

Sixth Grade Transition Middle School Counselor FAQs

LINK TO THE ASCA DOCUMENT

[The Essential Role of Middle School Counselors](#)

Q: How do middle school counselors benefit sixth grade students and families? What do they do?

A: Counselors are educated in the art of implementing a comprehensive school counseling program that targets the unique needs of your middle school student. This approach includes support around academic, social/emotional, and career planning and is delivered through classroom guidance lessons, small groups, and in an individual setting. The move from elementary to middle school is a crucial transition for your 6th grader. To foster a successful experience, counselors work collaboratively with the feeder elementary schools to create a warm handoff for the students and their families. Common Supports provided by the counselors are peer mentoring programs designed to welcome new students to the school through their first day experience, a class registration event hosted at the elementary school for students to sign-up for classes, and informational nights where families learn more about the school and the resources available to them and their student. Numerous studies demonstrate the value of school counseling and can be found at schoolcounselor.org/effectiveness.

Q: How do counselors provide support for a student academically?

A: The counseling department often plays a key role in creating a schedule that meets the range of academic needs of ALL students. Counselors spend a great deal of time working with students, families, instructional coaches, administrators, and teachers to ensure students are enrolled in academically appropriate classes. Counselors use quantitative and qualitative data to inform the programming and supports they offer. Students' academic needs are one of the top priorities of counselors and we encourage you to partner with them to help your child be successful in middle school. Supports they offer can range from classroom guidance lessons focused on teaching academic skills like time management, study skills, and organization to small group skill building activities to partnering with students and families to goal set, future plan, and closely monitor academic progress.

Q: How do they provide support for a student's social and emotional growth?

A: Middle School Counselors typically follow their students, as their primary counselor, as they progress through the middle school grades. This allows counselors to develop relationships with their students as well as their families. Counselors may lead school wide social emotional initiatives, deliver classroom social emotional lessons, and will often facilitate small groups supporting students' more targeted social emotional needs.

Counselors spend a good amount of time meeting one on one with students who need additional support adjusting to the nuances of middle school. Additionally, counselors frequently support individuals and groups of students with social emotional topics such as healthy communication, decision-making and relationships, conflict resolution, and how to advocate for their needs. If a concern arises, counselors can be a point person in the school to help students and families navigate the system and find solutions.

Q: How do they help a student with career planning and exploration?

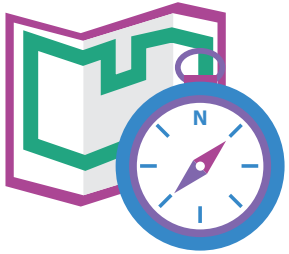
A: Counselors in Jeffco are committed to helping students build meaningful Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP), a state mandated initiative. Through student ICAPs, counselors help middle school students explore their own interests and strengths as they relate to their future. They take students through a process of exploring career, college, and other postsecondary options, and strategically help them to begin thinking about their future aspirations. Counselors may provide your student with opportunities such as career fairs, career conversations with industry professionals, interest and strength inventories, financial literacy lessons, goal setting, and building a personalized path of relevant stepping-stones as they explore a roadmap to reaching their future goals.

Q: What are the benefits students and families receive from Social Emotional Learning Specialists? What do they do?

A: Social Emotional Learning Specialists support students, families, and staff every day. The role of the SELS has three primary areas of focus facilitating school climate and culture efforts, direct instruction of social emotional learning to each and every student, and providing small group targeted supports for those students that need the extra help. Data are used throughout these focus areas to ensure decisions are made that are effectively and efficiently increasing outcomes for students. This role is integral to transitions as we are teaching the students the skills and competencies students need to be successful in middle school and beyond.

MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION SUPPORTS

6th/7th Grade First Day



Incoming students have access to the school before 7th and/or 8th graders arrive.

What Makes this Work?

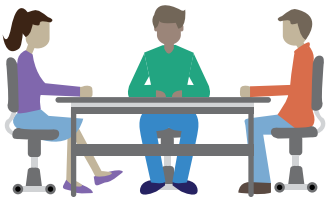
- Learning school layout & finding classes.
- Meeting teachers & learning class expectations & requirements.
- Understanding the school's daily schedule(s).
- Having time & structure to get to know peers or upperclassmen through teambuilding or other social activities.

Opportunities for students to talk to MS students & staff while still in 6th/7th grade helped to learn about MS academics, sports & other opportunities.

What Makes this Work?

- Both MS students & staff meet/talk with 6th/7th graders.
- Separate events or opportunities for these conversations to happen.
- MS student panel for 6th/7th graders, in addition to individual conversations about registration.
- 6th/7th graders can relate to upperclassmen more than school staff.
- School staff (teachers, counselors, or admin) give useful advice in regards to MS academic expectations.

Student & Staff Panels

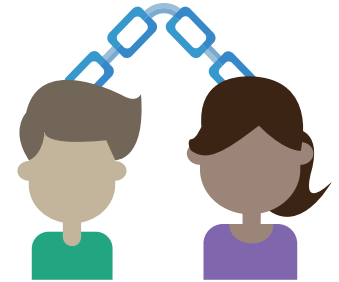


WEB Crew or peer mentoring programs that connect upperclassmen to academic & social opportunities.

What Makes this Work?

- Structured activities for mentors to help freshmen with both academics & transition.
- Structured time during school day to cultivate relationship between freshman & mentors.
- Freshmen seminar class can provide structure.

Peer Mentoring Programs



Key Drivers

Time & embedded structures to:

Build authentic relationships

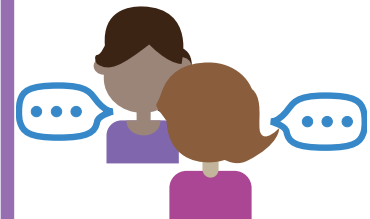
Provide essential information about academic life & social life in middle school

At-risk students selected for structured study hall periods.

What Makes this Work?

- Guided study hall period.
- Teachers & upperclassmen routinely & consistently accessible to help with academics.
- Work sessions most helpful when upperclassmen monitored & motivated freshmen through relationship-building opportunities.
- Mini-lessons on organization & other academic/study skills.
- Proportionate balance between lessons & homework time.

6th/7th Grade Seminar Class



Source:

Jeffco Research & Assessment Design

To view the full brief [click here](#). To view all Jeffco Research and Assessment Design publications [click here](#).