

insights



Preparing your child for high school

by Sharon Witt

Entering high school can be just as daunting for parents as it is for a child. It is a huge time of change, and coupled with the fact that starting secondary school often coincides with the onset of puberty, it can be quite a roller-coaster ride!

Spend as much time as you can reassuring your child that they do not have to face this change alone and that it will be, for the most part, a positive experience. Avoid sharing any horror stories you may have experienced as a teenager in high school – these will not help your child. Rather, recall any positive experiences you had, especially if you made life-long friends at high school.

Organisation is crucial to helping your child cope well with entering high school. Those students that are well organised have a much better chance of settling in those first few weeks of secondary school.

Here are 6 tips for preparing your child for high school:

1. Ensure your child has everything they need for high school well before school starts for the year

Having items missing at the beginning of the year will frustrate not only your child but the teachers. Ensure they have enough books to write in for each subject and always have spares on hand at home.

2. Practise using public transport if your child is using it for the first time

For many students, changing schools means they may now have to travel on buses or trains for the first time. Help them to familiarise themselves with the bus/train timetable and offer a contingency if they miss their transport. If possible, practise the trip during the holidays.

3. Set up a designated study space in the home

This tip is so important as so many children don't have a specific area set up to allow them to quietly complete their homework. The bedroom is not recommended as this is purely a space for sleeping and relaxing. Use any area that is reasonably quiet and well lit. Set up a desk with a computer, if possible, along with stationery items.



4. Set up a high school parent folder

This will be a place to file all correspondence so that you can know exactly what is happening for your child at high school, including important dates. If you know what is going on at school, you will be able to help your child feel in control and stay organised. I cannot recommend this highly enough. As a parent you really need to stay on top of school information, at least until your child has established their own routine and systems for staying organised at school.

5. Encourage healthy sleeping patterns at least one week before starting high school

If your child has got into a holiday habit of staying up late and waking up at lunch time, they will get a rude shock come first day of school when their sleeping patterns are all out of whack! Get your child into 'school routine' for sleeping during the final week of the holidays.

6. Keep your child's high school in the loop

Inform your child's new school if they have special needs or learning difficulties. Teachers will benefit from being made aware of any particular needs or special circumstances that will help them in working with your child. If there are any specific family issues that might affect your child's ability to settle into high school, communicate these to your child's class or home-room teacher as soon as you know who they are. Never underestimate the importance of keeping the lines of communication open with your child's school.



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