Maximizing Student Transitions

Guidance and Questions

Moving into the final months of the school year, MTSS provides a powerful reminder: transitions are more than events; they are opportunities to strengthen the system. They offer a unique window to build continuity, strengthen relationships and set students up for success in the next phase of their educational journey. Whether students are moving between grade levels, across schools or in and out of support, the way schools and districts navigate the process can significantly impact students' sense of belonging, academic confidence and readiness for what comes next. April and May are the ideal times to lay the groundwork for future learning.

When transitions are thoughtfully planned, they not only support students but also foster stronger collaboration among educators, families, caregivers and the broader school community. While transitions can sometimes become routine, MTSS encourages schools and districts to be intentional in ensuring the knowledge, strategies and supports helping students this year are thoughtfully carried over to the next stage. This does not require entirely new processes, but it does need intentional planning. When done effectively, a strong bridge is created between what has been learned and what is yet to come, ensuring students have the support they need to succeed in the next phase.

Is the System Set Up for Strong Transitions?

Smooth transitions depend on an aligned system. Taking time now to check alignment can ease transition planning and strengthen the MTSS system as we head into the new school year.

Key questions for schools and districts to consider:

Tier 1 Universal Instruction

- How clearly are Tier 1 practices defined, and are they consistently applied across grade levels and schools?
- Where might inconsistencies in Tier 1 create challenges for students transitioning into new learning environments? What do we do to address these issues?

Teaming and Collaboration

- How are MTSS teams prepared to collaborate on student needs and provide support as they move across tiers, grade levels and schools?
- What structures support collaboration between sending and receiving teachers?

Data Use and Decision-Making

- How effectively are we using existing data and resources to inform our decisions and ensure students receive the appropriate level of support?

Planning and Processes

- Have we identified a manageable starting point for planning efforts, such as creating a brief planning form or scheduling collaborative discussions?

Communication

- How can we ensure that student strengths are documented and communicated alongside their needs, highlighting growth and success?
- How are we ensuring clear and consistent communication with families, students, and all school personnel regarding transitions, supports and expectations?