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The transition from high school to high school marks a pretty exciting time in the life of a child -- and parents -- of 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 to forest high school not only have to deal with new teachers and academic demands, but also a completely different set of students, some of whom are three years older and much more mature. The switch to secondary school can be disastrous if a child doesn't make the transition smoothly - 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 as your child enters ninth grade - like what happens when a math whiz playing your trombone learns 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 high school is the often dramatic increase in school sizes. 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 dumped into 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 ninth grade, it can be quite remarkable to imagine entering a completely unknown (and much larger) campus and strolling through 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 the individual class will become larger as well. Student-to-teacher ratios vary widely 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 jump from a 15-student class 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 falling through the cracks. Eighth grade Teacher ads seem to spend a lot of time trying to explain to their students (or trying to scare their students, however you'd like 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. Kids who aren't ready for it can be nasty surprises during the first month or so of ninth grade. Increased workload -- combined with new environmental stress, schedules, expectations, teachers and classmates -- can actually throw some kids for a 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 giddy time for some kids. They are the oldest (and hence, coolest) in school, and they take the opportunity to rule this fact over anyone they consider to be beneath them (it's, like, you know, everybody). But as September rolled around, they found out pretty quickly how demoralizing it could fall from the head of the pack down the barrel. For this and other reasons we've just discussed, a lot of kids find themselves floundering in ninth grade. Some schools have tried to combat this phenomenon by separating new students from the crowd only slightly - they institutionalize ninth-grade academies or smaller class sizes to maintain some middle school feeling for a while longer. Ads In most secondary schools, with their emphasis on building communities and nurturing students, children don't get much choice in what classes they take. Students may be put into different groups based on skill level, but in general, there is little variation in the course. Sixth grade is American history, seventh grade is pre-algebra, and that's it. High school is an all-new ballgame, with seemingly endless options -- which are exciting, obvious, but 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 band practice? Or if physics goes against France? There may be no 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 it may be parental involvement. After all, this is a critical time in your child's life - soon, they fly cages, never to be seen again. But you'd think wrong: Parental involvement decline during the middle school years. One reason is that secondary schools often don't court parental involvement as much as primary and secondary schools do - it's just kind of a more hands-off environment. Parents also usually assume that their contributions are not required as much as older and more responsible children. Not so much. 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 ads often refer to high school as bubbles - 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 isn't much focus on the outside world. But that was all a change in high school. Suddenly the goal was very clear: college. No more fooling around - this is a real deal. Some students, for sure, focus on the 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 be all who cares about value. So again, it's up to you, parents - it's your job to remind underperformers to step up to the plate. Poor ninth grade ad. As if they didn't yet have enough to manage, what with a remarkable 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 middle school (as is the case with everything) kicks that up a few notch. 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 the 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. Most of the ad changes we've covered so far in this article have some atmosphere attached to them -- the transition to high school is very exciting and scary. But sport is one part of high school life that can be parked right in places 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 with academics: Sure, high school sports are fun, but high school football games are 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 early children's new identities, which can make the transition a little less painful. Your ad knew we were going to get to this one sooner or later, didn't we? Peer pressure rears its ugly head quite early in the lives of any child, but the stakes are definitely raised in high school. The pressure to drink and do drugs certainly appears for some during the school years, but children (and parents) soon realize that the worry is small potatoes compared to what lurks in high school. And it's not just about illegal substances - it's clothing, eating, cheating, you name it. Succumbing to peer pressure can quickly derail an academic career, and that is a major factor in many dropout cases. 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 pages. Parents of lawn mowers cut through obstacles and difficulties before their children could 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 Problems 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 Association of Secondary Schools, May 2000. (Accessed Sept. 10, 2010) High School Center. 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