

Transition from Cabrini Middle School to Cabrini High School

After gathering three years of information from 8th and 9th grade students during their Cabrini Dream Mentor Program (CDMP) sessions, interviews, conversations and documented responses I wanted to share some information that will help your student transition from eighth to ninth grade.

Please note the information provided is not unlike what happens to any student going from Middle School to High School.

Freshman year is recognized by researchers and educators alike as critically important. More students fail ninth grade than any other grade, and once students are held back, the likelihood that they'll drop out increases dramatically.

Many of our students in ninth grade struggle. The information I have and other research shows if students don't get on a correct path, they end up having a lot of anxiety and difficulty. Ninth grade is a critical year for students in terms of being overwhelmed with new found independence and the ability to choose from many different activities. Beginning to understand new learning skills also can impact the students' ability to start off getting good grades as they plan and prepare for college.

The majority of concerns I get have to do with homework and the ability to find time with all the other sports and activities they have been involved in since the early grades.

Many of the upper class students tell me their GPA took a nose dive in ninth grade and they are paying for it now (11th & 12th) after we research and find information about Merit Scholarships and Admission Requirements for college.

Some will say "I'm kind of shy, and with all the new kids coming to Cabrini that I don't really know, I'm afraid I'll make a mistake and that will be horrible.

What I am doing with the eighth graders when they meet with me for their second session before they graduate we discuss the importance of starting off on a good foot with developing some basic Time Management Skills that instruct them to not do everything in one year. I tell them they have four years to take in many new opportunities and it is vital to get to know their teachers, accomplish their school work and determine the amount of quality time it will take to do their studies.

We also go through a number of scenarios where they started out new and that in most instances the anxiety and fear they had goes away once they gain more knowledge about their new surroundings. Plus they will have many other students feeling the same.


Tips for Parents

Ninth graders will experience a variety of new skills and milestones. It is always good for parents to have some idea of what their student is going through, and the following list should help.

- Intellectual Skills – Higher expectations coincide with his/her own increasing abilities. He/she will have interests that span farther and wider than ever, in addition to a greater awareness and curiosity about the world around him/her. An example of your teenager's expanding intellect is his/her new found skill of deductive reasoning.
- Social Skills – Your adolescent is becoming less egocentric in his/her views, and that gives a greater ability to compromise, to stay composed when he/she's in disagreement with someone and to be generally more tolerant and even-tempered. His/her view of the world will settle first on the friends he/she has around him/her.
- Emotional changes – While your ninth-grader is less self-conscious than he/she has been in the past couple of years, he/she is most likely still uncertain about how he/she measures up. Physical appearance matters greatly to him/her, as well as how they're developing.
- Challenges – Your student will encounter many challenges throughout the ninth grade year, and the most common ones are academic failure, eating too much or too little, struggling with today's teen pressures and adjusting to a bigger school.

Going to 9th grade is a huge transition for most children. In many cases, children are not just changing grades, but changing schools. The school is not the only thing that is changing, however– so are the challenges, the expectations, as well as the children themselves as they begin that rocky road that goes from childhood and leads to adulthood. Here are some tips to help you help your child through 9th grade.

You can help by beginning to prepare your child before the first school bell rings. If your child has been having any trouble with reading, writing or mathematics, it might be a good idea to work with them on their weak points over the summer, or consider hiring a tutor. The work will only be getting more difficult in high school, so make sure your child has a good grasp of the basics.

As teens grow, sleep often becomes a major issue. More than half the children in this country are sleep deprived, due to their changing biological clocks.  Their bodies begin getting tired at a later hour, but they still need a full night

sleep. Before school even starts, encourage your teen to go to bed at night at a reasonable hour. Enforce a winding down time in the evening, which your child should stay away from stimulating activities, such as video games, television, or sports. Let them engage in light reading, or listen to soft music, so they develop a good routine that they can keep once school begins.

Going from being a big fish in a little pond to a little fish in a big pond can be an unnerving– even frightening– experience. If your teen is going to a new school in which he will not know anyone, see if the school has any summer programs that your teen can participate in. This will give your child the opportunity to begin meeting students at his new school so he will not feel so lonely when he begins.

Once your child starts school, get in touch with your child's teachers and guidance counselor (Especially if IEPs or Accommodations are needed). Call, or write them a note to introduce yourself, and tell them how they can best get in touch with you if they need you. Voice any concerns, such as if your child is having problems in a particular subject area, very shy in class, or forgets to do homework assignments. If it appears your child is having any problems with classes, homework or social situations, schedule meetings with educators or guidance counselors. Opening the lines of communication with the teachers will help you to stay on top of how your child is adapting and nip problems in the bud.

Don't stop checking a child's work just because they are in high school. Ask to see their assignment notebook, check their home work in the evenings, and ask for test grades and report cards. As teens become more independent they may begin to turn less to parents with their school work. Show your teen that you are still interested, and if she resists, explain to her that you love her and it is your responsibility to see that she is continuing to do well in school. If any signs of problems show up, take action– they can only get worse, and are not likely to go away on their own. Any bad habits or problems that develop in the ninth grade become a danger, as your child may continue them throughout high school.

Social demands can become a big problem for teens starting high school if you are not careful. Teen relationships become more personal and complex than when they were younger– they may feel the need to spend more time with their friends. The abundance of extra curricular activities offered in high school can cause some freshmen to bite off more than they can chew. Often, very busy schedules will cause students to compromise their sleep or study time. Help to teach your child to balance her social life, work, home life and sleep so that she is not neglecting any areas. Talk with her about setting limits on extra curricular activities so they don't interfere with her work or deprive her of much needed rest.

On the flip side, if your teen seems to be socially withdrawn once she begins high school, encourage her to seek out at least one or two activities so that she will have the opportunity to work in smaller groups with students who have similar interests outside of the classroom.

While ninth grade can be a major transitional year for children, you can help him coast through it by teaching him to handle the new challenges responsibly, keeping on top of his progress, and keeping the lines of communication open.