

## Tips for Building Relationships with Your STEM Colleagues

*Directions:* Implementing STEM requires change and can create turmoil. To ensure good relationships with colleagues during stressful times, consider these ideas. These ideas are particularly useful for a teacher leader charged with helping to implement STEM.

### **Show a personal interest in colleagues.** *Some ideas . . .*

- Learn something about their interests, hobbies, and aspirations.
- Take time to mention things they told you in previous conversations.
- Be an attentive listener.
- Send birthday cards and recognize big events in their lives.

### **Be a considerate conversationalist.** *Some ideas . . .*

- Avoid falling into the trap of thinking what to say next rather than fully listening to what your colleague is saying.
- Do not interrupt. A quick way to damage trust and rapport is to interrupt while a person is speaking.

### **Be mindful of your body language and keep it positive.** *Some ideas . . .*

- Unfold your arms and remember to smile.
- Watch your voice tone, facial expression, repetitive movements, and muscle tension.
- Remember to make eye contact and show genuine interest.

### **Keep colleagues informed.** *Some ideas . . .*

- From time to time, send colleagues articles and information about STEM.
- Connect them to good STEM education web sites and involve them in exploring the world of resources that exists beyond the school site.

### **Exhibit the same qualities you value in others.** *Some ideas . . .*

- Be dependable.
- Be respectful.
- Be friendly and positive.
- Be honest.
- Follow through with commitments.

### **Do not take colleagues' reactions personally.** *Some ideas . . .*

- Accept that teaching STEM requires change and causes some degree of turmoil.
- Practice keeping an objective mental stance about negative comments and responses.
- When you feel yourself personalizing comments, try this: Deliberately “look down” on the situation from an imaginary balcony. Avoid labeling the situation as “good” or “bad,” and say to yourself: *This is interesting. I wonder what this is all about.* This will help you regain an analytical viewpoint that will prove more effective.

### **Relax and give it time.** *Some ideas . . .*

- Understand that building relationships takes time, persistence, and energy.
- Accept that you will not know all answers.
- Apologize if you make a mistake, and remain grounded in the basic principles of good STEM work.