

Tips to Prepare for Secondary School

As students prepare to graduate from elementary school, an exciting new experience awaits them at the secondary school level. For parents who are preparing students for their first experience with secondary school, there may be many questions and concerns. Here are some tips for parents to help prepare their teens for life beyond elementary school.

- * Consider attending events at the new school such as a sporting event, music concert, theatre production or assembly. This will provide you with an opportunity to get to know the school, its routines and extra-curricular offerings. It's also a great way to meet other parents, the staff and the Principal of the new school.
- * Talk about any anxieties your teen may have before the new school year begins but **avoid retelling negative experiences** from your own high school experience. Reiterate how, like all new situations, high school will take some getting used to, but will provide many new and exciting experiences. Discuss choices and consequences as they relate to new friends.
- * Discuss expectations for homework, assignments and tests, and how each of these will be more demanding at the secondary level. Consider all the extra-curricular community events your teen is currently involved in to determine what, if anything, may have to be dropped or scaled back in order to meet the time demands of school.
- * Make sure that there is a good workspace available for your teen. S/he will likely need additional supplies this year - have them ready before the school year begins. While school projects now require the use of computers and Internet access, it isn't necessary to buy a top-end computer for the home.
- * Find out what additional supplies will be needed for school such as locker locks, binders, paper, dictionaries, art supplies, geometry sets, mathematics aids or gym uniforms. Put off buying specialized school supplies and text-books until your teen has been given a specific list from the teachers.
- * If there is a dress code or uniform used at the new school, find out where you can purchase clothing prior to the start of school. Inquire as to whether the school sponsors a second-hand sale or can supply you with the names of graduating students who may be selling their uniforms.

* Review the new school's yearbook. Find out what extra-curricular activities are offered and encourage your teen to get involved. There are so many opportunities available in high school to help your teen become an active and involved member of the student body.

* Discuss lunch plans, particularly if your son/daughter will be eating in a cafeteria for the first time. Discuss where you expect your child to eat their lunch and where to spend their free time after lunch, as students in secondary school are given more freedom to leave school property. Reiterate the importance of healthy eating and how it affects learning. Talk about the vending machines that will be available at the new school and how to avoid purchasing products from them on a regular basis.

* If your teen will be travelling to school by public transit, ensure that he is familiar with the route. Have an emergency contact available in case there is a problem during the first weeks.

* Before school begins, start a nighttime routine that will allow your teen to get up on time. Most teens stay up late and sleep in late. Remind him/her that getting to school on time will require getting up earlier than may be used to. Even teens need 7 - 9 hours of sleep each night to perform well in school.

* Set clear expectations about attendance and the consequences of skipping classes. Teens need to understand that truancy will not be tolerated by the school, and may result in missed lessons and lost marks. Find out what the policies of the school are in relation to missed classes or lateness. Many schools require a call from parents in advance if a student will be away and a follow-up note from home. Make it clear to your teen that you will be attending all information and student performance feedback sessions and that you will maintain an open dialogue with teachers.

* As a parent, get involved in the School Council and other parent-related events.