

High School Parents

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Gadsden City Schools

still make the difference!



A study group can help your teen build academic skills

Some families don't think teens will be very productive if they go over to a friend's house to "study." However, studying with others can actually help students.

Study groups allow students to share their strengths and benefit from those of other members. They also offer practice for adulthood, when work projects may involve collaboration.

The key is to form a study group in which the members *really* study. Share these tips with your teen:

- **Choose a size for the group.** Experts suggest between four and six people.
- **Think carefully about members.** This is essential for forming an effective group. Members should be serious about studying and wanting to do well in school. Teens who are involved in personal

relationships may not do well in a study group together unless they are skilled at separating work from their social life.

- **Consider how to divide the work.** Usually in a study group, each person handles one aspect of the material. It is helpful if members get assignments that play to their strengths. Then they can share more easily and explain their sections to the rest of the group.
- **Keep it professional.** Set a day and time for meetings and stick to the schedule. This reinforces the idea of a serious study group. Members may also want to pick a chairperson (rotate this position) for each meeting. Part of the chairperson's job is to keep the studying on track.

Teach your teen how to stand up to pressure



Negative peer pressure can affect students' well-being and performance, often leading to

lower self-confidence, increased anxiety and poorer grades. Since simply saying *no* doesn't always work to fend off this pressure, empower your teen with a variety of ways to respond.

Your teen could:

- **Offer personal reasons**, such as "I'm working hard to make the varsity team. I don't want to screw that up."
- **Talk about consequences.** "Sorry, the last person who got caught skipping school was suspended. I won't risk that."
- **Be dismissive.** Your teen could make a face and walk away.
- **Blame a parent.** "If my dad finds out, he will freak out."
- **Suggest an alternative.** "I was planning to see a movie. Want to come with me instead of going to that party?"
- **Stay away.** Someone who repeatedly tries to get your teen into trouble is no friend at all. Suggest that your teen consider avoiding the person, at least for the time being.

It takes just 20 minutes a day to strengthen reading skills!



By the time students reach high school, their reading skills are essential for learning. In every subject from math to science to history, they need to read long or complex passages and understand what they've read.

The good news is that reading skills improve with practice. Students who read regularly get better at it. They read more quickly and remember more. Reading also improves their focus and expands their vocabulary.

Encourage your high schooler to practice reading skills by reading something enjoyable. Your teen should set aside 20 minutes a day and read something not related to school. Reading at least 20 minutes a day will

expose your teen to almost two million words per year!

If possible, pick up something to read yourself during the same time. Later, you and your teen can talk about what you've read.

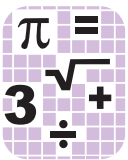
Over time, this simple solution will help your high schooler strengthen "reading muscles" and get more out of school-related reading.

Source: G. Ivey and D. Fisher, *Creating Literacy-Rich Schools for Adolescents*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

"Reading is essential for those who seek to rise above the ordinary."

—Jim Rohn

Encourage your teen to take science and math classes



Research points to an effective way to make a difference for your high schooler's future: Talk about the importance of science and math.

There are plenty of great jobs in science, technology, engineering and math. (Together, these fields are often called STEM.)

STEM-related jobs are increasing every year, and many are accessible with a two-year associate's degree after high school. These positions typically offer competitive starting salaries for new graduates, ensuring a rewarding career path.

Yet teens often avoid the math and science classes they need in high school to prepare for these jobs. That's where families can help. Explain that choosing STEM

classes now can increase your teen's future options. Then:

- **Discuss** how your teen's current interests can lead to STEM careers. If your high schooler is always using a certain app, suggest taking a computer science class. If your teen is interested in how things work, a career as an engineer could be a great fit.
- **Encourage** your teen to take at least one math class and one science class every year. Students aiming for STEM careers should take a total of four years of math and four years of science while in high school. These courses help students develop the problem-solving skills necessary for high-tech, high-demand jobs.

Source: C.S. Rozek and others, "Utility-value intervention with parents increases students' STEM preparation and career pursuit," PNAS, National Academy of Sciences.

Are you showing your teen how to be thorough?



So many poor grades result not from a lack of knowledge, but rather from careless mistakes.

Are you teaching your

high schooler to do careful, accurate work? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

1. **Do you help** your teen plan a schedule that allows enough time to work on assignments without rushing?
2. **Do you encourage** your teen to pay attention to details—such as the correct citation for research sources?
3. **Do you remind** your teen that neatness counts, and that sloppy work—particularly in math—leads to errors?
4. **Do you encourage** your teen to double-check answers before submitting work?
5. **Do you suggest** your teen edit and proofread writing assignments before turning them in?

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you are helping your teen turn in thorough work. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children.

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Time lines are helpful tools for students studying history



When reading about complex events such as the Russian Revolution, students may have trouble with all the dates and complicated names.

Creating a time line is an effective way to make historical events easier to follow. These visual aids make it simpler for students to see how one event led to the next and exactly how much time passed between them.

By organizing the sequence of events, time lines help students understand the bigger ideas and context of important moments in history.

To create a time line, encourage your teen to:

- **Set boundaries.** When did the era begin? When did it end? If the topic is the Russian Revolution, the time line shouldn't start with the

fall of the Roman Empire. Your teen should stick with the time period outlined in the class notes.

- **Summarize key events.** Who was involved? What happened and why? When and where did the event take place?
- **Include illustrations for events.** Here's a case where a picture really is worth a thousand words. Graphics help students with recall.
- **Use different colors.** For example, your teen might use red for the February Revolution and orange for the October Revolution.

The completed time line should help your teen "see" how the events unfolded. To review for a test, have your teen try to rewrite the time line from memory.

Source: L. Zwier and G. Mathes, *Study Skills for Success*, University of Michigan Press.

Give your teen four test-taking strategies that improve results



Whether it's a small pop quiz in English or the all-important driver's test, test-taking is simply a fact of life.

To succeed on any test, suggest that your teen use these strategies:

1. **Read directions carefully.** This step prevents simple, avoidable mistakes. Directions often specify whether to answer all questions or only some, if multiple-choice options have more than one correct answer, or if your teen needs to show work on math problems.
2. **Use time wisely.** Your teen should read through the entire test before answering any questions, when possible, then budget time. For an essay worth half the points, your

teen should plan to spend half the time on it. Encourage using every minute available; speeding through increases the chance of error.

3. **Answer the easy questions first.** Getting off to a strong start can give your teen the confidence needed to tackle the tougher questions later. Answering the easier problems first may also trigger memories of facts or formulas that will help your teen with the more difficult material. Remind your student to mark skipped questions to make them simple to find and revisit.
4. **Review answers.** Your teen should use all remaining time to double-check work for frequently-made mistakes or careless errors like transposed numbers.

Questions & Answers

Q: My high schooler has always been shy and it seems to be getting worse. My teen is a good student. However, in a group of peers, my teen just freezes up. What can I do to help my teen?

A: Shyness is often an unchangeable trait, so the way you guide your teen through managing it can make all the difference. Instead of focusing on it as a weakness, highlight your teen's unique strengths.

Your teen may be a great listener or have insights into people and social situations. Emphasize these positive qualities.

At the same time, gently support your teen in developing new skills that will make social life feel easier and more rewarding.

To help your teen cope:

- **Offer reassurance.** Many shy teens think they're the only ones who struggle socially. Let your teen know that shyness is extremely common and that many successful adults have had to learn how to deal with it.
- **Encourage your teen** to share opinions and to be more vocal in family settings.
- **Have your teen practice** looking people in the eye and smiling when they meet.
- **Help your teen prepare** a question or two to ask when meeting someone new.
- **Find ways** for your teen to work with others in small groups. Is there a service club at the school or community center? Could your teen paint the sets for the school play? Learning to use and focus on strengths can help your teen develop more confidence and grow up to be a capable young adult.

It Matters: Motivation

Give your teen motivation to attend school



As students grow older, the temptation to skip class often increases—even as regular school attendance becomes more crucial.

When high school students skip class, they may think they're just getting out of that day's assignments. However, they need to understand that they may be sacrificing much more—including future opportunities they might want.

Going to school is not just about today, this grading period or even this school year. It's a direct investment in your student's future.

To reinforce school attendance:

- **Make your expectations clear.** Let your teen know that you expect on-time attendance in every class every day. Talk about why you think it's important.
- **Avoid having your teen** babysit younger children during school hours.
- **Schedule appointments** outside of school hours when possible.
- **Be consistent.** Avoid sending conflicting messages by letting your teen miss school for unnecessary reasons, such as to finish homework.
- **Provide incentives.** These can be weekend outings or special time with you. Make sure they're things your teen views as rewards.
- **Monitor absences.** Call the teacher if you suspect your teen may be skipping school or classes. Review the attendance marked on the report card or online portal.

Boost internal motivation to spark a lifetime of learning

Most people are motivated to learn for both internal reasons (the love of learning) and external reasons (to earn a grade or other reward). But internal motivation is what inspires lifelong learning.

To foster internal motivation:

- **Praise your teen** for progress and for taking challenging classes, rather than just for grades.
- **Help your teen set goals** for mastering subjects. Goals should be set high, but not so high that they are unreachable.
- **Encourage your teen** to review progress towards goals regularly—and to be honest. "I could do better if I studied another 20 minutes each night."
- **Encourage your teen** to try a variety of learning strategies and figure out which ones work best in what circumstance. For example, if your teen remembers vocabulary



words better after hearing them, try reading them out loud.

- **Talk about** how you believe in your teen. Say things like, "These questions are very challenging, but I know you'll figure them out."

Lack of effort is often a sign that your teen is struggling



You've noticed your teen isn't turning in math assignments. Is this simply a lack of motivation, or is something else going on?

Sometimes, a lack of effort is actually a way of hiding a bigger, more serious problem. Teens may pretend they don't care, become the class clown or repeatedly "forget" assignments to keep families and teachers from seeing that they are struggling with the subject matter.

If this sounds like your teen, it's important to talk to the teacher right away. That "I just don't care" attitude may be hiding the fact that your teen genuinely needs help with that class.

Knowing the real problem is the first step to fixing it. If your student is struggling, ask the teacher which concepts or skills from previous years your teen needs to work on to be successful now. Then, look for solutions, like finding a tutor, getting extra help after class or taking a summer class to catch up.