

School

getting
Connected

BUILDING RESILIENT YOUTH | GROWING STRONG COMMUNITIES



An Introduction

Welcome to Getting Connected. Within this resource you will find seven topics, each with a number of learning Units.

Each Unit has the following components:

1. Points to Remember

These are the core teaching outcomes for the work unit. They are designed to be simple so that each child will have the opportunity to internalise the content.

2. Summary

An explanation of the core points for teacher information.

3. Activities

Each work unit will have some form of activities divided into the categories (borrowed from multiple intelligences theory) listed below:

Visual/Spatial

These activities will be based on making pictures or artistic images relating to the topic. They may also relate to visual puzzles or problem solving activities.

Dramatic/Interpersonal

These activities will challenge students to explore a topic through roleplay or another form of character identification or interaction. There will usually be a follow-up process of de-briefing in order to process the learning activity.

Kinesthetic

These activities will ask students to physically manipulate or interact with their environment as part of the learning process. They may involve creating or manipulating a substance or object; or they may involve a game or physical challenge.

There will usually be a follow-up process of de-briefing in order to process the learning activity.

Linguistic/Intrapersonal

These activities will usually be completed individually by students. They will be predominantly work-sheet or journal based activities that encourage the student to reflect and learn.

Units:

1. Starting High School

Theory Component

A feeling of belonging, according to some motivational researchers, is a basic psychological need that is essential for human growth and development. Maslow proposed a 'hierarchy of needs' in which our need for attachment and belonging comes only after our physiological needs and our need for safety. One can see then, how important it is for adolescents to have a sense of belonging at high school and how challenged this may be when they start.

Coping mechanisms are critical when making such a change and these generally improve with maturity. Adolescents are therefore more reliant on their environment to help them negotiate these difficult transitions.

Research highlights the fact that schools can play a critical role in promoting the wellbeing of their students. Schools can 'prepare children for the tests of life and not for a life of tests' (Huxley et al, 2004, p15) by fostering an environment that prepares students, indoctrinates them and supports them so that they feel connected to their school.

School

Unit 1: Starting High School

Learning Focus Points

- Starting high school is a stressful time
- Most students experience some anxiety about making friends and fitting in
- It takes time for students to understand how a new school works

Summary

Making the change from primary to high school can be a stressful one. Not only does it involve a new environment, new teachers and friends, rules and regulations, but it also means making the transition from the top of the hierarchy at primary school to bottom of the hierarchy at high school, in terms of age and experience. This can be a very challenging time for even the most well rounded of students.

Most new students experience some anxiety about starting high school. Understanding how school operates, making friends and fitting into a new school environment are common concerns to new students. Understanding what high school is about can help students to feel supported, which in turn will improve their resiliency and social adjustment in the school climate.

Starting High School Classroom Activities

Visual/Spatial

Visual/Spatial

These activities will be based on making pictures or artistic images relating to the topic. They may also relate to visual puzzles or problem solving activities.

Activity – I Made it Before, I Can Make it Again

Time: Approx 30 – 40 min

Brief: *Students recall difficult times in primary school, put them in an artwork and take confidence knowing they made it so far.*

Introduction

Class discussion:

You all have made it through Primary School.

Was it all easy all the time? What were some of the harder times you can remember from Primary School?

On one side of your paper list up to nine times you can remember in primary school that were tough to get through. It may have been pressure from school work, a hard time with friendships, with teachers, or maybe something that was hard to deal with at home.

On the 'art' side of the paper, draw a frame for each of those moments and put something in it to represent that period of time. You may draw something, paste in a photograph, or cut out something from a magazine that reminds you of that time.

Write a title on the artwork: *"I Made it Before, I Can Make it Again"*

Debrief:

- *Does anyone want to tell us about your artwork?*
- *How did you feel remembering those tough times in your life?*
- *Does it give you a sense of confidence knowing that you got through those times before?*
- *Do you think high school will be easier or harder than primary school? Why?*

Activity – I Used to Be... But Now I Am...

Time: Approx 30 -40 min

Brief: *Students bring in childhood pictures and write a poem about growing up*

Ask students during the class before to bring to class at least 5 photos (hopefully plenty more!) of themselves growing up.

Part One

Take the sets of photos from the students. Without letting the class see which student's photos you have in your hand, show the photos to the class (let them gather around close to you) starting with the youngest first. See how long before they guess who it is.

Part Two

Have the students write a poem, or just a short paragraph to go with their photographs. The poem should have the title, "I'm Not a Baby Anymore". The goal is to write a statement that says, 'I'm in high school now. I'm growing up.'

Part Three

Have students put the photos and poem together to form a piece of art.

Debrief:

- *Where do you think you are on the line between an child and an adult?*
- *Do you think you'll have to grow up a little more in order to deal with high school? Or are you ready now?*

**Dramatic /
Interpersonal**

Dramatic/Interpersonal

These activities will challenge students to explore a topic through role play or another form of character identification or interaction. There will usually be a follow-up process of de-briefing in order to process the learning activity.

Activity - The Day Before School Started

Time: Approx 15 – 25 min

Brief: *Students role play a phone call on the day before school started*

Introduction:

Can you remember how nervous you were on the night before the first day of high school? Does anyone want to tell us what you were nervous about?

Ask students to come to the whiteboard all at once and write up something that they were thinking of or were nervous about on that night.

Divide students into pairs, or small groups and ask them to come with a role play. There will be two characters: one will be the nervous student and the other will be an older friend who somehow knows exactly what will happen.

Then ask them to pick one of the things written on the board (that students were nervous about) and use that as the subject for the role play. As they are preparing their role play, they can remember the thing they were nervous about, and how it worked out in the end. Tell the students to make the role play as positive and realistic as possible.

Activity – My Magic Mentor

Time: Approx 20 – 30 min

Brief: *Students role play how a magic mentor could help them in school*

Introduction:

One of the best things a person can have when they first start high school is an older friend (or brother or sister) who knows everything about school, who will be there to help with any situation, answer any question, and protect you from every mean person. A friend like that is called a 'mentor'. It can be anyone older who takes an interest to help you, teach you and look after you. If you did have a friend like that (a mentor) – what might they be like? What if they were like the genie in Aladdin's lamp – so that they would magically come out just when you needed them?

Task:

Divide the students into small groups and have them make up a skit showing the kind of situations they would like an older mentor to magically be there to help them. Then perform the skits for the class. Have them make the situations real... the mentor isn't a super hero – he/she can just show up whenever you need them.

Debrief:

- *Do any of you have an older friend or sibling in high school who is a mentor to you? Can you tell us about them?*
- *Would any of you like to have a friend like that in school if there was an older student who was interested in you? (use this discussion to set up the possible relationship of peer mentors or peer support leaders in the future... or to enhance that relationship if it already exists in your school)*

Kinaesthetic

Activity – Voiceless Trust Walk

Time: Approx 10 – 20 min

Brief: *Students lead each other blindfolded through an obstacle course without touching or speaking*

Materials: Tea towels or some other material to use as blindfolds for half the class.

Pair up students and blindfold one of them. Then set out a simple obstacle course around and/or outside the classroom. The task is for the sighted partner to lead the blindfolded one through the obstacle course safely. The trick is that they are not

Kinaesthetic

These activities will ask students to physically manipulate or interact with their environment as part of the learning process. They may involve creating or manipulating a substance or object; or they may involve a game or physical challenge. There will usually be a follow-up process of de-briefing in order to process the learning activity.

allowed to touch their partner – or to speak! They will have to work out some other signals without using words.

More challenge:

Have more than one blindfolded person per each sighted person. The blindfolded ones can be in contact with each other in a line.

Debrief:

- *Starting high school is something no one can know all about. How is this activity like starting high school?*
- *How did you make it through the obstacle course?*
- *What lessons can that teach you about making it through high school?*

Activity – Pile On

Time: Approx 5 – 15 min

Brief: *See how many students can balance on a small space*

The ideal object for this group challenge is a big tree stump that is close to the ground. If you can't find that, try to find the closest thing. You may need to just draw a circle on the ground or borrow a hoop from the phys ed department.

Divide class into groups of 6 – 8. Task: Get as many of the group to balance with their feet in the circle as possible. Challenge the other groups to see who gets the most.

Debrief:

- *What did it take to get the most people in or on the circle?*
- *Was it easy to plan exactly how to get everyone into the circle, or did you just have to get in and pile on? (Hopefully the answer would be to pile on)*
- *How can that relate to how someone can be able to fit in to high school?*

**Linguistic/
Intrapersonal**

These activities may be completed individually or in small groups by students. They will be predominantly worksheet based and will encourage students to reflect and learn.

Linguistic/Intrapersonal

Activity - The Way School Works Quiz

Time: Approx 20 – 30 min

Brief: *Students make up quiz questions that the whole class answers*

Students will work in groups to make up their own quiz on the way things are done at your school.

Include questions about:

1. Details of uniform – day and sport
2. How to check in or out of school if you're late or sick, etc. . .
3. What happens when you get in trouble. Give details about detentions at all levels.
4. How do you catch busses
5. Where do you go or who do you talk to if you're worried about different things:
 - a. Trouble with classes
 - b. Trouble with bullying
 - c. Trouble at home
6. What activities or clubs are there to join
7. What awards are there at the end of the school year and how you get them
8. What happens at swimming carnival
9. What happens at the canteen or tuckshop
10. What areas are out of bounds
11. Where can you eat lunch

Have each group write up their questions (they could have multiple choice) and hand them to you to read out. Students can ask you for some of the answers if they can't find out from each other.

Then have the whole class answer the quiz (the ones who wrote the questions should at least get those ones right).

Activity – Who Are Those Teachers?

Time: Approx 10 – 20 min

Brief: *Students try to remember teachers who fill some key positions in the school*

On a piece of paper, have the students to draw boxes with the following titles of teachers. See how many they can put a name to:
(Adjust this list to fit your school)

Maths Teacher	Library Staff
Head of Computers	Head of Grounds
Counsellor	Drama Teacher
Head of Performing Arts	Chaplain
Sportsmaster	School Captains
Year Coordinators for each year	Principal

Debrief:

Review the names of those teachers to help students remember the important ones to them.

Activity – The Hardest Thing So Far

(Worksheet No. 1. See Appendix)

Time: Approx 15 – 30 min

Brief: *Student worksheet*

Students reflect on the things that have been difficult for them in various areas of school life and write about how they got through – or are getting through it.

Debrief:

- *Is anyone willing to share something they put on their sheet?*
- *Are there any pieces of advice that you have put on your paper that you wished someone had shared with you earlier? Tell us about them?*
- *Would any of you be willing to give me your worksheet to share with next year's new students?*

Appendix School



The Hardest Thing So Far

High school can be a tough time, but you can get through it. Sometimes it's good to realise that other people find some things hard going too. It gives them courage to know that they might not be the only one who finds some particular thing hard.

So use this worksheet to do some thinking on what some of the hard things have been so far in getting through high school. Also write down how you got through that hard thing. If you haven't got through it yet, be honest and say so - but write down your plan of how you might get through it.

If you are willing to share this after you get finished, your words just might encourage another person starting out in high school.

Area of School Life This is to help you think of the things that have been hard	What Happened	How you got through it OR How you plan to get through it
Friendships		
School Work – <i>Assignments and Homework</i>		
Playground/Lunchtimes		
Classes		
Teachers		
Getting to and from school		
Sports		
Anything Else?		