High School Parents®

October 2020
Vol. 28, No. 2

Enterprise City Schools
Parent & Family Engagement

still make the difference!



Reading for enjoyment has many benefits for students

Your teen already does a lot of school-related reading—he's reading a novel for English class and he spent 45 minutes reading his biology textbook last night. So why is it important for him to make time for pleasure reading, too?

When teens read for fun, they don't worry about memorizing every detail for an upcoming test. They enjoy what they read and are likely to read faster.

Teens who are able to read quickly also understand more of what they read. Their reading comprehension improves and their vocabularies grow—and these benefits carry over into success with school-related reading and standardized tests.

Here are ways to encourage your teen to read for pleasure:

- **Show him that reading is fun.** If you're reading something you enjoy, share it.
- **Read what your teen reads.** Pick up a magazine or book your teen is reading. Talk about how it connects to something in your life. Ask your teen to do the same.
- **Listen to audiobooks.** Books that are too challenging to read alone can come to life when they are read aloud. As your teen listens to a book, he is strengthening his vocabulary, fluency and listening skills. He can listen to them while exercising, riding in the car or just relaxing.
- **Remind your teen** that he doesn't have to finish every book he is reading for pleasure. If the book is boring or too hard, he can just try another.

Connect with your teen's counselor



During your teen's high school years, she'll have many teachers, take lots of different classes and participate in various activities.

But there's one person who will see the whole picture and who will follow your teen's progress throughout her high school career. That person is her school counselor.

Your teen's counselor can help you and your teen make wise choices when it's time to select classes. If your teen is heading for college, the counselor can help her make sure she has the classes she needs to graduate and to meet admission requirements. Then, when it's time to apply for college, the counselor can suggest schools that might be a good match.

So when should you and your teen meet with her counselor? As early as possible. Schedule a virtual or in-person meeting in order to map out a path to success for your teen. Then, remember to touch base with the counselor at least once each semester to ensure your teen stays on track.

Copyright © 2020, The Parent Institute®

Copyright © 2020, The Parent Institute®

Talk to your teen about the negative effects of cheating



Most high school students don't view cheating as a serious offense. They are under a lot of academic pressure, and many see cheating as a way to lessen that pressure. As a result, anything from plagiarizing to copying a classmate's homework to using a phone to look up answers during a test has become "regular" behavior.

To discourage cheating, let your teen know that:

- **Cheating is never OK**—even if other students are doing it. Explain that you'd rather have her do her best and earn a low grade than to score higher by cheating.
- **Cheating is dishonest.** Some teens don't realize that it is the same as lying and stealing. They're stealing someone else's work and lying by saying it's theirs.
- **Cheating hurts her**. While there may be some short-term benefits (she doesn't have to do the homework or write the paper), she won't learn the material.
- **Cheating can become a habit.** When teens cheat and get away with it, they are often tempted to cheat again.

"Cheating in school is a form of self-deception. We go to school to learn. We cheat ourselves when we coast on the efforts and scholarship of someone else.

—James E. Faust

Studies show it's important for teens to get enough sleep



Sleepy students have trouble learning, are less likely to be physically active and are more likely to feel depressed. Research shows it's just as important to get a good night's rest after a day of learning as it is the night before a test—learning continues to take place while your teen sleeps.

But high schoolers often have trouble getting enough sleep. Their natural rhythm is to sleep late in the morning and stay up later at night. They may struggle to wake up for classes that start early in the morning.

To reset your teen's internal clock and help him wake up ready to learn:

- **Encourage him** to stick to a bedtime routine. Experts say dimming the lights at night and avoiding bright screens right before bedtime can make it easier for teens to fall asleep.
- **Tell him to avoid caffeine.** Consuming caffeine even just a few hours before bedtime can reduce your teen's total sleep time by one hour.
- **Don't let him sleep** all weekend. Your teen shouldn't sleep more than two hours past his normal wake-up time. His body will be too confused when he has to wake up early again on Monday.
- **Suggest exercise.** Working out, running and other activities—at least a few hours before bedtime—will help your teen sleep soundly.

Source: S. Spinks, "Adolescents and Sleep," PBS, niswc.com/high_moresleep.

Are you stressing the value of your teen's effort?



Every student is capable of her own "personal best." Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are encouraging your teen's best effort:

___**1. Do you point out** her work ethic? "I'm impressed that you decided to spend the weekend working on your research paper!"

___**2. Do you encourage** your teen to take pride in her own work ethic? "It must make you feel great to know that you did your personal best on your project."

___**3. Do you celebrate** the progress your teen makes as the result of her effort?"That extra 30 minutes of studying each night has really paid off."

___**4. Do you avoid** focusing too much on the results, as long as your teen is doing her best?

___**5. Do you model** consistent and diligent effort? "I am working on my report for work each day this week so I can get it completed by Friday."

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you are encouraging your teen to strive for her best. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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 © 2020, 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 © 2020, The Parent Institute®

Helping teens handle stress can reduce the risk of dropping out



Students who drop out of school limit their life choices forever. But every year, many teens make this destructive choice.

A Canadian study looked at teens who faced big challenges. All were low-income. Most had low grades. But only some of the students dropped out. What made the difference?

The study found that it's not always a school issue. Often, a difficult life event or problem at home—death, divorce, health or legal problems, or even a move—can tip the scales and lead teens to drop out of school.

Parents can't always control the stress that happens in their teens' lives. But they can recognize it and find effective ways to help them cope. Teens are often moody, but pay attention to a major change, such as suddenly losing interest in old friends and things they used to enjoy.

If you notice signs of stress:

- **Encourage your teen** to take a break. Sometimes just listening to music or watching an old movie can offer some stress relief.
- **Discourage negative self-talk.** Teens under stress sometimes think that nothing will ever change. Help your teen see that even small changes can make a difference.
- **Help your teen** break big challenges into smaller parts. A huge project can seem overwhelming. So find one small thing she can finish today.

Source: V. Dupéré and others, "High School Dropout in Proximal Context: The Triggering Role of Stressful Life Events," *Child Development*, Society for Research in Child Development, Inc., niswc.com/high_stressdropout.

Encourage your teen to take science and math classes



It's natural to worry about your teen's future and whether she will be able to get a good job. One study found an effective way to make a difference for your teen's future: Talk about the importance of science and math.

There are a wide variety of jobs in science, technology, engineering and math. (Together, these fields are often called STEM.) Some STEM-related jobs require only a two-year associate's degree after high school. Often, these jobs have starting salaries of $50,000 or higher for new college graduates.

Yet teens often avoid the math and science classes they need in high school to prepare for these jobs. That's where parents can play a significant role. Help your teen see that the choices she makes today can affect her future. Then:

- **Show your teen** how her current interests can lead to STEM careers. If she's always using an app on her phone, she might want to take computer science and develop her own apps. If she's interested in learning how things work, she could prepare for a career as an engineer.
- **Encourage your teen** to take at least one math class and one science class every year. Students aiming for STEM careers should take a total of four years of math and four years of science in high school.

Source: C.S. Rozek and others, "Utility-value intervention with parents increases students' STEM preparation and career pursuit," *PNAS*, National Academy of Sciences.

Questions & Answers

Q: My tenth-grade son has always gotten his own way. Even in grade school, his tantrums were so bad I gave in. But now he's totally rebellious. He refuses to do anything I ask. He calls me names. He doesn't complete schoolwork and his teachers are as frustrated as I am. How can we help this child get back in control?

A: Most teenagers go through periods of rebelling against authority. But it sounds like your son has moved beyond what's acceptable.

And while dealing with his defiance may be challenging, you must deal with it. Otherwise, he'll never be able to hold a job, have a healthy relationship or live with others.

Here's what to do:

- **Meet with his teachers.** You all need to be on the same page—and you'll need to present a united front.
- **Set up basic expectations.** Choose your battles, but do focus on things like safety, completing assignments and speaking respectfully to others.
- **Let him know** that there will be consequences for his actions. The consequences should be roughly proportional to what he has done. (Taking the car without permission is not the same as calling someone a name.)
- **Enforce consequences** when he tests the limits. Remain calm and remember that he needs a parent, not a friend.
- **Look for help** for your son and for yourself. A pediatrician, a Big Brother, a mentor or a coach can help you both navigate this troubling time.

Copyright © 2020, The Parent Institute®

It Matters: Responsibility

To promote responsibility, stop hovering!



High school is a time to give teens more responsibility. Yet when it comes to school and homework, some parents seem to take over.

Studies show that overly involved parents, sometimes called "helicopter" parents, can hurt their teen's school performance. They can even make their teen more anxious and depressed.

While it's important to be interested in what your teen is learning in school and to get involved when he really needs your help, let him take the lead. To promote responsibility:

- **Choose your words** carefully. "We" don't have a big paper due Monday—your teen does. And *he*, not *we*, must fulfill his commitments on time. If you hear yourself talking about *our* math homework, take a step back.
- **Expect your teen** to take responsibility for finishing homework. If you're checking in every 15 minutes to see how he is doing, you're not letting him learn to manage time. If you're doing the homework, stop.
- **Let your teen** try to solve school problems. If he gets a bad grade, let him talk to the teacher. If he fails a science test, have him work to pull up his grade. These are skills that will make your teen successful in college and on the job, so let him learn what to say and do now.

Source: K. Reed and others, "Helicopter Parenting and Emerging Adult Self-Efficacy: Implications for Mental and Physical Health," *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, Springer US.

Time management is a vital skill for success in high school

Using time wisely is one of the best lessons in responsibility that students can learn. It will keep your teen from missing deadlines and appointments. It will help her stay up to date with schoolwork. And it will help her lead a less stressful life.



Encourage your teen to:

- **Use a planner or calendar.** She should write down everything on her schedule for the week and check it throughout the day.
- **Schedule a "catch-up day"** once a week where she works on a task that she has been putting off—or works ahead on something.
- **Do a little at a time.** Studying 30 minutes each day is much more effective than trying to cram for six hours the night before a test.
- **Say *no* to things** that will overload her. If she already has a packed schedule, she probably doesn't have time to take on an optional activity or project.
- **Limit screen media**. Digital devices are usually the biggest time wasters. Don't ask your teen to give them up completely. But ask her to find ways to limit their use.

Encourage and notice signs of responsibility in your teen



Responsibility is about more than completing chores or turning in homework on time. It's also about thinking ahead and considering how your words or actions will affect others and yourself.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Keep his promises.** He can't be responsible if he breaks his promises. People must know that when he gives his word, they can count on him to follow through.
- **Admit his mistakes.** Being responsible does not mean being perfect. In fact, it's actually the opposite. Responsible people make mistakes all the time. However, they don't just shrug them off. They admit their mistakes and then they make amends if needed.
- **Accept the consequences.** Responsible people deal with the results of their mistakes without trying to blame others. They learn from mistakes and rarely make the same mistake a second time.