

Helping Students Learn[®]

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Grand Erie District School Board

Growing Excellence ... Inspiring Success



September 2013

Share some secrets with your teen for a successful school year

No matter how your teen did last year, the start of a new school year is the perfect opportunity to start with a clean slate. Here are some tips on ways your student can have the most successful year possible:

- **Bring the right tools for the job.** A carpenter can't work without a saw and hammer. A student shouldn't show up without a textbook, a notebook and something to write with. If organization is challenging for your teen, have him use color-coded binders so he gets to English class with his English homework.
- **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, he may miss the entire point of the lesson. Then he'll fall further behind.
- **Strengthen study skills.** Learning how to take notes, how to read a textbook and how to study for tests will make homework time more productive. Have your teen ask his teachers for some tips. He can also look in the library for books that teach important study skills.
- **Make up missed work right away.** Most kids get sick at some time during the year. But your teen should take the responsibility of finding out what work he has missed—and turning it in as soon as possible.



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



Make attendance a priority this year

Good attendance can make the difference between graduating from high school and dropping out. Students often drop out because they have fallen behind in class—which could be avoided by attending school regularly.

To promote attendance:

- **Set a goal.** Start realistically—like having your teen go to school every single day for a whole grading period. Decide on a reward together. It may be as simple as a special Saturday lunch together.
- **Discuss your own attendance.** Companies depend on employees showing up every day. Set an 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.

Preparing for your teen's future starts now!

Discuss your teen's plans for after graduation. With your teen:

- **Research interesting careers.** How much schooling is required? What classes could your teen take to help prepare her?
- **Write a résumé.** Include jobs held, community service and academic achievements. Your teen should also add any special skills or computer programs she knows well.
- **Take advantage** of career-planning services at school. See if your teen could visit a person in a job that interests her.

Help with responsibility

Even though your teen may look like an adult, he's still learning adult traits, like responsibility. To develop this skill:

- **Be clear about expectations.** If curfew is midnight, say, "I expect you home by 12."
- **Assist in planning.** Help your teen keep a calendar—and check it regularly.
- **Encourage baby steps.** When your teen has a long-term goal, help him break it into achievable steps.

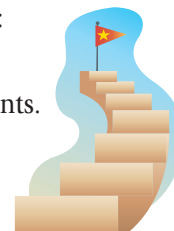


Source: J. and D. Elum, *Raising a Teenager: Parents and the Nurturing of a Responsible Teen*, Celestial Arts Publishing.

Study skills for achievement

No student will be able to succeed in school without a good set of study skills. Share these top study tips with her:

1. **Set** goals.
2. **Write** down all assignments.
3. **Read** carefully.
4. **Take** good notes.
5. **Stay** organized.



Source: "Top 11 Study Skills," The Center for Teaching and Learning, Stanford University, www.stanford.edu/dept/CTL/Student/studyskills/top11.pdf.

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What do I do if my teen has been caught cheating?

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

A: You need to take this seriously. Cheating is cheating. And whether your teen copies off someone else's test or turns in work that isn't her own, she is cheating.

But she's right about one thing. Cheating is common among teens. In a recent study by the Josephson Institute, 32 percent of teens admitted that they had done just what your daughter did. That same study reports that 51 percent of high school students have admitted to cheating on tests.

Remind your daughter that your family doesn't condone cheating. And help her put this in perspective. If she gets into a college only by cheating, she's not going to be able to stay there. Many colleges have honor codes that outlaw cheating—and the consequence could be as serious as being expelled.

It's important that you support the school and any consequences imposed. The lesson your teen learns may be painful and embarrassing. But in the end, she'll be a stronger student—and she'll learn a lot more—by doing her own work.



Are you planning for a great year?

A great year in high school doesn't just happen. It takes planning. Here's a quiz to see how you're doing. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions:

- ___ **1. Does your teen** use a calendar or planner to write down class assignments?
- ___ **2. Have you visited** the school at least once this year? Sign up to help with at least one school event or activity.
- ___ **3. Does your teen** have a regular study schedule so class assignments get completed on time?
- ___ **4. Does your teen** have a quiet place to study at home?

- ___ **5. Have you joined** the parent-teacher organization at your teen's school?

How did you do?

Mostly yes answers mean you're off to a great start this year. For each no, try some of the ideas mentioned to help your teen have a great year.

"A new position of responsibility will usually show a man to be a far stronger creature than was supposed."
—William James

Memorizing allows for more complex thinking

When was the Civil War fought? Who was the president after Franklin Roosevelt?

Students need to remember a lot of facts. And sometimes they just need to memorize key information. When students can call up information automatically, it frees their brains to focus on more complicated things, like analysis or the structure of a question.



Help your teen with memorizing. Make flash cards. Use a cell phone app that tests facts.

Source: V. Heffernan, "Drill, Baby, Drill," New York Times, September 19, 2010, <http://tinyurl.com/25s4cet>.

Help your teen develop a sense of self-discipline

The most successful students are those with self-discipline. To build this important trait:

- **Avoid rescuing your teen.**
- **Avoid doing things** that your teen can do himself.
- **Have your teen** keep his own calendar, keeping track of studying and activities

Peer pressure really can lead to poor choices

Researchers are learning that teenage brains may be wired to make bad decisions and take risks when their friends are watching them.

Just knowing others are watching seems to affect the process of making good decisions. The "peer pressure" is the presence of peers.

Talk with your teen about making responsible decisions when it comes to both school and his social life. Review rules and consequences. Stress independent thinking.

Source: T. Parker-Pope, "Teenagers, Friends, and Bad Decisions," New York Times, February 3, 2011, <http://tinyurl.com/6c7sq7z>.

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