The George Washington University Transition Initiative Introduces:

**Standards for Middle Level Transition**

*Can today’s students envision a future that is economically self-sufficient? Are they able to articulate a plan that will help them achieve their goals and dreams? Do they understand the consequences to the many aspects of their life if they don’t follow through with their plans?*

These are the questions that launched The George Washington University’s Transition Initiative in 2005. We knew we had to get students thinking. We knew that as educators we must make sure that students transition successfully into productive adulthood.

High schools across America have adopted Freshman Transition because it *cultivates students’ sense of belonging, encourages ownership of learning, supports the ability to make good choices during a time of changes and challenges, and* helps students prepare for a self-sufficient future. Educators plead that these same strengths are needed in early adolescence.

In response to this nationwide request, the **Standards for Middle Level Transition** are presented to help students navigate their way into adolescence. Middle level students need help to focus on

* **personal and social development**
* **educational achievement**
* **career and life skills**

As with the Freshman Transition Standards, we relied on best practices research and adolescent development theory to create the structure, framework, and conception of the middle school transition standards.

**Overview**

The following Standards map a course for middle school students that are filled with explorations and experiences to help them make a successful transition into adolescence. With the help of caring educators, students will build personal, social, academic, and career skills to help them navigate their path to the future.

**Personal and Social Development** *(navigating twists and turns)*

Students will

* + develop a strong, positive self-concept
  + develop positive, meaningful relationships
  + demonstrate effective communication strategies
  + learn the benefits of having a cooperative spirit
  + work well in teams
  + value diversity
  + develop coping skills

**Educational Achievement** *(navigating challenges and changes)*

Students will

* + develop organization skills
  + discover how to learn best
  + apply learning skills to academic tasks

**Career and Life Skills** *(navigating opportunities and directions)*

Students will

* + explore their skills and aptitudes
  + apply strategies to solve problems and make decisions
  + set goals, make a plan to reach those goals, and carry out the pl

**Standards for Middle Level Transition**

Domain I: Personal and Social Development

*Navigating challenges and changes*

**Standard 1: Develop a strong, positive self-concept**

Goal I: Students will explore and understand their personal strengths, motivations, and interests

1. Reflect regularly on the things that make them feel strong
2. Identify factors that motivate them when they are engaged in important social situations and academic tasks
3. Recognize how much they are influenced by peer pressure
4. Identify and prioritize things that interest them
5. Make and carry out a plan to engage in the things they find most interesting
6. Create a personal profile of strengths, motivations, and interests

Goal II: Students will recognize self-esteem and how it differs from false confidence

1. Reflect on the attributes they used to accomplish an important task and how that accomplishment made them feel
2. Contemplate times when they were praised for work they did not think was worthy and how that made them feel
3. Understand that self-esteem can be enhanced through positive relationships with peers and important adults and by accomplishing goals

**Standard 2: Develop positive, meaningful relationships**

Goal I: Students will learn how to connect with others. They will:

1. Develop the skills needed to be a good listener
2. Develop the skills needed to be empathic
3. Recognize, accept, and respect the similarities and differences of others

Goal II: Students will learn how to form positive friendships. They will:

1. Recognize varying levels of friendship
2. Gain understanding of the traits and values to look for in a friend that will make their life more rewarding
3. Identify the qualities that they contribute to a friendship

Goal III: Students will demonstrate effective interaction with others. They will:

1. Understand how one’s personal behavior influences the feelings and actions of others
2. Demonstrate tolerance and flexibility in interpersonal and group situations
3. Acknowledge the need for privacy and personal boundaries
4. Demonstrate skills in giving and responding to praise and criticism

**Standard 3: Demonstrate effective communication**

Goal I: Students will use effective communication strategies with peers, parents, and other adults. They will:

1. Determine communication preferences
2. Understand the importance of effective listening skills
3. Explore ways to improve oral and written communication with peers and adults
4. Recognize the importance of non-verbal communication and how it can support or contradict the spoken word
5. Understand that showing respect for others’ points of view is critical for effective communication among individuals and groups

Goal II: Apply effective communication skills when using social media. They will:

1. Explore the use of social media for communicating, including the benefits, cautions, and potential harm
2. Be aware of the difference in the receiver’s perception when messages are sent through social media and when they are delivered in person
3. Identify ways to avoid miscommunication when using social media
4. Determine appropriate self-disclosure when communicating through social media

**Standard 4: Learn the benefits of having a cooperative spirit**

Goal I: Students will recognize the impact that cooperation has on the society in which they live. They will:

1. Analyze historical research and current events to understand the positive outcomes of working cooperatively
2. Analyze historical research and current events to recognize the negative outcomes when there is no cooperation

Goal II: Students will recognize the impact that cooperation has on their personal lives. They will:

1. Identify situations when their cooperation led to an outcome that benefitted them personally
2. Identify situations when their lack of cooperation led to disappointment
3. Reflect on personal situations when they were affected by others’ cooperation or lack of cooperation

**Standard 5: Work well in teams**

Goal I: Students will understand the characteristics of an effective team member. They will:

1. Show respect for and flexibility with team members
2. Practice compromise and cooperation when working in groups
3. Accept accountability for the outcome of the team’s effort
4. Demonstrate leadership when appropriate and follow the leader when that helps get the job done

Goal II: Students will understand the roles of team members and the process. They will:

1. Identify the roles that promote effective teamwork
2. Participate in group work carrying out the responsibilities of the assigned team roles
3. Create strategies for handling team conflicts
4. Replicate the process of working as a team to reach a goal

**Standard 6: Value Diversity**

Goal I: Students will expand their awareness of diversity. They will:

1. Examine personal values, biases, stereotypes, and discriminatory behaviors
2. Explore aspects of diversity within important relationships, at school, and in the community
3. Reflect on personal reactions to experiences with diversity

Goal II: Students will participate in activities that help them learn more about diversity. They will:

1. Share favorite traditions and rituals with others of diverse backgrounds
2. Invite members of the community to share their cultural traditions
3. Explore organizations that represent diverse groups
4. Participate in community activities involving aspects of diversity

**Standard 7: Develop coping skills**

Goal I: Students will display skills for understanding and coping with adversity. They will:

1. Identify triggers and sources of stress
2. Distinguish between healthy and unhealthy responses to stressful situations
3. Learn to accept outcomes that they cannot change

Goal II: Students will demonstrate strategies for resiliency when facing challenges.

They will:

1. Use humor as a component of resilience
2. Explore what makes them important and special as an individual and reflect on that in order to put adversity into perspective
3. Develop a sense of purpose through goal setting

Domain II: Educational Achievement

*Navigating twists and turns*

**Standard 8: Develop organizational skills**

Goal I: Students will organize themselves for learning. They will:

1. Apply strategies for keeping track of assignments
2. Create daily and long-term study plans
3. Assess the effectiveness of the study plans

Goal II: Students will organize their learning environments. They will:

1. Identify a place to study that maximizes learning
2. Equip the study place with materials and resources to get the job done
3. Make the study place comfortable, convenient, and conducive to learning
4. Organize backpacks and lockers *so there is a place for everything and everything is in its place*

Goal III: Students will develop a system to get it all done. They will:

1. Analyze how they currently spend their time
2. Create a plan that allows for spending more time on more important activities
3. Assess the plan to determine that it includes family, friends, studying, chores, hobbies, and personal time

**Standard 9: Discover how best to learn**

Goal I: Students will identify their dominant learning style and adapt to various teaching styles. They will:

1. Complete selected learning style inventories and analyze the results
2. Recognize teaching styles that are compatible with their learning style and those that are a mismatch
3. Identify ways to get what they need in order to learn from teachers whose teaching styles are not in sync with their learning styles

Goal II: Students will identify their learning preferences. They will:

1. Identify the things in their surroundings that help them feel ready to learn
2. Identify the things in their surroundings that interfere with learning
3. Synthesize their knowledge of their learning preferences to design an environment that will maximize learning

**Standard 10: Apply learning skills to academic tasks**

Goal I: Students will use their learning skills to complete school assignments. They will:

1. Apply knowledge of organizational skills, learning styles, and preferences to complete selected assignments
2. Document the results of academic work when purposefully applying learning skills
3. Compare those results to work completed before applying their learning skills
4. Reflect on their feelings when using their preferred learning style

Domain III: Career and Life Skills

*Navigating opportunities and directions*

**Standard 11: Explore their skills and aptitudes**

Goal I: Students will recognize personal skills and aptitudes and relate them to academic and career opportunities. They will:

1. Complete an aptitude assessment
2. Match skills and aptitudes to school and leadership opportunities
3. Match skills and aptitudes to future career opportunities

**Standard 12: Apply strategies to solve problems and make decisions**

Goal I: Students will carry out the steps of decision-making/problem solving process.

They will:

1. List and explain the steps for making decisions
2. Apply the decision-making steps to individual and group decisions
3. Cooperatively list and explain the steps for problem solving, when working in teams
4. Work together to apply agreed upon steps, so that all involved are satisfied

**Standard 13: Set goals, make a plan to reach those goals, and carry out the plan**

Goal I: Students will understand how to set goals. They will:

1. Understand the purpose of goal setting
2. Distinguish between short and long-term goals
3. Identify short and long-term personal goals
4. State goals in specific terms so that they will know when the goals have been achieved

Goal II: Students will develop and carry out an action plan for reaching their goals.

They will:

1. Decide what they need to do to reach their goals and create a timeline for accomplishing goals
2. Determine who can help with the action plan and enlist those helpers
3. Continuously review the action plan to make sure the goal is reached on time