

Tips for Parents of Teenagers

Parenting, especially of teenagers, has to be the most difficult work in the world. While we know that the family dynamic is the most important factor contributing to a student's success in school, many parents often see high school as a time to free their children from some parental supervision. They try to balance being vigilant with fostering responsible independence in their adolescents.

Parents want to be proud of their children's accomplishments. Since obtaining a high school diploma is their teenager's ticket to entering the real, adult worlds of work and/or further education, then positive parental involvement has to continue in the high school years. Thus, how can parents help their teens do their best?

Certain common denominators seem to exist in our successful students' lives. Some of these commonalities are simple and obvious. Successful students have parents who

- Feed them a healthy breakfast, provide for lunch at school and monitor their health.
- Make sure that the family eats dinner together as often as possible.
- Make sure they are getting enough sleep, rather than staying up until 2:00 a.m. (Sleeping in school is unacceptable); insist they attend school and get there on time.
- Evaluate levels of participation in extracurricular activities or work and insist on reduced hours or elimination of participation when academic achievement declines.
- Talk intelligently with them; share ideas about issues in school, work, activities, the world, etc. When students talk only with friends, that practice reinforces the present level of development. Conversing with adults helps students to develop language, thinking and social skills for the future.
- Set standards for honorable and considerate behavior and hold children to them, establishing consequences for violations and rewards for exceptional achievement. They practice mutual respect.
- Place electronic equipment – such as computers, cell phones, televisions and blackberries– in family access areas in order to 1. oversee school work and be a ready resource for help, 2. monitor recreational use and 3. model effective sharing of the use of these tools.
- Check that school assignments are done completely and on time. They provide space in family areas for doing schoolwork according to the teenager's needs, for the same aforementioned reasons. The work effort of a teenager isolated in a fully equipped bedroom is difficult to supervise.
- Know the school's dress code and make sure the adolescent is dressed appropriately for school and school events on and off campus.
- Attend Parent-Teacher Nights and conferences or maintain contact with school personnel.
- Help to facilitate school projects, but let the students do their own work.
- Attend events involving the teen's participation or interests.
- Take them to local museums, libraries, restaurants, outdoor activity sites, performances and/or community events, etc. for enjoying the variety of learning experiences.
- Demonstrate citizenship and problem-solving by discussing issues, volunteering in the community and voting in elections.
- Read and talk about what they have read, in newspapers, magazines, books, manuals, directions, etc. These parents send the message that reading well is an important key to functioning in the world.

These actions do speak louder than words. Adolescents want parents' visible support, even when they say it is not necessary anymore. Parents can praise their teenagers' achievements, encourage responsibility for their successes and failures, help them overcome difficulties and champion their needs.

High school is a time of parents gradually letting go; any teenager needs to build the self-esteem of and pride in a job (school) well done. For achieving that goal, any teenager needs help at times, from friends, teachers, coaches, school staff and most of all, parents.

To share additional tips, please send your suggestions to Mr. Edward Sapienza, Principal, PVMHS.

