

Making Transitions Easier

There are many transitions students make throughout their education: home to school, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, high school to college, college to work. Each transition can be very stressful for students. Transitions are a combination of excitement of the new but also fear of the unknown.

There are activities that parents and teachers can do to help ease a transition - the sooner the better!

Home to School: The Beginning!

This can be a traumatic day for both students and parents! It is normal for many young children to cry or fuss when they are faced with a new experience such as pre-school or kindergarten. Toni Bickart and Fran Simon have compiled a list of tips to help parents and students have a "Successful First Day!":

1. Have your child meet his or her teacher before the first day of school!
2. Visit your child's classroom before the first day of school!
3. Have your child bring a "special object" with them, such as a blanket or toy. Check with the teacher first but having an object will create comfort for the student.
4. Give the child a picture of your family that they can keep in their bag or desk - just so they know you are still close by!
5. Get names of other children in the class and have a play date. Your child will be comforted by familiar faces in the classroom.
6. Check out the school's playground before school starts!
7. Do pretend play with your child on how you will go to school and how you will say goodbye! Including, what to wear, having breakfast, taking a bus and saying goodbye.
8. Agree on a good-bye ritual with your child before the actual good-bye. For example, one hug, two kisses and a high five.
9. Make sure your child knows how he or she is getting home, who is picking him or her up, and what time.
10. Find something about the schedule that you can discuss with your child such as lunch or recess.
11. Plan the menu! Have your child help you make lunch so they can be excited when they eat it.
12. Put a special note in their lunch or backpack so they have a little surprise mid-day.
13. Make sure you have enough time in the morning. A rushed morning can cause more anxiety and stress for the new student!
14. Find out with the teacher if you can stay for a little bit before saying "Good Bye" right away!
15. When it's time to go, GO! Don't hang around - even though it might be hard for you, you will be a distraction to your child and delay their new experience.



Elementary to Junior High: The Middle

Remember! This is a big change too! Yes, your child has been in school for years now but that was *elementary*! Middle school means changing classes, no recess, reduced parent involvement, carpools or buses, getting through crowded halls and finding his or her way around ALONE. Parents can help their "more mature" students become accustomed to the change, maybe they won't be sitting in tears like back in Pre-School or Kindergarten but the anxiety might still be there!

According to the American School Counselor Association, here are a few things you can do:

1. Visit the School! No one likes to be wandering around, confused and lost - Give your student a chance to see their new stomping grounds.
2. Discuss Expected Changes! Middle School means more work, more responsibilities, different schedules, and more consequences for bad behavior.
3. Shopping List - Students now need their own school supplies. On the first day, bring one notebook and a pen and make a list of what is needed because different subjects require different needs.
4. Backpacks! While some middle schools have lockers, some students have to carry their books class to class. Students need strong backpacks to protect their backs with big books to carry!
5. Dress Code - Some schools have uniforms, while others do not. Now is the time when popularity and trends come out, teach your Middle Schooler that they will be meeting new people and reaffirm the "Golden Rule."
6. Talk to your child about what they can do to make Middle School better! Band, Sports, Plays or School Council? Middle School is a mini-High School, the more accustomed your middle schooler is to their opportunities, the easier their next transition will be.

Here are some books that are ideal for new students:

- * Brown, Marc. *Arthur's Teacher Trouble*
- * Bridwell, Norman. *Clifford's First School Day.*
- * Howe, James. *The Day the Teacher Went Bananas*
- * Jackson, Ellen. *It's Back to School We Go!*
- * Parish, Herman. *Amelia Bedella Goes Back to School.*

High School and Work

Balancing Work and School: Money vs. Mind Management

Your student has already been through a few transitions by now and for most students this is the third school they've attended. It's balancing work, extra-curricular activities and social lives that is harder. While employment can help organize and add structure to a high school student's life, it can also add chaos and confusion if not done in moderation. Here are some tips that will help a student balance their busy schedules:

1. Keep an Agenda book or make a "To-do" list every day. Check things off as you go!
2. Think of all that wasted time! Car rides, watching television, hitting the snooze button - Use this time to get some reading done or go through flash cards!
3. Plan your work schedule in advance. Start working a few hours of week and see how you can balance it with your school work. If you aren't too stressed, take on a few more hours each week. Designate a set schedule. If you have to work Monday after school, make sure Monday nights are free for school work.
4. Don't just study the night before a test. Look over notes daily, so the day before a test won't be too hectic.
5. Avoid conflicts! Try to plan your week far in advance so you can study and work without conflicting schedules.
6. Working part-time and attending school is a lot of hours for a student. It means that other activities, such as hanging out with friends or sports may have to be put on the back burner. Always remember what is important and prioritize!
7. Schedule relaxation time too! With all the obligations on your schedule, it may be overwhelming. Plan on a night in with a movie or good book and you'll have something to look forward to during busy days!
8. Be honest with your boss. If you are scheduled too many hours, let him or her know. They would rather you be honest and able to work efficiently than if you were stressed about school or tests.
9. Get a good night's sleep! While it may seem that late night is the only time you have to study, remember that if you are not fully rested, you will not function as well at school.
10. Lastly, try to find a part-time job that interests you! If you like sports, try to find a job related, such as at a sports store or coaching young kids or if you like animals, try a pet store or in a vet's office! While you may not love what you are doing, look around and watch your older co-workers. It may help you figure out what you'd like to be later on in life.



A Few High School Transition Tips

High School - Could be the best time or the worst time depending on what end of the social totem pole your child is on. Social groups are changing, new people and cliques are emerging, there is a chance of being teased or teasing others, harder work, larger classes and other issues involved with moving to this unfamiliar school. According to Kidsource.com, there are a few things that parents and students can do to help ease the transition:

1. Have a buddy. There must be someone that your child knows in the high school already such as an older sibling, cousin, neighbor or friend's older sibling. This person can be a mentor and coach for your child.
2. Encourage your child to get involved! Band, Athletics, Drama or Arts - there are so many open possibilities in high school.
3. Set goals for your student and have your student set goals for themselves! Straight A's? Never be late? Always do their homework? Start small and work up.

According to DJ Mac Iver's article "Meeting the Needs of Young Adolescents," a high school transition program should be set up for middle school students to move on towards high school, including:

1. Provide parents and students with information about the new school.
2. Provide students with social support, either from family, friends or teachers, during the transition.
3. Bring middle and high school teachers, administrators and even students together to learn about different changes in curriculum, discipline and requirements.