Connect the Dots:
A Staff and Faculty Activity to Ensure All Students Are Connected with Adults

Making sure every student belongs... not just attends.

Objectives:
- Make authentic connections to all students
- Determine which students receive plenty of adult attention and which ones are “under the radar”
- Develop strategies for ensuring all students are engaged every day
- Raise awareness of the importance of connecting with all students among staff and faculty
- Ensure that students feel they belong, not just attend your campus, and that no student “falls through the cracks”

Overview of Key Elements:
This faculty and staff activity is perfect for beginning of year staff development, early in school year, mid-semester and follow up at end of year, to help ensure that all students have adults who know them and connect with them regularly about something that matters to the student. The activity will help reveal which students have solid relationships with several adults in the building and who may feel isolated and anonymous. Elementary, middle and high school staff and faculty can benefit from this exercise.

Activity Steps:

- Best practice includes using index cards with a label stating the student’s name (one card per student).
- Find a location in a teacher lounge or workroom where it can be posted but is not visible to the student population.
- Arrange the cards in alphabetical order by last name and hang on walls.
- Ask all staff and faculty who interact with students to stop by the room during a specific time frame; allow a week or two so teachers have time to be reflective in their responses.
- Give each adult several sheets of red dots and blue dots (or any two colors you have). Ask them to place the dots on the cards as follows:
  - Red Dot = I know the student. I have made a connection to the student and can converse with them about something that matters personally to them. I know something about their hobbies and interests.
  - Blue Dot = I know the student’s name and recognize him/her in the hall but could not and have not had a personal conversation focused on a topic important to the student.
  - No Dot = I don’t know this student.
- Hold a faculty meeting to debrief the findings. Work out a strategy for students with different levels of dots. The goal is to achieve a campus environment where every student has multiple red dots.

DID YOU KNOW?
Schools with more than 600 students must have a specific strategy in order to connect to every student.

I know the student.
I recognize this student’s name.
Reflection:
- Students with no dots need immediate attention and a strategy to connect.
- Students with no red dots are the second priority. How can we establish more (and more genuine and authentic) connections with him/her?

Potential Follow-Up Steps:
- Using whatever criteria makes sense for your school, develop a strategy with benchmarks to ensure that, if this activity were repeated at the end of the semester, there would be many more red and blue dots.
- Discuss the benchmarks in faculty meetings; use a term such as “connectedness factor” to measure the percentage of students with at least one red dot and evaluate changes in the rate.
- Set goals for staff and faculty to reach out to a certain number of students. For example, “Focus on Five” students each week.

DID YOU KNOW?
The average high school graduate is only known by 6 adults in the school.