

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



October 2015

Title I Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit 10

## What's inside counts: Encourage your teen to consider character

High school students must handle many responsibilities: homework and studying, chores and other family duties, sports and extracurricular commitments. But perhaps more important, and more often overlooked, are *internal* responsibilities. These are your teen's responsibilities to himself, including making wise choices about the kind of student—and person—he wants to be.

Help your teen by sharing your family's values, setting and enforcing limits, and living the way you want him to live. To encourage him to take responsibility for his character, have him:



- **Ask character-building questions.** These include: "Am I kind?" "Can people count on me?" "Do people trust me?"
- **Set goals.** Have him choose three ways to improve his character. For example: "I want to be more reliable. I want to help others. I want to be more trustworthy." Then have him plan how he will accomplish each goal.
- **Think decisions through.** Discuss with your teen the ways people show character through their choices. When he has a decision to make, have him write, "What will happen if ... " and list the likely result of each option. This helps him learn to think ahead, rather than just considering his feelings in the moment.



## Six tips build math and science success

Math and science skills are increasingly important in today's job market. To maximize your teen's college and career options, share these tips for more effective math and science learning:

1. **Schedule time.** Your teen should block out time every day for studying math and science.
2. **Start by reviewing.** Your teen should look over her class notes before tackling new material.
3. **Answer all the questions.** If an assignment calls for answering the even questions, answering the odd ones as well can build your teen's confidence.
4. **Draw a picture.** If she is confused, drawing a diagram can help her see how things fit together.
5. **Verify understanding.** After finishing a unit, your teen should answer the questions at the end of the chapter.
6. **Don't fall behind.** Remind your teen that studying science or math is like climbing a ladder. Progress is made step by step.

## The good seats are in front

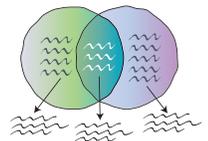
Sitting in the front of the classroom can give your teen a whole new view—and not just of the board. Doing so can improve:

- **Alertness.** Her teacher can see her!
- **Note-taking.** She'll be able to see and hear better and take more detailed notes.
- **Participation.** She may get called on more and get more out of the class.

## Chart a course to more effective writing

Clear writing requires organized thinking. Charts and diagrams can help! Here are two types your teen may find useful:

- **Venn diagrams** are great for a "compare and contrast" essay. Draw two overlapping circles. Where they overlap, write how the things are the same; in the outer sections, note how they differ.
- **Flow charts** help organize a narrative. Draw a series of boxes with an arrow pointing from each box to the next. The first event in the story goes in the first box, the next in the second, and so on.



Source: *Know it All! Grades 9–12 Reading*, The Princeton Review.

## Promote 'thinking for fun'

Many activities outside the classroom build the critical thinking skills your teen needs in school. Have him try:



- **Debating.** Debate teams help students learn to support their arguments.
- **Playing board games.** Chess teaches predicting and making reasoned choices.
- **Reading for pleasure.**
- **Working on puzzles.** Crosswords and jigsaws can strengthen logic skills.

Source: S. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, Simon & Schuster.



## How do I decide if my teen can balance school and a job?

**Q:** My daughter wants to get a job. Her grades are just average, but a job might teach her responsibility. How can I tell if my teen is ready to take on an after-school job?

**A:** Most teens would love some extra money. But they don't always make the best choices about jobs. As you and your teen decide what's right for her, ask:

- **How many hours will she work?** Studies show that most teens can handle about 10 to 15 hours a week. (In fact, they may even find that their grades go up.) Beyond that, schoolwork starts to suffer. So, set limits.
- **Will a job keep your teen from school activities?** She should allow time for any school clubs or sports she enjoys. She should also have enough time to be with her friends and with you.
- **Will a job keep your teen from meeting family obligations?** She should not let a job interfere with her responsibilities at home.
- **How will your teen manage her money?** Make it clear that she won't be spending every penny she makes on extras. Help your teen set up a plan to save part of her earnings.



Working and going to school is a balancing act, and your teen must remember that school is her top priority. With your help, she can make the best choices for today and for her future.



## How strong is your bond with your teen?

They may not admit it, but most teens want to stay connected to their parents. And studies show that those who do are happier, healthier and do better in school. Are you forging a bond with your teen? Answer *yes* or *no*:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you have** a regular "appointment" to have fun together, one on one?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you do** things your teen likes? If he's into hockey, do you watch games on TV together?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you listen** to your teen's music sometimes?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you volunteer** to drive your teen and his friends places?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you try** to spend less money and more time with your teen?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are actively building a stronger bond with your teen. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.*

Life affords no greater responsibility, no greater privilege, than the raising of the next generation. —C. Everett Koop

## It's your teen's application

Deadlines are looming and your teen hasn't started her college application essays. She hasn't asked teachers for recommendations. She hasn't even listed her school activities.

At times like these, some parents simply take over. But applying for college is part of the separation process. Teens need to take responsibility for it. To be a mentor, not a manager:

- 1. Have** your teen make an appointment with her counselor for the three of you.
- 2. Help** your teen schedule specific deadlines for each part of the applications.
- 3. Remind** your teen regularly to consult the schedule.

## Alcohol inhibits learning

You probably know that drinking alcohol increases a teen's chance of engaging in risky behavior. But did you know it can damage your teen's ability to learn? Teen alcohol use can lead to poor memory and reduced problem-solving, visual and spatial skills.

Talk to your teen about the risks of alcohol. Remind him that underage drinking is illegal, and you won't tolerate it.



## Foster education at home

As you and your teen work to develop her independence, keep in mind that your involvement in her education is still crucial. Continue your efforts to:

- **Ask about school.** Be specific. Say things like, "Tell me something you learned in chemistry class today."
- **Support learning.** Ask if she needs school supplies or a ride to the library.
- **Make reading a family priority.**

Source: M. Popkin and others, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, Active Parenting Publishers.

### Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2015, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-103x