

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

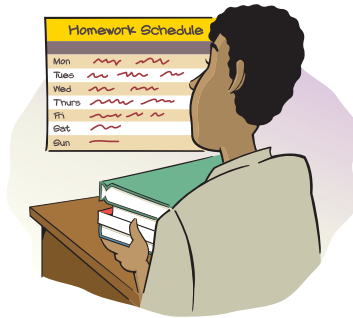
Sunburst Public Schools



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Keep your teen on track as the calendar turns toward spring

Motivation has a way of going down as the temperature starts going up, especially for seniors. Teens may need more encouragement and structure to fulfill their academic responsibilities. It's not a bad idea to check in with your teen about homework—even if he's as motivated as ever. He may need help coping with the increased number of projects, papers and tests during the last quarter of the school. Here's what to do:



- **Make sure your teen has a place to do homework.** You and your teen probably did this at the beginning of the year. Still, many families find their teens start to "spread out" their work all over the place as the year goes on.
- **Have your teen write out a homework schedule** and post it where he can easily see it.
- **Suggest that your teen make lists.** These include assignments to be done, materials needed and test dates.
- **Ask if you can help.** Of course, you should never do homework for your teen, but you can help in other ways. For example, stop by the library on your way home from work and pick up a book your teen needs.
- **Remind your teen to "work first."** Teens like to choose for themselves when they will do homework. But what if homework falls victim to screen time? It's time to step in.

Source: S.S. Zentall, Ph.D. and S. Goldstein, Ph.D., *Seven Steps to Homework Success: A Family Guide to Solving Common Homework Problems*, Specialty Press, Inc.



Discuss the high cost of dropping out

Not long ago, a student who dropped out of high school could still live a comfortable life. In 1967, nearly half of high school dropouts earned enough money to be considered part of the middle class.

Today high school dropouts often find themselves at the bottom of the income scale. Many of the jobs that allowed people without an education to earn a good living are gone. Dropouts get low-wage jobs with no opportunity for advancement.

Poor attendance is often one of the first signs that a student is about to drop out of school. So if your teen is skipping classes or often absent, take action. Get her back in the habit of going to school on time—every day. Keeping her in school now will help her earn a living in the future.

Source: J. Amos, *Dropouts, Diplomas, and Dollars: US High Schools and the Nation's Economy*, Alliance for Excellent Education, www.all4ed.org/files/Econ2008.pdf.

Encourage time outdoors

The warmer spring weather doesn't have to distract your teen from her studies. In fact, it can help her. Research shows that students learn more from two 20-minute study sessions than one 40-minute session. So suggest that your teen take a break and head outside for 10 minutes. Whether she reads on the steps or goes for a run, the fresh air will wake her brain up!

Help your teen make the most of campus visits

The best way for your teen to decide on the right college is to see it for himself. But don't plan to just drive up, get out and have a look around. You should:

- **Do some homework.** Before visiting a college, your teen should at least review its brochures, catalogs and website.
- **Make reservations.** Try to book a tour. If it's possible, see if your teen can stay overnight in a student residence hall.
- **Act like a student.** Try to attend a class or a campus event of your teen's choice.



Bullying is a serious matter

Has your teen told you about kids bullying a student at school? Tell him to speak up. When bullies aren't stopped, all students are affected. He doesn't need to confront the bullies. Instead, he should inform teachers and administrators at the school. They will know the best way to handle the situation.



Source: A. Lacey and D. Cornell, "The Impact of Bullying Climate on Schoolwide Academic Performance," University of Virginia, http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu/pdf/Lacey_The%20Impact%20of%20Bullying%20Climate%20-%20APA%202011%20Poster.pdf.



How can parents encourage good behavior in teens?

Q: My teen was always an above-average student. But lately her grades have dropped. She has new friends—kids I don't know. She's lost all interest in school, and in other activities. Recently, I've caught her lying about things—from a grade on a test to where she's going. What should I do?



A: Any one of those changes in your teen's behavior might be a cause for worry. But taken together, they point in a dangerous direction. To help your daughter:

- **Have a talk with her.** Tell her what you have observed. Say that you love her and want to help her, but also say you will be monitoring where she goes and who she's with until she is back on track.
- **Talk with her teachers.** They may be seeing the same things. They may even have some added insights. Tell them about your worries. Ask them to stay in touch with you.
- **Get additional assistance.** The school counselor or your family doctor may offer some ideas on where to get help.
- **Trust your instincts.** If you suspect your teen is using drugs or involved in other risky behavior, you're probably right. Delaying action won't help, so act as quickly as you can.



How do you & your teen communicate?

Sometimes, it seems as if teens and parents speak different languages. Your teen says he'll be home "soon." He means, "Sometime before tomorrow." You say, "Do your homework now." He hears, "Do it when it's convenient."

Luckily, there are ways that parents and teens can learn how to speak the same language. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're using them:

- ___ **1. Do you try** to find some time each day to spend with your teen?
- ___ **2. Do you schedule** regular times to do something special with your teen?
- ___ **3. Do you try** to spend a few minutes with your teen before bed? Often, teens will say things in the dark that they wouldn't say during the day.

- ___ **4. Do you sit down** sometimes to watch whatever TV show your teen is watching?
- ___ **5. Do you try** to listen to some of your teen's favorite music?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you are trying to communicate with your teen. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"In the time it takes you to understand a 14-year-old, he turns 15."

—Robert Brault

Instill a strong work ethic

Research shows that work habits your teen develops now will help him keep a job in the future. Expect him to:

- **Show** up on time.
- **Follow** directions.
- **Cooperate** with teachers and classmates.
- **Resolve** conflicts calmly.

Source: "Work Ethic Training Helps Teens Gain Employability Skills," University of Idaho Extension System, www.extension.uidaho.edu/impacts/Pdf_01/workethictraining-01.pdf.

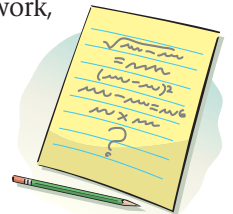
Self-esteem breeds success

Self-esteem grows when kids recognize their accomplishments. To help this happen:

- **Compliment** your teen. "I didn't ask you to clean the kitchen, but you did. You're amazing!"
- **Have** your teen name something she doesn't like about herself, such as, "I wait until the last minute." Then challenge her to do the opposite. (She could start a paper early, for example). Express confidence that she'll succeed!

Solving sample problems helps reinforce concepts

Suppose your teen is studying chemistry. Before he starts his homework, have him copy a problem that the teacher solved in class onto a fresh sheet of paper, close his book and put away his notes.



Can he solve the problem by himself? Probably not. And believe it or not, that's good news. Because now your teen needs to work through the sample problem again. He may need to check his notes or read the book. But he'll know what steps to follow and why. Then he's prepared to do his homework.

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