



TRANSITION PLANNING

FOR 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



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North Carolina has implemented many new initiatives to raise achievement and close gaps for all of our students. If we succeed, it will be because we have paid attention to the needs of individual children as all of them transition throughout their years in the public school system.

The state's initiative is for each local school district to develop and implement a transition plan that will address the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of all students. A transition plan, as outlined in this document, will provide school districts and schools with strategic directions toward resolving many of the issues those children will face as they grow up in a diverse and rapidly changing global environment.

The No Child Left Behind initiative and testing mandates have defined state and national standards for accountability purposes for all school districts. The single priority of the North Carolina State Board of Education is that every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century. Therefore, North Carolina must focus on the five State Board Goals: Globally Competitive Students; 21st Century Professionals; Healthy, Responsible Students; Leadership for Innovation and 21st Century Systems.

All children need a learning environment that engages them at their developmental levels, provides them with differentiated instruction for their unique learning styles, and provides a support system for the many changes they will incur as they grow from being a child into the teen years and adulthood.

We hope that you will use this document as a guide to plan for all children to make successful transitions between the different levels of their education.

Handwritten signature of June St. Clair Atkinson in cursive.

June St. Clair Atkinson
State Superintendent

Handwritten signature of Howard E. Lee in cursive.

Howard E. Lee
Chairman, State Board of Education

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT

June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent* | jatkinson@dpi.state.nc.us

6301 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6301 | (919) 807-3430 | Fax (919) 807-3445

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PRESCHOOL-KINDERGARTEN COMMITTEE

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Elementary Education Division
NC Department of Public Instruction

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Office of School Readiness /
NC Department of Public Instruction

Joe Appleton, Consultant
More At Four
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NC Department of Public Instruction

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Office of School Readiness /
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Title 1 Preschool
Office of School Readiness /
NC Department of Public Instruction

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Durham, NC

Ana Palacios
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University of North Carolina at Charlotte

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Haywood County Schools

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Asheville City Schools



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NC Department of Public Instruction

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Wake County Schools

Ann Bullock, Ph.D
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Exceptional Children Division
NC Dept of Public Instruction

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NC Department of Public Instruction

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School of Education
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Antonia Johnson, Consultant
School Safety and Climate Section
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North Carolina Department
of Public Instruction

Daphne Montoya, Seventh Grade Teacher
Charles W Stanford Middle School
Orange County Schools

Julia Timberlake, Teacher
Southern High School
Durham Public Schools

Tom Winton, Consultant
Visually Impaired and Assistive Technology
Exceptional Children Division
North Carolina Department
of Public Instruction

FACILITATOR

Lucy Roberts
Chief, Primary Education
Elementary Education Division
NC Department of Public Instruction

EDITOR

Dr. Margaret Gayle, Executive Director
The American Association for
Gifted Children
Duke University



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rationale	3
I. District Transition Planning	5
II. School & Classroom Transition Planning	12
III. Incorporating Transition Plans into North Carolina’s Mission and Goals	13
IV. Supporting Future-Ready Students for the 21st Century	14
Home / Preschool Transition to to Kindergarten	15
Second Grade Transition to Third Grade	21
Elementary Transition to Middle Grades	25
Middle Grades Transition to High School	28
High School to College and Careers	32
Appendices	37
Conducting a PK-12 Needs Assessment.....	38
Critical Elements for Creating 21st Century Skills	41
Education Acronyms	44
Research, Resources, and References	46

RATIONALE

Anyone who has ever moved from one location to another or has been separated from friends, knows how hard a transition can be. Going from a known, comfortable environment to one that is different and unfamiliar can be very stressful. The school environment is where many transitions occur for children and their families. These transitions are met with both delight and concern. While there is the pleasure of accomplishment as students move to something new, there also may be anxiety over leaving friends and teachers they know and love for the less familiar. For parents, there is pride in seeing a child grow to meet new challenges, yet concern for how a student will cope with the change and what the situation may bring to their role as parents. (Nebraska Department of Education, 2001).

“Although many students make these transitions with little apparent difficulty, it is evident that significant numbers do not” (UCLA, 2003). According to a national survey of kindergarten teachers, 48 percent of the children they teach have moderate to severe problems with transitions (SERVE, 2004). Similar struggles occur throughout the educational experience from preschool through grade twelve. “Any [student] may experience academic, social, and emotional challenges in negotiating transitions. And, failure to cope effectively with such challenges can have life-shaping consequences” (UCLA, 2003). Not only is this a critical time in a child’s life which impacts later success in school, effective transitions increase academic performance and may even contribute to decreases in discipline problems in later years (UCLA, 2003).

Because learning is a continuous process, transition planning is important for all who educate and guide students. Effective programs recognize that groups of students will exhibit a range of abilities and accomplishments. Therefore, all students need a learning environment that engages them at their levels and provides differentiated instruction for their unique learning styles so that they will have a better opportunity for a successful transition as they progress through each level. It is important to link subsequent steps in students’ education to earlier experiences and to involve parents in these activities and decisions (Nebraska Department of Education, 2001). Therefore, the primary goal of transition planning is to ensure that all students have opportunities to experience academic excellence and a strong sense of well-being. Educators know the importance of outlining steps to take in promoting success for all students and their families as they move on to new experiences. In addition, “transition practices are implemented by a range of partners, in a variety of settings, and in multiple domains of continuity” (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004).

Many children entering schools today will live into the 22nd Century and will be required to adapt to many changes in work and society. Students whose experiences are positive and whose social and emotional needs are met will have a better chance of academic success at every level of their journey through the educational system. Other potential outcomes of successful transition planning are: lower retention rates of students; higher graduation rates; more students from underrepresented populations being placed in higher-level courses; fewer behavior problems and expulsion rates and more satisfied parents. There are many ways to evaluate the success of individual strategies or activities but the most important outcome, ultimately, will be how students and their parents view their school experiences and whether they believe that they can succeed at the next level.

*Transition means change,
a passage from one style, form,
state, or from one place to another.*

Patricia W. Wesley,
Smooth Moves to Kindergarten, 2001

Transitions are most effective when the new environment and personnel are responsive to each particular age group and to the stakeholders most affected by the changes. “To meet the goals of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools must understand the impact of transitions and establish a range of transition supports” (UCLA, 2003). It is important for school districts to have a comprehensive and coordinated transition plan and to modify it as changes occur in student populations, school personnel, and community resources.

Although students experience transitions at each grade level, this document offers a framework for designing, implementing and evaluating a transition plan to be used at the district and school levels focused on transitions from preschool to kindergarten, second to third grade, elementary to middle grades and middle to secondary grades. North Carolina has identified these particular grade level transitions as critical times in a student’s educational experience. The goals and strategies outlined in this suggested transition plan are designed to help students be successful and better prepared to meet the challenges of the future. Additional resources are provided to ensure that each transition plan offers beneficial opportunities for students, families and schools.

Paying attention to the transition of students as they progress through the different grade levels is even more important in today’s schooling environment because of the diverse populations that represent many cultures and ethnic groups. School districts that develop a comprehensive transition plan, in collaboration with all stakeholders in their communities, will build positive relationships that will lead to a greater understanding of the needs and concerns of all of their students and their families. An effective plan will include an on-going evaluation process that will ensure that the outcomes established for the different transition levels are being met and updated as student data and environmental changes occur.



I. DISTRICT TRANSITION PLANNING

Transitions are very important and must be designed, valued, and honored at every stage in a student's school life in order for optimal development to be achieved. Research indicates that school districts need to develop and implement comprehensive transition plans, especially at specific grade levels [Terrific Transitions, SERVE, 2005; Bohan-Baker, Marielle and Priscilla M.D. Little, (April 2004)]. Successful transitions for students as they move through the educational system are critical to their future success, whether they enter college, the community college system, the military or the workplace.

The primary responsibility for developing and implementing a transition plan will vary in each district, however the district superintendent provides the visionary leadership needed for making transition planning a priority in the district. The superintendent, working with the financial officer and school board, allocates resources to support the transition efforts, provides incentives for involvement and schedules staff time for planning. Through this leadership, a district team is created to design, implement and evaluate a preschool through grade twelve transition plan. This team is comprised of recruited stakeholders from the district and community who can identify the needs of the students at the different developmental levels and implement plans that produce positive results for students and their families. Stakeholders may include district personnel, principals, teachers, families, support staff, business and community leaders such as civic groups, health department personnel, preschool programs, Head Start programs, faith community leaders, colleges, universities and community colleges. Together, the transition team provides on-going evaluation of the District Plan by identifying strengths and needs, revising as needed.

With support from the superintendent, the transition team will

Goal 1: Implement a district plan that will ensure successful transitions for children and their families from preschool through high school.

- conduct a needs assessment in order to determine current transition activities and services as well as issues or possible barriers.
- create a district transition plan by identifying district goals, strategies and outcomes.
- support schools in creation and implementation of school transition plans, using identified district transition goals and strategies.

Goal 2: Collaborate with community and district stakeholders by utilizing the talents of business and community leaders and agencies that align their services with the transition goals and strategies.

Goal 3: Build and sustain relationships that will provide support to the schools, staffs, families, and students for implementing transition goals and strategies.

Goal 4: Plan professional development opportunities for all personnel to support transition issues and barriers as identified in the needs assessment.

Goal 5: Work with the local school board to provide continued financial support for sustaining transition planning within other district initiatives.

DISTRICT TRANSITION PLAN

Using the suggested goals and strategies found below, or those created by your transition committee, identify your district, school and/or classroom goals and strategies that will be implemented during this school year.

SBE Goals: NC Public Schools will produce globally-competitive students

Goal 1. Implement a district plan that will ensure successful transitions for children and their families from preschool through high school.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Develop a district wide transition team that includes the Superintendent, curriculum coordinators, preschool agencies and other relevant stakeholders.	Year Long	●					
Employ a transition coordinator with access to bilingual services.	Year Long	●					
Develop a plan that meets the needs of diverse cultures.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Develop a transition plan for students who enter the school throughout the school year.	Year Long	●	●	●	●	●	
Develop a plan that meets the needs of diverse cultures.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Incorporate existing district efforts and federal requirements for children with special needs and Title 1 served children and families into the transition plan to help ensure future success for all children.	Year Long	●	●		●		
Provide opportunities for families to be an integral part of school improvement plan and to plan transitions.	Year Long	●	●		●	●	
Use the school improvement plan to help determine school focus areas for staff development.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Coordinate with district report card committee for report card review and revision.	Year Long, 2nd grade		●	●	●		
Utilize ongoing, varying assessments to drive instruction and to monitor student progress.	Year Long		●	●			
Implement consistent procedures of sharing the child data form (s) with upcoming teachers that address children's successes and challenges, learning styles and other pertinent information.	Spring and Fall		●	●			
Establish and implement a standardized grading scale and policy.	Year Long	●	●				

DISTRICT TRANSITION PLAN

Using the suggested goals and strategies found below, or those created by your transition committee, identify your district, school and/or classroom goals and strategies that will be implemented during this school year.

SBE Goal: Leadership will guide innovation in NC public schools.

Goal 2: Collaborate with community and district stakeholders to form a transition team that will utilize the talents of business and community leaders and agencies that align their services with transition goals and strategies.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Collaborate with the committee and those responsible for children’s care and education to develop a written transition plan for the community.	Year Long	●	●				
Advertise transition information using a variety of community contacts such as local newspapers, TV, radio, flyers, churches, faith-based organizations, schools, community centers, health care agencies, pediatricians, preschool programs and supermarkets.	Year Long	●	●				
Collaborate with community leaders and the school system to create or involve an existing transition committee that reflects the diversity of the community and includes all the stakeholders.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Develop community partnerships to provide time, materials and other academic, social and emotional support for students.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Identify interpreters and translators to facilitate communication with students and parents or caregivers.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Create partnerships by involving community members, businesses and families with volunteer and leadership opportunities.	Year Long	●	●	●	●	●	
Develop service plans for students with histories of excessive absences, discipline referrals and/or suspensions.	End of 2nd and Beginning of 3rd		●	●	●	●	

DISTRICT TRANSITION PLAN

Using the suggested goals and strategies found below, or those created by your transition committee, identify your district, school and/or classroom goals and strategies that will be implemented during this school year.

SBE Goal: NC public school students will be healthy and responsible.

Goal 3: Build and sustain relationships that will provide support to the schools, staffs, families and students for implementing transition goals and strategies.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Create a sense of community within the school district.	Year Long		●	●	●		
Build rapport among school counselors, social workers, support staff and community health services in order to provide quality services for families.	Year Long		●	●	●	●	
Provide a variety of learning environments to meet the individual child's learning needs.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Develop a profile on each child that outlines strengths, challenges, learning styles and other important information. Integrate profile into each child's personalized education plan (PEP) and/or individual education plan (IEP).	Year Long			●	●	●	
Show support for teachers and demonstrate collaboration among all the stakeholders.	Year Long	●	●		●		
Develop strategies that will ensure an on-going communication system with the family that will help build trust and respect.	Year Long		●	●	●		
Provide a translator, childcare and transportation for school events to encourage family participation.	Year Long	●					
Develop a handbook for families that outlines school procedures and includes appropriate forms for collecting information that will help families and school personnel to work together. Have copies available in relevant languages.	Spring	●	●	●	●		
Implement a positive model behavior support system for the schools.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Make available a parent resource center on specific resources for pertinent grade level issues: test anxiety, developing friendships and etc.	Fall and Ongoing	●	●				
Establish communication procedures with parent/caregivers.	Fall and Ongoing		●	●	●	●	
Schedule time for the classroom teacher to collaborate with the EC/AIG teacher to provide ongoing transition support re: IEP goals, PEP goals, AIG goals.	Year Long		●	●	●		

DISTRICT TRANSITION PLAN

Using the suggested goals and strategies found below, or those created by your transition committee, identify your district, school and/or classroom goals and strategies that will be implemented during this school year.

SBE Goal: NC public school students will be healthy and responsible.

Goal 3: Build and sustain relationships that will provide support to the schools, staffs, families and students for implementing transition goals and strategies.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Develop IEP and PEP procedures regarding teacher familiarity with goals, interventions, and expectations.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Schedule time for English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and classroom teachers to meet to discuss Limited English Proficient (LEP) students' proficiency levels and modifications.	Year Long		●	●	●		
Provide dedicated time for personnel to implement, review and revise activities that benefit transitioning students.	Year Long	●	●				
Provide opportunities for children to build rapport with school counselors, school social workers and other support staff.	Before School Starts		●			●	
Develop and implement an effective communication plan that reflects consistent and frequent contact with parents/guardians regarding student progress.	Year Long	●	●				



DISTRICT TRANSITION PLAN

Using the suggested goals and strategies found below, or those created by your transition committee, identify your district, school and/or classroom goals and strategies that will be implemented during this school year.

SBE Goal: NC public schools will be led by 21st Century professionals.

Goal 4: Plan professional development opportunities for all personnel to support transition issues as identified in the Needs Assessment.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Design a professional development program that provides administrators, teachers and support staff with an awareness and in-depth knowledge of the transition plan and implementation strategies.	Ongoing	●	●				
Train teachers and support staff in updates on research-based practices on rigor and relevance in the curriculum.	Ongoing	●	●				
Provide teachers with professional development on parental involvement.	Ongoing	●	●				
Train teachers in working with diverse cultures.	Ongoing	●	●				
Provide opportunities for teachers and staff to develop relationships and conflict-resolution skills.	Ongoing	●	●	●	●		



DISTRICT TRANSITION PLAN

Using the suggested goals and strategies found below, or those created by your transition committee, identify your district, school and/or classroom goals and strategies that will be implemented during this school year.

SBE Goal: NC public schools will be governed and supported by 21st Century systems.

Goal 5: Work with the local school board to provide continued financial support for sustaining transition planning within other district initiatives.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Collaborate to find programs and funding for transition activities and materials, events, information packets, brochures, etc.	Year Long	●					
Have policymakers work together to provide open meetings for families and staff regarding the importance of transitions.	Year Long	●	●				
Establish guidelines for schools to submit requests for a transition program and activities prior to budget planning by the local superintendent and board of education.	TBD based on budget planning	●	●				
Provide examples of funding needed to support transition activities to include but not limited to: transportation to and from events; substitutes for release time for school personnel; materials and resources to support activities and event; and professional development.	TBD based on budget planning		●	●	●		



II. SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM TRANSITION PLANNING

Each school, through leadership from the principal, will use the district transition plan to design a school based transition plan that meets the specific needs of their student population. The principal, as instructional leader for the school, allocates resources and time to support the transition efforts. The principal may wish to create a new transition team to help with the development and implementation of the plan or may wish to have the transition planning become a responsibility of the existing school-based leadership team. This team may include administrators, teachers, support staff, guidance counselors, school nurses, students, families and community representatives.

With support from the principal, the school-based transition team will

1. review the district plan.
2. add additional goals for diverse populations.
3. identify additional strategies to address the specific needs of their community.
(See appropriate Grade Level Goals and Strategies Charts)
4. integrate the school transition goals into the school improvement plan.
5. evaluate the school transition plan by identifying strengths and needs, revising as needed.
6. support each classroom teacher in identifying classroom transition strategies to be implemented throughout the year.



III. INCORPORATING TRANSITION PLANS INTO NORTH CAROLINA'S MISSION AND GOALS

The North Carolina State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction have adopted a guiding mission that “every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and post secondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century (SBE, 2006). In order to create Future-Ready Students for the 21st Century, the State Board of Education has identified the following five goals:

- NC public schools will produce globally competitive students.
- NC public schools will be led by 21st Century professionals.
- NC public school students will be healthy and responsible.
- Leadership will guide innovation in NC public schools.
- NC public schools will be governed and supported by 21st Century systems.

School districts in North Carolina are required to develop a school improvement plan that takes into consideration the annual performance goals for their schools that are set by the State Board of Education under G.S. 115C-105.28. It is recommended that school improvement plans be organized around the State's goals for Future-Ready Students, provided they complement the LEA's goals and objectives. Because successful transitions help to produce globally-competitive students, ensure that students will be healthy and responsible learners and offer opportunities for leadership to guide innovation in NC public schools, it is also suggested that transition plans be incorporated into each school improvement plan. Transition goals and strategies may also be included in individual teacher's professional development/individual growth plan.

Recommended grade level goals and strategies that align with the state's Future-Ready Students goals have been identified in charts on the following pages. These charts indicate strategies and primary responsibilities for implementing the strategies within the district, school and classrooms. The charts also include suggested timelines for implementation of the various strategies.

PREK-12 TRANSITIONS

Supporting Future-Ready Students for the 21st Century

A carefully planned and implemented transition plan is a critical strategy in ensuring that all students and families have the essential environment, curriculum, and leadership for a successful school journey.

DISTRICT TRANSITION PLANNING GOALS

* KEY ELEMENTS OF 21ST CENTURY LEARNING	Implement a district plan	Collaborate with Community	Build and Sustain Relationships	Plan Professional Development	Work with Local School Board	
	Core Subjects	✓			✓	
	Learning Skills	✓				
	21st Century Tools	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	21st Century Context	✓		✓	✓	
	21st Century Content		✓			✓
	21st Century Assessments	✓			✓	✓

*See Appendix for full description of each key element

The 21st Century Learning Initiative's essential purpose is to facilitate the emergence of new approaches to learning that draw upon a range of insights into the human brain, the functioning of human societies, and learning as a community-wide activity. The six key elements of 21st Century Learning listed above clearly align with the five PK-12 Transition Goals, helping to improve student achievement; more effectively address the needs of students with special challenges, such as English language learners and students with disabilities; and help schools meet the intent of No Child Left Behind.

www.21stcenturyskills.org

HOME / PRESCHOOL TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

Young children enter kindergarten from a variety of settings, which may include preschool, child-care and the home. These children represent diverse family cultures, circumstances and learning needs. These young children encounter many new experiences: separating from family; adjusting emotionally and socially to a new environment; learning more structured routines at home and at school; developing relationships with new adults; interacting with other children in a classroom setting; taking care of self and personal belongings; learning new rules; and riding a bus, just to name a few. “Ensuring that children start school ready to learn requires that attention be paid to one of the most complex and significant changes they will experience – transition to kindergarten” (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004).

Children ages three to five, are beginning to feel more comfortable when separated from familiar people, places and things however they may appear anxious at the beginning of a new school year. Physically, these children are experiencing a period of rapid growth, continuing to develop eye-hand coordination and increasing their fine motor skills. They engage in pretend play easily and naturally and eagerly explore the world around them. Cognitively, as kindergarten age children continue to explore their world by being actively involved with the materials and people in their environment, they are expanding their understanding of cause and effect, are developing a sense of how reading, writing and numbers work, and are expanding their language skills and vocabulary. Most kindergarten age children are beginning to see that their views differ from those of others but remain self-centered. Kindergartners also become increasingly aware of the consequences of their own actions and behaviors (Nebraska Department of Education, 2001).

Effective transitions from the preschool years to kindergarten that take into account the unique characteristics of four- and five-year-old children are essential in building a foundation for success in school and life. “One of the challenges in knowing how to provide continuity in the transition to kindergarten is that children at this stage represent a wide range of emotions, skills and abilities” (Wesley, 2001). The process of building relationships among the child, family and school is essential to successful transitions and promotes a positive approach to learning. This process helps foster the child’s innate interests, curiosity for learning, emotional and social growth, and higher academic achievement. “For the preschool teacher, the transition means saying good-bye to children to whom they have grown attached, with the hope that what has been gained will provide a foundation for continued growth. For the new teacher, it means saying hello to a new group of children, with the goal of building the new program upon their diverse backgrounds and experiences” (Nebraska Department of Education, 2001).

Successful transitions build respect for individual differences, encourage understanding of the whole child, create a sense of trust and belonging, and reduce child and family anxiety toward school. Transitions that bring together the home, school, and community continue the collaborative effort and promote the common goal of providing successful school experiences for all children.

Other supports that facilitate smooth transitions are educational environments that respect all children, provide developmentally appropriate opportunities, offer accessible transportation, collaborate with community support services, and ensure appropriate resources for the child and the school. "Moving to elementary school usually means that a child will enter a new setting. However, if both settings are developmentally appropriate, children will be more likely to find similar experiences that will allow them to begin in their new setting with confidence that they have the ability to accomplish certain tasks. Knowing what is expected adds to children's self-confidence, encourages their attempts to try new experiences, and facilitates continuity in development" (Nebraska Department of Education, 2001).

"The heart of transition planning for preschool to kindergarten is a shared philosophy based on how young children grow and learn...and includes age appropriateness, individual appropriateness, child-initiated and child-directed learning and teacher support"

(Nebraska Department of Education, 2001).

One of the biggest challenges facing teachers is getting to know and understand the children they teach and helping the families to support their efforts as they enter a more formal structure of education. The North Carolina Ready School Definition and the ten dimensions outlined in the Ready School Assessment Research provide the research and support for developing and implementing a comprehensive transition plan that can address the many challenges facing children from preschool through high school. Transition goals are designed to build a support system for the young child and to provide research-based practices in developing the classroom environment and climate for the children and their families.

With support from the school principal, teachers of young children:

Goal 1. Get to know and understand the children, their families, and their previous experiences.

Goal 2. Plan and provide an appropriate, developmental, and welcoming environment for meeting the needs of each child.

Goal 3. Implement a plan that will ensure successful transitions for children and their families.

BENEFITS OF SMOOTH TRANSITIONS

(WESLEY, 2001)

FOR CHILDREN:

When transition teams strive to bridge the gap between preschool and school experiences by ensuring that activities, materials, and expectations build on what is already familiar to the child, the child may demonstrate:

- Enhanced self-esteem and confidence
- Improved peer-group relations
- Greater efficiency and enjoyment in learning
- Positive regard for teachers
- Reduced stress

FOR FAMILIES:

When parents actively participate in planning and carrying out transition activities, they may develop:

- An understanding of the phases of early childhood education
- Increased confidence in communicating with educational personnel
- A positive outlook about collaboration with schools
- Enhanced self-esteem regarding their communication and advocacy skills

FOR TEACHERS:

Teachers who collaborate with others to ease the child's transition between home, preschool, and school can expect:

- Enhanced ability to meet individual needs of children
- Increased efficiency in program planning and implementation
- Better community support
- An enlarged professional support network
- A wider pool of resources



PRESCHOOL TO KINDERGARTEN

Using the suggested goals and strategies found below, or those created by your transition committee, identify your district, school and/or classroom goals and strategies that will be implemented during this school year.

Goal 1: Get to know and understand the children, their previous experiences and their families.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Develop an inclusive inventory of all programs in the district: home, public and private pre-school, faith-based, developmental day, homeless, itinerant services, child care placements, early intervention, Even Start, Migrant, Head Start and Parents As Teachers.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Design and implement a checklist of necessary paperwork and information for preschool teachers to complete for students entering kindergarten.	Spring	●	●	●	●		
Meet with preschool teachers to review assessments and work sample portfolio information. Exchange information and experiences that create as much continuity as possible when children move from one setting to another.	Year Long	●	●	●	●	●	●
Provide opportunities and time for kindergarten teachers to implement home visits, prepare classroom environment and plan for orientation needs (needed supplies, time, financial support).	Fall	●	●				
Meet families before the first day of school through staggered entry possibilities, home visits, evening socials, open houses, beginner's day and others.	Spring		●	●	●	●	●
Develop communication strategies with families that will provide an ongoing dialogue about their children, recognizing that families are the best advocates for experts on their children. Ask families to describe their children's previous experiences through surveys and interviews. Include information regarding service providers, such as, physician, therapist and preschool teacher.	Year Long		●	●	●	●	
Utilize the Kindergarten Health Assessment (KHA) as a communication tool between families, physicians and schools.	Fall			●	●	●	
Develop a profile of pertinent information on each child entering kindergarten. Include needs, language, culture, interests, strengths and developmental levels. Include family expectations, hopes and dreams for their child.	Spring Summer		●	●	●	●	●
Provide opportunities for preschool and kindergarten teachers to meet and collaborate throughout the year.	Year Long	●	●				

PRESCHOOL TO KINDERGARTEN

Goal 2: Plan an appropriate and welcoming environment for meeting the needs of each child.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Develop and implement a ready schools plan. Use the Ready Schools Inventory and other resources to identify needs and goals.	Spring	●	●	●	●		
Coordinate a professional development approach to bring care providers, preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers and support staff together to discuss, learn and plan appropriate programs for young children.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Develop common planning time for teachers on a daily, weekly and long-term basis in order to provide children what they need to learn, grow and thrive.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Plan developmentally appropriate curriculum and policies (age, cultural and individual appropriateness) for all programs in the care and education of children. Modify learning environments based on individual needs.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Provide families a description of the classroom environment and a typical day. Identify the curriculum and scope of the program.	Year Long	●	●	●	●	●	
Observe and evaluate the use of appropriate curriculum and instructional practices in the classroom setting.	Year Long		●				

PRESCHOOL TO KINDERGARTEN

Goal 3. Implement a plan that will ensure successful transitions for children and their families.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Involve support staff, service providers (OT, PT, Speech) school nurses, and guidance counselors as a part of transition plans, activities and screenings.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Use a variety of procedures for supporting transitions such as home visits, gradual or staggered entry, health screenings and developmental screenings.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Make class rosters available to teachers as soon as possible. Encourage home visits and planning for a smooth transition.	Year Long		●				
Plan an orientation and open house at the beginning of the year that sets the tone for good communication between school personnel and family. Have a translator available, when possible.	Spring		●	●	●		
Create partnerships with local preschools and invite their preschoolers to visit the school.	Year Long		●	●	●		

SECOND GRADE TRANSITION TO THIRD GRADE

Transition from second to third grade should be a gradual, ongoing process, requiring support and collaboration among school staff, families, and communities. The process is multi-dimensional including physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development.

“Getting a new school year off to a good start can influence children’s attitudes, confidence and performance both socially and academically” (UCLA, 2003). Children who make a smooth transition from second to third grade are better able to make the most of their learning opportunities.

Children from age 7 to 9 are going through many changes in their social, emotional, and physical development and in their cognitive abilities. Although children who are moving from second grade to third grade are becoming more outgoing and self-confident, many continue to feel some anxiety within the larger community when separated from familiar people, places, and things. They can be sensitive to criticism and will eagerly take on tasks in which they are likely to be successful, but usually will not readily take risks. During this age span, children are learning to work in groups, can lead sometimes and can follow others, and continue to understand consequences of their own and other’s behaviors. Beginning third graders, also continue to refine fine motor skills, are continuing to develop hand-eye coordination, may experience some visual difficulties, and continue to show enthusiasm for most physical activities.

“During the early school years children are acquiring attitudes and approaches toward learning and work – such as persistence, resourcefulness, and initiative – that may last a lifetime” (NAEYC, 1997)

During this age span, the understanding and use of language to clarify thinking and learning is refined. The ability to solve multi-step problems using manipulatives and to understand cause and effect continues to be developed. (Nebraska Department of Ed, 2001). Third graders also begin to relate the world around them to the content of the curriculum. “As children get older, their range of experience broadens as does their individual variability. Developmentally appropriate schools set high standards for children’s learning but are flexible in their expectations about when and how children gain certain competencies” (NAEYC, 1997)

Teachers of this age student facilitate the development of the whole child with an intentional focus on social skills such as helping, cooperating, negotiating, and talking through interpersonal problems with those involved. Teachers also provide daily opportunities to promote initiative, perseverance, task orientation and self-regulation while encouraging students to set high goals but achievable goals for themselves. (NAEYC, 1997) In order for teachers to help students become more responsible and take ownership of their own learning, homework may increase throughout the year, NC Standard Course of Study objectives are explored on a deeper level and time is devoted to reflecting on and revisiting learning experiences throughout the third grade school year.

This transition from second to third grade is critical and often challenging for children as the focus shifts from: 1) learning to read to reading to learn; 2) learning to write to writing in a formalized format; 3) developing problem solving strategies to solving multi-step problems; and 4) moving from non-standardized assessments to standardized testing. A smooth transition is essential to the personal success of all children. Children need support with emotional and social development as they continue to maintain and establish new friendships and learn to succeed within a high-stakes testing environment.

In caring communities of learners where children and adults feel accepted and respected children learn personal responsibility, how to develop constructive relationships with other people, and respect for individual and cultural differences as well as important skills and knowledge to enable them to function in society (NAEYC, 1997).

Parents are a significant factor in the success children achieve. Parents and teachers have a major influence on children at this age and it is important for them to work closely together as they help children prepare for rigorous work and for end-of-grade tests (EOG).

Transition goals are designed to build a support system for each student and to provide research-based practices in developing the classroom environment and climate for the students and their families.

With the support of the school principal, second and third grade teachers:

Goal 1. provide emotional and social support for children by building relationships, addressing individual needs and creating a welcoming environment.

Goal 2. achieve articulation and alignment of curriculum with Standard Course of Study.

Goal 3. ensure that grading systems and standardized testing align with Cognitive, Emotional, Social and Language Domains.



SECOND GRADE TO THIRD GRADE

Goal 1: Provide emotional and social support for children by building relationships, addressing individual needs and creating a welcoming environment.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Provide a common planning time for 2nd and 3rd grade teachers to meet with support personnel to discuss, develop and implement strategies for meeting the emotional and social needs of individual children.	Fall and Year Long		●	●	●		
Schedule a step-up day: invite second graders to visit 3rd grade classrooms to see routines (homework agendas, planners, etc.), meet teachers and answer questions, and talk to third grade students about life as a third grader.	End of 2nd grade school year		●	●			
Provide opportunities throughout the year for second grade students and third grade students to become buddies. Events together could include reading buddies, letter writing buddies, etc.	Fall and Year Long			●			●
Develop a Comeback Club. Invite third grade students from the previous year to visit and talk with second grade students about experiences in third grade.	Spring			●			
Establish a communication process with upcoming third grade students.	Summer before 3rd grade/ongoing			●	●	●	●
Schedule a <i>Meet the Teacher</i> day.	Before school starts			●		●	
Meet with families, former 2nd grade teachers and school staff to address and support the needs of exceptional children entering 3rd grade.	End of 2nd and Beginning of 3rd			●	●		
Develop an adult buddy, mentor or foster grandparent program for the new 3rd grade children and families.	Fall		●	●	●		
Create an End-Of-Grade (EOG) Test Preparation Guide for Parents.	During the School Year	●	●	●	●		
Implement a parent night for 2nd grade parents. Have 2nd and 3rd grade teachers identify expectations for 3rd grade and discuss state and local policies on promotion standards.	Year Long		●	●	●	●	
Hold informal "meet and greet opportunities" between 2nd and 3rd grade parents and teachers to answer questions or to address ongoing issues.	Once a month		●	●	●	●	

SECOND GRADE TO THIRD GRADE

Goal 2: Achieve articulation and alignment of curriculum with NC Standard Course of Study.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Provide opportunities for 2nd and 3rd grade teachers to meet with administration and support personnel to clearly articulate NC Standard Course of Study goals and objectives from second grade to third grade and to develop alignment strategies.	Beginning of 2nd year	●	●	●	●		
Schedule 2nd and 3rd grade teachers to meet with administration to discuss curriculum expectations, integration and gaps.	Quarterly		●	●	●		
Provide time for 2nd and 3rd grade teachers to collaboratively plan and develop units of study.	Year Long	●	●	●	●	●	
Hold a parent orientation regarding 3rd grade curriculum, grading, standardized testing, teaching methods and behavioral expectations.	Fall and Ongoing		●	●			

SECOND GRADE TO THIRD GRADE

Goal 3: Ensure that grading systems and standardized testing align with Cognitive, Emotional, Social and Language Domains.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Schedule 2nd and 3rd grade teachers to meet with administration and support personnel to discuss site-based transition issues regarding the grading system, standardized assessments and K-2 assessments.	Fall		●	●	●		
Develop procedures to address testing accommodations and classroom modifications for exceptional children (EC), 504, and limited english proficient (LEP) students.	During 2nd and Beginning of 3rd	●	●	●	●	●	
Develop appropriate strategies for helping students be successful in high- stakes testing.	Year Long, 2nd grade			●	●	●	●
Develop and implement stress management strategies for students.	End of 2nd and Beginning of 3rd			●	●	●	●

ELEMENTARY TRANSITION TO MIDDLE GRADES

Young adolescents transitioning from fifth to sixth grade differ considerably in skills, attitudes, and behavioral attributes. These students have unique social, cognitive, emotional, and physical needs based on their changing minds, bodies, and school-settings. Transition to middle grades is marked by several changes: 1) interacting with more peers, teachers and older students; 2) increasing responsibilities and expectations; 3) keeping up with projects and long term assignments; 4) electing sports and extracurricular activities; and 5) making academic and career choices. Therefore, it is important to provide an appropriate program that meets the developmental needs of every student, an academically rigorous and relevant curriculum, and additional support systems. In order to facilitate student success, responsibility for transitional support must be shared among students, families, schools, and the community.

Middle grade schools should focus on the learner's academic, social, emotional and physical needs. Students want and need to connect their learning to real world applications.

Adolescents students need to have a sense of belonging. Therefore, students who have rotated between classes in fifth grade for at least part of the day, reported feeling better prepared to enter a middle school environment. Waggoner (1994) investigated transition concerns that showed students from teamed settings demonstrated a stronger affiliation in school activities and fewer concerns about transitions than self-contained classrooms.

Empirical evidence suggests that middle grades tend to place more emphasis on relative ability and competition among students and less emphasis on effort and improvement. As a result, a decline in task and ability goals and academic efficacy occurs. Working in groups, focusing on effort and improvement, and making choices all support a more positive task-focused goal structure (Anderman and Midgley, 1996).

Middle school is an important place for nurturing students as they face greater academic challenges and for promoting a healthy social environment.

With support from the school principal, elementary and middle grade teachers:

-
- Goal 1. build collaboration among elementary and middle grade schools.

 - Goal 2. develop programs on drug awareness, health issues and interpersonal relationship skills appropriate for adolescents.

 - Goal 3. provide a developmentally appropriate environment to promote student transition and success.

 - Goal 4. promote programs that ensure student success in school.

ELEMENTARY TO MIDDLE GRADES

Goal 1. Build collaboration among elementary and middle schools.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Organize a transition day or night for incoming sixth graders.	Spring	●	●	●	●	●	●
Plan and implement a sixth grade orientation during the first week of school.	Spring	●	●	●	●	●	●
Develop a sixth grade orientation for parents before or during the first two weeks of school.	Spring	●	●	●	●	●	
Disseminate information to students and parents to assist students in the transition process.	Year Long	●	●	●	●	●	

ELEMENTARY TO MIDDLE GRADES

Goal 2. Develop programs on drug awareness, health issues and interpersonal relationship skills appropriate for adolescents.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Provide instructional time to implement the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, including the health and wellness curriculum.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Offer individual and small group counseling services for students who are in need of social, emotional and academic support.	Year Long	●	●	●	●	●	
Develop a process for immediately referring students to support services, as needed.	Year Long	●	●	●	●	●	

ELEMENTARY TO MIDDLE GRADES

Goal 3: Provide a developmentally-appropriate environment to promote student transition and success.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Provide and sustain on-going professional development based on adolescent needs, the middle grades concept, diversity (cultural, academic, SES, gender) and differentiated instruction.	Prior to and during school year	●	●				
Provide middle grades research-based advisor-advisee program and time in which diverse groups of students share feelings, problem solve and implement strategies based on emotional, social, and academic needs.	Prior to and during school year	●	●		●		
Design constructive opportunities that promote positive social relations (dances, assemblies, pep rallies and clubs).	Prior to and during school year		●	●	●		
Review school facility layout (designate hallways for sixth, seventh and eighth grades) to address individual, developmental and academic success.	Year Long	●	●				

ELEMENTARY TO MIDDLE GRADES

Goal 4: Promote programs that ensure student success in school.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Teach study skills and provide organizational tools needed to help students be successful.	Prior to and during school year		●	●	●		
Develop homework policies that promote the Balanced Curriculum and align with daily instruction.	Prior to and during school year	●	●	●	●		
Provide time and opportunities for horizontal articulation regarding homework assignments, testing schedules, field trips, and other events.	Prior to and during school year		●		●		
Establish core teacher teams that work collaboratively to provide appropriate learning communities to address all student needs.	Prior to and during school year		●	●	●		

MIDDLE GRADES TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

Educators and parents must collaborate to create positive, ongoing and effective initiatives for students transitioning from middle schools to high schools in order to meet their social, emotional, physical and academic needs. During these years, students need to have a sense of “belonging to a group.” They need initiatives that introduce them to peers through a variety of activities and events. They need a support system that provides them with a safety net when they encounter higher academic standards and social and emotional issues. Positive and effective initiatives should successfully result in more academic rigor, increased graduation rates, reduced dropout rates and improved relationships for more students. Various forms of communication strategies should be employed to successfully reach the diverse stakeholders and to build a sense of community.

Many of the solutions to easing transitions for middle grade students to high school have been reviewed in the research literature and have been implemented into the strategies. Many of these strategies for implementing the transition goals will help principals in planning for meeting the challenges of today’s high school students and helping them to be more emotionally stable and successful with 21st century skills. Some of the highlights of the review of the literature are cited.

Young adolescents entering high school look forward to having more choices and making new and more friends; however, they also are concerned about being picked on and teased by older students, having harder academic work, making lower grades, and getting lost in a larger, unfamiliar school (Mizelle, 1995; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994).

As young adolescents make the transition into high school, many experience a decline in grades and attendance (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, & Trickett, 1991); they view themselves more negatively and experience an increased need for friendships (Hertzog et al., 1996); and by the end of 10th grade, as many as 6% drop out of school (Owings & Peng, 1992). For middle school students, including those who have been labeled “gifted” or “high-achieving,” the transition into high school can be an unpleasant experience (Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994).

This research has found that when middle grade 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). Furthermore, middle grade principals indicated that they expected fewer of their students to drop out before graduation when the school provided supportive advisory group activities or responsive remediation programs (Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991)

A dropout study published in March 2006, *The Silent Epidemic*, conducted for Bill and Melinda Gates by Civic Enterprises, has some important information for districts to consider in developing a transition plan that will solve some of the issues facing this age group. The dropouts who were interviewed for the study send a clear message to those who want to work on solutions to the problem. Many said that they made a mistake in dropping out and that if they could do it over they would choose to stay in school. Many found that the classes were boring, not challenging or interesting; others found the academics too daunting. One of the biggest reasons cited in the report for the dropout problem is frequent absences and the need to follow-up with parents when problems first begin to develop. Teens have many challenges as they move from middle to high school: 1) dealing with peer pressure; 2) having more high stakes testing; 3) joining competitive sports; 4) needing to work; 5) coping with a range of social and physical changes; and 6) growing into adulthood.

The Southern Regional Education Board recommends that school districts 1) support middle grades to high school transition programs; 2) align middle grades curriculum to high school readiness standards; and 3) orient students and parents to the demands of going to high school (*High Schools That Work*.)

All of these opportunities and challenges need to be considered, as districts develop a transition plan, that will result in more students graduating from high school prepared, with a resilient spirit, to live and work in a global and technological society.

With support from the school principal, middle grades and high school teachers

Goal 1. build relationships among transitioning students, parents, older peers, teachers and key school personnel.

Goal 2. prepare students for transitioning to the next grade level, career and work.

Goal 3. develop transition programs and a variety of activities that meet the social and emotional needs of the students.

Goal 4. develop vertical alignment planning for middle, high school and district level personnel.

Goal 5. develop and implement a plan to meet the challenges facing North Carolina’s high schools.

MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

Goal 1: Build relationships among transitioning students, parents, older peers, teachers and key school personnel.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Develop student big sister and big brother programs.	January of 8th grade year	●	●		●		●
Develop smaller learning communities that are based on a content or interest area.	January of 8th grade year		●	●	●		●
Develop advisor and advisee programs for the middle and high schools.	Year Long	●	●		●		
Develop mini courses taught by all personnel offered at both the middle grades and high schools that are based on student interest.	Year Long		●	●	●		

MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

Goal 2: Prepare students for transitioning to the next grade level, career and work.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Develop an articulated curriculum with a variety of activities for students, parents and school personnel.	Beginning of 8th grade year	●	●	●	●		
Create guides or handbooks to help students and teachers plan and prepare academically for the transition from 8th to 9th grade.	Beginning of 8th grade year	●	●	●	●		

MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

Goal 3: Develop transition programs and a variety of activities that meet the social and emotional needs of the students.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Have a spring social event for current and incoming high school students.	Spring of 8th grade year		●		●		●
Have middle grades students shadow high school students.	Spring of 8th grade year		●		●	●	●
Provide for across-grade and service-learning projects with grades shared by both middle grades and high school students.	Year Long	●	●	●			
Provide letter-writing programs in which eighth graders correspond with high school students.	Spring of 8th grade year		●	●			

MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

Goal 4: Develop vertical alignment planning for middle, high school and district level personnel.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Utilize team teaching between eighth and ninth grade teachers.	Year Long	●	●	●	●		
Schedule opportunities for teachers and administrators from both middle and high schools to exchange their roles and responsibilities.	When feasible	●	●	●			
Provide joint professional development in the content areas.	Year Long	●	●				

MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

Goal 5: Develop and implement a plan to meet the challenges facing North Carolina's high schools.

Suggested Strategies	Timeline	District	School Principal	Teacher	Support Staff	Family	Student
Appoint a committee, with a community leader as a chairperson, to gather data on the issues facing middle and high schools in the district.	Year Long	●					
Schedule community forums to engage business leaders, policy makers, parents and students in a dialogue that will assist the district in developing support for intervention programs.	When feasible	●	●				
Seek out funding sources and support for entrepreneurial activities and courses for students and teachers to develop.	Year Long	●	●		●		
Use interactive networks of people and technologies to expand the vision of districts that are under funded.	Year Long	●	●		●		

HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE AND CAREERS

(Excerpt from SREB: (2005) Building Transitions from High School to College and Careers for North Carolina's Youth)

North Carolina must go beyond just requiring more rigorous academic courses for graduation and having students pass high-stakes exams. The state needs policies and initiatives that result in more students graduating college- and work-ready.

ACTIONS NORTH CAROLINA CAN TAKE

- **Focus attention on getting more students ready for entering ninth grade:** 1) Help middle grades language arts, mathematics and science teachers align their courses to the readiness standards necessary for ninth-grade success in college-preparatory courses. 2) Have an early-alert system to identify middle grades students who will need help preparing for challenging high school work. 3) Enroll unprepared students in special summer programs and extended-day programs taught by the best teachers and aimed at getting students ready for grade nine.
- **Focus attention on the ninth grade by designing a catch-up system for incoming ninth-graders who are below grade level in language arts/reading and mathematics** with the goal of getting them through college-preparatory Algebra I and college-preparatory English by the end of grade nine. This specially designed catch-up system would include intervention strategies such as
 - using a flexible schedule, including the possibility of a longer school day and year, that increases students' time in core language arts/reading and mathematics studies designed to eliminate academic deficiencies;
 - having the ninth grade student-to-teacher ratio no higher than any other high school grade level;
 - enticing the best teachers to teach ninth grade and become leaders of teaching teams designed to improve instructional planning, delivery and re-teaching strategies for students who need extra support to meet grade-level standards;
 - assigning students to an adult mentor who meets with them frequently; and
 - enrolling at-risk ninth-graders in a career-exploratory experience that: a) exposes them to multiple pathways in high school leading to further study and good jobs; b) integrates reading, writing and mathematical skills and knowledge; and c) requires students to use a variety of technologies to design and complete authentic real-world projects.
- **Focus on reducing high school retention rates at each grade level while getting students to meet grade-level standards** by 1) having frequent assessments and requiring that students who do not meet standards participate in extra-time support sessions; 2) providing intervention counseling to students who fail to complete assignments and requiring their participation in monitored study sessions with trained mentors; 3) providing students immediate opportunities to retake failed courses or course segments involving crucial skills for future learning; and 4) having a special senior year emphasis to help students graduate.
- **Focus attention on expanding efforts to assist students to pass the end-of course exams.** These might include 1) expanding opportunities for students to retake the tests whenever they are ready by using technology; 2) creating a bank of test items that teachers can use at the end of each grading period to determine progress students are making on meeting state standards; and 3) creating special courses, including Web-based instruction, aimed at helping students master the standards failed most frequently.
- **Focus on developing opportunities for students who are two grade levels behind their peer group.** Such opportunities might include providing an alternative diploma for those students including the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) credential and employer certifications in a career field. Such an action might be implemented through special academy programs in a high school, at a career/technical center or through a middle college program on two- or four-year college campuses with programs designed to connect academic and workplace skills. Practices like these might make it possible to raise the compulsory, school-attendance age to 18 and to keep these students interested in school longer.
- **Set ambitious high school graduation targets for all groups of students and make them a part of the state accountability system for schools.** Set progressive graduation targets so that high schools with the lowest graduation rates have to make greater annual progress toward the goal.
- **Target all high schools that are failing to get 60 percent of entering ninth-grade students to the senior year three years later and have them create and implement an improvement plan** that organizes the school into independent, mainstream theme-based small learning communities of 300 to 400 students. Assist schools with organizing their small learning communities around a rigorous academic core curriculum and career themes using a school improvement model such as High Schools That Work that leads to postsecondary studies and good jobs. Make each small learning community semiautonomous with control over its schedule to enable teachers to work together to improve curriculum and instruction and provide students with the extra time and help necessary to meet course standards.

- **Implement policies and initiatives focused on rigor, relevance and relationships to have more high school students graduate.** These could include a) providing more students opportunities to learn higher-level academic skills through authentic learning and high-quality career/technical classes; b) providing an extensive and timely extra-help system that enables more students to succeed in more rigorous courses; c) providing each student with an adult mentor to help the student and his or her family set and achieve post-high school goals; and d) drawing from lessons learned from successful initiatives such as *High Schools That Work*.

Establishing standards and improving opportunities for students to participate in dual credit/dual enrollment programs and other programs where college credit for academic and career/technical courses is available — Of the North Carolina career/technical (CT) students⁸⁴ who took the 2004 HSTW Assessment, 22 percent reported they had taken dual enrollment classes at their high schools; 20 percent said they had taken community college classes for credit, and 11 percent indicated that they had taken courses at a four-year college.⁸⁵ In addition, 26 percent of these CT students reported that they took Advanced Placement (AP) courses to earn college credit. Based on the 2004 HSTW Assessment, AP students had higher achievement in both reading and mathematics than dual enrollment students did.

Forum participants raised concerns about the lack of standards for dual credit courses as well as the lack of a statewide policy for how students are admitted to these courses. Although post-secondary institutions may arrange dual enrollment agreements with local school systems, there is no statewide policy ensuring that students have to meet the same placement requirements as college freshmen to enroll in dual credit courses or meet common criteria.

As a consequence, prepared students get a jump-start on college, but unprepared students may also earn college level credit in high school only to find out later that they have spent much of their first year in college taking remedial courses.

The North Carolina High School to Community College Articulation Agreement, in effect January 2005,⁸⁶ builds on the existing College Technical Preparation course of study. In order for high school students to earn college credit for these courses, they must 1) earn a grade of B or higher in the course; 2) attain a raw score of 80 or higher on the standardized VoCATS post-assessment; and 3) enroll at the community college within two years of their high school graduation date. While this agreement helps remove barriers for transfer credits, it does not address college-readiness in language arts/reading and mathematics.

ACTIONS NORTH CAROLINA CAN TAKE

- **Apply the same college-readiness standards to dual credit courses** as those used for enrolling freshmen in postsecondary studies, using the same assessments and/or placement exams and the same benchmark scores established for college-readiness for college freshmen.

- **Allow high school students to enroll in dual credit career/technical courses during their senior year**, even if they are not deemed college-ready at the beginning of the year. At the same time enroll them in specially developed transitional courses in language arts/reading and mathematics that are designed to help them to become college-ready. Require them to pass the readiness or placement exams prior to receiving college credit for the dual credit courses.

- **Establish criteria** for instructors, course content and assessments to ensure the equivalency of content and performance levels across the spectrum of dual credit courses. The state can adopt an AP-like approach to all dual credit courses — academic and career/technical — in that these courses will have common course standards, common end-of-course exams and training for faculty to teach these courses.

- **Require career/technical teachers at secondary and post-secondary levels to hold equivalent certification** to ensure that they have the content knowledge necessary to prepare students to earn an industry-recognized credential.

- **Develop policies that encourage high schools and colleges to work together to give students a jump or ready-start on college and careers.** College-ready seniors need to have access to AP and dual credit courses that allow them to earn college credit while in high school. Enroll unprepared seniors in specially designed transitional courses to help them become ready for college. Have seniors not planning college complete concentrations in quality career/technical programs that lead to industry certifications in high demand, high-paying jobs.

Designing and implementing a guidance and counseling system built on the belief that all students are potential college material

— Forum participants think that too many teachers and counselors do not believe that all students can achieve at high levels and that parents do not understand the link between post-secondary education and the state's economy.

Based on forum discussion, the state needs a statewide effort to help change this mindset. Counselors and teachers need to believe that all students can achieve at high levels. This effort ought to engage families to help parents understand why it is necessary in a knowledge-based economy for nearly all young people to have some type of postsecondary education. North Carolina ranks 40th in the nation for the percentage of adults who have at least a high school diploma or GED credential and ranks 11th for the percentage of children under 18 years living in poverty.⁸⁷ Thus, many families have no firsthand experience with higher education or with the types of employment opportunities afforded by a college education.

⁸⁴ HSTW defines a career/technical student as one who has completed a sequence of at least four courses in a broad career field.

⁸⁵ 2004 HSTW Assessment, op. cit.

⁸⁶ North Carolina State Board of Education and North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges. *North Carolina High School to Community College Articulation Agreement*, revised January 2005.

ACTIONS NORTH CAROLINA CAN TAKE

- **Implement a teacher adviser system where each professional educator in the high school assists a small group of students and their parents from grade nine through grade 12 to set postsecondary goals.** This system can help students and parents prepare programs of study and utilize assessment results to track academic progress on a regular basis. Advisers communicate frequently with parents and provide intrusive counseling, support and encouragement as needed.
- **Use data for decision-making to ensure the best opportunities for high school students to make transitions from high school to postsecondary studies.** Forum participants discussed the need for a system that would enable faculty members and education leaders to make decisions based on follow up data and other student data that would be collected using an integrated, statewide system. Research is needed to determine how students perform in postsecondary studies compared with their high school performance on end-of-course exams and the courses they completed.
- **Provide opportunities in the ninth-grade curriculum for students to explore a wide range of career and educational options.** Engage students in the kinds of experiences that would help them set career and educational goals. These could include job shadowing; business tours; college campus visits; and classroom presentations from former graduates, local businessmen and career specialists.
- **Require students to develop at least six-year career pathways** that include a coherent sequence of rigorous academic and career courses commencing in the ninth grade and leading to an industry-recognized credential, associate's degree and/or baccalaureate degree. (See Appendix B for an example of a career pathway template.)
- **Build on existing communication by scaling up statewide efforts** to help more students and their parents understand what options are available for college and careers. Assist students to access these opportunities by 1) continuing to grow the statewide Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness of Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) efforts through focused counseling and mentoring of seventh- and eighth-graders and continued support as they progress through high school; 2) communicating a key stay-in-school message to students in danger of dropping out and to their families; and 3) collaborating with partners in SREB's Go Alliance that have launched campaigns to get more students to complete high school and to enroll in college.

Improving enrollment, persistence and completion rates at two- and four-year colleges and universities — While more North Carolinians have college credentials than a decade ago, the state ranks 31st in the nation for the percentage of adults age 25 and older who have a bachelor's degree.⁸⁷

According to the 2004 census update, 25 percent of this age group held at least a bachelor's degree.⁸⁸ Forum participants believe that it is critical to the state's economic vitality to increase the percentages of young adults who have some type of postsecondary education or training.

North Carolina surpasses the nation and all other SREB states for college enrollment of recent high school graduates.⁹⁰ However, its low high school graduation rate adversely affects the college enrollment rate. Pairing the facts that 71 percent of students entering grade nine graduate from high school and 65 percent of recent high school graduates enroll in postsecondary studies, less than one-half of North Carolina's high school-age graduates enrolled in college in 2003.

For many students, the first year of college is the "make or break" year, especially for students who are deficient in reading, writing and mathematics. A national research study found that almost half of first-time students who leave their initial institutions by the end of the first year do not return to higher education.⁹¹ Another national study shows that taking remedial courses reduces the chance of attaining a degree, and the more remedial courses taken, the less likely a student is to earn a degree.⁹²

According to one forum participant, when students are in "developmental purgatory" for a long time, they not only become discouraged about staying in college, they use up too much of their financial aid for remedial courses.⁹³

Once enrolled, students' persistence is high in the university with 85 percent of the freshman class in 2003 returning their sophomore year. Comparable persistence data are unavailable in the community college system; however, based on all students who are completing a curriculum program with a certificate, diploma or degree, 51 percent return for studies.⁹⁴

In contrast, college completion rates are a challenge for North Carolina. More than three-fourths (77 percent)⁹⁵ of the first-time freshmen enrolling in the state's community colleges in 2001 did not graduate within a three-year period. In the University of North Carolina system, 44 percent of first-time freshmen in 1998 did not graduate within six years.⁹⁶

According to forum participants, community colleges need a better way to help students set goals. When students come in with a goal, they complete their goal, compared with those without goals who drop out. One participant whose institution was a partner in the College and Career Transitions Initiative and had implemented career pathways in the information technology career cluster reported that his institution was seeing incremental improvements in students staying the course to earn the certificate because they followed the plan.

⁸⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. *2004 American Community Survey: Ranking Tables*, 2004.

⁸⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. American FactFinder. *2004 Community Survey, Data Profile Highlights*, 2004.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ SREB. *Fact Book*, 2005, *op. cit.*

⁹¹ Twigg, Carol A. *Increasing Success for Under-served Students, Redesigning Introductory Courses*. The National Center for Academic Transformation, 2005.

⁹² Adleman, Clifford. "The Kiss of Death? An Alternative View of College Remediation." *National CrossTalk*, Summer 1998.

ACTIONS NORTH CAROLINA CAN TAKE

- **Encourage community colleges to develop high school to college transition programs.** These transition programs could combine the HSTW-recommended academic core and Key Practices⁹⁷ with the College and Career Transitions Initiative (CCTI) career pathway model advocated by the League for Innovation in the Community College⁹⁸ to develop programs in high-demand career fields. Transition programs of study would involve aligning high school core academic courses to postsecondary-readiness standards, establishing conditions for earning academic and career/technical dual credit, and aligning career/technical courses with industry standards. (See Appendix A for HSTW-recommended curriculum and Appendix B for CCTI's model and example of career pathway template.)

- **Add an indicator to the accountability system for presidents of community colleges, four-year colleges and universities to increase the college persistence and graduation rates annually for their respective institutions.** Rates could be improved by

- determining which introductory courses have high failure rates, indicating they may need to incorporate newer, research-based teaching strategies, computer-based learning resources, mastery learning, on-demand help and peer mentors;
- having students develop and file a graduation plan during year one;
- assigning a mentor and using technology to track students and provide intrusive counseling for those who have attendance problems, who fail to do their work or who have difficulty with course content;
- incorporating passing employer certification exams when determining community college and technical college completion rates and ensure these certifications are knowledge-based, standardized and graded independently of the school, administered on a multistate basis; and recognized by industry, trade or professional associations; and
- addressing the special circumstances of student groups, such as first-generation students, adult students and other nontraditional students, who often have more out-of-school challenges for staying in college and finishing than do other students.

⁹³ Comments. North Carolina Education Forum, Raleigh, June 6, 2005.

⁹⁴ North Carolina Community College System. *2005 Critical Success Factors*, 16th Annual Report, June 2005.

⁹⁵ SREB. Fact Book — electronic table (Table 38) updated March 1, 2006, op. cit.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ HSTW is the nation's largest and fastest-growing effort to combine challenging academic courses and modern career/technical studies to raise the achievement of high school students — www.sreb.org.

⁹⁸ The League for Innovation in the Community College's CCTI partnerships are in effect in Arizona, California, Florida, Indiana, Maryland, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin — www.league.org/ccti.

APPENDICES

- PK-12 Transition “Conducting a Needs Assessment”
- Critical Elements for Creating 21st Century Schools
- Education Acronyms
- PK-12 References, Research, and Resources

CONDUCTING A PK-12 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A review of current practices, strengths, and needs will assist in identifying goals and objectives needed in order to create a comprehensive transition plan. The needs assessment may be used for individual reflection, to prompt group discussion, to guide district and school transition teams, or as a way to track progress in an effort to continually improve the transition processes.

For each item, place an "X" next to the appropriate word(s) to indicate whether you believe that example of best practice is followed.

	Yes	Yes, but more of this is needed.	No	No, yet this is something to pursue.
DISTRICT				
Transitions for students are addressed in the district.				
The LEA has a transition committee.				
The transition committee is comprised of multiple stakeholders who are best able to meet the needs of the initiative.				
LEA's profile on student retentions, graduation rates and other predictors are used in order to develop transition strategies for ensuring student success in school.				
A transition plan has been written.				
The written transition plan includes a timeline.				
The written transition plan includes responsibilities for implementation.				
Transition goals are identified in the school improvement plan.				
EVALUATION				
There is an evaluation plan to sustain and improve the communication process.				
A plan has been written with a timeline and responsibilities for implementation.				
An evaluation measure is identified and used to monitor and improve the transition process.				
Questions are included in the evaluation process that will assess the effectiveness of collecting information from children and their families.				
There is an evaluation process that includes questions and measurements that will assess the effectiveness of evaluating effective classroom environments.				
Policymakers are effectively involved in supporting transitions.				
Financial support is in place to continue successful transition planning.				

	Yes.	Yes, but more of this is needed.	No.	No, yet this is something to pursue.
STUDENTS				
The K-12 school environment is welcoming and socially supportive for students and families.				
Outreach activities are used to identify and communicate to those who are limited English proficient.				
There is an appropriate policy on contacting and using interpreters.				
Procedures have been established for entering kindergarten, including advertising and registration information.				
There are procedures for students who enter kindergarten through early admission.				
There is a process for developing a preschool profile on students.				
Languages and cultures are reflected in the preschool profile.				
Interests, strengths and developmental levels are reflected in the preschool profile.				
Family expectations, education levels, hopes, dreams and needs of the children and their families are reflected in the preschool profile.				
The preschool profile and portfolio information are used to plan and implement learning experiences for students.				
Students' previous experiences are compiled and used to guide curriculum development and instruction.				
Previous experiences compiled include information regarding school year or year-round program, identifying half-day or full day programs.				
Previous experiences compiled include information regarding the scope of the previous program and classroom environment.				
Previous experiences include information regarding resources that were made available in prior years.				
Previous experiences include information regarding the typical schedule of activities and events.				
The K-12 school beliefs and expectations are clearly articulated, informing families, administrators, and teachers about schedules, student/teacher ratio, transitions with adults and other children, academic assessments, and rules and behavior expectations.				
The K-12 school environment is clearly articulated, informing families, administrators, and teachers about the scope of the program.				
The K-12 school environment is clearly articulated, informing families, administrators, and teachers about the schedule for a regular school year or a year round program, school calendar, conference schedules, daily schedules, and special activities.				
The K-12 school environment is clearly articulated, informing families, administrators, and teachers about the credentials of the staff.				

	Yes.	Yes, but more of this is needed.	No.	No, yet this is something to pursue.
STUDENTS (CON'T)				
The K-12 school environment is clearly articulated, informing families, administrators, and teachers about the support staff that is available and their titles.				
The K-12 school environment is clearly articulated, informing families, administrators, and teachers about learning opportunities that are available for all staff and families.				
The K-12 school environment is clearly articulated, informing families, administrators, and teachers about the resources that are available.				
The K-12 school environment is clearly articulated, informing families, administrators, and teachers about support for positive behavior.				
A K-12 school handbook is available for parents that include the registration process, policies and procedures and appropriate forms (medication, custody papers, lunch, insurance, field experiences, photo release, and other).				
Various strategies and programs are used to support transitions to higher education/career opportunities, which may include vocational counseling, college counseling, mentoring program, job training, work-study programs, and life skills counseling.				
STAKEHOLDERS				
Communication regarding transitions is initiated and sustained with stakeholders.				
Colleges, universities and community colleges are involved in supporting preschool-12 transitions.				
Community and local businesses are important and active stakeholders in the transition from high school to higher education/military/career.				
Various agencies are involved with students who need support in a transition to another school or district.				
Strategic plans, ensuring participation by families in programs and school events, are identified and implemented successfully.				
Family partnerships are created, supported and sustained.				
Parent/Family involvement programs offered reflect the National PTA Standards.				
Strategies and procedures are in place for recruiting, recognizing, supporting and sustaining volunteers.				
When applicable, before- and after-school programs that benefit successful transitions are implemented.				
Various staff development opportunities are provided in order to prepare and support staff in designing research based curriculum that will prepare students for being successful in a global environment.				
A variety of staff development is offered in order to help prepare staff to ensure successful transitions for students?				

CRITICAL ELEMENTS FOR CREATING 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

There are six key elements for fostering 21st century learning:

1. Emphasize core subjects. Knowledge and skills for the 21st century must be built on core subjects. No Child Left Behind identifies these as English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics, government, economics, arts, history and geography. Further, the focus on core subjects must expand beyond basic competency to the understanding of core academic content at much higher levels.

2. Emphasize learning skills. As much as students need knowledge in core subjects, they also need to know how to *keep learning* continually throughout their lives. Learning skills comprise three broad categories of skills:

- information and communication skills;
- thinking and problem-solving skills, and;
- interpersonal and self-directional skills.

Good teachers always have fostered these skills. The challenge now is to incorporate learning skills into classrooms deliberately, strategically and broadly.

3. Use 21st century tools to develop learning skills. In a digital world, students need to learn to use the tool that are essential to everyday life and workplace productivity.

Skilled 21st century citizens should be proficient in ICT (information and communication technologies) literacy, defined by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as “the interest, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital technology and communication tools to access, manage, integrate and evaluate information, construct new knowledge, and communicate with others in order to participate effectively in society.”

4. Teach and learn in a 21st century context. Students need to learn academic content through real-world examples, applications, and experiences both inside and outside of school. Students understand and retain more when their learning is relevant, engaging and meaningful to their lives. In the global, networked environment of the 21st century, student learning also can expand beyond the four classroom walls. Schools must reach out to their communities, employers, community members and, of course, parents to reduce the boundaries that divide school from the real world.

5. Teach and learn 21st century content. Education and business leaders identified three significant, emerging content areas that are critical to success in communities and workplaces:

- global awareness;
- financial, economic and business literacy; and
- civic literacy.

Much of this content is not captured in existing curricula or taught consistently with any depth in schools today. An effective way to incorporate this content is to infuse knowledge and skills from these areas into the curriculum.

6. Use 21st century assessments that measure 21st century skills. States and districts need high-quality standardized tests that measure students’ performance of the elements of a 21st century education.

However, standardized tests alone can measure only a few of the important skills and knowledge we hope our students will learn. A balance of assessments—that is, high-quality standardized testing for accountability purposes and classroom assessments for improved teaching and learning in the classroom—offers students a powerful way to master the content and skills central to success in the 21st century. To be effective, sustainable and affordable, sophisticated assessment at all levels must use new information technologies to increase efficiency and timeliness.

21ST CENTURY CONTENT

Global Awareness

- Using 21st century skills to understand and address global issues.
- Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work and community contexts.
- Having the ability to utilize non-English languages as a tool for understanding other nations and cultures.

Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy

- Knowing how to make appropriate personal economic choices.
- Understanding the role of the economy and the role of business in the economy.
- Using entrepreneurial skills to enhance workplace productivity and career options.

Civic Literacy

- Being an informed citizen to participate effectively in government.
- Exercising the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national and global levels.
- Understanding the local and global implications of civic decisions.

Health Awareness

- Having the ability to access health information and services, navigate health institutions and act as an effective advocate to improve health for self, family and/or community.
- Understanding preventive physical and mental health measures, including proper diet, nutrition, exercise, risk avoidance and stress reduction.
- Demonstrating understanding of national and international health

THINKING AND LEARNING SKILLS

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills

- Exercising sound reasoning in understanding.
- Making complex choices.
- Understanding the interconnections among systems.
- Framing, analyzing and solving problems.

Communication

- Articulating thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.

Information and Media Literacy Skills

- Understanding, managing and creating effective oral, written and/or multimedia communication in a variety of forms and contexts.
- Analyzing, accessing, managing, integrating, evaluating and creating information in a variety of forms and media.

Creativity and Innovation Skills

- Demonstrating originality and inventiveness in work.
- Developing, implementing and communicating new ideas to others.
- Being open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives.

Collaboration Skills

- Demonstrating ability to work effectively with diverse teams.
- Being willing to be helpful and make necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal.

Contextual Learning Skills

- Having the ability to take advantage of education in a variety of contexts both inside and outside the classroom; understanding that knowledge is acquired within a context.

ICT literacy

- Using technology in the course of attaining and utilizing 21st century skills.

LIFE SKILLS**Leadership**

- Using interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence more than one person toward a goal.
- Having the ability to leverage strengths of others to accomplish a common goal.

Ethics

- Demonstrating integrity and ethical behavior in personal, workplace and community contexts.

Accountability

- Setting and meeting high standards and goals for one's self and others.

Adaptability

- Adapting to varied roles and responsibilities.
- Tolerating ambiguity and changing priorities.

Personal Productivity

- Utilizing time efficiently and manage workload.
- Being punctual and reliable.

Personal Responsibility

- Exercising personal responsibility and flexibility in personal, workplace and community contexts.

People Skills

- Working appropriately and productively with others.

Self Direction

- Monitoring one's own understanding and learning needs.
- Demonstrating initiative to advance professional skill levels.
- Having the ability to define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight.
- Demonstrating commitment to learning as a lifelong process.

Social Responsibility

- Acting responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind.

EDUCATION ACRONYMS

A I G

Academically and Intellectually Gifted: Academically gifted students are defined as those who demonstrate or have the potential to demonstrate outstanding intellectual aptitude and specific academic ability.

E C

Exceptional Children: As defined by IDEA, the term "child with a disability" means a child with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments or specific learning disabilities; and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. Not all children who have a disability require special education; many are able to and should attend school without any program modifications.

E O C

End-of-Course. EOC tests are designed to assess the competencies defined by the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for each of the following courses: Algebra I, Algebra II, English I, Biology, Chemistry, Geometry, Physical Science, Physics, Civics and Economics, and US History. Tests are taken during the last 10 days of school or the equivalent for alternative schedules.

E O G

End-of-Grade. EOG tests in reading and mathematics are taken by students in grades 3-8 during the last three weeks of the school year.

E S L

English as a Second Language. ESL is a program model that delivers specialized instruction to students who are learning English as a new language.

I D E A

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This federal act requires all states to develop alternate assessments for students with disabilities for whom the standard statewide assessment program is not appropriate.

I E P

Individualized Education Program. The IEP is a written statement for a student with a disability that is developed, at least annually, by a team of professionals knowledgeable about the student and the parent. The plan describes the strengths of the child and the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child, and when, where, and how often services will be provided. The IEP is required by federal law for all exceptional children and must include specific information about how the student will be served and what goals he or she should be meeting.

K H A

Kindergarten Health Assessment. Every parent or guardian has the responsibility to ensure that the child has received a full physical, including receiving the required immunizations at the age required by law and attached to the state Kindergarten Health Assessment form. The health assessment shall occur no more than 12 months prior to the date of school entry. All children are required to have a completed NC health assessment form on file in the school by the 30th day of school.

L E A

Local Education Agency. LEA is synonymous with "local school system." LEA indicates that a public board of education or other public authority maintains administrative control of the public schools in a city or county.

LEP

Limited English Proficient. Students whose first language is one other than English and who need language assistance to participate fully in the regular curriculum are considered limited English proficient.

NCDPI

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The N.C. Department of Public Instruction administers the public school laws and the policies adopted by the State Board of Education and offers instructional, financial, technological and personnel support to all public school systems in the state.

OT

Occupational Therapy: OT is a service provided by a licensed occupational therapist to address the functional needs of an individual as they relate to sensory, motor, postural, and emotional development, adaptive behavior and play, and the performance of self-help skills.

PEP

Personalized Education Plan. A PEP is a plan that is specifically designed to improve a student's performance to grade-level proficiency. PEP also stands for Principals' Executive Program. This preparation program for principals provides relevant and rigorous professional development opportunities based on the best current theories and practices.

PT

Physical Therapy: PT is a service provided by a licensed physical therapist and is concerned with prevention of physical disabilities and with providing rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities resulting from prenatal causes, birth trauma, illness, or injury.

SAS

Student Accountability Standards. Statewide standards (or gateways for promotion) North Carolina public schools students are required to meet as one consideration for promotion from grades 3, 5 and 8 and high school graduation.

SBE

State Board of Education. The State Board of Education is charged with supervising and administering "the free public school system and the education funds provided for its support." The Board consists of the Lieutenant Governor, the Treasurer, and 11 members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly in Joint Session.

SCS

Standard Course of Study. The North Carolina Standard Course of Study is the guiding document as to what should be taught in North Carolina public school classrooms.

SIP

School Improvement Plan. Strategies for improving student performance, how and when improvements will be implemented, use of state funds, requests for waivers, etc. comprise a school improvement plan. Plans are in effect for no more than three years.

PK-12 TRANSITION

RESEARCH, RESOURCES, AND REFERENCES

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SECOND TO THIRD GRADE TRANSITION

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