



What you and your child can do to MAKE THE MOST OF HIGH SCHOOL

• **DISCUSS AND DECIDE TOGETHER:** Visiting the school and asking questions of the principal, teachers, and current students and their families is important preparation for high school. Your child should be an active part of the process, deciding what most excites her about school and looking for the programs and classes that meet those interests. The “Portland Public High Schools: Find Your Fit” brochure can help you and your child find the type of high school that matches her learning style.

• **PREPARE FOR WHAT’S DIFFERENT:** In high school, students have more responsibility than in primary grades for choosing classes, getting work done, etc. Work with your child to define what structure and support will help him thrive in a new school.

• **UNDERSTAND THE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES YOUR STUDENT NEEDS:** There’s a lot that’s expected of high school students: Time management skills, good study habits, the ability to set and work toward goals, good focus and note-taking (in class and when doing homework), the ability to meet deadlines, and a willingness to take responsibility for their own education. As you discuss these skills with your student, help her to identify ways she has already demonstrated each skill (examples can come from school or from other activities — playing on a sports team involves long seasons of practice, making art requires attention to detail, etc.). This will help your child see high school success as building on her past accomplishments.

• **KNOW WHEN AND HOW TO CHOOSE:** High school students have more input into their class schedules, and what they choose matters. Whether it’s

required courses, electives or special programs of study, the better your student understands what’s offered, the better the choices he can make. The school counselor

is an important resource for you and your child. Meet with the counselor early, so your student can make every semester of high school count. Some possible questions to ask the counselor:

- ✓ What basic academic courses do you recommend for students who want to go to college?
- ✓ What elective courses do you recommend for college-bound students?
- ✓ Can students who are considering college get special help or

tutoring?

✓ What activities can my child do at home and over the summer to strengthen his or her preparation for high school, and in later grades for post-high school training or college?

✓ What do different colleges require in terms of high school grades and SAT or ACT scores?

✓ Do you have tips for balancing homework with other extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, and part-time jobs?

• **GET OFF TO A STRONG START:** Students should start high school believing they can succeed in challenging classes and committed to developing strong study skills. Students who put off taking required courses or fall behind in credits in the first year of high school are more likely to end up struggling to graduate. If your child falls behind, work with the school to develop a plan for making up credits as soon as possible.

• **ACKNOWLEDGE HOW MUCH HIGH SCHOOL MATTERS:** Remind your child that for graduation —





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continued

and for colleges and most employers — a grade point average (GPA) is cumulative, meaning it covers all four years of high school. Grades in the freshman year count just as heavily as grades in the junior and senior years, so it's important for students to start high school committed to their classwork.

- **PLAN FOR WHAT'S**

HARD: High school means more responsibilities, and more stress. Thinking in advance about how to cope with stress can help keep your student on track when the pressure is on.

- **RECOGNIZE THAT HIGH SCHOOLERS ARE ALMOST**

ADULTS, BUT NOT QUITE: There's more than just school on your student's mind. High school students struggle with balancing a sense of personal identity, fitting into social groups, peer pressure and schoolwork. Dating, driving, nearing adulthood: With all sorts of distractions from classes and homework, it's especially important that your student have positive long-term goals and an understanding of how doing well in school can help her fulfill those goals.

- **FIND WAYS TO FIT IN:** Extracurricular activities can be a great way for ninth-graders to make friends

and fit into high school. And they can teach values and skills that will help students do better in class. Help your student explore what clubs, sports and activities are available in high school and which fit his interests. What students do outside of school matters, so stress the importance of challenging activities, and help your student appreciate what skills and values they are gaining along the way.

- **BE AWARE OF EVERYTHING KIDS ARE FACING:** Eating disorders, depression, drug use, sexual experimentation — it can be hard for adults to admit that their kids can have such tough problems. While many high school students never have these experiences, you should

be aware of them, and be ready to intervene if your child is affected. Don't ignore any signs that your son or daughter is struggling, and seek help if you or your child feels overwhelmed.

- **STAY OPEN TO CHANGE:** High school students are still trying to figure out who they are and what they want. They may change their minds a lot. Don't be frustrated — your child needs your support through these years. Keep communicating with your student, and with teachers and counselors, so you can help your student weather the emotional storms of the teen years.

