

Transitioning to a New School

Parents generally do their best to construct their child's life in a way that removes and/or limits instability, provides predictable routines, and minimizes emotionally difficult changes. However, change does occur and sometimes it is impactful. One of these changes that happens in almost every child's life is moving to a new school. Whether your family is experiencing a job change that requires relocating to a new school district or your child is making the leap from pre-school to elementary school or elementary to middle school, it's almost certain at some point your child will change schools. The first days and weeks of a new school can be exciting, but they can also be filled with uncertainty and anxiety.

Tips for parents in helping their kid/s successfully adapt to a new school.

- **Take a Team Approach.**
If you find yourself choosing between a few schools, talk with your child about what each school has to offer. Let our child have some say in what school he/she would like to attend.
- **Be Positive.**
Talk to your child about their expectations, hopes, and fears for the upcoming school year but remain positive in response. Reassure your child that other children are having the same feelings and that he/she will have a great year. Remind him/her that they'll learn new things and make friends.
- **Encourage School Involvement.**
While you don't want your child to become over-committed, it's important to encourage participation in one or two activities that particularly interest him/her. Your child is more likely to strive academically if he/she feels connected through a school activity, club, or sport.
- **Get Enough Sleep.**
If your child has enjoyed a vacation of late nights and lazy mornings, getting him/her up for school over the next few weeks can be difficult. Help make this transition easier by having a sleep routine in place. Having all electronic devices off for the night, an hour before bed, will help your child wind down so they can fall asleep and rest easier.
- **School Supplies.**
Make sure you or your child finds out what school supplies and materials are required. Most schools should provide a handy list for the lower grades, but if not, take it upon yourself to ask and then purchase the items as soon as possible.



- **Prepare the Night Before.**
To avoid the morning rush, organize what you can the night before. Lay out clothes, make a lunch and assemble any supplies your child may need. Be sure to get everyone up extra early so you'll have plenty of time to calmly get ready and get out the door on time.
- **Get a Healthy Start.**
Encourage your child to eat a good breakfast and pack a healthy snack to help him/her get through the day.
- **Accompany Your Child.**
Even if your elementary school child will be riding the bus regularly or walking to school, you may want to take him yourself on the first day, particularly if he seems nervous.
- **Introduce Yourself.**
Young children are often shy with a new teacher. If at all possible, have your child meet their teacher before they attend their first day, otherwise, it might be helpful if you go into the classroom and introduce your child to the teacher. Let the teacher know about any special interests or challenges that your child has.

If you notice your child's showing signs of poor transitioning, it's important to talk to them about it, and to meet with their teachers and administrators so you can work to target the sources of your child's discomfort. School guidance counselors and school psychologists can also help with difficult transitions. They can sometimes designate a faculty member as a contact person with whom you can communicate. The school may even be able to pair your child with a "buddy" like a built in friend who is comfortable in the school already.

Tips for Schools/teachers in helping their kid/s successfully adapt to a new school.

- **Having a New Student Transition Team.**
Transitional periods are also opportunities for growth if children have learned coping skills and are given an opportunity to understand and adapt to their new environment.
- **Peer Helper/ Buddy System.**
Create a student monitoring, peer helper or buddy program consisting of children chosen from various groups who are taught to be role models for younger children. The training may consist of one or two days before school starts or at other times. The children participate in role plays, exercises, games, and discussions that increase team and empathy building. Their roles will vary, but they can include greeting younger children or new students, conducting school tours, answering questions, introducing new students to peers, providing social support throughout the year, and/or mediating peer problems.

- **Welcome Sign/Board.**

Personally greet new students with the school's indoor/outdoor LED message board or having a bulletin board welcoming new students.

Remember to monitor new students and identify those who are struggling. Refer them into school support systems such as the school counselor/social worker or to groups that promote school adjustment.

www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/adjusting-to-new-school/

www.educationcorner.com/adjusting-to-a-new-school.html

www.today.com/.../new-kid-survival-guide-how-help-child-thrive-new-school-

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