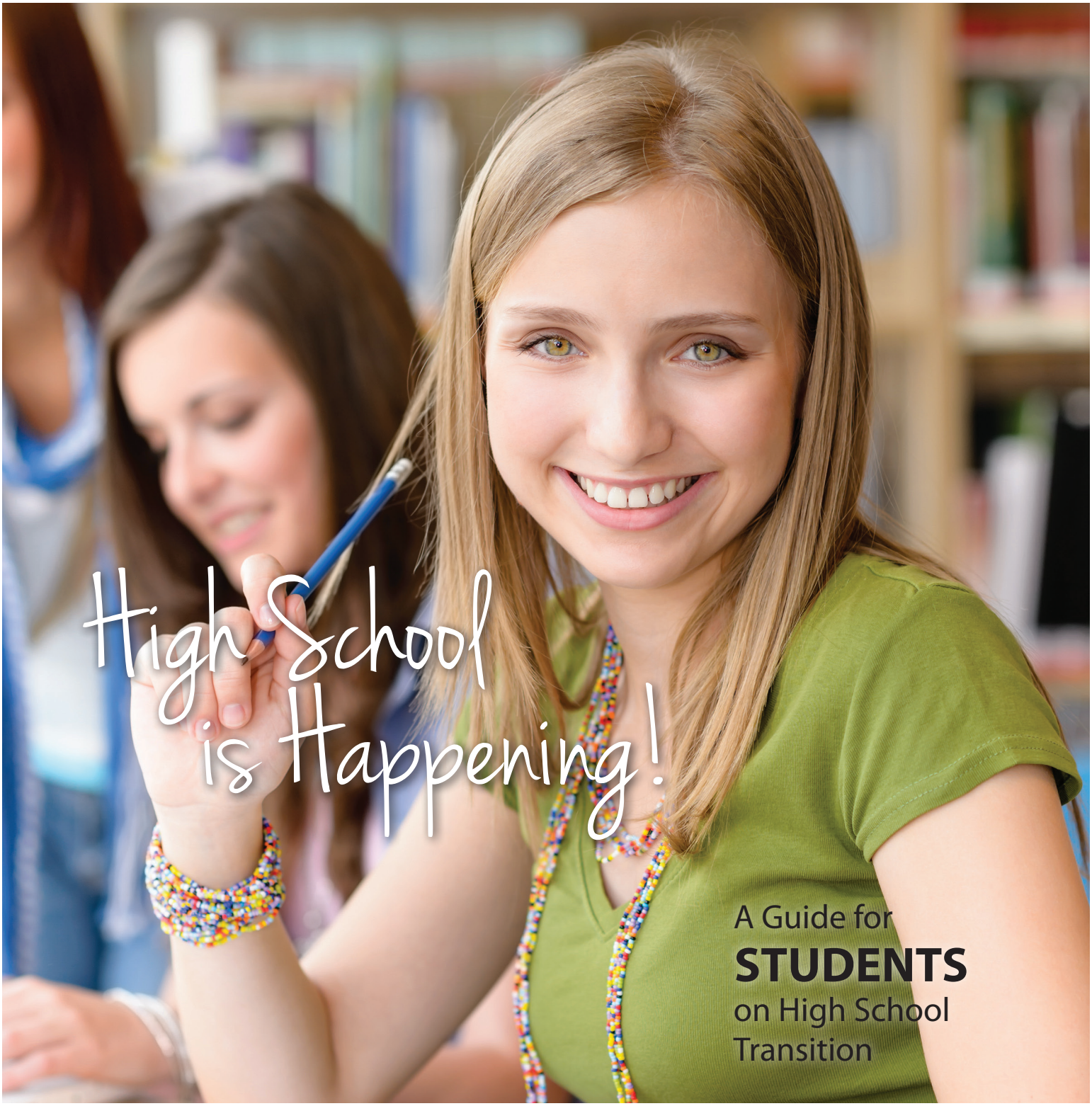

High School is Happening!

A Guide for **STUDENTS** on High School Transition

The time has arrived.

Start getting ready because **High School Is Happening!** A successful transition from middle school to high school sets the stage for your academic achievement, personal development, and college and career readiness. While you might be ready for more responsibility and independence, you also need to know how high school will be different. The beginning of high school is a fresh start. You are leaving behind a familiar building and teachers to take an important step towards your future. It is a time of not just making new friends and trying different classes, but adding responsibilities and freedoms. The decisions and choices that you make during high school will very likely influence the direction you follow after graduation. As you approach this new beginning it is natural to feel anxious and ask yourself questions like: Will my classes help me accomplish my dreams? What extracurricular activities should I choose? How will I balance academics and extracurricular activities or work? What do I want to do after high school? How will I handle more responsibility?

To help answer these questions, this booklet concentrates on five areas of focus that are identified as particularly important to the life of a high school student:

- Discovering Your Self
- Learning How to Balance
- Before the Report Card Arrives
- The Graduation Plan
- Getting Involved in School

Understanding what to expect when you start high school and developing good habits now will allow you to enjoy a smooth transition to high school. You have been waiting a long time for this moment, so continue reading to find out what happens in high school so you can make the right decisions.

Discovering Your Self

Discovering yourself in a new, larger high school with more students can be a challenging yet exciting experience. Not only will you meet freshmen like yourself for the first time, but also upperclassmen who you probably don't know. There are as many opportunities to meet people as there are larger class sizes and new clubs and organizations to join. Participation in school clubs and extracurricular activities looks great on your college applications, but don't worry about joining every possible club. The clubs will be more rewarding if you are an active member in a few clubs that interest you, but don't be afraid to try something new. At the beginning of the school year, everyone is excited to see new people and make new friends, but take the time to get to know people before developing relationships and building trust. Friends can influence your decisions, so make sure that you choose friends who not only share the same interests as you but also want to see you do well in school. Be careful about the information your share with new friends at school in conversation and especially on the internet and social media. High school can be a fresh start, but you want to start with a good reputation and protect your privacy.

Building New Relationships

- Find clubs, organizations, and activities that you enjoy
- Ask classmates to attend school events with you
- Think about what are important qualities in a friend
- Find positive outlets to express yourself such as exercise, writing, or listening to music
- Focus on yourself — don't compare yourself to others
- Avoid making judgments about people before getting to know them
- Stay away from listening to or sharing stories about other students

Extracurricular Activities:

- Athletic Teams
- Performing/Visual Arts Groups
- Academic Clubs
- Volunteer Organizations
- Career Interest Groups
- Leadership Organizations
- Honor Clubs
- Community Organizations

Learning How to Balance

Learning how to balance your classes, extracurricular activities, friends and family, and possibly a job requires a little skill and a lot of organization. Your teachers and parents will expect you to keep track of your own schedule in high school and will no longer remind you about due dates or assignments. Teachers are more likely to assign long-term projects that will require you to work at your own pace and in groups. Accomplish your long-term goals by dividing them into smaller objectives that you can check off when they are completed. From your book bag and locker to your agenda and study area, keep everything organized to save time and prevent information from being lost. If you are feeling overwhelmed with your course load and commitments, take a moment to review your priorities or talk with your parent, a school counselor or a trusted adult about the best way to manage your time. There are many benefits to working a part-time job in high school and being involved in organizations, but remember that the most important job is doing well in school.

Managing Your Time

- Review and update your calendar regularly
- Write down assignments and due dates before leaving the class
- Copy key dates from your syllabus for each class into your calendar at the beginning of each semester
- Try to finish assignments early to avoid work building up
- Find what motivates you to finish your work
- Look ahead to allow enough time to get everything done
- Take responsibility for yourself and avoid procrastinating
- Allow time to relax and do something you enjoy

Keep a Schedule:

- Student Agenda
- Yearly Planner
- Online Calendar
- Student Handbook
- Family Calendar

Before the Report Card Arrives

Before the report card arrives there are a few differences about high school that you need to know in order to be prepared for your classes. Teachers may not provide as many opportunities for you to earn grades so you can't afford to coast on assignments or exams. The courses that you take in high school are more challenging because they are designed to prepare you for college and potential careers. But don't worry, teachers offer tutoring before or after school to provide extra time to help students. Even students at the top of their class in high school will attend tutoring to get some extra help. Another major difference in high school is maintaining your overall grade point average and developing your transcript. Unfortunately, you don't get to start over each year in high school, so be sure to keep your grades up and build a strong grade point average your freshmen year. Most of your teachers will give you a syllabus, which you will need to keep as a guide for the class. Remember that your teachers are there to help you, so be sure to ask them when you need extra assistance.

Reaching Your Potential

- Be an active listener in class by asking questions and taking good notes
- Review your notes every day even if your teacher does not assign work
- Organize your class notes and handouts
- Learn your school's grading system to determine your grade point average and class rank
- Keep track of your class grades so you know how you are doing
- Talk with your teachers about extra help before you fall behind
- Study smaller chunks of information regularly in shorter periods of time

Syllabus:
An outline of the topics that will be covered in your class, which usually describes specific information including your teacher's contact information, the grading policy, and a schedule of test dates.

Transcript:
A permanent record of all your high school courses taken and grades earned from the beginning of high school until you graduate. It may also include your class rank and scores on certain tests.

The Graduation Plan

All high school students will develop their own **Graduation Plan,** which ensures that they are on track to graduate high school and achieve their goals. Make sure that you are taking the right classes every year to earn your high school diploma and also meet entrance requirements for potential colleges. Remember, you are responsible for your plans now. Each year in high school you should expect to take classes in English/Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. In order to graduate high school, students also need to pass Personal Fitness/Health plus complete certain pathway courses in Career, Technical and Agricultural Education, Advanced Academics, World Languages, or Fine Arts/Performing Arts. High school students even have the opportunity to earn college credit before they graduate through certain advanced level courses or different dual or joint enrollment programs with participating colleges. Begin your college and career search early by exploring the different college, technical school, or military options that interest you and learn what courses might be required. With so many options and decisions, it is important that you are actively involved in selecting your classes and learning about the best possible direction after high school for you.

Setting the Course

- Schedule an appointment with your high school counselor
- Explore different career possibilities through new career pathways courses
- Take practice college entrance exams and utilize available practice resources at your school
- Learn about yourself – complete a career interest survey
- Attend college and career events at your school and nearby locations
- Visit local colleges and universities with your family
- Develop a portfolio to store information about possible colleges and career plans

Georgia's Career Clusters:
Groups of different occupations that are based on a common set of knowledge and skills, which include pathway courses of connected career and technical classes.

How Do I Become Involved in My School?

Show School Spirit. This does not mean wearing school colors every day, but try to attend sporting events, pep rallies, school dances and plays to meet people outside of the classroom. Your high school years will be filled with fun activities, social opportunities, and other events that will create memories and new friendships.

Discover Your Passion. High school encourages students to pursue their interests by exploring new classes, clubs, and organizations. If your school does not offer a club that matches your interests, then talk to your principal or teachers about possibly starting a new group.

Give Back to the Community. Finding time to volunteer and perform community service not only helps others but is personally rewarding. Completing service hours is also a good way to add polish to your college applications. Think about ways you can raise awareness for a worthy cause or lend a hand to those in need.

Keep Your Eyes and Ears Open. Following the news and information happening in high school can be challenging. Make sure you pay attention to announcements about opportunities that might benefit you. Check your school website regularly and other announcement boards around the building for information about scholarships, contests, meetings and other useful information.

Keep Your Parents Informed. In high school, parents and teachers rely more on students to bring information home to their families. Be sure to keep your parents informed so they know what is happening at school and how to be a part of your high school success.

Find Your Support System. From teachers and counselors to friends and family, high school is filled with people who want to see you be successful. Seek those people when you need help solving a problem or start feeling upset. There are multiple sources of support for you to lean on in high school.

Get to Know Your Teachers. Teachers are a wealth of information and not just about what is in the textbook. They are also coaches, advisors, club sponsors, tutors and mentors. They write letters of recommendation to help students apply for jobs or college. Take the time to make sure your teachers know you so they can help you achieve your goals.

Step Out of Your Comfort Zone. High school is about learning and we learn when we try new things. Whether it is giving a speech in front of the class for the first time or auditioning for the school play, try something new. You might be surprised what you learn about yourself.

Get Involved in the Community. Learn about the activities and athletics offered at your local recreation center, mentorship opportunities, and the different afterschool and summer programs available in the community. These are great ways to meet other students from your school and neighboring schools.

Visit Our Partners for More Information about High School Transition

Georgia Department of Education
www.gadoe.org

Georgia Student Finance Commission
www.gsfc.org

Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network
www.afterschoolga.org

Georgia Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
www.georgiapta.org

Georgia Family Connection Partnership
www.gafcp.org

United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta
www.smartstartga.org and www.uwma.org

GaDOE Georgia Department of Education

United Way United Way of Greater Atlanta

Georgia PTA® everychild.onevoice.®

Georgia FamilyConnection

Georgia Student Finance Commission LOANS ◢ SCHOLARSHIPS ◢ GRANTS

G·san GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

Communities In Schools HELPING KIDS STAY IN SCHOOL AND PREPARE FOR LIFE