



Successful School Transitions: Tips for Parents

Normalizing the Transition/ Emotional Support

- Anxiety during times of transition is normal. Do not minimize your child's fears or concerns. Validate these feelings for your child. Set up a plan with your child to help address his/her fears. Spend time walking by the school, go to any "meet and greet" opportunities, talk with older children who have been to the school, etc.
- Reinforce your child's ability to cope. Children absorb their parents' anxiety, so model optimism and confidence for your child. Remain calm and positive.
- It's important to keep communication open. Listen to your child. Involve your child in discussions, rather than lecturing. Find low-stress times to listen and engage in discussions with your child. For instance, before bed, while walking or driving to/from school.
- For middle school children, attend the Back to School day for all 6th graders in August. Students get their schedules, and walk through their daily routine. They also try out their lockers. This is an opportunity for your child to get acquainted with the campus.
- Remember, everyone is new in 6th grade – a little excited, a little nervous. But they are all learning how to find places on campus, remembering where their classes are, locker combinations, etc. Everyone is meeting new students and staff.

General Guidelines

- Maintain routines, including healthy sleep and eating habits.
- Establish and maintain agreed upon rules surrounding television and technology.

Homework

- Have a designated time and space for your child to do homework.
- Encourage your child to attempt homework independently. Praise effort and persistence, not accuracy. Have consequences in place when work is not completed/turned in.
- Encourage self-advocacy for your child. With older children, encourage them to approach his/her teacher when homework is not complete, an assignment is confusing, etc.
- Teach, model, and encourage systems for organization and approach to homework and studying. Systems may include use of calendars, checklists, post-it notes to summarize text, timed breaks, etc.
- In middle school, most teachers have online student management systems that allow parents to track their child's homework and progress.

Friends/Social Connections

- Connect with friends over the summer.
- Keep connected with social/religious/extracurricular groups outside of the school.
- Middle school brings new challenges, from physical changes to pressure from peers. Children may feel more pressure to "fit in". Be there to listen to your child. Encourage varied friendships.
- Middle schools have many clubs and extracurricular activities. This is a great opportunity for all students to get involved in an area they are interested in. This can foster motivation and joy.

Health/Wellness

- Discuss with your child the benefits and risks of communication via social media. Children (and adults) want to present their "best self" on social media platforms – to show their life in the best possible light. It is not a good "assessment" of one's truth. Research has also linked social media use to a decrease in social skills and happiness.
- Monitor technology use. Set family rules and limits for technology use. Know that it is okay to maintain your family rules with your child, even when other children may have different rules. Have clear consequences established as a family when rules are not followed. Talk with other parents about how technology can be monitored.

- Communicate with school administration any incidents of possible bullying, threats, etc. Encourage your child to share information with you if they or someone they know/hear about may be involved in something unsafe.
- For students beginning to start puberty, the American Girl “Body Book” series provides information for children about changes in our bodies, in clear, understandable language.

Growing Independence

- Model for your child the values you hold. Show a positive attitude toward learning and school. Children emulate what they see us do!
- Encourage effort and perseverance over grades or final outcomes. Praise their efforts and persistence!
- Encourage your child to take healthy risks. Try out for a new sports activity, a play, musical endeavor; join a club.
- Let your child struggle, and be there for them to offer support – not as a rescue. Let your child experience natural consequences.

Students with Special Needs

- For students with IEPs, transition meetings take place to meet and make a connection with middle school staff, and pass along important information and put supports in place.
- For students with IEPs, while students have up to 6 teachers, the Case Carrier is the primary point of contact for the family. This person can help parents navigate the communication system within the school. The Case Carrier has your child’s IEP, and is aware of his or her needs.
- For students with IEPs, if ESY is recommended, it is a good way to get familiar with the campus, staff and students in a more relaxed atmosphere.
- For children with fine motor challenges, ask about alternatives to the standard locks on lockers. They have locks that spin, use a key, or spell out a word.



Transitions... a Flow Map of Where You Want Your Child to Go



Now

Summer

The Next Year

