

Helping Students Transition Back to School

Change! It is that time of year again. For most families it means moving from the summer mode back to the school mode you left in early June. For some families, it means starting a brand new routine in a new school. It is perfectly natural for students and parents to have some stress and anxiety every time a new school year begins. How can parents help? Elementary students need to be reassured that things will be alright. Yes, the next grade is different from the last one and yes, the expectations are a little higher. However, remind your son or daughter that he or she has also grown academically and socially so they can handle it! Discuss parts of school your child enjoys (friends, recess, certain subjects or activities, etc.) and help him or her understand that life is about accepting the fun stuff as well as the not so enjoyable stuff! Take your child to school before the first day. Walk around and talk with people. Look at your child's classroom as well as the playground and gym. Remember, it is usually a little play mixed with a lot of learning. Do not send the message that school will be all fun. This usually leads to a very disappointed child in September! It is important that you are positive and upbeat, but also realistic.

To help middle level students, parents need to remember that their priorities are probably socially driven. Many students and parents underestimate the importance of the middle years, both academically and emotionally. I was a middle school principal for 16 years and I know that students in the middle grades sometimes resemble hormones with feet! They are changing physically and emotionally so fast that confusion occurs on a fairly regular basis. Parents can help by minimizing the drama so often related to peer issues and stressing the increasing importance of academics. Work with your son or daughter about looking at the big or long term picture and goals. Many middle school students want to deal only in the present. Academic preparation in middle school is essential for success in high school, especially as the standards continue to be set higher and higher. Give examples from your own life that illustrates how priorities change and how you keep your eyes on the long term prize.

High school students usually know the ropes. They also should have started on a more individualized program that matches their post-secondary goals, abilities, and interests. These goals are moving targets. Parents need to discuss where the student is now and what needs to be accomplished next. As with all students, be realistic. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. It is normal not to be good at everything. Find those strengths and interests and foster them. Make sure school personnel are on the same page with you and your student. With high school comes "credits". If your student has lost credits or is having academic difficulties that might interfere with obtaining a diploma, work with your school to look at options. Parents need to understand that administrators and counselors do not enjoy pointing out the dire straits of students who are really struggling, but it is essential we do so clearly and share all the options we are aware of. Parents need to find out why the credits were lost, help fix that problem, and listen to all options, even the unsavory ones!

Good luck to all students and parents on the upcoming school year from all of us at Crossroads Charter Academy.