

STARTING A NEW SCHOOL

Making the leap to a new school can be downright difficult for a kid at any age. There are new friends to make, teachers to meet and new routines to settle into. It's important to realize this challenge as parents, especially since we are likely going through difficulties of our own in adjusting to the new location.

Even in the midst of your own stresses, be sure to take the time to connect with your child to prepare them for the transition and then check in on the progress throughout the school year. If you don't, you may find later that your child has been struggling socially and academically long before you involve yourself in the process.

CHOOSING A SCHOOL

If you're moving to a completely new area for work or family changes, choosing a school should be one of the first steps. If there are multiple options, how do you choose the one that's right for your child? It all comes down to research.

There are many online resources that track statewide performance in standardized testing. You also can set up appointments with administrators from each school to get a sense of what each has to offer. Location, staff and size of the school should all be factors in your decision. Encourage your child to offer an opinion on the choice before making a final decision.

AVOIDING STRESS

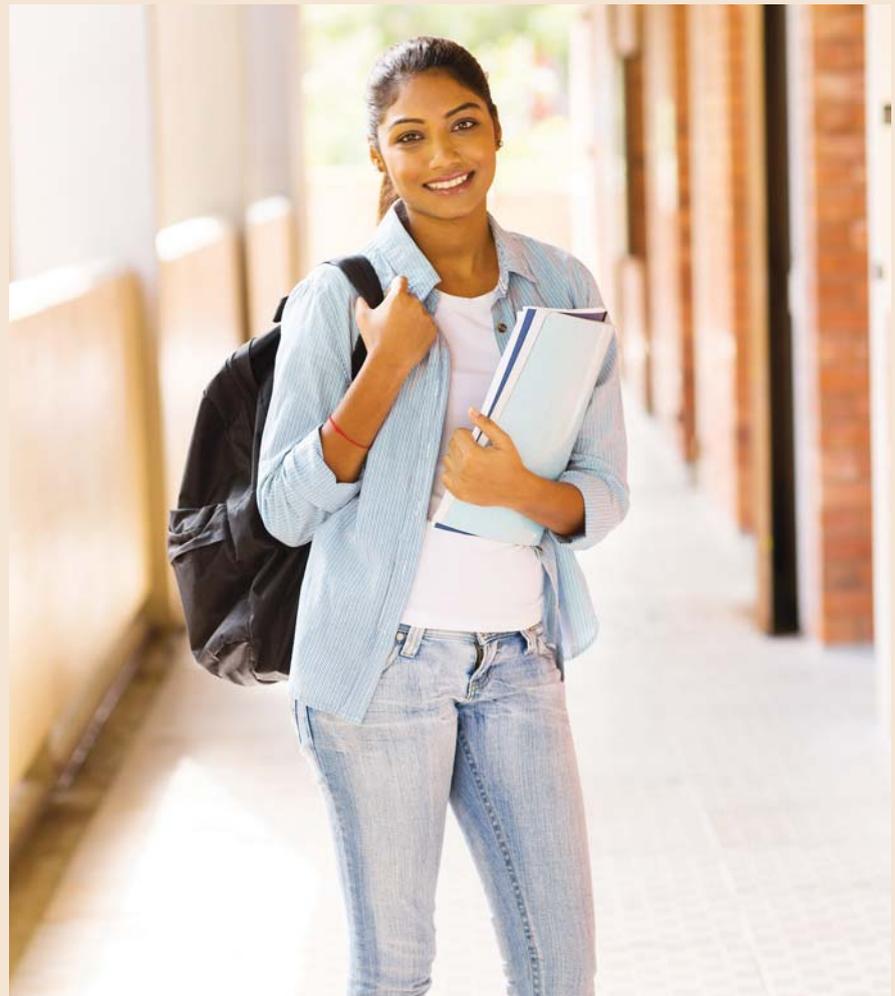
Teens across the country — 27 percent in fact — report feeling extreme stress during the school year, according to new research from the American Psychological Association. Other findings included 34 percent of teens expecting stress to increase in the coming year.

Changing schools can be one of the most stressful situations for a student to experience. That's why it's so important to stay positive during this period of great change. As the school year approaches, be open with your child about what to expect. Reassure your child that a new school means new opportunities to learn and make friends. Try your best to understand and empathize with your child's feelings of stress instead of simply brushing them under the rug.

EARLY INVOLVEMENT

It's important to take every opportunity to familiarize yourself and your child with the new school environment. Take some time before the start of school to talk about safe routes to school or find the bus stop she'll be using.

If the school hosts any type of new student orientation, take advantage. These are great ways to meet new teachers, administrators, parents and peers. Be ready to involve yourself in whatever functions you can at the school to help your child feel like you are an active participant in the process.



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