

Tips for Parents

Students and teachers obviously have a lot of responsibility related to school. The students' parents also have a very important role to fulfill. By following these tips, parents can help their kids better succeed at school (without doing their work for them!)

1. Make Sure Your Kids Get Enough Sleep

A child in kindergarten should be getting 10 hours of sleep each night. Teenagers need almost that much. They need close to nine hours of sleep. Not many teenagers get enough sleep on school nights.

Not getting enough sleep can cause many different problems. You know that when your child is tired he or she can be grumpy and emotional. There are other problems that aren't as obvious. Being overtired makes it easier to get sick. Over time, it can lead to depression, weight gain and acne. In school, students who are tired have a harder time paying attention. They have a harder time remembering what they are supposed to be learning.

For many students, school starts early in the morning. Activities, television, and computers make it easy for students to be wide awake late into the night. The end result? Tired teenagers.

Encourage your teenager to go to sleep around the same time each night. They should get up at about the same time every day – even on the weekends. Having an established sleep schedule will make it easier for the student to get the sleep he or she needs.

2. Establish School Night Rules

"We don't allow computers to be on after 9pm," says one father of two middle school students. "Even for homework. The kids know they have to get their computer work done before it gets too late."

Research indicates that the lights from televisions and computer screens interfere with brain signals that tell a person to get sleepy. Computers make it possible to be in contact with other people late into the night. They made it possible to watch videos or play games for hours. These things take time away from homework and rest. Set limits and enforce them.



Limit after school activities. Help your teenager choose no more than two activities such as a sport or club. Being too busy leads to stress. Kids need to have some down time on a regular basis. Help them create a manageable schedule. Include time for those favorite activities, time for homework, and time to enjoy being a kid.

Have dinner together as a family at least twice a week. Ask your student about school and about his or her day, and truly listen to the responses.

3. Be Involved at School

Look for opportunities to help at your student's school. You may help with a fundraiser or carnival once each year. You may help coach a sports team or club for a season. Or you may dedicate time on a regular basis – possibly monthly or weekly – to help with tasks at the school. Teachers often seek help from volunteers to do tasks. These tasks may include making photocopies or listening to students read.

Get to know the teachers and school staff. This can be a great way to get a more accurate picture of how your child is doing in school. It will help you know what the expectations are. You may also get a chance to see how your child interacts with others. Parents are often surprised to realize how differently their kids act at school compared to how they behave at home.

Pay extra attention to your child's friends. Your teenager's friends have a tremendous influence on him or her. Know who your student is spending time with.

4. Help, but Don't Do the Student's Work

If your teenager asks for help with an assignment, offer assistance. Or help them find resources that will help. "This year my son is doing math that I don't know how to do," says one mom of a high school junior. "I couldn't help him answer the questions. But I did help him find a good on-line tutor. Now he can get his questions answered for his homework."

Teach your child to be responsible. "We wanted our kids to take care of their own business," said one mother. "But we also wanted to help them if they found themselves stuck. For example, if one of our kids left something at home that they needed at school, I would bring it to them. But they would have to pay me \$5 from their allowance to pay for my time and for gas. That way they learned to be responsible."

5. Focus on what is Most Important

Not every student gets straight "A's." Not every student is class president or captain of the football team. Recognize that your child is a unique individual. He or she is not just like you, not just like his or her big brother or sister, and not just like anyone else. Celebrate his or her own successes and encourage his or her passions. Focus on what is most important – your child.