

People Can be Successful with School Transitions

Going to school involves many transitions. Being successful at school involves learning to handle transitions successfully.

Perhaps the most important transition leading to success at school is the one where a person wakes up and gets ready to leave sleep and relaxation behind in order to arrive at school on time. Some people set one or more alarm clocks to help make this an easier and more successful transition. Others ask someone else – maybe a parent or sibling – to help wake them up on time. Sometimes a warm shower can help wake a person up and get ready to head to school. Eating a good breakfast will provide energy and brain power to face the transitions ahead.

Traveling to school provides a time to get ready for an ‘environmental transition’. There are many differences between the home environment and the school environment. The people, routines, expectations, sounds, sights, smells, and schedules are usually very different in these two environments. Thinking about and anticipating the differences ahead of time, and maybe using some relaxation techniques, can help to make a successful transition between those two environments.

Once a person arrives at school, there are many daily transitions to be faced. Sometimes a bell rings to signal that it is time for a transition from one room or activity to another room or activity. Some schools require a student to watch the clock and listen to the teacher’s instructions to know when it is time for a transition. Using a planner with a complete

schedule can help a person remember what comes next when it is time for a transition.

Even social groups experience transitions on a regular basis. During one class or activity, a person is part of that class or social group. After that class, as all the students transition to their next activity, they sometimes form smaller groups in the hallways or other common areas of the school. These groups change as people move from one area to another. Some people become part of a particular group because of its location (the people stand near their locker or classroom). Sometimes people seek out a group because the members share a particular interest or ability – they may even be part of a club, team, or musical group. Often people are just busy transitioning from one activity or location to another, and they do not become part of a group but continue to move past other groups as they head to their next destination.

While there are many daily transitions, others happen less frequently. Starting a new grade usually happens once each year. A person will generally move a grade or class higher each year, although if a student needs extra assistance or time to finish requirements for one grade or class, he or she might stay in that grade or class for another year. Moving a grade or class higher usually means that the requirements are more difficult, although the student is also generally smarter and has more knowledge than the year before, and is prepared to handle new assignments.

Sometimes a person transitions from one school to another. If the transition occurs because all students are expected to move on

to another location (for example, from elementary to middle school), a student will likely be accompanied in this transition by many classmates or other students. If the transition is occurring because the student has moved to a new home, or because there has been a decision to try a new school or a new school district, the student may be the only one transitioning to the new school.

It is important to remember that many people at school can help a person experience successful transitions, even on a daily basis. Most teachers are willing to answer students' questions, or to provide extra assistance when needed. Guidance counselors and administrators are also available to help students organize schedules, prioritize assignments, find classrooms, choose activities, make friends, prepare for future transitions, and talk about the joys, fears, frustrations, and successes that accompany a person's daily transitions.