Easing the Transition

SAMPLE ISSUE
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It's a Team Effort

Transitions are hard for everyone. Starting a new job, welcoming a new child, dealing with the death of a loved one, getting married or filing for divorce. A transition can seem positive on the surface, but even joyful transitions bring stress and difficulties. Our middle school students struggle with transitions, too.

Middle school students may be dealing with getting to know a new school building, meeting new teachers, combining with students from other feeder schools, and gaining a new degree of independence. It’s scary, exciting, overwhelming, and, at times, paralyzing. How do we help them handle the change and find success at the other end?

The articles for this issue’s transition theme overwhelmingly highlight the importance of focused planning efforts prior to, during, and after the transition to and from middle school. Collective and ongoing attention to students’ transitions helps them build confidence and resilience, be in tune to expectations, minimize anxiety, and maintain their sense of identity.

It takes a team to pull this off. Students benefit when staff at feeder schools work intensively and collaboratively with staff at the receiving middle or high school. Additionally, engaging school counselors, coaches, and parents as part of the team is critical for student success. Organizational changes like providing for common planning time and developing interdisciplinary connections can make a difference and providing professional learning opportunities for teachers and counselors develops common knowledge and perspective on their roles in the transition process.

Let’s not forget peer-to-peer help, too. You’ll find that hearing the experiences of and encouragement from a student who’s “been there, done that” (see this issue’s article from student Annabelle Kier) can help a student new to the middle or high school realize they’re not the only one with these thoughts and anxieties. There’s comfort in commiseration.

I hope you find in this issue new ideas and inspiration to revisit and improve your school’s transition plans so students remain engaged, confident, and successful learners.

April Tibbles, Editor

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