



Coronavirus

Supporting the transition into College and Sixth form – School Leaflet

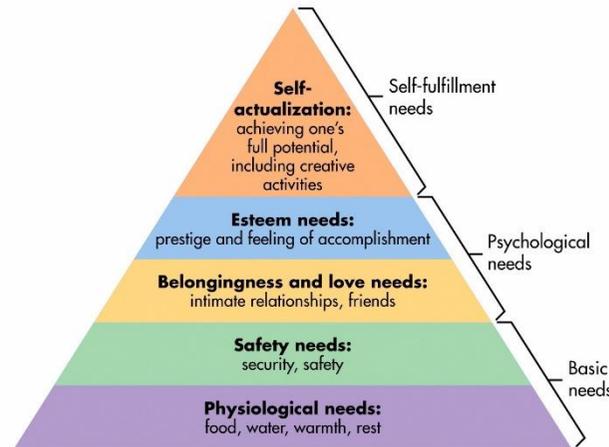
School staff have been highly valued for the support offered during this time. This leaflet provides information and advice for school staff to help support the transition of young people from Year 11 into college or further education.

The young people arriving into your classrooms in September have likely had very different experiences, some positive, as they may feel reduced pressure or have spent time with their families. However young people are likely to have experienced **loss** in one form or other:

- Loss of examinations/opportunity;
- Loss of routine/structure;
- Loss of connection to friends;
- Loss of space to explore identity;
- Loss of freedom;
- Loss through bereavement/illness.

Research shows that 16 – 18 year olds are a vulnerable group for developing mental health conditions. Leaving Year 11 is often an uncertain time, which has been magnified in the current pandemic. The idea of returning to school post-lockdown may be an anxious thought for students, but also parents and teachers.

More than ever, we need to support our pupils and our own wellbeing. According to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs (below), it is vital that we meet basic needs of safety, belonging and self-esteem, before we can learn and tap in to our learning potential (self-actualisation).



By supporting these basic needs, both for the young people and the adults who work with them, we can develop our **resilience** needed the rest of the academic year. This leaflet will provide some issues and advice to consider.

Key principles for the transition

Hobfoll et al. (2007) identified five key principles that support recovery and resilience after a difficult event. These can help you to think about how you can support your pupils' and your own wellbeing during this period. Tick any that may be helpful for you.

1. A sense of safety

For some young people, school may not feel like a safe place anymore. It may take some time for some students to return to these feelings of security at school. Routine and structure can help to foster this sense of safety. Suggestions:

- Watch with curiosity and empathy. Respond sensitively to increased anxiety or challenging behaviours.
- Email students about what to expect on their first day. Possibly send a list of what has changed and what has stayed the same.
- Ensure that usual adjustments for SEN pupils (e.g. passes, visuals) are in place.
- Break tasks down into sub-tasks.

2. A sense of calm

Emotional contagion is the phenomenon that individuals tend to express and feel emotions that are similar to those of others. We 'catch feelings' from the others around us. During covid, some students have been over-exposed to emotional contagion in its most destructive form. These students are hyper-sensitised to non-verbal clues and respond to tone of voice and body language before they hear verbal content. Suggestions:

- Be aware of, label and acknowledge your own feelings.
- Notice your non-verbal communication.
- Model emotion regulation and how to stay calm.



- Tentatively reflect back and validate students' own emotions.
- Notice the strengths and resilience your student's have developed over lockdown.
- Peers are fundamental for young people. Signpost or set up peer wellbeing schemes.
- Be aware of your school safeguarding policy should a student make a disclosure.
- Raise students with your pastoral team when necessary.

3. A sense of self and collective efficacy

In contrast to the notion of catching up, we may have to repeat and reinforce previous concepts and skills that have been disrupted by trauma. This might involve revisiting past topics and reminding students of their success. Your students' will likely return to your classroom with varying levels of independence and self-study skills. Suggestions:

- Initial lessons can focus on revisiting learning or rebuilding learning skills.
- Avoid starting the term with assessments as this may add to existing stress.
- Be aware that 'catch up sessions' or 'extra work' convey the message that students have fallen behind, when in truth they are not behind anyone.
- Emphasise your students' strengths, and reflect on your own skills too.

4. Social connectedness

Starting college or sixth-form can be daunting for many students, even more so when transitioning



to a new provision. It is important to reconnect, build relationships and develop belonging. A sense of belonging as a protective factor for vulnerable students, but again, the same principle applies to staff. Suggestions:

- Do not underestimate the power of a meet and greet, regular check-ins and kind words – to your students and between colleagues.
- Send a welcome email/letter to your new class or form group before the transition.
- Be aware that your pupils may have had limited social contact.
- (For Year 11 teachers) How can you support the ending of secondary school? Create a year book, virtual proms etc.

5. Promoting hope

For many students, the sudden cancellations of exams and potential need to appeal results, may have fostered feelings of uncertainty about their future. All of our students will feel like they have lost time in learning. 'Active hope' is a practice, it is something we do not something we have as a personality trait. Suggestions:

- Share how the curriculum will look over the next year so students feel reassured.
- Ask students to reflect on the skills they already have and have developed at home.
- Work with your students to set their own targets and goals (see corresponding leaflet for young people which includes an activity to support this.



Looking after yourself

This is a stressful time for everybody as we live though challenging and uncertain times. Take time for yourself to notice how you are feeling. You may want to read our leaflet on staff wellbeing on the Octavo website under the "resources" tab.

In the meantime, perhaps consider if there are small things you can do to support your hierarchy of needs (e.g. through your nutrition, work breaks, guided breathing or meditation).

Ask for support from your colleagues when you need it, and remember all the strengths you have built on that have got you this far. Check in with other staff, communicate, share your anxieties... but share positive experiences too!

Useful Resources

Article on supporting young people p lockdown using nurture principles: <https://bit.ly/LockdownNurture>

Article exploring COVID-19 and "emotional contagion": <https://bit.ly/COVIDEmotional>

You can also contact your SENCo or Link Educational Psychologist for support: edpsychology@octavopartnership.org

Produced by the Croydon Educational Psychology Team

