



7 Ways to Prepare for Middle School and High School Transition



Most students feel excited, and a little nervous, when they start middle school and high school. But, if the students know what to expect, they are likely to feel more confident and relaxed.

Here is some advice to help your preteen and teen feel more on top of things those first few weeks.

1) Logistics are the hardest part

Let's start with middle school, where students' first hurdles are logistical – needing to remember a locker combination, learning the building layout, and getting to class on time.

One safeguard to feeling overwhelmed is early exposure. Parents are urged to make sure their kids visit their future school and attend any orientation or kick-off activities prior to the start of school.

Frisco ISD has a scheduled day for each campus prior to the start of school for students to tour the campus and find their classes. Make sure to mark this date on your calendar.

2) Let them handle challenges on their own

Give preteens and teens the space to handle challenges on their own. That could mean letting them fiddle with their combination lock without stepping in to help. Or, if they come home with a complaint about an assignment or class, pushing them to problem solve for themselves.

Instead of stepping in with a solution, Parents might ask, "Have you spoken with your teacher?"

Homework is another area where parents should show support, but not take over. Parents can help by focusing their praise not on talent or natural ability, but the hard work their child is doing. Praise the effort. Parents can let their kids struggle some and not enable [them].

3) Don't end your involvement; change it

Parent involvement is still important as children grow older – the form just needs to change. Classroom volunteering is usually not appropriate after middle school, but parents can show interest by having dinner with their children, asking about their day and monitoring their phone use and social media presence.

“If parents just wash their hands of it and give them free reign . . . it can be very damaging to kids,” said Bickel. Sixth-graders “want to be treated more like young adults . . . but they’re not.”

Extracurricular activities, whether at school or in the community, are also very important to students' success. Parents should let their children pick activities themselves.



4) In high school, establish routines

When it comes to the high school transition, the absolute number one thing that's different is the amount of freedom.

Students have to adjust to not being part of "teams" as they might have been in middle school, having a broader spectrum of peers and a wider range of movement within the school building.

For some students, the demands of high school can bring feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Parents can help their new high-schoolers by setting up after-school routines at home to ensure homework gets done and students stay organized.

5) Monitor progress

It is recommended parents monitor their students' grades and attendance through the online parent portal. All FUSD teachers post grades on the Home Access Center (HAC).

Email is often the preferred way of communicating with teachers. Check HAC on a regular basis to monitor your child's progress. Contact your child's teacher if you have a question or concern.

6) Keep track of friends

At both middle and high school, educators recommend that parents keep track of their child's friends. Parents should be wary if their ninth-grader starts hanging out with 11th- or 12th graders, whether in a romantic relationship or a platonic friendship.

7) Red flags to watch for

At the middle school level red flags that may indicate the transition isn't going well include students complaining of headaches, stomach aches, sleeplessness, or simply not wanting to go to school.

That's definitely a time when parents need to say, 'What's going on?'

Parents should not only watch for any out-of-character behavior, but also any mismatches between how students say things are going and what their grades or other indicators suggest.

School Calendar

<http://www.friscoisd.org/about/resources-and-information/school-calendars>

Each school has a calendar that shows when grading periods begin and end, when parent-teacher conferences are scheduled, and when your school will be closed for holidays and vacation.

School Rules

Get your school's Student Handbook:

<http://www.friscoisd.org/about/resources-and-information/student-handbooks>

All schools have rules regarding student conduct and behavior.

Learn school dress codes, cell phone policies, rules regarding medication, etc.

<http://www.friscoisd.org/about/resources-and-information/dress-code>

Class Schedule

Check your child's schedule to make sure he or she is in the correct classes. If you have concerns contact the school counselor.

Attendance Policy

Middle school hours: 8:25 a.m. to 3:35 p.m.

High school hours: 9 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

<http://www.friscoisd.org/about/resources-and-information/school-attendance>

Know your school's attendance and tardy policies.

Lunch

Make sure your child knows when his or her lunch schedule is. Check the website for each week's lunch menu, the payment plans, etc.

<http://friscocafe.org/>

Testing

Know what standardized tests your child will be taking, when these tests will be given, and how students should prepare.

<http://www.friscoisd.org/departments/testing/standardized-testing-faq>

School Counselor

Each campus has counselors on staff who help students choose their courses, monitor their progress, and help them figure out how to deal with difficult situations. Find out who your child's counselor is and make sure he or she knows how to go about making an appointment.

Counselors are not only excellent resources for students, they are also great resources for parents.



Student Services-Guidance and Counseling

469-633-6583

www.friscoisd.org

Information taken from article written by Ann Schimke on August 23, 2013, for Chalkbeat.com.