

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

March 2023  
Vol. 30, No. 7

Dodgeville High School

*still make the difference!*



## Researchers reveal five key tasks for parents of teens

Now that your teen is in high school, do you think that most of your school-related jobs are over? According to research, high school students benefit when families:

- 1. Love and connect.** Spend time together as a family and spend one-on-one time with your teen. Do familiar things like cooking a meal or watching sports, and add new things like volunteering. Family bonds support school success.
- 2. Guide and limit.** Figure out what's nonnegotiable, such as issues related to school responsibilities, health and safety. Let your teen know you won't give in on those things. But discuss ways you and your teen can compromise on issues like clothes, hair and schedules.

- 3. Monitor and observe.** Be aware of where your teen is going and who your teen is with. Keep in contact with the school about academic performance and attendance. Consult with teachers, coaches and other adults in your teen's life.
- 4. Model and advise.** Be a good role model. Take care of your health and put your values into practice. Your example is more powerful than any words you speak.
- 5. Provide and advocate.** If your community doesn't offer what you think teens need, get active. Network within the community to provide the support they need.

**Source:** A.R. Simpson, Ph.D., *Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action*, Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health.

## Checklists help students stay organized



Before an airplane takes off, the pilot runs through a checklist to make sure everything is ready. Even pilots who have flown thousands of flights still go through their checklists every time they fly.

Encourage your teen to run through these mental checklists throughout the day:

- **In the morning.** What do I need for school? Book bag, assignment, lunch, gym shoes, a signed note.
- **Before class.** What do I need for my first class? Textbook, homework, pencil, paper.
- **In class.** What are the assignments for tomorrow? Do I understand them? Are there long-term projects? When are they due?
- **Before leaving school.** What materials do I need to bring home to complete all of my assignments?
- **At home.** What are my school-work priorities? Which tasks are most important? Due first?
- **Before bed.** What do I need for school tomorrow? Have I placed all items by the door.

## It takes just 20 minutes a day to strengthen reading skills!



By the time students reach high school, they are expected to be strong readers. In every subject from math to science to history, they need to read long passages and understand what they've read.

The good news is that reading skills improve with practice. Students who read regularly get better at it. They read more quickly and remember more. Reading also improves their focus and expands their vocabulary.

Encourage your high schooler to practice reading skills by reading something enjoyable. Your teen should set aside 20 minutes a day and read something not related to school. Reading at least 20 minutes a day will expose your teen to almost two million words per year!

If possible, pick up something to read yourself during the same time. Later, you and your teen can talk about what you've read.

Over time, this simple solution will help your high schooler strengthen "reading muscles" and get more out of school-related reading.

Source: G. Ivey and D. Fisher, *Creating Literacy-Rich Schools for Adolescents*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

**"Teenage reading statistics show over 80% of them don't read for pleasure on a daily basis."**

—*American Psychological Association*

## Studying a foreign language has many benefits for students



Many students consider foreign language courses only as something they are required take to earn a diploma. Help your teen see the many other benefits of learning to speak another language.

Learning a foreign language:

- **Helps students improve skills** in their native language. For English-speaking students, a new language can sharpen vocabulary, grammar and writing skills.
- **Improves students' memory** and gives them practice in speaking and listening.
- **Prepares students** for the world outside of school. A new language exposes them to another culture and its traditions. Knowing another

language also opens the door to more career options.

To support your teen's efforts in a foreign language course:

- **Ask your teen to teach you** a few simple phrases. Use them around the house.
- **Stay involved** in assignments. Ask how your teen is doing in class at least once week.
- **Look for news** and TV stories about the country whose language your teen is studying.
- **Go to the library** and check out videos, music and books in that language.
- **Look for festivals** and cultural events related to the language your teen is studying. Make plans to attend one together.

## Are you showing your teen how to be thorough?



So many poor grades result not from a lack of knowledge, but rather from careless mistakes.

Are you teaching your high schooler to do careful, accurate work? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you review** your teen's planner to see that assignments are written down completely?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you encourage** your teen to pay attention to details—such as the correct citation for research sources?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you remind** your teen that "neatness counts," and that sloppy work—particularly in math—leads to errors?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you encourage** your teen to double-check answers before submitting work?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you suggest** your teen read over and edit writing assignments before turning them in?

**How well are you doing?**

If most of your answers are *yes*, you are helping your teen turn in thorough work. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Published monthly September through May.  
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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.  
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.  
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

# Address common attendance excuses from your teenager



You've heard them all—every excuse in the book for why your high school student should be allowed to skip school.

Your teen may have even invented some new ones that weren't around back when you were trying to pull one over on your parents.

Here is a list of common excuses teens use to get out of going to class—and ways to respond to them:

- **"I don't feel good."** This excuse has been around as long as school itself. Unless your teen is really sick, it's time for school. Always follow The school's health protocols.
- **"If I could just sleep for an extra hour, I'd be so much more productive."** Respond that your teen can go to bed an hour earlier tonight.

- **"I have a project due at 2 p.m. that I haven't finished yet."** Say that your teen needs to be more organized. You won't allow skipping a class just to finish an assignment for another class.
- **"I need to rest before the big game tonight."** School comes before sports and other extracurricular activities. Big events are not an exception.
- **"Juniors aren't supposed to go to school today. I forgot to tell you."** If this could be possible, call the school to make sure.

If your teen is constantly trying to stay home from school, it may be a sign of a larger problem. Speak to your teen's teachers or school counselor about ways to address an ongoing reluctance to attend school.

# Time lines are helpful tools for teens studying history



The assignment is to read about the Russian Revolution, but your teen is having trouble remembering all those

names and dates. In history, cause and effect matter, so it's important for students to put things in order.

Creating a time line can help. Time lines make it easier to see how one thing led to another and how much time passed between events. They also help students put ideas into context.

To create a time line for events, your teen should:

- **Set boundaries.** When did the era begin? When did it end? If the topic is the Russian Revolution, it's not necessary to begin the time line with the fall of the Roman Empire. Suggest that your teen

stick with the time period outlined in the class notes.

- **Identify the important events.** Have your teen summarize key points: who was involved, what happened, and when the event took place.
- **Include illustrations for events.** Here's a case where a picture really is worth a thousand words. Graphics help students with recall.
- **Use different colors.** For example, your teen might use red for the February Revolution and orange for the October Revolution.

The completed time line should help your teen "see" how the events unfolded. To review for a test, have your teen try to rewrite the time line from memory.

**Source:** L. Zwier and G. Mathes, *Study Skills for Success*, University of Michigan Press.

**Q:** My high schooler wants to get an after school job. I know jobs can help students learn responsibility and time management, but how do I know if my teen is ready to handle one?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Most teens would love a little extra money. But not all teens are mature enough to make the best choices when it comes to after-school jobs.

Here are questions to ask as you and your teen make this decision:

1. **How many hours** would your teen work? Experts believe that most teens can handle about 10 to 15 hours a week. (In fact, these students may even find that their grades go up.) More hours than that, and schoolwork starts to suffer. So set limits.
2. **How would your teen** get to and from work? Is there public transportation available?
3. **How would your teen manage** the money? Make it clear that you expect your teen to create a savings plan.
4. **Would a job keep your teen** from meeting family obligations? Your teen should make sure that there will still be time for responsibilities at home. An after-school job shouldn't interfere with family meals or traditions, either.
5. **Will a job keep your teen** from participating in school activities? These strengthen teens' feelings of belonging at school, which improves academic outcomes.

Working and going to school is a balancing act. Your teen must remember that school is the top priority. With your help, your teen can make the best choices for today and for the future.

# It Matters: Mental Health

## Pay attention to your teen's behavior



It's normal for teens to be "moody" and to distance themselves from their parents. So how can you tell when

your teen may be struggling? Here's what experts have to say:

- **Keep talking.** Regularly ask how your teen is doing, and make it clear you're always ready to listen. Talk about other adults your teen can turn to, like relatives, teachers, school counselors, coaches, etc. Feeling connected to family, school and the community can make your teen more likely to seek help if there's a problem.
- **Recognize symptoms.** Feelings of sadness or stress that persist and interfere with daily life may be signs of depression or anxiety. Other symptoms include avoiding favorite activities and changes in eating and sleeping habits. If you're worried about your teen, ask teachers and the school counselor what they've observed, and make an appointment with a doctor.
- **Learn suicide warning signs.** The Centers for Disease Control reports the suicide rate increased seven percent among people ages 15 to 24 recently. Warning signs include feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness, withdrawing from family and friends, giving away belongings and saying things like "There's no reason to live."

If you notice any of these signs, or if you suspect your child has suicidal thoughts, seek professional help right away.

## Help your teen set healthy boundaries with social media

**S**ocial media helps teens stay connected with friends and family, which is important for mental health. But social media can also have negative effects on mental health.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Control content.** Suggest your teen follow people who are inspiring, like a favorite author. Explain that it's OK—and even healthy—to unfollow people who make your teen feel sad or anxious.
- **Turn off notifications.** This simple yet surprisingly effective strategy will make your teen feel less tempted to check social media constantly. Instead of reacting to every ping, your teen can set aside specific times to go online.
- **Put posts into perspective.** Social media posts can make people's



lives look ideal. Remind your teen that no one's life is perfect. People are much more likely to take and share photos of good times than of not-so-good ones.

- **Walk away.** Have your teen take breaks from social media. It can be refreshing to go "off the grid" for an evening, a day or a weekend.

## Five strategies can help your high schooler manage stress



From doing well in school to fitting in with peers, life as a teenager can be stressful. Share these proven stress relievers with your teen:

1. **Spending time in nature.** Explore nearby parks together. Suggest taking hikes, going stargazing or sitting outdoors to read or study.
2. **Hobbies.** Doing arts and crafts, playing a musical instrument or engaging in something your teen enjoys can provide a relaxing break.
3. **Setting priorities.** School, studying, work, sports, friends—does

your teen cram too much into each day? If a busy schedule is causing stress, it may be time for your teen to cut back.

4. **Sleep.** Teens need 8 to 10 hours of sleep per night for overall health. To promote better sleep, have your teen limit screen use in the hour before bedtime and keep devices outside the bedroom at night.
5. **Physical activity.** Go for family bike rides or follow along with a yoga video together. Suggest that your teenager combine exercise with socializing by regularly meeting friends for a pick-up game or a run.