*The Central Valley Chronicle*

December 2025

CENTRAL VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

*INSTILLING PRIDE, INSPIRING OTHERS*

## MS. VLACH'S

# COUGAR CONNECTION

## MOVING INTO THE NEW SEASON

As we move into the winter months, I continue to see the impact of intentional engagement across our classrooms. Teachers are designing lessons that require students to think, discuss, and apply learning in meaningful ways. These routines reflect our commitment to teamwork and our shared belief that every student can learn and grow with the right support and high expectations.

Academically, students are working hard as they transition between activities and prepare for end-of-semester projects and tests. Recent walkthroughs have shown students actively engaged in discussions, problem-solving, and collaborative tasks. With our semester break so close, it is great to see signs that they are ready to finish the semester strong.

With the changing season, I want to emphasize the importance of sending students to school at their best each day. Rest, recovery, and consistent sleep routines help students stay focused and healthy through the winter stretch. As winter weather becomes more unpredictable, please continue to help us keep students safe. For our student drivers, preparation and caution are essential. If a student will be absent, we ask families to contact the school as soon as possible. In a district with long travel distances, timely communication is vital in helping us account for and ensure the safety of all students.

Finally, we continue to see positive behavior from students across the building, and their pride in our school is evident. We appreciate the gym clean-up efforts from both our students and janitorial staff after home games this fall; these actions show a shared respect for our facilities and for one another, and are encouraged by all patrons as we cheer on our student athletes. As we move into the holiday season, I hope you enjoy the festive touches added by our students and staff. Additionally, as we move toward more indoor activities and increased use of our facilities, we ask everyone to continue taking care to keep our spaces clean, welcoming, and well-maintained.

Together, these actions, intentional engagement, positive behavior, collaboration, and care, shape a community that truly reflects our mission of Instilling Pride and Inspiring Others. Thank you for your partnership and for the ongoing commitment that makes Central Valley a place where students can learn and grow.

# Central Valley Elementary

## December Newsletter

*From the Principal's Desk: Mr. Nick Carlson*




### Cougar Community Recognition

### October Star Student Winners (RESPONSIBILITY)




### October Staff Recognition










## Warm Wishes From Our CVE Family to Yours

As we step into December, our hearts are full. This season brings so many moments of joy, celebration, and togetherness, and we want to wish every CVE family a very Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. We hope your home is filled with laughter, rest, and time spent with the people who mean the most to you.

Looking back on the first half of the school year, we couldn't be more proud of our students. The growth we've seen in reading, math, writing, and across every subject has been incredible. They are asking deeper questions, showing more confidence, and truly stepping up as learners and leaders. Watching them grow each day is one of the greatest gifts of this job.

Thank you for being such an important part of our school community. Your support, encouragement, and partnership make all the difference, and we are truly grateful for each one of you.

Wishing you and your family a peaceful, joyful holiday season and a wonderful start to the new year!

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***Star Student Winners:*** Rainey Marshall, Teagan McClure, Laityn Poss, Hannah Nordhues, Lawson Nekoliczak, Blaikely Nekoliczak, Brynlee Houtby, Blakely Ford, Lakin Weeks, Amber Kreifels, Harlow Buettner.
Not pictured: Jason Coffin

***Staff Recognition:***
Ms. Adi Wood, Mrs. Shelly Houtby

# Central Valley Elementary

## December Newsletter

*CVE Core Values: Respectful, Kind, Responsible, Positive, Honest, Hard Working*



## Upcoming Events

**December 3rd**
2:15 Dismissal

**December 12th**
Winter Concert 7:00

**December 19th**
Cougar Community Recognition 1:00

**December 19th**
1:30 Dismissal - Christmas Break

**December 22nd - January 2nd**
Christmas Break

**January 5th**
Students Return - Full day

## Golden Spoon Winner: Mrs. Julia Wood's 1st Grade Class





# Central Valley Elementary

## December Newsletter

*CVE Core Values: Respectful, Kind, Responsible, Positive, Honest, Hard Working*



## 1st Semester Cougar Point Goal:

**100,000 Points**

**Current Total: 73,700**

**Reward: *Movie Munch-A-Thon***




## Veterans Day Program

















# Central Valley Elementary

## December Newsletter

*CVE Core Values: Respectful, Kind, Responsible, Positive, Honest, Hard Working*



## WAY TO GO, STAR STUDENTS!







## October Pizza with the Principal



Sponsored by the Central Valley PTO!






The Class of 2031 will be selling Gift Cards 11/25—12/3. A percentage of each gift card sold goes to help raise money for the students' senior trip.

See any 7th grader to order, or you can contact Mrs. Grint or Mrs. Alexander at the high school.

The gift cards will be here before Christmas.

The 7-12 Band/Choir Holiday Concert will be held on December 5 at 7:00pm in the Greeley Auditorium.

Please feel free to join us in wearing your Ugly Christmas Sweater!!



## Nuture student growth

Supporting your teen in school goes beyond academics. Students thrive when families:



1. **Love and connect.** Spend time with your teen, as a family and one-on-one.
2. **Guide and limit.** Stand firm with your teen on rules about school, health and safety Discuss ways to compromise on other issues, such as clothes and chores.
3. **Model and advise.** Set a good example. Take care of yourself. Explain your thinking to your teen. Ask her to do the same.

## Volunteering improves lives

When teens volunteer in the community, they contribute to society - and to their own future. Your teen can gain work experience as he builds organizational and social skills and learns about issues facing people around him. To find volunteer opportunities, encourage your teen to contact his school counselor, local libraries, religious organizations and community service groups.



. Congrats to the CV Cougar football players that received D2-6 All-District honors!




Front row l-r: Ky Cargill, Dallas Wadsworth, Talan Wood
Middle row l-r: Tyler Luscomb, Lane Foltz, Zevan Wolf, Zavyer Wolf, Oaklan Soto, Lincoln Nekoliczak
Back row l-r: William Pokorny, Gunnar Vanosdall, Caden Straka, Landon Shoemaker, Luke Shoemaker

**D2-6 All-District Football Honors 2025**

| Central Valley (8-0 5-0) | | | Anselmo-Merna (7-1 4-1) | | | Twin Loup (5-3 3-2) | | | Burwell (4-4 2-3) | | | CWC (3-5 1-4) | | | Palmer (2-6 0-5) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| # | Name | Gr | # | Name | Gr | # | Name | Gr | # | Name | Gr | # | Name | Gr | # | Name | Gr |
| **1st Team** | | | **1st Team** | | | **1st Team** | | | **1st Team** | | | **1st Team** | | | **1st Team** | | |
| 25 | William Pokorny | 10 | 15 | Dane Duryea | 11 | 20 | Carter Hall | 11 | 30 | Drew Dawe | 11 | 20 | Michael Jesse | 11 | 8 | Uriel Guzman | 11 |
| 5 | Luke Shoemaker | 11 | 3 | Caenyn Priest | 11 | 17 | Oran Grint | 9 | 14 | Brody Jensen | 11 | 55 | Dan Kluver | 12 | | | |
| 2 | Landon Shoemaker | 11 | 88 | Brayden Wilson | 12 | 56 | Mace Beran | 12 | 68 | Cy Feeken | 11 | | | | | | |
| 13 | Caden Straka | 11 | 77 | Drake Doss | 12 | 54 | Bereket Glendy | 12 | | | | | | | | | |
| 27 | Gunnar Vanosdall | 11 | 50 | Barrett McIntyre | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Lincoln Nekoliczak | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **2nd Team** | | | **2nd Team** | | | **2nd Team** | | | **2nd Team** | | | **2nd Team** | | | **2nd Team** | | |
| 1 | Lane Foltz | 11 | 54 | Jackson Christen | 11 | 49 | Cazen Smith | 12 | 8 | Binyam Sikes | 12 | 1 | Trey Blackmore | 10 | 36 | William Scheer | 11 |
| 17 | Tyler Luscomb | 12 | 5 | Colin Wright | 12 | 1 | Yahya Harris | 10 | 4 | Kason Larson | 11 | 20 | Mason Knox | 12 | | | |
| 12 | Oaklan Soto | 10 | | | | 30 | Emmet Grint | 12 | 77 | Tysen Welton | 11 | 50 | Parker Freouf | 11 | | | |
| 28 | Zevan Wolf | 10 | | | | 63 | Gunner Bottorf | 12 | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Zavyer Wolf | 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Honorable Mention** | | | **Honorable Mention** | | | **Honorable Mention** | | | **Honorable Mention** | | | **Honorable Mention** | | | **Honorable Mention** | | |
| 10 | Talan Wood | 12 | 10 | Jarrett Wells | 12 | 23 | Blake Bottorf | 9 | 18 | Trentin Brown | 12 | 4 | Carter Metschke | 11 | 52 | Erik Samuelson | 12 |
| 15 | Ky Cargill | 12 | 1 | Timmy Myers | 10 | | | | 28 | Owen Stevenson | 10 | 7 | Jackson Wright | 10 | | | |
| 6 | Dallas Wadsworth | 11 | 12 | Tate Seevers | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Congratulations to our Cougar Volleyball players who earned Goldenrod All Conference Honors!!!

# Goldenrod All-Conference Volleyball 2025

### First Team

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Regan Smith | Burwell | Senior |
| Bentleigh Dugan | Central Valley | Sophomore |
| Annaka Wood | Central Valley | Junior |
| Cayle Grossart | Central Valley | Junior |
| Sheridan Falk | Nebraska Christian | Senior |
| Tessa Weltruski | Riverside | Junior |

### Second Team

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kali Jarosz | Archangels Catholic | Senior |
| Taytum Perdew | Nebraska Christian | Senior |
| Adeline Hunnicutt | Nebraska Christian | Sophomore |
| Kadeya Sanborn | Nebraska Christian | Junior |
| Kailey Patzel | NGSE | Senior |
| Ella Molt | Riverside | Sophomore |

### Third Team

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Whitney Wegener | Archangels Catholic | Senior |
| Brookelyn Gideon | Burwell | Senior |
| JarahLynn Morrow | Elba | Junior |
| Addison Wysocki | Elba | Junior |
| Abby VanBibber | Grand Island Lutheran | Junior |
| Marlea Donahey | Palmer | Senior |

### Honorable Mention

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Tatum Classen | Archangels Catholic | Junior |
| Karsyn Bower | Burwell | Senior |
| Katelynn Simon | Burwell | Junior |
| Maggie Kriewald | Central Valley | Sophomore |
| Laurel Mann | Central Valley | Sophomore |
| Taylor McIntyre | Central Valley | Senior |
| Georgia Bridger | Fullerton | Senior |
| Abigail Uden | Grand Island Lutheran | Junior |
| Lauren Smith | Grand Island Lutheran | Sophomore |
| Chloe Keasling | Grand Island Lutheran | Senior |
| Cara Sidak | Nebraska Christian | Senior |
| Grace Mahony | Riverside | Senior |
| Michelle Esch | Riverside | Junior |

Early Development Network

Babies Can't Wait

The Early Development Network provides early intervention services for families with children birth to age three with developmental delays and/or health care needs. Our program connects families with needed services and provides ongoing support. EDN has caring and professional Services Coordinators to serve families with an individualized and strengths based focus. These services are free to families and we welcome anyone who may have questions or concerns.

If you are concerned about a child's development or know someone who is please call EDN (308)237-2280 at ESU 10 for services in Region 10 or 1(888)806-6287 for referrals throughout Nebraska. If you are unsure which EDN office serves your area please call (308) 237-2280 and we are happy to assist you in finding your best contact person.

To learn more about our program please visit esu10.org and choose the EDN tab in English or Spanish or visit edn.ne.gov.







The Class of 2028 would like to thank the parents, sponsors and vendors who made Girls' Night Out a success this year.

## Gold Level

HomesteadBank

SBS STATE BANK of SCOTIA

## Silver Level

Cornerstone BANK

HSB HENDERSON YOUR BRAND OF BANKING

Thank you to everyone who attended, bought raffle tickets, or silent auction items.

US. FOODS

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
# Helping Children Learn®
*Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School* December 2025
Title I-Educational Service Unit 10

## Help your elementary schooler develop math fact fluency




Math fluency is similar to being fluent in a language. Fluent math students know that 2 + 2 = 4 without having to think about it, just as they know "Hello" is a greeting. Being able to recall math facts automatically lets your child focus on the more complex aspects of solving problems.

To strengthen your child's fluency in math:

- **Use counters.** Small items like dry beans or buttons help students "see" numbers and processes. Your child can put several pennies in a cup, dump them out and add those that land on "heads" plus those that land on "tails." Then, have your child add the tails number to the heads number. Or, subtract the heads number from the total number of coins.
- **Play Math War.** Remove face cards from a deck and deal the rest face down. Each player flips over two cards. In Addition War, each player adds the numbers on their cards, and the one with the higher sum wins all the cards. In Subtraction War, each player subtracts their smaller number from their larger one: the one with the larger difference wins the cards.
- **Choose a number,** such as the date. Ask your child to come up with as many addition and subtraction facts as possible that equal that number. On the 15th, your child might think of 20 - 5, 7 + 8 and 10 + 15.

Source: N.M. McNeil and others, "What the Science of Learning Teaches Us About Arithmetic Fluency," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, Sage Journals.

## Fill winter break with learning fun

The thought of days of free time during a school break can inspire joy in students—and mild panic in their families. To avoid hearing "I'm bored" from your child, plan a few enjoyable activities that promote learning:

- **Volunteer as a family.** Turn your child's attention from the "I wants" to helping others who are less fortunate.
- **Cook together.** Help your child make seasonal foods you remember from your childhood. Share your memories.
- **Read and watch.** Choose a book that has been made into a movie. Read it together, and then watch the movie. Discuss how the two are alike and different.
- **Explore first-person history.** Help your child interview relatives—even you—about life in the past. Together, brainstorm a list of questions, such as, "What was school like for you when you were my age?" and "What trends were popular?" Have your child record or write down the conversations.

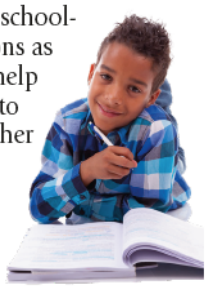
## Kindness is empowering



It's true that children aren't always kind to one another. But your child doesn't have to accept unkindness as the norm. Talk together about ways to respond if a classmate is being treated unkindly. Then, challenge your child to do at least one nice thing for a classmate each week. Explain that your child has the power to make a difference.

## Say 'no' to multitasking

It isn't really possible to concentrate on many things at once. Research shows that when students multitask, their minds just switch quickly between tasks without focusing on any.



When your child does schoolwork, eliminate distractions as much as possible. Then, help your child schedule time to do tasks consecutively, rather than at the same time. Limit multitasking to activities that don't need attention, like eating a snack while chatting.

Source: C. Kubu, Ph.D. and A. Machado, MD, "The Science is Clear: Why Multitasking Doesn't Work," Cleveland Clinic.

## Check off responsibilities

Checklists are useful tools that can help your child remember to fulfill responsibilities without being reminded. Sit down together and make a list of responsibilities your child is ready to handle independently. Here is a starter list you can adapt:

- **Get up on time.**
- **Complete schoolwork.**
- **Read at least 20 minutes a day.**
- **Take care of personal hygiene.**

Agree on consequences for shirking. And be sure to praise your child for a job well done!

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
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## Q&A How can I teach fairness to my highly competitive kids?

**Q: My children are so competitive that it's an issue. My younger child cries after losing, and the older one sometimes cheats when my back is turned. How can I teach them to be good sports?**



**A:** Whether children are competing in games, in the classroom or in life, they need to learn how to play fairly and accept the results. To help your children learn these lessons:

- **Explain that fair play is important.** Make it clear you expect them to play by the rules and be gracious to opponents—win or lose.
- **Set time limits.** Establish a time to stop playing and set a timer before the game starts. When it goes off, the game is over.
- **Be gentle when correcting** your children for making a wrong move. Just explain what the player should do instead.
- **Discourage cheating.** Review the rules at the start of the game. If a child tries to cheat, just repeat the rules. The second time, calmly say, "When you don't play by the rules, people get upset. If it happens again, the game is over."
- **Reject trash talk.** Every poke, put-down or unkind comment earns the player a foul. Five fouls, and the player is out.

## Parent Quiz Are you teaching your child to move on?

Disappointments happen to all students from time to time. Events are canceled, games are lost, friendships fade. Are you helping your child learn to move forward after letdowns? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

___**1. Do you help** your child see what can't be changed and what can? "You can't change the weather. But you can change your plans."

___**2. Do you talk** about things to learn from mistakes? "Next time, you can start studying a few days earlier."

___**3. Do you explain** that it is OK to express feelings, but not OK to sulk?

___**4. Do you teach** your child to expect the unexpected and respond in positive ways?

___**5. Do you help** your child brainstorm next steps to take?

**How well are you doing?**

*More* yes *answers mean you are helping your child learn to cope with disappointment. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them."
—Maya Angelou

## Discuss respectful behavior

When children behave respectfully toward teachers, classmates and school staff, they help create the positive academic environment all students need to learn. Remind your child that it's important to:

- **Be courteous to everyone.**
- **Raise a hand** and wait to be called on, and avoid interrupting others.
- **Listen when the teacher** or classmates are speaking.
- **Accept constructive feedback** from the teacher politely. Teachers point out mistakes so students can learn from them.

## Play with punctuation

Punctuation makes writing easier to read and understand. Here's a fun way to get this point across to your child and provide some practice at the same time:

1. **Write a short story** and remove the punctuation.
2. **Ask your child** to read it aloud. It's challenging!
3. **Edit the story together,** adding punctuation that makes it easy (or funny) to read. Talk about why you are choosing—or not choosing—certain marks. Then, let your child write a story for you to punctuate.

## Let your child tackle it first

Students gain skills and confidence when they learn to do things for themselves. Let your child take the lead with:

- **Addressing confusion** about schoolwork or grades. Ask your student to talk to the teacher about it before you step in.
- **Solving minor issues** with peers. Discuss things your child can do.

If issues persist or are serious, such as bullying, contact the school yourself right away.

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MIDDLE SCHOOL

# Helping Students Learn®

*Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School* December 2025

Title I-Educational Service Unit 10

## Foster the leadership qualities that boost middle school success

Many people think of a leader as a boss: someone who tells others what to do. But true leadership has just as much to do with listening, learning, planning and setting an example. Leadership qualities help students develop problem-solving and communication skills and responsibility.



All children have the ability to become leaders. To foster leadership, encourage your child to be:

- **Organized.** Leaders plan ahead. They know that leaving projects to the last minute usually produces poor results.
- **Open to new ideas.** Leaders know they don't know everything. They listen and consider input from others.
- **Flexible.** Leaders don't get stuck in the rut of doing everything the same way every time. They are willing to negotiate and try new solutions.
- **Caring.** Effective leaders want to make things better for everyone.
- **Optimistic.** Leaders are enthusiastic and expect things to go right. They trust the people they work with.
- **Resilient.** Leaders know how to handle losses and move forward when things don't go as planned.

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

## Speak out against substance abuse

Substance abuse early in life increases the risk of addiction and damage to brain function—and it can be fatal the first time. The middle school years are a time when giving your child prevention messages is critically important.

People are more likely to turn to drugs and alcohol in times of transition, like middle school. Kids this age also want to try new experiences. Since their judgment and decision-making skills are immature, they may not recognize the risks.

To set your child straight:

- **Ask, "What have you** learned in school about substance abuse?" Reinforce those messages.
- **Discuss the dangers** of using prescription drugs improperly.
- **Set clear rules:** No use of any drug, including alcohol, cannabis and nicotine products, except as prescribed by a doctor for your child or approved by you.
- **Build a strong relationship.** Enjoy time and activities together.

Source: "Preventing Drug Abuse: The Best Strategy," National Institute on Drug Abuse.

## Level up reading suggestions

Your child is growing up and learning more about how the world works. To encourage frequent reading, acknowledge this growth. Suggest that your child read:



- **News articles.** Share an article on an interesting current event every day. Ask your student to share one with you, too.
- **Books about people** your child's age who are making a difference. Middle schoolers are figuring out their place in the world and how they can contribute.

## Promote accountability

To help your student learn to face up to problems and take responsibility for actions:

- **Let your child** be the one to talk to the teacher first about issues with grades.
- **Ask questions** to help your child think about potential results of actions before taking them.
- **Let your child experience** and learn from consequences.

## Four study tips get results

Research points to four study strategies that improve learning and memory. Encourage your child to:



1. **Study the same** material in multiple locations.
2. **Alternate** studying different types of content in a single study session.
3. **Space out study sessions** over several days, rather than cramming.
4. **Practice recalling** learned information—by summarizing, self-testing, etc.

Source: M. Imundo and others, "Where and how to learn: The interactive benefits of contextual variation, restudying and retrieval practice for learning," *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology,* Sage.

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MIDDLE SCHOOL
# Helping Students Learn®
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## Q&A How can I tell if moodiness is really depression?

**Q: My middle schooler has been unhappy and negative lately. Is this normal at this age, or could my child be truly depressed?**



**A:** Hormonal changes in the middle school years can swing children's moods up and down from one minute to the next. However, poor mental health among adolescents is widespread, so you are wise to be concerned.

Depression typically lasts longer than a mood swing. Your child might be depressed if one or more of these signs persist for at least a few weeks:

- **Sadness, agitation,** anger or irritability.
- **Feelings of hopelessness,** worthlessness or guilt.
- **Loss of interest** in previously enjoyed activities.
- **Sleeping or eating** too much or too little.
- **Difficulty concentrating.**
- **Frequent headaches** or stomachaches.

The risk is higher for children who have a family history of depression, or who are under stress, have a learning disorder or are experiencing a loss. If you suspect depression, seek professional help immediately from a doctor or school counselor.

## Parent Quiz Are you teaching time management?

Middle schoolers have assignments in multiple classes. So they need sharp time management skills to complete everything on time. Are you helping your child develop these skills? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

___**1. Do you have** your child write all academic and social commitments on a calendar?

___**2. Do you ask** questions to help your child prioritize tasks? *What's due soonest? What will take the most time to complete?*

___**3. Do you model** wise timing decisions? *I'm going to get started now. Waiting until the last minute is so stressful.*

___**4. Do you help** your child break big projects down into manageable steps?

___**5. Do you have** your child create a weekly schedule of times for completing tasks?

**How well are you doing?**

*More* yes *answers mean you are instilling effective habits for using time wisely. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"A plan is what; a schedule is when. It takes both a plan and a schedule to get things done."
—Peter Turla

## Encourage language study

Research shows that when students study a foreign language, their brains physically change in ways that enhance learning. Language learning benefits your child's:

- **Memory.** The need to learn and recall new vocabulary gives the brain a workout that strengthens connections.
- **Understanding** of how language works. This aids reading, writing and test-taking.
- **Problem-solving skills.** Studies show that students who speak more than one language do better in math and science.

Mastering the challenge of learning a new language also provides a confidence boost that helps when tackling other subjects.

Source: H. Mohamed, "How speaking multiple languages changes your brain," DW.com.

## Serve nutrition knowledge

A nutritious diet helps your child stay alert in class and retain information. To reinforce the need to make healthy food choices:



- **Plan meals** with your child. Set a goal to try one new healthy food each week.
- **Read food labels** together. Does that bag of chips contain more than one serving? Have your child calculate the fat and salt content in the whole bag.

## Explore tutoring options

Students who consistently struggle in school may benefit from one-on-one tutoring. Ask your child's counselor about tutoring resources at school and in the community.

When working with a tutor, set realistic, short-term goals together so you can tell if the tutoring is working. Then, let the tutor take charge. If your child isn't making progress after several months, it may be time to try something or someone else.

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HIGH SCHOOL
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## Boost motivation by helping your teen develop a sense of purpose



Having a sense of purpose—about learning and life in general—is grounding for teens. Research shows that purpose inspires positive emotions in teens that support their mental health and bolster their motivation to succeed.

To foster a sense of purpose, encourage your teen to:

- **Set goals.** Discuss things your high schooler wants to achieve. Whether it is learning a language, passing a challenging required class or running a 5K, a personal goal gives your teen a reason to work hard and persist.
- **Think about the future.** Have your teen meet with a school counselor to discuss potential career options and plans for pursuing them. While it isn't necessary to decide on a career now, exploring options can provide direction and help your teen feel empowered to move forward.
- **Pursue a passion.** Suggest joining a school club or team, or finding a part-time job that will let your teen develop related skills and knowledge.
- **Be of service.** Help your teen find opportunities to volunteer in the community or work to further a cause of interest.

Source: A. Burrow and others, "Cultivating Purpose in Adolescence, Council Report No. 3," The National Scientific Council on Adolescence.

## Help your teen use AI appropriately

Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing how people work, communicate and learn. Knowing what it can and cannot do can help your teen recognize and analyze the data it provides—and use it to enhance learning.

Explain to your teen that AI:

- **Learns by analyzing** information provided by people. But AI systems can't always judge the accuracy of that information or provide additional data, so your teen may receive incorrect or incomplete answers to questions.
- **Is often programmed** to customize data for users, so it can present biased information. Your teen should verify facts with multiple credible sources.

Students can use AI to learn more about class topics. Your teen might ask a chat bot to "explain the Pythagorean theorem," for example. But caution your teen that using it to write answers or papers is plagiarism.

Encourage your teen to research ways AI is used in career fields. Does working with AI interest your teen?

## Talk about times to say 'no'

Most teens are still learning to manage their time responsibly. Emphasize to your teen that in order to be able to fulfill commitments, it's important to say *no* to:




- **Optional activities** that create schedule overload.
- **Excess recreational** media use. Challenge your teen to find ways to limit endless scrolling.

## Search for key college facts

Students have many options for education after high school. One tool that can help your teen find schools or programs that might be a good fit is College Scorecard (*collegescorecard.ed.gov*). Users can sort data on schools in various ways to learn about:

- **Degree programs** and fields of study offered at different schools.
- **Graduation rates.**
- **Costs** and average student debt.

## Hold your teen accountable

Accountable teens think ahead and consider how their actions will affect themselves and others. As a result, they also tend to work harder and achieve more in school. To instill accountability, make it clear you expect your teen to:



- **Keep promises.** People must know they can count on your teen.
- **Admit mistakes.** Everyone makes mistakes. Accountable people don't shrug them off. They admit them and try make amends.
- **Accept consequences.** Accountable students *don't* try avoid consequences by blaming others. They *do* try to learn from the experience and avoid repeating it.

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HIGH SCHOOL
# Helping Students Learn®
*Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School* December 2025

## Q&A How can I convince my teen to put effort into reading?

**Q: My ninth grader rushes through reading assignments just to finish them—and doesn't seem to remember anything afterwards. What can I suggest that will help?**



**A:** In order to learn from reading, students must remember what they read. To make this easier, encourage your teen to take the time to:

- **Consider the purpose** of the reading material. Your teen should ask, "What does the author want me to get out of this?"
- **Decide that the material** is worth remembering. Even if the subject is not a favorite, your teen can decide, "I want to remember this because it will help me in school."
- **Concentrate.** Your teen should focus attention on the reading. Suggest setting a timer for 10 minutes and giving reading undivided attention until it rings. Your teen can also write a few questions before starting to read and then focus on finding the answers.
- **Look for the familiar.** While reading, your teen can think, "Does this remind me of anything I already know? If so, what?" It's much easier to remember something new when it connects to something familiar. Your teen can also consider how parts of the reading connect to one another.

## Parent Quiz Do you encourage working with teachers?

Students may not like strict, demanding teachers. But learning how to work with tough supervisors is a lesson that pays off in school and in the workplace. Are you helping your teen meet the challenge? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___**1. Do you tell** your teen that working with all kinds of people is necessary in school and in life?

___**2. Do you talk** about your teen's goals for the class?

___**3. Do you help** your teen brainstorm ways to show interest in doing well—participating in class, attending help sessions, etc.?

___**4. Do you say** that you think your teen is a capable student who can work hard and be successful in the class?

___**5. Do you suggest** your child ask a school counselor for help resolving ongoing issues?

### How well are you doing?

*More* yes *answers mean you are equipping your teen to work productively with teachers. For each* no, *try that idea.*

"Accept challenges, so that you may feel the exhilaration of victory."
—George S. Patton

## Strengthen self-sufficiency

In adulthood, your teen will have to handle many things without your help. Practicing now helps teens develop responsible self-sufficiency—which helps in school and whatever comes next. To encourage it:

- **Allow your teen** to solve problems independently. Don't rush to the rescue unless it's a matter of safety.
- **Discuss the connection** between actions and their outcomes. Ask your teen to think about what could happen as a result of different choices.
- **Don't fix things** your teen has done poorly. Instead, ask, "How do you think you could do better next time?"

## Offer math-solving tips

If your teen is stumped by a math problem, these strategies can help:



- **Try to solve** any part of it you can, even if you can't solve the whole thing.
- **Round off** the numbers and try to solve it that way. Then, your teen can go back to the original and try again.
- **Estimate.** After estimating an answer, your teen can work backward through the calculations and see how closely it fits.

## Take anxiety out of tests

Teens worry about all sorts of things, but tests don't need to be one of them. To help your teen conquer test anxiety:

- **Focus on preparation.** Help your teen make and stick to a plan to study in short sessions spread out over several days.
- **Share ways to relax,** such as tensing and relaxing muscles from the toes on up.
- **Offer reassurance.** While you expect your teen's best effort, your love for your teen won't change, no matter the grade.

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