

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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A Service of the Newton County Schools

*still make the difference!*

## Parent involvement in high school is critical for success

In elementary school, it's easy to get involved with your child's education. You can chaperone field trips or volunteer in the classroom. In high school, however, your teen may discourage your involvement.

But your involvement is still very important! When parents are involved in high school:

- **Students are better readers.**
- **Student attendance improves.**
- **Student dropout rates go down.**
- **Students have more positive attitudes about school and learning.**

So what can you do? Don't worry—it is possible to maintain your involvement in your teen's education without causing her to die of embarrassment. You can:

- **Stay in touch** with your teen's teachers. Meet them at least once during the year. Then communicate through notes, email or phone messages.
- **Talk about school.** Ask your teen what she's learning in her classes. Listen to her responses.



- **Attend school events**—especially if your teen is participating in the event. This shows your teen that you think school is important and that you care about her education.
- **Encourage regular study hours.** Be sure that your teen has a quiet, comfortable place to study.
- **Provide help**—offer to proofread a paper before your teen hands it in. It's a great way to see firsthand what she's reading and thinking about.

Source: "Family Engagement," National Dropout Prevention Network/Center, [www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/family\\_engagement/overview.htm](http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/family_engagement/overview.htm).

## Miss school? Your teenager will miss out!



Is it a big deal to let your teen miss school if he's not sick? Research done by the Chicago

Public Schools gives the answer: *Absolutely.*

The school system tracked the attendance of students who missed even a small amount of school—roughly one week each marking period. They found those students were significantly more likely to drop out or not graduate from high school on time.

Ninth grade is an especially important year. Only 63 percent of ninth graders who missed one week of school each marking period graduated on time four years later.

When teens miss class, they miss out on important learning. So stress the importance of going to school every day.

Also check your teen's absences from class. Be sure that he is not only in school, but also in his math class!

Source: Consortium on Chicago School Research, "What Matters for Staying on Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools," University of Chicago, <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/07%20What%20Matters%20Final.pdf>.

## Make mornings more tolerable for your teenager, entire family



Getting a teen out of bed in the morning can be a chore. And during those first few weeks of school (when your teen is still on a summer schedule) it can seem nearly impossible!

But you can teach your teen to tolerate mornings. Learning how to get up on time is important. It's a time management skill that your teen will use every day as an adult.

And if your teen is motivated in the morning, he's likely to carry that motivation through the day—in all of his classes. To help your teen get up on the right side of the bed every morning:

- **Start with a smile.** When your teen's alarm clock goes off, walk past his room and say "Good morning!" Your upbeat mood might be contagious.
- **Encourage breakfast.** Eating forces your teen's body to wake

up. And the food powers his brain, which will make it easier for him to learn and pay attention in that first period class. Provide some type of breakfast—even if it's just a banana your teen grabs as he heads out the door.

- **Suggest a shower**—starting with cold water. The shock of the temperature will open the eyes of even the sleepest teen! Or allow your teen to turn on the radio—a song with a fast beat could get him moving.

Source: Denise Witmer, "How To Help Your Teen Wake Up in the Morning," About.com: Teens, [http://parentingteens.about.com/od/behavioranddiscipline/ht/wake\\_alarmclock.htm](http://parentingteens.about.com/od/behavioranddiscipline/ht/wake_alarmclock.htm).

**"High achievement always takes place in the framework of high expectations."**

—Jack Kinder

## Use 'drive time' to teach your teen a lesson about respect



It's important to look for opportunities in your teen's everyday life to teach him about respect. And if you can find something he can really relate to, you have a golden teachable moment.

Most teens dream about getting their driver's licence. And as they get closer to earning it, they pay close attention to other drivers. For parents, this is a great time to help teens think about showing respect.

Suppose a driver cuts you off as he races to get into the turn lane. You could lose your temper. Or you could talk about it with your teen. Is that

driver showing respect for the other drivers on the road?

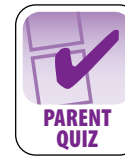
Do not be surprised if your teen thinks you should have responded in kind. He may even say, "You allowed him to disrespect you."

It's that kind of thinking that gets teens into trouble. Now is the time to remind him that not every slight needs to be addressed.

If you had chased after the other driver, you might have put yourself—and others on the road—in danger. Helping teens see that it's okay not to respond can be a powerful lesson.

Source: Goodcharacter.com, "Teaching Guide: Respect for Grades 7-12," [www.goodcharacter.com/ISOC/Respect.html](http://www.goodcharacter.com/ISOC/Respect.html).

## Are you helping your teen consider consequences?



Teens think they're invincible. So it's up to parents to help teens develop an appropriate sense of caution. Are you teaching your teen to make good choices and consider consequences?

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Have you talked** with your teen about thinking first—*before* acting?
- \_\_\_ **2. Have you taught** your teen delaying tactics when she is faced with a choice? She can count to 10 or pretend to call someone so she can stall for time.
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you remind** your teen of her long-term goals? "Will you get into college if you skip classes and fail?"
- \_\_\_ **4. Have you given** your teen an out? If she's in danger, you will pick her up—no questions asked.
- \_\_\_ **5. Have you given** her some ways to say *no*. "My parents would kill me!" is usually effective.

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you're preparing your teen to think before she acts. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

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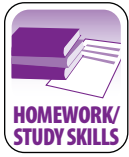
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## Encourage your teen to make homework 'green' this year



Many families are doing their part to try and help the environment. Some recycle. Others use compact fluorescent light bulbs. And still others try to take public transportation as much as possible.

This school year, give your teen the chance to do something good for the environment. Help him try to turn his homework "green" by saving paper. Encourage your teen to:

- **Get creative with notes.** Your teen could take notes on the back of old papers that are blank on one side. Or he could record class discussions and type up notes at home on the computer.

- **Use recycled notebook paper.** Using recycled paper can save a huge amount of landfill space each year! Just have your teen look on the packaging of the paper. If it's recycled, it will say so right on the package.
- **Think before printing.** Does your teen really need to print out each draft of his research paper? See if he can edit earlier drafts right on the computer and only print when necessary. And he should use the front and the back of paper when he does print!

Source: Grace Fleming, "How to Green Your Homework And Be Kind to the Environment," About.com: Homework/Study Tips, <http://homeworktips.about.com/od/studymethods/a/green.htm>.

## Help your daughter avoid peer pressure to send, post pictures



Teens who are staring at their cell phones may not be reading text messages. They may be looking at suggestive photos forwarded by friends.

New research shows that peer pressure can cause girls to email these suggestive pictures. Almost half of teens say that pressure from friends or dates is the reason girls post photos they would never share with their grandparents!

Here is a talk you must have with your teen—before she pushes the "send" button:

- **Know who your teen communicates with.** You know who comes into your home, but do you know who your teen is communicating with on her phone and online?
- **Be sure your teen understands that *nothing* is private in cyberspace.** Even when teens

think they're sending a photo to just a few friends, those teens forward the pictures and pretty soon, they are on MySpace.

- **Help her think about the future.** Nothing completely disappears once it's on the Internet. How will she feel if a college admissions officer sees the picture? How about a potential employer?
- **Check out your teen's online profile.** Go on MySpace, Facebook or other social networks where your teen may be communicating with friends. Remind her—she's already chosen to make this information public. You are not snooping. You're just asking to see what everyone else already knows about her.

Source: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, "Sex and Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults," [www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech_Summary.pdf).

**Q:** My daughter wants to do her homework while listening to music. She says it helps her concentrate better and get more done. Our rule has always been that she needs to do homework in a quiet place because she says other noise distracts her. As we start the school year, I want to set rules for homework that will help her do her best in school. Can she learn while she listens to music?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** As with so many parenting issues, the answer to this one is, "It depends." The research on this topic has found no single clear answer. To find the right answer for your child:

- **Ask yourself questions.** How well is your daughter doing now? Is she doing her best? Is she earning good grades or is she just getting by?
- **Pay close attention** to your daughter as she studies with the music on. Is she singing along with the words of the song? If so, she isn't paying full attention to her homework—no matter what she says. In that case, she may need to confine her study-time music to music without lyrics.
- **Try an experiment.** For one month, have her do her homework with no music. Then give her a month to study with music. Compare the results. Did homework take longer? Were her grades higher?

And while you're making rules for study time, think about other noise. Since your daughter says that other noise is distracting, think about a no-TV-during-homework rule. You can pay bills, read or do other quiet work.

—Holly Smith,  
The Parent Institute

# It Matters: Responsibility

## Give your teen responsibility for his own schedule



Your teen may be used to you telling him what to do and when to do it. But as he grows up, he should gradually take over his own schedule.

The start of the school year is the perfect time to give your teen a calendar or a planner. Encourage him to think about assignments and events and to write everything down so he doesn't forget anything.

Then suggest that your teen start thinking:

- **Monthly.** After filling in his calendar with school, activity and family commitments, he should look at the whole month. Are there any conflicts? Is there a big project coming up next month that he needs to start working on now?
- **Weekly.** It's important to review the week ahead, as well. Does he have any tests next week? He will have to allot more study time for that subject this week. If he wants to go out with friends on Friday night, he may need to do his laundry on Thursday instead.
- **Daily.** Your teen can make to-do lists to help keep him on track. That will ensure he gets everything done.

Review the schedule with your teen. If he's at school for eight hours a day, sleeps for eight hours a night, and studies for three hours each evening, does he really have time to join the soccer team?

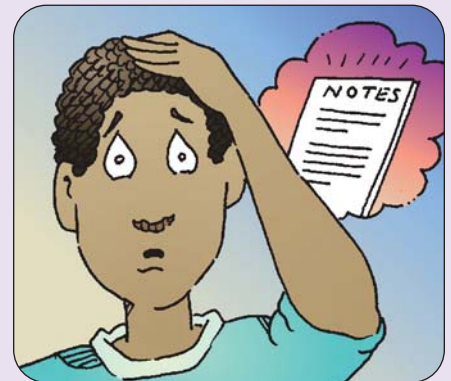
With practice, your teen will learn to make responsible decisions about how to spend his time.

## Encourage your teen to take responsibility for belongings

**W**hen your child was six, you overlooked the occasional forgotten lunch. But now he's 16—and still forgetting his gym clothes at home or his history book at school.

Your teen's scatterbrained behavior is frustrating you—and hurting his own school success. To help your teen learn to be responsible for his belongings:

- **Avoid "rescuing" him.** If he has a biology test tomorrow but has forgotten his notes at school, don't drop what you're doing to drive him back to the school. Tell him to figure out a solution. He could walk back to school or call a friend and ask to study together.



- **Figure out why he's so forgetful.** Is your teen only absent-minded when it comes to his English homework? He may be having trouble in that class. Set up a conference with your teen and his teacher to see if extra help is available.

## After-school activities can help your teen become responsible



It's the beginning of the school year and your teen may be thinking about signing up for a few after-school

activities. These can be a great way to build responsibility, but not if they're all fun and games.

Researchers at Wake Forest University have learned that teens can use after-school clubs to become more responsible adults.

Sometimes in life, we all have to do things we don't want to do. After-school clubs can be a great way to learn that lesson. A student who writes for the school paper must meet his deadlines, even

when he has a big test. A young actor who is cast in a play can't miss a rehearsal or everyone's performance will suffer.

Talk about this issue with your teen. If she starts a project for a club, she needs to finish it. If she signs up for a team, she commits to go to every practice. When she makes that early morning workout, it will get easier the next time.

Tell your teen she's building "responsibility muscles." They'll get stronger each time she follows through.

Source: "Wake Forest University Study Shows How Youth Programs Foster Responsibility in Teens," Wake Forest University, [www.wfu.edu/news/release/2009.02.06.t.php](http://www.wfu.edu/news/release/2009.02.06.t.php)