

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

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



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## Make sure your teen knows these secrets to success with math

Math is one of the most useful subjects your teen will take in school. For some students, it's also one of the most challenging. The best way to succeed with it is simple: practice. The best math students study every day.



Share these tips with your teen:

- **Make the most** of class time. It's important to attend every class to prevent falling behind. Encourage your teen to ask questions—if your student is confused, others probably are too. Your teen should also take class notes and review them each evening.
- **Schedule enough time** to complete assignments every day. This should be a time when your teen can concentrate—not in the few minutes after English before math class starts.
- **Solve sample problems.** Your teen can copy a problem on a separate sheet of paper, then try to solve it without looking at the steps. If that's a struggle, your teen will know it's time to review the steps carefully.
- **Review past quizzes and assignments.** Math builds on itself, and your teen may see similar problems on the next test.
- **Set up a study group.** What confuses your teen may be something another student can explain. The group should just be sure to keep the focus on math, not socializing.



## Help solve schoolwork struggles

There is only one person who should do your teen's schoolwork—your teen. But if your student is facing one or more of these common hurdles, there are things you can do to help:

- **Not doing** the work, or not turning it in. Let your teen know you are concerned and that turning in complete assignments is a top priority. Offer strategies that help, like writing all assignments down in one place.
- **Not understanding** the work. If your teen doesn't understand the directions or the material in an assignment, suggest asking a classmate or the teacher to clarify.
- **Not caring** about schoolwork. Point out the links between the topics and real-world activities that interest your teen.
- **Not enough** schoolwork—or too much. If your teen is doing well in a class, the workload is probably right. But if grades are low and your teen seems to have little homework, or if assignments seem to take all night, encourage your teen to talk with the teacher.

## Suggest exciting reading

Do you frequently hear complaints from your teen that "reading is boring"? Have an answer ready. Suggest that your student try reading:

- **About a favorite topic.**
- **Something funny,** like a parody or a joke book.
- **A tale with a twist,** like a mystery.

## Avoid a costly mistake

High school dropouts are generally at the bottom of the income scale, and face the highest unemployment rate. Just by graduating from high school, teens can add an average of almost \$10,000 to their yearly income.



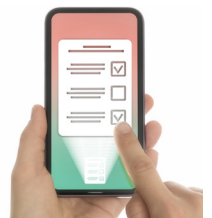
If your teen isn't attending classes regularly, take action now. Work with the school to get your student back on track to graduate. You'll be helping your teen earn a better living in the future.

Source: "Education pays," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Expand research options

There is more to doing research than a basic internet search. Exploring other resources will help your teen create a more in-depth paper, project or presentation. Encourage your student to:

- **Contact experts** mentioned in published articles and ask to interview them.
- **Conduct a survey.** Your teen can ask a series of questions on the topic and include the findings in the project.
- **Ask teachers** and librarians to suggest resources that might offer different points of view.





## How can I convince my teen to stop procrastinating?

**Q:** My teen has a tendency to put assignments off until the last minute. Then we have a late-night, panicky scramble, and the work my teen turns in isn't as good as it could be. What should I do to break this bad habit?

**A:** Teens who regularly procrastinate end up creating a lot of unnecessary stress, and they usually don't perform as well academically as they could. But it doesn't have to be that way!

To help your teen replace procrastination with more effective work habits:

- **Get to the root of the problem.** Sit down together and ask, "Why do you think you put things off?" Is your teen afraid of failing? Or is it a thrill to dash something off at the last minute? If you aren't sure how to address your teen's concerns, suggest a meeting with a school counselor.
- **Encourage positive self-talk.** Saying things like, "There's no time like the present" can be motivating.
- **Teach project management skills.** Have your teen break big assignments into small tasks and set a deadline for each. Your teen may still wait until right before each deadline to start, but the project will get done.
- **Discuss your teen's bigger goals.** Learning effective time-management habits will improve your teen's chances of success in school now and in college or the workplace later on.



## Parent Quiz

### Are you open to discussing 'tough stuff'?

Today's teens face a lot of challenging issues. Your teen needs guidance from you to steer safely through hazards. Two-way communication is key. Are you making it easy for your teen to talk to you? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you set aside** regular time to be with your teen?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you give** your full attention when your teen starts to talk about a difficult subject? If you can't, do you arrange a time to get back to your teen?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you listen** to what your teen thinks before saying what you think?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you let** your teen know that on some issues—such as drugs, sex, alcohol—there's no negotiating, but that on others, you're usually willing to consider a compromise?

- \_\_\_ **5. Do you admit** when you don't know something?

#### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are encouraging a vital dialogue with your teen. For each no, try that idea.*

"Communication sometimes is not what you first hear; listen not just to the words, but listen for the reason."  
—Catherine Pulsifer

## Discuss others' poor choices

It's critical for students to learn to plan ahead and consider the consequences of their actions. Talking about other people's bad decisions allows them to gain perspective without feeling criticized.

The media is an endless source of examples of poor life choices you can discuss with your teen. Ask questions like:

- **What did this person do** that led to the negative consequence?
- **How could this event** affect the person's future? How about that of others?
- **What other choices** could the person have made?

## Help stamp out hazing

Try-outs for parts in a play or spots on a team are a normal part of school. But if your teen is asked to do something degrading, dangerous or illegal in order to join a group, it's not OK. It's hazing, and it's illegal in most states.

Hazing affects 1.5 million high school students each year. Make it clear to your teen that no one should have to be embarrassed or hurt to be included. And if you or your teen are aware of incidents of hazing, report them to the school.

Source: *Hazing Prevention Starts Now: Engaging Staff, Students and Parents in Promoting a Positive School Culture*, The Parent Institute.

## Is it your teen's best work?

Encourage your teen to carefully review assignments before handing them in. Your teen should ask questions like:

- **Does this meet** all the requirements the teacher laid out?
- **Have I reviewed** it for accuracy?
- **Is there anything** I could improve?



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