

Middle School Reform Report

Transition

HCPS has an obligation to facilitate a positive and successful academic, social, and emotional experience for all students as they transition from elementary to middle and middle to high school and beyond. A comprehensive program of transitional support activities promotes growth and development, and provides an equitable and productive experience for all students and their families. Research shows that the attributes of successful transition programs include sensitivity to the anxieties accompanying a move to a new school setting, the importance of parents and teachers as partners in this effort, and the recognition that becoming comfortable in a new school setting is an ongoing process, not a single event. Activities designed to ease student anxieties also help them become ready for the new learning environment and increased academic and behavioral expectations.

While all HCPS middle schools provide a variety of transition activities (Grade 5 to Grade 6, Grade 8 to Grade 9), use interdisciplinary teams to monitor individual student progress, and/or have school counselors and other personnel provide services and teach lessons, currently there is a lack of monitoring, coordination and evaluation regarding the impact of these activities. Ninety-two percent of stakeholders who responded to the Middle School Survey (2008) agreed with the statement: “All middle schools should provide meaningful activities that are a part of a transition plan as students move from elementary school to middle school, through middle school, and from middle school to high school.” The committee recommends a uniform transition program be designed so all HCPS students have a relatively consistent experience, and that a standard program evaluation be developed.

Recommendation 9

All middle schools will provide meaningful activities that are a part of a transition plan as students move from elementary school to middle school, through middle school, and from middle school to high school.

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Rationale:

- This complicated period of transition has often been associated with a decline in academic achievement, performance motivation, and self-perceptions. It is a time when young adolescents are most likely to experiment with at-risk behaviors. It is also the point at which children begin to make pivotal decisions regarding their academic and career choices — precisely at a time when they may be distracted or turned off by academic endeavors. (NMSA/NAESP, 2002)
- A well-designed transition plan can restore the strong sense of belonging the entering middle school student once felt in elementary school - a key element associated with the positive motivation to enjoy and succeed in academic tasks. (NMSA/NAESP, 2002)
- Anxiety associated with transitioning between school levels “can be minimized when the new environment is responsive to each particular age group.” (Schumacher, 1998)
- Research and anecdotal information document that family anxieties accompany a move to a new school setting. It is important for parents and school staff to be partners in the effort to communicate changes in procedures and expectations during transitions from grade to grade and level to level. Becoming comfortable in a new school setting is an ongoing process, not a single event. (NMSA/NAESP, 2002)
- Recognizing that schooling is a continuum, educators must understand what is required of students at every stage and ensure a smooth transition academically and socially for each student from grade to grade and from level to level. (NASSP, 2006)
- Middle school students who participate in support programs start to develop attitudes that they will rely on later, when they face the challenges of high school. (Cushman, 2006)
- In February 2008, 1,543 parents, students, community members, administrators, post secondary faculty, central office staff and middle school faculty were asked the degree to which they support the following statement: “All middle schools should provide meaningful activities that are part of a transition plan as students move from elementary school to middle school, through middle school, and from middle school to high school.” 92% of the respondents answered “strongly agree or agree.” (Middle School Ad Hoc Committee Stakeholder Feedback, 2008)

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Status of Transition Programs in HCPS Middle Schools

School	2008-2009		2009-2010
	Incoming 6 th Graders	Outgoing 8 th Graders	
AMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with special educators, counselors, administrators • Band visits elementary schools • Counselor visits elementary schools • Jump Start to Success Program • School visits in Aug. for military families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8th graders visit AHS in June • Articulation meetings w/special educators, counselors, administrators • Help facilitate high school registration • Sports recruitment in May 	<p>A uniform HCPS transition program for students as they enter, move through, and leave middle school</p>
BAMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with special educators • Jump Start to Success Program • Open House • Teacher/counselor articulation • Tour of school for 5th graders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with special educators • Help facilitate high school registration • Teacher/counselor articulation 	
EMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6th grade team orientation program • Articulation with special educators • Counselor visits 5th graders • Jump Start to Success Program • Open House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with special educators • Help facilitate high school registration • Publicize and support high school activities for 8th graders 	
FMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with 5th grade teachers/special educators • Jump Start to Success Program • Open House • Tour of school for 5th graders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with high school counselors • Help facilitate high school registration • Invite high school special educators to end-of-year IEP, 504 mtgs. 	
HGMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5th graders attend daytime spring musical • 6th/7th graders meet next year's teachers • Jump Start to Success Program • Principal and counselor visit elementary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8th graders attend ½ day orientation @ high school • Articulation with 9th grade teachers 	
MMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with 5th grade teachers • Jump Start to Success Program • Open House • Tour of school for 5th graders • Visits to elementary schools to speak to PTA's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8th grade trip to JHS to tour and hear about sports and extra-curricular activities • Articulation with 9th grade teachers, counselors, special educators • Help facilitate high school registration 	
NHMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with 5th grade teachers • Jump Start to Success Program • North Harford Area Choral Day • Open House • Tour of school for 5th graders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with 9th grade teachers • Help facilitate high school registration • Middle school counselors teach transition lesson to 8th graders • Visits from high school counselors and sports coaches 	
PMMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with 5th grade teachers, counselors, and special educators • Band/Chorus/Orchestra Day in February • Open House • Summer Camp Week with Parent Night • Tour of school for 5th graders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities Fair for eighth graders • Band/Chorus/Orchestra Day in February • Freshman Experience • Monthly articulation meetings 	
SMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with 5th grade & special education teachers • Open House • Parent orientation • Student orientation • Tour of school for 5th graders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation with 9th grade & special education teachers • Help facilitate high school registration 	

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Implementation Plan for Transition Recommendation (9)

Project Manager: Supervisor of School Counseling						
Timeline	Step/Goal	Persons Responsible	Stakeholders	Strategies	Budget Implications	Indicators of Implementation
Summer 2008	Write charge and choose meeting dates for transitions work group	Assistant Superintendent Curriculum Instruction Supervisor of School Counseling	Middle School Community	Review Middle School Reform Report Review Master Calendar	None	Charge written Meeting dates chosen
Summer 2008	Identify a transitions work group	Assistant Superintendent Curriculum Instruction Supervisor of School Counseling	Middle School Community	Brainstorm workgroup membership Ask middle school principals to recommend parent members Write and send letters of invitation	Mailing cost for parent letters	Workgroup membership finalized
2008-2009 School Year	Hold meetings to meet the requirements of Recommendation 9 of Middle School Reform	Transitions Workgroup	Middle School Community	Define all elements of a consistent transition plan Define professional development to support plan Submit information necessary for an Implementation Brief on Transitions	Compensation for workgroup participants Professional development costs	Meeting agendas and minutes Defined transitions plan
On-going, Quarterly	Design quarterly school-based "key experiences" with support of all school staff to address the academic, personal/social, community and career domains at each grade level	Interdisciplinary Teams School Services Personnel	Middle School Community	Create schedules to permit staff articulation Provide staff development to increase teacher knowledge base concerning "key experience" topics Provide time for development and implementation of "key experiences"	Additional materials costs Professional development costs Compensation costs	"Key Experience" quarterly dates reported Professional development meeting agenda and minutes

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Project Manager: Supervisor of School Counseling						
Timeline	Step/Goal	Persons Responsible	Stakeholders	Strategies	Budget Implications	Indicators of Implementation
2009-2010 School Year	Obtain baseline data on success of transition program	Supervisor of School Counseling Supervisor of Office of Accountability	Middle School Community	Develop program evaluation tool	Distribution costs	Baseline data collected and analyzed
Yearly, Ongoing	Evaluate transition program	Supervisor of School Counseling Middle School Principals	Middle School Community	Distribute program evaluation Analyze data Revise program as necessary	Distribution costs	Data analysis reported Program revised if necessary

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Evaluation Plan for Transition Recommendation (9)

Project Manager: Supervisor of School Counseling	
Data Point	Indicators of Success
Program evaluation	Increase in stakeholder satisfaction after baseline data is obtained in 2010
Student Attendance	Increase in student attendance
Student Report Card Grades	Increase in the GPA of all students
Student Motivation Survey	Positive trend in student responses

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