



PACKIN' UP

MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION GUIDE
2020



WAKE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM



Dear Counselors and Parents,

The transition from elementary to middle school is often an exciting, yet nerve-racking time for students. Best case scenario would be that each rising 6th grader feels prepared to enter middle school. As educators or parents, we can greatly enhance students' comfort level with this change by exposing them to common concerns that arise in middle school and equipping them with skills necessary to be successful. Packin' Up: Middle School Transition Guide is created in an effort to support 5th grade counselors, 6th grade counselors and parents in this endeavor. The information within this guide can be used by counselors and parents at the elementary and middle school levels; therefore, it can be tailored to the school's goals and students' needs.

Sincerely,

The Transition Guide Team

Becky Rackley, Counselor, Holly Ridge Elementary School

Sue Edwards, Counselor, Lacy Elementary School

Whitney Bennett, Counselor, York Elementary School

Erin Wright, Counselor, West Millbrook Middle School

Javier Martinez, Counselor, Ligon Middle School

Brent Sauls, Counselor, Daniels Middle School

Elaine Harper, Counselor, Wakefield Middle School

Revised: February 2020 by Kinea Epps, Rolesville Middle School

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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The transition to middle school can be challenging for students due to differences in middle and elementary school settings. It is important for parents' transition, as well as their child. One adjustment for parents and students is to know that in most cases students have to adjust and know that in most cases, students no longer have one core teacher, but six or seven. This section will provide general information about the functioning of the middle school.

Who's Who in the Middle School?

Students may notice when they get to the middle school that there are several adults around, but they are not always sure what those adults do and who to ask for help.

TEAM LEADER

This person is one of the core teachers that schedules conferences, facilitates meetings, and manages the team's activities. He/she is the first point of contact when a student's school performance needs to be addressed.

GRADE LEVEL COUNSELOR

One very important thing for students to understand is that their middle school counselor is there to help them, just like their elementary counselor. For most middle schools within Wake County, there is one counselor for every grade level or track, for year-round schools, in middle school. For many schools that counselor rotates with their students for all three years, but for some the counselors remain in the same grade level from year to year. The counselor in the middle school will typically not be in the classroom as much as the elementary counselors but are available for individual and group sessions. The counselor is not an administrator and is not responsible for disciplinary actions.

GRADE LEVEL ADMINISTRATOR

The administrative layout of a middle school can be very confusing to some students. They have a principal of the whole school, but they will most likely have a grade level administrator (or Assistant Principal). The student's grade level administrator will more often than not be the one to handle safety, disciplinary, and/or facility situations within that grade level.

GUIDANCE TECHNICIAN

There is typically a guidance technician in each of the middle schools. This individual is usually the first person a new student meets at the school because they often handle the initial registration process. The technician also coordinates the withdrawal process for students leaving the school.

CASE MANAGER

It is important to know that students with special needs have been assigned a case manager to help ensure that their needs are being met. Special education teachers serve as the case manager for an identified group of students who have an Individualized Educational Program (IEP). These teachers are responsible for ensuring that the IEP is implemented, scheduling meetings to discuss an IEP, and/or to answer questions regarding the IEP. The 504 Contact is the case manager for students who have a Section 504 Accommodation Plan. In most middle schools, this person is typically a counselor. The AIG Coordinator is the case manager for students who have a Differentiation Educational Plan (DEP). Finally, the ESL Resource Teacher is the case manager for students who have a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER (SRO)

The school resource officer is not a security guard, but a Wake County Sheriff's Deputy. His/her presence on campus can be intimidating if students are unaware of the role the resource officer plays within the school. These individuals are on campus to maintain student safety. Almost all middle schools in the county have one, so it does not mean a school is a tough school for having a full-time resource officer. The school resource officers are very approachable and they are another source of help for students.

> See Activity 1

Glossary of Middle School Terms

CORE CLASSES

Although elective choices may vary by individual middle schools, all middle schools require each regular education student to take Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science.

ADVANCED CLASSES

These classes comprise students who are identified academically intellectually gifted (AIG) and students who have received recommendations from teachers because they are performing at an extremely high level. Most middle schools offer advanced classes in language arts and math. Advanced classes in other subject areas are more often available in magnet schools.

BINDERS

Most teams require an organizational system comprised of binders and/or folders. A 3 ring binder is usually required and acts as the student's desk, the place where he/she keeps most of his/her things for class.

AGENDA

One of the most important objects a student will possess in middle school is his/her agenda. The agenda is essentially a planning book in which students can write down homework assignments, upcoming projects, dated activities, or any other important information. Using an agenda can help students with short-term and long-term goal-setting and planning. Some schools have agendas available for parents to purchase. Others allow students to use their preferred method for keeping up with assignments, etc. Be sure to talk with your students about the best method for organization. Because 6th graders will have many different classes and teacher expectations to keep track of, writing everything down is essential.

DISCIPLINE

It is important that middle school students are aware early of the policies for the county and for the school. Wake County policies can be found in the Parent/Student handbook, and individual school policies can usually be found at the front of each student's agenda. Students need to understand the differences between their elementary school rules and the new middle school rules and expectations. Topics such as dress code policy and other common violations should be talked about at length with students. Though specifics cannot be addressed by the elementary schools on each middle school's rules, it is important to begin dialogue about some of the differences.

ELECTIVES

These are classes that students take in addition to core classes that allow for variety in their day. Some examples of electives may include drama, dance, chorus, or art. In 6th grade, most schools require that students take a keyboarding class, unless they are in a band, strings, or Reading/Math ALP. Students also take a class entitled Healthful Living, which comprises health education and physical education (PE). Classes can be held quarterly, semesters or year-long.

END OF COURSE (EOC) TESTS

These tests are given to students who take high school level courses such as Algebra or Geometry.

INCLUSION

Students with special needs can have their instruction provided to them in the regular classroom setting. Hence, there is no pull-out for AIG or IEP students from their regular classroom settings. AIG students are typically served in the advanced classes, while IEP students may be instructed in the In Class Resource (ICR) classroom settings. IEP students may also be served through resource classes that coincide with their specific area of need.

LOCKERS

Students in middle school will utilize a locker. Most middle schools provide lockers for the students, but often students must provide the lock. The students do not need to visit their lockers after every class period. Often teachers provide times for students to use their lockers and go to the bathroom. Advise students to get their locks over the summer and to practice their combinations. In the fall, homeroom teachers will allow students time to practice and will always keep a list of students' combinations in case they forget! Teachers will always have a default key to unlock lockers when combinations are forgotten.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION & SUPPORT (PBIS) & CHARACTER EDUCATION

Some schools are PBIS schools. This is a program established within the school for teaching and rewarding positive behavior. Additionally, essential to students' growth and development, teachers incorporate character education lessons into their classrooms. The following traits are emphasized (courage, good judgment, integrity, kindness, perseverance, respect, responsibility, self-discipline)

ON TEAM/OFF TEAM

In most schools, students are considered to be on team if they have lunch with one of their core teachers. Conversely, they are considered off team if they have lunch with an elective teacher or H/PE teacher.

SUPPLY LIST

By the beginning of the school year, schools provide a list of needed supplies for a student to have by team and/or elective teachers. Most schools have supply lists posted on their school's website.

TEAMS

In most middle schools, students will be assigned to a team. The team is traditionally composed of four core teachers. Some variations may include two teacher teams, where both teachers teach 2 subjects each; or three teacher teams, where at least one teacher teaches more than one subject. Teaming is an important component to the middle school concept. Teaming allows the teachers to work together to create interdisciplinary units, which enhances student learning.

Teams go on field trips or have team days. Schools try to balance teachers on teams such that teacher personalities are diverse. Having a mix of different personalities hopefully ensures that each child can almost always find at least one teacher on their team with whom they connect. In addition, students are placed on teams in a way that promotes academic and demographic equity.

TEAM AREA

This area may also be referred to as Team Hallway or Pod but is the designated area of the school in which the student's core classes are located. Students will spend the bulk of the school day in their team area.

TEAM CONFERENCE

Parents can request to schedule a conference with their child's core teachers to discuss their child's performance and/or express concerns. Teams are great for parents because the parent can contact one teacher and get information to, or from, his or her child's whole team of teachers. In most schools, the team leader is responsible for scheduling the conference. However, counselors can be asked to schedule conferences and/or invited to attend team conferences. Teachers do like to meet as a team but individual teacher conferences can be requested and scheduled as well.

TRANSITION TIME

The time between classes is usually very short ranging between 3- 5 minutes. This is plenty of time as long as students do not continuously stop in the halls and engage in long conversations with friends. Some schools use a bell system that will inform students when each class ends and when the next one begins, while some schools only use a bell that begins school and another at dismissal.

> See Activity 2



ACADEMICS

ACADEMICS

Letter Grading (Middle School)

In middle school, students earn letter grades of A, B, C, D, or F on their report cards. They may also be assigned a grade of "I" for "Incomplete" if, because of an emergency, they do not complete work by the end of the grading period. The "Incomplete" becomes an "F" if work is not finished by an assigned time. Letter grades have the following numerical values:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Below 60

In addition to academic performance requirements, students must meet the requirements of the WCPSS attendance policy. Failure to meet the requirements of the attendance policy may result in failure of a class and grade retention.

> See Activity 3

Standards-based Grading vs. Letter Grading

Letter grades are quite different from standards-based grading. In **standards-based grading**, students are assessed as being at, above, or below grade level using the 1, 2, 3, 3* or 4 number system. Work habits and conduct grades are separate from the student's content proficiency. Students are not given a letter grade for assignments or tests. Rubrics are used to assess whether or not the student is performing at, above, or below grade level, and a level number is given. The **letter grade system** is used to measure how well a student has mastered a specific objective, rather than being assessed on broad concepts over time. This is often shown in a percentage of the questions that the student got correct. Most sixth-grade teachers use a percentage scale. For example, some teachers may use these percentages: homework 15%, class work 15%, quiz 30%, and test 40%. Please understand that a 3 in elementary school does not equate to an A or B on the percentage scale. It is important to remember that the best way to determine if a student has mastered a concept is the average of his/her test and/or quiz grades.

Honor Roll Recognition

Most middle schools recognize students who have made the honor roll. An honor roll is a list of students who have made either all A's (the A honor roll) or have made a combination of all A's and B's (the AB honor roll) on their report card during each quarter's marking period. Middle school recognitions may include certificates, rewards, names being read on announcements, lists of names in the local newspaper, and/or awards ceremonies.

Homework Requirements

Homework at the elementary level is used for skills practice and is an indicator of understanding of concepts. It is not supposed to be used to determine a student's level of proficiency. In middle school, students have homework to complete every night, presentations to give in class, and big group projects to turn in. It is the foundation for future tests. Rising 6th graders must understand that they will be held accountable for correctly completing homework. Parents should encourage their students to find a homework buddy on their team to ask about assignments and missed work when they are absent. Several middle school teachers have websites that parents and students can access for assignment information.

Time Management/Study Habits

In middle school, time becomes a precious commodity. Students normally have at least six classes in a school day- with six different teachers, six different expectations, and sometimes six different homework assignments! Along with being responsible for all of the above, students must also be responsible for managing time; both at school and at home. One major academic process that students must fit in to their busy schedules is homework- whether completing homework assignments, major projects, or studying for tests. Learning and utilizing study skills will both qualify and quantify time for a 6th grader. Students should use completed work as a study guide along with notes from class. When studying ahead, students should review notes each night.

> See Activity 4

Description of Core Classes

Sixth grade students study language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and healthful living.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Following State Standards for English Language Arts, sixth graders develop skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language through experience with print and digital resources. Students read a wide range of text, varying in levels of sophistication and purpose. Through print and non-print text, they develop comprehension strategies, vocabulary, as well as high order thinking skills.

MATHEMATICS

The Standards for Mathematical Practice rest on important “processes and proficiencies” with longstanding importance in mathematics education. They describe the characteristics and habits of mind that all students who are mathematically proficient should be able to exhibit. The eight Standards for Mathematical Practice are:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Model with mathematics.
- Use appropriate tools strategically.
- Attend to precision.
- Look for and make use of structure.
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

SCIENCE

Traditional laboratory experiences provide opportunities to demonstrate how science is constant, historic, probabilistic, and replicable. Although there are no fixed steps that all scientists follow, scientific investigations usually involve collections of relevant evidence, the use of logical reasoning, the application of imagination to devise hypotheses, and explanations to make sense of collected evidence. Student engagement in scientific investigation provides background for understanding the nature of scientific inquiry.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Students in sixth grade will continue to expand the knowledge, skills, and understandings acquired in the fourth and fifth grade studies of North Carolina and the United States by connecting those studies to their first formal look at a study of the world. Sixth graders will focus heavily on the discipline of geography by using the themes of location, place, movement, human-environment interaction, and region to understand the emergence, expansion, and decline of civilizations and societies from the beginning of human existence to the Age of Exploration.

> For more detailed information, please refer to the Middle School Program Planning Guide:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17NtdXmwsbdvV5TG-uokSITOCVznDpNoz/view>

Elective Courses

Each middle school offers a program of electives. Electives are courses that students can choose based on their interests. Elective courses may be offered in nine-week, trimester, semester, and/or year-long formats. Elective offerings vary by school; therefore, each school prepares a registration sheet that lists the electives it will offer. The availability of electives depends on student interest, an appropriate facility, and staffing.

HEALTHFUL LIVING

Healthful Living is required for all 6th grade students and includes health education and physical education. These two courses complement each other as students learn how to be healthy and physically active for a lifetime. Because our health and physical fitness needs are so different from a generation ago, the nature of healthful living is changing. Poor health choices (i.e., use of alcohol and other drugs, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity) now account for more than 50% of the preventable deaths in the United States.

SUPPORT/TUTORING PROGRAMS

Academic support and tutoring opportunities will vary from school to school. After and during school programs might



SOCIAL

SOCIAL

Problem-solving, Making Good Choices, and Responsibility

It is important to remember that students' first priority in middle school is to learn! That being said, social skills can greatly enhance their chance of having a positive environment in which to learn. Efforts and choices will directly affect grades, opportunities to participate in sports and/or other extracurricular activities, peer interactions, and relationships with adults both in and out of school. Part of growing up and gaining independence involves gaining the trust of both teachers and parents. To do so, students must demonstrate responsibility and the ability to make good choices across settings. The students' ability to problem-solve and choose positive ways to interact with parents, teachers, and peers will aid in making their middle school experience successful.

MAKING/CHOOSING FRIENDS

One of the cool but scary things about middle school is seeing all of the new faces. Knowing how to make new friends will be extremely important in the middle school setting. Several different elementary schools feed into one middle school, and students are assigned randomly to teams. As a result, students may not be on the same team with their friends they may have had while in elementary school. Some students might already know a lot of students from their old elementary school, but many students do not know anyone at all because they were the only ones from their elementary school to come to a particular middle school. Going to middle school is a great opportunity to make new friends. Some tips for making new friends are:

- Get involved in school activities
- Introduce yourself to students who sit around you in your classes
- Choose different partners during group work assignments in your classes
- Sit with different groups of people at lunch
- Make an appointment with the school counselor for help with making friends.

> See Activity 5

PEER PRESSURE

Middle school is a time of great transition emotionally, physically, and socially. All of these changes can either be nurtured, or hindered by peers. Remember, peer pressure can be either positive or negative. Examples of positive peer pressure might include encouraging friends to study by offering to study with them or motivating them to work hard at a sport. Examples of negative peer pressure might include someone encouraging students to spread rumors, be disruptive in class, or skip school. In order to best handle social pressure, the following tips might be helpful:

- Find friends with similar interests, values, and beliefs
- Be assertive—tell friends what you like/don't like
- Don't use alcohol or other drugs
- Avoid situations in which you know that you could get into trouble
- Learn to handle conflicts in a positive way

- Talk with trusted adults about situations that you don't understand and/or that make you feel uncomfortable

BULLYING

Bullying is unfair (meaning the —bully uses some sort of power over his/her victim) and one-sided (meaning only one person or one group of people is engaging in bullying behavior in the situation). Bullying happens when someone keeps hurting, frightening, threatening, or leaving someone out on purpose. Bullying can include behaviors such as:

- Physical violence and attacks
- Extortion and theft
- Taunts, name-calling and put-downs
- Peer group exclusion
- Threats and intimidation
- Cyberbullying

Help is available to students who feel that they are being bullied. If a student witnesses a bullying situation, they have the power to be part of the problem or part of the solution depending on their reactions to the situation. They can exacerbate the situation by doing nothing, encouraging the bully, or pretending not to see. Students can help the situation immediately reporting the situation to an adult, by helping the victim to get out of the situation and encouraging the victim to get help.

It is imperative that every student knows at least three appropriate things to say and/or do when they are victims of bullying. Another aspect of bullying involves forming cliques. Groups of friends with similar interests are healthy and natural. However, cliques are formed when students gather together and begin excluding other students from their group based on superficial reasons (i.e. not pretty enough, not smart enough). Stereotyping, discrimination, and negative social interactions with other groups are possible outcomes of joining cliques.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying occurs when students use a data device such as a computer or cell phone to bully or harass other students. This may occur in various ways including text messaging, using social network sites to message each other, and via email.

Interactions with Older Students

Most middle schools are designed so that 6th graders are in teams, and interactions with 7th and 8th graders are limited. Just as in elementary school, positive social interactions of all students are encouraged, and bullying is not tolerated. If students find themselves in uncomfortable situations in which they feel they need help, they should be aware that teachers, counselors, and/or any other school personnel are there to help them.



GETTING INVOLVED

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/GETTING INVOLVED

Sports

An activity that rising 6th graders often look forward to in middle school is the opportunity to represent their school in athletics. WCPSS athletic policy allows only 7th and 8th grade students can try out and participate on a sports team. However, here are a couple of ways 6th graders can get involved in supporting their school athletic programs:

BE A MANAGER

Most of the coaches in middle school will reserve the role of team manager for an eager 6th grader. Students wanting to be managers should be aware that it is a significant time commitment and could take away from other activities. Students interested in being a manager should contact the appropriate coach as soon as possible.

BE A FAN

Sixth-grade students should be encouraged to come to athletic events and support their teams and their school. Games are not only a great way to plug into the school, they are a great way to meet new friends and hang out with your old ones.

Clubs

Like sports, some clubs only allow 7th and 8th grade students to participate. Usually, these clubs are considered honors and only students that maintain good grades as 6th graders are eligible to participate, like National Junior Honor Society. There are some clubs and extracurricular activities available for 6th graders.

Some include:

- Student Council,
- Battle of the Books Club,
- Book Club, Chess Club,
- Science Olympiad, and
- Dance Team and/or the Step Team.

Clubs and extracurricular activities will vary depending on the middle school so students are encouraged to visit their school's website and contact club advisors to find out about these clubs.

Music/Band/Drama

Band, Chorus, and Orchestra are a few other ways for middle school students to get involved in their school culture. If rising 6th grade students wish to participate in band or orchestra, most schools require students with no prior experience to start playing an instrument in 6th grade. Other programs such as Honors Chorus, school plays, and productions may require that students try out to participate. Many of these programs require after school and evening commitments for performances.



REGISTRATION

REGISTERING FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Registration Information

Managing paperwork for registration can be a large task to complete. Oftentimes, your students are entering a variety of schools which may all have different processes for registering students. Elementary counselors should take advantage of the opportunities offered by Wake County to meet with representatives from middle schools that your students typically attend. Building lines of communication between you and the schools your students feed into can help in disseminating the right information to your parents and students about their schools.

Typically, 5th grade counselors access registration forms through Wake Connect located under the registration tab. Elective sheets from all Wake County middle schools are posted in the registration file. Math recommendations are completed by 5th grade teachers prior to elementary counselors sending the registration packet home. Best practice would be to explain the registration forms and elective sheets to all 5th grade students before sending packets home. Registration is completed in PowerSchool with the support of the Elementary School Counselor.

> See Activity 6

Communicating with Middle School Counselors

Just because your students with conflicts have left elementary school, it does not mean they have left their conflicts behind. Elementary school counselors can be proactive by giving the middle school counselor a heads up on potentially disruptive conflicts. One effective way for elementary counselors to do this is to complete the watch list provided by the county which can be beneficial to middle school counselors receiving these new students. The watch list gives middle school counselors an opportunity to address concerns with students early in the school year. Elementary counselors should complete the form by checking the area of concern and providing specific information regarding Also, elementary counselors should consider contacting the middle school counselor personally to discuss further and/or more serious concerns.

Making Information Accessible

Parents and students transitioning to middle school have a lot of questions. How do we register? What electives do you offer? When can I have a tour of the school? To address these questions and concerns, counselors should consider posting information for new parents & students on the school's website.

Creating a website dedicated to 6th grade registration will centralize information and make it more readily accessible to rising 6th graders and their parents. Suggestions for information that can be posted on the website include open house dates, tour times, parent workshop locations and orientation information. Posting downloadable forms that new parents typically need is another way to service parents while saving you time. Most schools have a webmaster that can help create a website or a link on the school's website dedicated to registration.

Transition Programs

A strong transition program should include opportunities to visit the school, meet teachers and learn about how the school works. These types of programs will vary from school to school. They can range from a summer transition camp to an orientation night. The more opportunities students and parents have to learn about the school the smoother the transition will be for everyone.

Sixth grade teachers are very supportive and helpful during the transition time. Students are not counted tardy during the first week and teachers are available to help the students find their classrooms. Rules and procedures are explained, written, in print, practiced often and are sent home the first week of school to be signed and returned. Following rules and procedures are basic life skills. The teachers teach responsibility and accountability.

> See Activity 7



TIPS FOR PARENTS

TIPS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

Parent participation in education is closely related to student achievement. Both of you will be affected by this change to middle school. The key during adolescence is to balance your support while promoting responsibility and independence in your child.

- Become informed about your new school by attending orientations, going to open houses, reading school guides and student handbooks, create a PowerSchool account to monitor student grades.
- Remember that schools are open during the summer. Take this as an opportunity to visit your child's as often as possible before the first day of school. Moving into a new building can be a bit scary sometimes. Being familiar with the school building before the first day of school can help lessen your child's anxiety.
- Consider your child's feelings. Your 6th grader may not want you joining them for lunch, but you can stay involved by volunteering in your child's school, chaperoning on fieldtrips and/or joining the PTSA.
- Know the name of your child's team, the homeroom teacher, the team leader and the school counselor for his/her grade. Students of all ages benefit when family and school cooperate and have a positive relationship. If you have questions or concerns don't hesitate to call or email the school staff.
- Decide on the best method of keeping up with homework and projects for your child.
- Balance after-school recreational activities, provide a quiet study area and set the expectation that your child will be working regularly on homework and long-term projects. Set rules about technology. Organization and time management skills must be developed so students will be prepared and not feel overwhelmed.
- Know the dress code for your school. Be cognizant of the need of increased personal hygiene as developmental body changes occur.
- Check the calendar for your specific school. Know when interims and report cards go out, dates of early release days and any dates of special activities (e.g. Picture Day, athletic events, EOGs).
- Be sure the main office has current contact information. Don't assume your child will know or share changes in phone numbers or addresses. Provide updated information to Guidance Technician or NCWise Data Manager.
- Talk to your child about school and peers. Listen for comments that reflect how they are feeling and what they are thinking. Expect your child to make mistakes and have personal struggles. Give them time to think and make decisions about how to handle their problems and deal with the consequences.
- Provide opportunities for your child to develop their interests and socialize with friends, but be sure to monitor their choices. Peer acceptance and self-esteem issues become increasingly important in middle school.

STAY CONNECTED

Powerschool Parent Portal

All Wake County Schools use a tool known as Home Base or referred to as Powerschools Parent Portal. Home Base gives parents and students access to real-time information including attendance, grades, and assignments. With Home Base, powered by PowerSchool application, everyone stays connected: Students stay on top of assignments, parents are able to participate in their child's progress, and teachers can instantly share information from their grade book with parents and students. Families with multiple students can also set up their accounts to view all of their students at one time, with one login.

Parents will be required to complete an application available online or through their student's school or website. Visit the link below for additional information. <https://www.wcpss.net/domain/69>

Other Online Communication Tools

Find out what new communication tools your child's teachers will use. Many times you will find out that middle school teachers use websites to give a weekly or daily update of what is being taught in their classrooms, including test and quiz dates or project due dates. These tools are easily accessible and usually linked straight from the school's website or a teacher's own website and are very helpful in keeping parents and students informed of what's going on in the classroom.



SCHOOL COUNSELOR ACTIVITIES

SCHOOL COUNSELOR ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Who's Who in the Middle School?

This game is used to help transition students into middle school by introducing them to key helpers within the school. 6th graders often know that they need help with something but are unsure of who can help. This lesson helps them to know the names and locations of people within the school. It also acts as a platform to tell students more about a particular person's job (like School Resource Officer, School Nurse, or School Counselor). This can also be used as a short activity to begin discussion with students about what you do as a school counselor.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

6th Grade Counselor

TIMEFRAME

Beginning of 6th grade school year

MATERIALS

- Two different colored index cards
- Markers
- A large map of the school OR a chalkboard or dry erase board to draw a rough map
- Tip: Take photos of people to use in the activity

DIRECTIONS

- On one set of index cards place the name and job title of each person to be highlighted by students; one name per card
- On the other set of index cards describe different situations in which students may need help
- Have the students work in small groups. Give each group a stack of the 2 sets of index cards.
- Instruct the students to try as best they can to match the person/job to the situation that best describes why they would see that person
- After the students have done their best guessing, go over the answers
- Then allow students to take turns going to the board and taping the person's name to where they are located in the school. Adjust answers as necessary.

EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE/JOB

- Grade Level Counselor
- Administrator
- Data manager
- School Resource Officer
- Guidance Technician

EXAMPLES OF PROBLEMS

- Come late to school and need to sign in
- Having a problem with a bully
- Lost your agenda
- Problems with a friend/academic concerns
- Need to see your counselor
- Helps keep the school safe

Activity 2: Middle School Website Scavenger Hunt

This activity is designed to help students find out important information about the middle school they will be attending. A good time to use this activity in the classroom or computer lab would be at the end of 5th grade to help the students learn more about their new school for the fall. Students will explore and learn information about their school such as important dates (i.e. school dances and sporting events), school mascots, extracurricular activities, teacher emails, and school procedures. Counselors will need access to a computer lab and students will need to know the school they will be attending the following year.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Elementary School Counselor

TIMEFRAME

End of 5th grade school year

MATERIALS

- computer for each student/access to computer lab
- pencils
- scavenger hunt worksheet

DIRECTIONS

- Reserve your school's computer lab well in advance of activity.
- Find out the website addresses of all of your feeder schools and have them handy in case the kids do not know them.
- When in the computer lab, give each student a copy of the middle school scavenger hunt worksheet and a pencil.
- Tell students to log onto their computers and go to their school's website and then complete the scavenger hunt worksheet.

SCAVENGER HUNT QUESTIONS

- What is your new school's website address?
- What are the email addresses of two sixth grade teachers?
- What sports does your new school participate in?
- What clubs/extracurricular activities does your new school have?
- What is the name of the principal at your new middle school?
- What is the name of the grade level counselor(s) at your new middle school?
- What are the names of two 6th grade teams at your new middle school?
- What is your new school's mascot?

Activity 3: The Incredible Power of the Zero

The following activity is designed to demonstrate to students the incredible effect that a zero can have on their grade. In middle school, most teachers will allow students to turn in late work for a reduced percentage in a grade or —partial credit. However, if students do not take this opportunity the missing assignment will become a zero and can drastically affect their overall homework average. This is a quick activity that should be used during the early days of middle school and combined with other introduction to middle school activities. (*Tip: Be sure to follow your school's grading policy of incorporating zeroes)

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

6th Grade Counselor

TIMEFRAME

Beginning of 6th grade year

MATERIALS

- Pencil
- Paper
- Example of a student's homework average before and after they receive a zero.

DIRECTIONS

The counselor will need to come up with a scenario in which a fictitious student with a decent homework average forgets to turn in an assignment. Students can use simple math to compute the student's new average.

EXAMPLE

John currently has a 100, 98, 90, and 88 for his homework grades to give him a 94 homework average. However, Tuesday he had soccer practice and was so tired when he got home that he decided not to do his homework. He knew his teacher would allow him to turn it in for partial credit by the end of the week, but he got so busy again that he forgot. His teacher was forced to put a zero in the grade book. The next week John got his interim report and was surprised at his homework average.

What was John's new homework average with the —zero?

Answer: 74.8

Activity 4: The 5 W's of Study Habits

Activity corresponds with Study Skills Lessons on CMAPP in secondary folder

This activity will help students to think about and record the best way to study, tailored specifically to them.

INSTRUCTOR

Elementary Counselor or 6th Grade Counselor

TIMEFRAME

End of 5th grade year or beginning of 6th grade year

DIRECTIONS

Ask students to write the 5 W questions down the left- hand side of a paper- who, what, when, where, and why. Students will be writing down study habits for each question that is specific to them. Ask each of the questions separately, explaining each and asking students to volunteer answers that are specific to their studying style.

- Who? (Who can help you when you need it- teachers, parents, classmates)
- What? (What to study? Take home all materials needed.)
- When? (Best time to study- as soon as you get home, after a snack, etc.)
- Where? (Best area to study in- free of distractions, plenty of space)
- Why? (Why should you study?)

If there is ample time, have students add a last question, How?

How? This can be used to start a discussion about learning styles or ways to study (lighting, snack or no snack, noise level, etc).

Activity 5: Clumps

In middle school everyone is searching for an identity and oftentimes this leads to the formation of cliques. This activity is designed to give students the chance to understand what it feels like to be left out or be excluded from a group. The counselor will need access to a classroom and plenty of room to move around. Additionally, counselors will need to preface the lesson explaining that some students may be excluded or left out, only for the activity. (Tip: Activity could be then paired with [Mix It Up at Lunch Day](#))

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

6th Grade Counselor

TIMEFRAME

Beginning of 6th grade year

MATERIALS

Notecards, transition signal (music, bells, etc)

DIRECTIONS

Have students stand up and move around the room. Give them time to —mingle! and maybe even give them a topic to discuss, such as —What are you doing this weekend?! When students have had ample time to talk to some of their peers, call out a number. The students then have to —clump themselves into groups of that number within a few seconds. Students left standing without a group are told to return to their seats. Repeat this process until there are only two or three students left standing. Remind students they cannot always group with the same students each time. Next, lead a discussion to explore how students felt during this activity. Discussions can be whole group or have students write questions on notecards to process.

Examples of leading questions

- How did it feel to be included in a clump? Or left out? Or couldn't find a group to join?
- How did you feel when you were with your friends versus when you were with people you don't usually hang out with?
- Can cliques be good or bad?
- How can belonging to a clique help or hurt your self-esteem?
- What kind of cliques do you see at your school?

Activity 6: A Unit on Middle School Transition

This is a three-part lesson plan designed to gradually introduce middle school registration as well as address middle school concerns for students that are about to transition to middle school.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR:

Elementary School Counselor

TIMEFRAME

Spring of 5th grade school year

LESSON ONE: ADDRESSING COMMON MIDDLE SCHOOL ISSUES

Give pre-test before lesson starts:

Name: Teacher:

On a scale of 1-10, rate the following:

- I am excited about going to middle school.
- I am worried about going to middle school.
- I feel prepared to go to middle school.

Answer the following:

- What are you excited about when you think about being in middle school?
- What worries you when you think about being in middle school?

Have several students share what they are excited about, then have several students share what they are worried about. Themes that are common in these discussions include older students, harder classes/work, getting lost in the new school, bullying, different expectations, not being able to open a locker, and having more responsibility. Assure students that they are not alone in having these feelings, and then give any factual information that you have that can allay fears.

Throughout all three lessons, encourage students to ask questions about any aspect of middle school. The goal is to get students to become comfortable and confident in moving on to middle school. If a student asks a question that you cannot answer, try to get the answer from a middle school counselor or other school staff members, and then relay the information to students during the next lesson.

Between lessons one and two, look at all pre-tests. Develop lesson two based on the biggest worry that your students have.

LESSON TWO: ADDRESSING YOUR STUDENTS' CONCERNS

Tailor your lesson two to meet the specific worries and concerns addressed by the 5th grade students at your school in Lesson One. Again, throughout the lesson, have students ask questions and answer them as factually as you can.

LESSON THREE: REGISTRATION FOR 6TH GRADE

Give students —practice registration sheets with information on both sides. Explain each section, and have students write down what you are explaining on their practice sheets. For example, under the recommended placement section, explain that their teachers have recommended core class placement for 6th grade, and so the students will not have to fill out that section. Students will write —I do not fill this out beside this section.

On the flip side of the sheet, have a sample middle school electives page. Talk about the importance of choosing the right elective (i.e. not choosing an elective because your best friend wants to be in the same class). If Middle School Program Planning Guides are available, have students look up the electives on that particular sheet and read the descriptions out loud. Remind students that each middle school's elective choices are different, so they can only choose from the electives printed on their specific middle school's sheet. Have students circle choices they are interested in. Talk about your specific plan for registration and due dates for getting registration sheets turned in, and what could happen if the sheets are not returned!

Finally, pass out the same pre-test questions as a post-test to determine whether or not students feel more at ease about middle school issues.

Activity 7: Transitional Camp Overview

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Middle School Counselor

TIMEFRAME

Summer before 6th grade school year

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

To support the transition from elementary to middle school, rising 6th grade students must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful academically and socially in middle school. The major objective of implementing an orientation camp is to address the transition concerns for both rising 6th grade students and their parents.

General concerns for transitioning students include finding their classrooms, meeting new students, adjusting to tougher academic standards, and learning common practices at the school. Parents are often concerned with academic standards, school practices, and their students' teachers and courses.

ORGANIZATION OF PROGRAMMING

Organizing an orientation camp involves collaborating with a variety of stake holders. Coordinators of these events may seek partnerships with student organization groups, parent organizations, teachers, administrators, and other staff to implement a day-long camp. Counselors may want to consult schools with 6th Grade PLTs for creative ideas regarding transition orientation camps. Collaborations with student organizations drive programming for rising 6th grade students, while parent organization collaborations drive programming for rising parents.



RESOURCES

RESOURCES

Academic Resources

Wake County Public School System www.wcpss.net

School Policies, calendars, current news, community resources, academic/behavior resources, individual middle schools

N.C. Department of Public Instruction www.dpi.nc.gov

Course of Study, EOGs, school report cards

College Foundation of North Carolina www.cfnc.org

Careers, high school planner, scholarships

National Education Association www.nea.org

Parenting Tips, Nutrition Information, Education Issues, Homework/Parent Conference Tips

Middle School Websites

The Parent Toolkit www.parenttoolkit.com

Social/Emotional Support, Developmental Support, Diversity Resources

Kids Health kidshealth.org

Advice on Children's health, behavior and growth before birth through teen years

USAGOV www.usa.gov/education?source=kids

Government information on activities related to school, careers, and recreation

National PTA www.pta.org

Family Engagement resources, College & Career Readiness, Health & Safety

Parent Guide to K-12 Success www.greatschools.org

School Quality resources, Community Action & Parenting Tips

Mental Health and Social Emotional Websites

National Mental Health Association www.mhanational.org

Addresses the needs of those living with mental illness

National Mental Health Information Center www.nimh.nih.gov

Understanding mental illness and treatment of mental illness

Bullying Resources www.stopbullying.gov, www.pacer.org/bullying/resources

Tips on how to support your child and communicate with your child's school