

For a high school student, it can be quite concerning when you are told that you will have to move away from everything and everyone you know. There is an air of uncertainty that comes with every move. What will my new school be like? Will the people there like me? Will they have the same sports or clubs that I am currently involved in? Will I be smart enough? Will I be good enough to meet my current goals? In the end, most questions come back to whether or not you will be able to maintain your lifestyle, or whether or not you will be able to make friends. It can be scary.

Ever since I was born, my father has been a member of the United States Air Force, a fact of which I am proud. As a result, I learned discipline, citizenship, and respect for others at a very young age. This is not nearly all I learned from being a military child. Perhaps the most important thing I learned has been how to adapt to my surroundings, whether it be in my own country or even overseas. Everything from the landscape to the culture to the expectations of citizens changes almost every time you move over a substantial distance. Having moved since my birth as part of the military PCS system, I have moved out of state six times, out of the country, back in, and in at least ten different homes that I can think to count. At some point, I started counting the number of years in any given school system rather than looking at the experience in terms of elementary, middle, and high school. Consecutive years in any school system was always a plus, but not something I could count on.

As a senior in high school this year, I have managed to gain some stability, staying in one high school for more than one year. Before now, I went to a brand new high school for every year of my high school career. I have left behind many teachers I enjoyed, many educational and extracurricular opportunities I won't be able to get back where I am now, and many close friends

I will likely not be able to see again. These are only the basic side effects of essentially losing your home.

Academically speaking, especially in high school, students will meet another obstacle; Not all schools in our nation are the same, nor are the tests that these schools are trying to prepare us for if you move between states. For example, when I moved from Mississippi to Virginia, I was concerned that I would be behind my peers in Virginia. I had been told that the educational system in Mississippi was behind that of Virginia which was concerning. I was an honors student in Mississippi. What if I wasn't smart enough to maintain that status in Virginia? Add to that uncertainty the fact that my new school system did not have the same type of scheduling I was familiar with, and to say the least, I was a bit scared. My high school in Mississippi held us to a four by four schedule, entailing that we would have the same four class periods a day for around 80 minutes per day each semester. This allows for the most comfort when dealing with course loads due to extended class periods and fewer classes at a time, even though those classes must be taught in a shorter amount of time. When I first moved to Virginia, I was immediately changed to an A/B block schedule, wherein seven courses are all taken simultaneously but are broken into A and B days with one homeroom class taken on both. This allows for the same amount of time per day, but spreads students across more classes per week and exposes them to the threat of up to seven teachers assigning projects and tests all at the same time, which is a long jump from the four by four structure I had become accustomed to. Although I found that I had been adequately prepared by my teachers in Mississippi, I found myself struggling to balance an excessive number of assignments at inopportune times. Upon eventually acclimating to this scheduling system at the end of the school year, I was moved once more into a school system that practices a seven-period day system. Only hardly used to the A/B

schedule, I started taking all of those classes every single day with very minimal class time each block and often times leaving with homework because the teachers can not fit as much instruction into the school day as they wish. These changes, though not uncommon, are some of the most pressing challenges relocating students face in their academic lives.

Unfortunately, acclimating to a new schedule is not the only problem that you face when moving from one state to another or even from one school system to another. The next problem you face is that, much like college, not all of your credits always transfer over, especially dealing between states. I was forced to take a course in Mississippi that was partially Mississippi studies. Upon moving out of the state to Virginia, I quickly discovered that they would not count this as a history credit as it was there, but as an elective, because the credit applied to a different state and they refused to convert this to the equivalent of their history credit. As such, I had to give up an entire class slot in order to take two history classes in a year to get myself back on track for graduation. I even had to fight to keep my AFJROTC credits to count as what they are meant to, clearing one art credit and one physical education credit over the two blocks I had taken it. These are almost certainly not issues limited to me, and I feel students looking to move must be highly aware of this fact.

As if the difference in academics was not enough, moving can make it even more difficult to maintain involvement in high-level extracurricular activities. As far as high school goes, positions such as National Honor Society President and Class President are awarded to students who have had time to make connections to the teachers and students responsible for voting them in, making these positions popularity contests. Therefore, filling your college resumes with such titles will feel nearly impossible until you manage to make those relationships. I managed to do so with one of my teachers who opened a long list of clubs to me,

one of which was in collaboration with NASA, and I got to design some of the parts we would end up using by myself. Given enough time, it is possible to find these connections around you, but searching for them must become part of your daily life if you wish to catch up to those who have been in one place for their entire lives.

Overall, leaving behind everything you know is nothing short of demanding for all of those involved, but I'm happy to say that there are good sides to counteract, at least in part, the negatives of moving. While you must physically leave behind your friends and family, there is always someone willing to accept you for who you are where you are going. Someone somewhere near you at any time will feel the same way you do, if not through their own experience then through their sympathy for you. If you are ever in need of reassurance that the world around you is not crumbling at your feet, all you need do is to look up at all of those who are willing to take your side at any given time and extend a hand. You are never alone, for someone out there is doing the same. The first few weeks to the first couple of months are by far the hardest to get through, but lights shine brightly at the end of the tunnel if you are willing to endure the trials it takes to get there. With that said, whether you are a first-time mover or a relocation veteran, I feel that my advice to any teenager preparing to relocate is simple: No matter what, remain or become optimistic and outgoing. This can be a completely new start in your life if you choose to make it so, so make the best out of it and soar across your new horizon. A great new world awaits you on the other side.