

High School Parents[®]

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Educational Service Unit #8

still make the difference!



When parents are involved, teens care more about school

Parent involvement typically decreases once students reach high school. But staying engaged in what your teen is doing in school still promotes success.

Teens care more about school when they know their parents care about it, too. To show your teen that his education matters to you:

- **Attend back-to-school night.** Ignore all protests from your teen that “you don’t have to go,” and “no one else’s parents are going.” Go anyway and meet as many of his teachers as you can.
- **Talk about school.** Ask him to tell you about each of his classes and teachers. Which class is he most excited about? Which one

does he think will be the most challenging? Don’t stop asking questions once the school days become routine. Ask about school every day, even if it’s just, “Tell me one thing you learned today.”

- **Try not to miss special occasions.** You may not be able to make every game or hear every speech. But make as many as possible. When you can’t be there, let your teen know that your heart is with him.
- **Chaperone.** Volunteer to help out with a dance, game or field trip. Again, ignore your teen’s requests for you to stay away. Your participation will show your teen that his education and his activities are important to you.

Help your teen chart a course for college



Whether your teen is a freshman or a senior, there are lots of things she can do to make sure she’s

on track to graduate from high school and move on to college.

Here’s a partial list:

- **Freshman year,** encourage your teen to get involved in clubs, volunteer work or sports. Have her tell her guidance counselor that she plans to go to college. Explore financial aid and ways to save for college.
- **Sophomore year,** encourage your teen to research colleges of interest. Make sure she is taking challenging classes that meet high school graduation requirements.
- **Junior year,** your teen should take college admissions tests (ACT and/or SAT). She should make sure that the classes she is taking to meet graduation requirements will also meet college admission requirements. Sometimes they differ.
- **Senior year,** your teen should begin her college applications. She should post the dates she needs to submit the applications and financial aid forms.

Teach your teenager how to be a more respectful person



Your teen rolled his eyes when you asked him to take out the garbage. He used a tone of voice that would have kept you grounded for life if you had tried to use it on your parents.

During adolescence, teens tend to focus inward, thinking mostly about themselves. It's hard for them to do that and also hear Mom or Dad talking about homework or chores. So they sometimes shut parents out.

What can you do if your teen behaves in a disrespectful way? Try these ideas:

- **Be a model of respect.** That doesn't mean that you have to be perfect—who could be? But when you demonstrate your values, your teen will notice. “So that's what being a

respectful adult is like. I want to be like that, too.”

- **Let your teen know** that having strong feelings is OK, but being disrespectful isn't. Teens can—and do—get angry with parents. But that doesn't mean they can use an inappropriate tone or foul language. Set boundaries.
- **Enforce consequences.** Act quickly and calmly when your teen is disrespectful.

“If we lose love and self respect for each other, this is how we finally die.

—Maya Angelou

Follow these five strategies for successful study sessions



Not all teens know how to study. Those that don't may spend more time than they need to on their work for school. Or they may get frustrated and stop studying completely.

Share these strategies to help your teen study effectively:

1. **Take notes in class.** Writing down what the teacher says can help your teen see what the teacher thinks is important. Reviewing his notes regularly will also improve his retention of the material.
2. **Break it up.** Research shows that frequent short study sessions spaced out over time are more effective than one long study session.
3. **Study similar subjects at different times.** Putting new information into
4. **Avoid getting sidetracked.** If your teen finds his mind wandering during study time, he should keep a note pad by his study spot. He can jot down reminders or random ideas that pop into his head and then get right back to studying.
5. **Eliminate distractions.** The TV, his phone and a growling stomach will all distract your teen. Make sure he turns off all electronics and takes care of hunger and thirst before sitting down to study.

your brain is a little like pouring concrete. Your teen has to give it time to “set up.” So between a science lesson with a lot of formulas and a math lesson with a lot of formulas, your teen should study history or English—to allow the science lesson time to set.

Are you starting the year with success in mind?



“Begin with the end in mind,” advises author Stephen Covey. In other words, help your teen start the year with the habits that will lead to success all year long.

Are you helping your teen build habits for success this year? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Have you encouraged** your teen to establish a regular time to study?
- ___ **2. Have you suggested** your teen keep a calendar in her study space so she can write down the due dates for her assignments?
- ___ **3. Do you schedule time** to spend together as a family? Teens may say family time isn't important, but research shows it is.
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your teen's friends to spend time at your house? That way, you can get to know them.
- ___ **5. Have you discussed** your family rules with your teen? As she matures, adjust the rules as necessary.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are setting the stage for a successful school year. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Encourage your teen to take science and math classes



It's natural to worry about your teen's future and whether he will be able to get a good job.

A new study found one effective way to make a difference for your teen's future: Talk about the importance of science and math.

There are plenty of great jobs in science, technology, engineering and math. (Together, these fields are often called STEM.)

STEM-related jobs are increasing every year. Some 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 while 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.

Q: My son is taking challenging classes this year. He also plays two sports, has a part-time job and volunteers every week. He says he needs to do all this to get into college. How can I tell if he's trying to do too much?

Questions & Answers

A: Today's high school students carry a full load. Between schoolwork and their extracurricular activities, many of them have no time for themselves.

The toughest thing for you to remember is that this is your son's life. He is making choices and learning how to set priorities—which is a necessary step for his budding independence.

However, you can still support your teen and guide his decisions by asking him two important questions:

1. Do you have any downtime?

Remind your teen that everyone needs to have some unscheduled time every week to relax, hang out with friends or just listen to music and daydream.

2. Are you doing these activities

because you genuinely enjoy them? Colleges aren't looking for someone who has plodded through activities they didn't like in order to build a résumé. They are more interested in seeing a connection between your teen's activities and his passions.

If your teen's grades start to slip, get more involved. Help him rethink what he's doing and make some changes. Ask your teen to think about the activities he is involved in. If there are any he is doing only because he thinks he has to, those may be the ones to drop. Let your teen know you love him for who he is, and not what he does.

Support your teen's ability to think critically in high school



As your teen gets older, she is learning to think in a more complex way. Your teenager has begun to develop:

- **Advanced reasoning skills.** She is able to think about multiple possibilities and hypothetical situations.
- **Abstract thinking skills.** She can think about intangible concepts, such as *spirituality*.
- **The ability to think about thinking.** This allows your teen to consider how she is processing what she is learning and feeling.

Changes in thought processes are often displayed in "typical" teen behavior, such as the belief that "no one" understands what's going on. Teens also tend to become more

concerned with the world around them. They may start supporting a cause, or begin to notice differences between adults' words and actions.

To support your teen's thinking skills:

- **Listen to her concerns.** Try not to be offended if she says you don't understand. Instead, enlist the help of an older sibling or family friend, and suggest that your teen turn to her for advice.
- **Listen to her ideas.** Let her give her opinion on your rules and their consequences.
- **Discuss her views** of the world—and talk about your own. Ask about her political ideas and spiritual beliefs. Withhold any judgement.
- **Encourage her to get involved** in causes she feels strongly about.

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 get to practice 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.

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 her promises.** She can’t be responsible if she breaks her promises. People must know that when she gives her word, they can count on her to follow through.
- **Admit her 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.

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 him stay up to date with schoolwork. And it will help him lead a less stressful life.

To help your teen manage his time this school year, have him:

- **Use a planner or calendar.** He should write down everything on his schedule for the week and check it throughout the day.
- **Limit screen media.** The TV, computer and phone are usually the biggest time wasters.

Don’t ask your teen to give them up completely. But ask him to find ways to limit their use.

- **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 him. If he already has homework, football practice and a part-time job, he probably doesn’t have time to participate in another after-school activity.
- **Schedule a “catch-up day”** once a week where he works on a task that he has been putting off.

Source: S. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, Fireside.