

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

HIGH SCHOOL

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

October 2008

SPENDING TIME WITH TEENS

Family dinners feed body & mind

Studies show that when families eat together regularly, teens get better grades. In fact, teens who eat regular family dinners (at least five times a week) are 40 percent more likely to earn A's and B's in school. They're also less likely to have problems with drugs and alcohol.

Meals together allow stressed-out teens to feel more comfortable turning to their families for support.

Make eating together a priority. Schedule family meals just the way you schedule soccer practice and other important activities. And don't forget to:

- **Involve everyone** in the family to get a meal on the table quickly. Prep time is also a great time to catch up on the day's news.
- **Make mealtimes pleasant.** Try to focus mealtime conversation about what is happening at school or work. If you have a problem, talk about it another time.
- **Be flexible.** If practice ends at 8 p.m., eat later that evening. Order carry-out if you don't have time to cook.

Source: ABC News, "Family Dinner Linked to Better Grades for Teens," <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/Health/story?id=1123055&page=1>.



GETTING ORGANIZED

Teens must manage homework time

Many teens live in the here-and-now. They don't plan ahead—which is important for homework. To help your teen, encourage him to:

- **Write things down.** Every assignment should be listed on paper. Give your teen a big calendar to keep near his desk.
- **Set goals every day.** Before studying, consider what needs to get finished. What's the most important job? How long will it take?
- **Start with top priorities.** Put the most urgent tasks first. This helps your teen complete them when he has enough energy.
- **Include time for short breaks.** Research shows that students learn more in two 20-minute study sessions than in one 40-minute session.
- **Mark assignments off the list** as he completes them. It's a great—and motivating—feeling to watch the list shrink!

Source: Janet S. Fox, *Get Organized Without Losing It*, ISBN: 1-575-42193-3 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Attendance is key to success

School is your teen's job. And it's *your* job as a parent to make sure he's there. Expect your teen to be in school unless he is ill or there is a family emergency. Remember to:

- **Schedule** appointments after school.
- **Make** sure he isn't tardy.
- **Check** with teachers about your child's attendance.

Source: Randall S. Sprick, *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom*, ISBN: 0-87628-248-6 (The Center for Applied Research in Education, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Do you know the rules?

Most schools distribute student handbooks, behavior policies and other guidelines in the fall. You are expected to know the school rules and to promote responsible behavior.

If you haven't seen them, ask for a copy. Or check out the school website. You may find them posted there.



ENCOURAGING READING

Teach your teen to preview

When your teen has finished reading a textbook chapter, does she remember what she read? If not, it may help her to preview a chapter before she reads it. Have her skim the pages and read:

- The introduction.
- Bold-faced headings and subheadings.
- Photo captions and charts.
- Words in **bold** or *italics*.
- The summary of the chapter.
- Questions at the end of the chapter.

Then have her read the chapter. She should find it much easier to remember what she has read.

Source: "Textbook Reading Strategies," Carnegie Mellon University, www.cmu.edu/academic-development/publications/fastfact/Textbook%20Reading07.pdf.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents prevent procrastination?

Q: My teen puts things off. If he has a big paper due, he waits until the night before. He's very bright, but his grades suffer. How can I help him break the procrastination habit?

A: When procrastination gets to be a habit, as it has for your son, it can have serious consequences.

Help your son think about why he puts things off. Is he afraid of failing? Is his schedule overloaded? Does he watch too much TV?

Whatever the cause, he needs to get into good study habits now. Start by helping him break large projects into smaller tasks. Then have him set a deadline for each task. He may still wait until the deadline to finish each part, but bit by bit he'll finish the job. And once he gets started on a project, it will be easier to keep working.

As he finishes each task, he should give himself a small reward. Perhaps he can take some extra time playing a favorite online game.

Finally, make sure he sees each assignment in terms of his long-term goals. Learning how to study and getting better grades will help him with his goal of being a success in school, on the job and in life.



PARENT QUIZ

Is your teen making good choices?

Teens aren't known for making the best choices. But experts say parents can influence the decisions teens make. Answer these questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're guiding your teen towards good decisions:

- ___ **1. Have you spoken** with your teen about her goals—and how her choices can affect her progress towards them?
- ___ **2. Do you advise** your teen to look at her choices from more than one perspective?
- ___ **3. Do you help** your teen brainstorm many solutions to a problem?
- ___ **4. Have you talked** with your teen about how *you* solve problems?

___ **5. Do you encourage** your teen to think about the consequences of each choice she makes?

Each yes answer means your teen is learning how to choose wisely in life. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

*"The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity."
—Dorothy Parker*

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Expect your teen to be responsible for actions

Perhaps the most important lesson you can teach your child is to take responsibility for her actions. Here's how:

- **Give your teen** regular responsibilities.
- **Avoid nagging.** Use one word reminders such as "homework" instead.
- **Let your teen** make as many decisions as possible.
- **Allow your teen** to experience the consequences of her actions.
- **Don't make excuses** for your teen.

YOUR CHILD AND YOU

Get clued in to teens' lives

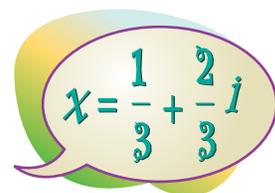
Adults who care make all the difference in a teen's life. So stay tuned in. Know your teen's friends and know what he does in his free time. Teens with parents who are "clued in" are less likely to get into trouble than other teens.

Source: "Parenting Teens," Focus Adolescent Services, www.focusas.com/Parenting.html.

REINFORCING LEARNING

Looking for patterns in math problems helps teens

As your teen solves math problems, have her talk her way through them. ("Now I'm multiplying both sides of this equation by two.") When she's done, she will have found both the problem's answer and the procedure she used. This will make similar problems easier.



Source: Eric Jensen, *Student Success Secrets*, ISBN: 0-764-12007-7 (Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1-800-645-3476, www.barronseduc.com).

Helping Students Learn[®]

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Managing Editor: Patricia Hodgdon.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Erika Beasley & Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Susan O'Brien & Pat Hodgdon. Editorial Assistant:

Pat Carter. Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.

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

Copyright © 2008, 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