

TIPS: Making the transition from middle school to high school painless

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WHAT PARENTS SHOULD LOOK FOR:

1. Well-planned and ongoing transition activities that prepare students for the very different atmosphere of the high school should be a regular part of both schools' plans. In particular, high schools must have a transition plan that does more than register students for classes. The high school should make an effort to learn about your son or daughter by having their high school teachers talk to their middle school teachers and use the information and recommendations to help students make the adjustment.
2. Students should play a major part in transition activities. Their academic and social strengths and needs must be accurately addressed. Students should have significant input, explaining what they are good at and what areas need improvement. To help with this sometimes difficult transition, some high schools place students on teams where they attend classes with other students and get to know their teachers well. Other schools provide advisory programs assigning each student an advisor or mentor—an adult advocate.
3. The school may be different but the kids are not! Some may not be ready to adjust to the more rigid, separate class structure of the high school; others may not have the self-discipline to make it on their own with less teacher attention; still others may not be able to handle the time demands of co-curricular activities and maintain their studies at the same time. The bottom line is that the high school should adjust to the needs of the students, not the other way around. Both schools share in the responsibility for seeing that the transition from middle school to high school is smooth. As more high schools recognize how well common middle school practices like teaming, advisory programs, and academies meet adolescents' needs, the transition process gets easier. In the meantime, every parent should recognize that this transition is not a singular event—it is a process well worth the combined attention of parents, teachers, and students.

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