



The High School Years: Transitioning to Adulthood

Summer 2015

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[www.uclaschooldiversity
project.com](http://www.uclaschooldiversityproject.com)

Dear Parent:

Welcome to the UCLA High School Project, a continuation of the three-year UCLA Middle School Diversity Project of which you and your child were a part of. As a parent or guardian of a student who completed their first year in one of our California high schools, you have given us continued permission to include your son or daughter in the extension of this important project. Our newsletter, *The High School Years: Transitioning to Adulthood*, will keep you informed about the study.

As Principal Investigators, allow us to first reintroduce ourselves. Sandra Graham is a Professor in the Department of Education at UCLA. Jaana Juvonen is a Professor in the Department of Psychology at UCLA. We are devoting our careers to the study of adolescent development in school. Our collaborators in northern California are Frank C. Worrell, a Professor in the Graduate School of Education at UC Berkeley and Brett Johnson Solomon, a Professor in the Department of Liberal Studies at Santa Clara University. We have a particular interest in adolescents' social development – their relationships with peers, their friendship networks, whether they feel accepted or rejected, their desires to be engaged in their communities, their mind-sets regarding the future, and how these feelings affect their adjustment and academic performance in high school. Based on what we have learned about adolescent development, we believe that healthy social relationships and academic and future successes go hand-in-hand. Our long-term goal is to use the information obtained from our research to develop between school programs that are sensitive to the needs of all adolescents. In the new phase of this project, we are especially interested in how both the past middle school experiences and the students' current feelings about their new school, their classmates, and themselves influence their academic performance and healthy development in schools that range in ethnic diversity. With the most ethnically diverse population of any state in the nation, California remains the perfect setting for the extension of this study.

As a participant in this study, your son or daughter will be followed over their four years of high school and the first year following graduation. Each of these five years, your teen will complete a written and confidential survey that asks about the social and academic experiences, challenges, and successes of high school. The 9th grade Spring assessment will have already been completed by the time you receive this Newsletter. We are pleased to inform you that the great majority of students found the survey to be interesting and the new format of using iPads to complete it to be particularly enjoyable. They were also happy to receive a \$20 honorarium for completing the survey.

Published once per year, our Newsletter will provide updates about the progress in the study. Each issue will include informative essays on topics important to adolescent development and performance in high school and descriptions of recent research on timely topics of concern to you as parents of teenagers. These articles will be written by us and our talented team of undergraduate and graduate students. This first issue includes information on easing the transition to high school and, in looking toward the future, academic options in California for students who wish to continue their education beyond high school graduation. Our goal is to share with you our knowledge about development during the teen years based on our own research and the work of other leading scholars.

If you have any questions about the study or other information contained in this Newsletter, please feel free to call (661) 889-0559. Manpreet Dhillon, our Project Manager, will be happy to speak with you. If you prefer, she will arrange for you to speak to one of the Principal Investigators.

We are grateful to you, as parents, and to the staff and teachers at your teen's high school.

Enjoy the Newsletter!



Making a Smooth 9th-Grade Transition

By Aletha Harven, M.A. and Suzanne Markeo Hayes, Ph.D.

Expect Temporary

Setbacks: Any time students make the transition from one school to another (e.g., from elementary to junior high school, or from middle school to high school), there is a tendency for students to experience a decline in their academic performance. This decrease in performance occurs for a number of reasons, such as adjusting to a new environment, learning new rules, and taking on more responsibilities. In a study that examined students' perceptions of the transition to high school, students discussed the difficulties that they experienced during their 9th grade year. For instance, homework was reported as being more challenging; students felt a lack of support from their teachers, and the students disliked the length and size of their classes. These perceptions can lead to temporary drops in both motivation and achievement.

Be Supportive: Because of their many concerns, once students begin 9th grade, parents need to provide them with a large amount of support. In a study that analyzed a national sample of over 20,000 students during the transition from 8th through 10th grade,

it was found that students who were performing well in school also reported high levels of family support. That said, parents can provide their teen with support in a number of ways. For example, asking a student about school at the end of the day helps a parent monitor student progress and possible concerns. If a student is having difficulty, for example with a teacher either in relation to schoolwork or in simply getting along, parents should talk to the child and offer suggestion on how to deal with the problem. If that does not work, talking to the teacher and finding out what actions need to be changed are very important. This can be done by sending notes to the teacher, arranging conferences, or attending parent open house events. If problems with the teacher persist, then the parent can talk to the child's school counselor. All of these actions send a message to your teen that you, as their parent, are on their side as they tackle the challenge of getting used to high school.

Encourage your 9th Grader

to get Involved: In addition to helping overcome classroom difficulties, parents can encourage their children to have positive social experiences with peers.

Having a positive social experience in high school may be as important as doing well in class. This does not mean a child needs to be the most popular or have many friends. Being able to participate in positive school activities allows a teen to become more connected to the school. School related activities allow students to meet peers in a non-academic setting where they can get to know each other and have fun. In addition, school activities allow students to interact with teachers outside of the classroom setting. Parents who encourage their children to participate in school related activities are more likely to have students who are engaged and motivated in school. Research suggests that participation in extracurricular activities can motivate students while increasing their academic performance. Also, extracurricular activities can develop character within students, while teaching them important value such as effort, hard work, and persistence.



To summarize, below is a list of what parents can do to help their child transition to high school and help make the freshman year enjoyable for everyone.

- ◆ Help your child get to know the campus.
- ◆ Talk to your child about daily experiences in school.
- ◆ Help with any difficulties in class work or teacher relations.
- ◆ Encourage your child to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- ◆ Get to know your child's school counselor.
- ◆ Keep in touch with the teachers. Go to Back to School Night and Parent Conference Night.

Join the PTA and be involved at the school when possible.

Thinking Ahead to College

By Alice Ho, Ph.D.

—A college education for your son or daughter is one of the most important investments you can make. Today, a college education is a necessity for many careers and jobs, and a college degree is required preparation for advanced study in many fields. The average annual income of high school graduates is only \$30,056 compared to \$54,714 for college graduates. In the state of California, there are three systems of public colleges: the University of California (UCs), the California State University (CSUs), and the California Community College (CCCs). The UCs are the most competitive of the three and they have the most admissions requirements.



The University of California

The UCs are academic research institutions that provide undergraduate, graduate and professional education, such as law or medicine. There are nine UC campuses, including UC Berkeley, UC Los Angeles, and UC San Diego. For students planning to enter that fall after high school graduation, the application filing period is between November 1st and November 30th. Students can apply online at www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions or obtain an application booklet from the school counselor/

UC Admissions Requirements

The UC schools have an admissions process called the Comprehensive Review. The factors considered under this review of freshman applicants include but are not limited to:

Academic grade point average (GPA) in all completed "A-G" courses. Beginning with the entering class of 2007, a **minimum GPA of 3.00 is required** in these courses.

Scores on the new SAT I (critical reading, mathematics and writing) or the ACT Assessment (plus the new ACT writing), and the SAT II Subject Tests in two different subject areas: history/social science, English literature, mathematics, laboratory science or a foreign language.

Number of academic courses beyond the minimum "A-G" requirements, including Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, honors, and transferable college courses. (Try to take the number of years recommended, especially if you are considering one of the more competitive UCs; go above and beyond what is required.)

Special talents, achievements, awards, special skills, involvement in school clubs and organizations, leadership positions, and community service.

For all the most up to date information on UC admissions processes, check on the web at www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions or meet with your counselor/college counselor.



The California State University

CSU's primary mission is undergraduate education and graduate education through the master's degree and teacher education.

There are 23 CSU campuses, including CSU Long Beach, CSU Long Beach, and Cal Poly Pomona. For students planning to enter the fall after high school graduation, the application filing period is between October 1st and November 30th (some campuses may have extended deadlines). Students can obtain an application from the school counselor/college counselor.

CSU Admission Requirements:

Academic grade point average (GPA) in all completed "A-G" requirements, same as the UC's and a **minimum GPA of 2.00** in these courses.

Scores on the ACT Assessment plus the new ACT Writing Test, or the new SAT I (critical reading, mathematics and writing).

Graduation from high school.

Some campuses have higher standards or additional requirements for particular impacted majors, programs, or those who live outside of the local area. It is good to double check with the individual campus(es) that you are applying to. For more information on how to plan for admissions to CSUs, visit the website www.csumentor.edu or meet with your counselor/college counselor.

What about California Community Colleges?

The Community Colleges have as their primary mission providing academic and vocational instruction for older and younger students through the first two years of undergraduate education (lower division). California Community Colleges admit any student who will benefit. There are 109 community colleges in the state of California and 21 in the LA area. To find your nearest community college, check on the web at <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/AlphaList.aspx> or ask your counselor. There is open admissions and enrollment.

What are the requirements for admission to the California Community Colleges?

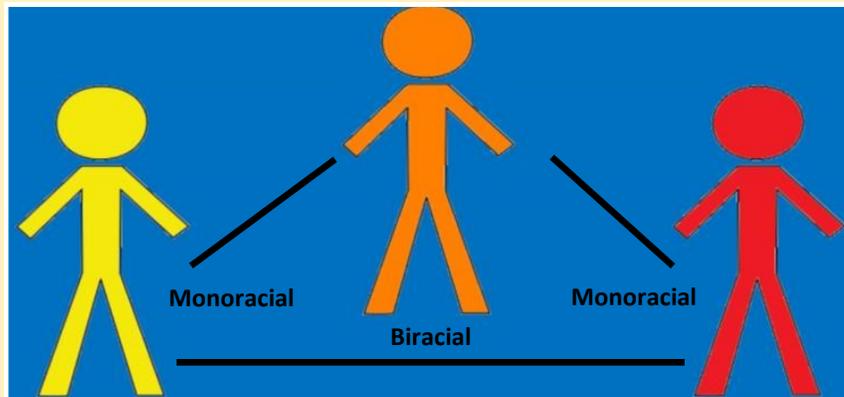
Anyone who is 18 years old may enroll in a community college. Students under 18 still in high school may also take college-level courses at a community college with approval from their high school counselor. There are no additional requirements. You should double check with your local community college's admissions office.

Friendships as Bridges: How Biracial Youth are Promoting Friendships

By: Leslie Echols, Ph.D.

The ethnic composition of the United States is becoming more and more diverse and is changing the population of students in public schools. In addition to having a greater variety of students from different ethnic groups, many schools now have a number of multiethnic (e.g., biracial) students. We are just beginning to learn about multiethnic students and their adjustment in school, but our research suggests that these students may play a unique role in promoting friendships among their peers.

In one recent study, we examined the friendship choices of students in schools with two dominant ethnic groups (e.g., African American and Latino) and a smaller population of biracial students from those two groups (e.g., African American-Latino heritage). Students from a single racial group (monoracial) showed friendship preferences in this order: (1) for members of their own ethnic group, (2) for members of the biracial group (with whom they shared part of their ethnic background), and (3) for members of the other dominant ethnic group (i.e., cross-ethnic peers). For example, Latino students most preferred Latino peers as friends, followed by African American-Latino biracial peers, followed by African American (cross-ethnic) peers. What was most fascinating about this research is that monoracial students with biracial friends were more likely than other monoracial students to have cross-ethnic friends. In other words, biracial students acted as friendship bridges between their cross-ethnic peers, promoting more cross-ethnic friendships in their school.



This figure demonstrates how biracial students in our study are bridging cross-ethnic friendships between peers in their school. The yellow and red figures represent monoracial students. The orange figure represents a biracial student who shares half of his/her ethnic background with the yellow figure and the other half with the red figure. The black lines represent friendship ties. Monoracial students with biracial friends (e.g., the yellow and orange figures) are more likely to also have cross-ethnic friends (e.g., the yellow and red figures).

Although some educators and parents may be concerned about how well biracial children fit into their peer groups, these promising new findings suggest that not only are biracial children making friends, but they are helping to create a positive peer environment in their schools.

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