



## **Blue / Green Learning Communities at Royal Oak Middle School**

Royal Oak Middle School is committed to providing an optimal learning environment where our students are encouraged to reach their full potential. To support this growth for students, the physical design of the school is based on the smaller learning community concept (SLC). The SLC's are positioned on two floors in the east wing of the school with the green community on the lower floor and the blue community on the top floor. There are also areas of common use, such as the library, gym, and multi-purpose room.

Staff and grade 6, 7, and 8 students are equally distributed in each community. Research shows that smaller learning communities create a more supportive climate where students, staff, and parents all form strong personal bonds. The communities provide a safe and stable environment in which meaningful relationships can be established and maintained among the students and staff members. Those relationships form a solid foundation upon which student growth in all academic areas is supported. "Students feel a greater sense of engagement, belonging, and personal value when their classmates and teachers get to know them" (Policy Brief, 2001, p. 2). These positive relationships allow students to feel a greater sense of belonging and engagement.

Small learning communities facilitate consistent and effective communication. They allow parents and teachers to become allies in supporting student learning. These personal connections assist in developing the personal assets and resilience which are central to healthy development.

The Royal Oak staff value small learning communities as a way to build and strengthen community spirit and promote and maintain a positive school culture. Staff collaborate during blue and green community meetings and plan ongoing activities such as multi-grade advisory, peer mentorship, and community assemblies and performances.

**Our hope is to create an inclusive and welcoming environment where "no one is a stranger." (Policy Brief, 2001).**

### **References**

Policy Brief (2001). *Are small schools better? School size: Considerations for safety and Learning*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.