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# Essential Middle School Family Engagement

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# Speakers



**Rebecca Honig**

Chief Content  
and Curriculum Officer

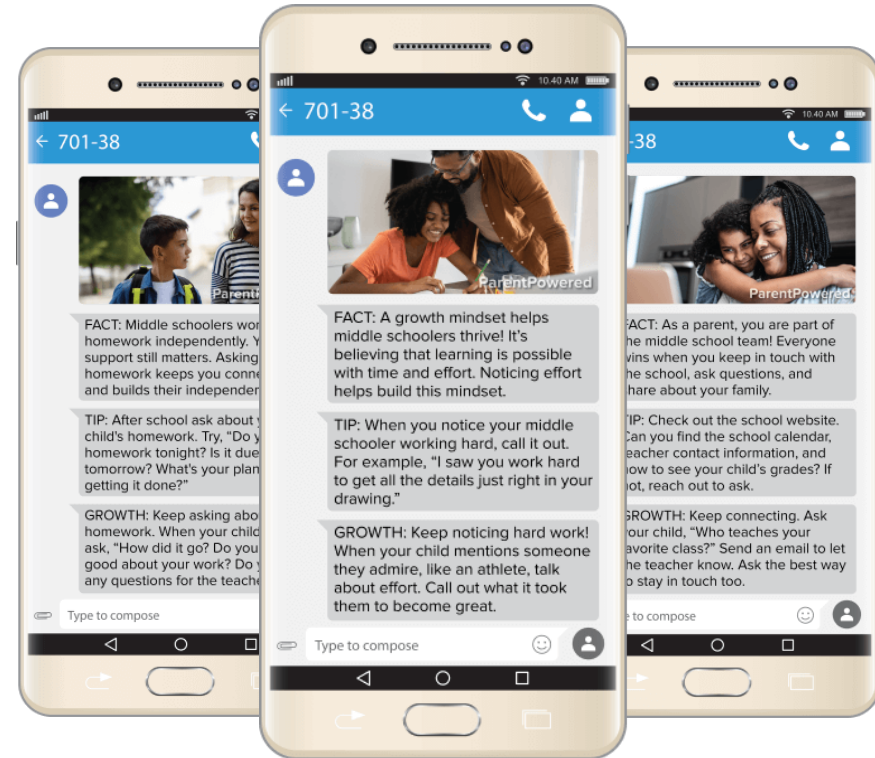


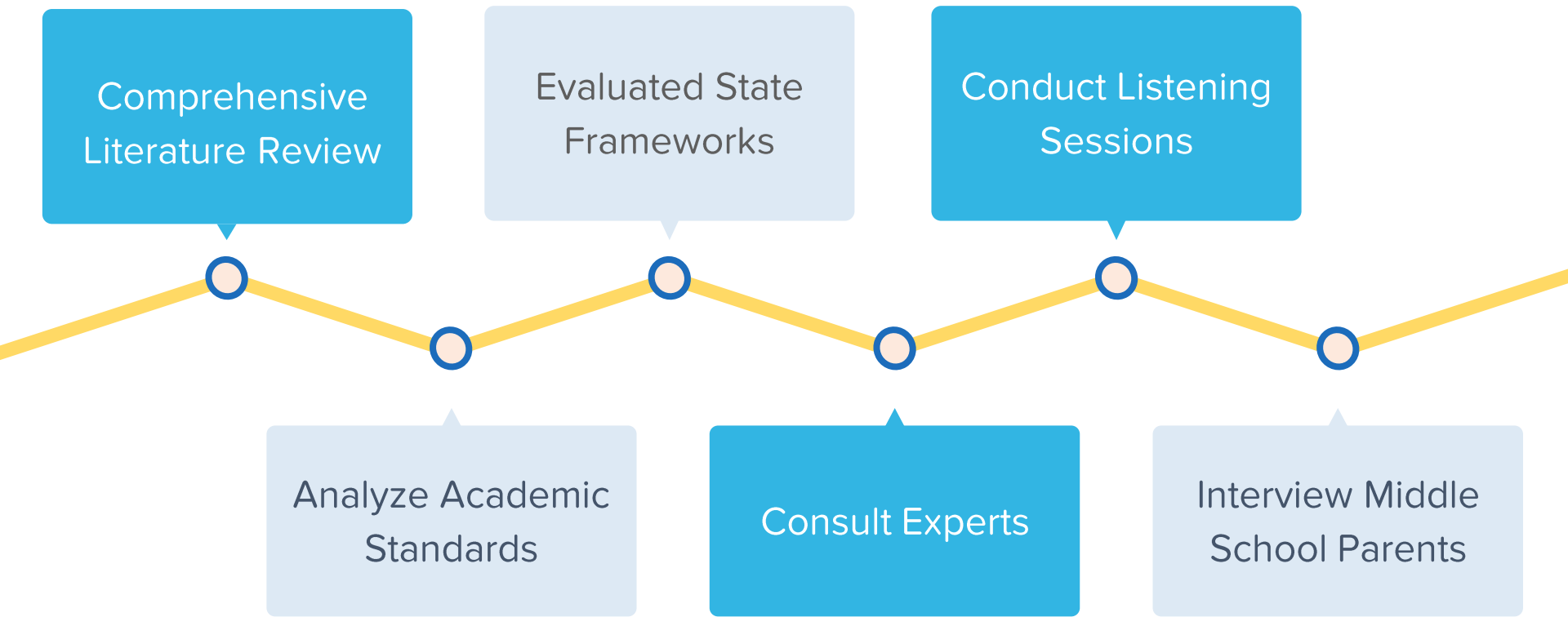
**Françoise Lartigue**

Content and Curriculum  
Specialist

# Middle School Family Engagement

# Designed to Meet Your Needs









# Goals

1. Insights from the research
2. The four domains of middle school family engagement
3. “Do's and don'ts” families should know to help their adolescents thrive

# The Need

"Middle School is almost where parents need to put more of their energy than they did in elementary school versus less."

- Pat Lowthian  
*Montana Migrant  
Education Program*



# The Opportunity

“Adolescents with supportive parents exhibit higher rates of self-reliance, identity formation, school performance, and positive career-planning aspirations, as well as lower rates of depression and delinquency.

Youth who share trusting relationships with their parents—characterized by mutual and sustained bonds and open communication—have higher grade point averages (GPAs) and better physical health and are more likely to disclose information to their parents that will keep them out of trouble.”

(Ferguson & Rodriguez, 2005)



# Hurdles to Engagement



# HURDLE, Context

*“Middle schools are large and complex, often making it difficult for parents to figure out how to become effectively involved.” (Hill & Tyson, 2009)*



HURDLE ↘

# Development

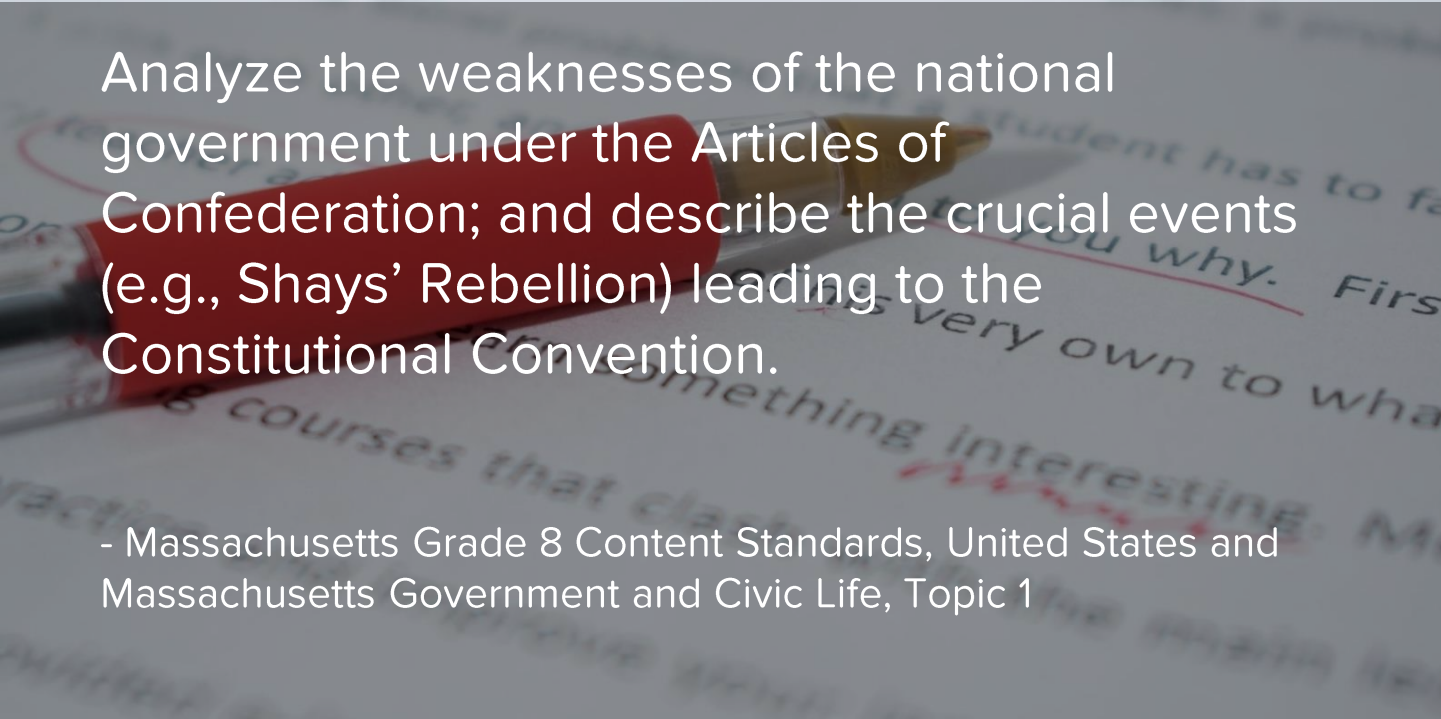
*“Adolescents often indicate that they want their parents’ help but do not want their parents to visit the school.” (Hill & Tyson, 2009)*



HURDLE<sub>3</sub>

# Content

*“Many families... have had a negative experience with school themselves, which reduces the likelihood of their initiating engagement... without intentional strategies on the teachers’ side to engage families.” (Hindman et al., 2012)*

A red highlighter pen is positioned horizontally across the middle of the image, resting on a document. The document contains several lines of text, some of which are highlighted in red. The text is slightly blurred, but the words "something interesting" and "very own" are visible. The background is a light gray color.

Analyze the weaknesses of the national government under the Articles of Confederation; and describe the crucial events (e.g., Shays’ Rebellion) leading to the Constitutional Convention.

- Massachusetts Grade 8 Content Standards, United States and Massachusetts Government and Civic Life, Topic 1



# The Equation

*“The older the child becomes, the more disconnected families feel from the school community and the more unsupported by the school and community.”*

*(Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020)*



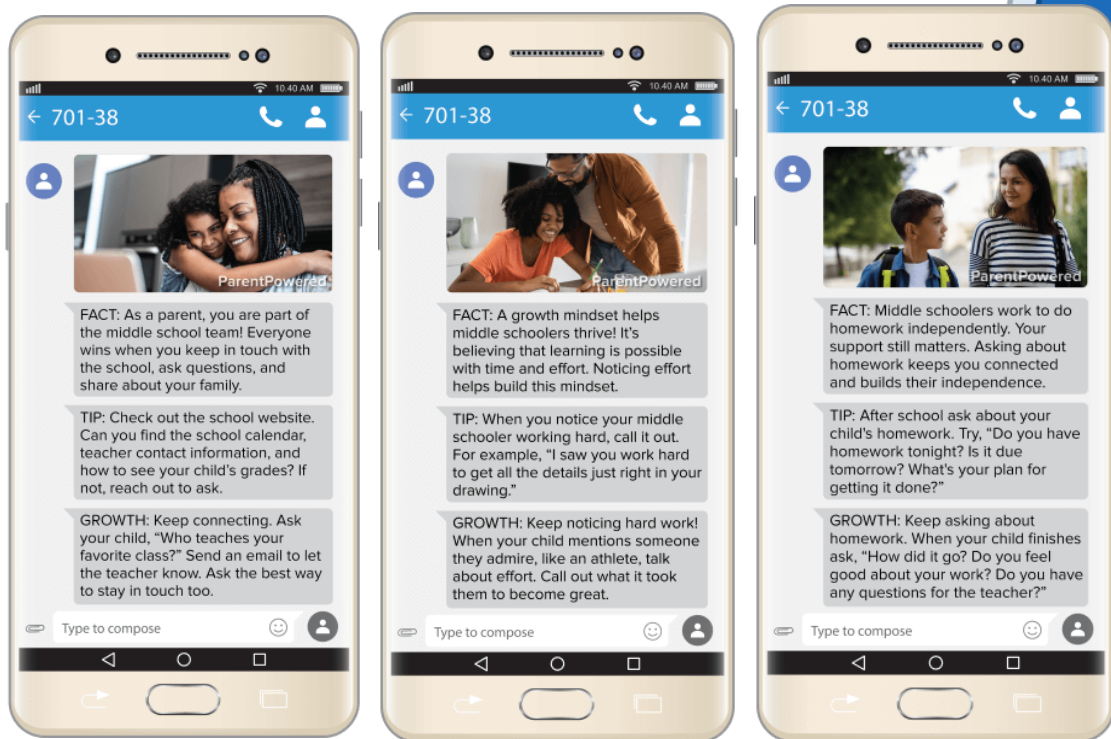
# The How

**97%** of American adults under 50 have cell phones

**98%** of cell phone owners send and receive texts

**98%** open rate for text messages (vs. 26% for email)

2. Pew Research Center, 2021





Engaging Middle School Families

# The What

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Social  
Emotional  
Learning



Home School  
Partnerships



Approaches  
to Parenting



Academic  
Supports

# The What



## Academic Supports

**FACT:** Middle schoolers work to do homework independently. Your support still matters. Asking about homework keeps you connected and builds their independence.

**TIP:** After school, ask about your child's homework. Try, "Do you have homework tonight? Is it due tomorrow? What's your plan for getting it done?"

**GROWTH:** Keep asking about homework. When your child finishes ask, "How did it go? Do you feel good about your work? Do you have any questions for the teacher?"



## Social- Emotional Learning

**FACT:** In middle school kids feel a strong desire to fit in. This can sometimes make it hard for kids to make their own decisions. Practicing with you can help.

**TIP:** Ask questions to help your child think about decisions. Try, "What can you do or say if a friend asks you to do something you don't want to do?"

**GROWTH:** Keep talking about decisions. Brainstorm things your child might say to get out of an uncomfortable situation. For example, "I'm not into that. Thanks."



## Home School Partnerships

**FACT:** As a parent, you are part of the middle school team! Everyone wins when you keep in touch with the school, ask questions, and share about your family.

**TIP:** Check out the school website. Can you find the school calendar, teacher contact information, and how to see your child's grades? If not, reach out to ask.

**GROWTH:** Keep connecting. Ask your child, "Who teaches your favorite class?" Send an email to let the teacher know. Ask the best way to stay in touch too.



## Approaches to Parenting

**FACT:** You are amazing! Celebrating your strengths helps your middle schooler celebrate their strengths. Positive thinking is a great thing to pass on!

**TIP:** Today, think of one thing you feel good at. It can be anything. Tell your middle schooler about it. Mention how it makes you feel and helps you in life.

**GROWTH:** Keep celebrating strengths. Now ask your child, "What's 1 thing you've felt good about today?" Challenge them to notice 1 good thing each day this week.



## Spiral

**FACT:** After school can be just the time to connect with your middle schooler. Today, ask about homework. Try, "What's 1 homework assignment that's been interesting lately?"

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**GROWTH:** Keep connecting. Think about strengths you've seen your child working to build. Share what you've noticed with them. You might share it with the teacher too.

# Home School Partnership

- ✓ Reciprocal Communication
- ✓ Attendance
- ✓ Transitions
- ✓ Advocacy & Involvement




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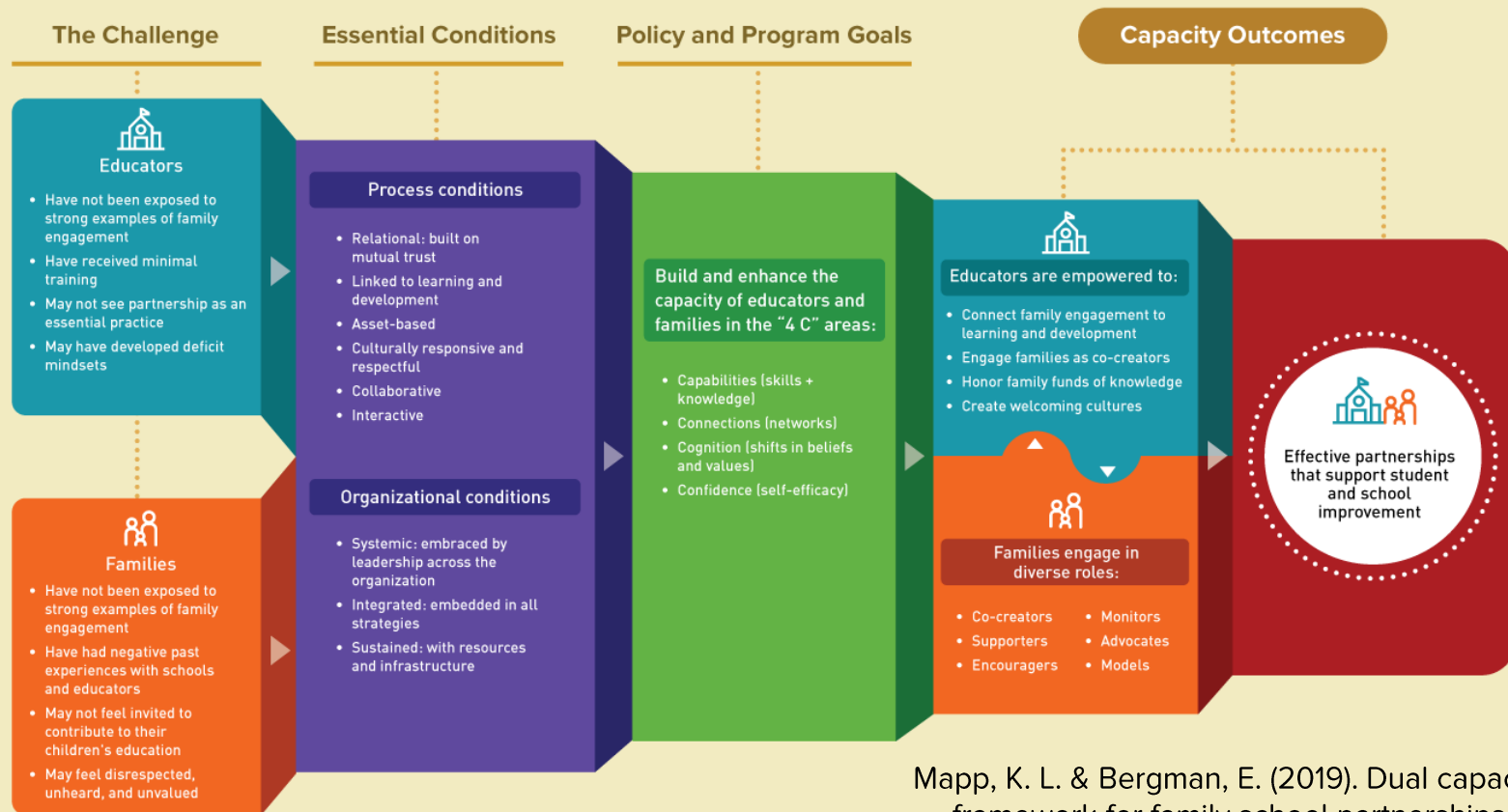


# Why Home School Partnerships?



**SNAPSHOT** The Home School Partnerships domain helps build trusting and reciprocal relationships between home and school by giving families everyday ways to navigate the middle school context, communicate with educators, support attendance and advocate for child's needs.

# The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Version 2)



Mapp, K. L. & Bergman, E. (2019). Dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships (Version 2). Retrieved from: [www.dualcapacity.org](http://www.dualcapacity.org)



# How do parents...

- Find out what's going on in order to get involved?
- Reach out and seek information?
- Find available supports and services?
- Advocate for their child and share about their family so the school can better address their child's needs?

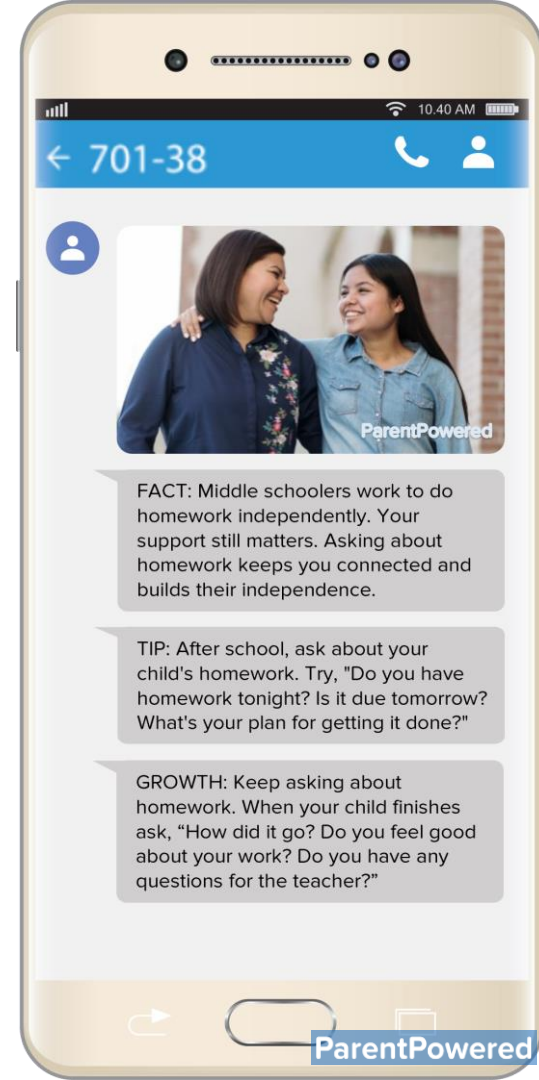


# What **You** Can Do

1. Set expectations
2. Strength-based communications
3. Create an inclusive setting

# Academic Supports

- ✓ Growth Mindset
- ✓ Academic Socialization & Learning Connections
- ✓ Effective Study & Learning Skills
- ✓ Homework



# Why Academic Support?

CINCINNATI COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

Report Form

DATE: 3/5/70

STUDENT: REBECCA HONIG

CLASS: 7 ADVISOR: D. CHESNUTT

SUBJECT: PRE ALGEBRA

GRADE C EXAM " " + " " + " " ACCUM. C

COMMENTS: Rebecca's test grades of "D", "B", "D" went in the opposite direction from the class average. She & I need to meet on a regular basis.

TEACHER

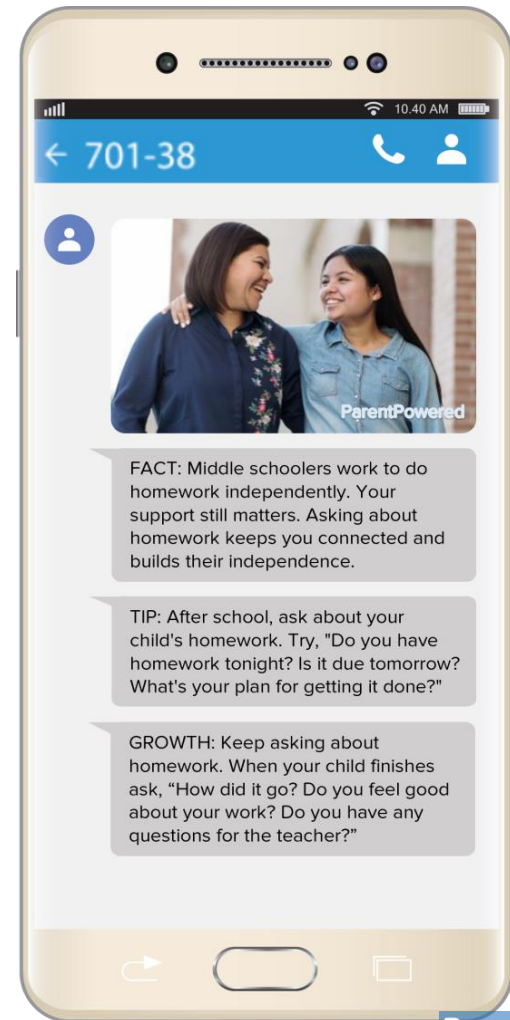
**SNAPSHOT** The Academic Support domain offers parents research based, developmentally appropriate strategies for supporting their child's learning and reaching grade level expectations in Math, Literacy, Science and Social Studies.

“Academic socialization includes parents’ communication of their expectations for achievement and value for education, fostering educational and occupational aspirations in their adolescents, discussing learning strategies with children, and making preparations and plans for the future, including linking material discussed in school with students’ interests and goals.” (N. Hill, D. Tyson, 2009)



# How do parents help their middle schoolers...

- Navigate homework independently
- Study effectively
- Advocate when they have questions
- Practice a growth mindset
- Make connections between their passions and interests and what they are learning in school

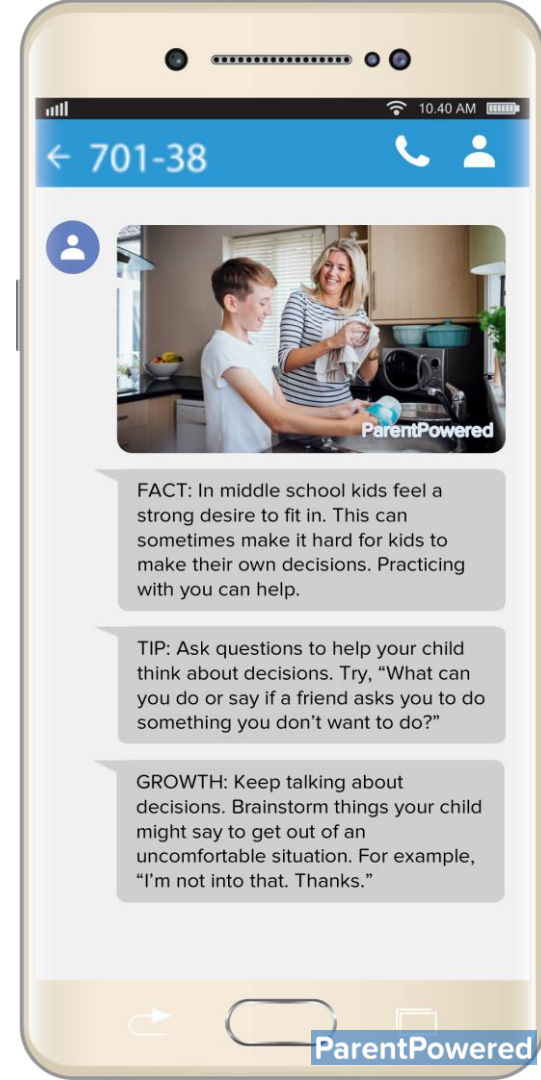


# What **You** Can Do

1. Let them know just right ways to support learning
2. Consider 5 cross functional success strategies
3. Share a story

# Social Emotional Learning

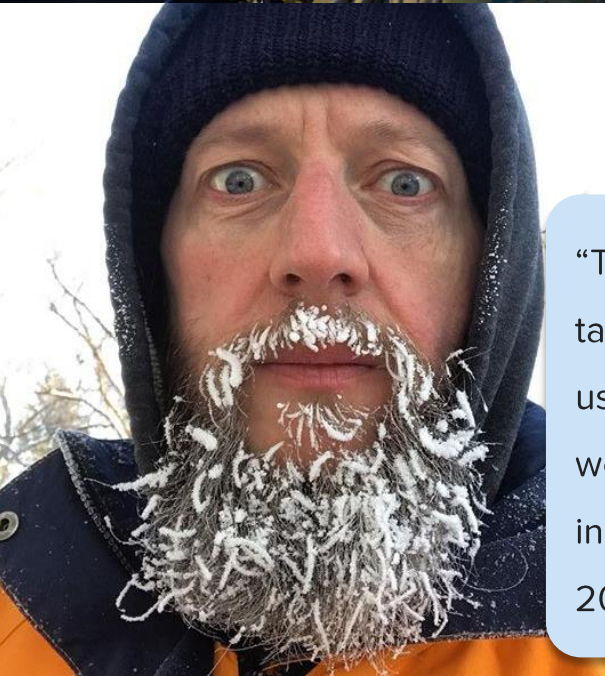
- ✓ Sense of Self
- ✓ Independence & Executive Function
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Emotions & Development



# Why SEL?

**SNAPSHOT** The SEL domain aims to increase student success by promoting research based social and emotional competencies that lead to middle schoolers building independence, a positive sense of self, emotional regulation and critical relationship skills.





“They are motivated to integrate with peers, take risks and have new experiences, learn using emotion, so-called ‘heartfelt goals’, work out self-identity, and gain autonomy and independence.” (Hohnen, Gilmour, Murphy 2020)





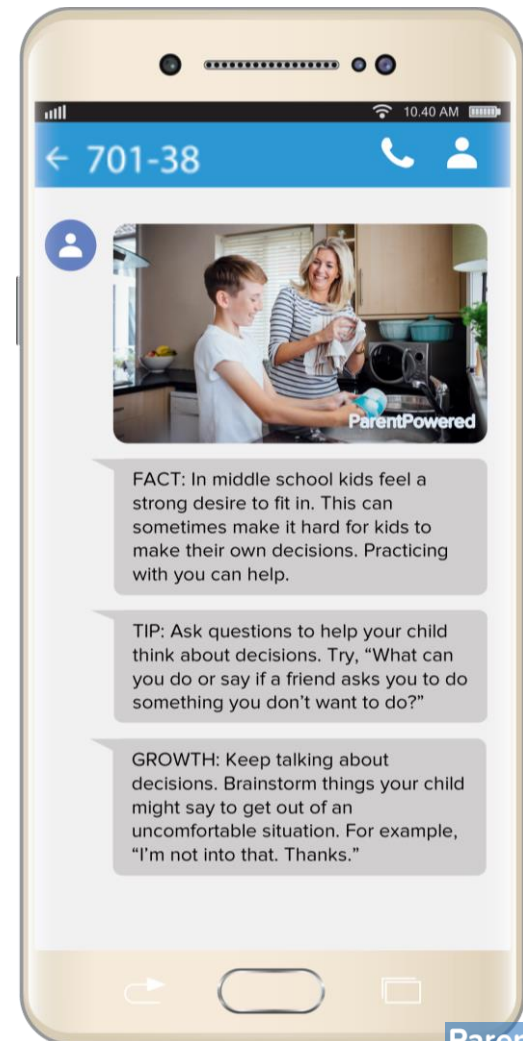
“Parents need ways to help [kids] with that transition to independence while letting them know ‘I’m here for you.’”

- Gladys Herrera-Gurule,  
District Family Engagement  
Coordinator



# How do parents help their middle schoolers...

- Build the ability to advocate for themselves and their needs
- Develop perspective taking
- Recognize and develop supportive friendships
- Build strategies for coping with intense emotions

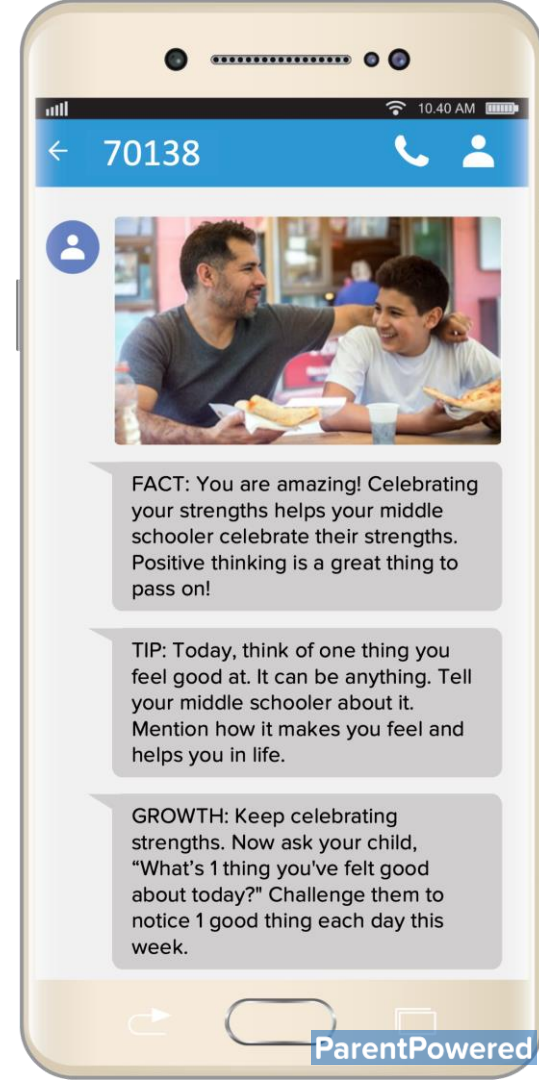


# What **You** Can Do


- Strengths-based support that leverages families values and relationships
- Communication, reflective practices, collaboration

# Approaches to Parenting

- ✓ Knowledge of Adolescent Growth & Development
- ✓ Reflective Practices
- ✓ Mindsets & Modeling
- ✓ Self-Care





A photograph of a Black woman and her teenage daughter. The woman is on the left, wearing a white polo shirt and a gold watch, smiling warmly. The daughter is on the right, wearing a grey t-shirt and glasses, with her arms around her mother's shoulders, also smiling. They are indoors, with a wooden door visible in the background.

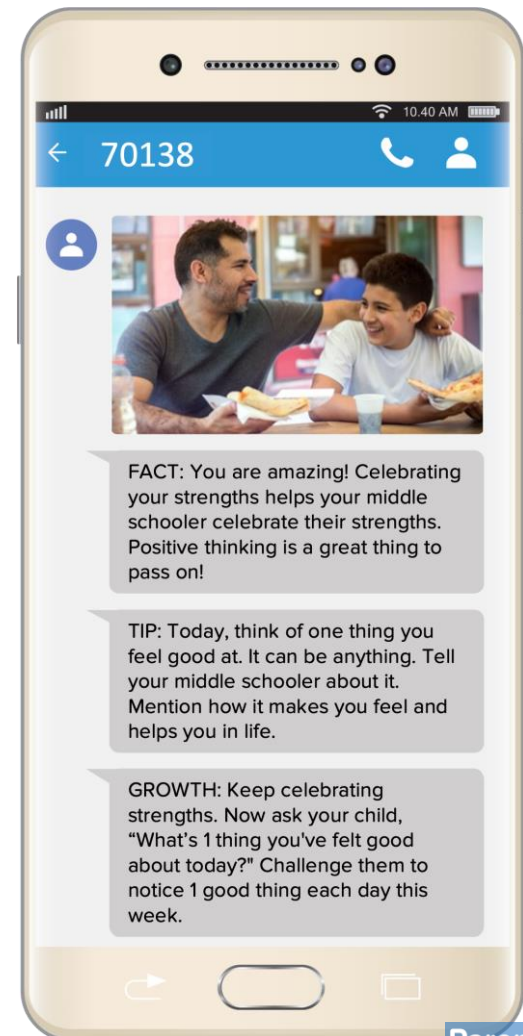
Engaging Middle School Families

# Why Approaches to Parenting?

**SNAPSHOT** Adolescence brings about shifts in the parent child relationship. As Dr. Michael Riera explains, “In adolescence kids basically fire their parents as the managers of their lives and rehire them as consultants.” In the Approaches to Parenting domain we arm parents with the information, self-care strategies and reflective practices to understand, navigate, leverage, and celebrate this shift.

# How can parents...

- Navigate the shift from being “pilot” to “co-pilot”
- Develop strategies for working through challenging behaviors
- Establish and maintaining a positive parental mindset
- Find opportunities to care for themselves and recharge



# What You Can Do

- Give a window into adolescent development
- Middle school parent meet-ups
- Parental self care tips, too

# The What



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# 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Curriculum Framework



## Academic Supports

### Topics Include

- Growth Mindset
- Academic Socialization & Learning Connections
- Effective Study & Learning Skills
- Homework

## Social-Emotional Learning

### Topics Include

- Sense of Self
- Independence & Executive Function
- Relationships
- Emotions & Development

## Home School Partnerships

### Topics Include

- Reciprocal Communication
- Attendance
- Transitions
- Advocacy & Involvement

## Approaches to Parenting

### Topics Include

- Knowledge of Adolescent Growth & Development
- Reflective Practices
- Mindsets & Modeling
- Self-Care



# Trauma-Informed

Aligned to the 5 Protective Factors

- Twice as much SEL support as Core
- Academic skills from Core are scaffolded, sequenced, and edited for triggers
- 30% of the curriculum supports parental self-care, resilience, and executive function
- Reviewed by mental health experts for SAMSA's 4Rs

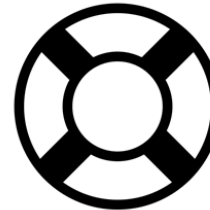
Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development



Social & Emotional Competence of Children



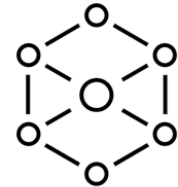
Concrete Supports in Times of Need



Parental Resilience



Social Connections



# Easy to Launch

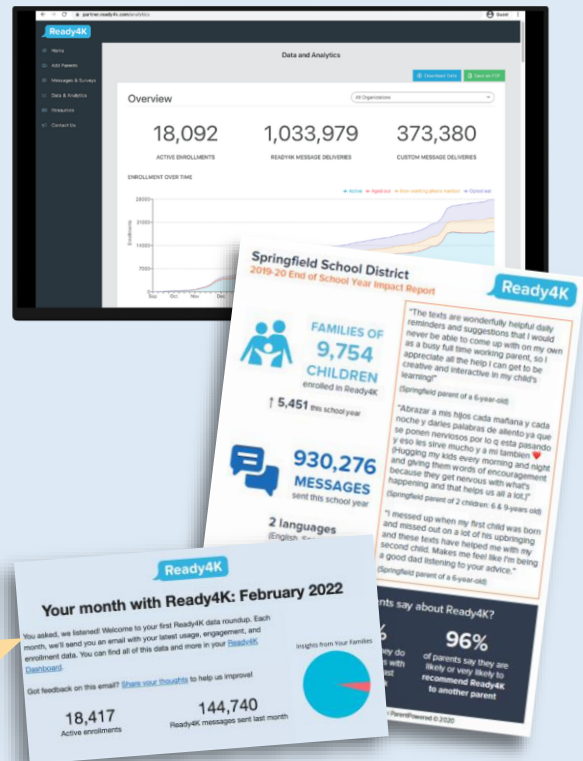
Parents.xls		
Parent phone number	Text language	Grade level
(123) 456-7890	Spanish	3
(123) 987-6543	English	K
(123) 678-4567	Chinese	5

Clever

# Easy to Use



# Easy to Report



"The biggest surprise was how easy the process was."

- Amy Reyes, Wyoming DOE

“I’ve been waiting for  
something like this.”

- Jana W., Pampa ISD

**Summer complimentary**  
with your  
2022-23 school year  
ParentPowered program



**[learn.ready4k.com/middle-school](https://learn.ready4k.com/middle-school)**