

## Middle E-Connections

### Plan a Smooth Transition

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The middle level years are fraught with challenges for students and their families. Particularly challenging for many students is the transition from elementary to middle school. Reducing the uncertainty students experience as they leave the security of elementary school and venture into the next educational phase of their lives can be accomplished by using a well-organized process.

A springtime visit to the school, self-guided tours of the building in the summer, and a first-day transition camp form a comprehensive, three-step overview of the new environment for incoming middle grades students.

#### Step One: Visitations

Working with elementary teachers, counselors, and administrators, orchestrate visitations.

Invite the middle school principal and school counselor to visit the incoming middle grades students in their elementary school classrooms. They can provide an overview of the middle school in a concise and focused manner. Distribute handouts that include a map of the school, a sample schedule, the curriculum, the organizational structure of the school, and frequently asked questions and answers.

Also plan to have the students visit the middle school with their elementary teachers while school is in session. After being greeted by the school's principal and counselor, walk the students around the school. Current middle grades students make great tour guides.

#### Step Two: Self-Guided Tours

Two to three weeks before the start of the school year, send students and their families a personalized letter. In addition to welcoming the students to the school, offer two or three dates and times when students can come to the school with family members for a self-guided tour.

#### Step Three: Transition Camp

Rather than offering an optional summer transition camp experience, a first-day camp allows all students to begin their middle school experience on sound footing.

Under the leadership of a steering committee comprised of students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators, a one-day camp can be formatted to encompass all phases of school life including curriculum, health and guidance services, discipline, cafeteria procedures, safety, and other pertinent information. By using homeroom groups or dividing the students into small groups within teams, you can present the material to students following a schedule designed exclusively for the day.

#### The Last Step

To help determine the success of your transition activities, ask members of the steering committee what they saw or heard during the course of the transition camp. Valuable feedback can also be obtained by distributing a survey to students and family members. This feedback will help you and your steering committee make adjustments that continue to improve your plans for fostering future smooth transitions.

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For more ideas on planning successful transitions, visit [transitioning to middle school](#) or [transitioning to high school](#).