

High School Parents

January 2026
Vol. 33, No. 5

Gadsden City Schools

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Help your teen follow through with academic resolutions

Making a New Year's resolution is easy, but sticking to it is tough. Many people start January with goals like earning higher grades or exercising more, but by February, those plans often fall by the wayside.

Encourage your teen to set some academic goals and then follow this process for turning them into reality:

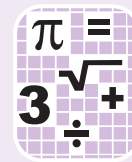
- 1. Reflect and learn.** The month of January is named after the Roman god Janus, who could look both backward and forward. This is an effective way for your teen to approach goals. Ask your teen: *What goals have you achieved and how did you do it? What did you learn that can help you with your new goals?*
- 2. Write it down.** Have your teen write down academic goals and include

a clear deadline. Having a written goal is a powerful visual reminder that will keep your teen focused.

- 3. Picture the future.** Ask your teen to imagine what success looks like. Studies show that the more vividly students can picture their goals, the more likely they are to achieve them.
- 4. Break it down.** Big goals can be overwhelming, so it's essential to break them down into smaller, manageable steps. Brainstorm together about specific steps your teen will need to take along the way.
- 5. Celebrate progress.** Final outcomes are not the only indicator of success. Acknowledge your teen's hard work and persistence along the way.

Source: B. Greene, "The Psychology Of Writing Down Goals," New Tech Northwest.

Share tips for doing better in math classes



You can support math achievement by encouraging your teen to use these proven strategies:

- **Ask questions.** Most teens are hesitant to ask questions in class. However, if your teen has a question, other students are probably wondering the same thing.
- **Stay on top of assignments.** Math builds on what was learned before. Staying current gives your teen the necessary foundation for going forward.
- **Get a study buddy.** Suggest that your teen find a math study partner. They can talk through problem-solving strategies together.
- **Go online.** Your teen can search for a math concept and find helpful explanations.
- **Read ahead.** If the teacher will go over chapter four tomorrow, have your teen read it tonight. Then, have your teen try to solve some problems in the textbook. Reading ahead helps students realize what they don't yet understand—which helps them ask better questions in class the next day.

Offer support as your teenager becomes an independent learner



High school students should be in charge of fulfilling their school responsibilities. It's not *your* job to keep track of assignments or think of ideas for a long-range project. It's time for your teen to develop learning independence.

You can offer support by remaining familiar with the work your teen is doing and helping without taking over. Here's how:

- **Set high expectations** that are realistic for your teen to meet. When teens know their families believe in their abilities, they are more likely to rise to the occasion.
- **Ask for details** about the school day. Say things like, "Tell me one thing you learned in your chemistry class today" or "What assignments do you have this week?"

- **Create a supportive environment.** Offer to bring a snack when your teen is studying. Give your teen a ride to the library or pick up needed school supplies while you're out shopping.
- **Show that reading** is a high priority. Talk about books, news and entertainment articles—anything you have read lately. Share reading material you think your teen would find interesting.
- **Help your teen see challenges** as opportunities to grow and learn, not as signs of failure.

"He who learns but does not think, is lost! He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger."

—Confucius

Let your teen know that there is no such thing as 'no homework'



When teens are in high school, there is always something they can do to keep up with their schoolwork. So if your student comes home from school without any assignments to complete, suggest spending 30 to 60 minutes on one of the following activities:

- **Get started** on a long-term project or paper. It's never too early to begin. Talk about the advantages of working on something when there's less pressure.
- **Review a chapter** or read ahead. Students are often amazed at how much better the information sticks in their mind if they study it when they're relaxed.
- **Read over class notes.** Reviewing notes regularly reminds students what they've learned and gives them an opportunity to fill in any material they may have left out.
- **Create a practice test** from books and notes. Then, you could offer to quiz your teen.
- **Practice math problems.** Or, look up some vocabulary words the teacher hasn't yet assigned.
- **Write something.** It could be a story, a poem, a journal entry or a letter to a friend.
- **Read something.** Try a classic book, a magazine, a graphic novel or a newspaper.

Source: R. Dellabough, *101 Ways To Get Straight A's*, Troll Associates.

Are you teaching your teen how to get organized?



Most teens are not naturally organized. They need to be taught strategies that will help them get to school on time, with the books and assignments they need.

Are you sharing organization strategies with your teen? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you have** your teen use a planner to record assignments and review it after school each day?
- ___ **2. Do you maintain** a place by the door for things that are going to school the next day?
- ___ **3. Do you recommend** dividing large projects into smaller parts and creating deadlines for each part?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your teen to schedule time for homework, work and activities—and write it on a calendar?
- ___ **5. Do you suggest** keeping supplies and references handy for doing assignments and other projects?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you're encouraging your teen to use organization strategies. Mostly *no* answers? Try those ideas in the quiz.

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to Help Their Children.

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Published monthly September through May.
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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

Graphic organizers can help students make a writing plan



Writers of all ages can get stuck when it's time to put pen to paper, and high school students are no exception. But for many teens, the biggest challenge in writing isn't the essay itself—it's figuring out where to start.

Graphic organizers are a simple but effective way for students to sort through their ideas. Here are a few to share with your teen:

- **Venn diagrams** are a great tool for a compare and contrast essay. To make one, your teen should draw two overlapping circles. In the outer parts of each circle, write down the differences between the two topics. In the space where the circles overlap, note the similarities.
- **Flow charts** can help when writing a narrative. To make one, have your teen draw a series of boxes with arrows leading from one to the next. In the first box, write the first event of the story. The next event goes in the next box, and so on.
- **Web diagrams** are useful for identifying supporting details. Your teen can draw a large circle in the center and write the essay's main topic inside. Then, draw small circles branching off the main one and fill them with supporting details.
- **Story boards** are another way to organize a narrative. Have your teen make a short list of ideas to cover, then sketch out a visual story and fill in the details.
- **T-charts** are useful for looking at two sides of an argument. Have your teen draw a large capital "T". On the left side, write the first topic. On the right, write the second topic. Then, fill in the chart with details that correspond to each side.

Address common attendance excuses from your teenager



High school students are known for coming up with every excuse in the book to skip school—and your teen may even have a few you've never heard before.

Here are some of the most common excuses teens use to get out of class, and how you can respond to them:

- **"I don't feel good."** This excuse has been around as long as school itself. Unless your teen has a fever, it's time for school. Follow the school's health protocols.
 - **"If I could just sleep for an extra hour, I'd be so much more productive."** Respond that your teen can go to bed an hour earlier tonight.
 - **"I have a project due at 2 p.m. that I haven't finished yet."** Say that your teen needs to be more organized, and you won't allow skipping a class just to finish an assignment for another class.
 - **"I need to rest before the big game tonight."** School comes before sports and other extracurricular activities. Big events are not an exception.
 - **"Juniors aren't supposed to go to school today. I forgot to tell you."** If this could be possible, call the school to make sure.
- If your high schooler is constantly trying to stay home from school, it may be a sign of a larger problem. Speak to your teen's teachers or school counselor about ways to address an ongoing reluctance to attend school.

Q: My high schooler tends to put things off. If there is a big paper due, my teen waits until the night before—sometimes, until very late on the night before. How can I help my student break the procrastination habit?

Questions & Answers

A: We all put some things off. But when it gets to be a habit, as it has for your high schooler, procrastination can have serious consequences.

To promote time management:

- **Ask why your teen** puts things off. Some students are afraid of failing. Some like the thrill of dashing something off at the last minute. And others are simply unmotivated. Explain that putting things off is not the solution.
- **Help your teen** divide large projects into smaller tasks and set deadlines for each task. Your teen may still wait until close to each deadline to finish that part, but bit by bit progress will be made. And once your teen gets started on a project, it may be easier to keep working.
- **Encourage your teen** to use small rewards as motivation. After completing a task or assignment, it's OK to take a ten-minute break to do something enjoyable, such as listening to music, walking around or reading an article.
- **Help your teen connect** assignments to long-term goals. For example, finishing a research paper on time develops discipline and time-management skills, which are crucial for success in careers like project management or freelance writing.

It Matters: Effective Discipline

Structure and discipline help students thrive



Most high schoolers have matured a lot since their elementary school days, but they still have a long way

to go. The part of teens' brains that controls impulses and helps them make wise decisions is not mature yet. That's one of the many reasons teens need structure and discipline.

Your efforts to set boundaries and guide your teen will pay off in all settings—especially at home and at school. Remember to:

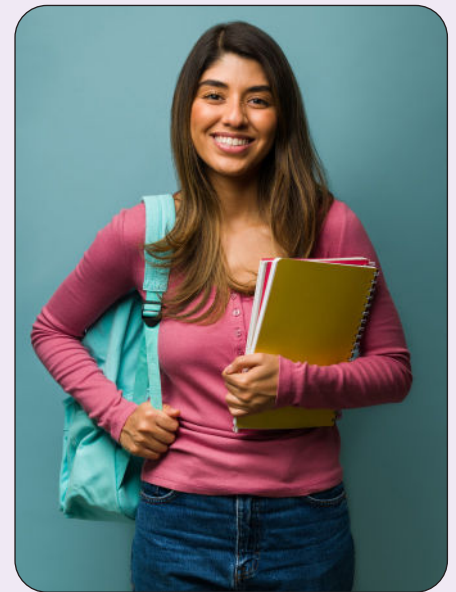
- **Expect difficult moments.** When your teen acts first and thinks later, blurts out the wrong thing or is moody, it's not necessarily to hurt your feelings. Try not to take these things personally.
- **Be firm, yet flexible.** Make sure your teen knows the limits and the consequences for violating them. Consider granting more freedom as your teen shows more responsibility.
- **Know your teen's plans.** What will your teen be doing? Who will your teen be with? When will your teen be home?
- **Distinguish** between an *explanation* and an *excuse*. Your teen's age and brain growth may explain some behavior. But they are never an excuse for being rude or defiant.
- **Focus on big issues.** These include things like schoolwork, safety and respect for others. Try not to nag your teen about the smaller issues, such as the occasional messy room.

Source: D. Walsh, Ph.D., *Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen*, Atria Books.

Establish consequences that are natural, related and reasonable

Consequences are a key part of discipline because they teach your teen that actions have results. Experts agree that consequences are most effective when they are:

- **Natural.** The best consequences happen naturally. Example: Your teen doesn't complete an assignment. Natural consequence: Your student earns a low grade. Let natural consequences happen except in matters of safety.
- **Related.** The consequence should relate directly to what your teen did. Example: Your teen comes home with an empty gas tank—again. The rule is to fill the tank before returning the car. Related consequence: Your teen can't use the car for one week.
- **Reasonable.** Example: Your teenager comes home after



curfew without permission from you. Reasonable consequence: Your teen has to stay home next Saturday night.

Teens' behavior is influenced by friends and screen media



Even though you have a big impact on your teen's life, you aren't the only one influencing your student's behavior and attitude about important things, such as school.

Make sure you are paying attention to outside influences that affect your teen, such as:

- **Friends.** Try to get to know your teen's friends and their families. Allow your teen to invite friends over occasionally. Talk about what your teen and friends do for fun. Are these friends planning to go to

college? If not, what are their plans for after high school?

- **Social media.** Ask about the social media sites your teen uses. Together, look at some of the things your teen and friends post online. Are the photos, comments and videos appropriate? Do they reflect your teen's values?
- **Movies and shows.** Watch a favorite movie or show with your teen. Use it as a way to start a conversation by asking questions like, "What do you like about this?" or "Did the characters make good choices?"