



**Mentoring and “Leaning in” to Transitions**

If you are mentoring an adolescent, you have most likely witnessed, or are about to witness, your mentee’s transition to middle or high school. This significant rite of passage brings a surplus of questions and “what ifs” for both you and your mentee.

When asked about moving up, adolescents’ questions reveal their concerns about entering a new phase of life and different school: “How will I find the right classroom in such a big school?” “What happens if I’m tardy?” “What if I don’t see any of my friends?” “Will I have classes with seniors?” “What if no one wants to sit with me at lunch?” Most likely you had some of these same worries when you were in their shoes. Remembering your own fears and expectations can help cultivate empathy and appreciation for the journey your mentee is beginning.

Similarly, mentors ponder questions and doubts about following their mentee to middle or high school. “How can I be a positive influence on a teenager?” “What if he has outgrown the relationship?” “Wouldn’t she rather be with friends at lunch?” “Why is my mentee acting so different?” These are valid questions and we encourage you to talk about them with your Mentor Director, but if you find yourself asking “Will he still want me to be his mentor?” always assume the answer is yes. Your mentee needs your help with this transition, whether he/she realizes it or not. **Now is the time to lean in** and notice the changes, growth and challenges your mentee is experiencing. Listen, be flexible and offer support. Allow your mentoring relationship to adjust by asking how he/she would like to spend your time together. Your role as mentor changes as your mentee’s needs change. Middle and high school transition is a great time to appreciate life is a journey, celebrating where our mentees have been and where they have the potential to go!

Here are some great resources for mentors of adolescents:

[Middle School Age Developmental Characteristics](#)

[High School Age Developmental Characteristics](#)

[What to Know Before You go to Middle School](#)

[What to Know Before You go to High School](#)