

Helping Students Learn[®]

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School
Cumberland County Schools



November 2022

Help your teen see that success is possible and worth working for

Many students are quick to dismiss low grades with statements like, "I'm just not a science person." They may not think they can learn because they don't fully understand the connection between practice and results. As a result, they may not put in the effort that would lead them to success.



Having a strong work ethic—which includes dedication and pride in doing quality work—is important for success in school and in the workplace. To help your student develop one:

- **Instill a growth mindset.** Say that you believe your teen can learn anything by working at it. Some teens think that having to work at something means they aren't smart. Explain that effort and practice are what leads to mastery. Then celebrate progress: "Your hard work is paying off!"
- **Be a role model.** Display a positive attitude about work and show your teen that you take your job and your responsibilities seriously. Demonstrate persistence when things get tough.
- **Expect your teen to fulfill responsibilities.** This includes taking responsibility for poor decisions. For example, if your teen misses a deadline for a school assignment, don't write an excuse to the teacher. Make it clear that it's your teen's responsibility to find a solution.
- **Reinforce priorities.** Encourage your teen to finish the chemistry assignment before logging in to play online games with friends.



Meaningful connections boost recall

Brain research provides clues to how memory works. Some can help your teen study more effectively. For example, teens often memorize by repeating something over and over. But one study shows that there's a better way.

Repetition can help with short-term memory. But long-term memory is what is needed to recall material for a test. In the study, researchers found that a more effective way to store a fact long-term is to give it meaning by relating it to data already stored in the brain. Encourage your teen to make this connection by creating:

- **A mental image.** The Spanish word for *narrow* is *estrecho*. Your

teen could picture that word stretched out until it is very narrow.

- **Links to familiar facts.** Which spelling, *stationary* or *stationery*, means paper? "*Stationery* uses envelopes."
- **Sentences.** "I shouldn't battle again." The number of letters in the words correspond to the year the Civil War ended: 1865.

Source: "Long-Term Memories Made with Meaningful Information," ScienceDaily.

Volunteer as a family

Volunteering in the community is a rewarding way to spend time with your teen. Talk about what you can do together, then let your student make the arrangements. You can learn more about each other while making a difference, and your teen can build workplace, social and leadership skills.

Make hard choices easier

Choosing to do the right thing is easy when everyone else is doing it, too. But often, teens run into situations when the choice is not so easy.



Sometimes, the choices may seem trivial, like whether to get up when the alarm clock goes off, or roll over and skip class. Other times, they may involve more serious matters, such as pressure from friends to cheat. But always, the consequences can be big.

Talk about these tough choices with your teen. Reinforce that while choosing to do the right thing may be hard, your teen will have an easier time in the long run.

Ease one cause of anxiety

Surveys show that the number of teens suffering from anxiety is surging. Teens are worried about many things, but tests don't have to be one of them. To help prevent test anxiety:



- **Emphasize preparation.** Help your teen make and stick to a study plan.
- **Provide perspective.** One poor grade doesn't mean a student is a failure. You will love your teen no matter the grade.
- **Share relaxation strategies,** such as tensing and relaxing muscles, starting with the toes and working up.
- **Help your teen visualize** going into the test feeling confident and prepared.



How can I get my teen to take risks seriously?

Q: My teen feels invincible and has no fear of dangerous behavior. When I discourage unnecessary risk-taking, all I hear is “Don’t worry.” But I do worry. What should I do?

A: Despite the events of the last few years, many teenagers share a belief that nothing bad will ever happen to them. While this is developmentally normal, it can also be terrifying to their families.

Teens are wired to seek new experiences, and that can lead to risky behaviors. One key to preventing them is to help your teen see the difference between courage and recklessness. It is courageous for trained fire fighters to enter a burning building. It would be reckless for your teen to do so.

When and where is your teen most likely to take risks? Brainstorm together about the potential consequences of those actions—both to your teen and to others. Discuss ways to prepare and avoid negative effects of carelessness. Make it clear that while it’s great to challenge yourself, it’s not OK to put yourself or others in danger.

Teens still need boundaries. For example, they often do irresponsible things when they’re driving. If this is true of your teen, set a rule: Your teen can drive, but not take passengers. Participating in activities like organized sports is another way teens can learn to address risk in positive ways, such as by practicing skills and wearing protective equipment.



Parent Quiz

Are you helping your teen face and overcome challenges?

Students who are struggling in school, whether from the pandemic’s effects or other reasons, need support and encouragement at home. Are you helping your teen cope with learning challenges? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you check in** with your teen regularly about progress and concerns about classes?
- ___ **2. Do you encourage** your teen to talk with teachers about getting extra help?
- ___ **3. Do you develop** plans with your teen, the teachers and a school counselor to help your student get back on track?
- ___ **4. Do you help** your teen strengthen study skills such as organization, setting goals and priorities, note-taking and time management?

- ___ **5. Do you look** for resources and support for your teen, such as tutors, school programs, online videos, etc.?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are giving your teen a necessary boost to overcome obstacles. For each no, try that idea.

“A challenge only becomes an obstacle when you bow to it.”

—Ray Davis

College facts help predict fit

With so many options for higher education, figuring out how to find schools that are a good fit for your teen can seem overwhelming. Visit the U.S. Department of Education’s College Scorecard website (collegescorecard.ed.gov) together. Your teen can search and sort the collected information on every U.S. college to find answers to questions about:

- **Fields of study offered.**
- **Graduation rates.**
- **Cost and student debt.**
- **Average SAT and ACT scores** of admitted students.

The site also includes links to find out more about career pathways and financial aid.

Explore world geography

Geography involves much more than knowing where places are. It’s also about how their locations affect life there, and how different places compare to and affect one another. Encourage your teen to:

- **Map social connections.** Where do social media friends and followers live? Are they concentrated in one area? Why?
- **Try foods from other countries** and investigate why certain ingredients or cooking methods are featured.
- **Use a topographic map** to plan a hike, noting elevation, distance, direction and geographic features on the route.



Work along with your teen

It can be difficult for teens to buckle down to assignments and studying if the people around them are relaxing and having fun. At least part of each evening, “study” along with your teen. Read a book or do some household paperwork. Your support shows that focusing on schoolwork is important.

Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Copyright © 2022, The Parent Institute®, a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com