



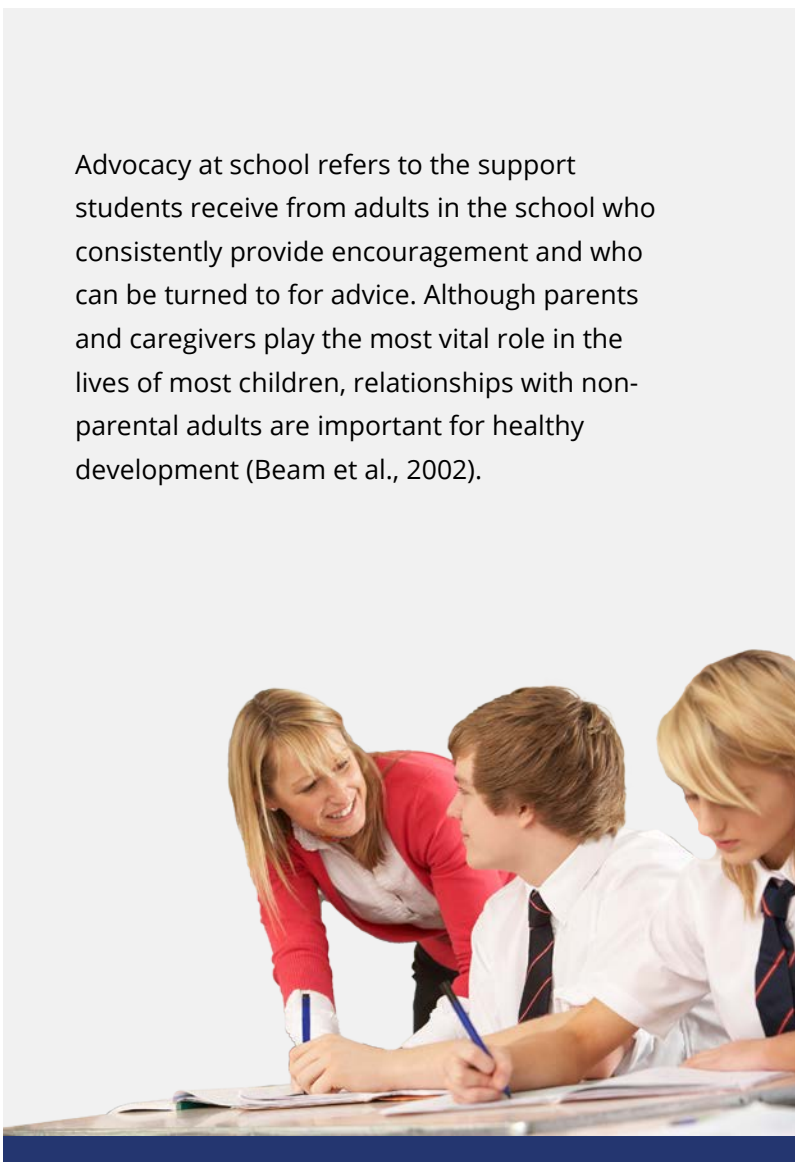
Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

Advocacy at School

Advocacy at school refers to the support students receive from adults in the school who consistently provide encouragement and who can be turned to for advice. Although parents and caregivers play the most vital role in the lives of most children, relationships with non-parental adults are important for healthy development (Beam et al., 2002).

Why is it important?

- Students who feel they are being supported report higher levels of engagement (Green et al., 2008).
- Emotional support from teachers is positively related to students' grade-point average (Tennant et al., 2015).
- Having a teacher or other non-parental advocate is especially important for at risk youth, yet the advantages extend to other youth as well (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005).



In Practice

Schools can support student advocacy by creating equitable conditions that ensure each student has at least one adult at school who advocates for them and encourages them to perform to the best of their abilities.



What can schools do?

Schools can engage in the following steps to establish a supportive environment for all students:

- Get to know the student population and take note of any vulnerable students who may benefit from additional support.
- Pursue targeted interventions for any students who may require them.
- Establish a mentorship program to ensure that every student is matched with a mentor or ally on school staff who can support them.
- Set aside dedicated time for students to check-in and meet with their assigned advocate.
- Capture student voice to ensure students feel supported by using online survey tools designed to gather formal feedback related to student concerns.



In the Classroom

Teachers can support individual student goals and talents by:

- Facilitating regular check-ins to establish supportive relationships where students feel comfortable disclosing information in relation to their learning needs and interests.
- Providing additional support during the middle school years as non-parental adults can play an increasingly important role during this transitional period (Buchanan & Bowen, 2008).
- Targeting those who are most in need of an advocate, which can include at-risk youth and those from less privileged backgrounds.
- Collaborating with others within the school system and broader community to ensure that available resources and supports are effectively put in place for students who need them the most.

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