

Helping Students Learn[®]

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



May 2020

West Carroll Parish School District

Encourage timely preparation to improve results on final exams

Final exams usually cover much more material than other tests. The study time students devote to preparing for them should also be greater. Your teen's finals may be weeks away, but now is the time for him to start preparing.



Encourage your teen to:

- **Talk with teachers.** If he is confused about the material, your teen should ask where to look for help. Teachers may also offer hints on areas to focus on. "Remember how much time we spent on solving quadratic equations?"
- **Create a study plan.** Have your teen schedule multiple study sessions for each subject on a calendar. He should also block out the time he needs to complete other final projects and assignments.
- **Gather and organize class materials.** Studying is easier when your student has everything he needs for a subject—the year's class notes, returned homework and corrected tests and quizzes—filed in one place.
- **Restock supplies.** Ask your teen to think about materials that help him study, such as index cards and sticky notes. Get more if he's running low.

Support your teen's effort by making sure he has a quiet place to study, and gets a good night sleep before each exam.



Get a head start on college essays

Will your teen be a senior next year? For an easier fall, encourage her to use some of her time this summer to write her college application essays.

Share these strategies from college admissions officers:

- **Start early,** even if your teen isn't sure yet which schools she'll apply to. Nearly 900 colleges now use the Common Application. Visit www.commonapp.org to check out the 2020-2021 essay prompts.
- **Be genuine.** Admissions officers want to know who your teen really is, not who she thinks the colleges would like her to be.
- **Answer the question.** Your teen's essay should tell a story about what matters to her. But it should also relate to the prompt.
- **Give it time.** A good essay can't be dashed off the night before it's due. Encourage your teen to write, rewrite and edit her essay so she has a polished draft to show a trusted teacher in the fall.

Source: V. Freeman, "Here's What Admissions Officers Look for in a College Entrance Essay," Best Colleges, niswc.com/essay-strategies.

Talk about times to say no

Responsibility isn't just about following through with commitments;



it's also about doing one's best. Remind your teen that part of being responsible means saying *no* when he can't handle one more thing. In that case, saying, "I'm sorry, I can't"—even to an exciting opportunity—is the more responsible choice.

Help your teen bounce back

Learning how to manage disappointment and keep moving forward is a lesson your teen will carry into adulthood. To support her in the process:

- **Listen.** Encourage your teen to put her feelings into words.
- **Sympathize,** but don't try to fix things. Tell her you're sorry she isn't getting the playing time she wants, but don't call the soccer coach and insist she get more.
- **Model** coping skills when you face your own letdowns. "I'm disappointed I didn't get that promotion. I'm going to think of other ways I can contribute."

Summer is for learning, too

Use the summer break from school to show your teen that learning can happen anytime. To reinforce his skills in:

- **History,** ask your teen to do some research. What can he find out about past events or notable people that have changed your community?
- **Science,** challenge him to plant and care for a garden. He'll have to learn what plants need to thrive.
- **Writing,** suggest that your teen choose a new skill or hobby he wants to learn and keep a journal of his progress.





My teen rejects my efforts to talk. What should I do?

Q: My daughter and I used to be very close. But lately she's become a stranger. Whenever I ask her about school, she just rolls her eyes. I want to stay involved, but how can I when she won't talk to me?



A: If you have no reason to believe that your daughter is participating in risky behavior, there's no need to panic. She is probably going through a normal phase, not too different from when she was a toddler. Remember when she shouted *no* and threw tantrums? Now she rolls her eyes. To manage this phase:

- **Understand that your teen** is trying to establish a new, independent life. And while she still knows that she needs you, she's not about to admit it. Try not to take her behavior personally. Just stay calm, and avoid responding to her attitude with anger.
- **Don't allow disrespectful behavior.** Make it clear that if your teen can't be polite, you will not listen to what she has to say. But be sure to give her your full attention when she does speak civilly.
- **Let her find her own way** for now. Contact her teachers if you are concerned about her schoolwork. Tell your teen that you will always be on her side. Then be patient—if you were close before, you will be again.



Are you upholding the limits you set?

Teens are famous for pushing boundaries. But some limits are essential to keep them safe and doing their best in school. When your teen pushes, are you a pillar of support who stands firm? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you enforce** a regular curfew for your teen? be your teen's parent than his best friend?
- ___ **2. Do you discuss** rules and the reasons for them with your teen?
- ___ **3. Do you apply** consequences consistently, even when you know your teen may get upset with you?
- ___ **4. Do you adjust** rules *only* when your teen earns more freedom through responsible behavior?
- ___ **5. Do you believe** that it is more important for you to

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean that you are maintaining boundaries in your teen's best interest. For each no, try that idea.

"Be sure and put your feet in the right place, and then stand firm."

—Attributed to Abraham Lincoln

Review workplace skills

Will a summer job be your teen's first step into the workforce? Make sure she understands the real-world demands she will face. Your teen will be expected to:

- **Arrive on time**, dressed appropriately.
- **Take direction** from a supervisor and cooperate with coworkers.
- **Interact politely** with customers or clients—even when they aren't polite.
- **Speak and behave** professionally.

In the fall, she'll find that these workplace skills will help her achieve in school, too.

Choose health this summer

When the school year is over, your teen may think it's OK to abandon healthy habits. But dropping them can lead to unhealthy changes, such as obesity. Health supports learning, so have him aim for:

- **At least eight hours** of sleep a night.
- **One hour** of daily physical activity.
- **Five servings** a day of vegetables and fruits, and no sugar-sweetened drinks.



Source: K. Ruiz, "7 Healthy Habits to Start Before School Begins," Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center.

Encourage summer reading

Whether your teen has summer reading assignments or not, she'll benefit from reading over the summer. To motivate her:

- **Help your teen find** reading material she enjoys.
- **Acknowledge her maturity.** Look for an article on a more grown-up topic and discuss it with her.
- **Read together.** Choose some young adult novels to share.
- **Set an example.** Let your teen see you reading often.

Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Copyright © 2020, The Parent Institute®,

a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-103x