

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - Australia's No 1 parenting educator

Making a smooth start to secondary school

Getting used to new subjects and new teachers, as well as forming new friendships are just some of their challenges during this period.

Starting secondary school is a time of change and uncertainty, which places new demands on kids. Being at the bottom of the pecking order where they are unsure of the playground hierarchies is just one adjustment that they need to make. **Getting used to new subjects and new teachers, as well as forming new friendships are just some of their challenges during this period.**

Some kids take these new experiences in their stride but it is natural to experience some difficulty, particularly as it's accompanied by the potentially unsettling transition from childhood to adolescence. It's no coincidence that children's learning levels out in the transition year presumably because the social tasks of adjustment take precedence over academic performance.

It helps to remember the **3 P's** to assist your young person to settle in:

1. Patience

Be patient and understanding in the early weeks. Brush up on your listening skills as you help your young person adjust. Talk to your young person about change and reassure them that it is normal to feel nervous in new circumstances. Let them know that many of the difficulties they face will be temporary.

2. Positive attitude

Confidence is catching so make sure you see this transition time as an exciting challenge that your child can handle rather than an event to be feared. Ask them about the new subjects or interesting activities they are doing, and try to shift their focus to the positive aspects of school. Discuss settling in problems with the appropriate person such as a year level coordinator, but give your young person time to handle them on their own before seeking help.

3. Process their day

Some young people may come home with fairly exaggerated accounts of secondary school and may not always paint a fair picture. They can be sensitive to many things, which they would have shrugged off in primary school. It helps if you can listen without judgement and show a real interest in their new school, while providing them with the space they need to get away for a while. Expect some behaviour blowouts as many kids let off some steam in the safe and stable environment of a loving family.

If your eldest is starting, then secondary school will be a relatively new experience for you too. It will take some time for you to adjust to the school's culture and communication methods.

Although secondary schools may seem a little foreign for those used to the relative intimacy of primary schools one aspect is the same – ***outcomes for students is maximised when schools and parents work together in the best interests of the student.***

One way to support your young person's school is by actively promoting the schools' values. For instance, if respect is a prominent school value then you can discuss this in relation to the way your young person behaves around friends, relatives and family.

Most importantly, talk your young person's new school up, rather than talking it down as kids of all ages take their cues from the most significant adults in their lives- their parents!

Published by Michael Grose
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