

High School Parents[®]

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Educational Service Unit #8

still make the difference!



Develop family habits that emphasize, support learning

The concept of “reinforcing learning” can be tricky when you are the parent of a high school student. You may not feel that you remember or know enough about what your teen is learning to reinforce it.

That’s OK. Parents can support learning by creating everyday opportunities that make it possible. Here’s how:

- **Talk about the jobs** people hold whenever you visit a business with your teen. Discuss the education needed for such a job, but keep the conversation casual. Do not turn the occasion into a lecture.
- **Plan some family projects** that involve math skills, such as painting a room or cooking a meal. Get your teen involved.
- **Encourage your teen** to research and explore. For example, ask her

to help you pick out something your family needs or to find a new place for your family to visit.

- **Let your teen know** that you are interested in anything new she learns at school. Tell her you would love to have her explain those concepts to you.
- **Encourage your teen’s talents**, even if they are not what you would have picked. Let her know that you admire her abilities. Remember, these talents may become the foundation of your teen’s future career.
- **Ask for your teen’s opinions** on everything. Teens are usually aware of major current events and have given them some thought. Make sure your teen knows that you value her opinion—whether you agree with it or not.

Encourage your teen to be more responsible



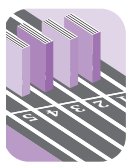
The next stage in life for your teen is adulthood—and that will require him to take care of himself.

Self-sufficiency will help him when he heads off to college or enters the workforce. It will also make him more responsible as he finishes high school.

To promote self-sufficiency:

- **Emphasize choices** and results. Before he acts, encourage him to think about what could happen as a result of his decisions.
- **Applaud him** when he makes a good decision. When he doesn’t, ask what he learned.
- **Don’t rescue him** unless it’s a matter of safety. Forgotten lunches and missing homework are not matters of safety.
- **Don’t solve his problems.** He knew he wanted to see that new movie this weekend, but he spent all of his money. He won’t learn to rely on himself if you pay for his ticket.
- **Don’t do things over.** His English paper may not be as organized as you think it should be, but don’t offer to “fix” it for him.

Make an effort to connect and spend time with your teenager



Most teens don't want to end their relationships with their parents. They just want those relationships to change as they grow older. Spending time with parents is an essential priority for teens—but they can't do it alone.

To make spending time with your teen one of *your* priorities:

- **Take five ... or 15.** Devote five to 15 minutes a day to your teen. Give her all of your attention—and let her choose what you do. She may want to talk about something that's bothering her, watch a TV show together or go for a walk. The important thing is that you focus on your teen.
- **Show an interest.** Talking about what your teen is doing at school is a great first step. Attend her games and performances. Go

to school meetings. Being there shows your teen how important she is to you more than your words can.

- **Be friendly.** Make an effort to get to know your teen's friends. Offer to drive a group of them to the movies or the mall. Make your home a place where they can feel comfortable "hanging out." You will get to know the people who matter to your teen—and you'll know she's in a safe place.

"The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life."

—Richard Bach

Teach your teen 'mind mapping' to help with comprehension



Minds work a lot like websites. From one main idea, our thoughts tend to branch off to other ideas. Those are linked to still more ideas.

A great way to learn something new is to create a link to something you already know. Creating a mind map is a helpful technique.

Before he starts learning a new subject, have your teen:

1. **Write the main word** or phrase of that subject in the center of a piece of paper. Have him circle it.
2. **Write any related words** or phrases he can think of around the circled word. He can use

overlapping circles or arrows to connect items. Encourage your teen to work quickly. The goal is to get as many ideas down on paper as possible.

3. **Edit the map.** He might move some items near related ideas or use color to help organize concepts.

As your teen begins reading about the subject, he should add new information to his map, working outward. As the map expands, details should get more specific.

When the map is finished, your teen will have a personal map that puts what he just learned in the context of what he already knew.

Are you helping your teen prepare for the future?



It can be scary for teens to think about life after high school. Should they go to college? What should they study?

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your teen prepare for the future:

- ___ **1. Have you encouraged** your teen to take advantage of the career-planning services available at school?
- ___ **2. Have you talked** with your teen about careers that interest him and the education or training required?
- ___ **3. Have you suggested** that your teen shadow a person in a job that interests him?
- ___ **4. Have you helped** your teen develop a résumé that lists academic achievements, work experience and community service?
- ___ **5. Are you helping your teen** make productive summer plans? He could take a class at a community college or get a job related to a career.

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're giving your teen lots of support as he prepares for the future. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Use newspaper articles to boost reading and critical thinking



The newspaper has lots of appeal when you're trying to get your teen to read. Newspaper articles are shorter than books or most magazine articles—which makes your teen less likely to protest that she doesn't have time to read them.

Quickly look through the paper. You will probably see at least one story about something your teen might find interesting.

Clip or download a story and read it yourself. Then ask your teen to read it. Later, ask her what she thought of the article. Did she learn anything? Can she think of anything the writer didn't include?

Reading the newspaper every day, even just an article or two, is one of the most valuable habits your teen can develop. To really sharpen her thinking skills, encourage her to read the editorial page. Every day for a week, each of you read the editorials in your daily newspaper. Then, pick a time each day to discuss what you've read.

With what do you agree? With what do you disagree? If you could tell the author one thing, what would it be? Did the author fail to comment on something that you find important?

Reading something and then analyzing it is the basis of critical thinking.

Study groups help high school students build important skills



You may not believe your teen will be very productive if he goes over to a friend's house to "study." However, studying with others can actually benefit teens.

A study group allows your teen to share his strengths and benefit from those of others. It is also great practice for adulthood, when he may have to collaborate with others on work projects.

The key is to form a study group in which the members *really* study. Share these tips with your teen:

- **Choose a size for the group.** Between four and six people usually works best.
- **Think carefully about members.** This is a fundamental part of forming a study group. Members should be serious about studying and wanting to do well in school.

Teens who are involved in personal relationships (with a boyfriend or girlfriend)—may not do well in a study group together unless they are skilled at separating work from their social life.

- **Consider how to divide the work.** Usually in a study group, each person handles one part of the project. It is helpful if members get assignments that play to their strengths. Then they can share more easily and explain their sections to the rest of the group.
- **Keep it professional.** Set a day and time for meetings and stick to the schedule. This reinforces the idea of a serious study group. Members may also want to pick a chairperson (rotate this position) for each meeting. Part of the chairperson's job is to keep the studying on track.

Source: R. Fry, *How to Study*, Career Press.

Q: My daughter has always been shy. I thought she'd grow out of it but, if anything, it's getting worse. She's a good student and a great artist. But put her with a group of teens and she just freezes up. What can I do?

Questions & Answers

A: Your daughter is not alone. In fact, some studies show that most students are shy—at least in some situations.

Experts tell us that shyness doesn't go away. So the way you help your daughter deal with her shyness is critical. Focus on the positives. Your teen is probably a great listener. She may have good insights into people. Emphasize those strengths. Help her accept herself the way she is, while still giving her the skills she needs to get along in the world.

To help your teen cope:

- **Reassure her.** Many shy kids think they're the only person in the world who has trouble in social situations. Let your teen know that she's not alone.
- **Give her practice speaking up.** Encourage her to share her views and to be more vocal in family settings.
- **Have her practice looking** people in the eye and smiling when she meets them.
- **Tell her to prepare** a question or two to ask when she meets someone new.
- **Find ways for her to work** with other kids in small groups. Is there an art club she can join? Could she paint the sets for the school play?

As she works with her strengths, she'll grow in confidence. She may never be the center of attention. But she'll grow up to be a confident, if quiet, young woman.

It Matters: Motivation

Make sure your teen is motivated to attend school



The older some kids get, the harder it is to motivate them to go to school—and the more important going to school becomes.

If your teen skips class, she may just think she's getting herself out of that day's work. But what she should know is that she may be getting herself out of much more—such as future opportunities she might want. Going to school is not just about today, this grading period or even this school year. It's an investment in your student's future.

To reinforce school attendance, be sure you:

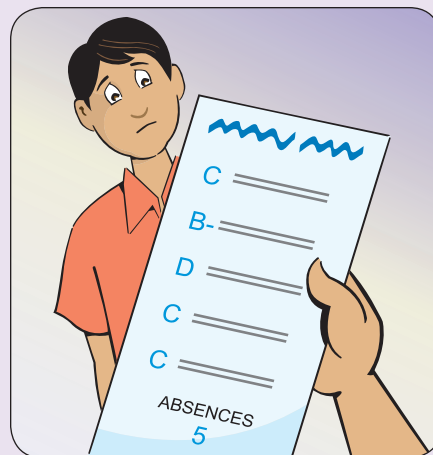
- **Make school attendance a priority.** Tell your teen that you expect her to be in every class every day. Talk about why you think it's important.
- **Check your teen's whereabouts.** Call the teacher or the school if you suspect your teen may be skipping school or classes. Review the attendance marked on her report card.
- **Avoid having your teen babysit** younger children during school. And try to schedule medical appointments outside of school hours.
- **Set a good example.** Go to work—despite that headache. Don't pull your teen out of school for haircuts or shopping.
- **Provide incentives.** These can be weekend outings or special time with you. Make sure they're things your teen views as rewards.

Lack of effort may be a sign that your teen is struggling in school

You found out that your teen hasn't been turning in his math homework. "I just didn't feel like doing it," he says. Is he just lacking motivation, or is it something else?

A lack of effort can actually be a cover-up for a more serious problem. Teens will do a lot to keep parents and teachers from figuring out that they are having trouble with a subject. They'll pretend they don't care. They'll act like the class clown. They'll "forget" their homework day after day.

If this describes your teen, you might want to sit down with the teacher and take a closer look. His "I just don't care" attitude may be hiding the fact that he needs serious help in that class.



If your teen is struggling, act now. He can work with a tutor, stay after class for extra help and maybe even take a summer class. Knowing the real problem is the first step to fixing it.

Your teen's internal motivation results in a lifetime of learning



Most people are motivated to learn for both internal reasons (the love of learning) and external reasons (to receive a grade or other reward). But internal motivation is what inspires lifelong learning.

To foster internal motivation in your teen:

- **Praise her for effort** and for understanding the material, rather than just for the grades she earns.
- **Help her set goals** for mastering her subjects. Goals should be set high, but not so high that they are unreachable.
- **Encourage her** to decide how well she's meeting her goals. She should be honest: "I could do better if I studied another 20 minutes each night." But she should not put herself down: "I'm so stupid."
- **Encourage her** to use learning strategies that work best for her. For example, if she remembers things better after hearing them, she could try reading what she is studying out loud.
- **Let her know** you believe in her. "These questions are very challenging, but you understand the basic concepts so you'll figure them out."