

# *School* • • *Transitions*

Whether your child is just starting school or moving to a new one, find out how to make the school year a success.

*Written by Kara Wetmore French*



Bane Elementary School students Angelina and Arielle with their Bus Buddy

Parents are encouraged to wait at the bus stop with their children





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Caption needed

It's every parent's dream- the school bus arrives, your child walks confidently to the bus, backpack in tow, blowing a kiss over their shoulder and offering cheery wave as they set off for their first day in a new school. However, the reality of this scene seems to be somewhat different. Often it involves prying a clinging kindergartener off your legs, or begging your junior high student to please look at the camera and smile as you attempt to take pictures of the happy occasion. It's true, preparing for the important transition of starting a new school can be a daunting task, but worry not. We've assembled tips from both educators and parents alike to help you and your children both prepare for a great school year.

### *Starting School*

Many parents don't know where to begin as they try to take some of the worry and confusion out of a new school for their children. Often times, it is the parents more than the children who are dreading the arrival of the school bus. Not surprisingly, it seems almost impossible to believe that your children will be able to have an enjoyable day without you there to look after them in their new environment. Though difficult, the transition to independence as a successful student actually requires parents to take a few delicate steps back. "At first, sending your children to school will be tough," says Cy-Fair mom Linda Hollister. "You are so nervous for the first few weeks, always wondering how things are going." Cy-Fair mom Jennifer Bennett also offers this sage advice, "If you have to cry when you put your baby on that bus to elementary school, and we all do, wait until the bus is out if sight and you are back home."

### *The Wheels on the Bus*

For more than a few students and parents, it is not the idea of school that causes some stress, but the idea of the bus ride that gets them there. "The idea that my five-year-old kindergartener would be riding the bus with fifth graders kept me awake nights," confesses Cy-Fair mom Ellie Patterson. "I was so afraid the older children would be forced to sit near my little guys." Former Cy-Fair bus driver Robin Wetmore assures that children are separated by age on the elementary bus. "The younger the children, the closer to the front they sat. The kindergarteners always were grouped together, and they really enjoyed riding the bus." Parents are also strongly encouraged to wait with their elementary children until the bus arrives. This ensures that someone is always watching your child during the transition between parent and bus driver.

### *Alleviating Fears*

Taking the mystery out of school is the key to ensuring a comfortable transition. Going to a new place without mom or dad can seem like a huge step, but having an idea of what to expect can ease that worry. When you visit the school campus for registration, taking time to show your student some key places, like their classroom, can be a great help. Before the school year starts, taking advantage of the "Meet the Teacher" day helps both

students and parents in understanding who their teacher is, what their classroom looks like and who else will be in their class. Cy-Fair dad Matt Wilson advises, "Once you meet your child's teacher, talk with them about your child specifically. Let them know your concerns and if you foresee any problems." Communication with your child about their fears and expectations are essential. Being positive, cheerful and direct can ease fears, but may not alleviate all of them. Also, check out back-to-school events for both parents and students of all age levels in your neighborhood community. This can be a good way to meet and network with other parents as well as allowing children to make new friends.

### *Adapting to a New School*

Many parents worry about their children and their ability to adapt to the curriculum of a new school. Parents are encouraged to check out the Cy-Fair ISD website under Curriculum and Instruction for their child's age and grade level. Parents have the option to review sample curriculum, education expectations, and TAKS objectives by grade level. Stay involved in your child's lessons by helping with homework, reading together and talking about what they are learning. For older students, the new experiences of changing classes frequently, unfamiliar campuses, lockers and more advanced subjects can seem daunting. Even though teens may seem to take the changes in stride, make sure they feel comfortable in their new role. Talk to them away from distractions like the computer, TV and phone to ensure they enjoy their new freedoms, but also understand the responsibility that junior and high school present.

### *Moving on Up*

Whether you are the parent of a kindergartener or a high school student, each move to a new school presents challenges and triumphs. Keeping the lines of communication open between your child, school and your family is essential to avoiding problems and having a great year. When in doubt, ask! Cy-Fair teachers and administrators are more than happy to schedule time to talk to parents about any questions or concerns they might have. Here's to a great year of exciting growth and learning for all Cy-Fair students. CFM

*KARA WETMORE FRENCH appreciates her mom in a whole new way since she became a mother herself. I love you Mom! Thanks for everything.*

## *From Elementary to Middle School*

Moving from elementary to middle school can be a difficult time for some pre-teens. Here are a few tips...



- Don't let your fears rub off on your child. Be confident, supportive and let your child know you believe in her.
- Attend all parent orientations, meet the teacher night, and get to know your child's new school and teachers.
- Listen to your child's signals and give her a little space if needed.
- Don't interrogate your child when she first walks in the door. Let her have some downtime.
- Open-ended questions like "What was the best part of your day?" get better responses than "How was school?"
- Encourage your child to get involved in clubs and activities to find other students with similar interests.



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