



WELCOME TO WESTSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL!

A parent's introduction to the transition from elementary to 7th-grade.

A new journey begins ...

Starting middle school is one of the biggest milestones in your child's life... and yours! It is a time to celebrate, but also a time that understandably may come with some uneasy feelings and fear of the unknown. This guide includes information we hope will ease the transition including what you can expect at meetings and from your student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, what special education services for your student may look like at WMS, as well as tips for supporting your student's transition.

INSIDE

- What can I expect from my child's IEP team?
- Transition Timeline
- What will special education services look like?
- How can I plan for my child's transition?



WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MY CHILD'S IEP TEAM?

Elementary to Middle School Transition Meeting:

Before the end of your child's 6th-grade year, you may be asked to attend a transition meeting.

→ Purpose of Meeting:

- Sharing basic information about your child's strengths, needs and success strategies
- Learning general information about middle school, including WMS interdisciplinary teaming structure, schedules, etc.
- Discussing possible services and supports based on your child's needs and IEP goals
- Providing an opportunity for you and the middle school team to ask questions and schedule future WMS visits

This meeting will typically include staff from your child's current IEP team as well as staff from the middle school team.

Prior to starting 7th-grade, students and families will have multiple opportunities to engage in transition-related activities. At any time, parents are encouraged to ask questions or request information from your child's IEP manager or Special Education Coordinator about the upcoming transition.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting:

IEP meetings for your child will continue to occur on an annual basis. In preparation for middle school, your child's IEP may need to be adjusted. These adjustments can be made during a middle school transition meeting, during a separate IEP meeting, and/or via an IEP addendum (no formal meeting required).

→ Possible Adjustments:

- Attending school
- IEP manager
- Duration of school day
- Service providers
- Service times
- Transportation

REMEMBER: You have the right to call an IEP meeting at any time. Your child's team may choose to hold an IEP meeting prior to the start of 7th-grade, shortly after the school year begins, or in accordance with the IEP due date.

TRANSITION TIMELINE

FALL of 6th-Gr. Year

- 6th-grade IEP Managers receive training to become familiar with WMS transition procedures
- October - Transition resources (Part 1) provided to parents

WINTER of 6th-Gr. Year

- District begins plans for next year's projections (i.e., caseload sizes, staffing, etc.)
- Staff begin preparing for incoming students

SPRING of 6th-Gr. Year

- March - 7th-grade tours begin
- March - Transition resources (Part 2) provided to parents
- April - Staff determine which students will require more structured transition support
- April & May - Staff observe incoming students in current setting & use transition checklist to collaborate with current team
- April & May - transition meetings are held
- May - if possible, IEP Managers are identified

SUMMER Before 7th-Gr.

- Individual tour/transition opportunities at parent request
- Transition-related questions should be directed to Coordinator or Special Services Director
- Pre-Opening - Special Education Student & Family Bootcamp

FALL of 7th-Gr. Year

- IEP implemented by new team
- September - Family Check-In Night

WHAT WILL SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES LOOK LIKE?

My Child's School Day

In Westside Community Schools, students with IEPs are served in their neighborhood school within the district, regardless of disability. IEPs are designed to meet the unique needs of each student. Your child's IEP team will design an IEP that will enable your child to participate in the general education setting to the greatest extent appropriate. Supports provided vary depending on your child's specific academic, social, behavioral, health, physical, and adaptive needs. Your child's IEP is a working document with the flexibility to be modified and adjusted as the needs of your child change.

... Continuum of Support ...

IN-CLASS SUPPORT:

- Students in need of in-class support may receive their IEP services through a collaborative teaching model, where a special educator, specialist, or educational assistant partners with the English/Language Arts, Math, other core content or elective teacher(s) to deliver instruction, intervention and accommodations.

INTERVENTION COURSES:

- Students requiring academic intervention in the areas of reading or math will be registered for specific intervention classes, taught by either a general or special education teacher. This course may take the place of an elective.

ASSISTED LEARNING (AL):

- Students may be assigned one or more periods of assisted learning support each day. This period, staffed by the special education department, will be used to work on IEP goals: (reading, writing, math, social, behavioral, organizational) skills in an individualized or small group setting. If not assigned an AL period, students may be removed from portions of a content or elective class to receive IEP services.

ALTERNATIVE CURRICULUM INSTRUCTION:

- Students who require extensive support in the areas of academics and functional/daily living skills often participate in the alternate curriculum classes. These courses target both the state extended indicators and students' individual IEP goals in a hands-on, highly structured setting.

RELATED SUPPORTS & SERVICES:

- As defined by the IEP, students may receive physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech/language therapy, vision &/or hearing services, medical support, assistive technology, social skills instruction, behavioral intervention, etc. These supports and services may be provided in the general education classroom, a small group setting, or one-on-one with a provider, during the school day.

HOW CAN I PLAN FOR MY CHILD'S TRANSITION?

Transition Meeting Planning

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK:

- What will my child's school day look like?
- What kind of communication can I expect?
- Who will be working with my child?
- What types of clubs or activities are available to students at WMS?

QUESTIONS YOU CAN EXPECT TO BE ASKED:

- What are your child's strengths?
- What are your greatest concerns?
- How can we help make this a smoother transition for you and your child/family?
- How and how often do you prefer we communicate with you?

Easing the Transition

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Middle School Open House** - April 13th & 15th (all Incoming 7th-graders)
 - **Special Education Information Session** - May 3rd
- **6th Grade Spring Tours** - March & April - Students on IEPs have the opportunity to tour the Middle School with their 6th grade IEP manager during school hours.
- **Warrior Walkabout** - May 14th - Students will participate in an afternoon of activities at the Middle School to help get them acclimated. They will participate in fun interdisciplinary team building activities, Q&A sessions, tours, etc.
- **Special Education Transition Bootcamp** - Pre-Opening - Students and their parents will meet key special education staff, engage in Q&A, and become familiar with their child's schedule.
- **Visit the School** - The Middle School is open all summer long for students to tour, either by teacher request or parent volunteer

KEEP TEACHERS INFORMED:

- Stay in contact with your child's teachers, especially if:
 - A change in your child's life is causing significant new stress
 - Your child starts taking medication that may affect his or her behavior or learning
 - You have any concerns about your child's performance in school

Parent Survival Tips for Middle School Transition

1. **Show confidence, not anxiety** - Your child takes cues from you. So even if you have some worries about how he or she will fare in middle school, do your best not to make your child feel worried too. Instead, help him or her feel confident by being optimistic and positive in what you say.
2. **Encourage more independence** - Your child is growing up, maybe faster than you would like. He or she may show interest in new styles and express new opinions. Accept these harmless changes. While making sure your child is safe, look for ways he or she can handle more responsibility.
3. **Teach self-advocacy** - By the time your child leaves middle school, if able, he or she should feel empowered to speak up for him/herself in all types of situations. Make sure your child knows that expressing his or her wishes is an important responsibility.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT SCHOOL-WIDE SUPPORTS ARE AVAILABLE TO MY CHILD BEYOND THE SCHOOL DAY?

- **The Library** - The media center is open until 5:00 every day after school for students to work independently on homework.
- **Before or After School** - Some teachers are available before school for extra assistance.
- **Warrior-Time** - Every student is assigned academic intervention or AL time at the end of the day to work on academic or IEP-related tasks.

HOW DO IEP SERVICES FIT INTO THE MIDDLE SCHOOL INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM MODEL?

- Each 7th-grader is assigned to one (of four) interdisciplinary teams of content-area teachers. Each team is served by an AL teacher who delivers special education services and is responsible for IEP case management. General and special education teachers collaborate on a daily basis to meet the needs of all learners on their team.

HOW WILL MY CHILD'S ACCOMMODATIONS BE PROVIDED AT WMS?

- Accommodations will be provided to your child as outlined in their IEP. These accommodations may be provided in multiple environments across the school setting as necessary to meet your child's needs.
- Prior to the start of school, your child's IEP team will communicate with general education teachers, administrators, and other key personnel to inform them of your child's individual needs and required supports.

HOW DOES TECHNOLOGY WORK AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL?

- Every 7th/8th grader is issued their own device at the beginning of the school year. If you feel that your child cannot handle the responsibility of having a device, alternative options are available:
 - check-in/check-out device at beginning and ending of every school day
 - computer curfews - turning the device access on/off at a certain time every day
 - accessing adaptive equipment, aligned to the IEP



HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS?

As questions arise this year, **please don't hesitate to reach out** to your child's current IEP manager and/or Sarah Ehlers, Coordinator of Elementary Special Services (contact information below).

For middle school-specific questions, you can contact Jenni Allen (contact information below). Closer to the end of the school year, more specific information regarding IEP manager, general education teachers, and related service providers will be provided.

... DISTRICT CONTACTS ...

Sarah Ehlers

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Part 2 - Spring



WMS TRANSITION PLANNING GUIDE

A parent's guide for the transition from elementary to middle school.

A new journey begins ...

As you enter your child's final months of elementary school, you may have questions about what to expect next. You may also be a bit anxious. This guide is intended to ease the transition and support you and your child in knowing what to expect and how to prepare.

For additional information, please refer to *Part 1* of the transition resource planning guide or contact your child's IEP manager.

INSIDE

- Transition Timeline
- How can I plan for my child's transition?



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HOW CAN I PLAN FOR MY CHILD'S TRANSITION?

Elementary to Middle School Transition Meeting:

In **Part 1** of the transition planning guide we shared information about the purpose of a possible transition meeting. You also received information regarding your child's annual IEP meetings and possible IEP adjustments in preparation for middle school. In this **Part 2** resource, we hope to further help you prepare for this potential upcoming transition meeting.

PLANNING FOR QUESTIONS YOU CAN EXPECT TO BE ASKED	
POTENTIAL QUESTIONS	YOUR RESPONSE
What are your child's strengths?	
What are your greatest concerns?	
How can we help make this a smoother transition for you and your child/family?	
How and when do you prefer to receive communication from your child's IEP manager?	

REMEMBER: You have the right to call an IEP meeting at any time. Your child's team may choose to hold an IEP meeting prior to the start of 7th-grade, shortly after the school year begins, or in accordance with the annual IEP due date.

Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success.

HOW CAN I PLAN FOR MY CHILD'S TRANSITION?

Elementary to Middle School Transition Meeting Continued

Your child's transition meeting will not only be a good time to provide input to members of the next team, but also a great time for you to ask any questions you may have.

PLANNING FOR QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS

What will my child's school day and schedule look like?

What if my child needs help at lunch, taking medications, navigating the building?

What kind of communication can I expect, and from whom?

Who will be working with my student? When and for what purpose?

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU PLAN TO ASK



MY CHILD'S IEP TEAM

The following team information can be added once staffing decisions have been finalized.

As questions arise during the transition process, please reach out to your student's current IEP manager and/or Sarah Ehlers, Coordinator of Elementary Special Services (contact information below). For questions during the summer, please contact Jenni Allen, Coordinator of Middle School Special Services (contact information below).

WHAT TO EXPECT NEXT

- **STUDENT SCHEDULES:** Each spring, student schedules are created by WMS staff, in partnership with parents & 6th grade general & special education teachers. Prior to completion, parents are consulted to resolve possible scheduling conflicts or changes.
- **IEP MANAGER ASSIGNMENTS:** Next year's IEP Manager, also called Assisted Learning Teacher, will typically be assigned before the end of this school year. You will also be informed of any other Service Providers involved with your student at this time. You can expect to hear from the new IEP Manager prior to the end of the school year. You will be notified of changes, if any, as soon as possible.
- **BUILDING-LEVEL TRANSITION OPPORTUNITIES:**
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IEP Manager:

Homeroom Teacher:

Dean:

Counselor:

Related Service Providers:

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