Change can be challenging for any teen and since all teens are unique, even typical students struggle with transition. This guide is intended to share the common challenging experiences and possible ways to defuse them. As the parent, you are an important part of making the process a positive experience for your child.

By now, your child has been practicing many of the skills needed for success in High School. Some of the skills include:

* Meeting new people
* Working with multiple teachers and class changes
* Navigating the hallways with more independence
* Social changes (dating, ball games, clubs and transition or planning for life after high school)

In High school your child may encounter new situations that will continue to develop independence such as:

* Picking electives
* Choosing a Diploma track and meeting requirements
* Continue to refine self-advocacy skills
* Considering transportation choices
* Social situations (Dating, Clubs, and sporting events)
* Planning for life after high school

The state of Tennessee requires that students begin transition planning at the age of 14. As the parent, it is important to be supportive of your child’s role as the decision marker (as appropriate) through their transition into adulthood.

1. **Developing a “Transition Action Plan”**

Major transitions will go more smoothly for your child if you gather information and prepare for the change. The time and resources needed, will depend on the needs of the child. Generally, the schools start having meetings to prepare families for the transition from Middle to High School in February or March with a transition IEP meeting. If a child has more complex needs, planning may need to begin earlier.

Things to consider:

* Most schools offer Orientation Events or other programming to encourage a smooth transition. Will a group orientation visit be enough for your child? (Does an individual orientation need to be planned?)
* Would it be beneficial to have additional supports such as using the school’s website to help recognize key people at the school?
* What additional supports will be needed during the school day?
* Will the size or the layout of the school affect your child’s ability to navigate throughout the school day?
* Will an interpreter be needed? (Sign Language or other languages?)
* Arrival and dismissal at the high schools are independent. What type of support may your child need?

1. **Gather information**

Ask your Middle School Case Manager for a contact person to get more information about the High School.

* Ask for a copy of the student handbook, class schedule, listing of possible clubs or extra-curricular activities, and supportive academic services. (Such as tutoring or after school programming)
* Identify the names and contact information of resource people such as the grade level principal, case manager, and school nurse.
* If appropriate, ask/ check for accessibility
* Discuss specifics about various pathways to graduation (Regular, Occupational, and Alternate Academic Diplomas
* Other supports: **Parent Liaison (Sue Ownby)**

**865-594-8889**

[**sue.ownby@knoxschools.org**](mailto:sue.ownby@knoxschools.org)

1. **Collecting Information**

Questions to ask:

* What are the attendance and discipline policies?
* Are there expectations for the student’s ability to use technology?
* Are there specific accommodations needed (Cafeteria, Library, or Bus Room)?
* Are there specific needs in transportation?
* What are the emergency and evacuation plans? (Are there any special consideration needed?)
* Are there any additional supports that need to be added to the IEP?
* Do teachers have additional communication (Such as Teacher specific websites or chat rooms)?
* What is the best method of communicating with my child’s Case Manager?
* Additional information including contact information community calendar with free events and trainings and other important information is available at: <https://www.knoxschools.org/domain/5429>

1. **Developing Self Advocacy Skills**

As your child develops, they should be developing skills to take a more active role in self-advocacy. **Remember, at age 18 students take over the parent’s role as the key advocate.** This means that the student will be the primary decision maker and signing the IEP. They have control over who will be invited to the meeting, other than the required members of the school staff. The school will **no longer invite parents** or any other participants. This becomes the student’s responsibility as an IEP team member. (Unless the parent has been granted conservatorship through the court system.)

Points to discuss:

* Is my child being encouraged to assume the responsibility for explaining how he or she learns best?
* Is my child able to present information about his or her disability, skills, and interests?
* Are my child’s ideas, interests, and preferences being taken into consideration by the team as decisions are being made?

1. **Preparing your child for the transition-** In the spring of the last year of middle school begin to introduce positive and exciting things about the new setting.

Some suggestions:

* Purchase a t-shirt or other swag from the school
* Attend functions such as concerts; science fairs or ball games is a fun way to introduce the school building
* Talk to them about the move (count down on a calendar) and ask about any concerns that they might have. Make a plan ahead of time so they will know what to do.
* During the summer drive by the school.
* Attend any orientation type programming.
* Ask about meeting teachers or touring the school before school officially opens.

Helpful hints:

* Locate restrooms and water fountains, the school main office, nurse station, counselor’s office and other significant areas
* Map out the best routes between classrooms
* If your child has a locker practice doing the combination.
* Plan the routine for getting on or off the bus. Discuss what to do if the routine changes (miss the bus or have an appointment)

**Parent Checklist**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED | CHECK | NOTES/ COMMENTS |
| I have reviewed the Student Handbook and discussed the expectations with my child |  |  |
| We have discussed grading, behavior, and homework expectations |  |  |
| I have reviewed any new accommodations |  |  |
| I have the contact information to my child’s case manager |  |  |
| How will the teachers be notified about any procedural changes in the IEP |  |  |
| I have reviewed the emergency and safety plans |  |  |
| Encourage extra-curricular activities as appropriate for the student’s interest and skills. |  |  |
| I have reviewed the plans for transportation including arrival and dismissal procedures |  |  |
| I have met with my child’s teachers |  |  |

**Notes**