

Going to high school means more than just a new school...



Two factors make the transition to high school such a particular challenge:

1

Adapting to physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and academic changes.

E.g., puberty, identity development, disruption of social network, new environment, new school procedures, etc.

2

The fact that students enter a new school environment that does not always align with their psychological needs.

E.g., need for self-esteem when evaluation methods are more focused on performance and comparison, etc.

It's a transition that...

SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERS THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE FOR MOST STUDENTS



After the transition to high school, about 70% of students experience factors that could impact their academic success.

While for many, these factors may not have major consequences, most students do experience:

- Lower academic performance
- Reduced motivation and engagement
- A more negative attitude toward school
- Increased social anxiety and loneliness

IS A SOURCE OF ANXIETY



While many students are optimistic about their future when starting high school, others experience certain types of anxiety, including:

- Getting lost in a new, larger school
- Having trouble making friends and being bullied
- Having stricter teachers and not enough support
- Having more schoolwork both in class and at home
- Having different rules and routines from one class to the next
- Having to face different methods of evaluation

AFFECTS SOME STUDENTS MORE THAN OTHERS



- Students who are already behind academically
- Students with previous psychosocial adjustment or behavioural problems in elementary school
- Students from families that provide little academic support
- Girls, who tend to be more sensitive to disruptions in their social networks and place greater importance on academic success



Many experts advocate against excessive competition among students, noting instead that goals promoting mastery and learning tend to be better at nurturing motivation and engagement.

CAN BE PREPARED FOR IN MANY WAYS AND OVER A PERIOD OF AT LEAST A YEAR

Above all: fulfill three psychological needs

One of the reasons students have trouble adjusting to high school is that their new environment does not always meet their psychological needs.

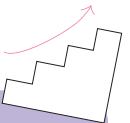
NEED FOR AUTONOMY



Self-affirmation and autonomy are important parts of adolescence. However, high school often comes with a greater emphasis on discipline and external control.

- Allow students to participate in decision making (e.g., choices concerning content, methods, order of tasks, etc.).
- Encourage students to set behavioural and learning goals.
- Urge students to plan their work schedule.

NEED FOR SELF-ESTEEM



Teens are in the process of constructing **their identities** and are thus **more sensitive to social comparisons**. High school evaluation methods that emphasize performance and competition can thus have negative effects.

- **Value self-improvement** rather than ranking within the group.
- Highlight **effort, progress, and successes**.
- Ensure evaluation is varied, progressive, and **not discouraging**.

NEED FOR CONNECTION (BELONGING AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS)



While social connections take on great importance in adolescence, the high school environment sometimes means that teachers are less available and that it is harder to create relationships with peers (e.g., more students going to different classrooms, rather than a single classroom, etc.)

- Plan regular status meetings among practitioners working with the same students.
- Get personalized, regular, and frequent follow-ups for all students from a significant adult.
- Encourage contact among students and school staff outside the classroom.

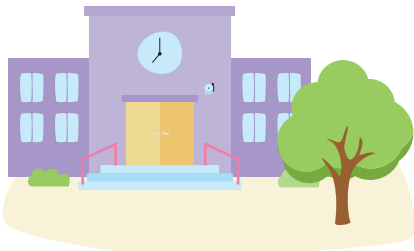


Creating good relationships with peers and teachers early on is strongly associated with a smooth school transition.



Courses of action

Activities supporting a smooth transition start at least 12 months before students start high school, and even in the years leading up to it.



AT SCHOOL

- Implement psychosocial activities in addition to ensuring pedagogical continuity between elementary and high school.
- Increase the number and duration of visits of elementary students to high schools.
- Organize supplementary activities for students who are behind at school.
- Set up personalized tutoring and monitoring programs in secondary 1.
- Introduce students to high school teaching methods.



AT HOME

- Attend open house events at the high school.
- Accompany students to the orientation day.
- Go over the school's rules and regulations with the student.
- Visualize a typical school day.
- Focus on the positive when discussing the changes to come.



IN THE COMMUNITY

- In organizations working with teens, include activities aimed at:
 - Discussing the transition, listening to teens' concerns, and reassuring them.
 - Developing social and conflict-resolution skills.
 - Supporting students, especially over the summer, and maintaining contact after the start of high school.
- Organize transition camps.
- Work with the local school to organize activities that involve both elementary and high-school age students.

Offering a wide variety of high-quality extra-curricular activities is associated with many benefits for students transitioning to high school, including:



- A greater sense of belonging to the school
- Improved psychosocial adjustment
- Better grades



ReadyForHighSchool.ca

A fun platform where students can explore new situations and that enables discussions among educational stakeholders, students, and parents.

For more information:

<https://www.reseautreussitemontreal.ca/en/key-topics/school-transitions1/elementary-high-school-transition/>
(This page also includes links to all the sources used to compile this infographic, more courses of actions, other resources, etc.)

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