

Helping Students Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

HIGH SCHOOL

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

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IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Make attendance a top priority

Research shows that cutting class is the first step in a downward spiral. Students fall behind in a class. Then they avoid it. As a result, they fall further behind. Soon they're at risk of dropping out.

And it's not just that students miss class. What they do out of class can be dangerous too: smoking, using alcohol and drugs, and even breaking the law.

To prevent such problems, parents can:

- **Be involved.** Find out what homework your teen needs to complete. Check to make sure he does it. Talk with his teachers to see what else you can do to help him be successful.
- **Spend time together.** Look for ways to encourage your teen to open up. For example, watch a TV show and talk about what you see. Or read the same book and discuss your reactions.
- **Promote responsibility.** Expect your teen to pitch in. Assign him a few age-appropriate chores around the house. Set rules about curfews and other key matters—and then stick to them.
- **Address concerns.** If you're worried about your child's attendance, take action right away. Don't allow cutting class or skipping school to become a habit.



Source: Martell L. Teasley, "Absenteeism and Truancy: Risk, Protection, and Best Practice Implications for School Social Workers," *Children & Schools*, April 2004 (National Association of Social Workers, 1-800-227-3590, www.socialworkers.org).

COPING WITH ADOLESCENTS

Avoid angry scenes with your teen

Your teen talked back to you—again. It seems she's always angry. When coping with an emotional teen:

- **Try walking away.** If your teen doesn't have anyone to fight with, her anger will go away more quickly.
- **Establish consequences.** If she exhibits disrespectful behavior such as screaming, stamping her feet or slamming doors, then limit her TV or phone time.
- **Stay calm.** Listen to what she is really saying. That's the first step toward solving the problem.
- **Talk when the worst is over.** That's a time when both of you can open up to talk about what's going on.
- **Ask teachers** if she displays anger at school. Ask for their suggestions on how to help your daughter learn how to handle her emotions.

NEXT STEPS

Keep resolutions this year

It's a brand new year. Your teen may have made resolutions to get fit or get better grades. But does she also have a plan for sticking to her resolutions? Encourage her to write her goals down and post them where she'll see them every day.

Source: "The Awesome Power of Goal Setting: Ten Tips for Triumph," About.com, http://humanresources.about.com/od/performance/management/a/goal_setting_2.htm.

MOTIVATING YOUR TEEN

Learn about learning styles

Everyone learns in different ways. Making vocabulary flash cards to flip through may help a student who learns best when being active.

Drawing a diagram may help a teen who learns by seeing. An audio book may help a student who learns by listening.

Source: Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., "Connect for Success: Building a teacher, parent, teen alliance," www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/19/fe/bc.pdf.



SCREEN TIME

Protect your teen from cyberbullies

A recent study found that 32% of all teens who use the Internet have been victims of cyberbullies. They have received threatening emails, had embarrassing photos posted or had rumors about them spread online.

To protect your teen from a cyberbully, keep computers in a family area, such as the kitchen. Your teen may be more likely to tell you about bullying if you're in the same room.

Source: Amanda Lenhart, "Cyberbullying and Online Teens," Pew Internet & American Life Project, www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Cyberbullying_Memo.pdf.



Keep giving teens chores

When you give your teen chores and compliment his work, it shows that you:

- **Want** him to respect things and people.
- **Know** he has skills that help the family.
- **Trust** him enough to get the job done.
- **Appreciate** his contributions.

BUILDING CHARACTER

Teens can be mentors

If you think your teen could be a good role model, encourage her to work with younger kids. She could:

- **Coach** a children's sports team.
- **Tutor** kids at a school or through an organization.
- **Volunteer** at a daycare center.
- **Ask** the library if there are opportunities for teens to read with kids.

Source: Rebecca Greene, *The Teenagers' Guide to School Outside the Box*, ISBN: 1-5754-2087-2 (Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

SPENDING TIME WITH TEENS

Memories keep families close through tough times

Dealing with a difficult situation? Hold on to the special things that make you a family. Talk about happy memories. Share photos, keepsakes and home movies with your teen. Remind him that you're glad to be his parent. Most teens need to hear this!

Family traditions also help. Perhaps you always eat dinner together on Sundays. Maybe you enjoy Saturday morning walks. Even the simplest rituals show love and commitment to family. Stick to them during rough times. They are comforting—even if your teen doesn't say so.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents make sure teens complete homework assignments

Q: My daughter just won't do her homework—and I can't make her. What can I do?

A: You're right to be concerned about your daughter. Doing homework not only reinforces what she learns in class, it also helps her teachers identify where she needs help. To motivate your daughter:

- **Talk with her.** Ask why she doesn't do the work. Some teens are afraid to admit they are having problems. If your teen is struggling, contact her teacher or her counselor.
- **Set up consequences.** If she fails to do her homework, then limit her media (TV, computer games, Internet) time. Or, if she is of age, take away her driving privileges. Be sure to tell your teen your expectations and the consequences in advance.
- **Don't nag.** Once you've told your teen your expectations, back off. If she isn't responsible, then impose an appropriate consequence. If you always have to nag her, she will never take responsibility for herself.
- **Help her find a way to track assignments.** Get her an assignment notebook or a large calendar.
- **Notice when she improves.** Once your teen starts completing her homework on time, tell her you are pleased that she's being so responsible. Teens really do care what their parents think!



PARENT QUIZ

What does your teen do after school?

Research shows that teens who spend their out-of-school time in organized activities do better in—and out—of school than teens who don't. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your teen is getting the most out of his after-school hours:

1. **Does your teen** have a structured activity for after-school hours most days of the week?
2. **Do you set** limits on the amount of time your teen can spend just "hanging out"?
3. **Does your teen** "check in" after school so you know where he is and who he's with?
4. **Do you make** sure your teen actually gets to his activities?
5. **Have you looked** for after-school programs to help your teen with his homework?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're helping your teen spend his out-of-school time wisely. For each no answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

"Children have more need of models than critics."

—Carolyn Coats

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