

Blueprint is brought to you by Jack Berckemeyer, Kim Campbell, Debbie Silver and Dedra Stafford and is written by Judith Baenen.

Helping Ninth Graders Plan Ahead

According to a NASSP survey of more than 1800 middle-grades students, close to 90 percent said they intend to go on to college, but only 30 percent knew what the requirements are for getting admitted. If your ninth graders are thinking about college, they will need your guidance as they move ahead in high school.

Of course, most ninth graders don't yet know what specific area they wish to pursue in college or as a career, but you can help them focus by giving them a general idea of what courses are required in various fields. Let them know what paths you followed, or ask a parent (or parents) to come in to explain how their academic experiences led them to their profession.

Some of your students could be guided toward community college, especially if they have an interest in a career that can be accommodated through an associate degree. Even so, they will need to know what high school classes they should take and master so that they will be on track for a smooth entrance.

For most ninth graders, college seems like a faraway endeavor. But they are relying on their teachers to know how quickly the years pass and how important it is to have the right preparation for future opportunities.

Before you turn in your keys ...

It's the end of the school year and you are anxious to put things away and turn in your keys. But you are still in the "school zone" and this is a good time to plan seriously for next year. Research shows that you can increase your energy and creativity just by doing something different (starting a new exercise routine, trying a new digital game, taking an alternate route to work). Plan now to do something different next year to energize your teaching. Here are some ideas:

Throw away old materials now. Still have mimeographed sheets in your file? Aging examples of student work? Lesson plan ideas you haven't used for years? If you didn't use it last year, get rid of it before you leave for the summer. If you have been using the same items every year, all the more reason to get rid of whatever it is and start fresh.

Change rooms - or at least change your room. Nothing pushes us into creativity faster than an environmental change. See if you can switch rooms with a colleague for next year. If there's no chance of that, rearrange your room now in a way that allows for more student interaction. Move your desk to a part of the room it has never been in.

Plan a new unit. While the past year's lessons are still in your mind, plan a new unit - either something you haven't taught before or an old lesson in a new way.

Resolve to use more manipulatives and/or centers. Think about what would've worked this year if you would have had time to get it together.

Investigate flipping. Talk with someone who has tried it. Ask around to see if someone attended a workshop on flipping this year. Watch a webcast while you are cleaning your room. Find or create at least one or two videos that you can use to flip your classroom. Once you get started on flipping you might not stop.

Work with someone new. New teacher joining your team or department? A colleague you haven't worked with for a while? Contact that person before you leave for the summer. See if the two of you can't plan something together for next year's classes.



Jack says:

Why not **send a box of locker locks** to the elementary/middle school so students can practice opening a lock?

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