

ASK A REL RESPONSE

Ninth-Grade Transition Programs

The transition to high school is a crucial time that can affect students' ability to stay on track to graduate (see Roderick, Kelley-Kemple, Johnson, & Beechum, 2014). While studies have been done on summer programs for incoming ninth-graders, research indicates that an effective freshman transition program focuses on the entire ninth-grade year (see Habeeb, 2013).

In response to a request for research on best practices for summer transition programs for incoming freshmen, REL Northwest's Reference Desk librarian searched for evidence under the broader topic of effective transition programs in general. Below, we share a sampling of the publicly accessible resources on this topic, found in a search of research databases and websites of federally funded organizations and other research and policy centers. The databases include Education Administration Abstracts, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Education Research Complete, and Google Scholar.

This customized search is provided through our Ask A REL program and is available free of charge. Ask A REL responses are tailored to meet the needs of each individual request, and include copies of full-text articles from peer-reviewed journals. If you would like additional research on transition programs or on other topics, please contact Jennifer Klump at relnw@educationnorthwest.org for personalized assistance.

References:

Abbott, S. E., & Templeton, K. (2013). *Ninth grade counts: Using summer bridge programs to strengthen the high school transition.* Retrieved from Great Schools Partnership website: <http://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/resources/ninth-grade-counts/>

The third installment of a three-part series, this tool provides guidelines and resources for schools to develop effective summer transition programs for ninth-grade students. The goal is to design programs to eliminate learning gaps and prepare incoming high school students for success. The guide includes a self-assessment protocol, three brief profiles of schools with innovative summer bridge programs, and planning road maps.

Dedmond, R., Brown, R. D., & LaFauci, J. M. (2006). Freshman transition programs: Long-term and comprehensive. *Principal's Research Review*, 1(4), 1–8. Retrieved from Freshman Transition Initiative website:
http://www.freshmantransition.org/NASSP_ResearchBrief.pdf

This National Association of Secondary School Principals' research brief discusses issues around freshman transition programs and profiles programs across the country, including those in summer.

See also the Freshman Transition Initiative website: <http://www.freshmantransition.org>

Ellerbrock, C. R., & Kiefer, S. M. (2014). Supporting young adolescents' middle-to-high-school transition through creating a ninth-grade community of care: Implications for middle level educators. *Middle School Journal*, 45(3), 3–10. Retrieved from
http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sarah_Kiefer/publication/260186711_Ellerbrock_C_R_Kiefer_S_M_2014_Supporting_young_adolescents_middle-to-high-school_transition_through_creating_a_ninth-grade_community_of_care_Implications_for_middle_level_educators.Middle_School_Journal_4520143-10/links/53d816170cf2e38c632f3129.pdf

The authors discuss the importance of middle-to-high school transitions and highlight the need for collaboration between middle and high school teachers to ensure healthy adolescent development beyond the middle grades.

Habeeb, S. (2013). The ninth grade challenge. *Principal Leadership*, 13, 18–22. Retrieved from
http://www.nassp.org/tabid/3788/default.aspx?topic=The_Ninth_Grade_Challenge

This article describes essential components and characteristics of freshman transition programs. It also compares two approaches: the academy model and teaming model.

Kennelly, L., & Monrad, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Easing the transition to high school: Research and best practices designed to support high school learning*. Retrieved from American Institutes for Research, National High School Center website:
http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_TransitionsReport.pdf

This toolkit contains four resources—a fact sheet, policy brief, best practices brief based on key research, and snapshot of one school's program—that describe how to support and guide a smooth transition into high school.

Neild, R. C. (2009). **Falling off track during the transition to high school: What we know and what can be done.** *Future of Children*, 19(1), 53–76. Retrieved from ERIC website: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ842047>

This article discusses what it means for ninth-graders to be off track, why that happens, and what strategies help to keep students on track to graduation. Neild specifically discusses summer transition programs for incoming ninth-graders, in particular the Chicago Public School's Step Up to High School program. She cautions that although "reports of successful summer bridge programs abound," the data are based on observations and lack comparison groups.

Roderick, M., Kelley-Kemple, T., Johnson, D. W., & Beechum, N. O. (2014). *Preventable failure: Improvements in long-term outcomes when high schools focused on the ninth grade year* [Research summary]. Retrieved from University of Chicago, Urban Education Institute, Consortium on Chicago School Research website: <http://ontrack.uchicago.edu/>

This summary highlights findings of a research report on a Chicago Public Schools' program for ninth-graders who, as a result of intensive and targeted efforts to improve their transition to high school and prevent course failure, were able to stay on track to graduation. One dramatic statistic: "On-track rates improved more among African American males than among any other racial/ ethnic gender subgroup, rising from 43 percent in 2005 to 71 percent in 2013." The summary also describes the impact of these improvements on students' long-term outcomes.

Warger, Eavy & Associates. (2009). *Summer bridge programs* [Policy brief]. Retrieved from ERIC website: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED505704>

This brief includes best practices of summer bridge programs and elements to consider when implementing such programs.