

Our first ParentNet meeting of this school year was held in the Farmhouse on October 9, 2018. We had a great discussion on the following topics:

- ❖ Helping high schoolers find their cultural identity
- ❖ Staying connected with your high schoolers
- ❖ Dealing with time management challenges

Helping High Schoolers Find their Cultural Identity

***Situation:** I grew up in Korea steeped in the various Korean traditions and cultures. My daughter, however, was born and brought up in America and, as a high schooler, doesn't show as much interest any more in our native interests. She doesn't speak our native language any more, which makes extended family visits so much harder. For some parents, this problem also manifests within the country – parents who grew up on the eastern or southern part of the country find the culture that their kids are growing up with here sufficiently different to be concerning. How should we balance across all of this?*

Discussion:

***Celebrate your native traditions:** A parent suggested to continue celebrating the native traditions – such as watching that Eastern European football game, celebrating Chinese New Year, making those delicious Norwegian cardamom rolls, telling stories of the civil war and taking kids to relevant museums, and so on. Your kids will continue to silently absorb all of these without you (or even them) realizing that they are.*

***Be patient through the high school years:** As much as your high schooler may not be outwardly expressing your culture in the way you'd like it (speaking your language, eating your native food, etc.) – this is likely to change once they go to college. Parents noted that when kids come to visit from college, they have seen a transformation – one parent noted that they express interest in learning how to cook native recipes, another parent noted that when they visited Germany, their son was able to connect better with the locals and feel at home. It was then he became more interested in his heritage.*

***Be multi-cultural and embrace it all:** One parent suggested that as much as your first culture may belong to the native country you are from, and the second culture might be the American culture, a broader perspective to consider then is a third culture which is to just embrace it all. When your children are relaxed and happy as they are (and not how we'd want them to be), and have an internal desire – those local traditions you have imbibed over the years will automatically manifest themselves.*

Staying Connected with Your High Schoolers

***Situation:** My high schooler does not seem to want to connect with me. In fact, I find that she seems to talk with many others over dinners or at weddings, however does not spend as much time with me. Whenever I ask my son how his day was, he tells me not to bother him with such questions and that he is too busy. How do I effectively connect with my high schooler?*

Discussion:

Listen, don't interrogate: A few parents suggested that as much as we have a desire to know everything that is going on in our high schooler's life, they may not be ready to share it. Consequently, it is better to listen to what they have to say, when they are ready as opposed to interrogate (which will just shut them off).

Drive your high-schooler: Volunteer to drive your high schooler with their friends. You will find that they forget you are in the car and engage in conversations that will give you context into the challenges they are faced with on a day to day basis, which may explain their attitude.

Arrange for 1-1 vacations: One parent suggested that instead of having the whole family go on a vacation together, arrange for a vacation with just you and your high schooler, as it will give a great way to bond than if everyone was together.

Engage in activities of interest to your high schooler: One of the parents suggested doing activities that your high schooler may enjoy. For instance, if they like to play electronic games, take them to a game arcade and play with them; if they like eating at a nice restaurant, take them to Purple or some similarly nice restaurant (when possible); if they have a favorite TV show, watch that show with them together. This will give you the ability to find topics that you can commonly converse on, which then can help lead into other harder topics you (and your high schooler) may want to talk about.

Gently remind kids to be graceful: A parent suggested that if kids speak impolitely with you, then it would be helpful to re-phrase their words to speak more gracefully. For instance, instead of them saying "the food is terrible", remind them that they could say "thanks for making dinner. Could we try a different recipe the next time?" Also note, that high schoolers carry a fair amount of insecurity with them as they are trying to assert their own independence (which is natural given they will separate after high school to go to college) - and at times, this manifests in an ungraceful way.

Dealing with Time Management Challenges

Situation: My high schooler looks overwhelmingly busy with college applications, homework, leadership roles in clubs, school work to maintain GPA, and so on. He tells me that he is burnt out, out of capacity, which is contributing at times to declining grades. Another parent noted that their high schooler often comes home late from school after their basketball game or other extra-curricular activity, then plays with the dog, and only after that gets to homework. She is at times on the phone till midnight with other friends working on homework which then gets in the way of getting a good night's sleep. How do others handle such situations?

Discussion:

Refresh the Context: Many parents noted that when high schoolers state that they are stressed out about school, bring things into perspective, and ask them if they would feel the same way about this situation ten years from now. This model of refreshing the context helps your high schooler gain a better perspective and relax into the work they are about to do rather than being stressed out about it.

Adapt to your child's work pattern: Some parents noted that they are strict about bedtime and even if it means taking in unfinished work to school. Other parents noted that they would let their high schooler work later into the night if necessary. During the discussion, it was generally noted that as



parents, we need to discover and adapt to our child's rhythm. Ideally, try to focus your child on doing work immediately after school when possible. In addition, offer to help – for example, if you find that your child has a busy day the next day, offer to do their chores to help them out.

Help your child learn to be independent: As a parent, try not to nag your high schooler. A parent suggested to jointly make a schedule, have one day when you get updates from them, and then let them be independent in managing work. In addition, try to divide up responsibilities across parents – for example, one of the parents might just have a dynamic that works better with your child.

Monitor productivity and grades: If you detect that your child's productivity and grades are declining, then look into understanding if there are other inhibitors – is your child really benefiting from late night Skype calls across multiple friends doing homework, or can he work alone a few days, does your child have a phone next to her while working, etc. Look for some inhibitors and ask your child to consider experimenting.