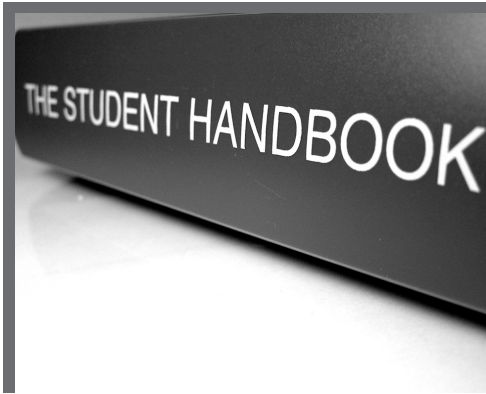


SCHOOL TRANSITION

Starting secondary school presents new experiences which place many demands on children

Children move into secondary school at the same time that they go through puberty. This double whammy means parents need to handle kids with consideration and care.



Being at the bottom of the pecking order where you are unsure of the rules of the playground is just one adjustment to make. Dealing with more than one teacher, changing classrooms for each subject, reading a timetable, altering eating habits and carrying a load of books around is difficult enough without the added task of meeting new people and making friends.

Some kids take these new experiences in their stride but it is natural to experience some difficulty making the transition from primary to secondary school. Here are some positive ideas to help young people make a smooth transition to secondary school:

1. It's time for some supportive parenting. Talk to your child about change and reassure him or her that it

is normal to feel unsure and anxious in new circumstances. Let your child know that any difficulties faced will only be temporary. Some kids may brush you off with a 'she'll be right' attitude but don't be fooled by the bravado. Most will be feeling fairly unsure of themselves.

2. Prepare thoroughly for the first day. Have the correct uniform and books and familiarise your child with transport arrangements.

3. Pair them up with a sibling or a peer. If your child doesn't have a sibling at the school try to pair him or her up with a friend if they walk or use public transport on the first day.

4. Share some of your own memories of starting secondary school, but steer away from any horror first-day stories. It can be reassuring for a child to know that you went through a similar experience and survived. Disclosing in this way shows that you understand how they feel.

5. Confidence is catching. Children often take their cues from their parents so show confidence in their ability to cope.

6. Listen to children in the first few weeks of school. Ask about the new subjects or interesting activities they are doing, and try to shift their focus to the positive aspects of school.

7. Make contact with your child's year level coordinator if you have concerns about how they are settling in. Don't wait for a parent-teacher night.

N.B. If it is your eldest child who is starting then secondary school will be relatively new for you, too. It will take some time to adjust to the school's culture and communication methods. You can learn a great deal by talking with your child and encouraging him or her to share experiences.

In times of change what you and your child need most of all is to communicate with each other.



Parenting ideas
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