Middle School Matters:

A Guide for Georgia Schools on Middle School Transition

A partnership publication by:

Georgia Afterschool Investment Council

Georgia Department of Education

Georgia Family Connection Partnership

Georgia Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC)

Georgia Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta

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Middle School Matters: Overview

Purpose of the Toolkit

The intent of this toolkit is to provide educators with the conceptual framework for middle school transition, materials to obtain and organize student information, as well as to inform and effectively involve students and families in the transition planning process. The toolkit is organized so that it is easy to use, locate items, or add additional materials.

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, and 6th grade middle school transition activities. Each section includes materials to assist readers in assessing students, creating a variety of handouts for students and families, and developing a body of evidence as part of the student's transition plan. These tools, templates, and worksheets are examples of the materials you will use or give to your students and families as you work together to help your future middle school students transition smoothly. It is important to note that all of the activities do not need to be used at each grade level. Some activities may be a better fit than others, based on your school community needs.

We encourage you to personalize the toolkit by adding more "tools" or information and updating the materials when it is appropriate. We have created a space in each section for you to makes notes or identify additions to the current content so you can keep track of where new materials are located in the toolkit.

This toolkit is designed to help educators, families and students:

- Understand the middle school transition process;
- Implement activities to engage middle school students and their families;
- Develop a plan for students to transition to middle school successfully through the areas of social/emotional, organizational/environmental, academic, developmental, as well as college and career awareness;
- Establish concrete resources that can be utilized within the classroom and at home; and
- Use the transition planning process to ensure that all students transition from elementary school to middle school with adequate support from the school, family, and community.

Middle School Matters: Overview

What is School Transition?

School Transition is a process that prepares all partners – students, families, schools and communities - to develop knowledge, skills, and relationships that help students move from one educational setting to another.

In this instance, students are transitioning or "changing" from elementary school to middle school. The transition from elementary to middle school is a change that impacts not only students, but also their families, school staff, and the community.

School transition is a process that involves four facets:

- Ready schools;
- Community participation and support;
- Family knowledge and involvement; and
- Schools/educational settings committed to preparing children.

Transition should not be viewed from only the perspective of students and families, but rather should entail the perspectives of families, students, teachers (elementary and middle school), administrators, and community members as students move from one level of education to the next.

Why is Middle School Transition Important?

School transition is not a "one size fits all" approach, but a framework that includes strategies as well as policies and procedures tailored to meet the needs of students, schools and communities.

Making the transition into middle school is the first and most significant step to insuring a successful middle school experience. A well-planned transition program helps families and students have a greater peace of mind by providing the groundwork for a successful beginning of the middle school adventure.

A comprehensive middle school transition program includes supports designed to:

- Help students form a realistic expectation of what middle school will be like;
- Provide a positive and successful first impression;
- Respond to the needs and concerns of students;
- Support school-initiated family and community partnerships;
- Demonstrate an inviting, supportive, and safe environment;
- Have multi-faceted guidance and support structures;
- Build a sense of community by supporting meaningful relationships and learning; and
- Ensure a successful introduction to the middle school experience.

Middle School Matters:
Overview

What Does the Research Say?

A review of the literature concerning transition of students from elementary school into middle school reveals a robust discussion about the challenges faced by young people in maintaining school engagement and academic success during these critical years. Upon entry into middle school, students are bombarded with environmental, social, psychological, and physiological changes that may overwhelm some. Lack of specific skills needed to cope with these stressors can have significant effects on an individual student's ability to adjust, maintain academic achievement, develop future aspirations, and sustain overall feelings of self-worth. The potential negative effects of school transition on youth in this stage of development have been well documented by research (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Seidman, LaRue, Aber, Mitchell, & Feinman, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). Following the transition into middle school, many students feel less positive about their own potential and the importance of schooling. They may put forth less effort and give up more quickly. Grades may decline. There is a perceived decrease in support from school personnel and increased engagement with peer groups. Students with the most difficulty are frequently those who are unable to focus on school and learning. It is reasonable to conclude that without the intervention of a thoughtfully designed transition program, the adjustment period for these adolescents is likely to be lengthy (Allan & McKean, 1984) and has the potential to negatively impact school success. To that end, it is extremely important that educators, parents, and community members work together to address transition issues. To be most effective this must be done at the school level, as well as at the individual student level.

Effective and comprehensive middle school transition programs help (Weldy, 1991):

1. Build a sense of community;
2. Respond to the needs and concerns of the students; and
3. Provide appropriate, faceted approaches to facilitate the transition process

In addition, research completed as part of the Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Papers Series at Harvard University (Cook, Mushkin & Vigdor, 2008), found that students moving from grade 5 into middle school environments show a "sharp drop" in math and language arts achievement in the transition year that continues to have significance as far out as 10th grade, even jeopardizing their ability to graduate from high school and go on to college. Meanwhile, students who participate in intentional transition efforts and as a result make a smooth transition into 6th grade are absent less often than students who did not, experience less disruption in their academic achievement and maintain higher levels of engagement in school.

Middle School Matters:
School Transition Team and Plan

Developing a Middle School Transition Team

The purpose of a school transition team is to guide and develop activities that help students, families, and communities support a successful transition process. A transition team also looks at policies and procedures as well as funding and resources for transition activities.

Unlike other school committees, the sole purpose of the school transition team is to plan, assess, and implement strategies that will support the successful transition of students and families into middle school. Teams can be incorporated as a workgroup within existing committees and should designate someone to serve as the middle school transition coordinator. This person is responsible for convening meetings and coordinating activities. The coordinator may be the assistant principal, school counselor, Title I coordinator, family liaison, or staff member who is interested in this work.

A school transition team is typically governed by school leadership and is generally comprised of:

- Elementary and middle school personnel (teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, family liaisons)
- Families
- Students
- PTA/PTO members
- Churches or faith based organizations
- Community leaders (city/county council members, etc.)
- Community agencies (library, Boys and Girls Club, etc.)
- Afterschool programs
- Local businesses (small business owners, large business chains, etc.)

Once the school transition team is formed, typical responsibilities consist of:

- Building relationships among key partners to identify needs, goals, and resources;
- Creating an annual transition plan and calendar that engages each of the partners;
- Implementing the transitional plan;
- Developing a budget for activities;
- Helping to identify funding and leverage resources through donations and in-kind services;
- Recruiting volunteers to assist with middle school transition events and activities ;
- Advocating for policy and community change;
- Engaging additional community partners where appropriate; and
- Developing a feedback or evaluation process to measure the impact of the transition policies and activities.

Middle School Matters:
School Transition Team and Plan

Developing a Middle School Transition Plan

A middle school transition plan is a way to plan, guide and manage the implementation of the transition process.

The plan can consist of the following:

- **Transition Activities** - What activities will be implemented?
- **Action Steps** - How will the activites be implemented?
- **Cost/Resources** - What resources (materials, personnel, etc) will be needed to successfully implement the activites?
- **Personnel** - Who will be responsible for implementing the activites and their components?
- **Evaluation** - How will the effectiveness of the activities be measured?

The transition plan can be embedded in the larger school plan. However, it is important that the plan, and its activities do not become dormant on paper. Many of the activities found on the following pages of this toolkit can be included in a middle school transition plan as it is developed or to added to an existing plan. A sample school transition plan and school transition team form are included on pages 60 and 61 in the appendix.

As a reminder, successful transition is a developmental process and should not be limited to the months of March, April and May during the 5th grade. Teams should meet regularly to discuss the planning, implementation and execution of strategies.

Keeping the Momentum of Middle School Transition Moving

School transition teams play a pivotal role in helping to ensure that students, families, and communities are successful in their transition processes. As indicated earlier, transition is a process that entails the efforts of many and are specific to the needs of the community. All school cultures differ; therefore, it is not expected that each school will implement this guide in the same manner. The needs of your students will change from year to year. The school transition team should conduct a needs assessment of the school, students, families, and community once a year to identify what those needs are and strive to adequately meet those needs. The following sections will provide activities that can be used by teams to support successful transition.

Middle School Matters:
Transition Activities

Transition Activities Overview

This transition toolkit is designed to help school staff, families, and communities focus on supporting student academics and self-awareness, along with college and career readiness as students move to middle school. This toolkit includes tasks and activities to help with determining needs and facilitating decision making and problem solving. The activities that support this process will enhance the students' ability to learn about themselves and enable them to start their middle school careers with a meaningful focus. It is the expectation that this toolkit will provide visible and concrete ways of demonstrating the link between school-based learning and preparation for middle school transition by assisting administrators, teachers, families, and the community with the supplemental tools needed to prepare students for the demands of this next step.

The Transition Players and Their Roles

As mentioned earlier, transition should not be viewed from only the perspective of students and families, but rather should entail the perspectives of families, students, teachers (elementary and middle school), administrators, and community members as students move from one level of education to the next. Similarly, each has a role to play in providing or participating in quality middle school transition activities.

Schools must play a primary role in the middle school transition process. While partnerships between families, schools, students, and communities must be viewed as equally important with shared responsibilities, it is essential that schools take the lead in offering quality middle school transition activities that equip staff, families, and community members with the information needed in order for them to assist students in a successful transition process. The materials in this toolkit have been designed to help schools organize and supplement the academic curriculum in the most efficient manner possible to ensure maximum effectiveness and student success. School staff are encouraged to modify the activities as needed to meet the learning styles of students and the desires of their overall school community.

Students must take an active role in their own middle school transition development. Under the guidance of school staff, families, and community stakeholders, students should understand the impact that transition activities have on their future success, and they should assume responsibility for completing the tasks assigned. Students are encouraged to ask questions and seek assistance in times of need and, most importantly, enjoy the new opportunities and increased freedom that comes with entering middle school.

Middle School Matters:
Transition Activities

Families must be prepared for the middle school transition process themselves in order to provide the ongoing love, guidance, and support needed by students during this critical transition. Families should work in partnership with the school to participate in the middle school transition activities offered, as well as learn and reinforce information received to ensure student academic and social success. Many of the activities and strategies provided throughout this toolkit are to be implemented within the home in an effort to reinforce the curriculum and support what is being taught and offered at school.

Communities must invest in the future success of their students and their families as this helps create efficient and productive citizens who, in turn, make the community flourish. Communities should support middle school transition through ongoing collaboration, exposing students to careers or technology, and/or serving as positive role models through school involvement or in after school programs. College and career readiness exploration is vital at this point in a student's academic career, and community members can help shape the future of their young leaders by capitalizing on their strengths and interests during this transition stage.

Understanding the Transition Activities

A transition plan should include activities delivered by administrators, counselors, teachers, media specialists, or business and industry partners. The activities should assist rising and current middle students and their families with addressing academic concerns such as having too much homework and how to get extra help, or with social issues like bullying and making new friends, or with procedural concerns like knowing the rules. For the purpose of this toolkit, five areas of focus have been identified to include:

1. Social/Emotional
2. Organizational/Environmental
3. Academic
4. Developmental
5. College and Career Awareness

Important to Note:

While schools or LEAs may want to consider using the district's or their school's Title I, Part A allocation and/or Title I, Part A parental involvement set-side to implement the activities being used for middle school transition, please keep in mind that federal compliance regulations are still in place. More specifically, those federal compliance regulations regarding supplement not supplant (SNS) and allowable costs as governed by OMB Circular A-87 and Title I, Part A non-regulatory guidance must still be used to guide districts and schools on Title I allowable costs. Please refer to these regulations when making decisions regarding the appropriate funding of these activities for your school community.

Middle School Matters:
Transition Activities

The following pages represent a sampling of activities delivered to 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students and their families that will assist them in making better and more informed decisions regarding social, organizational, academic, developmental, and college/career awareness issues and concerns. It is recommended that the transition plan and the aligned activities start during the 4th grade year, perhaps in the spring, and continue through the first semester of the 6th grade. This suggestion attempts to avoid the current practice in which elementary schools utilize the latter part of the 5th grade to address middle school transition concerns or issues. Students and their families will react better to smaller doses of information, and the various ongoing activities will clarify and solidify information for all.

As you progress through the toolkit you will notice that it is divided into three grade levels: 4th, 5th, and 6th grade. For each grade, there are numerous activities that can be completed by students, schools, families, or communities. Please note that this toolkit does not address the varying academic ability levels of 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students. Therefore, teachers or school staff should adjust instruction as it is related to these activities to meet the needs and ability levels of their students and families. To increase rigor, it is also recommended to include higher order thinking skills or questions appropriate for each activity. The use of application, analytical, synthesis, interpretive, and evaluative questions will help students with factual recall and application of thinking skills, further enforcing the content learned.

Each activity page is organized as follows:

- **Title** - *Provides the name of the activity*
- **Activity** - *Describes what the activity is in thorough detail*
- **Outcome** - *Describes what results from implementing the activity*
- **Audience** - *Describes target audience for the activity*
- **Area of Focus** - *Describes area(s) of focus most applicable to student learning and success*
- **When** - *Describes the suggested time for implementation*
- **Process** - *Describes how to implement the activity*
- **Resources** - *Provides reference materials for further information on the topic, sample worksheets, or handout templates to aid in implementing the activity*
- **Tips for Success** - *Describes extra steps or thoughts for consideration that would enhance the delivery and success of the activity*

As you turn the page and begin viewing the transition activities for each grade level, please utilize this legend to identify the activities that best support the transition needs of the students in your school community. In addition, while not repeatedly stated at the end of each activity, do not forget that it is essential to evaluate the success of your middle school transition activities by requesting feedback through simple surveys or follow up contact with students and families. This information will be critical as your middle school transition team revises your middle school transition plan each year to ensure the activities are leading to the desired transition outcomes.

4th Grade

While often overlooked, 4th grade is the appropriate time to begin the middle school transition process. At this age, students are industrious and curious, often eager for new knowledge. To help students make a smooth transition, they need to be introduced to the increased demands that they will eventually face early on and in ways that they can understand. The activities in this section will help 4th graders sharpen their overall skills and will assist families, school staff, and community partners with implementing the beginning stages of preparing these students for their transition to middle school.

Title: Family Communications
Activity: Families will receive communications in the form of, but not limited to flyers, grade-level newspapers, daily announcements, phone calls, social media messages, and web resources. All address issues related to age appropriate social/emotional topics, developmental concerns related to transition, motivation, career exploration, and academic goal setting.
Outcome: Families will learn more about school activities, develop confidence in talking to school staff and encourage student learning at home.
Audience: 4th grade families
Areas of Focus: Academic, College and Career Awareness, Social/Emotional, Organizational/ Environmental, and Developmental
When: Throughout 4th grade

Process:

Part of the transition to middle school is ensuring a student's strong foundation in academic, social, and developmental skills at the end of 4th grade. To help families understand how they can continue to support and assist their child during this time and in these tasks, the school should provide relevant information to families. Families should provide contact information at the beginning of the school year and complete a survey regarding the best way to receive information (email, text message, mail, website, student delivery). Families should be made aware that the information collected will be used for important school communications only and will not be shared with anyone outside of the school. Information could consist of:

- Communicating with your child during family meetings
- How to plan with their children for the future
- Age appropriate expectations - cognitive and physical changes
- School events
- Making new friends and keeping old friends
- Asking for help when needed

Resources:

- **Family Communications Survey**: See page 62 in the appendix.
- **Parent's Guide to 4th Grade:** www.education.com/grade/fourth-grade
- **Family Communication Templates:** www.educationworld.com/tools_templates/index.shtml
- **Scholastic: Many Ways to Reach Parents:** www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/many-ways-reach-parentshttp://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/many-ways-reach-parents

Tips for Success:

- Have teachers or other school staff keep a family communication log.
- Provide communications in languages that are representative of your school's population.

Title: Grade Level Teacher Planning
Activity: Teachers and support staff ensure continued use of jointly organized time to assess academic progress, developmental issues, social/emotional concerns, and academic instructional concerns of students moving to 5th grade so there will be adequate time to address key areas of need before their transition to middle school.
Outcome: Teachers are able to provide academic and developmental assistance to the teachers in next grade level to help transition students successfully and allow the new teachers to plan accordingly.
Audience: 4th and 5th grade teachers and support staff
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, and Developmental
When: Throughout 4th grade

Process:

Teachers, counselors, and others will review multiple aspects of student progress, including academic achievement, social and emotional gains made, and current developmental needs. Fourth grade teachers will create data charts including reading, language arts, math, science, geography, citizenship, behavior, interactions with classmates, and related categories to help 5th grade teachers have a general overview of the whole child.

This process will focus on positive aspects and not result in negative-formed critiques. Honest discussion about student performance, skill deficits, and skills mastered will need to be shared between 4th and 5th grade teachers before students transition annually.

Resources:

- Teachers will use school data, test data, discipline records and plans, along with related resources to prepare a full overview and representative picture of students as they transition to 5th grade.
- **Grade Level Teacher Planning Spreadsheet:** See page 63 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

Fourth grade teachers are able to answer the following questions:

- Student is ready/not ready for fifth grade academically because….
- Student is ready/not ready for fifth grade socially because…
- Student is ready/not ready for fifth grade behaviorally because…
- Student is ready/not ready for fifth grade developmentally because...

Title: Career Survey
Activity: School staff will conduct a survey of students in their school or grade level, depending on the size of the school, to determine career interests and create a graph to display their findings.
Outcome: Students will have the ability to determine career interests by gender and will begin to start thinking about their own interest as well as learn how to create a pictograph.
Audience: 4th grade students
Areas of Focus: College and Career Awareness
When: Fall of 4th grade

Process:

Start this activity with a discussion of how students' interests (the things they like) can influence their selection of a career or occupation. Give students examples: teachers should like students/people and helping students/people; nurses should like caring for and helping people; computer programmers should like solving problems and working alone; artist should like being creative; a firefighter should enjoy working on a team and have good physical strength; lawyers must enjoy teamwork and public speaking; accountant should enjoy working with numbers and computer programs.

Ask the class to look over the list of careers/occupations on the survey. Ask for a few student volunteers to read parts of the list to the class. If they have questions about any of the careers/occupations, take a few minutes to discuss those occupations.

Divide the students into groups of 3 or 4 to conduct the career survey. Assign each group a class or classes that each group will survey. Make sure other teachers are prepared for your students to enter their class.

After completing the survey, ask the students to combine all the surveys then tally the circles to get a total for each career; tally circles based on gender. Use the data that you collected from the survey to make a pictograph. Be sure to include a key that tells the value of each symbol. Also create a pictograph to compare likes and dislikes between the genders.

Follow up with a series of questions: What did you learn? Do you think gender has anything to do with career choices? Why?

Materials: Handouts, career survey, pencil and paper, markers; computer lab (depending on the level, instruction and the effort at collaboration with keyboarding and math).

Resources:

- **Career Survey:** See page 64 in the appendix.
- **Pictograph Example:** See page 65 in the appendix.
- **Developing Computer Pictographs:** www.softschools.com/math/data_analysis/pictograph/make_your_own_pictograph
- **Creating a Pictograph from Excel:** http://faculty.kutztown.edu/schaeffe/Excel/Vallone/Vallone_Excel.pdf

Tips for Success:

- Include math teachers with graphing component/skills in lesson or coordinate the lesson to be integrated between two class subjects.
- Create a large pictograph on the wall so other students will see the results.

Title: Career Exposure: Cluster of Career Grapes
Activity: Schools develop various opportunities to showcase various career options and share real life job applications through career day assemblies or classroom lessons.
Outcome: Students will become aware of careers in each of the 17 career clusters.
Audience: 4th grade students
Areas of Focus: Academic and College and Career Awareness
When: Winter of 4th grade

Process:

Teachers will design a Career Cluster Word Wall for students. Students will learn about a certain cluster and answer related questions. Teachers will call on students to read a story aloud, while they create spelling and language arts activities, and develop authentic career-related math problems for students to complete during the cluster unit that align to CCGPS and GPS.

In addition, students will write a letter to invite a professional from the selected cluster to visit their classroom. The professional will describe their job in detail to the students. Students will then have an opportunity to interview the professional with job-related questions about their career. To conclude, students will write a short story or report about the career cluster. Students can choose between expository, narrative, or persuasive writing.

Resources:

- **Career Cluster Questions:** See page 66 in the appendix.
- **To Start the Exploration of Specific Clusters:** www.mynextmove.org
- **Elementary Career Cluster Reading List:**
  - www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/Career-Development.aspx
  - www.careertech.org/career-clusters/glance/career-leaders.html
  - www.gacollege411.org
  - www.gcic.peachnet.edu

Tips for Success:

- Ask students to set relevant goals from their interviews if the career cluster interests them. Goals can include learning more about related careers, educational expectations, salary, etc. Have the students write and send a thank you letter to the career professional for visiting the classroom.
- Offer students the opportunity to learn more about a career that interests them. Have them complete a presentation on the cluster to highlight a specific career or create a short video or web page to highlight their interests.
- Involve more community, businesses or industry members in the project. Contact entities such as the local Chamber of Commerce and regional Workforce Investment Board to locate career professionals within the area.

Title: Understanding the Relationship of Academics and Personal Qualities to the World of Work.
Activity: Students participate in a lesson related to academic goal setting, college and career readiness, and self-awareness.
Outcome: Students will learn how classroom jobs can help them achieve personal and future career success.
Audience: 4th grade students
Areas of Focus: Academic, College and Career Awareness, and Social/Emotional
When: Spring of 4th grade

Process:

During classroom guidance, students will learn how to employ strategies to achieve future career goals with success and satisfaction. Students will learn about employment readiness skills , identify and develop personal and ethical work habits needed for school and work success. Students will participate in a discussion around two essential questions:

1. Why do we have classroom jobs?
2. How can these classroom jobs help with developing good work habits?

The counselor will write the words: Personal Skills, Ethical Skills (the word ethical may have to be defined) and Work Habits on the board. Ask if anyone knows what the words mean and how they help a person in their work.

Personal Skills: Skills that are about how a person treats themselves or others such as helpful, friendly, kind and being a good listener and caring.

Ethical Skills: Skills a person uses when trying to do the right thing in different situations, such as honesty, doing the right thing, doing your own work and doing your best work.

Work Habits: Skills a person uses when completing work and getting it done on time. Important work habit examples are being neat, organized and completing work on time.

Counselor will ask students to describe and discuss their various classroom jobs and responsibilities.

Materials: Chart paper, chalkboard, career cluster examples

Resources:

- **Missouri Department of Education Guidance Lesson Plans:** www.missouricareereducation.org/for/content/guidance

Tips for Success:

- Invite local guest speakers to come and speak to students about careers and good work habits. Ask them to discuss what qualities they look for when hiring people for a job in their organization or company.

Title: Circle Share
Activity: Circle time is a brief group meeting which involves all students sitting in a circle to explore current issues or concerns regarding middle school transition or similar topics.
Outcome: Students will develop positive relationships, self-discipline, conflict resolution, assertive communication and democratic group processes alongside the skills of speaking, listening, observing, thinking and concentrating.
Audience: 4th grade afterschool students
Areas of Focus: Social/Emotional and Developmental
When: Spring of 4th grade

Process:

Tell the group to form one large circle. Inform students that that circle time is an ancient tool for strengthening community. Native Americans regarded the circle as the principal symbol for understanding life's mysteries. Man looked out on the physical world through the eye, which was circular. The earth was round, and so were the sun, moon and planets. The rising and setting of the sun followed a circular motion. The seasons formed a circle. Birds built their nests in circles. Animals marked their territories in circles. In the old days, tribes lived in circular homes called teepees and their communities were arranged with the teepees in a circle. Indeed, to Native Americans, the whole of life appeared to operate in circular patterns.

Tell the group that each day in our afterschool program begins with circle share. Because our program is currently focusing on skills for middle school, today's circle will focus on middle school transition.

Tell individuals that the talking stick will be placed in the center of the circle and when someone is moved to speak, he or she will retrieve the stick. Once an individual has finished speaking, they can replace the stick in the center of the circle. Silence is a part of circle time and is welcomed.

Inform the group of the day's question for contemplation and response. Questions could be things such as: What skills do you think you will need for middle school?, What do you want to be when you grow up and why?, or What are you looking forward to in 5th grade?

After several minutes have passed and circle time has come to a natural stopping point, tell the group that you will now introduce the day's activities.

Resources:

- **Talking Stick Examples:** www.southwestwoodcrafts.com/talking%20sticks.htm

Tips for Success:

- Begin each day in your afterschool program with circle time. Pick a topic for the week with varying discussions each day. Also, ask the students what they would like to discuss.

NOTES

NOTES

5th Grade

The transition to middle school is on the horizon for 5th grade students. This is the time when students begin to build on the basics they were taught from previous years to solidify their educational foundation. At this age, children can feel both thrilled and overwhelmed by transition; therefore it's important for teachers and families to continue to prepare students by challenging them with projects that require planning and organization. The activities in this section will help 5th graders sharpen their overall skills and increase awareness as they prepare to transition to middle school.

Title: Elementary School Visits
Activity: Middle school teachers, principals, counselors take turns throughout the year conducting information sessions (q&a) with fifth graders at the elementary school about the middle school.
Outcome: Elementary school students will learn about middle school expectations and will become comfortable asking middle school staff questions about academics.
Audience: 5th grade students
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, and Organizational/Environmental
When: Throughout 5th grade

Process:

Elementary schools will make an agreement with the feeder middle school(s) personnel to conduct visits to the 5th grade classrooms throughout the school year to address questions and to allow students to become familiar with people they will be encountering at the middle school. The personnel should change per visit and include teachers, administrators, principal, counselors, etc.

A notice should go to all families notifying them of the visits and families should be encouraged to develop questions with their child regarding middle school. Visits should take place with class size groups rather than whole grades to encourage conversation and openness among students. Visits should last no longer than 30 minutes and should be held during the school day about once a quarter.

In addition to the student questions, topics for the visits should be predetermined and discussed with the elementary school counselor. The subjects could include: (1) What to expect from teachers, (2) How will your academics change, (3) How does it feel to go to class with older students, etc.

Resources:

- **Elementary School Visits:** See page 67 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

- Ask students to create questions one week prior to each middle school visit as homework. Provide students with index cards to capture their questions.
- Document all questions students ask and create a frequently asked questions manual or handout to use the following year.

Title: What is Middle School Like?
Activity: Middle school students take turns throughout the year conducting information sessions (q&a) with fifth graders at the elementary school about the middle school.
Outcome: Students will become comfortable interacting with older students and will start to build relationships prior to entering middle school.
Audience: 5th grade students
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, and Organizational/Environmental
When: Throughout 5th grade

Process:

Middle schools should recruit a core group of middle school students to conduct a question/answer session with feeder elementary school students twice per year. The sessions should be held on a Saturday or in the evening after school has ended and all elementary feeder schools should be invited to attend. Depending on the size of the audience, 5th grade students could be spoken to all at once or they could be divided into equal and manageable numbers for more of a personal group question/answer session. Each session should last no longer than 45 minutes.

Middle school students participating should help create the agenda based on things they wish they would have known before starting middle school. The schedule and topics should be established the spring of the preceding year. Subjects could include: (1) What to expect the first day/week of school, (2) The role of principal and counselors, or (3) What to expect when changing classes.

Since programming is during the evening or weekend other family members should also have a separate information session they can attend while their children are participating in the student session.

Resources:

- **What is Middle School Like Agenda:** See page 68 in the appendix.
- **People Bingo Icebreaker:** See page 69 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

- Hold sessions at the middle school on a Saturday, if possible, to allow the 5th graders an opportunity to go to the middle school.
- Ask school PTA, as well as community and business organizations, to provide volunteers who can meet and greet with families and present pertinent information that may benefit students and families through the transition period and beyond.
- Coordinate with local afterschool program sites that serve the students to develop complimentary sessions to allow for more informal and continuous information sharing between students.

Title: Peer Mentoring
Activity: Current 6th grade students serve as peer mentors to offer support and guidance to 5th grade students throughout their 5th and 6th grade years.
Outcome: Students will gain awareness about middle school culture and student activities through mentors who have experienced activities and the middle school environment personally.
Audience: 5th grade students
Areas of Focus: Social/Emotional
When: Throughout 5th grade

Process:

The feeder middle school will agree to recruit students in the 6th grade to mentor 5th grade students. The mentor program will last for two consecutive years, with the mentoring program ending at the completion of the student's 7th and 6th grades. Middle school mentors should receive a brief orientation the first two months of the school year to prepare them for mentoring. The peer mentoring should be carried out in groups. Therefore, a group of middle school students will meet with elementary school students during specified planned meetings throughout the year.

The elementary school should hold a "Meet and Greet" event at the beginning of the school year for elementary school students to meet the middle school students in a relaxed, non intimidating environment. Families of the elementary school students should receive an invitation to this event and plan to attend to learn more about the peer mentoring program. At the end of the "Meet and Greet," families should have the opportunity to sign their child up for the program.

Mentoring sessions should not disrupt class for students and mentoring activities should be driven by the 6th grade students. Actual mentoring sessions should not be attended by adults but will be supervised to assist when necessary and facilitate the overall process.

Resources:

- **Peer Mentor Worksheet:** See page 70 in the appendix.
- **Making the Grade: A Guide to Incorporating Academic Achievement Into Mentoring Programs and Relationships:** http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/205
- **Established mentor programs that will provide resources and assist with starting a mentoring program:**
  - **Big Brothers Big Sisters of America:** www.bbbs.org
  - **EMT Website:** www.emt.org/publications.html
  - **National Mentoring Center:** www.nwrel.org/mentoring
  - **National Mentoring Partnership:** www.mentoring.org

Tips for Success:

- Include families in the mentoring events, but in separate areas to allow both students and families time to connect and network with one another as well as ease fears.

Title: Pen Pal Program
Activity: 6th grade classes adopt 5th grade classes and exchange letters four times per year.
Outcome: Students will engage in creative writing as well as investigative thinking and develop increased writing skills. The process will allow the 5th grade students to learn more about middle school through open and honest student perspectives.
Audience: 5th grade students
Areas of Focus: Academic and Social/Emotional
When: Throughout 5th grade

Process:

5th grade elementary school teachers and 6th grade English/language arts teachers should coordinate and pair students in their classes with one another for the pen pal program. Students will participate in the letter writing exchange four times throughout the year.

The first letter should come from the 5th grade students telling the middle school students a little bit about themselves inclusive of their interests and favorite subjects. 5th graders should also ask any questions that they have about middle school. The letters should be handwritten, placed in an unsealed envelope addressed with the recipients information, and reviewed by the classroom teacher before being sent.

6th grade students should respond to the letter and have the opportunity to share information about themselves, share what it is like in middle school, and answer any questions that were asked. It is suggested that responses to each set of letters throughout the year are received by the 5th graders within a two week period.

At the end of the school year a celebration social event should be held in order for the pen pals to meet each other. Students should bring the letters they have received throughout the year and wear nametags. An icebreaker could be planned to facilitate conversation between the students and refreshments could also be provided.

Resources:

- **Benefits of Having a Pen Pal: Pen Pals Can Promote Healthy Development:** http://tweenparenting.about.com/od/socialdevelopment/a/benefit-of-pen-pals.htm
- **Letter Writing for Elementary School Students:** http://mathandreadinghelp.org/letter_writing_for_elementary_students.html
- **Letter Writing Tips and Ideas:** http://mathandreadinghelp.org/articles/Letter_writing_tips_and_ideas.html

Tips for Success:

- Have teachers provide a list of topics to discuss in each set of the letters to spark student writing.
- Ask PTA or community organizations to sponsor the celebration event by offering space, volunteers, food, door prizes, etc.

Title: Grade Level Teacher and Counselor Planning
Activity: Teachers and support staff ensure continued use of jointly organized time to assess academic progress, developmental issues, social/emotional concerns, and academic instructional concerns of students moving to 6th grade so there will be adequate time to address key areas of need before their transition to middle school.
Outcome: Teachers will be able to provide academic and developmental assistance to the teachers and support staff in next grade level to help transition students successfully and allow the new teachers to plan accordingly.
Audience: 5th and 6th grade teachers and support staff
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, and Developmental
When: Throughout 5th grade

Process:

Teachers, counselors, and others will review multiple aspects of student progress, including academic achievement, social and emotional gains made, and current developmental needs. Fifth grade teachers will create data charts including reading, language arts, math, science, geography, citizenship, behavior, interactions with classmates, and related categories to help 6th grade teachers have a general overview of the whole child.

This process will focus on positive aspects and not result in negative-formed critiques. Honest discussion about student performance, skill deficits, and skills mastered will need to be shared between 5th and 6th grade teachers before students transition annually.

In addition, this process will help to ensure at-risk students are not over looked and connected to needed programs and resources at the middle school level during the transition period. For example, IEP's and student success plans can be revised with elementary and middle school staff as well as the child's family to ensure they are immediately available when the student begins sixth grade or EL students can be connected to appropriate staff to make certain they receive the services they require from the first day of school.

Resources:

- Teachers will use school data, test data, discipline records and plans, along with related resources to prepare a full overview and representative picture of students as they transition to 6th grade.
- **Grade Level Teacher Planning Spreadsheet:** See page 63 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

Fifth grade teachers are able to answer the following questions

- Student is ready/not ready for sixth grade academically because …
- Student is ready/not ready for sixth grade socially because …
- Student is ready/not ready for sixth grade behaviorally because …
- Student is ready/not ready for sixth grade developmentally because …

Title: Effective Study Skills
Activity: Students participate in lessons focusing on effective study habits and participate in a teambuilding activity.
Outcome: Students will be aware of good study habits/skills to increase their achievement.
Audience: 5th grade students
Areas of Focus: Academic
When: Fall of 5th grade

Process:

Start the lesson with an icebreaker that will facilitate teambuilding among students. The icebreaker is called Human Letters. Teachers will divide students into groups of 4 to 5 people. This is a game of speed. The teacher will call out a letter in the alphabet and each group has to quickly form the required letter. This activity can be done lying on the ground or even while standing. The group that forms the letter fastest wins the game. This game requires students to quickly communicate which part of the letter they will be and therefore promotes clear communication as well as clear leaders in the group. Rewards are optional.

Following the icebreaker, students will engage in a discussion lead by the teacher on the **importance** of good study skills. Possible answers could be: make better grades; mom and dad will be proud; graduate from high school; may attend college; get a good job. Divide the students into smaller groups of about 3-4 students. Give each group a white paper plate with the words "good study skills" written in the middle. Have each group brainstorm what they believe are the best study skills. The group should reach a consensus about the top 5 good study skills. Prepare an arrow template for each group in proportional size to the circle. Ask the students in each group to write a study skill on each arrow and attach it to the outside of the circle creating a circle thinking map. Display each group's thinking map for others to see. If time allows, debrief with each group. Possible answers may be: Turn the TV off; get a desk or table; good light; books; pencil/pen; organized notebook; time management; ask for help if needed; stay organized.

Materials: White paper plate, arrow template, tacks or push pins, and tape

Resources:

- **Arrow Template:** See page 71 in the appendix.
- **ABC Teach:** http://abcteach.com/directory/middle_school/goal_setting
- **Education World:** www.educationworld.com/a_curr/profdev/profdev151b.shtml
- **E How:** www.ehow.com/list_6112919_indoor-building-activities-elementary-students.html
- **E Themes University of Missouri:** http://ethemes.missouri.edu/themes/1045

Tips for Success:

- Use the completed student circle thinking maps on good study skills during a middle school transition workshop to discuss how families can reinforce these good study habits at home.

Title: Resource Packet for 5th Grade Families
Activity: School creates a resource packet that includes information for understanding their child in 5th grade and what they can do to help in terms of organization and study skills, problem solving, goal setting, and career awareness as they move towards middle school.
Outcome: Families will feel informed and prepared for their child's 5th grade year by receiving information about resources, family meetings, volunteer opportunities, family workshops, school policies and procedures and upcoming events.
Audience: 5th grade families
Areas of Focus: Social/Emotional, Developmental, Academic, Organizational/Environmental, and College and Career Awareness
When: Fall of 5th grade

Process:

Part of the transition to middle school is ensuring a strong foundation of academic, social, and development skills at the completion of 5th grade. To help families understand how they can assist their child during this time of transition the school should provide a welcome packet to 5th grade families. The elementary school and middle school should partner to compile appropriate information. The packet could include information such as:

- Understanding the importance of 5th grade and the transition to middle school their family will experience over the next two years
- Understanding the language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science Common Core Georgia Performance Standards
- How to handle stress
- How to choose after school activities
- How to support my child's social and emotional development
- Opportunities for transition to middle school support that will be offered throughout the year

The welcome packet should be sent home on the first day of school with each 5th grader as well as made available at family meetings, in the front office, in the family center, and at community centers and apartment complexes.

Resources:

- **SchoolFamily.com:** www.schoolfamily.com
- **The Parent's Guide to 5th Grade:** www.education.com/grade/fifth-grade

Tips for Success:

- Ask families at the middle school to provide input on what should be provided in the welcome packets so the information provided will have a family's perspective.

Title: Transition Survey
Activity: Students and families complete surveys on what they would like to learn about during their transition to middle school.
Outcome: School will discover family and student expectations for school/family communication, student learning and curriculum, school facilities, school environment and school responsibility for student learning.
Audience: 5th grade students and their families
Areas of Focus: Academic and Organizational/Environmental
When: Fall of 5th grade

Process:

Invite current 5th grade students and their families to participate in a survey to determine what information they would like to receive about the transition to middle school. Give the survey to 5th grade students during the school day and make electronic and hard copies available for families to complete and send in.

The survey should be confidential and should be used by elementary and middle school family groups, counselors, and committees in charge of transition activities. The answers to the survey questions should be helpful in developing activities for transition throughout the year such as panel discussions, round table topics, elementary school visits, information sessions, and transition camps.

Resources:

- **Family Transition Survey:** See page 72 in the appendix.
- **Student Transition Survey:** See page 73 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

- Have current 6th graders develop a top ten list in response to the 5th grade students top fears and have the middle school's parent organization develop a top ten list in response to families top fears to share during transition night or another transition activity.

Title: Kids Against Bullying
Activity: Students participate in a lesson focusing on bullying prevention and recognition.
Outcome: Students will learn how bullies act and what they can you do to handle bullies safely and effectively.
Audience: 5th grade students
Areas of Focus: Social/Emotional, Developmental, and Academic
When: Winter of 5th grade

Process:

During classroom guidance, students will learn how to identify bullying and how to develop some effective strategies to handle bullies. The guidance sessions will focus on the following essential questions:

1. Why is bullying prevention important?
2. What is bullying?
3. Who bullies and why?
4. Who is bullied?

Students will watch a video (www.pacerkidsagainsbullying.org) and a PowerPoint presentation on bullying and have a discussion afterwards. Ask students to give examples of bullying and their thoughts on who is bullied and why. Students should pick a partner to discuss these questions. Student will give feedback from the video and share their feelings about what they have learned from the video. Students may share if they have ever felt or been bullied. ***Note: Some students may not feel comfortable discussing personal instances of bullying and they should not be pressured to discuss.** The counselor will summarize the lesson and ask students to sign an anti bullying pledge certificates. Let them know that these pledges will be displayed and by displaying these pledges in the school hallways, they are taking a stand against bullying.

Materials: Bullying PowerPoint presentation, "Kids Against Bullying" oath pledges, chart paper and video "What Bullying Is."

Resources:

- **Georgia Department of Education Bullying Prevention:** www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/Bullying-Prevention-Toolkits.aspx
- **Kids Against Bullying Video:** www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org

Tips for Success:

- Have students conduct a school wide anti-bullying poster campaign and have families and teachers judge the posters.

Title: Creating a Public Service Announcement (PSA)
Activity: 5th and 6th grade students will address the topic of middle school transition by making their own PSA. After watching and discussing some online PSAs, students will write their own script and film a PSA.
Outcome: Students will become more familiar with the idea of middle school transition and learn about media literacy.
Audience: 5th grade afterschool students
Areas of Focus: Academic
When: Spring of 5th Grade

Process:

Begin by talking a little bit about what a PSA is and what it is meant to do. Ask if there are any PSAs that students remember. Ask individuals why they are memorable. Talk about your own favorites. Together, watch a few of the PSAs on the Ad Council or BoostUp websites.

Provide a copy of the PSA Activity and Questions Sheet and answer the first set of questions together under the heading Step 1: Thinking About PSAs. Talk to the group about middle school transition topics that may be appropriate for a PSA. Tell the group that they will be filming their own PSA. Move on to Step 2 on the PSA Activity and Questions Sheet: Choosing Your Topic and Step 3: Thinking About Solutions on the PSA Activity and Questions Sheet.

Once the research is complete, continue on with Step 4: Planning Your Own PSA. This step involves completing the PSA Script Outline worksheet as a group. Give the group time to make a plan for filming the video. Allow the group to use the video camera to film their PSA and then debrief on the activity.

Materials: Folders with research articles on different middle school transition issues, video camera, computer with internet access, flipchart and marker. *Optional:* Props that correspond to each of the three topics.

Resources:

- **PSA Examples:** www.adcouncil.org/gallery.html and www.boostup.org/#/tools/ad_campaign
- **PSA Activity and Questions Worksheet:** www.readwritethink.org/files rsources/30157_activity_sheet.pdf
- **PSA Script Worksheet:** www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/script_outline.pdf

Tips for Success:

- Ask debriefing questions such as: What did you learn by participating in this activity? Did you discover anything new? What else do you want to know about the topic that you chose? Who cares about this issue locally? Elsewhere in the world? How could your groups' ideas or this activity be translated into an action-based project to improve middle school transition?

Title: Middle School Transition Night
Activity: Families attend a transition night at the middle school that gives them the opportunity to tour the school, discover new expectations, learn about required materials, and socialize with other families and school staff.
Outcome: Families, students and teachers will connect and develop relationships for support. Families and students will have an understanding of the layout of the school and contact information.
Audience: Rising 6th grade families
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, Developmental, Organizational/Environmental
When: Spring of 5th grade

Process:

Rising middle school students and their families should be invited to attend an official evening regarding their upcoming transition to middle school. Sessions should separate families and their students early in the evening, but bring them together for the end.

Families should tour the middle school, meet with school staff, teachers, and administrators. In addition, they should be provided with information about student activities available at the school as well as academic expectations such as grading, scheduling, subject matter, study skills and homework. Information on how to physically navigate the school, as well as how to remain in constant communication with staff through multiple paths should also be discussed. Families should be given a list of ways that they can volunteer at the school, support their child at home, and join family groups.

Students should discuss various topics found in the student handbook regarding scheduling, attendance, behavior, and dress code. A tour of the school should also be given to point out key places that they will need to visit. Students should also meet teachers and discuss academic expectations and changes regarding homework, study habits, and classroom content.

At the conclusion of the meeting, bring students and families back together to walk through a mini-schedule and allow for conversation between family and child.

Transition materials should be provided to any students and their families who are unable to attend.

Resources:

- **Where Do You Go Worksheet:** See page 74 in the appendix.
- **Transition Night Agenda:** See page 75 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

- Ask PTA as well as community and business organizations to provide volunteers to meet and greet with families and present pertinent information that may benefit their student or family through the transition period and beyond.
- Place transition materials in the front office, family resource center, community centers, and after school programs for families who missed the meeting.

Title: Middle School Communications
Activity: Middle schools send their school communications to 5th grade students and their families so they can begin to learn about various events and their new school's culture.
Outcome: Families and students will become familiar with the communication methods of the middle school and the current events of the school community.
Audience: 5th grade families
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, and Organizational/Environmental
When: Spring of 5th grade

Process:

Families of 5th graders should have the option to sign up to receive communications from the middle school beginning Spring of their 5th grade year. Families will have the option to select the best way to receive information, but information will be sent to the 5th grade families the same way it is sent to current middle school families. Information should be provided by phone, email, mail, or student delivery. If sending home forms through student delivery, the middle school should ensure that the feeder elementary schools receive the information in a timely manner from them to send home. The information should include upcoming student events and activities, as well as opportunities for families to get involved at the middle school level. Families should also learn where they can go in the middle school or who they could contact to obtain additional information.

Resources:

- **The Parent's Guide to Middle School:** www.education.com/grade/middle-school
- **Scholastic: Parent Communication Strategies:** www.scholastic.com/teachers/collection/parent-communication-strategies

Tips for Success:

- Have middle school parent organizations use this opportunity to invite 5th grade families to attend middle school family meetings to learn about activities and events.

Title: Education and Career Goal Setting
Activity: Students participate in a lesson focused on the importance of setting educational and career goals.
Outcome: Students will learn the importance of academic achievement goal setting and how it is related to future career success.
Audience: 5th grade students
Areas of Focus: Academic
When: Spring of 5th Grade

Process:

Students will discuss with the teacher the importance of setting goals. Possible answers might include: gets you where you want to be; helps one to map progress by establishing steps; helps to anticipate the barriers; identifies who can help.

Teacher will then write the following quote by Yogi Barra on the board or flip chart: "You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going, because you might not get there." Students will be asked to discuss how this statement relates to educational and career planning. Teacher will tell students that goals are usually very important to the individual, they are within the power of the individual to make happen (realistic), and they are reasonable (possible) and clearly stated.

Teacher will then divide the students into smaller groups. Give each group a copy of a picture with a girl looking at a stack of textbooks with a diploma laying on the top. Ask students what the following picture represents in goal setting: What is the goal? What do the books represent? What is the time limit? Is this an important goal for all of you? Can you do it?

Teacher will end the lesson by making sure students understand that graduating from high school and knowing what their next steps are after graduation will be very important when planning their courses at the high school level.

Materials: Board or Flip Chart, Quote, and Picture Template

Resources:

- **Lesson Picture Template:** See page 76 in the appendix.
- **Scholastic:** www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/everyday-study-skills
- **Math and Reading Help:** http://mathandreadinghelp.org study_skills_for_elementary_students.html

Tips for Success:

- Have students raise their hands at the end of the lesson if they have graduation from high school as a goal.
- Have students write about the importance of goal setting in their school's family newsletter.

Title: Family Reading Night
Activity: Hold a reading night for 5th graders and middle school students that encourages reading and allows 5th graders to become acquainted with the new school setting and academic expectations they will soon experience.
Outcome: Students and teachers will build relationships prior to the new school year. Students will experience diminished summer learning loss and increased family engagement.
Audience: 5th, 6th, 7th graders and their families
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, and Organizational/Environmental
When: Spring of 5th grade

Process:

At the end of the school year, distribute rising 6th, 7th, and 8th grade summer reading lists. The list should include required readings and suggested readings, as well as a brief summaries of the books. Invite current 5th and 6th graders to a Summer Reading Kick-Off event held at the local library or the middle school library. At the event, summer reading lists should be distributed, but families should also be notified of the lists through various communication methods.

During the event, provide the opportunity for the 5th grade students and families to see what a typical middle school event is like, inclusive of the academic rigor that will be expected of them. Provide opportunities for current middle school students to display reading projects and have older students make summary presentations on books that they read the year prior to the students that will be reading them this year. Also, provide activities for students and families to complete together and separately that include reading.

Provide opportunities for students and families to meet the English/language arts teachers and have students set personal goals for how many books they plan to read over the summer. Collaborate with the local library to sponsor a contest for middle school students who just attended the event to encourage reading over the summer.

Resources:

- **Family Reading Night Agenda:** See page 77 in the appendix.
- **Family Reading Nights:** www.educationworld.com/a_curr/strategy/strategy034.shtml

Tips for Success:

- Ask the local library to sponsor family reading nights throughout the summer and promote these family reading nights at end of the school year events.
- Work with community partners and school parent organizations to donate books from the summer reading list to give out as prizes.

Title: Family Panel
Activity: Middle schools work with feeder elementary schools to organize a panel that allows 5th grade families to ask questions and learn from current middle school families.
Outcome: Families will have a forum to have their questions answered and to be able to connect with similar families who have previously experienced the middle school transition process.
Audience: 5th grade families
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, Organizational/Environmental, and Developmental
When: Spring of 5th grade

Process:

The parent organization at the middle school should partner with the parent organizations at the feeder elementary school(s) to organize a family panel for middle school transition. The panel should consist of parents of current middle school students and the audience should be made up of current 5th grade families. The panel should be moderated by the middle school counselor or the school principal. The panel from the middle school should use information obtained by transition and parent surveys to develop the panel's topics. In addition, elementary school parents should be given the opportunity to submit questions before and during the event.

Possible topics for consideration could include: bullying, clubs, sports, scheduling, family engagement, grading, homework, etc.

Parent organizations should also use this time to discuss expectations for family engagement at the middle school level and explain how the parent organization plays a role in student achievement and success. The meeting should be highlighted not as a parent organization meeting, but as a middle school transition activity to attract all families.

Resources:

- **Multicultural Parent Panel:** www.fcps.edu/fairfaxnetwork/resources/parenting_guides/multicultural_panels.pdf

Tips for Success:

- Create a diverse family panel representative of all the families that make up the school community population.

Title: Understanding the Academic Landscape
Activity: Elementary schools provide workshops and resources by bringing in middle school experts to help students and their families understand the grading system and significance of academics in middle school.
Outcome: Students will acquire the skills for improving learning and task management to be successful in middle school.
Audience: 5th grade students and their families
Areas of Focus: Academic
When: Spring of 5th grade

Process:

Workshops should be organized by the elementary school counselor, school transition team, parent involvement coordinators, or elementary school parent organization to help rising 6th grade parents understand the middle school grading system, curriculum, and teaching styles. Middle school experts should be brought in as guest speakers. Share "Tips for Success" with parents and discuss strategies they can use to support their child's learning and academic success. Topics to include in the workshops can be:

- Learning How to Manage School and Personal Time
- How to Use Effective Communication Skills to Ask for Help
- Identifying Personal Learning Styles.
- "Don't Be A Stressed Student"

Workshops may even be themed based such as *"Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?"* and address topics such as moving beyond what you learned or did in the 5th grade (project work, increased rigor, etc.)

Resources:

- **Learning Styles Test Example:** See pages 78-80 in the appendix.
- **Homework and Study Habits Workshop:** www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/Parent-Engagement-Program-Workshop-Templates.aspx
- **Communication Skills:** www.mindtools.com/page8.html
- **Time Management Skills:** www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_HTE.htm
- **The Middle School Student's Guide to Ruling the World: Tips and Links:** www.middleschoolguide.com/products/tips-links-and-forms

Tips for Success:

- Invite guest speakers to give seminars to students and families on effective communication techniques.
- Hold workshops in conjunction with parent organization meetings (at the elementary school) in order to reach as many families as possible.

Title: Middle School Expo
Activity: Schools organize a one day event to provide information to families about extracurricular activities for students, volunteer opportunities for parents, and resources available at the school.
Outcome: Parents and students will be aware of the various opportunities available for students and families. Students will be made aware of the educational requirements to become involved in certain activities.
Audience: 5th grade students and their families
Areas of Focus: Academic, Organizational/Environmental, Social/Emotional, and Developmental
When: Spring of 5th grade

Process:

The middle school will hold an expo at the school to provide an opportunity for rising 6th grade students and their families to become acquainted to the many opportunities that are offered at the middle school level. It should be held on a Saturday to allow as many students and families as possible to participate.

Both the middle and elementary schools should coordinate regarding the promotion of the event so that all parents are notified and encouraged to attend. In addition to the many activities at the expo, the middle school should deliver a brief presentation followed by a question and answer period immediately following. It is suggested that the presentation last between 15 and 20 minutes and the question and answer session about 15 minutes. The presentation and question and answer session should be offered two to three times throughout the event to allow all parents attending the expo a chance to participate. In between the formal presentation consider some of the following booths or activities:

- Have sports teams and school clubs set up theme table booths. Ask current middle school students who play on the teams or are club members to staff the tables along with the club sponsor.
- Have student artwork displayed, ask the choir and band to perform, show student science projects, etc.
- Have sporting teams play exhibition games on the fields or in the gym at the school and allow students and families to watch.
- Have a scavenger hunt game where students have to tour the school to visit the various booths, clubs or activities that are offered at the school. Offer prizes to winners.
- Have GACollege 411 sessions in the computer lab so students can set up an account and begin to learn what they are interested in.
- Show student produced videos in the media center to highlight the school's video lab or department.

Resources:

Scavenger Hunt: See page 81 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

- Have PTA, community or business organizations participate by providing information on resources that they can offer students and families such as mentoring programs, after school programs, extracurricular activities, and academics/clubs.
- Record the question and answer session and make it available on the website or for check out in the family resource center for families who were unable to attend.

Title: Lighting the Flame
Activity: Schools hold a meeting between the parent, student, teacher, and 6th grade counselor to begin work on college and career awareness as they move towards the 8th grade bridge plan.
Outcome: Students and parents are prepared to transition from 5th grade to middle school with an understanding of the college and career readiness process.
Audience: 5th grade students and their families
Areas of Focus: Academic and College and Career Awareness
When: Spring of 5th grade

Process:

Elementary school will provide a parent and student night and invite 6th grade staff from feeder middle school(s) to hold ceremonies to transition students from 5th grade to sixth grade.

Part of the ceremony will encompass recognitions of 5th grade class students and their families. The ceremony will include a symbolic transition of college and career flame for students and their families from elementary to middle school.

After the ceremony, the program moves to small groups featuring 6th grade staff meetings with students and parents to cover basics of middle school, career exploration in middle school, and to introduce concept of Individual Graduation Plan for eighth grade. Small groups allow more opportunity for questions/answers and greater planning for students' middle school experience and college and career future.

Resources:

- **BRIDGE Card**: See pages 82-83 in the appendix.
- **GaDOE Counselor Information:** www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/Counselor-Information-.aspx

Tips for Success:

- Link this ceremony to your school's end of the year honors day to increase attendance and also demonstrate the importance of this process to younger students and their families.
- If also participating in the pen pal activity, have the 6th grade pen pal attend the ceremony and incorporate the 6th grade pen pal into part of the passing of the college and career flame.

NOTES

NOTES

6th Grade

The 6th grade year is likely to be the most challenging during the middle school transition process. This is the one of the most significant developmental stages children experience and, as a result, it is vital for parents to be involved with all aspects of their 6th grader's life. These students tend to be more focused on their social identity than learning; therefore, it can present quite a challenge to keep 6th graders motivated and interested. This section provides an assortment of great activities 6th graders can engage in to sharpen their overall skills, remain focused and complete some of the final developmental steps as they complete the transition to middle school.

Title: Parent Workshops
Activity: A series of parent workshops that focus on various transition topics are provided for parents.
Outcome: Parents will learn about various ways to help their student throughout their middle school years and adolescence.
Audience: 6th grade families
Areas of Focus: Social/Emotional, Organizational/Environmental, Academic, Developmental, and College and Career Awareness
When: Throughout 6th grade

Process:

Workshops for parents should be determined by the counselor and parent involvement coordinator at the school based on parent needs as discovered through family transition surveys conducted in the 5th grade year, parent surveys, suggestion boxes, and relevant events in the community.

Workshops should be offered at various times and dates such as during the lunch hour, after school hours, evening hours, weekends, and during special events. Mini workshops (20 minutes) can also be offered at the beginning or at the end of parent meetings. Workshop facilitators could be school staff, health professionals, safety professionals, and local community organizations. Workshop subjects can include:

- Academics—Expectations, Organization, Curriculum, Study Skills
- Communication
- Confidence and Self Esteem
- Physical, Emotional and Social Change
- Difficult Situations (bullying, peer pressure)

Resources:

- **GaDOE Parent Engagement Program Workshop Templates**: www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/Parent-Engagement-Program-Workshop-Templates.aspx

  - Learning Your Child's School System

  - Homework and Study Habits

  - Preparing for College

  - Helping Your Teen Cope with Peer Pressure

  - Communicating with Your Child and Teen

Tips for Success:

- When holding workshops, consider language barriers, scheduling, transportation, and child care to ensure maximum meeting attendance.

Title: Principal Roundtable
Activity: The principal gathers separate small groups of 6th grade students and their parents to address questions, concerns, and engage in conversation about the middle school transition process.
Outcome: Parents and students have the ability to bring about change in future middle school transition activities for the benefit of future students and influence current school policies.
Audience: 6th grade students and families
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, Organizational/Environmental, and Developmental
When: Throughout 6th grade

Process:

Principal's roundtables are a wonderful way to ensure that 6th grade students and their families have received the support they have needed for a successful transition and also provide insight into how to enhance the transition experience for future students and families.

Parent roundtables should be held three times per year at various times. The school should notify parents at the beginning of the school year about the roundtable dates and times for the year. Roundtables should continue to be advertised throughout the school year, especially two weeks before the event. Leading up to the roundtable the principal should tape a two to five minute video regarding the roundtable transition topic and post on the school's website to encourage parent participation. Topics to likely address are whether the needs of students have been met through the transition process and what additional supports are needed?

Student roundtables will be held twice a year and will be conducted using a representative group of selected students. During those two meeting times, the principal will conduct three sessions with groups of 30 students each. The principal will use the time to discuss student middle school transition.

Resources:

- **Effective Roundtable Facilitation Techniques**: www.frost.com/prod/servlet/cpo/4659282.pdf

Tips for Success:

- Hold the parent roundtables at various times throughout the year and in various locations around the community to ensure all parents have an opportunity to participate.
- Reach out to all types of students, especially those who are at-risk of having the most trouble with the middle school transition process.

Title: Middle School Transition Camp
Activity: Students attend a transition camp at middle schools to become oriented to their new schedule, school building, classmates, and new responsibilities. Parents attend a special transition workshop during the camp.
Outcome: Students and their parents will have their transition concerns addressed and feel more prepared to enter 6th grade.
Audience: Rising 6th graders and their families
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, Developmental, Organizational/Environmental
When: Summer before 6th grade

Process:

Transition camps provide students the opportunity to become comfortable with their new school environment by exploring the structure and creating a sense of belonging before the new school year begins. The camp should last between three to five days over the summer (three hours a day) and be advertised to students and their families during the spring of 5th grade to allow time for them to sign up.

The camp should provide students with opportunities to socialize with other incoming students as well as learn from sessions that will aid them in academic success. The principal, teachers, administrators, counselors, and current middle school students willing to serve as guides will be needed to staff the camp.

Sessions should include:

- Touring the school
- Understanding lockers
- Exploring the media center
- Participating in mini-classes
- Learning new study skills
- Peer pressure and bullying
- How to stay organized
- Changing classes

During the camp, there should also be a family transition session offered each day to provide families with information, resources, and a tour of the school.

Resources:

- **Middle School Transition Camp Planning and Implementation Checklist:** See pages 84-85 in the appendix.
- **Middle School Transition Camp Sample Agenda:** See page 86—87 in the appendix.
- **Wake County Public School System Packing Up...A Guide to Middle School Transition - Activity 8 (p. 43) - Transition Camp Overview:** http://www.wcpps.net/planning-guides/transition_guide_6_graders.pdf

Tips for Success:

- Enlist parent organizations as well as community and business organizations to provide volunteers to help with activities and present pertinent information to students and families that may benefit them throughout the year.
- Survey students and parents at the end of the camp and use results for future planning.
- Get creative about transportation so all students can attend. Partner with summer camps and summer programs to share students.

Title: Parent and Student Transition Guide
Activity: Develop a parent and student middle school transition guide to address key areas of importance for rising middle school students and their families.
Outcome: Students and their parents will be confident, focused, and prepared to transition into middle school.
Audience: Rising 6th grade students and their families
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, Developmental, Organizational/Environmental, and College and Career Awareness
When: Summer before 6th Grade

Process:

Many student and their families do not know what to expect once their child leaves elementary school and enters middle school. Adolescence is an exciting yet challenging time for students and their families. A transition guide is a great way to ensure that your students and their families are well prepared.

The guide should be created by the elementary and middle school transition teams and include a range of topics such as:

- How do I navigate the school?
- Who should I contact when I have a problem?
- What is peer pressure?
- How will I stay organized?
- What is the middle school lingo?
- What can families do to stay involved in their student's education?
- What will I be learning?

The guide should be distributed at various events and locations over the summer such as camps and summer programs. It should also be provided at open house and the first parent meeting for 6th grade families at the beginning of the year.

Resources:

- **Kentucky Department of Education Parent Guide Surviving and Thriving the Middle Grades:** www.education.ky.gov/users/otl/Beginning_of_School_Year/Parent%20Guide%20to%20Surviving%20and%20Thriving%20in%20the%20Middle%20Grades.doc
- **Packin' Up...A Guide to Middle School Transition:** http://lufkinroad.wcpss.net/guidance/Documents/6th%20grade%20info/transition_guide_6-LRMS%20revised%202011-12.pdf
- **Family Middle School Transition Brochure:** See page 56 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

- Distribute your own middle school transition brochure or booklet along with the State Family Middle School Transition brochure to ensure families are equipped with all necessary information.

Title: Home Visits or Family Socials
Activity: School teams schedule home visits with every family who has an incoming 6th grader to welcome them to the school. When possible, family socials could be used as a substitute alternative where a large amount of new families reside in a neighborhood or apartment complex.
Outcome: Families and school staff will build positive relationships with one another based on trust and ongoing communication.
Audience: Rising 6th graders and their families
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, Organizational/Environmental

When: Summer before 6th grade or the first few weeks of school

Process:

Home visits can provide an opportunity to develop trust between the home and school. Visits should be informal, last no more than five to ten minutes, and be focused on welcoming the family to the school and providing information on student success. Incoming families should be notified that school staff will be conducting welcome visits and visits should be scheduled in advance. Visits should take place in pairs and all school faculty and staff should be encouraged to visit a set number of homes. It is important that school staff is trained on how to conduct home visits and be given some strategies to use while in the family's home.

If home visits are unfeasible due to the size of the incoming student population, another way to reach families is by holding "family socials" in subdivisions, apartment complexes, community centers or in partnership with community organizations. The social will help parents get to know each other in order to build a community of support among themselves. Transition handbooks and other resources should be provided at the socials.

When feasible, families at the socials should have an opportunity to sign up for home visits from a middle school counselor, parent involvement coordinator, or other school staff to address individual concerns or questions early in the school year.

Resources:

- **New York State PIRC Home Visiting for Teachers:** www.nyspirc.org/pdf/Home%20Visits%20for%20Teachers.pdf
- **National Education Association There is No Place Like Home...Visits:** www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin241.shtml
- **Harvard Family Research Project The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project:** www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/the-parent-teacher-home-visit-project

Tips for Success:

- If unable to visit all incoming families, consider reaching out and conducting home visits with those students who are most at risk as identified by the elementary school during the initial transition period.

Title: Welcome Letter
Activity: Families receive a letter welcoming them to the school and explains what to expect from teachers and staff as well as provides information on how to navigate their new school.
Outcome: Parents and students will feel welcomed to the school and begin to establish a positive relationships with the school.
Audience: Rising 6th grade parents
Areas of Focus: Academic and Organizational/Environmental
When: Summer before 6th Grade

Process:

The middle school should send a letter to incoming 6th graders and their families welcoming them to their new school. The letter should come from the principal on behalf of the entire staff, but it should be sent by the student's home room teacher. The teacher is encouraged to write a handwritten sentence or two at the top of each letter to add a more personal touch.

The letter should include information such as:

- The school's contact information
- The school's website inclusive of important information and where updates can be found
- The principal's contact information and open office hours
- Information regarding the first day of school
- Upcoming school events such as open house, the first parent organization meeting for the school year, and new student and family principal roundtables
- Ways to get involved in the middle school for both the student and their family

Resources:

- **Principal Welcome Letter:** See page 88 in the appendix.
- **First Day of School Letters and Survival Kits Build Communication:** www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr358.shtml

Tips for Success:

- Place a copy of the letter on the school's website during the first month of school for parents who may not have received a copy over the summer.
- Offer bilingual letters if the school population has native speakers of other languages.

Title: Middle School Video
Activity: Current middle school students create a video welcoming rising 6th graders to their new school.
Outcome: Students will see their new school building and new school staff, experience what opportunities middle school offers, and hear from their peers about the transition experience.
Audience: Rising 6th graders
Areas of Focus: Academic, Social/Emotional, and Organizational/Environmental
When: Summer before 6th grade or the first day of school

Process:

Have 6th grade students at the end of their first year of middle school create a video to welcome incoming 6th graders and provide information needed to new students for the first week of school. Pick a representative group of students to develop the video as a class project or as part of an after-school project. With the help of an adult sponsor, allow students to determine the content of the video using poetry, rap music, or other creative means. Content that could be covered includes:

- Pictures and information on school leadership and important school staff to know
- A day in the life of a middle school student
- A tour of school showing important places and the people you will see there
- Student and teacher interviews
- Extra-curricular activities— clubs, sports, art organizations

Show the video over the summer at transition camp or in an assembly on the first day of school. Also, post the video to the school's website so it can be viewed by everyone.

Resources:

- **4th Grade Transition to Middle School Video**: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20Visits%20for%20Teachers.pdf
- **Middle School Transition Video:** http://www1.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=43265&title=Middle_School_Transition

Tips for Success:

- If the middle school does not have a video/production studio, work with community partners or parent volunteers to assist with the production/editing or teach the students how to do it.

Title: Student Ambassadors
Activity: 7th and 8th grade students volunteer to assist 6th graders during the first month of school to help them navigate the middle school landscape.
Outcome: New students will feel supported throughout their transition to middle school and know who they can turn to when questions arise.
Audience: 6th grade students
Areas of Focus: Social/Emotional and Organizational/Environmental
When: Beginning of School Year

Process:

Teachers and the school counselor should recommend 7th and 8th grade students to serve as ambassadors to 6th grade students. Student ambassadors should receive an orientation that includes the "do's" and "don'ts" of dealing with new students, questions that should be directed to an adult, and topics that should not be discussed. Ambassadors will be stationed throughout the halls before school begins, during class changes, during lunch, and after school and will wear buttons that say "Ask Me" so they are easily recognizable. In addition, ambassadors will participate in other middle school transition activities that take place.

Resources:

- **Student Ambassador Permission Form:** See page 89 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

- If able, ask ambassadors to serve as camp guides during the summer transition camp as well.

Title: Goal Setting
Activity: Schools administer activities that help students develop skills and work towards reaching goals in parent—teacher and guidance counseling sessions.
Outcome: Students will learn to establish challenging academic goals for school and career success.
Audience: 6th grade students and families
Areas of Focus: Academic and College and Career Awareness
When: Fall of 6th grade

Process:

Teacher, school counselor or teacher as advisor should introduce concept of setting goals and the importance of reaching aspirations. Hand out goal setting sheet for students to establish goals for academics, career exploration , behavior and trying one new school-sanctioned activity.

Students will review goals from the fall semester in January of the spring semester of sixth grade and then set new goals for spring semester using same form.

School-based family involvement coordinator can work with community organizations to establish workshops to help parents set goals to be more involved with their child and middle school.

Resources:

- **SMART Goal Setting Document:** See pages 90-92 in the appendix.
- **Motivational Modules Found on GAcollege411:** www.gsfc.org/main/publishing/volunteer_resource/index.cfm

Tips for Success:

- Have community organizations assist with facilitating workshops for parents to help explain the goal setting process with them, as well, so they can help their child with setting reasonable goals.

Title: Thumbprint Mural: How We are Alike and Different
Activity: Students participate in lessons focusing on anger management, diversity, and teambuilding, ensuring the students are ready for academic success.
Outcome: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them respect themselves and others.
Audience: 6th grade students
Areas of Focus: Social/Emotional, Developmental, Academic, Organizational/Environmental, and College and Career Awareness
When: Fall of 6th grade

Process:

During a classroom guidance group activity have students examine and compare their own thumbprints to identify and appreciate their own similarities and differences with their peers. The essential questions that will be discussed are:

1. How am I like my friends?
2. How am I different from my friends?
3. Can similarities and differences be identified from thumbprints?

***Note: Group rules must apply for students to stay focused and remain respectful.**

The counselor will have students place their thumbprint from an ink pad on a piece of butcher paper that has been placed on a wall or board to create a thumbprint mural. A discussion of similarities and differences should then take place. During this time, have students compare their own thumbprints as well as write their name and something unique about themselves in a wavy line or other pattern around their thumbprints.

Once completed, students will read their statements aloud and everyone will examine the completed thumbprint mural.

Materials: Butcher paper, colored markers, ink pad, and masking tape.

Resources:

- **Group Activities for Counselors**, Sally Elliot, 1994
- **Missouri Department of Education Guidance Lesson Plans:** www.missouricareereducation.org/for/content/guidance
- **Teaching Tolerance:** http://www.tolerance.org

Tips for Success:

- Display the Thumbprint Mural on the school 's website and make it available to school parent organizations.

Title: Silent Interview
Activity: Students will examine stereotypes and first impressions through a get-to-know one another process.
Outcome: Students will examine the linkages between one's personal identity and one's cultural assumptions as well as build relationships with other students.
Audience: 6th grade afterschool students
Areas of Focus: Social/Emotional
When: Fall of 6th Grade

Process:

Pair students with a partner who they do not know well. Tell students that they will be conducting a silent interview of their partner. Ask them to look at their partner and answer the questions on the Silent Interview Questions worksheet as they believe their partner would respond, if he or she could talk. THERE SHOULD BE NO TALKING! The pair should have five minutes to complete their interviews simultaneously. Responses for each question should be written under the area on the sheet marked: **Your response.**

Stress that it is okay for students to look at their partner during this exercise, even if they might not normally do such a thing, and it is okay to make incorrect guesses!

After both individuals have completed the silent interview, partners will have ten minutes to share their presumed responses with their partners and ask for the accurate response to each question. They should mark the correct responses in the area of the sheet called: **Accurate Response.**

Reconvene the large group and debrief the exercise recording takeaways on a flipchart. Guide the debriefing in the direction of these important conclusions:

1. *First impressions, which we all have, are usually colored by our own feelings and values. Because of this, our first impressions are sometimes wrong.*
2. *Being asked to share those first impressions is uncomfortable because we are aware that they might be based on stereotypes and consequently be inaccurate.*
3. *Knowing that others are judging us is an uncomfortable feeling.*
4. *Our first impressions can be even more inaccurate if we are unable to ask for and receive feedback.*
5. *Assumptions are based on previous experience, as are the categories we use to assess each other.*
6. *We often miss important clues.*

Resources:

Silent Interview Questions Worksheet: See page 93 in the appendix.

Tips for Success:

- Encourage students to bring the activity home and further discuss with parents/guardians.

Title: Utilizing a Career Information System (CIS)
Activity: Students will understand the importance of using an electronic career information system to gather different types of career-related information to support career planning (i.e., Individual Graduation Plan)
Outcome: Students will be aware of the selected career information system (CIS) in their school/system.
Audience: 6th grade students
Areas of Focus: College and Career Readiness
When: Fall after transition to the middle school activities

Process:

Electronic career information systems contain information that will assist students in answering three essential questions:
Who Am I?
Where Am I Going?
How Am I Going to Get There?

Students will have access to career-related assessments and exploration and planning tools.

It is recommended that students take this information home to share with their parents.

The electronic career information system will be used to create the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) by the end of the 8th grade year.

Students will discuss with the teacher/counselor/advisor the importance of educational and career planning. Write the Steven Covey phrase on the board or flip chart, "If you fail to plan, then plan to fail." Then, divide the class into smaller groups. Ask each group to discuss the phrase and how that phrase relates to educational and career planning. Possible answers may be: identify classes at the high school, decide on a career, decide which postsecondary school one might attend, determine graduation requirements, decide a career pathway, create educational and career goals, determine which occupations are in demand; have high wages; require high skills.

Next, have each group report on their interpretation of the phrase. Advise students which career-information system (Gacollege411, GCIS, Career Cruising) was selected by the school/system. Provide the URL address and password/id when required. Advise students: they will need to establish an account in order to utilize the program; they will continue to use this system to gather and manage educational and career information from now until they graduate and beyond; they will be the CLASS OF _____. Following the lesson, make sure 6th grade students are introduced to the selected career related information system (GCIS, Gacollege411 or Career Cruising) with a prepared brochure. All of these systems have prepared brochures.

Resources:

- Order brochures prior to this activity
- **Gacollege411**: www.gacollege411.org (FREE)
- **Georgia Career Information System** (subscription; requires password and id)
- **Career Cruising** (subscription; requires password and id)

Tips for Success:

- Have students raise their hands if they plan to visit the system selected career information system.
- Teach families about CIS and prepare them to help their child as they look towards completing the Individual Graduation Plan in 8th grade.

NOTES

NOTES

Middle School Matters:
Family Brochure and Video

A Middle School Transition Family Brochure has been developed in both English and Spanish to help students, families, schools, and communities communicate the importance of school transition. One side of the brochure addresses how families should prepare for transition, while the other side of the brochure addresses how students should prepare for transition. Limited copies of the brochures were printed and may be still available by contacting any of the following partner organizations:

- Georgia Afterschool Investment Council
- Georgia Department of Education
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership
- Georgia Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC)
- Georgia Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta

In addition, a handout version of the family brochure has also been developed for ease of copying and distribution at any school or community organization's convenience. This can be accessed at: http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/Parent-Engagement-Program-For-Parents-Links.aspx Once there, click the Middle School Transition Family Brochure Handout in the appropriate language to download the brochure handout version.

The Middle School Transition Family Video will be released in Fall of 2012. Please check back at a later date for more information on how to access this video for your school community's use.

Middle School Matters:
References and Resources

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Middle School Matters:
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Resources

Middle School Matters! A Guide for Families on Middle School Transition (Also in Spanish)

Middle School Matters! A Guide for Students on Middle School Transition (Also in Spanish)

Middle School Matters! A Guide for Families on Middle School Transition Handout (Also in Spanish)

Middle School Matters! A Guide for Students on Middle School Transition Handout (Also in Spanish)

Coming Soon: *Middle School Matters! A Guide for Students and Families on Middle School Transition Video* (Also in Spanish)

Middle School Matters: Appendix

Middle School Transition Toolkit

School Transition Team

SCHOOL TRANSITION TEAM INFORMATION SHEET

School Name: _____

Principal: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Transition Coordinator: _____

Agency/School: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Transition School Team Members:

(Select at least 1-2 members for each category. There must be at least one representative from each category on the team.)

****The Transition Team Partnership is convened by the "Principal" and will meet at least four times or more during the school year. The Transition Coordinator can be represented by the Principal or someone that the principal or team selects to help coordinate team meetings, transition plans, and to serve as the contact for the transition team.*

a) **School** (*Principal, Assistant Principal, Elementary and Middle teachers, Parent Liaisons, Counselors)*

Name Agency Email Phone

_____

_____

_____

b) **After School** *(After School Program Staff, Family Resource Coordinators, Mentors)*

Name Agency Email Phone

_____

_____

_____

c) **Families** (*PTA Leadership, Parents and Families of 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Grade Students*)

Name Agency Email Phone

_____

_____

_____

d) **Community** *(Religious, Business, Civic Organization, Public/Private Agencies, Political Officials, Higher Education)*

Name Agency Email Phone

_____

_____

_____

Selected Effective Transition Strategies:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Middle School Transition Toolkit

School Transition Team

SAMPLE SCHOOL TRANSITION PLAN

School Name: _____

Transition Coordinator: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

The Transition Plan is used both as a tool to plan year-round transition activities and as a management tool to help guide implementation.

Example: *(Please insert your own Goal and Indicators below)*
Goal: Effective coordination between Elementary and Middle schools (i.e., school to school connections) by Fall 2012
Indicator 1: School leadership and other staff members will identify feeder elementary schools and work to establish/improve relationships with them.
Indicator 2: The middle school transition team will work to establish consistency between school policies and practices that help create connections and smooth transitions for children entering middle school.
Indicator 3:_____
Indicator 4: _____

*Note this is just an example, remember your transition plan should be an ongoing, year-round process.

Indicator Number	**Transition Timeline** ***Include the beginning and end date for the strategy***	**Action Plan** ***Include each step***	**Resources/Cost Needed** ***List cost, materials, and personnel as well as in-kind costs***	**Person Responsible**	**Evaluation Method** **Describe the source of information or document that will be used to confirm effectiveness of strategies and achievement of indicators**
2	October 2012	Review existing school transition activities, practices and policies to find out what is already being done	Staff No Cost/Inkind	Transition Coordinator	Report of Findings
	October 2012 – May 2013	Develop transition calendar outlining activities for transitional activities for the school year	Transition Team	Transition Team	Calendar of Events, Number of Participants
1	November 2012	Build connections by hosting a round table discussion between partnering elementary and middle school parents, staff and personnel to learn about each other's school	Refreshments - $50	Transition Coordinator	Survey
	February 2013	Sponsor a middle school night inviting incoming 6th graders and their parents to visit/tour the school and learn about the programs	Refreshments- $100 Information Packets - $100 School Staff & Volunteers - Inkind	Assistant Principal	Parent Survey

Adapted from "Planning for Terrific Transitions: A Guide for Transition-to-School Teams/1-27-11

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Family Communication

SAMPLE SURVEY

Families play a critical role in students' education and success!

"ET PHONE HOME!"

Parents, We Want To Hear From You *And* We Want You To Hear From Us!

Even though most parents and educators *are not trying to reach another planet,* it can be an *astronomical* job to communicate back and forth on a regular basis!

Let Us Know Some Ways Jefferson Elementary School Can "Phone Home!"

Please circle an answer for the following questions and return to your child's teacher or drop it off at the front office.

Do you need school communications to be written in another language:	Yes	No
What language?		
Do you need communications to be verbal instead of in writing?	Yes	No
Do you have an email address?	Yes	No
May we contact you via email?	Yes	No
If yes, please provide email address:		
Do you have access to the internet at home? (Via Computer, Cell phone)	Yes	No
Do you have access to a computer elsewhere?	Yes	No
Do you need an alert when emails are sent such as by a text message?	Yes	No
Do you know about our website with your child's homework assignments posted?	Yes	No
If not, would you like more information?	Yes	No
Would you be interested in free adult evening technology courses?	Yes	No
Would you be interested in receiving regular text messages?	Yes	No
Do you use Facebook on a regular basis?	Yes	No
Would you go to a school's Facebook page on a regular basis?	Yes	No

Parent Name _____

Student Name _____ **Grade**_____

Best phone number to reach you_____ **Best Times**_____

A Family Engagement Tool by the Division for Special Education Supports and Services, GaDOE @ March, 2011

* E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial Movie, 1982

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Grade Level Teacher Planning Spreadsheet

SAMPLE

Students	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E
Academic Achievements					
Math					
ELA					
Science					
Reading					
Social Studies					
Social Gains					
Positives					
Concerns					
Emotional Gains					
Positives					
Concerns					
Developmental Needs					
Positives					
Concerns					
Citizenship					
Behavior					
Test Data					
Attendance Data					
Parent Involvement Data					

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Career Survey

SAMPLE

In this survey you will determine which career/occupation might interest you. Each CAREER/OCCUPATION is representative of occupations in the aligned CAREER CLUSTER. For example, TEACHER is an occupation that would be aligned with the career cluster EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

Select one career/occupation that you might be interested in learning more about. Also indicate if you are a boy or a girl by checking the appropriate box next to your career/occupation selection.

Occupation (Career Cluster) Circle one	Boy	Girl
Nurse (Health Science)		
Entrepreneurs-have your own business (Marketing)		
Engineer (STEM)		
Law Enforcement (Law, Public Safety & Correction Security)		
Firefighter (Law, Public Safety & Correction Security)		
Landscaper (Agriculture, Food & Forestry)		
Truck Driver (Transportation, Distribution & Logistics)		
Pilot (Transportation, Distribution & Logistics)		
Military (Law, Public Safety & Correction Security)		
Teacher (Education & Training)		
Accountant (Finance)		
Scientist (STEM)		
Computer Programmer (Information Technology)		
Lawyer (Law, Public Safety & Correction Security)		
Administrative Assistant (Business Management and Administration)		
Artist (Arts, Audio/Video Technology & Communications)		
Construction Manager (Architecture& Construction)		
Counselor (Human Services)		
Chef (Hospitality & Tourism)		
Welder (Manufacturing)		
None of the above		

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Pictograph

SAMPLE

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Career Exposure: Cluster of Career Grapes

QUESTIONS

1. What career opportunities are in this career cluster?
2. What careers in this career cluster do you like or that interest you?

Choose a specific career within this career cluster.
Answer the following questions.

1. What skills in this specific career can you do or interest you?
2. What type and how much training is needed for your specific career?
3. What are some of the characteristics or traits of your specific career?
4. What is the job outlook for your specific career?

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Elementary School Visits Agenda

SAMPLE

Elementary and middle school staff should meet prior to entering the classroom to discuss logistics and protocols. If the teacher collected questions from students ahead of time, share these questions with the middle school staff before they enter the classroom to begin the session.

11:00am – 11:05am	Middle School Staff Introduce Themselves to Students
11:05am – 11:10am	Middle School Staff Talk Briefly About Particular Middle School Transition Topics (Pick a Theme for Each Visit)
11:10am – 11:25am	Middle School Staff Entertains Student Comments/ and Questions on Middle School Transition
11:25am – 11:28am	Wrap Up and Opportunity for Students to Write Follow Up Comments and Questions for Next Session
11:28am – 11:30am	Closing Comments and Wrap Up

Middle school staff should collect all questions and comments from students at end of the visit to prepare for the next session. Students should be encouraged to discuss what was learned in the session with their parents for homework.

Possible Topics for each Session:

1) School Layout, Teachers, and School Staff
2) Academic Expectations and Homework
3) School Schedule and Changing Classes
4) Social Issues (Making New Friends) and Extracurricular Opportunities

Middle School Transition Toolkit

What is Middle School Like?

SAMPLE AGENDA

******Please allow 45 minutes for this activity.***

Introductions (5 minutes)

The facilitator (counselor, middle school teacher, etc.) should introduce themselves and also have the middle school students introduce themselves.

Overview (3 minutes)

The facilitator will briefly explain to the students why they are participating in the "What Is Middle School Like?" activity.

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

People Bingo (see next page) – you may want to have a token prize for the "winner."

Instructions: Students have 10 minutes to complete the icebreaker. Each student should receive a copy of the game face down. The facilitator will tell the group when to flip the sheet over and start the ice breaker. In the allotted time, students should find one person who can answer the question or follow the instructions in each bingo box. Once the person has answered the question/followed instructions, they should initial. You can only have each person initial a box ONE TIME. Once the time is up, the person with the highest number of initialed boxes wins the ice breaker.

Middle School Presentation Time (20 minutes)

****Each middle school student should read a pre selected question under the selected topic.*

Topic (example): What does a typical day look like?

- Starting the day - What happens when you get to school in the morning?
- Changing classes - What happens if you are running late for class?
- Lockers – How many times can you go to your locker? Should you share your locker? What should you put in your locker?
- Lunch – Can you eat with your friends?
- End of the day – Where do you go to wait until your are picked up? If you ride the bus, how long do you have to get to the bus?

Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Question and Answers - Have note cards for questions that elementary students may have asked that can be addressed at next meeting.

Adjourn (2 minutes)

Give elementary students the day , time and location of the next meeting verbally and on a card to give to their parents.

*Remember to have a separate session for the parents to attend as well.

People Bingo

FIND SOMEONE WHO…

Has had a broken a bone	Is an only child	Can tell you the person that discovered electricity	Has been to Florida	Has lived in another state
Is left-handed	Plays a musical instrument	Is wearing red	Will give you a high five	Can whistle a Justin Bieber song
Has pierced ears	Can swim	FREE	Can say the Pledge of Allegiance – NOW!	Likes to go bowling
Read 5 books last summer	Is wearing black socks	Has a pet	Wears glass-es	Watches the TV show "ICarly"
Likes to eat spinach	Can rub their stomach and pat their head at the same time	Has at least three brothers or sisters	Has jumped on a trampoline	Can tell you the person that invented the telephone

Name_____

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Peer Mentoring Worksheet

MENTOR/MENTEE INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY EXAMPLE

Let's Get To Know Each Other!

Pair the mentors/mentees. Let everyone know that they have 20 minutes to answer the following questions:

1. List 5 things you have in common physically
2. List 5 things that are different between you physically
3. What are 2 things you look for in a friend?
4. What are your 2 favorite movies?
5. What are your 3 favorite songs?
6. An ideal dinner menu for you would be…
7. The one food you dislike the most is…
8. Are you the only child? If not, how many brothers and/or sisters do you have?
9. What is your favorite thing to do on the weekend?
10. What is something that you are good at doing?

At the end of 20 minutes, let everyone know that it is time to stop.
Explain to the group that the answers to the questions will help everyone get to know each other. Each time the mentor and mentee meet they should discuss one of the questions (and answers) and how it has an effect on their lives.

ARROW TEMPLATE

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Transition Survey

SAMPLE FAMILY SURVEY

Hello ABC School Families!

This short survey will help us provide support to you and your family as your child transitions from elementary to middle school. Please circle your answers to the following questions:

1. Are you aware of the type of curriculum that is required of middle school students?

   YES NO

2. Do you know what your student can expect from a typical day in middle school?

   YES NO

3. Do you know the average amount of homework your child should expect in middle school?

   YES NO

4. Do you know that your child can join academic clubs in middle school?

   YES NO

5. Are you comfortable using the parent portal to get information about your child's progress?

   YES NO

6. Do you know what types of communication to expect from the middle school?

   YES NO

7. Are you familiar with the sports activities that your child can try out for in middle school?

   YES NO

8. Do you know about the types of classes that your child will have to take in order to prepare for high school?

   YES NO

9. Would you be willing to attend parent workshops about academic standards and goal setting?

   YES NO

10. Do you know where to go if you would like to volunteer at the school or seek other ways to be involved at the middle school level?

    YES NO

***Are there any topics you would like to learn about in more detail regarding your child's transition to middle school? If so, please list.**

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Transition Survey

SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY

Hello ABC School Students!

This survey will tell us what we need to do to help you get ready for middle school.
Please circle your answers to the following questions:

1. Have you ever used a locker with a combination lock?

   YES NO

2. Do you feel comfortable changing classrooms for each subject?

   YES NO

3. Do you know how much homework to expect in middle school?

   YES NO

4. Do you know that you can join academic clubs in middle school?

   YES NO

5. Are you comfortable walking school halls with 8th grade students?

   YES NO

6. Are you comfortable asking for directions if you are lost finding a class?

   YES NO

7. Do you know the number of sports activities that you can try out for in middle school?

   YES NO

8. Do you know the types of classes you will have to take in middle school?

   YES NO

9. Are you comfortable eating lunch if you are not able to eat with your friends?

   YES NO

10. Are you comfortable finding the school counselor if you need help with classes or if you are being mistreated by other students?

    YES NO

***Do you have any more questions regarding middle school? Please list anything that comes to mind. Every question is important!**

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Middle School Transition Night

WHERE DO YOU GO SAMPLE WORKSHEET

As you complete the school tour, listen carefully and fill in the blanks with the correct answers. Those who accurately complete the sheet can exchange it for a door prize ticket at the faculty and staff meet and greet immediately following the tour for a chance to win a prize. Good luck!

Where do you go when...

1. You have science and social studies classes?_____

   List two 6th grade teachers who teach these subjects:_____

2. There are student assemblies?_____

   Who typically leads the assemblies?_____

3. You are having problems with a friend? _____

   Who is the person you should speak with?_____

4. You are late to school?_____

   Who is the person you should speak with?_____

5. You have connections classes?_____

   List two 6th grade connections teachers:_____

6. You need to do research for an English paper?_____

   Who is the person you should speak with?_____

7. You need to eat breakfast or lunch?_____

   Who is the cashier?_____

8. Your parents want to learn about new resources to stay involved?_____

   Who is the person you should speak with?_____

9. You do not feel well or need to take medicine?_____

   Who is the person you should speak with?_____

10. You want to learn about school sports or clubs?_____

    Who is the person you should speak with?_____

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Middle School Transition Night

SAMPLE AGENDA

WeCare County Middle School Welcomes You!

Welcome	Principal 8th Grade Student
Introductions	Grade Team Leaders
What Parents Need to Know (Parents Only)	PTA President Parent Liaison
What to Expect Next (Students Only)	6th Grade Team Leader 6th Grade Students
School Safety	Resource Officer
Questions and Answers	All
School Tour Where Is… Worksheet	Parent Tour Guide Student Tour Guide
Mini-Class Schedule Walkthrough	All
Faculty and Staff Meet and Greet	All

Important Contact Information:

WCMS Principal	Dr. John Doe	706.342.5555 john.doe@wecare.k12.ga.us
WCMS Counselor	Mrs. Ann Doe	706.342.5555 ext 123 ann.doe@wecare.k12.ga.us
WCMS Parent Liaison	Mr. Jack Smith	706.342.5555 ext 222 jack.smith@wecare.k12.ga.us
Front Office		706.342.5555 ext 411
WCMS PTA President	Melissa Wilson	706.342.4233 mwilson@gmail.com
Resource Officer	Sgt. Will Doe	706.342.5555 ext 911
Cafeteria	Betty Doe	706.342.5555 ext 789

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Education Career and Goal Setting

LESSON PICTURE TEMPLATE

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Family Reading Night

SAMPLE AGENDA

Meet and Greet Reception 6:00pm - 6:30pm

- Attendees will receive a Welcome Packet with Summer Reading Lists and FREE reading materials – books, magazines, coupons, and a reading resource directory/guide
- Families will sign up to receive email/snail mail newsletters and updates from the local library as well as have an opportunity to sign up for a library card.
- Tour of Library/Media Center
- Refreshments are served

Game Time 6:30pm - 7:15pm

- ***Sight Word Bingo*** - Winners get to choose a summer reading book to take home
- ***Book Walk*** - Cake walk with words instead of numbers
- ***Book Mark Making*** - Materials available to design your own bookmark
- ***Build-a-Book*** - Write a book with your family, make a cover, and print it

Reading Stations and Conversations 7:15pm - 8:00pm

Rotate groups of 5th grade parents and students every 15 minutes to one of three stations. (Note: you should also have stations for 6th grade parents and students who are not delivering presentations to the 5th grade families so they can participate and learn as well.)

- ***Station 1 (Parents and Students):*** Current 6th grade students share presentations on books that the rising 5th graders will be reading – they are to share the plot only, not give away the ending!
- ***Station 2 (Students Only):*** Rising 5th graders will learn from current 6th graders about reading programs the school participates in as well as expectations for teachers regarding reading assignments.
- ***Station 2 (Parents Only):*** Parents will sit in on a presentation by 6th grade teachers and parents of current 6th graders to talk about reading expectations in middle school, how to engage middle school readers, and what resources and tips are available to prevent summer reading loss.
- ***Station 3 (Parents and Students):*** Parents and students will meet all the 6th grade English/language arts teachers, set personal reading goals for the summer, and develop a plan of action to meet their goals.

Dismissed 8:00pm

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Understanding the Academic Landscape

LEARNING STYLES SAMPLE

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES TEST

The multiple intelligences test is designed to help you discover your learning style. By understanding your learning style, you will learn how to maximize your method(s) of learning, identifying what helps you learn and process information best. Learning styles are applicable across all ages and apply to both children and adults. This test does not provide a medical diagnosis of any sort and is for informational purposes only.

Read each statement. If it expresses some characteristic of yours and sounds true for the most part, jot down a "T." If it doesn't, mark an "F." If the statement is sometimes true, sometimes false, leave it blank.

1. _____ I'd rather draw a map than give someone verbal directions.
2. _____ I can play (or used to play) a musical instrument.
3. _____ I can associate music with my moods.
4. _____ I can add or multiply in my head.
5. _____ I like to work with calculators and computers.
6. _____ I pick up new dance steps fast.
7. _____ It's easy for me to say what I think in an argument or debate.
8. _____ I enjoy a good lecture, speech or sermon.
9. _____ I always know north from south no matter where I am.
10. _____ Life seems empty without music.
11. _____ I always understand the directions that come with new gadgets or appliances.
12. _____ I like to work puzzles and play games.
13. _____ Learning to ride a bike (or skates) was easy.
14. _____ I am irritated when I hear an argument or statement that sounds illogical.
15. _____ My sense of balance and coordination is good.
16. _____ I often see patterns and relationships between numbers faster and easier than others.
17. _____ I enjoy building models (or sculpting).
18. _____ I'm good at finding the fine points of word meanings.
19. _____ I can look at an object one way and see it sideways or backwards just as easily.
20. _____ I often connect a piece of music with some event in my life.
21. _____ I like to work with numbers and figures.
22. _____ Just looking at shapes of buildings and structures is pleasurable to me.
23. _____ I like to hum, whistle and sing in the shower or when I'm alone.
24. _____ I'm good at athletics.
25. _____ I'd like to study the structure and logic of languages.
26. _____ I'm usually aware of the expression on my face.
27. _____ I'm sensitive to the expressions on other people's faces.
28. _____ I stay "in touch" with my moods. I have no trouble identifying them.
29. _____ I am sensitive to the moods of others.
30. _____ I have a good sense of what others think of me.

Excerpted from Armstrong, T. *Multiple Intelligences In The Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1994).

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Understanding the Academic Landscape

LEARNING STYLES EXAMPLE

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE SCORING SHEET

Place a check mark by each item you marked as "true." Add your totals. A total of four in any of the categories A through E indicates strong ability. In categories F and G a score of one or more means you have abilities as well.

	A Linguistic	**B Logical-Mathematical**	**C Musical**	**D Spatial**	**E Bodily-Kinesthetic**	**F Intra-personal**	**G Inter-personal**
	7 ___	4 ___	2 ___	1 ___	6 ___	26 ___	27 ___
	8 ___	5 ___	3 ___	9 ___	13 ___	28 ___	29 ___
	14___	12 ___	10 ___	11___	15 ___		30 ___
	18 ___	16 ___	20 ___	19___	17 ___		
	25 ___	21 ___	23 ___	22___	24 ___		
Totals:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____

Excerpted from Armstrong, T. *Multiple Intelligences In The Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1994).

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Understanding the Academic Landscape

LEARNING STYLES SAMPLE

The Seven Multiple Intelligences in Children

Children who are strongly:	Think	Love	Need
Linguistic	In words	Reading, writing, telling stories, playing word games, etc.	Books, tapes, writing tools paper diaries, dialogues, discussion, debate stories
Logical-Mathematical	By reasoning	Experimenting, questioning, figuring out puzzles, calculating, etc.	Things to explore and think about, science materials, manipulatives, trips to the planetarium and science museum
Spatial	In images and pictures	Designing, drawing, visualizing, doodling, etc.	Art, LEGOs, video, movies, slides, imagination games, mazes, puzzles, illustrated books, trips to art museums
Bodily-Kinesthetic	Through somatic sensations	Dancing, running, jumping, building, touching, gesturing, etc.	Role play, drama, movement, things to build, sports and physical games, tactile experiences, hands-on learning
Musical	Via rhythms and melodies	Singing, whistling, humming, tapping feet and hands, listening, etc..	Sing-along time, trips to concerts, music playing at home and school, musical instruments
Interpersonal	By bouncing ideas off other people	Leading, organizing, relating, manipulating, mediating, partying, etc.	Friends, group games, social gatherings, community events, clubs, mentors/apprenticeships
Intrapersonal	Deeply inside themselves	Setting goals, meditating, dreaming, being quiet, etc.	Secret places, time alone, self-paced projects, choices

Excerpted from Armstrong, T. *Multiple Intelligences In The Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1994).

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Middle School Expo

SCAVENGER HUNT

This scavenger hunt is designed to help rising 6th graders learn their way around the school as well as to introduce them to some of the activities the school has to offer. Upon completing your registration and collecting your welcome packet, please search the school and expo tables to find the items listed below. (Hint: Your welcome packet includes a school map!) Once all the items are collected, return to the check-in desk with your items to claim a prize. You may work in groups!

1. **Principal's Office:** The Principal's Business Card with his signature

2. **Nurse's Station:** Band-Aid

3. **Soccer Team:** Try out dates and times flyer

4. **Spanish Club:** Flag from a Spanish speaking country

5. **Resource Officer's Office:** Sheriff's badge sticker

6. **Media Center:** Bookmark

7. **Counselor's Office:** Peer pressure booklet

8. **Cheerleading Squad:** Pom Pom

9. **Art Club:** Paint brush

10. **Cafeteria:** Lunch menu

11. **Gym:** Healthy heart tip sheet

12. **Student Council**: Meeting and events flyer

13. **Volleyball Team**: Current team member's signature

14. **Choir/Band/Music Room:** Sheet music

15. **6th Grade Lockers:** Key

16. **Basketball Team**: Piece of a basketball net

17. **Helping Hand Club**: Volunteer opportunity flyer

18. **Football Team**: Small plastic football

What is the Move On When Ready (MOWR) Act?

Move On When Ready Act (MOWR), House Bill 149, was signed into law April 2009 as a dual enrollment opportunity for students to attend a postsecondary institution full-time during their junior and/or senior year of high school.

Students that participate in MOWR will receive high school credit and college credit simultaneously while attending college classes on the college campus, full-time. Approved college on-line courses may also be taken that meet high school graduation requirements.

How does Move On When Ready help students?

MOWR provides high school students the opportunity to "jump start" postsecondary education during the high school years. Once a student meets the admission requirements and is accepted to a technical college, 2-year college, or 4-year university, the high school student will be free to "move on" earlier to the next educational level.

The opportunities within the MOWR legislation provide students an educational alternative other than the traditional high school setting or school day structure. The Move On When Ready Act also provides students an option to earn postsecondary credit before graduating high school. Students who earn postsecondary credit while in high school, according to recent research, are more likely to graduate from college or university.

August 2011

What is the BRIDGE Law?

The BRIDGE (Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy) Act, House Bill 400, was signed into law May 2010 to create an atmosphere motivating middle- and high-school students to learn because they see the relevance of education to their dreams and future plans. The implementation of the BRIDGE Act provides middle- and high-school students with career counseling and regularly-scheduled advisement to choose a focused plan of study.

What are the critical parts of the BRIDGE Act?

The most critical parts of the BRIDGE Act mandate all students in middle and high school receive counseling and regularly-scheduled advisement. The second mandate is that students choose a career area, create an Individual Graduation Plan, and graduate high school prepared to go to college or to enter the workforce. The third mandate requires regularly-scheduled advisement for all high- and middle-school students. The new rigorous performance standards and graduation requirements found in Georgia secondary schools better prepare our students and ensure they are prepared to move on successfully from one phase of their educational life to the next, and eventually to become a productive citizen of Georgia's workforce. The BRIDGE Act when coupled with Georgia's economic and workforce development model creates qualified workers to attract strong, stable companies and industries.

What are the requirements of the BRIDGE Act?

Beginning in the 2010-2011 academic year, local school systems must provide to sixth, seventh and eighth grade students the following:

- counseling
- regularly-scheduled advisement
- career awareness
- career interest inventories
- information to assist students in evaluating their academic skills and career interests.

August 2011

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Lighting the Flame

BRIDGE CARD

Georgia Department of Education

Beginning in the 2010-2011 academic year, local school systems must provide the following to high school students:

- o career counseling
- o career guidance
- o regularly-scheduled career advisement
- o information to enable students to successfully complete their individual graduation plans, preparing them for a seamless transition to postsecondary study, further training, or employment.

What is the Individual Graduation Plan?

Another part of the BRIDGE Act is the requirement that all 8th grade students during their spring semester create an Individual Graduation Plan (IGP). This graduation plan helps "map out" the rigorous academic core subjects and focused work in mathematics, science, or humanities, fine arts, world languages or sequenced career pathway coursework. The IGP is based on the student's selected academic and career area to prepare them for their chosen career. This plan must be developed in consultation with parents/guardians, students, school counselor or teacher as advisor.

Additional parts of the IGP may include career-oriented and work-based learning experiences, and postsecondary studies through Georgia's multiple College Credit Now programs.

Can students change their Individual Graduation Plan?

Students are allowed changes to their IGP, but need to keep it sufficiently structured to meet graduation requirements and to qualify for admission to postsecondary education. It is adviseable that any changes to the plan be based on career data gathered from career interest inventories.

These changes can be made during the high school ongoing review of the Individual Graduation Plan. During the IGP review, courses completed, schedules, career pathway, postsecondary plans, and related topics can be reviewed and revised, if appropriate, upon approval by the student and the student's parent or guardian with guidance from the student's school counselor or teacher-advisor.

Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

Georgia Department of Education

What does Move On When Ready cost?

Students can save money on future college costs because most expenses are paid by a funding mechanism established by the legislation. MOWR covers students to enroll full-time (12 semester hours) in postsecondary institutions to earn high school and college credits simultaneously.

How can students participate in Move On When Ready?

Interested students need to meet with their high school counselor and parents to discuss the guidelines and responsibilities of the MOWR program. Students are eligible to participate in Move on When Ready if they are entering 11th or 12th grade, as determined by the local system, and have spent the prior school year in attendance at a public high school in Georgia. Before students become MOWR candidates, they must meet the admission requirements of the selected college/university. Once accepted, students will need to complete the application form, meet the dual enrollment/ MOWR requirements as set by the eligible institution in addition to the GaDOE guidelines, and select approved courses to take at the college level that meet the high school graduation requirements.

What Else Do You Need To Know?

Tuition, materials, fees and possibly books are paid through MOWR funding. Food, transportation, and other costs are the responsibility of the student. Students participating in Move on When Ready are not eligible for any other state student financial aid at an eligible institution for courses taken under the program. They can receive additional institutional aid or local scholarships from the local postsecondary institution they are attending. Move on When Ready course hours do not count against any maximum hourly caps for HOPE scholarships or grants. Students may live on campus or commute and the student is responsible for expenses related to these living costs. Students entering grade nine for the first time during the 2011-2012 school year and beyond, will need to pass the Georgia High School Writing Test and take Georgia public high school End of Course Tests, which contributes to 20% of the course grade.

Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent
"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Middle School Transition Camp

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Getting Started

When planning a Middle School Transition Camp, start by considering the following:

- **Planning Team:** Who needs to be involved in the planning process? Consider this as an opportunity to collaborate with elementary schools and to involve new or existing partners. At the school level, have the middle school transition team plan the camp and be sure to include participants such as the principal, other school leaders, school counselors, social workers, parent involvement coordinators, Title I administrators, 5th grade teachers, middle school teachers, and parents. Invite one of your business or community partners to serve as well.

- **Funding:** What funding is available? Consider Title I funds, special grants, and community donations, including volunteers and in kind services. Also, consider if you will offer bus transportation or various pick up points to include all children as well as other operation costs.

- **Criteria for participation:** Which students will be served? Depending on funding and the purpose of middle school transition camp, the number of students served could vary. Some camps only offer middle school transition camps to select groups of students while others offer the opportunity to all incoming 6th graders.

Planning and Implementation Checklist

After the initial planning steps have been considered, use this check list to help work out the details.

☑ **Middle School Transition Camp Planning Team:** Who will serve on the planning team? Consider including a parent and other community groups as well as school staff.

☑ **Purpose and Curriculum:** What is the purpose of your middle school transition camp? What curriculum will you use? Have you developed an agenda? What results would you like to see?

☑ **Criterion and Number of Students To Be Served:** How many students will be served? What is the criterion for participation?

☑ **Marketing and Promotion:** How will you advertise? What partners will assist you? In addition to school personnel, apartment complexes, public health facilities, libraries, home visitation programs, and other community agencies and groups can help you recruit.

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Middle School Transition Camp

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

☑ **Cost:** Typically middle school transition camps are free to families. However, will you need to charge a small fee?

☑ **Registration:** What is the deadline? What information will parents need to register their student(s)? How will you register students?

☑ **Dates and schedule:** When will the middle school transition camp be held? How many hours? Middle school transition camps typically range from 1 to 5 days with 5 to 3 hours a day.

☑ **Forms:** What information and forms are required by your school?

☑ **Flyers and Other Printed Information for Families:** Consider a brochure and providing a schedule of activities.

☑ **Budget:** What are all the costs associated with holding a middle school transition camp?

- Personnel: How will the middle school transition camp be staffed? Will you encourage parents and others to volunteer? Will you need janitor or other personnel?
- Utilities
- Program Supplies
- Food: Will you offer lunch? Snacks?
- Family Activities and Workshops
- Transportation
- Evaluation and Feedback

☑ **Transportation:** Will transportation be offered? Will students have an opportunity to ride the school bus to and from home? Many school systems have the school buses pick-up and drop off children to and from the school.

☑ **Parent Involvement:** How will you engage families? Will they be involved in the school activities? Will there be "adult sessions" with child care? Interpretation? Refreshments? Child care for infants and toddlers if needed?

☑ **Evaluation:** How will you measure "success?" How will you get feedback from the middle school transition staff, families, and students? How will you share the pictures, the stories, as well as the data and lessons learned?

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Middle School Transition Camp

SAMPLE AGENDA

Day One

8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:45	Middle School Welcome, Overview, and Student Panel
9:45 – 10:30	Student Team Building Activities in Small Groups
10:30 – 10:35	Travel to Assigned Workshop
10:35 – 11:15	Assigned Workshop
11:15 – 11:20	Travel to Assigned School Tour Group
11:20 – 12:00	School Tour and Locker Discussion/Practice
12:00	Dismissal

Day Two

8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:45	Welcome and Orientation to Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Student Organizations (Interactive Session)
9:45 – 11:05	Mini Class Sessions (students participate in mock schedule visiting five classes that are ten minutes each with a set amount of time to transition to each class)
11:05 – 11:10	Travel to Assigned Workshop
11:10 – 12:00	Assigned Workshop
12:00	Dismissal

Day Three

8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 10:00	Welcome, Student Team Building Exercise, and Student Q&A
10:00 -10:05	Travel to Assigned Workshops
10:05 – 10:55	Assigned Workshop
10:55 – 11:00	Travel to Lunch
11:00 – 12:00	Celebration Lunch or School Picnic (Students, Parents, and Family Invited)
12:00	Dismissal

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Middle School Transition Camp

SAMPLE AGENDA

Workshops

Students will be assigned to groups and rotate among all three workshops. Therefore, every student will attend all three workshops over the three camp days.

Workshop 1:Bullying Prevention, Peer Pressure, and Self-Esteem Building (Cafeteria)
Workshop 2:Homework, Organization, and Study Skills (Music Room)
Workshop 3: Media, Video, and Technology Usage (Media Center)

Sample Parent/Family Agenda

Day One

8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 10:30	Middle School Transition Parent Overview and School Tour*

Day Two

8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 10:30	Middle School Transition Parent Overview and School Tour*

Day Three

8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 10:30	Middle School Transition Parent Overview and School Tour*
11:00 – 12:00	Celebration Lunch or School Picnic (Student, Parents, and Family Invited)

*Middle School Transition Parent Overview and School Tour is the Same Meeting Each Day

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Welcome Letter

SAMPLE

August 1, 2012

Hello Achieve Middle School Families:

I am very excited to welcome you and your student(s) to the Achieve Middle School family. I hope that each of you had a great summer and that you are ready for the 2012-2013 school year. The Achieve faculty and staff have been preparing the school for your arrival and cannot wait to meet you. As your new principal, I look forward to an exciting new year as your family makes the transition from elementary to middle school.

We have planned a **6th Grader Back to School Bash** on Tuesday, August 15, 2012 from 4:30pm until 6:30pm. The event will give students an opportunity to meet faculty and staff, tour the school, locate their locker, and get a list of school supplies they will need on the first day. In addition, we will have a core group of current middle school students that will serve as ambassadors during this time. They will help escort incoming students and answer questions.

Parents will have an opportunity to visit the parent resource room and meet the Parent Involvement Coordinator. I urge you to pay a visit to the parent resource room so that you can learn about opportunities to volunteer, upcoming parent workshops, resources, and partnerships with the local community. *The parent resource room is located in room 124 down the first hall on the right immediately after you pass the front office.*

We will have an area designated as "Resource Roundtables" where you will be able to get information such as: PTA membership and meeting information, instructions on how to use the parent portal, extracurricular activities, after school enrichment activities, a staff directory, principal office hours, and upcoming school events.

The first day of school is Monday, August 21, 2012. **School starts at 8:45am and ends at 3:50pm.** Please make sure you have arrangements after school for your child whether it is an afterschool program, academic club, or sports practice. The school and local community offer many different extracurricular and enrichment activities to meet the needs and interests of all students. Please refer to the attached list of opportunities to learn more about what is offered and how to sign up.

We will be holding an **Open House** on Tuesday, August 29, 2012 from 6:00pm until 8:00pm. At this time, I will hold a Question and Answer session and then you will be able to meet with your child's teachers. You will also receive information about grade level curriculum, as well as learn about the tools and resources that we are currently using in the classroom.

We appreciate the role all of our families play in the life of our school community and encourage you and your student to take advantage of the opportunities we offer to get connected. Your involvement, no matter how much or how little time you have, will benefit all of Achieve Middle School students.

I am looking forward to personally meeting you soon and know it will be a great school year.

On behalf of the Achieve Middle School team,

Arthur Handle
Principal

Middle School Transition Toolkit

Student Ambassadors

SAMPLE PERMISSION FORM

Dear Student:

Remember when you were a rising 6th grader? Wasn't it nice to have a trusted student you could rely upon or ask questions to on a regular basis?

Each new school year our middle school welcomes incoming 6th graders with our Student Ambassador Program. This program enlists rising 7th and 8th grade students to serve as ambassadors to new 6th grade students during the first few weeks of school. Ambassadors serve as guides during school hours to help new students navigate the middle school landscape and to provide them with a trusted source for information if they have questions throughout the day. You will not miss any class time. I am contacting you about this as I would like to ask you to serve as a student ambassador next school year. I know that you are a responsible student that I can count on and will be someone that the new students will trust and look up to as a role model.

As a student ambassador, you will be assigned to various areas of the school before and after school, as well as during class changes, lunch and other free periods. Your schedule will rotate with other student ambassadors. In addition, you will also be asked to participate in other middle school transition activities that will take place throughout the school year. In order to serve as a student ambassador you must attend a mandatory training on **August 16, 2012, from 3:30 -5:30 PM**. **If you have a conflict with this date just let me know.** At that meeting you will learn about further expectations, opportunities, and receive your ambassador schedule.

If you are willing and able to serve as student ambassador for the 2012-2013 school year, please complete the attached slip and return it to me Ms. Smith in the front office by May 1, 2012. I will contact you this summer to remind you.

Thanks,

Ms. Jane Doe
School Counselor

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Middle School Transition Toolkit

Goal Setting

INSTRUCTIONS

SMART Goal Setting

Following are components of an effective goal – one that describes performance standards that will "tell us what good behavior looks like." The SMART acronym can help us remember these components.

Specific	The goal should identify a specific action or event that will take place.
Measurable	The goal and its benefits can be measured to show success.
Achievable	The goal should be attainable with available resources.
Realistic	The goal should require you to stretch or grow some, but still allow for the likelihood of success.
Timely	The goal should state the time period in which it will be accomplished.

Here are some tips that can help you set effective goals:

1. Develop several goals. Start with just two or three goals and then as you begin to accomplish them, consider growing your list further to five or seven goals. This will give you several things to work on over a period of time.

2. State goals as declarations of intent, not items on a wish list. "I want to organize my papers for each class" lacks power. "I will organize my papers for English, math, and science class" is intentional and powerful.

3. Attach a date to each goal. State what you intend to accomplish and by when. A good list should include some short-term and long-term goals. You may want a few goals for the year, and some for each semester.

4. Be specific. "To play an instrument" is too general; "to talk to the band director this month and select an instrument I want to learn to play" is better. Sometimes a more general goal can become the long-term aim, and you can identify some more specific goals to take you there.

5. Share your goals with someone who cares if you reach them. Sharing your intentions with your parents, your best friend, or your teacher will help ensure success.

6. Write down your goals and put them where you will see them. The more often you read your list, the more likely you will be able to get the results you want.

7. Review and revise your list. Experiment with different ways of stating your goals. Goal setting improves with practice, so play around with it.

Adapted from Maine Career Advantage (2002).
Career Preparation Curriculum, Lesson Plan 7: Goal Setting at http://www.ccd.me.edu/careerprep

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Goal Setting

TEMPLATE

Name: _____ Date: _____

The following goals are focused on the next _____ months:

School Goals:	Action Steps:
Personal/Home Goals:	Action Steps:
College and Career Goals:	Action Steps:

Adapted from Maine Career Advantage (2002).
Career Preparation Curriculum, Lesson Plan 7: Goal Setting at http://www.ccd.me.edu/careerprep

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Goal Setting

SMART GOALS WORKSHEET

Goal statement:

What do I need to do to reach this goal?

Where am I now?

Obstacles:	Solutions:

Adapted from Maine Career Advantage (2002).
Career Preparation Curriculum, Lesson Plan 7: Goal Setting at http://www.ccd.me.edu/careerprep

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Silent Interview

WORKSHEET EXAMPLE

Instructions: Look at your partner and answer the following questions as you believe your partner would if he or she could talk. THERE SHOULD BE NO TALKING! Record your presumed responses under:

a) Your response

After you and your partner have both completed the silent interview, you will share your written responses with your partner and ask for the accurate response to each question. Record your partners accurate response under:

b) Accurate response

1. **What is this person's ethnic or national group?**

   a)

   b)

3. **What does this person do on the weekends during his or her spare time?**

   a)

   b)

4. **What would be the IDEAL gift for this person?**

   a)

   b)

4. **What elementary school did this person attend?**

   a)

   b)

5. **What is this person's favorite subject in school? What are they best at?**

   a)

   b)

6. **Describe this person's current neighborhood: rural, suburban, center city; busy or quiet; single home or apartment, etc.**

   a)

   b)

For More Information on Middle School Transition Please Visit:

Georgia Afterschool Investment Council
www.afterschoolga.org

Georgia Department of Education
www.gadoe.org

Georgia Family Connection Partnership
www.gafcp.org

Georgia Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC)
www.cisga.org

Georgia Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
www.georgiapta.org

United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta
www.smartstartga.org and www.uwma.org