



**Building Transitions
(5th to 6th & 8th to 9th)**

Madeira City Schools Planning Commission
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Table of Contents

- 1. Objective**
- 2. Methodology**
- 3. Key Findings**
- 4. Conclusions and Recommendations**
- 5. Appendix A – Sample Survey**

Objective

The focus of this study will be to gather best practices to promote positive student success as they transition from one building to the next within our Madeira school experience. Within our school district, how can we help build positive relationships among students and staff and set appropriate expectations for increased learning and independence? What are fun traditions or exciting new ways to enhance our grade level experience as they begin anew in a new building? What do other schools or school districts do to welcome new students and transition students to their next new building? How can we set students up for success?

Methodology

- Gather current best practices from building transitions within Madeira schools.
- Explore what other schools/districts do to welcome new students.
- Identify how we can help build positive relationships among students and staff and set appropriate expectations for increased learning and independence.
- Learn about fun traditions and exciting new ways to enhance our grade level experience.
- Think about how we can set students up for success.

The Planning Commission Committee reviewed current building transition practices with Gretchen Bloomstrom, Assistant Principal, Madeira Middle School and Madeira High School as well as explored what neighboring districts do to welcome new students to the building. The committee also worked to create a student survey to gather direct feedback from students who transitioned from Madeira Elementary to Madeira Middle School in the 2022/2023 school year. Current 9th grade students that transitioned from Madeira Middle School to Madeira High School in 2023/2024 were also surveyed.

Creating the Survey

The Planning Commission Committee created the survey questions in response to current transition practices between Madeira Elementary, Madeira Middle School and Madeira High School. We collaborated to come up with questions that would provide a range of data.

Publishing the Survey

The survey was administered through Google Forms and published in November 2023 through mid-December (2023). Language Arts teachers at Madeira Middle School sent the survey to current 6th grade students. 121 students completed the middle school survey. Dave Kennedy, Principal, Madeira High School emailed all 9th grade students. 101 students completed the High School survey.

Key Findings

Current Practices MES to MMS

- Shadow Day at MES (*'23-'24 school year only - after winter break*)
 - A few 6th grade teachers observe 5th grade classrooms at MES before start of school year
- Admin meeting with current 5th graders
 - Mrs. Huelsman and Mrs. Cabral meet with current 5th graders + rising 6th graders and support with scheduling (*April*)
 - Students get an introduction to what middle school is like and preview a schedule
- Incoming 6th graders visit MMS (*spring*)
- Team and transition meetings (*year round and during school year*)
 - School psychologist, school counselors, intervention specialists meet with MES team and to help build out student schedules and transition plan
 - Communication goes out to families to support them during transition
 - Summer services are available for students and done at MMS
 - Thursday team time meetings (Admins, counselors, psychologist)
 - Once a month – Children's Hospital support
- Class schedule pick up and decorate lockers (*August before first day*)
 - Separate day scheduled for 6th grade
- Meet the Team Night (*Right before or after first day*)
 - For all students and families
 - Welcome everyone in gym/cafeteria, open house (about an hour) with shortened bell schedule for parents to follow
 - Separate night scheduled for 6th grade
- Schoology (*year round support*)
 - Available student and parent support
- Weekly Smores communication with families (*during school year*)
- Parent volunteer opportunities: Career Day, Tie Dye activity

Other Practices

- Hallway transitions, lunchroom seating, recess expectations
 - Staggered release for students buying lunch
 - New recess area – playground, bball court, baseball field, shelter, no gated playground area, no creek
- PTO partnerships
 - 5/6th grade social night
 - Babysitters club (Students can get certified)
- Madeira City Parks Board hosts a "Splash Party" at Swim Club
 - 2023 student attendance: 171
- Extracurriculars
 - School sponsored sports start at 7th and 8th grade
 - Student clubs (Community service, chess, math counts, art, National Jr. Honors Society, musical)
 - Current participation
 - 6th Grade - 92%
 - 7th Grade - High 80s%
 - 8th Grade - Low 80s%

Current Practices MMS to MHS

- World Language (*during school year*)
 - 8th graders who take world language (Latin, French, two Spanish classes) start their day at HS and get bussed back
 - Provides early exposure to HS campus
- Visit to MHS (*February during school hours before freshman focus*)
 - For all 8th graders
- Freshman Focus and activity fair (*February – evening event*)
 - For 8th grade students and families
 - Presentation in auditorium
 - Student activity fair – students get to see all available clubs with advisors and student leaders (Clubs start meeting 2-3 weeks into school during “common time.” Common time is for clubs to meet or students to get extra help.
- Class Schedules (*February*)
 - MHS counselors meet with every rising 9th grader to review schedules
 - Scheduling process starts right after Freshman Focus event
 - Counselors meet with students one-on-one and build their schedule (Counselors go to MMS – later in Feb; schedules due in March)
 - Students have a window of time to request a schedule change at beginning of school year
 - Counselors have a touch point mtg with their students each year and post HS plan mtg with parent and student
- Freshman Orientation (*early August*)
 - Optional for students (~95% of students participate)
 - Welcome, HS band plays to welcomes students and students tour school
 - Students get put into small groups with 2-3 HS leaders (HOPE, Key Club, Student Body), are shown lockers
 - Administrative contacts: Jen Bruening and Jen Ulland
 - New students after this date have shadow days
- Team and transition meetings (*Spring/Summer/Fall*)
 - School psychologist, school counselors, intervention specialists meet with building team and to help build out student schedules and transition plan
- First Day of school welcome
 - Student government-led (more fun and welcoming)
 - Music plays while students enter, selfie-frame, high fives, bubble machine, sidewalk chalk
- Madeira Strong Assembly (*first week of school*)
 - Special assembly
 - Student government-led (2-3 keynote student speakers, plus a teacher)
- Freshman class assembly (*first week of school*)
 - Review expectations, tips on time management, how to reach counselors
 - Opportunity for students to join clubs
- Freshman meetings during Common Time (*August-May*)
 - Counselors meet with students 1-2 times per quarter
 - Assembly style check-in
- 9th grade and 10th grade team meetings (*1x month during school year*)
 - Teachers meet with Gretchen/Admin and counselors
 - Concerns, questions, highlight students who need support

- One-on-one Pairing (*1x per week for 20 mins during school year*)
 - HS students who want to apply are matched with MES or MMS student (counselor and teachers identify student)
 - Current participation - 50 MHS, 15 MMS, 35 MES

Current Practices at Neighboring Districts

Indian Hill Village School District

Primary School to Elementary School Transition

- Classroom and playground visit - student pairing
- Pen plan with 2nd and 3rd graders
- 3rd Grade Parent Information Night and Tour
- "Meet the Teacher Day" and "Scavenger Hunt"
- Access to Counselors
- Internal Administration/Counselor meetings

Elementary School to Middle School Transition

- 6th grade Parent Orientation
- Fly Up Day - students walk to new building and attend pep assembly
- Student small group meeting with counselors for schedule and introductions
- Introduction of a house system coming for SY '24-'25
- Navig8tors is introduced
 - Leadership program for 8th grade students. There is an application process and selected students work with 6th grade students to orient them to life in the Middle School. As part of being selected as a Navig8or, they take a 1st semester leadership class.

Intermediate School to High School Transition

- 8th Grade Open House
 - Specifically for 8th-grade families and is run similarly to private/parochial schools' open houses. Students/families are assigned a one-on-one tour guide to assist them for the entire evening and move them from station to station throughout the building so that families can have conversations with faculty and staff about their respective departments. Tour guides are members of their National Honor Society, so by default, most of them are highly involved in a variety of activities. Most athletic coaches program directors are present. Interactive videos are playing throughout the building along with members of the orchestra playing a "mini" walkthrough concert.
- Curriculum Night
 - Each department will have teacher reps that man stations, answering questions about courses, academic sequences, etc. A lot of the info is similar to the open house night, but all conversations are related to academics. There are opportunities to hear about alternative credit-bearing options - CCP and Credit Flex (through counselors). To start the evening, the HS administration and HS counselors do a "rising freshman family meeting" covering logistics of the night, logistics of HS (lockers, parking, absences/attendance, roles of staff across the building), and provide important dates regarding the scheduling timeline.

- **Transition to High School Meeting (8th Grade Students)**
 - Students participate in this event during the school day. Students go to the HS auditorium and are presented to by HS counselors. Points that are discussed; what it means to be a HS student, the difference between MS and HS, how grades/GPA work, CCP, Credit Flex, scheduling timeline, how MS teachers will help in the process, when to contact the HS staff, how to use test scores from MS to help with picking classes, the teacher recommendation process, expectations for community service, basics on study skills, how to get help in HS, overview of the HS bell schedule, how to get involved (and why), things to be doing now, what's coming up to look forward to and orientation.
- **Sports Night/Academic Celebration**
 - This is an "academic signing." Students who make the commitment to stay at IH will be invited to a pizza party that aligns with a basketball game late in the season. During halftime, they are celebrated for "being committed" to IH, and this is their "signing day."
- **Counselor Small Groups**
 - IH Counselors present in small groups to their future alpha-assigned counselors (30-40 students). It's a get-to-know-each-other session. This is about relationships and getting to know their counselor.
- **Individual 8th Grade Scheduling Family Meetings**
 - Each student schedules with their counselor one-on-one and parents are invited. This is a time when individual questions can be answered. Some families need to book follow-up appointments as they have questions and need feedback on plans. Doing this helps the master scheduling process - the counselors talk through the "why" for each class rather than students picking classes based on what friends are doing which can cause massive shifts to section numbers and staffing needs.
- **MS to HS Transition Meetings (504/IEPs).**
 - At some point in the spring, teams come together to talk about individual needs that extend beyond the typical levels of support in the general education environment.
- **Shadow Days**
 - Shadow days are offered to out-of-district students and current 8th graders. This offering allows students to spend the day with like-minded students or friends that are current students.
- **HS Math and English Departments visit MS classes**
 - HS Math and English Department conduct face-to-face visits to MS classes where they talk about English sequencing and math sequencing. The purpose of this is to make sure that all students understand the importance of assessing current work habits, individual strengths/weaknesses, and picking the "right" level of class that makes sense for the individual student and their overall goals.
- **Summer Touchpoints**

Sycamore Community Schools

Elementary School to Intermediate School Transition

- **Special Education forms are sent to Elementary schools**
 - This helps getting a full picture of students for identifying the best placement for programming as well as potential staffing needs (educational aides, teaching staff).
- **Special Education team visits Elementary schools**
 - This is helpful to ensure students with unique needs are supported with the transition.

- Elementary PTO's meet with Intermediate school leadership
 - This allows Sycamores leadership team to meet with parents and give them an overview of "Life at Greene."
- "Life at Greene" is introduced
 - They find value in this by ensuring the information being shared is accurate and helps to put families at ease.
- Music Fair is hosted at Intermediate school for Band/Orchestra/Choir
 - 5th grade is the first time that students in Sycamore participate with an instrument in music class. Band, orchestra, choir, or a combination of the three are offered.
- Student information cards are sent to 4th grade teams
 - Counselors send out student information cards and meet with the 4th grade team to ensure they get an accurate picture of students regarding academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs. This allows for intentional class placement as well as making sure the necessary supports are in place when the school year starts.
- Elementary and Intermediate administration teams share unique situations
 - Some examples of unique situations include; students struggling with behavior, challenging family dynamics, etc. This also ensures they are aware of the situations and how to best support those students.
- Course selection form is sent to parents
 - There are options for specials/elective classes and this ensures scheduling is accurate as well as students receive their desired classes.
- Intermediate hosts and all Elementaries 4th grade visit
 - This gives students an opportunity to tour the building, eat in the cafeteria, play on the playground, and attend mini-sessions with staff and students to learn about the building.
- Parent Orientation at Intermediate school
 - This is filled with presentations by staff about the different programming as well as tours given by students. There is also a Q/A session with the leadership. This is scheduled before course selection forms are due in order to help ensure parents understand and are comfortable with class selections as well as allow them to "get a feel" for the building/staff/leadership.
- Green 101
 - Green 101 is a two-day, ½ day bootcamp run by the staff about all things you need to know as a 5th grader from computers to cafeteria to lockers. \$50 covers the cost (and work with their community partners for students who are unable to attend). They typically have 75% attendance. This is a wonderful way for students to feel comfortable, meet students in their homeroom/team, and eliminate some anxiety.
- Get Connected
 - This is a great day for parents/students to come to the building. This is not a scheduled staff day, but they work with staff to trade out a work day at the end of the year and almost all staff attends. On this day, the 5th and 6th graders drop off supplies, get their picture taken, buy any calculators/books they need, pick up their Chromebook, walk the building, etc. It is a come/go day and serves as a structured open house.
- New to District
 - Counselors put on a mini-presentation with the essential need-to-know for parents/students for any student who is new to the district.
- Transition Days
 - The first two days are split alphabetically so only ½ the students are there. This allows for staff/students to not feel overwhelmed and have a slower transition to the newer building.

Mariemont City Schools

Junior High to High School Transition


- Daytime retreat to Camp Kern for incoming Freshman
- The junior high has a three day orientation at the start of school to build community and prepare students for what is coming their way
- District partnership with Child Focus, Inc. for additional mental health services for students.
- Sample Freshman schedules available online
- Effective study habit guide to help students transition to high school workload

Student Survey Results

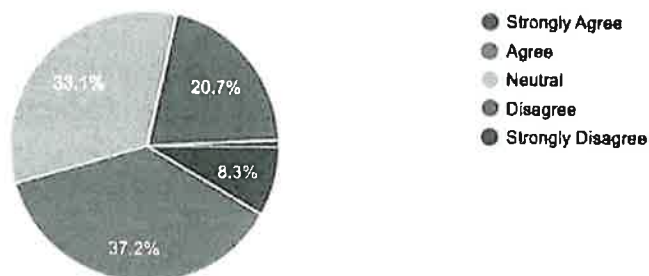
Results from the current 6th grade students at Madeira Middle School are as follows:

Please share your agreement with this statement: "My fourth grade teachers talked about what middle school was going to be like."

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121 responses



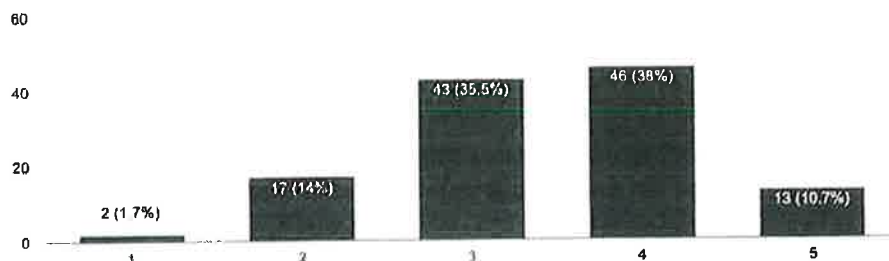
- 45.5% of current sixth graders remember 4th grade teachers discussing middle school with them .

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest), how prepared were you for the transition from 4th to 5th grade?

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest), how prepared were you for the transition from 4th to 5th grade?

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121 responses



- 48.7% of current 6th graders felt very prepared for the transition to middle school. .

In Their Words...

What activities and/or conversations about the transition from elementary school (4th grade) to middle school (5th grade) did you find the most helpful?

- *We had an assembly about everything we would learn and how the building was set up. Mrs. Huelsman came and talked to us about it.*
- *A schedule, teachers in the hallway telling what supplies to bring*
- *The assembly at the end of the year with the 5th grade teachers*
- *Visit to the middle school at the end of the year*
- *The thing where the fifth grade teachers came to talk to us and when the encore teachers came over as well.*
- *I liked visiting the middle school*
- *When Mrs. Huelsman came to the elementary school to show pictures of the teachers and who the counselor and the vice principal was.*
- *When we went into the middle school the day before and put all of our stuff in our lockers and got to meet the teachers.*
- *The thing I found most helpful was the paper that said which classes we go to in order and our locker code so that I could have any idea of what to do. Because in 4th grade we traveled in a group of people and now you travel individually.*
- *You will have a lot more freedom and different schedules. Knowing that the bathrooms are switched helps out A LOT!*
- *The teachers took it A LOT easier on us on the first day of school.*
- *It was hard not knowing where your classes were.*
- *The locker was confusing to open.*

What advice would you give next year's incoming middle school students (about the transition from elementary school to the middle school)?

- *Be prepared. If you don't listen to directions you won't know where to go. Trust me, I*

promise. You will want to listen.

- *Lockers take time but we all get it.*
- *Middle school is so much fun but you have to stay on task and be prepared and be responsible.*
- *Be ready for many changes including honors and lots of new information.*
- *Just be yourselves, respect the teachers, keep your lockers closed, don't forget anything you will need for class, and don't spoil the fun of cores for other people.*
- *As long as you have your locker combo practiced, and your schedule ready, you'll be perfectly fine because 6th grade isn't as scary as it might seem.*
- *If you have a question just ask it's much easier than guessing.*
- *There is more homework but if you work hard in class and IET you will most likely finish it in school.*
- *This is something I had SO MUCH trouble with! It was really hard for me to adjust to waking up an hour earlier. I would tell them to try to shift into a good sleep schedule during the summer, because elementary school starts at 9:00 and middle school starts at 8:00.*
- *I would also say to educate them and their parents about all of the new opportunities and extracurriculars that are available, like (Community Service Club, Art Club, MathCounts, Girls on the Run, Student Council, Musical)*
- *I did not know about the many activities you could do in my first year.*
- *You got this, patience is needed and just organize your time*

What would make the transition from elementary school to middle school better for incoming students?

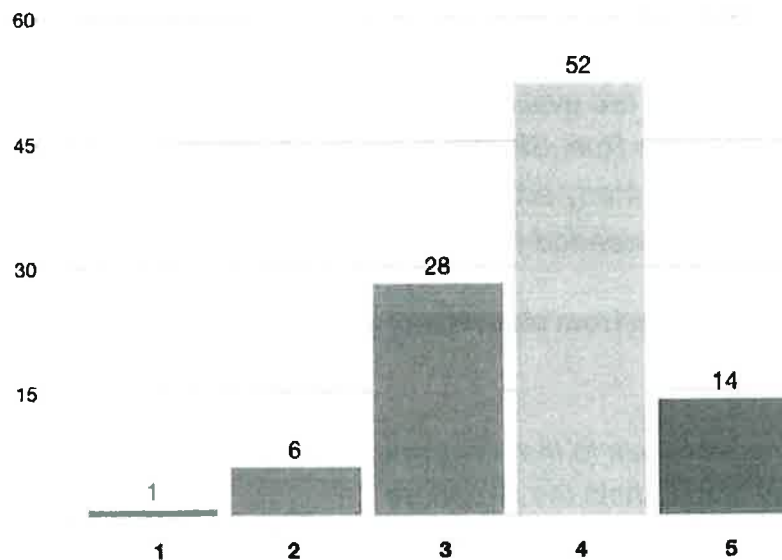
- *The 5th graders get to talk to the 6th graders and learn more about the middle school.*
- *If we do a buddy club to help the 5 graders*
- *More explanations about the school and how people work and do their teaching styles.*
- *A slower paced start, like have them just start easier than go harder.*
- *One thing that would make the transition better is that we meet our teachers the year before.*
- *In the first week of school maybe talk with them about what they're nervous about and tell them they'll be okay. Maybe also in the first week be humorous and make them laugh to get the nervousness out of them, and also tell them all about 6th grade and the middle school.*
- *Give them time to practice opening their lockers.*
- *By telling them they will have more privileges but more responsibility*
- *Letting the students know about the schedules ahead of time would help them be prepared.*
- *Give them more homework in the later quarters like 3rd and 4th to simulate the homework that we have.*
- *Maybe telling them all the fun projects and how cool your locker will look*

- *You should try to do different kinds of clubs but you should also still make sure that you have time to do your homework and play with your friends.*
- *Give students an extra 5 minutes after 8:00 for the first week or two, to adjust to opening lockers every day. I would also say to have a mock day of school maybe during summer, and just run through your schedule and classes because it was really confusing for me.*
- *We should still take the tour of the middle school and maybe we could pull a few students to talk to the incoming 6th grade. Also, we should give the first week of school for them simple and not a lot of homework.*

Student Survey Results

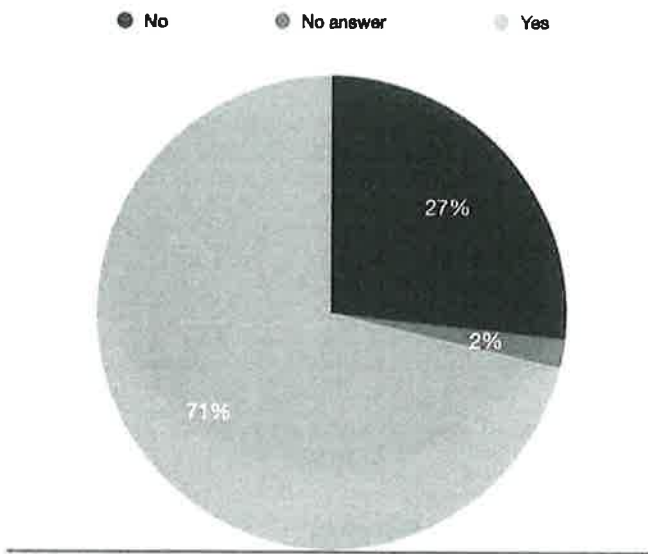
Results from the current freshman at Madeira High School are as follows:

On a scale of 1-5, how prepared were you for the transition from 8th to 9th grade?



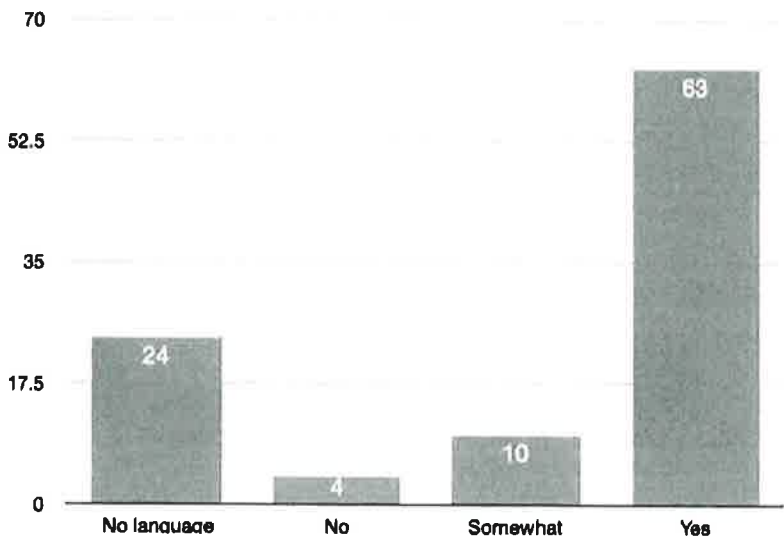
- 66% of current ninth graders felt very prepared for the transition to high school.
- 7% felt underprepared for the transition.

Was Freshman Focus beneficial to you?



- An overwhelming majority saw a benefit from Freshman Focus (conducted February 2023).

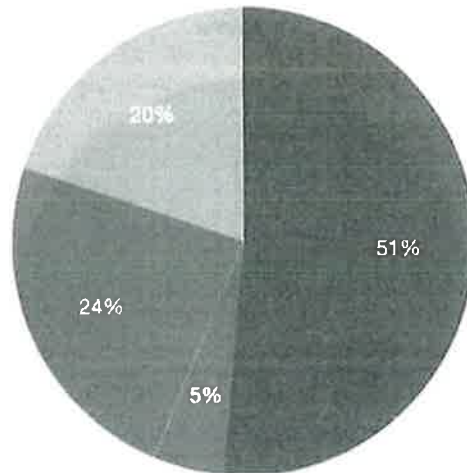
Did taking a language help you with your transition to high school?



- 77 out of 101 surveyed took a language course in 8th grade.
- 95% of these students found taking a language at least somewhat beneficial.

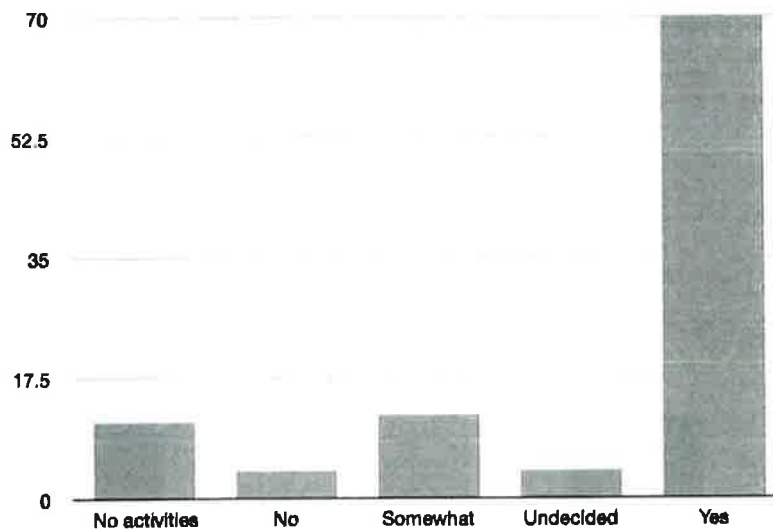
My eighth grade teachers talked about what high school was going to be like:

● Agree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Strongly Agree



- 72% of students agreed with this statement.

Did being involved in extracurricular activities help you with your transition to high school?



- 90 out of 101 surveyed participate in extracurricular activities.
- 77% of these students strongly agreed that extracurriculars are beneficial.

In Their Words...

- *Orientation allowed me to walk my schedule and see where all of my classes would be.*
- *The tour around school definitely helped, especially when we had our schedule right in front of us.*
- *Orientation helped me see other high school students' points of view instead of just*

adults.

- *We heard from real high school kids who understood the social structure better than the adults.*
- *Freshman orientation helped me not only with practice of getting to classes, but also feeling what it would be like to be in High School.*

Advice Given from incoming freshman:

- *Be humble, learn how to study, use your common time/study hall wisely, take a study hall!*
- *There is so much more freedom, but that comes with a lot of responsibility.*
- *Be ready for A LOT of homework and not a lot of breaks.*
- *100% do a summer sport or extra activity because it is so helpful seeing familiar faces in the hallways and safe people to ask questions to.*
- *Study like crazy. You may think you're prepared for a test, but you probably aren't.*
- *Sign up for a bunch of activities. Most likely, they won't overlap. Even if they do, missing one meeting doesn't really matter all that much. They are fun and a nice break from the school day. Be weary of the after school ones though. They can be A LOT.*
- *Don't be afraid to sign up for the easier class. High school is pretty different from middle school. Know your limits. If all of your friends are taking a hard class, that doesn't mean you have to as well.*
- *Take a study hall. I cannot stress this enough. Even if you think study halls are useless, they aren't. If you don't have work to do, you can just relax. If you do have work to do, this class is perfect. Also, if you have the same bell study hall as a teacher, you can go there for help. They really don't mind.*

Overall students at Madeira High School feel very prepared for the transition from eighth grade to high school. They feel that their eighth grade teachers and the supports in place were very helpful. The students have suggestions that they feel would have further supported the adjustment.

In Their Words...

- *Mock school day.*
- *Allow us to see actual classroom teaching and what high school notes look like.*
- *Making sure mental health is a priority with sports schedules and planning tests for each class not on the same day.*
- *Explain to students that they need study tactics and different ways to remember material because high school is more difficult than middle school.*
- *Talk more about study habits in middle school.*
- *Make our 8th grade classes more challenging. I felt like I was not prepared for how hard classes would become in high school.*
- *I feel like a day where 8th graders could walk through the school and talk to their teachers would be great. You could figure out where your classes are, how they run, and get to know your teachers. It could be on a Saturday for a couple hours.*

- *Maybe have the upperclassmen talk to the kids more? I think I've learned a lot more about the transition from the kids than the adults.*

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The most successful schools see the transition between the middle grades and high school as a process, not an event. It is recognized that the transition is not an event, but a process, a set of activities and dispositions to support student success. The transition process should be anchored in your school's vision of success for each student and your commitment to improving their educational experience. These schools involve teachers, students and families in continuous planning to support students' academic and social success in high school and beyond. Madeira does all of these things and more to support our students.

One of the most effective ways to collaborate is to create a "Transition Team" consisting of teachers, administrators, parents and students from both schools. They work best when students who are less successful or with less social status are included as well as those with high academic and/or social status. The role of the team is to identify transition needs, develop plans for attending to them, and monitoring their implementation. Frequently the first activity of the team is to conduct a needs assessment to gather data about the success of students when they transition to the ninth grade (number taking challenging courses, attendance, failure rates). The most successful teams use data to understand student needs and to identify proven practices to support student learning.

Based on the best practices from Madeira City Schools, surrounding districts, and feedback from Madeira City Schools students, the planning commission recommends the additional best practices:

Recommendation - 5th to 6th Grade (MES to MMS)

- Give students more opportunity to visit MMS building (locker visits), including meeting teachers prior to start of school (ie. Mock school day, a day to drop off supplies, etc.)
- Shortened bell schedule (or transition days) for the first few days of school so students get familiar with classroom transitions
- Ramp up homework
- Educate and teach students on healthy and effective study habits (increased homework and balancing extracurricular activities/sports with school)
- Involve middle school student leaders to support 6th grade transition to middle school
- Provide more information for students (and parents) on using Schoology and extracurricular activities available
- Provide more information to parents prior to August (what to expect, homework, schedules, etc.) (can be online or webinar)
- Review Extracurricular Programs & Student Activities planning commission report from last year to find more ways for students to engage with each other outside the classroom
- Locker notes/words of advice from upperclassmen to welcome 6th graders
- Educate students on how to safely travel through downtown Madeira

Recommendation - 8th to 9th Grade (MMS to MHS)

- Give students more opportunity to visit MHS building, including meeting teachers prior to start of school
- Provide a sample schedule for students to see what a “typical” class schedule looks like
- Provide tour of school after students receive their schedule (ie. mock school day)
- Educate students on healthy and effective study habits (increased homework and balancing extracurricular activities/sports with school)
- Involve high school student leaders to support 9th grade transition to high school
- Review Extracurricular Programs & Student Activities planning commission report from last year to find more ways for students to engage with each other outside the classroom
- Locker notes/words of advice from upperclassmen to welcome 9th graders
- Review timing of Freshman Focus (move to Fall)
- Check-in with 9th graders a few weeks after school starts

