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**Introduction**

The move from primary school to the secondary school setting brings about the need to navigate a challenging, new, and uncertain environment. At this time, students must learn challenging academic material, traverse new peer and teacher relationships, and get acquainted with an unfamiliar school structure (Evans et al., 2018; Sniedze-Gregory et al., 2021; Zeedyk et al., 2003). Researchers have noted that students can experience this new setting negatively. For example, studies show that there can be negative effects such as declines in self-concept and self-esteem (Coelho et al., 2017), and in some cases even more adverse outcomes such as depression (West et al., 2010). However, Booth and Gerard (2014) found that American 7th grade students enter their school with positive feelings about themselves and the school, while Jindal-snape et al. (2020) found that a new school environment presented positive opportunities for building new relationships. Therefore, it is important to understand what factors contribute to students’ capacity to effectively navigate the novelty and challenge implicated in the beginning of secondary school.

The overall theoretical framework to explore these relationships is the Academic Demands-Resources (AD-R) framework (Martin & Collie, 2022). This perspective is adapted from the Job Demands-Resources theory, a long-studied model applied to the work environment that describes the interplay of contextual and personal factors leading to work performance and employee health (Bakker et al., 2022). Within the academic domain, the AD-R framework integrates pertinent academic and personal factors that influence student engagement and disengagement through motivational processes, which further predicts important academic outcomes (Martin et al., 2021, 2023a 2023b; Martin & Collie, 2022). The model explains that academic demands impair student motivation, while an abundance of academic resources can offset the negative impact of demands and allow students to succeed in their academic setting. As such, it is essential to understand the salient academic demands and resources that influence beginning secondary school students and the role of these demands and resources in their capacity to navigate the challenges and novelty in secondary school.