

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

HIGH SCHOOL

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



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## Study strategies can boost your teen's math and science results

When it comes to learning math and science, effective study skills make a big difference. Share these strategies with your teen for success with these core subjects:

- **Block out time every day** to work on math and science, whether the classes will meet or not. Allow extra time if the material is challenging.
- **Review recent class notes** at the start of each study session before working on new assignments.
- **Take self-quizzes to verify** understanding of the material. Suggest that your teen try to answer sample questions at the end of a chapter, or rewrite section headings into question form. If your student can't answer the questions, it's time to look back through the text.
- **Draw pictures of concepts** or solving procedures. Creating a visual can help students see how things fit together.
- **Solve extra problems.** The teacher may assign only specific numbered questions on a worksheet or textbook page. But students don't need to stop there! Answering all of the questions can reinforce a process or concept in your teen's mind and boost confidence. When similar problems show up on a test, your teen will know how to answer them.



## These factors raise risk of dropping out

According to federal data, the dropout rate for high school students is more than five percent. These students don't wake up one day and decide to leave school. The desire to drop out typically builds up over time.

Be on the lookout for these factors that your teen may be at risk:

- **Frequent absences.** Students who miss more than five days in a marking period often fall behind. When it's hard to catch up, some students decide to give up instead.
- **Disengagement.** Students who don't pay attention in class or turn in assignments, and who have behavioral issues in school, may end up dropping out.
- **Difficulty** in core subjects. Failing math, science, English or history may mean repeating a class. Multiple failures may mean repeating a grade—and an increased risk of dropping out. If you see these signs, consult your teen's school counselor for help. Together, make a plan to get your teen back on the graduation track.

Source: "Dropout rates," National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences.

## Steer your teen toward bed

In a recent survey, one in six teen drivers said they had driven a car while feeling drowsy. Car accidents are a top cause of teen deaths. Help your teen stick to a schedule that allows at least eight hours of sleep each night. Adequate sleep not only supports school success—it may keep your teen alive.

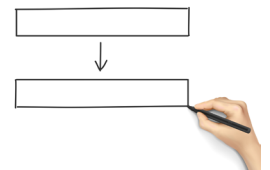


Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine, "Study reveals high rate of drowsy driving by teens," ScienceDaily.

## Suggest a pre-writing step

One of the challenges of writing is how to organize thoughts clearly. Encourage your teen to try using a graphic organizer before starting to write. Your teen can make a:

- **Flow chart** to put events in order. This is a series of boxes, each containing an event, with arrows leading from one box to the next.
- **Web diagram** to identify details that support a main idea. This is a large circle with lines branching off it. The theme of the piece goes in the circle, and details on the branches.
- **Storyboard.** Your teen can make a list of ideas to cover, then sketch them out and fill in details.



## Serving others serves teens

When teens volunteer in the community, they contribute to society—and to their own futures. Your teen can gain work experience, build social skills, and learn about issues facing people living nearby. Counselors at school may have a list of volunteer opportunities, or your teen can contact local libraries and community service groups.

Source: "Why Youth Service," Youth Service America.



## Decisions seem to scare my teen. What can I do to help?

**Q:** My student struggles with making decisions. Even the smallest choice can be a stumbling block. My teen is a junior, and will soon have big decisions to make. How can I help?

**A:** Decision-making requires commitment—and that can be scary. For some teens, fear of making the wrong choice can lead to almost total paralysis.



To help your teen get comfortable making decisions:

- **Share a strategy for thinking through options.** Encourage your teen to make lists of the pros and cons of each alternative. Sometimes, seeing things written down can make the choice easier.
- **Relieve worry about mistakes.** Discuss the fact that things don't always work out the way we plan—and that's not all bad. Your teen can learn from any choice, even if it's simply what *not* to do next time.
- **Provide lots of low-risk opportunities.** Suppose your teen is responsible for a weekly chore. On Monday, say, "You need to vacuum your bedroom before this weekend. You decide when you are going to do it." Then, leave the choice of timing up to your teen. If your teen doesn't complete the task by the deadline, impose a consequence.
- **Encourage setting deadlines** for big decisions. "You have until Tuesday to decide if you want to accept Mr. Brown's job offer."



## Are you instilling a habit of organizing?

Many students struggle with organization. They need to learn strategies that will help them get to school on time with the materials they need. Are you helping your teen practice organizing? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you remind** your teen to record assignments in a planner and review it each afternoon?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you have** your teen put items that need to go to school in an assigned place the night before?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to set more than one alarm if waking up on time is an issue?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you help** your teen set up files for saving handouts, tests and work for each subject?

- \_\_\_ **5. Do you schedule** a regular "Let's each do one thing we've been putting off" day?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your teen put organization strategies to use. For each no, try that idea.*

"Stop waiting for the perfect time to get organized. Take this moment and make some progress."  
—Heidi Leonard

## Avoid motivation mistakes

Motivating teens to put in the effort they are capable of is tricky business. To avoid common pitfalls, follow these guidelines:

- **Put your teen in charge.** Trying to control your student won't encourage responsibility for learning. Ask what you can do to support your teen's efforts.
- **Let experience teach.** Rescuing your teen from negative consequences reduces incentive to stop problematic behavior.
- **Maintain your cool.** Getting angry or trying to make your teen feel guilty is more likely to upset your student than increase effort.

Source: D. Heacox, Ed.D., *Up from Underachievement*, Free Spirit.

## Promote pleasure reading

Teens who read for fun tend to do better in school than those who don't. Ask your teen to set a pleasure reading goal for this school year. It can be measured in reading time, pages read or books completed—and your teen gets to pick what to read. Together, decide on a reward for reaching the goal.



Source: "NAEP Long-term Trend Assessment Results: Reading and Mathematics," The Nation's Report Card.

## Encourage your teen to tackle a healthy challenge

Taking on healthy challenges builds teens' independence, self-confidence and responsibility, and increases their likelihood of success in school. Healthy challenges include things like:

- **Signing up** for a higher-level class.
- **Learning a new skill** or hobby.
- **Making friends** with someone new at school.
- **Trying out for** an athletic team or training for a physical goal, like a 5K.

### Helping Students Learn®

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