

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Tuckahoe Union Free School District
A Promise To Prepare For Tomorrow

February 2010

MOTIVATING YOUR TEEN

Involvement prevents dropouts

Teens who drop out of school earn less than graduates and are more likely to have trouble with the law. Risk factors that lead to dropping out include:

- **Low** educational expectations.
- **Low** commitment to school.
- **Low** parental contact with school.
- **Lack** of discussion about school at home.

To motivate your teen to stay in school:

- **Expect your teen to be in school on time every day.** Teens with frequent absences think they can't catch up.
- **Expect your teen to do his best.** Your opinion matters to your teen.
- **Let him know that you believe in him**—and that you know he'll succeed at whatever he tries.
- **Encourage him to become involved** in a sport or club. Teens with ties to the school beyond academics are more likely to stay in school.
- **Work as a team with your teen's teachers.** Tell them if you are concerned. They want your teen to succeed.
- **Talk about school at home—every day.** Ask, "What was the most interesting thing you learned at school today?" This shows your teen that you care about school—and that he should, too.



Source: "Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs," National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, www.dropoutprevention.org/resource/major_reports/communities_in_schools.htm.

REINFORCING LEARNING

Teens can learn information by HEART

If your teen just can't remember what she's read, you can help. Teach her to learn it by HEART. Here's how:

- H = How much** does she already know? Your teen will remember more if it's linked to something she's already learned.
- E = Establish a purpose** for studying. She might say, "I am going to learn the definitions of *mean*, *median* and *mode*."

A = Ask questions. As she reads the text, she should jot down any questions she has.

R = Record answers. As she finds the answers to her questions, have her take notes. Of course, one question can lead to another!

T = Test. Has she found answers to her questions? Can she answer the questions at the end of the chapter? Then she will likely remember what she read.

Source: Ann L. Loranger, "The Challenge of Content Area Literacy," Clearing House, Education Resources Information Center, www.eric.ed.gov.

YOUR TEEN AND YOU

Form a good relationship

You want your teen to have friends who are a positive influence. Research shows that teens who are close to their parents are more likely to choose appropriate friends. To develop a good relationship with your teen:

- **Find** shared interests.
- **Talk** frequently—especially about school.
- **Express** affection. Teens are looking for acceptance and approval. Let your teen know that you love her.

Source: Jeff Grabmeier, "Parents Can Help Teens Choose 'Good' Friends, Study Finds," <http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/adolfmnd.htm>.

BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Real life requires math

Few teens understand how credit card fees and interest work.

Show your teen the fine print on a credit card application. Ask your teen, "If you buy a \$50 jacket on your credit card now, can't pay the bill this month, and have a 20% interest rate, how much will that jacket *really* cost you?"

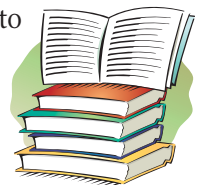


Source: Sharon Waldrop, "4 finance experts talk teens and money," www.creditcards.com/credit-card-news/financial-experts-advice-teens-1279.php.

ENCOURAGING READING

Practice makes perfect

Teens who read a lot learn to read more quickly. So let your teen practice his reading skills on something he *wants* to read. If he's a sports fan, hand him the sports section or a player's biography. But whether it's a magazine, a newspaper or a how-to book, just keep him reading.

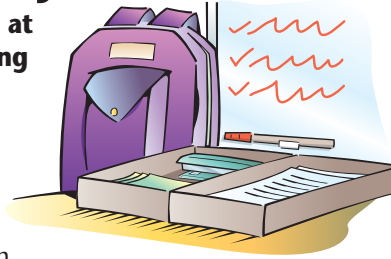


Source: Gay Ivey and Douglas Fisher, *Creating Literacy-Rich Schools for Adolescents*, ISBN: 1-416-60321-2 (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, www.ascd.org/books).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents encourage teens to take responsibility?

Q: My daughter forgets her homework at home and then gets a zero for not doing the assignment. I have tried to talk to her but it seems to do no good. How can I get her to take responsibility for getting her homework turned in?



A: It's great that you realize this is your daughter's problem—and not yours. A high school student is definitely old enough to take responsibility for turning in her own assignments. To promote responsibility without nagging:

- **Expect your daughter to keep her room organized.** Does she have a place where she can keep her school papers? Even cardboard boxes will work. If she keeps her schoolwork organized, she'll be more likely to get completed assignments to school on time.
- **Have a set place for her backpack.** Each evening have her put everything needed for the following day in her backpack.
- **Allow more time in the morning.** She'll be less likely to forget her homework if she isn't running out the door munching on a piece of toast.
- **Make sure that your daughter** isn't covering up an academic problem. Some teens would rather "forget" their homework than admit they don't understand how to do an assignment. If you suspect this is the case, ask her teacher how you can work together to help your daughter.

PARENT QUIZ

Are you teaching how to handle stress?

Parents can't take away the stress teens face in high school. But you can help your teen learn to live with it. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your teen handle stress:

1. **Do you talk** about the problem when your teen is stressed? Do you work together to make a plan to deal with it?
2. **Do you help** your teen find at least one thing he can do to attack the problem?
3. **Do you make sure** your teen eats healthy food and avoids caffeine?

___ 4. **Do you encourage** your teen to get enough sleep?

___ 5. **Do you encourage** your teen to do something he enjoys each day?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you're helping your teen deal with stress. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

*"Give your stress wings
and let it fly away."
—Carin Hartness*

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Counselors are ready when you need help

School counselors are recognized each February during National School Counseling Week. Counselors are trained to help parents with concerns about their teen's:

- **Academic progress.**
- **Behavior.**
- **Mental health.**
- **Friends.**
- **Motivation.**

Source: Brenda Melton, M.Ed., "Understanding the School Counselor-Parent Connection," American School Counselor Association, www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=532.

AFTER SCHOOL

Encourage volunteering

Studies show that teens who volunteer just two hours per week have higher self-esteem and are 50% less likely to drink or do drugs than those who don't. If your teen isn't already involved, help him find a way to give back to his school and community.

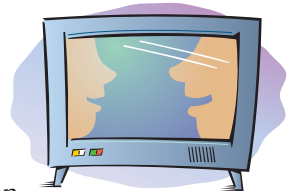
Source: Ann Pleshette Murphy, "Teens Who Volunteer Reap Academic Rewards," ABC News, <http://abcnews.go.com/print?id=125060>.

MAKING TIME COUNT

Teens + TV = Talking time

Here are some tips on turning time in front of the TV into time when you can talk with your teen:

- **Talk** about what you see on the news. Teens have strong opinions on social issues. So if you see a news story about a health issue, a war or a social problem, see what your teen has to say.
- **Watch** a travel program together. Then talk about where you'd like to visit.



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