

## **Parent Advocacy Tips**

The following tips are shared by parents who attended a Parent Academy Workshop, *Can We Talk? Speaking Up for Your Children to Help Them Succeed* facilitated by the MCPS Parent Advisory Council and the Department of Family and Community Partnerships.

### **SPEAKING UP FOR YOUR CHILD**

- Be persistent to find out information to help your child.
- Know your rights as a parent.
- Know the rules and policies of the school.
- Don't wait for problems to talk with teachers—introduce yourself and go to school meetings and events.
- Keep folders for each child. Sort papers and review them to process information.
- Review your child's work and grades.
- Communicate your goals for your children.
- Share that you want your child to have access to opportunities.
- Keep in mind, there are no students without parents—nobody knows your child like you do.
- Articulate expectations of fair treatment for your child—academics, social behavior.
- Know it is okay to persevere and persist.
- If things are not going well, talk with the teacher, and perhaps the reading specialist, counselor, principal.
- Ask for a conference or a meeting if you have concerns.
- Be on time for meeting and conferences.
- Write your notes to help you prepare for meetings with school staff.
- Write down your questions and practice asking them.
- Prioritize and ask most important questions.
- Ask for examples of how to help your child at home and how to help with homework.
- If your child has special needs, work with the team.
- Be open and honest—teachers want to help.
- Ask school if they have resources to help your child or know of any others in the community.
- Help your child see the light at the end of the tunnel—talk about effort and importance of trying again to reach goals.
- Talk with your children about your expectations.
- Help your children to learn to advocate for themselves.

### **Speaking Up for All Children**

- If you have a concern that affects your child and other children in the school, make it known.
- Share your suggestions in a positive way.
- Work with PTA or other parent organizations to talk with principal about concerns that affect your child and other children.
- Network with other parents.
- Ask for things that will help (e.g, grade level chats about curriculum for parents, process to request a conference).
- Address real examples brought to the attention of the school (e.g., bullying) .

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### **BUILDING A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SCHOOL**

- Don't wait for problems to talk with teachers—introduce yourself, go to school meetings and events.
- Get to know the principal, teachers, and other school staff.
- Educate yourself—look up information on websites, research at the library, talk with others, attend workshops and meetings.
- Use resources like MCPS, school, and PTA webs sites and listserves.
- Ask the school for ways to help at school.
- Think about what the school can honestly do—don't expect miracles.
- Look beyond the school for community resources that could support the school.