

# Tips to Help a Mentee Transition to a New School

Students entering a new school often experience a variety of fears, from how to find their classrooms to worrying about bullies. Here are some strategies for helping your mentee work through those fears.

**Give your mentee opportunities to express his feelings about a new school.** If your mentee isn't bringing up the topic but you notice that he is more distracted or stressed out than usual, initiate a conversation. Acknowledge the change that is coming and ask open-ended questions to see if anything is worrying him.

**Don't minimize his fears and concerns.** It's tempting to try to downplay them or respond with a blanket statement like "You'll be fine." Sometimes just listening and empathizing is enough. Listen to what he has to say and offer practical suggestions if it appears he wants your advice.

**Help your mentee overcome fears of the unknown.** If she's worried about opening a combination lock, bring one for her to practice on. If getting between classes sounds impossible, get a stopwatch and create a course so she can see how long it takes to get from one place to another. If homework sounds scary, encourage her to ask her teacher or counselor to provide some guidance.

**Talk about your own transitions.** Strategic self-disclosure may be a useful tool to help your mentee see that his worries are normal and expected. You may even get a laugh or two as you describe your own experiences and how you handled them.

**Help your mentee get organized.** A new school might mean more homework and a greater need to stay organized to keep up with assignments from multiple teachers. You can relieve your mentee's worries about schoolwork by helping him develop his organizational skills. Look at how his work is currently organized and offer tips for improvements, and talk about how he can organize his free time to get homework done.

**Help your mentee set goals for getting involved in new things.** Look at elective class offerings together and check out extracurricular activities. Talk about how an after-school activity can help her make new friends, and how elective classes allow her to follow her own interests with students who share them.

**Point out your mentee's strengths and abilities.** Adolescence is a time of plummeting self-esteem and self-confidence. Find ways to remind your mentee about her abilities and how they will help her be successful in her new school. Be specific in your praise. For example, "You've really gotten organized with your schoolwork this year. That will help a lot when you start your new school." TeamMates offers Gallup Strengths training and codes for free- reach out to your TeamMates liaison to sign up!

**Talk about friendships.** Changing schools doesn't have to mean losing friendships. See if your mentee can name some students he wants to get to know better who are going to the new school. Talk about how he has made new friends in the past. Remind him he has friends in other settings, too—in the neighborhood, place of worship, or sports activities. And let him know you will be there for him in the coming year also.

**Support your mentee throughout the transition.** Your mentee's worries won't disappear when she enters the new school for the first time. Adjusting to the new school and finding her place there will take time, and she is bound to feel discouraged at times. As she comes to you with problems and concerns, listen and use open questions to help her problem-solve on her own. You can't fix her problems for her, but you can offer your own perspectives. Showing up weekly for your visits provides a steady, consistent routine for your mentee.

**Seek out help for your mentee if problems persist.** Mentors sometimes see academic struggles, changes in behavior, or signs of emotional stress before teachers and other school staff. If you believe your mentee needs additional help, alert your school facilitator. Your role is to help your mentee learn about these resources and encourage your mentee to access them when needed.