

Parents/Guardians Supporting Middle/High School Students through School Closure and Building Changes

The closure and school-change process is impacting our families, students and staff across the District. Our children are experiencing stressed adults at school and at home: this adds to their own stress. This paper is intended as a resource for responding to children's concerns and worries. They will look to adults for guidance, stability, and reassurance. We will all do our very best to give them the support they need.

Students are already asking questions:

- Why do we have to move out of our school?
- Where will we go?
- It's not fair!
- Will all my friends go with me?
- Why do other kids get to come to my school?
- Nobody cares about us

Responses:

It is very hard making any school changes, especially moving from one school to another. Sometimes, things happen for young people and adults that don't seem fair at all. Let's be sure we know what we mean when we say "fair." (Discuss) Fair is when the solution seems like justice, like it's the right thing to do. Sometimes, things happen that don't seem right or fair at all. The fact is, sometimes things really aren't fair. Can you think of some things that have happened to you or other young people that didn't seem fair?

- Didn't get invited to a party or event
- Didn't get chosen for a game, team or activity
- Being teased or bullied
- People are mean for no reason
- Parents fight or get divorced
- Parent in military service
- Parent has gone away or is absent
- A relative is sick or died
- Economic issues – parent lost job, need to move out of home, not enough food

Sometimes things happen to us, and it seems like we have no control. Other people make the decisions, and we can't always understand why they do things. When this happens, what can we do?

- We can ask questions and try to learn more and understand more.
- We can talk to our trusted friends and adults.
- We can tell our side and talk about our feelings.
- What are some of the feelings people have when hard things happen, especially when they don't seem fair? (mad, angry, sad/depressed, hopeless, paralyzed, fear, cynical, frustrated)

Can you tell me about your feelings? The people who made the big decisions about schools -- the Superintendent and the School Board -- know that the decisions were hard to make and that it is even harder for the families, teachers and students. They want all schools in the Seattle School District to be great schools, and they hope you will come to really like your new school and will work hard and also find classes, teachers and friends you like.

What can help you feel better, to be hopeful? (Discuss: Allow time for thinking)

Some ideas:

- Talk to friends, family, others
- Listen to music
- Walk, run, dance, play sports
- Draw, write, journal, create
- Read books and comics, make jokes
- Eat healthy treats
- Take naps
- Relax with pets
- Go to a special place/space
- Other ideas

Often, things can turn out much better than we think they will. Has that ever happened to you? Can you think of times/changes that you really dreaded – but things went better than you expected? (Discuss; help child to remember some situations.)

What can you do to make your new school more comfortable and welcoming for you?

- Have a good attitude (hope, excitement, plan to work hard, have fun, make friends)
- Practice skills: how to make new friends, show respect, be a good listener, share feelings.
- Be on the lookout to find new trusted adult(s) in the new school
- Journal and draw ideas, thoughts, feelings
- Read books about change, moving, etc.

You might be wondering;

Will I make new friends?

Will my teachers like me?

Will people be happy that I am coming to their school?

Do I even care anymore?

Lots of kids are wondering about the same things.

Most people have faced hard times and hard situations before. Some (of us) are facing hard times at home right now. I know there are times when you have had to be strong – maybe even brave. And I know that you did it. You got through the hard times. Sometimes, things turned out as bad as you thought, but sometimes things turned out much better. I have a lot of confidence in you. I am hopeful for you. I am going to support you.

**Staff Resources: school counselor, nurse, teacher, librarian
Pamela Hillard, Health Education, 252-0987**