

TIPS FOR PARENTS TO HELP WITH A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

Be interested and enthusiastic about their move to high school. Your encouragement will help your child to make a successful transition to High School. Listen to their experiences and expectations. Make sure you don't miss the next Incoming Freshmen Night Program.

This program is designed to help parents and their children prepare for starting high school. Graduation information and college information will also be provided. Some children, because of pressure from their peers, will try to discourage their parents from attending orientation days. Being there will help you understand your child's experiences better.

Make sure **travel arrangements** to and from school are organized. Talk about back-up travel arrangements, for example, what to do if a student misses a bus or has to be dismissed early.

Discuss the changes every student will experience. Emphasize that many people feel apprehensive about changing from a smaller middle school to a larger high school, and that there will be people to help them adjust. Encourage them to seek out support staff, such as Mrs. Richardson, Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Andrews, a teacher, or an AVC counselor.

Learn about school routines and timetables. Talking to student already enrolled at the school can be useful in finding out this information.

Help your child to develop good study habits. Try to provide them with somewhere private and quiet to study. Help your child to set aside a particular time to study. Work out a daily timetable that incorporates all your child's needs and interests. Regularly viewed TV programs, club activities and sport should all be part of the timetable. Ultimately they will need to manage their own study and they can guide you in what is helpful for them.

Practice organizational skills. In the first few weeks of high school you might want to check with your child that they have the right books for the following day. You will quickly encourage a good habit. Have your student use the day planner which Pioneer's ASB provides. Check their backpack's organization after a week or so. If necessary empty the backpack out and help your student get organized.

Discuss emergency and safety issues. Talk about these issues - including crossing roads or taking essential medication - simply and without emotion. Allow your child to contribute their views. Find out who the staff are at the school who can help them if they need it on issues such as medication.

Let your child know that you trust them and that they can trust you. **Keep communication open** about all your child's experiences, and make sure they know you're available if things go wrong.

Help your child set priorities. The expectations and responsibilities of high school will be quite different than what your child experienced in middle school. As more and more responsibility falls upon their shoulders, help your child evaluate the levels of importance they place upon their academic requirements versus social activities.

TIPS FOR STUDENTS TO HELP WITH A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

Use active versus passive study strategies. *Active strategies engage your brain more fully and therefore are more effective and efficient. Passive is just reading or staring at your textbook and notes.*

*** Use study partners or groups. By working with other students in your class you will actively engage your brain because the act of communicating requires you to use a great many parts of your brain.**

The most successful high school students are those who form study groups in ninth grade. These groups often continue through graduation and deepen in commitment to each other as each year passes. Top students may be in

competition with each other, however, they also always help each other to understand material, share notes, etc. Study groups may be formed on your own or may be formed as part of Pioneer's Homework Center. The Homework center meets Monday through Thursday from 2:30 to 4:30 in the Library Media Center.

*** Always take notes whether you think you need to or not.**

Taking notes engages a larger portion of your brain and greatly helps in focusing on school work during class time.

*** Always re-write your notes the same day that you take them whether you need to or not. Re-writing helps you add details to your notes and organize them for future work.** *This can be part of Pioneer's homework every night plan. This will assist you in reflection, and in re-learning each of your subjects. Re-writing engages a far larger portion of your brain than just re-reading and is about 10 times more effective as a learning and study tool. Add color or pictures/drawings to your notes if you find that helpful.*

*** If you have trouble concentrating on the textbook when you study, take brief organized notes of the key ideas and content.** *Reading a text book is different than reading a novel. You might pause after each paragraph and make a note of the main idea of that paragraph. You might also make flash cards of any new terms.*

Before you read a section in a textbook. Page through the section and look at the bold print headings. This will help your brain to know where the textbook material is heading. Looking at the questions at the end of the reading before you start to read will also help. You will then be alerted to key information in the text.

*** Use a timer to study and do homework.** *Use a kitchen timer to set a 15-20 minute study period. After concentrating for that time take a 5 minute break. Get up walk around, go to the bathroom, stare out the window, get a drink or a snack. DON'T TURN ON TV, VIDEO GAMES OR CHECK YOUR E-MAIL. Return to your work for another study period and continue to alternate with timed breaks. Try to study in a public at the kitchen table or dining room table and not in your room. Flash cards can be rapidly reviewed during any free time, including commercial breaks during your favorite TV show.*

*** Use "S" Period, the Homework Center and teacher "office hours".** *Don't be shy! Teachers are very glad to assist you! Take advantage of these opportunities! When in doubt ask questions and seek assistance. The very best and most successful student always do.*

*** Get involved in school.** *Join a team, a club, drama, music or the ASB. The larger part of your life you make Pioneer the more successful and happy you 'll be!*

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL

Transitioning from middle school to high school can be difficult for students. During this time of physical, emotional, and intellectual flux, the change to high school can be challenging. Opportunities for: independence, increased individual choice, increased individual responsibility, increased expectations and increased challenge, may lead to apprehension. This is normal. This reading explores the differences between middle school and high school. It also offers suggestions for a smooth transition for both students and parents.

A student focus group identified the following as concerns about incoming ninth graders and successful transitioning from middle school to high school.

- * Weakness in skills, such as note taking, critical thinking and study skills.
- * High levels of immaturity and irresponsibility.
- * Weaknesses in basic grammar, writing and math skills.
- * Too little rigor in middle school courses.
- * Lacking a history of academic success in middle school.
- * A history of middle school disciplinary referrals.
- * Poor study skills/habits.

The student focus group made the following success tips to incoming ninth graders:

- * Practice spelling, use a spell check program to proof your work
- * Look up vocabulary words in the dictionary. Make flash cards providing the text and/ or dictionary definition along with the definition in your own words as a check for understanding.
- * Continually practice and develop math skills.
- * Develop and use good study habits.
- * Don't slack off.
- * Be responsible!
- * Come to class fully prepared.
- * Have high expectations of yourself.
- * Do homework every night, don't get behind.
- * Get involved in high school, join teams, clubs, activities.

WHAT CHALLENGES / DIFFERENCES WILL STUDENTS FACE?

SCHOOL:

New buildings, new classrooms, greater number of students, new teachers, new administrators, larger campus, more diversity of students / teachers, more sports and extra-curricular activities, more competition, can be impersonal, discipline rules and policies are enforced, there is no ninth grader “grace” or “adjustment” period, more focus on academic rigor and less on *nurture*.

CLASSES:

More academically rigorous, may have mixed grade level students, more lecture, more reading, notes needed, more competitive, courses consecutive and build on previous learning, require students to develop an assertive and efficient learning style, and good organizational skills.

GRADUATION:

No social promotion, specific graduation and college entrance requirements, California High School Exit Test, Grades Count!, No retention... be successful or alternative placement and/or release, grades and courses determine student’s future.

TEACHERS:

Specialists in their subject matter, expect students to come prepared to learn, they teach to: California Standards, WASC and College requirements, view students as young adults, focus on academic rigor, goal is: college, career, adult preparation, employ higher Bloom Level Educational Objectives: (beyond Knowledge) for example.....

KNOWLEDGE:

Recognize or recall information.... “Who wrote Hamlet?” Words typically used: define, recall, recognize, remember, who, what, where,when.

COMPREHENSION:

Demonstrate that the student has sufficient understanding to organize and arrange material mentally..... “What do you think Hamlet meant when he said, “ to be or not to be, that is the question?” Words typically used: describe,compare, contrast, rephrase, explain

APPLICATION:

Students apply previously learned information to reach an answer. Solving math word problems for example.....”According to our definition of Socialism, which of the following nations would be considered Socialist?” Words typically used: apply, solve, classify, use, choose, employ

ANALYSIS:

Higher order questions that require students to: think critically and in depth, identify the motives, reasons, and/or causes for a specific occurrence, consider and analyze available information to reach a conclusion. “After studying the French, American and Russian revolutions, determine the strength of economic causes of revolution.” Words typically used: identify, draw conclusions, determine, prove, support, analyze, why?

SYNTHESIS:

Higher order question that asks the student to perform original and creative thinking. Synthesis questions might ask students to: produce original communications, make predictions, and solve problems. Words typically used: predict, produce, write, design, develop, construct, synthesize, improve, devise, how can we solve?

EVALUATION:

A higher level question that does not have a single correct answer. Students judge the merits of the issue, employing objective criteria. “Who is more effective, Senator Feinstein or Senator Boxer?”

HOMEWORK:

Homework every night! Homework means more than written work. It means, review, reflection, study, practice, relearning, fewer work sheets - more complex assignments, spelling and grammar count, must use complete sentences, firm deadlines and due dates, no late work accepted, more challenging work, more reading, little or no extra credit work available, working every night essential to success.

SOCIAL / PHYSICAL CHANGE:

Rapid change, freshmen bottom of social order, much greater individual responsibility, need to balance school, social life, sports, work and family, pressure of college and career preparation-planning, need to establish new social connections, greater accountability, just 4 years away from full adulthood, college, career, marriage, military service

PARENTS:

Parents function as “coach” and no longer “player”, encourage, monitor, discipline, support, communicate, emphasize and assist students in making individual decisions, in taking responsibility, and accountability, assist students in becoming independent while maintaining family connections.