


Supporting Freshman Transition Programs

Tips for Educational Leaders


Transforming Schools from the Bottom Up



© 2009 Solutions, etc.


DO NOW:

List as many potential problems or obstacles to implementing a freshman transition program as you can.




The Role of the Educational Leader: Keeper of the Fire

- Acknowledge the Darkness
Identify the Need (The Freshman Problem)
- Light the Fire
Create Interest in the Solution (The Freshman Opportunity)
- Fan the Flame
Make it Happen! (Transforming School from the Bottom Up)
- Keep it Fueled Long-term




© 2009 Solutions, etc.

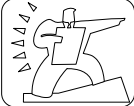


Supporting Freshman Transition Programs

Acknowledge the Darkness




© 2009 Solutions, etc.




Use Data to Validate Instinct

- Getting a faculty to identify areas of need (complain) is easy
- Put data in the hands of teachers and provide time for interpretation
- Getting a faculty to accept responsibility for improving matters is a bit more difficult




© 2009 Solutions, etc.




Supporting Freshman Transition Programs

Light The Fire





© 2009 Solutions, etc.



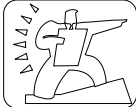

Provide a Self-serving Rationale

“By successfully [*insert problem here*] , our school can be a significantly better place to practice our profession”



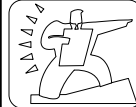

Example

“By successfully transitioning freshmen, our school can be a significantly better place to practice our profession.”



No Matter What the Problem is...

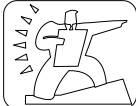

It is the responsibility of the professionals in the school to solve it.
Indeed, we are the only ones who can!



Supporting Freshman Transition Programs

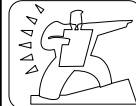

Fan The Flame

***Plan It, Staff It, Schedule It,
& Prove It Works!***




Plan It

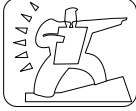
1. Which courses?
2. Which teachers?
3. Which rooms?
4. Master Schedule?



Plan It - Courses

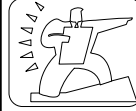

- Determine which courses will be a part of the learning community
- If all students will not be teamed, allow student requests to determine who is teamed and who is not teamed
- Don't team students – team courses





Common Pitfalls

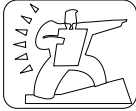

- “Starting Small” with only at-risk students
 - *Creates a “Bad” or “Dumb” Community Potentially Stigmatizes a Program Forever*
 - *Potentially Burns Out the Teachers who boldly began the program*



Plan it - Teachers

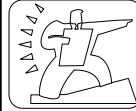

Consider:

- Personalities of members
- Gifts of members
- Ability to Achieve Consensus
- Mentoring new teachers
- Younger teachers mentoring veterans



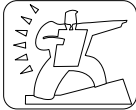

Common Pitfalls

- Assuming that all great teachers will make great team members
 - *Kings of Kingdoms*
- Assuming that the teachers on a team should remain the same each year
 - *Sibling Feuds*
 - *Seeding the Future*



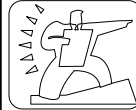

Plan it - Rooms

- Some Transition planners opt to use rooms in close proximity
- Some use separate facilities
- The + and – of isolating a Transition Program is the subject of debate
- Our experience is that the choosing of rooms is NOT a “Make it or Break it” issue




Plan it – Master Schedule

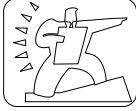
- Master schedules impact every aspect of a school
- The fewer parameters on your schedule the better
- Not all courses need to be part of your transition program – where is the greatest area of need?
- It is okay for students to be partially teamed.



Schedule It


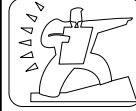
- Newer scheduling algorithms accommodate teams
- Even the most antiquated student information system, however, can schedule teams by creatively using Student Requests, Course Numbers, and Class Size to schedule teams.






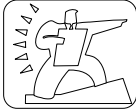
Schedule It

- Randomly assign students to a team
- Except those who the middle school recommends separating!*
 - A “scouting report” is immensely helpful, but must be used appropriately

Schedule It

- The fewer levels or tracks in your master schedule the better – both from a scheduling perspective and learning perspective
- Strive for heterogeneous grouping of students across teams
 - Since more leveling is inherent in Math, use these courses to ensure a balance of student abilities and attitudes.


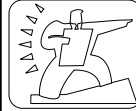
Example

Team X

- One Section of Geometry
- Two Sections of Algebra 1 Part 1
- Two Sections of Algebra 1 Part 2


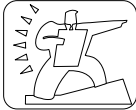
Team Y

- One Section of Geometry
- Two Sections of Algebra 1 Part 1
- Two Sections of Algebra 1 Part 2

Common Pitfalls

- Giving groups of similar students similar (or identical) schedules
The Pack of Wolves
- Creating a “Smart” team and a “Weak” team
Redbirds and Bluebirds


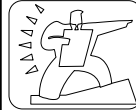



Schedule It

Traditional 7 Period Day

Teacher	Dept	Room	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 4L	Period 4R	Period 5	Period 5L	Period 5R	Period 6	Period 7
TEAM X	Eng	1	ENGLISH	PLAN	TEAM PLANNING	ENGLISH		ENGLISH	LUNCH	ENGLISH		ENGLISH	
TEAM X	Math	1	ALGEBRA 1 PART A	ALGEBRA 1 PART A	TEAM PLANNING	PLAN		ALGEBRA 1 PART B	LUNCH	ALGEBRA 1 PART B		SCIENCE	
TEAM X	Sci	1	SCIENCE	SCIENCE	TEAM PLANNING	SCIENCE		SCIENCE	LUNCH	PLAN		SCIENCE	
TEAM Y	Eng	2	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	TEAM PLANNING	HISTORY		HISTORY	LUNCH	HISTORY		HISTORY	
TEAM Y	Math	2	ENGLISH	PLAN	ENGLISH	LUNCH		ENGLISH	LUNCH	TEAM PLANNING		ENGLISH	
TEAM Y	Math	2	SCIENCE	ALGEBRA 1 PART A	ALGEBRA 1 PART A	LUNCH		ALGEBRA 1 PART B	PLAN	TEAM PLANNING		ALGEBRA 1 PART B	
TEAM Y	Sci	2	SCIENCE	SCIENCE	SCIENCE	PLAN		SCIENCE	PLAN	TEAM PLANNING		SCIENCE	
TEAM Y	SS	2	HISTORY	HISTORY	PLAN	LUNCH		HISTORY	HISTORY	TEAM PLANNING		HISTORY	
					Two Year Foreign Languages					Two Year Foreign Languages			
					Band					Band			

- No “split” classes
- Team teachers have same lunch as others on team
- Individual Planning at different times
- Schedule Electives during Team Planning






Schedule It

4 x 4 Block (Teacher Schedule)

Teacher	Dept	Room	BLOCK 1	BLOCK 2	BLOCK 3	BLOCK 4	
TEAM X	Eng	1	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH		TEAM PLANNING
TEAM X	Math	1	ALGEBRA 1 PART A	GEOMETRY	ALGEBRA 1 PART B		TEAM PLANNING
TEAM X	Sci	1	SCIENCE	SCIENCE	SCIENCE		TEAM PLANNING
TEAM X	SS	1	HISTORY	HISTORY	HISTORY		TEAM PLANNING
TEAM Y	Eng	2	ENGLISH	ENGLISH	TEAM PLANNING	PLAN	ENGLISH
TEAM Y	Math	2	ALGEBRA 1 PART A	ALGEBRA 1 PART B	TEAM PLANNING	PLAN	GEOMETRY
TEAM Y	Sci	2	SCIENCE	SCIENCE	TEAM PLANNING	PLAN	SCIENCE
TEAM Y	SS	2	HISTORY	HISTORY	TEAM PLANNING	PLAN	HISTORY
					Foreign Languages		Foreign Languages
					Band		Band


- Students have two teamed classes per semester
- Team Planning is 1st and Individual Plan 2nd






Supporting Freshman Transition Programs

Keep it Fueled Long-term




© Solutions, etc.

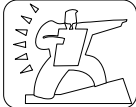


Set High Expectations

- Communicate the investment that team planning represents
 - Compare the fraction of the school day with the same fraction of a new teacher's salary




© Solutions, etc.

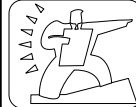


Prove It Works

- Institute Systems of Mutual Accountability and Annual Evaluation
 - Team Log
 - Talley Sheets for conferences with students, parents, counselors, and administrator




© Solutions, etc.




Empowering Team Teachers

Consider allowing team teachers to:

- Make student schedule changes (intra-team)
- Assist in scheduling new students
- Power to deal with discipline
- Share their strengths with the rest of the faculty and be viewed as as leaders in the learning community.




© Solutions, etc.

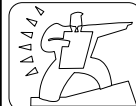


Proving It Works & Sustaining the Process

- Require that key principles be continued in subsequent years (agenda books, note taking techniques, etc.)
- Make presentations to school board and central office administration




© Solutions, etc.



Proving It Works & Sustaining the Process

- Plan to collect data before you need it
- **Budget to pay teachers for summer evaluation and refinement**



© Solutions, etc.