Transitions: 8th to 9th Grade

Some thoughts for Parents and Teachers
Outcomes

- Define two types of transitions for middle and high school students
- Review research on 8th to 9th grade transitions
- Explore strategies for successful transitions
8th to 9th Grade Transitions

- What?
- Why?
- How?
Two Types of Transitions

1. Personal Transitions:
   including emotional, social, cognitive and physical changes in development experienced by young adolescents

2. Structural Transitions:
   moving from one building (Middle School) to another (High School)
Research on Transitions

• “The success or failure experienced during this transition [from middle to high school] can be a turning point in the social and academic lives of students.”

(Schiller, 1999)
How dramatically different the new environment is from the previous environment influences one’s reaction to the transition. Many things affect the student’s response:

*Personality, Resources, Skills, Perceptions* Reyes, Gillock, Kobus, Sanchez 2000
As middle school students move to high school, they encounter more opportunities to:

• Be picked on & teased by older students
• Get lost
• Receive more difficult work
• Make lower grades
Many students experience a decrease in achievement from middle school to high school, and this may represent the first time high-achieving students experience grades lower than As. (NMSA Research Summary, 2006)

As opposed to 8th grades, 9th graders experience greater rates of:
- Academic struggles
- Behavior problems
- Suspensions and Expulsions
After entering high school, students listed time management, ability to stay on task, social skills, behavior, and academic ability as essential elements of success. (Zeedyk et al., 2003)
Research on Transitions

• High school dropout rates are significantly lower in school districts that have explicit middle school to high school transition programs

(Morgan & Hertzog, 2001; Smith, 1997).
Graduation Rates

• Across the states, approximately 75% of high schoolers graduate on time.

• The graduation rate in urban areas state is estimated to be as low as 30%.

• The graduation rate in Detroit, for example, is the lowest of any major city in the nation, at 24.9%.
• NMSA has long asserted that the middle grades are the last best chance to help students make decisions that will impact the remainder of their lives. Middle School students make decisions that either open or close doors in their future.
• “The Forgotten Middle” report by ACT in 2008 states that, “The level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade, has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from High School than anything that happens academically in High School.”
The Forgotten Middle

Recommendations

• Focus K-8 standards on the knowledge and skills that are essential for college and career readiness, and make sure these are non-negotiable for all students.

• Monitor student progress in becoming ready for college and career, and intervene with students who are not on track in upper elementary school and continuing through middle school.
The Forgotten Middle
Recommendations

• Improve students’ academic behaviors.

• Support intervention programs that help all students become ready for college and career.
Successful Transitions

- **Transitions must become a **PROCESS** and not an **EVENT**.**

Transition Programs should be:
- Multi-faceted
- Involve collaboration between middle and high school educators
- Mindful of parent concerns
- Developmentally responsive
Successful Transitions

• Successful Transitions Programs involve:
  • Collaboration between middle school and high school personnel
  • Early intervention
  • Communication with students and their families
Successful Transitions

- Programming must address:
  - Curriculum (academic rigor of courses)
  - Facilities (location of classrooms, etc.)
  - Safety and discipline (rules, discipline code)
Discussion Questions

• What examples of effective transition programs are there?

• In ways might a district foster curriculum, instructions, and assessment conversations between middle and high school teachers?

• What possible changes in curriculum/assessment does the research suggest?
More Questions

• Isn’t it sufficient to plan a day for eighth grade students to visit the high school and tour the building?

• How can parents be more effectively included in the transition process?

• How might a school system design a multifaceted approach to middle/high school transitions?
More Questions

• What role do ninth-grade academies play in the transition process?

• Should eighth grade look more like ninth grade and ninth grade look more like eighth grade?

• How might schools pay more attention to the developmental needs of students between the ages of 12 and 15?
• ACT, The Forgotten Middle report. 2008

• J. Allen Queen, Student Transitions from Middle to High School. Eye on Education, 2002.


• Transition from Middle to High School. NMSA Research Summary, September 2006.