

High School Parents[®]

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Education Service Center Region 15

still make the difference!



Parental expectations set the stage for academic success

Research shows that parental expectations have a huge impact on high school students' achievement. One study found that:

- **Teens strive to reach** parents' expectations of them. If you believe in your teen and expect her to succeed in school, she is likely to have higher academic achievement.
- **Teens' expectations** for themselves begin to match the expectations their parents have for them. If you make it clear to your teen what you want of her, by saying things like "I want you to do well in school," she will begin to have the same expectations for herself.

So how can you use this information to help your teen? You can:

- **Talk to your teen** about what you want her to achieve this school year—and ask her what she expects to achieve.
- **Set attainable goals** with your teen—such as improving her grade in history.
- **Discuss the future.** Compare your dreams for your teen with her own. Talk about potential careers or college plans. Tell her that you support her and know she can succeed in whatever she does.

Source: J.M. Froiland and M.L. Davison, "Parental expectations and school relationships as contributors to adolescents' positive outcomes," *Social Psychology of Education*, Springer.

Sitting up front can keep teens alert & engaged



If your teen feels disconnected in his classes, it may help him to sit in the front of the room.

Sitting up front can:

- **Change a teacher's outlook** on your teen. If your teen asks to sit up front, the teacher will likely think he has become more motivated. She may engage him in more class discussions. In turn, he may get more out of the class.
- **Help your teen** take better notes. He will probably be able to see and hear better.
- **Promote alertness.** If your teen is up front, he'll be more aware that the teacher can see him. He'll be less likely to become distracted, look out the window, talk to his neighbor or fall asleep!
- **Build your teen's confidence.** After a few weeks of better listening, more class discussion and better note-taking, your teen should feel more positive about the class and about school in general.

Source: P.L. Benson, Ph.D. and others, *What Teens Need to Succeed: Proven, Practical Ways to Shape Your Own Future*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Show your teen how to use checklists to stay organized



Before an airplane takes off, the pilot runs through a checklist to make sure everything is ready. Even pilots who have flown thousands of flights still go through their checklists every time they fly.

Your teen can develop her own checklists to make sure she has what she needs:

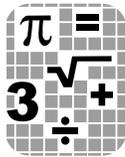
- **In the morning.** What do I need for school? Book bag, homework, lunch, gym shoes, a signed note.
- **Before class.** What do I need for my first class? Textbook, homework, pencil, paper.
- **In class.** What are the assignments for tomorrow? Do I understand them? Are there long-term projects? When are they due?

- **Before leaving school.** What books do I need to bring home for homework? Check assignment sheet.
- **At home.** What are the most important projects? Prioritize my study schedule.
- **Before bed.** What do I need for school tomorrow? Place all items by the door.

“Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up.”

—A.A. Milne

Help your teen study effectively for math and science classes



Studying for math and science classes often requires different skills than studying for other subjects. To help your teen study math and science effectively, tell him to:

- **Schedule extra time**, especially if math or science classes are challenging for your teen. He should block out time to work on these subjects every day.
- **Start each study session** with review before he begins working on new material. Your teen should look back over what the teacher covered in class.
- **Check his understanding** of the material. He should read the sample questions at the end

of a chapter. If he can't answer all of those questions, he should look back through the text.

- **Draw a picture.** If your teen is having trouble understanding something, suggest that he draw a diagram. Making a picture of something he's read can help him see how things fit together.
- **Answer all homework questions.** Some teachers will tell students to answer only the first five questions on a worksheet or only the even-numbered ones. If your teen tackles *all* the questions or solves *all* the problems, he may start to feel more confident—so when he sees similar questions on a test, he'll know that he can answer them.

Are you helping your teen get plenty of sleep?



Although the average teen needs nine hours of sleep, most teens get fewer than seven hours each night. That means they are likely to be tired, crabby and unable to focus in class.

Are you doing all you can to help your teen get enough sleep? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to go to bed earlier, instead of letting him spend time online or watching TV?
- ___ **2. Do you help your teen** adopt healthy habits? That means making sure he gets exercise each day and doesn't drink too much caffeine.
- ___ **3. Do you suggest** “power naps?” Even a short nap after school can sometimes help.
- ___ **4. Do you help your teen** manage his time so he doesn't have to stay up late to complete assignments?
- ___ **5. Do you limit** your teen's late-night activities on weekends?

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers were *yes*, you are helping your teen get the rest he needs. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Give your teen three test-taking strategies that lead to success



Whether it's a short quiz in English class or that all-important driver's test, testing is a fact of life for today's teens. To

help your teen succeed on *any* test, suggest that he:

1. Read the directions carefully.

This will keep him from making simple and avoidable mistakes. The directions could say, "Answer two of these four questions." Or they could say that some multiple choice questions have more than one correct answer. On a math or science test, the directions will say whether your teen has to show his work. (Even if he gets the final answer wrong, he could get partial credit for showing his work.)

2. Use time wisely. If possible, have your teen read through the entire

test before answering any questions. Then he can budget his time. If the essay question is worth 50 points, he will know how much time to allow. He'll also know if he's spending too much time on a single question. Using time wisely also means using all the time available. Some teens treat tests like a NASCAR race—they want to be first across the finish line. Teach your teen to use any extra time to check his work.

3. Answer the easy questions first.

Getting off to a strong start can give your teen the confidence he needs to tackle tougher questions. Answering the easier questions first may also remind your teen of a fact or two he'll need to answer the more difficult questions.

Graphic organizers can help students gather their thoughts



Gathering ideas is often the first hurdle to get over when faced with a writing assignment.

Many students just don't know where to start.

Graphic organizers can help students organize their thoughts effectively. Here are a few types to try:

- **Venn diagrams.** These are helpful when writing a "compare and contrast" essay. To make a Venn diagram, your teen should draw two overlapping circles. In the outer portions of each circle, she should write down the differences between the two topics. In the area where the two circles overlap, she should write down how they are the same.

- **Flow charts.** These are helpful when writing a narrative. A narrative tells a story about a series of events. To make a flow chart, your teen should draw a series of boxes. She should draw arrows leading from one box to the next. In the first box, she should write down the first event in her story. The next event goes in the next box, and so on.
- **Web diagrams.** These are helpful for identifying a main idea and supporting details. Your teen should draw a large circle and inside it write the theme of her essay. In smaller circles that surround the large one, she should write down details that support her theme.

Q: My daughter wants to get a job. Her grades are just average, but I think a job might help her learn responsibility. How can I decide whether my teen is ready for an after-school job?

Questions & Answers

A: Most teens would love a little extra money. But not all teens are mature enough to make the best choices when it comes to after-school jobs.

Here are some questions to ask as you make the choice that's right for your teen and your family:

- **How many hours** would your teen work? Experts believe that most teens can handle about 10 to 15 hours a week. (In fact, these students may even find that their grades go up.) More than that, and schoolwork starts to suffer. So set limits.
- **How will your teen manage** the money she earns? Make it clear that she won't be spending every penny she makes on extras. Instead, help your teen set up a savings plan.
- **Will a job keep your teen** from meeting family obligations? She should make sure that she will still have time for her responsibilities at home. Don't let a job interfere with family dinners or traditions, either.
- **Will a job keep your teen** from participating in school activities? She should leave time for school clubs or sports she enjoys. She should also allow time to be with her friends.

Working and going to school is a balancing act. Your teen must remember that school is her top priority. With your help, your teen can make the best choices for today and for her future.

It Matters: Building Responsibility

Discuss 'internal' responsibilities with your teen



Your teen probably assumes many *external* responsibilities, such as doing chores and completing homework, without your “hovering” over her.

Even more important, though, are your high schooler's *internal* responsibilities, the ones that shape her character. These are her responsibilities to herself—making her own choices and deciding what type of person she will become.

As a parent, you can help. You can share your family's values, set and enforce limits and live the way you want your teen to live. Encourage your teen to take responsibility for her character by:

- **Questioning herself.** Examples of character-building questions include, “Am I kind enough?” “Can people count on me?” “Do people trust me?”
- **Setting goals.** Have her list three ways to improve her character. Examples: “I want to be more reliable. I want to help others. I want to be more respectful.” Have her list a way she can accomplish each goal. Examples: “I'm going to leave the house 15 minutes earlier. I'm going to volunteer twice a month. I'm going to arrive to my classes on time.”
- **Making thoughtful choices.** We show our character through our choices. Have your teen write, “What will happen if ... ?” and list the likely results of her choices. This teaches her to look ahead, rather than just at her feelings in the moment.

Expect your high schooler to take responsibility for learning

By high school, your teen should take over all responsibility for his own learning. It should not be your job to tutor him or think of ideas for his long-range project. These are the years when establishing independence is crucial.

However, you can and should remain familiar with the work your teen is doing. Be a “consultant” for your teen. Here's how:

- **Ask your teen** about his day. Be specific. Say things like, “Tell me one thing you learned in your chemistry class today.”
- **Create an environment** for learning. Ask if he needs a ride to the library or if you should pick up any school supplies while you're out shopping.



- **Show that reading** is a high priority. Talk to your teen about books, magazine and newspaper articles—anything you have read lately. Clip articles you think he would find interesting.

Source: M. Popkin, Ph.D. and others, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, Active Parenting Publishers.

College applications are your teen's responsibility—not yours



Your teen's college applications have to be in the mail by January. But so far, she has done nothing. She hasn't started her essays or asked her teachers to write recommendation letters. She hasn't even made a list of her school activities.

At times like these, some parents simply take over. They contact teachers and tell them what to write. They draw up the list of activities. And some college counselors even suspect that parents write the essays themselves!

The best approach? Don't do it. Applying for college is part of the

separation process. Teens need to take responsibility. Sure, you can proofread her essay or read it and provide feedback—but the task is hers to complete. Your job is to serve as a guide or mentor to your child during this process, not a manager.

To help your teen get back on track, work with her guidance counselor. Make an appointment for the three of you to sit down together. List what has to be done and when it has to be finished. With that list, your teen will know what she has to do to prepare her applications. And you can simply cheer her on each step of the way.