Transition Camp: To High School and Beyond

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Transition Camp students learned teamwork at the USU challenge course

Evenings were for fun, enjoying activities, creating dances, and playing games with new friends.

Transitions are a big deal, and the school years between middle school and college are full of them. Summer is a perfect time to help students prepare, learn new skills, and experience a college campus. This summer, over 200 students, teachers, and mentors spend three days at Utah State University in Logan learning new and useful skills and making friends.

Students spent their days in workshops learning about everything from math and reading approaches, to organizational skills and how to ask for help. A highlight of this camp included a visit to USU’s outdoor challenge course, a high ropes course emphasizing teamwork and other skills. Evenings were for fun, enjoying the pool and recreation areas, creating original dances, and playing games with new friends.

Teachers and site coordinators from our school’s GEAR UP programs served as chaperones. One teacher that I talked to was Becca Proper, an English and Spanish teacher from Ephraim Middle School. This was her first USU STARS! GEAR UP camp experience and second time on campus, and she was impressed. “I really like that they did some fun getting-to-know-you games, and I think that broke the ice for them initially,” said Proper. “While we were in our training they were out getting hot and sweaty and playing tug-o-war, and I can tell that they really bonded.”

“Being on a college campus is really cool. I heard one girl say ‘I had no idea that the dorms would be this cool. I thought they would be like a bunch of people shoved in a really small place,’” said Proper. “And I said ‘does it make you want to go to college?’ and she said ‘yes.’ so I think the exposure to college is really important to help them see campus life is fun.”

College students and recent graduates served as mentors, connecting with the students and creating a safe environment for learning. Rules were set early on in camp so that students knew what was expected of them at all times, and who was watching out for them. This improved the experience for both students and teachers. “I can tell that their counselors know their kids and they know when one is missing, and they are trained really well,” said Proper.

Transition Camp took place from June 26-28. This year, the fifth for the camp, there were 153 students, 30 mentors, and 20 chaperones involved to make camp a success. They came from across Utah, including West Valley City, Draper, South Salt Lake City, Ephraim, Logan, Gunnison, Moroni, and Clearfield. This camp is one of five camps offered by STARS! GEAR UP on the USU Logan campus this summer. Partners supporting this camp included Academic Success Center and the ROTC program at USU.

The STARS! GEAR UP program hosts summer activities for students and school staff on the USU campus, as well as in other areas of the state, through the Granite School District, USU Extension, and at Snow College. Professional development for teachers and staff is provided under the leadership of the School of Teacher Education and Leadership in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education & Human Services, along with support of faculty and staff from the College of Engineering and the College of Science.

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