

High School Parents[®]

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Booker T. Washington High School
Dr. Michael J. Roberts, Principal

still make the difference!



Keep tabs on your teenager's computer & cell phone usage

A recent survey found that teens spend about two hours per day online—80% of which is spent using a social networking site like Facebook. Another study found that half of teens send 50 or more text messages a day—roughly 1,500 each month!

With statistics like these, it's a wonder that teens get any schoolwork completed at all! Make sure that your teen's grades don't fall by setting limits on computer and cell phone use. Here's how:

- **Talk to your teen** about his computer and cell phone usage. Ask him how much time he thinks he spends on computer tasks that aren't school related, and how many texts he sends a month.
- **Check his estimates.** You can get his cell phone usage from the

phone company. For his computer use, ask him to keep a log of each site he visits, and how long he spends at each one. He might be surprised!

- **Be realistic.** Your teen really doesn't need his phone while he's supposed to be sleeping. Consider having him "turn in" his phone at bedtime. That simple limit will decrease those texts while improving his quality of sleep. For the computer, think about a simple exchange: For every 30 minutes he reads, your teen can have 30 minutes of computer time to do things not related to schoolwork.

Sources: J. Van Grove, "Teens Experiencing Facebook Fatigue," Mashable, <http://mashable.com/2010/06/30/teens-social-networks-study>; A. Lenhart, "Teens and Mobile Phones," Pew Internet & American Life Project, www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Teens-and-Mobile-Phones.aspx.

Look online for young adult book reviews



Teens are more likely to do things if they are given specific suggestions rather than general ones.

"Take out the trash and put away your laundry" usually gets better results than "Do your chores."

This same idea is successful when encouraging teens to read. Suggesting a specific book for your teen to read may be more effective than simply saying, "You should read more." But with all the young adult books out there, you probably don't have time to preview them all to make sure they're appropriate for your teen to read.

That's where Parental Book Reviews (<http://sites.google.com/site/parentalbookreviews>) comes in. Parents read young adult novels and post their reviews on this website. There's even a list of "Clean Reads"—books with little to no profanity or sexual content. So take a look at Parental Book Reviews before you head to the library with your teen, and make a list of books to suggest!

Source: "Parental Book Reviews," <http://sites.google.com/site/parentalbookreviews/home>.

Share strategies to help your teen succeed on math tests



Math tests can be difficult to prepare for. After all, there aren't any dates to memorize or essays to write. But you

can help your teen do his best by sharing these math test strategies.

Before the test:

- **Practice.** Redo old homework problems or problems from quizzes. Focus on the problems you had trouble understanding or got wrong, and work on them until you are confident in how to solve them.
- **Create a "formula sheet."** On one sheet of paper, write down all the formulas you need to memorize.

During the test:

- **Write down those formulas** as soon as you get your test. That way, you're less likely to forget what you have memorized.
- **Read the directions carefully.** Don't lose credit for simply

forgetting to show your work or circle your answer!

- **Estimate.** If the problem asks you to subtract 32 from 109, you know the answer should be about 80. So if you get 17, try again!
- **Take your time.** Remember, a math test isn't a race.

After the test:

- **Go back and check your work.** Rework any problem you were uncertain about.
- **Look for careless errors.** Are all of the decimal points in the right place? Did you remember the negative sign?

"To be in your children's memories tomorrow, you have to be in their lives today."

—Anonymous

Encourage your high schooler to have a positive attitude



Mentioning words like "positive attitude" is a good way to make many teens roll their eyes. But having a positive attitude

is a foundation in building character.

Many key elements of character, including kindness, empathy and leadership, are impossible to achieve if you only look at the dark side of life.

Here are some positive traits to nurture in your teen:

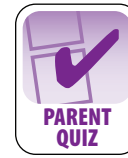
- **Hopefulness.** On most days, some things will go well and others won't. Don't dwell on what went wrong. Focus on what went well.
- **Moving on.** Say your teen didn't get picked for a certain team. The

next chance to try out isn't until next year. After some disappointment, encourage him to put it behind him for now.

- **Laughter.** Remember: Nothing is better than humor for getting rid of a negative attitude.
- **Seeking opportunities.** Say your teen loves animals. Having a positive attitude will tell him that there may be a veterinarian in your area who could use some help. Encourage your teen to call a few of them and a new world could open up for him.

Source: B. Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? For Teens, A Guide to Building Character*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Is your teenager ready to have an after-school job?



A part-time job can be a great way for teens to learn responsibility. But it can also overwhelm their ability to focus on

schoolwork. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if your teen is ready for a job:

___1. **Does your teen show** you that she can use time responsibly? Are you confident that she can combine a job and school?

___2. **Have you set a limit** on the total number of hours your teen can work?

___3. **Have you told your teen** that if her grades suffer, she will have to quit her job?

___4. **Have you and your teen** developed a plan for how she will spend the money she earns?

___5. **Have you and your teen** discussed how she will get back and forth to work without disrupting your entire family?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you and your teen are prepared for her to get a job. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Researchers ask teenagers to name their biggest role models



For years, researchers have been asking teens whom they look up to as their “biggest role model.” And for years, teens have been answering that question by naming their parents!

It may be kind of a shock to hear that the same kids who commonly tell their parents, “You just don’t understand!” also look up to their parents more than anyone else in their lives.

In fact, parents are so often listed as teens’ most important role models that this year researchers actually asked teens to list someone other than their parents as their role model.

And researchers found that family still came first! Here are the results:

- **37% of teens named a family member** other than their parents as the person they look up to most (typically a grandparent).

- **11% named a teacher** or coach.
- **9% listed friends.**
- **6% responded with a pastor** or other religious figure.

That means that a whopping two-thirds of teens named someone they know personally as their greatest influence. (The remaining one-third named a famous person.)

So how do today’s teens go about choosing their role models? Teens look for:

- **Personality traits** of that person (such as caring for others, being courageous or being fun).
- **Wanting to “follow in that person’s footsteps.”**
- **Encouragement**—that person helps a teen “be a better person” or supports her goals for the future.

Source: “Teen Role Models: Who They Are, Why They Matter,” The Barna Group, www.barna.org/teens-next-gen-articles/467-teen-role-models.

Build responsibility & motivate your teen to do unpleasant tasks



Whether it’s taking out the trash or studying Spanish verbs, there are some tasks that aren’t fun. Yet they need to be done if we want to live in a clean home (or pass Spanish).

There are ways to motivate your teen to do those chores and develop the responsibility to do them without nagging. Here are some tips:

- **Be up front.** Trash removal is messy and not much fun. Tell your teen you get that. You’ve acknowledged that his feelings are valid. But he still has to do his part.
- **Don’t offer rewards** for things outside your teen’s control. If you

pay for every A, he may simply stop trying if he thinks he can never earn that grade. Instead, focus on the things your teen *can* control. He controls whether—and how much—he studies.

- **Be a role model.** It’s hard to tell a teen to exercise if you’re a couch potato. Remember that you teach by example.
- **Make rewards small,** if you do offer them. Too much emphasis on rewards actually decreases motivation. So give a small, mostly symbolic reward for a job well done.

Source: L. Kutner, *Making Sense of Your Teenager*, William Morrow and Company.

Q: My sixteen-year-old wants a tattoo. She says every one of her friends is getting “inked.” I don’t think she’s old enough to make such a permanent decision. What should I do?

Questions & Answers

A: There is no question that tattoos are more stylish today than they were in the past. Teens often see tattoos as a symbol of their independence.

Yet there are many issues of concern:

- **A tattoo is permanent.** Your daughter needs to think hard about whether something she finds stylish today will still be appealing in a few years. You might get out some old pictures of you wearing outlandish clothes or a hairstyle that was popular when you were her age. Point out that clothes are easy to change—a tattoo is not.
- **Tattoo removal is difficult,** expensive, painful and not always successful. Ask her to talk to a dermatologist about some of the problems with tattoo removal. Perhaps the sight of a tattoo that didn’t come off may change her mind.
- **Some employers consider** tattoos inappropriate and don’t allow visible tattoos while on the job.

Ask your daughter why she wants a tattoo. Listen carefully to see if there is an alternate solution.

In some states, teens can’t get a tattoo without a parent’s permission. But whether or not it’s the law, it’s still your house. You have a right to set the rules while she is living under your roof.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: The Home-School Team

Research proves parents matter in high school



As students move up in the grades, their parents' involvement declines. Parents sometimes tell themselves that they can't really make a difference anyway—or that their teen doesn't want them to show up.

But what are the facts? Researchers at Harvard University followed students from eighth grade through their high school graduation. Here's what they learned:

- **Parents who expect** their teens to graduate from high school raise teens who believe they will become high school graduates.
- **Parents who had high** expectations for their teens raised teens who did more homework. That, in turn, led to better grades.
- **The further** parents believed their teens would go in school, the more likely they were to reach that goal. In other words, if you believe it, your teen can achieve it!

For parents, this large study can be summed up in just two words: Stay involved! Be sure your teen does his homework. Ask him about school every day. And convey the message, over and over, that education is important and that you know your teen can succeed.

Source: E. Patrikakou, "Adolescence: Are Parents Relevant to Students' High School Achievement and Post-Secondary Attainment?" Harvard Family Research Project, www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/adolescence-are-parents-relevant-to-students-high-school-achievement-and-post-secondary-attainment.

Teach your teen the importance of respect for teachers, coaches

Ask teachers about their biggest frustration and you may get a surprising answer. It's not the working hours or the pay. Instead, it's the feeling that they aren't treated with respect.

Most high school students say *they* want to be treated with respect. But when it comes to their teachers, teens admit that they and their peers often don't extend that same respect to them.

That's a place where you, as a parent, can make a difference. Your teen should know that you expect her to treat teachers and coaches with respect.

Remind your teen that she shouldn't forget her manners when she leaves the house. The same behaviors you expect of her at home are things she should display at school. You wouldn't let her speak rudely to you—so she shouldn't speak that way to a teacher.



Talk to your teen about what respectful behavior looks like. Your teen can show respect to teachers in simple ways—waiting her turn to speak in class, coming to school prepared and arriving on time.

Be a good role model. You may not always agree with everything a teacher or coach does. But you should model ways to disagree without being disagreeable.

Source: G.D. McKay and others, *Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World*, Prima Publishing, a Random House Company.

Communication with your teen, school is the key to involvement



Experts agree that parent involvement in high school is important. In fact, one thing the nation's most outstanding schools nearly always have in common is that they have very active parents.

You don't have to be in school to be an involved parent. For example, you have a big role to play just by keeping the lines of communication open. Teens face a lot of tough

issues today. Let your teen know you're always available to listen.

Keep the communication open with school as well. Make sure teachers have your contact information. Check teachers' websites. See if there's an online grade book so you can be sure your teen is handing in work. And be sure to check attendance as well.

Source: National PTA, "When Kids Become Too Cool for Parents," Family Education, <http://life.familyeducation.com/peer-pressure/self-image/36377.html>.