

High School Parents[®]

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Jasper County High School

still make the difference!



Reinforce study skills to help your teen's developing brain

Teens' brains are still developing—and they continue to develop until they reach adulthood. During adolescence, your teen's brain is learning to think critically, plan ahead, solve problems and control impulses.

While he may be able to process more complicated and abstract information, your teen needs to practice putting these new skills to work. He also needs to develop processes for learning new information.

Help your teen reinforce what he is learning in school by suggesting that he:

- **Color-code materials** to keep organized. For example, your teen might write down his assignments in blue ink, new information in red ink and long-term project details

in green ink. His brain will categorize the information it sees in different colors as it processes what steps to take next.

- **Use charts and diagrams** to visualize new information. Seeing facts in graphic form may make it easier for your teen to comprehend the material and recall it later.
- **Outline the steps** of long-term projects. This will help your teen keep track of important steps and due dates.
- **Rely on routines.** Consistent expectations from you will help your teen remember the processes and rules for completing homework, studying for tests and more.

Source: P. Lorain, "Brain Development in Young Adolescents," National Education Association, niscw.com/high_skills.

Combine teens' interests with volunteering



When your teen helps others, she's also helping herself. Teens who volunteer regularly

develop strong problem-solving and leadership skills. They are also respectful of and respected by teachers and classmates.

Encourage your teen to find a volunteer activity that fits her interests. If she likes to:

- **Read**, she might volunteer to read to residents of a nursing home or to elementary school students.
- **Be active**, she could offer to run errands, do yard work or wash windows for an elderly neighbor. She could organize an event to clean up a vacant lot or a park.
- **Work with children**, she could volunteer at a summer camp or offer tutoring services to elementary or middle school students.
- **Be social**, she could sign up to be a peer counselor or a mentor. Or she could register voters at a community center. She could even organize an event to raise money for a charity.

Combat common attendance excuses from your teenager



You've probably heard them all—every excuse in the book for why your teen should be allowed to stay home from

school. He may have even invented some that weren't around back when you were trying to pull one over on your parents.

Here is a list of common excuses teens use to get out of going to school—and ways to combat them:

- **"I don't feel good."** Unless your teen has a fever or other noticeable symptoms, send her to school.
- **"I need more sleep."** Respond that if she reduces her screen time tonight, she could probably go to bed an hour earlier.
- **"I have a project due that I didn't finish."** Let her know that she needs to be more organized. She isn't

allowed to skip a class just to finish an assignment for another one.

- **"I need to rest before the big game tonight."** School comes before all extracurricular activities, and "big" events are no exception.
- **"Seniors don't have to go to school today."** If this could be possible, call the school to confirm.

However, if your teen is constantly trying to stay home from school, it could be a sign of a larger problem. Speak to her teachers or school counselor if you are worried about her reluctance to attend school.

"Eighty percent of success is showing up."

—Woody Allen

Teach healthy relationship skills so your teen can focus on school



Many teens begin to date once they are in high school. Unfortunately, some teens don't know what healthy relationships

look like. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year.

When teens are in unhealthy relationships, they often:

- **Do poorly in school** or miss school because they don't feel safe.
- **Doubt their self-worth**, feelings and decision-making ability.
- **Become depressed** and anxious.
- **Think about suicide.**
- **Engage in unhealthy behaviors**, such as drug and alcohol use.

Talk with your teen about the importance of respect. Explain that people who are in healthy relationships:

- **Can talk openly** to each other. Communication is key to a good relationship.
- **Work together** to make decisions. They also support and respect each other.
- **Balance their time** between their relationship and their friends and family. A relationship where two people never see anyone but each other isn't healthy.
- **Feel free to be themselves.** People in a healthy relationship accept each other's differences.

Source: "Teen Dating Violence," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nswc.com/high_violence.

Are you helping your teen get needed help?



The end of the year is near—and your teen may be struggling in one or more classes.

Are you doing all you can to identify problems and support your teen? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

___ **1. Do you recognize** the warning signs (failing grades, missed classes) that your teen may be having academic difficulties?

___ **2. Have you worked** with your teen to identify the possible causes of a problem? Is he not doing the homework, not listening to the teacher, not understanding the assignment?

___ **3. Have you told** your teen that it's a sign of strength to ask for help when he needs it?

___ **4. Have you encouraged** your teen to talk to his teachers and counselor about help available at the school?

___ **5. Have you looked** into other resources if your teen needs more help than the school can provide?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your teen get the support he needs. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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The Parent Institute, 1-800-756-5525,
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Studies show that a strong work ethic leads to success



In today's competitive workplace, it's not enough for your teen to possess the specific skills a job requires. He also needs to have a strong work ethic.

In one survey, 75% of business owners said they were concerned about the lack of work ethic in their new hires. Employers are often forced to let people go because of:

- **Tardiness and absenteeism.**
- **Failure to follow instructions.**
- **Inability to get along with coworkers.**

With a strong work ethic, your teen will be able to avoid these pitfalls.

A work ethic consists of:

- **Dependability.** A company needs to know that your teen will show up when he is scheduled to and that he will do his work. Your teen

practices dependability when he shows up for school and his classes prepared and on time.

- **Initiative.** An employer will expect your teen to be able to work on his own, follow directions and keep himself motivated. Your teen displays initiative when he completes his work without being nagged by you or his teacher.
- **Interpersonal skills.** A company needs its employees to know how to communicate effectively and work on a team. Your teen works on interpersonal skills every time he participates in a group project.

Remind your teen that he has the opportunity to strengthen his work ethic every day in school!

Source: M. Toneguzzi, "Survey shows work ethic of new hires has deteriorated for small business owners," *Calgary Herald*, nswc.com/high_ethic.

Q: My daughter wants to get an after-school job, but she's never had one before and I don't want her schoolwork to suffer. How can I help her decide if she can handle one?

Questions & Answers

A: After-school jobs provide many benefits for teens. They teach responsibility and money management skills (and they can enhance a college application). But before you give your daughter the green light to start applying for jobs, be sure you both agree that school is her number one priority.

To help your teen decide if she can handle an after-school job:

- **Discuss various options** for part-time jobs and the amount of time per week each takes. Mowing a few lawns on the weekends may not require the same amount of time as working at a local restaurant. What would best fit into your teen's schedule?
- **Talk about other commitments** that your teen has. How much time does she need to devote to homework every night? Does she play any sports or help watch younger siblings after school? Adding an after-school job can help your teen learn valuable time management skills—as long as it doesn't overload her schedule.
- **Remind her to take time** for herself. Teens' lives can be stressful! Your teen should make sure she will still have time for herself if she adds a job to her schedule.

While after-school jobs build important life skills, make sure your teen knows that her full-time job is being a successful student!

Parents can help teens recover from college rejection letters



Applying to college takes a lot of hard work. Unfortunately, there's a chance your teen might not have been accepted to her top-choice school. What should you do?

First, get *your* emotions under control. It's normal to feel upset that your teen is hurting. But a college rejection letter doesn't mean that your teen isn't a good student or that her future is in jeopardy.

Next, give your teen time to get over the shock. She might not want to talk right away—and that's OK. Wait until she's ready and then help your teen:

- **Accept that rejection hurts.** It's reasonable for your teen to feel

like the rejection is personal. But remind her that many schools are overwhelmed by the number of qualified students they must turn away, simply because they don't have enough space.

- **Put it into perspective.** What did your teen hope to accomplish at this particular school? Chances are good that there are other schools with similar programs.
- **Change direction.** Help your teen think about what's next. Is she still waiting to hear from other colleges? Could she take classes at a local community college and reapply to her dream school next year? Work together to come up with an alternate plan—and take action.

It Matters: Technology

Free apps can give your teen's learning a boost



Today's teens use smartphones to send text messages, post pictures, check social media and play games.

Sometimes, they even use them to call people.

Why not encourage your teen to use his phone as a learning aid? There are countless free apps that can help him:

- **Prepare for college testing.** There are many apps that help teens master the challenging vocabulary for college tests. Downloading one of these apps will allow your teen to study new words on the go.
- **Study a foreign language.** Many apps will help students in their foreign language courses. Some apps focus on vocabulary. Others help students learn challenging verb tenses. Your teen should ask his teacher to recommend the best one for the language he is learning.
- **Replace a graphing calculator.** In upper-level math classes, students often use these calculators to solve problems. There are apps that will also do the job. Now he will be able to solve equations on his phone.
- **Read Shakespeare.** Instead of lugging around a huge volume of Shakespeare's works, your teen can download whatever he's reading to his phone.
- **Brush up on geography.** There are even apps that can help your teen become familiar with the countries around the world.

Limit recreational screen time with these four strategies

Studies show that teens spend an average of nine hours a day online. And much of that time is spent scrolling through social media and playing video games.

Experts urge parents to help teens limit excessive recreational screen time. Here are four ways:

1. **Encourage your teen** to spend one week writing down the amount of time she spends each day on recreational screen time. Challenge her to reduce that time the following week.
2. **Establish no-tech zones** and times. For example, the dinner table should be a place where everyone leaves their screen devices behind.
3. **Create a tech curfew.** Your teen should have at least 30 minutes of "unplugged" time to wind down before she goes to sleep.



4. **Don't use tech time** as a reward or punishment. It'll make it seem even more important to your teen.

Source: J. Anderson, "Even teens are worried they spend too much time on their phones," Pew Research, nswc.com/high_techtime.

Enhance learning with these websites for high schoolers



There are some great teacher-recommended websites available to complement teens' learning and help with

homework. Here are some of the best and what your teen can do on each one:

- **Khan Academy**, www.khanacademy.org. Your teen can learn about everything from algebra to art history—and even take practice college entrance exams.
- **Math Open Reference**, www.mathopenref.com. Your teen can

find definitions of math terms and see examples of how to solve problems.

- **The Library of Congress Digital Collections**, www.loc.gov/collections. Your teen can listen to recordings, read digital texts and see still and moving pictures from periods of history.
- **The Learning Network** from *The New York Times*, learning.blogs.nytimes.com. Your teen can read the news, learn about "This Day in History" and see news-related maps.