***Norwood Public Schools***

***Transition Activities for Grades PreK-13***

Parents/guardians and school personnel are key partners in every child’s education; therefore, Norwood Public Schools seeks to establish strong and on-going communications between family and school. All our school personnel always welcome and encourage parental engagement and participation in the education of their child (children).

Principals use newsletters, school websites, PTA councils, School Councils, Connect ED communications, and informational packets to communicate essential information and encourage involvement. Many student and family activities focus on helping students through various transitions throughout their school years.

Norwood Public Schools has been awarded a Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grant that primarily serves Norwood families with preschool and kindergarten children. The purpose of this grant is to provide coordination of services for families, including support for families in making school transitions, building resilience in coping with transitions, and connecting the parent community through literacy and parenting workshops.

The CFCE Council communicates the availability of support with the preschool providers through council meetings, emails, resource guides, and newsletters. This communication becomes a vital link to the Norwood Public Schools as families enter the Norwood Public Schools and access services.

**Transitioning into Preschool**

The Norwood Public Schools preschool, located at the Willett Early Childhood Center, is a special education program that includes peer models, students who do not have an IEP. The peer models for each of the programs in the preschool are chosen by lottery and attend the program from September through June. The staff of the Willett Preschool is in constant communication with the early intervention programs and with parents from Norwood and elsewhere regarding transitioning from an Individualized Family Service Plan to an IEP with the public schools. Student support team meetings are held prior to the student entering the Norwood Public Schools. IEPs and support are discussed with the sending agency and the parents. Parents are ensured that the needs of their child will be met and appropriate programming will be planned. Over the course of the year, children on IEPs enter the Willett on their third birthday.

**Transitioning from Preschool into Kindergarten**

For most families, their introduction to the Norwood Public Schools happens in **February** at **Kindergarten Registration Week** as they register their child for kindergarten at the Willett Early Childhood Center. During this process they are greeted by the school secretary, staff from the CFCE Grant, and the Willett Principal. Parents are assisted with the completion of the necessary paperwork for registration, family support information is provided, and their questions are answered.

The following **April**, the **Kindergarten Screening Week** takes place. Parents are required to attend the screening with their child. The children are again greeted by the school secretary and staff from CFCE who lead the children in small groups to the gym for the screening process. The parents then meet with the principal in small groups for a discussion of preliminary information about the kindergarten program, and they are told that they will receive additional information in the mail. The principal’s presentation is followed by a presentation by the school nurse regarding medical and health information. Bus and school safety arrangements are also discussed.

Prior to the beginning of the next school year, sometime in May all kindergarten families are invited by mail to **Welcome to Willett Day** which will take place on an early Saturday in **June**. The transition activities include the following:

* In the cafeteria, families are welcomed to the Norwood Public Schools community, see a PowerPoint of Willett activities, and learn the Willett song.
* Families are given a tour of Willett in small groups.
* Staff is available to meet with parents (paid by the CFCE grant).
* A bus is in the parking lot for the children to enter and take a seat with their family. Bus safety, rules, and pick-up and drop-off procedures are explained.
* Each child leaves with their own copy of The Night Before Kindergarten (pending available funding).

Parents receive a packet of information in **July**, which includes the teacher assignment, as well as invitations to and schedules for **Preschool and Kindergarten Parent Information Nights**, held in **late August**, and **Preschool and Kindergarten Orientation Day**, in early **September,** when children visit their classrooms with their parent(s)/guardian(s). Parents have the opportunity to ask questions of the principal, food service director, nurse, and PTO representative.

**Transitioning from Kindergarten to Grade One**

In early June, the Willett principal holds a **First Grade Visiting Day** for the children of the graduating kindergarten class. The students are separated into five groups according to the elementary school they will be attending the following year. The students are then accompanied by Willett staff to the receiving schools. Norwood Public Schools provides five buses for the visits each year. When the students arrive, they are greeted by their respective school principal, broken into groups, and taken to the first grade classrooms for a “visit.” The students are then given a tour of their school. After the tour, they return to the Willett. The whole event usually takes about 1-1 ½ hours.

The Willett principal explains the transition day to the parents through newsletters and informational packets. A letter will notify parents of the events of the day and transition activities.

In May-June, Willett staff meets with grade one teachers and principals to discuss student needs and class assignments.

Each of the five elementary schools hosts a **1st Grade** **Open House** in **August or early September**. During this open house parents meet the principal and first grade staff. The school is open for family tours, and teachers are available for questions and concerns.

**Transitioning from Grade to Grade at the Elementary Level (1-5)**

Beginning in May transitional meetings are held within each school regarding movement from one grade to the next. The school principal and classroom teachers from the sending classes meet to discuss appropriate class/teacher assignments, considering such matters as SPED, Title I, and ELL needs, personalities, and gender. After consultation with specialists, preliminary class lists are developed and finalized in June. Most, but not all, schools hold a **Step Up or Move Up Day** on the last day of school. During that day the students “move up” and visit their next year’s classroom and teacher.

**Transitioning from grade 5 to Grade 6 at the Coakley Middle School**

The Coakley Middle School (CMS) provides letters to all five elementary schools to distribute to parents regarding subject selection for music and foreign language and information about **Parents’ Night** in late **May.** Parents get an overview of the house and team organization, school rules, school schedule, courses and curriculum, buses and other essentials at CMS, and parents can ask questions about any concerns they may have.

In end of May or **early June** (after math and science MCAS testing), on five different days, all fifth graders **visit the Coakley Middle School** in their elementary school groups. Program agenda includes the following:

* Fifth grade teachers meet with the CMS guidance counselors to share helpful information on incoming students.
* Students meet the principal and housemasters and are given an introductory program with video.
* Students receive information on subject choices in music and foreign languages, how lunch works, on locks and lockers.
* Students are given small group tours of the school facilities led by eighth grade students.

In preparation for academic transitioning to 6th grade, the 5th grade teachers meet to discuss their students’ academic and social needs (who needs to be separated, who needs a friend, etc.). Further meetings are held with the Elementary and CMS special education staff to transition the students on IEPs to ensure a smooth transition of services. The CMS Reading and Title One teachers also solicit information from grade 5 teachers on students they would recommend for additional reading and Title I support in grade 6.

Students and parents discuss class choices for grade 6. CMS staff hosts a parent meeting at the CMS to discuss scheduling and CMS routines.

The transition from 5th to 6th grade includes many traditions including a **Fifth Grade PE/Field Day** that is planned by the physical education department and the 5th grade teachers in the second week of June at the Oldham School.  This event brings together the 5th grade students in one location for a fun day of competitive games and awards. This event highlights the 5th grade year and creates lasting memories for all who attend.

Other individual school transition activities include the following:

**BALCH SCHOOL**:
The Balch has a **5th Grade Musical and Scholarship Evening** in June with pictures of the scholarship recipients going to the newspaper. Balch’s **5th Grade Awards Day** is held the day before the last day of school. The NESPA President's Awards and teacher awards are given along with promotion certificates. The PTO does a 5th grade yearbook. There is a **Step-up Day** on the last day of school for grades 1-4.

**CALLAHAN SCHOOL**:
In June special education staff uses a NPS van to take Callahan SpEd and TASC students to visit Coakley Middle School. The **5th Grade 5 Musical and Graduation** take place in mid June and diplomas are handed out to the 5th graders. **Step Up Day** happens after morning recess on the last day of the school year. At that time high school scholarships and all student awards are given out. The PTA pays for a fifth grade yearbook. New parents are invited to August PTA Board meeting. There is a **Welcome Back Cookout** for all families on the first Friday evening after the start of school.

**CLEVELAND SCHOOL**:
Cleveland School **Field Day** occurs in mid-June and is for all Cleveland students, grades one-five.  The **5th Grade Musical** also takes place in mid-June.  This is a fun event for staff, parents, and especially our students.  There is dress rehearsal for all students the day prior to the event. The **Awards Day** is in June where scholarships and Richwine Citizenship awards are given out.  **Promotion (Step Up) Day** occurs on the last day of school with the following schedule:  fifth grade goes to the cafeteria to watch their first grade musical; we then promote students (first to second, second to third, etc) and they "step up" and visit their new teacher, classroom, etc.  We do not have a fifth grade graduation, but the PTA and fifth grade teachers work closely together to have a fifth grade picnic/celebration. The school’s PTA organizes and publishes the fifth grade yearbook.

**OLDHAM SCHOOL**:
5th Grade Phys. Ed Day takes place at Oldham in June. Each elementary school wears its own t-shirt. After the **5th Grade Musical** college scholarships are awarded by the PTO to graduating Norwood High School students who were students at the Oldham School. Oldham’s **Awards/Graduation/Promotion (Move Up) Day** takes place on the last day of school.  Graduation is at 9:30 am with cake and juice reception afterwards.  Move Up Day goes from 11:00 to 11:30 am. 5th Grade Yearbook is given out the last week of school.

**PRESCOTT SCHOOL**:
In mid June the Prescott School has the **5th Grade Musical** and the scholarships are given out at that time to NHS seniors.  Although Prescott does not have a step up day or a graduation ceremony, in June Prescott hosts a **5th Grade Family Picnic** day to Capron Park, and on the last day of school there is an award ceremony where the NESPA President's Education Awards are given to 5th grade students.  A 5th grade yearbook and video are given to each 5th grader.  On the last day of school students in grades 1-4 are given their placement information for the following year. All placement decisions are made by the grade-level teachers in collaboration with the principal, the reading teacher, and special education staff. Just prior to the opening of school, Prescott holds an **Open House for first grade students and their parents** so they can meet their assigned teacher and see their classroom.

**Transitioning from Grade to Grade at the Secondary Level (6-12)**

Beginning in May transitional meetings are held within each school regarding movement from one grade to the next. The school principal, housemasters or deans, counselors, special education and classroom teachers from the sending classes meet to discuss appropriate class/teacher assignments, considering such matters as SPED and ELL needs, personalities, and academic strengths and concerns.

Letters are sent home to middle school parents about course selection options for the following year. Guidance staff meets with students in small groups and individually to provide advice and firm up selections.

High school guidance counselors meet one on one with high school students to develop a course request sheet for the following year. A copy of this form goes home with the student for parental approval.

**Transitioning from Grade 8 to Grade 9 at Norwood High School**

In early March, High school counselors go to CMS to discuss 9th grade courses and schedules, lunches, after school activities, sports, attendance policy, and other matters with all 8th grade students who have the opportunity to ask questions about next year.

In mid March, high school administrators conduct a **9th Grade** **Parent Night** at the high school for parents of incoming 9th graders.

In May middle school counselors go over course selections with each 8th grade student.

**“A Day in the Life of a Freshman” Program**: In end of May or early June six CMS (two from each grade 8 team) and two Saint Catherine’s 8th grade students visit the HS for the day and then report back to their respective CMS teams.

In June middle school counselors meet with HS counselors to share helpful student transition information (discuss 504 plans, IEPs, peer issues, etc).

Also in June, NHS Guidance hosts "**8th Grade Step-Up Day**" where all the Coakley 8th-graders visit the high school for a few hours during a regular school day. This program consists of 3 parts: 1) a school tour, 2) a panel discussion with a select group of graduating seniors - they offer advice and have a "heart-to-heart" with the students, and 3) a session where they meet their mentors for the following year. These "**Mustang Mentors**" are a select group of upperclassmen who are exceptional representatives and leaders in our high school. These assigned groups will also be their **Advisory group** for their freshman year.

Just prior to the start of school, the High School sends incoming parents and students information on **9th Grade Orientation Program** that occurs one evening (at 6:00 pm). Upper class student leaders attend to answer questions about the high school experience. Parents meet members of the administrative team (vice principal, deans, guidance chair, and athletic director) and senior class president to go over critical handbook policies and programs. Students go to their homerooms to review their schedules, locate and open lockers, review critical handbook polices, and ask questions of teacher and student leaders.

During the first week of school, high school guidance counselors run a three-session **Freshman Seminar** covering graduation requirements, attendance policy, role of guidance department, college and career exploration and planning, goal setting, and bullying.

**Transitioning into and out of Special Programs**

NPS staff assists students’ and families’ as they transition into and out of new programs for the first time. Programs such as Title I, ELL, and Special Education must follow state and federal procedures for admitting and exiting students. For students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), transitions require thoughtful planning and active Team participation to ensure smooth transitions from school to adult life.

In a transition year for a student with an IEP the following occurs:

* Annual IEP meetings are scheduled and held.
* Transition meetings are offered to parents typically in May and June.
* Meetings are designed to share knowledge of the student with new school staff and/or service providers.
* Students in a substantially separate program are accompanied by their teacher to tour the new school and meet staff.
* In June, parents are invited to a “Meet and Greet” session to get acquainted with their child’s program and instructors.
* All special needs students also take a tour with their peer group’s classes to their new school.

School personnel are also very attentive to the many smaller, day to day transitions required of students as they move from one classroom to the next. Classroom teachers seek to make these transitions as orderly and least disruptive as possible for each student.

**Transitioning into and out of Our School System**

Teachers and staff of NPS are constantly aware of the stress on students and families as they move from community to community. Classroom teachers prepare for new students, assisting with their transition to new classrooms and new classmates. Each principal and guidance counselor requests and gathers all the necessary information regarding prior educational experiences and academic records that can be helpful in developing student academic schedules and making appropriate educational placements and other transitional plans.

School office personnel assist families who are transitioning out of NPS by forwarding appropriate student records in an orderly and timely fashion. If enough notice is given, school or classroom “good bye” or “best wishes” activities are planned.

**Transitioning to College or Other Post-Graduate Opportunities**

To prepare students for transitioning from the high school after graduation, all 10th graders receive a workshop from the guidance counselors on college and career planning using the Naviance software program. In a small group setting, students complete a personality profile and a career interest inventory that is reviewed by the student’s counselor.

In grade 11 students again use the Naviance program in a small group setting to work on resume writing and college/career research and planning. Guidance counselors then hold one to one college and career planning meetings with students to discuss transition plans. Additionally, at a **Junior Parent/Student Night** in March the guidance department invites representatives from a 2 year school and from a 4 year state school and a 4 year private college to discuss the college application process.

Guidance counselors meet one on one with all 12th grade students to do more intensive college/career planning. Also, representatives from area colleges as well as the military and career schools are invited to the high school for informational sessions. The guidance department also runs a college application workshop every Wednesday after school throughout the fall, and in December they offer a **Senior Parent Night** on college and financial aid.

**Summer Program Transitions**

To help minimize summer academic loss, Norwood Public Schools and the town of Norwood offer various summer programs for grades preK-12:

* Willett Preschool Skills: July-August (Monday-Thursday, 8:30-10:30/11:30/1:30) at Willett.
* Summer Academy: July-August (Monday-Thursday, 8:30-10:30) at CMS.
* Heroes: July-August (Monday-Friday, 8:30-1:30) at CMS.
* Challenger: July-August (Monday-Thursday, 9:00-2:00) at CMS.