High School Parents®

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Clarke County School District

still make the difference!

Help your teen set academic goals with a year-end review

As the school year draws to a close, encourage your teen to pause and reflect on how things went . This isn't just about grades—it's about learning, growth and preparing for an even better year ahead! This simple review can help your teen plan next year's academic goals.

Begin this conversation by asking your teen:

- **Did you do as well in classes** as you had hoped you would?
- **Do you feel that your grades** reflect what you learned?
- **What was your favorite class** and why?
- **What was your least favorite class** and why?
- **Which teachers did you have** the best relationships with this year?

Then, help your teen look ahead. Ask what your teen would like to improve or change. For example, would your student like to strengthen writing skills and earn a higher grade in English next year? Encourage your teen to come up with a list of goals to accomplish and write them down.

Once the goals are set, work together to create an action plan for achieving them. List the specific steps your teen will take. For instance, could your teen enroll in a summer writing class at a local community college to strengthen skills?

Whatever plan your teen develops, offer support. When teens know their families have high expectations and believe in them, they are motivated to work hard and reach their goals.

A part-time job can reinforce school skills

A summer job is often a teen's first step into the workforce. Summer work helps teens prepare for the demands and responsibilities of the real world. It can also teach them many valuable lessons about responsibility, time management and respectful behavior—beneficial ingredients for school success.

If your teen will be working, reinforce these lessons. Expect your teen to:

- **Work with others.** Your teen will have to get along with coworkers and take direction from a supervisor.
- **Be accountable.** An employer will depend on your teen to show up when expected and to perform all job duties. This helps your teen be responsible and develop a work ethic.
- **Be respectful.** Many entry-level jobs involve working with the public. Your teen will need to be polite and helpful—even to people who don't show the same respect.
- **Think about the future.** Part-time jobs can help teens figure out what type of work they may want to do in the future.

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Teach your teen that healthy relationships built on respect

A significant number of teens experience dating violence each year—whether verbal, emotional, physical or sexual. Experiencing this type of violence during the teen years increases the risk of encountering partner violence later in adulthood.

To help your teen build positive and safe relationship skills, have an open discussion about mutual respect. People in respectful relationships:

- **Can talk openly.** They feel safe being both honest and direct.
- **Make decisions together.** They also support and listen to each other.
- **Support each other's goals** and interests.
- **Maintain balance.** They spend time with friends and family. A relationship where two people see no one but each other isn't healthy.
- **Honor privacy and space.** They don't demand passwords, check private messages or track their partner's movements.

> **"Your relationships are your story. Write well. Edit often."**
>
> *—Esther Perel*

Make an effort to connect and spend time with your teenager

Spending time with parents is an essential priority for teens—even if they won't admit it. Most teens want positive relationships with their parents. They also want those relationships to evolve as they grow older.

To make the most of the time you spend together:

- **Devote at least 15 minutes** a day to your teen. Offer your undivided attention—and let your teen choose the activity. Your student may want to talk about a problem, watch a video together, or go for a walk. The important thing is that you focus entirely on your teen.
- **Keep advice to a minimum.** Every time you try to solve a problem for your teen, you send the message that your teen can't solve problems independently. Instead, listen and ask questions to help your teen think things through.
- **Show an interest.** Talk about what your teen is doing at school. Attend games and performances. Go to school meetings. Being there demonstrates how important your teen is to you more than words alone can.
- **Be friendly.** Get to know your teen's friends. Offer to drive a group of them to the movies or another activity. Make your home a comfortable place for them to hang out. This way, you'll know your teen is in a safe place and you will get to know these influences better.
- **Practice respectful communication.** Avoid minimizing your teen's fears, even if the worries seem minor to you. Instead, acknowledge your teen's emotions and ask open-ended questions like "What helps you when you feel that way?"

Are you helping your teen develop good character?

As children become teenagers, families still play an important role in shaping their character. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are instilling values in your teen:

1. **Do you take advantage** of everyday opportunities to talk with your teen about the importance of living with integrity?
2. **Do you model the values** you want your teen to develop? If you value compassion, are you kind to others? Teens learn more from your actions than from your words alone.
3. **Do you look for ways** to put your values into action—such as by volunteering for a cause important to you or helping out a neighbor?
4. **Do you offer praise** when you see your teen demonstrating your family's values?
5. **Do you point out people** you see on the news or in your neighborhood who demonstrate positive values?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are giving your teen a code to live by. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children.

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Educational learning apps can help students learn on the go

High schoolers often use their smartphones for social activities like sending text messages, posting photos and videos, checking social media and playing games. Occasionally, they even use them to make a call.

However, these devices are not just for socializing. Smartphones can also be tools for learning. There are countless free apps that can help students:

- **Learn vocabulary terms**. The Quizlet app uses digital flashcards and practice modes to help your teen master terminology and key concepts quickly across any subject, from Science to History.
- **Graph math problems** on the go. Upper-level math students can use the Desmos Graphing Calculator app to instantly plot equations, visualize functions and solve complex problems right on their phones.
- **Brush up on geography.** To become familiar with countries and capitals, your teen can download Seterra Geography, a popular quiz-game app that helps test knowledge of world geography.
- **Improve focus and memory.** Look for apps like Elevate, which offers a basic free version with daily exercises and puzzles designed to sharpen focus, memory and cognitive skills.
- **Manage time.** For keeping track of everything, the MyStudyLife app is a specialized free digital planner that helps students manage class schedules (including rotating ones), track homework and set reminders for exams.

Help your teen make daily exercise a healthy summer habit

Many high schoolers plan to lie around all day, every day during summer break. Don't let your teen waste the summer this way!

Encourage your teen to do some kind of exercise every day. It doesn't take long for a habit to form—and daily exercise is a healthy habit to have.

Teens who exercise regularly:

- **Perform better** academically.
- **Are less likely to** become overweight.
- **Have stronger bones** and muscles.
- **Sleep better** than those who don't exercise regularly.
- **Have higher self-esteem.**
- **Are less stressed** and better able to handle problems.
- **Are less likely** to be depressed.
- **Tend to grow** into healthy adults.

The key is to make exercise fun. Your teen doesn't have to work out for hours every day. Splitting workout time into shorter bursts is much more realistic for most teens.

Your teen could walk around the neighborhood for 15 minutes in the morning and swim at a local pool for 30 minutes later in the day. Or, perhaps your teen would like to join a summer sports league with friends. They can experience the benefits of exercising their bodies and their social skills at the same time.

Source: I. Esteban-Cornejo and others, "Independent and Combined Influence of the Components of Physical Fitness on Academic Performance in Youth," The Journal of Pediatrics.

Questions & Answers

Q: My kids fight constantly and I always get caught in the middle. This is making me dread their summer break from school. How can I teach them to treat each other respectfully and resolve their conflicts peacefully?

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.

To avoid being 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 kids 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 children to talk about their feelings, not the other person's mistakes. Instead of, "YOU always steal my clothes," try, "I feel upset when my stuff is used without my permission to borrow it."
- **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 children will never understand 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.

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It Matters: Summer Learning

Investigate the benefits of summer school

Many high school students are looking forward to taking a break from school, eager for a few months of freedom and relaxation. But before they completely check out, they may want to consider summer school instead.

While summer school isn't for everyone, your teen may be able to:

- **Gain credits toward graduation.** If your high schooler failed a course, summer school provides an opportunity to take it again. Or, if your teen has been in classes for English language learners, taking a regular English class in the summer may be a great option.
- **Tackle a difficult subject.** If an upcoming science or math class is going to be a big challenge, taking it in the summer will give your teen more time to concentrate on it. This can be a great option for students who want to raise their grade point average.
- **Free up space** for an art or music class. During the regular school year, a student in a demanding academic program may not have room for music or art. Taking an academic class in the summer will allow your teen to include these enriching classes in the regular school-year schedule.

If your teen decides to take a class over the summer, discuss the importance of keeping up with assignments. Because summer classes are taught in such a short time period, missing even one day's work can make it hard to catch up.

Studies show summer reading improves student achievement

Research shows that high school students strongly benefit from reading over the summer. For the most value:

- **Challenge your teen** to read at least four books. One study found that the more books students read during the summer, the bigger their academic gains.
- **Ask your teen** to teach you new words. Students who read one million words a year add at least one thousand words to their vocabularies.
- **Go to the library together** often to refresh your reading supply. Students who use the library over the summer are more likely to read regularly than those who do not.
- **Suggest your teen** ask friends about books they have enjoyed and what they liked about them.

Recommendations from peers are likely more tempting than ones from adults.

Source: *Kids and Family Reading Report: The Summer Reading Imperative,* Scholastic.

Planning helps high schoolers handle summer assignments

Some high school classes require students to do an assignment over the summer. For summer schoolwork success, remind your teen to:

- **Review the assignment** before the school year ends. That way your teen can get clarification if something is unclear.
- **Gather needed resources.** If students must read a book for the assignment, your teen should get it early. The library may run out of copies if your teen waits too long to check it out.
- **Get started early.** Some teens put off assignments until the last days of the summer—leading to long nights and rushed work. Help your teen divide the work into parts and assign deadlines for each part. Encourage your teen to set the final deadline a few weeks before school starts.
- **Put in effort.** First impressions matter. If your teen does careful work, it will set a positive tone for next year. Say, "Doing your best on this assignment will help shape what next year's teacher thinks of you."