

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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Chambersburg Area School District

*still make the difference!*

## Take it from principals—parent involvement counts in high school



Your teen may be telling you that her teachers don't need your input at this age. But the principal would likely say something a little different.

A recent survey of more 300 principals in 21 states showed that principals want families to be in close contact with the school.

Jon Swett, a principal in Washington state, made this statement: "For parents to make contact with their child's school every few weeks is really responsible parenting." More than 60 percent of principals agreed with him that this is the most important thing parents can do to help their student succeed in high school!

Some other tips from high school principals:

- **Talk about school.** Parents should know what is going on in their teens' classrooms. They should also be up-to-date on school activities and who their teens' friends are.
- **Make time for your teen.** It's not always easy, especially if you are a single parent or you work more than one job. But check in with your teen every day. And make sure she knows you'll be checking.



- **Be aware of the Internet.** Principals point out that the digital age has many benefits. But a downside is that it is easier than ever for teens to keep their thoughts, feelings and conversations secret. Keep the computer out of your teen's bedroom. If your teen has an online journal (like on Myspace<sup>®</sup>, LiveJournal<sup>™</sup> or Facebook), let her know you'll be reading it.
- **Monitor your teen's homework.**

Never do the homework for her. But know where and when she is doing homework.

- **Let your teen know** that you think school is important. Let your teen know that you expect her best work.
- **Never allow your teen to skip school.** Expect your teen to be in school except in case of illness or emergency.
- **Get involved in school activities** as your schedule allows. Even if it's something you can do at home, like working on the school website—your time counts!

Source: "Principals Offer Advice to High School Students' Families: Results of an Exclusive Principal Poll Announced at Professional Development Conference," The Principals' Partnership of Union Pacific Railroad, [www.uprr.com/newsinfo/releases/community/2006/0711\\_partnership\\_survey.shtml](http://www.uprr.com/newsinfo/releases/community/2006/0711_partnership_survey.shtml).

## Learn what to do when your teen 'runs out of gas'



He started work on the project with a burst of energy. But before it was due, he seemed to run out of gas.

Some teens don't have the motivation to finish what they start. They don't do the final draft of the paper. They don't finish reading the novel. They don't answer all the questions.

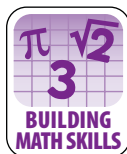
We all know people who are poor finishers. Their homes are full of projects they started but didn't complete. And when we have to work with them on a project, we tear our hair out waiting for them.

There are some things parents can do to help teens master the skills they need to follow through. Here are some tips:

- **Have a regular time** for homework, whether teachers assign it or not. Call this time your teen's "mental workout."
- **Teach your teen** how to break large jobs into smaller tasks.
- **Praise him as he finishes projects.**
- **Assign jobs** that your teen has to do every day. Motivation often is a problem with boring tasks.
- **Help your teen get organized** before starting a task.
- **Try not to let your teen quit** when the going gets tough.

Source: Mel Levine, *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes*, ISBN: 0-743-26224-7 (Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, [www.simonays.com](http://www.simonays.com)).

# Encourage your teen to take & practice math as much as possible



Does your teen plan to continue his education after high school?

Continuing education doesn't just mean four-

year college. It's also two-year colleges, trade schools and work programs. If your teen is interested in any of these, advise him to take math.

Students find that math is a problem when they graduate. They think they won't really "need it," so they don't take it or practice it. Then they find out they were wrong. In today's global economy, two years of math may not be enough. Encourage your teen to take three or four years.

Math helps with:

- All four-year college programs.
- All two-year college programs.
- Most technology-based or mechanics trade programs.

Even if your teen does not take more math after high school, the reasoning skills learned in math will help him with other pursuits.

Here are some tips to help your teen get more out of math:

- **Take advantage** of any tutoring or math skills classes offered in your high school or community.
- **Consider summer school.** A list of courses often comes out in March or April. See if one of these could benefit your teen.
- **Use the Internet.** There is a lot of math help available on the Internet. Have your teen go to a major search engine such as Google™.

Source: Barbara Pytel, "High school math is lacking: Students are not taking enough math for college," Educationalissues.com, [http://educationalissues.suite101.com/article.cfm/high\\_school\\_math\\_is\\_lacking](http://educationalissues.suite101.com/article.cfm/high_school_math_is_lacking).

# Talk with your teen if quitting sounds like a good decision



It's important for you to encourage your teen to participate in activities and sports. They help build character and can

often motivate teens to do their best. But what should you do when your teen decides to quit a sport or activity?

Ask your teen these questions when she's ready to call it quits:

- **Who will be hurt?** Teens should see that signing up is a commitment. The team, club or group will suffer if she decides to leave. As a general rule, your family policy should be that people finish what they start.
- **Why does she want to quit?** Listen carefully. "I'm bored" is not a good reason.

- **Whose idea was it to sign up?** If you are more in love with soccer than your teen is, it's time to let her choose which activities to join.

Source: Stacy M. DeBroff, *Sign Me Up! The Complete Parents' Guide to Sports, Activities, Music Lessons, Dance Classes and Other Extra-curriculars*, ISBN: 0-743-23541-X (Free Press, 1-800-223-2336, [www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com)).

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# Are your teen's clothes sending the wrong message?



He wants to wear a shirt that advertises a brand of beer. She is wearing a shirt that gives new meaning to the word

"skimpy." For many teens and parents, school clothes become a daily battleground. Do you know what to do when your teen heads to school in clothing you don't approve? Answer *yes* or *no* to each statement:

\_\_\_\_ 1. I help my teen develop self-respect by having conversations about making good choices.

\_\_\_\_ 2. We talk about the messages clothes send and why my teen might not want to send those messages.

\_\_\_\_ 3. I tell stories about myself. I have shared photos of some of the clothing choices I made—those that worked and those that didn't.

\_\_\_\_ 4. We talk about the importance of place. Clothing that works in one place may be inappropriate in another.

\_\_\_\_ 5. I've read the school rules about appropriate clothing. Many dress codes spell out what is (and isn't) allowed.

**How did you do?**

Each *yes* answer means you're helping your teen make appropriate clothing choices for school. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

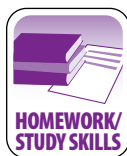
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## Have an idea to share?

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](http://www.parent-institute.com/ideas/pmd)). Materials sent cannot be returned.

# Keep your teen on track as the calendar turns toward spring



Motivation has a way of going down as the temperature starts going up, especially for seniors.

Teens may need more encouragement and structure to fulfill their responsibilities.

It's not a bad idea to check in with your teen about homework even if he's as motivated as ever. He may need help coping with the increased number of projects, papers and tests during the last quarter of the school.

Some ideas:

- **Make sure your teen** has a place to do homework. You and your teen probably did this at the beginning of the year. Still, many families find their teen starts to "spread out" his work all over the house as the year goes on.

- **Have your teen** write out a home-work schedule and post it where he can easily see it.
- **Make lists.** These include assignments to be done, materials needed and test dates.
- **Ask if you can help.** You should never do homework for a child of any age, but you can help in other ways. For example: Stop by the library on your lunch hour and pick up a book your teen needs.
- **Remind your teen** to "work first." Teens like to choose for themselves when they will do homework. But what if homework falls victim to screen time? It's time to step in.

**Source:** Sydney S. Zentall, Ph.D., and Sam Goldstein, Ph.D., *Seven Steps to Homework Success: A Family Guide to Solving Common Homework Problems*, ISBN: 1-886941-22-X (Specialty Press, Inc., 1-800-233-9273, [www.addwarehouse.com](http://www.addwarehouse.com)).

## Graphic organizers are a big help in managing ideas for writing



Setting down ideas is the first hurdle to get over when writing. Many students lack a good system for this. Just jotting things

down is often not enough for them.

Using graphic organizers can solve this problem. Here are some tips:

- **Venn diagrams** are helpful when your teen writes a "compare and contrast" essay. Comparing tells how things are alike. Contrasting tells how they are different. To make a Venn diagram, your teen should draw two overlapping circles. In each circle, she should write down the differences between the two things. In the space where the two circles overlap, she should write down how they are the same.
- **Flow charts** are helpful when your teen writes a narrative. A narrative

tells a story about something that has happened. To make a flow chart, your teen should draw a series of boxes. She should draw an arrow in between each box. In the box farthest to the left, she should write down the first event in her story. The next event goes in the box to the right, and so on.

- **Webs** are helpful when your teen wants to identify a main idea and supporting details. Your teen should draw a large circle and inside it write the theme of her essay. In smaller circles surrounding the large one, she should write down details that support her theme.

**Source:** The staff of The Princeton Review, *Know it All! Grades 9-12 Reading*, ISBN: 0-375-76374-0 (Princeton Review Publishing, 1-800-273-8439, [www.randomhouse.com/princetonreview](http://www.randomhouse.com/princetonreview)).

My daughter's prom is coming up and I'm concerned. There's the dress she wants (too expensive!) and the curfew she wants (none at all). And then there's the music—at a dance where I was a chaperone, I was shocked by the lyrics in some of the songs that were played. I worry about my daughter. What are parents and schools doing to help keep prom from becoming too racy?

### Questions & Answers

It wasn't so long ago that the biggest parental worry about the prom was whether someone would spike the punch. Today, worries range from pre-prom drinking to post-prom sleepovers.

What's different today starts with the lyrics to the songs. Even the cleaned-up versions of many popular songs are offensive.

So what do you do? Start by talking with your daughter. Tell her you want her to have a prom she'll always remember. Talk about the issues that concern you, from drinking to music to after-prom parties. Share your confidence in her ability to make the right decision. But ask her how she plans to deal with the issues when they arise.

*Share your confidence in her ability to make the right decision.*

Work with your school. Are any pre-prom safety meetings being held? Some schools have asked students to sign a pledge that they will "stay classy" on prom night. It may not seem like a big step, but it sends a powerful message to teens.

—Kris Amundson,  
The Parent Institute



## Address cutting class by going to school yourself



Your teen cut math class—again. Between you and her teacher, you are nearly out of options.

In a case like that, it may be time for serious measures. Tell your teen that the next time she misses class, you will go to school with her.

This is a real threat. It's embarrassing enough for teens to admit they even have parents. But having parents show up in school is something they'll avoid at all costs.

You can't just appear in math class, of course. Set up a face-to-face meeting with her teachers and the principal. Explain what you're going to do. Ask them to call you the next time your teen misses a class. They may also have a rule about tardiness—say, that two tardies equals one absence.

Tell your teen what you're going to do. Then do it. Walk into the classroom (the teacher will be prepared). Sit next to your teen. Stay for a class or two. If the problem is more serious, eat lunch at her table.

It won't take many visits (maybe only one) before your teen gets the message. Soon, she'll decide it's too much trouble to cut class.

If you're worried about missing work, talk with your boss. Explain what you're trying to do. Many bosses will work with you to solve this problem.

**Source:** Scott P. Sells, *Parenting Your Out-of-Control Teenager*, ISBN: 0-312-26629-4 (St. Martin's Press, 1-800-221-7945, www.stmartins.com).

**"Being involved in my child's school changed my life."**

—Jannie Chavez de Arias,  
parent of a high school student,  
a middle school student and  
an elementary school student,  
Athens, Ga.

## Try using parent pressure to keep your teen safe at parties



Teen drug and alcohol use isn't just a teen problem—it's a *parent* problem. This startling fact comes from a new report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse.

The statistics are sobering. By the time teens reach the age of 17, nearly half have been to a party where teens were drinking, smoking pot or using cocaine—while parents were present.

Even so, the presence of a parent is helpful. Teens reported that alcohol is 16 times more likely to be present at a party where parents were not in the house. And illegal drugs are 15 times more likely to be at an unsupervised party.

Teens say their parents are basically clueless about what goes on.



While nearly all parents (80 percent) say their teens don't go to parties where alcohol or drugs are available, teens don't agree. Nearly half say they have attended such parties.

Virtually all parents say they are home when their teen has a party.

Yet one-third of teens say that's not so.

Perhaps what's needed in this case is some peer pressure—for parents. Before your teen attends a party, call the host's parents. Ask if they will be at home.

Ask what they will do to make sure no alcohol or drugs are available at the party.

**Source:** "National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XI: Teens and Parents," National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, www.casacolumbia.org/absolutem/articlefiles/380-Teen%20Survey%20X1%20Final%20PDF.pdf.

## Know what is normal & what isn't in your teen's computer usage



Teens who use the Internet a few hours a week for homework often use it twice as much for playing games and chatting. Parents wonder: "Is this okay?" "How much is too much?"

Know it is typical for teens to:

- **Chat with friends**—people their age whom they know well and whom you also know—via instant messages on many nights.
- **Spend a few hours a week** playing computer games.
- **Retreat to their rooms** to read or listen to music. This is especially true of teens younger than driving age.

- **Become far more social** outside home, and away from the computer, once most of their friends reach driving age.

Know it's not typical for teens to:

- **Avoid their families** in favor of the computer.
  - **Chat with people** whom they don't know. This is dangerous!
  - **Never receive calls** from peers and not seem to have "real-life" friends.
- Take action if your teen's computer use is "not typical." Make time every day to do something he enjoys, or to just talk to him.

**Source:** Pat Spungin, "My Teenager, The Computer Geek! Is It Healthy?" *Raisingkids*, www.raisingkids.co.uk/13\_21/TEE\_HR03.ASP.