

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

April 2011  
Vol. 18, No. 8

Loudoun County Public Schools  
www.lcps.org

*still make the difference!*



## Make sure your teen sticks to homework routines in spring

As days get warmer and longer, it can be hard to focus on homework. Encourage your high schooler to keep his homework routine steady. After all, if it's worked since last September, something's going right! But he can bring in a little bit of spring with some tweaks, such as:

- **Location.** Is his bedroom starting to feel like a dungeon? Suggest that your child do some of his reading outside to enjoy the weather. Just make sure he can still concentrate—if the basketball game two doors down is calling his name, it's time for your teen to head back inside.
- **Time.** Research suggests that students recall more information when it's learned in chunks. So if he's been working for an hour,

suggest that he take a break and walk around the block. Maybe you can go, too!

- **Order.** Even if he usually does the homework for his favorite class first, suggest that he tackle the hardest assignments first instead. He'll get them done while he's freshest.

Even teachers can feel the call of warm spring days. If your teen has an unexpected day without homework, suggest that he:

- **Prepare for end-of-year tests.** He can gather notes, old tests and quizzes so he's organized come test time.
- **Read.** Reading for pleasure is a wonderful way for your child to relax, while still exercising his brain and building reading skills!

## Involvement makes a real difference!



Study after study has shown that your involvement in your child's education has a huge effect, from preschool

through high school—and beyond! Working with the school shows your teen that:

- **Education is important to you.**
- **You support the efforts** her school makes.
- **You want to make the school** a great place to be. After all, your child spends almost as much time at school as she does at home.

As the year winds down, make sure your involvement doesn't slack off. Here's how:

- **Continue to keep an eye on** your teen's progress.
- **Encourage your teen** to get help before the final exam if her grades start to slip.
- **Try to attend a meeting of** the parent organization.
- **Ask if the graduation or** prom committees need any additional help planning events for seniors.

Your continued involvement *really* does make a difference!

## Studies show nighttime texting can lead to learning problems



A recent study found a link between nighttime texting and poorer sleep at night. It found that kids who sent texts

before going to bed experienced poorer quality of sleep at night. These evening texters were also at a higher risk for daytime issues such as ADHD, anxiety, depression and learning difficulties.

The research suggests that rather than relaxing before bed, these children keep their minds stimulated right until they close their eyes. This contributes to being unable to fall asleep and moving around a lot while asleep. They're also more likely to be woken up in the middle of the night by that beeping or buzzing phone. Participants in the study sent an average of 34 texts a night!

A sleepy student isn't going to get as much out of school as an alert one. So how can you make sure

your teen isn't falling prey to nighttime texting? Keep the phone out of your teen's room at night. She might protest that she needs to use it as an alarm clock. Remind her that "old-fashioned" alarm clocks have been waking people up for years—and make sure hers still works.

Talk to your teen about why she sends these nighttime notes (or why she wants to be available to receive them). What can't wait until morning?

**Source:** C. Phend, "Bedtime Texting Bad for Sleep," ABC News, <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/Sleep/bedtime-texting-bad-sleep/story?id=12035026&page=1>.

**"There is always a moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in."**

—Graham Green

## What should you do if your high schooler is cutting class?



The school called today. Your teen missed his math class—and not for the first time. News like that is hard for a parent

to hear. But taking immediate action is critical. Here are three things you should do when you first learn your teen is cutting class:

### 1. Don't ignore the problem.

Research shows a strong link between class attendance and grades. Let your teen know you expect him to go to class.

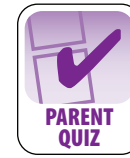
### 2. Talk about the reason your teen is missing the class. One of the primary reasons that teens cut

classes is because they are falling behind. If your teen is worried that he doesn't understand what's going on in math class, the solution is not to skip the class. Work with the teacher to see what your teen needs to do to catch up.

### 3. Help him see the link. Teens don't always see the link between what they're learning in class and what they want to do later in life. So help him see how the math he is learning today will help him in his chosen career later on.

**Source:** "Student Attendance: Research and Strategies," The Principal's Partnership, [www.principalspartnership.com/attendance2.pdf](http://www.principalspartnership.com/attendance2.pdf).

## Should you be 'friends' with your teen online?



According to the Pew Internet Project, more than half of all teens use social networking sites. Answer *yes* or *no* to the

questions below to find out if your teen is safe online:

\_\_\_ 1. **Do you know** if your teen is a member of a social network? (If you don't, try a Google search of your teen's name.)

\_\_\_ 2. **Have you learned** about the privacy settings on social networks? Help your teen decide what parts of the information she shares online should be made public.

\_\_\_ 3. **Have you reminded** your teen to be careful about what images she puts online? A picture on the Internet *never* goes away.

\_\_\_ 4. **Have you told** your teen that if she isn't friends with a person in the "real world," she shouldn't be friends with her online?

\_\_\_ 5. **Do you have rules** about using social networking sites?

### How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers means you are protecting your child online. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

**High School Parents**  
*still make the difference!*

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

For subscription information call or write:  
The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,  
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.  
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

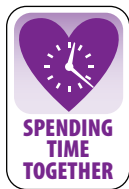
Or visit: [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com).

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2011 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.  
Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Kris Amundson & Jennifer McGovern.  
Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

## Make sure spending time with your high schooler is a priority



The key to spending time with your teen is *making* time to spend with your teen. One counselor asked students why they don't spend more time with their parents—and the results were surprising. The majority of students wanted to spend time with their parents—but their parents were “too busy” checking email, watching TV and talking on the phone.

So be sure to schedule time with your teen. Here's how:

- **Try some “DEAT” time.** You may remember DEAR—drop everything and read—from elementary school. Well, try to drop everything and *talk* next time your teen asks you a question.

- **Find a hobby to share.** Maybe you enjoy scrapbooking, while your teen loves photography. Work together to create a photo album that is sure to be a family heirloom.
- **Consider errands and chores** as quality time. Heading to the supermarket? Have your teen hop in the car. You can talk while you drive and while you shop.
- **Have monthly “dates.”** Head to a coffee shop or ice cream parlor with your teen. Or get creative and bring a picnic to the park. Spend 20 or 30 minutes lingering over treats and talking. Keep the conversation light and fun.

**Source:** S. Carney, “Spending Time With Your Teen,” [suite101.com](http://suite101.com), [www.suite101.com/blog/sugarsnapmj/spending\\_time\\_with\\_your\\_teen](http://www.suite101.com/blog/sugarsnapmj/spending_time_with_your_teen).

## Teach your high schooler the responsibility of saying *no*



Get good grades. Go to practice. Don't miss that meeting. Go to work. Spend time with your friends. Spend time with

your family. And don't forget about your chores!

Teenagers have a lot of responsibilities on their plates! It's important to talk to your teen about being responsible.

Part of being responsible is fulfilling all of your commitments. Another part is being able to say *no* when you absolutely can't handle anything else.

Teens often think that taking on as many commitments as possible is a great way to prove that they are responsible. But in reality, they end up overloading themselves and not giving their all in any activity. They may be doing a lot of things—but

probably aren't doing any of them really well. Responsibility isn't just about showing up for a commitment—it's also doing your job to the best of your ability.

If this sounds like your teen, sit down with her and make a list of all of her responsibilities. Then work together to rank the items. Put things she “must do” at the top, and things she “doesn't really need to do” at the bottom. Encourage her to star or highlight her favorite activities.

Over the summer, when your teen has more free time, she can think about which activities she'd like to eliminate next year. Help her realize that sometimes saying, “I'm sorry, I just don't have time to help you with that,” is the most responsible act after all. Just make sure she realizes this doesn't apply to her chores!

**Q:** The good news: My husband has been offered a new job. The bad news: We will need to move about two hours away. My son, who will be a junior next year, is very upset. He wants to stay here. He even found a friend who says he can live with their family. What should I do?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** There are some cases when a student might stay in a school. For instance, if your son had one semester left in high school, he might have a stronger argument. But your son is talking about a two-year period when he would live away from his family. It's hard to see how that helps him or you.

Your son may be concerned about leaving his friends. But if he has friends at this school, he'll make friends at the next school. In this era of email and social networks, he can stay in touch. And moving two hours away isn't so far—perhaps you can agree that he can visit on Homecoming or another special date.

If possible, make a trip with your son to visit the new school before the end of the year. Talk with counselors about the classes he can take. There may be courses not offered at your current school.

If he enjoys sports, let him talk with the coach. If he's a musician, schedule time to talk with the band director. Let him start to envision himself at this school—in classes, on teams, hanging out with friends. That will make the move easier to accept.

—Kris Amundson,  
The Parent Institute



# It Matters: Reading

## Encourage your high schooler to read often



If you want a teen to read well, then you have to encourage him to read a lot. It's just as simple as that.

Reading, like anything else, is a skill—and it gets better with practice. But today's teens often don't (or won't) take the time to practice their reading skills.

Here are ways to encourage your teen to read more so that he also reads better:

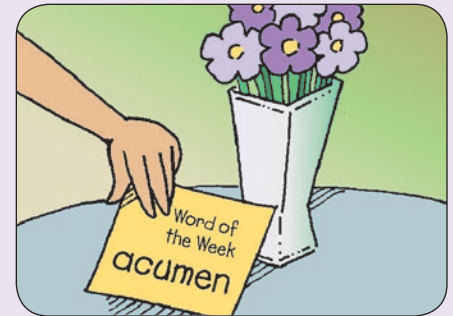
- **Focus on quantity, not quality.** Sure, it would be great if he wanted to read all the Greek myths. But if it's the latest story about one of his favorite baseball players instead, don't worry. Keep lots of reading material handy. Get magazines, comic books or how-to books on things that interest him.
- **Cut out an article** you think he might enjoy. Give it to him and then discuss it with him later. Or read a book he's reading and then talk about it.
- **Try nonfiction.** Some boys just don't enjoy reading fiction. So look for nonfiction articles on topics that might interest him—anything from outer space to outdoor activities.
- **Try humor.** Boys enjoy reading things that are funny. Their sense of humor may not be the same as yours, but if they are motivated to keep reading, humor can be a great thing!

**Source:** David Cooper, David Chard and Nancy Kiger, *The Struggling Reader: Interventions that Work*, ISBN: 0-439-61659-X, Scholastic Books.

## Boost your teen's vocabulary with a 'Word of the Week'

**K**nowing exactly the right word can be powerful for a teen. Instead of calling a bully a "creep," think how satisfying it would be to call him a "domineering brow-beater." Here are two ways to help your teen boost her vocabulary:

1. **Create a personal dictionary.** When your teen encounters a word she doesn't know, have her write it in a notebook. When she gets to a dictionary, she can add the definition. In spare moments, have her review the words in her personal dictionary.
2. **Play "Word of the Week"** as a family. Have someone in the family choose a word and write it on an index card. Add the



definition. Post the card where everyone can see it. Now for the rest of the week, see who can use that word in a sentence. The weekly winner is the person who used the word the most.

**Source:** "Helping Your Child at Home with Vocabulary Building," Child Development Institute, [www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/vocabulary.shtml](http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/vocabulary.shtml).

## Give your high schooler a PLAN for reading textbooks



Learning how to read textbooks and remembering key information is an important skill.

One strategy is to use a PLAN (Predict-Locate-Add-Note). Here's how it works:

- P Predict.** Look over the assignment before beginning to read. Check out the titles and subtitles. Look at pictures or graphs. Think about yesterday's assigned reading. Now have your teen make a prediction about what this assignment is likely to cover.
- L Locate.** Before reading, have your teen jot down a list of the things he knows about this topic. Based on his preview, have him

also note the things he does not know but expects to learn.

- A Add** new words and phrases while reading. If a word appears in bold type, it is probably important. After reading a paragraph or two, have your teen stop. Is this what he thought he would be learning?
- N Note.** Once your teen has finished reading, have him review his notes. Did he learn what he thought he would? What does he think will appear in the next reading assignment?

**Source:** "Reading strategies to help high school students and middle school students understand their textbooks," Educational Research Newsletters and Webinars, [www.ernweb.com/public/1056.cfm](http://www.ernweb.com/public/1056.cfm).