

Junior Student-to-Student Program Summary

The middle level grades (6 – 8) can be a very challenging time in a young person's life. They are trying to figure out who they are and where they fit in with their friends, in their school, and in their community. They are trying to determine and prioritize their varied interests along with their likes and dislikes. They are also preparing for their future. It can be a very uncertain time.

Imagine moving to a new school, in a new town. Imagine walking into a school for the first time. You do not know anyone. You do not know your way around the school. You do not know anything about the new school's academic requirements. Everything at your new school seems very different from your old school. How will you ever figure things out and find a place to fit in?

Junior Student 2 Student (JS2S) is rooted in the belief that transitioning, moving from school-to-school or city-to-city, does not have to be difficult—just different. JS2S is built on the same research/model as Student 2 Student (designed for high school students), but has been designed to meet the unique needs of middle school students.

After a core group of a school's students and adults go through a JS2S training, the school will have a team that trains other students to actively assist incoming and exiting students in three areas: Finding the Way, Academics, and Relationships. Incoming students quickly feel welcomed, comfortable, included, and accepted into their new school community. For the exiting student, the team helps prepare them for their transition to another school.

JS2S is designed to help change a transitioning student's focal point from what has or will be lost to what the student will gain through the relocation. JS2S guides students through their uncertain surroundings, offering – from a peer viewpoint – valued information, friendship and assistance in the areas that matter most.

- How do I find my way around?
- Who will I meet? How will I make friends? What about my relationships?
- What do I need—and/or who do I need to see—to find out about school's academic requirements?

The JS2S program meets very real transitioning student needs with:

- Immediate peer credibility
- Positive peer relationships
- Valued information

A team from a school campus, consisting of two advisors and six students, receives transitional issues training from Military Child Education Coalition trainers. The team returns to their home school to recruit and train others about ways to support students

who are relocating to or from their school. The focus is student-centered and student-led with close supervision from the adult advisors.

The program is designed around three research-based training modules:

- Finding the Way (Campus, Culture, and Community)
 - How do I get around the campus? What do kids my age do here? What is unique about this community?
- Academics (Requirements, Processes, Program Access)
 - What are the campus policies and requirements (e.g. dress code, homework)? What are the processes unique to the new school (e.g. grading scale, teaming, calendar)? How do I gain access to special programs (e.g. Gifted & Talented, Resource, Advanced Placement classes)?
- Relationships (Acceptance, Trust, Attributes)
 - What can you do to make students feel accepted? How do you establish trust? What are the risk and rewards of new relationships?

Each team customizes the training specifically for their home site. Through the training, the team develops well-prepared local lesson plans and clear team assignments for implementation at their home campus.

JS2S Program Objective:

To provide the student who is relocating with the critical edge for a successful transition.

What is the purpose of JS2S?

- To rapidly meet the transitioning students' critical needs.
- To quickly bring transitioning students relevant information from a credible, relatable source: another student.
- To immediately establish a peer relationship thereby helping students to gain greater confidence, enhance their comfort level, and increase their sense of well being while they adjust to their new environment.

Why does JS2S work?

- JS2S training meets real transitioning needs.
- JS2S leadership is provided by the students.
- JS2S is timely.
- JS2S curriculum is based on—and continually reviewed—in light of current research.

What information is covered during the JS2S training?

- Change and Transition
- Finding the way module
- Academic module
- Relationship building

The final objective of a JS2S training event is the creation by each middle school of a customized JS2S campus action plan to take back and implement in a timely manner. The newly trained core group will then initiate a training cycle that brings more students in the school's JS2S organization with all JS2S members becoming trained and available to assist incoming and exiting students.