

## Transitions

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This presentation will highlight the more difficult transition years for children, give some practical advice on how to better handle those transition years and finally give some tips on how to help school communities to better support students in transition years.

The top 3 most stressful transitions years are

- Entering school 1<sup>st</sup> year - Kindergarten
- Leaving the Elementary School to attend high school
- Graduation from grade 12

Every year is a transition year but there are other important Transition years in the system.

- Kindergarten to grade 1
- Grade 3 (Primary) to Grade 4 (Junior)
- Grade 6 to 7
- Grade 10 to 11
- Any time a student has to move schools or programs

One of the most important things a parent can do is to teach their child to become independent. Raising children to be resilient will take them further than knowing everything about transitioning. Recognizing that transitions years are stressful on children (and parents) is one step in helping to support your child.

### **Tips to reduce stress before school starts in the fall**

Plan to visit the new school during or around Registration time (usually January or February) when many schools have Open Houses or Information Nights. If there is no open house, call the school and make an appointment for a tour and visit. (Kindergarten, high school or new school).

Take your child with you.

Go to the school willing to ask lots of questions and looking for signs that the school is welcoming.

- Talk to the Principal, secretary or staff about the school
- Talk to neighbors and friends about the school
- Ask Staff to tell you about the school
- Visit websites, blogs, get on mailing list and review newsletters.

Questions to ask: The following information should be available in either the presentation, on the school website or in a letter of welcome. If not, just ask.

- School start and finish time
- Staff numbers
- Number of students and class sizes
- Grades in school
- Feeder schools/Family of School
- How do students get to school (walkers, bus, drop off). Is your family eligible for bussing?
- School culture-what is the school known for. What activities do the students and staff get involved in? Does the school have special programs? What social events does the school have? Does the school have a school council and what do they do.
- What school supplies does your child need and are there any school fees.

### **Helping your Child get ready for school**

August

Get a routine in place for the new school year about a week before school starts. This all helps to reduce stress, ensures that your child is well rested and ready to adjust to school.

- Talk about school and if possible visit the school grounds
- Keep the conversation very positive
- Talk about the things that your child can do at school, the things they will learn about, the fun they will have meeting new classmates and teachers and the new things they will learn.
- If you know who the teacher(s) will be, talk about them but make sure that this is not the only thing to talk about. Teachers can be reassigned or move so that nothing can be guaranteed that your child will be in a particular class.
- Special needs: Principals should be contacted before school starts if there are any special needs for your child. (ie allergies, learning disabilities, stresses at home – illness, divorce or anything that maybe causing anxiety)

- Have your child make and pack their own lunch and snacks, when younger, with your help. Have them pack their own back pack at all ages.
- Practice getting to school or knowing where the bus will be for pick up and drop off. Most Boards have a bus training day in August. Take advantage of this free experience. If your child takes the bus, talk to your child about good bus riding practices for their safety. A parent must take a child off the bus, find out what age this applies to in your school.
- If you know the classroom routine, talk about it with your child. One of the biggest stresses is that your child may be worried about where they are to go when they get to school, how they will find their classes (high school), where will their back pack go, when is snack time and recess time and if they can buy food in a cafeteria. Make sure they have a pair of indoor shoes and phy ed clothes if required. Older children should have combination locks for lockers. The child should know how to open the lock.

### **At Home; Getting ready for School**

- Talking with your child and then determining the best time to go to bed (ensure enough rest) and time to get up, eat, packing back pack (night before or day of) and getting out the door so that it is not a huge stress or a big rush.
- Have your child involved in packing packs and making lunch/snacks. Bring healthy foods, low in sugar and fat. Make sure the amount of food is appropriate for the age of your child. Finger food is good at snack time as there is not a lot of time. (cut up veggies or fruit, crackers and cheese)
- Set up a routine for when your child arrives home. Example: Empty back packs, have a snack, do homework, limit TV and computer. Make time for outside play and/or exercise.
- Homework: Set up a place to do homework. The kitchen table can work well especially when a parent is getting dinner ready and can supervise. When homework is done can depend on the child, some do better doing it right away, others need time to wind down after school.
- If there are any concerns or issues, talk with your child's teacher.

Encourage your child to get involved in their school clubs, activities or sports.

### **What can a school do to be more welcoming:**

Host Open Houses or Information evenings in winter or spring.

Meet the Teacher Night in September

Have teachers call to introduce themselves or send home a letter about classroom routines

Send out regular newsletters (email, paper, flash alerts)

Host some social events for families and students (BBQ, Dance, Skate Night, movie night ect)

Invite parents to sports events, school events (awards, drama) or attend field trips

Invite parents to volunteer in school (library, lunch time, special events and/or craft days)

Have student/staff set up displays of activities and clubs in school

High Schools: invite grade 8 to visit school during a school day.

Students, Staff and parents should always feel welcome.

### **Resources**

Ministry of Education Parent support

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/>

Ottawa Catholic School Board Student Success

Transition Pamphlets

Grade 6-7, Grade 8-9, Grade 10-11

<http://www.ottawacatholicschools.ca/content.php?doc=7053>