High School Parents®

February 2021
Vol. 28, No. 6

Enterprise City Schools
Parent & Family Engagement

still make the difference!



Take an interest in what your teen is learning in school

You probably ask your teen how he's doing in his classes. You may ask how biology is going, or if math is getting any easier. But many parents admit that what they really want to find out about is their teen's grades.

Grades are important, but so is the learning process. Make sure you show interest in what your teen is learning—not just what his report card says.

Ask your teen about:

- **Any experiences** in class that have changed his way of thinking. You may be able to share some of your own experiences that had a similar effect on you.
- **The book he is reading.** What questions does he have about the plot? Does he relate to the main character? Does the book remind him of any others he has read?
- **His accomplishments.** How did he handle the most difficult problem on the science assignment he recently aced? How did he feel after finishing that research paper?
- **His most recent test.** Does he think the test was an effective way to measure how well he knew the material? Will he do anything different to prepare for the next test?

Questions like these show your teen that you are interested in what he is thinking. They also show you are monitoring his development. Both of these reinforce the message that education is about more than just grades.

Show your teen what respect looks like



When it comes to teaching your high schooler about respect, the idea isn't to *teach* her at all. It's to *show* her.

Here are some everyday ways to demonstrate respect:

- **Be polite.** Say *please, thank you* and *excuse me* when talking to your teen. Knock before entering her room.
- **Be fair.** Don't pass judgment on your teen or punish her for something before learning all the facts. Show respect by taking the time to get her side of the story.
- **Be kind.** Don't belittle your teen when she messes up. Don't tell stories from her childhood that might embarrass her in front of others.
- **Be dependable.** If you tell your teen you'll do something, do it. Earn her respect by proving that you're reliable.
- **Be honest.** Every little white lie you tell may chip away at the respect your teen feels—or doesn't feel—for you.
- **Be accountable.** Apologize when you make a mistake or hurt your teen's feelings.

Copyright © 2021, The Parent Institute®

Copyright © 2021, The Parent Institute®

Research challenges commonly held beliefs about studying



Research on effective learning strategies offers students insight into *where*, *what* and *when* they should study. Share these findings with your teen:

- **Where is the best place to study?** Most students have a favorite study spot. But several studies show that studying in the same place may not be the most effective way to learn. Researchers gave college students a list of vocabulary words. Half the students memorized the words while sitting in the same spot on each of two days. The other half studied in a different room each day. The second group remembered more of the vocabulary words.
- **What should students study?** Most students tend to concentrate on studying one thing at a time—vocabulary words today, verb forms tomorrow. However, it actually helps to mix things up in a single session. Variety seems to leave a deeper impression on the brain.
- **When is the best time to study?** Scientists believe learning is most effective between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. Students remember more if their studying is spaced out overal several days. That leads to better results, without having to spend more total time studying.

Source: B. Carey, "Forget What You Know About Good Study Habits," *New York Times.*

> **"Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow."**
>
> *—Anthony J. D'Angelo*

Four steps improve student essays and in-class writings



Essay tests can intimidate students. If your teen is dreading an upcoming essay test, share these four tips for success:

1. **Read the question.** If it says:
   - *Discuss*—make fact-based observations about the topic.
   - *Describe*—give specific details about the subject matter.
   - *Show*—point out your idea or opinion and support it with facts.
   - *Explain*—offer causes or reasons for something. Be factual.
2. **Write an introduction:**
   - *Briefly explain* what the essay will be about.
   - *Use the third person*. Don't use *I* unless told to do so.
3. **Write the body of the essay.** Each paragraph should answer a specific part of the question and include:
   - *A topic sentence.*
   - *Information that supports* the topic sentence.
   - *A closing sentence.*
4. **Write the conclusion.** Summarize the essay topic and be sure to:
   - *State* what you've concluded.
   - *Mention* how the facts support your position.

Encourage your teen to take a few minutes before starting to outline his ideas. He should jot down notes having to do with the topic and then decide how to link them together. Often, these notes can become topic sentences for paragraphs.

Are you helping your shy teen find ways to cope?



Nearly everyone has felt shy at one time or another. But some teens seem to be shy in *any* new situation. They find it hard to make friends and are afraid to speak up in class. Connecting with others can also be a challenge for students who are learning remotely.

Are you doing all you can to help your shy teen? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

___**1. Do you take time to show** your teen that you love her?

___**2. Do you help your teen** get involved in activities with like-minded students?

___**3. Have you helped your teen** find volunteer activities? Helping others makes teens feel good about themselves.

___**4. Do you help your teen** role-play challenging situations? Practice can help a teen build confidence.

___**5. Will you talk with her teachers** if shyness affects class participation?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your shy teen manage shyness and build social skills. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

High School Parents still make the difference!

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1291

For subscription information call or write: The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474. Fax: 1-800-216-3667. Or visit: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May.
Copyright © 2021, The Parent Institute, a division of PaperClip Media, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

X02775346

 Copyright © 2021, The Parent Institute®

Challenge your high schooler to brush up on geography



It may seem like the world is shrinking. Social media and the internet allow your teen to connect with people and research information from all over the world.

That's why geography—often misinterpreted by teens as something replaced by GPS—is still important. Geography is about knowing where places are, why they're there and why they matter. And just because your teen is chatting with someone in Colombia doesn't mean he actually realizes his friend is in South America, not Columbia, South Carolina.

To help your teen strengthen his geography skills, challenge him to:

- **Use a subway map,** bus or train schedule and a city map to plan a future trip from home to a point of interest using public transportation.
- **Use a topographic map** to lay out a hike through the countryside or your community. He should note the elevation, distance, direction and geographic features along the route.
- **Explore his social network.** He can use a map to determine which of his friends lives the closest. Who is the farthest away?
- **Eat "around the world."** He can try ethnic foods and then locate their countries of origin on a map. Have him investigate why some cultures use forks and others use chopsticks—or no utensils at all.

Online and in-person friends can provide support for teens



Ask your teen to define the word *friend* and you'll get many answers. She has 950 "friends" on social media—but are they really friends? She has a "friend" who talks about her behind her back. Is she really a friend?

During the teen years, friends take on a new importance. Some friends help teens become their best selves. They can encourage each other to do their best in school and out. They can offer support when times are tough.

While teens may feel that being popular and having lots of friends is important, research shows that teens who have a few close friends do better over time. By age 25, they have a stronger sense of self-worth and are less likely to be depressed.

Talk with your teen about what makes someone a good friend. Help her think about her own behavior as well. Does she display the qualities that she thinks make a good friend?

It's also important to talk about online friendships. Today's teens live much of their lives on their devices. Can a social media friend fill the same need as an in-person friend?

You may be surprised to learn that the answer can be *yes*. Researchers looked at a series of studies about teen friendships. They learned that, whether online or in person, good friends behaved in the same way. They chatted about everyday life. They reached out in times of stress. As a result, the friendships had the same closeness and trust wherever the teens met.

Sources: "Close friendships in high school predict improvements in mental health in young adulthood," Science Daily; S. Schwartz, "Teenagers' Friendships Online Provide Emotional Support, Study Finds," Education Week.

Q: I caught my son copying all the answers from his friend's homework. He said it was no big deal and that other students do it all of the time. What should I do?

Questions & Answers

A: Unfortunately, many high school students turn to cheating. In one study conducted by the International Center for Academic Integrity, researchers found that 95 percent of high schoolers surveyed admitted to participating in some form of cheating—whether it was on a test, plagiarism or copying homework.

And many students have found that cheating is even easier to do in virtual learning environments. But that doesn't make it OK.

Cheating is very serious. It's important to keep your son from turning one mistake into a more severe problem. Here's how:

- **Send a clear message** to your teen that cheating is wrong. It's dishonest and it robs him of learning the skills and information he'll need for success in life.
- **Ask your teen** why he cheated. Is he afraid of disappointing you or getting punished for less-than-perfect grades? Is he overloaded with schoolwork?
- **Don't put too much emphasis** on grades. Instead, stress the importance of learning and doing his best. Let your teen know that mistakes are learning opportunities and you will love him no matter what.
- **Help your teen** develop better study habits—so he can make better grades on his own.
- **Find help** if your teen has fallen behind. The teacher may know a student who would be willing to tutor him a few hours a week.

Copyright © 2021, The Parent Institute®

It Matters: Reading

Effective reading strategies boost comprehension



Your teen knows how to read. But does he know that different reading strategies can help in different classes? For example, if your teen is reading:

- **Math,** encourage him to read it at least twice. The first time, he should read quickly to get an overview. The second reading will take more time. Have your teen concentrate on the key points and take notes. And those sample problems? They're not there to fill space. Working through every step of every example will help your teen understand how to go from step to step. Remind him that math is learned by *doing* and not just by *reading*.
- **History,** suggest that he start at the last page. Have him read the questions or summary. This will give him an idea of the key points of the chapter. Then, he should check the headings and words in boldface type. Remind him to pay special attention to photos and graphs, which often contain critical information. Only after doing all these things should your teen start at the beginning of the chapter and read to the end.
- **Science,** have him start with the vocabulary. He can write down unfamiliar words on note cards and learn their meanings. Then, he can look for the parts of the words that appear in other science terms. A student who understands that *biology* is the study of living things can figure out that *geology* is the study of the earth.

Take the 15-minute reading challenge with your teenager

Studies consistently show that teens don't spend enough time reading for pleasure. Yes, they are busy. But every teen needs strong vocabulary and reading comprehension skills—and the best way to improve those is through practice. When a student reads for pleasure, she can improve her grammar and fluency without even realizing it.

Make a pact with your teen that you will *both* spend 15 minutes each day reading for pleasure. Fifteen minutes is easy. Your teen could wake up 15 minutes earlier and read in the morning, or spend 15 minutes reading before falling asleep at night. She could read during lunch or right after she finishes her classes.

Those 15-minute sessions will add up quickly. Fifteen minutes a day is almost two hours each week—



or over 90 hours a year! That's 90 hours of practicing skills that your teen will need for the rest of her life!

Are you and your teen ready to take the challenge?

Help your high schooler find interesting reading material



Teenagers are more likely to read if they have interesting books to choose from. Suggest your teen:

- **Ask around.** No book review is as powerful for a teen as the recommendation of a friend. A teacher might be able to suggest a book your teen would like, too.
- **Think about her mood.** A sad novel may not hold your teen's interest if she really feels like laughing. Help her think about movies she's enjoyed. They may offer a clue to the kind of book she'd enjoy.
- **Check out the local library.** She can browse books online or search books by topic. Your teen could even send an email to the librarian for recommendations.
- **Look at lists.** Many book stores and literacy organizations compile lists of popular books for teens. Search online to find a list.
- **Let one good thing lead** to another. A teen who enjoyed one book by an author should pick up something else by the same writer. One book on history may lead your teen to a book with a different point of view.