

***Redesigning the Ninth Grade  
More than an Academy!***

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**High Schools That Work/  
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# Who is here?

- **Positions?**
- **Who am I?**
- **Former**
  - **Principal**
  - **Math Teacher**
  - **Coach**
- **What I believe?**
  - **Effort is the key**
  - **Something you can use**
  - **This session – BRIEF overview**
  - **Definition of Ninth Grader**

# Key Points

- Faculty ownership beats faculty buy-in
- Do not create a new transition
- Do not try to do it all in one year
- You have to get to instruction
- **Purpose driven students attend and achieve**

# Connect Students for Success

- **Connect each student (ninth grader):**
  - 1. To a goal beyond high school;**
  - 2. To a plan to achieve that goal;**
  - 3. To an adult to help them achieve the goal; and**
  - 4. Their instruction connected to the goal.**

# ***Redesigning the Ninth-Grade Experience***

**What are the major areas of focus for an effective ninth-grade design?**

**Ninth Grade Academy**

**Early orientation**

**Summer Bridge**

**Specialized ninth grade courses (Changing Instruction)**

**Guidance, advisement and support**

**Career Exploration**

**Standards Based Grading Practices**

**First 30 days focus**

**What are you doing?**

**What can you do?**

**What help do you need?**

# Ninth Grade Academy

1. Organize teachers into a ninth grade academy with heterogeneous students. No ninth grade academy team should have only one group of students!
2. Instructional leader to assist team(s) in
  - creating common expectations
  - instructional planning;
  - examining the level and quality of teacher assignments and student work; and
  - **supporting struggling students**
3. Provide teams with **common planning time**
4. Ensure the student-to-teacher ratio in the ninth grade is no higher (and hopefully lower) than any other grade level.
5. Encourage the best teachers to teach ninth grade courses.
  - What are you doing? What can you do? What help do you need?

# Early Orientation/Summer Bridge

1. **Orient students to high school life, beginning in the middle grades and continuing into the early months of the ninth grade.**
2. **Create a summer bridge program to bring at-risk students to grade level before entering the ninth grade.**

**Special Note: What about students who come after the start of the school year?**

**What are you doing? What can you do? What help do you need?**

# Specialized Ninth Grade Courses/Teaching in New Ways

*We know these can work:*

- 1. Use special courses and effective instruction to get more students to grade level standards in literacy and math.**
- 2. Create support opportunities in multiple formats.**
- 3. Design classroom activities to help students work together to complete challenging assignments (AVID Approach).**

**What are you doing? What can you do? What help do you need?**

# Guidance and Support

- Provide mentors for at-risk ninth graders and advisors for all incoming ninth-graders.
- Involve parents in the process
  - Connect it to something the kids want.
  - Do not use kids to communicate it.
  - Student led conferences

**What are you doing? What can you do? What help do you need?**

# Career Exploration

- Develop career exploratory courses that engage students in authentic projects and expose them to a variety of career and educational opportunities.
- Projects from each career area
- Initial ninth grade course for all career areas

**What are you doing? What can you do? What help do you need?**

# Standards-based Grading Practices

Standards-based grading (SBG) policies require students to redo substandard work to meet grade-level standards.

- Most controversial
- Many save this for last
- Start small
- For those who are against it: Why is it okay for students to redo courses they fail, but not okay to have them redo assignments and assessments that they fail?

**What are you doing? What can you do? What help do you need?**

# First 30 Days Focus

- Most engaging days of the year!
- Use it as a hook!
- Act more like Kindergarten teachers

**What are you doing? What can you do?  
What help do you need?**

# Questions



# Final Thoughts

**All schools and all teachers want to improve. However, few want to change. The fact remains, that to improve one must change!**

**Thank you**

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