

Transitioning with Your Teen

The transition from elementary to Jr. High can be challenging for many students. There is more focus on academic performance, competition, and independent work. Teaching becomes less individualized and students are expected to take greater responsibility for their education.

Here are some ways that you as a parent can assist your teen in navigating this transition.

Encourage connection to their school

- ❖ Go to open houses, orientations, and welcome days.
- ❖ Encourage your teen to participate in clubs, activities, and teams that interest them.
- ❖ Encourage positive relationships with teachers.
- ❖ Find out if your teen's school has a peer mentoring program.
- ❖ Support the friendships that your child has already and the new friendships that they will be making.

Listen to their concerns

- ❖ Listen more than you talk, youth spend a majority of their time listening to others talk. Let them share their feelings; this helps them to cope and become more aware of their changing identity.
- ❖ Remember the challenges you faced when entering Jr. High or when you started a new job.
- ❖ Allow them to express their negative feelings and suggest possible coping strategies.
- ❖ Recognize that your child's stress is normal, children experience stress just as much as adults do. This is particularly true when they are learning to navigate new environments.

Help prepare them for challenges

- ❖ Brainstorm with your teen possible challenges that they may face and think of ways that they could deal with them.
 - It is helpful to help them identify areas in their lives that they have control over and areas that they do not. Acknowledging these things helps to reduce the stress that they may feel.
 - Common concerns among students include; getting to class on time, finding lockers, keeping up with materials, finding lunchrooms/bathrooms, finding the right bus, getting through crowded hallways, remembering which class to go to, and personal safety.
- ❖ Learn about your child's developmental needs and the changes that they are experiencing.
- ❖ Emphasize the positive strengths that your teen possesses.
- ❖ Remind your child that they are not alone, they face the same social challenges that many other teens are facing as well, such as making new friends.

Keep the lines of communication open. While your child is growing in independence and branching off into new social circles they are still dependent on you. Maintain family traditions such as family dinners, board game nights, or camping trips. The teen years can produce some turbulence, but establishing a warm and predictable environment at home can strengthen them against the challenges and unpredictability of this transition. Tell them how much you love them, even if it makes them cringe.

Additional Resources

Parent Toolkit

Information about academics, social emotional learning, and health and wellness divided by grade.

<http://www.parenttoolkit.com/>

Kids Help Phone: New School

Information about fitting in, making friends, finding your way around, schoolwork, and dealing with new teachers

<https://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/InfoBooth/School/New-School.aspx>

Guidelines for Supporting Successful Transitions for Children and Youth

An Alberta Children and Youth Initiative

<http://www.assembly.ab.ca/lao/library/egovdocs/2006/alac/158807.pdf>

Edutopia: Transition Resources for Parents, Teachers, and Administrators

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/transition-resources-teachers-matt-davis>

Learn Alberta: My Child's Learning: A Parent Resource

Answers to common questions about supporting a child in school

<https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/mychildslearning/commonquestions.html?section=question8>

Transitions and Pathways from Elementary to Secondary School

Supporting successful transitions

<http://www.safeacceptingschools.ca/media/resource/TransitionLiterature.pdf>