
TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Altoona Middle School

Altoona, Wisconsin

The Altoona Middle School Partnership Committee is a school improvement Action Team that meets monthly. Members include one staff member and one parent representing each grade level and special education; the principal; the community liaison; and a chairperson. Much of the committees' work centers on facilitating communication and addressing issues brought by parents and staff members. Beginning in the 1999-2000 school year, they took several steps to facilitate the transition of students and families to middle school.

The committee began its work on the transition by holding several meetings at which parents presented their concerns and ideas for dealing with difficulties their children might experience starting fifth grade at the middle school. Staff members from fourth and fifth grade then met to review parent input and discuss ways they could help students transition. The Partnership Committee also brainstormed additional activities that could be implemented. Finally, representatives from the staff, guidance department, and Partnership Committee met to create an Action Plan.

Students had originally prepared for middle school with:

- A letter exchange between fourth and fifth grade students;
- A panel discussion at which fourth graders received information from staff and students about middle school and fifth grade; and
- A parent meeting in the spring with the principal, guidance counselor, and dean of students.

Additional activities initiated for the 1999-2000 school year to address parents' concerns included:

- Fourth grade students walking through the fifth grade classrooms and meeting teachers in the spring;
- Parents and students visiting the middle school to receive their class schedules and try their locker combinations the week before school starts;
- Students and parents attending a Back to School Night the day before school starts.
Students and their families walked through their daily schedules, met the teachers, talked

about the year ahead, tried their locker combinations, had refreshments, and took home school water bottles;

- Students and families receiving a *Tip Sheet for Success in 5th Grade*, developed from ideas presented by parents and staff members;
- Surveying fifth grade parents about their child's transition experience at fall conferences;
- The school implementing a Project Hotline on a trial basis; and
- Parents serving on the panel for the spring parent meeting.

The response from parents, staff, and students has been very positive. The Partnerships Committee effectively facilitated the process of listening, creating action steps, ensuring they were carried out, and evaluating the results.

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