

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Educational Talent Search  
Eastern New Mexico University

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## IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

### Attendance: Your teen's priority

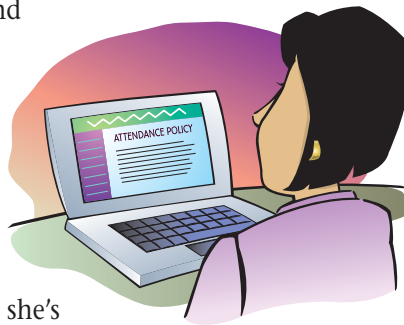
Student achievement goes hand-in-hand with good attendance. In fact, studies show that students who attend school between 85 and 100 percent of the time pass tests in reading and math at much higher rates than students who attend school less than 85 percent of the time.

It makes sense: Your teen can't learn if she's not in the classroom. Learning builds day by day—class discussions and hands-on activities cannot be made up.

When a big test is looming, your teen may want to stay home to study. Or when she's exhausted from working and staying up late, she may want to sleep in. Rather than saying *yes*, expect her to go to school. Later discuss how she can improve her study habits or adjust her schedule. Be sure to serve as a good example—your teen won't believe that attendance is important if you are constantly calling out of work or skipping plans with friends.

Also, check the school attendance policy for specific details on excused absences. Avoid allowing your teen to miss school for medical appointments, work (school should be her priority right now) or family vacations (enjoy these during summer break or other school holidays).

Source: "Attendance Matters!" Minneapolis Public Schools, [www.mpls.k12.mn.us/Attendance.html](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/Attendance.html).



## BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

### Teens can 'take charge' of their lives

Your teen is still maturing, but you can expect him to be responsible for:

- **Using** a calendar to manage his time. Seeing his test and project dates alongside those of his other activities will help him see which evenings he has time to relax—and which nights he'll have to buckle down and study.
- **Scheduling** appointments. Give him the number and ask him to make an appointment for his annual check up with the dentist.
- **Setting** a budget—and sticking to it. Keeping a budget will focus his attention on how he spends his money. Expect him to save for long-term goals.
- **Turning** in assignments on time. If getting your teen to complete homework is a daily struggle, check with his teachers—it may be a sign that he needs extra help.

## DISCIPLINE

### Calmly defuse arguments

One day your teen may end up on the Supreme Court. But does he have to argue every issue with you? To cope with your "in-house lawyer":

- **State** your request calmly—and only once.
- **Offer** choices. "Do the dishes or fold the laundry."
- **Take** a break. "Let's talk about this later."
- **Assign** weekly tasks. Daily battles may disappear.

Source: "Arguing and Backtalk," iParenting, [www.childrentoday.com/articles/1072.php](http://www.childrentoday.com/articles/1072.php).

## ENCOURAGING WRITING

### Revision improves writing

Good writers know the importance of editing. That's because writing can almost always be improved. Encourage your teen to get a head start on writing projects. She'll be able to make several drafts and let you review them. Reading a paper out loud can catch mistakes, too.

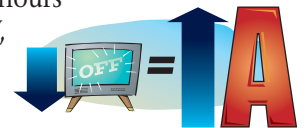


Source: Susan Abel Lieberman, *The Real High School Handbook*, ISBN: 0-3957-9760-8 (Mariner Books, [www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/mariner](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/mariner)).

## SCREEN TIME

### When the TV goes off, students' grades go up

Start the new year by limiting your child's computer and the TV time. Most teens spend nearly four hours a day watching TV, an hour a day on the computer, and an hour a day playing video games. Less "screen time" leads to better health—and better grades!



Source: "A Nation at Risk: Obesity in the United States," Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, [www.rwjf.org/files/publications/other/AH\\_NationAtRisk.pdf](http://www.rwjf.org/files/publications/other/AH_NationAtRisk.pdf).

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### How can parents help teens handle, put a stop to bullying?

**Q: My son has problems with “mean friends.” He doesn’t want me to call their parents because he’s afraid his friends will be angry with him. How can I help him?**

**A:** You are not specific about how your son’s friends are mean to him, but if they are bullying him, their behavior should be addressed.

Bullying can take many different forms—direct behaviors such as verbal taunts, name calling, teasing, threats and intimidation, menacing gestures, physical violence or extortion and theft. Indirect bullying behaviors can include intentional exclusion from a group, spreading rumors and creating situations where victims feel like social outcasts.

And now, in today’s world of text messaging, email and social networking websites, cyberbullying has become an increasingly common occurrence.

Here are some things you can do:

- **Tell your son that he does not** have to just “grin and bear it.” No one should tolerate friends who are mean.
- **Tell him that if this mean behavior** meets the description of bullying, it’s important for the school to be informed. Other students may also be victims.
- **Talk with your son’s counselor.** If this is a common problem, perhaps a parent group could be formed to address the problem.



## PARENT QUIZ

### What does your teen do after school?

Teens who use their after-school hours wisely can do better in school and prepare for a good job. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you’re helping your teen make the most of after-school hours:

1. **Do you know** where your teen goes after school?
2. **Have you encouraged** your teen to join a school club or sport she enjoys? Research shows teens who do more than just study are more successful after high school.
3. **Have you set** limits on the amount of time your teen can watch TV after school?
4. **Do you check** in to see what sites your teen is visiting if she spends time online?
5. **Does your teen study** at a regular study time? Do you check to see that homework is finished?

**How did you do?** Each *yes* means you’re helping your teen use after-school hours wisely. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

“Put your future in good hands—your own.”  
—Author Unknown

## MOTIVATING YOUR TEEN

### Don’t become a parent involvement ‘dropout’

Sadly, teens aren’t the only ones who drop out. Some parents do, too. One in three high school students say their parents have no idea how they are doing in school. And more than half say they could bring home a grade of C or lower without upsetting their parents. To stay involved:

- **Ask** about homework.
- **Attend** parent-teacher conferences.
- **Speak** positively about teachers and support school rules.
- **Tell** your teen you expect her to work hard and do her best.

When you show education is important to you, your teen will be more likely to succeed in school.

Source: Sue Blaney, *Please Stop the Roller Coaster*, ISBN: 0-972-77794-6 (ChangeWorks Publishing, www.pleasestoptherollercoaster.com).

## BUILDING CHARACTER

### Dream with your teen

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., lived a life of leadership and service. In his famous speech, he said, “Now, I say to you today my friends, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream.” How does your teen handle difficulties? Does he have a dream for his future? How can his education prepare him to serve others?

## REINFORCING LEARNING

### Ask about class notes

Instead of asking, “How was school today?” ask your child to show you the notes she took in class. Review them with her. She’ll be more likely to notice if she missed something when the material is fresh in her mind.



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