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Moving from secondary school to high school is an exciting time in the life of a child and a parent. But it can also be scary. It's not just moving to another school, it's a whole new environment. The beginning of high school can be overwhelming and confusing, and not just because the buildings are physically bigger and the campus is unknown. Children leaving the middle school bubble for the high school jungle need not only deal with new teachers and academic requirements, but also completely different students, some three years older and much more mature. Moving to high school can be disastrous if a child doesn't make the transition smoothly - more children fail in ninth grade than in any other grade [source: Weber]. Most school systems pave the way by implementing transition programs that can include everything from campus visits to shading, but it's never easy. Our list of the top 10 differences between middle school and high school helps you identify some of the pitfalls you might come across when your child enters ninth grade - like what happens when your stomach bone-playing math finds out that a band's workout conflicts with counting? We hope to find advice to help you get through this often crazy time. Ad content One of the scariest things about moving from middle school to high school is the often dramatic increase in school size. It's scary enough to move from a three-grade school to a four-degree school - and on top of that, several middle schools from one district often dump into one high school. There can be four times as many children in high school, most of whom are strangers. With the first day of ninth grade looming, it can be overwhelming to imagine getting to a completely unknown (and much larger) campus and walking in a sea of new faces. Most high schools are quite attentive to facilitating transition, but it's not hard to see how children can get lost during the mix. A larger student union leads to the next item on our list ... Ad We know that high schools have higher enrolments than middle schools, so it's clear that individual classes are also growing. Student-teacher ratios vary widely across the country, but generally high school classes are larger than middle school classes. It may not be much, but it matters. Jumping from a class of 15 to a class of 20 children doesn't seem like such a huge thing, but it does lead to things seeming a little more impersonal and less like a two-second interaction with a teacher. There is definitely much less hand-holding in high school - older children are expected to be more responsible and independent, so they (theoretically) don't need as much attention from teachers. And a child who's not ready: the task may end up falling through the cracks. Ad Eighth-grade teachers seem to spend an inordinate amount of time trying to make clear to their students (or trying to scare their students, however you want to look at it) that there will be a lot more homework in high school. And they do this for a reason: there's a lot more homework in high school. Children who aren't ready for it can get a nasty shock in the first month of ninth grade. Increased workload - combined with the stress of new environments, schedules, expectations, teachers and classmates - can actually throw some children into the loop, so it's especially important for parents to be at stake during this transition period. The ad eighth grade - especially the last couple of months - is a dizzying time for some children. They are the oldest (and therefore the coolest) in school, and they take every opportunity to gloat this fact instead of everyone below them (i.e. everyone). But as September rolls around, they notice pretty quickly how depressing it can be to plunge from the end of the herd to the bottom of the barrel. For this and other reasons we've just discussed, a lot of kids find themselves in ninth grade. Some schools have tried to combat this phenomenon by separating little from the freshman pool - they are installing ninth-grade academies or smaller class sizes to maintain some of that middle school feeling for some time to come. Advertisement Most middle schools with an emphasis on community and nurturing pupils, children don't get much choice in which category. Students may be placed in different groups based on skill level, but there is usually little variation in courses. Sixth grade is American history, seventh grade is pre-algebra, and that's it. High school is a brand new ball game with seemingly endless choices - which is exciting, of course, but it can be overwhelming. And the scheduling is always tough too: What happens if your chrome-playing child is also a whistling of mathematics, and advanced trigonometry coincides with band training? Or if physics conflicts with French? There may not be an easy answer or quick fix, but if parents, teachers and instructors work together, they can create a balanced schedule. Advertisement You may think that as academic and athletic requirements increase in high school, so can parental involvement. This is a critical time in your child's life. But you'd think wrong: parental participation actually decreases in high school years. One reason is that high schools often don't hold parental inclusion as much as elementary and middle schools - it's just more of a hands-off environment. Parents also generally assume that their contributions are not because children are older and more responsible. No, it's not. Many studies have shown that parental participation is a significant factor in their children's success. Your kids may be ashamed when you're here, but it's for their own good. Advert People often call middle school a bubble - students, of course, make reading, writing and arithmetic, but sometimes the process is more pronounced than the end result. Children learn about themselves, are safe in their own little community, and there is little focus on the outside world. But that's all going to change in high school. Suddenly, the goal is very clear: university. This is real. Some students are certainly grade-oriented from the start, so this change of goals can be inspiring - finally, all those that count on something! However, it can be disturbing for a child who may not have been too worried about grades. Your job is to remind the underachievers to step up to the plate. Ad Poor ninth graders. As if they do not already have enough to manage, with an overwhelming new environment, greater class size and increasing academic demands, they also need to juggle a number of new teachers. In middle school, children probably have no more than two or three different teachers a day, but high school (as it does with everything) kicks it a few points. They can have six or seven teachers every day - all have their own methods, standards, workloads, moods and characteristics. No wonder grades plummet and dropouts rise in ninth grade. So even if you stay on top of your child's work and grades, be sure to be understanding - this can be a tough time. When they're 10. The ad Most of the changes we've discussed so far in this article have a little to do with the contradiction - moving to high school is exciting and scary. But sport is one part of high school life that can be parked directly in an exciting place. Most middle schools have sports teams, but they don't bring the school back to life the way high school sports can. It's just like an exchange with academics: Sure, middle school sports are fun, but a high school football game is the real deal. Even if your child isn't an athlete, sporting events offer plenty of opportunities for social interaction with new classmates. Nor does the taste of the spirit of the school ever hurt - it gives children a new beginning of identity, which can make the transition a little more painless. You knew we'd get through this sooner or later. Peer pressure rears its ugly head quite early in any child's life, but the stakes are sure to be raised in high school. The pressure to drink and take drugs will surely come in middle school years, but children (and parents) soon realize that these worries are small potatoes compared to what you lurk in high school. It's not just illegal substances, it's clothes, eating, cheating. Surrendering to peer pressure can quickly derail academic careers and is a major factor in many of the dropouts. As always, parents need to be vigilant and, before the most important thing, keep the lines of communication open. For more information about the differences between middle school and high school, see the links on the next page. Lawnmowers parents cut obstacles and difficulties before their children can confront them. HowStuffWorks talks to experts about the style of parenting. Bennett, Laurie J. and Mac Iver, Martha Abele. 'Girls tend to stop going; Boys are told not to come back': Report on gender and dropout problem in Colorado schools October 2009. (Accessed September 10, 2010) Ray. The right kind of peer pressure. Slate, 12 May 2010. (Accessed September 10, 2010) Nancy B. and Irvin, Judith L. Transition from middle school to high school. National Middle School Association Journal, May 2000. (Accessed September 10, 2010) High School Center. Facilitation of transition to high school: research and best practices designed to support high school learning. (Access 10.9.2010) to PTA. (See 9 September 2010) . Transition to middle school and high school. (Accessed September 10, 2010) Dave. 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