

Moving from middle school to high school, is a big transition. It can be a time of fun, excitement and new experiences, but it can also be challenging or worrying for many children. You can help by making sure your child is prepared and feels supported.

It is hard not to feel, in those weeks leading up to the first day of freshman year, that you and your child have finally hit the big leagues. Because you have. High School is, in many ways, a break with everything that has gone before. Suddenly your child, and let's be honest he may look like a young adult but is still very much a child, is in a world where sex, drugs, alcohol, along with the high school demands, competitive sports, and college are all part of the vernacular. It can seem overwhelming at times, almost too much.

Take a deep breath. Don't worry. Adolescence is almost like a rerun of the earliest years of childhood, with both physical and intellectual change occurring at a standing pace, new dangers appearing all the time and an unending need for sleep and food. High school takes four year because that is the minimum it takes for both kids and parents to transition from the final days of childhood to the first moments of adulthood. Your child will have enough time and so will you.

Going to high school: what to expect

Children often have **mixed feelings** about starting high school. They might be

- excited about new friends, subjects and teachers
- nervous about learning new routines, making new friends or wearing a new uniform
- worried about handling the workload or not fitting in.

You might also worry about these issues and about whether your child will have the confidence and skills to handle them.

These **worries are all normal**. High school also means a move from the familiar to the unknown, and a whole new way of doing things.

Relationships

Your child will need to meet new peers and make new friends and establish or reestablish her position within a peer group.

Schoolwork

Your child will need to adapt to new teaching and assessment styles, cope with a wide range of subjects, adjust to having different teachers in different classrooms, become more responsible for his own learning, manage a heavier and more complicated study and homework load, and learn a new and more complex timetable.

Getting around

Your child will have to adjust to a new school campus, find her way around, get to class on time with the correct books and materials, and possibly cope with new transport arrangements.

All these issues might be particularly challenging for some young people living in rural or remote communities. For example, they might need to manage lengthy travel times or move away from their families, friends and local communities to go to boarding school or a school to meet any special needs they might have.

When children are making the move to high school, you have the biggest influence on how smooth the transition is. Your child's friends do influence how your child feels about the move, but your support has stronger and longer-lasting effects.



Preparing to start high school

You can help ease any worries your child has about starting high school by preparing your child in the months and weeks before school begins.

Real-world issues

Here are some ideas for dealing with real-world issues:

- Make sure your child goes to any high school transition and orientation programs provided by the high school
- Involve your child in the decision-making where possible. For example, you could try talking together about transport options to and from school, and subject electives.

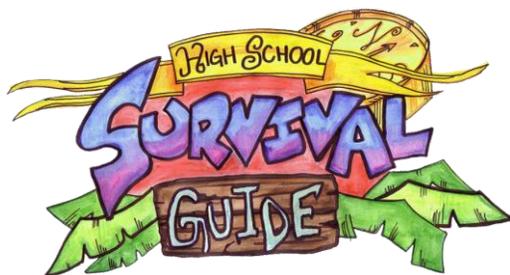
Feelings

Here are some ideas to deal with mixed feelings and worries:

- Talk with your child about what he's most looking forward to and to what he's worried about. Really **listen** when your child shares his feelings and worries about high school. **Reassure him that it's normal to worry about going to high school.**



- Encourage your child to look at the positive side of the move to high school. For example, you could highlight the new opportunities your child will have by talking about extracurricular activities your child could choose at the new school.
- Talk with your child about friendships. For example, you could ask what your child's friends are saying about high school. You could also talk about how your child might keep in touch with old friends and make new friends at high school.



During the transition to high school

Real-world issues

Here are some ideas to help with the practical side of the transition to high school:

- Try to arrange for a parent, grandparent or other close adult to be home before and after school for the first few weeks after you child starts high school.
- Find out the name of the teacher/counselor/advisor responsible for your child's overall care, attendance and social and academic progress. Try to introduce yourself as early as possible.
- Try to make your home as comfortable for study as possible. For example, make sure your child has a quiet place to study, away from distractions like the television or a mobile phone.

What is a true friend? Friendship is not about people who act true to your face. It's about people who remain true behind your back.

Friends – These ideas might help with worries about getting to know people and making new friends at high school:

- Reassure your child that it's normal to worry about making new friends.
- Find out whether there's a buddy system at your child's new school and encourage your child to be involved in it.
- Let your child know that new friends are welcome in your home. Encourage your child to invite new friends over or be ready to transport your child to their houses.
- Help your child explore new opportunities. Learning a musical instrument, trying a new sport or joining a drama class are great ways for your child to meet new people and get involved in school activities.

Feelings

Consider these feelings for handling emotional ups and downs:

- **Be prepared for ups and downs.** Adjusting to change takes time, but if things don't stabilize after the first term, talk to your child's home-room teacher in the first instance.
- Remind your child that it's normal to feel nervous about starting something new – such as, you could share how nervous and excited you feel when starting a new job.
- Talk to other parents to check whether your child's experiences and feelings are similar to those of others. Sporting and school events are good opportunities to meet other parents.
- Try to make sure your child eats well, gets plenty of physical activity and gets plenty of sleep. The change to high school is likely to make your child more tired at first.
- Stay calm. If you're calm and reassuring you'll give your child more confidence that she can get through the tough parts of starting high school.



Children with additional needs beginning high school

The transition to high school is sometimes more challenging for learners with additional needs. It's important to ensure that your child – and your family – are adequately prepared for the change and can get the information you need.

You might need extra time to plan your child's transition to high school, even starting up to a year ahead. Student intervention services at your child's middle and high school will play an important role in ensuring your child's needs are supported.

If you'd like extra support or have concerns, you can talk with your child's teacher, counselor, school principal or learning support team.

Your feelings about your child beginning high school

Your child's transition to high school is a **big change for you too**. Your relationship with your child's middle school might be ending, and you're likely to have a different sort of relationship with your child's high school.

It's normal to have mixed feelings about these changes.

Talking to other parents, particularly those who have gone through the high school transition, often helps. It might ease your mind to know that most children find things a little hard at first but settle in during the year.

Also, other parents who are experienced at the school can often answer small questions and give you helpful tips about how things work at your child's new school.

And don't be surprised, nor take it personally, if you find that your child does not want you to be as visible at his high school as you might have been during the elementary or middle school years. Remember that he'll still need your support outside of school, and that is all part of the way he develops greater independence.

What can I do to help my child make the transition to high school?

1. Talk about college, but not so much

College admissions is a dark grey fog that will at some point descend upon your home. While you do want to mention that freshman grades **do count** for college admissions [being sure your child understands the terms **Cumulative GPA** and **Overall GPA**, see below], put a full-blown discussion on hold for a bit, reminding yourself and your child that **high school should be about high school**. Tell your teen that ninth grade is about 1. **Exploring new activities and making new friends** 2. **Taking whatever activity, you already love to the next level** and 3. **Getting good grades and acclimatizing to the rigors of high school**. That is it. Everything else comes later.

*There is not much difference between **cumulative GPA** and **overall GPA**. The term "GPA" stands for grade point average. The cumulative GPA is the grade point average of all grades a student has secured in a semester or term. However, an overall GPA may be defined as an average of all cumulative GPA's which a student has secured in all semesters and all the courses in an academic term.*

The grades may be defined as a measurement of varying levels of performance in a subject. Most of the graduate and post graduate institutes across the world measure the performance level of students in a particular subject through grades. Grades can be assigned in letters like A, B, C, D, or F. These grades may be interpreted differently.

2. Stay close

Your child is an uncharted territory, for her. And while you may not be a "helicopter" or hovering parent, it would not hurt to stick close for the first few months. A close eye on who she is making friends with, how and when she is getting her work done and her general health, would not go amiss. Some kids have challenges with their time management as they enter high school and find themselves up late, sleeping inadequately and getting on a vicious cycle. Parents can help with this, establishing routines, limits on social media and strict bedtime. **Sleep for teens is like water for plants, it is not pretty when they don't get enough.**

3. Count back for curfews

Curfew decisions will differ as family dynamics differ. Whatever you decide, we suggest that you count back – think about what time is okay for a high school senior to come in at night. Realize that every year you will want to move their curfew back a little bit in acknowledgement of their growing maturity and freedom. Then work backwards four years. If you start ninth grade at midnight, you will soon find yourself in trouble.

4. Talk about the hard stuff

If you have not been talking about the hard stuff, drugs, birth control, sex, consent...this is the time to start. These conversations may be *hard to hear* and *hard to say*, but necessary. If you have been talking, double down. Your child is now in a world where

these issues arise, if not for them (hopefully) for schoolmates, and the time to talk is **early and often**. Every family has its own customs and values and every ninth grader should know them. Over time, they may discard some of what we say, ignore our warnings or our rules. They may choose to defy us, but they should never for one moment be uncertain of both the rules and values the family embraces.

5. **Find the one thing**

Ninth grade is the year to start (or for some kids, continue) one thing that will carry your student through high school (the school newspaper, a drama group, a sport or art activity) and to delve into other things along the way. Academics may seem a bit challenging, but for most freshman, there is still time to experiment with different extracurricular interests. The most important things a freshman learns are about herself. This is a year for students to discover interest they have or that an activity undertaken since childhood is better left behind.

6. **Friendships change**

Ninth grade is the time and chance for new friendships to grow. For most school districts, ninth grade provides an opportunity for teenagers to expand and/or completely change their social group. As multiple middle schools feed into one high school, it can be immensely liberating for 8th grade students who crave different peer groups. It can also shake up an existing social order, bringing in a breath of fresh air to stratified social status. Even in situations where there is just one middle school feeding into one high school, friendships may certainly change.

Change is hard - but change is also good. Change makes us stretch beyond our comfort zones and grow in new directions. And while the fluid nature of high school - and trying to keep old friendships while exploring new ones - is an adjustment, it can strengthen your relationships with others.

7. **As a general rule...Freshmen should stick with Freshmen**

Freshman year is certainly high school, but not all high schoolers are the same. The social order of high school means that kids largely stay in their grade groups. But in clubs, sports and other activities the grades mix fluidly. For Freshmen, and to a lesser extent, sophomores, this is not always a great thing. Sure, older students have much to teach younger students about leadership and excelling at extracurricular activities, but it doesn't end there. The world of a 14/15-year-old is very different from a 17/18-year-old. While some socializing is nice, end of season parties, cast parties, younger high school students are best encouraged to stay in their own lane, amongst their own.

8. A bit of parental input

In the ninth grade, teachers appreciate “inside input” from parents, so that they can connect with their learners more effectively. And if there are hiccups along the way, would not mind a bit of parental input. Emphasis on “a bit.” Students, by now, should be able to speak up for themselves, but sometimes teachers or counselors need a bit of background and helping a 14-year old. Again, a bit, is not out of line.

9. Course selection

Many high school classes have prerequisites and freshmen need to be aware of these and the order in which classes should be taken. In an ideal world, each student would have a counselor who guides them through the process of course selection and planning their four years. In the real world, sometimes, parents need to help. Freshmen need to imagine where they would like to end up academically senior year and draw a path of classes that will get them there. Plans change but it helps to set goals from the start.

10. Finding your place as a parent of a high school student

It seems almost inconceivable that we could have a child this old, as our own high school days seem not so far removed. Looking at your new high school child, who by now may be look at you eye-to-eye, it is not hard to feel as though time has begun to accelerate and the road to the empty nest becomes clear.

Transition Activities

June, July, August

This fall, your child will be one of many who will be beginning their freshman year in a new school.

For the parents of those soon-to-be freshmen, it feels like the “countdown clock” to college, independence and adulthood begins ticking faster and faster. The high school years are a momentous and consequential time. The choices – both big and small – that children and their parents make in these years can have a lifelong impact. And the freshman year sets it all in motion – which is why lots of open, honest conversations before and during that first year of high school are so essential.

Below are three conversations we recommend having with your child as he or she begins high school. They help to set the “ground rules” and give a context for most of the other experiences and conversations in the four years to follow.

It is best if these are real conversations, and not lectures – *talking with your teen and not just talking to your teen.* Finding ways to ask open questions and listening to what is said (and what’s not said) is key.

And knowing that many teens are uncomfortable with anything that feels too much like a forced “sit-down chat,” we recommend parents of freshmen use informal “car talks” while driving together to or from school, the store/mall, or a friend’s house – after all, with a driver’s license on the horizon, the opportunities for such conversations will soon be coming to a close. So, without necessarily making it feel like a big deal to your child, find a moment to turn down the radio, have him or her put down their mobile phone and have genuine, unforced, and meaningful conversations on these topics. **Suggestion: Keep a journal to make note of your child’s responses. You will find this information useful in August when completing the final activity for the summer.**



Keeping high school and college in perspective.

There are more than 2,100 fully accredited, non-profit, four-year colleges and universities in the United States – over 1,500 private and over 650 public. Any one of these colleges sends their graduates on to great law schools, medical schools, and graduate schools, or out into successful lives and careers afterwards.

Yet, for many high school students (and their parents), fear and stress over college admissions at only one or just a handful of these institutions clouds nearly all of their actions and choices in four years of high school.

They select extra-curricular activities or electives with the sole purpose of “padding the college resume” instead of actually discovering new interests. They look for the easiest (and often least meaningful) community service opportunities, not with a priority of helping others, but instead with the goal of racking up the greatest number of service hours.

They avoid taking intellectual risks and often approach their classes by asking only “Will this be graded?” or “Will this be on the test?”

Ultimately, the stress of college admissions forces them to miss out on many important experiences and powerful learning opportunities that could positively shape their future in college and well beyond.

Parents should take the time now to ask their child questions like these:

- What do you think your goals should be for your high school years?
- When they’re over, what do you hope you will have accomplished?
- What do you think my goals are for your high school years?

Hopefully, these conversations help put college in perspective. The purpose of the high school years for our children, is not to gain admission to one particular college, but rather to learn and strengthen skills and habits of hard work, to build and deepen relationships, and to begin to discern a purpose and meaning for their independent adult lives to follow. And whatever that purpose and meaning might be, it ought to involve helping and positively impacting others.

A student who spends their high school years working very hard, building good habits, taking good intellectual risks, being a good friend and contributing positively to the lives of others, will surely find many of those 2,100 colleges and universities eager to welcome him or her – perhaps even with some scholarship money, too.

Even more beneficial for the student, though, is that those high school experiences set him or her on a trajectory for a meaningful and successful life far beyond college, as well.



Thinking “meta” – especially about responsibility and empathy.

The teenage brain is physically and chemically different from the adult brain – just do a quick internet search for “frontal lobe development.”

Without exception, every teen will repeatedly behave impulsively, emotionally, thoughtlessly, and irrationally – something parents and teens ought to discuss together candidly in the quieter, less emotional moments.

Your freshman is going to spend eight hours each day, five days each week, for the next four years at school, making hundreds or thousands of independent choices without you around.

Some of those choices will be impulsive, emotional, thoughtless, and irrational. They will get in trouble with their teachers. They will embarrass themselves. They will make mistakes, big and small, that they someday will wish they could take back. And they will be surrounded every day by hundreds of other teens whose own impulsive, emotional, thoughtless, and irrational choices are bound to negatively impact your child on more than one occasion.

Metacognition refers to thinking about how we think. It can be very helpful for high school students to get in the habit early of reflective metacognition – thinking about their choices when or after they make them and trying to figure out why they made that choice.

Particularly if it’s a bad or hurtful choice, they might see that they really had no rational reason for the decision they made – they just behaved impulsively and thoughtlessly [**perfectly natural, for a teenager**].

Perhaps this might help them just a brief moment of pause before the next emotional, impulsive, thoughtless, or irrational choice they make ... though brain development tells us the odds may be against this. More likely, though, it can help them be less defensive and **take responsibility** for the consequences after the choices are made.

They understand that making bad or stupid decisions as a teenager doesn’t make you a bad or stupid person. They become receptive to seeking and learning lessons from mistakes.



Behaving disrespectfully, hurting someone else, cheating, lying – when these things happen, a student should **take responsibility**, apologize, try to be sure it doesn’t happen again, and try to the best of their ability to make amends and set things right. Similarly, parents ought to help their child remember that they’re surrounded by hundreds of other teenagers whose brains are similarly wired to make poor decisions from time to time, and they ought to **extend empathy and forgiveness often**. Having this “meta” perspective at the outset of the high school years can be very beneficial in helping a student navigate the emotional roller coaster that is to follow.



Love.

They may roll their eyes and act annoyed with their parent, but teens need to hear this: “I love you. There is nothing you can ever do that would make me love you less. I may get frustrated and lose my temper. You may make a decision that really disappoints me or even hurts me. **But I will always love you, no matter what.**”

There are lots of other meaningful conversations to have and skills to build for a high school freshman – on academics, learning, friendships, peer pressure, sex, drugs, alcohol, and so much more.

However, we believe these three big perspective-setting conversations at the outset gives a valuable context to everything that follows. Ensuring that your teen has the right priorities and the right perspective – and knows that he or she will be loved, no matter what – will help put them on the path for a successful high school experience – and the many years that will follow.

June – adapted from *Solving the Relational Puzzle with Learners* – Did You Know Publishing, Inc.



Activity # 11

Multiple Perspectives

This is the way: I See Me/You See Me

Suggested Procedure:

Invite your child to circle the words they feel describe them.
Consult with your child to check perceptions and set personal goals.

Not very smart	Smart [Capable of making good grades]
Sluggish [Not motivated]	Energetic [Ready to Learn]
Tired	Lively
Funny	Loud/Showy
Failure	Success
Punctual	Tardy
Class Clown	Disrespectful
Compassionate	Caring

Suggestion: In your journal make note of your child's responses. You will find this information useful in August when completing the final activity for the summer.

June – adapted from *Solving the Relational Puzzle with Learners* – Did You Know Publishing, Inc.



Activity # 12

Taking A Look In The Mirror *Individual Self-Concept Check*

Suggested Procedure:

Invite your child to complete the checklist. Talk about ways to build personal strengths.

Consult individually with students to check perceptions and set personal goals.

1. I have confidence in myself because _____ .
2. Others have confidence in me because _____ .
3. I believe I am capable in achieving in school because _____ .
4. Others believe I am capable in achieving in school because _____ .
5. My teachers support me because _____ .
6. My parents support me because _____ .
7. My best character trait is _____ .
8. My friends see me as _____ .
9. My greatest challenge is _____ .
10. I will be successful in life because _____ .

Suggestion: In your journal make note of your child's responses. You will find this information useful in August when completing the final activity for the summer.

July — adapted from *Solving the Relational Puzzle with Learners* – Did You Know Publishing, Inc.



Activity # 13

Students Expressing their Dreams, Vision, and Ambition

Suggested Procedure:

Your child is to complete a paragraph for each of the following. Dialogue between the two of you should follow.

Consult individually with students to check perceptions and set personal goals.

1. What does it mean to be SMART?
2. What does it mean to be SUCCESSFUL? Who determines SUCCESS?
3. What does it mean to be DETERMINED? (*What does it look like?*)
4. Who do I ADMIRE and why?
5. What will I need to do to be successful? Do I need support from anyone else? If so, who?

Suggestion: In your journal make note of your child's responses. You will find this information useful in August when completing the final activity for the summer.



June, July, August

Literature provides an imaginative space in which we can enter into others' experiences and reflect on the world around us. Over the summer, as you prepare to enter high school, we ask that you read **at least two books** chosen from the options below, or make a different selection. Read for pleasure. Read to maintain or build your reading ability. Read to have something interesting to share with your classmates in the fall.

Choose books that you find appealing. If you would like to think about your options before diving into a book, you could check out reviews at GoodReads.com. In terms of length, you might want to consider the number of pages in the book but recognize that the length of a book isn't really correlated with the reader's quality of experience.

Parents may want to assist their child in picking out appropriate books in consideration of their family's values and children's interests.

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda by Becky Albertalli	Not-so-openly-gay Simon is blackmailed into being his classmates' wingman with the threat of his sexual identity – and that of his pen pal – being revealed.
Wintergirls by Laurie Halse Anderson	Lia comes to terms with her best friend's death from anorexia as she struggles with the same disorder.
The Last Leaves Falling by Sarah Bernwell	In Japan, teenaged Abe Sora, who is afflicted with Lou Gehrig's disease, finds friends online and elicits their help to end his suffering
Tyrell by Coe Booth	Tyrell, who is living in a Bronx homeless shelter with his spaced-out mother and his younger brother, tries to avoid temptation so he does not end up like his father.
Georgia Peaches and Other Forbidden Fruit by Jaye Robin Brown	When Jo's radio evangelist father remarries and moves
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky	Charlie, a freshman in high school, explores the dilemmas of growing up through a collection of letters he sends to an unknown receiver.
Ready Player One by Ernest Cline	Life in 2044 is spent in the virtual world OSASIS. When Wade stumbles on a puzzle set up by the creator of OSASIS, he starts to compete to claim a prize of massive fortune.
Unbecoming by Jenny Downham	Katie's family life is already full of stress when she has to start caring for a grandmother with Alzheimer's she's never met. Plus, Katie has a secret of her own she cannot reveal.

Court of Fives by Kate Elliot	When Jess’s family is torn apart, she must rely on an unlikely friendship and her skill at Fives – an intricate, athletic competition – to protect her Commoner Mother and biracial sisters.
Tell Me Again How a Crush Should Feel by Sara Farizan	Leila’s Persian heritage already makes her different from her classmates, and if word got out that she liked girls, life would be twice as hard. But when a new girl shows up, Leila starts to take risks she never thought she would.
Symptoms of Being Human by Jeff Garvin	A gender-fluid teenager who struggles with identity creates a blog on the topic that goes viral and faces ridicule at the hands of fellow students.
Conviction by Kelly Loy Gilbert	Braden cares about three things: baseball, his father, and God. They’re all called into question when his father, a Christian radio host, is accused of murdering a Hispanic police officer.
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon	Despite his fear of people, an autistic boy decides to investigate the murder of a neighbor’s dog and uncovers secret information about his mother.
Dreamland Burning by Jennifer Latham	Rowan finds a skeleton on her family’s property. Investigating the murder leads to painful discoveries about the past. Alternating chapters tell the story of William, another teen grappling with the racial firestorm leading up to the 1921 Tulsa race riot.
Under a Painted Sky by Stacey Lee	In 1849, Chinese-American Samantha is on the run as a suspected murderer, dressed as a boy and following the Oregon Trail with runaway slave Annamae.
Character Driven by David Lubar	In his last year of high school, Cliff Sparks has to figure out what to do with his life, including how to meet new girl Jillian and how to deal with old issues with his unemployed father.
How it Went Down by Kekla Magoon	When Tariq is shot to death, his community is in an uproar. Tariq was black, the shooter is white, and everyone has something to say, but now two accounts of the events agree.
Shame the Stars by Guadalupe Garcia McCall	A retelling of the Romeo and Juliet story set in 1915 along the U.S.-Mexico border as the Mexican Revolution is taking hold and Texas Rangers fight Tejano insurgents.
Never Fall Down by Patricia McCormick	Based on a true story, Arn Chorn Pond is separated from his family and sent to a labor camp when the Khmer Rouge takes power in Cambodia in the 1970s.
When the Moon Was Ours by Anna-Marie McLemore	Best friends Miel and Sam are strange and magical. Now four beautiful sisters, rumored to be witches, are after Miel and Sam’s magic and their secrets.
Burn Baby Burn by Meg Medina	It’s the summer of 1977 in the Bronx – a summer of arson, the serial killer <i>Son of Sam</i> , and citywide blackouts. But Nora’s just looking to get out of her house and away from her family.

Dumplin by Julie Murphy	Willowdean proves she's "more than just a fat girl" while preparing to compete in the pageant her mother runs and navigating her feelings for a co-worker.
A Step from Heaven by An Na	Korean-born Young Ju tells her story from the age of four, when her family immigrates to the United States, through her teenage years, as she adapts to life as an American.
I'll Give you the Sun by Jandy Nelson	A story of first love, family, loss, and betrayal told from different points in time, and in separate voices, by twin artists Jude and Noah.
The Sacred Lies of Minnow Bly by Stephanie Oakes	A handless teen escapes from a cult, only to find herself in juvenile detention and suspected of knowing who murdered her cult leader.
Shadowshaper by José Older	When murals in her neighborhood start to change, Sierra discovers that her Puerto Rican family members are shadowshapers in an epic battle for their lives with an evil anthropologist.
Lucy and Linh by Alice Pung	Australia teen Lucy tries to balance her life at home surrounded by her Chinese immigrant family with her life at a pretentious private school.
Gabi, a Girl in Pieces by Isabel Quintero	Gabi Hernandez chronicles her senior year as she copes with the personal and family drama, cravings for food and cute boys, and the poetry that helps forge her identity.
Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Sáenz	Ari is angry loner with a brother in prison, but when he meets Dante, he starts to ask questions about himself and his family.
Winger by Andrew Smith	Ryan Dean grapples with living in the boarding-school dorm for troublemakers, falling for his female best friend who thinks of him as just a kid, and playing wing on the Varsity rugby team.
Marcelo in the Real World by Francisco X. Stork	Marcelo, a high-functioning autistic teenager, faces new challenges, including romance and injustice, when he goes to work for his father in the mailroom of a law firm.
The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas	Starr moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer.
American Girls by Allison Umminger	Anna runs away to LA where her half-sister takes her in, but after spending days on television and movie sets, she learns LA is not the glamorous escape she imagined.
It's Kind of a Funny Story by Ned Vizzini	New York City teenager Craig Gilner succumbs to academic and social pressures at an elite high school and enters a psychiatric hospital after attempting suicide.

The Final Four by Paul Volponi	Four players at the Final Four of the NCAA basketball tournament struggle with the pressures of tournament play and the expectations of society at large.
Black Boy White School by Brian F. Walker	Anthony gets a scholarship to a prep school in Maine, where he finds that he must change his image and adapt to a world that never fully accepts him.
This Side of Home by Renée Watson	Twins Nikki and Maya agree on most things but react differently to their neighborhood gentrification and the new family that moves in when their best friend is evicted.
The Sun is Also a Star by Nicola Yoon	Natasha is on the verge of being deported to Jamaica when she meets Korean-American good son Daniel who believes there is something extraordinary in store for them.
The Serpent King by Jeff Zentner	The son of an imprisoned Pentecostal preacher faces his personal demons as he and his friends try to make it through their senior year of high school in rural Tennessee.
American Street by Ibi Zoboi	Fabiola and her mother try to move back to the U.S. from Haiti, but her mother is detained at the airport, and so she moves in with her cousins in Detroit and has to navigate a new life there.

Early August — write a note

“Sharing key information can help educators make a connection with your child”

What can you tell your child’s teachers that will help them do their job better? You might be surprised. However, keep in mind no one knows more about your child than you do. You know the culture (practices, habits, traditions, beliefs, languages, etc.) from which your child comes. Their likes, dislikes, what they value, etc. It’s just as important for parents to tell teachers about what they are observing at home that may affect school performance as it is for teachers to report how children are doing in the classroom.

Students do best when parents and teachers work together as partners. The start of a new school year is a great time to open dialogue with your child’s teacher. Not sure where to start? Here are seven things teachers wish you would tell them. After all it is the teacher’s job to want to make a connection with you and you and your child. No matter how much teachers know about the content area that they teach your child won’t connect with them, unless they know their teachers care about them. Sharing this information with your child’s teachers will help them to better understand your child’s needs and lay the groundwork for a cooperative relationship throughout the school year.

When writing your letter, be sure to refer to the notes in your journal, which you have been keeping this summer in helping your child to transition to High School.

1. **Health conditions:** If your child is diabetic, uses an inhaler, is allergic to peanuts, or has a serious health condition, her teacher should know. It’s also helpful to let the teacher know whether your child has been diagnosed with conditions like ADHD, which may affect behavior and concentration.
2. **Family issues:** Fill the teacher in if your family is going through a major change that could affect your child, such as a divorce, a death in the family, or a move. Even if your child seems to have adjusted well, alert teachers so they can watch for behavioral changes.
3. **Personality traits or behavior issues:** Maybe your son is painfully shy and is worried about making friends at a new school. Or perhaps your child has been acting out at home and you’re concerned she’ll do the same at school. It’s best to make teachers aware of these issues before they become a problem at school.
4. **Strengths and weaknesses:** Your daughter is a smart student in math but is embarrassed to read aloud. Your son loves language arts but struggles with science. If you tell teachers these things up front, they’ll have more time to help your children improve in the areas they need it most.

5. **Learning style:** You've spent years teaching your kids, from potty training to tying shoelaces, so you have a good idea of their learning styles. If your child learns better through hands-on activities than listening to explanations, mention that to his teachers. Also share any teaching strategies that you've found work well with your child.
6. **Study habits:** Does your son speed through math homework but labor over reading assignments? Do your daughter's grades suffer because she spends so much time at piano lessons? Tell teachers about your child's study habits and any issues they face in completing work. Teachers often can offer suggestions to make studying time go more smoothly.
7. **Special interests:** Knowing more about your child's hobbies or interests can help the teacher forge connections in the classroom. Let the teacher know that your young son loves a particular comic book superhero and that your middle school daughter is a gifted painter.

Thanks to you and your summer engagement we can start now preparing for an incredible _____ - _____ academic year. We at _____ City Schools are excited about servicing you and your student learner/s!