



## Supporting Your Child Through the Transition to High School

*Jennifer McMillan, a licensed therapist and Camas parent, recently joined our district staff as the new Social-Emotional Support Liaison. As new transitions can be challenging for both students and adults, she offers the following tips to families who are about to embark on the transition to high school.*

- **Discomfort is often a part of any transition** – Before jumping in to help, allow your child the chance to find their own way. The truth is, we can't build emotional muscles without struggles.
- **Adolescence is a developmental stage** – The neurological changes taking place create unique opportunities and challenges. Anticipate missteps, mistakes, and the need to pivot and adjust. (Adolescent brains grow and change until about age 26!)
- **Your child is moving towards autonomy & independence** – Support this natural tendency by allowing them to take part in decision-making involving their life and let them learn from the “natural consequences” of their decisions.
- **Broaden your definition of “school success” to include life skills** – Now's the time for adolescents to work on problem solving, goal setting, stress management, self-advocacy, and awareness of negative self-talk and emotions.
- **Listen** – Listen without giving advice. (I know how difficult this can be!) Listening **first** allows for connection – and your best chance at influence.
- **Coach vs. Manage** – Though adolescents' organizational skills are still maturing, navigating high school requires many of them. Resist the urge to micromanage; instead, use “coaching” to help them learn how to manage their time, homework load, and more.
- **Connect** – Even with newfound independence and a heightened need for peer approval, your child still requires a strong connection to family. Try to carve out time each day to check in. (You may just be the one consistent anchor in their life.)
- **Don't hesitate to reach out for support/help** – If you feel your child is struggling beyond your ability to help, reach out for support. Contact your child's school counselor and teachers for more information.

For more information on ways to support your child during adolescence, check out these resources:

- [Age of Opportunity](#), by Laurence Steinberg
- [Brainstorm](#), by Daniel Siegel
- [How to Raise An Adult](#), by Julie Lythcott-Haims
- [Untangled: Guiding Teenage Girls Through the Seven Transitions into Adulthood](#), by Lisa Damour