



DeSoto County Schools

The Transition from Middle School to High School: **A Guide for Educators and Parents**

The transition from middle school to high school can be a challenging experience for students and their families. During this time of change, your child(ren) may also begin to desire more independence as he/she feels him/herself stepping into adulthood. Concurrently, there is a misconception that parents should decrease their involvement in their child's personal, educational, and social lives upon the start of high school. While it is important to refrain from being an overbearing parent, it is very important that you stay engaged in your child's growth as it is proven that family involvement leads to greater academic success and higher graduation rates ("High School is Happening", 2015).

While there are a wide variety of reservations your teenager may have, common concerns for budding high schoolers include:

- Why does my body look so different (height, weight, physical changes from puberty)?
- Do I have gender identity questions? Who do I talk to?
Does anyone care about me?
- Do my teachers know my name?

- Will I get bullied by older students?
- What if high school is too hard for me and I get bad grades?
- Who am I?
- What if I get lost and can't find my classrooms?
- What if my friends from middle school don't go to the same high school as me?
- Will I make new friends?
- What if I don't live up to my parent's expectations?
- Will my new classmates or older kids make fun of my appearance when changing in the lockers before P.E.?

How Can Parents Help?

1. Keep a calendar that everyone in the family uses on a daily basis.
2. Attend school activities that are open to parents.
3. Volunteer at your child's school.
4. Stay informed by reading information sent home by the school (policies, curriculum, grading, monthly newsletter, etc.).
5. Monitor your child's academic, social, and developmental progress.

Did you know... (Adapted from Georgia Dept. of Education)

- Family involvement in high school leads to a shorter adjustment period in 9th grade, greater academic success, and higher graduation rates.
- Teenagers perform better in school and are less likely to drop out when they possess a strong connection with an adult that teaches and mentors.
- Students that participate in engaging transition events planned by school officials, teachers, and parents are less likely to drop out of high school.

- A positive correlation exists between a teen's success in high school and family involvement in education. Positive, open communication along with realistic expectations are extremely important in reaching this success.
- The more success a student experiences as a ninth grader, the more likely he/she is to graduate and enjoy high school ("High School is Happening", 2015).

Challenges and Supports

(Adapted from Sylvan Learning)

The changes that your child and family will experience during the transition to high school can be overwhelming. It is especially important to keep a watchful eye over your child as he/she is exposed to academic challenges, drugs, alcohol, peer pressure, bullying, and more. Below you will find important information on how to help your child(ren) stay safe and healthy throughout high school.

Academic Challenges

What We know

- More than half of all freshman in the top 35 cities of America have a reading proficiency recommended for sixth graders.
- Teenagers that watch less than three hours of television a day perform better in reading/writing exams compared to those that watch more than three hours of television a day.
- Those who are comfortable reading and writing tend to score better in mathematics.
- Commend and support the effort your child makes to learn.
- Stay informed and involved in your child's academic obligations (homework, projects, exams, etc.) If needed, provide help and/or speak with teachers for advice on how to assist your child.

- Children commonly inherit their parent's tendencies, so set a good example – turn off all media devices and spend some time reading or writing every day.
- Monitor your child's progress in adapting to and overcoming his/her learning differences.

Know the Warning Signs

- Spelling the same word differently in the same piece of writing.
- Refusing to read or write when asked, and becoming anxious.
- Misinterpreting clear directions and information.
- Taking longer than normal to learn reading strategies.
- Struggling to remember or understand what your child is reading.

What Parents Can Do?

1. Be open with your child about his/her academic challenges and accept them, creating a comfortable environment.
2. Referring to your child's challenges as disabilities is detrimental to his/her self-esteem; Rather, refer to them as differences so your child remains confident in his/her ability to perform.

The Internet

What We Know According to National Statistics

- 8 to 18 year olds spend more than 50 hours a week on social media.
- Approximately 7 out of every 10 teenagers do not have rules on how much time they can spend on social media per day.
- Teenagers with rules on media use spend approximately 3 hours less per day on internet platforms when compared to those with no rules.
- About 70% of children ages 7 to 18 have stumbled across online

pornography on accident (usually while using the web search engine for homework).

- Nearly 90% of teenage females claim that they can chat online with anyone without their parents knowing.
- 54% of teenage females believe they can maintain a cyber relationship without their parents knowing.

(“GuardChild, 2016 & “Daily Media Use Among Children and Teens Up Dramatically From Five Years Ago,” 2010).

What Parents Can Do?

1. Speak openly and regularly with your child about the use of the internet and other media sources.
2. Talk about internet safety and how to act appropriately on social media websites (Facebook, Instagram, etc).
3. Be mindful of the popular social media sources such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, SnapChat, etc. that your child uses.
4. Children learn by example. Make sure to filter the sites you visit and moderate the time you spend on the internet.

Tips for Success (Adapted from Georgia Dept. of Education)

The start of high school is like a storm; the initial experience can feel turbulent and difficult, but eventually the storm diminishes and sunny skies return. Students undergo social, emotional, physical, and academic growth in high school as they near adulthood, and they need your help. The most important topics to be aware of are self-dependence, responsibility, academic performance, and preparing life after high school. Below you will find important tips regarding these topics to help you assist your teenager in creating a joyful high school experience with positive memories and lasting friendships.

Becoming Self-Dependent

- Encourage your teenager to explore extracurricular activities.
- Make sure to actively listen as this naturally opens the conversation to ideas and solutions. (Please use this link for more information regarding this topic <http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/strategies.html>).
- Urge your teenager to express feelings and concerns using words.
- Encourage establishing trusted adult mentors for further support.

Developing Student Responsibility

- Show your teenager how to remain up-to-date with class material – set small, timely goals to fulfill larger objectives in the future.
- Teach time management skills and monitor your teenager's improvements.
- Discuss the importance of communicating openly and effectively with peers and staff when working on group activities.
- Help your teenager create a calendar that he or she uses daily
- Keep track of your teen's grades and attendance.
- Encourage your teenager to set aside time to relax with friends and family. Stress the importance of self-care and balance.

Academic Performance

- Keep track of your teen's grades and overall performance in each class throughout the year.
- If you are concerned, set up meetings with teachers/counselors to discuss your teen's growth.
- Create a home environment conducive to learning/studying.
- Make sure your teen is meeting all school graduation requirements. Work with your teenager collaboratively to set goals and expectations.

- Attend parent discussions and workshops hosted by your teen's school.

Preparing for Life After High School

- Regularly refer to your teen's four-year plan as he or she progresses through high school.
- Explore opportunities such as job shadowing for your teenager to gain insight into various professional fields.
- Discuss post-graduation plans proactively. Be mindful that your student may have ideas to partake in something other than college (gap-year experiences, job opportunities, and more)
--<http://www.pamf.org/teen/life/school/alterpaths.html> (link contains information on alternative paths after high school).
- Support your student's efforts to explore prospective universities, gap-year experiences, and more.
- Attend all college and career events near you.
- For additional details on preparing for the transition from high school to college and adulthood, please visit:
<https://www.settogo.org/>.

Information obtained from Toolkit for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention-Compiled by: Shashank V. Joshi, MD, Mary Ojakian, RN, Linda Lenoir, RN, MSN, CNS, and Jasmine Lopez, MA, NCC