HIGH SCHOOL

Helping Students Learn®

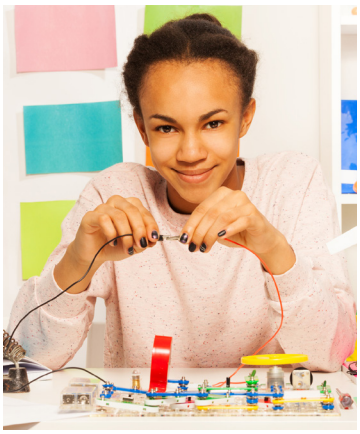
Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

March 2024

Hondo Independent School District

Encourage your teen to identify as a math and science person

Students who see themselves as "math and science people" are more likely to go further in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects and pursue STEM-related careers. Even if your teen is more interested in other fields, taking rigorous math and science classes helps develop reasoning skills that will be useful in any subject or job.



All students can be math and science people. To encourage this identity:

- **Seek out positive experiences** with math and science. Take your teen to science museums, STEM fairs, etc. Share news stories about scientific discoveries and rocket launches. Suggest reading popular books or watching movies related to math and science.
- **Promote daily practice.** Just as athletes and musicians still need to practice to keep their skills sharp, so do math and science students.
- **Help reframe negative thoughts.** Encourage your student to add the word "yet" to the end of thoughts like "I can't do this problem." When your teen struggles, mention past successes with challenging material.
- **Suggest getting help early.** Math and science concepts build on themselves, and staying on track helps students feel capable. So your teen should talk to the teacher right away when a concept seems unclear.

Source: R. Quintana and A. Saatcioglu, "The Long-Lasting Effects of Schooling: Estimating the Effects of Science and Math Identity in High School on College and Career Outcomes in STEM," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World,* American Sociological Association.

Make it clear that attendance counts

Educators talk a lot about the importance of attendance, but teens get the message better when families also make school attendance a priority at home. To promote regular attendance:

- **Talk with your teen** about the importance of showing up on time—whether it's at school, a job or an appointment. Explain that it shows responsibility and respect for other people and their time. Then, set an example by always striving to be on time yourself.
- **Don't make staying** at home a treat. Make sick days "device-free days." Sick students need to rest. Your teen will also be less likely to fake an illness just to get out of going to school.
- **Address anxiety.** Ask if your teen is worried about school. If necessary, contact a counselor.
- **Have your teen set** an attendance goal. Start with a short-term goal at first, like attending every day for a month, then work up.

Teach silent signs of respect

Using respectful language will help your teen get along in school. But it is just as important for students to behave respectfully when they aren't speaking. Remind your teen that smiling and making eye contact shows polite interest. Eye rolling and disrespectful gestures should be avoided.

Promote a writing process

Effective writing is well-thought out and clear. A five-step process helps students achieve this goal:



1. **Prepare.** Your teen should brainstorm key points to include.
2. **Research.** A deeper understanding of the topic makes writing more interesting.
3. **Outline.** Creating a plan for the writing helps ensure that ideas flow logically.
4. **Write** and rewrite. A rough draft is for getting ideas down. Your teen can revise and clarify in the next draft.
5. **Proofread** the final draft carefully.

Source: J. Unger and S. Fleischman, "Research Matters: Is Process Writing the 'Write Stuff'?" *Educational Leadership,* ASCD.

Strengthen your teen's ability to resolve conflicts



Conflicts with teachers, friends or family happen to most students from time to time. Teach your teen these strategies for resolving them:

- **Comment** on the problem, not the person. Name-calling won't help.
- **Listen** and try to understand the other person's point of view.
- **Take time to think** before acting.
- **Look for a compromise.**
- **Ask for help if needed.**
- **Be willing to apologize** if at fault.

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Q&A My teen has a problem with a teacher. What should I do?

Q: My teen has disliked a few teachers before. But now one seems especially hard for my student to deal with. Everything my teen says about this teacher is negative. How should I handle this?



A: High school students have lots of teachers, and it is common for them to find one they just don't like. After hearing negative things, you may be tempted to rush to your teen's defense. Instead, help your student learn to manage the situation. Here's how:

- **Listen and acknowledge** your teen's feelings. Explain that it is OK not to like a teacher. But it is also necessary to learn to work with people we don't like. Say that you know your teen can do this.
- **Discuss what's at the root** of the issue. Does your teen struggle to understand the content in the teacher's class? Does the teacher seem to treat your teen differently from other students? Has your teen done anything that might have contributed to the situation?
- **Urge your teen to ask** for a meeting with the teacher to talk about the issues and work to find solutions.
- **Follow up with your teen.** Are things improving? If not, a meeting with you, your teen and the teacher may be in order.

Parent Quiz Are you fostering interest in reading?

Reading is a fundamental skill students use in every class in school. Daily reading will help keep your high schooler's reading skills sharp. Are you encouraging your teen to read? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

___**1. Do you put** a variety of interesting reading materials in places where they will catch your teen's eye?

___**2. Do you read** aloud together sometimes? Pick a book you both might like, and take turns reading to each other.

___**3. Do you share** articles with your teen that you have read and found interesting?

___**4. Do you talk** about the different reasons you read—to find information, to learn something new, to relax?

___**5. Do you read** every day and invite your teen to join you?

How well are you doing?

More yes *answers mean that you are showing that reading is an ideal way to spend time. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"It is books that are the key to the wide world; if you can't do anything else, read all that you can."
—Jane Hamilton

Exercise can give your teen a mental health boost

The amount of time that teens are physically active is on the decline. And research suggests that too much inactivity increases the risk that a teen will become depressed.

One study of thousands of teens found that kids whose activity levels decreased over time had higher depression rates. Kids who added even one hour per day of light physical activity had lower rates.

Encourage your teen to stick to a regular exercise routine, and to get up and move around often when studying or relaxing.

Source: A. Kandola and others, "Depressive symptoms and objectively measured physical activity and sedentary behavior throughout adolescence," *The Lancet Psychiatry*.

Encourage project planning

Planning is the secret to success with long-term projects. It should start when the project is assigned. Have your teen mark the due date on a calendar. Then, have your student cross out any days and times when it isn't possible to work on the project. With a realistic idea of how much time is left, your teen can plan when to complete each part of the project.



Bolster ethical decisions

In the face of an ethical dilemma, will your teen do the right thing? Provide practice by having your student put any decision through this test:

- **Am I hoping** no one will find out I made this choice?
- **How will I feel** about this choice in a month? In a year?
- **How will my choice** affect others?
- **If everyone did** what I'm about to do, would the world be the kind of place I want to live in?

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