

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



November 2019

Willingboro School District

## Discuss the dangers of vaping to your teen's health and learning

Use of electronic cigarettes by teens rose by 78 percent last year. And while they are marketed as a safer alternative to tobacco, e-cigarettes aren't nearly as safe as many teens and adults think.

Recent cases of serious illness and death have been linked to vaping. The Centers for Disease Control advises that teens should not use these products. Arm yourself and your teen with these facts:



- **The vapor e-cigarettes produce** usually contains nicotine. One pod of vape liquid may contain as much nicotine as 20 cigarettes. Other ingredients may be related to the outbreak of illness.
- **Nicotine is highly addictive.** Adolescent brains are especially vulnerable. Teens who vape are also more likely to start smoking regular cigarettes.
- **Nicotine can have a negative effect** on learning and memory.
- **One in 11 middle and high school students** report using e-cigarettes to consume cannabis.

E-cigarettes may look like pens, vaporizers or flash drives—making them hard for parents and schools to detect. It is vital for you to make it clear to your teen that you will not tolerate smoking or vaping.

Source: "Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, and Young Adults," CDC, [niscw.com/vape](http://niscw.com/vape); "Outbreak of Lung Illness Associated with Using E-cigarette Products," CDC, [niscw.com/vape2](http://niscw.com/vape2).



## Careful review leads to quality work

Teens are often so relieved to finish an assignment that they close the book on it quickly and move on. But successful students understand the importance of reviewing their assignments carefully before handing them in.

Learning to look objectively at the quality of his own work can help your teen become a motivated and independent learner. And that can help him earn better grades.

Encourage your teen to ask himself these six questions before he turns in an assignment:

1. **Does this meet** my teacher's requirements? He should double-check any rubric he received.
2. **Does this reflect** my best work?
3. **Have I given credit** to others whose work I used as sources?
4. **Which part** of this project am I most pleased with?
5. **Is there anything** I can improve?
6. **What have I learned** from this assignment? This, after all, is the point of doing it.

## Connect with teachers

When you schedule a parent-teacher conference, the teacher can give you helpful information about your teen and what she's studying. Be sure to bring a list of your questions—your teen may not know why she got a poor grade on her essay, but the teacher will, so ask! Explore ways you both can help your teen have a successful year.

## Share tips for test success

To help your teen do his best on almost any test, make sure he knows to:

1. **Read the instructions twice.** He should note key words which tell what to do, such as *list*, *define* and *describe*.
2. **Read each question** carefully, and determine what he thinks the answer is *before* reading any choices provided.
3. **Answer all the questions** he knows first. Your teen can circle the questions he skips and come back to them later.
4. **Allow time to double-check** his answers. Are they correct and complete?



## Insist on screen-free sleep

A recent survey found that 68 percent of teens keep their phones in their rooms at night, and one third sleep with them in the bed. The lights can make it harder for teens to fall asleep, and the notifications wake them up all night. Poor sleep affects success in school. Have your teen:

- **Do schoolwork** that requires a screen device early in the evening.
- **Turn devices off** 30 minutes before bed and charge them outside her room.



Source: M.B. Robb, Ph.D., "The new normal: Parents, teens, screens, and sleep in the United States," Common Sense Media, [niscw.com/sleepless](http://niscw.com/sleepless).



## How can I get my teen to stop rebelling and behave?

**Q:** When my son was young, his tantrums were so bad I often gave in. Now he's in 10th grade, and he calls me names and refuses to do anything I ask. He does the same thing at school and his teachers are as frustrated as I am. How can we help him get his behavior under control?

**A:** Dealing with your son's defiant behavior may be a challenge, but you must deal with it. Otherwise, his chances of success at school, in the workplace and in healthy relationships are slim. It's not too late to turn things around. Here's how:

- **Meet with your teen's teachers.** Discuss problems and actions to take. Agree to present a united front.
- **Establish basic expectations.** Choose your battles, but include respectful behavior toward you and others.
- **Set consequences.** Let your teen know what the consequences for misbehavior will be. Make them proportional to the offense (skipping class for the third time isn't the same as leaving a towel on the floor).
- **Enforce consequences consistently.** Your teen may get angry, but remember that he needs you to be a parent, not a friend.
- **Get help** for your son and yourself. A counselor, mentor or coach may be able to help you both move forward in positive ways.



## Are you helping your shy teen thrive?

There is nothing wrong with being shy. But teens who *always* feel shy in new circumstances may need help learning to handle school and social situations. Are you doing all you can to support your shy teen? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you find** many ways to show and tell your teen that you love her?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you help** your teen get involved in activities she likes?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to volunteer? Helping others makes teens feel good about themselves.
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you role-play** tough situations with your teen? Knowing what to say can give her confidence.
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you ask** your teen's teachers for advice if shyness

has negative effects on her participation in class?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your teen gain confidence and social skills. For each no, try that idea.*

*"Self-confidence is the first requisite to great undertakings."*

*—Samuel Johnson*

## Affirm the value of work

Traits such as reliability, dedication and pride in one's work are part of a strong *work ethic*. Developing his work ethic will make your teen a better student and a more valuable employee. To help:

- **Give your teen responsibilities.**
- **Set an example.** Show that you take your job and responsibilities seriously.
- **Put work before play.** Expect your teen to finish the rough draft of his paper before he goes out with friends.

## Relieving stress can help students stay in school

Research shows what leads students to drop out of school isn't always school-related. Often a difficult life event or problem at home can tip the balance. You can't always control the things that happen in your teen's life. But you can help her find ways to cope. If she seems stressed:

- **Recommend a break.** Listening to music or watching an old movie may help her relax.
- **Encourage positive thinking.** If she thinks nothing will ever improve, remind her that even small changes can make a difference.
- **Help her address big challenges** one step at a time.

Source: V. Dupéré and others, "Is Dropping out of High School More Likely after Stressful Life Events?" *PRC Research Brief*, The University of Texas at Austin, [niswc.com/lifestress](http://niswc.com/lifestress).

## Suggest a homework source

Does your teen's homework for a class take him hours to complete each night? Or is he struggling in the class but seems to have only a few minutes worth of homework a night?



Encourage him to ask the teacher about the best way to approach his assignments.

### Helping Students Learn®

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