

# Transiency – How Changing Schools Can Harm a Child

**What it is:** When children switch schools frequently, they are considered transient. The children who are most harmed by switching schools are those who switch schools often, especially mid-year, and those who are already struggling with academics, behavior, or social skills.

**What it's not:** A single switch to a new school when your family moves or changing from the elementary to the secondary school within the say school system.

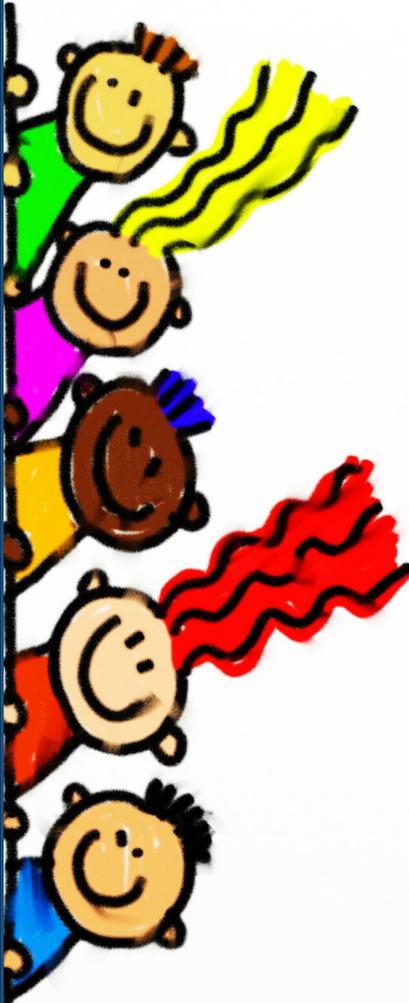
**Why it's important:** Students who switch schools miss critical instruction which can make learning very difficult. Some parents believe that all schools use the same teaching tools and teach skills in the same order, but that is far from the truth. School A could teach a particular skill in early fall while School B teaches it in late fall. A student who moves from school B to school A would miss being taught that skill. That happens for many, many skills, throughout the year, especially in reading and math instruction. The problem is made more serious with each move. Students who are transient end up missing so much instruction!

**Highly mobile elementary students are often a full year behind their peers.**

Students who switch schools may also struggle with social interaction and behavior problems as well, in part because learning becomes challenging, but also because they may have a difficult time forming friendships and support networks.

**Ways to help your child:** If you must switch your child's school, there are steps to take to minimize the negative effects.

- Schedule the move to occur during the summer or at semester break, if at all possible.
- Before the move, spend time talking to your child's teacher. Compile a packet to share with the new school that explains your child's learning strengths and needs. Ask your child's teacher if you can share his or her phone number or email address with the new teacher.
- Look for the best choice for a new school.



- Sign your child up for any and all learning opportunities in your new school community, such as library story hours, summer school, and after-school academic support. These types of activities can help lessen the impact of switching schools.
- Sign your child up for social-networking opportunities in your new school community so they can build friendships and connections with their new peers.
- Schedule a meeting to talk with the new teacher and share information about your child. Take copies of past report cards, any Reading Plan, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), 504 plan, or health plan, if your child had/has any of these.
- Before the move and also once your child starts their new school, increase the amount of time you are spending with your child as they do homework. This will help you identify areas that are a challenge for your child. Homework represents only a small part of what your child is learning each day. Homework is typically just practice on skills that have been taught already at school. If your child is struggling with the homework, it's a red flag that they missed some important instruction. It's critical to communicate with your child's new teacher so they know what skills are missing for your child. Ask what you can do at home to help your child catch up.

**Ways to help your child:** If you are considering moving because you are unhappy with our school, please talk to us first. We want to do everything we can to teach your child!

- Make an appointment to talk with your child's teacher. Express your concerns and ask what can be done so that you do not need to switch schools.
- Talk to the school principal to express your concerns.
- Ask what additional supports are available that your child could access. Sometimes parents are unaware of the options such as after school academic support available.

### References:

Sanderson, Donna R. "Engaging highly transient students." *Education*, vol. 123, no. 3, 2003, p. 600+. *Academic OneFile*, Accessed 18 Sept. 2017.

Schafft, K. A. (2006), Poverty, Residential Mobility, and Student Transiency within a Rural New York School District\*. *Rural Sociology*, 71: 212–231.