



How to Make a Successful Transition into High School



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Dear 8th graders (and parents):

Soon you will begin a new chapter in your life – that of a high school student. This is only one of the many significant transitions that you will face in your life. We want you to be successful, so we want to encourage you to begin preparing right now!

Transitions provide new opportunities for you to grow, mature, and develop. You will learn new things and improve your social skills as you mature from child to young adult. You will also have opportunities to strengthen your faith and to better understand your own personal relationship with God. You will expand your circle of friends – keeping many of your old friends and adding new ones.

This booklet is provided to give you some basic information which may help you as you transition to high school. Many of the skills that you develop now will also be useful in future, such as a willingness to accept responsibility for yourself. Read the included information on study habits and study skills and then practice these techniques every day. How you do academically during your freshman year is just as important as your other high school years – maybe even more so. Also the habits you establish as a freshman will set the tone for your success throughout high school. What you do outside the classroom is also important. Being involved in extracurricular activities at school, at church, and as a community volunteer are all important to developing yourself as a well-rounded individual.

Parents, you have an important role in your child's high school experience. You can help him/her establish consistent study habits, see that he/she takes appropriate courses, encourage the exploration of possible careers, visit colleges or technical schools, and encourage participation in a variety of after-school activities.

We pray that God will bless the conclusion of your 8th grade year and your transition to high school. We would love to work with you next year at Wolf River Lutheran High School, but we pray for your success and happiness wherever you may attend.

Serving Christ and you,

Jay Lindsey, Jr.

Executive Director / Principal

Wolf River Lutheran High School

The transition from Middle School into High School

Numerous studies have been done on the transition to high school. Those studies all agree that . . .

- As students make the transition into high school, many young adolescents experience a larger, more impersonal, more competitive, and grade-oriented environment than they experienced in middle school. Of course, this depends on the school. We at Lutheran High pride ourselves on having a family atmosphere that provides personal attention, encouragement and support.
- Students experience a greater diversity of teachers and peers, and they have more choices to make in their curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Many young adolescents' grades drop, and they do not attend school as regularly as they did.
- Students also develop a more negative view of self and feel an increased need for peer friendships.
- Young adolescents ready to make the transition into high school are concerned about how difficult the classes will be, how to study, and how to manage their time when they get involved in extracurricular activities.
- Freshmen students report that high school is more difficult and demanding than middle school.
- Students transitioning to a high school with a developed transitional support program do better in the transition from middle school to high school.

Starting high school is an overwhelming experience for most teenagers. There are many things about high school that are different from your old school environment, and you will experience many changes.

You will face navigating a new school, making new friends in an unfamiliar class, and getting to know new teachers. These new teachers will usually have higher academic expectations than your middle school teachers. They want to help you get into college; in return, they expect you to work hard and improve your skills. On top of all this, the high school years are the time in your lives when you face the greatest temptation to make unhealthy life decisions.

Although these are all big changes, **they are nothing you cannot handle especially with God's help.** There are many different resources available to help you deal with any problems. Your teachers, counselors, doctors, parents, and friends are there to help you transition into this new time in your life. High school may be a time of change, but these changes are usually for the better.

Your high school years are a great time in your life. You will gain new freedoms, have new experiences and be trusted with new responsibilities. However, there can and will be problems. If you are feeling pressure to do something you feel is wrong, talk to a friend, parent, pastor, or counselor to find a solution. If you are not succeeding academically, find a tutor or someone to help you improve. If you feel isolated socially, try to join a school club or group to make new friends. High school may seem rather daunting at first, but with time, you will come to appreciate the experience.

Keep your options open!

Right now you may not know what you want to do with your future – or exactly how to get ready for it. That's okay! You have plenty of time to figure out what interests you, what you're good at, and how those things add up to a bright future. The most important thing to do right now is make sure you keep your options open. The best way to keep your options open is to **make what you do count!**

Almost everything you do from the moment you walk into high school on the first day of your freshmen year will affect your options after high school, so, start smart! Make your classes count. Make your extra-curricular activities count. Make your relationships count. In order to do this, you have to be ready for some hard work.

For the first time you'll have lots of choices to make about what you study. It's important to know that the choices you make for 9th grade, and the rest of your high school years, will affect the choices you'll have for the rest of your life.

No matter what you dream of doing with your life, preparing yourself for education beyond high school is the wisest thing that you can do right now. Post-high school education can provide valuable experiences that will ultimately contribute to a better quality of life for you. Whether or not you go on to a college, a career or technical school, or straight into the working world, the information and skills you learn in your high school classes will always be useful to

you. In simplest terms, everyone in every kind of job needs to be able to write clearly, speak clearly, listen carefully, understand what is written and spoken, and use math effectively. SO, MAKE IT COUNT!

High School is Different!

Knowing how high school works is important. Here are some key differences between high school and middle school.

- ✓ Your classes will often be harder. Most classes are required for graduation. You have to take and pass these classes. Other classes are considered “electives.” If you fail them, you don’t have to retake them, but you still have to have a certain number of credits in order to advance to being a sophomore and to eventually graduate. You usually get to choose your elective classes.
- ✓ You’ll have more homework and, at least in the beginning, the homework will seem harder.
- ✓ You will have more teachers who are responsible for more students. Teachers in larger schools might not know you like your elementary/middle school teachers did. Most will do what they can to help you but you need to go to them for help.
- ✓ You are on your own to get to your classes on time and other activities during and after the school day.
- ✓ If you are involved in athletics, there may be tryouts. Just because you were a starter on your middle school team, doesn’t mean you will even make the high school team.
- ✓ Coaches will often expect more of you. Practices will be longer and harder. Members of teams and activities are expected to be fully committed.
- ✓ There will be lots of opportunities to join clubs and various activities, but you have to go to them. They won’t come looking for you.
- ✓ Course grades are accumulated to give you a final grade point average and number of credits. Academically, everything counts, from first semester freshmen year through second semester senior year! It’s much harder to raise your cumulative grade point average than it is to lower it. Your high school transcript will follow you as you look into your options beyond high school, so the margin for error is slim.

Start Strong!

- By its very nature, you will have more freedom in high school. You will face temptations wrapped up in that freedom. Follow through on your responsibilities and don’t get behind.
- Manage your time. You will make new friends and you’ll want to spend time with them. You will still have responsibilities at home, too. If you are involved in sports or an activity, it will take more of your time. Balancing your time can be tough. Use a planner or calendar to keep track of assignments, upcoming tests, and other responsibilities.
- It’s worth repeating...everything you do in high school adds up and affects your post-high school options. So you have to start strong academically.
 - ✓ Do your homework...EVERY assignment...and turn those assignments in on time. No exceptions!
 - ✓ If you don’t know how to do an assignment – get help. Ask your teacher first, parents second, and friends as a last resort.
 - ✓ Study for tests...and not just the night before. If it is the first test from a teacher, find out what the test will be like. Ask other students who have done well in a class with that teacher.
 - ✓ Be in school! Just because you might be feeling a little under the weather isn’t a reason to stay home. Nothing has a more powerful negative effect on grades than absences. It is more difficult to learn the information you miss when not in class.
 - ✓ Memorize things that need to be memorized. Don’t wait. Tackle it right away. Use note cards or other resources to help you. If you need to quiz yourself, try www.quizlet.com. You can put in the information and play games and quiz yourself.
- Get involved. The sooner you get involved with something in high school the better. Getting involved in a sport or activity will help you make friends, develop relationships, and get to know coaches, advisors, or teachers who care about your success.
- Select your high school classes carefully. Work with your high school counselor or whoever is responsible for putting together your schedule. If you are ready, enroll in a college prep curriculum. It keeps more options open later. Take elective courses that interest you. Ask older students about teachers and classes to try and get the best ones available. Putting time and thought into choosing your classes can payoff big-time in the future.

Don't push your parents away!

In high school, the trend of your friends becoming more important to you than your parents will continue. Your parents will often seem annoying, ignorant, embarrassing, etc. However, they have also been where you are. True, that may have been a long time ago, and some parents will have a very difficult time letting you grow up, but fighting with them won't get you anywhere. Answering their questions and seeking their advice is more helpful than you may think. Talk to your parents. Keep the lines of communication open. They might irritate you...but no more than you will irritate them... AND they will be there for you when you need them. They truly want what is best for you, so keep them as part of your life. Everyone needs encouragement and a healthy support system when going through a transition like high school. Your parents will be around even if your friends desert you.

Now is the time to start thinking about college and career!

The best time to start thinking about life after high school is right now. You don't need to know which college you want to go to, or even if you want to go to college at all, but having some ideas is helpful so that you can take the right classes and properly prepare. Different colleges and/or different career paths have different requirements, so early planning is essential. You don't have to know what career you will embark on, but if something interests you, check it out. Don't wait until you are a senior to begin this process. Shadowing a professional for a day or taking a class about a subject could help you decide. The sooner you do decide, the more likely you can apply for scholarships specific to that career.

Choose your friends wisely!

You will spend an enormous amount of time with your friends. Having friends with similar values, beliefs, and priorities will help you be successful. Choose friends who will build you up, encourage you, and make you better...and be a good friend to others. Bad habits and bad choices have a way of rubbing off on even the best kids from the best families. You can only be as good as the company you keep.

Tips for Making Your Classes Count

- ✓ **Sit close to the front** of the classroom when possible.
- ✓ **Join in** class discussions.
- ✓ **Ask questions!** If you don't understand something, chances are others in the class don't understand it either.
- ✓ **Keep up** with class assignments. Finish them before they are due.
- ✓ **Ask for help** in any class in which you find yourself falling behind. Remember, your teachers want to help you succeed!
- ✓ Look for ways to **sharpen your basic skills** in science, math, and English.
- ✓ **Learn keyboarding skills** so you can type your schoolwork more quickly.
- ✓ Learn to **take good class notes**. You'll be taking lots of notes throughout the rest of your education.
- ✓ Learn to **proofread, correct, and rewrite** your written work.
- ✓ **Develop test-taking skills**. Your teachers can show you how to get started.

What you do outside of school counts too!

- ✓ Develop **good habits** now that will help you succeed in high school and beyond.
- ✓ Find a **quiet place to study** where you won't be interrupted.
- ✓ Plan a daily **homework schedule** and stick to it. Do more than is required.
- ✓ Ask your **family or friends** to read your written work and ask them for help if you're having trouble at school.
- ✓ Use your local **library**. If you don't have a library card, get one!
- ✓ Read...read a lot...**read everything you can get your hands on**. Talk with your family and friends about what you read.
- ✓ Look up words you don't know in an on-line **dictionary** then use your new words in writing and talking.
- ✓ Talk with your family about **career plans** and what you want to do in the future.

Time Management

Successful students make good use of their time.

- ✓ **Set Priorities.** Each day make a list of what you have to do. Rank each task in priority order. Accomplish what you can during the day and start a new list tomorrow.
- ✓ **Be Flexible.** There are times when you may want to change the priorities on your list or forget the list all together!
- ✓ **Don't Procrastinate.** Putting things off until the last minute is a terrible habit which leads to incomplete tasks or work being rushed and done poorly. If you have a job, get it started and get it done. When given an assignment in class, complete as much of it as possible during the class period.
- ✓ **Don't Waste Time.** All time is valuable. Time before practice, dinner, etc. can be used to accomplish a variety of tasks. Despite busy schedules most of us waste far more time during the day than time we use effectively.
- ✓ **Plan time to Organize.** Spend a few minutes each day planning your schedule and organizing your day. Taking time to carefully plan your day will save time and energy in the long run.
- ✓ **Plan Study Times.** Consider the amount of work you need to accomplish for the day. Try to predict the amount of time it will take for each task. In time you will become more efficient at predicting time for tasks and planning appropriately.
- ✓ **Divide and Conquer.** Long term assignments should not be left for the last minute. Such assignments need to be broken into smaller chunks and the work spread out over time. This method makes big tasks seem less overwhelming and improve the quality of work for such projects.
- ✓ **Know Thyself.** People have different times of the day when they are at peak performance levels. Studying when you are at your best will be more efficient and productive.

Getting Organized

One of the foundations to success is the ability to organize. How many of these statements related to good organizational skills reflect your daily habits?

- ✓ I have the necessary materials to be organized – including a three ring binder with dividers, an assignment book, folders for each subject area, a notebook for individual notes, a highlighter felt tip marker.
- ✓ A copy of my weekly class schedule is posted inside my locker or binder.
- ✓ I set deadlines for tasks I need/want to complete each day, week, month. I break long term projects into smaller, more manageable parts.
- ✓ Each evening before bed I set out those things I will need for school the next day, including assignments, books, signed notes, special projects, assignment notebook, backpack, supplies, etc.
- ✓ In my bedroom I keep a calendar of special events, vacations, appointments, etc. which I need to remember when organizing my day.
- ✓ In order to simplify the organization of my locker, backpack, and folders, I bring to school only the items I need in order to learn.
- ✓ I keep a "to do" list of everything I want to accomplish each day.
- ✓ For each subject area I have a separate folder and section within my three ring binder.
- ✓ I come to class prepared – with the books, papers, notebooks, pencils, erasers, etc. which I will need in class.
- ✓ My planner is kept current. I refer to it when deciding what materials to take home and how to use my study time.
- ✓ I take notes in every class. These notes are neat, thorough, and organized.
- ✓ My note taking system is easy to understand and doesn't require a lot of time. I use a highlighter when reviewing my notes.

Homework Tips

Homework is an important tool for learning. Homework is also a big factor in determining the grades given to students. One of the easiest ways of becoming a more successful student is to improve homework quality.

- ✓ Find an orderly, comfortable, quiet, and well-lit place to do your homework. Make sure you have the proper materials/supplies you should have available to you for homework.
- ✓ Write down daily assignments in your planner. Be sure to include a date when work is due. Always get homework done on time.
- ✓ Don't leave the classroom until you understand what the assignment is and how to do it. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- ✓ Schedule a routine time each night of the week when homework will be done.
- ✓ Set goals for completing your homework. Discuss possible weekly rewards with your parents.
- ✓ Keep track of your time. Don't spend all the study period on one assignment – you need to pace yourself to complete all assigned tasks.
- ✓ If you need help, ask your parents/call a friend. Don't give up!

- ✓ Do your homework first – then outside activities.
- ✓ Take a break when studying for long periods of time. Five minutes of fun is suggested for every 30-45 minutes of work.
- ✓ Try variety. Alternate time between subjects you prefer for those you don't. Occasionally switch from difficult to easier work and back again.
- ✓ If you are absent, quickly make up assignments. Remember to take completed assignments back to school.

Note-taking techniques

- ✓ Taking notes activates you, keeps you involved.
- ✓ Strive for neatness to make it easier to become organized.
- ✓ Develop a system to indicate the importance of various items.
- ✓ Use note cards for vocabulary and other organizational purposes.
- ✓ Review your notes daily, ask for clarification when necessary.
- ✓ Borrow notes to cover any class sessions you might miss.
- ✓ Actively listen to pick out key words, phrases, or concepts.
- ✓ Work up mental or written summaries of your notes.

Preparing for & taking tests

- ✓ Tests are opportunities to evaluate your knowledge of the material.
- ✓ Put review time into your daily schedule.
- ✓ Know the test date, the material to be covered, and the type of test.
- ✓ Try to avoid last-minute cramming.
- ✓ Review your notes, the textbook, corrected tests, and homework.
- ✓ Anticipate the questions you are likely to be asked.
- ✓ Make sure you are well-rested on the day of the test.
- ✓ Read the entire test before starting. Follow the directions.
- ✓ Allocate time for each part of the test according to its worth.
- ✓ On multiple choice questions, choose the best answer.
- ✓ On matching questions, match the ones you know to narrow the options.
- ✓ If a true/false statement is partially false, mark it false.
- ✓ On essay questions, jot down a brief outline before starting.
- ✓ Be complete and concise in your answers. Don't try to pad the answer.
- ✓ Recheck your answers before you turn them in.

More Tips for Preparing for Tests

The length of time you study for tests may not be as important as how you study for tests. The following are some tips which will help you become "smarter" in your approach to studying for exams.

- ✓ Define. By knowing what the test is on you can focus better on what to study. If you're not very clear about what is being tested ask your teacher. Most teachers will be pleased and impressed with your interest and concern and will be very helpful in assisting you to focus your studies.
- ✓ Review notes, textbooks, worksheets, etc. to help determine what information is important. Use a highlighter to underline key information.
- ✓ Create lists of questions about the material which you would ask if you were the teacher.
- ✓ Start early! Cramming at the last minute is a poor study method. Instead study frequently for short periods of time. Reserve the last few minutes of daily study time to review information for the next examination.
- ✓ Avoid distractions. Most people need to concentrate in order to learn. Sorry, a blaring television or iPod is usually not a good background for effective studying.
- ✓ Consider a study group. This should be made up of friends who are serious about working hard to do better in school, not just a group who wants an excuse to get together. A good study group is an excellent source for motivation, reinforcement, and support.
- ✓ If you're having problems in one area, ask your teacher to explain it. This clarification may be the needed boost you need to succeed on the test.
- ✓ Pay close attention to the correct spelling of key vocabulary words. They are likely to be on the test in some form.
- ✓ Practice writing short essay responses to questions which may appear on the test.