

Transition: Elementary School to Middle School Tip Sheet

Ideas for Elementary Schools

- Discuss transition with students, always in an upbeat and encouraging manner
- Collaborate with middle school staff to discuss academic and social expectations as well as student needs
- Answer student questions about middle school honestly
- Invite middle school staff to talk to students prior to the transition
- Schedule a “field trip” to tour the middle school
- Invite current middle school students to come back and talk to elementary students about their transition experiences
- Host student and parent meetings to talk about the differences and similarities between elementary and middle school
- Start a pen pal system where students in 5th and 6th grades write to each other about middle school

Ideas for Middle Schools

- Provide a shadowing experience in which one fifth grader spends the day with a sixth grader and reports back to class about the observations
- Provide school tours led by middle school students
- Hold parent and student meetings and discuss the differences between elementary and middle school
- Hold open house activities which include: opening lockers, practicing lunchroom procedures, walking through a daily schedule
- Host a meeting between middle school counselors and elementary feeder counselors to share information about students and collaborate on how to improve the middle school transition
- Host meetings with parents and students to discuss their questions and concerns
- Host parent to parent meetings where they can discuss their concerns and network with other parents; have parents of current middle school students help lead these meetings
- Send a welcome letter to students during the summer congratulating them on transitioning to middle school and including dates of upcoming transition events
- Have staff wear “Ask Me” badges to let students know that it is acceptable to ask questions, and to let them know who to ask during the first weeks of school
- Have new students come to school one day before returning students to get information, practice routines, and meet teachers
- Start a pen pal system where students in 5th and 6th grades write to each other about middle school
- Develop activities where students can socialize before, during, and after transition, such as community service projects, clubs, and sports

- Establish peer-helpers, mentors, or ambassadors to help students who struggle with transitions
- Assign students to families/teams/homerooms to build a sense of belonging with opportunities for team building and socializing
- Periodically survey students to see what concerns they still have and address these through activities and meetings
- Continue to provide activities that focus on communications between parents and students, parents and school
- Actively encourage every student to be a part of an extracurricular activity

Ideas for Parents

- Participate in all activities offered by the school
- Explore the school's web site with your child, looking at announcements, schedules, and events
- Accompany your child to campus tours and orientations
- Get a map of the campus and help your child find the areas he'll be in
- Get a copy of your child's class schedule and mark the location of lockers, classrooms, and restrooms on the school map
- Find out the length of passing periods and time it out for your child, demonstrating how far you can walk in that time
- Get a copy of the student handbook and review the rules and expectations
- Buy your child a lock for the locker and practice opening and closing it
- Take advantage of summer programs offered at the middle school
- Encourage your child to join sports teams, clubs, or other extracurricular activities
- Talk about social skills and practice skills needed in difficult social situations
- Meet with teachers early in the year to discuss your child's strengths and needs
- Encourage teachers to continue using strategies that have worked for your child in the past (homework journal, homework buddy, etc.)
- Help your child with time management and organization skills
- Help your child be his own advocate; encourage him to speak up and discuss problems and solutions with teachers on his own; be ready to step in when needed