

High School Parents[®]

September 2010
Vol. 18, No. 1

Loudoun County Public Schools
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still make the difference!



Make your expectations clear at the start of the school year

High school matters. The grades your teen receives can affect everything from how much you'll pay for car insurance to whether she can play sports in college. So it's important to give your teen a solid foundation.

Research from the Harvard Family Research Project shows that there is one thing every parent can do: expect a lot. When you expect that your teen can do well in high school, she picks that up. As a result, she also starts believing that she can do well.

That means she spends more time doing homework. The result, of course, is that she does better in school.

Here are three things you should do every day:

1. **Talk with your teen** about school. Tell her you want her to do her best each day. Your teen may not be at the top of her class—but she can always do her personal best.
2. **Talk about next steps.** Help her see the link between good grades and success in her future career.
3. **Emphasize effort.** When your teen is feeling like she can't do her math or her English report, encourage her not to quit. Teens need to learn to stick with a tough task even if it's a bit of a challenge.

Source: E. Patrikakou, "Adolescence: Are Parents Relevant to Students' High School Achievement and Post-Secondary Attainment?" Harvard Family Research Project, www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/adolescence-are-parents-relevant-to-students-high-school-achievement-and-post-secondary-attainment.

Attendance is the key to school success



School success is impossible without one factor: attendance. Your teen's

attendance is the single most important element for school success, this year and every year.

Research shows how important attendance really is. In one study, 75 percent of students who missed school regularly did not earn a high school diploma. That means a teen who is frequently absent only has a 25 percent chance of graduating.

So this year, make attendance your entire family's priority:

- **Never let your teen** stay home to miss a big test or to rest up for a big game.
- **Don't use your teen** as backup child care. Make other plans before your younger children get sick.
- **Don't make it a treat** to stay home. Any teen who is too sick to go to school is also too sick to watch TV, play video games or use the computer.
- **Don't schedule** appointments during school hours.

Source: J. DeKalb, "Student Truancy," ERIC Digests, www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed429334.html.

Stay involved, alert to ensure your teenager isn't bullying



Bullying, especially at the high school level, has been all over the news in recent months. Cyberbullying has made it more difficult for parents to be aware of what's going on. Students are bullied through gossip and insults—and the single bully has been replaced by packs of students picking on a single victim.

So what can you do to make sure your teen doesn't become a bully?

- **Monitor your teen's Internet usage.** Keep the computer in a common area. Ask to see your teen's social networking profile.
- **Encourage face-to-face interaction.** Some studies suggest that students who are used to electronic communication may not realize the impact their words

have on others. Suggest that your teen invite friends over instead of chatting online.

- **Discuss TV shows and movies.** One study found that shows and movies often reward "meanness" in teens. Talk about these situations with your teen. Ask if she feels they represent what happens at her school.

Source: R. Hampson, "A 'Watershed' Case in School Bullying?" USA Today, www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-04-04-bullying_N.htm.

"From the neck down you are worth minimum wage. But from the neck up, the sky is the limit."

—Frank Bono, parent,
on the importance of education

Review your high schooler's responsibilities, make changes



This September, take some time to review your teen's current responsibilities. Teens can grow up a lot in a year, and it may be time for a change. Think about ideas like these:

- **Has your teen** gotten his license over the summer? Maybe he's ready for the new responsibility of picking up the dry cleaning or running some other errands for you.
- **Did he manage** to keep to his curfew this summer? Maybe you could extend his curfew an extra half hour on Saturday nights.
- **Has he been begging** you for a way to "prove" he's an adult? Give your teen sole responsibility for the family pet—feeding it, walking

it and even making appointments to see the veterinarian.

Teens may seem apathetic sometimes—but that's just their way of trying to assert their independence and show that they don't *really* need their parents. But the vast majority of teens actually *want* their parents' approval. Divvying up the household chores shows your teen:

- **That he is an important part** of the family.
- **That you believe** he's capable of completing responsibilities.
- **That his newfound** independence has not gone unnoticed.

Updating your teen's responsibilities will show him you are proud of him and will also prepare him for the responsibilities of adulthood.

Are you helping your teen prepare for college?



Students used to wait until their senior year to start thinking about college. But there are many things high school juniors should be doing to find the college that's right for them. Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below:

- ___ **1. Have you and your child met** with the school counselor to be sure he will have taken all the classes he needs to go to college?
- ___ **2. Are you making** sure your child studies so this year's grades reflect his best effort?
- ___ **3. Have you encouraged** your teen to get to know his teachers so they are comfortable writing college recommendations for him?
- ___ **4. Are you planning** to visit some colleges this year? If you can't travel, do some online visits.
- ___ **5. Are you encouraging** your teen to take college tests at least once this year? That way, he will have time to improve his score if he needs to.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your junior get ready to apply for college. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1291

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The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
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Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

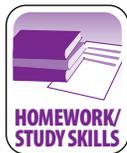
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Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2010 NIS, Inc.

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Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

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Help your teen start the school year with solid study habits



It's a new year, new teachers—and an opportunity for your teen to revamp those old study habits. Try sharing these

four tips with your teen:

- 1. Get a planner.** The only 100% effective way to remember what you have to do is to write it down. A planner helps you keep track of everything—from what chapter to read and what homework problems to complete, to when the next test is and when your next volleyball game is. That way, you'll always be prepared and able to avoid those all-nighters.
- 2. Take notes**—in every class. When your teacher is talking, she's not doing it to waste your time. She's telling you exactly what you need to know about the subject and what's going to be on the test.

Develop a way of taking notes that works for you—and use it. And if you spend a little time each day reviewing those notes you took in class, you will be better prepared at test time.

- 3. Think about your study spot.** If you do your homework in the same place every day, your body actually gets used to it and it takes you less time to focus once you sit down. A good study spot is quiet, comfortable, well-lit and stocked with your study essentials—pens and pencils, paper, reference books, etc.
- 4. Form a study group.** It can help to discuss some subjects with other students. Try to keep your study group small, though—and make sure your friends realize it's for serious studying, not socializing.

Talk with your teen about the importance of respect



People assume that teens will be disrespectful, and then—surprise—they often are. Instead of reprimanding your teen for

being disrespectful, have an open discussion about respect. Try to:

- **Talk about respect.** What does showing respect look like? What words would she use to define respect? How does showing respect in person differ from showing it over the Internet or a text message? Should there be a difference?
- **Talk about disrespect.** How do people show that they disrespect teens? How do teens show that they disrespect others? Has your

teen ever felt disrespected—by another teen, by another adult or even by you? How does she think others feel when she disrespects them?

- **Talk about the importance of showing respect at school.** Your teen can show respect to the teacher in simple ways—like coming to class prepared and on time. Your teen can show respect to her classmates by working quietly. And your teen can show respect to the other staff by following school rules and using good manners.

By demonstrating respect, your teen is more likely to receive it in return.

Source: Rick Wormeli, *Day One & Beyond*, ISBN: 1-571-10355-4, Stenhouse Publishers.

Q: My son went to a very small private school until this year. Now he will be a ninth grader at a large high school. He had friends at his old school, but he knows only a few students at the new school. He doesn't say much, but I know he's unhappy. What can I do to help him make the transition successfully?

Questions & Answers

A: Starting at any new school is a challenge. So even the students who have known each other for years are going to be feeling anxious! You can:

- **Meet with his counselor** if you haven't already. Find out if there are clubs or activities your son can join. Kids who share his interests are likely to want to be his friend.
- **Give him opportunities** to feel in control. Let him decide what to wear—he needs to fit in. So even if it's not what you'd choose, as long as it is appropriate, allow him to make the choice.
- **Be sure he completes** school work. Falling behind in any class will just add more stress, and he doesn't need that.
- **Be supportive.** Spend one-on-one time with your son. He's more likely to open up if you're doing something together than if you say, "Let's talk."
- **Stay positive.** Remind your son that he made friends at his old school, and he will find friends at this school, as well. So he should take his time and look for people he would like to spend time with—they're around.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: The Home-School Team

Get involved and stay involved in your teen's school



What makes the difference between a successful high school student and one who struggles? That's the question that student researchers in Kentucky set out to answer. They surveyed more than 4,000 teens. They read research studies. The findings were clear—parent involvement plays a huge role. Here are some of the things they learned:

1. **Nothing takes the place of personal contact.** If you have a question, it's easier to ask someone you have already met. So plan to attend back-to-school night so you can have a chance to meet all your teen's teachers.
2. **Attend school events.** They often are a time when parents and teachers can meet and talk informally. As Dr. Laurence Steinberg said, "Parents who attended school programs, went to back-to-school nights, went to see their kids play in athletic events or perform in musical and theatrical events," had students who were more successful.
3. **Parents and teachers are busy.** You may not always be available to answer a phone call from the school. Be sure the school has all your phone numbers and an email address so you will be less likely to miss the message that your teen skipped fourth period!

Source: Youth News Team of Kentucky Conference for Community and Justice, "High School Students Have Parents, Too!" Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence, <http://dennis4353.home.insightbb.com/ynt/YNTSummaryReport.pdf>.

Get to know your teen's high school guidance counselor

During your teen's high school years, he'll have many teachers and coaches. He'll take different classes and sign up for different activities.

But there's one person who will see the whole picture—who will follow your teen's progress throughout high school. That's his counselor.

Counselors can help you and your teen make wise choices when it's time to choose classes. If he's heading for college, the counselor will make sure he has the classes he needs.

Then when it's time to think about college, the counselor can suggest schools that might be a good match. The counselor will suggest some schools that may be "reach" schools and some that are more likely to admit your teen.



So when should you and your teen get to know the counselor? As early as possible. Make an appointment to meet with the counselor. Together, you can help your teen map a high school path to success.

Source: College Board, "Your Child's High School Counselor, Putting it All Together," www.collegeboard.com/parents/plan/hs-steps/21287.html.

Try one of these many ways to help your teen's school



Your teen may not want you to help out in his English class. But there are still ways you can make a difference. Offer to:

- **Tutor a student one-on-one.**
- **Sew costumes** or paint scenery for a school play.
- **Serve on a school committee.**
- **Help design a brochure** about your school.
- **Answer the phone** in the attendance office.
- **Provide transportation** to school for a parent who can't drive.
- **Translate school information** into another language.
- **Sell tickets** at a school event.
- **Handle paperwork.** Check with your child's teacher or the office to see if there are papers that need to be folded or stapled.
- **Set up email lists** so teachers can contact parents in each class.

Source: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, "50 Ways Parents Can Help Schools," www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa11k20.htm.