

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



September 2011

Grand Erie District School Board
Growing Excellence ... Inspiring Success

Strive for good attendance this year

What's the one most important thing you can do to help your teen succeed in school this year? Make sure he's in class!

Researchers tracked the attendance of students who missed even a small amount of school—roughly five days each marking period. They found those students were more likely to drop out or not graduate from high school on time. Ninth grade is an especially important year. Only 63 percent of ninth graders who missed even one week of school each marking period graduated on time four years later.



When teens miss school, they miss out on important lessons, hands-on experiences, class discussions and more. So stress the importance of going to school every day. Your teen may ask, "Do I have to go?" Smile and say firmly, "Absolutely."

To promote regular attendance, have your teen:

- **Use an alarm clock.** If necessary, he can set two!
- **Pack his lunch** and organize his backpack before going to bed.
- **Schedule medical appointments** during non-school hours.
- **Limit late-night work hours.** School is his most important job.

Source: Consortium on Chicago School Research, "What Matters for Staying on Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools," University of Chicago, <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/07%20What%20Matters%20Final.pdf>.



Monitor your teen's technology usage

Teens *love* technology—but often aren't experts on online safety. To make sure your teen is safe online:

- **Remind** your teen that nothing is private in cyberspace. A photo sent to just a few friends can easily be forwarded to someone else or posted on a website.
- **Help** her think about the future. Nothing completely disappears once it's on the Internet. How will she feel if a college admissions officer or a potential employer sees a picture or blog post?

- **Know** who's contacting your teen. Teens sometimes consider someone they have only met online as a friend.
- **Use** a search engine to search for your teen's name or any social networking profiles. You are not snooping. After all, if you're able to find her easily, so can anyone else—like a teacher or classmate.

Source: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, "Sex and Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults," www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech_Summary.pdf.

Involved parents boost student achievement

Parent involvement often declines during the teen years. But research shows that parents play a key role in supporting student achievement. To stay involved:

- **Ask** your teen about school every day.
- **Attend** school events.
- **Meet** your teen's teachers.

Source: E. Patrikakou, "Adolescence: Are Parents Relevant to Students' High School Achievement and Post-Secondary Attainment?" Harvard Family Research Project, www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/adolescence-are-parents-relevant-to-students-high-school-achievement-and-post-secondary-attainment.

To get success, expect it!

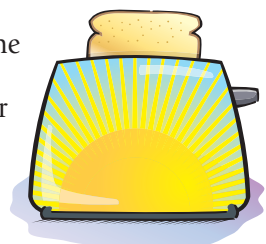
When thinking about your expectations for your teen this year, consider that:

- **Teens try to reach** parents' expectations of them. If you believe in your teen and expect her to succeed in school, she is likely to have higher academic achievement.
- **Teens' own expectations** begin to match parents' expectations. If you make it clear to your teen what you expect of her, by saying things like "I believe you can do well in school," she will begin to have the same belief in herself.



Breakfast benefits brains

Eating forces your teen's body to wake up. And the food powers his brain, which will make it easier for him to learn and pay attention in class. Provide some type of breakfast—even just a banana or piece of toast your teen grabs as he heads out the door.





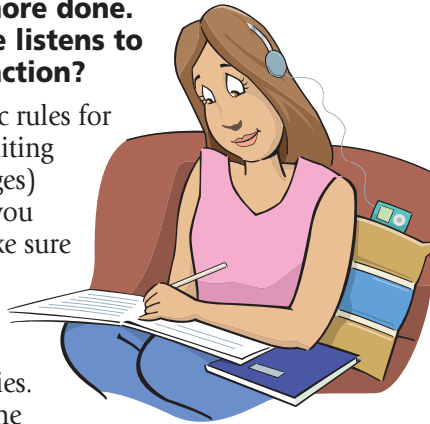
Can students do homework while listening to music?

Q: As the school year begins, I want to set rules for homework that will help my daughter do her best in school. She likes to work while listening to music. She says it helps her concentrate better and get more done. But can she really learn while she listens to music—or is it just another distraction?

A: It's important that you set some basic rules for homework with your daughter. And limiting distractions (like the TV and text messages) is a good place to start. But at this age, you shouldn't have to hover over her to make sure she follows them.

Give your daughter input into this matter. Let her study with music for one day. Pay close attention as she studies. Is she singing along with the words of the song? If so, she isn't paying full attention to her homework—no matter what she says. In that case, she probably should listen to music without lyrics during study time.

Then try an experiment. For one month, have her do her homework with no music. Then give her a month to study *with* music. During which month did homework take longer? Which month were her grades higher? Together, discuss which method of studying was more effective.



Are you teaching your teen to think?

Teens think they're invincible. They think that smoking or driving fast will only hurt other people—not themselves. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your teen is developing an appropriate sense of caution:

- ___ **1. Do you talk** with your teen about the need to think first—before acting? Teens often jump in with both feet!
- ___ **2. Have you taught** your teen to delay when he is faced with a choice—such as counting to 10 before responding?
- ___ **3. Do you remind** your teen of his long-term goals? "Can you play basketball in college if you're kicked off the team now for drinking?"
- ___ **4. Have you told** your teen if he's in a dangerous situation, you will come pick him up—no questions asked?

- ___ **5. Do you help** your teen practice some ways to say *no*? **How did you do?** Each yes answer means you're helping your teen learn that the things he does can put him in danger. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are."

—Roy Disney

Encourage responsibility

When your child was younger, you could overlook the occasional forgotten lunch. But now your teen needs to learn to be responsible for his own things. Here's how:

- **Avoid** "rescuing" him. If he calls to say he left something at home, don't drop what you're doing to take it to him.
- **Figure out** why he's so forgetful. Is "forgetting his homework" easier than saying he didn't understand how to do it?
- **Work** together to find a solution.

Schedule a school check-up

Block out an hour of time this month to sit down and really talk to your teen about school. Ask how she thinks the school year is going so far and which classes are her favorite (or least favorite). Talk about her goals for the year and for the future. Taking the time to check on her progress shows your teen how important her education is to you—and how proud of her you already are.

Think green for homework

Teens like to feel as if they can make a difference in the world. To help your teen turn his homework "green," encourage him to:

- **Use recycled notebook paper.** Using recycled paper saves three cubic yards of landfill space a year!
- **Think before printing.** Does your teen really need to print out every draft of that paper?
- **Take notes** on the back of old papers. Or record class discussions and type notes at home.



Source: G. Fleming, "How to Green Your Homework And Be Kind to the Environment," About.com, <http://homeworktips.about.com/od/studymethods/a/green.htm>.

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