Why Does Middle School Transition Matter?
Because the quality of a student’s transition to middle school sets the course for their educational future.

Middle School students who consistently miss school have lower grades or fall a grade level behind, are statistically more likely to drop out of high school or, even worse, not make it to high school at all.

What would happen if older students at your school were given the resources, the skill and the permission to help change this…and the structure to do it?

Providing a transition structure that connects 8th graders to your incoming 6th graders and includes effective training and the necessary support to make the relationship meaningful, allows your 6th graders to focus on school, rather than avoiding bullies and wondering how or if they’re going to fit in.

In other words, to help 6th graders succeed, we need to help them transition.

WEB’s main goal is to successfully transition 6th graders by addressing the three fundamental transition needs that every student has: Safety, Information and Connection.

Safety
Most schools interpret student safety as the need to keep negative influences/people/events from entering the school environment. As a result, a significant amount of money and resources are invested in security to seal off the campus from the outside world and make it harder for those things to get in. While this is obviously important and does need to be addressed, it is not the only safety issue students face at school.

Those inside schools know there’s a far greater safety issue that students face on a daily basis: keeping them safe from the negative forces within the school walls and halls. Bullying, rumors, isolation, and harassment are far more likely to pose safety risks on the average campus than external violence.

WEB allows students to have a trusted source of safety from their first moments on their school campus, the 8th grade WEB Leaders. This group of students become advocates, protectors and guardians for the 6th graders, making sure they are not being bullied and, if they are, taking appropriate action to stop it. WEB Leaders help stop the bullying by being positive examples to their own peer groups as well as by being a safe place for a bullied 6th grader to turn to for help.

Information
To make a successful transition, we need the what, where, how, and when to aid us on our journey. In schools, this translates to, among other things, students wanting to know what
classes they have to take, where those classes are, what rules are important, what opportunities are available, and where they have to be when.

The challenge comes in getting this information to the students in an accurate and timely manner and in a format that will resonate to them. Many schools gather large groups of new students and parents together and talk at them. They might also post the information everywhere they think parents or students will look: newsletters, websites, and bulletin boards.

WEB address the need for information by creating a dissemination process that uses the student-to-student relationship; this includes both one on one interactions and connection in small groups. This makes it far more likely that critical information is received and remembered. Additionally, 6th graders now have a trusted source of information they can turn to should they have other questions or need to know more about something.

**Connection**

Even when students feel safe and informed, their transition into a new school may not be successful if they do not develop a genuine sense of connection to it. In every transition in our lives we need to feel a sense of connection to the new situation, whatever it may be. Whether it’s a new job, a new child, or a new reality in our own lives, part of our success in that transition depends on our connection to it.

This is true for students as well; the more connected they are to their school, the better they will do in all the measures that are important in tracking their success: grades, test scores, attendance, and discipline. When students are connected to school, they want to be there, and this makes all the difference. Students who are connected to school and to each other perform better.

Unlike the two other components to a successful transition, safety and information, the connection part of transition is left to chance. Schools’ efforts to address this crucial component of transition is to offer co-curricular activities, athletics, and special events in the hopes that kids will join and connect. But, unfortunately, only a few numbers of students take advantage of these offerings. Confident students, those who have older siblings or a lot of friends can easily navigate the world of extra-curricular activities. But what about those who are timid, lack confidence or simply don’t know what to do or how to join? Sadly, even the most robust co-curricular programs only involve a percentage of the students.

With WEB, 6th graders can ask their older WEB Leader about activities and get encouragement to join. WEB Leaders can recommend and help the 6th grader with the process of deciding to become involved in school activities, thus fostering a deeper connection to both the school and to their peers.

The transition to middle school is crucial, and yet there are limited resources and little focus given to this significant event. With WEB, you implement a structure that connects every incoming 6th grader with a caring 8th grader from their first day of school through the end of the year. This
structure is the foundation for helping your 6th graders feel safe, informed and connected to their new school, thus ensuring a successful middle school transition.