

CENTRAL VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL
INSTILLING PRIDE, INSPIRING OTHERS

MS. VLACH'S

COUGAR CONNECTION

CELEBRATING FIRST SEMESTER SUCCESS

As we welcome the new year, we want to celebrate the many successes from our first semester at Central Valley Jr./Sr. High School.

First, we are thrilled to announce that our district has earned an AQuESTT Excellent rating. This achievement reflects the hard work and dedication of our students, faculty, and staff. Thank you for your continued commitment to providing strong academic and social opportunities for all learners across our district.

We are proud to recognize 66 students who earned a place on the Quarter 2 Honor Roll. Their hard work, commitment, and dedication to learning reflect the high expectations we hold for ourselves and one another.

Our National Honor Society students demonstrated outstanding service by delivering over 61 Meals on Wheels to community members. This meaningful effort was made possible through the leadership of Mrs. Shoemaker and the generous support of State Bank of Scotia, Sixel Insurance, Greeley Country Market, and Vang's Village Shoppe. We are grateful for the strong partnerships that continue to support our students and community.

To celebrate the end of the semester, students enjoyed a holiday bowling day, providing a fun and positive way to wrap up the term and build connections before winter break. Students competed against one another and the staff, all in good fun. In the afternoon, the students were treated to a hot cocoa bar organized by Mrs. Underwood, finished off our Christmas world trivia, and played games with their classes and teachers. Thank you to the school board for allowing our students to start off their winter break on a high note.

Thank you to our students, staff, families, and community for making the first semester a success. We look forward to a strong and productive second semester ahead.

Go Cougars!

Excellent

2024 AQuESTT



Central Valley Staff, Students, and Community Members,

We are proud and excited to announce that Central Valley Public Schools has received an Excellent rating through Nebraska's AQuESTT accountability system. This top distinction is a remarkable accomplishment and one that our district should celebrate.

AQuESTT, which stands for Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow, is Nebraska's comprehensive framework for classifying school districts across the state. This system evaluates school performance through six principles that reflect a well-rounded, student-centered approach to educational success:

- Leadership
- Educational Opportunities and Access
- Transitions
- Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Student Success
- Educator Effectiveness
- Student Achievement and Growth

Each school within Central Valley also received its own classification rating, and we are proud to share that all buildings improved from their 2023 results.

- Elementary School – Excellent
- Middle School – Excellent
- High School – Good

These ratings reflect the hard work of our students, the commitment and professionalism of our staff, and the strong community partnerships that make Central Valley a special place to learn and grow. Our students continue to strive for academic excellence every day, and these results highlight the exceptional opportunities and supports available to them.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our families, patrons, and community members for your continued support of Central Valley students. Your involvement, encouragement, and pride play an essential role in helping us achieve success today and for the future.

Congratulations, Central Valley Cougars!

Together, we will continue to instill pride and inspire others.

Pictures from the holiday bowling day!



Front row l-r: Sara Burns, Josie Marshall, Misty Parson
Back row l-r: Aubry Hansen, Kristanna Parson, Jalen Eckton



Top picture: Colin Berney
Bottom picture: Katelyn Usasz

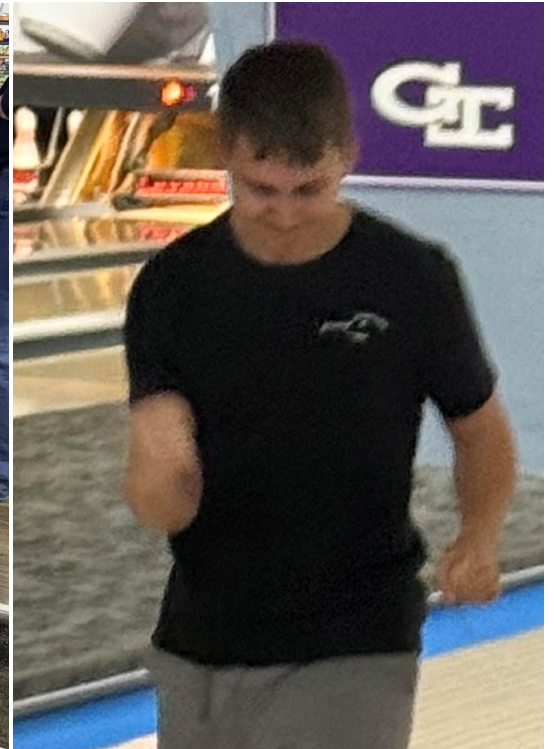


L-r: Kashlyn Samway, Gracen Owens, Rylan Wood, Destiny Haynes, Lauryn Rosander, Shyann Borwege



Katie Middendorf, Ali Morris, Claire O'Connor, Mattie Schumacher

Matthew Pribnow



Central Valley Elementary

January Newsletter

From the Principal's Desk: Mr. Nick Carlson

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026

Cougar Community Recognition

November Star Student Winners (KINDNESS)



November Staff Recognition



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Happy New Year to all of our Central Valley families! We hope your holiday break was filled with rest, joy, and time spent together. As we welcome the new year, we are excited to continue the learning, growth, and opportunities ahead for our students.

A new year is a great time to reset routines, set goals, and refocus on learning. We encourage families to continue working closely with both your child and our school - whether that's reading together at home, practicing skills, encouraging positive habits, or staying connected with teachers. We also want to remind families to continue to Strive For 95, because attendance matters and makes a big difference in student success.

When families and schools work together, our students thrive. We are looking forward to a great year ahead and all that our CVE students will accomplish!

Star Student Winners: Ailem Jimenez, Raelynn Ware, Olive Gotschall, Madison Foster, Logan Johnson, Jade Dugan, Ellie Borwege, Hazen Hanson, Trayven Berney, Bowen Thompson, Nathaniel Skinner, Levi Harms

Staff Recognition:

Mrs. Kim Killinger, Mrs. Dawn Bransfield



Central Valley Elementary

January Newsletter

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

Upcoming Events

January 5th
School Resumes - Full Day

January 6th
Principal for a day

January 7th
2:15 Dismissal

January 21st
High School STAR Event

January 28th
Spelling Bee

January 29th
Cougar Community Recognition 3:00

January 30th
No School

November Golden Spoon Winner: Mrs. Perrott's 3rd Grade Class



Central Valley Elementary

January Newsletter

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

Give Thanks

1st Semester
Cougar Point
Goal:



100,000 Points



Semester One
Total: 102,370

Reward: Movie Munch-A-Thon

Thanksgiving Feast



Central Valley Elementary

January Newsletter

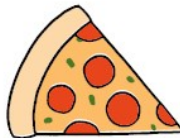
CVE Core Values: Respectful, Kind, Responsible, Positive, Honest, Hard Working



**WAY TO GO,
STAR STUDENTS!**



November Pizza with the Principal



**Sponsored by
the Central
Valley PTO!**





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.



On December 8, the girls basketball team held a morning practice so we could spend the day together giving back to our community. Following practice, the team traveled to Grand Island to shop for families in need this holiday season. The day concluded with a team "family dinner" at Olive Garden.

As their coach, I am incredibly proud of the team's work ethic and commitment on the court. Even more impressive, however, is the compassion, maturity, and character these young women continue to show off the court. They truly represent our school with class.

We have had a strong start to the season, and I'm excited to see it continue. With any luck, we'll have the opportunity to enjoy a few more "family meals" together in Lincoln this March.

Devon Beck



L-r: Addy Ryan, Cayle Grossart, Payton Kniss, Maci Ford, Kinley Nelson, Annaka Wood, Lydia Studley, Bentleigh Dugan, Laurel Mann, Trasa Klein, Maggie Kriewald, Taylor Rosander.

• • • UNIFIED • • • BOWLING

Coaches Kathy Donovan and Staci Rother

This year, our Unified Bowling team participated in three events. We kicked off the season at the Malcolm Invite on November 3, competing against 43 teams. Claire, Annaka, and Jaxton traveled to Lincoln, where they bowled six games against teams from Auburn, Beatrice, Centennial, Crete, Elmwood-Murdock, Johnson County Central, Lakeview, Malcolm, Palmyra, Raymond Central, Seward, Shelby-Rising City, Syracuse, Wahoo, Waverly, and Wilber-Clatonia. Although we didn't place, the team showed steady improvement with each game, and Claire knocked out several strikes this day!

Our second competition was the Grand Island Senior High Tournament on November 22, which included 13 teams from Aurora, GISH, Hastings, Lexington, Shelby-Rising City, and York. Claire, Thayer, and Ethan earned 2nd place in the silver bracket after completing 10 games, and the team celebrated its highest game of the season with a score of 139.

We wrapped up the season at Districts on December 2 at Pastime Lanes in Hastings. Claire, Brooklyn, Cayle, and Annaka represented us at this meet. It proved to be our most challenging outing, and despite working hard, we struggled to find our rhythm, but we had fun and had quite a few shining moments.

This year's Unified Bowlers were Claire O'Connor, Thayer Davis, Annaka Wood, Cayle Grossart, Brooklyn Perrott, Ethan Lobner, Alexa Gonzalex, and Jaxton Bernt.

With busy schedules that included other sports and One-Act commitments, we weren't able to attend as many events as we hoped—but we are looking forward to adding more competitions next year. Great work this season, team! Keep throwing those strikes!



****District bowlers include Brooklyn Perrott, Cayle Grossart, Claire O'Connor and Annaka Wood.**



The Sophomores win the Ninth Annual Christmas Tree Decorating Contest with "It's Sweet to be a Sophomore". Voting was done by randomly selected individuals from the Arcadia-Loup City communities.

Second place winners were the Seniors with their "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree". Congratulations and thank you to all of the classes for participating.



Sophomore Tree



Senior Tree

FCCLA STAR Events*Students Taking Action with Recognition*

Central Valley to host the FCCLA District 9 STAR Events.

The District 9 STAR (Students Taking Action for Recognition) events will be held at Central Valley High School on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. FCCLA STAR Events are competitive events where Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America members apply Family & Consumer Sciences (FCS) skills in leadership, career prep, and projects, with over 30 options covering various pathways like culinary, design, and early childhood, judged individually or in teams at different grade levels (6-12 & post-secondary) for recognition at district, state, and national levels. These events reinforce classroom learning through practical application, fostering skills in communication, critical thinking, and leadership via digital presentations, skill demonstrations, and portfolio development, culminating in awards. Top entries can advance to state and national competitions.

FCCLA Chapters attending will include Ainsworth, Boyd County, Burwell, Central Valley, Chambers, O'Neill, Ord and West Holt.

As this is a large event, CV FCCLA is seeking FCCLA alumni and community members interested in being evaluators. The qualifications are simple; computer knowledgeable to complete an electronic scoring rubric, a desire to work with youth, and learn more about FCCLA.

Please contact Mrs. Kennedy, advisor. At school 428-3145 or cell-308-383-7917. If you are interested or need more information.

REMINDER: High school students will not have classes on this day!!

PARENT QUIZ

Are you open to discussing "tough stuff"?

Today's teens face a lot of challenging issues. Your teen needs guidance from you to steer safely through hazards. Two-way communication is key. Are you making it easy for your teen to talk to you? Answer yes or no below:

1. **Do you set aside** regular time to be with your teen?
2. **Do you give** your full attention when your teen starts to talk about a difficult subject? If you can't, do you arrange a time to get back to your teen?
3. **Do you listen** to what your teen thinks before saying what you think?
4. **Do you let** your teen know that on some issues—such as drugs, sex, alcohol—there's no negotiating, but that on others, you're usually willing to consider a compromise?
5. **Do you admit** when you don't know something?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are encouraging a vital dialogue with your teen. For each no, try that idea.



Is it your teen's best work?

Encourage your teen to carefully review assignments before handing them in. Your teen should ask questions like:



- ♦ **Does this meet** all the requirements the teacher laid out?
- ♦ **Have I reviewed** it for accuracy?
- ♦ **Is there anything** I could improve?



Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Title I-Educational Service Unit 10



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

January 2025

Use encouraging words to boost your child's motivation to learn

Positive words from you can affect your child's motivation to learn. And experts agree that it is better to go beyond simple praise, like saying "Great job," to offering encouragement, such as "You have really learned a lot about this. Tell me some more!"

What's the difference between the two?

Simple praise:

- **Is results oriented.** "You got a 99 on your test! That's great!"
- **Uses words that express** your opinion, such as *good*, *terrific* and *wonderful*.
- **Is usually given** when your child does what's expected.

Encouragement:

- **Acknowledges effort and progress.** "Look at that project. I can see how much thought and care you put into it. It must feel good to know you really worked hard."
- **Describes specific aspects** of your child's work. "You picked up *without being asked*. Look at that *clean floor*!"
- **Doesn't depend on performance.** "That didn't go the way you planned, but I know you'll try again. What could you do differently?"

The big difference is that encouragement leads children to form their own positive opinions about themselves and their work, rather than depending on praise from other people.



Hand over responsibilities

Are you still packing your child's lunch? How about making the bed? If so, pass the duties on to your child. Most elementary schoolers are capable of handling such tasks. Don't pile on too many chores, but expect your child to regularly complete self-care tasks. This fosters feelings of capable independence along with responsibility.

Nurture a love of reading

Students who like to read do more of it. In the process, they build reading skills and overall learning power. To encourage reading enjoyment:

- **Make reading** an event. Choose books together at the library, then go for a tasty snack and read them.
- **Branch out.** Read a variety of kinds of books together. If your child usually reads fiction, try a biography. Or, help your child find a new book series to start.
- **Inspire curiosity.** Ask your child an interesting question. "How did our town get its name?" Help your child find out by reading.



Test-taking strategies improve results

Your child needs two kinds of knowledge for success on tests. One is knowledge of the subject matter. But it is also important for your child to know the test-taking strategies that help students earn every point they deserve.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Review these strategies together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write down memorized facts and formulas as soon as the test starts. Your child can refer to them later when answering questions. • Read the directions carefully. If something is confusing, your child should ask the teacher. • Read all the questions before starting to answer. Then, your | <p>child can calculate how much time to spend on each.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross out options on multiple choice questions that can't be right and choose among the rest. On <i>true/false</i> questions, remember that if any part of the answer is false, the whole answer is false. • Leave time to double-check answers before turning in the test. |
|--|---|

Teach lessons about money

When children learn about money, they build math skills and life skills at the same time. To foster financial literacy:

- **Consider giving** your child a small amount of money. Managing their own money builds children's respect for it. Have your child keep a record of purchases and calculate how much is left.
- **Demonstrate what budgeting** looks like. Say things like, "I'd love to order pizza tonight, but it will have to wait. Payday isn't until Friday."



Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

January 2025



What can I do to increase my child's patience?

Q: My kindergartner hates to wait and doesn't do it quietly. The teacher says this impatience is becoming a distraction at school. How can I help my child develop more patience?

A: Many parts of learning in school involve patience: waiting for a turn to speak, reading all the way to the end of a book to find out what happens, trying to understand a concept that isn't immediately clear.



To help your elementary schooler develop more patience:

- **Be understanding.** Say that you know waiting patiently isn't always easy. Explain that it is something everyone has to learn, and you will help.
- **Do activities together** that require patience, such as playing board games, putting together jigsaw puzzles, baking and planting seeds.
- **Help your child save** up money to buy a desired item, rather than just providing it right away.
- **Be a role model.** Show how you make waiting more pleasant. While waiting in traffic, say something like, "Let's use this time to make up a story." Read to pass time between activities. Observe things around you.
- **Offer practice.** When your child asks for something, say, "In a minute." If you are busy, use a hand signal that means, "When I'm finished."

Investigate science at home

You don't need fancy equipment to help your child learn about science. Just point out the science that's all around you, in things like:

- **Food.** Which cereals get soggy in milk? Does cheese get moldy faster on the counter or in the refrigerator? Help your child experiment to find out.
- **The night sky.** Observe the changes in the moon and stars over several months.
- **Household items.** Give your child something to take apart—a ball-point pen, a candle, an old toy. Can your child figure out how it works?



Improve talks about school

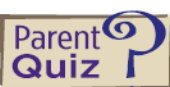
If conversations with your child about school are going nowhere, try this: Instead of asking lots of questions as soon as your child gets home, share a few things about your own day first. Then, ask open-ended questions about your child's day: "What was the most surprising thing that happened today at school?"

This works when discussing schoolwork, too. Talk about what you notice first (but don't point out mistakes). Then, ask your child to tell you more about it.

Make expectations work

It's important to set realistic expectations for your child. If they are too high or too low, your child may do poorly. For success:

- **Check with the teacher** if you aren't sure about your child's abilities.
- **Be consistent.** Don't lower expectations to make your child happy. Don't raise them because you've had a bad day.
- **Celebrate progress** your child makes along the way.



Are you enriching read-aloud time?

When you have fun reading aloud together every day, your child strengthens reading skills and learns to associate reading with pleasurable times with you. Are you making the most of read-aloud time? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___ **1. Do you read** aloud together for at least 20 minutes a day? your child will want to read again the next day?

___ **2. Do you encourage** your child to pick some cozy or fun places to read?

___ **3. Do you take** turns being the reader? Alternate reading sentences or paragraphs, or take on different characters when reading dialogue.

___ **4. Do you pause** to discuss what you're reading or let your child ask questions?

___ **5. Do you end** the day's reading at an exciting place, so

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are reading with your child in productive ways. For each no, try that idea.

"I think that when you can escape into a book it trains your imagination to think big and to think that more can exist than what you see."
—Taylor Swift

Helping Children Learn[®]

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Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Title I-Educational Service Unit 10

MIDDLE SCHOOL

January 2025



Help your middle schooler learn and use lots of new words

Having a wide knowledge of words and their meanings will give your child an advantage in reading and writing. It's easier to comprehend the meaning of a text when the words are familiar. And your child will be able to choose just the right words to express ideas clearly in writing.

To help expand your child's vocabulary:

- **Encourage daily reading.** Frequent reading is one of the best ways for students to learn new words. If your child loves cooking, suggest a biography of a famous chef. Look for more books by authors your child likes. Every so often, have your middle schooler read something that seems a little bit challenging.
- **Stop and look words up.** Whenever you and your child hear a new word, look up its definition in the dictionary. Have your student do this when reading, too.
- **Promote practice.** Encourage your child to use new words in conversation with you and others. Repeatedly recalling and using a word reinforces it in your child's mind.
- **Include your child in conversations** with adults. When children talk with adults, they are often exposed to new words. Ask your middle schooler's opinion on a topic. Then, be sure to avoid speaking for your child.



Know your maturing child

Understanding the emotional changes kids go through in the middle school years will help you support your child. These include:

- **A growing need** for independence.
- **A desire to be respected** for being more grown up.
- **Waves of self-doubt.**

Give your child meaningful responsibilities and chances to make decisions. Praise progress and success. Your love and support mean a lot—even if your child doesn't admit it.

Plan ahead for test success

A little planning can make preparing for tests more effective. Before a test, have your child ask and answer these questions:

- **How well do I** know each topic? Do I need time to learn as well as review?
- **What strategies** will I use to study (self-tests, flash cards, etc.)?



Then, help your child create a schedule of specific times to do the needed work.



Teach your child phone self-control

According to research, about half of children in the United States get a phone by the age of 11—and most turn to them between 26 and 100 times a day. This direct access makes managing digital media use a challenge for families.

Since too much of the wrong kinds of screen activity is linked with negative effects on learning and well-being, it's vital to help your child learn to keep screen use under control. Have your middle schooler:

- **Keep a log** of all phone use for one day. How many times did your child pick up the phone? For what activities? For how long?

- **Think about ways** to reduce phone use the next day. Your child could turn off notifications and check the phone only during specific times, for example.
- **Obey tech-free times**—while doing schoolwork, during meals and in the hour before bedtime.

Source: "Constant Companion: A Week in the Life of a Young Person's Smartphone Use," Common Sense.

Foster problem-solving

When a problem crops up that your child is not sure how to handle, build problem-solving skills by sharing this method:

1. **Define the issue.** What are the facts?
2. **Get more information** if necessary.
3. **Write down** as many potential solutions as possible.
4. **List the pros and cons** that could result from each option.
5. **Decide what to do** and do it.
6. **Review.** Did the solution work? If not, go back to step 4.



Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

MIDDLE SCHOOL

January 2025



What should I do to help my child turn grades around?

Q: In the first half of the school year, my seventh grader earned lower grades than we both would have liked. How can I help my child recover from a rough start?

A: There are months still to come in the school year—plenty of time for your child to finish strong. Encourage your middle schooler to consider this a fresh start.



To support improvement, help your child commit to these positive habits:

- **Goal-setting.** Help your child set reasonable, attainable goals. It's unrealistic to expect top grades overnight. But if your child earned all C's last grading period, a goal could be bringing at least some up to B's this time.
- **A daily study time.** When is your student most alert? Right after school? Or after a little downtime? Make that study time, and stick to it. If there are no assignments due the next day, your child can read or review.
- **Getting enough sleep.** Studies show that sleepy students don't perform well in school, so insist that your child head to bed (without digital devices) at a reasonable hour.
- **Tracking progress.** Discuss what your child is learning and how it's going regularly. Monitor online class gradebooks together. If your child is struggling, recommend asking for help as soon as possible.

Keep fear from getting in your middle schooler's way

After experiencing a few failures in a row, students sometimes avoid trying new or challenging things. The fear of failing again holds them back. To prevent this from happening if your child is struggling:

- **Encourage a positive outlook.** When students believe success is possible and decide to give a task their best effort, they are more likely to succeed.
- **Recommend trying** different study strategies. Suggest starting with an easy task to build confidence before moving on to a harder one. Or, your child could make pictures and graphs to figure out or remember a process. Does reading a passage aloud make it easier to understand?

Fit in some time for fitness

Exercise gives children more control over their bodies—and that sense of control can carry over to their studies, too. In a study of 11-year olds, regular physical activity was found to have a positive effect on academic achievement, because it helped students manage their behavior to achieve goals. Make exercise a part of your child's daily routine. You could even plan to work out together!



Source: E. Vasilopoulos and M.R. Ellefson, "Investigation of the associations between physical activity, self-regulation and educational outcomes in childhood," *PLOS ONE*.

Choose words carefully

The way you talk about your child can be motivating—or discouraging. If you could possibly be overheard, avoid making negative comments about your child to others—especially family members. Instead, talk about your student's kindness or sense of responsibility, or the time your child didn't give up, even when the going got tough.

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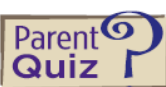
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Are you encouraging careful work?

Sometimes, students earn poor grades on schoolwork even when they know the material. The reason is usually careless errors. Are you teaching your child the importance of working carefully? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___ **1. Do you remind** your child to use all the time available when taking tests?

___ **2. Do you suggest** rereading instructions and rubrics so your child can be sure to do what is being asked?

___ **3. Do you encourage** your child to double-check answers before submitting work?

___ **4. Do you discuss** the need to pay attention to details, such as putting your child's name on work to be turned in?

___ **5. Do you reinforce** the idea that neatness counts, both at home and at school?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are teaching your child to put effort into being thorough. For each no, try that idea.

"Attention to detail is not about perfection. It's about excellence, about constant improvement."

—Chris Denny

Helping Students Learn®

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Title I-Educational Service Unit 10



January 2025

School attendance is a vital investment in your teen's future

As some teens near adulthood, they lose motivation to go to school. But for an adulthood with career options and potential for financial security, graduating from high school is an important step.

When students skip school, they may think only about getting out of that day's work. They need to understand that they may be getting out of much more—such as future opportunities they might want.



To reinforce the importance of school attendance:

- **State clearly that you expect** your student to attend every class on time every day. Absent students miss out on class discussions, questions raised by other students, explanations and much more.
- **Be consistent.** Avoid scheduling medical appointments during school hours or allowing your teen to miss school for unnecessary reasons, such as to finish assignments.
- **Monitor absences and tardies.** These add up faster than many families realize. Check on your teen's attendance regularly, either online through a family portal, on your teen's report card, or by calling the office.
- **Establish rewards for regular attendance** that your teen can earn, such as weekend outings or special time with you. Make sure they are things your teen sees as rewarding.



Seven tasks for 'no homework' days

In high school, there is always something students can do to keep up or get ahead with schoolwork. So if you hear "I have no homework tonight," suggest that your teen spend 30 minutes to an hour on one of these activities:

1. **Begin work** on a long-term project or paper. Starting early means your teen can think without deadline pressure.
2. **Review.** Spacing study sessions out over time improves recall.
3. **Read ahead.** Previewing material before it's taught will help your teen know what questions to ask.
4. **Clarify class notes**, and fill in any material that got left out.
5. **Create a practice test** using books and class notes. Then, you can offer to quiz your teen.
6. **Do a little extra.** Your teen could practice solving math problems, or write a summary of a text.
7. **Read something interesting.** Any reading your teen can learn from is worthwhile.

Source: R. Dellabough, *101 Ways to Get Straight A's*, Troll Communications.

Allow input on discipline

Giving your teen a say about rules and consequences will make them more effective. Listen, then decide on measures that are:

- **Clear**, with no room for argument.
- **Logical.** If your teen fails a test, adding to daily study time makes more sense than revoking a privilege.
- **Immediate.** Choose consequences that take effect right away.

Editing improves writing

Strong student writing is clear and free of distracting language and careless errors.

Taking time to edit and proofread is essential.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Read every word** slowly. The brain often fills in missing words.
- **Remove "filler."** Adding unnecessary words or phrases to increase word count will only weaken your teen's writing.
- **Check word usage.** Students often confuse sound-alike words such as *effect* and *affect*. Which does your teen mean?



Put grades in perspective

Pressure to earn high grades is a leading source of student stress. But grades are only one indicator of future success. Teach your teen that:

- **The point** of education is to learn. Help your teen value the knowledge gained in classes.
- **Finishing** a challenging project and improving in a tough subject are reasons to be proud and celebrate.
- **Your student's** best effort is enough, and you never want your teen to cheat.



Source: "Parents' Values and Children's Perceived Pressure: Topical Research Series #4," The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth.

Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



HIGH SCHOOL

January 2025



How involved should I be in choosing my teen's classes?

Q: The time for choosing next year's classes is coming up. I want to discuss the options, but my ninth grader says, "It's my life, and my choice," and wants me to back off. Should I?

A: Class selection is a time when staying involved can benefit your student more than allowing independent decision-making. The choices students make about classes in high school can affect whether they go on to higher education and where, and even the careers they might pursue.

To guide your teen's thought-process:

- **Review the requirements** for graduation. What has your teen fulfilled? What remains to be completed in the next three years?
- **Discuss your teen's goals.** What does your teen hope to do after graduation? What classes could help your student prepare?
- **Consider the requirements** for college admission. These typically include additional classes in specific areas. For example, most colleges expect four years of English and math, at least three years of science and history, at least two years of a foreign language and one year of the Arts.
- **Schedule a meeting** with your teen's school counselor. Together, lay out a plan for your teen's next three years. Some things may change over time, and that's OK. But your student will have important bases covered.



Take time to look both ways

January is named for the Roman god Janus, who looked both forward and back. Doing the same this month can help your teen finish the school year strong. Ask your student:



- **What goals** did you meet in the fall?
- **How were you** able to achieve them?
- **What lessons** did you learn that will help you going forward?

Then, help your teen use these insights to plan specific actions to take to achieve goals for the rest of the year.

Get results without a fight

Giving your teen an order—"Go do your homework right now"—is likely to lead to a power struggle if your student has other ideas. And experts recommend avoiding power struggles with teens.

This doesn't mean you should let your teen call all the shots, however. Instead, ask your teen to help find solutions that work for you both. Asking "What time will you do your work so we can still watch the game tonight?" may eliminate a fight—and still get the work in on time.

Source: J. Whitlock and M. Purington, "Dealing With Power Struggles," The Cornell Research Program on Self-Injury and Recovery.

Subtract math obstacles

When high school math gets difficult, some students feel they have reached their limits in the subject. But there are no limits! To overcome obstacles, encourage your teen to:

- **Ask questions in class.** If your teen wants to know, others probably do, too.
- **Stay caught up** with assignments.
- **Find a study buddy,** and talk through problem-solving steps together.
- **Search online** for videos and explanations of math concepts.



Are you helping your teen stay focused?

In a recent survey, 75 percent of public schools reported that students' lack of focus had a negative impact on learning at their school. Are you helping your teen develop the ability to concentrate? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you encourage** your teen to participate in activities that build focus, such as reading, sports and chess?
2. **Do you help** your teen limit recreational screen use by establishing digital curfews and screen-free times?
3. **Do you encourage** your teen to take notes and participate in class discussions?
4. **Do you discourage** multi-tasking? It is really constant switching among activities, which reduces focus.

5. **Do you avoid** interrupting when your teen is working?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your teen concentrate on learning. For each no, try that idea.

Source: "School Pulse Panel: Responses to the pandemic and efforts toward recovery," NCEs.ed.gov.

"The simple act of paying attention can take you a long way."

—Keanu Reeves

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