

High School Parents[®]

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Mountain Education Charter High School

still make the difference!



School counselors provide academic and social support

Your teen's high school counselor is a valuable resource for both you and your teen. School counselors are highly-trained professionals who are equipped to support students' academic and social development—from choosing classes to dealing with behavioral changes.

Counselors can assist families with a variety of issues. Contact the counselor if:

- **You have questions** about your teen's classes. These can include scheduling questions for next year or issues with current classes.
- **You are concerned** about your teen's behavior. School counselors are trained to help students identify and work through difficult issues. Be sure to remind your teen that the counselor is a trusted adult she can go to for guidance.
- **Your teen's grades are suffering.** School counselors can help parents and students figure out the source of academic problems and develop solutions to get grades back on track.
- **You are facing a crisis.** Counselors can provide support and assistance to students and families as they navigate crisis situations or emergencies.
- **You have questions** about your teen's future. School counselors can help students decide what they want to do after high school. They can offer advice on potential careers and training, as well as tips for reaching higher education goals.

Find ways to spend time with your teen



As teenagers grow older, they don't want to end relationships with their parents. They want

those relationships to mature and grow. Spending time together is still a priority for teens.

To nurture your relationship:

- **Devote time each day** to your teen. Turn off electronic devices and give him your undivided attention. Let him choose what you do. He may want to talk about something that's bothering him, share a new song with you or go for a short walk together.
- **Show an interest.** Talking about what your teen is doing at school is a great first step. Make every effort to attend his performances and games, too.
- **Be welcoming.** Get to know your teen's friends. Offer to drive them to the movies. Make your home a place where they can feel comfortable hanging out. You will get to know the people important to your teen—and know he's in a safe place.

Parents play a critical role in helping teens build resilience



Learning is not always easy. It requires persistence and hard work. And if things are challenging, it may also require a little resilience.

Resilient students are able to handle tough circumstances. They can look setbacks in the eye and overcome them. To help your teen become more resilient:

- **Let her know it's OK** to ask for help and support in difficult times. Knowing she has someone to turn to can ease stress and anxiety.
- **Talk about her strengths.** Remind your teen of hardships she has overcome. Thinking about past successes can give her strength to meet new challenges.

- **Be caring and supportive.** Your belief in her will give your teen the confidence to keep trying—even when she feels like giving up.
- **Encourage her to connect** with other students. Help your teen find a school club or activity that interests her. Feeling connected to others provides social support and strengthens resilience.

“Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems.”

—Gever Tulley

Four ways to support your teen's critical thinking skills



According to a survey of college professors, today's high school graduates are not prepared for the expectations they'll face in college. A lack of critical thinking skills is one of the reasons.

Of the instructors surveyed, 82 percent found that fewer than half of their students had the critical thinking skills they needed to be successful.

To address this issue, high school teachers are focusing more on deeper learning and critical thinking. This means your teen will not only be asked to recall a fact—but also to understand how that fact relates to other ideas.

To support your teen's developing thinking skills:

1. **Challenge him to form opinions** and defend them. For example, if your teen thinks there should be a

stop sign in front of the school, ask him why he feels that way. Then, encourage him to write a letter to local authorities outlining his ideas.

2. **Help him see all sides** of an issue. Say, “I understand why *you* feel that way. But there are other people who might say”
3. **Give him the reasons** behind the limits you have set. For example, studies show that more teens are injured in car accidents after 9 pm. What a great reason to establish a driving curfew!
4. **Talk about the advertisements** when you're watching TV. How are they trying to persuade viewers? Are they effective?

Source: D. Schaffhauser, “Survey: Most Profs Find HS Grads Unready for College or Work,” *Campus Technology*, 1105 Public Sector Media Group.

Do you help your teen focus on one task at a time?



Teens are multitaskers. They send text messages while listening to music and studying for history. Is all that multitasking making them more efficient?

Probably not. Studies show that teens have trouble shutting out distractions. So they may be doing several things at once, but none of them well.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are helping your teen concentrate on the task at hand:

- ___ **1. Do you turn off** the TV, phone and other devices during study time?
- ___ **2. Do you sometimes check** to see how many different things your teen is doing while she is studying?
- ___ **3. Do you set** an example by working on one thing at a time?
- ___ **4. Do you have** a technology curfew? After a certain hour, all technology must be turned off.
- ___ **5. Do you encourage** your teen to read? Reading strengthens the brain's ability to focus.

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are encouraging concentration. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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The Parent Institute, 1-800-756-5525,
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Make your teen responsible for learning and homework



Becoming an independent and responsible learner takes lots of practice. If you want your teen to take responsibility for her learning, then you have to put her officially in charge of it.

This means you may need to take a step back and give your teen more control over things such as studying and finishing her homework each night. Then, follow these steps:

- **Reinforce a set homework time.** Will your teen study right after school? After dinner?
- **Keep your teen's schedule clear** during homework time. Don't interrupt her study time to have her run a quick errand for you.
- **Help your teen develop a system** to keep track of her assignments.

She can write them down in a planner and use a checklist to mark off completed items.

- **Offer support.** Assure your teen that she can do the work. Make sure that she knows where to look for help. Suggest she get the phone number of a classmate in each class. Encourage her to ask the teacher for clarification, if needed.
- **Suggest your teen** schedule short breaks during her study time.
- **Remind your teen *only once*** that she has homework. Part of taking responsibility for her own work is remembering she has to do it.
- **Leave your teen alone!** Let her prove to you that she can be responsible for completing her work on time. And allow her to face the consequences if she doesn't.

Talk to your teen about how to combat cyberbullying



High schoolers spend much of their time texting their friends and sharing posts on social media sites.

Not surprisingly, these are the channels that many bullies use to harass other students. Studies show that 70 percent of students see frequent bullying online.

Whether it's a disrespectful comment posted on a photo or a rumor that's been retweeted several times, cyberbullying can have a devastating effect on students' self-esteem and academic performance.

Teens play an important role in defeating cyberbullying. Teach your teen to:

- **Delete messages** or comments posted on his social media pages

that are mean-spirited or make fun of others. He should not share negative messages or comments with friends. Bullying escalates when others help spread the message.

- **Unfollow or block users** who repeatedly post harmful or negative things about others.
- **Report bullying** to a trusted adult. Teens often operate under a code of silence. But telling a trusted adult can help bring the situation to an end.
- **Stop and think** before he posts something that could hurt someone.
- **Talk with other students.** Your teen should let his friends know that he thinks bullying is uncool.

Source: "11 Facts About Cyber Bullying," DoSomething.org, nswc.com/high_cyberbully.

Q: My sons just don't get along. They fight constantly and I always get caught in the middle. How can I teach them to treat each other respectfully and resolve their conflicts peacefully?

Questions & Answers

A: You aren't alone! Even the friendliest of siblings have times when they don't get along—and many parents feel like they have to be referees.

Instead of getting in the middle of every squabble, teach your kids some basic strategies for resolving conflicts peacefully and respectfully. These strategies will also help them when they face conflicts at school.

Teach your sons to:

- **Talk about problems *before*** they become conflicts. When little things are ignored, they tend to grow into big disputes.
- **Use "I-messages."** Encourage your boys to talk about their feelings, not the other person's mistakes. Instead of, "YOU always steal my clothes," try, "I feel angry when you take something without asking to borrow it first."
- **Avoid the "blame game."** If there's a problem, it probably doesn't matter whose fault it is. Help your kids spend their time fixing the problem, not placing the blame.
- **Listen.** Your boys will never see another person's point of view if they don't listen to what that person has to say.
- **Cooperate and compromise.** If two people have a conflict, they each have a problem. To solve it, they'll probably both have to make some changes.

It Matters: Reading

Reading speed affects students' comprehension



Studies show that people who are able to read quickly often have a better understanding of what they read.

To help your teen improve her reading speed and comprehension, encourage her to:

- **Read silently.** Sometimes slow reading happens because the reader is whispering words to herself. If your teen breaks this habit, she will read faster and free her mind to focus more on meaning and less on decoding.
- **Read the material** all the way through before going back to reread. Students who read slowly may lack confidence. They are so sure they missed something that they go back and reread a paragraph several times before going on to the next. This slows reading and rarely improves understanding. Most of the time, your teen will get what she needs from the first reading.
- **Read clusters of words** instead of single words. Meaning is easier to grasp from groups of words than it is from individual words.
- **Match reading speed** to level of difficulty. When your teens reads difficult material, she should slow down. But when she reads light material, such as fiction and magazines, she should do it as quickly as she can. The practice your teen gets from reading light material quickly will eventually allow her to read everything more quickly.

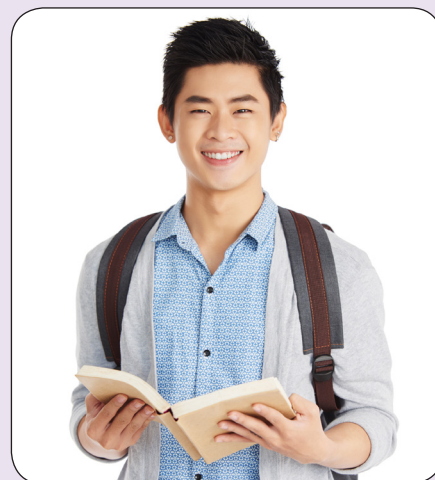
Source: D. Doyle, "Reading Better and Faster," Glendale Community College, niscw.com/high_speed.

Simple strategies can keep your high schooler reading

Reading becomes increasingly important as your teen reaches high school. And the best way to build reading skills is to read often. However, a recent study shows that less than 20 percent of teens read for pleasure every day.

To encourage your teen to read:

- **Make library visits** a regular habit for your family. Encourage your teen to check out books.
- **Build on his interests.** Encourage your teen to read books, magazines and articles about things he's interested in, from sports to celebrities.
- **Read what he reads.** If your teen is assigned a novel to read for his English class, get a copy and read it yourself. This shows your teen you are interested in what he is learning and can lead to some great conversations.



- **Be patient.** Teens can go through periods where they don't show interest in reading. A bit of time and encouragement may boost your teen's desire to read.

Source: J.M. Twenge and others, "Trends in U.S. Adolescents' Media Use, 1976–2016," *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, American Psychological Association.

Challenging material helps teens build reading muscles



High school students benefit from reading challenging material. However, many popular teen books are written at a fifth-grade reading level—or lower.

A steady diet of that type of reading won't prepare your teen for college. It won't get her ready for the kind of reading she'll have to do on the job.

According to experts, the ability to read complex texts is one of the most important predictors of student success in college. So what can you

do to motivate your teen to read more challenging material?

- **Talk to her** about building strength. Making a muscle stronger involves lifting weights. Making reading muscles stronger involves reading harder content.
- **Make sure your teen completes** the reading required for her classes. Teachers often assign challenging works—and the only way to benefit from them is to actually read them.
- **Suggest your teen read** a difficult book for pleasure. She can ask the librarian to help her select one.