# 9TH GRADE ON - TRACK *PLAYBOOK*

**PHILADELPHIA ACADEMIES, INC.**

*Improving Student Outcomes Since 1969*

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# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

# WELCOME

You are holding in your hands the first edition of a 9th Grade On-Track Playbook for Philadelphia. The story of how this playbook has come to be is the story of passionate practitioners and partners working together to understand the needs of ninth graders, test new approaches to best supporting them, and working to codify the most effective strategies so that more ninth graders across Philadelphia can successfully transition to high school and earn their high school diploma.

High school graduation is a major milestone in many of our lives. You might recall your own—what you wore, who was there, how you felt crossing the stage or posing for photos. Beyond the personal and familial pride it often evokes, high school graduation marks a pivotal transition from adolescence to adulthood in America.

However, a high school diploma is more than a photo moment or piece of paper—it's a gateway to critical opportunities. A high school diploma is the basic credential required not only for college, but also for trade schools, technical programs, and registered apprenticeships. All of these post-secondary pathways generally lead to more stable, better-paying jobs and more fulfilling careers. As of today, approximately 68% of jobs require some form of post-secondary education or training—a figure projected to rise to 72% by 2031.[1] The remaining jobs, while still essential, tend to offer lower wages, minimal benefits, and more demanding working conditions.

The brightest future we can imagine for our young people is one where every one of them graduates from high school. A diploma empowers them with the freedom and personal autonomy to choose their next step. For those who don't complete high school, the outlook is more stark. Dropouts face significantly higher rates of low literacy and incarceration, as well as poorer health outcomes, decreased earning potential, higher unemployment rates, higher risk of substance abuse, and an increased reliance on public assistance.[2]

The story of the 9th Grade On-Track work in Philadelphia is rooted in a shared sense of responsibility and care for our city's young people. It's a story about how we—as a collective of caring adults in their lives—can work together to meet their educational and developmental needs. When we do that well, we help students succeed in high school, earn their diploma, and gain the power to choose the post-secondary education and/or career path that's right for them.

The foundational research behind the focus on 9th grade emerged in 2008 from the University of Chicago's Consortium on School Research. Their groundbreaking study revealed that a measure known as *Freshman On-Track* was the strongest predictor of whether a student in the Chicago Public Schools would graduate high school on time—more powerful than prior academic achievement, family income, and race combined.

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[1] Newton, D. (2023, December 28). Report: College Education Or Training Will Be "The Only Pathway" To Good Jobs. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/dereknewton/2023/12/28/report-college-education-or-training-will-be-the-only-pathway-to-good-jobs/

[2] Lansford, J. E., Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (2016, March 19). A Public Health Perspective on School Dropout and Adult Outcomes: A Prospective Study of Risk and Protective Factors from Age 5 to 27 Years. Journal of Adolescent Health, 58(6), 652–658. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2016.01.014

The researchers found that students who successfully completed their 9th grade coursework and earned enough credits to be considered "on-track" were significantly more likely to graduate within four years. In contrast, those who fell behind in their ninth grade year faced a much steeper uphill battle and were significantly less likely to graduate, even if they showed academic promise in middle school. This research reshaped how schools in Chicago and across the country approach student success, emphasizing strong freshman-year support systems as critical levers for improving graduation rates.

In 2017, the School District of Philadelphia adapted the On-Track model from Chicago and created its own metric: 9th Grade On-Track, defined in Philadelphia as being enrolled in and earning credits in all four core classes plus one additional class. Local research confirmed what other studies had shown: students who were On-Track at the end of 9th grade were more than twice as likely to graduate on time. For the Class of 2021, 87% of School District of Philadelphia students who were On-Track at the end of ninth grade graduated on time, compared to a graduation rate of just 40% for those who were Off-Track.[3] Crucially, this finding held true across all racial, ethnic, and gender groups.

In 2017 the District also invested in the creation of a defined 9th Grade Academy Logic Model, to help schools clearly identify and implement elements of the 9th Grade Academy model that were most essential to ninth grade improvement, and made a large strategic investment in the hiring of 9th Grade Assistant Principals across the city. Alongside staffing and strategy investments, the District, with support from the Neubauer Family Foundation, began building robust data systems to support teachers and administrators in understanding the needs of their ninth grade students and monitor progress. New data dashboards—developed within the District's Qlik platform—enabled school leaders to dive deep into On-Track trends, analyze failure rates by subject, student group, and class sections, and track progress over time. A critical new tool, the Grades Monitoring Tool, was launched, helping administrators, teachers, and teacher teams dissect ninth grade grades and attendance data in one easy-to-use spreadsheet in real time. Soon after, the Check & Reflect was created with practitioner input, helping students understand their own progress and set goals. Later on, the Grade Impact Report would help teachers understand the impact of their gradebook design and grading practices on student achievement.

A parallel investment in professional development also began in 2017–18, thanks to support from the Neubauer Family Foundation. New trainings were delivered focused on helping principals and 9th Grade Assistant Principals understand the critical nature of the ninth grade year and how to use data tools to drive support for students. The following year, in 2018–19, the beginnings of the 9th Grade Success Network, facilitated by Philadelphia Academies, Inc. and funded by the Neubauer Family Foundation, took root. Today the 9th Grade Success Network is sponsored directly by the School District of Philadelphia and serves 28 high schools, with contracted plans to serve 32 high schools in 2026-27.

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[3] Wills, T. (2023, December). Ninth Grade On-Track Rates and Their Relationship to On-Time Graduation for First-Time SDP Ninth Graders in 2016-17 through 2018-19. The School District of Philadelphia. https://www.philasd.org/research/wp-content/uploads/sites/90/2023/12/Ninth-Grade-On-Track-Rates-and-On-Time-Graduation-for-First-Time-SDP-Ninth-Graders-2016-17-through-2018-19_December-2023.pdf

Over the last seven years, our group of practitioners, experts, consultants, and partners have learned a great deal about how to do the 9th Grade On-Track work and how to do it well. Recently, a new 9th Grade Assistant Principal asked: What if there were a 9th Grade Academy Playbook? The idea was simple but compelling: a single resource that captures what we've learned in a clear, usable format—something that could support both new and experienced leaders in designing effective strategies and practices that meet the needs of ninth grade students. We recognized the need to consolidate the insights, tools, and guidance that had been developed and make them more accessible to school leaders and practitioners. That idea became the impetus for the *9th Grade On-Track Playbook.*

In the summer of 2024, Philadelphia Academies, Inc. received funding from the Neubauer Family Foundation to host three 9th Grade Leader Summer Fellows who were selected to bring the playbook to life. They structured the playbook and authored much of its content, drawing from their own experience and the broader work across the District. Additional contributions came from the Philadelphia Academies, Inc. team, the School District of Philadelphia's 9th Grade On-Track project team, and the University of Chicago's To&Through Project team. Each collaborating partner provided valuable input and expertise to strengthen and refine this resource.

While we're proud to launch the first edition of the 9th Grade Academy Playbook, we know this is only the beginning. We know there is so much more collective wisdom and knowledge from across the 9th Grade Success Network and School District of Philadelphia that continues to be developed every day. Our hope is to continue collecting that collective wisdom and incorporate it into a future edition of the Playbook. The insights that come from your daily work—and your reflections on what is and isn't effective—are essential to moving our community forward. Our community is grounded in a set of shared beliefs: that every student deserves the support they need to be successful, that educators have the power to make a difference in students' lives, and that we can accomplish more collectively than we can individually. With these values at the center and so much progress already behind us, the future for ninth graders in Philadelphia is bright.

In partnership,

Nadia Schafer
Director, 9th Grade Success Network
Philadelphia Academies, Inc.

# ABOUT PHILADELPHIA ACADEMIES, INC. AND THE 9TH GRADE SUCCESS NETWORK

**PHILADELPHIA ACADEMIES, INC.**

Founded in 1969 to combat Philadelphia's dropout crisis, **Philadelphia Academies, Inc.** (PAI) pioneered the Career Academy Model, which has since been adopted by over 8,000 chools nationwide. Today, PAI continues its mission through its Middle School Programming, Workforce Development Initiatives, and the 9th Grade Success Network, equipping students, particularly Black and Brown youth, with the training, credentials, and mentorship needed to access life-sustaining careers. By embedding career-connected learning within Philadelphia's public schools and working to expand the capacity of school leaders, PAI bridges systemic gaps that have long excluded marginalized students from economic mobility. More than five decades later, the organization remains at the forefront of ensuring that talent, not zip code, determines opportunity.

PAI's **9th Grade Success Network** (9GSN) team delivers professional development, coaching, and network-wide learning to 24 schools across the School District of Philadelphia who are working to increase 9th Grade On-Track rates for their students. With PAI's support, ninth grade teams across the Network collaborate to provide data-driven interventions and student supports in order to help students transition to high school and stay on the path toward graduation. 9th Grade Success network schools receive:

### COACHING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

PAI provides weekly coaching and technical assistance to 9th Grade Assistant Principals and other 9th Grade Academy leaders (teachers, counselors, etc.) on using data tools to inform practice, organizing intervention efforts for Off-Track students, and monitoring the success of those intervention efforts. All coaching and technical assistance is aligned with the "12 Key Practices" developed by PAI, which codifies the most important practices and traits of effective 9th grade teams.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PAI provides Professional Development to 9th grade teacher teams on a number of topics related to effective teaming, data utilization, and intervention implementation for 9th Grade On-Track.

### COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The 9th Grade Success Network Community of Practice, which convenes quarterly in addition to a two-day Summer Summit, is a key component of PAI's support for Network schools. Each school is represented by a small group of core 9th grade team members who come together regularly to problem-solve shared challenges, exchange ideas and best practices, learn new strategies, and plan for continuous improvement.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An immense amount of appreciation goes to **Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez**, who led the design of this Playbook. She translated a complex vision into a final product that is not only polished and professional, but also highly functional and visually compelling. Her attention to detail, creativity, and commitment to elevating the content truly brought this resource to life.

We also extend deep gratitude to the **Neubauer Family Foundation**, whose generous investments in the 9th Grade On-Track work in Philadelphia—and in this Playbook project specifically—demonstrate their unwavering commitment to the success of young people in our city. Their years of tremendous support of the 9th Grade On-Track work in Philadelphia, including their funding of PAI's first summer fellowship for 9th Grade leaders, made this resource possible.

Finally, we thank the **School District of Philadelphia** for making this work possible. Its leadership and ongoing investment in 9th Grade On-Track efforts—including the dedicated 9th Grade Assistant Principal role, the prioritization of 9th Grade On-Track-related professional learning, and the sponsorship of the 9th Grade Success Network—have laid the foundation for sustained and meaningful impact.

**It is with deep humility and gratitude that we thank all members of the 9th Grade Success Network—past and present.** It is because of you that ninth graders are receiving more support and reaching higher levels of success than ever since we began measuring the 9th Grade On-Track metric. It is because of your commitment and insight that we understand more now than we did before about what works, for whom, and under what conditions—the ultimate question we will continue to seek answers to. And it is because of your contributions and tested results that we have content to fill this Playbook—with much more to come.

Thank you for your efforts. Thank you for reflecting on those efforts. And thank you for sharing your learnings and resources with us and the broader community.

**NEUBAUER**
FAMILY FOUNDATION

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
**PHILADELPHIA**
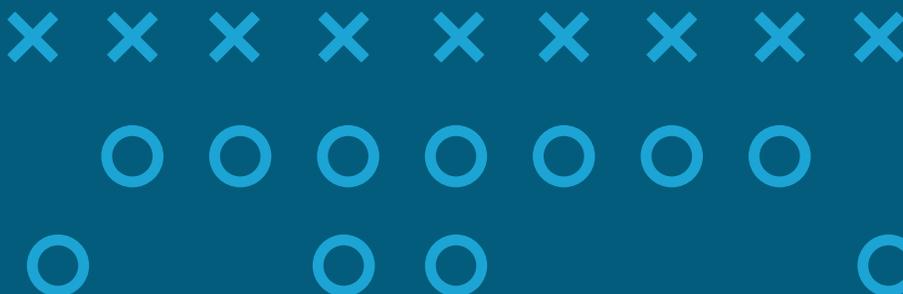
# WHY "9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE ON-TRACK?"

# WHY "9TH GRADE ON-TRACK?"

*Focusing on the success and development of 9th grade students can improve high school graduation rates and enhance career and college opportunities for young people. Extensive research and data confirm the importance of prioritizing ninth grade success. This section will explore the evidence behind this strategy and examine the structural, biological, and psychological factors that make the 9th grade transition such a pivotal moment in a student's educational journey.*

# HOW A FOCUS ON 9TH GRADE TRANSFORMED CHICAGO SCHOOLS

In the early 2000s, the University of Chicago's Consortium on School Research identified "Freshman On-Track" as a key predictor for high school graduation. In their research, the Consortium discovered that a student's On-Track status in ninth grade was more predictive of their likelihood to graduate high school in four years than eighth grade test scores, economic stats, race, and gender combined. Further, they discovered that students who are "on-track" in their ninth grade year are four times more likely to graduate from high school than their off-track peers. After reviewing the compelling research, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) made ninth grade success a central pillar of their high school strategy. School leaders and educators committed to investing time and resources into improving Freshman On-Track rates as a key lever for increasing graduation outcomes.

The investment in Freshman On-Track efforts in Chicago led to remarkable improvements in both on-track rates and high school graduation rates. As shown in the following graph, Chicago Public Schools was able to incrementally and systematically raise their On-Track rates which directly correlated with an increase in graduation rates after 4 years. That strategic intervention paid off: Freshman On-Track rates increased from 57% in 2007 to over 90% by the late 2010s, and graduation rates rose significantly as well, from around 50% in the early 2000s to nearly 80% by 2020.

Figure 1. Chicago Public Schools Freshman On-Track rate compared to 4 year graduation Rate 2002-2014[5]
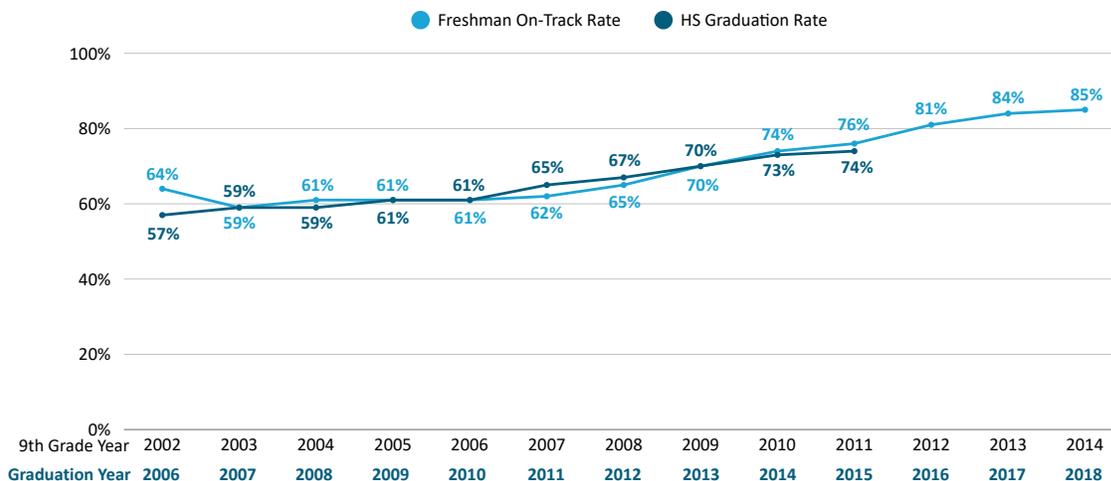
[4] Nagaoka, J., & Healey, K. (2016). The educational attainment of Chicago Public Schools students: 2015: A focus on four-year degrees. University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. (2016). Freshman On-Track [Data file].

[5] Ibid

# 9TH GRADE ON-TRACK IN PHILADELPHIA

In 2017, the Neubauer Family Foundation (NFF) – a Philadelphia-based organization whose philanthropic priorities include strengthening education systems to improve long-term outcomes for young people—sought a systemic approach to boosting high school graduation rates, a key predictor of future success. Drawing on research from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, the Foundation approached the University to support the School District of Philadelphia in adopting a version of Chicago Public Schools' Freshman On-Track metric. This cross-sector collaboration catalyzed new research by the District's Office of Research and Evaluation and led to the development of Philadelphia's own 9th Grade On-Track (9GOT) metric. With the metric established, NFF continued to invest strategically in data infrastructure, professional learning, and knowledge management to ensure strong implementation and citywide uptake of the 9th Grade On-Track strategy.

In 2018, the School District of Philadelphia's Office of Research and Evaluation conducted an in-depth study examining the predictive power of the 9th Grade On-Track metric. The findings were compelling: ninth graders who were On-Track were twice as likely to graduate from high school within four years compared to their Off-Track peers. When the study was updated in 2023 to include more recent cohorts, the correlation proved even stronger. For the Class of 2022, students who were On-Track in ninth grade graduated at a rate of 87.3%, compared to just 39.7% among those who were Off-Track—demonstrating that ninth grade success remained one of the most powerful early indicators of on-time high school graduation. [6]

Figure 2. On-time graduation rates for students who were on- and off-track as first-time 9th graders in 2016-17 through 2018-19 [7]
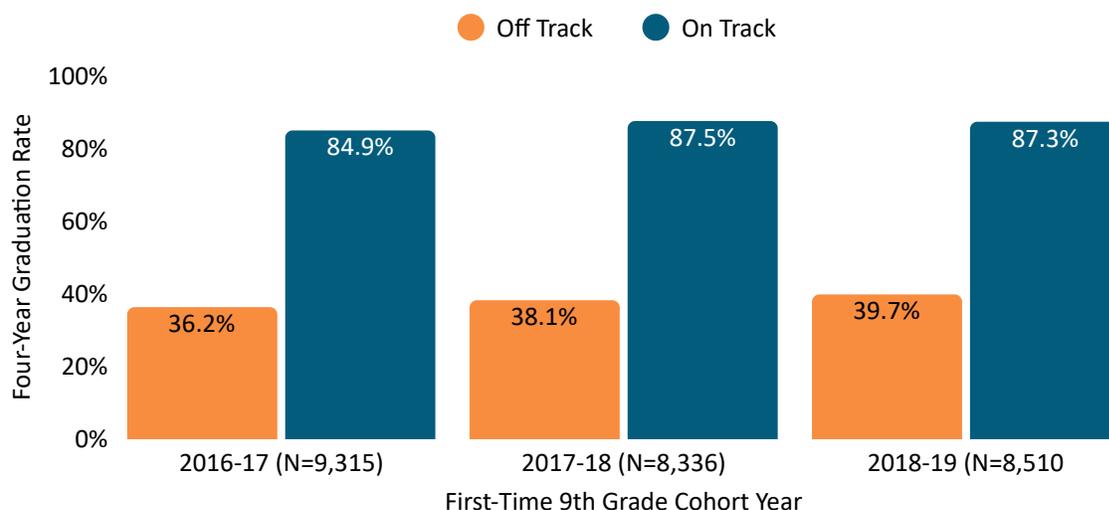
[6] Wills, T. (2023, December). Ninth Grade On-Track Rates and Their Relationship to On-Time Graduation for First-Time SDP Ninth Graders in 2016-17 through 2018-19. The School District of Philadelphia. https://www.philasd.org/research/wp-content/uploads/sites/90/2023/12/Ninth-Grade-On-Track-Rates-and-On-Time-Graduation-for-First-Time-SDP-Ninth-Graders-2016-17-through-2018-19_December-2023.pdf

[7] Ibid.

The School District of Philadelphia's Office of Research and Evaluation also found a strong link between a student's level of ninth grade success and their likelihood of enrolling in post-secondary education. Students identified as *Firmly On-Track*—those who met the On-Track criteria with A's and B's—had significantly higher college matriculation rates than their peers who were simply On-Track or Off-Track.[8] Nearly 80% of Firmly On-Track ninth graders went on to enroll in a two- or four-year college, with the majority enrolling in four-year institutions. Among students who were On-Track but not Firmly On-Track, about half pursued post-secondary education. By contrast, only 29% of students who were Off-Track in ninth grade matriculated into a post-secondary institution.

Figure 3. Post-secondary matriculation outcomes for the Class of 2019, by 9th Grade On-Track status [9]



*9GOT = 4 CORE + 1 MORE*

● Matriculated, 2-year    ● Matriculated, 4-year    ○ Did Not Matriculate

| | Firmly On-Track (N=2,092) | On-Track But At Risk (N=2,559) | Off-Track (N=936) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Did Not Matriculate | 21.6% | 52.0% | 71.1% |
| Matriculated, 4-year | 66.4% | 31.1% | 12.9% |
| Matriculated, 2-year | 12.0% | 16.9% | 16.0% |
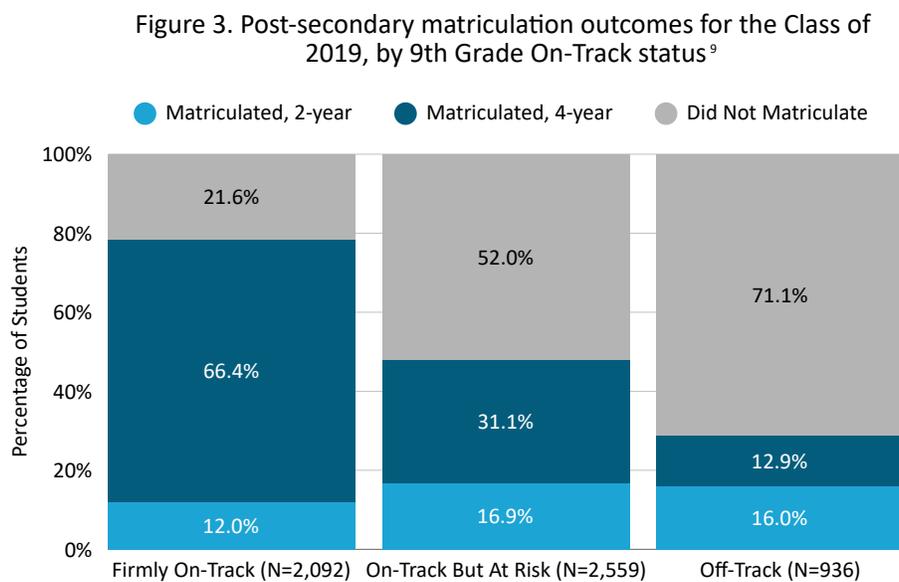
Findings from both Philadelphia and Chicago demonstrate that sustained support and targeted resources for ninth grade students can drive increases in On-Track and Firmly On-Track rates—indicators that are strongly associated with higher high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment.

## WHAT IS 9TH GRADE ON-TRACK AND FIRMLY ON-TRACK?

9th Grade On-Track metric measures whether a student is on pace to graduate high school within four years. The criteria for 9th Grade On-Track in the School District of Philadelphia is passing all four core classes (Math, English, Science, and Social Studies) plus one more of any other class taken in their ninth grade year. The 9th Grade On-Track criteria is known colloquially as "four core plus one more." Firmly On-Track is a designation for students who are not only On-Track, but who are earning all As and Bs in their 4 core classes (Math, English, Science, and Social Studies) plus one additional A or B in any other course.

[8] Tanz, A., & Erdem-Akcay, E. (2020, June). From Ninth Grade On-Track to College Matriculation: The Path of the 2015-16 SDP Ninth-Grade Cohort.

[9] Ibid.

# WHY DOES 9$^{TH}$ GRADE MATTER SO MUCH?

Life transitions can be both exciting and challenging—and for young people, the move from eighth to ninth grade is no exception. Entering high school marks a developmental shift: students are moving from early to middle adolescence, gaining greater independence, and beginning to shape their identities outside of their families.

At the same time, the school environment changes dramatically. High schools are typically "larger and less nurturing"[10] than middle schools or K–8 settings, and they demand greater self-reliance. Ninth graders must quickly learn to navigate multiple teachers, move independently between classrooms, manage new social dynamics with older peers, and adapt to an increased academic workload—all within a new and often unfamiliar school culture.

Educators regularly talk about transitions—between tasks, classes, or activities. But this broader transition into high school is profound and deserves equal, if not greater, attention. Below is a non-exhaustive list of the changes most students experience as they move from 8th to 9th grade:[11]

| MIDDLE SCHOOL AND K-8 SCHOOL | HIGH SCHOOL |
|---|---|
| In same room for most learning or walked to/from classes with teacher supervision | Individual schedule and expectation of traveling to each class independently |
| Focus on whole child development alongside content knowledge | Primary focus on the acquisition of increasingly complex content knowledge and skills |
| Can fail or do poorly in a core class and still be promoted to the next grade/class | Core classes need to be retaken if failed during the first try. Students must accumulate a set number of credits in specific subject areas in order to be eligible to graduate. |
| Significant scaffolding provided for assignments | More student responsibility for completing work and studying independently |
| 8th graders are highest on the social order | 9th graders are lowest in the social order |
| Closer to home, often within walking distance | Farther from home, often must navigate public transportation or make other transportation arrangements |
| Smaller school size | Larger school size |

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[10] BEST PRACTICES FOR GRADE 9 TRANSITIONS. (2017). In wasa-oly.org. https://www.was-oly.org/WASA/images/WASA/1.0%20Who%20We%20Are/1.4.1.6%20SIRS/Download_Files/LI%202018/Jan-Best%20Practices%20for%20Grade%209%20Transitions.pdf

[11] Ibid.

As students transition into high school, they are also navigating a critical stage of adolescent development—from early to middle adolescence—as part of the broader journey from childhood to adulthood. Supporting ninth graders effectively means addressing both their academic and developmental needs.

At this stage, many aspects of the adolescent brain are nearing maturity. The limbic system, which governs emotion, is fully developed, enabling students to feel and express a wide range of emotions. Their cognitive abilities are becoming more sophisticated, allowing for deeper reasoning and problem-solving. However, the prefrontal cortex—responsible for executive functions like planning, impulse control, and decision-making—is still developing. This means that many ninth graders will continue to struggle with organization, time management, and emotional regulation, even as they show strong intellectual skills and potential.

Additionally, adolescents are more likely to view the world in absolutes. Unlike adults, who can navigate gray areas and hold multiple perspectives at once, young people tend to interpret experiences as either right or wrong, fair or unfair. Understanding these developmental characteristics can help educators approach ninth graders with empathy, patience, and strategies that build both academic skills and personal growth.

Adolescents are especially sensitive to peer opinions and are motivated by a strong desire for belonging,acceptance, status, and respect.

Understanding adolescent brain development is foundational to this work. Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D., Executive Director of the American Institute for Learning and Human Development, identifies five key characteristics that define the adolescent brain: [12]

| Risk Taking | Sensation Seeking | Preference for Being with Peers | Rewards Seeking | Romantic and Sexual Attraction to Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|

These traits reflect a brain in progress—one that supports adolescents as they become more independent and self-sufficient, develop a deeper sense of self, and begin to feel empowered to contribute to others. As educators and practitioners, it's essential that we meet students where they are developmentally.Ninth graders are not simply smaller adults or bigger children—they are adolescents in a unique and transformative stage of growth. Supporting them well means working with their developing brains, not against them.

This includes helping students build executive functioning skills like organizing materials and managing their time; creating opportunities for choice and autonomy; normalizing mistakes to foster a growth mindset; and explaining the "why" behind classroom routines and expectations. It also means leveraging their heightened sensitivity to peer acceptance in intentional, constructive ways. Activities like talent shows, youth leadership opportunities, and school spirit events can offer meaningful outlets for connection, identity formation, and positive risk-taking.

At the same time, it's important to avoid practices that undermine these developmental priorities. Calling students out in front of their peers works against the values their brains are holding most dear—belonging, acceptance, and approval—and is likely to push them further away. Instead, addressing concerns privately and with empathy helps preserve students' dignity and keeps the door open for connection and growth.

When schools create environments where students can build healthy relationships, develop confidence, experience success, and feel a strong sense of belonging, they are far more likely to engage and thrive. Our students deserve adults who understand their developmental needs—and who are committed to guiding and supporting them not just as learners, but as emerging young adults.

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[12] Armstrong, T. (2016). The Power of the Adolescent Brain: Strategies for Teaching Middle and High School Students.

# 12 KEY PRACTICES

# 12 KEY PRACTICES

Helping ninth graders succeed in their first year of high school takes more than one person—it takes a strong, collaborative team. At the heart of this work is the 9th Grade Team: a dedicated group of educators and support staff who work in concert to ensure ninth graders are known, supported, and set up for success. When 9th Grade Teams are well-structured, collaborative, and student-centered, they become a driving force for improved student outcomes.

Philadelphia Academies, Inc. (PAI) has identified 12 Key Practices that are essential for strong 9th Grade Teams and leadership to drive improvements in On-Track and Firmly On-Track rates. Grounded in research on what drives student success, these practices provide a shared framework for effective team functioning. Schools in the 9th Grade Success Network regularly reflect on their implementation by assessing whether they are Not Yet Started, Initiating, Developing, or Sustaining in each area.

PAI's work has consistently shown that schools with high levels of implementation across these practices tend to see stronger outcomes for ninth graders. These schools have teams that meet consistently, use data to guide interventions, collaborate closely, and actively engage students and families. By contrast, schools that struggle to improve On-Track rates often lack intentional structures or investment in these core practices.

## THE 12 KEY PRACTICES

- **Key Practice 1:** 9th Grade On-Track Goals
- **Key Practice 2:** Weekly Team Meetings
- **Key Practice 3:** Effective Meeting Structure and Practices
- **Key Practice 4:** Data Utilization
- **Key Practice 5:** Targeted Intervention Strategies
- **Key Practice 6:** Interventions Implemented
- **Key Practice 7:** Collaborative Team
- **Key Practice 8:** Tracking Interventions
- **Key Practice 9:** Intervention Follow-Up and Evaluation
- **Key Practice 10:** Employing Ninth Grade Knowledge
- **Key Practice 11:** Students Engaged
- **Key Practice 12:** Parents and Families Included as Partners

The following pages outline each of the 12 Key Practices, including full definitions, potential action steps, and accompanying resources to support implementation. The list of action steps is not exhaustive—there are certainly other effective ways to bring each practice to life. Please also note that, while strong instructional practices are essential to achieving high 9th Grade On-Track rates, they fall outside of the specific focus of this Playbook and are therefore not included in the 12 Key Practices.

## KEY PRACTICE #1: 9$^{TH}$ Grade On-Track Goals

Definition: 9th Grade Team has strong, attainable goals for 9th Grade On-Track and Firmly On-Track. The goals are known by all team members, monitored regularly, and achievements are celebrated by leadership.

### ACTION STEPS

- ☑ Review 9$^{th}$ Grade On-Track Playbook

- ☐ Use previous year's data to set 9th Grade On-Track and Firmly On-Track goals that are 3-5% higher than the previous year (or maintaining if rates are over 80%).

- ☐ Investigate inequitable outcomes in On-Track and Firmly On-Track by race, gender, SPED status, EL status, and other identities and set a subgroup equity goal if applicable.

- ☐ Include goals in written communication with 9th grade team. (agendas, emails, posters, etc.)

- ☐ Review progress towards goals regularly during meetings and/or via email and celebrate achievements when they occur.

### KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Qlik, including subgroup performance section

- Grades Monitoring Tool, Summary Tables tab

## KEY PRACTICE #2: Weekly Team Meetings

Definition: The 9th Grade Team meets weekly to review On-Track data (attendance, course grades, etc.) and/or plan interventions.

### ACTION STEPS

- ☐ Ensure that 9th Grade Meeting time is built into the master schedule each year, for at least 45 minutes weekly.

- ☐ Ensure 9th grade teachers are rostered in an "academy model," where they teach primarily or exclusively 9th graders, and their schedules are aligned to allow for regular collaboration during designated 9th Grade Team meeting times.

- ☐ Develop a clearly defined agenda for each meeting that is action-oriented and not primarily "announcements."

- ☐ As possible, protect the 9th grade team's meeting time and limit the disruptions and cancellations of meetings due to coverages, schedule changes, and other school events.

### KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Structural Requirements for 9th Grade Academies

- Example: 9th Grade On Track Quarterly Team Data Schedule

- Tools for including entire team and keeping the team aligned: Team Google Chat; Weekly Email

## KEY PRACTICE #3: Effective Meeting Structure and Practices

Definition: The team practices effective meeting strategies, utilizing action-oriented meeting agendas, established staff roles, and group norms. Team creates and is guided by a common purpose/mission statement or set of core beliefs.

## ACTION STEPS

☐ Develop an aspirational 9th Grade Mission Statement as a team that emphasizes the importance of both On-Track and Firmly On-Track and is supported by all members.

☐ Create and maintain a running agenda that includes clear time allocations for each agenda item and is student-centered and data-driven (e.g., attendance, grades, behavior).

☐ Develop group norms and document them in the running agenda. Regularly monitor adherence to these norms and enforce them as needed.

☐ Decide on specific team roles; define responsibilities for each and delegate them to the team either on a permanent or rotating basis (e.g. time keeper, facilitator, note taker, data specialist, norms watcher, etc.).

☐ Document and review next steps at the end of each meeting.

## KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

• Team Meeting Structure and Activity Ideas - Google Docs

• Key Meeting Elements for a Strong Start with the 9th Grade Team

• Effective Team Meeting Practices – the basics (before/during/after meeting)

• How to Facilitate an Effective Meeting

• Sample Team Meeting Agenda

• NSCD Guide for Creating Team Norms

• Sample Team Mission Statements

• PBIS/TIPS Team Member Roles & Responsibilities (SDP)

## KEY PRACTICE #4: Data Utilization

Definition: Team and leadership uses data regularly to identify students in need of different interventions, dissect student issues, and progress monitor.

## ACTION STEPS

☐ Ensure AP and all team members understand how to find and use the key data tools (GMT, Check & Reflect, Grade Impact Report).

☐ Use summary tables in Qlik, Grades Monitoring Tool (GMT), and Incoming 9th Grader Report to identify trends and Tier 1 needs.

☐ Use summary tables in Qlik and GMT to identify any subgroup inequities and plan targeted interventions.

☐ Use the student roster tab of the GMT to identify students in need of specific Tier 2 interventions.

☐ Use the Grade Impact Report (GIR) to drive conversations and reflection about grading and identify any areas of focus.

## KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Data Tools & how to use: Data Tools FAQ (high-level). *See Section 5 for additional information about each data tool.*

- Data-Focused Protocols:
    - Target Group Analysis Protocol
    - Note Catcher for Target Group Analysis Protocol
    - Kid Talk / Student Discussion Protocol
    - Kid Talk Protocol – Chicago versions

## KEY PRACTICE #5: Targeted Intervention Strategies

Definition: The team considers the root causes behind student performance and utilizes a variety of targeted strategies according to student needs.

### ACTION STEPS

☐ Conduct Root Cause Analyses to determine the "why" behind student needs (as a collective, for subgroups, and individually).

☐ Develop a 9th Grade Intervention Tool Bank or Strategy Guide that summarizes the team's core interventions and strategies for addressing academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and attendance concerns.

☐ Define clear expectations for each intervention in terms of staff roles and high-quality implementation.

☐ Train team, as needed, on how to implement the different intervention and strategy efforts with fidelity.

### KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Written Intervention Strategy Template

- Student Intervention Plan stages (triangle diagram)

- Intervention Flowchart diagram (Chicago)

- Sayre Example Intervention Strategy – Tier 1 and 2 for Attendance, Behavior, and Course Grades by root cause

- BFHS Example Intervention Strategy – 3x3 grid format (Tiers 1, 2, 3; Attendance, Behavior, Course Grades)

- Southern Example: Tiered Interventions chart

- Differentiated Support Ideas for Incoming 9th Graders based on Incoming 9th Grader Report

- Root Cause Analysis Protocols
  - Fishbone Analysis Protocol
  - Fishbone Protocol diagram (printable)
  - 5 Why's Protocol and worksheet

## KEY PRACTICE #6: Intervention Implemented

Definition: The team considers the root causes behind student performance and utilizes a variety of targeted strategies according to student needs.

## ACTION STEPS

☐ Implement strategic Tier 1 interventions to support On-Track and Firmly On-Track goals.

☐ Provide Tier 2 interventions to at least 15% of 9th graders each quarter. (related to academic, attendance, behavioral, and/or social emotional needs)

## KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Intervention Library (SDP site)

- Effective Interventions list (PAI)

- Attendance Improvement Plan (and Frankford's Lateness and Attendance Improvement Plans)

- Summary of Behavior Intervention Techniques

- www.pbis.org

- Approaches to SPED On-Track

- 2x10 Relationship Building strategy

- Off-Track Student Survey (Chicago)

- Student Success Contract

## KEY PRACTICE #7: Collaborative Team

Definition: All team members take responsibility for student success and participate in the development and implementation of student interventions.

### ACTION STEPS

☐ Offer Professional Development (PD) for teachers about adolescent development and the importance of ninth grade.

☐ Create intentional opportunities to build a shared team mindset and collaborative culture rooted in trust, student-centeredness, and collective responsibility.

☐ Plan team meeting agendas to include time for teachers to analyze data and collaboratively discuss specific students including strengths, areas of concern, and possible interventions.

☐ Create opportunities for teachers/team members to lead various Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.

☑ Ensure team members are prioritizing relationship building in their work with 9th grade students; lead team through the Relationship Mapping protocol and follow-up on agreed upon action steps.

### KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Tuckman's Team Development Model (visuals and text)

- Tuckman's Model of Team Development (text)

- Foundations of an Effective Team (pyramid visual)

- Compass Points: An Exercise in Understanding Preferences in Group Work (protocol)

- Glows and Grows: Teacher-Admin Relationship Building

- Relationship Mapping Protocol (for students)

## KEY PRACTICE #8: Tracking Interventions

Definition: Team has a clear tracking system for interventions that is easy to review, understand, and kept up-to-date.

### ACTION STEPS

☐ Develop a tracker and tracking system that is effective and meets your schools needs. Consider setting up different trackers for different intervention efforts, or one or two comprehensive trackers for the team's main efforts.

☐ Establish clear expectations for who is responsible for updating the intervention tracker and the frequency or timing of those updates.

☐ Maintain up-to-date intervention tracker(s) and ensure all team members consistently reference them and contribute relevant updates.

### KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Basics of tracking and trackers

- Sample Intervention Trackers (make a copy of any tab to use as your own)

## KEY PRACTICE #9: Intervention Follow-Up and Evaluation

Definition: The 9th Grade Team consistently follows up on interventions to monitor implementation and effectiveness.

### ACTION STEPS

☐ Plan time during your meetings to evaluate effectiveness of interventions. Consider asking the team these questions: Did our intervention or strategy work? To what extent? Should we continue, retire, or change the intervention strategy? Was our understanding of the root cause accurate? If not, how can we incorporate student input in better understanding the root cause and/or what other effort should we try?

☐ Record intervention follow up and evaluation in your tracker.

☐ Use the knowledge gained during your evaluation in your plan for future interventions and strategies.

☐ After an event, use the frame of "pluses and deltas" to reflect on what went well that you would continue next time (pluses) and what you would change for next time (deltas).

### KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

SEE RESOURCES UNDER KEY PRACTICE #8

## KEY PRACTICE #10: Employing Ninth Grade Knowledge

Definition: Team members are experts on the high school transition and 9th grade development stage and use this information to inform their practice.

## ACTION STEPS

☐ Train the team on adolescent development and the importance of 9th Grade On-Track; enlist PAI for support if possible.

☐ Ensure highly qualified teachers are assigned to 9th grade and have a clear understanding of how to effectively support ninth graders—including building strong relationships, offering patience and second chances, and helping students adjust to high school expectations and habits.

☐ Plan at least 3 intentional and targeted activities over the course of the school year to address 9th grade developmental needs (e.g. time management, peer conflict resolution, email writing, digital citizenship, peer/adult relationship building etc.).

## KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

- Second Window documentary and discussion resources

- Student Wellness Questionnaires – link to three survey tools and "Survey Sorter Tool"

- Developmental Relationships Framework (Search Institute)

- Relationship Mapping Protocol

## KEY PRACTICE #11: Students Engaged

Definition: Students are aware of their progress and encouraged to be On-Track and Firmly On-Track. Adults meaningfully support students through goal setting and improvement planning, and convey confidence in students' ability to achieve.

### ACTION STEPS

☐ Post information posters in your 9th Grade Academy hallways and classrooms on the definition and the importance of 9th Grade On-Track and SDP graduation requirements.

☐ Foster a schoolwide culture of On-Track by explicitly teaching students what it means and why it matters—through town halls, classroom lessons, and other touchpoints—and by regularly celebrating On-Track and Firmly On-Track progress during quarterly events and through visible displays such as bulletin boards.

☐ Set up system for ensuring students are regularly reviewing their grades and setting improvement goals.

☐ Monitor system to ensure that 75% or more of students are utilizing the Check and Reflect tool and receiving meaningful adult support in their goal setting and monitoring.

☐ Support students through adult/advisor 1:1 conversations/mentoring.

### KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

Student Education on On-Track
- 9GOT Slide Deck for Students (Spanish version available here) and corresponding 9GOT Lesson Plan
- 9GOT Flier for Students and Families
- 9th Grade On-Track posters - English (printable)
- 9th Grade On-Track posters - Spanish (printable)

Check & Reflect
- Check & Reflect (C&R) Stepper
- Check & Reflect 101 and FAQ
- C&R Implementation Ideas from SDP
- Accessing Backpack for Report Card/C&R Report Video
- Know Your Data Presentation
- C&R Reflection Questions
- Student Conference Script for Educators to use with students (Parkway Northwest)

Other
- STAR data goal setting sheet for students (Penn Treaty)

## KEY PRACTICE #12: Parents and Families Included as Partners

Definition: Parents and families are informed of the importance of 9th Grade On-Track, kept abreast of their child's performance, and included as partners in the intervention process as appropriate.

### ACTION STEPS

- ☐ Design and schedule meaningful family engagement opportunities throughout the school year, ensuring at least one event each semester highlights the importance of 9th Grade On-Track and how families can support their students' success.

- ☐ Communicate with parents on an ongoing basis to inform them about their student's performance and remind them about the importance of 9th Grade On-Track (phone calls, parent blasts, social media, letters, etc.).

- ☐ Send home interims and report cards that include each student's On-Track status, and invite them to be signed and returned by families, aiming for a return rate of at least 75%.

- ☐ Offer flexible parent conference formats (e.g., in-person, virtual, phone) to ensure accessibility for all families. Use these conferences to discuss students' specific academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and attendance needs, and partner with families to develop clear, actionable next steps.

### KEY RESOURCES & TOOLS

- *9GOT Flier for Students and Families*

- *Parent Phone Call Best Practices*

- *Sayre 9th Grade Team Parent Conference form*

- *On-Track Interim "stamp"/printable*

- *Parent Letters – Mail Merge instructions and sample letters*

- *Fels' Check & Reflect Parent Letter*

- *C&R Guidance for Families* (sample letter)

# FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS AND STRUCTURES

# FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS AND STRUCTURES

A thriving 9th Grade Academy is built on a foundation of clear structures, intentional systems, and aligned staffing. This section outlines the core building blocks that support a successful 9th Grade Team—from designing an effective 9th Grade Academy model and assembling the right team members, to fostering a strong 9th Grade Academy culture, running productive meetings, and tracking student interventions. It also explores strategies for engaging families and provides a framework for understanding how team structures and focus areas evolve as schools grow in their On-Track practice. Whether you're launching a new 9th Grade Academy or refining an existing one, this section offers guidance and tools to strengthen your approach at every stage of development.
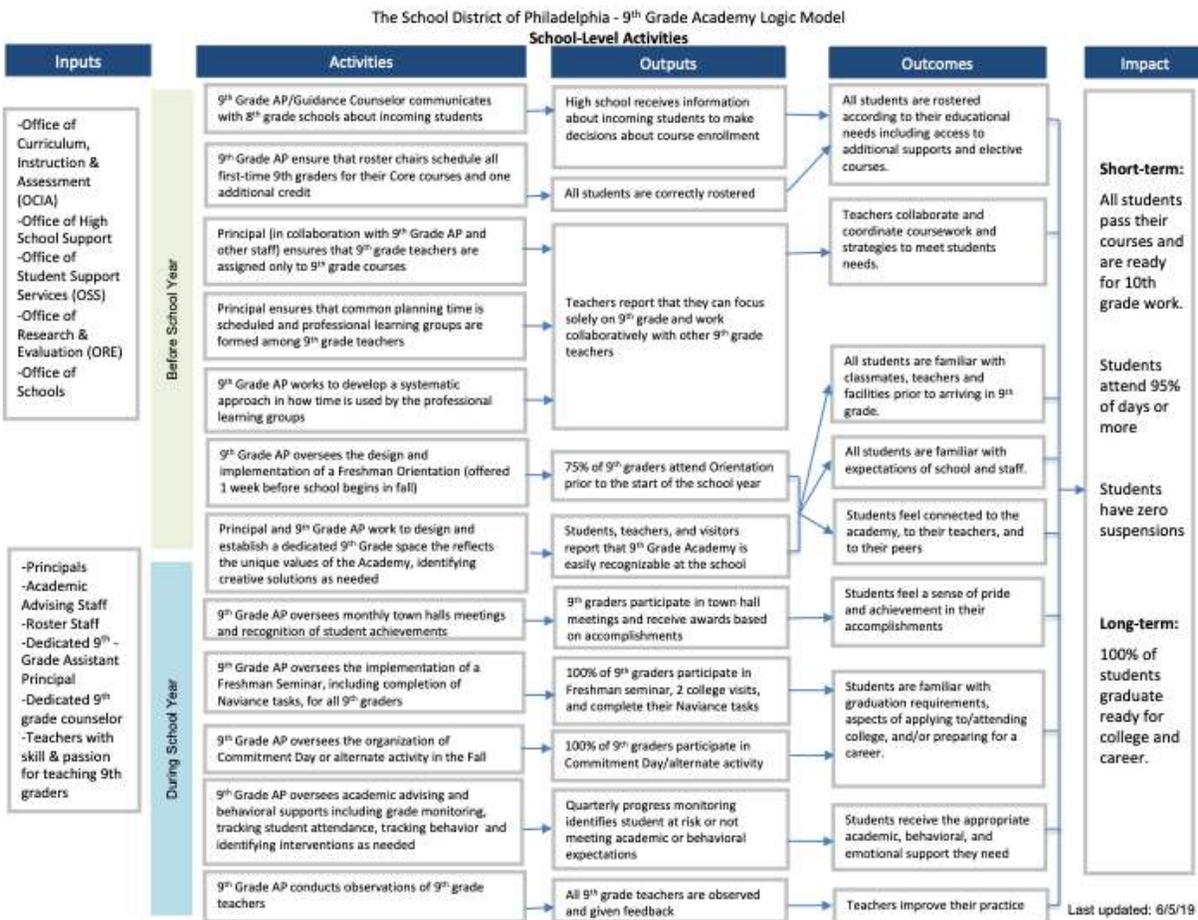
# 9TH GRADE ACADEMY LOGIC MODEL

The 9th Grade Academy Logic Model, developed by the School District of Philadelphia, outlines the core school-based structures, activities, and expected outcomes that drive student success during the critical transition into high school. This model can serve as a strategic roadmap for school leaders and 9th grade teams to understand how intentional design—across staffing, scheduling, culture, and academic support—can lead to stronger student engagement, improved behavior and attendance, and ultimately, higher 9th Grade On-Track and graduation rates.

While not every condition is within a school's immediate control, this model helps clarify the specific school-level practices that make the greatest impact on student outcomes when implemented with consistency and care. This framework can support both new 9th grade leaders who are building out their academy for the first time and experienced teams looking to assess and strengthen their current systems. Use it as a reference point as you explore and implement the foundational structures outlined in this section of the Playbook.

The School District of Philadelphia - 9th Grade Academy Logic Model

**School-Level Activities**

| Inputs | | Activities | Outputs | Outcomes | Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| -Office of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment (OCIA) -Office of High School Support -Office of Student Support Services (OSS) -Office of Research & Evaluation (ORE) -Office of Schools | Before School Year | 9th Grade AP/Guidance Counselor communicates with 8th grade schools about incoming students | High school receives information about incoming students to make decisions about course enrollment | All students are rostered according to their educational needs including access to additional supports and elective courses. | **Short-term:** All students pass their courses and are ready for 10th grade work. |
| | | 9th Grade AP ensure that roster chairs schedule all first-time 9th graders for their Core courses and one additional credit | All students are correctly rostered | | |
| | | Principal (in collaboration with 9th Grade AP and other staff) ensures that 9th grade teachers are assigned only to 9th grade courses | | Teachers collaborate and coordinate coursework and strategies to meet students needs. | |
| | | Principal ensures that common planning time is scheduled and professional learning groups are formed among 9th grade teachers | Teachers report that they can focus solely on 9th grade and work collaboratively with other 9th grade teachers | | |
| | | 9th Grade AP works to develop a systematic approach in how time is used by the professional learning groups | | All students are familiar with classmates, teachers and facilities prior to arriving in 9th grade. | Students attend 95% of days or more |
| -Principals -Academic Advising Staff -Roster Staff -Dedicated 9th - Grade Assistant Principal -Dedicated 9th grade counselor -Teachers with skill & passion for teaching 9th graders | During School Year | 9th Grade AP oversees the design and implementation of a Freshman Orientation (offered 1 week before school begins in fall) | 75% of 9th graders attend Orientation prior to the start of the school year | All students are familiar with expectations of school and staff. | |
| | | Principal and 9th Grade AP work to design and establish a dedicated 9th Grade space the reflects the unique values of the Academy, identifying creative solutions as needed | Students, teachers, and visitors report that 9th Grade Academy is easily recognizable at the school | Students feel connected to the academy, to their teachers, and to their peers. | Students have zero suspensions |
| | | 9th Grade AP oversees monthly town halls meetings and recognition of student achievements | 9th graders participate in town hall meetings and receive awards based on accomplishments | Students feel a sense of pride and achievement in their accomplishments | **Long-term:** 100% of students graduate ready for college and career. |
| | | 9th Grade AP oversees the implementation of a Freshman Seminar, including completion of Naviance tasks, for all 9th graders | 100% of 9th graders participate in Freshman seminar, 2 college visits, and complete their Naviance tasks | Students are familiar with graduation requirements, aspects of applying to/attending college, and/or preparing for a career. | |
| | | 9th Grade AP oversees the organization of Commitment Day or alternate activity in the Fall | 100% of 9th graders participate in Commitment Day/alternate activity | | |
| | | 9th Grade AP oversees academic advising and behavioral supports including grade monitoring, tracking student attendance, tracking behavior and identifying interventions as needed | Quarterly progress monitoring identifies student at risk or not meeting academic or behavioral expectations | Students receive the appropriate academic, behavioral, and emotional support they need | |
| | | 9th Grade AP conducts observations of 9th grade teachers | All 9th grade teachers are observed and given feedback | Teachers improve their practice | Last updated: 6/5/19 |

# 9TH GRADE ACADEMY
# STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS, AND STAFFING

**KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT:**
**#2 - Weekly Team Meetings**
**#10 - Employing 9th Grade Knowledge**

School leadership plays a critical role in designing a master schedule that creates the conditions for effective collaboration, student support, and community building within the 9th Grade Academy. While 9th grade leaders—such as an Assistant Principal or Academy Lead—can and should play a critical role in advocating for strong academy design, the responsibility for establishing the foundational conditions for success ultimately rests with the building principal. The following scheduling recommendations are intended to guide leaders in structuring time and space to support a successful 9th grade experience. While not all may be feasible in every school context and size, they serve as an aspirational guide for creating the structural conditions in which 9th grade students and teams can succeed.

## STAFFING BEST PRACTICES:

- Appoint a dedicated 9th Grade Leader—typically an Assistant Principal—who can focus exclusively on 9th grade systems, supports, and outcomes.
- Assemble a strong, cohesive 9th Grade Team made up of highly qualified educators, who to the best of your ability, are rostered to only or primarily teach 9th grade.
- Assign advisory teachers for 9th grade from your 9th grade team to further build on their relationships with students.
- Designate a member of the climate/support staff to work solely with 9th grade students, ensuring consistent presence and relational support.
- Dedicate a counselor who specifically oversees the 9th grade and actively participates in all 9th grade team meetings, rather than assigning counselors alphabetically.

## SCHEDULING BEST PRACTICES:

- Provide common prep time for the 9th Grade Team at least once per week to allow for regular, structured team meetings focused on data, interventions, and planning. If not all educators who serve 9th graders can be rostered to attend the weekly team meeting, prioritize the common meeting time for the 9th grade core content teachers.
- Establish a 9th grade-only lunch period—even if split across multiple periods—to promote community and ease transitions.
- As much as possible, schedule an elective course during first period to support students with the transition to earlier start times, rather than beginning the day with a core subject.
- Roster 9th graders in Physical Education to provide a healthy outlet for energy and support student well-being.
- Build in time for biweekly or monthly 9th Grade Town Halls at a consistent day and time to support culture-building and shared messaging.

## PHYSICAL SPACE BEST PRACTICES:

- Dedicate a clearly defined section of the school building to 9th grade classrooms—such as a wing, floor, or cluster of adjacent rooms—to foster a strong sense of community and ease transitions between classes. Display clear signage that marks the wing or hallway as the 9th Grade Academy.
- Locate the 9th Grade Leader's office(s) within or near the 9th Grade Academy space to allow for visibility and quick support.
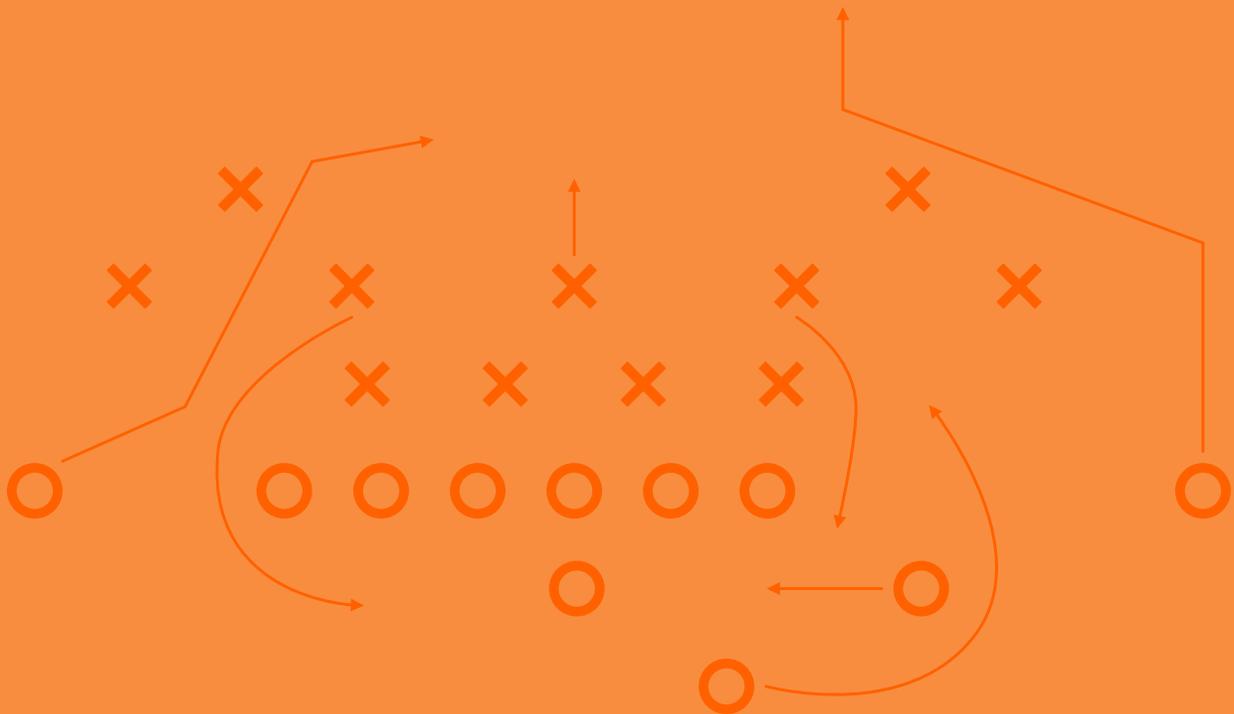
# THE 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE TEAM

A foundational component to supporting 9th grade success is a highly effective 9th grade team. Its intentional composition is critical to the success of 9th Grade On-Track efforts. Serving as the "engine" of the 9th Grade On-Track work, these team members play a critical role in designing and executing academy-wide programming, identifying and mobilizing resources, implementing academic and social-emotional interventions, and fostering equity for the young people they serve.

## 9TH GRADE TEAM COMPOSITION

The 9th Grade Academy Team should consist of the 9th grade core content teachers (English, social studies, math, and science), elective teachers who teach mostly 9th graders, teachers who support 9th grade diverse learners (both Special Education and English Learners), 9th grade specific counselor(s), behavioral support staff, climate team members (if assigned to 9th grade), and, if applicable, a 9th grade coordinator under the leadership of the 9th grade assistant principal.

## 9TH GRADE TEAM SCHEDULING

Scheduling plays an important part in the success of the 9th Grade Academy team. Once the master schedule is in place, it is essential for the 9th Grade Assistant Principal or Leader to intentionally protect and maximize their collaboration time. This scheduled meeting time must be treated as sacred—team members should not be pulled for coverage or other duties during these sessions to preserve their full engagement. Because elective teachers often have varied prep times, they may not be able to attend every weekly meeting but should remain actively connected through regular communication and shared documents to stay informed of 9th Grade Academy initiatives.

Additional meetings addressing specific student needs—such as attendance reviews, IEP discussions, behavioral interventions, or Tier 3 team meetings—may occur outside of regular 9th Grade Team meeting times. Nonetheless, key information and decisions from those meetings should be shared with the full team during their scheduled time to ensure alignment and shared understanding.

## 9TH GRADE TEAM MINDSET

The mindset of 9th Grade Academy team members is essential to building an effective and cohesive team. The most effective teachers are those who have high expectations for their students and also provide high levels of support. Academy leaders should collaborate closely with the principal and roster chair to prioritize the placement of exceptional, highly qualified educators who are well-suited to support 9th grade students. This strategic staffing approach helps ensure that students receive high-quality instruction from supportive, consistent, and caring adults, giving them a strong foundation for success in 9th grade and setting them up for success throughout their high school journey.

Ideally, team members are deeply invested in the mission and goals of the 9th Grade Academy. They should:

- Believe that all students are capable of success
- Embody the "warm demander"[13] mindset and build strong relationships with students
- Hold students to high academic and behavioral expectations
- Possess strong content knowledge and an engaging classroom presence
- Teach time management and self-advocacy skills alongside academic content
- Understand and respond to the unique developmental needs of 9th grade students
- Use data effectively to track and support student progress
- Collaborate to identify and implement strategies that support student On-Track status
- Foster a supportive, welcoming, inclusive, and safe 9th Grade Academy culture
- Believe in the purpose and promise of the 9th Grade Academy model

## CORE TEAM MEMBERS

The Core Team is a smaller, focused subgroup of the broader 9th Grade Team that works in close partnership with the 9th Grade Assistant Principal to lead key components of the 9th Grade Academy. Core Team members help drive the day-to-day implementation of On-Track work by pulling and analyzing data, planning events, running town halls, supporting the advisory model, coordinating interventions, and advancing other critical academy activities.

This team typically consists of 2–4 individuals in addition to the 9th Grade Assistant Principal. Members are usually strong 9th grade classroom teachers who have demonstrated leadership potential and/or possess specific skill sets—such as data analysis, graphic design, or project management—that collectively support the team's overall goals and responsibilities. The Core Team may meet regularly outside of regular 9th Grade Team meeting times to monitor student progress, plan interventions, and prepare for upcoming programming.

In schools participating in PAI's 9th Grade Success Network, Core Team members also represent the school at Community of Practice meetings. Common roles seen on 9th Grade Academy Core Teams often include:
- Core content area teacher(s)
- 9th Grade Coordinator, class sponsor, or 9th Grade Academy Teacher Leader
- 9th Grade Counselor

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[13] The "warm demander" approach has been proven to increase students' academic achievement. For more info see: Franita Ware, "Warm Demander Pedagogy: Culturally Responsive Teaching That Supports a Culture of Achievement for African American Students," Urban Education 41, no. 4 (2006): 427–456, https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085906289710.

# 9TH GRADE ACADEMY
# CLIMATE AND CULTURE

**KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT:**
**#6 - Interventions Implemented**

A strong school climate and culture are foundational to the success of the 9th Grade Academy. School climate refers to the overall quality and character of school life—shaped by relationships, teaching and learning practices, leadership, and the physical and emotional safety of students and staff. Such a culture is created and shaped both by the people within its walls and by the physical environment of the school itself.

In a thriving 9th Grade Academy, effective climate systems are predictable, consistent, and supportive. They foster positive relationships, promote academically rigorous and emotionally safe classrooms, and ensure that all students and staff experience a respectful and well-managed environment. Strong climate work includes clear routines, fair and consistent behavioral expectations, and structures that reinforce respect for self, peers, adults, and the school environment—applied equitably across all student groups.

## 9TH GRADE ACADEMY NORMS

Team buy-in is essential for norms to be applied consistently and effectively across all classrooms and common spaces. To build this shared ownership, 9th Grade Academy norms should be developed collaboratively by the entire 9th Grade Team and communicated clearly by all stakeholders. Meaningfully involving staff in both the creation and implementation of norms and consequences honors their professional expertise and voice—and increases the likelihood that the norms will be upheld with consistency and fidelity.

At the start of the school year—ideally before students return—the 9th Grade Team should hold a dedicated meeting to establish a shared set of 9th Grade Academy norms. This conversation should include expectations for student behavior in all academy spaces, communication protocols, appropriate consequences, and clear next steps for addressing infractions. Members of the school's climate team should be actively involved in this process to ensure alignment with school-wide norms and expectations. This collaborative approach also gives the 9th Grade Leader an opportunity to outline the school's "chain of command" for addressing climate concerns, including which behaviors should be managed in the classroom and which should be referred for additional support.

All 9th Grade Academy norms and policies should be aligned to the school's current climate practices, whether Relationships First, culturally-responsive PBIS, or another Social-Emotional Learning curriculum. Norms should also align to the school's 9th Grade Academy vision and goals as well as the School District of Philadelphia Code of Conduct.

Once norms are established, it is the responsibility of the 9th Grade Academy leader to ensure they are documented and distributed across all 9th grade classrooms. The 9th Grade Academy leader should also follow up with teachers to ensure that they are being applied consistently across the academy.

Common practices that benefit from norming as an academy include:

- Hallway/pass procedures
- Town hall and assembly procedures
- Bathroom policy
- Cell phone norms
- Late/missing work policy
- Detention policy
- Cutting/latenesses

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

While many schools establish incentive and consequence systems to reinforce 9th Grade Academy norms, it is important to consider both the benefits and potential drawbacks of these approaches. Incentives and consequences can encourage students to meet expectations by providing clear, tangible goals. However, if not implemented thoughtfully, these systems may unintentionally leave some students feeling excluded, diminish intrinsic motivation, or fail to address the underlying causes of certain behaviors—especially when those behaviors stem from external or unmet needs.

Ultimately, incentive and accountability systems should be rooted in equity, designed to support growth rather than compliance alone, and paired with relationship-building and restorative practices that help students stay connected to the school community.

## RESOURCES

- Randolph 9th Grade Classroom Norms (Randolph)
- Penn Treaty 9th Grade Classroom Norms (Penn Treaty)
- PACK Norms (Penn Treaty)
- Student Code of Conduct (SDP)
- Guide to Supporting Student Behavior (SDP)

# 9TH GRADE TEAM MEETINGS

**KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT:**
**#3 - Effective Meeting Structure and Practices**

Much of the 9th grade work takes place in the 9th Grade Team Meeting space. The 9th Grade Academy team should aim to meet at least once weekly for 45 - 60 minutes to develop and monitor strong and consistent Tier 1 and 2 interventions for behavior, attendance, and grades, while fostering peer/social engagement and connection.

## ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE 9TH GRADE TEAM MEETINGS

### LEADER AND TEAM PRE-WORK

Prior to the weekly meeting, the 9th Grade Leader should take time to intentionally prepare and share the agenda, clearly naming any pre-work that is necessary for team members to complete. Pre-work should be shared with the team at least 24-48 hours in advance of the team meeting for optimal engagement. Team member pre-work may include preparing the GMT, pulling Grade Impact Reports, updating the intervention tracker/attendance trackers, or other activities based on the main agenda items planned by the 9th Grade Leader.

### SHARED EXPECTATIONS: COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

A common understanding of how the 9th Grade Team collaborates during these times supports a strong foundation for effective team meetings. At the most basic level, this includes the expectation that all team members be present for the entire meeting, participate actively in group discussions, and remain engaged and on-task.

Your 9th Grade Academy meeting norms or community agreements should be developed as a team in order to increase whole team buy-in and clearly communicate these shared expectations. They should be posted at the top of your agenda and referenced often. Some suggested community agreements include:

- Be Present, Be Punctual, Participate
- Maintain a solution-oriented mindset
- Stay focused on what is best for students
- Actively collaborate, our work is stronger when all voices are heard

For other Community Agreement examples and process ideas on how to develop them, see the resources linked in Section 2: 12 Key Practices, under Key Practice 3: Effective Team Meetings.

## ROLES

In addition to shared community agreements, clearly defined roles for members of the 9th Grade Team increase individual engagement and share the responsibility for academy work and student success. These roles and the individuals who are filling them should be explicitly named for each meeting. Critical roles for an effective 9th Grade Team Meeting include:

- **Facilitator** - plans and runs the meeting in conjunction with other team members (9th Grade AP, 9th Grade Coordinator, 9th Grade Counselor, 9th Grade Class Sponsor, etc.)
- **Notetaker** - takes notes throughout the meeting to record important discussion points and action steps
- **Time Keeper** - helps keep the group on track in terms of time
- **Team Builder** - in charge of facilitating a team building activity (5 minutes or less); this can be a separate role or may be taken on by the facilitator

## LEADER FOLLOW UP

After the meeting, be sure to review the notes taken and address any new actions items or next steps. Include a due date and clearly identify responsible parties to ensure these tasks are addressed in a timely manner.

# STRUCTURE OF EFFECTIVE 9TH GRADE TEAM MEETINGS

To maximize the effectiveness of this time, meetings should center around a well-planned, action-oriented agenda that is sent out at least 24 hours in advance. It may be helpful to develop a consistent structure for most meetings so that everyone knows what to expect. For example:

1. Welcome and Review of Agenda and Community Agreements (5 min)
2. Community Connection or Opener (5 mins)
3. Main Activities (30 mins)
4. Closing, Review of Action Items, and Announcements (5 mins)

## COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND OPENER ACTIVITIES

Start off the meeting with a quick activity or question to develop community with the group and get people participating from the start. For example:

- **Fun Question:** Something people can answer quickly to build camaraderie on the team. Be sure your question is inclusive to everyone.
- **Glows/Grows:** Ask for what is working ("glow") and what is still in development ("grow"). Consider framing it specifically around 9th grade practices, such as a class that is going well or not well, a student that is responding to an intervention, 9th Grade Activities, etc.
- **Peaks and Valleys:** (or "Roses and Thorns") - Have everyone share a peak and valley from the weekend / week before. These can be personal or professional.
- **Win of the Week**: Have everyone share a "win" of their last week. These are typically professional in nature, but could also be personal.
- **Peer or Self Shout-outs:** What's something one of your colleagues did this past week that was impressive? What's something you did this past week that you were proud of yourself for and think was effective? Ask for 3 volunteers to share a shout-out if time is limited.
- **Student Shout-outs**: Shout-out a student you were proud of this week.
- **Meme Mood Board**: Using a meme mood board, ask participants how they are feeling today or about an upcoming event.
- **The Good, The Bad, The Funny:** Everyone shares something from the past week. They can choose to share something that was either good, bad, or funny.
- **Pulse Check:** Everyone shares how they are feeling 1 to 10 (1 being lowest and 10 being highest). People don't need to go into details, just share their number. This gives you a sense of the morale of the group as the meeting gets started.

## MAIN ACTIVITY TOPICS

While there might be a time when updates and announcements are needed, the focus of the 9th Grade Team meeting should center on collaboration around 9th Grade Academy events, student supports, and teaching practices. Following are examples of work the 9th grade team can meaningfully engage in together:

- Review student data (targeted focus in Grades Monitoring Tool and/or Summary Tables in Grades Monitoring Tool or Qlik)
- Analyze student data
- Develop / monitor / update Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions for behavior, attendance, and grades
- Update, discuss, or analyze intervention trackers
- Pull and analyze the Grade Impact Report for gradebook accountability
- Collaboratively plan advisory, Town Halls, 9th Grade Academy events, seasonal events, incentives, celebrations, and community building experiences
- Invite other key stakeholders to keep the team abreast on policies and procedures (SPECM, EL point person, School Technology Coordinator, Climate Manager, PAI coach for PDs, etc.)

In addition to reviewing current data and intervention tracking, incorporating different protocols can structure the conversation and problem-solving process, helping to keep meetings topical and relevant. Below are some protocols that can help structure team discussions and problem solving:

- 5 Whys
- Consultancy Protocol
- Fishbone Analysis
- Relationship Mapping Protocol
- Student Talk Protocol
- Target Group Analysis Protocol

## CLOSING ACTIVITIES

Use this time for any announcements that need to be made and summarize takeaways and action items from the discussion.

- Share any announcements
- Summarize Takeaways
- Identify Next Steps/Action Items (be as specific as possible — who is doing what, by when?)

## RESOURCES

- Key Meeting Elements for a Strong Start with the 9th Grade Team (PAI)
- Team Meeting Structure and Activity Ideas - Google Docs
- Sample Meeting Agenda (PAI)
- Weekly Meeting Agenda (Penn Treaty)

# STUDENT INTERVENTION TRACKING AND MONITORING

Tracking student interventions is a critical component of the 9th Grade On-Track process. More than a compliance task, an effective tracking system serves as a centralized tool for communication, helping teams document which supports have been implemented, assess their impact on student progress, and make informed, timely decisions about next steps. A clear, shared system strengthens collaboration and ensures that no student falls through the cracks.

## CRAFTING AN EFFECTIVE STUDENT INTERVENTION TRACKER

A strong intervention tracker centralizes key information about students receiving support and allows the team to monitor progress over time. At its core, a well-designed tracker should capture:

- Which students are being supported
- Specific challenges or needs being addressed
- Intervention strategies being used
- Implementation details (e.g., frequency, duration, participation)
- How and when the team will evaluate its effectiveness

Importantly, the tracker should be easy to navigate and update, enabling all team members to contribute consistently. A user-friendly, shared tool increases fidelity of implementation, improves communication, and helps ensure that interventions are timely, targeted, and responsive to student needs.

Some commonly tracked strategies or outcomes include:

- On-Track or Firmly On-Track Status
- Attendance / Class Cuts
- Daily Reports for Behavior / Preparedness
- Tier 1 and Tier 2 Interventions
- Interventions by Quarter
- Interventions by Teacher
- Small Group Interventions
- Student / Peer Mentoring

## USING A STUDENT INTERVENTION TRACKER

For an intervention tracker to be truly effective, it must be embedded into the regular practices of the 9th Grade Team. Involving the full team in its development, ongoing use, and data-driven conversations strengthens both the tool itself and the interventions it supports. Weekly meetings should include time to review trends, evaluate the effectiveness of strategies, and identify new or shifting student needs based on the data. This not only keeps all team members informed but also reinforces the value of consistent documentation in driving student success.

Maintaining an up-to-date tracker is essential. Depending on the type of tracker, updates may occur daily (e.g., behavior or participation logs), weekly (e.g., intervention notes), quarterly, or on an as-needed basis (e.g., subgroup monitoring). While all team members should engage with the tracker regularly, it is helpful to assign clear responsibilities for updating specific data points—clarifying who is responsible for what and when—to ensure accuracy and follow-through.

It is recommended to house all 9th Grade Academy trackers in a central, easily accessible location—such as a shared Google Drive folder or organized tabs within a single Google Sheet—to ensure all team members can access the tools and data they need. At the same time, care should be taken to maintain student privacy by limiting access to appropriate personnel and ensuring that sensitive information is handled in accordance with school and district data policies.

Sample templates and examples of intervention trackers are linked below to support teams in designing or refining their own tracking systems and strengthening the structures that support On-Track progress.

## RESOURCES
- Intervention Tracker Templates (PAI/9GSN Schools)
- Attendance/Class Cut Tracker Template (Penn Treaty)
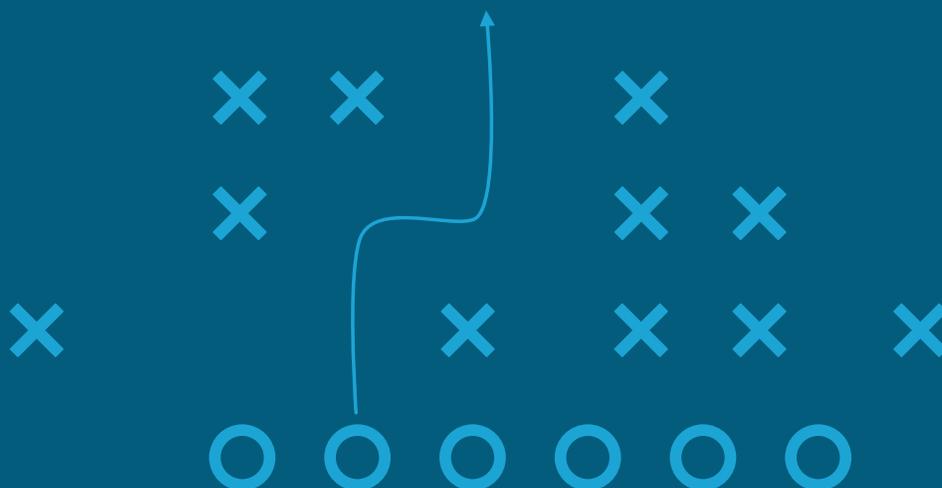
# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

**KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT:**
**#12 - Parents and Families Included as Partners**

Families, parents, and guardians are essential partners in supporting 9th grade success. Ensuring clear, consistent, and equitable communication with these stakeholders strengthens trust and helps reinforce the interventions and supports provided by the 9th Grade Academy. Because school-based communication must be limited to caregivers listed for the student in the Student Information System (SIS), it is critical to ensure that contact information is accurate and up-to-date.

When planning family engagement, consider potential barriers such as language access, literacy levels, or unfamiliarity with school systems. Using multiple modes of communication—alongside translation and interpretation services—can help ensure that all families are informed, included, and empowered to support their student's On-Track progress.

To effectively reach and engage families, schools should utilize a variety of communication methods tailored to different preferences, needs, and points in the school year. The strategies below outline both **modes of communication** and **timing of engagement** that can strengthen relationships with families and ensure they are informed, included, and equipped to support their student's success throughout the 9th grade year.

## MODES OF ENGAGEMENT
### PHONE CALLS/TEXT
- Regular phone calls home should be made in order to update families regarding student progress in classes and behavioral updates.
- All 9th Grade Academy team members should be making calls home for students, including 9th grade APs, teachers, climate staff, counselors, etc.
- Some families prefer text communication as a primary method - while text can be used effectively, phone calls are still a best practice for communication.
  - Sample Parent Texts for 9th Grade (PAI)
  - Texting Dos and Don'ts (Penn Treaty)
- Make sure to document all attempts to contact families on SIS for record keeping purposes.
- Principals and Assistant Principals are eligible for a District-provided cell phone. Talk to your Assistant Superintendent about acquiring one.

### SIS MESSENGER
- Email/text/voice message blasts to groups of students/families can be created through SIS as another way of reaching student families.
- Only accessible by 9th Grade leaders or SIS designees
- It is important to note that in order for these to be truly effective, student contact information in SIS must be up-to-date.
- A best practice to support this mode of communication is to take the time to verify contact info with families when calling at the start of the school year.
  - SIS Messenger Basics (SDP)

## NEWSLETTERS

- Letters (whether newsletters or grading period updates) can be sent home directly with students or through the mail. For communications that include grade progress information, we encourage use of the On-Track Interim stamp. This practice involves double printing interim reports onto a page preprinted with the definitions of On-Track status and then manually indicating the student's status by highlighting or circling their status on the page.
  - On-Track Interim Stamp (PAI)
- These letters can provide another touch point with families. Follow-up phone calls to families are recommended to ensure the message was received and to reinforce the message.
  - 9th Grade Report Letter (Penn Treaty)
  - Quarter 4 "In Danger of Failing" Letter (Roxborough)

## GOOGLE CLASSROOM

- Teachers can use their content area Google classrooms to communicate with students and families.
- 9th Grade Academy leaders can also set up a 9th grade specific Google Classroom as a means of updating students and families about important dates, events, and activities.

## SCHOOL WEBSITE

- Maintaining an up-to-date school website with event calendars, expectations, and resources helps families access consistent information. Ensure the site is regularly managed by staff with capacity to keep content current.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

- Creating and updating a 9th Grade Academy social media account can showcase events, celebrate successes, and share timely information with students, families, and the broader community.

## APPS

- Remind101: Enables messages to entire classes, groups, or individuals without sharing personal numbers; families can reply via text without downloading the app.
- Class Dojo: Share updates and events and message individual families who are connected without using a personal or Google Voice number.
- Infinite Campus: This requires an existing Parent Portal account, but once established it provides real-time notifications about student attendance and gradebook updates.

# TIMING OF ENGAGEMENT

Family communication should be regular and sustained throughout the school year, with increased frequency for students who require additional support. While some engagement strategies are ongoing or cyclical, others align with specific milestones or time-sensitive moments in the school calendar. Thoughtful planning across all types of engagement helps build stronger partnerships and ensures families remain informed and involved in their student's 9th grade journey.

## QUARTERLY FAMILY ENGAGEMENT MOVES

These engagement moves are recurring and should be scheduled with intention each quarter:

- School Advisory Council Meetings
- Communication about upcoming celebrations, events, or field trips
- Interim Reports
- End of Quarter On-Track Communication
- Report Card Conferences
- Classroom teacher phone calls about academic, behavioral, and attendance progress
- Case manager communication with families of students with IEPs and English Learners

## TIME SENSITIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT MOVES

In addition to the quarterly moves listed above, the following are key opportunities for family and caregiver engagement that occur at different times throughout the school year.

**SUMMER**:
- Conduct introductory phone calls with incoming 9th graders and their families
- Invite students to 9th Grade Orientation and send a Google Form RSVP to assist with planning
- Update SIS contact information (use 9th Grade Orientation as an opportunity to ensure all parent contact details are current)
- Reach out to feeder middle schools and request that they promote the 9th Grade Orientation to students transitioning to your school

**QUARTER 1:**
- Introduce 9th grade staff, including teachers, counselors, and climate staff who will support 9th grade learners
- Invite 9th grade students and families to Back to School Night
- Invite families to the Title I Meeting

**QUARTER 2:**
- During Quarter 2 and/or Quarter 3, host a celebratory event for 9th grade families (e.g, award ceremony, spaghetti night, talent show, etc.)

**QUARTER 3:**
- Send communication to welcome families back for the second half of the year
- Invite families to the Title I Meeting
- If not held in Quarter 2, host a celebratory event for 9th grade families (e.g., award ceremony, spaghetti night, talent show, etc.)

**QUARTER 4:**
- Share summer school information and registration details with eligible families
- Invite current families to end-of-year celebrations
- Invite incoming families to "Accepted Students" Day or a spring family orientation

## PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Throughout all communications and engagement efforts, respect for family privacy and adherence to school and district data policies are paramount. Ensure that sensitive information is shared only with authorized personnel and that communication platforms comply with privacy standards.

# STAGES OF ON-TRACK GROWTH

Although every school's journey is unique, patterns often emerge in how 9th Grade Teams evolve in their practices and mindsets. This section outlines common characteristics associated with different stages of On-Track development and offers guidance to help schools reflect and grow over time. While there is a strong connection between a school's On-Track practices and its On-Track rate, this section intentionally does not define growth by data alone. On-Track development is about more than a single number—it reflects the systems, mindsets, and habits that drive sustainable improvement. We encourage 9th Grade Team leaders to review each stage thoughtfully and use it as a tool for honest reflection: Where is your team now, and what might help you move forward?

## EARLY STAGE

In the early stages of On-Track practice, schools are seeking to get better at whole grade level practices. They may be struggling with issues such as attendance, hallway management, unclear grading practices, and a lack of shared expectations across classrooms. The 9th grade team may consist of teachers who may not be best suited for 9th grade instruction. Team meetings—if they occur—tend to lack structure and purpose. Conversations may drift into unproductive territory, such as venting frustrations or blaming students, rather than focusing on solutions. Action steps may be inconsistently identified, tracked, or followed through. While student data might be discussed, it is often not tracked or used systematically to guide interventions or measure impact.

### WHAT TO FOCUS ON IN THE EARLY STAGE:

- Establish clear, grade-wide norms for behavior and expectations, and ensure they are consistently applied across all 9th Grade Academy classrooms and spaces.
- Assess and refine team composition, prioritizing the placement of strong, student-centered educators who are well-suited to support 9th grade learners.
- Develop a consistent and structured weekly meeting routine to create space for collaboration, problem-solving, and shared accountability.
- Begin tracking Tier 2 interventions with a simple, shared data tracker to monitor student support efforts and build the foundation for future data-driven practices.

## DEVELOPING STAGE

In the developing stage, schools are beginning to build momentum, particularly around small group supports and early intervention efforts. Tier 1 practices are largely in place and functioning, though they may still require refinement. Some Tier 2 interventions have been introduced, but they are often underdeveloped—lacking in planning, follow-through, or consistent monitoring.

While the 9th Grade Team may be composed of educators well-suited for supporting 9th grade students, a clearly defined "core team" has not yet emerged to lead and manage more complex responsibilities. Meetings occur with increasing frequency and some structure, but roles are typically undefined and consistency varies. Intervention efforts are present but may lack the reliability, intensity, or coordination needed to produce meaningful and sustained impact.

## WHAT TO FOCUS ON IN THE DEVELOPING STAGE:

- Expand Tier 2 interventions based on student needs, and ensure the team is building a range of strategies to support different challenges.
- Define fidelity and high-quality for your Tier 2 interventions, and monitor to ensure they are being consistently implemented as designed.
- Improve consistency in data tracking, ensuring that student intervention data is updated regularly and used to inform next steps.
- Identify and cultivate core team members who demonstrate leadership potential and can begin taking on targeted responsibilities within the 9th Grade Academy.

## SUSTAINING STAGE

Schools in the sustaining stage have established strong On-Track practices and are now focused on refining and deepening their work. Tier 1 and Tier 2 systems are functioning reliably, and efforts are underway to enhance supports for students who are Firmly On-Track. At the same time, schools are sharpening their approach to Tier 3 interventions, ensuring individualized support for students with more intensive needs.

A well-defined core team is in place and operating as a leadership body, with members taking ownership of key aspects of the 9th Grade Academy. Team meetings are structured, purposeful, and can be facilitated with fidelity even in the absence of the Assistant Principal. Intervention strategies are being implemented consistently, allowing the team to focus on fine-tuning their systems and expanding their capacity to address the unique needs of each student.

### WHAT TO FOCUS ON IN THE SUSTAINING STAGE:

- Empower the core team to take greater ownership of responsibilities, including leading meetings, managing interventions, and driving continuous improvement.
- Codify and document effective Tier 1 and Tier 2 practices so they are easily accessible and transferable to new team members, ensuring continuity over time.
- Establish a dedicated Tier 3 team to provide individualized support for students facing complex personal or academic challenges that extend beyond Tier 2.
- Bolster Firmly On-Track efforts to ensure continued growth, challenge, and engagement for those who are consistently meeting expectations.
- Elevate instructional practice by increasing focus on academic rigor and supporting all educators in refining their pedagogy toward distinguished-level teaching.

# DATA TOOLS

# DATA TOOLS

Using data is not optional—it is essential. Effective 9th Grade Academy teams rely on consistent, strategic use of data to guide nearly every aspect of their work. From identifying students in need of support, to evaluating the impact of interventions, to driving school-wide systems improvements, data is a powerful lever for ensuring more students stay On-Track and ultimately graduate.

Within the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), teams have access to several tools that provide critical insights into student performance, engagement, and well-being. The most commonly used platforms include the Grades Monitoring Tool, Grade Impact Report, and Qlik, each offering different perspectives on how students are doing and where support is most needed. Additional tools such as the 8th–9th Grade Transition Report, Check & Reflect, Final Grades Analysis Tool, and Student Wellness Tools help teams dig deeper into attendance, behavior, academic progress, and social-emotional indicators. When used effectively and regularly, these tools allow teams to act with focus, urgency, and precision—ultimately leading to better outcomes for students.

The following section outlines each of the key data tools available to 9th Grade Teams, including a summary of what the tool offers, its strengths and limitations, when and how to use it, and who on the team is best positioned to leverage it effectively.

# GRADES MONITORING TOOL



The **Grades Monitoring Tool** (GMT) is a report generated from SchoolNet and uploaded into a customized Google Sheet for analyzing students' attendance and core course grades. The source data refreshes nightly, except on Sundays. In most cases, the report reflects grades entered the night before; however, reports pulled on Monday will show gradebook data as of Saturday night.

The Grades Monitoring Tool includes three primary tabs for analyzing student progress: **Student Roster, Summary Tables,** and **Sliders and Climbers**. The **Student Roster tab** displays students' attendance percentage, current and projected core grades, projected elective grades, and standardized test scores, while also including demographic and identification information such as SPED and EL status, race, gender, and advisory teacher name. The **Summary Tables tab** provides a variety of charts summarizing the overall estimated On-Track rate, the number of students in each quadrant (based on attendance and number of failing core classes), and outcome trends based on demographic subgroup and subject. The **Climbers and Sliders tab** presents lists of students with three or more grade level changes (within or across subjects) for celebration or intervention.

### STRENGTHS
- Provides a one-stop comprehensive data resource
- Easily filterable to identify specific trends within a particular subject area or demographic
- User-friendly and color coordinated

### LIMITATIONS
- Only as accurate and current as the data entered in gradebooks
- Surfaces trend data only, not specifics for assignments or gradebook categories
- Slight delay in data refresh over the weekend; Monday morning pulls may be inaccurate if there was Sunday gradebook entry

### WHEN TO USE
- Only as accurate and current as the data entered in gradebooks
- Surfaces trend data only, not specifics for assignments or gradebook categories
- Slight delay in data refresh over the weekend; Monday morning pulls may be inaccurate if there was Sunday gradebook entry

### WHO IS BEST SUITED TO USE THIS TOOL
- All educators and administrators can pull the Grades Monitoring Tool for the entire school or a specific filtered group of students. (e.g. all first-time ninth graders)
- One designated team member—such as the 9th Grade AP, 9th Grade Coordinator, or a team-designated "data specialist"—should be responsible for pulling the report regularly to support consistent, team-wide data analysis in weekly meetings.
- Individual teachers can also choose to pull the report solely for students on their own teaching roster to review progress across attendance, grades, and testing data.
- Assistant Principals and Principals may use the Grades Monitoring Tool to identify grade-level or school-wide trends, including subgroup performance and subject-specific failure patterns.

### DATA TOOL RESOURCES
- GMT Stepper (SDP)
- GMT Plus Template (SDP)
- GMT 101 and FAQs
- Video Story: Using the GMT at Furness (2021)

# GRADE IMPACT REPORT

## I. Grade Distribution

| Class | Average Assignments Per Week | Average Grade | Total Students | A's | B's | C's | D's | F's |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3400G.1Y1 Environmental Science, Period 1 | 0.6 | 60 | 14 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| 3400G.1Y2 Environmental Science, Period 1 | 0.8 | 65 | 19 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| HR 95 Homeroom 9, Period ADV | 0.0 | | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

## II. Category Table

3400G.1Y1 Environmental Science, Period 1 - MINERVA MCGONAGAL

| Category | Num Assignments | Weight | Average Score | Average Impact on Grade |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classwork (CW) | 4 | 20% | 56% | -8.8% |
| Homework (HW) | 1 | 10% | 67% | -3.3% |
| Performance Based Learning (PBL) | 1 | 30% | 68% | -9.7% |
| Tests (T) | 1 | 40% | 56% | -17.6% |

The **Grade Impact Report** (GIR) is a teacher-specific report accessed through the Student Information System (SIS) that provides a high-level analysis of how grading categories and individual assignments impact student performance across each of a teacher's course sections. The GIR offers a comprehensive snapshot of grading patterns, enabling teachers to reflect on the weight and structure of their assignments and categories and how these influence student outcomes. When introduced thoughtfully and with context, the GIR can serve as a powerful tool for driving reflection and facilitating coaching conversations around grading practices that promote equity and student growth.

**STRENGTHS**

- Easily accessible by teachers at any time to review their own gradebooks and make data-informed instructional adjustments
- Provides a clear, high-level snapshot of where students may be struggling
- Allows for easy review of the number of assignments per category to compare trends between course sections
- Quickly identifies students who are failing and may benefit from intervention strategies

**LIMITATIONS**

- Only as accurate and current as the data entered in gradebooks
- May require initial training to interpret effectively and avoid data overload
- Should be carefully framed as a reflective, growth-oriented tool to avoid being perceived as evaluative or punitive

**WHEN TO USE**

- Recommended twice per quarter: once around interims and again a few weeks before the quarter ends

**WHO IS BEST SUITED TO USE THIS TOOL**

- Teachers: To reflect on grading practices, assess the impact of assignments, and monitor student progress
- Administrators and Coaches: To support instructional coaching, foster equitable grading practices, and guide professional learning

**DATA TOOL RESOURCES**

- GIR Stepper for Administrators (SDP)
  - Administrator Grade Impact Report
- GIR Stepper for Teachers (SDP)
  - Teacher Grade Impact Report
- Teacher Grade Impact Report Guidance (SDP)
- GIR Walkthrough Video (8 min)
- Sample GIR
- Slides for Introducing GIR to Teachers
- GIR Roll-Out: Sample Team Meeting Agenda
- GIR Quick Guide for Teachers
- GIR Reflection for Teachers (KCAPA)
- See Reflecting On Grading Practices Using the GIR for additional resources

# QLIK

***Five Year Trend in Percent On Track for Four Year Graduation***



*Grade 9, Through End of Year*

| | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 34.7% | 31.7% | 27.8% | 28.8% | 20.5% |
| | 39.3% | 42.1% | 46.6% | 46.1% | 49.2% |
| | 26.0% | 26.2% | 25.5% | 25.2% | 30.2% |

*School Year*
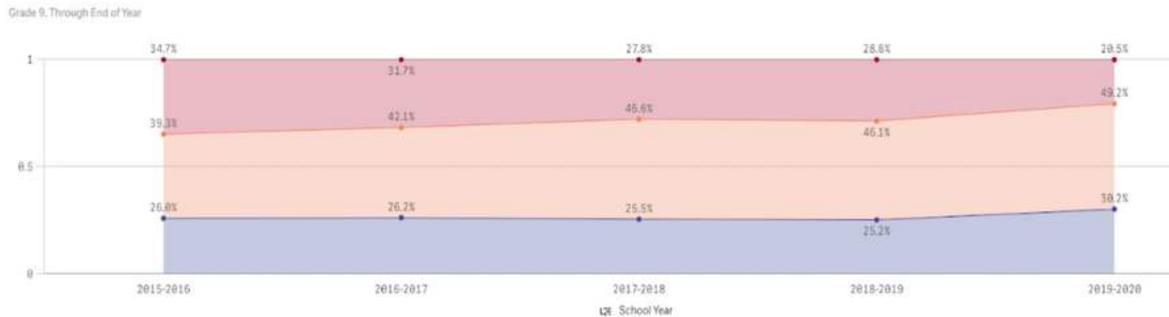
**Qlik Benchmarking, Analytics & Management** (QlikBAM) is a suite of interactive dashboards that allow school and district leaders to monitor progress at the school, network, and district levels. Qlik includes data on academics, climate, benchmarks, standardized tests, surveys, and more. On-Track metrics and trends are accessible through the **Course Marks and Credits** application within the Qlik platform.

**STRENGTHS**

- Offers school, network, and district-level data accessible to all users with a Qlik account
- Includes historical On-Track data dating back to 2018–19 for any school site
- Serves as the official source for the District's On-Track metric
- Can drill down to failure rates by course section, providing a more detailed analysis than the GMT Summary Tables can provide, for course-level failure rates
- Easily review On-Track performance by subgroups, as well as Off-Track reasons
- Robust filtering tools allow for analysis by grade level, demographics, EL/SPED status, and more
- Allows leaders to drill down on data for district wide initiatives (Student Well-Being Survey, STAR participation, Philly School Experience Survey)
- Provides climate specific data (suspensions, attendance, serious incidents) and attendance data over time

**LIMITATIONS**

- Does not allow drill-down to individual student data
- Does not show real-time progress or current grades toward On-Track goals
- Access is limited to administrators and School-Based Teacher Leaders (no general teacher access)
- On-Track data is finalized approximately two weeks after the end of each quarter, causing a lag in being able to judge and communicate the quarter's On-Track performance

**WHEN TO USE**
- After each quarter closes, to analyze official On-Track rates and grade-level or subgroup trends
- Monthly or after major assessment cycles to assess academic, attendance, and climate data

**WHO IS BEST SUITED TO USE THIS TOOL**
- Principals, Assistant Principals, and Teacher Leaders: To monitor On-Track rates, identify trends, and set or evaluate goals
- Network and District Leaders: To compare performance across schools and support targeted interventions

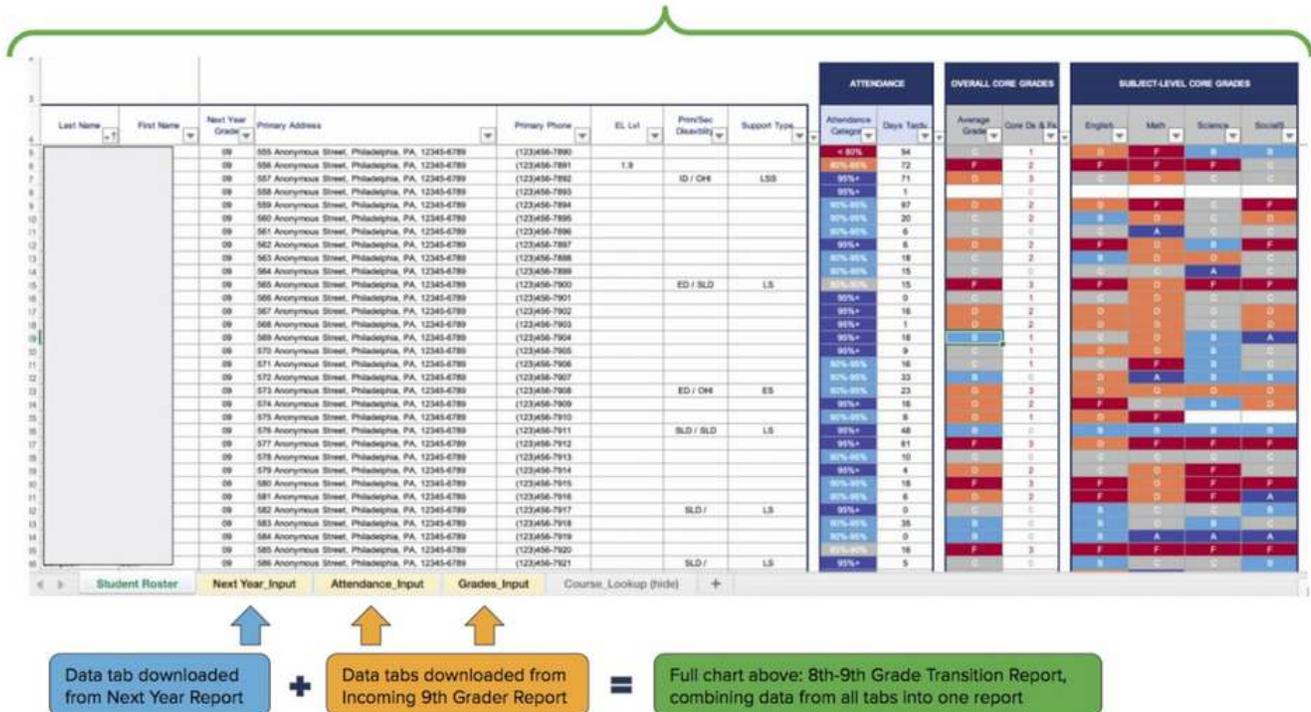**DATA TOOL RESOURCES**
- Qlik: Course Marks and Credits App (Qlik log-in required to access this page)
- Qlik 101 Video Tutorials
- Sample slide deck to present Qlik data to your team
- Keeping Pace for Graduation: Suggested Credit Totals by Grade (definition sheet for 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Grade On-Track)

# 8TH TO 9TH TRANSITION REPORT



Data tab downloaded from Next Year Report + Data tabs downloaded from Incoming 9th Grader Report = Full chart above: 8th-9th Grade Transition Report, combining data from all tabs into one report

The **8th to 9th Transition Report** is designed to help high school leaders prepare for their incoming 9th grade class beginning in May of the prior school year (i.e., while the incoming 9th graders are still in 8th grade). It compiles source data from the SIS's Incoming 9th Grader Reports for grades and attendance and the SIS Next Year report into a design layer that combines relevant student data into a single, actionable report. This report supports more intentional rostering and scheduling decisions, enables proactive intervention planning before the school year begins, and strengthens early parent engagement by identifying potential student needs in advance.

## STRENGTHS

- Identifies students who will need more support in the transition to 9th grade, based on 8th grade grades and attendance
- Categorizes students into one of four "support groups" based on 8th grade academic and attendance data, enabling the 9th Grade Team to more easily differentiate supports and prioritize outreach
- Serves as a valuable data resource to inform articulation meetings with feeder schools
- Allows schools to begin the scheduling and rostering process with a clearer understanding of student strengths and vulnerabilities
- Helps guide early family engagement efforts and informs planning for a smooth transition into 9th grade

**LIMITATIONS**
- Does not include data for students entering from non-SDP schools (e.g., charter, private, or out-of-district public schools)
- Does not provide information on behavioral or disciplinary history

**WHEN TO USE**
- Most relevant between May and August as schools prepare for students finishing 8th grade and transitioning to 9th grade

**WHO IS BEST SUITED TO USE THIS TOOL**
- 9th Grade Assistant Principals and roster chairs, to identify and plan for incoming 9th graders
- Special Education, English Learner, climate, and attendance support staff, to identify and proactively plan support for students with early indicators of need
- 9th Grade Assistant Principals and team members can also use the mailing address and phone number fields to proactively contact incoming students—either as part of a full-grade outreach or to connect with students flagged for early support based on academic or attendance concerns

**DATA TOOL RESOURCES**
- 8th-9th Grade Transition Report Stepper (SDP)
- Tips for Using the Incoming 9th Grader Report

# CHECK & REFLECT



The numbers below reflect totals through November 27, 2023

**Check and Reflect** — THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Cumulative GPA (Weighted): 4.00
*Represents all Completed Courses*

Projected GPA (Weighted): 3.94
*Represents Cumulative GPA + Projected Courses*

### ATTENDANCE
We want to see you in school every day
Goal: 90% attendance or above

| | Term 2 In-Progress | Year-To-Date |
|---|---|---|
| Days Enrolled | 5 | 55 |
| Days Present | 5 | 51 |
| Days Absent | 0 | 4 |
| My Attendance Rate | 100.0% | 92.7% |
| Days Tardy | 0 | 0 |

Reflection...

1) The area(s) listed above that I am proud of is/are:

2) The area(s) listed above that I want to improve is/are:

3) My goal for this area is to

_____

by _____

4) To improve, I will take these steps:

### GRADES
A's and B's set you up for success
Goal: A's and B's, with no D's or F's

| Current Courses | Term 2 In-Progress | Projected Final |
|---|---|---|
| African American History | 85 | 91 |
| Algebra 2 | 83 | 87 |
| Chemistry Honors | 94 | 92 |
| English 2 | 100 | 97 |
| Health | 100 | 100 |
| Physical Education | | 100 |
| Seminar Sophomore | | 100 |
| Spanish 2 | 100 | 100 |

### BEHAVIOR
Character is built each and every day
Goal: 0 suspensions

| | Term 2 In-Progress | Year-To-Date |
|---|---|---|
| Period Cuts | 0 | 1 |
| Out-of-school Suspensions | 0 | 0 |

The **Check & Reflect** provides a single page, printable view of a student's current grades, behavior, and attendance outcomes to facilitate student conferencing and goal setting. It is updated weekly for students and nightly for Principals, Assistant Principals, and Counselors.

## STRENGTHS
- Easily accessible to students via SIS to support weekly self-monitoring
- Promotes student ownership and accountability across academics, attendance, and behavior
- Useful for structured conversations with students and families about On-Track progress
- Printable version includes goal-setting prompts to guide reflection and planning

## LIMITATIONS
- Most effective when integrated into a broader system of conferencing and reflection—not just used as a completion task
- Reflects gradebook data as of the most recent Monday in the student version, restricting ability to track most recent progress

**WHEN TO USE**

- Can be pulled at any time during the quarter, especially during advisory, conferences, or intervention meetings
- Most effective when used weekly or at consistent intervals when grades and attendance are up to date

**WHO IS BEST SUITED TO USE THIS TOOL**

- Principals, Assistant Principals, and Counselors can batch print or single print PDFs of the Check & Reflect Report, or access individual Check & Reflect reports through the student's SIS profile
- Students can access their own report through the Student Backpack in SIS—making this an ideal tool for encouraging reflection, self-advocacy, and proactive engagement in their own academic progress

**DATA TOOL RESOURCES**

- Check & Reflect Stepper for batch printing by administrators (SDP)
- Check & Reflect Tab Stepper for administrators viewing individual reports through the SIS student profile tab (SDP)
- Student Portal Stepper for Student Access to C&R
- Check & Reflect 101 and FAQ
- Parent Check & Reflect Stepper
- Accessing Backpack for Report Card/C&R Report Video
- Check & Reflect 101 Asynchronous Training
- Know Your Data Presentation
- C&R Reflection Questions
- C&R Implementation Plan

# FINAL GRADES ANALYSIS TOOL



| | Student Count | |
|---|---|---|
| | All | Filtered Count |
| On-Watch *(Passing + 0%-10%)* | 5 | 5 |
| Bubble *(0%-10% to Pass)* | 17 | 14 |
| Stretch *(10%-20% to Pass)* | 9 | 4 |
| Firmly Off *(20% or more to Pass)* | 50 | 35 |
| Students Not Flagged | 102 | - |
| Total Students | 183 | 58 |

**Courses Included:** Only core courses that students are currently enrolled in are included.

**Points Needed to Pass:** This is the difference between the grade a student must achieve in and their current Term 4 in-progress grade. For students with an in-progress or posted percer up to 50% per District policy. All of the calculations reference the 50% floor instead of the actu "+" after the Points Needed to Pass.

**Handling Missing Term 4 Data:** If a student does not yet have a Term 4 in-progress grade, t completed terms. In the display, these averages appear in a lighter, grey font.

**Current Status Q4:** This field is based on the highest Points Needed to Pass among the stuc students who are passing every core course but within 10 percentage points of failing one, st and students who are farther from passing. Students who are more securely passing all core

| Student ID | Name | Grade Level | EL | SpEd | Total Core Course Failures | Q4 Points Needed to Pass | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | English | Math | Science | Social Studies | Max to F |
| 10002415 | Elijah Jones | 9 | | | 1 | 4 | +1 | | | |
| 10012304 | Mia Davis | 9 | | | 1 | | | 11 | | |
| 10013317 | Luna Anderson | 9 | | | 1 | | | 28+ | | |
| 10023427 | Evelyn Johnson | 9 | | | 3 | | 38 | 3 | | |
| 10042634 | Oliver Jones | 9 | | A | 5 | 38+ | 4 | 38 | 33+ | |
| 10043513 | William Hernandez | 9 | | | 1 | 4+ | | | | |
| 10044334 | Oliver Gonzalez | 9 | EL | | 1 | 3+ | | | | |
| 10055303 | James Martin | 9 | | | 1 | 3 | | | | |
| 1010102 | James Hernandez | 9 | | | 1 | | | 21 | | |
| 1011136 | Harper Johnson | 9 | | | 1 | | | 38 | | |
| 10120103 | Elijah Williams | 9 | Exited EL | A | 5 | 20+ | 35+ | 10+ | | |

The **Final Grades Analysis Tool** uses SIS-downloaded final grade data imported into a Google Sheet design layer to calculate a student's projected final grades based on grades earned through each completed term. It also calculates the percentage a student must earn in the remaining term(s) to reach a desired final grade.

## RISK LEVELS

Students are categorized by risk level for failing a core course for the year:

- On-Watch: 0–10% above the passing threshold
- Bubble: 1–10% below the passing threshold
- Stretch: 11–19% below the passing threshold
- Firmly Off-Track: 20% or more below the passing threshold

**STRENGTHS**
- Automatically groups students into intervention categories, supporting differentiated planning
- Especially useful in focusing efforts and conversations during "final push" efforts in Quarter 4
- Allows flexible filtering to target supports based on proximity to passing
- Includes a tab for individual student summaries that explicitly identifies requisite percentages to earn specific final grades in each subject

**LIMITATIONS**
- Must be used within a broader conversation around GPA, credit accumulation, and promotion, especially for students who earned high enough grades in the first part of the year to guarantee them to pass certain classes
- Only as accurate and current as the data entered in gradebooks

**WHEN TO USE**
- Can be pulled daily; grade and summary counts are updated nightly in the source data
- Most impactful after Quarter 3 ends to guide individualized Quarter 4 interventions

**WHO IS BEST SUITED TO USE THIS TOOL**
- Principals, Assistant Principals, Schedulers, and Counselors can access the source data for this tool
- 9th Grade Teams can use the shared Final Grades Analysis Tool to identify students who are failing or at risk of failing a course for the year, and to directly support those students by referencing the specific grades they need to pass in one-on-one mentoring and intervention conversations

**DATA TOOL RESOURCES**
- Final Grades Analysis Tool Creation Stepper - Google Docs
- Copy the Final Grades Analysis Tool here: bit.ly/finalgradestool

# STUDENT WELLNESS TOOLS

***Getting to Know You Questionnaire:***     ***Understanding Student Experiences:***     ***Pulse Check-In Survey:***



The **Student Wellness Tools** are student-facing Google Form surveys that are designed to provide varied opportunities to understand the unique academic and social/emotional needs of 9th graders, with the intention of using that information to create supportive and responsive learning environments. These tools include the **Getting to Know You Questionnaire**, the **Understanding Student Experiences** form, and the **Pulse Check In Survey**. They are designed to capture student responses at different points throughout the school year.

**STRENGTHS**
- Provides insight into areas of student experience not typically captured by academic or behavioral data
- Enables teams to trace responses (e.g., feelings of belonging) directly to individual students
- Survey Sorter Tool makes it easy for staff to view all responses to a particular question or review results easily by student
- Can complement the relationship mapping process to help ensure all students have a meaningful connection to at least one adult in the building

**LIMITATIONS**
- Students may experience survey fatigue, particularly if completing multiple surveys for different teachers or required assessments (e.g., the district-wide Student Well-Being Survey)
- Staff must be trained on how to review and respond to Pulse Check-In data with care, ensuring it is used supportively and appropriate protocols are in place for students needing higher levels of support

**WHEN TO USE**
- Getting to Know You: Once in August or early September
- Understanding Student Experience: October and again in February/March
- Pulse Check-In: Bi-weekly or as needed
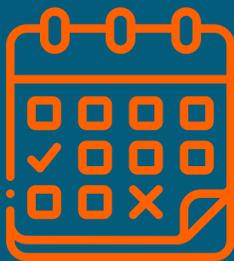
**WHO IS BEST SUITED TO USE THIS TOOL**
- 9th Grade Academy leaders and teachers can use these tools throughout the year to deepen their understanding of students' lived experiences, inform individual supports, and strengthen relationships.

**DATA TOOL RESOURCES**
- Wellness Check-in tools resources and survey links
- Student Wellness Tools page on SDP website

# 9TH GRADE ON-TRACK SUGGESTED CALENDAR

# 9TH GRADE ON-TRACK
# SUGGESTED CALENDAR

A well-timed calendar is essential for driving consistent, proactive, and strategic 9th Grade On-Track work. While the rhythm of the school year is in many ways predictable, its fast pace and competing priorities can make it easy to lose sight of proactive moves and timely next steps. This suggested calendar is designed to help 9th Grade Academy teams stay ahead—aligning data reviews, intervention planning, family engagement, and climate-building efforts with the moments they matter most. While every school's calendar will differ slightly, this tool offers a clear, quarter-by-quarter framework to guide your team's planning and ensure timely, coordinated action throughout the year.

## QUARTERLY CADENCE FOR ON-TRACK STRATEGY

High functioning 9th Grade Academies operate with a strategic cadence designed to optimize growth in 9th Grade On-Track. Key moves are intentionally embedded throughout each quarter to drive student success and strengthen the 9th Grade Academy community.

At the **start of each quarter**, the 9th Grade Academy (9GA) team should analyze data from the prior marking period and begin reviewing the **Grades Monitoring Tool** at least every other week. These data-informed discussions should drive Tier 1 and Tier 2 planning and guide teamwide strategies for the quarter ahead. Within the first few weeks—just before interim reports—9th Grade Academy Leaders should lead full-team conversations using the **Grade Impact Report.** These discussions should focus on grading norms, category use, and implications for teaching and grading practice. These early-quarter moves help communicate a culture of proactive monitoring and accountability, offer space for pedagogical reflection, and—beginning in Quarter 2—allow the team to pivot quickly in response to patterns from the prior quarter.

**Midway through the quarter**, the 9th Grade Academy should ensure their Tier 1 and Tier 2 efforts are effectively in place, expanding or adding to these strategies as needed based on what the data is illuminating.

In the **final three weeks** of the quarter, the focus shifts to sustaining momentum and closing remaining gaps. This may include targeted **Grade Impact Report** follow-up with select educators, continued Tier 1 and 2 interventions, and additional Tier 2 interventions. Regular team appreciation and morale boosters should be strategically scheduled throughout the year to support team wellbeing. A short end-of-quarter survey can help the 9th Grade Academy leader assess staff mindsets and support needs for the next phase of work. Each quarter should end with intentional planning for family engagement and attendance at report card conferences as well as an acknowledgement and celebration of those students who are On-Track or Firmly On-Track.

This consistent cadence of team collaboration, progress monitoring, targeted intervention, intentional family engagement, and celebration helps create the foundation for sustainable On-Track growth across the school year.

# SUGGESTED 9TH GRADE ACADEMY CALENDAR

This suggested calendar outlines key activities, data touchpoints, meeting topics, and strategic moves that can help 9th Grade Academy teams stay proactive and aligned throughout the school year. While each school's schedule may vary, this calendar, split into thirds for each quarter, provides a framework to support timely interventions, strengthen team coordination, and ensure consistent attention to On-Track priorities. While many of the activities repeat across the school year, they are included in each quarter to illustrate the rhythm and flow of a strong 9th Grade Academy cadence.

## KEY TERMS AND DESCRIPTIONS

**9GA:** 9th Grade Academy

**Q1, Q2, etc.:** Quarter 1, Quarter 2, etc.

**GIR:** Grade Impact Report (see: Section 5)

**GMT:** Grade Monitoring Tool (see: Section 5)
- Note: a "GMT Deep Dive" may include review of the quadrants, Core Content grade trends, trends by student subgroup, engaging in a Student Talk protocol, identifying specific students for Tier 2 efforts, and identifying specific action steps based on the data.

**Check & Reflect** (see: Section 5 and Section 7)
- Note: a strong Check & Reflect routine includes students reviewing their data with a trusted adult, setting a specific goal, identifying specific action steps, and following up on the completion of the action steps and progress toward the goal at a later date.

In addition to the items listed below, 9th Grade Academy administrators should provide regular (e.g., weekly or biweekly) reminders to staff about gradebook entry. These reminders should align with any established expectations around the number of assignments to be entered by certain points in the quarter or within specific grading categories. Administrators should also monitor/audit gradebooks regularly to ensure compliance with grading policies and identify educators who may need additional support. Targeted, 1-on-1 conversations—grounded in the Grade Impact Report—can be used to provide coaching and strengthen efforts to support student success. Weekly monitoring is recommended to catch and address trends early.

## QUARTER 1 — APPROX. 11 WEEKS

**FIRST THIRD**

**Week 1:**
- 9GA staff & student onboarding/orientation including relationship building, importance of On-Track, mission and goals, core values, norms, and intentional connection to extracurriculars
- Establishment of clear classroom and grade-level norms
- Clear vision and support materials for advisory programming
- Roster refinement
- 9GA Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

**Week 2:**
- Data tools review (GMT, GIR, Check & Reflect, 8th - 9th Grade Transition Report)
- "Transition to High School and 9th Grade On-Track 101" professional development for 9th grade team (or at minimum: new 9th grade teachers)
- 9GA town hall, including importance of On-Track, support and resources available, and connection to extracurriculars
- Gradebook norms communication or reminder

**Week 3:**
- Tier 1 reflection — add, pivot, or maintain in order to deliver at least 2-4 strong Tier 1 supports each quarter
- Use of 8th - 9th Grade Transition Report and/or GMT to provide intentional Tier 2 supports

**Week 4:**
- Continued focus on Tier 1 quality and implementation
- Check & Reflect
- GIR whole-group norming session on grading expectations and best practices

**MID-TERM**

**Week 5:**
- GMT Deep Dive
- Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategy building, shifts, and/or monitoring
- 9GA town hall, including the importance of On-Track
- 1-on-1 coaching conversations using the GIR with selected teachers who need further support

**Week 6:**
- Interim Reports (week 5 or 6)
- Check & Reflect

**Week 7:**
- GMT Deep Dive
- Monitoring of Tier 2 efforts, making adjustments to strategy as needed

**Week 8:**
- Monitoring of Tier 1 and Tier 2 efforts
- Check & Reflect

**FINAL THIRD**

**Week 9:**
- GMT Deep Dive
- Follow-up on 1-on-1 coaching conversations using the GIR with selected teachers who need further support
- Staff Well-Being Check Survey #1
- 9GA staff morale boost

**Week 10:**
- Check & Reflect
- 9GA town hall
- Data-driven Tier 2 efforts (continue or add to previous efforts)

**Week 11:**
- GMT Deep Dive
- Q1 "final push" efforts
- Intentional planning for recruitment and structure of Report Card Conferences

## QUARTER 2 — *APPROX. 9 WEEKS*

### FIRST THIRD

**Week 1:**
- Q1 9GA Data review and reflection using the GMT
- Q1 On-Track celebration and/or acknowledgement event

**Week 2:**
- Q1 Report Card Conferences
- Relationship Mapping protocol
- Check & Reflect

**Week 3:**
- GMT Deep Dive, Tier 1 and 2 action planning and/or progress monitoring
- GIR whole-group norming or re-norming session on grading expectations and best practices

### MID-TERM

**Week 4:**
- GMT Deep Dive, Tier 1 and 2 action planning and/or progress monitoring
- Interim Reports
- 9GA town hall

**Week 5:**
- Relationship Mapping check-in
- 1-on-1 coaching conversations using the GIR with selected teachers who need further support

**Week 6:**
- GMT Deep Dive, Tier 1 and 2 action planning and/or progress monitoring
- Check & Reflect

### FINAL THIRD

**Week 7:**
- Continued monitoring of and/or planning of Tier 1 and 2 efforts

**Week 8:**
- GMT Deep Dive, data-driven Tier 2 efforts (continue or add to previous efforts)
- 9GA town hall
- Check & Reflect

**Week 9:**
- Q2 "final push" efforts
- Intentional planning for recruitment and structure of Report Card Conferences
- Staff Well-being Check Survey #2
- 9GA staff morale boost

## QUARTER 3 – APPROX. 9 WEEKS

**Week 1:**
- Q2 9GA Data review and reflection
- Q2 On-Track celebration and/or acknowledgement event

**Week 2:**
- Q2 Report Card Conferences
- Check & Reflect
- GMT Deep Dive, Tier 1 and 2 action planning and/or progress monitoring
- 9GA town hall

**Week 3:**
- 9GA staff morale boost
- GIR whole-group norming or re-norming session on grading expectations and best practices

**Week 4:**
- 9GA town hall
- Interim Reports
- GMT Deep Dive, Tier 1 and 2 action planning and/or progress monitoring

**Week 5:**
- 1-on-1 coaching conversations using the GIR with selected teachers who need further support
- Revisit Relationship Map to adjust any student/teacher assignments, if needed, and to include new students who have transferred in.

**Week 6:**
- GMT Deep Dive, Tier 1 and 2 action planning and/or progress monitoring
- Check & Reflect

**Week 7:**
- Continued monitoring of and/or planning of Tier 1 and 2 efforts

**Week 8:**
- GMT Deep Dive, data-driven Tier 2 efforts (continue or add to previous efforts)
- 9GA town hall
- Check & Reflect

**Week 9:**
- Q3 "final push" efforts
- Intentional planning for recruitment and structure of Report Card Conferences
- Staff Well-being Check Survey #3
- 9GA staff morale boost

## QUARTER 4 — approx. 10 weeks

### FIRST THIRD

**Week 1:**
- Q3 9GA Data review and reflection
- Q3 On-Track celebration and/or acknowledgement event

**Week 2:**
- Q3 Report Card Conferences
- Check & Reflect
- GMT & Final Grades Tool Deep Dive, Tier 2 action planning
- 9GA town hall

**Week 3:**
- 9GA staff morale boost
- GIR whole-group norming or re-norming session on grading expectations and best practices
- Plan Transition to 10th grade event

**Week 4:**
- Interim Reports
- GMT & Final Grades Tool Deep Dive, continued Tier 2 action planning and/or monitoring

### MID-TERM

**Week 5:**
- 9GA town hall
- Interim Reports

**Week 6:**
- 9GA staff morale boost
- GMT & Final Grades Tool Deep Dive, continued Tier 2 implementation and/or monitoring

**Week 7:**
- Transition to 10th grade event
- Planning year-end celebration event
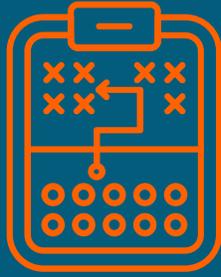
### FINAL THIRD

**Week 8:**
- Check & Reflect
- GMT & Final Grades Tool Deep Dive, continued Tier 2 implementation and/or monitoring

**Week 9:**
- GMT & Final Grades Tool Deep Dive
- Q4 "final push" efforts

**Week 10:**
- Tier 1 9GA event: Year End Celebration
- Year-End Staff Survey to inform practices for next year

# HIGH LEVERAGE STRATEGIES

# HIGH-LEVERAGE STRATEGIES

Just like a great team relies on a well-crafted playbook to guide its performance, a thriving 9th Grade Academy benefits from a clear set of strategic moves to drive student success. This section of the Playbook offers a set of high-leverage strategies—actionable, field-tested moves that can significantly improve On-Track and Firmly On-Track rates.

These strategies aren't one-size-fits-all. Like any strong team, schools must assess the field, adapt to their local context, and execute the right actions at the right time. The strategies shared here reflect some of the most effective practices implemented across schools in the 9th Grade Success Network. In this section, the strategies are grouped into Tier 1 and Tier 2/3 actions, reflecting their role in universal support or targeted intervention systems. For each strategy included here, you will find its purpose, why it works, implementation steps, common pitfalls to avoid, best practice tips, and links to supporting resources.

While not exhaustive, these approaches offer a strong foundation. School teams are encouraged to collaborate, reflect, and iterate—building off these examples and adjusting over time as they strengthen their systems. With the right focus and coordination, these strategies can power lasting improvements in 9th grade outcomes.

## STRATEGIES BY TIER

- **Tier 1: See pages 78-99**
- **Tier 2 and/or 3: See pages 100-110**

# RELATIONSHIP MAPPING

**TIER 1**
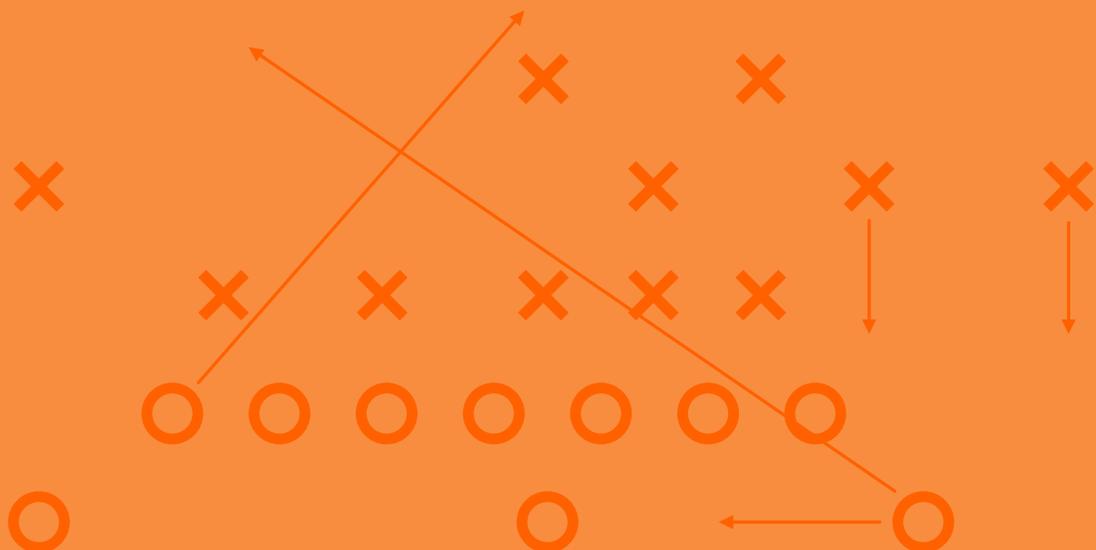
## PURPOSE

To ensure every student has a strong, trusting relationship with at least one adult in the building —essential for belonging, engagement, and targeted support.

## WHY IT WORKS

Research consistently shows that students who have strong, trusting relationships with adults in school are more likely to attend regularly, engage academically, and persist through challenges. Relationship Mapping helps schools proactively identify students who may be disconnected from adults in the building—ensuring that no one falls through the cracks. By surfacing these gaps early, staff can be strategic in fostering connections so that every student has at least one trusted adult they can turn to. This intentional approach has been shown to promote belonging, reduce behavioral issues, and improve overall student outcomes.[14]

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Prepare a Relationship Mapping document using Google Sheets or chart paper, pre-filled with the names of the students you want to ensure have trusted staff relationships (e.g., all students or those currently failing at least one class).
2. Direct staff to place their names next to the students with whom they feel they have a strong positive relationship.
3. Optional: Invite staff to add personal notes about the student (e.g., hobbies, interests, friends, support system, family info, or helpful tips) based on their relationship.
4. Identify students with no staff matches. Assign or invite staff to "sign up" to intentionally build relationships with these students. One recommended method is the 2x10 Relationship Building strategy, though other approaches are welcome.
5. Staff members become a point of contact for the students with whom they have strong relationships.
6. Follow up with assigned relationship-builders in two weeks to monitor progress and adjust assignments as needed.

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student ID | Student Name | Attendance rate | # of Core F's as of 10/15 | # Faculty Matches | Faculty Match (Go-to Person and/or Positive Relationship) | Notes about the Student (personal story / interests, family, tips) | Assigned Faculty for Relationship Building |
| 55555557 | JONES, TAKIRA (SAMPLE) | 85-90% | 2 | 2 | Jones, Schafer | Loves sneakers, has a sneaker collection; close with grandmom and lives with her | |
| | | | | 0 | | | |
| | | | | 0 | | | |

[14] Search Institute, The Role of Relationships in Promoting Student Success, accessed July 14, 2025, https://www.search-institute.org/research/role-relationships-promoting-student-success/; Aspen Institute, The Power of Relationships: How School Communities Support Student Success, accessed July 14, 2025, https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/power-of-relationships/; University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, Helping Students Build Strong Adult Relationships, accessed July 14, 2025, https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/helping-students-build-strong-adult-relationships.

## BEST PRACTICES

- Relationship mapping should be conducted towards the end of or after Quarter 1 — this allows time for authentic relationships to form and students to meet as many staff members as possible
- Allow ample amount of time during a meeting to complete the Relationship Mapping protocol – it should not be rushed
- Include as many staff members as possible: teachers, SPED support staff, counselors, climate members, coaches, etc.
- More than one staff member can identify themselves as an important adult to a student
- Teach and have staff use the 2x10 Relationship Building strategy to support staff in cultivating relationships
    - 2x10 Strategy
    - Why 2x10 Is a Sane, Effective Teacher's Best Friend (YouTube)
- Plan to revisit the Relationship Mapping protocol later in the school year to reflect any changes in student circumstances or to include new students who have transferred in. This helps ensure every student has a trusted adult connection.

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Sharing sensitive or confidential student information when completing the Relationship Mapping protocol
- Treating the activity as a compliance task rather than a meaningful relationship-building effort
- Over-directing staff on how and when to build relationships, which can undermine authenticity
- Assigning too many students to one staff member, which can dilute the quality of support and follow-through

## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 7: Collaborative Team
- Key Practice 10: Employ 9th Grade Knowledge

## RESOURCE BANK

- Relationship Mapping Slide Deck (PAI)
- Relationship Mapping Video (Making Caring Common)
- Relationship Mapping Protocol (PAI)
    - Web Resource of Protocol (Making Caring Common)

# TRUST SURVEY

### PURPOSE

To identify which students have strong, trusting relationships with school staff—based on students' own perspectives—in order to guide Tier 2 support and ensure every student has a meaningful adult connection.

**TIER 1**

### WHY IT WORKS

When students feel known and supported by at least one adult, they are more likely to attend consistently, engage academically, and persevere through challenges. While staff perspectives are essential for identifying student-adult connections, hearing directly from students offers a powerful and often more complete view. Trust Surveys center student voice, helping to uncover relationships that adults might not realize exist—or reveal the absence of trusted connections altogether. This student-informed approach can be used alongside Relationship Mapping or as a standalone strategy. Data from Trust Surveys help ensure no student goes unnoticed and enable staff to take strategic, student-centered steps to ensure every 9th grader feels seen, valued, and supported.

### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Create an online survey that asks students which staff members they feel a strong, positive relationship with.
2. Administer the survey during a time or class period that all students are expected to attend (e.g., Advisory, English, Social Studies).
3. Develop a plan to follow up with students who do not complete the survey the first time.
4. Dedicate time during a 9th Grade Team meeting to review the results and identify students who reported no strong adult connections.
5. Assign staff members to begin building intentional relationships with these students, and clarify expectations for follow-up.
6. Use existing relationships identified in the survey to support initiatives like mentorship programs, Tier 2 support plans, or other supports. These teachers can also serve as that student's "point person" for any intervention efforts throughout the year.
7. Administrators should also follow up directly with students who reported no trusted adult relationships to inquire more about their school experience.

## BEST PRACTICES

- Aim to administer Trust Surveys during the "sweet spot" — late enough in the year that most students have formed relationships with staff, but early enough to maximize the survey's impact. This typically falls in the second quarter.
- Trust Surveys can be administered multiple times in the year if the team determines there would be value in doing so. Generally, a team may want to re-administer the survey if there have been noticeable changes in the student body since the last time it was administered.
- Advisory time is an ideal opportunity to administer the Trust Survey. If advisory isn't available, try to identify a core subject with the most consistent instruction. For example, if all students have the same Social Studies teacher, check if that teacher is willing to incorporate the survey into their class.
- Clearly communicate the role of the "point person" to your team to ensure consistent student support across staff members.
- Include point persons in relevant data trackers so that other staff can quickly identify who to contact for support.
- Utilize the 2x10 Relationship Building strategy to help staff cultivate meaningful connections with students, if desired.
  - 2x10 Strategy
  - Why 2x10 Is a Sane, Effective Teacher's Best Friend (YouTube)

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Assuming the point person is the only adult with a strong relationship with a student. Many students have multiple adults they trust in a school.
- Limiting the point person role to teachers only; any adult in a school is capable of having a meaningful relationship with a student.
- Assigning too many students to a single point person.
- Making students feel bad or singled out for not having a strong relationship with an adult.
- Administering the survey without a clear, intentional plan for how the data will be used.

## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 7: Collaborative Team
- Key Practice 10: Employ 9th Grade Knowledge

## RESOURCE BANK
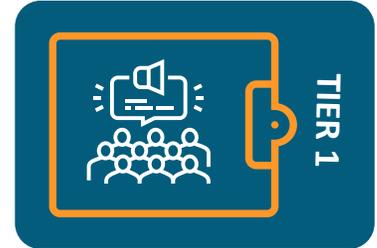
- Trust Survey (KCAPA)

# TOWN HALL

### PURPOSE

To create a regular forum for clear, grade-specific communication about goals, news, and expectations while also fostering community building and shared celebrations that strengthen connections among students, staff, and other key stakeholders.

TIER 1

### WHY IT WORKS

Town Halls provide a dedicated time for the entire 9th grade—either as one group or split into two for space—to come together as a community. While approaches may vary, the fundamental goal is to build and strengthen the 9th grade community. Whether themed monthly or held biweekly, Town Halls should be well organized, include all key stakeholders, and follow a structured agenda to maximize engagement and impact.

### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Assign seating and conduct a practice session on entering and exiting the space. Position staff evenly among students.
2. Set and communicate behavioral norms, reinforcing them with a visual presentation aligned to the session's purpose.
3. Manage time effectively by incorporating the schedule for Town Halls into the school event calendar.
4. Invite key stakeholders like parents, staff, administrators, and community partners to participate, based on the purpose of the session.
5. Encourage teacher collaboration and involvement in the planning and delivery of town halls.

### BEST PRACTICES

- Aim to hold town halls bi-weekly, or at minimum once a month (advisory time is a good option).
- Keep town halls between 30-45 minutes.
- Include all 9th graders, or split into two groups if space requires.
- Ensure all 9th grade advisors, teachers, and team members attend if possible (counselors, climate managers, etc.).
- Assign seats by advisory to support attendance and behavior monitoring.
- Involve teachers and staff members to be accountable for their students, allowing the presenter(s) to focus on delivering information.

### BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

- Come prepared with a clear agenda that includes time allocations
- Have a visual displayed for students to follow along, if appropriate (slideshow, videos, games, pictures, etc.)
- Delegate different speakers for engagement purposes and to have multiple voices represented
- Establish a clear routine for refocusing students' attention—and be sure to practice it regularly!
- Incorporate student-led components (group chants, shout-outs, managing slide decks, etc.)
- Display a calendar of important upcoming dates and events to preview with students.
- Celebrate students at every town hall, even if it's something simple like birthdays or recognizing the advisory with the loudest chant.
- Have a rehearsed, smooth process for students to enter and exit the auditorium.

### COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Using the majority of town hall time solely for announcements
- Hosting a town hall just for compliance
- Making town halls overly punitive—if a true emergency arises, consider holding a separate "emergency town hall" to address it. Regular town halls should remain focused on community building, norm alignment, and celebrations, including reestablishing behavior expectations in a positive way.

### KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 10: Employing 9th-Grade Knowledge
- Key Practice 11: Students Engaged
- Key Practice 12: Parents and Families included as Partners

### RESOURCE BANK

- Slide deck ideas (KCAPA)

TOWN HALL TOPIC IDEAS →

## POTENTIAL TOWN HALL TOPICS

- **General**
  - School norms and expectations (hall policy, uniform policy, reminder of school start time, cell phone policy, etc.)
  - Announcements: Whole school initiatives, events, community resources, upcoming On-Track trips or events, when grades close for the quarter, tutoring support information
  - Share 9th grade data
- **Monthly celebrations**
  - Birthdays
  - Attendance
  - Teacher shoutouts
  - Advisory competitions
- **Quarterly celebrations**
  - On-Track/Firmly On-Track
  - GPA (3.0 Club)
  - Class rank
  - Most improved
  - STAR growth
- **Community building activities**
  - "2 Truths and a Lie" from a rotating teacher
  - Teacher photos of when they were in high school, guess who is who
  - Mini-talent shows
  - Chants
  - Fun student polls
  - Other games or SEL activities in small groups or whole group
- **College and career exposure and exploration**
- **Guest speakers (adults, upperclass students, or recent alumni)**

# HALL POLICY

### PURPOSE

A clear and consistent hall policy establishes expectations for student presence and behavior in the hallways throughout the school day. This promotes safety, reduces class cuts and eloping, and helps maintain a positive and orderly learning environment for all students and staff.

**TIER 1**
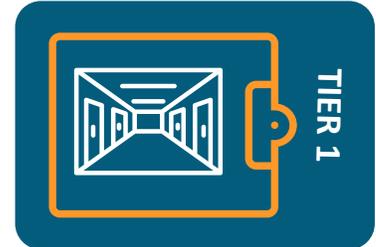
### WHY IT WORKS

Transition times in high schools can be chaotic, but they also offer a valuable opportunity for students to move safely between classes and connect with peers. When hallway time is intentionally structured with clear rules and consistent enforcement, students feel more secure and supported. This structure helps minimize disruptive behaviors like cutting class or eloping while fostering a positive school climate. Achieving this requires all staff to be aligned on procedures and actively engaged in monitoring and supporting hallway expectations.

### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Establish clear norms for hallway etiquette, including specific protocols for students leaving class to use the bathroom.
2. Communicate these expectations clearly and consistently to students during orientation, town halls, advisory, and other key touchpoints.
3. Create a clean, positive, and functional hallway environment. Consider hanging positive mindset posters.
4. Collaborate with the leadership team to define a hallway sweep protocol and schedule, along with a clear procedure for responding to students who violate expectations.
5. Ensure all staff and stakeholders are familiar with the hallway sweep procedures and consequences. Enact routine hallway sweeps in accordance with your plan.

### BEST PRACTICES

- In alignment with best practices for 9th Grade Academy, house all 9th grade core classrooms in the same area of the building to reduce transition time and create a defined 9th Grade Academy space.
- Ensure that all staff are implementing both schoolwide policies and 9th Grade Academy-specific expectations consistently.

## BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

- If possible, assign a dedicated climate staff member to be present in the 9th grade hallway throughout the day to assist with transitions, support students in need of a reset, and address emerging issues.
- The 9th Grade Assistant Principal should be highly visible in the 9th grade space. If their office is located elsewhere, consider using a rolling desk to maintain presence and accessibility.
- Ensure that all bells and classroom clocks are properly synchronized with the 9th Grade Academy's schedule to prevent confusion around class start and end times.
- Encourage teachers to greet students at the door to reinforce positive transitions and hallway norms.
- Provide a 9th grade-specific hall pass that is visually distinct from the schoolwide pass. This allows all staff to easily identify whether a student is permitted to be in a particular area of the building—such as the 9th grade hallway—and reinforces clear boundaries across grade levels.
- Have a pass that is solely for "taking a breather" and make sure it's different from your regular hall pass. This pass should have clear guidelines—like where the student can stand or go, how long they can be out, and what they're allowed to do during that time. It's a helpful tool for students who just need a moment to regroup, and it signals to any staff member that the student has permission to be out of class for a specific purpose.
- Identify and consistently follow through on consequences for students who repeatedly walk the halls or arrive late to class.
- Ensure all staff are trained on how to respond to serious hallway incidents, including protocols for who to contact and how to provide immediate support.
- Allow students who leave class or are removed an opportunity to restore and return to learning when ready.
- Conduct regular hallway sweeps with clear follow-up and consequences. Track this data—your climate team can lead this work.
- Monitor and document class cuts, and regularly share cut data with students and families to promote accountability.
- Report any concerning or suspicious hallway behavior to the appropriate personnel (e.g., nurse, counselor, social worker, DHS, etc.).
- Keep families informed about hallway behavior patterns or issues that may require additional partnership or support.

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Allowing teachers to remove students from class as a first consequence.
- Letting students take advantage of hall passes—be consistent with rules, routines, and consequences.
- Making assumptions about students who frequently visit the restroom or nurse; connect with the student and reach out to families first.
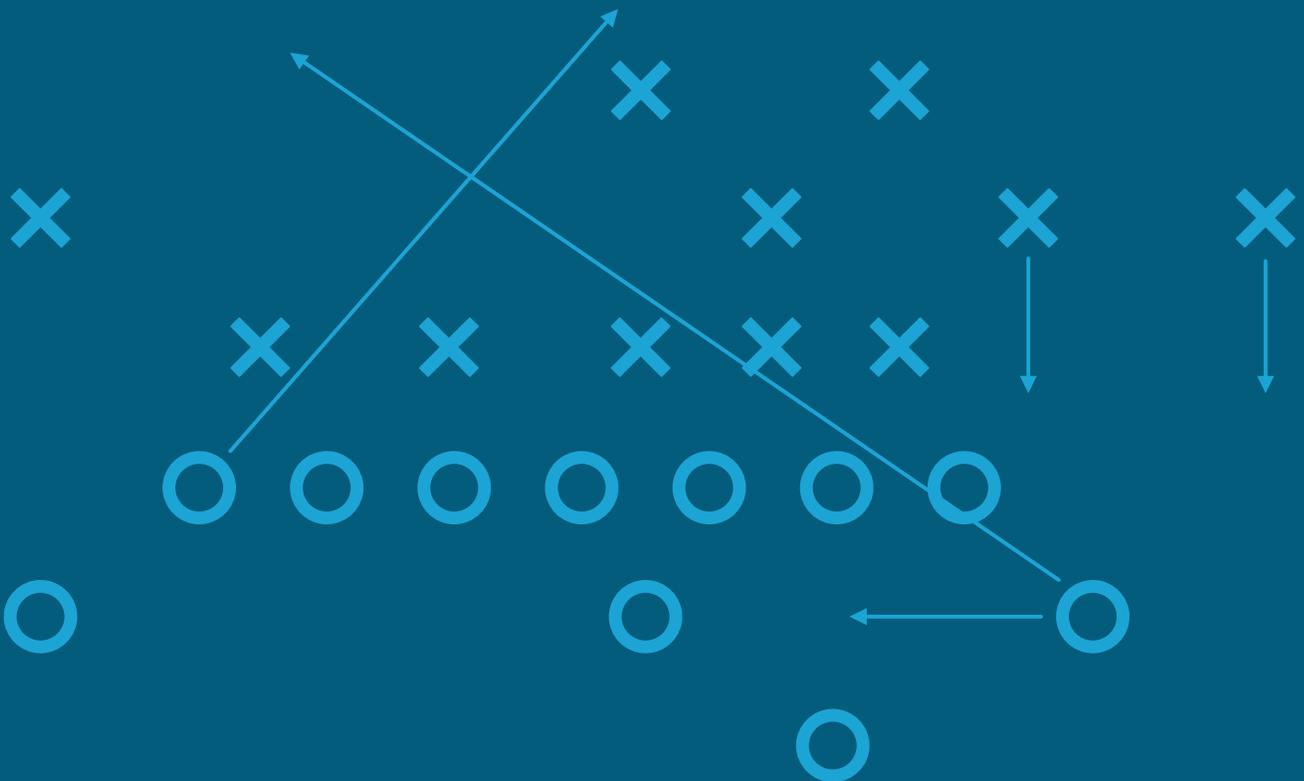
## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 6: Interventions Implemented
- Key Practice 7: Collaborative Team

## RESOURCE BANK

- Attendance/Class Cut Tracker Template (Penn Treaty)
- 5 Minute Break Pass  (KCAPA)

# CHECK & REFLECT ROUTINES

**PURPOSE**

To inform students of their current attendance, behavior, and academic data and provide structured time to reflect and set goals for improvement.

**WHY IT WORKS**

When students have consistent, structured opportunities to review their own data, they are more likely to take ownership of their progress, identify areas for improvement, and engage in self-directed growth. Check & Reflect routines provide a predictable system for students to monitor their own attendance, behavior, and grades—all of which are key indicators of success in 9th grade. By pairing these routines with supportive adult guidance and goal-setting opportunities, students develop critical habits of reflection and responsibility. This tool also helps surface important insights for educators and families, making it easier to provide timely interventions, reinforce positive trends, and build stronger school-home partnerships.

**IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

1. Choose a consistent weekly or biweekly time (e.g., during Advisory, Homeroom, or Freshman Seminar) to implement Check & Reflect routines across the 9th Grade Academy or even schoolwide.
2. Decide whether students will access the Check & Reflect electronically or through printed hard copies. Pull or generate the Check & Reflect report for each student from SIS (see Stepper linked in the Resource Bank), or provide clear instructions for students to access their own report through the Student Portal.
3. Introduce the routine and its purpose to students before the first session. Make time for questions and ensure students understand each data point (attendance, behavior, grades).
4. Distribute the Check & Reflect reports or lead students through accessing their reports and provide time for students to review and reflect on their current data. Encourage quiet reflection.
5. Guide students in setting specific goals based on their data. Use a simple goal-setting framework and encourage students to track progress over time in a dedicated Check & Reflect tracker or binder. Some students may need additional support to identify meaningful goals and the concrete action steps needed to achieve them.

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS (CONTINUED)

6. Collect and review student reflections. Ensure all students turn in their reflections (even if incomplete), and review them regularly to identify individual needs, track progress, and celebrate growth—no matter how small.
7. Follow up intentionally. Use the reflections to surface patterns of concern or students with unmet goals, and coordinate with staff to provide targeted support or adjust strategies as needed.
8. Incorporate Check & Reflect data into parent/guardian conversations—for example, by pulling the report the morning of a parent meeting to inform the discussion.

## BEST PRACTICES

- Create a system for students to track their goals and progress over time, such as a personal data tracker or reflection folder (see Resource Bank for examples).
- Use the reports to celebrate student growth, no matter how small — especially improvements in effort, attendance, or specific course grades.
- Incorporate Check & Reflect into student-led conferences or parent/guardian communication. For example, print updated reports the morning of a family meeting to support a data-driven conversation.
- Ensure advisors or teachers review reflections and goals so students receive support and accountability throughout the quarter.

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Treating it as a compliance task. If Check & Reflect becomes a box to check rather than a meaningful reflection process, students are less likely to engage.
- Using it once and forgetting it. This is most impactful when it becomes part of a consistent weekly or biweekly routine—not a one-time activity.
- Neglecting follow-up. Students need adult support to take action on their goals. Be sure to check in and offer guidance.
- Sharing reflections publicly without consent. Students' Check & Reflect data and goals should remain private unless they choose to share with others.

## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 4: Data Utilization
- Key Practice 6: Interventions Implemented
- Key Practice 11: Students Engaged
- Key Practice 12: Parents and Families Included as Partners

**RESOURCE BANK**

- Check and Reflect Steppers (SDP)
  - Admin facing
  - Parent/Family facing
    - Video
  - Student facing
    - Video
- Check and Reflect Data Tracker (KCAPA)
- Student Reflection Form Template (SDP)
- Check and Reflect student-facing Powerpoint presentation, "Know Your Data" (PAI)
- C&R Reflection Questions (PAI)
- C&R Implementation Plan (SDP)
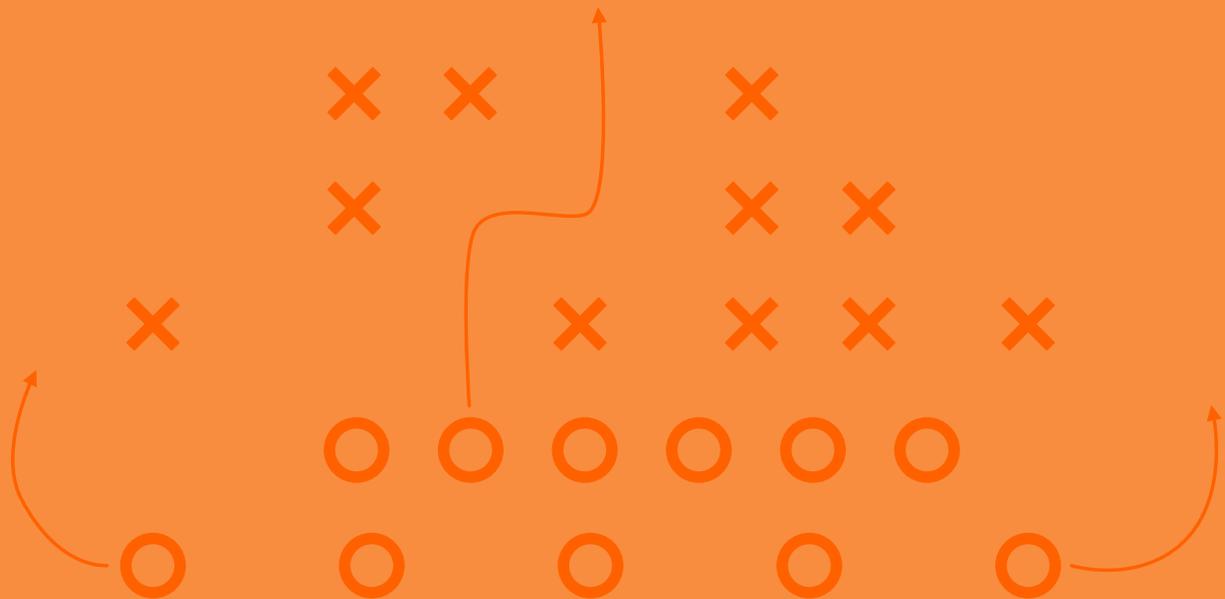
# LEVERAGING ADVISORY

### PURPOSE

To maximize the impact of advisory by using it as a consistent, intentional space that advances 9th Grade Academy goals through relationship building, skill development, and community connection.

**TIER 1**

### WHY IT WORKS

Advisory is a powerful opportunity to build intentional relationships between students and staff, foster a sense of belonging, and equip students with the skills they need to thrive in high school. When well-planned and consistent, advisory time strengthens the overall culture of the 9th Grade Academy and provides space to reinforce key priorities like attendance, behavior, academic support, and community norms. An advisory structure created and maintained by the 9th Grade Team ensures shared ownership, promotes staff buy-in, and keeps the time aligned with broader team goals. Though advisory models vary across schools, the key is to ensure this time is never left unstructured or underutilized. With the right systems and content, advisory becomes a cornerstone of student connection, growth, and success.

### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Assign 9th grade staff as advisory teachers for 9th grade students.
2. Develop an advisory structure that does not require preliminary planning time for teachers. Consider options such as a daily curriculum, creating themed days with set activities (e.g. Check & Reflect on Tuesdays, SEL activities on Mondays, etc.), and having a centralized resource hub.
3. Train teachers on how to effectively implement the advisory program as intended.
4. Throughout the year, provide continuous support and supplementary materials to advisory teachers.
5. Regularly follow up to ensure the advisory process is working as intended.
6. Seek feedback from students and staff. Use what you learn to refine and improve the advisory process.

### BEST PRACTICES

- Establish a daily or weekly focus (depending on your schedule) that is student-centered.
- Regularly review the advisory schedule and expectations with students and families (e.g., during orientation, town halls, or parent communications).
- Invite student input on certain topics to build ownership and engagement.

## BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

- Incorporate structured "free time," such as Freshman Fridays, where students can choose from one of a few activities with their peers.
- Once your advisory structure is stable, consider using this time for targeted Tier 2 interventions.
- Use advisory for adult or peer mentoring when appropriate.
- Communicate the upcoming week's advisory focus in advance so teachers don't feel the need to "prep"
- Provide ready-to-use slide decks or materials directly to advisory facilitators ahead of time.

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Allowing students to "opt out"
- Allowing teachers to "opt out" or treat advisory as unstructured downtime.
- Permitting students to visit other advisories or roam the building with hallway passes.
- Failing to plan—unstructured time can quickly become wasted time.
- Using advisory inconsistently, which sends mixed messages about its importance.

## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 6: Implementing Interventions
- Key Practice 7: Collaborative Team
- Key Practice 10: Employing 9th Grade Knowledge
- Key Practice 11: Students Engaged

## RESOURCE BANK

- Advisory planning worksheet (PAI)
- SIS: Logging parent contact (SDP)
- Weekly warm up ideas (KCAPA)
- CNN 10 note catcher (KCAPA)
- Daily scripted prompts (School of the Future)
- Check and Reflect Data Tracker (KCAPA)
- KCAPA Advisory 1 Pager (KCAPA)
- Future Advisory 1 Pager (School of the Future)

# COMMUNITY BUILDING EVENTS

### PURPOSE
To foster a strong sense of belonging, connection, and joy within the 9th Grade Academy through inclusive and intentional events that engage all students and staff.

**TIER 1**

### WHY IT WORKS
A strong school community doesn't just happen—it's built through consistent, shared experiences that center joy, trust, and connection. Community building events create opportunities for students and staff to interact in positive, low-stakes environments, which helps build relationships, reinforce culture, and increase student engagement. When these events are thoughtfully planned, inclusive of all 9th graders, and aligned to the values of the academy, they signal to students that they are part of something special. These experiences lay the groundwork for improved attendance, stronger peer and adult relationships, and a more cohesive school identity.

### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS
1. Brainstorm meaningful events that align with your team's goals and help build a sense of community.
2. Gather input from students using surveys, focus groups, or empathy interviews to ensure events reflect their interests and needs.
3. Identify and engage internal and external partners who can support event planning, funding, or facilitation.
4. Map out a calendar of community events for the year, at least one per quarter, ensuring they are open to all 9th grade students.
5. Meet with stakeholders to plan the details of each event, including objectives, logistics, staff responsibilities, student leadership opportunities, and any outside support or volunteers needed.
6. Promote the event to students, staff, and families through flyers, announcements, social media, or personal invitations.
7. Use a sign-in sheet to track attendance and follow up as needed with students or families.

### BEST PRACTICES
- Be intentional about timing—aim to host at least one large-scale event each quarter (e.g., Freshman Orientation in Quarter 1).
- Collaborate with school partners and local community members—many businesses are eager to support schools when asked.
- Involve families whenever possible, whether as volunteers, chaperones, or audience members.

## BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

- Use public transportation for off-site events when feasible to reduce costs.
- Don't hesitate to ask venues or companies you're visiting if they can offer discounts or help cover costs.
- Leverage existing time in the school schedule for events to avoid coverage or scheduling challenges.
- Tap into your team's collective experience—many great ideas already exist in the room!

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Excluding students from events based on behavior or grades—students who are struggling still need to feel part of the community.
- Making all events "pay to attend." A few paid events are fine, but strive to make most activities free so they're accessible to all students, regardless of financial situation.
- Waiting until the last minute to plan—this often limits your options and increases stress.
- Assuming every event needs to be a trip—there are plenty of meaningful and fun ways to build community right in your school or neighborhood.

## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 7: Collaborative Team
- Key Practice 10: 9th Grade Knowledge

## RESOURCE BANK

- [Student friendly activities in Philadelphia](#) (Discover PHL)
- [Field Trip Directory](#)

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### COMMUNITY BUILDING EVENT IDEAS

- **9th Grade Orientation**
- **Back to School BBQ**
- **Outward Bound**
- **Spaghetti night**
- **Awards night**
- **Game night**
- **9th Grade Dance**
- **Trips (Dave and Busters, Bowling, Skating, Museums, etc.)**
- **College and career exposure (College Trip, Career Day, local business tour, etc.)**

- **Field Day or Kick Ball Day**
- **9th Grade Talent Show (have the teachers be the judges)**
- **Students vs. Faculty Basketball Game**
- **Movie event— play a movie in your auditorium that the students vote on**
- **"Freshman Friday"-- allow students in the gym, outside, or to another classroom during advisory time for free time every Friday or every other Friday**

# QUARTERLY ON-TRACK CELEBRATIONS

### PURPOSE

To celebrate and motivate students who are meeting or exceeding academic and behavioral expectations —reinforcing the importance of staying On-Track throughout the 9th grade year.

**TIER 1**

### WHY IT WORKS

Quarterly On-Track celebrations help establish a school-wide culture that prioritizes and uplifts academic progress, attendance, and positive behavior. By publicly recognizing students who are On-Track, Firmly On-Track, or demonstrating growth, these events reinforce what success looks like and why it matters. They also serve as a key touchpoint for engaging students, families, and staff in the shared goal of 9th grade success. When paired with clear communication and regular data sharing, celebrations build momentum, foster motivation, and encourage continued progress throughout the year.

### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Gather student input on what types of celebrations would be meaningful or motivating to them.
2. Plan a quarterly celebration with your team to recognize students who are On-Track and Firmly On-Track. Consider also honoring "Climbers" (students who are demonstrating improvement in their grades), students demonstrating core values, those with improved STAR scores, or other groups who deserve recognition.
3. Plan the logistics: determine the date, time, location, food, music, decorations, and how students will be invited. Consider inviting families and community partners to join the celebration.
4. Promote the event early and often—build excitement through announcements, flyers, advisory time, and 1:1 conversations.
5. Coordinate with staff to ensure they can attend or support the event (e.g., supervising, presenting awards, etc.).

### BEST PRACTICES

GENERAL

- Ensure all stakeholders understand the definitions of On-Track and Firmly On-Track —review them often with staff, students, and families.
- Introduce On-Track vocabulary during Freshman Orientation so students and families are familiar with the language from the start.

## BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

### GENERAL

- Reinforce On-Track vocabulary with teachers during 9th Grade Team meetings.
- Use On-Track language when discussing grades and progress with students.
- Post current On-Track student lists in central locations, like freshman hallways, to increase visibility.
- Display On-Track posters in highly-visible areas to build awareness and motivation.
- Regularly promote upcoming On-Track celebrations to build excitement and momentum.
- Use the Check & Reflect document to help students and families monitor progress throughout the year.
- Schedule each celebration for the week after grades are finalized to keep recognition timely and meaningful.
- Consider making the Quarter 4 celebration a Move-Up Day to celebrate students transitioning to 10th grade. Ensure it's a special event that honors those who successfully completed the 9th grade year.

### CELEBRATION EVENT

- Print individual awards to present to each student being recognized.
- Announce each student's name during the event to give them their moment to shine.
- Display a visual during the celebration, such as student names or photos, to help make the recognition feel special.
- Highlight the advisory with the highest On-Track rate as an additional celebration point.
- During the event, consider reviewing the grade-level On-Track data and comparing it to previous quarters to show progress.
- Consider setting a collective goal with the 9th grade for the next quarter. (Note: If your On-Track goal is numerically low—even if it reflects growth—it may be counterproductive to share it with students. In some contexts, it's better to focus on a general goal, such as
- 100% On-Track or growing the number of students who are On-Track.)
- If your school uses social media, consider sharing information about the celebration with the community.
- Put student names on display in a visible area of the school (e.g., hallway bulletin board or poster).

### COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Using celebrations as incentives rather than recognition. Framing celebrations as rewards can unintentionally shift the focus to external motivation. This undermines efforts to build a culture where students are driven by a sense of purpose and growth. Instead, celebrations should affirm students' efforts and progress toward long-term success.
- Excluding eligible students for unrelated reasons. If a celebration is tied to a clear academic marker—like being On-Track—all students who meet that criteria should be included. Removing students due to unrelated behavior concerns can send mixed messages and erode trust in the system.
- Taking away or scaling back celebrations midyear. Students notice when promised elements of a celebration disappear over time. Reducing or removing components can feel like a loss and may harm student morale. Be mindful of setting realistic, sustainable expectations from the start.

### KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 9: Employing Ninth Grade Knowledge
- Key Practice 11: Students Engaged
- Key Practice 12: Parents and Families Included as Partners

### RESOURCE BANK

- Award template
- On-Track Communication Slide Deck (PAI)
- Celebration Slide Deck template (KCAPA)
- On-Track Interim template (KCAPA)
- On-Track Interim template (Penn Treaty)

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### ON-TRACK CELEBRATION IDEAS

- Ceremony or recognition at Town Hall
- Special pin or button
- Field trips (e.g. Rolling Thunder)
- Food parties (e.g. pizza, ice cream, etc.)
- Extended lunch time on Fridays
- Dress down days on Fridays (if your school has a uniform)
- School store bucks
- Swag— t-shirts, lanyards, stickers, bracelets, etc.
- Movie event (hosted in auditorium)
- Tie-dye party
- Free admission to a school event (e.g. dance, show, etc.)
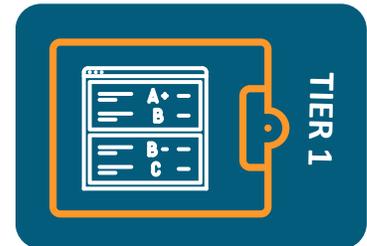- 9th grade exclusive events (e.g. pep rally, staff vs. student game, field day, etc.)

# REFLECTING ON GRADING PRACTICES USING THE GIR

### PURPOSE

To support teachers in evaluating their grading policies to ensure they are aligned with the school's core values and promote equitable, student-centered outcomes.

**TIER 1**

### WHY IT WORKS

The Grade Impact Report (GIR) provides a clear, data-driven view of how grading practices influence student outcomes. By surfacing patterns—such as categories that carry disproportionate weight, low assignment frequency, or unusually high failure rates—the GIR supports productive, non-punitive reflection on what's working and what may need to shift. This tool enables leaders and teachers to engage in shared conversations about how grading structures can either reinforce or remove barriers to success. When paired with a culture of trust and growth, these reflections help build more equitable grading systems that better reflect student learning and effort.

### IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Run the Grade Impact Report for each 9th grade teacher.
2. Review the data carefully. Identify potential areas of concern, such as low assignment frequency, high failure rates, or heavy grade weighting in one category.
3. Decide whether to hold reflection meetings with all teachers or only with select individuals based on the data (e.g. those with low assignment counts, high failure rates, etc.).
4. Prepare for these conversations thoughtfully. Clarify your goals, identify key takeaways from the GIR, and develop questions that invite reflection rather than defensiveness.
5. Allocate time for teachers to reflect on their grading practices independently before the meeting, if possible.
6. Host one-on-one meetings with teachers to discuss the report. Use the time to listen, reflect, and co-plan next steps for strengthening grading policies.
7. Ensure that any recommendations or feedback are aligned with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) contract and district grading policies.

### BEST PRACTICES

- Attempt to review the report two times per quarter with teachers (ideally during interims and two weeks before the quarter ends).
- For new teachers, review the data earlier in the quarter to ensure they are aligned with grading expectations and the PFT contract. Early conversations can help prevent larger grading issues later.

## BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

- Use the GIR as a tool to facilitate broader conversations about equitable grading practices and to norm grading as a 9th Grade Academy. For example, if teachers aren't using all grading categories, the data may look different—this could generate a conversation where you norm around what your team expectations are (within PFT guidelines).
- Spend time teaching teachers how to properly run, read, and analyze the data on the GIR. Consider using a "notice and wonder" protocol with example data during the first review.
- Have teachers independently review their reports and reflect on the data before group discussions.
- If teachers are willing, have them share key takeaways with a partner or whole group.
- Have teachers share their next steps with the 9th grade AP so the AP can follow up as needed. They may report verbally, via Google Form, Google Doc, or email—the AP should select the communication method based on the level of concern and support required.

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Speaking in ways that conflict with the PFT contract.
- Blaming teachers for grading or performance issues.
- Making blanket statements about specific subjects, teachers, or students.
- Reviewing the report merely to "check a box" without meaningful analysis or follow-up.

## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 4: Data Utilization
- Key Practice 7: Collaborative Team
- Key Practice 10: Employing 9th Grade Knowledge

## RESOURCE BANK

- GIR stepper for teachers (SDP)
- GIR stepper for admin (SDP)
- GIR presentation (Bartram)
- GIR Quick Guide for teachers (PAI)
- GIR Teacher Reflection Checklist (Edison)
- GIR Teacher Reflection Document (BFHS)
- GIR Teacher Reflection Document (NEHS)
- GIR Admin/Teacher Guiding Questions (PAI)

# CATCH-UP CAFÉ

### PURPOSE
To provide a structured, supportive space where students can complete missing work, recover grades, and build academic momentum.

### WHY IT WORKS

Catch-Up Café offers students dedicated time, space, and support to complete missed assignments and stay or get on track—especially during critical grading periods. Whether hosted during lunch, advisory, or another designated time, this intervention signals to students that their success matters and provides a consistent, welcoming opportunity to catch up. By intentionally inviting students, coordinating with teachers, and creating a supportive environment, Catch-Up Café helps reduce failure rates, build accountability, and foster a culture of care and follow-through. When thoughtfully implemented, it also strengthens relationships between students and staff—and ensures no one falls too far behind.

As the role requires teachers to give up their lunch time, staff involvement must remain strictly voluntary and cannot be mandated. Ideally, once the Cafe time is scheduled, select one classroom or another location in the school building to host.

Having students sign up or mandating attendance for specific students prior to the Cafe time allows teachers to plan for the number of participants, as well as gather any required materials/supports students might need to complete their missing work. Keep in mind if this is during the students lunch, a replacement meal has to be provided or you can host in a space that allows them to eat the school lunch provided. If it is not hosted during lunch, snacks can be provided to the students.

WHICH ROOMS WILL BE AVAILABLE DURING LUNCH?

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Identify the students best suited for the Catch-Up Cafe. The Cafe could be geared towards specific students or, could be a Tier 1 opportunity where all students are invited. If that is the case, you may still want to conduct special outreach to the students you know would benefit most from the opportunity.
2. Choose a time and location to host the Café—ideally weekly or biweekly, or otherwise aligned with grading milestones (e.g., interims, before end of quarter).
3. Consider designating certain subjects on certain days (e.g. Science and Math on Tuesdays, English and Social Studies on Thursdays, or inviting students to complete work from any class on the Catch-Up Cafe days).
4. Coordinate with teachers to ensure gradebooks are updated and that key assignments (especially high-impact tasks per Grade Impact Report) are identified for students.
5. Organize materials needed to complete assignments, including copies, rubrics, or tech access, with clear directions.
6. Review logistics with your team during the 9th Grade Team Meeting to ensure shared understanding and coordination.
7. Communicate with students and families about the opportunity and expectations—use texts, flyers, town hall announcements and/or Google Classroom announcements.
8. Make food arrangements in order to create a welcoming and supportive (non-punitive) atmosphere:
9. If held during lunch, make sure students receive a meal (either relocated school lunch or alternate).
10. If not during lunch, offer snacks or light refreshments.

## BEST PRACTICES

- Recruit teachers from various content areas to support on a rotating basis
- Encourage students to sign up in advance—ideally with the assignment they plan to complete.
- Post clear norms and expectations for behavior: quiet work time, assignment-focused, respectful space.
- Provide positive feedback and recognize effort—not just output.
- Offer full credit for assignments completed during Catch-Up Café to reinforce motivation.
- Can be implemented in conjunction with after school tutoring sessions
- Provide positive feedback to students to encourage participation and effort
- Track student participation/attendance at the Cafe and outcomes over time
- If teachers are volunteering their time to support the Catch-Up Cafe during their lunch or prep, provide formal compensation or recognition of their time.

**COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID**

- Hosting too many students at once, which can dilute focus and support.
- Treating the Café as a hangout or lounge—keep the tone academic and purposeful.
- Requiring teacher participation—voluntary involvement is key.
- Framing the Café as punishment; avoid shame or blame for missing work.
- Waiting until November to recruit teachers; early planning helps students receive the support in a timely manner.
- Running Catch-Up Café in multiple classrooms at once, which can stretch supervision and reduce support quality.
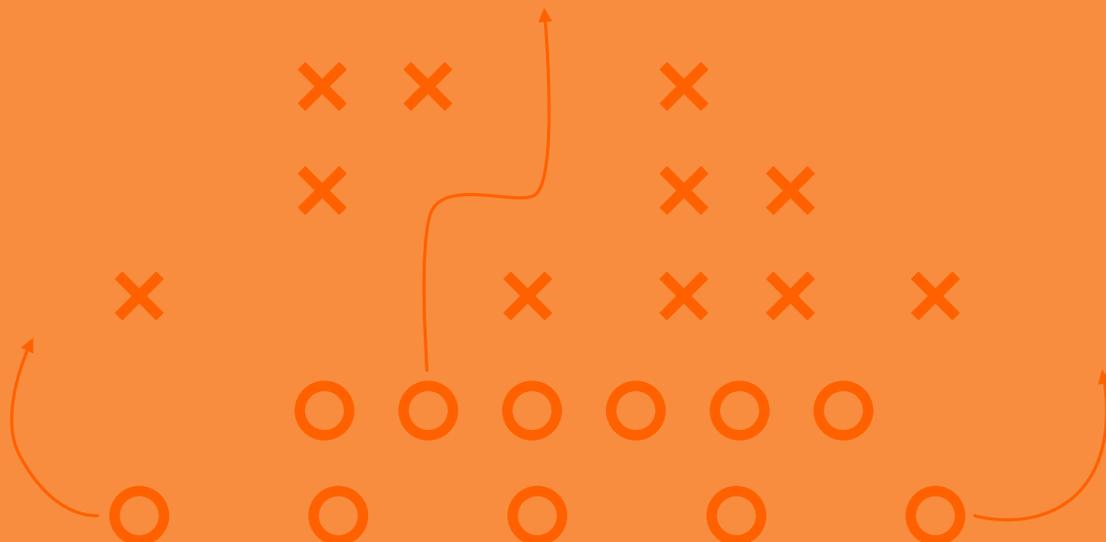
**KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT**

- Key Practice 5: Targeted Intervention Strategies
- Key Practice 6: Interventions Implemented
- Key Practice 7: Collaborative Team

**RESOURCE BANK**

- Catch Up Cafe Fliers (Penn Treaty)
- Catch Up Cafe Video (George Washington HS)
- What's Tea (Catch-Up Cafe instructions) (Sayre)

# ADULT TO STUDENT
# MENTOR GROUPS

## PURPOSE
To foster meaningful, consistent connections between students and trusted adults in order to increase engagement, boost academic success, and provide targeted support through the pivotal 9th grade year.

TIER 2/3

## WHY IT WORKS
Mentor groups offer a strategic way to address shared student needs in a safe, supportive setting—guided by trusted adults and anchored in clear goals. As the year unfolds, your 9th grade team will begin to identify common challenges facing individual students and subgroups. Mentor groups create space to respond to those needs with consistency, care, and intention. They help students feel seen and supported, while equipping them with the tools to successfully navigate 9th grade and the broader challenges of adolescence.

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS
1. Identify a subgroup of students for mentoring. Consider if you also want to take teacher referrals.
2. Create a designated time and place for the mentoring interactions to happen.
3. Vet community partners or in-school staff to host the mentoring meetings, ensuring all required clearances and documentation are in place.
4. Collaborate with mentors to develop a schedule, create agendas, and prepare any necessary materials.
5. Establish and communicate clear norms for behavior and expectations within the mentoring space.
6. Use a sign-in sheet to track student attendance at each session.
7. Monitor participation alongside baseline and quarterly outcome data to track student progress.
8. Host the mentoring sessions and follow-up to ensure the group is proceeding as planned.

## BEST PRACTICES

### LAYING THE GROUNDWORK
- Allow time to identify student needs—don't rush to launch. Starting after Quarter 1 is often ideal.
- Be transparent with students about why they were selected and how the group supports their growth.
- Get input from the student's key adults (parents, family members, former school staff, etc.) to better understand and support each student's needs.
- Ensure adults leading the group are qualified and trusted. Ensure there's a clear point of contact if challenges arise.
- Invite guest speakers or trusted partners from the community as appropriate.

### DESIGNING A STRONG STRUCTURE
- Establish a consistent meeting time and location, and share the calendar with students in advance.
- Have a targeted plan of action for each meeting, aligned with student needs and group goals.
- Consider incorporating a variety of modalities into the mentoring space—some of which can happen simultaneously. Examples include:
- Sharing meals together
- Hosting a speaker series with guest speakers from the community
- Facilitating roundtable discussions
- Creating opportunities for bonding and shared experiences (e.g., watching sports or YouTube together, taking trips, open gyms)
- Holding one-on-one check-ins with students
- Treat mentor groups as a Tier 2 intervention and monitor their effectiveness accordingly.

### CREATING A SAFE, ENGAGING SPACE
- Promote an environment that supports relationship-building, shared experiences, and trust.
- Build in time to foster community—this could include shared meals, games, or group activities.
- Honor student privacy and keep families in the loop as needed and appropriate.
- Celebrate growth—acknowledge both small wins and long-term progress.
- Consider a student-created or catchy group name to increase ownership and positive association (e.g., "Queens" instead of "Girls Group").
- Be flexible—adapt the group structure and strategies as needed. Adjustments often lead to insights that strengthen the experience.

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Framing mentor groups as a punishment rather than a support.
- Creating groups that are too large to allow for meaningful connection.
- Spending the entire session talking at students instead of creating space for dialogue.
- Feeling discouraged if every session doesn't go exactly as planned—flexibility and learning is part of the process.
- Getting frustrated if some students take longer to open up—relationship-building takes time.

## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 6: Interventions Implemented
- Key Practice 10: Employing 9th Grade Knowledge

## RESOURCE BANK

- Mentor Group Resource Guide (National Mentoring Resource Center)
- Supporting Black Male Students Slide Deck (9GSN CoP #3 23-24 Roxborough and Northeast)
- Unlocking Youth Perspectives Slide Deck (Mentor IR)
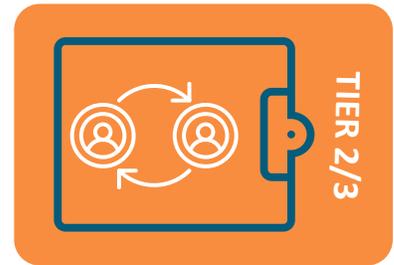- Black Male Mentor Group Slide Deck (GWHS)

# PEER TO PEER
# MENTORING GROUPS

## PURPOSE

To strengthen student outcomes by pairing 9th graders with upperclassmen who can offer authentic guidance, encouragement, and connection based on shared school experiences.

**TIER 2/3**

## WHY IT WORKS

Peer mentoring offers a powerful layer of support by leveraging the lived experience of older students. When 9th graders connect with upperclassmen who have navigated similar academic and social challenges, the guidance feels more relatable and credible. These relationships can boost motivation, increase a sense of belonging, and help younger students problem-solve in real time. At the same time, mentors benefit by building leadership skills and contributing meaningfully to the school community. With consistent structure and adult oversight, peer-to-peer mentoring can be a mutually beneficial tool for student growth and engagement.

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Identify a subgroup of target students as well as their potential mentors.
2. Inform parents/guardians of both mentors and mentees.
3. Create a tracker with students' data.
4. Collaborate with all stakeholders on location, time and agenda of the sessions.
5. Train the peer mentors on how to properly mentor their peers.
6. Designate an adult to be present during each session to offer guidance and supervision.
7. Create a time for both students to introduce themselves to each other and discuss the expectations of the group.
8. Use a sign-in sheet to track attendance of both mentors and mentees.
9. Follow up with participants periodically to ensure that the program is running effectively.

## BEST PRACTICES

GENERAL

- Be intentional in selecting participants—consider student needs, strengths, and the potential for meaningful connections.
- Assign 1–2 staff members to help plan and support the facilitation of mentoring sessions
- Train mentors to lead with a spirit of inclusivity—encouraging open-mindedness, respect for differences, and authentic conversations.

## BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

GENERAL
- Collaboratively plan meeting agendas with mentors, and allow space for student-led discussion and decision-making.
- Include students in establishing group norms to create a sense of ownership and safety.
- Build structure into each session, while maintaining flexibility so students can guide the experience.
- Hold peer mentoring sessions during Advisory or other non-instructional time to protect academic learning.
- Regularly reflect on the program's effectiveness and group dynamics—adjust as needed based on student feedback and observed outcomes.

IDENTIFYING MENTORS AND MENTEES
- Upperclass students
  - When selecting upperclass students to support with peer to peer mentoring, be intentional with who you are selecting. Think about what your 9th graders need and who in your school community has had similar experiences to them. Mentors don't need to be all honor roll students—students with a variety of backgrounds can offer valuable support, often in ways the 9th Grade Academy team cannot. For example, a student who successfully navigated a challenge in their high school career such as a disciplinary infraction may be especially well-positioned to guide others.
- 9th Graders
  - Identify 9th graders who would benefit from additional support—academically, behaviorally, or socially. The 9th Grade Academy team can help flag students using early indicators such as attendance, conduct (to an extent), and grades. Relationship mapping can also be a useful tool in identifying students who may benefit most from mentoring.

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID
- Taking over group discussions instead of allowing students to lead.
- Assigning staff to support the program without their buy-in or preparation.
- Pulling students from core instructional time for mentoring sessions.
- Expecting every session to go smoothly—some inconsistency is normal.
- Creating groups that are too large for meaningful interaction.
- Excluding students who could benefit from the experience.
- Holding only one or two sessions with no follow-up or ongoing structure.

## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT
- Key Practice 6: Interventions Implemented
- Key Practice 10: Employing 9th Grade Knowledge

## POTENTIAL TOPICS

- **Growth Mindset** – believing you can learn and improve through effort and persistence
- **Self-Reflection** – understanding your strengths and areas for growth
- **Communication Skills** – expressing yourself clearly and listening effectively
- **Time Management** – balancing priorities and making the most of your time
- **Self-Advocacy** – speaking up for yourself and asking for what you need
- **Conflict Resolution** – resolving disagreements respectfully and constructively
- **Building Healthy Relationships** – navigating friendships, setting boundaries, handling peer pressure
- **Identity & Belonging** – exploring who you are, embracing differences, building inclusive spaces
- **Goal Setting & Motivation** – identifying short- and long-term goals, staying focused, celebrating progress
- **Decision-Making** – making thoughtful choices, weighing consequences, staying true to values
- **Coping with Stress** – managing anxiety, using healthy coping strategies, balancing responsibilities
- **Navigating Social Media** – digital footprints, managing online drama, self-image and media literacy
- **Academic Habits** – organizing schoolwork, study strategies, asking for help early
- **Transition to High School** – what I wish I knew, getting involved, managing freedom/responsibility
- **Leadership & Influence** – leading by example, helping others, being a role model
- **Celebrating Success & Resilience** – recognizing growth, bouncing back from setbacks

# DAILY REPORTS

## PURPOSE

To provide consistent monitoring and support for students who need increased accountability, helping them stay on track both academically and behaviorally.

**TIER 2/3**

## WHY IT WORKS

Daily Reports offer a high-touch, data-informed structure for supporting students who need more frequent feedback and encouragement. By tracking progress on a daily basis, this intervention helps students build self-awareness, take ownership of their behavior and academics, and stay aligned to school expectations. It also strengthens communication between students, teachers, support staff, and families—creating a unified team focused on student growth. When implemented thoughtfully, Daily Reports help foster consistent routines, provide opportunities for praise and redirection, and allow staff to quickly adjust supports as student needs evolve.

## IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. Identify a small group of students who would benefit from increased monitoring and consistent feedback. Use academic, attendance, or behavioral data to inform your decisions.
2. Create the Daily Report document that you will use, based on teacher team input. Use examples of other Daily Reports to inform your document.
3. Meet with selected students to introduce the Daily Report process, clearly outlining expectations, goals, and how success will be measured.
4. Brief teachers and staff on their role in the Daily Report process. Provide a list of students involved and ensure they understand how and when to complete the reports.
5. Establish a clear communication system for sharing Daily Report data with families, and define the criteria for when a student might "graduate" from the intervention.
6. Use 9th Grade Team meetings to regularly review student progress, make decisions about continuing or retiring supports, and identify additional students who may benefit from joining the intervention.

## BEST PRACTICES

- Create an accountability protocol for the students who may have trouble completing their daily report.
- Have students take the daily report home weekly for parent/guardian signatures.

## BEST PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

- Send parents/guardians a photo of the daily report at the end of each week to ensure receipt—especially for students who don't consistently return signed reports.
- Set designated times and locations for collecting, reviewing, and completing daily reports.
- Develop an exit strategy that enables students to graduate from the Daily Report process once they meet the criteria.

## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Completing the reports but failing to follow up on the daily report data.
- Failing to set clear, objective standards or data points for students to meet.
- Allowing the report to become subjective instead of based on measurable criteria.
- Only sharing "bad days" with families or using the report to threaten students with negative calls home.
- Tracking too many focus areas—keep it to 1–4 key targets, ideally aligned with the school's vision or values (e.g., Bartram BRAVE, Penn Treaty PACK).
- Putting too many students on daily reports; it should not include most of the 9th grade cohort.

## KEY PRACTICE ALIGNMENT

- Key Practice 4: Data Utilization
- Key Practice 5: Targeted Intervention Strategies
- Key Practice 6: Interventions Implemented
- Key Practice 7: Collaborative Team
- Key Practice 8: Tracking Interventions
- Key Practice 9: Intervention Follow up and Evaluation

## RESOURCE BANK

- Daily Report Tracker (Bartram)
- Daily Report Example (Penn Treaty)
- Daily Report Tracker (KCAPA)

# GLOSSARY AND REFERENCES

# KEY TERMS

**9th Grade Academy**: A supportive small learning community within a high school that empowers 9th graders to successfully navigate their academic and social transition, build strong connections, and set a solid foundation for on-time graduation and future success.

**9th Grade Assistant Principal**: A school administrator responsible for overseeing the 9th Grade Academy, analyzing data, and supporting 9th grade students.

**9th Grade On-Track**: A metric used by the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) to determine how likely a 9th-grade student is going to graduate on time (in four years). The criteria for 9th Grade On-Track is passing 4 core classes (Math, English, Science, and Social Studies) plus one more of any other class taken in their ninth-grade year. The 9th Grade On-Track criteria is known colloquially as "four core plus one more."

**9th Grade On-Track Goals**: Strong, attainable goals for 9th Grade On-Track and Firmly On-Track that are known by all team members, monitored regularly, and achievements are celebrated by leadership.

9th Grade Team: A team that meets weekly to review On-Track data (attendance, course grades, etc.) and/or plan interventions.

**Advisory**: A regularly scheduled period where a group of students meets with a teacher or staff member to focus on the non-academic aspects of their school experience. This period serves as a space for social-emotional learning, community building, and supporting students' academic, social, and future-planning needs, rather than functioning as a traditional academic class.

**Collaborative Team**: A team where all members take responsibility for student success and participate in the development and implementation of student interventions.

**Core Team**: A smaller group within the 9th Grade team that works closely with the 9th grade leader to analyze data, plan events, and support the advisory model.

**Firmly On-Track**: Students who meet the 9th Grade On-Track criteria and earn As and Bs in their four core classes plus one additional class.

**Grade Impact Report:** Aggregates gradebook data to determine the impact of current categories and assignments on students' final grades. The report is designed to allow teachers and school leaders to have conversations around planning for the improvement of course performance in their classrooms and to facilitate discussions on grading practices.

# KEY TERMS

**Grades Monitoring Tool:** A comprehensive report downloaded from SchoolNet and input into a Google Sheet design layer for analyzing students' attendance and core grades. The tool displays a roster of all students with their average and subject-level grades (projected final, current term and the previous term) and count of course failures. The report also shows student demographics, participation in special education and ELL, and standardized test scores. Summary tables and charts are also available that display aggregate trends of grades by subject, course failures, etc. The report enables school leaders and teachers to identify students that would benefit from supports and interventions.

**Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** A plan created for students with special needs in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

**Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)**: A prevention-focused, problem-solving service delivery framework that systematically connects all of the academic and nonacademic interventions, supports and services available both in the school and the community to support instruction and eliminate barriers to learning and teaching.

  MTSS contains the following components:
  • Shared Leadership
  • Data-Based Problem-Solving and Decision Making
  • Layered Continuum of Supports
  • Evidence-based Instruction, Intervention and Assessments
  • Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring
  • Family, School, and Community Partnering

**Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)** Meeting: A meeting involving a team of educators, administrators and possibly external partners to review data on student progress and discuss interventions to support students' academic and social-emotional needs. The goal is to provide a structured and collaborative approach to identifying and addressing student needs, ensuring that all students receive the appropriate level of support.

**Multilingual Learner (MLL):** Students who are learning how to communicate in multiple languages. The term is often used interchangeably with students who are learning English as a Second Language (ESL), English Learners (EL), or English Language Learners (ELL).

**Off-Track:** Students who are failing one or more core classes or are missing an additional elective credit, and therefore do not meet the criteria for 9th Grade On-Track.

# KEY TERMS

**Targeted Intervention Strategies:** Strategies that the team considers and utilizes according to student needs to address the root causes behind student performance.

**Tier 1 Interventions:** Universal supports and strategies implemented school-wide or grade-wide to address academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs.

**Tier 2 Interventions:** Targeted supports and strategies provided to students who need additional support beyond Tier 1 interventions.

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