

How Do You Know When a Student Is Struggling with This Transition?

Here are some signs and symptoms of transition distress:

- a decrease in school grades from middle to high school and a general lack of success in school
- a decline in school interest
- diminished self-concept, self-belief, and confidence in one's abilities
- an increase in school absences/tardiness
- an increase in behavior problems at school resulting in frequent discipline
- expression of feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- use of avoidance strategies to problem-solve rather than facing the problem head-on

If you recognize these symptoms in a student, be sure to seek opportunities to provide more support, perhaps involving the school counselor, parents/guardians, and other appropriate adults.

Conclusion

The journey into high school is one that is exciting, yet scary; challenging, but potentially very rewarding. For most students, this transition leads to greater self-understanding and positive growth—social, academic, and emotional. It is our hope that this video provides you with some essential tools to inspire this positive change in young people's lives.

Moving On to High School

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

To the Facilitator

Before showing the video, take time to review this guide, which provides general information about the transition to high school and a suggested session outline. Also included is a transition planner to help students prepare for this important transition time.

Purpose of This Video

This video helps students deal with the issues of moving from middle school to high school. It is designed to stimulate a conversation that goes well beyond the video content, to encourage students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that contribute to academic success, and to prepare them for the journey into young adulthood.

How Can This Video Be Used?

This video can be used in a variety of settings, including

- student/parent orientation meetings
- school open houses
- homeroom or general class discussions
- a “moving on” session in middle school
- a “welcoming” session in high school

In addition, this video can be used with young people in after-school or community youth programs.

Learning Objectives for the Video

After viewing this video, students will be able to

- identify the rewards and challenges of moving on to high school
- apply a variety of strategies to successfully cope with the stress of moving on to high school
- motivate themselves to seek out adult and peer support if they are struggling with this transition

Introduction

Like the transition to middle school, the transition to high school can be filled with excitement and anticipation, but it can also be filled with stress and uncertainty. During this time, young people face a variety of academic and

personal challenges—different schools, harder classes, new and changing friends, changing bodies, and growing peer pressure, to name just a few.

Most young people progress through this turbulent time without great stress or serious struggle. For a small percentage, however, this transition is a difficult one that may lead them down a path toward academic failure and a variety of negative, risky behaviors including the use of alcohol and other drugs. These students need additional information, support, and encouragement provided by significant adults in their lives as well as peer support offered by positive friendships and other relationships.

What Can Your School Do to Ease This Transition?

Schools can do a number of things to ease this transition to high school. Here are just a few ideas:

- create smaller “schools” or learning centers within the school, allowing students to receive more attention and feel more connected to others
- foster more opportunities for students to build supportive relationships with teachers and other students
- have older students mentor younger students
- develop an orientation to high school that involves teachers, students, and families
- provide welcoming activities that include a school visit, building tour, and an introduction to the school’s curriculum and after-school programs
- encourage parents to have continued interest in their child’s education
- publicize who the adult helpers are in the building and how they can be contacted

Moving On to High School Suggested Session Outline

Here is a suggested outline for a 50-minute student session, which includes the viewing of the *Moving On to High School* video. Adapt this outline to fit your group's needs and time frame.

Materials Needed:

- *Moving On to High School* video
- VCR/monitor
- "My Transition Planner" handout (included in this guide)
- pens or pencils

Preparation Needed:

- Be sure to preview the video and write down some of its key messages to review with students. Think through possible answers to the discussion questions before the session.
- Photocopy "My Transition Planner," one per student.

Getting Started (5 minutes):

Ask students: **What do you think it will be like in high school? How might it be different from your experience in middle school?**

Allow several students to respond.

Explain: **Today, we're going to talk about moving on to high school and what that transition will be like. We're going to start by showing a video.**

Playing the Video (15 minutes):

Play the video. Make sure every student can easily see and hear the video.

Discussing the Video (10 minutes):

Ask students the following questions:

1. **What were some of the rewarding or positive aspects of moving on to high school that were mentioned in the video?**

(Possible answers: a different variety of classes; more or new friends; more freedom and independence; more activities a person can be involved in; able to drive a car)

2. **What are YOU looking forward to in moving on to high school?**

Allow several students to respond.

3. **What were some of the challenges students faced in moving on to high school that were mentioned in the video?**

(Possible answers: peer pressure; changing friends; different school; getting lost; more homework; harder classes; being the youngest in the school; changing bodies)

4. **What are some of the concerns YOU have about moving on to high school?**

Be sure to spend extra time on this question. Allow several students to express their concerns.

5. **What are some things YOU can do to make this transition easier for yourself?**

Have students share ideas from the video, but also their own ideas.

(Possible answers: get involved in school activities; be open to new friends; believe in yourself and your abilities; find a teacher or adult who can support you; ask for help if you get lost or have questions; resist the pressure from friends to use alcohol or drugs; get organized; set personal goals; find a strong interest and develop it)

6. **Optional:** The video does not specifically address the issue of dating and sexual pressure. If appropriate with your audience, you may want to spend a few minutes talking about this issue.

Spend a few minutes talking about the people who will be available to support the students in this transition. This may include their homeroom teacher, school counselor, other teachers, coaches, parents/guardians, and friends. If available, give specific names of school staff that students can go to for help.

Going Deeper (15 minutes):

Divide students into groups of two or three. Give each student one of the “My Transition Planner” handouts and a pen or pencil (if they don’t have one).

Explain: **I have given each of you a planner that will help you prepare for this transition to high school. I would like each of you to fill in the first two statements by yourself.**

Allow students a minute or two to fill in these questions.

Explain: **Now, working as a group, help each other fill in statements 3 through 9 on your planner. When you are done with this, fill in statement 10 on your own.**

As students are filling in their planners, be sure to walk around the room offering ideas.

Optional: If there is time, have students share some of their answers on their planners.

Taking It Home (5 minutes):

Review some of the key concepts covered in the video. Then encourage students to take their “My Transition Planner” home and review it periodically as they make the transition to high school.

Extending the Learning (Optional):

Here are some additional ideas, if you would like to spend more time on this topic with your students:

Activity 1:

Invite high school students to talk with your students about their experience in high school. What was the transition like for them? What helped make the transition easier?

Activity 2:

Schedule a time when your students can tour the high school. Ask the school’s principal, counselor, or other adult to give the tour and to spend time talking about the school and who is there to help students if needed.

Activity 3:

Ask students to describe some of the situations they are concerned about in moving on to high school. Choose a few examples and have students role-play how they would handle these situations in positive ways. After each role-play, talk about the situation and how it was handled. Talk about any other positive ways to deal with the situation as well.

My Transition Planner

This transition planner is designed to help you better prepare for high school.
Fill out each area as completely as you can.

<p>1. Three things about high school that I am looking forward to are:</p>	<p>6. If I feel unsafe at my new school, I will:</p>
<p>2. Three things that concern me about moving on to high school are:</p>	<p>7. Two things I will do to reduce the stress of this transition are:</p>
<p>3. To prepare myself to move on to high school, I plan to:</p>	<p>8. A talent that I plan to further develop in high school is:</p>
<p>4. Key people in my life who can help make this move easier are:</p>	<p>9. My family can help me meet the challenges of high school by:</p>
<p>5. Activities that I plan to get involved with at my new school are:</p>	<p>10. Overall, my feelings about high school can be summed up in these words:</p>