

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Program

Elgin Public Schools

## Help your teen figure out how much time is really left this year

Teens tend to have a different sense of time than adults. When something is due next month, your teen may feel as though there is loads of time left to complete it. But in the spring, when multiple final projects, papers and exams must be completed in just a few weeks, many students feel the pinch.

To help your teen focus on the amount of time that's actually available for completing year-end work:



1. **Sit down with a calendar** and any planners, schedules and notes about commitments your teen has.
2. **Make a list of all the schoolwork** and studying your student must do between now and the end of the year. Ask your teen to estimate how much time (days and hours) there is left to complete these tasks.
3. **Turn to the calendar.** Cross off all the parts of days when your student *can't* do schoolwork. Say your teen's plan was to study for biology on Friday. But when you check the other commitments, it turns out there is a two-hour softball practice after school, and then your teen is scheduled to babysit. Does Friday still count as a study day?
4. **Look at "soft" commitments** as well. If Saturdays usually include a few hours of downtime, is your teen *really* going to give it up to study?
5. **Add up the real amount of time left** for schoolwork and studying before the end of the year. Chances are, it's less than your teen estimated. But now your student can make a realistic plan for fitting everything in.



## Discuss need for respect in relationships

Peer relationships—with friends and significant others—matter to teens. However, many teens find themselves in abusive relationships. The abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional or verbal, and occur in person or online.

In a CDC survey of teens, one in 11 girls and one in 14 boys said they had experienced physical dating violence in the previous year.

Talk with your teen about the essential role of respect in relationships. Explain that people who respect each other:

- **Feel free to be themselves.** People in a healthy relationship accept each other's differences.

They aren't afraid to be direct and honest with each other.

- **Make decisions** that affect both of them together. They also support and listen to each other.
- **Balance their time** between friends and family. A relationship where two people spend time only with each other isn't healthy.

Source: "Preventing Teen Dating Violence," Centers for Disease Control.

## An 'I don't care' attitude may be a cry for help

A lack of effort in school doesn't always mean a student is lazy. Some teens pretend they don't care about doing well to cover-up for the fact that they are struggling.

Identifying the real problem is the first step toward a solution. If your teen seems to be giving up in a class, talk to the teacher. Ask about options for help. Could your student take a summer class in the subject?

## Will your teen have summer assignments?

Many teachers assign work for next year's classes that's due when school resumes in the fall. Before the summer break begins, have your teen:



- **Find out about** summer assignments, and get clarification if anything is unclear.
- **Obtain necessary supplies**, such as books from the school library.
- **Get a head start.** Help your teen schedule time for completing the work.

## Why community college?

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), roughly 6.8 million students are enrolled in 1,044



community colleges in the United States. Students choose these two-year programs for many reasons, including:

- **Flexible scheduling** that lets them work and go to school at the same time.
- **Lower costs** than a four-year program.
- **A shorter route** to employment.

Is community college a fit for your teen? Ask a school counselor about courses and programs, costs, and options for transferring to a four-year university.



## What can students do when project partners don't work?

**Q:** My teen's history teacher assigns a lot of group projects. But time after time, not all the group members do their share of work. My teen is left to make a slideshow or do some other job because someone else didn't get it done. Isn't there a better solution?



**A:** Group projects give students an opportunity to learn the subject matter while they also learn to work with others—important preparation for the workplace. But “working with” doesn't mean “working for.” Your teen shouldn't do someone else's work.

Encourage your teen to talk to the teacher. There is no need to name names. Instead, your student should just say that there is a problem with group members not doing their share, and ask for ideas on how to handle it. For example, your teen could make sure the group's tasks are divided fairly, and encourage everyone to feel ownership in the project.

Your teen might also suggest that the teacher ask each member to write a description of what they contributed. Or ask the group to describe what each member did. Even if the teacher doesn't ask, the group can do it anyway.

Your teen needs to know that it isn't “tattling” to work with the teacher to solve this problem. Learning how to deal with classmates who don't do the work is valuable practice for future school and job success.



## Are you fostering your teen's self-reliance?

One of the toughest—and most important—jobs facing high school parents is helping their teens learn to stand on their own. Are you preparing your teen for responsible independence? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

\_\_\_ **1. Do you involve** your teen in decisions about rules and consequences?

\_\_\_ **2. Do you teach** your teen basic life skills, such as doing laundry and budgeting?

\_\_\_ **3. Do you help** your teen build project management skills—planning steps, breaking big tasks down, meeting deadlines, etc?

\_\_\_ **4. Do you encourage** your teen to participate in activities that require public speaking? This develops confidence.

\_\_\_ **5. Do you give** your teen lots of chances to make decisions within the limits you set?

### How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are raising your teen to be a self-reliant adult. For each *no*, try that idea.

“I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship.”

—Louisa May Alcott

## Use this year's experiences to set next year's goals

To encourage your teen to set personal goals for the next school year, review the highs and lows of this year together. Discuss:

- **Expectations and reality.** Did your teen hope to do better? Do grades earned reflect what your student learned?
- **Areas your teen** would like to improve. Together, make a list of goals.
- **Steps your teen** will take to reach each goal. What can be done now? Over the summer? Next fall?

## Encourage healthy exercise

Don't let your teen lie around all summer! Teens who exercise regularly:

- **Earn better grades.**
- **Are less likely** to become obese.
- **Sleep better** than teens who don't.
- **Are less stressed** and better able to handle problems.

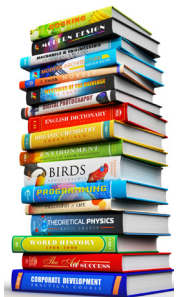
Research shows that parent support has a positive effect on teens' physical activity.

Source: J.E. Moral-Garcia and others, “Relationship of Parental Support on Healthy Habits, School Motivations and Academic Performance in Adolescents,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

## Get set for summer reading

Students benefit from time spent reading. But in one study of teens' summer reading habits, 32 percent of kids ages 15-17 read *no* books at all when school was out. To keep your teen reading this summer:

- **Visit the library often.** Lack of access to books is a big reason teens don't read.
- **Challenge your teen** to read at least four books before September.



Source: *Kids and Family Reading Report: The Summer Reading Imperative*, Scholastic.

### Helping Students Learn®

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