

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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MOTIVATING YOUR TEEN

Set smart goals this school year

Whether it's making a sports team or getting an A in math, teens need to set goals. But figuring out how to set goals can be difficult. Give your teen a five-item checklist. Goals should be:

- 1. Specific.** Saying, "I want better grades" is not a goal. It's a wish. Saying, "I want to earn an A in math" is better.
- 2. Measurable.** How will your teen know when she's successful? She has to set a goal she can quantify. "By the end of this grading period, my average will be a 92."
- 3. Attainable.** If your teen has a C+ average, she's probably not going to graduate number one in her class. But she could set a goal of making the honor roll.
- 4. Relevant.** Your teen will be more likely to work hard if she believes that the results matter. For example, understanding math can help her budget for an exciting purchase.
- 5. Trackable.** Goals take time to achieve. Help your teen set up a system so she can see her progress. And if she goes off track, it will be easier for her to get herself back on course.



Source: Joe Landsberger, "Organizing (Large) Study Projects," Study Guides and Strategies, www.studygs.net/orgstr1.htm.

STUDY SKILLS

Boost your teen's note-taking skills

Taking notes when reading is one of the secrets to success in high school. But teens don't always know how to effectively take notes. Share these tips that can make the job easier:

- **Don't rewrite the book.** Read at least a paragraph or section before noting anything. Then decide what's most important.
- **Take notes from memory.** Rephrasing ideas moves you from reading to understanding.
- **Summarize graphs,** tables and charts in your own words.
- **Develop shortcuts.** Writing "Civil War" repeatedly takes a lot of time. Jot "CW=Civil War" in the margin. Then use your abbreviation often.
- **Use loose-leaf paper.** When it's time to study, you may want to spread out your notes. Number pages to limit confusion.

Source: Adam Robinson, *What Smart Students Know: Maximum Grades, Optimum Learning, Minimum Time*, ISBN: 0-5178-8085-7 (Three Rivers Press, www.randomhouse.com/crown/trp.html).

YOUR TEEN AND YOU

Show belief in your teen

The high school years aren't easy—and parents can't change that. But you can offer support. Tell your teen that you love him, no matter what. Discuss what he can do to make life happier. Together, plan for his exciting future. Express your confidence in his ability to succeed.

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Encourage good attendance

One of the most effective ways to get involved with your teen's education is to make sure that she regularly attends school. Be sure to:

- **Discuss attendance** with your teen.

Explain the importance of attendance and punctuality—if she didn't show up to a job, she'd be fired. School attendance is no less important.



- **Set a good example.**

Make sure that you attend school events whenever possible. Ask your teen about school to show that it's as important to you as it is to her.

SOLVING SCHOOL PROBLEMS

Sit in the front row in class

Sometimes a change in scenery does wonders. Have your teen ask his teachers if he can sit in the front row. Suggest that he try it in his easiest class, where he'll feel most confident. Sitting in the front row at school can reduce distractions, build interest in lessons, make a good impression and encourage participation.



Source: Peter Benson, Judy Galbraith and Pamela Espeland, *What Teens Need to Succeed*, ISBN: 1-5754-2027-9 (Free Spirit Publishing, www.freespirit.com).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Is parent involvement important in high school?

Q: My son entered ninth grade this year. I've been involved at his school over the years, but high school seems so different. Is it time to step back and take a break from being so involved? Does my involvement still make a difference in high school?



A: Yes. A study at Johns Hopkins University tracked thousands of students through the 12th grade. The study kept track of the classes students took, their grades, and whether they went to college. It also measured what their parents did during their child's high school years.

The study found that parents still play a big role. Setting high expectations is key. So is talking with students about going to college. Parents who did these things had students who were much more likely to graduate and go on to higher learning.

Parents also play a big role in keeping students focused in math and science. That's important, because so many of today's well-paying jobs require people to use higher-level math.

So set aside time to talk with your high school student. Make sure he's taking courses that will keep him on track to head to college. Your involvement really *does* make a difference.

Source: Sophia Catsambis, *Expanding Knowledge of Parental Involvement in Secondary Education—Effects on High School Academic Success* (Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, Report No. 27, ED426174).

PARENT QUIZ

Does your teen have success in mind?

If your teen starts the school year with good habits, she's likely to experience success all year long. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your teen build habits for success this year:

- ___ **1. Is there** a big calendar by your teen's study space on which she can write test dates and assignment due dates?
- ___ **2. Does your teen have** a regular study time?
- ___ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to use checklists?
- ___ **4. Have you reviewed** your family rules about studying?

___ **5. Do you encourage** your teen to form study groups with her classmates?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you are setting the stage for a successful school year. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Success doesn't come to you ... you go to it."
—Marva Collins

Reward teen responsibility

Your high school student will likely want a later curfew than she had in middle school. To know if it's time to change the rules, consider her past record.

If she's been great about coming home promptly (or calling when there's a problem), she may be ready for more freedom. It's still important to know exactly where she's going and with whom.

Keep in mind that new rules don't have to be permanent. Privileges can be taken away if they're not working out.

AFTER SCHOOL

Assess after-school jobs

Most teens would love to have a little extra money. But taking a job is a serious decision. Here are some issues to consider:

- **When will your teen work?** Some experts recommend no more than 10 to 15 hours a week.
- **How will your teen manage money?** Design a spending and savings plan. He might even consider investing.
- **Will it affect your teen's schoolwork?** School comes first. Your teen will still need to set aside time for homework.

HOMWORK

Evaluate Internet sites

The Internet is a valuable tool for helping with homework. The best results come from the most careful use.

Share these important tips:

- **The site should be credible.** Your teen should only use it if a reliable person or organization created it.
- **The site should promote learning.** What is its goal? To provide information? Sell something? Knowing will help your teen determine its value.



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