

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Employ seven E's to instill the values that lead to success

Parents and educators alike want students to have positive values that will help them succeed and make school a pleasant place to be. We want them to be responsible, empathetic and compassionate. Try this seven-step process for teaching your teen the values that matter most to your family:

- 1. Explain.** Talk about what you mean by values like honesty and compassion.
- 2. Examine.** Look for news items or stories in literature that demonstrate a particular value in action. TV shows can be great opportunities to discuss people who do—and don't—display certain values.
- 3. Exhibit.** It's true, values are more caught than taught. If you want your teen to be reliable, for example, you need to live up to your own commitments.
- 4. Expect.** Let your teen know that you expect him to demonstrate respect and persistence.
- 5. Experience.** If you want your teen to be compassionate, provide him with life experiences that let him put that value into practice.
- 6. Encourage.** When you see your teen demonstrating one of your family values, name it. "Thanks for being responsible and taking out the trash."
- 7. Evaluate.** Sometimes, talk about times when it can be hard to put values into practice. Discuss what to say and how to deal with those situations.



Source: T. Lickona, *Character Matters*, Touchstone Books.



The time for college planning is now!

It's never too early for you and your teen to plan for her life after graduation. If she is college-bound, visit campuses together whenever you can. Your teen will develop a sense of the size, location and type of school she's looking for.

On campus, your teen should:

- **Talk to students.** Ask about the challenges and advantages of attending the school.
- **Sit in on a class.**
- **Take notes and pictures** to keep schools straight in her mind.
- **Talk to a professor** and at least one student in an academic department that interests her.

If she can't visit campus she should:

- **Check out the websites** of colleges or universities she'd like to know more about. Many offer virtual tours.
- **Ask the admissions offices** to put her in touch with some professors and students she can contact by email or phone.

Source: "Making the Most of College Campus Visits," Go4Ivy, niswc.com/campus.

Bonds support achievement

Nearly one in four teens wants to spend more time with parents. The parent-teen bond is an important source of confidence for teens. Strengthen your connection by doing simple activities together:

- **Cook** or take a walk.
- **Share stories** about family history.
- **Unplug.** Spend time electronics-free.

Source: "Surprise! Teens Want to Spend More Time with Parents," Connect with Kids, niswc.com/hang.

Concentrate on attendance and assignments

Your teen is probably dreaming of winter break, but she needs to stay focused on schoolwork. To keep her on track:



- **Have her make a checklist** of everything she has to do *before* winter break.
- **Ask questions** about what she's doing in school. Does she have any major assignments that she'll need to work on *during* winter break?
- **Review her attendance** for the first half of the school year. Is she going to all of her classes? Establish attendance goals together for the rest of the year.

Plan for pleasure reading over winter break

Time off from textbooks makes vacation an ideal time for your teen to read for the fun of it. To encourage him:

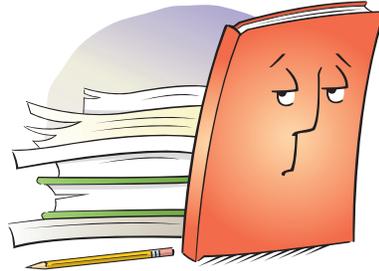


- **Challenge him to read** at least one book for pleasure. Let him wander in the library until he finds something exciting.
- **Have family members read** the same book. Ask your teen to lead an informal chat about it.
- **Watch a movie based on a book**—as long as your teen reads the book first!



How do I motivate my teen to take schoolwork seriously?

Q: My daughter has come down with a serious case of “senior slump.” Unfortunately, she’s only a sophomore! She’s stopped doing her homework. She doesn’t seem to care whether she passes her classes or not. How can I turn things around so that she’ll get the chance to actually be a senior?



A: It sounds like this is new behavior for your daughter. What has changed? Does she have new friends? Is she taking more (or less) difficult courses? Talk to her teachers about what they’re seeing. Ask teachers, counselors or coaches who knew her last year for their input as well.

Right now your teen is putting a lot of energy into not caring. To motivate her to put it into her studies instead:

- **Talk with her** about her progress in school. Tell her that even if *she* doesn’t care, *you* do. Relationships with parents matter to teens.
- **Set deadlines and specific goals.** For example, set a regular study time each day. Review due dates for assignments.
- **Help her focus on realistic, positive steps** she can take. She may feel overwhelmed. She may not be able to raise her grades this marking period, but remind her that she *can* read the novel the English teacher assigned. She can do math homework every day. Each positive step will motivate her to try a little harder.



Is your teen prepared for peer pressure?

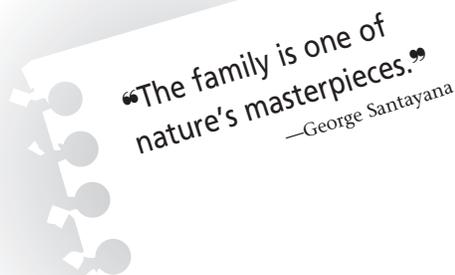
As teens become more independent, their friends have a greater influence. Your teen may feel pressure to skip class or take other actions you would not approve of. Are you equipping him to resist peer pressure? Answer *yes* or *no*:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to invite his friends to spend time at your house?
- ___ **2. Do you talk openly** about your family’s values?
- ___ **3. Does your teen know** it is okay to use you as a scapegoat? “My mom wants me at home tonight. Sorry.”
- ___ **4. Do you role-play** situations in which your teen might have to resist? It’s easier for him to say *no* if he’s practiced it.
- ___ **5. Do you teach** your teen to trust his gut? If he thinks a

situation may get out of hand, he should just avoid it.

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are giving your teen tools to do what he knows is right. For each no, try that idea.



Help your teen help others

Volunteering lets teens apply their academic skills to help their communities. It also fosters important traits such as responsibility.

Ask your teen to research organizations your family can help this year. You could:

- **Prepare and serve a meal** for a local soup kitchen.
- **Collect blankets for a shelter** or canned goods for a food pantry.
- **Visit a nursing home.** Ask if there are residents who don’t have family who visit regularly.
- **Help a neighbor** or friend having a rough time. Run errands or shovel snow.

See an attitude of gratitude

Research shows that gratitude can boost student achievement. Set a daily time for your teen to think about things he is grateful for. Encourage him to turn his gratitude list into an action list. If he realizes that he’s grateful for his grandfather, he might phone him after school.



Be on alert for DXM abuse

Abuse of cough medicines containing dextromethorphan, or DXM, is a serious problem among teens. DXM abuse can cause hallucinations and loss of motor control—not to mention failure in school. It can also cause dizziness, headaches, irregular heartbeats, seizures and brain damage. You should:

- **Talk to your teen** about the hazards of DXM abuse.
- **Stress that taking** more than the recommended dose of any medicine—even one sold over-the-counter—is dangerous.
- **Remind your teen** that you will always listen, no matter what she wants to say.

Source: “Cough and Cold Medicine Abuse,” KidsHealth.org, nswc.com/DXM.

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