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School Transitions

Whether your child is starting prep next year, transitioning to high school, or just moving to the next grade, for some children this is a really overwhelming time. Teachers and parents play a key role in supporting children with this transition. Some children will benefit from seeking appropriate professional support with early intervention.

- Recognise that this is a stressful time. All children experience some form of anxiety or stress around these transitions – these feelings are common with all children. Encourage talk amongst peers, recognising common feelings.
- Identify specific feelings and what this is around for the child i.e. worried I might not make any friends, stress over how to catch the school bus, anxious over new or increased homework etc.
- Talk about it! What things are they looking forward to? What things do they think they will struggle with or do with ease? Talk about what they can do to help get through the challenges – brainstorm together!
- Remind them of what things they are good at, or their personal strengths or characteristics. Draw on prior experiences that they found stressful and discuss what skills or strengths they utilised to get through it.
- Be honest. Acknowledge that it may be a difficult or stressful time, but it should get easier with the helpful tools and strategies. Each child responds and copes differently, and that is ok. We are all different!
- Discuss options for professional help. Some children need professional support to manage this transition - learning new and increased skills and how to cope when distressed or highly anxious.
- Discuss informal supports that the child can utilise i.e. friends in their class or school, teachers they may know, school counsellors, or things they enjoy that are offered at the school e.g. Lego club
- Parents and teachers need to work together. Discuss what support individual children need with appropriate involvement from the child. Problem solve together! Give the child opportunities to ask questions, discuss what things parents and teachers can do, what things the child can do - all working together on a plan for transition!
- Familiarise the child to the new environment and schedule. Arrange meetings and informal catch-ups with teachers, attend the school /classroom at different times. Practice things that are most helpful for the child i.e. catching the school bus.
- Consider use of a transitional object for younger children i.e. mum's bracelet to be returned at the end of the day.
- Make the child aware of any unanticipated changes as soon as possible. Talk to the child about what they can do if things go differently than expected, and what tools or strategies they can use to cope or assist.
- **Important:** Be proactive! If you are not sure if it's an over-reaction or a valid concern, explore it with the child. It is better to check things out, than leave things to be a bigger issue later on e.g. has struggled socially for years and now has no friends in high school.