

High School Parents[®]

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Gadsden City Schools

still make the difference!



Help your high school student keep grades in perspective

Studies consistently show that pressure to achieve high grades is a primary source of stress for high school students. However, educators know that as significant as grades are, they are not the only indicators of future success.

It's also important for students to have a positive attitude toward learning, develop a strong work ethic, and maintain a balanced outlook on life.

To give your teen perspective:

- **Be clear about the message** you are sending. Too much pressure from families to get top grades can lead to cheating.
- **Let your teen know** that success does not depend on a straight-A report card. Finishing a challenging project and bringing up a grade

in a tough subject are reasons to be proud. Encourage your high school student to strive for personal excellence rather than perfection.

- **Help your teen see** the real value in what students learn in class—that gaining knowledge is the whole point of education.
- **Learn together** about the variety of post-high school education choices. There are many options beyond traditional four-year universities, including trade and technical schools and community colleges.
- **Discuss school concerns.** Listen to your teen and say you're always available to offer support.

Source: "Parents' Values and Children's Perceived Pressure: Topical Research Series #4," The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth.

Five steps can boost reading comprehension



Most high schoolers have mastered the basics of reading. But remembering what they read can

be a tougher challenge.

To help your teen retain more, share this five-step process:

1. **See it.** Albert Einstein once said, "If I can't picture it, I can't understand it." Tell your teen to read a paragraph and then try to picture the content.
2. **Predict.** Proficient readers ask themselves what they think will happen next. This is one way they stay focused on what they are reading.
3. **Ask questions**—before and after reading. What is the main idea? What are the differences between mammals and birds? How did the ancient Romans conquer and hold their empire?
4. **Relate it.** New learning is most likely to "stick" if it relates to other things your teen already knows. Help your student find those connections.
5. **Teach it.** Have your teen present the material to you. When students teach new concepts to others, it enhances understanding and recall.

Peer pressure can sometimes be beneficial for your teen



Adults often think of peer pressure as a purely negative force. But that's only true if your high schooler is feeling that pressure from negative people!

Help your teen benefit from positive peer pressure by encouraging activities that expose your student to people who have the similar interests and values.

Here's how:

- **Encourage participation** in school activities. This is probably the easiest way for your teen to meet a positive peer group. Look at the school website together and find a club that matches your teen's interests.
- **Encourage your teen** to invite friends to your home when you will be there. Knowing your teen's friends and staying aware of their activities is important. Stock your

home with games and snacks to make it a favorite hangout spot.

- **Get to know the families** of your teen's friends. This provides an opportunity to discuss shared values and rules, helping to reinforce positive behaviors.
- **Research volunteer opportunities.** Your teen could join a local service club or youth group.
- **Help your teen** identify positive role models—people your teen knows, sports figures or even celebrities. Talk about the positive traits and characteristics they have and ways your teen can emulate them.

“Show me your friends and I'll show you your future.” —Anonymous

Maximize learning by sharing memory-boosting strategies



Memory skills, especially long-term memory skills, are vital for learning. Long-term memory is the “store of knowledge”

we draw on all our lives.

To help your teen boost memory power, share these tips:

- **Look at the big picture.** If there is an upcoming test on Chapter Four, your teen should spend the most time studying that chapter. However, your teen should also look at the summaries of other chapters. This broader view helps connect Chapter Four to the entire unit, which can significantly boost memory and understanding.
 - **Put information** on index cards and review the cards frequently.
- This method makes recalling small chunks of information easier.
- **Focus attention** on the middle part of material, because brains remember the beginning and end parts best.
 - **Make the material relevant.** Your teen could visit a related historic site or watch a video on the topic.
 - **Use mnemonics**, such as acronyms. Techniques like remembering GEMDAS for the order of math operations can help students recall information.
 - **Study and then rest** or sleep. While your teen's body unwinds, the brain remains active—organizing and cementing the information studied. This behind-the-scenes work is helpful for memory retention.

Are you helping your teen get plenty of sleep?



Although the average teen needs nine hours of sleep, most teens get fewer than seven hours each night. That means

they are likely to be tired, crabby and unable to focus in class.

Are you doing all you can to help your teen get enough sleep? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to go to bed at a reasonable time and turn off digital devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime?
- ___ **2. Do you help** your teen adopt healthy habits, such as exercising each day and avoiding excessive caffeine?
- ___ **3. Do you suggest** “power naps”? A short nap after school can help your teen catch up on sleep.
- ___ **4. Do you teach** time management so your teen doesn't have to stay up late at night in order to complete assignments?
- ___ **5. Do you limit** your teen's late-night activities on weekends?

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers were *yes*, you are helping your teen prioritize rest. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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to Help Their Children.

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Give your teen six strategies for taking better class notes



Why do some students do better in school than others? One reason may be that they take careful notes. To do this, they

have to pay close attention to what they hear in class. That makes it easier for them to learn the material.

Here are some note-taking tips to share with your teen:

- 1. Listen for the main ideas.** Anything the teacher repeats more than once or writes on the board should go in your teen's notes. Your teen should also write down any words that the teacher defines.
- 2. Keep it brief.** Your teen should use phrases and words instead of complete sentences. Recommend that your teen create a system of abbreviations and symbols and keep a list of them.
- 3. Leave some blank spaces.** This allows your teen to add comments or questions later.
- 4. Place a mark** next to confusing or unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts. This reminds your teen to look them up later.
- 5. Use colors and shapes.** Your teen can draw a circle around the most important idea. Some students find it helpful to use colored markers to show how ideas relate.
- 6. Review the notes** each evening. Your teen will be better able to fix any mistakes and fill in missing information. Daily review will also help your teen remember the material at test time.

Reviewing written work reduces errors and improves grades



Effective communication is an essential skill for all students. Before submitting a paper or essay test answer, your teen should

take time to review it. Careless errors can negatively affect your teen's grade.

When editing a piece of writing, your teen should:

- **Track with a finger.** Encourage your teen to proofread slowly, word by word, to check for mistakes. Sometimes the brain fills in missing words.
- **Be concise.** Sometimes students use "filler" words to increase word count. Your teen should eliminate unnecessary words and phrases, such as *needless to say*, *basically*, etc.
- **Check word usage.** Many English words sound alike. Students sometimes confuse words like *there* and *their*, and *affect* and *effect*. Spell check programs won't catch those errors.
- **Proofread punctuation.** Do sentences end with a period or question mark? Are commas used correctly? Your teen should check for proper use of apostrophes. (Pay attention to the difference between *its* and *it's*. The first is possessive; the latter means "it is.")
- **Add support.** Does the essay include interesting examples? Is there support for the main idea?
- **Add interest.** Varying the sentence structure will ensure the piece holds the reader's attention. Suggest that your teen use interesting details or a interesting point of view to make the writing unique.

Q: My high schooler wants to get an after school job. I know jobs can help students learn responsibility and time management, but how do I know if my teen is ready to handle one?

Questions & Answers

A: Most high school students would love a little extra money. But not all teens are mature enough to make the best choices when it comes to after-school jobs.

Here are questions to ask as you and your teen make this decision:

- 1. How many hours** would your teen work? Experts believe that most teens can handle about 10 to 15 hours a week. (In fact, these students may even find that their grades go up.) More hours than that, and schoolwork starts to suffer. So set limits.
- 2. How would your teen** get to and from work? Is there public transportation available?
- 3. How would your teen manage** the money? Make it clear that you expect your teen to create a savings plan.
- 4. Would a job keep your teen** from meeting family obligations? Your teen should make sure that there will still be time for responsibilities at home. An after-school job shouldn't interfere with family meals or traditions, either.
- 5. Will a job keep your teen** from participating in school activities? These strengthen teens' connection to school, which improves academic outcomes.

Working and going to school is a balancing act. Your teen must remember that school is the top priority. With your help, your teen can make the best choices for today and for the future.

It Matters: Responsibility

Help your teen focus on personal responsibilities



Most students assume many *external* responsibilities, such as doing household chores and completing assignments

for school.

Even more important, though, are *personal* responsibilities. These are teens' responsibilities to themselves—making their own choices and deciding what type of people they will become.

You can support your teen's efforts by setting and enforcing limits, sharing your family's values, and living according to those values.

In addition, encourage your high schooler to:

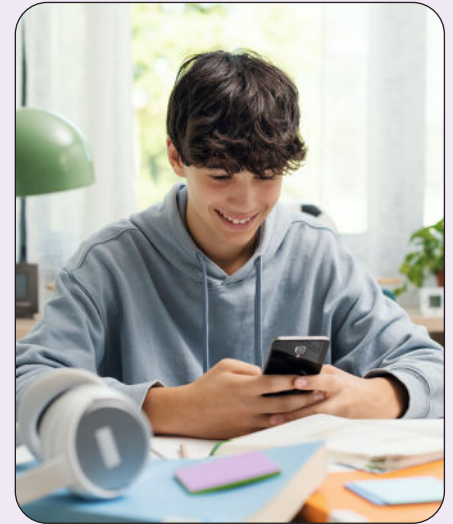
- **Ask questions.** Examples of personal responsibility questions include, "Am I kind to others?" "Can people count on me?" "Do people trust me?" "Am I respectful of others' time?"
- **Set goals.** Have your student list three ways to improve. Examples: "I want to be more reliable. I want to help others. I want to be more respectful." Have your teen list ways to accomplish each goal. Examples: "I'm going to leave the house 15 minutes earlier. I'm going to volunteer twice a month. I'm going to arrive to my classes on time."
- **Make thoughtful choices.** We show our integrity through our choices. Have your teen write, "What will happen if I ... ?" and list the likely outcomes of choices. This teaches your teen to look ahead, rather than just focusing on feelings in the moment.

Responsible social media use begins with healthy boundaries

Social media helps teens stay connected with friends and family. However, too much social media can also have negative effects.

Encourage your teen to take responsibility for social media by:

- **Controlling content.** Suggest your teen follow people who are inspiring, like a favorite author. Explain that it's OK—and even healthy—to unfollow people who make your teen feel sad or anxious.
- **Turning off notifications.** This simple yet surprisingly effective strategy will make your teen feel less tempted to check social media constantly. Instead of reacting to every ping, your teen can set aside specific times to go online.
- **Putting posts into perspective.** Social media posts can make people's lives look ideal. Remind your teen that no one's life is



perfect. People are much more likely to take and share photos of good times than of not-so-good ones.

- **Walking away.** Have your teen take breaks from social media. It can be refreshing to go "off the grid" for an evening, a day or a weekend.

Give your high schooler some responsibility for the future



Creating a college and career readiness portfolio is a valuable step in your teen's preparation for life after high school.

Having information stored in one place will be helpful, especially when your teen is filling out scholarship, college and job applications.

In the portfolio, your teen should include details about:

- **Academics.** List current and future courses to take in order to meet graduation and college admission requirements. Your student should

also write down final grades to calculate grade-point average.

- **Extracurricular activities.** List activities, the dates of participation and any leadership positions. Your teen should include things like school clubs, volunteer work, sports, jobs and internships.
- **Awards, accomplishments and skills.** Being on the honor roll, winning an essay contest, becoming proficient in a computer program, and being selected to showcase art are a few examples of the kinds of things to include.