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Blalack middle school choir

The transition from middle school to high school marks a fairly exciting time in a child's - and a parent's - life. But it can also be scary. It's not just a move 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 larger and campus is unknown. Children who leave middle school bubble for the jungle of high school need not only deal with new teachers and academic demands, but also a very different set of students, some of whom are three years older and much more mature. Switching to high school can be disastrous if a child doesn't smooth the transition - more kids fail ninth grade than any other degree [source: Weber]. Most school systems do pave the way through implement transitional programmes, which can involve everything from campus visits to shadow students, but it's never easy. Our list of the top 10 differences between middle school and high school will help you identify some of the pitfalls you can walk across as your child goes ninth grade — like what happens when your trombone-play math whiz finds out that tape practice conflicts with calculus? We hope you will find advice that will get you through this often crazy time. Content One of the scariest things about moving middle school to high school is the often dramatic increase in school size. It's scary enough to make the move from a three-degree school to a four-degree school - and then on top of that, several middle schools from one district often spill into one high school. So there could easily be four times as many kids at high school, most of whom will be absolute strangers. If the first day of ninth grade looms, it can be overwhelming to think that you are entering a totally unknown (and much larger) campus and walking around in a sea of new faces. Most high schools are pretty attensical about easing the transition, but it's not hard to see how kids can get lost in the shuffle. The larger student body leads to the next item on our list... Ad We know that high schools have higher enrollment than middle schools, so it stands to reason that the individual classes are also going to get bigger. Student-to-teacher ratios vary across the country, but generally, high school classes are larger than middle school classes. It may not be much, but it makes a difference. The leap from a 15-student class to one with 20 kids doesn't look like that big of a deal, but it results in things feeling a little more impersonal and less one-on-one interaction with the teacher. There's definitely a lot less hand-holding in high school - older kids are expected to be more responsible and independent, so they (in theory) don't need as much attention from their teachers And a kid who isn't quite ready for the task could end up fall through the cracks. Ad-eighth-grade teachers seem to be spending an exorbitant amount of time making it clear to their students (or trying to scare their students, but you want to look at it) that there's going to be a lot more homework in high school. And they do it for a reason: There's a lot more homework in high school. Children who are not ready for it can be in for a nasty shock during the first month or so of ninth grade. The increased workload — combined with the stress of new environments, schedules, expectations, teachers and classmates — can really throw some kids for a loop, so it's especially important for parents to be at their game during this transition time. Ad Eighth grade - especially the last few months - is a giddy time for some kids. They're the oldest (and therefore, coolest) in school, and they take any opportunity to lord this fact about anyone they deem to be among them (that's, like, you know, everybody). But when September rolls around, they discover pretty quickly how demoralizing it can be to plummet from head of the pack to the bottom of the barrel. For this and the other reasons we've just discussed, many kids find themselves floating in ninth grade. Some schools have tried to combat this phenomenon by separating freshman from the crowd just a little - they introduce ninth grade academies or smaller class sizes to maintain some of that middle school feel for a while longer. Advertisement In most middle schools, with their emphasis on community building and nurturing students, kids don't get much choice in what classes they take. Students can be placed in different groups based on skill level, but generally there is little variation in the courses. Sixth grade is American history, seventh grade is pre-algebra, and that's about it. High school is a whole new ballgame, 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 trombone-playing child is also a math whiz, and advanced trigonometry is at the same time as band practice? Or if physics collides with French? There may not be an easy answer or an instant solution, but if parents, teachers and counselors work together, they can create a balanced schedule. Ad You may think that, as academic and athletic demands increase in high school, so can parental involvement. After all, it's a critical time in your child's life — pretty soon they're flying the cage, never to be seen again. But you'd think wrong: Parent engagement actually diminishes during high school years. One reason is that high schools often don't court parental involvement as much as primary and middle schools - it's just a more practical type of environment. Parents also generally assume their contributions are not children are older and more responsible. Not like this. Many studies have shown that parental involvement is an important factor in their children's success. So go ahead and volunteer - your kids might be embarrassed to have you around, but it's asserted for their own. Ad People often refer to middle school as a bubble - students do their reading, writing and arcology, of course, but sometimes the process becomes more stressed than the end result. Kids learn about themselves, safe in their own little community, and there's not much focus on the outside world. But it all changes in high school. Suddenly, the goal is very clear: college. No longer fooling around - that's the real deal. Some students, to be sure, are grade-focused from day one, so this change in goals can be exciting — ultimately, all as scoring for something! However, it might be jarring for a child who might not have all that worried about gr. So again, it's up to you, parents - it's your job to remind underpligibles to step up to the plate. Ad Poor ninth grade. As if they don't already have enough to manage, what with an overwhelming new environment, greater class size and increased academic demands, they should also judge several new teachers. In middle school, kids probably have at most two or three different teachers a day, but high school (as it does with everything) kicks it up a few notes. Now they can have six or seven teachers every day - all with their own methods, standards, workloads, moods and idiocyrasies. It's really no wonder that degrees plummet and dropout rates rise in ninth grade. So, even while you stay on top of your child's work and grades, remember to understand - it can be a rough time. Once they hit 10th and 11th grade, though, you can really crack the whip. Ad Most of the changes we've discussed so far in this article have some ambivalence attached to them - the transition to high school is exciting and terrifying. But sports is one part of high school life that can be parked squarely in the exciting spot. Most middle schools do have sports teams, but they don't bring the school around life as high school sports can. It's just like the switch in focus with academics: Sure, middle school sports is fun, but a high school football game is the real deal. Even if your child is not an athlete, sporting events provide a lot of opportunity for social interaction with new classmates. Also, a taste of school spirit never hurts - it gives kids the beginning of a new identity, which could make the transition a little less painful. Ad You knew we were going to get to this one sooner or later, didn't you? Peer pressure behind his ugly head pretty early in any kid's life, but the game is definitely raised in high school. Press to drinking and doing drugs certainly appeared for some during the school years, but kids (and parents) soon realize that those concerns are small potatoes compared to what lurks in high school. And it's not just about illegal substances - it's clothes, eats, cheats, you name it. Succumbing to peer pressure can quickly derail an academic career, and that's a big factor in many fallout cases. As always, parents need to be vigilant and, most importantly, keep the lines of communication open. To learn more about the differences between middle school and high school, check out the links on the next page. Lawnmowers parents cut off obstacles and hardships before their children face them. HowStuffWorks speaks 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': A report on gender and the fallout problem in Colorado schools. October 2009. (Acquires Sept. 10, 2010) Ray, The right kind of peer pressure. Slate, May 12, 2010. (Accessed Sept. 10, 2010) Nancy B. and Irvin, Judith L. Transition from Middle School to High School. National Middle School Association Journal, May 2000. 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