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The transition from high school to high school marks a pretty exciting time in a child's - and parent's - life. But it can be scary too. It's not just moving to a different school - it's a completely new environment. The beginning of high school can be overwhelming and confusing, and not just because the building is physically larger and the campus is familiar. Children leaving the middle school bubble for the middle school forest not only have to deal with new teachers and academic demands, but also a series of completely different students, some of whom are three years older and much more mature. The transition to secondary school can be disastrous if a child doesn't make a smooth transition - more children fail ninth grade than any other class [source: Weber]. Most school systems pave the way by implementing transition programs, which can involve everything from campus visits to shadowing students, but it's never easy. Our list of top 10 differences between high school and high school will help you identify some of the pitfalls you might encounter when your child enters ninth grade - like what happens when a math whiz plays your trombone knowing that the band is practicing conflict with calculus? We hope you will find some suggestions that will get you through this often crazy time. Content One of the scariest things about moving from high school to secondary school is the often dramatic increase in school size. It's scary enough to make the move from a three-grade school to a fourth-grade school - and then on top of that, some middle schools from one district are often banished to one middle school. So there could easily be four times as many children in high school, most of whom would be absolute strangers. As the first day looms in ninth grade, it can be pretty overwhelming to imagine entering a completely unknown (and much larger) campus and strolling in a sea of new faces. Most secondary schools are quite attentive about easing the transition, but it's not hard to see how children can get lost in the shake-up. The larger student body leads to the next item in our list... Advertising We know that secondary schools have higher enrollment than secondary schools, so that is the reason that individual classes will become larger as well. The ratio of students to teachers varies greatly across the country, but in general, the middle school class is larger than the middle school class. Maybe not much, but it makes a difference. The leap from 15th-grade students to one with 20 kids doesn't seem like a deal great, but it results in things feeling a little more impersonal and less one-on-one interaction with teachers. There are definitely fewer handrails in secondary school - older children are expected to be more responsible and independent, so they (in theory) don't need much attention from their teachers. And a child who isn't quite ready for the task may end up ending fall through the cracks. The eighth grade Teacher ad seems to spend a lot of time trying to explain to their students (or trying to scare their students, but you want to see it) that there will be more homework in high school. And they do this for a reason: There's more homework in high school. Children who are not ready for it can be a nasty surprise during the first month or so of ninth grade. Increased workloads - combined with new environmental stress, schedules, expectations, teachers and classmates - can really throw some kids to the loop, so it's important for parents to be at their game during this transition time. Eighth Grade ads - especially the last few months - are a dizzy time for some kids. They are the oldest (and hence, coolest) at school, and they take the opportunity to master this fact over anyone they consider to be beneath them (it's, like, you know, everyone). But as September rolled around, they discovered pretty quickly how demoralized it could fall from the head of the pack down the barrel. For this and other reasons we've just discussed, many kids find themselves floundering in ninth grade. Some schools have tried to combat this phenomenon by separating fresh students from the crowd only slightly - they institute ninth-grade academies or smaller class sizes to maintain some middle school feeling for a while longer. Ads In most high schools, with their emphasis on building communities and nurturing students, children don't get much choice in what classes they take. Students may be included in different groups based on skill levels, but in general, there is little variation in the course. Sixth grade is American history, seventh grade is pre-algebraic, and that's it. High School is an altogether new ballgame, with seemingly endless options - interesting, obviously, but it can be overwhelming. And scheduling is also always difficult: What happens if your trombone-playing child is also a math whiz, and advanced trigonometry at the same time as a band rehearsal? Or if physics goes against France? There may not be easy answers or quick fixes, but if parents, teachers and counselors work together, they can create a balanced schedule. Your ad might think that, as academic and athletic demands increase in high school, so might parent engagement. After all, this is a critical time in your child's life - soon, they fly the cage, never to be seen again. But you'd think wrong: Parental involvement during the middle school years. One reason is that secondary schools often don't court as much parental involvement as primary and secondary schools do - it's just a more hands-off kind of environment. Parents also usually assume that their contributions are not required as much as older and more responsible children. Not so. Many studies have shown that parental involvement is a major factor in their children's success. So go ahead and volunteer - your kids may be ashamed to have you around, but it's for their own good. People's ads often refer to high school as a bubble - students do their reading, writing, and arithmetic, of course, but sometimes the process is emphasized more than the end result. Children learn about themselves, are safe in their own small communities, and there is not much focus on the outside world. But that's all changed in high school. Suddenly the goal was very clear: college. No more messing around - this is a real deal. Some students, to be sure, focus on class from day one, so this goal change can be exhilarating - finally, everyone as a count for something! However, it can be jarring for a child who may not all care about value. So again, it's up to you, parents - it's your job to remind the underperformer to step up to the plate. Poor ninth grade ads. As if they didn't yet have enough to manage, what with the incredible new environment, larger class sizes and increased academic demands, they also had to juggle some new teachers. In high school, children may have at most two or three different teachers per day, but secondary school (as is the case with everything) kicks that up a few notches. Now, they can have six or seven teachers every day - all by their own methods, standards, workloads, moods and idiosyncrasies. It's no surprise that grades plummeted and dropout rates soared in ninth grade. So even as you stay on top of your child's work and grades, remember to understand - this can be a difficult time. Once they reach grades 10 and 11, you can actually break the whip. Ads Most of the changes we've covered so far in this article have some atmosphere attached to them - the transition to high school is very interesting and scary. But sport is one part of high school life that can be parked right in a place of interest. Most high schools do have sports teams, but they don't turn on schools like high school sports. It's like switching focus to academia: Sure, high school sports are fun, but a high school football game is a real deal. Even if your child is not an athlete, sporting events offer plenty of opportunities for social interaction with new classmates. Also, the sense of school spirit never hurts - it children start a new identity, which can make the transition a little less painful. Your ads know we're going to get to this one sooner or later, don't you? Peer pressure rears its ugly head quite early in any child's life, but the stakes are definitely raised in secondary school. The pressure to drink and do drugs certainly appears to some during the school years, but children (and parents) soon realized that the concern was small potatoes compared to what lurked in high school. And it's not just about illegal substances - it's clothes, eating, cheating, you name it. Succumbing to peer pressure can quickly derail academic careers, and that is a major factor in many cases of dropouts. As always, parents need to be vigilant and, most importantly, keep lines of communication open. To learn more about the differences between secondary and secondary schools, see the links on the following page. Lawnmower parents cut through obstacles and difficulties before their children can face them. HowStuffWorks talks to experts about parenting styles. Bennett, Laurie J. and Mac Iver, Martha Abele. 'Girls Tend to Stop Going; Boys Told Not to Come Back': Report on Gender and Dropout Issues at Colorado School. October 2009. (Accessed Sept. 10, 2010) Ray. The Right Type of Peer Pressure. Slate, May 12, 2010. (Accessed Sept. 10, 2010) Nancy B. and Irvin, Judith L. Transition from High School to High School. Journal of the National High School Association, May 2000. (Accessed Sept. 10, 2010) High School Center. 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