

High School Parents[®]

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Educational Service Unit #8

still make the difference!



Show interest in what your teen is learning at school

You probably ask your teen how she's doing in her classes. You may ask how biology is going. Or if math is getting any easier. But many parents admit that what they really want to find out about is their teen's grades.

Grades are important, but so is the learning process. Make sure you show interest in what your teen is learning—not just what her report card says.

Ask your teen about:

- **Any experiences** in class that have changed her way of thinking. You may be able to share some of your own experiences that had a similar effect on you.
- **The book she is reading.** What questions does she have about the

story? Does she relate to the main character? Does the book remind her of any others she has read?

- **Her accomplishments.** How did she handle the most difficult problem on the science test she recently aced? How did she feel after finishing that research paper?
- **Her most recent test.** Does she think the test was an effective way to measure how well she knew the material?

Questions like these show your teen that you are interested in what she is thinking. They also show you are monitoring her development. Both of these reinforce the message that education is about more than just grades.

Consistency leads to fewer arguments



Your teen missed his curfew. You're too tired to argue about it, so you let it slide. Parents

often think they are avoiding an argument by simply ignoring a situation.

And they are—for the moment. But they're also setting themselves up for a battle the next time they try to enforce the same rule. It's one of the contradictions of discipline. The more consistently you apply consequences, the less you will have to impose them. Consistency is key for effective discipline.

When you're inconsistent, your teen starts to think you don't really mean what you say. The rules aren't really rules—they're more like suggestions. So he'll fight against them all the time. After all, sometimes pushing back works.

On the other hand, if you enforce his curfew every time, your teen knows what to expect if he breaks it. And he'll be more likely to follow the rules—at home and at school.

Source: G. Bodenhamer, *Parent in Control*, Fireside Books.

Don't let your teen's work begin to slide as spring weather arrives



As soon as the days become longer, students' attention spans become shorter. It's like there's something in the air that entices kids of all ages to skimp on studying in favor of extra time outdoors.

To make sure your teen is still giving homework her best efforts:

- **Talk about it.** Ask questions about her assignments—which one was the most interesting? Which one was the most difficult? This will remind your teen that even if she doesn't care about her homework, you still do.
- **Time it.** If your teen averaged three hours of homework per night during the winter, a new 15-minute

homework average should make you suspicious. A comment like, "Your teacher sure let up on the homework suddenly," might be enough to fix the problem.

- **Combine it.** Suggest that your teen do her reading on the front steps. That way, she can enjoy the fresh air—without sacrificing her homework time.

"There is simply no substitute for hard work when it comes to achieving success."

—Heather Bresch

Online and in-person friends can provide support for teens



Ask your teen to define the word *friend* and you'll get many answers. He has 950 "friends" on social media—but are they really friends? He has a "friend" who talks about him behind his back. Is he really a friend?

During the teen years, friends take on a new importance. Some friends help teens become their best selves. They can encourage each other to do their best in school and out. They can offer support when times are tough.

While teens may feel that being popular and having lots of friends is important, research shows that teens who have a few close friends do better over time. By age 25, they have a stronger sense of self-worth and are less likely to be depressed.

Talk with your teen about what makes someone a good friend. Help

him think about his own behavior as well. Does he display the qualities that he thinks make a good friend?

It's also important to talk about online friendships. Today's teens live much of their lives on their devices. Can a social media friend fill the same need as an in-person friend?

You may be surprised to learn that the answer can be *yes*. Researchers looked at a series of studies about teen friendships. They learned that, whether online or in person, good friends behaved in the same way. They chatted about everyday life. They reached out in times of stress. As a result, the friendships had the same closeness and trust wherever the teens met.

Sources: "Close friendships in high school predict improvements in mental health in young adulthood," Science Daily, nswc.com/high_close-friends; S. Schwartz, "Teenagers' Friendships Online Provide Emotional Support, Study Finds," Education Week, nswc.com/high_friend-support.

Are you helping your teenager manage time?



Time management can be a real challenge for teens. The challenge gets greater as they get older and have to deal with complicated projects and schedules. Students may feel the pinch particularly during the spring.

Are you doing all you can to help your teen manage her time? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to write all of her school and personal commitments on a calendar?
- ___ **2. Do you talk** with your teen about her priorities and explain that when she can't do everything, she should focus on what's most important?
- ___ **3. Do you suggest** your teen make and follow a schedule each week?
- ___ **4. Do you show** your teen how to break down large assignments and tasks into smaller, more manageable steps?
- ___ **5. Do you set an example** by using your time wisely?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your teen learn how to manage her time. For *no* answers, consider trying those ideas.

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Ninth-grade performance may predict success in later grades



Want your teen to do well as a senior? Then pay attention to his grades in ninth grade. There's strong evidence that freshman grades, rather than test scores, can predict success.

Researchers in Chicago looked at the grades of more than 180,000 ninth graders. They found that freshman-year grades were strongly related to how well students did in high school and college.

Grades show more than just how well a student is doing in class. They also reflect things like attitude, attendance and behavior. Grades can also signal how hard a student is working. Does he turn in homework? Does he take part in class discussions?

Ninth-grade teachers notice the students who do well. Often these students are encouraged to sign up

for advanced or honors classes. And research shows that a teacher's expectations of a student often come true. So students who are expected to do well often live up to that belief.

Students who do well in their first year of high school gain confidence. Their feelings of success also lead to future success.

The researchers noted that not all teachers grade the same way. Even so, grades in freshman year turn out to be a good predictor of the future.

This does not mean that students should take easy classes so they can get higher grades. Colleges and employers still want to see that students are challenging themselves. But parents should pay attention to how well their teen is doing right from the start.

Source: J.Q. Easton and others, *The Predictive Power of Ninth-Grade GPA*, UChicago Consortium, niswc.com/high_grades-predict.

Q: My son is a talented athlete. He is a junior and he's a starter on the team this year. He hopes to earn a scholarship so he can go to college. What should I do to help him?

Questions & Answers

A: The most important thing you both can do is be realistic. Only a small number of the athletes who play on high school teams ever get the chance to play in college. And an even smaller number earn scholarships.

That doesn't mean your son can't be one of them. But it will take hard work and careful planning. To get started:

- **Talk with your son's coach.** Ask him to give you his honest opinion. Is your son talented enough to play in college? Ask about other students from your school. How many of them have played in college? How did they do? Did any earn scholarships?
- **Research.** Find schools where your son might be able to play. Unless he's a superstar, these may be smaller schools. Identify schools that are also strong in the areas he wants to study.
- **Make sure** he is academically eligible. The NCAA has strict rules about what students must study and the grades they must earn. Check out www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future for more information.
- **Make things happen.** If your son meets all of the criteria, ask his high school coach to reach out to schools of interest. The NCAA has specific rules for contact between high school athletes and college coaches. Violating these rules will affect your son's eligibility, so make sure you understand them.

Show your teen how to master essay tests in just four steps!



Essay tests can intimidate students. If your teen is dreading an upcoming essay test, share these four tips for success:

1. **Read the question.** If it says:
 - *Discuss*—make fact-based observations about the topic.
 - *Describe*—give specific details about the subject matter.
 - *Show*—point out your idea or opinion and support it with facts.
 - *Explain*—offer causes or reasons for something. Be factual.
2. **Write an introduction:**
 - *Briefly explain* what the essay will be about.
 - *Use the third person.* Don't use *I* unless told to do so.

3. **Write the body of the essay.** Each paragraph should answer a specific part of the question and include:
 - *A topic sentence.*
 - *Information that supports the topic sentence.*
 - *A closing sentence.*
4. **Write the conclusion.** Summarize the essay topic and be sure to:
 - *State* what you've concluded.
 - *Mention* how the facts support your position.

Encourage your teen to take a few minutes before starting to outline her ideas. She should jot down notes having to do with the topic and then decide how to link them together. Often, these notes can become topic sentences for paragraphs.

It Matters: Building Respect

Integrity and respect guide teen behavior



Even a teen with the best of intentions will make mistakes. She may lie to a friend. She may go to a party she told you she wouldn't attend.

It's important to talk with your teen about acting with integrity. While *morality* is the set of beliefs that help your teen judge what's right and wrong, *integrity* is how she acts on those beliefs. Teens with integrity respect themselves and others.

It's great if your teen says she believes in being honest. But what does she do when her friend asks for the answer to question 10 on the test? Her decision in that instance reflects her integrity.

There are going to be times when your teen makes decisions that she knows are wrong. Some experts say that teens actually learn integrity during those times—they gain integrity by losing it.

But that only works if someone helps them think through their choice by asking questions like:

- **What got in the way** of telling the truth?
- **Were you trying to impress** someone else?
- **Would you have acted differently** if you had been with a different group of people?

When your teen makes a poor choice, she should hold herself accountable, admit her mistake and make amends. Tell your teen that integrity is like a muscle. The more she uses it, the stronger it will become.

Source: M. Riera, *Staying Connected to Your Teenager*, Perseus Books Group.

Community service promotes leadership skills and respect

Woodrow Wilson, a wartime president, once said, "If you would be a leader, you must lead your own generation, not the next." That's what teen volunteers do every day.

Over the years, researchers have examined many of the positive effects of community service on teens. They include:

- **Respect.** Teens who volunteer learn to respect others and themselves. As they work to solve problems, they gain new skills. They see the results of their work. They gain the respect not only of their peers, but also of adults and community members.
- **Leadership skills.** Teens who participate in community service learn how to organize others. They know how to work in teams. Those are skills they can use in the classroom today and in the workplace tomorrow.



- **Admiration.** Other teens think that those who volunteer are cool. They respect them as leaders and look up to them.

Source: *Volunteering: Indicators on Children and Youth*, Child Trends Data Bank, niscw.com/teen_volunteering.

Teach respect by showing your teen what it looks like



When it comes to teaching your teen about respect, the idea isn't to *teach* him at all. It's to *show* him.

Here are some everyday ways to demonstrate respect:

- **Be polite.** Say *please*, *thank you* and *excuse me* when talking to your teen. Knock before entering his room.
- **Be fair.** Don't pass judgment on your teen or punish him for something before learning all the facts.

Show respect by taking the time to get his side of the story.

- **Be kind.** Don't belittle your teen when he messes up. Don't tell stories from his childhood that embarrass him.
- **Be dependable.** If you tell your teen you'll do something, do it. Earn his respect by proving that you're reliable.
- **Be honest.** Every little white lie you tell may chip away at the respect your teen feels—or doesn't feel—for you.