

## Helping Your Child Make Successful Transitions

### **Transition from Home to Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten**

Beginning preschool or kindergarten is a transition that holds many changes for children. The importance of parents' involvement in their child's transition from home to school cannot be stressed enough. With the support of a caring parent, this transition can be a positive experience for a child, giving him or her a sense of self-confidence and accomplishment.

- Give your child opportunities to leave you and spend time fun times with other adults and children.
- Talk about school in positive ways.
- Give your child opportunities to play with items like scissors, crayons, pencils, markers, paint and paper.
- Read books to your child and talk about the pictures and the story.
- Encourage your child's independence by letting him/her follow simple directions and by letting him/her do tasks on his/her own.
- Take your child to visit the school. Playing on the playground, touring the building, and finding the bathrooms are helpful activities at this time.
- Ask your child what he/she thinks school will be like. You may learn that your child understands what to expect, or you may find that he/she has unrealistic fears or misunderstandings. Listen and talk about school.
- Visit the bus stop or walk the route to school.
- Expect your child's transition to be successful. Remember the adjustment will take time.
- Your positive outlook can help your child; let him know you are confident in his ability to do well.

## Transition from Elementary School to Middle School

Preparing for middle school is a crucial point in a lifetime of learning. While elementary school focuses on the student, and high school solidifies his skills, middle school is when your child will decide how important education is to him. Middle-school lessons will not simply teach facts — they will also teach how these facts carry over into real life. Long-term interdisciplinary units will call for creative, agile thinking. Block scheduling (a series of longer class sessions spread over a one- or two-week period) will let your child immerse himself in complex, multi-dimensional topics.

- Visit the middle school. Help your child figure out the layout and find out how the school is organized. See if you can get a tour and walk around until your child has a sense of where to find classes, the library, the gym, and the cafeteria. Remind him/her that it will look different when there are hundreds of kids crowding the halls.
- See if your student can meet some of his/her teachers or the school counselor. Knowing what a few teachers look like can make your student feel more comfortable.
- Clothes. The idea of going to school looking decidedly uncool is terrifying. Help your child think about how he/she wants to present himself/herself the first day. Acquaint yourself with the school dress code.
- Mornings. Before school starts, get everyone used to going to bed and getting up earlier. A tired child isn't going to do well in school. Set up a healthy [sleep](#) routine .
- Get organized. If the school requires that he/she have certain materials, make sure he's/she's got them well before the first day of school. If obtaining such supplies is beyond your budget, contact the counselor's office to find out what programs are in place so your child has what he/she needs.
- Set up a study corner. There will be more academic demands, with more and harder homework. Work with your student to set up a place for doing homework during the middle school years.
- Talk with your child about the new peer group. Remind him/her to hang back during the first few weeks to see who they want to be friends with, who they should maybe stay away from, who is friendly, and who isn't. Once a student gets identified with a particular group, it's hard to change it. Encourage him/her to take the time to decide who he/she really wants to hang with.
- Talk about bullying. Talk about how not to get caught up in participating with the bullies and what to do if he/she becomes bullied.
- Substance abuse. Like it or not, your child's values and your teaching about values will be challenged during the middle school years. Being clear about your own values and having calm discussions well ahead of time can help your child develop the strength to [make good decisions](#).
- Talk about romance. But most kids don't start pairing off until middle school. Talk about being respectful of self and of others. Talk about what it means to be loving and in love. Most important, talk about how important it is to explore many different relationships so they can make a good choice for a mate later on in life.
- The transition to the middle school years is often as challenging for parents as it is for the students. We're saying goodbye to [childhood](#) and hello to the beginnings of adolescence. By taking the time to do some thoughtful planning and to have some very important discussions, parents can set the tone for success in the preteen years.

## Transition from Middle School to High School

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The importance of parent involvement in a child's life during the teen years is undeniable. While adolescents want independence and time with friends, they continue to depend on the care and guidance of their parents.

The transition from middle to high school can be a stressful time with many uncertainties. Unfortunately, many parents are less involved in their child's education during these years because their child is more independent and has multiple teachers to keep in touch with.

Taking time to get involved in your child's education can greatly influence his/her success in school and in life. When parents work together with their child to help him/her navigate the changes from middle to high school, the result is a confident teen ready to try new experiences, develop new friendships and set high expectations for success.

- Attend planning meetings for choosing high school courses with your child.
- Ask your child about his/her goals for high school and after high school. Listen.
- Help your child set high and realistic goals.
- Tell your child about your hopes for his future.
- Ask the school for information and a school handbook prior to the beginning of the year. This should be provided in your home language. Read this information and talk about it with your child.
- Check out the school Web site.
- Ask about opportunities for students to shadow a high school student.
- Attend orientations and open house events.
- Visit the school building with your child before the school year begins to help him/her become familiar with the new building.
- Talk with your child about what clubs, teams or other activities he/she can join at school.
- Encourage your child to develop relationships with other students with similar interests.
- Talk with other parents and students about their experiences in this school.
- Ask open-ended questions like, "How's it going?" or "What have you been learning?"
- Make comments like, "You seem upset. What happened?" Then listen.
- Expect your child's transition to be successful. Remember the adjustment will take time. Your positive outlook can help your child; let him know you are confident in his ability to do well.