



## Middle School to High School Transition Toolkit

This toolkit has been created for educators and parents as they prepare their learners to transition from **middle school to high school**. The toolkit includes unique activities for this transition.

The transition activities have also been divided into three sections: 1) the spring **Before** the transition year, 2) the **Beginning** of the transition year, and finally 3) transition activities **throughout** the transition year.

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# **Spring & Summer Before 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**For Learners**  
**For Learners and Families**  
**For Parents**

# **Transition Tools for High School Learners**



## Welcome Aboard

**Audience: 8<sup>th</sup> Graders**

**When: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (Spring)**

### Overview:

Expanded social experiences in high school represent a new opportunity for learners, especially those who may have experienced exclusion in middle school. Learners in high school have the potential to establish new social networks that did not exist in their middle schools. Providing multiple opportunities for rising freshmen to interact with high school learners is one way to assist new learners in establishing social supports and relationships.

### Procedures/Guidelines:

Consider scheduling the following opportunities:

- Invite middle level learners to attend designated high school sporting events, plays, or concerts and reserve seats for them.
- Schedule a speaker/program that would be of interest to both middle level learners as well as current high school learners and invite the upcoming learners to attend.
- Assigning long-term projects for pairs or small groups from both schools
- Assign a project that pairs small groups of eighth graders with high school learner groups
- Organize joint extra-curricular opportunities for middle level and high school learner such as club projects or service-learning opportunities
- Create cross grade school “teams” to play virtual games such as chess, hangman or scrabble
- Host a high school dance and invite upcoming freshmen as special guests.

**Things to Consider:**

Experiences that bring middle school and high school learners together need careful planning and monitoring to produce optimum benefit for both groups.

These experiences can be facilitated by school staff, parent volunteers or education majors from a local college.

**Resources:**

- Middle School and High School Character Education Curriculum – Service-Learning Projects Section (found within each Character Trait) (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.)



## Let me tell you what it takes

**Audience:** Incoming 9<sup>th</sup> Graders

**When:** 8<sup>th</sup> Grade & Summer before 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Overview:

Developing and sustaining a mentor program for learners entering the high school can create a sense of belonging for new learners even before they begin attending. A culture of support and acceptance can set the stage for not only the beginning of the transition but throughout the high school years.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

- Recruit current upper classmen to serve as mentors to current middle grade learners who will be attending the high school the next year.
- The compatibility of mentor and mentee is a factor that should be taken into consideration when arranging pairs. Mentors will benefit from prior leadership development training. Mentors and mentees may benefit from having similar backgrounds, interests and life experiences:
  - Match learners with similar extra-curricular interests: sports, drama, music, 4-H etc.
  - Match mentees who are struggling academically with mentors who have success in particular content areas.
- Any one or a combination of the following models is possible:
  - E-mentoring programs that are conducted through email or on a blog.
  - Tutoring programs in which older learners provide extra academic help to struggling learners to better prepare them for the rigors of high school
  - Big Brother/Big Sister formats in which older learners provide guidance for concerns new learners may have regarding fitting in at the high school.

**Things to Consider:**

- It is important to establish the goals for the mentoring program and provide training to mentors prior to beginning. Training should include guidelines for topics to be discussed.
- Mentors should meet regularly with a staff sponsor and receive on-going guidance.
- Any correspondence between mentors and mentees should be reviewed prior to being sent to ensure appropriateness of content.

**Resource:**

- Leadership Development for Youth Development (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.)





## The Summer Slide

**Audience: Incoming 9<sup>th</sup> Graders**

**When: Summer before 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

### Overview:

During a government web cast (2009), Secretary of Education Arne Duncan described summer learning loss as “devastating.” This is what researchers have often referred to as the “summer slide.” Researchers conclude that two-thirds of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading achievement gap can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years, with nearly one-third of the gap present when children begin school (Alexander, Entwistle & Olsen, 2007). To avoid the “Summer Slide” consider assigning reading selections to transitioning freshmen.

### Procedures/Guidelines:

The following recommendations are a compilation of research on what some high schools are doing:

- Make arrangements for the school library or local public library (preferably on a book mobile) to assure that multiple copies of recommended readings are available to learners of low-income and other disadvantaged families.
- Send a letter (snail mail or email) to all transitioning freshman learners explaining the summer reading program and any related assignments.
- Connect the reading assignment to class work that will be covered in content areas in the fall.
- Coordinate with the local library to establish a teen reading club aligned with the school’s summer reading list. Library facilitators can conduct book discussions and related activities.

**Things to Consider:**

- Ideally the selections would be tied either to learners' career and college goals as identified through the ILP or to fall curriculum.
- Related assignments could lead learners to make connections between the reading and their education.
- Further connections can be made by arranging for speakers or organizing field trips that extend learning throughout the school year.

**Resource:**

Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap

[http://www.ewa.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/summer\\_learning\\_gap-2.pdf](http://www.ewa.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/summer_learning_gap-2.pdf)



## Welcome Home

**Audience: Incoming 9<sup>th</sup> Graders**

**When: Summer before 9<sup>th</sup> grade**

### Overview:

Research has shown that learners are full of fears for their first day of high school. Middle school learners have anxiety about high school wondering how stringent the rules are, how difficult the work is, and how other learners will accept them. Help alleviate the fears of learners and parents by planning an Open House event or a Preview Night prior to the start of the new school year and remind them that this school is their new home away from home during these very important years; and there is no place like home!

### Procedure/Guidelines:

- Host a back to School Night for the parents and upcoming freshmen learners. Allow parents and learners to walk the halls and find their way through the course schedule in the physical building. Provide opportunities for parents and learners to meet teachers. In the common area of the school, clubs, organizations and sports teams could set up information tables to promote their activities. Encourage learners and parents to get involved.
- Host small, more informal events on several different days, or a combination of day and evening hours prior to the opening day of school. Having more than one day set aside for events would allow more parents to participate. During this time parents could bring their learners in, pick up a copy of the learner's schedule and locate all of the classrooms, and find the learner's locker and practice the combination. Consider having the cafeteria open for parents and learners to purchase snacks. Providing learners an opportunity to become accustomed to lunch lines and procedures.
- Host a family game or reading night, or even a family movie night before school begins and invite incoming freshmen and their families. Often the only time parents see the inside of the high school is for a parent conference or when one of their children gets

into trouble. Find ways to invite families into the school so that they understand their value in learning.

### **Things to Consider:**

- Provide space for parent organizations to set up information tables as a way to encourage parents to get involved at the school.
- Consider having upper classroom produce a virtual tour of the high school and post it on your website so that learners who cannot attend Open House can view.

### **Resource:**

- Freshmen Orientation Video

# **Transition Tools for High School Learners & Families**





## Total Access

**Audience: Incoming 9th Graders & Families**

**When: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (Spring)**

### Overview:

High school websites can be storehouses of information for learners and families. Provide web addresses, including passwords if applicable, to families and learners who will be transitioning to the high school. This will allow the families the opportunity to become familiar with your site before they rely on it as a main source of information.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

Possible items for including on the website:

- **Teacher Pages** – teachers can host their own page on the high school website where they post their teaching philosophy, classroom calendars with project and assignment due dates, project descriptions, classroom rules/procedures and contact information. Email links could also be provided.
- **Lunch Menu** – learners are often used to having lunch menus sent home by the school for parents to reference and/or help plan meals for their learners. If the menu is on the website, parents can assist freshman learners with lunch planning.
- **Club/Sport/Activity Pages** – clubs and sports groups could have their own web page to post practice and game schedules, activity schedules, mission and vision statements, upcoming field trip information, club rules, etc.
- **School Handbook (Agenda)** – Post the school handbook on the website to make it more accessible to parents and learners. Handbooks are generally sent home with learners at the beginning of the year, but learners often misplace them and can no longer refer to them when they have questions.

- **Blogs** – include family and student blogs or discussion areas for new learners and their families. Ask current parents and learners to participate in the blog to respond to questions and concerns voiced by the families of or the upcoming learners themselves.

### Things to Consider:

- Websites can often be difficult to navigate, however, to ensure that your school website is user friendly, consider self-explanatory menu items to help even novice computer surfers find their way around your site.
- To encourage upcoming learners and parents to use the website and become familiar with its contents, consider an online trivia contest where school memorabilia is the grand prize.



# Transition Tools for High School

## Parents





## **Dive Right In**

**Audience: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Parents**

**When: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (Spring)**

### **Overview:**

The PTA/PTO can be a great avenue for schools to use to help get parents involved in the school setting. Research shows that when parents are involved in their child's education, those learners generally have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and more consistently completed homework.

### **Procedure/Guidelines:**

Ask the PTA/PTO to host events such as the following for incoming families and students:

- Family Dinner, perhaps a potluck mixer – with a focus on how parents can best help their learners succeed in high school. – Have a panel of parents of current learners share their experiences and respond to questions of attendees. Have a panel of older learners meet with the incoming learners to share tips on how to be a successful learner.
- Picnic with activities such as corn hole or horseshoe tournaments. The focus would be on building relationships with parents of rising high school learners. Parents of learners who are graduating could share their success stories and ideas on how to assist incoming high school learners to succeed.
- Family ice cream social. In addition to enjoying some tasty ice cream, parents can gather information about how they can help their learners in their coming years of high school.
- Family “fun night” where the focus is on “fun raising” not “fundraising.” Food, games and a time to mingle and socialize would be the focus of the event.

**Things to Consider:**

- Many factors contribute to a decrease in family involvement in high school. In order to maintain open communication schools must use a variety of settings to encourage parents to stay involved.

**Resources:**

- ABCs for Success with the Common Core (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.)
- 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade to Learners Success Literacy & Math (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.)

# **Transitioning Into High School 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (Start of Year)**

**For Learners  
For Parents**

# **Transition Tools for High School Learners**



## **Planning your future – using the Cultural Competency Character Education Portfolio**

**Audience: 9<sup>th</sup> Graders**

**When: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (Start of Year)**

### **Overview:**

Freshman year is pivotal for college and career planning. Setting aside time for using the Cultural Competency Character Education Portfolio should occur often throughout the year. These sessions could be included in core content classrooms or as a component of an elective class.

### **Procedure/Guidelines:**

Explain to learners that the Cultural Competency Character Education Portfolio will help them to plan coursework and activities as they complete their high school education, prepare for post-secondary education and develop career plans. The document, Cultural Competency Character Education Portfolio Activities, provides guidance for these components:

#### **Section A**

- The Cover Letter
- The Résumé
- The Career Essay

#### **Section B**

- Cultural Competency Standards for Learners
- Definition for Competence
- Overview
- Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric

Definition for Intercultural Knowledge  
Framing Language  
How to Use the Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric  
Glossary  
Rubric to measure Knowledge, Skills, Beliefs and Attitudes  
Evaluation for Self and Observer  
Continuing competence contributes to the quality of the individual/employee  
Matrix for measuring; Acting autonomously, Functioning in a socially heterogeneous group, and Using tools interactively  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Environment  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Theme Matrix  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill Matrix  
Criteria for awarding the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Cultural Competency and Character Development Certificate  
Projection for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Cultural Competency and Character Education Portfolio

### Things to Consider:

- Document ways that learners use the Portfolio that are innovative or unique, so that you can incorporate those ideas with future learners.

### Resource:

- Cultural Competency and Character Education Portfolio (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.)
- General Guidelines for Creating a Culturally Competent Character Education Portfolio (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.)





## End the Guessing Game

**Audience: 9<sup>th</sup> Graders**

**When: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (Start of Year)**

### Overview:

Middle school academics are very different from high school academics. It takes learners a while to understand that grades are linked to credits and credits must be earned in order to advance through grade levels and ultimately graduate. With a bit of preparation, learners can have an understanding of the academic expectations and better meet these challenges.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

Almost every high school teacher hands out a syllabus and spends the first day of school going over it. By the time learners get home that first evening, most will admit that the entire day has become one big blur of unclear expectations. Facilitators of learning should consider presenting their classroom routines and expectations in a more engaging way.

- Ask facilitators of learning to provide a PowerPoint presentation or video that could be emailed to parents or posed to teacher web pages. This presentation should address procedures and expectations for the class. Parents and learners could view this together at home. The presentation might also include background information about the facilitator of learning and a welcoming introduction to the class.
- Place a hidden message in the syllabus and give the first learner finding the message a prize.
- Add graphics to the syllabus and print it on colored or decorative paper to make it more interesting and eye appealing.
- Have learners pair up and do a scavenger hunt activity using the syllabus.
- Show a video prepared by learners from the previous year. In the video learners could provide tips on how to be successful in the class. It could also include a part by the facilitator of learning addressing other necessary information.

**Things to Consider:**

- High school facilitators of learning often complain that students are unable to meet reasonable expectations. Truth be known, many learners are simply unsure about what the expectations are. Facilitators of learning need to be sure to set their expectations clearly and communicate these to learners and parents.
- Modeling is a great tool for learners, and it helps them understand the level of effort and commitment needed on their part to be successful.



## Making Connections

**Audience: 9<sup>th</sup> Graders**

**When: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (Start of Year)**

### Overview:

High schools are typically larger, less personal and more departmentalized than middle and elementary schools. As a result, learners often feel disconnected and somewhat lost. Recent research of learners who dropped out of school without graduating shows that almost half reported doing so because they were bored or disengaged from the high school. It is very easy for ninth graders especially, to get lost and to not feel connected to their new school.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

- Ask all of the school teams, clubs, and organizations to decorate the cafeteria walls with banners, posters, and other paraphernalia representative of their group and showing what the group does.
- Schedule a time (i.e., at lunch, one hour during the day, early arrival time and homeroom) for representatives of the various school clubs, organizations, teams, and special activities to set up booths and allow freshman learners to visit and gather information.
- Identify places for posting meeting announcements for all groups (i.e., hall bulletin board, location on school web site, school announcements).
- Utilize Cultural Competency Character Education Portfolio Resume information from “Hobbies and Interests” data to determine extra-curricular interest of freshman. And also, by doing exercises from the Did You Know Publishing “Solving the Relational Puzzle,” to determine the likes and dislikes of students.
- Find out which students are not participating in school organizations and identify a mentor (either school staff or community members) for these learners to provide them with a stronger connection to the school.

**Things to Consider:**

- After a first meeting, mentors could meet with their mentees electronically. Having email communications could increase the amount of contact for learners with their mentors. However, learners may need school time for doing this.



## Finding My Way

**Audience: 9<sup>th</sup> Graders**

**When: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (Start of Year)**

### Overview:

Recent research of learners who dropped out of school without graduating shows that almost half reported doing so because they were bored or disengaged from the high school. High school learners are typically larger, less personal, more departmentalized than middle or elementary schools. As a result, learners often feel disconnected and lost in the ensuing shuffle. It is very easy for ninth graders especially, to get lost in the shuffle and fail their course work without timely intervention.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

- **Develop a school-wide advisory program for ninth grade learners to help them with their high school transition.** Assign faculty and staff small groups of learners to meet with at least once a week to discuss transition issues and to monitor learners' academic progress suggesting appropriate interventions.
- Establish a mentoring program to provide more care and attention for targeted learners using school staff, community members, and/or business representatives. Use early dropout prediction data, such as absenteeism, history of failure, discipline referral record, and unstable home environment to create a list of potential dropouts. Mentors would be one person that learners could go to if they had a question or concern.
- Administer the learning cycle inventory in the ILP. If your school has a homeroom or an advising period, consider administering the learning style inventory during this time and share the results with the faculty. Knowing learners' predominant learning style could help facilitators of learning group learners for projects, and determine appropriate interventions when learners are having trouble.

**Things to Consider:**

- Research has shown that the **single most important factor for student success is relationships with adults in their academic environment.**
- Activities such as this one helps to build those relationships and help facilitators of learning connect with learners.

**Resource:**

- Solving the Relational Puzzle with Learners (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.)

# **Transition Tools for High School**

## **Parents**







## Raising the Bar

**Audience: Parents of 9<sup>th</sup> Graders**

**When: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (Start of Year)**

### Overview:

The transition from middle grades to high school is often very confusing for incoming freshmen. Grades, course selection and credits are either new concepts completely, or take on an entirely new meaning on the high school level. Parents and learners are often unaware of the benefits of accelerated learning opportunities.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

Help parents and learners make the connection from the high school coursework to the resulting college level coursework that the learner will take once he or she enters college (or dual credit courses in their last two years of high school).

- Host an Accelerated Learning Opportunities Rally and/or a College Fair. During this event, a quick overview of the latest research can be presented to parents and learners. Counselors or teachers can share accelerated learning course offerings (AP, Dual Credit, etc.) and learners who have taken the courses can share their experiences. Local college staff can attend and be called upon to discuss the colleges' approach to the various accelerated learning opportunities and how the college uses these credits in admission and placement decisions. The colleges could set up informational booths for parents and learners to ask questions and learn more about the college opportunities.
- Learners currently enrolled in accelerated courses could visit younger learners and talk with upcoming middle school learners about high school course offerings and the benefits of taking advantage of such opportunities.
- If applicable, counselors and teachers can take the opportunity to sit down with learners individually and/or with parents and go over EPAS EXPLORE scores. (EPAS – Educational Planning and Assessment System) is a linked series of three tests – EXPLORE, PLAN &

ACT – that is designed to measure a learner’s educational progress and college readiness as they move through high school.

**Things to Consider:**

- Learners and parents are unaware of the research that shows that what courses a learner takes often has direct correlation with learners ACT score and which college and what college courses they will need to take as a result.



## In a Million Words or Less

**Audience:** Parents of 9<sup>th</sup> Graders

**When:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (Start of Year)

### Overview:

Facilitators of learning often begin the school year with a parent letter in which they introduce themselves and provide an overview of the school year. These parent letters are wonderful sources of information and facilitators of learning often agonize over the design and content of the letters for weeks before they actually send them home to parents. This transition activity involves a letter from parents, to the teachers, about the learners.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

Make no mistake about it, parents are the experts on their children. They know their children's culture; their personalities, quirks, successes and failures. This activity involves a homework assignment for the first week of school – only it is to be completed by the learner's parent or guardian, not by the student themselves.

- The actual activity can be worded like this: You know so much more about your own child than I know about them at this moment. As we are going to be on a year-long journey together, and part of my job is to help prepare your child for the future you want them to have. It helps when I know more about your child's likes and dislikes, their personality and tendencies, and their past successes and failures. In a million words or less, tell me about your child.
- You can alter the title and try, "In five hundred words or less..." if you want to make the task less daunting to parents.

### Things to Consider:

- Research has shown that the single most important factor for learner success is **relationships** with adults in their academic environment. Activities such as this one help to build those relationships and help facilitators of learning **connect** with learners.



# **Transitioning Into High School 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (During the Year)**

**For Learners  
For Learners & Families**

# **Transition Tools for High School Learners**



## Looping for Success

**Audience:** 9<sup>th</sup> Graders

**When:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (During the Year)

### Overview:

Looping, also known as multi-year placement, is a process by which learners remain in “teams” with their peers and their teacher through several years of their educational experience. Looping has been a popular technique for elementary and even some middle schools for several years, but this teamed approach is slowly taking root in high school classes as well.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

- Looping allows facilitators of learning to focus on learner skills levels and learner academic growth, and not necessarily on grade-level curricular boundaries. Teachers in looped classrooms have the freedom to accelerate the curriculum as they need to in order to stay on pace with student learning.
- Looping helps alleviate the beginning of the year “drag” where learners are trying to become familiar with the expectations and routines of a new teacher and teachers are trying to quickly assess the aptitude of a new set of pupils. Learning can begin on day one of the school year.
- Many professionals will dismiss looping for all classes, it is possible to loop some of the core classes. A learner, for instance, can have the same English/Language Arts teacher for several years, or the Same Social Studies teacher for several years.

### Things to Consider:

- Allowing learners to build on friendships and relationships with teachers over several years can allow for significant academic and social growth. Learners will benefit from the consistent nature of knowing the teacher and knowing the expectations for the course. Facilitators of learning can benefit because there is already a relationship in place with the learner and the learner’s parents.



## Shadowing through the Dark

**Audience:** 9<sup>th</sup> Graders

**When:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (During the Year)

### Overview:

Student to student mentoring is a concept that is rapidly catching on across the United States. Research studies have shown that students with a mentor are 53% less likely to skip school, 37% less likely to skip classes, 33% less likely to hit someone and 59% more likely to improve their grades. High school learners are also much more likely to listen to their peers – learners their own age who have been through the very experiences they are facing.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

- Consider utilizing your National Honor Society learners as peer mentors. These learners should be trained in leadership skills and should have both the academic skills and the cultural competency skills to support freshman learners.
- Consider making the program voluntary. No freshman learner is going to want to be forced to have a mentor buddy, but some may want this opportunity and will take advantage of it when presented with the option.
- Have older learners assist younger learners in becoming familiar with the school building as well so that younger learners are less fearful of that first day of school.
- Peer mentors will need training on how to be an effective leader to their mentee. Without training, mentors will be unsure of their role and their responsibilities.

### Things to Consider:

- Peer mentoring can be a wonderful opportunity for freshman learners to have a “seasoned” peer walk them through the school building and talk to them about the importance of class work and being involved in extracurricular activities. Well screened peer mentors can be a first line of defense for freshman learners who are often unsure and confused about the myriad of choices they face.

### Resource:

- Leadership Skills for Youth Development (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.)

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## Spreading your Wings

**Audience:** 9<sup>th</sup> Graders

**When:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (During the Year)

### Overview:

Providing information about possible volunteering, job shadowing opportunities in the community can help freshmen learners make a personal connection and feel a sense of belonging. Ideally these experiences should be aligned with the learners' Career Matchmaker results and cluster recommendations in their ILPs.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

Walk learners through the following process to identify an appropriate experience:

- Have learners complete the Career Matchmaker assessment, review the suggested careers, and then select 3 careers that they are interested in researching further.
- Ask learners to click on those 3 careers to see how their responses in Career Matchmaker align with the tasks associated with that career.
- Have learners work in pairs or small groups to discuss the following questions. (If possible group them by similar careers)
  - What aspects of the job do you like/dislike?
  - What volunteer opportunities might be available to provide experience in exploring this career? (If in the computer lab, have learners complete the volunteer exploration form).
- As a follow-up exercise, have students create a sidewalk square illustrating their interests, skills and goals. When learners have completed their squares, ask them to share their square with a partner. Then have learners share a key point about their partner's square with the class.

**Things to Consider:**

- Invite community members to speak about related careers.
- Possibly have learners complete applications and conduct mock interviews.
- Guest speakers could provide feedback on applications and interviews.



## Chalking up Points

**Audience:** 9<sup>th</sup> Graders

**When:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (During the Year)

### Overview:

Whether for a graduation moment, to earn National Honor Society points or simply to be helpful, volunteering brings many benefits to the lives of adolescents. Ideally, the volunteering experience should be aligned with the students' Career Matchmaker results in their ILPs.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

Use the following checklist (adapted from *21 "To Do" Lists for High School* by: Valerie Pierce and Cheryl Rilly) to guide learners through the volunteering process:

- Call professional organizations and associations related to your interests to see if they need volunteers or could suggest a volunteer position.
- Click on websites for ideas.
- Check the school bulletin board or check with your counselor to see what service possibilities exist through your school.
- Ask your friends where they plan to volunteer.
- Check the websites of local newspapers and television stations for lists of volunteer activities and events. Watch for stories on interesting charity events. Call the sponsoring agency and ask if you can volunteer.
- Call the local sports teams to see if they're sponsoring youth events. Ask if you can volunteer.
- Check with your place of worship. Can you teach Sunday school? Babysit? Volunteer at church events? Do they sponsor mission work?
- Turn your interests into volunteer work. If you take extra curricular classes (i.e. dance, music), ask the instructor if they need help.
- Initiate your own volunteer group for a cause or need that you are passionate about.
- Find out if your volunteer position can turn into a summer job or internship.

- Ask your counselor if your school has a program that gives high school credit for community service hours.
- **Document** any volunteer time in your Cultural Competency Character Education Portfolio.

### Things to Consider:

- Provide time for learners to document their volunteering experiences in their Cultural Competency Character Education Portfolio.
- Provide links to local community service opportunities on your school webpage.

# **Transition Tools for High School Learners & Families**





## Student Led Conferences

**Audience: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Learners & Families**

**When: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (During the Year)**

### Overview:

Learner led conferences move the learner from passive to an active participant in a 3-way interaction among parent, facilitator of learning, and learner. Learners assume “equal partner” status in discussions concerning their academic progress. One EXTREMELY important characteristic remains constant: **The learner leads the discussion**. In participating in this process, learners can improve oral communication skills and gain self-confidence. Facilitators of learning who frequently use this model report that the parent and teacher bonds are strengthened. Both the facilitator of learning and parent are more likely to initiate subsequent contacts throughout the remainder of the school year.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

Consider the following strategies when conducting learner led conferences:

- The facilitator of learning should create a welcoming atmosphere (i.e. greet at the door with a smile and a handshake, make eye contact). Set the tone with a positive comment about the learner.
- The facilitator of learning should arrange to conduct conferences at a designated area, preferably in the classroom with comfortable seating. Provide adult seating so parents are not uncomfortable. Learner led conferences should help prevent parents from having childhood memories of school trauma.
- Students should review their ILP and Cultural Competency Character Education Portfolio with their parents and discuss strengths, interests and goals. Prepare learners in advance to highlight the accomplishments they have documented. This is also a good time to discuss the learner’s educational plan.

- Allow the parents the opportunity to ask questions or set up an additional conference time, if the need is felt by either the facilitator of learning or the parents.

### Things to Consider:

2 Options for conducting learner led conference:

- The facilitator of learning personally attends each learner/parent conference. This is preferred for the first Learner-Led Conference by facilitators of learning as well as parents.
- The facilitator of learning schedules 4-5 conferences simultaneously with the facilitator of learning moving around the classroom and attending to groups as needed. This is preferred after facilitators of learning, learners, as well as parents become experienced in the Learner-Led conference format.

### Resource:

- Parent, Family, and Community Involvement *Educating Our Students Together – A Reference for Family-School-Community Partnerships* (Did You Know Publishing, Inc.)





## Follow the Money

**Audience: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Learners & Families**

**When: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (During the Year)**

### Overview:

Beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, learners need to make it their “job” to search for scholarships. With that said, finding scholarships can seem like a daunting experience to both learners and parents alike. Starting this process helps to allow families to devote sufficient time to preparing their learner. The ILP features over 1500 scholarships for learners to research. The good news is that the ILP also features a “Financial Selector” component to help narrow the search.

### Procedure/Guidelines:

- First, log onto the ILP and click on the blue “schools” button at the top of the screen, next click on the “financial aid” button.
- Learners will then answer a series of 22 questions related to their interests, talents and affiliations of their parents. Once completed they will receive a list of scholarships for which they are uniquely qualified.
- Learners can also search for scholarships by program name using an alphabetical index by clicking on “Financial Aid,” then “Search for Scholarships.”

### Things to Consider:

- Consider having learners write an essay or letter that is required for one of the scholarships on their list.
- This document can be saved to the “My Documents” section on the homepage of the learner ILP. When the learner is a junior or senior they can revisit the essay to make revisions and submit to the appropriate scholarship sites.

### Resource:

- Student and Parent ILP Access
- ILP Parent Toolkit