

TRANSITION PLANNING FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

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Research on Middle School Transitions

- Transition to high school is associated with a decrease in:
 - social support
 - academic functioning: grades, school attendance, academic motivation
 - mental health functioning: increased depression, delinquency, and substance abuse
- Transition is also associated with an increase in:
 - academic stressors
 - social stressors (Hussong, 2007)

Research on Middle School Transitions

- Success or failure during the 9th grade year often sets the tone for a student's entire high school career
- If a student is successful during their 9th grade year, there is likelihood that the student will graduate and enjoy their high school experience (Silverthorn, 2005)
- There is a heightened risk of school-drop out related to negative educational experiences (Hussong, 2007)

Student Perspective

- 8th grade students worry about their experience transitioning to high school and some view it as difficult
- Akos & Galassi, 2004 found that 8th grade students were primarily concerned with an increased workload, difficulty of classes and getting lost at school
 - Students later reported that academic and social changes, and feeling disconnected from school were the most difficult aspects of the transition process
 - Students also reported liking high school less than middle school

Student Perspective

- This research study (2000-2001 school year) showed that an increase in transition preparedness activities in 8th grade allowed for a smooth transition for students into 9th grade
- Activities included the following:
 - Campus visits from the freshman principal, counselor, activities director, and former students
 - Registration
 - Students discussed their concerns about attending high school and had many of their questions answered

Students with Special Needs

- Researchers interviewed twelve, 9th grade students, six with learning disabilities and six without learning disabilities
- The major research question was:
 - "What transition activities did the students find helpful, and were there differences between the experiences of those with learning disabilities and those without?" (Letrello, 2003)

Interview Results

- Students with learning disabilities indicated that they relied more heavily on help from peers and teachers to be successful in the ninth grade year than did students without learning disabilities
- Students with learning disabilities were involved in less activities than students without, which limited them from making new friends.
 - Talking to their 8th grade teachers and future high school counselors before the transition helped them get acquainted with the high school. (Letrello, 2003)

Developed Recommendations

- Middle school should have as many activities as possible to prepare students for the change to high school
- Transition groups should be formed at the middle school to plan for the transition to 9th grade
- Student's needs and fears regarding the move to high school should be assessed and addressed in eighth grade
- Students with special needs should have continuous support from teachers and staff during the transition and after they enter high school
- Students entering 9th grade should be encouraged to get involved in extracurricular activities (Letrello, 2003)

IDEA's Definition of Transition

- Transition services: (section 56460 CA ed. code)
 - coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability.
 - Designed to be a result oriented process.
 - Focused on improving the academic and functional achievement.
 - Facilitate movement from school to post-secondary activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation.

IDEA

- IDEA looks at transition as a function of the IEP.
- IDEA focuses on high school to post high school transition.
- Because regulations focus on high school to post high school regulations, there is a lack of transition services at the middle school level.
- Many high school teachers feel that incoming Freshman are not prepared for high school (academically and socially).

Transition as a Process

- IDEA's definition limits to focusing on post high school preparation.
- Process rather than one time thing.
- Preparing students for high school:
 - Academically
 - Emotionally
 - Socially

Discussion

Are students at your middle schools prepared for high school?

What practices are implemented at your school district to prepare students for the transition into high school?

What can be done to help students transition?

Retail Programs

- Transitions Curriculum Learning Kit (Pearson Assessment)
- A self-advocacy program to help students prepare and be successful their freshman year in high school.
- Teaches students with learning disabilities the skills to successfully make the transition to middle school, high school, or college.
- Students learn lessons in self-advocacy, responsibility, and how to develop strategies for academic success.
 - Materials includes videos with unscripted student interviews, a self-advocacy handbook, student work guide and individual student transition booklets.
 - [Interview sample](#)

Retail Programs

- Transitions A High School and College Preparatory Curriculum for Middle School Students. (Debbie Branker Harrod, Maureen Hornung)
- High School and College Preparatory Curriculum for Middle School Students
- Discusses the importance of the academic, social and emotional attainment necessary for student readiness in high school.
 - Workshop series that addresses relevant topics focusing on the issues surrounding the preparation process for junior high students.
 - Designed for a wide range of groups and sites so that practitioners may adapt it to their respective and individual needs
 - Eleven sessions are explicitly mapped out in an easy to follow format.
 - Available for purchase or free download at <http://www.lulu.com/content/386454>

Retail Programs

- 2007-2008 Getting Ready for High School Guide, (schoolguide.org)
- Developed by the Los Angeles County Office of Education
- Series of low cost guides to provide students, parents, counselors and teachers with information and resources for better transitions
 - 64-page booklet that has two main chapters and a resource section.
 - Designed to help middle school students plan for high school and for life after graduation.
 - Students identify interests and skills, begin career exploration, and create an Action Plan for high school that includes a four-year course of study focused on reaching their goals.

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- 6 to 8 week group with 5 – 10 students
- Target group: SDC & RSP students
- Psycho-educational in nature
- Incorporates ideas from William Bridges
 - *Bridges, W. (1980). Transitions: making sense of life's changes; strategies for coping with the difficult, painful and confusing times in your life.* Massachusetts: Perseus Books

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

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 - William Bridges
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 - School-Connect Website
 - *School-Connect: Optimizing the High School Experience* (n.d.) Selected sample lessons. Retrieved March 2, 2007 from <http://www.school-connect.net/curriculum.htm>

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- Objectives
 - Prepare
 - Address fears
 - Teach new skills

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- General flow of each session
 - Intro to session topic
 - Structured conversation
 - Structured activity
 - Closing thoughts/comments

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- Week One
 - Introductions
 - Establish group rules
 - Pass out High School materials
 - Map
 - Sample bell schedule
 - Website address

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- Week Two
 - Transitions put us in reverse!
 - Use flow chart to demonstrate William Bridges model:
 - Endings
 - Neutral Zone
 - Beginnings
 - Draw favorite memories of Middle School – “what will you say goodbye to?”

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- Week Three
 - The Neutral Zone!
 - This summer, what will you do to prepare for High School?
 - Grizzly Retreat
 - Visit campus to become familiar with it
 - Practice social skills

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- Week Four
 - New Beginnings
 - Who determines who we should be?
 - How do we get reputations or get placed in a clique?
 - What can we do to change that?
 - Draw the REAL you in High School

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- Week Five
 - Beginnings Part Two – Academic Success
 - What is a block schedule?
 - What are our work/academic habits?
 - Self assessments on study habits, work styles, learning styles, etc.
 - Develop list of questions for High School Counselors & Teachers

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- Week Six
- What takes us off task?
 - Use School – Connect Handout 3.6.3 “Distractions and Curveballs”
- Do role plays and discuss strategies
- Provide answers to student questions from last week

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- Week Seven
- Meet with Middle School Alumni
 - Panel presentation
 - Give former students chance to be the experts!
- Q & A
- Social Time

SAMPLE GROUP MODEL

- Week Eight – Closing Session
- Review Objectives
- Complete Evaluations
- Draw Hopes & Dreams Mural

References

- Hussong, A., Stein, G. L., (2007). Social and academic expectations about high school for at-risk rural youth. *America Secondary Education*, 36(1)
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- Silverthorn, N., DuBois, D.L., Crombie, Gail. (2005). Self-perceptions of ability and achievement across the high school transition: Investigation of a state-traitmodel. *Journal of Experimental Education*. v73 p191