

Middle School Transition Partnership Fund

For many students, their time spent in middle school will be their shortest tenure at a public educational institution. It is also a time of greater independence, new friends, more demanding coursework and new learning opportunities. Creating a sense of culture and community is one of the main points of emphasis outlined in the [Association of Middle Level Education Characteristics of Successful Middle Schools](#), and it is a challenge to build and reinforce that culture within these short years. However, what would it mean if that time could be expanded through experiences that build from a students' current to future school?

For students [entering](#) and [exiting](#) middle school, we can expect that stronger transitions will mean improved attendance, behavior, academic performance, retention rates and, overall, more success.

The goals behind this funding are to:

- Encourage relationship building across school levels and create more intentional coordination between schools
- Demystify for students what to expect at their next school and bridge the knowledge gap
- Remove barriers for student success in their transition to the next level

Funding Opportunity

Partnership teams from two cross-level schools (elementary and middle school OR middle and high school) may request up to \$7,500 to support planning and execution of transition activities into or out of middle school over a period no longer than 18 months. Funds may be used for a range of expenses, such as staff planning time, supplies, technical assistance or transportation costs for partnership projects and activities.

To be eligible for support, transition projects should include one middle school, and one elementary school OR high school.

Project description/writeup should:

- Focus on student transition from elementary to middle school OR middle school to high school;
- Clearly define a particular challenge in the transition that partners are trying to overcome (ex: Math performance drops from 5th to 6th grade, so how might we create a supportive onramp to MS in that subject)
- Demonstrate concrete collaboration between faculty and/or students at partner schools;
- Set forth major milestones or a workplan for collaboration and activity;
- Outline at least 2 success outcomes and how partnership teams plan to accomplish these objectives. One project outcome should address sustainability and/or continuation of school partnership once the grant period ends.

The selection committee will prioritize requests that support work that is likely to lead to future collaborations and student impact.

Additional Commitments

Please note that we will ask for partners to participate in a final virtual convening in June 2025 to share out best practices, lessons learned, and inform future collaborations.

Timeline

January 29, 2024	Fund Announcement at Hawaii Academies
February 5, 2024	Announce at AMLE/DOE Middle Level Conference
February 7, 2024	Middle School Fund Informational Call (optional) Zoom: http://tinyurl.com/mstf24
February 19, 2024	Request writeups due
February 29, 2024	Selection Announcement
March 1, 2024 – July 30, 2025	Project Timeframe

Application Instructions

Applications will be considered with our grants management platform Fluxx. To apply, visit <https://castlefoundation.org/middletransition>. You will be asked to register and then will upload the following documents:

- Project Description (1000 words max)
 - Are you focusing on transition from elementary to middle school OR middle school to high school?
 - What particular challenge in the transition process are you trying to overcome?
 - Demonstrate concrete collaboration between faculty and/or students at partner schools;
 - Set forth major milestones or a workplan for collaboration and activity
 - Outline at least 2 success outcomes and how partnership teams plan to accomplish these objectives. One project outcome should address sustainability and/or continuation of school partnership once the grant period ends.
- Project Budget
- Letter of Support from the Complex Area Superintendent or designee

Should you require assistance, please contact Maria Quidez at mquidez@castlefoundation.org.

Project Examples

- Teachers from middle school sit in on 9th grade math class, 9th grade teachers sit in on 8th grade math classes – collaboration on how 8th grade teachers can use 4th quarter to prepare students for what to expect in 9th grade; 9th grade teachers can plan for how to shape 1st quarter lessons to accommodate transition of learning
- Student leader exchange – 9th grade student leaders and teachers visit 8th grade classes in 1st semester to orient students as they select their electives/courses for freshman year; same 9th grade leaders lead school tour for visiting 8th graders in 2nd semester
- Series of 8th grade assemblies to get students prepared for HS – registration day (model like a sports signing day), group activities with HS students, round robin meet and greet with HS admin/counselors/teachers
- 8th grade shadow day, whereby 8th grade students are paired with a 9th/10th student for a day