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## Supporting Families and Tweens through Transitions at School

**Transitions are inherently exciting as girls move from another school to Roseville College, or as they prepare for the transition into Senior School. Transitions can also be tricky, so here are some tips to keep in mind as you navigate the start of high school with your 'tween' and other important milestones.**

The “tween” years is a relatively recent concept to describe the years between being a child (a highly dependent, readily influenced little person) and becoming a teenager (a sometimes inflexible, let-me-find-out-for-myself young person striving for independence). It varies for each girl, on average, anywhere between 8 and 14 years old.

### 1. Value Your Daughter's Family Bond

The most important anchor for a child in times of change is a firm bond at home – a sense of belonging and security. Focus on things like your parent-child connection, mutual respect, trust, and giving validation to the complex emotions and feelings stirred up in your daughter at this time of uncertainty. Make time to ask, then listen to her: how is she feeling about the current situation? What can you do to help her (like answering questions or sharing memories of your own experiences)? Or, is there anything specific she'd otherwise like to discuss with Mum or Dad?

### 2. Keep the Lines of Communication Open

Instead of one intense deep-and-meaningful conversation about transition, which can be intimidating, consider planning bite-sized conversations at times when you are nurturing your parent-child connection. Examples include an after-school café stop on the way home from sport, or baking afternoon tea together every other Sunday. These set up a positive context for a well-placed question and lots of listening (by you). Such moments of quality time can become indispensable as your daughter moves into other areas of challenge as a teenager and, later, an adult.

For transition to Year 7, be intentional in spending quality time together throughout her entire Year 6. Focus on her feelings, opportunities and interests, potential challenges, and how to prepare together. Start with easy things, like uniforms and routines. Acknowledge fears and worries; but try not to dwell on them. Often, as time passes, these things solve themselves and children realise on their own that they've grown into the solution; it's not as significant as they initially thought.

### 3. Change Brings Opportunities to Realise Purpose

Familiarise yourself with the sorts of opportunities that await your child at Roseville College. With this knowledge, seed conversations with things that will trigger her interest and excitement. Stir her curiosity; but let her ask for more information! It's important that she feels that any change allows her to be herself; but will open doors for her to engage her heart and passions: explore co- and extra-curricular opportunities like sports and outdoor education, music and expressive arts, debating and public speaking, sciences and technology, coding, robotics and mathematics.

### 4. Look for Balance

As the time for transition gets closer and choices are made, encourage a balanced load of activities across the life of school; it is as important to pursue the things she loves as much as it is to try new things. Guiding your daughter through choices is an important role for parents – don't overload! Children grow and change their mind as the year progresses, and persevering with choices that they've made is an important lesson too, as is committing to a sports team until the end of a season.

Children grow when given room to figure out what they're good at, what they enjoy, and what they thought they'd like to do; but later realise otherwise! Balance in activities also exposes your daughter to a range of fellow students in a variety of classroom and non-classroom contexts. This too is beneficial, because she learns to get along with a variety of different people and, in doing so, she might discover “her thing” and possibly her lifelong passion.

### 5. Prepare for an “Academic Shift” that Accelerates Your Daughter's Growth

For a tween changing schools, there is inevitably an upward shift academically. This is magnified in the transition to Senior School at the start of Year 7. For some, the major change is from a dedicated all-round classroom teacher in Year 6 to an array of specialist subject experts (for each subject) held in specialist rooms in Year 7. For others, the simple re-setting of expectations in academic application and diligence (including personal inquiry and study) is a significant adjustment.

At the time, this pressure in learning can be a little daunting; however, as parents, encourage your daughter and persevere because this will be one of the most positive changes to influence her personal growth and discovery at school. In my experience, students are remarkably adaptable and many enjoy the new challenges quite quickly – often raising the bar for themselves once they feel the rewards of trying something new or working harder.

## **6. Maintain Existing Friendships while Nurturing New Friends**

Among the excitement of new places and new people, take the initiative to encourage your child to sow into valued, existing friendships (ie. from Junior School or their prior school, church, the local neighbourhood, extended family, or other clubs and groups) at the same time as establishing new ones. There are several reasons this is important: it teaches children that people aren't disposable and that lasting friendships involve highs and lows (including celebrations and forgiveness). Several circles of friends in and outside of school also helps protect your daughter against an inevitable friendship fall-out, compared with the impact of a fall-out with a core friend/circle of friends because "all her eggs were in one basket".

## **7. Be an Organised Parent**

Being organised will make it easier for your child and your family. If you are uncertain, seek out information. At Roseville College, we aim to equip every parent with the information and resources you need because we know you are keen to support your daughter and want to be organised for a smooth start to school. Get to know our school website and its online resources (ie. a parent portal), read the school newsletters and get in touch to answer lingering questions.

## **8. Facilitate Great Habits of Organisation for Your Child**

As tweens journey into the teenage years, the best approach is to guide – but not do. Your child's autonomy and self-responsibility are a primary goal of a functional parent-school partnership.

While ensuring children are safe, let her catch public transport, make her own lunch, put dirty clothes in the laundry (so her PE shirt is clean and ready when next needed), pack her homework in her bags, read her timetable to plan for the day ahead, ensure excursion notes are returned on time... It is not cruel to let her make mistakes and figure out a better way next time; it is real life learning. School is a great and safe place to get these habits under the belt for life.

## **9. Be Your Child's Advocate**

We certainly are, too. By being your child's advocate, we join ranks, and together advocate for her school, teachers, peers and future. Together, we can work things out and... things work better. Reserve judgement on hearsay. While you know your child may not always be entirely blameless, never cease being her advocate. The road will have bumps, some involve other students and some involve teachers. Some just happen. By reserving judgement and working together, we demonstrate wisdom to our children while still protecting them. The truth and best resolution almost always rise to the surface alongside important life lessons.

## **10. Support the Whole Child and Know Their Limits**

Clearly, there is a lot going on in the heads of tweens as they navigate higher levels of learning with the complexities of getting along with others! Any girl adjusting to transition will naturally experience an emotional drain as her senses are bombarded with information. Some cope more easily than others for the first month or two, or until the last few weeks of term! Be prepared that, at some stage, signs of overload will warn you that tiredness and (yes, probably) grumpiness are looming. You know your daughter best. Support her with sound sleep, nutritious food, lots of water, chill-out time to recharge her batteries, exercise to invigorate her body, and love to refuel her confidence to start afresh tomorrow. While she needs grace and TLC, she also needs to know that the benchmark for appropriate behaviour and conduct hasn't changed.

At Roseville College, at each milestone of the educational journey, we appreciate that many parents are "new to this" and that each girl – and her family will respond differently. Our goal is to work alongside you by keeping communication lines open, by providing topical seminars and learning opportunities, and by prioritising pastoral care to help equip your family as your daughter begins to realise her purpose on the journey from Kindergarten to Year 12.

I certainly encourage parents to explore the services offered by Roseville College to help navigate their daughter's (and family's) unique situation.