

A young boy and a woman are smiling together. The boy is on the left, wearing a grey and blue striped polo shirt. The woman is on the right, wearing a pink top and a beaded necklace. They are both looking towards the camera. The background is a solid reddish-brown color.

High School is Happening!

A Guide for  
**FAMILIES**  
on High School  
Transition



**School transition** is a process that prepares students, families, schools, and communities to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and relationships to assist students in successfully moving from one setting to another. Moving from middle school to high school can be a big change for students and for their families as well. A smooth high school transition for students and their families will build the foundation for an enjoyable and a productive academic career. As students prepare to explore new horizons, there is a misconception that parents should be less involved in high school than elementary or middle school. Parent involvement does not disappear in high school, but it does look different. Teenagers may not want you to chaperone their high school prom, but they still want to know that you are there to support them in school. Thanks to guidelines established by federal regulations such as Title I, more schools are creating policies and building structures to ensure that parents have the opportunities to be involved in their child's education from kindergarten to graduation.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

When families are involved in their student's high school experience, the student is more likely to have higher academic achievement, be better adjusted, and graduate.

This brochure is designed to keep families actively involved in high school by providing them with the information needed to successfully navigate the transition process and guide their students. To better prepare parents for the expectations of high school, this brochure concentrates on five areas of focus that are identified as particularly important to the life of a high school student.

- Becoming Self-Dependent
- Developing Student Responsibility
- Before the Report Card Arrives
- The Graduation Plan
- Being Involved in High School

The first day of high school represents the start of new possibilities and is an exciting day for both you and your student. As the parent of a high school student, you will be involved in guiding your student to make the right decisions and develop the skills needed to be successful. Continue reading to learn and discover what you can do to make sure your student has a successful high school transition.

## Becoming Self-Dependent

**Becoming self-dependent** is part of the developmental process that students will experience during high school, which includes social, personal, and academic growth as they transition towards adulthood. During this time, your student will begin to discover their own identity and develop their own opinions. As they meet new friends in high school, you may notice changes in their personality and interests. Their social interactions can also impact their academic achievement as they learn how to balance extracurricular activities with coursework. High school offers a wide variety of events and organizations for students, so it is normal for them to pursue different activities and change interests. This allows students to find their passion, which can lead them to try new classes and explore possible careers. When students become excited about school, they are motivated to do well in their classes. Listen to what motivates your student in school by asking questions about what interests them.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Students achieve better grades and are less likely to drop out when there is a caring and positive connection with an adult who is responsible for teaching and mentoring the student.

There are many ways for families to help their student develop their self-dependence.

- Encourage your student to explore extracurricular activities
- Talk to your student about school and their peers
- Supervise and follow your student on social media
- Lend an ear — never underestimate the power of a good listener
- Use your home as a positive gathering place
- Help your student express feelings or concerns into words
- Suggest trusted mentors for additional adult support

## Developing Student Responsibility



Helping students **develop responsibility** in high school will prepare them to handle extra requirements with their classes, activities, and friends. During high school, students will take a variety of academic classes while also participating in additional extracurricular activities, so daily preparation and planning are essential to their success. At first, students may need help in understanding how to prioritize their commitments and tasks. Watch for signs that your student could be feeling overwhelmed, such as changes in sleep patterns or a sudden lack of interest in school. Before granting them extra freedom, communicate your expectations about their priorities and responsibilities. High school is about learning, and students learn from making their own decisions as well as mistakes. Provide your student with the opportunities, the guidance and information to develop their decision making skills. Teaching your student to plan each day, keep up with homework assignments, and learn to self-advocate will help them become more accountable and responsible.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Students who participate in transition activities that actively engage students, parents, and staff members are less likely to drop out of high school.

There are many ways for families to support their student's development of responsibility.

- Teach your student to set small, attainable goals to accomplish larger projects
- Encourage time management skills by supporting and monitoring their progress
- Help your student understand the importance of working in groups and sharing responsibilities
- Show your student how to create a calendar that is reviewed regularly
- Register for the high school's online parent portal to view grades and attendance, if available
- Sign-up to receive alerts and notices from the high school
- Allow your student to relax and spend time with friends and family



## Before the Report Card Arrives

**Before the report card arrives** you should get to know your student's teachers and what classes they are taking. There are usually several opportunities for parents to check their student's grades during the school year, either online or through progress reports. By monitoring your student's progress regularly, you will be able to identify any possible concerns as early as possible. Pay attention if you notice your student rarely brings schoolwork home or avoids talking about a particular class. If you notice any issues, it is important to contact your child's school right away to learn about their tiered approach to providing support to help students who may be struggling.

The final grade that you see on the report card will be entered on your student's transcript and factored into their cumulative grade point average. This is important because colleges and employers will request a copy of your student's transcript to review their overall academic performance in high school. At home, you can support your student by showing enthusiasm about school and expressing an interest in what your student is learning. While the academic courses will be more rigorous in high school, knowing your student's teachers and the high school curriculum will make a difference in your child's education.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The most accurate predictor of student achievement in school is the extent to which one's family is able to become involved in their child's education and communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for their child's achievement.

There are many ways for families to help ensure their student experiences academic success in 9th grade.

- Monitor your student's grades and performance in class during the year
- Meet with your student's teachers and counselor
- Create a supportive learning environment at home
- Know what achievement tests and core classes your student is required to complete
- Congratulate your child on improved test scores or for showing gains
- Set high, yet realistic, academic expectations for your student
- Visit the school website to learn about the various high school courses and their syllabi
- Attend academic workshops or meetings for parents at the school

## The Graduation Plan

Early on in high school, parents will have an opportunity to learn about their student's **graduation plan**, which maps out their student's classes and goals over the next four years. While high schools offer a variety of courses, there are specific courses that your student must pass in order to earn a high school diploma. Students are required to complete certain academic courses in English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies plus Personal Fitness/Health. Additional graduation requirements must be satisfied by completing three sequenced pathway courses in Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education, World Languages, Advanced Academics, or Fine Arts/Performing Arts. Students can add, as part of their graduation plan, college-level courses and earn concurrent credit or dual enrollment credits towards a high school diploma and a college degree while in high school. It is best to make an appointment with your student's high school counselor to learn more about these courses and options. By knowing what classes your student needs to take, you will be able to help your child stay on track towards earning a high school diploma.

Asking your student questions about their career interests and college goals can be beneficial and insightful for both of you. Your child needs to understand what they enjoy doing on a regular basis. Do they like working with their hands, outside building things, for example, or would they rather work in an office writing computer code? Understanding who they are and what they enjoy, will lead them to learning and mastering essential skills for a career. Once they choose the most appropriate educational path, you and your student can then make their career dreams come true by selecting the best high school courses, completing dual enrollment courses, and arranging postsecondary programs of study.



### DID YOU KNOW?

If a student is successful during 9th grade, there is a higher likelihood that the student will graduate and enjoy their high school experience.

There are many ways for families to help prepare their student for college and a career.

- Complete a four-year plan of study with your student and their school advisor (counselor, homeroom teacher, etc.)
- Keep track, along with your student, of their progress towards graduation
- Find ways to allow your child to experience a variety of possible career fields
- Visit local colleges and universities with your student early on in high school
- Attend college and career events at the high school and nearby locations
- Understand the high school promotion and graduation requirements
- Learn about the different Career Clusters and Pathways in Georgia
- Arrange job shadowing experiences for your student during the year in a chosen career field of interest



## How Do I Continue to be Involved in My Child's School and Education?



While opportunities for family engagement may change at the high school level, your involvement in your student's education remains a critical part of their academic success. Even though students are expected to develop independence, it is important for parents to remain informed and knowledgeable in order to provide guidance and support to their student.

**Stay Informed.** Often times in high school, information and announcements are still relayed to parents through their students. However, in addition to asking your child what is happening in high school, be sure to regularly visit the websites for the school and school district. Signing up to receive alerts and phone messages, attending meetings,

and joining parent groups will also make you an informed parent. There may not be a specific date for parent-teacher conferences in high school, but parents can schedule meetings with teachers or counselors throughout the year.

**Set a Good Example.** You may think that your teenager doesn't hear a word that you are saying, but they are listening and watching. Show them the importance of high school by speaking positively about your student's teachers and the school. Avoid scheduling appointments or making plans that may cause your child to miss time in class. Teach them to value their education by making it a priority in your lives.

**Find the Time.** High school only lasts four years, but those years are filled with sporting events, school dances, parent meetings, choir recitals and graduation. Enjoy the opportunities to watch your child and support their hard work in the classroom, under the lights or on the stage.

**Lend a Hand.** Parents are valuable members in the school community and help improve the overall success and image of the school. Consider lending your time and talents to make the school a better place for the community, students, families, faculty and staff. Ask the principal or counselors about possible projects or opportunities which parents can complete to contribute to the school's success.

**Talk with Your Student.** By listening to what their student is saying or perhaps not saying, parents can learn how their child is doing in school. Help your student find solutions to their problems by allowing them to express their concerns or struggles. Make sure that your student knows you are available to listen and talk with them when they are facing challenges in school.

**Meet the Teachers.** In high school, there are various faculty members who will work with your student during the year, including teachers, counselors, administrators and the principal. Be sure that you know how these people can help your student to be successful in high school as well as how to contact them when you have questions or need assistance. Attend events at the beginning of the year, such as open house or transition activities, to meet your student's teachers and give them your contact information.

**Know How Your Student is Doing.** You don't have to solve physics problems to be an involved parent in high school. By monitoring your child's progress and keeping tabs on their academic performance, you will be prepared to spot any signs of trouble as soon as possible. Utilize online systems to track your student's grades. Remember that knowing and understanding the school's grading system, promotion and graduation requirements, and course schedules will help you to track your child's progress.





High School  
is Happening!

A Guide for  
**STUDENTS**  
on High School  
Transition





## The time has arrived.

Start getting ready because **High School Is Happening!** A successful transition from middle school to high school sets the stage for your academic achievement, personal development, and college and career readiness. While you might be ready for more responsibility and independence, you also need to know how high school will be different. The beginning of high school is a fresh start. You are leaving behind a familiar building and teachers to take an important step towards your future. It is a time of not just making new friends and trying different classes, but adding responsibilities and freedoms. The decisions and choices that you make during high school will very likely influence the direction you follow after graduation. As you approach this new beginning it is natural to feel anxious and ask yourself questions like: Will my classes help me accomplish my dreams? What extracurricular activities should I choose? How will I balance academics and extracurricular activities or work? What do I want to do after high school? How will I handle more responsibility?

To help answer these questions, this booklet concentrates on five areas of focus that are identified as particularly important to the life of a high school student:

- [Discovering Your Self](#)
- [Learning How to Balance](#)
- [Before the Report Card Arrives](#)
- [The Graduation Plan](#)
- [Getting Involved in School](#)

Understanding what to expect when you start high school and developing good habits now will allow you to enjoy a smooth transition to high school. You have been waiting a long time for this moment, so continue reading to find out what happens in high school so you can make the right decisions.



## Discovering Your Self

**Discovering yourself** in a new, larger high school with more students can be a challenging yet exciting experience. Not only will you meet freshmen like yourself for the first time, but also upperclassmen who you probably don't know. There are as many opportunities to meet people as there are larger class sizes and new clubs and organizations to join. Participation in school clubs and extracurricular activities looks great on your college applications, but don't worry about joining every possible club. The clubs will be more rewarding if you are an active member in a few clubs that interest you, but don't be afraid to try something new. At the beginning of the school year, everyone is excited to see new people and make new friends, but take the time to get to know people before developing relationships and building trust. Friends can influence your decisions, so make sure that you choose friends who not only share the same interests as you but also want to see you do well in school. Be careful about the information you share with new friends at school in conversation and especially on the internet and social media. High school can be a fresh start, but you want to start with a good reputation and protect your privacy.

### Building New Relationships

- Find clubs, organizations, and activities that you enjoy
- Ask classmates to attend school events with you
- Think about what are important qualities in a friend
- Find positive outlets to express yourself such as exercise, writing, or listening to music
- Focus on yourself — don't compare yourself to others
- Avoid making judgments about people before getting to know them
- Stay away from listening to or sharing stories about other students



### Extracurricular Activities:

- Athletic Teams
- Performing/Visual Arts Groups
- Academic Clubs
- Volunteer Organizations
- Career Interest Groups
- Leadership Organizations
- Honor Clubs
- Community Organizations

## Learning How to Balance

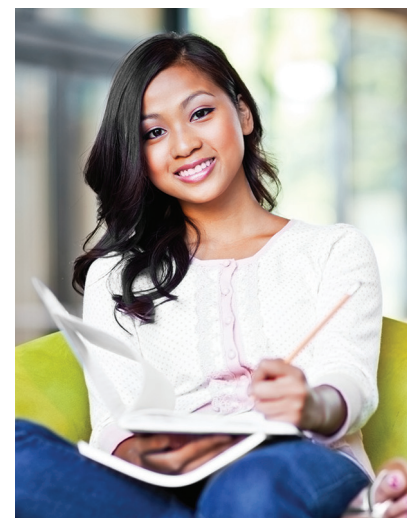
**Learning how to balance** your classes, extracurricular activities, friends and family, and possibly a job requires a little skill and a lot of organization. Your teachers and parents will expect you to keep track of your own schedule in high school and will no longer remind you about due dates or assignments. Teachers are more likely to assign long-term projects that will require you to work at your own pace and in groups. Accomplish your long-term goals by dividing them into smaller objectives that you can check off when they are completed. From your book bag and locker to your agenda and study area, keep everything organized to save time and prevent information from being lost. If you are feeling overwhelmed with your course load and commitments, take a moment to review your priorities or talk with your parent, a school counselor or a trusted adult about the best way to manage your time. There are many benefits to working a part-time job in high school and being involved in organizations, but remember that the most important job is doing well in school.

### Managing Your Time

- Review and update your calendar regularly
- Write down assignments and due dates before leaving the class
- Copy key dates from your syllabus for each class into your calendar at the beginning of each semester
- Try to finish assignments early to avoid work building up
- Find what motivates you to finish your work
- Look ahead to allow enough time to get everything done
- Take responsibility for yourself and avoid procrastinating
- Allow time to relax and do something you enjoy

### Keep a Schedule:

- Student Agenda
- Yearly Planner
- Online Calendar
- Student Handbook
- Family Calendar





## Before the Report Card Arrives

**Before the report card arrives** there are a few differences about high school that you need to know in order to be prepared for your classes. Teachers may not provide as many opportunities for you to earn grades so you can't afford to coast on assignments or exams. The courses that you take in high school are more challenging because they are designed to prepare you for college and potential careers. But don't worry, teachers offer tutoring before or after school to provide extra time to help students. Even students at the top of their class in high school will attend tutoring to get some extra help. Another major difference in high school is maintaining your overall grade point average and developing your transcript. Unfortunately, you don't get to start over each year in high school, so be sure to keep your grades up and build a strong grade point average your freshmen year. Most of your teachers will give you a syllabus, which you will need to keep as a guide for the class. Remember that your teachers are there to help you, so be sure to ask them when you need extra assistance.

### Reaching Your Potential

- Be an active listener in class by asking questions and taking good notes
- Review your notes every day even if your teacher does not assign work
- Organize your class notes and handouts
- Learn your school's grading system to determine your grade point average and class rank
- Keep track of your class grades so you know how you are doing
- Talk with your teachers about extra help before you fall behind
- Study smaller chunks of information regularly in shorter periods of time

## The Graduation Plan

All high school students will develop their own **Graduation Plan**, which ensures that they are on track to graduate high school and achieve their goals. Make sure that you are taking the right classes every year to earn your high school diploma and also meet entrance requirements for potential colleges. Remember, you are responsible for your plans now. Each year in high school you should expect to take classes in English/Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. In order to graduate high school, students also need to pass Personal Fitness/Health plus complete certain pathway courses in Career, Technical and Agricultural Education, Advanced Academics, World Languages, or Fine Arts/Performing Arts. High school students even have the opportunity to earn college credit before they graduate through certain advanced level courses or different dual or joint enrollment programs with participating colleges. Begin your college and career search early by exploring the different college, technical school, or military options that interest you and learn what courses might be required. With so many options and decisions, it is important that you are actively involved in selecting your classes and learning about the best possible direction after high school for you.

### Setting the Course

- Schedule an appointment with your high school counselor
- Explore different career possibilities through new career pathways courses
- Take practice college entrance exams and utilize available practice resources at your school
- Learn about yourself – complete a career interest survey
- Attend college and career events at your school and nearby locations
- Visit local colleges and universities with your family
- Develop a portfolio to store information about possible colleges and career plans

### Syllabus:

An outline of the topics that will be covered in your class, which usually describes specific information including your teacher's contact information, the grading policy, and a schedule of test dates.

### Transcript:

A permanent record of all your high school courses taken and grades earned from the beginning of high school until you graduate. It may also include your class rank and scores on certain tests.

### Georgia's Career Clusters:

Groups of different occupations that are based on a common set of knowledge and skills, which include pathway courses of connected career and technical classes.

## How Do I Become Involved in My School?

**Show School Spirit.** This does not mean wearing school colors every day, but try to attend sporting events, pep rallies, school dances and plays to meet people outside of the classroom. Your high school years will be filled with fun activities, social opportunities, and other events that will create memories and new friendships.

**Discover Your Passion.** High school encourages students to pursue their interests by exploring new classes, clubs, and organizations. If your school does not offer a club that matches your interests, then talk to your principal or teachers about possibly starting a new group.

**Give Back to the Community.** Finding time to volunteer and perform community service not only helps others but is personally rewarding. Completing service hours is also a good way to add polish to your college applications. Think about ways you can raise awareness for a worthy cause or lend a hand to those in need.

**Keep Your Eyes and Ears Open.** Following the news and information happening in high school can be challenging. Make sure you pay attention to announcements about opportunities that might benefit you. Check your school website regularly and other announcement boards around the building for information about scholarships, contests, meetings and other useful information.

**Keep Your Parents Informed.** In high school, parents and teachers rely more on students to bring information home to their families. Be sure to keep your parents informed so they know what is happening at school and how to be a part of your high school success.

**Find Your Support System.** From teachers and counselors to friends and family, high school is filled with people who want to see you be successful. Seek those people when you need help solving a problem or start feeling upset. There are multiple sources of support for you to lean on in high school.

**Get to Know Your Teachers.** Teachers are a wealth of information and not just about what is in the textbook. They are also coaches, advisors, club sponsors, tutors and mentors. They write letters of recommendation to help students apply for jobs or college. Take the time to make sure your teachers know you so they can help you achieve your goals.

**Step Out of Your Comfort Zone.** High school is about learning and we learn when we try new things. Whether it is giving a speech in front of the class for the first time or auditioning for the school play, try something new. You might be surprised what you learn about yourself.

**Get Involved in the Community.** Learn about the activities and athletics offered at your local recreation center, mentorship opportunities, and the different afterschool and summer programs available in the community. These are great ways to meet other students from your school and neighboring schools.



## Visit Our Partners for More Information about High School Transition

Georgia Department of Education  
[www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org)

Georgia Student Finance Commission  
[www.gsfc.org](http://www.gsfc.org)

Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network  
[www.afterschoolga.org](http://www.afterschoolga.org)

Georgia Parent Teacher Association (PTA)  
[www.georgiapta.org](http://www.georgiapta.org)

Georgia Family Connection Partnership  
[www.gafcp.org](http://www.gafcp.org)

United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta  
[www.smartstartga.org](http://www.smartstartga.org) and [www.uwma.org](http://www.uwma.org)

