



United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

Supports successful middle school to high school transitions and best practices that align with the six conditions of the Community School model.

Provides technical assistance to support the implementation of approved best practices, grant writing and resource development, and research and evaluation.

Why is the Middle to High School Transition a Critical Step in a Child's Academic Career?

Students are more likely to fail 9th grade than any other grade.¹ Statistically, students who fail 9th grade have less than a 30 percent chance of graduating high school.² Many high schools are developing programs to support freshman and help them avoid the low marks, failed courses and high absenteeism that lead to retention and dropping out of school.³ These programs employ transition strategies that prepare students to meet the social and academic demands of high school.⁴

Strategies

- Articulation and alignment between middle and high schools to ensure schools are communicating expectations of students, rules and regulations.
- Summer Bridge program that provides incoming freshman with social and academic experiences that build community and prepare students for 9th grade.
- Freshman Advisory or Seminar courses to prepare students for success in a new environment – to help them develop the skill and knowledge sets they need to meet the expectations of their new school and teachers.
- Freshman-only small learning communities to foster shared kinship and identity among 9th graders and academy adults.

For more information, please read *Smoothing the Transition between Middle School and High School* by Legters, N., Smerdon, B., and Early, K. 2008. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Framework: Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland:

Jumpstart to Graduation is a month-long program students entering 9th grade attend to help boost confidence and prepare them for high school. This program utilizes a project-based learning curriculum and also includes advisory periods, college visits, and team-building exercises. Efforts to engage the parents of at-risk ninth grade students are proactive and ongoing through the school year.

For more information, please visit greatschoolspartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/jumpstart_manual_2012.pdf.

Summer Strategies for Successful Transitions from Middle to High School is an article containing the best practices that have grown out of more than 10 years' work looking at how to improve transitions from middle grades to high school.

Strategies include:

- Investing in the planning process in preparing students for high school.
- Providing an accelerated curriculum.
- Making a purposeful effort to engage students intellectually, emotionally, socially, and behaviorally.
- Engaging a cross-disciplinary team that includes career and technical careers.
- Teaching the habits of success – study skills, time management, relationships skills, goal setting, literacy, and mathematics skills.
- Focusing on the culture and learning environment.
- Seeking parents' commitment and support.
- Using summer to develop lead teachers and aspiring principals.
- Integrating technology into teaching and learning.
- Using summer observations to inform school practices.

For more information, please read *Summer Transitions Bridges to High School, Connections for life: Summer Strategies for Successful Transitions from Middle to High School*, National Summer Learning Association.

1 Horwitz and Snipes, 2008.

2 Horwitz and Snipes, 2008.

3 See work by Allensworth, Easton, Balfanz and others.

4 *Smoothing the Transition between Middle School and High School* by Legters, N., Smerdon, B., and Early, K. 2008. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

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