

## Ninth Grade: The Transition Is Tricky, but Here Are Some Tips

By Cullen Durant

It is safe to say that the transition from middle school to high school can be a difficult one. There are many new challenges in high school. These include social and academic pressures and the expectation to juggle all of them with extracurricular activities.

“While it varies from student to student, I think that ninth-graders most often struggle with time management, prioritizing, and planning,” says Upper School Student Assistance Counselor Lauren Garrett. “With an increase in both workload and extracurricular activities, it can be a challenge to keep everything balanced.”

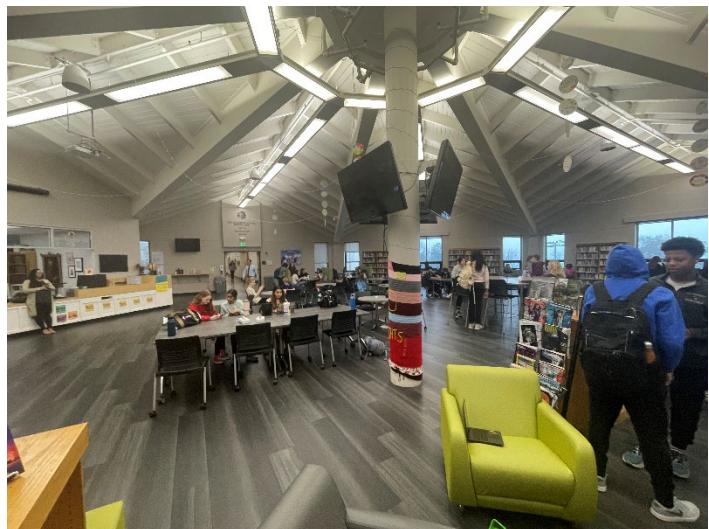
Several students interviewed by *The Acta Diurna* also identified their main stress as the challenge of juggling everything. But Ms. Garrett wants stressed students to know, among other things, that they’re not alone and it comes with the territory:

“... There has always been stress coupled with the transition into ninth grade. I think that the stress is caused by a number of different factors: misunderstanding the level of success necessary to ‘get into a good college,’ not having strong study or time-management skills, [self-] comparison to classmates, and social dynamics, among other things.”

Other staff, especially ninth-grade educators like biology teacher Maggie Hill, recognize that their new-to-high-school students are juggling complex changes – social, biological, and academic. But she pointed out measures Altamont takes to help students with the transition. Altamont’s Advisory program “is really helpful for that, because it allows faculty to connect with students individually and plan out what works for them,” she says. Hill says she also appreciates school planners as good tools for helping students learn to keep track of their schedules and responsibilities on their own. She added that doing more planning manually versus online would help some students.

Hill and Garrett also mention individual help sessions with teachers and planning sessions with counselors as potential or partial remedies to the new stresses of ninth grade.

Finally, it is okay to ask for help, says Ms. Garrett. She suggests staying involved in things but making sure to not spread yourself too thin. Try not to compare yourself to others. Yours and



your classmates' successes and failures will look different. Try to keep your eyes on your own journey.