

## Middle School Dialogue Notes

### From the GradNation Summit

Mission: Graduate, in partnership with America's Promise Alliance and AT&T, hosted the Albuquerque GradNation Community Summit August 2, 2014 at Volcano Vista High School. During the Summit, community members attended a variety of breakout sessions. Learning Alliance collaborated with two youth facilitators and offered a dialogue session focused on middle schools. Themes, bright spots and recommendations from the dialogue are listed below.

#### Themes

- Schools need to be safe, welcoming places for students to build self-esteem and receive social and emotional support
- Students and families prefer more choices including project-based classes and experiential learning
- School programs and efforts have to work for families' schedules, values and interests
- Strong teachers and mentors make huge differences

#### Bright Spots

- **Advancement Via Individual Determination, AVID** - a college readiness program targeting the least served students in the academic middle who have the capacity to succeed but need extra support and direction ([www.aps.edu/avid](http://www.aps.edu/avid))
- **Homework Diner** - an intergenerational learning environment combining nutritious food and homework help (<http://manzanomesa.aps.edu/homeworkdiner>)
- **RFK Charter School** - offers a unique experience for students seeking alternatives to traditional middle schools and stresses the importance of relationships among all the participants ([www.rfkcharter.com](http://www.rfkcharter.com))

#### Recommendations

- Invest in training for middle school teachers to be more responsive to and understanding of students
- Develop greater cohesion between middle school and high school expectations and curricula
- Introduce more college planning and career options during middle school
- Offer additional math tutoring to middle school students
- Encourage high school students to mentor middle school students through an electronic pen pal system thereby promoting high school from student perspectives and easing the transition from middle school to high school