

FROM THE OFFICE OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPPER MERION AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT September 2026



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Building Student Relationships

A fresh start to the new school year is a great opportunity to build relationships with students. Research shows that it takes approximately 40–50 hours of time spent together to build strong relationships with students. We can immediately recognize that given the time it takes to build relationships, this is not something that occurs in one or two settings; but rather over an extended period of time. It breaks down to at least four weeks of building relationships with students. Teachers should stay connected with students after the initial four weeks to keep the relationship strong.

Tips For Building Relationships With Students:

- Be helpful. Students connect with teachers who are ready and willing to help. Teachers can offer help or wait until the student asks for help.
- Recall students' stories or experiences. Share your own story or similar experience.
- Be authentic. Embrace who you are. Share your hobbies, interests, books you are reading, music you like, and shows/movies you enjoy watching.
- Ask questions. Inquire about your students' lives. Encourage them to tell you about their interests.
- Be consistently kind. Some students warm up to teachers immediately, while for others it takes some time. Continue to be kind and develop a mutual respect. Kindness leads to meaningful learning.

Things That Make You Go Hmm...



Connections before content...

How do you let students know they are seen, heard, and cared for?

WATCH: ["The Power of Relationships In Schools"](#)

SEPTEMBER APPRECIATION

Hispanic Heritage Month

UMASD HHM Video

World Afro Day/The CROWN Act

Rosh Hashanah

Yom Kippur



STUDENT VOICE



Some UMAHS students were asked what do teachers do to create a sense of belonging. The following are a few of the student responses:

- ☒ Make an effort to bond with students.
- ☒ Allow ALL student voices to be heard.
- ☒ Be a good communicator and listener.
- ☒ Encourage students to work with each other.

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I have never regretted taking the class time to build relationships with my students. **It builds trust.** When the students trust me, they are willing to go on the rigorous academic journey that the rest of the year holds.

—AMY NICHOLS, Teacher

