

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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Newark Public Schools

***still make the difference!***



## Foster internal motivation to create a lifelong learner

Internal motivation is a significant contributor to student academic success. Teens who are internally motivated *want* to learn. They are not learning solely to receive a particular grade or a parent's approval. They are learning because they find it satisfying.

Most people are motivated to learn for both internal and external reasons. But internal motivation is what creates lifelong learning.

To develop your teen's internal motivation, encourage your student to:

- **Set goals** for mastering the material in classes. Setting goals creates a sense of purpose and ownership for learning. And reaching goals will give your teen a feeling of accomplishment.
- **Connect learning** to real-world situations. This reinforces the value of what your teen is learning.
- **Focus on the value of learning.** Praise your teen for working hard and understanding the material, regardless of the grade earned.
- **Be curious.** Encourage your teen to ask questions about material and to explore topics beyond the assignment at hand.
- **Have confidence** in personal abilities. Say that you believe in your teen. "These math problems look very challenging, but you know the concepts and you'll work them out." Statements like this will help your teen view challenges as opportunities to learn and grow.

## Don't let your teen allow work to slide



As soon as the days become longer, students' attention spans seem to become shorter.

It's like there's something in the air that entices kids of all ages to skimp on studying in favor of extra time outdoors.

To ensure your teen is staying engaged with schoolwork:

- **Talk about it.** Ask questions about assignments—which one was the most interesting? Which one was the most difficult? This will remind your teen that you still care about what's going on at school—and your teen should, too.
- **Time it.** If your teen averaged more than one hour of schoolwork per night during the winter, a new 15-minute average should make you suspicious. A comment like, "Your teacher sure let up on the assignments suddenly," might be all it takes to fix the problem.
- **Combine it.** Suggest that your teen do an assigned reading on the front steps or in the backyard. That way, your teen can enjoy the fresh air—without sacrificing schoolwork time.

# Community service promotes leadership skills and respect



There is a popular saying that “Great leaders don’t set out to be leaders, they set out to make a difference.” That’s what teen

volunteers do every day.

Over the years, researchers have examined many of the positive effects of community service on students. They include:

- **Respect.** Teens who volunteer to help others learn to respect people and themselves. As they work to solve problems, they gain new skills. They see the results of their work. They gain the respect not only of their peers, but also of their community.
- **Leadership skills.** Teens who participate in community service learn how to organize others. They know how to work in teams.

Those are skills they can use in the classroom today and in the workplace tomorrow.

- **Admiration.** Other teens think that those who volunteer are cool. They respect them as leaders and look up to them.

Together, find a cause your teen feels strongly about. Then, support your student’s efforts to volunteer.

**“As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands—one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.”**

—Audrey Hepburn

# Show your high school student how to take effective notes



Developing an effective note-taking strategy helps students get the most out of their classes. Share these tips with your teen:

- **Create a structure.** For example, suggest drawing a vertical line down a sheet of paper and dividing it into two columns of about one-third and two-thirds of the page. Your student should take class notes in the wider column.
- **Take notes by hand.** Studies show that writing notes by hand helps students process information better than keyboarding.
- **Create a list of abbreviations.** Teachers can talk faster than students can write. So using abbreviations will help your teen keep up. Try *b/c* for *because* and *ex.* for *example*.
- **Review notes after each class.** While rereading notes, your teen can jot down questions or quick summaries in the narrow column. Your teen can also add any extra explanations that will help when it’s time to study for the test.
- **Supplement notes** with information from other resources. An assigned reading or a teacher-recommended website may expand on a subject.
- **Use color to highlight.** Some students create a color-coding system to highlight key points in their notes. Your teen can devise a system that will help identify key details when it’s time to review for the test.

# Are you helping your teen prepare for the summer?



Before you know it, the last day of school will arrive. To make sure your teen is engaged in productive activities

this summer, now is the time to start planning. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are preparing in effective ways:

- \_\_\_ **1. Have you asked your teen** to verify with teachers that grades in all classes are passing? Otherwise, the summer could be filled with remedial classes.
- \_\_\_ **2. Have you suggested** taking a summer class? Your teen may be able to pursue an interest or complete a required class ahead of schedule.
- \_\_\_ **3. Have you encouraged** your teen to start looking for a summer job opportunities?
- \_\_\_ **4. Have you discussed** places your teen could volunteer?
- \_\_\_ **5. Have you checked** with friends about possible internships available at their places of employment?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you’re helping your teen prepare for a productive summer. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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# Encourage your teen to take science and math classes



Research points to one effective way to make a difference for your high schooler's future: Talk about the importance of science and math.

There are plenty of great jobs in science, technology, engineering and math. (Together, these fields are often called STEM.)

STEM-related jobs are increasing every year. Some require only a two-year associate's degree after high school. Often, STEM jobs have starting salaries of \$50,000 or higher for new college graduates.

Yet teens often avoid the math and science classes they need in high school to prepare for these jobs. That's where families can help. Explain that choosing STEM classes now can increase future options. Then:

- **Show how current interests** can lead to STEM careers. If your high schooler is always using a certain app, suggest taking computer science and learning to develop a new app. If your teen is interested in how things work, a career as an engineer could be a great fit.
- **Encourage your teen** to take at least one math class and one science class every year. Students aiming for STEM careers should take a total of four years of math and four years of science while in high school.
- **Suggest that your teen** seek out extracurricular STEM programs or clubs, such as robotics, coding, or math and science olympiads.

Source: C.S. Rozek and others, "Utility-value intervention with parents increases students' STEM preparation and career pursuit," *PNAS*, National Academy of Sciences.

**Q:** My teen is a junior in high school and can't seem to make a decision about anything! How can I help my teen learn how to make responsible decisions?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** As kids grow up, they will be required to make all sorts of decisions—some big and some small. Decision-making is challenging for most teens. But for some, it can lead to almost total paralysis.

To help your teen learn to make well-reasoned decisions:

- **Offer plenty of opportunities** to make low-risk decisions. Suppose your teen is responsible for mowing the lawn every week. On Monday, say, "The lawn needs to be mowed before this weekend. You decide when you want to mow it." Don't mention it during the week. Simply let your teen decide when to mow the lawn.
- **Share helpful strategies.** When your teen has to make a decision, suggest making a list of the positives and negatives for each option. Sometimes, seeing things written down can make the choice easier.
- **Remind your teen** that mistakes are opportunities to learn. Some teens are afraid to make a decision because they are worried about making the wrong one. Let your teen know that in life, things don't always work out the way we plan—and that's OK. People learn something from every choice they make, even if it's simply what *not to do* next time.
- **Suggest that your teen** set deadlines for big decisions. "You have until Tuesday to decide if you want to accept Mr. Smith's job offer."

# Share tips that help students stay awake during study time



Many high school students report that they sometimes fall asleep while studying. Here are some tips you can give

your teen to fight off the urge to doze:

- **Get enough sleep** on a regular basis. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, teens need between eight and 10 hours of sleep every 24 hours.
- **Don't get too much sleep!** Too much sleep can make your teen just as groggy as too little.
- **Take frequent breaks.** One five- to 10-minute break after every hour of studying will keep your teen awake and focused. During breaks, your teen can pace across the room, take a fast shower or do some stretching exercises.
- **Don't get too comfortable.** If your teen is studying lying down, it will be easier to doze off.
- **Focus on posture.** Sitting up straight or standing up while studying can help your teen stay alert.
- **Exercise regularly.** Active teens sleep better at night and have more energy during the day.
- **Drink plenty of water** to avoid dehydration.
- **Eat a healthy snack** to keep blood sugar stable.
- **Study with a friend** or in a group.
- **Alternate tasks** to keep things interesting.



# It Matters: Discipline

## If you want your teen's attention, remain calm



If there's one way to guarantee that your teen won't listen to you, it's to yell. When an adult yells a teen,

the conversation basically stops. The teen is no longer listening, and the adult is venting frustration more than trying to make a point.

Studies have found that the consistent use of harsh verbal discipline is harmful. In addition to causing behavioral problems, frequently screaming can increase your teen's risk for depression and academic troubles.

That said, teens occasionally do things that make adults want to yell. Whether your teen misses curfew or fails a test, your first reaction may be to raise your voice. Instead, speak quietly and firmly. Try to:

- **Respond, not react.** Reacting—acting on a first impulse without thinking about it—often leads to yelling. Manage your emotions and respond calmly.
- **Realize whose problem it is.** When parents lose their tempers over a bad grade, teens become more focused on hiding from their wrath than with determining how to raise that grade. Remain calm and ask how your teen plans to deal with the problem.
- **Take a break.** If you feel like you can't face your teen without shouting, leave the room. Take a deep breath and come back when you feel less upset.

Source: Society for Research in Child Development, "Harsh parenting predicts low educational attainment through increasing peer problems, ScienceDaily.

## Remember these guidelines for disciplining teenagers

Teens have matured a lot since their elementary school days, but they still have a long way to go. The part of the brain that controls impulses and helps them make good decisions has not matured yet. Teens still need structure and discipline.

Here are some guidelines:

- **Expect the difficult moments.** When your teen acts first and thinks later, blurts out the wrong thing or is moody, it's not an intentional act targeted at you. It's important not to take it personally.
- **Be firm, yet flexible,** with your teen. Make sure your teen knows the rules and the consequences for breaking them. Consider granting more freedom as your teen shows more responsibility.
- **Know the difference** between an *explanation* and an *excuse*. Your teen's age and brain development may explain some of behavior.



However, they are not an excuse for being rude or defiant.

- **Focus on the big issues.** These include things like safety and schoolwork. Try not to scold your teen about the smaller issues, such as an occasional messy room.

## Teach your high schooler how to be a more respectful person



Your teen walked out of the room in the middle of a discussion with you. Later, your teen used a tone of voice

that would have kept you grounded for life if you had tried to use it on your parents.

What can you do if your teen behaves in a disrespectful way? Try these ideas:

- **Be a model of respect.** That doesn't mean that you have to be perfect—who could be? But when you demonstrate your values, your teen will notice. "So that's how adults behave. I want to be like that, too."
- **Let your teen know** that having strong feelings is OK, but being disrespectful is not. Teens can—and do—get angry with adults. But that doesn't mean they can use an inappropriate tone or foul language. Set boundaries.
- **Enforce consequences.** Act quickly and calmly when your teen is disrespectful.