

High School Parents[®]

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Mountain Education Charter High School ***still make the difference!***



Three learning resolutions boost academic success

The start of a new calendar year is a great time for families and students to review the first half of the school year. How is your high school student doing? Are learning and performance where your teen—and you—would like them to be? If not, it may be time for your teen to make learning resolutions.

Here are three to suggest:

1. **Be in every class on time** every day. Students who consistently miss class or who arrive late, miss out on important information. Teachers don't have time to reteach material every time a student is absent or late.
2. **Read for pleasure.** Teens benefit from time spent reading. Pleasure reading strengthens writing skills, comprehension, vocabulary and

more. According to the most recent report by from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 14 percent of students say they read for fun every day. So, encourage your teen to spend time each day reading something enjoyable.

3. **Reduce recreational screen time.** We all spend time on digital devices—whether it's for school, work or socializing. However, students need plenty of screen-free activities in their schedules. Suggest your teen turn off screen devices for at least one to two hours each day, and use that time to read, be active or relax.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1971–2023 Long-Term Trend (LTT) Reading and Mathematics Assessments.

Help your teen handle disappointment



Life doesn't always go as planned. Whether your teen earns a bad grade on a test or finds

out that social plans have been cancelled, learning to accept and cope with disappointment is a necessary part of life.

To help your teen bounce back after things go wrong:

- **Ask, "How are you feeling?"** Often, teenagers tend to either overreact or to clam up entirely. Help your teen express disappointment using words.
- **Don't try to fix things.** You won't help your teen learn coping skills. Instead, be sympathetic and supportive: "I'm so sorry that event was cancelled. I know you are disappointed. What else could you do?"
- **Demonstrate coping skills.** It may not be easy to share your personal disappointments. But it's one of the best ways to show your teen how you have learned to cope. "I am so disappointed that I didn't get that promotion," you might say. "I'm going to keep trying."

Ask yourself these questions when creating rules for teens



As teens mature, they need fewer rules. But you still need to set limits on what is—and isn't—allowed.

The key to setting effective rules is balance. Your teen needs independence, but you still need to keep some control.

Rules will be different for each family. But the questions to ask yourself as you are setting them will be the same:

- **Has my teen** had a chance to talk about this rule with me? Teens should have input; however, parents should always make the final decision.
- **Will this rule** help my teen develop independence? Teens need to learn how to think for themselves. They need opportunities to make choices and live with them. But they can't

handle every choice. For example, by high school, your teen should be able to decide *when* to study, but not *whether* to study.

- **Am I setting an example** by following this rule? If you don't wear your seat belt, don't be surprised if you discover your teen isn't wearing one when driving.
- **Does my teen know** what will happen if the rule is violated? Make sure you establish consequences in advance.

“Long before I was a success, my parents made me feel I could be one.”

—Toni Morrison

Four steps improve student essays and in-class writings



Essay tests can intimidate students. If your teen is dreading an upcoming essay test, share these four tips for success:

1. Read the question.

- *Discuss*—make fact-based observations about the topic.
- *Describe*—give specific details about the subject matter.
- *Show*—point out your idea or opinion and support it with facts.
- *Explain*—offer causes or reasons for something. Be factual.

2. Write an introduction:

- *Briefly explain* what the essay will be about.
- *Use the third person.* Don't use *I* unless told to do so.

3. Write the body of the essay.

- Each paragraph should answer a specific part of the question and include:
- *A topic sentence.*
 - *Information that supports the topic sentence.*
 - *A closing sentence.*

4. Write the conclusion.

- Summarize points made and be sure to:
- *State* the main conclusion.
 - *Mention* how the facts support that position.

Encourage your teen to take a few minutes before starting to outline ideas and use them to jot down notes having to do with the topic. Then, your teen can decide how to link them together. Often, these notes can become topic sentences for paragraphs.

Are you helping your teenager manage time?



Time management can be a real challenge for high school students. The challenge gets greater as they get older and have

to deal with complicated projects and schedules. Students may feel the pinch, particularly during the second half of the school year.

Are you doing all you can to help your teen manage time? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to write academic and personal commitments on a calendar?
- ___ **2. Do you talk** with your teen about setting priorities and the value of focusing on what's most important first?
- ___ **3. Do you suggest** your teen make a schoolwork schedule each week?
- ___ **4. Do you show** your teen how to break down large assignments and tasks into smaller, more manageable steps?
- ___ **5. Do you set an example** by using your time wisely?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your teen learn how to manage time. For *no* answers, consider trying those ideas.

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Discuss the different styles of decision-making with your teen



You know that your teen's decision-making skills will get better with experience. But did you know that your teen may make decisions in a different manner than you do?

Have a discussion about different styles of decision-making. Which style do each of you use most often? Are there situations when one style might work better than another? Here are five styles:

1. **Decisive?** People in this category often act quickly. They base their decisions on the information that is immediately available to them. They rarely change their minds.
2. **Flexible?** Flexible decision makers may act on limited information, but they are open to changing their minds. If their first solution to a problem doesn't work, they will switch to another one. And they

will reevaluate decisions as more information becomes available.

3. **Hierarchical?** These types of decision makers collect as much information as they can before making a decision. They look at the information and determine the best solution. And they stick with their decision—because they worked out the details before making it.
4. **Integrative?** These people are like scientists. They collect and evaluate a lot of information, but realize there are many solutions that could work for the problem. They test each idea by imagining the outcome.
5. **Systematic?** These people collect as much information as possible and come up with as many solutions as possible. They then rank the solutions from *best* to *worst* and try out each one.

Source: L. Morton, "Five Decision-Making Styles for Small Business," Strategic Market Segmentation.

Challenge your high schooler to brush up on geography



It may seem like the world is shrinking. Social media and the internet allow your teen to connect with people and research information from all over the world.

That's why geography—often misinterpreted by teens as something replaced by GPS—matters. Geography is about more than knowing where places are. It's also about how their locations affect life there, and how different places compare to and affect one another.

To strengthen geography skills, challenge your teen to:

- **Use a subway map,** bus or train schedule and a city map to plan

a future trip from home to a point of interest using public transportation.

- **Use a topographic map** to lay out a hike through the countryside or your community, noting the elevation, distance, direction and geographic features along the route.
- **Explore social networks.** Your teen can use a map to determine where online friends live. Are they concentrated in one area? Why?
- **Eat "around the world."** Your teen can try ethnic foods, locate their countries of origin on a map, and investigate why some cultures use certain ingredients, cooking methods or utensils.

Q: My 10th grader puts forth so much effort in Spanish class but just isn't learning the language. I'm afraid my teen may have to take the class again next year. How can I support my student when trying hard doesn't seem to be enough?

Questions & Answers

A: Life isn't always fair. Some students can master a subject without much effort. Others work hard but still struggle.

That's no reason to give up. There are some things your high schooler can do differently that may make a difference.

Encourage your teen to:

1. **Have a discussion** with the teacher and talk about study methods. How is your teen studying? What problems does the teacher see? What could your teen do differently? Where should your teen focus efforts?
2. **Make a plan** based on the teacher's recommendations. For example, your teen could spend 20 minutes a day learning vocabulary words with flash cards. Later in the study session, your teen could work on conjugating verbs or reading comprehension.
3. **Review past lessons.** Working through old assignments can help your teen figure out where the problem started.
4. **Get extra help.** Does the school have student tutors? Can the teacher recommend someone to work with your teen?
5. **Keep trying.** Acknowledge how hard your teen is working and say you are proud.

With effort, teacher guidance and your support, your high schooler will likely be able to improve Spanish skills.

It Matters: Building Character

Make community service a priority for your family



When teens donate their time and talents, they aren't just making their communities better—they are also

doing something for themselves.

Studies show that kids involved in community service are less likely to smoke, drink or do drugs. In addition, teens who volunteer tend to earn better grades, improve social skills and develop leadership skills that will help them throughout life.

Families who volunteer together also see real benefits. They get to spend time together—working toward a shared goal. They see each other in new ways. (Who knew that Taylor would be great at organizing? Who knew that Dad could speak Spanish so well?)

Here are some tips to help your family get started volunteering together:

- **Take an inventory.** Are family members already volunteering in the community? Is it possible for other family members to join in?
- **Brainstorm.** As a family, discuss what causes you care about. Politics, healthcare, the environment? What organizations benefit those causes?
- **Research local opportunities** that align with your interests. Check community bulletin boards and explore websites such as volunteermatch.org.
- **Start small.** Choose a one-time activity. If you like it, make plans to return.

Source: J. Segal, Ph.D. and L., "Volunteering and its Surprising Benefits," HelpGuide.org.

A solid work ethic benefits teens in school and in life

A *work ethic* is a set of values and beliefs that include traits such as reliability, dedication and pride in one's work. Having a strong work ethic is not only necessary for success in the workforce—it is necessary for success in school, too.

To instill a strong work ethic in your teen:

- **Be a role model.** Display a positive attitude about work and show your teen that you take your job and your responsibilities seriously. Demonstrate persistence when things get tough.
- **Expect your teen to fulfill** responsibilities and be accountable. For example, don't write an excuse if your teen misses a deadline for a school assignment. It's your teen's responsibility to talk with the teacher and find a solution.



- **Reinforce delayed gratification.** Remind your teen that working should always come before play. Expect your teen to finish the first draft of the paper *before* logging in to play video games with friends.

Suggest that your high schooler focus on three daily goals



Teens tend to think that the whole world is focused on them. Here's a simple exercise to help your teen expand that

focus to think about obligations and other people's needs, too:

Ask your teen to spend a few minutes every morning setting three simple goals for the day. Think of them as the Three S's:

1. **School.** What is the most important thing your high schooler can do that day for school? It might be to finish a project or

to talk to the teacher about an assignment.

2. **Self.** What's the healthiest thing your teen can do that day for self-care? Schedule 30 minutes to exercise? Go to bed earlier? Reduce screen time?
3. **Someone else.** Now have your teen think about another person. What could your teen do to help someone else that day? Reach out to a new student? Run errands for an elderly neighbor? Write a note to a friend going through a rough time?