8th Grade Transition Protocol

**Activity Description:**

There are a variety of activities recommended to help 8th graders transition to high school. However, this protocol is not just a series of different activities but rather a systemic approach to transitioning students from middle school to high that begins in the beginning of the 8th grade year and last through the end of the freshmen year of high school. This protocol describes a joint effort and joint responsibility between the middle school and high school counselors, administration and faculty members. Transition “out” is not about touring the high school for an evening or sitting through course and sports/activity presentations. Targeted transition out activities and mindset begin long before students begin thinking about the next step.

**School Counselor Performance Standard 2: Program Delivery** - The professional school counselor facilitates delivery of the WV Comprehensive Developmental School Counseling Program for all students.

- **Function 2G: SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS** - The professional school counselor establishes student supports for successful transitioning through programmatic levels and from school to school, school to work, or school to post-secondary, or career and technical training.

- **Indicator 2G1:** The professional school counselor facilitates transition interventions and supports to assist all students in successfully completing each grade level and transitioning to the next programmatic or grade level.

**GOAL:** To transition all students from middle to high school so that all students have the skills necessary to successfully navigate the 9th grade and complete high school.

**Rationale:**

The 9th grade year has recently been referred to as the ‘Ninth Grade Bulge.’ Many freshmen experience a significant decline in both grades and attendance, and unless significant, individualized transition efforts occur, students are more likely to be retained in the 9th Grade than any other years. This often occurs as a result of the new social opportunities, increased academic rigor, more choice freedoms, and increased pressures of fitting in and finding comfortable peer groups.

According to ERIC Digest, universally 9th grade students tend to “view themselves more negatively and experience an increased need for friendships” This applies across the board from low performing to even honors or “high achieving” students. Therefore, the transition between middle and high school is critical. As The National Middle School Association (NMSA) explains, “Successful transition programs must involve collaboration between eighth and ninth grade buildings/personnel [...] schools should communicate to identify [...] the distinctive features of academic, social, and organizational logistics and philosophies in middle school and high school.”

**Materials:**

* Counselor Resources = CR (link to these resources from [http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/protocols.html](http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/protocols.html))

1. **CR1:** Planning Guide 8th Grade Parent Workshop
2. **CR2:** 8th Grade Parent Workshop Agenda

**Lead Developers:** Shelly DeBerry, WVDE Student Success Advocate; Barbara Ashcraft, School Counseling Coordinator; Cathy Grewe, Counselor - Jackson Middle, and Lori Helmick, Counselor – St. Mary’s High School
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3. **CR3**: 8th Grade Parent Workshop/Orientation Power Point
4. **CR4**: Talking Points - 8th Grade Parent Workshop
5. **CR5**: Portfolio Contents
6. **CR6**: Portfolio Lesson Plan
7. **CR7**: Mapping Your Future Power Point for Students
8. **CR8**: Career Guidance Lesson
9. **CR9**: Career Guidance Handouts
10. **CR10**: Tips for Parents
11. **CR11**: Closing the Gap: Successful Transitions Power Point

Visit this website: [http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/protocols.html](http://wvde.state.wv.us/counselors/protocols.html) to review and download these protocols for additional 8th grad transition assistance.

12. **8th Grade ISTP Protocol**
13. **Middle School At-Risk Protocol**

**Procedures:**
1. Transitioning to high school must be a process not an event. 8th and 9th grade counselors will reference, modify and use the resources from this protocol along with other resources you are familiar with or are already using to create a dynamic, engaging, systemic transition program.

2. The middle school counselor must establish a working relationship with the receiving high school counselors and work collaboratively all year on transition activities that include but are not limited to:
   a. High school students mentoring and tutoring middle school students
   b. On-going orientation activities to high school that include visits to the high school throughout the year for various events (performing arts etc)
   c. Small group question and answer sessions about high school
   d. Guidance lessons about change, course requirements for graduation, career pathways and portfolio development
   e. Activities specifically tailored with teacher advisors on how to navigate high school
   f. Special invitation to high school events: career days, sporting events, competitions, field day events, etc

3. Make arrangements for the high school counselors to visit the middle school students early in the school year and again during registration time.

4. Make arrangements for various instructors to visit the middle school to discuss their programs with the students (eg. Band, performing choir, dance team, student government, JROTC, vocational instructors or any other program that you think the students need more information about)

5. Approach the high school counselor and make arrangements for the student government representatives to speak to the middle school students or have them create a DVD to share with the middle school students.

6. Identify students who are at-risk and follow the Middle School At-Risk Protocol to assure the more intense need of this population are addressed in order to increase the chances of successful transitions.

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7. Schedule such free programs as “Making High School Count” to hear from experts, how early decisions (academic choices, behavior, attendance, etc.) in high school have long-term consequences on student success and post-secondary opportunities.

8. Conduct an evening Parent Orientation to High School workshop in collaboration with the high school counselors to orient them to high school culture, experiences, options, courses, etc. and answer questions and concerns from parents both in the spring of the 8th Grade Year and late summer of the 9th grade year.

9. Follow 8th Grade ISTP Protocol to ensure all students have an informed, systematic process of exploring careers related to the county’s career clusters, understanding interests and abilities, and selecting high school courses for the first two years of high school.

10. Assist high school counselors with any scheduling/registration activities.

11. Secure student copies of schedules before the end of the school year and have counselor and students available to answer questions specific to courses. Review schedules with students for correctness.

12. Introduce counselor assignments, if possible.

13. Arrange a visit to the high school, once schedules are received, before the end of the school year to introduce to teachers, become aware of class location, and receive any summer assignments.

14. Publish the Parent/student orientation dates for the fall and encourage all students to attend.

15. Host summer transition programs for interested and at-risk students.

16. Hold a Challenge/Field Day with 9th Grade students, teachers, counselors and principals to allow for relationship building.

17. Broadly publicize Freshmen Orientation Events communitywide (churches, sporting events, 4-H, Scouts, etc.)
   a) During beginning of year orientations, assign students to mentors, introduce them, have them walk them through their schedules, etc.
   b) Host mentor/student events at least quarterly.
   c) Introduce students/parents to their adult mentor/advisor. Discuss activities, goals of advisory, of what to expect during advisor (curriculum, special activities, communication with parents, etc).

18. Work collaboratively with parents and the community to ensure that transitioning to high school is a fun, engaging, meaningful experience that assures incoming freshmen know what to expect, have a plethora of high school success tips, and know who to contact when things are not going well or when they have unanswered questions.
Additional Resources:

The Next Best Step: Helping Students Transition “Out”

- As they make the transition into high school, many young adolescents experience a larger, more impersonal, more competitive, and grade-oriented environment than they experienced in middle school (Eccles, Midgley, & Adler, 1984).
- They experience a greater diversity of teachers and peers, and they have more choices to make in their curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Many young adolescents' grades drop, and they do not attend school as regularly as they did (Barone et al., 1991; Reyes, Gillock, & Kobus, 1994).
- They also develop a more negative view of themselves and feel an increased need for peer friendships (Hertzog et al., 1996)
- Once young adolescents make the transition into high school... concerned about how difficult the classes were and how to manage their time when they got involved in extracurricular activities. How to study and how to manage their time were major concerns once these young adolescents made the transition into high school.
- School seemed a lot more difficult and demanding than it had in middle school.

Web Links:
http://www.chccs.k12.nc.us/ISD/HighSchoolreform9thGrad.pdf
http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/43

Evaluation:
1. Documentation of all transition activities
2. Survey of freshmen students in reference to being prepared for high school
3. Student/parent/teacher forums and surveys
4. Student Needs Assessment
5. 9th grade D/F/I Reports
6. 9th grade Retention Rates
7. High School discipline and attendance reports
8. Extra-curricular involvement
9. Parental Engagement – Continued Involvement in the Student’s Education
10. Advisor Records and Feedback