

UNITED WAY COMMUNITY SCHOOL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL ELEMENTARY TO MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITIONS



United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

Supports successful transitions for students moving from elementary schools to middle schools through 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 Do Successful Elementary to Middle School Transitions Matter?

Transitions can be difficult for everyone, but for young people one of the most difficult transitions is from elementary to middle school. At the same time that young adolescents are adapting to hormonally induced physical, emotional and cognitive changes, they suddenly enter new educational environments that are typically less nurturing, larger, more departmentalized (e.g., going from one classroom to another), more competitive, and more demanding academically. Middle school students are generally expected to be more independent and responsible for their own assignments as well as other commitments.¹

Strategy: United Way Mentoring Program: Be a Middle School Mentor

The *Be a Middle School Mentor* program works in conjunction with the Youth Futures Commission and the Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania. This strategy reaches students in grades 6 and beyond. Mentors commit to one hour per week to mentees to help:

- Set career goals and get ready for the Pittsburgh Promise Secondary Education scholarship
- Address peer pressure
- Help students with transition from elementary to middle school and ultimately from middle to high school

For more information, please visit unitedwaypg.org/mentor/.

Project: The Boomerang Project

The Boomerang Project connects 8th graders to incoming 6th graders to offer support and guidance during this critical transition period. The project includes effective training to strengthen the relationship between the students, and encourages 6th graders to focus on school, rather than avoiding bullies and wondering how or if they're going to fit in. The project's main goal is to successfully transition 6th graders by addressing the three fundamental transition needs that every student has: safety, information and connection.

The Boomerang Project:

- Provides a structure that builds supportive relationships among students.
- Brings together students from a cross section of the student body to collaborate for a common purpose.
- Trains leaders to act autonomously after being thoroughly prepared to influence 6th graders positively.
- Creates a safer environment by giving permission to older students to "look out for" their 6th graders.
- Encourages and supports involvement in co-curricular activities as well as better academic performance.
- Focuses on contributing to the success of others for the sake of being a responsible member of the community, not for extrinsic reward.

For more information, please visit www.boomerangproject.com/.

Framework: Middle School Matters: A Guide for Georgia Schools on Middle School Transition

This toolkit provides educators with the conceptual framework for middle school transition and materials to obtain and organize information. It helps to inform and effectively involve students and families in the transition planning process. Each section includes student assessment and transition plans and handouts for students and families. There are five sections in the toolkit:

- Overview
- School Transition Team and Plan, 4th grade
- Middle School Transition Activities
- 5th Grade Middle School Transition Activities
- 6th Grade Middle School Transition Activities

For more information, please visit www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Documents/Parent%20Engagement/Final%20Middle%20School%20Transition%20Toolkit.pdf.

¹ Transition from Elementary to Middle School: Strategies for Educators; National Association of School Psychologists.

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