



Information Sheet

FOR PARENTS OF STUDENTS TRANSITIONING INTO YEAR SEVEN

Parents play a crucial role in helping students through one of their biggest life changing experiences: the transition into secondary school. Academic research shows a difficult transition can lead to poorer academic performance, less social connection and more school dropouts.

But with a few key areas of preparation and ongoing support, parents can successfully guide their children, equipping them with the survival skills, expert knowledge and creative inspiration to confidently thrive in year seven and beyond.

This checklist provides the top five ways parents can help their students thrive:

1. Address the unknown

It doesn't matter if you're 11 years old or 111 years old, change can be scary. A Life Education study of 444 transitioning students across 15 schools in 2021 found many were feeling unprepared and scared about the move to secondary school. But the report found the fear of change was actually an underlying fear of the unknown.

Like turning on a light for someone who's afraid of the dark, parents can empower their children by simply addressing the Giraffe in the room. By setting aside time early in the transition years to find out what kids know, don't know and think they know about secondary school, can address any misconceptions, concerns and expectations head on.

Our research found the four main areas of student concerns were:

- School work "How hard is the work and how much is there to do?"
- New school systems "How do I know what classroom to go to?"
- Friendships "How will I make new friends or make sure I don't lose current friends?"
- Self-discipline "How can I be organised for school and make sure I get there on time?"

2. Communicate

Transition can be both stressful and exciting for students, with a variety of emotions and challenges along the way. Parents can guide students through this entire journey by taking the time to talk through changes during your child's final years of primary school and continuing this conversation through their first few months into high school.

Discussions about their new teachers, new friends, schoolwork expectations, what they are enjoying and what they are being challenged with will help you keep track of their progress. Use your child's new school support systems, like orientations and parent teacher nights, to check in regularly and share your experiences, questions and ideas.

3. Tailored support

The research shows each student's transition experience is unique. As a parent or guardian, no one knows the needs of your child better, so it's important to share these considerations with educators throughout

the transition to secondary school. This includes children who might be faced with a more difficult transition because of social, academic, health, environmental, or other contextual challenges.

Parents should discuss with their child, teachers and any support services teams, any specific requirements that could assist with the transition, such as:

- What are the specific additional challenges that need to be overcome?
- What extra preparation could support the transition?
- How and when will this extra preparation happen?
- Do we need to coordinate any extra services or expertise?
- How can teachers and parents collaborate better to support the transition?

4. School work

A key area of concern for many students is understanding how their schoolwork will change and whether they will be able to manage things like multiple subjects and regular homework.

Most students will need to become more independent and may need some support to create time and space to study at home. In their primary years, students become more familiar with time management skills and expectations, but unknowns and misconceptions still require clarification.

At secondary school, students will need to learn how to navigate their timetable, interact with multiple teachers and subjects and learn how to balance their studies, extra-curricular activities and hobbies.

Parents can help guide their children through this period by:

- Offering support to help students prioritise their time
- Creating a distraction free space for study
- Create daily routines for getting ready for school with things like, laptop charging, packing sports uniforms or checking homework.

5. Getting to and from school

It might sound simple but getting to and from school and then navigating around the new school environment are all major sources of concern during the change to secondary school. Parents can help transitioning students by working together to plan their new school transport options and timetables.

Depending on where your child goes to high school will dictate whether there is also a change of routine at home and a change for you as a parent. It's a good idea to practice the new travel route to test how it could impact your family routine. Making sure you build in extra buffer time and contingencies will also help reduce stress during the morning or afternoon routine.