

Ask the Expert Q&A #6

Preparing Students for Transitioning to Middle School

Presenters:

Josh Taylor, Ph.D. &
Noel Woolard, Ed.D.
VCU-RRTC, Autism
Center for Education

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What are the important considerations for preparing students to transition to middle school?

The middle school environment is very different from elementary school, the building is usually much larger and there are many more students in that building. So you think about your elementary students as you are preparing them to transition to middle school. You need to prepare them as early as possible for all the changes that they will be experiencing so they will hopefully have a successful transition as possible.

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What are the most important elements for the elementary school teams working with students transitioning from elementary to middle school to think about?

The first thing is that we have to prepare and provide lots of opportunities for students to practice skills that will enable them to be successful in the middle school environment. For example, we want to make sure that the elementary school teams transitioning elementary students are collaborating with the middle school teams, with some conversation about who these students with ASD are, what their needs are, and what their strengths are, so that we can make sure that they are in the correct place in the school environment. We also want to make sure that we are including the parents as we move forward with this transition so they can also do their part in helping their children at home as well. Communication and collaboration with both the elementary and middle school teams are a big part of this transition being successful.

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Last minute tips for teachers preparing the elementary school students to transition into middle school?

When preparing students with ASD to transition to middle school, the focus should be placed on organization. Focus should be on teaching these students how to set up their notebook, how to find things and put things into their notebook in a place where they could find them at a later date. It is also extremely helpful to teach them how to use agendas, make sure they can communicate their wants and needs in any way, shape, or form. Even if students with ASD can communicate vocally, make sure their communication is functional and they could do it at any time. Also, it is beneficial for the transitioning student to go over to the middle school building and to take tours. Take them to meet their new teachers, meet office staff, and the cafeteria workers as well, and become familiar with the building.

This Q&A has been taken from “Ask the Expert Series” which are short videos that discuss important topics for parents, educators, community members, and individuals with ASD and can be found on the VCU-ACE website: <https://vcuautismcenter.org/resources/asktheexpert/>