

STARTING HIGH SCHOOL

A Guide for Parents



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Dear Parent,

Starting high school is a big step. High schools are usually larger in size, the coursework is often more difficult, and the grades are more important. Students are also going from being the oldest kids in the school to being the youngest.

During this time of transition, it's important to keep the lines of communication open, and to provide your new high school student with lots of encouragement and support.

This book will show you how you can help your child make a smooth, successful transition to high school.

Here's to a great school year!

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COMMON Student Concerns

While most students are excited about starting high school, many are also a little apprehensive.

Here is a list of some of the concerns that new high school students often have. Use this list to start a conversation with your child about any concerns he/she may be having.

- Being Late to Class
- **Getting Lost**
- **Making New Friends**
- Being Teased or Bullied
- **Having Someone to Sit With at Lunch**
- Remembering Their Schedule
- Classes That Are Challenging
- **Dressing for P.E.**
- **More Homework**



Discussing the topics covered in this book will help alleviate your child's concerns, and show your child how to have a successful start to this very important year.

COMMUNICATION Is Key

Keeping the lines of communication open during the first few weeks of school is very important. Here are some tips to help you do this.

▶ **Ask open-ended questions**

Instead of “How was school?” say “Tell me about your day.” Or ask “What are you studying in science?” “What’s that book about?” “What did you have for lunch?”

▶ **Be available to listen**

Timing is important. Be available to listen when your child wants to talk, and look for times when he/she is most likely to be open to conversation (when you’re fixing dinner, driving in the car, before bed, etc.).



▶ **Recognize your child’s concerns**

Something that may seem like a small thing to you could be a big thing to your teenager. If your child has a concern or problem, listen attentively, and help him/her figure out how to deal with it and move forward.

▶ **Pay attention to nonverbal communication**

Teenagers aren’t always able to put into words the things they need you to know. It is, therefore, important to pay attention to your child’s body language, eating and sleeping patterns, moods, and school performance. These can be good indicators of how things are going at school and with friends.

LEARN ABOUT Your Child's School

At the beginning of the year, students are concerned about what to wear, what their friends are doing, and getting used to a new schedule. They're not thinking about some of the more important, but less exciting, things such as the school's attendance policy.

Many schools schedule a day prior to the start of school for students to tour the building and find their classes. Make sure that you have this date marked on your calendar.



Learn about the following, and share the most important and pertinent information with your teenager. (All of the following topics will most likely be discussed in your school's handbook and/or on their website.)

School Calendar

Every school has a calendar that shows when grading periods begin and end, when parent-teacher conferences are scheduled, and when school will be closed for holidays and vacations. Write these dates on your calendar at home.

School Rules and Policies

All schools have rules and policies regarding student conduct. Learn about your school's dress code, cell phone and attendance policies, rules regarding medications, etc.

Class Schedule

Check your child's class schedule to make sure that he/she is in the correct courses. If you ever feel that a course is too difficult or "not right" for your student, talk to your child's counselor.

Extracurricular Activities

Students who participate in school activities generally enjoy school more and get better grades. Find out what activities are available at your school and encourage your student to get involved in at least one activity.



School Counselor

Counselors help students choose their courses, monitor student progress, and help students deal with difficult situations. Find out who your child's counselor is and make sure he/she knows how to go about making an appointment. *Counselors are also a great resource for parents.*

Eligibility Requirements

High schools have eligibility requirements that students must meet before they can play a sport. These requirements may also apply to students who participate in activities such as cheerleading and student government. If you have questions, talk to the athletic director or see the school counselor.

Check Information Online

Many teachers post grades and homework assignments online, and email is often the preferred way of communicating with teachers. Take advantage of your school's online communication systems, and check your school's website regularly for information and updates.

A BLUEPRINT For Success

High school students are becoming more independent and self sufficient, but they still need direction, guidance, and support from their parents.



Here are some specific things you can do to help your student get the school year off to a great start.

▶ **Purchase school supplies**

Make sure your child has the tools he/she needs before school starts. In addition to paper, pens, and pencils, students need folders, notebooks, a calculator, alarm clock, and an assignment notebook (if your school doesn't provide planners).

▶ **Provide a place to study**

Your student needs a place to study that's quiet, well-lit, and comfortable. This area should have a surface for writing and be equipped with supplies.

▶ **Insist on good attendance**

Your student needs to be in school on time every day unless he/she is ill. *Attendance is the #1 school success factor!*

▶ **Develop routines**

Having a good morning and nighttime routine makes everyone's day run much smoother. Help your teenager establish routines that include getting to bed at a reasonable hour, and getting up early enough to eat a good breakfast.



▶ **Monitor technology use**

Be aware of how, and for what purposes, your child is using his/her cell phone, laptop, tablet, and/or home computer.

Set limits and guidelines. Limits might include turning off all cell phones during dinner, and/or docking all phones in a common place at 9 pm.

▶ **Set goals**

At the beginning of the year, help your teenager set some academic goals. You might think about what grade he/she should realistically be able to earn in each course for that grading period, or you could focus more on study habits (e.g., have all homework completed by 9:00 each night).

Setting goals will help your child understand what your expectations are, and these goals will give your student something specific to work towards.

▶ **Encourage a healthy lifestyle**

With everything that's going on in their lives, it's important that high school students eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. Have nutritious food at home, make sure that your teenager gets some exercise or does something physical on a regular basis, and insist on a reasonable bedtime.

▶ **Emphasize the importance of education**

Nothing will affect your child's opportunities in life more than education. Make education a top priority in your home.

Monitor Early Grades

Make sure that your student is getting off to a good start in all of his/her classes. If you have a concern about your child's progress in one or more classes, contact the teacher(s).

Help Your Child Get ORGANIZED



In order to keep up with everything, high school students need to have good organization skills.

Use this information to help your child be a more organized, successful student.

► **Planner**

Encourage your child to take his/her planner or assignment notebook to every class, and to use it to record assignments, tests, quizzes, and anything else he/she needs to remember. When used correctly, a planner is a great organization tool.

► **Three-Ring Notebooks**

Using a three-ring notebook with tabs for different classes is a great way to keep notes organized. Handouts can easily be inserted and if your child misses a class, he/she can copy someone else's notes and insert them where they belong.

► **Papers**

Unless your school has gone paperless, your child probably has lots of papers—notes, homework, handouts. Encourage your child to have a specific place for each paper (folder, file, or notebook).

► **Home File**

Create a home file to store anything your child wants to keep or may need later (e.g., returned tests, essays, artwork).

► **Teacher Websites**

Encourage your child to bookmark teacher websites and/or progress books to make it easy to check grades.

Discuss TIME MANAGEMENT

With good time management, students have less stress and more free time. They also feel more in control of their lives.

Go over these tips with your child and encourage your teenager to use his/her time wisely.

1 Use time in school

Encourage your child to use any free time in school to start on homework. He/she will have a lot less to do at night.

2 Develop a study plan

Some students want to get their homework done right after school; others want to take a break and do their homework later. Help your student determine the best time for him/her to do homework.

3 Make a weekly schedule

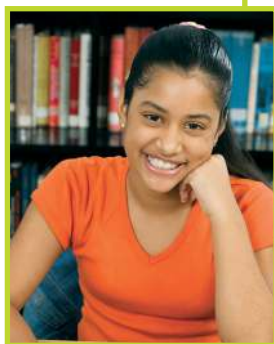
Encourage your child to take time each Sunday night to plan out the coming week—making sure he/she has enough time to do everything that's scheduled.

4 Make good use of extra time

Help your child identify times during the day that are wasted. Discuss how these times can be used more effectively.

5 Limit time wasters

Social media, TV, video games—these can all be huge time wasters. Talk to your child about scheduling short periods of time for these activities.



Encourage Good STUDY HABITS

Most high school students have a significant amount of homework, and a lot more reading to do. Having good study habits is therefore very important.

Everything Counts Now

When a student becomes a freshman, everything starts to “count.” Freshman courses, grades, and credits all become part of a student’s transcript and freshman grades are used to calculate a student’s GPA.

Make sure your student understands the importance of doing his/her best—right from day one.

While some students have developed good study habits by the time they get to high school, many still need assistance and support. If your child’s study habits have room for improvement, use these tips to help your child become a better student.

1. Help organize and prioritize homework

- Before starting on homework, have your child decide exactly what needs to be done, and the order in which he/she is going to do it. For example:
 1. Read short story for English
 2. Do Algebra problems on page 15
 3. Answer Science Review questions
- If your student has a lot to do, help prioritize the work to make sure there’s enough time for the things that are the most important.

2. Help break large assignments down

Large assignments can seem overwhelming, and sometimes students need help figuring out where to begin. Show your student how to break large assignments and projects down into smaller, more manageable tasks.

3. If your child has a question or problem...

Encourage your child to talk to the teacher either before or after class whenever he/she has a question or problem. Teachers are generally happy to help, but students need to let their teacher know they need it.

4. Be available to help—but don't do your child's work

All students need encouragement and support, and many need a little extra help from time to time. Be available to help if your child gets stuck, needs someone to listen to a speech, look over an essay, or help review for a test. However, don't give more help than is wanted, and don't do the work yourself.

If something doesn't get done, don't come to the rescue. If you do, your teenager won't feel the need to be responsible in the future.



Monitor Progress

It's important for students to be successful in their classes, and for them to feel competent and capable. If you see your child struggling in a class or spending an excessive amount of time on homework, contact the teacher and discuss your concerns.

The SOCIAL SCENE

Friends are very important to high school students, and many students have some concerns or apprehensions regarding the high school social scene.

Here are some things you can do to help your child feel good about this very important aspect of high school.



- **Encourage after-school activities**

Extracurricular activities are a great way for teenagers to meet other students with similar interests. Being part of a team, club, or group also gives students a sense of belonging.

- **Maintain family activities**

While being with friends is very important to high school students, doing things with their parents and families provides them with a much needed sense of security.

Spend one-on-one time with your child, plan family outings, and eat dinner as a family as often as possible. During dinner, turn off the TV, silence all phones, and talk about your day.

- **Build self-esteem**

Students with a positive self image are less influenced by peer pressure, and less affected by social concerns. Foster your child's strengths through family activities, developing his/her interests and skills, church activities, volunteering, etc.

■ **Expect friendship shifts**

In high school, friendships often shift and change—a best friend in middle school may now have new interests and be making new friends. Encourage your child to keep his/her “old friends,” and to work on making new ones.

■ **Discuss bullying**

Bullying can sometimes be a problem in high school. If your child ever mentions anything about being bullied or harassed in school or online, find out exactly what has happened, and talk about how to best deal with the situation. You may also want to discuss what’s happened with your child’s counselor or principal.

■ **Promote independence**

If your teenager has a question or problem, try to help your child figure out how to take care of it on his/her own. Being able to get their questions answered and their problems resolved helps students gain confidence, and it gives them a sense of empowerment.

You want your child to become more independent and self-sufficient; however, it’s important for your teen to know that you are always available if he/she ever needs your help.



Final Thoughts

High school students have a lot to deal with, and high school can be stressful at times. More than anything, your teenager needs encouragement, support, and lots of hugs.

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This booklet shows parents how they can help their children make a successful transition to high school—and get high school off to a great start.



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