

High School Parents[®]

May 2011
Vol. 18, No. 9

Loudoun County Public Schools
www.lcps.org

still make the difference!



Preparation now will make studying for tests easier

There's probably only one thought on your teen's mind right now: summer! But remind her that final exams stand between her and that nice, long break. And she'll be doing herself a favor if she prepares for those exams sooner rather than later.

Encourage your teen to take part of a day at the beginning of this month to get a jump start on finals later. Suggest that she:

- **Stock up on materials.** Ask your teen what she needs for effective studying—note cards, highlighters, pens. Suggest she get more supplies if she's running low.
- **Organize notes.** Finals are all about review. Your teen will be ahead if she has all her notes in one place, and in an order that makes sense to her.

- **Talk with teachers.** Many teachers will offer hints about how to focus on studying. A comment like, "Remember how often we referred to the concepts in Chapter Six," can be very helpful.
- **Come up with a study plan.** Most tests require serious study and review. Encourage your teen to use a calendar to block out study time and schedule the other things she needs to do before the end of school.

Don't forget to do your part, as well, to help your teen get ready for those final exams! Make sure she has a quiet place to study and gets a good night's sleep the night before tests.

Source: Susan Abel Lieberman, *The Real High School Handbook*, ISBN: 0-395-79760-8, Houghton Mifflin Company.

Don't drop out before the end of the year!



The end of the school year is drawing closer. As you cross the days off the calendar,

both you and your teen may be tempted to start summer vacation a bit early.

Here are three areas where it's important for you not to become a "parent dropout":

1. **Attendance.** Now more than ever you need to stay on top of your teen's school attendance. If there's an online attendance system, check it regularly. Ensure that your teen keeps going to class.
2. **Grades.** Final exams can count for a big part of the course grade. In some classes, teachers have scheduled projects that are a major part of the grade. Don't let your teen put off working on these projects or studying for his exams.
3. **The social scene.** With prom and graduation close by, teens seem more tempted to drink. Be sure you check to see that a trusted adult will be present before your teen is allowed to go to a party.

Encourage your high schooler to brush up on geography



It may seem like the world is shrinking. The Internet allows your teen to connect with people and research information from all over the world.

That's why geography—long seen as a science involving dusty maps—is still so important. Geography is about knowing where places are, why they're there and why they matter. And just because your teen is chatting with a friend in Seoul doesn't mean your teen actually realizes his friend is in South Korea, not South Carolina.

So help your teen strengthen his geography skills. Together, you can:

- **Use a subway map**, bus or train schedule and a city map to plan a trip from home to a point of interest using public transportation.
- **Use a topographic map** to lay out a five-mile hike through the

countryside or local community.

Note the elevation, distance, direction and geographic features along the route.

- **Check your teen's social network.** Use a map to determine which of his friends lives the closest. Who is the furthest away?
- **Eat around the world.** Try ethnic foods, then locate their countries of origin on a map. Investigate why some cultures use forks and others use chopsticks—or no utensils at all!

Source: "Geography Is 10 Cool Things," My Wonderful World: A National Geographic-led campaign, www.mywonderfulworld.org/kidsteens_welcome.html.

"Keep in mind that neither success nor failure is ever final."

—Roger Babson

Discuss your teenager's hopes and dreams over the summer



When is the last time you asked your teen what he wants to be when he grows up? If "dinosaur-riding space cowboy"

is the last answer you remember, it might be time to ask again.

Early in the summer, set aside some time to talk with your teen about his future. Ask him how he sees himself in five, 10 or 30 years. What does he hope to be doing? What career does he think he'd be happiest in? If he's not sure, talk about his hobbies or his favorite classes. His interests are a great starting point—and may be the key to his dream job.

As the summer goes on, help your teen research what he needs to do in order to reach his goals. You might head to the library or search online. Are there special classes he needs to take in school? Is there a particular college program he'd like to strive to get into? Does your family know anyone already working in your teen's dream field?

Keep your teen's dream job in mind as you go about your daily life. If you notice a newspaper article about advances in that field, cut it out and put it on his desk. If you see a TV show related to what he wants to do, make plans to watch it together.

Do you stand firm or are you a pushover parent?



Nearly every time a parent imposes a rule, a teen is likely to push back against it. "It's not fair," she'll say. "Nobody else's parents make them do this."

But what happens then? Some parents stand firm. But others seem to let themselves get pushed around. Answer *yes* or *no* to each question to make sure you aren't a pushover parent:

___ 1. **Does your teen** have a regular curfew that you enforce?

___ 2. **Do you stand firm** on your rules, even when your teen argues with you?

___ 3. **Do you impose** and enforce consequences when your teen breaks a rule?

___ 4. **Do you stand firm** on rules even if you know your teen will be angry?

___ 5. **Do you understand** that you should be your teen's parent—not her best friend?

How well are you doing?

If you answered mostly *yes*, you are not a pushover parent. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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.

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.

Help your teenager combat peer pressure over summer months



For many teens, “summer” means “freedom”—no teachers, no classes, and tons of time with friends! That

sounds like a blast if you’re a teen.

If you’re a parent, you may be concerned about your teen spending so much time unsupervised. And with good reason—teens are more likely to have sex or try drugs or alcohol during the summer than they are during the school year.

But you can help your teenager combat negative peer pressure.

Here’s how:

- **Talk to your teen.** Make sure you know where he is going, who he

will be with and when he plans to be back. If he’s going to a party, always make sure a parent will be present.

- **Encourage healthy activities.** Suggest that your teen find some place to volunteer over the summer. He should also look into getting a summer job, joining a summer sports league or taking a summer class. As a bonus, any of these activities would help strengthen his résumé and college applications!

Source: A. P. Murphy, “Summer Is Hot Season for Teen Sex,” ABC Good Morning America, <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/AmericanFamily/story?id=125048&page=1>.

Expert suggests the 9-5-2-1-0 initiative for healthy habits



If they had it their way, teens would probably sleep until noon, stay up until 2 a.m., live on nothing but pizza and

soda, and maybe—occasionally—leave the computer to head outside into the sunlight. And without the routine provided by school, many teens spend their summers exactly like that!

This summer, make sure your teen sticks to a healthy routine. After all, she’ll be heading off to the “real world” soon and won’t have that bell to summon her to gym class or that cafeteria to provide her with good meal choices. She’ll be on her own!

One expert suggests the 9-5-2-1-0 initiative. It states that teens should aim for:

- **9 hours of sleep** each night.
- **5 servings of fruits and vegetables** each day.

- **2 hours of screen time** (or less) each day.
- **1 hour of physical activity** each day.
- **0 sugar-sweetened drinks** each day.

To make it a little bit easier for your teen, stock your fridge with healthy snacks and make sure she has an alarm clock.

By sticking to the 9-5-2-1-0 initiative, your teen will be maintaining healthy habits and learning how to create her own routine. She’ll also be practicing self-discipline. After all, you’re not always going to be watching over her to make sure she doesn’t drink half her body weight in soda!

Source: V. Newman, “The Goldilocks Dilemma,” Your Teen for Parents, <http://yourteenmag.com/2010/12/the-food-war-nurturing-a-healthy-relationship-with-food/>.

Q: My daughter found herself on the wrong side of a new school dress code. The rules require that students cover their midriff and navel. She wore a short top to school anyway. Now she has to serve detention. I didn’t think the top was that short. And does the school even have the authority to tell kids what to wear? It’s a free country.

Questions & Answers

A: It is a free country, but there have always been rules to make sure one person’s freedom didn’t interfere with another person’s interests. That’s why you can’t shout “Fire” in a crowded building.

In general, schools have the authority to take actions that promote student learning. That certainly can mean setting some clear rules about the clothes students wear to school.

Schools sometimes ban certain articles of clothing, or even clothing of a certain color. Wearing a color that denotes membership in a gang can actually put a teen in danger.

Remind your daughter that she sends a message with the clothing she wears. Ask her whether she really wants to call attention to herself in a way that might keep other students from learning.

Tell your daughter to save her short tops for after-school wear. But if she’s heading to an after-school job, she might be better off leaving those skimpy clothes in the closet. If she wants to create the impression that she’s serious about her work, she should stick to more modest clothing at work.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Summer Learning

Help your teen keep a summer journal online



You can't expect to score a three-point shot the first time you try it. And you can't learn to write without repeated practice.

But over the summer months, you can help your high schooler make writing a lot more fun—by helping her create an online writing journal.

Writers use journals for many reasons. Sometimes they want to vent. Sometimes they need to clarify their thoughts.

Getting started is easy. Your teen can use a special notebook or sheets of notebook paper stapled together. She can even set up a free journal online (try *livejournal.com*).

Remind your teen that journal writing:

- **Is more than sending** a text message. She should spend some time and thought when writing in her journal.
- **Is not blogging**, although many entries can become blog posts. Blogs are written for other people. A journal entry can be kept private forever.
- **Can be different every day.** Some days, it will be harder to think of something to write about. On those days, your teen can simply write down a list of all the words that come to her mind. One may lead to a later journal entry.

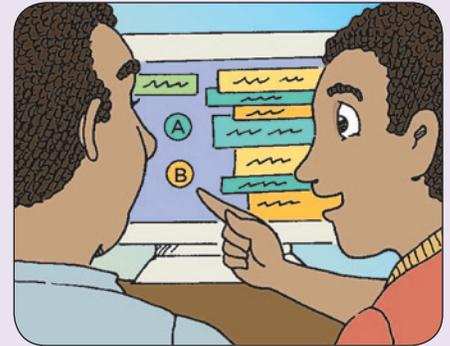
Source: National Writing Project, *Because Digital Writing Matters*, ISBN: 9780-4704-0772-1, Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint.

Ask your high schooler to teach you something you don't know

One of the best ways to learn something is to teach it to someone else. So you can motivate your teen to dive into a subject by asking him to become your tutor.

Choose a subject you'd like to know more about—something your teen already understands. Maybe you want to learn about how to play one of his favorite video games. Maybe you want to master the rules of baseball. Or maybe you just want to know more about what all the buttons on your cell phone can do!

Ask him if he's willing to be your tutor. Then take your learning seriously. Mark down some times when the two of you can work together. And be sure to give him the respect that any teacher deserves!



Your teen will have to do some in-depth learning so he can teach you. He'll grow in self-confidence. And you'll learn something you never knew.

Source: "Seven Simple Strategies for Stopping Summer Learning Loss," DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, www.cyitc.org/elements/file/Summer%20Learning%20Loss%20Tips.pdf.

Reading over the summer can prevent learning loss



By the end of high school, some students have nearly three years' more reading growth than others. They didn't take more classes, and they didn't go to summer school. They just read throughout the summer.

Research shows that students tend to forget some of what they have learned over the summer vacation. It's called "summer learning loss," and over time, it can really make a difference. Students come back to school in September and have to spend time relearning things they learned the year before.

But students who read over the summer don't show that same learning loss. They walk in the door in September ready to go to work.

One of the most important things you can do this summer is to keep your child reading. Make it as easy as possible for your teen to pick up something to read. Visit the library often. If you don't have a library close by, see whether a community center or a local place of worship might be willing to sponsor a lending library to keep students reading throughout the summer.

Source: D. Viadero, "Study Finds that Book Giveaways Stem 'Summer Slide,'" Education Week, <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research/summer-learning-loss>.