

Helping Students Learn[®]

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Hornell City School District



December 2014

Employ seven E's to instill the values that lead to success

Parents and educators alike want students to have positive values that will help them succeed and make school a pleasant place to be. We want them to be responsible, empathetic and compassionate. Try this seven-step process for teaching your teen the values that matter most to your family:

- 1. Explain.** Talk about what you mean by values like honesty and compassion.
- 2. Examine.** Look for news items or stories in literature that demonstrate a particular value in action. TV shows can be great opportunities to discuss people who do—and don't—display certain values.
- 3. Exhibit.** It's true, values are more caught than taught. If you want your teen to be reliable, for example, you need to live up to your own commitments.
- 4. Expect.** Let your teen know that you expect him to demonstrate respect and persistence.
- 5. Experience.** If you want your teen to be compassionate, provide him with life experiences that let him put that value into practice.
- 6. Encourage.** When you see your teen demonstrating one of your family values, name it. "Thanks for being responsible and taking out the trash."
- 7. Evaluate.** Sometimes, talk about times when it can be hard to put values into practice. Discuss what to say and how to deal with those situations.



Source: T. Lickona, *Character Matters*, Touchstone Books.



The time for college planning is now!

It's never too early for you and your teen to plan for her life after graduation. If she is college-bound, visit campuses together whenever you can. Your teen will develop a sense of the size, location and type of school she's looking for.

On campus, your teen should:

- **Talk to students.** Ask about the challenges and advantages of attending the school.
- **Sit in on a class.**
- **Take notes and pictures** to keep schools straight in her mind.
- **Talk to a professor** and at least one student in an academic department that interests her.

If she can't visit campus she should:

- **Check out the websites** of colleges or universities she'd like to know more about. Many offer virtual tours.
- **Ask the admissions offices** to put her in touch with some professors and students she can contact by email or phone.

Source: "Making the Most of College Campus Visits," Go4Ivy, niswc.com/campus.

Bonds support achievement

Nearly one in four teens wants to spend more time with parents. The parent-teen bond is an important source of confidence for teens. Strengthen your connection by doing simple activities together:

- **Cook** or take a walk.
- **Share stories** about family history.
- **Unplug.** Spend time electronics-free.

Source: "Surprise! Teens Want to Spend More Time with Parents," Connect with Kids, niswc.com/hang.

Concentrate on attendance and assignments

Your teen is probably dreaming of winter break, but she needs to stay focused on schoolwork. To keep her on track:



- **Have her make a checklist** of everything she has to do *before* winter break.
- **Ask questions** about what she's doing in school. Does she have any major assignments that she'll need to work on *during* winter break?
- **Review her attendance** for the first half of the school year. Is she going to all of her classes? Establish attendance goals together for the rest of the year.

Plan for pleasure reading over winter break

Time off from textbooks makes vacation an ideal time for your teen to read for the fun of it. To encourage him:



- **Challenge him to read** at least one book for pleasure. Let him wander in the library until he finds something exciting.
- **Have family members read** the same book. Ask your teen to lead an informal chat about it.
- **Watch a movie based on a book**—as long as your teen reads the book first!

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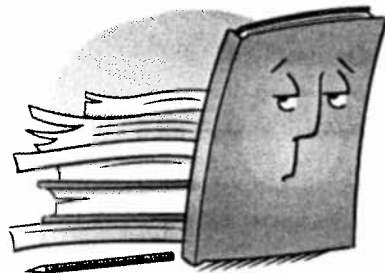
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Q&A How do I motivate my teen to take schoolwork seriously?

Q: My daughter has come down with a serious case of "senior slump." Unfortunately, she's only a sophomore! She's stopped doing her homework. She doesn't seem to care whether she passes her classes or not. How can I turn things around so that she'll get the chance to actually be a senior?



A: It sounds like this is new behavior for your daughter. What has changed? Does she have new friends? Is she taking more (or less) difficult courses? Talk to her teachers about what they're seeing. Ask teachers, counselors or coaches who knew her last year for their input as well.

Right now your teen is putting a lot of energy into not caring. To motivate her to put it into her studies instead:

- **Talk with her** about her progress in school. Tell her that even if *she* doesn't care, *you* do. Relationships with parents matter to teens.
- **Set deadlines and specific goals.** For example, set a regular study time each day. Review due dates for assignments.
- **Help her focus on realistic, positive steps** she can take. She may feel overwhelmed. She may not be able to raise her grades this marking period, but remind her that she *can* read the novel the English teacher assigned. She can do math homework every day. Each positive step will motivate her to try a little harder.

Parent Quiz

Is your teen prepared for peer pressure?

As teens become more independent, their friends have a greater influence. Your teen may feel pressure to skip class or take other actions you would not approve of. Are you equipping him to resist peer pressure? Answer *yes* or *no*:

1. **Do you encourage** your teen to invite his friends to spend time at your house?
2. **Do you talk openly** about your family's values?
3. **Does your teen know** it is okay to use you as a scapegoat? "My mom wants me at home tonight. Sorry."
4. **Do you role-play** situations in which your teen might have to resist? It's easier for him to say *no* if he's practiced it.
5. **Do you teach** your teen to trust his gut? If he thinks a

situation may get out of hand, he should just avoid it.

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are giving your teen tools to do what he knows is right. For each *no*, try that idea.

"The family is one of nature's masterpieces."
—George Santayana

Help your teen help others

Volunteering lets teens apply their academic skills to help their communities. It also fosters important traits such as responsibility. Ask your teen to research organizations your family can help this year. You could:

- **Prepare and serve a meal** for a local soup kitchen.
- **Collect blankets for a shelter** or canned goods for a food pantry.
- **Visit a nursing home.** Ask if there are residents who don't have family who visit regularly.
- **Help a neighbor** or friend having a rough time. Run errands or shovel snow.

See an attitude of gratitude

Research shows that gratitude can boost student achievement. Set a daily time for your teen to think about things he is grateful for. Encourage him to turn his gratitude list into an action list. If he realizes that he's grateful for his grandfather, he might phone him after school.



Be on alert for DXM abuse

Abuse of cough medicines containing dextromethorphan, or DXM, is a serious problem among teens. DXM abuse can cause hallucinations and loss of motor control—not to mention failure in school. It can also cause dizziness, headaches, irregular heartbeats, seizures and brain damage. You should:

- **Talk to your teen** about the hazards of DXM abuse.
- **Stress that taking** more than the recommended dose of any medicine—even one sold over-the-counter—is dangerous.
- **Remind your teen** that you will always listen, no matter what she wants to say.

Source: "Cough and Cold Medicine Abuse," KidsHealth.org, niscw.com/DXM.

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Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas parents can use to help students
do well in school.*

Hornell City School District



THE
PARENT
INSTITUTE

December • January • February 2014–2015

December 2014

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Help your teen think about what she's learned this year.
- 2. If your teen is struggling with a novel in English class, look for a study guide to help him.
- 3. Ask your teen to estimate the tax on a purchase.
- 4. Write your teen a short note and place it where she'll find it at bedtime.
- 5. Learn about community events in your area. Pick one together and go.
- 6. Visit the library with your teen. Check out a book about holiday traditions and choose a new one for your family to try.
- 7. Give your child a coupon good for time with you.
- 8. Advise your teen that the best way to prepare for college entrance tests is to turn off the TV and read every day.
- 9. Compliment your teen on something responsible he did today.
- 10. While your teen is riding in the car, ask, "Is there anything you'd like to talk about?"
- 11. Ask your teen to keep a journal.
- 12. The best solutions to problems between you and your teen are ones that work for you both.
- 13. Ask to see your teen's homework.
- 14. Make plans to attend a new movie with your teen.
- 15. Help your teen set up a "college and career" file. She might include a list of references, samples of schoolwork and her résumé.
- 16. Try to have an entire conversation with your teen in rhyme.
- 17. Read a book your teen is reading for English. Talk about it together.
- 18. Teens often tell you as much through behavior as through words. "Listen" to your teen's body language.



- 19. When you're driving, challenge your teen to point out "rules of the road" he sees you following.
- 20. Negotiate chores with your teen when possible. Let her decide if she cleans the garage today or tomorrow.
- 21. Help your teen make a checklist of things to bring home from school.
- 22. Bring up a sticky situation before it occurs. Rehearse how your teen might handle it.
- 23. If your teen is interested in a job that doesn't require a college degree, talk about what it does require.
- 24. Cook dinner with your teen. Think of ways to reduce the fat in something you are making.
- 25. Challenge your teen to find the answer to an interesting question. Why, for example, do July and August have 31 days?
- 26. Invite your teen's friends to spend time at your house.
- 27. Take your teen out for a special snack.
- 28. Take a "college trip" to the library with your teen. Find guides to colleges and college applications.
- 29. Help your teen develop abbreviations to use when taking notes. For example, *w/* stands for *with*, *infl.* for *influenced*.
- 30. With privileges come responsibilities. Teens who don't fulfill their responsibilities lose privileges.
- 31. When your teen is making a decision, help him see the pros and cons.

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TIPS FAMILIES CAN USE TO HELP STUDENTS DO BETTER IN SCHOOL

January 2015

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Watch a TV show with your teen. Talk about how it does or does not reflect your family's values.
- 2. It's a fact: 40 percent of teens try unsafe methods to lose weight. Encourage your teen to eat nutritious meals.
- 3. Ask your teen to name two ways he can be a better friend.
- 4. Check your calendar. Can you help at school at least once this month?
- 5. Suggest your teen make an emergency school supply kit.
- 6. New drivers are easily distracted. Limit the number of friends who can ride along when your teen is at the wheel.
- 7. During an argument, switch places with your teen. Each of you should present the other's point of view.
- 8. Have your teen's homework habits slipped a bit? Help her get back to a daily study time.
- 9. Watch the news with your teen. If a story strikes his interest, suggest he learn more about it.
- 10. Bake a batch of cookies with your teen. Together, take some to a neighbor who might appreciate some company.
- 11. When your teen wants to change a family rule, ask her to list three reasons why you should change it.
- 12. If your teen is confused in one of his classes, be sure he asks the teacher for help right away.
- 13. Encourage your teen to form a study group.
- 14. Some teens take too many risks. Talk to your teen about the difference between *courage* and *carelessness*.
- 15. Ask your teen if school is challenging. If the answer is *no*, tell her to talk to her counselor about taking more rigorous classes.

- 16. Emphasize an important message: *Not* all teens are sexually active.
- 17. Visit the library. Ask the librarian to suggest books teens are reading. Encourage your teen to try one.
- 18. Help your teen think of ways to maximize his time.
- 19. Teach your teen how to deal with a kitchen fire.
- 20. How is your teen doing at mid-year? There's still time to get help if grades are falling.
- 21. Tell your teen you love her.
- 22. Talk about how your teen can set priorities and balance his time.
- 23. Help your teen make healthy choices when she packs her lunch.
- 24. Be sure your teen knows that your rules apply when he's at a friend's house, and not just at home.
- 25. Email or text your teen an encouraging note.
- 26. Urge your teen to take notes in every class.
- 27. Have your teen figure out how many miles your car gets per gallon.
- 28. Check with your teen's counselor. Is your teen on track to graduate? If not, what steps should she take to get back on track?
- 29. Get a list of vocabulary words used on SATs. Challenge the family to learn two words a week.
- 30. Ask your teen to tell you what it means to be a leader.
- 31. Help your teen set goals for this year. Post them in his room.



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February 2015

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. On a day without homework, your teen can use study time to review.
- 2. Parenting a teen is tough. Carve out some time to take care of yourself.
- 3. Encourage your teen to eliminate pessimistic phrases from his vocabulary. Help him think positively.
- 4. The night before a test, have your teen take five minutes to get organized for the morning.
- 5. Suggest a few activities that your teen can do alone.
- 6. When your teen sets a goal, have her say it aloud. This helps her believe she can do it.
- 7. Challenge your teen to run the house for the day. He is responsible for laundry, dinner and cleaning.
- 8. Tell your teen about something you did in high school that you would do differently now.
- 9. Talk about The Golden Rule with your teen.
- 10. If your teen didn't make the team or the school play, help her plan what she'll do to prepare for next time.
- 11. Look through old family albums with your teen. Tell him stories about his relatives.
- 12. If your teen is a perfectionist, limit the number of times she can redo an assignment.
- 13. When your teen comes home from being out with friends, greet him with a cup of hot cocoa. Talk about his evening.
- 14. Cut out a cartoon your teen will enjoy. Leave it by her place at breakfast. Attach a note that says, "I love you."
- 15. Visit the library with your teen. Check out a book about a career that interests him.



- 16. Watch a travel program with your teen. Talk about a place you'd like to visit.
- 17. Have your teen request some college catalogues. Read them together.
- 18. Give your teen the responsibility for making her own doctor and dentist appointments.
- 19. Talk with your teen about the qualities you each look for in a friend.
- 20. Most colleges have websites. Encourage your teen to make some virtual college visits.
- 21. What one thing would your teen change about the world?
- 22. Criticism can be a self-fulfilling prophesy. Give positive messages whenever you can.
- 23. Offer to help your child review for a big test. Call out vocabulary words or time him during a practice test.
- 24. It's a fact: Teens say that getting good grades in school is their number one worry.
- 25. Suggest your teen record key ideas from a chapter. Then she can play them back to study.
- 26. Talk with your teen about his plans for the day.
- 27. Go to an office supply store with your teen. Does it give her ideas for ways to be more organized about schoolwork?
- 28. Take a walk with your teen. Talk about how you can work together to achieve one of his goals.

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