

**2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”**

**WORK GROUP: *Middle School to High School Transition***

**FINAL REPORT**

**Committee Members:**

Roszalyn Akins

Bonnie Brinly

John Nocht

Gladys Peoples

Tina Stevenson

Gary Wiseman

**Number of Specific Recommendations:   4**

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**Group Recommendation Number: 1 -----Structure**

#### **Specific Recommendation:**

1 (a) Investigate reorganizing the current structure of schools to include 6-7, 8-9, and 10-12 student groupings. Make student assignments in such a way to make each middle and high school as equally racially and economically diverse as possible. Organizational reforms such as small learning communities, de-tracking in favor of common core curriculum, and interdisciplinary teaming.

1 (b) Implement a district wide year round alternative schedule allowing breaks between quarters or sessions.

1 (c) At the minimum add one day at the first of the year for incoming freshmen.

#### **Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:**

Students entering high school face common challenges: Physical and emotional; social; and academic challenges

Recent literature provides insight into practices that may increase student engagement and achievement by focusing on the distinction between bureaucratic and communal school organization. Researchers have identified practices that may help create a sense of community within a school leading to less student alienation and lower dropout rates (Lee & Smith, 1995; Lee, Bryk, and Smith, 1993; Johnson, 1992; Bryk & Driscoll, 1988)

1(a) Fayette County Public Schools data shows a 56.52% retention percent for 9<sup>th</sup> graders over the past six years. Of the 4,142 students retained in the high schools (1999-2000 to 2004-05), 2341 were 9<sup>th</sup> graders. (Appendix).

Reorganizing the middle school and high school will provide opportunities for relationship building between peers and teachers as well as remove the distractions of the larger span of disparate age groups.

1(b) A different schedule would allow for interventions to occur at different times during the grade year.

1(c) The first day of school for freshmen would start one day before the rest of the students return from summer break. New students are able to follow their schedules, meet their teachers, and learn about the opportunities available to them without the distractions of upperclassmen.

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**Group Recommendation Number: 2 -----District Standards for Transition**

#### **Specific Recommendation:**

2 (a) Complete a district-wide vertical alignment of curriculum so that all students coming from the middle school have mastered the same content. Begin the work in each feeder pattern.

2 (b) Develop district wide standards for mastery of subjects and assessment tools to assess all students at the end of an organizational level.

2 (c) Develop end of course exams.

2(d) Create deliberate activities that bring middle school and high school administrators, counselors, and teachers together to learn about the program, courses, curriculum, and requirements of the respective schools.

#### **Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:**

Research shows that making a successful transition to high school can help students form lasting attachments to school and increase students’ likelihood of graduating from high school.

2 (b) (c) Expect all teachers to teach the same content consistently.

Do not use ability tracking with ninth graders in any of the core academic classes (Legters/Kerr 2000)

2(d) Activities that create a mutual understanding of curriculum requirements at both levels and of the young adolescent learner will help educators at both levels meet the particular needs of their students. (Hertzog et al., 1996; Vars, 1998)

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**Group Recommendation Number: 3 -----Differentiated intervention for students**

**Specific Recommendation:**

3 (a) Provide accelerated programs for students needing to catch up and assure that dual credit programs are equally available at all high schools for those who are ready to move to a more challenging curriculum.

3 (b) Move to a performance-based credit system with schools developing specifics to meet student and school needs

3 (c) Special instruction/classes/intervention/schools developed for students not meeting standards with multiple paths for students to “catch-up”

- Smaller class size

- Intervention during alternative calendar/schedule breaks

3(c) Identify students who need additional enrichment experiences in grades 7 and 8.

- Develop high-level exploratory courses in grades 7 and 8 that give students more time to read, write and do math

- Utilize the career/education plan (IGP)

- Include parent orientation

3 (d) Create a “Successful Transitions” Team and implement/create transition programs.

Successful Transition Team: Comprised of Principal, school or district curriculum specialist, school or district representative with school data collection responsibilities, at least one English and one mathematics teacher, computer teacher, guidance counselor, and others who have indicated interest in transition components

Summer Bridge Program: Students exiting grade eight who are performing at the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile or lower or who perform below grade level, attend a four to six week summer program. Focus on reading, mathematics, computer and study skills. Recruit the strongest teachers to teach in this program. Include high-interest challenging activities and career education components.

EOY Program: The last four week of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year would be spent in activities preparing 8<sup>th</sup> graders to transition to high school. Activities could include: visiting the high school, shadow upperclassmen; attend presentations by high school students or panel of high school students;

Double Dose Program: Ninth grade students not ready to take college prep courses are enrolled in “catch-up” program. Curriculum includes double doses of language arts/reading and mathematics.

Implement a Community for Learning (CFL) Program. Key components of the CFL program are support and training for teachers, a learning management system designed to help students develop a sense of responsibility for the own learning and behavior, and an emphasis on community and family involvement.

**Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:**

3(a) Students who struggle to meet more demanding academic requirements, especially those with poor prior preparation, often have feelings of alienation and self-doubt. These conditions ultimately lead to disengagement from school. (Zane, 1994; Epstein & Mac Iver, 1990)

3 (c) When parents are involved in their student’s transition to high school they tend to stay involved in their child’s schools experiences (Mac Iver, 1990); and when parents are involved in their child’s high school experiences, students have higher achievement (Linver & Silverberg, 1997; Paulson, 1994) are better adjusted (Hartos & Power, 1997), and are less likely to drop out of school (Horn & West, 1992)

3(d)Research has found that when middle school students took part in a high school transition program with several diverse articulation activities fewer students were retained in the transition grade. (Mac Iver, 1990)

3 (d) Legers/Kerr (2000)

Oates (1998)

Mac Iver 1990\_

Mac Iver and Epstein 1991

3(d) Students who are not successfully integrated into the school community make the decision to drop out early in their high school career. (Bryk, 1994)

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**Group Recommendation Number: 4 -----Teacher Staffing and Incentives**

**Specific Recommendation:**

- 4 (a) Staffing should be flexible and based on the individual school need given the results of the assessments of the entering students.
- 4 (b) Provide special professional development for intervention teachers and highly trained specialists to assist both teachers and students.
- 4 (c) Offer incentives for master teachers to teach intervention classes
- 4 (d) Offer bonus structure for teachers who teach intervention classes or based on number of students pass end-of-course exams.

**Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:**

See Middle School and High School 2020 Group