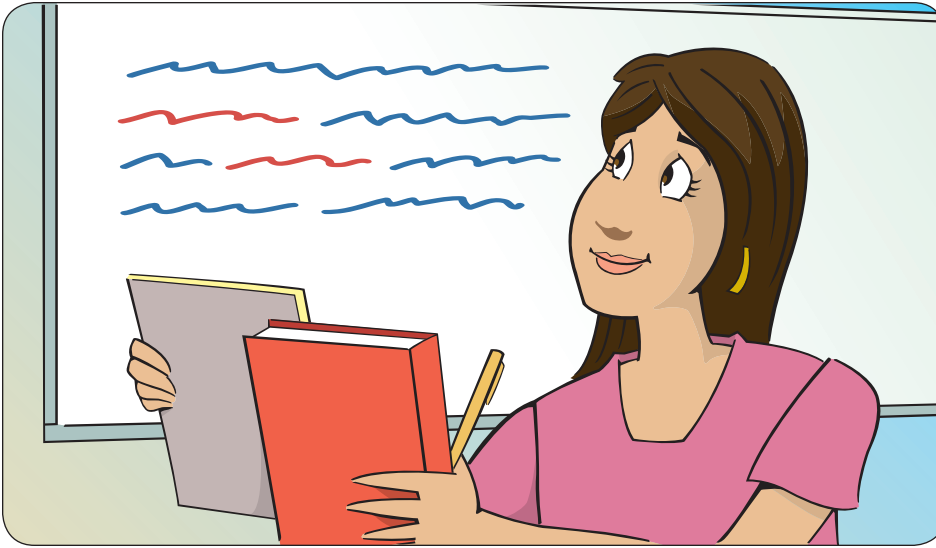


High School Parents[®]

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Halton Catholic District School Board

still make the difference!



Four strategies can help your teen succeed in high school

What's the secret to having a great year? Ask the expert—a teacher. Here are one teacher's tips on ways your high schooler can have the most successful year possible:

1. Bring the right tools for the job.

A carpenter can't work without a hammer and a saw. A student shouldn't show up without a textbook, a notebook and something to write with. If organization is challenging for your teen, have her use color-coded binders so she gets to English class with her English homework.

2. Do homework daily. In some classes, such as math, today's lesson builds on what students learned yesterday. If your teen hasn't done the homework, she

may miss the entire point of the lesson. Then she'll fall further behind.

3. Learn how to study. Learning how to take notes, how to read a textbook and how to study for tests will make homework time more productive. Ask your teen's teachers for tips on study skills. Also, look in the library for books that teach this important survival skill.

4. Make up missed work right away. It's not uncommon for students to get sick some time during the year. But your teen should take the responsibility of finding out what work she has missed—and turning it in as soon as possible.

Source: R. Wormeli, *Day One and Beyond*, Stenhouse Publishers.

Attendance should always be top priority



Good attendance can make the difference between a teen who graduates from high school and one who drops out.

Teachers focus on the importance of attendance, but that message is more effective when you support it at home.

To promote attendance:

- **Talk about your own attendance.** Companies depend on employees showing up every day. Set a good example by heading out the door with a smile on your face.
- **Don't make staying home a treat.** Consider making a "no TV or computer" rule on sick days. Your teen can read or rest. He'll be less likely to say he's sick just to get out of going to school.
- **Set a goal and offer a reward for reaching it.** Start with a realistic goal at first—like having your teen go to school every single day for a whole month. Decide on a reward for his success. Even something as simple as lunch together can be a great motivator!

High schoolers must memorize key facts to unleash brainpower



When was the Civil War fought? Who was the President after Franklin Roosevelt? How do you say *I ate* in Spanish?

The truth is that to be successful in school, students need to remember a lot of facts. And brain researchers are learning that some of the oldest methods—notably, *drilling*—are the best ways to do that.

When students can recall information automatically, they free the working memory in their brains that is needed for higher-level thinking and understanding deeper concepts.

So when your teen sits down to study, have her take the responsibility to memorize key facts. Tell her to make a set of flash cards. She might

even look for a computer application (like Cram for custom tests) that makes memorization a game.

Another good way to learn things, it turns out, is by testing. So have your teen test herself by answering the questions at the end of the chapter.

Source: V. Heffernan, "Drill, Baby, Drill," *New York Times*, September 19, 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/09/19/magazine/19fob-medium-heffernan-t.html.

"A child becomes an adult when he realizes that he has a right not only to be right, but also to be wrong."

—Harry S. Truman

Encourage writing by letting teens publish their own work



Teens need to know how to write in order to be successful in school and in life. Of course, teens do a lot of writing for school assignments.

But research shows that teens are more likely to write and enjoy it when they know their peers will be reviewing and commenting on their writing. So how can you use that information to encourage your teen to write? By heading online!

Here are a few online sites where teens can post their writings and read the work of other writers:

- **Figment**—www.figment.com.
- **Booksie**—www.booksie.com.
- **Writer's Cafe**—www.writerscafe.org.

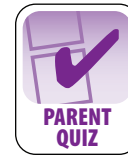
- **Amateur Writing**—www.amateurwriting.net.
- **The Next Big Writer**—www.thenextbigwriter.com.

Check out these online sites with your teen. See if he'd be excited to post short stories, poems or even a novel on one of the sites. It could be a great outlet for his writing.

But do take a minute to remind him that these online safety rules still apply:

- **Do not post anything** you wouldn't want your grandparents or a future employer to see. Google never forgets!
- **Never meet in person** with anyone you're "friends" with online. There's no way of knowing if the person is really who he says he is.

Are you helping your teen avoid eating disorders?



Eating disorders are common among teens. These disorders can cause health problems and even death. Answer

yes or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your teen avoid eating disorders:

___ 1. **Do you talk about the messages** that TV shows, magazines and movies send about acceptable body types?

___ 2. **Do you encourage** your teen to eat healthy foods?

___ 3. **Do you talk about the dangers** of eating disorders? Constant dieting can affect your teen's growth and health. Food is also not the way to deal with emotional issues.

___ 4. **Do you work** with your teen's health provider? If you suspect an eating disorder, get medical help.

___ 5. **Are you aware** of the example you set? When their parents diet or use food to cope with emotions, teens will likely follow their example.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your teen avoid an eating disorder. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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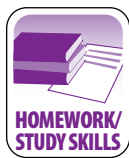
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Helping teens with homework doesn't mean doing the work!



Parents have always known it's important to help teens with homework. But today, some parents are actually

doing the homework.

Clearly, that's going too far. But what can a parent do?

Teachers say they need to see the teen's work, not the parent's. Only by looking at homework can a teacher judge what a teen still doesn't understand. Teachers often use what they learn from homework mistakes to plan future lessons.

Where should you draw the line between helping and taking over? You can:

- **Make helpful suggestions.** Suggest that your teen add a chart or graph to a paper. It's not okay if you create the chart on the computer while your teen works on math.

- **Suggest other sources** when your teen is working on a project. But don't take over by going to the library or running an internet search for your teen.
- **Edit your teen's work.** But don't rewrite a paper. Circle words your teen misspelled, but don't go to the dictionary to look them up. Point out punctuation problems.
- **Help your teen** see how what she's learning relates to real life. If she's doing math, you can show her how to balance a checkbook. It's not appropriate, though, to do her math homework for her.
- **Encourage your teen to talk** to the teacher if she is struggling with an assignment. Don't rush to call the teacher for her. Show your teen you trust her to handle the situation on her own. If she isn't able to resolve the problem, then step in and make the call.

Do you know what your teen wants to do after high school?



High school won't last forever—even though sometimes it might seem like it will! Do you know what your teen wants to

do after high school? Does he want to go to college? Does he want to get a job?

Discuss your teen's plans. Focus on how your education has helped you—or why you wish you had learned more.

With your teen:

- **Research** how to prepare for a career that interests him. How much schooling is required? Does he need to go to college or even graduate from school? Could he take any specific classes now to help prepare him?
- **Write a résumé.** Include jobs he's held, community service and academic achievements. Your teen can also add any special skills or computer programs he knows well.
- **See if he could visit** a person in a job that interests him. That way he will see first-hand the type of work that's involved.
- **Begin planning** for after-school jobs. It may take a little longer to find one that could prepare your teen for his chosen career path.

Q: My daughter works hard to get good grades. But already a teacher called to tell me my daughter had cheated. Many pages of a paper she turned in were copied, word for word, from the Internet. My daughter says that everyone cheats and if she doesn't, her grades won't be good enough to go to a good college. How should I handle this?

Questions & Answers

A: Cheating is cheating. And whether your teen copies off someone else's test or turns in work that she hasn't done, she is cheating.

Cheating is very common among teens. In a recent poll by Common Sense Media, 38 percent of teens admitted that they have done just what your daughter did.

That same poll shows that you're not alone in being surprised that your teen was using technology to cheat. In the poll:

- **92 percent of parents** believed that *other* kids used cell phones to cheat. But just 3 percent thought their teen was guilty.
- **79 percent of parents** believed that *other* students copied work from the Internet; just 7 percent said their teen had. Clearly, the math doesn't add up. So support the school. Remind your daughter that your family doesn't condone cheating. And if the only way she can get into a college is by cheating, she's not going to be successful there.

The lesson she learns may be painful and embarrassing. But in the end, she'll be a stronger student—and learn a lot more—by doing her own work.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Responsibility

Brain research shows teens take risks with friends



He's a responsible kid. So why did he and his friends get in a car and drive *way* too fast? Or go to a party where they

knew there would be alcohol?

Brain researchers now know some things about the teenage brain. And what they're learning is that teens may be wired to make bad decisions and take risks when their friends are watching them.

Researchers asked teens and adults to play a short driving game. They were rewarded for finishing quickly, as long as they followed basic traffic rules. While they were playing, researchers monitored their brain activity. Half the time, the teens played alone. Half the time, they were told that their friends were watching in another room.

The result? When teens thought friends were watching, they took *many* more risks. They drove faster. They ran yellow lights. They were more likely to crash.

In other words, just knowing others are watching made the difference. The "peer pressure" was simply the presence of peers.

What does this mean for parents? Perhaps most important, parents should *never* assume that their teens will make responsible choices when they're with friends. So before your teen goes out, be sure to review the rules—and help your teen think through consequences.

Source: J. Chein and others, "Peers increase adolescent risk taking by enhancing activity in the brain's reward circuitry," *Developmental Science*, March 2011, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Your teen needs supervision, time to learn responsibility

Your teen's appearance can be deceiving. You look at him and he looks so grown-up. That may lead you to assume that he also thinks like an adult.

The truth is that a teen's body matures a lot faster than his brain. Teens can learn to be responsible—but they need time and a lot of parental supervision.

Here are some ways to help your teen grow into responsibility:

- **Be very clear** about your expectations. Teens aren't very good at reading between the lines. If weekend curfew is midnight, say, "I expect you home by 12:00."
- **Accept that your teen** can't plan ahead. Help him write due dates



for school projects on a calendar—and then check it regularly. If the test is Friday, he can't go to the game on Thursday night.

Source: J. and D. Eilum, *Raising a Teenager: Parents and the Nurturing of a Responsible Teen*, Celestial Arts Publishing.

Help your teenager develop responsibility with self-discipline



Students with self-discipline are able to buckle down and do the work needed to achieve.

- To promote self-discipline:
- **Avoid rescuing your teen.** If she gets herself into a jam—like forgetting her homework—let her feel the consequences. She needs to learn how to think ahead and solve problems.
 - **Avoid doing things for your teen** that she can do for herself. Yes, it might be faster for you to do her laundry. But eventually, she'll have to take care of it herself—and it's better that she learns now while you're there to help.

- **Encourage your teen** to participate in activities that develop self-discipline. Playing a musical instrument means your teen has to be self-disciplined enough to practice regularly. Team sports require your teen to show up to practice on time and give her all.
- **Encourage your teen** to set (and stick to) her own study schedule. She's old enough to decide what study time works best for her.
- **Give your teen choices** about which responsibilities she will share in your home. Don't let her choose *if* she's going to complete a chore, but try to let her decide between washing the car or taking out the trash.