

High School Parents[®]

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still make the difference!



Kindness can make your teen happier and more successful

Research shows that people who are actively kind to others actually score higher on measures of happiness than people who don't go out of their way to be kind. And happier students tend to be more motivated in general—which ultimately helps them in school.

To foster kindness in your teen, encourage her to be:

- **Compassionate.** Kind people feel for others, even when they are not directly affected by a situation. Your teen can show compassion by putting herself in others' shoes. She could smile at a student who looks upset. She could invite a new student to sit with her during lunch.
- **Grateful.** Kind people thank others. Did a counselor go above and

beyond to help your teen with her college applications? She should thank the counselor—and maybe even write a nice note.

- **Considerate.** Kind people take others' feelings, needs and wants into account. Showing up to class on time, holding the door open for another student, and contributing fairly to group projects are all ways your teen can show consideration.
- **Forgiving.** Kind people realize that holding a grudge isn't effective. Let your teen know that she will be happier if she doesn't dwell on the past.

Source: O. Curry and others, "Happy to Help? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of performing acts of kindness on the well-being of the actor," *Open Science Framework*, [niswc.com/high_kind-matters](https://www.niswc.com/high_kind-matters).

Expectations are road maps toward success



Setting high expectations for your teen is a fundamental step toward school success. Think of your

expectations like a road map—without the map, there's no guarantee your teen will end up at the final destination (or even know what it is). With the map, he'll be able to successfully find his way.

To ensure that your expectations for your teen are clear:

- **Talk about goals.** Help him make plans for the future and figure out how to make those plans a reality.
- **Discuss the link between effort and outcome.** Assure your teen that you are prouder when he gives his best effort than when he gets an easy A.
- **Make time to talk** about school and schoolwork. This will help him know that you are interested in his education.
- **Ask him to create routines** for homework and chores. This shows your confidence in his ability to get the "little things" done by himself—and prepares him to tackle larger goals in the future.

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 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?**
Brain research says that students remember more if their studying is spaced out. That will give students a better result, without having to spend any 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

Practice really does make perfect when it comes to math!



Math is one of the most useful classes your teen will take in school—and for some students, one of the most difficult.

Unfortunately, there's no single "magic secret" that will help your teen do well in math. It takes work—the best math students study every day.

Share these math success tips with your teen:

- **Take notes in class**—and review them each evening. He should write down any questions he has and ask the teacher the following day.
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions** in class. If he's confused about how to solve a problem, he needs to speak up. Others in the class may feel the same way.
- **Review past quizzes** and homework. They'll help him remember the steps he used to solve each problem—and he's likely to see similar problems on the next test.
- **Do the homework every day** and allow enough time. He shouldn't wait until 30 minutes before the class to complete his homework.
- **Solve sample problems.** He should look in the book and ask his teacher for sample tests he can take.
- **Start a study group.** What he doesn't know might be something a friend can explain. He just needs to be sure to keep the focus on math.
- **Avoid missing class.** Learning builds day by day—especially in math. If your teen falls behind, he should ask for help right away.

Do you help your teen deal with tough teachers?



Sooner or later, every student encounters a tough teacher. Are you preparing your teen for life after high school by

helping her deal with this challenge? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

1. **Have you reminded** your teen that throughout her life she will have to deal with all kinds of people?
2. **Have you talked** with your teen about her goals for the class? If she wants to earn a good grade, she will need to work with the teacher.
3. **Have you brainstormed** with your teen about things she can do to improve the relationship?
4. **Have you explained** to your teen that she is a capable student who works hard—and that you believe in her?
5. **Will you encourage** your teen to talk with her counselor if she has persistent problems with a teacher?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your teen learn how to work with her teacher. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

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Every college-bound student should find out three things



Applying to college can be pretty stressful. Schools have different requirements and students have different strengths. Figuring out how to find schools that are a good fit can seem overwhelming to teens.

The U.S. Department of Education has collected information on every college in the United States. Their College Scorecard (collegescorecard.ed.gov) makes it easy to learn three key things that every college-bound student should know:

1. Can I get in? The Scorecard shows students the range of average SAT and ACT scores for admitted students. Your teen can compare her scores to these. If her scores are in that range, it doesn't mean she's guaranteed to get in. But her odds are better than if her scores are much lower.

2. How many students graduate? It's important to note that some schools have a higher graduation rate than others. Other things being equal, your teen should probably choose the school where more students finish.

3. What's the cost and how much debt does a typical student leave with? Families worry about the cost of tuition and whether or not their teen will graduate with a lot of debt. You may be surprised to learn that some seemingly expensive schools can actually wind up costing less. That's because they offer programs that help eligible students graduate with very little debt. So don't rule out a college until you check these figures.

The Scorecard is not the only tool students should use. But it can help your teen learn important things about a college before she applies.

Challenge your high schooler to find a 'mind-building' hobby



As your teen gets older, it becomes more important for her to think critically—to weigh the information she hears, sees and reads.

There are lots of fun ways you can help your teen develop her critical thinking skills. Encourage her to:

- **Read more than textbooks.** It can't be said too often that teens should read for pleasure—everything from the newspaper to a favorite magazine to a novel. The more your teen reads, the more new ideas she will be exposed to.
- **Do puzzles.** Crossword puzzles build word power. Jigsaw puzzles improve logic.
- **Play board games.** Chess is probably best for teaching critical thinking. However, checkers, backgammon and some popular brand name games, such as Scattergories, build important thinking skills, too.
- **Debate.** Most teens love to argue. Ask your teen to stop arguing with you and join the school debate team instead. No debate team? Perhaps your teen could start one.
- **Play a musical instrument.** Making music teaches about order, rhythm and patterns. It sharpens listening skills. And it can help teens feel calm, which improves their ability to think.

Q: My son tells me he falls asleep almost every day in his English class. It's his first class of the day and he says that the combination of a subject he doesn't like and the early hour just knocks him out. How can I help him?

Questions & Answers

A: Studies show that most teens are not, by nature, morning people. But they have to get up and get to school anyway.

Sleeping in class is a problem. First, your son is obviously missing some of what the teacher has to say. If he already struggles with English, this will make the situation worse.

He is also hurting his relationship with the teacher. If he ever wants extra help, the teacher may wonder why he didn't pay attention the first time she taught the material.

So work with your son to find ways he can stay awake during class. Here are two ideas:

1. Enforce an earlier bedtime.

No, he won't like it. But since he can't meet his responsibilities in the morning, he'll just have to agree to the new schedule.

Make sure your teen knows that bedtime means "no media." Don't let him keep his cell phone in his room for recharging—he'll be tempted to check it.

2. Encourage him to make

some changes in class. Have him talk with the teacher and request a seat near the front of the room.

This combination of more sleep and a little more focus should keep your teen awake during all of his classes, even the early morning ones.

It Matters: Attendance

Attendance is linked to your teen's success



Is it really that important for your high schooler to go to school every day? Research has a clear answer: yes. Attendance

matters. In fact, by ninth grade, regular attendance is a better predictor of high school graduation than grades.

When students are absent an average of just two days per month—even when the absences are excused—it can have a negative impact. These students may fall behind in class and their grades can slip. They feel less connected to their school. Over time, this can even lead to a higher risk of dropping out.

Research from the National Center for Education Statistics has found a strong link between school attendance and student achievement.

To ensure that your high school student takes attendance seriously:

- **Discuss the school policy.** What are the consequences for missing too much school?
- **Set clear expectations.** Make sure your teen knows you expect her to be in school every day, unless she is sick.
- **Talk about the importance of attendance.** Missing school means falling behind in class.
- **Set a good example.** Talk about how you show up on time for your job—even when you are tired or feel unmotivated.
- **Talk to the school.** If there are sudden changes in your teen's attendance, work together to solve the problem.

Source: "Every School Day Counts," National Center for Education Statistics, [niswc.com/high_attend-research](https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/nces_data/attendance-research).

Talk about the importance of getting to all classes on time

The bell just rang. Students are at their desks and ready for class to begin—except for your teen. He's still in the hall talking with his friends. When you read his report card, you see that he has been late to class several times. When you ask why, he shrugs his shoulders.

Here's why tardiness matters:

- **It affects everyone.** A student who arrives late disrupts the teacher's plan. It shows disrespect for the teacher and for every student in the class.
- **It could affect his student record.** Many schools translate tardies into unexcused absences. (For example, three tardies could equal one absence.) Your child may be counted as absent even if he eventually showed up for class.



- **It's a bad habit.** Adults who can't get to work on time may be fired. Your teen should learn habits that will prepare him for life.

Talk to your high schooler about the high cost of dropping out



Not long ago, a student who dropped out of high school could still live a comfortable life.

In 1967, nearly half of high school dropouts earned enough money to be considered part of the middle class.

But today? Most high school dropouts find themselves at the bottom of the income scale. Many of the jobs that allowed people without an education to earn a good living are gone.

Today, high school dropouts can get only low-wage jobs with little opportunity for advancement—

earning on average about \$25,000 a year. Just by graduating from high school, teens can add an average of \$10,000 more a year to their salaries.

Poor attendance is often one of the first signs that a student is preparing to drop out of school. If your teen's attendance is less than perfect, deal with the issue now. Help him get back into the habit of going to school regularly. By keeping him in school today, you'll help him earn a living in the future.

Source: A. Josephson, "The Average Salary by Education Level," SmartAsset, [niswc.com/high_cost](https://www.smartasset.com/education).