

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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La Porte Independent School District

*still make the difference!*



## Help your teen get off to a great start this school year

**W**hether it's your teen's first year in high school or the last, there are five simple things you can do to set the stage for a successful school year. Make sure you:

### 1. Meet with your teen's teachers.

Do this at back-to-school night or schedule an appointment. Opening lines of communication early will make it easier for you to work together if a problem arises.

2. **Write down the names** and email addresses of your teen's teachers. Also write down contact information for the principal, the attendance office and your teen's school counselor. Keep the information handy for easy access throughout the year. Follow the school on social media, too.

3. **Plan to attend** the school events that involve your teen. You'll have fun, you'll show that you care about your teen and the school, and you'll get to meet other parents. These contacts will be useful when your teen tells you things like none of the other students have homework.
4. **Make it clear** that there will be a study time at your house every day. Your teen can decide *when* to do assignments, but not *whether* to do them. No homework? Your teen can read or review class notes.
5. **Check with the counselor** to make sure your teen is on track to graduate and be admitted to college. Even students who aren't sure they want to go to college should take courses that leave that option open.

## Sitting up front can keep teens alert in class



Studies have found that students who sit in the front of the classroom tend to perform better than

those sitting in the back. Sitting in the front can help your teen:

- **Stay alert.** When teachers can see them, students are less likely to become distracted, talk to a classmate or fall asleep.
- **Take better notes.** Sitting up front makes it easier to see and hear.
- **Become more engaged.** Teachers sometimes engage students sitting in the front of the class in more discussions—which can help the students get more out of the class.
- **Build confidence.** With better listening, more class discussions and better note-taking, students feel more positive about school.

If your teen has an assigned seat and can't sit up front, don't worry. Your student can still arrive on time, greet the teacher and strive to participate in every class.

Source: P. Will and others, "The impact of classroom seating location and computer use on student academic performance," *PLOS ONE*, Public Library of Science.

## Peer pressure can actually be a good thing for your teenager



Parents often think of peer pressure as a 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 same interests and similar 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. It's important for you to know your teen's friends, and this is a great way to do it!

Make your home a favorite hangout spot by stocking it with games and a variety of snacks.

- **Get to know the parents** of your teen's friends. Learn about their family rules and values and share yours.
- **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

## Set your teen up for success by focusing on attendance



One of the best ways to support learning is to make sure your teen attends school every day.

Attendance is vital for school success.

Teens who miss school frequently are more likely to:

- **Drop out.** Missing too many classes is often the first sign that a teen is giving up on school.
- **Get into trouble.** One study found that 78 percent of people who ended up in prison had a first arrest for school truancy.

The beginning of the school year is a good time to develop positive habits. To make school attendance a priority:

- **Talk to your teen** about the importance of attendance and punctuality.

If you didn't show up to your job, you'd get fired. Let your teen know that attending school is just as important.

- **Avoid scheduling medical** and other appointments for your teen during school hours.
- **Communicate with teachers.** If your teen must miss a class, talk to the teacher to see how you can all work together to make sure your teen stays on track.
- **Attend school meetings** for families. Establish routines at home that make getting to school on time easier. And talk with your teen about school every day.

**Source:** “What's the Link Between Truancy and Delinquency?” San Bernardino County District Attorney.

## 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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# Talk to your teen about the importance of academic honesty



The research is in on students and cheating, and the news is sobering. In a nationwide survey of 43,000 secondary

students, 59 percent admitted to cheating on tests and assignments.

Studies also show that:

- **Above-average students** are just as likely to cheat as their lower-achieving peers.
- **Cheating doesn't carry** much of a stigma anymore. Students don't feel the shame in it that they once did.
- **The more pressure** students feel to earn higher grades, the more likely they are to cheat.
- **Cheaters often justify** their actions by claiming that "everyone's doing it." In their minds, they'll be at a disadvantage if they don't cheat.

- **Cheating is easier** than ever, thanks to the technology. Students can download entire papers or projects online.
- **Kids tend to begin** cheating at games or sports in elementary school. Academic cheating sets in during middle school.

Let your high schooler know you expect honesty at home and in class. Remind your student that cheating includes:

- **Copying homework** from another student.
- **Sharing questions and answers** during or after a test.
- **Copying words and ideas** of others without giving the source.
- **Handing in a project** or paper that was completed by someone else.

*Source: Plagiarism: Facts & Stats: Academic Integrity in High School, Plagiarism.org.*

# Mind mapping can strengthen students' comprehension



Minds work a lot like websites. From one main idea, our thoughts tend to branch off to other related ideas. Those are

linked to still more ideas.

One effective way for students to learn something new is to create a link to something they already know. Creating a mind map is a helpful technique. Mind mapping is a visual and logical way of note-taking that literally "maps out" ideas and represents them graphically.

Before learning a new subject, students can:

1. **Write down the main word** or phrase of that subject in the center of a piece of paper and circle it.
2. **Write down all related words** or phrases they can think of around

the circled word. Your teen can use overlapping circles or arrows to connect items. The goal is to get as many ideas down on paper as quickly as possible.

3. **Edit the map.** This might mean moving some items near related ideas or using color to help organize the concepts. Your teen can also add drawings and symbols.

As students read about the subject, they should add new information to the map, working outward. As the map expands, the added details should be more specific.

After completing the mind map your teen will have a personal map that puts the new information into the context of previously learned material.

**Q:** Now that my teen is in high school, I am wondering how much monitoring I should do when it comes to recreational activities. Should I track my teen's location using my phone? Should I read my teen's text messages? How much is too much?

## Preguntas y respuestas

**A:** There are many tools available to parents these days to help them monitor teens. But it's important to remember one thing—and that's the fine line between keeping your teen safe and spying.

Your goal should be to respect your teen's privacy and promote safety at the same time. To help your teen steer clear of trouble:

- **Build a parent network.** Get to know the parents of your teen's friends, and discuss concerns about alcohol, vaping and drug use. Before you allow your teen to go to a party, check to see if a responsible adult will be present.
- **Set rules about driving** a car—and about riding in cars. Make sure your teen knows *never* to get in the car with someone who has been drinking. Say, "If you are ever in that situation, call me and I will pick you up—no questions asked."
- **Monitor social media posts.** Make it clear that your teen should not post things that aren't OK for the whole world to see—including you.
- **Talk with your teen.** Spend time alone together—go out for ice cream, take a walk or do something else you both enjoy. One-on-one talks will help you build a strong relationship. And in the long run, that will work far better than spying on your teen!



# It Matters: Responsibility

## Help your teen focus on personal responsibilities



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

for school.

Even more important, though, are *personal* responsibilities, the ones that shape character. 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 character-building questions include, "Am I kind enough?" "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 character through our choices. Have your teen write, "What will happen if ... ?" and list the likely outcomes of choices. This teaches your teen to look ahead, rather than just focusing on feelings in the moment.

## Give your high schooler some responsibility for the future

**C**reating 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.

## Ask your teen to be responsible for limiting digital device use



According to the Pew Research Center, 54% of teens say they spend too much time on their phones and other mobile devices. They feel pressured to respond immediately to social media posts, text messages and other notifications.

This technology "addiction" can have a negative effect on students' learning, academic performance and mental health.

Parents can help teens manage device time responsibly by asking them to:

- **Spend one day tracking** the number of times they pick up their phone or other device and the amount of time they spend on it.
- **Reduce their screen time** the next day. Brainstorm ways to accomplish this. Your teen could turn off notifications and check the phone only during specific times.
- **Adhere to technology-free times.** These are times when devices should be turned off or out of reach—during study time, family mealtime, bedtime, etc.

Source: J. Jiang, "How Teens and Parents Navigate Screen Time and Device Distractions," Pew Research Center.