

High School Parents[®]

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Chambersburg Area School District

still make the difference!

Get your teen involved in planning your summer trip



April is a great time to start planning ahead for that summer family road trip. Whether it's a day trip to the beach or a quest to see every major league baseball stadium, be sure to involve your teen in the planning. It's a great way to spend time with your teen, and he'll be thankful that you asked his opinion. Your teen can help you:

- **Figure out what to do.** You may think that visiting the World's Largest Strawberry (Strawberry Point, Iowa) is the best use of your time, while your teen would rather see the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (Cleveland, Ohio). You and your teen could also research the places you plan to visit to find out their history and significance before you even arrive.
- **Plan your route.** Work with your teen to find the best route for your trip, whether by using paper maps or consulting websites such as Mapquest (www.mapquest.com) or Free Trip (www.freetrip.com). Don't forget to plan for rest stops at picnic sites or restaurants along

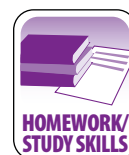


the way. For reviews of great roadside restaurants, go to www.roadfood.com.

- **Manage the car.** Teach your teen the basics of car maintenance, such as how to check and adjust the oil and tire pressure, or how to change a flat tire. If he's old enough, you might even let him drive for part of the trip—as long as you are also keeping your eyes on the road.
- **Plan and prepare travel-safe snacks.** Have your teen arrange for a few snacks between meals. Healthy items such as granola bars and pretzels will last longer than sugary treats.
- **Keep your sanity.** Put your teen in charge of entertaining younger siblings. He can invent a set of car rules for everyone to follow, such as “keep your hands to yourself.” And he can gather items to distract younger children when they're bored: travel games, books and coloring books and colored pencils (crayons could melt in a hot car).

Source: Wayne Parker, “Planning the Summer Road Trip,” About.com, <http://fatherhood.about.com/od/activities/a/summertrips.htm>.

Support your teen when it's time to prepare for tests



Whether it's an Advanced Placement test, a final exam or an important state test, this is a month when many teens will prepare for big exams. To help your teen prepare, have her:

- **Focus on weak areas.** No one is equally good at everything. So to make the most of her study time, have her look through old tests and homework assignments. Have her list the subjects or chapters where she needs the most work.
- **Work with others.** Many teens find that forming a study group is a great way to review material. Members can quiz each other and can share questions that might be on the exam. If she doesn't join a study group, she can still work with a classmate.
- **Find a more interesting way to learn the material—like writing a song or poem.** Memorizing alone isn't enough.
- **Apply it.** A teen will understand more about the meaning of “survival of the fittest” if she thinks about a TV reality show like “The Apprentice.” She'll remember more about the plot of *Emma* if she also has seen the movie *Clueless*.

Source: Shelley O'Hara, *Improving Your Study Skills*, ISBN: 0-764-57803-0 (CliffsNotes, an imprint of John Wiley & Son, Inc., 1-800-762-2974, www.wiley.com).

Believe it or not—you can make teen screen time work for you



By the time most American students graduate high school, they will have spent 15,000 hours in the classroom—and 20,000 in front of the television.

Television has worked its way into families' everyday lives to a staggering extent. Sure, you can limit how many hours of television your teen watches in a given day. You can restrict the shows your teen watches. But the best thing you can do is to make TV work for you. Here's how:

- **Watch with your teen.** Even if "Lost" isn't your favorite show, it might be your teen's. Look at it as an hour to spend with your teen, rather than as an hour of torture.

Plus, it may give you some insight into who your teen is using as a role model when you are not around.

- **Talk with your teen.** After the show, discuss what happened. Was there unexpected violence? Ask your teen why this show appeals to her. Did a character have to deal with a crisis? Ask your teen how she would have solved it.
- **Share with your teen.** How was this show similar to or different from what you watched as a teen? Remembering that you were once her age will help her relate to you.

Source: Sheila H. Troppe, "Television and Teens," Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1984/5/84.05.03.x.html.

Got a special talent? Put it to work at your teenager's school



You learned sign language and you've always wanted to share your knowledge. Today, some schools, including **Margaret Brent Middle School in St. Mary's County, Maryland**, invite parents to play an active role in after-school clubs.

From drama club to scrapbooking to helping out with the school newspaper, parents are encouraged to share their talents with students.

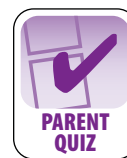
Check with your school. You may find that your talents or interests match a specific school need. You could:

- **Line** the athletic fields.
- **Help** coach the girls' track team.
- **Design** the programs for the graduation ceremony.
- **Paint** sets or find props for the spring musical.

By lending your time and talents, you'll get a chance to spend time with your teen—and your school will offer better activities for all students.

Contact: Laura Carpenter, Supervisor of Gifted and Talented Programs, St. Mary's County Public Schools, 301/475-5511 ext. 142, lmcarpenter@smcps.org.

Could your teen be in need of extra help in school?



The end of the year is near—and your teen is struggling in one or more classes. It's not too late to get extra help. Does he need it? To find out, answer *yes* or *no* to each statement below.

___ **1. I recognize the warning signs** that my teen may be in trouble in one or more classes. A failing grade or several missed classes can cause problems.

___ **2. I first work** with my teen to figure out the cause if I see a problem—not doing the homework, not listening to the teacher, not understanding the assignment.

___ **3. I have talked with my teen** about why it's a sign of strength and not of weakness to ask for help when he needs it.

___ **4. I have talked** with my teen's teachers and counselor about help available at the school.

___ **5. I have looked outside for help** if the school doesn't have the help my teen needs. This could include self-study materials (such as another textbook) or a tutor.

How did you do?

Each *yes* answer means you are closer to getting your teen the help he needs. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Have an idea to share?

The editors of *Parents Still make the difference!* pay \$25 for each original idea published (in English, please), and you will receive credit in the article.

Send ideas to *Parents Still make the difference!*, Editorial Staff, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474 (or www.parent-institute.com/ideas/pmd). Materials sent cannot be returned.

Help your teen understand the balance between school & work



Today's teens are faced with a lot of pressure, especially when it comes to managing their time. Most students balance

schoolwork, extracurricular activities and chores with a part-time job. The key to doing this successfully is for your teen to remember that being a student is his full-time job. Before your teen takes a part-time job, ask:

- **What does the job entail?** Will his job at the sporting goods store involve helping customers choose the right tennis rackets, or will he be stocking shelves in the back room? Make sure that his idea of the job matches up with what he'll actually be doing.
- **How will he get there?** Does he have a car? Will you drive him? Can he take public transportation?

- **Why does he want to take the job?** Will it look good on a college résumé or is he just looking for some extra cash? It's a good idea to "try out" jobs in a field he may want to go into later in life.
- **When will he be working?** Is it just after school or weekends, as well? Can he take extra time off during baseball season?
- **Who will he be working with?** Have you spoken with the management to see if it is reputable? Will he be working with some of his friends?
- **Where is the job located?** Is it in a safe neighborhood? Is it close enough for him to walk to from school?

Source: "Balancing High School and Part-Time Work," CollegeBoard.com, www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/high-school/45266.html.

My 15-year-old has a page on a social networking site. I checked it out and was surprised and sad to read what she said. She talked about going to parties where alcohol was served, and described getting "wasted." We have had a serious talk and we are taking steps to address this issue. But other kids I know have similar comments on their pages. Should I be telling their parents? The school?

Questions & Answers

Social networking sites, such as MySpace®, are a new way for teens to communicate. Where teens in the 1950s met at the malt shop and teens of later years met at the mall, today's teens meet each other online.

The sites provide a great way for young people to share information about themselves. But, as with any online conversation, what they say may not always be the truth.

In addition, there can be consequences. Employers and colleges regularly check out students' web pages to see what young people say about themselves. And once that information is posted, it can live forever. Even after your teen deletes the information from her page, an older version may be stored on someone else's computer.

Should parents know what you saw on their kids' home pages? Absolutely. Safety is always an issue when posting things online. But teens may also face legal trouble because of what they have written in their home pages. Not long ago, a local police department prosecuted students for underage drinking that they had bragged about on a social networking site.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

Combat common attendance excuses from your teenager



You've heard them all—every excuse in the book for why she should be allowed to stay home. She's 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 some common excuses teens use to get out of going to school—and ways to combat them:

- **"I don't feel good."** This excuse has been around for as long as, well, school itself. Unless she can describe her symptoms exactly, send her to school.
- **"If I could just sleep for an extra hour, I'd be so much more productive."** Respond that if she skips TV time tonight, she could go to bed an hour earlier.

- **"I have a project due at 2 p.m. that I haven't started yet."** Let her know that she needs to be more organized. She shouldn't skip her classes just to finish assignments for another one.
- **"I need to rest before the big game tonight."** School comes before extracurricular activities, and "big" events are no exception.
- **"We actually don't have school today. I forgot to tell you."** If this could be possible, call the school to make sure.

However, if your teen is constantly trying to stay home from school, it may be the sign of a larger problem. Speak to your teen's teacher or guidance counselor if you are worried about her reluctance to attend school.

Use colored strips to help your teen read more fluently



He struggles every time he picks up a textbook. It takes him forever to sound out each word. So naturally, he's not paying much attention to the content.

Research shows that more fluent reading is a key to comprehension. Here's a simple method that can help your teen learn to read more fluently.

Go to the store and buy a few colored report covers. Choose two or three different colors because one color may be easier for your teen than another. Cut one cover into a narrow strip that is just large enough to cover two lines of text in his textbook. Be sure you leave the fold from the report cover attached. That will make it easier to slide the strip down the page.

Now have your teen put the strip on the page he is supposed to read, with the fold over the edge of the page. As he reads, have him move the strip down the page. This will make it easier for him to keep track of the line he is reading.

After he's finished reading a page, have him stop. Can he tell you what he read? If not, he should go back and read the text a second time.

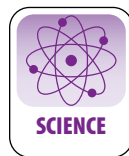
It won't happen in one session, and it won't happen in a week. But over time, his reading will become more fluent.

Source: Anne Benninghof, *Meeting Standards: Instructional Strategies for Struggling Students*, ISBN: 1-570-35515-0 (Sopris West, 1-800-547-6747, www.sopriswest.com).

"The young always have the same problem—how to rebel and conform at the same time. They have now solved this by defying their parents and copying one another."

—Quentin Crisp

Help your teen get the most out of reading science textbooks



Reading a science textbook is not the same as reading the sports pages, a novel or even a math textbook.

Here are tips that will help your teen read and remember what's in the science book:

- **Explore.** Before starting to read the textbook, have your teen read the introduction to the chapter. Then have her look through the chapter headings, subheadings, summary and review questions. How does this subject connect to things she has already studied?
- **Examine.** Have her look over pictures, tables and diagrams. They are often easier to understand than the words. What new information can be learned?



- **Read.** Have your teen read the chapter. At the end of each section, she should stop to see if she can explain what she's just read in her own words. Have her take notes about important information, concepts and vocabulary.

- **Analyze.** Have your teen look carefully at the problems in the textbook. Have her write an explanation and draw a diagram to explain the various steps used to solve the problem.

After class, have your teen combine the notes from class with the notes from the textbook. That way, she'll have everything she needs in one place. That will make it easier when it's time to review.

Source: Dawson College, "Learning from Science Textbooks," <http://dc37.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/lc/textbook.html>.

Teach your teen that respect is vital in healthy relationships



When people talk about "teens" and "respect" in the same sentence, they are usually remarking on teens' disrespect towards adults or teens' self-respect. It is unusual to hear someone talk about teens' respect for each other, even though that is equally important.

During high school, many teens begin to date. However, many of them don't realize what a healthy relationship is. Teens who do not respect each other may find themselves in an abusive relationship. To prevent this, talk with your teen about the importance of respect in a relationship. Explain that people who respect each other:

- **Can talk openly to each other.** Communication is key to a good relationship.
- **Work together to make decisions.** They also support and listen to each other.
- **Balance their time** between their relationship and their friends and family. A relationship where two people never see anyone but each other isn't healthy.
- **Feel free to be themselves.** People in a healthy relationship accept each other's differences.

Remember, teens in healthy relationships are more likely to focus on school.

Source: "What's Respect?" Choose Respect, www.chooserespect.org/scripts/teens/whatisrespect.asp.