



Information Sheet

FOR TEACHERS OF STUDENTS TRANSITIONING INTO YEAR SEVEN

Educators 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, teachers can successfully guide their students, 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 teachers can help their students thrive:

1. Address the unknowns

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, teachers can empower their children by simply addressing the Giraffe in the room. By setting aside time early in the year to find out what students 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. Teachers can guide students through this entire journey through regular communication, during the child's final years of primary school, all the way through the first year of secondary school.

In addition to ongoing dialogue with the student and parents, teachers can establish or maintain productive communications channels with transition schools. Primary teachers can discuss how to best prepare their students with key educators from prospective secondary schools, including Year Seven Coordinators, Assistant Principals and student wellbeing leaders.

Secondary school educators can make sure new students are well prepared and learn how to best support individuals through dialogue with feeder primary school teachers, Assistant Principals and student inclusion leaders.

3. Tailored support

The research shows each student's transition experience is unique, so teachers should consider what tailored support could help each student through the secondary school progression. This includes identifying students who could be 'at risk' of a difficult transition based on social, academic, health, environmental, or other contextual challenges.

Students who have any formal plans, funding, assessments or support services will need extra attention during transition. Teachers should discuss with students, parents, support teams and other educators, any specific requirements that could assist with the transition, such as:

Which students will need extra preparation for transition?

How and when will this extra preparation happen?

Do any students have health concerns or require specific learning support?

How can the schools and educators collaborate better to support the transition?

Do we need to coordinate any extra services or expertise?

4. School work

A key area of concern for 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 advice on how 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.

Teachers can help guide their students by:

- Providing practical advice and lessons on time management
- Break down study requirements into specific easy to understand tasks and examples
- Develop checklists for getting ready for school with things like, laptop charging, packing sports uniforms or checking homework.

5. Getting to and around school

It might sound simple but getting to and from school and then navigating around the new environment are all major sources of concern for students and parents. Teachers can help transitioning students develop the skills to navigate their new school and their commute while working with parents to make sure they're prepared for any family routine changes.

Orientation days are great opportunities for students to get familiar with their new school layout. Learning how to interpret and navigate using physical school maps as well as practicing journey planning with digital tools like Google maps can also be great ways to help student prepare for transition.