

Research Brief

Successful Transition to High School

Question: What steps can be taken to assure that 8th graders make a successful transition to 9th grade?

Summary of Findings: More students fail ninth grade than any other grade level. When middle school students took part in high school transition programs with a variety of different articulation activities, fewer students were retained in ninth grade. Ideally, these transition programs include activities that provide students and parents with current information about the new school, provide students with social support and opportunities for peer interaction during the transition, provide opportunities for parent involvement and bring middle school and high school personnel together to learn about one another's curriculum, special programs, requirements and expectations. (MacIver, Phi Delta Kappan, 1990) School leaders can ease students' transition into high school by implementing transition programs that address the needs of students and their parents and that facilitate communication between middle school and high school teachers and support staff.

Major Findings and Conclusions:

Effective high school transition programs address the following key areas;

- ✓ Providing parents and students with information about the new school.
 1. High school tours
 2. Small-group sessions with high school counselors
 3. High school teachers trade places with 8th grade teachers for one day.
 4. Pen pals with Band, Student Council, or honors level students, athletes and other groups that are common to both grades.
 5. Summer camp for rising 9th graders
 6. Passes/invitations to social/athletic events at high school (supervised)
 7. New letters and websites dedicated to providing information to incoming students.
 8. Designate willing parents as 9th grade ambassadors to formally and informally communicate with incoming parents
 9. Scheduling system that allows extensive collaboration with parents and middle school staff.

- ✓ Provide opportunities for peer interaction and social support.
 1. Open house hosted by current ninth graders.

2. Supervised attendance by incoming 8th graders at 9th grade social functions.
 3. New comers festival a few weeks before school starts.
 4. Assigning "buddies" to incoming 9th grade classes.
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5. Separating lunch schedule by grade level to decrease interaction with older students.
 6. Regular open hours with counselors so students can drop in to discuss problems or concerns.
 7. Ninth Grade only, phone line to an assistant principal so parents have easy access to assistance should social problems arise.
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- ✓ Provide opportunities for parent involvement.
1. Actively seek parent volunteers and involve volunteers in the day-to-day activities of the school.
 2. Develop a Ninth Grade Newsletter that parents begin to receive when their child is in the second half of eight grade. Continue the newsletter through the first half of ninth grade.
 3. Refrigerator magnets or key chains with counselors' names, phone and e-mail contact information.
 4. Quarterly phone calls by teachers, counselors, or advisors.
 5. Have a staff member simulate an attempt to contact the school to assure that lines of communication are indeed open.
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- ✓ Provide opportunities for communication between middle and high school teachers and support staff.
1. Create a "transition" team of teachers, counselors, parents and students from the middle and high schools that meets regularly to identify issues and propose transition activities and improvements.
 2. Invite teachers from the middle school to visit team or department meetings from the high school (and vice versa) on a regular basis.
 3. Schedule an annual joint faculty meeting with feeder schools to identify common concerns and opportunities.
 4. Create departmental "liaison" positions, in which high school teacher Ms. A. stays in touch with Mr. B. at the middle school on a regular basis.



- ✓ Provide academic support for incoming ninth graders.
- 1. Create a support class that meets on a regular basis for all 9th graders and which addresses transition issues, counseling, academic expectations, etc.
- 2. Assign each incoming 9th grader an adult advocate/advisor/mentor who assists the student with transition and attends to each student's academic progress and social adjustment.
- 3. Create tutorials and other academic support activities, using teachers, adult volunteers and older students to help struggling 9th graders.

Online Resources:

- [Boston Public Schools, Schools to Career, Web Site](#)
Provides limited information about transitions programs for the Boston Public School system. Contact information is included.
www.boston.k12.ma.us/stc/transitions.htm
- [Connecting Entrance and Departure: The transition to ninth grade and high school dropout.](#)
This comprehensive research report details the effects of transition on high school dropout behavior, and documents practices designed to reduce transition-related dropouts.
<http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/dropouts/neild.pdf>
- [The Ninth Grade Academy at Montclair High School](#)
A complete description of the transition planning and activities of a comprehensive high school.
http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc/descriptions/montclair/pdfs/ninth_grade_academy.pdf
- [The Ninth Grade Success Academy](#)
A description of the success academy for ninth graders at Central High School in Newark, NJ.
<http://www.nps.k12.nj.us/central/ninthgradesuccessacademy.htm>
- [Helping Middle School Students Make the Transition to High School](#)
An excellent introductory article. This one would be great for distributing at a faculty meeting or planning committee.
<http://www.kidsource.com/education/middlehigh.html>

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