



10 PGCPS Parent Guide: Ways to Help Your Child Succeed in High School

Support from parents and families is key to helping high-schoolers do well academically. Here are 10 ways parents can put their teens on track. For more information, please contact the Department of Family and School Partnerships at 301-618-7456.

1 Attend Back-to-School Night and Parent-Teacher Conferences

Teens do better in school when parents support their academic efforts. Attending back-to-school night is a great way to get to know your teen's teachers and their expectations.

In high school, parent-teacher conferences address issues like behavior problems, falling below grade-level expectations, or alternatively, benefiting from advanced class work. Conference times also help provide clarity around your child's academic performance and testing performance reports.

Parents or guardians can request meetings with teacher or school staff any time during the school year. Meetings can be scheduled to set up or revise individualized education plans (IEPs), 504 education plans, or gifted education plans for teens with special learning needs.

2 Stay Connected

Knowing the physical layout of the school building and grounds can help you connect with your child when you talk about the school day. The school website has key information about the school calendar, testing dates, extracurricular activities and includes links to communications portals, such as SchoolMax and Blackboard.

3 Support Homework Expectations

During the high school years, homework gets more intense and grades become critical for college plans. Students planning to attend college also need to prepare for the SAT and ACT. Amid these changes, many teens are learning how to balance academics with extracurricular activities, social lives and jobs.

Provide a well-lit, comfortable, and quiet workspace for homework. Avoiding distractions and setting up a start and end time can also help. Sit down with your teen to go over class loads and make sure they're balanced, and help them stick to a homework and study schedule. Encourage your teen to ask for help when it's needed.

4 Send Your Child to School Ready to Learn

Teens also need the right amount of sleep – about 8 to 9 hours each night – to be alert and ready to learn. Early school start times combined with extracurricular activities mean that teens often don't get enough sleep. Lack of sleep is linked to decreased attentiveness and short-term memory, inconsistent performance and delayed response time. Napping after school can push bedtimes back; encourage teens to keep a consistent sleep schedule and turn off their phone at bedtime.

A nutritious breakfast also helps prepare for a successful school day. If your teen is running late, encourage them to take a healthy, portable snack. Many schools provide nutritious breakfast options before the first bell.

5 Teach Organizational Skills

Learning and mastering the skills of getting organized, staying focused, and seeing work through to the end will help teens in just about everything they do. Help teens keep assignments and class information together in binders, notebooks, or folders that are organized by subject. Creating a calendar will help teens recognize upcoming deadlines and plan their time accordingly; be sure to include non-academic commitments.

6 Offer Help With Studying

Planning is key for teens juggling assignments in multiple subjects. Help your teen break down larger studying tasks into smaller chunks and use a study calendar so they aren't studying for multiple tests at the same time. Remind your teen to take notes in class, organize them by subject and review them at home. If grades are good, your teen may not need help. If grades begin to slip, it may be time to step in.



7 Know the Disciplinary and Bullying Policies

Review the PGCPS Student Rights & Responsibilities Handbook for rules and consequences for not meeting expectation for behavior, dress codes, use of electronic devices and more. Know the policies and consequences of bullying and how to report bullying if it happens to your teen.

8 Become and Stay Engaged

Volunteering at school is a great way to show you're interested in your teen's education. Follow your teen's cues to determine how much interaction works for both of you, and whether your volunteering should stay behind the scenes. Even giving a few hours during the school year can make an impression on your child.

9 Take Attendance Seriously

Teens should take a sick day if they have a fever, nausea or worse. Otherwise, it's important that they arrive at school on time every day, because having to catch up with class work, projects, tests, and homework can be stressful and interfere with learning.

10 Make Time to Talk About School Every Day

Since many teens spend much of the day outside the home – at school, extracurricular activities, jobs or with peers – staying connected can be challenging. While activities at school, new interests and expanding social circles are central to the lives of high school students, you are still their anchors for providing love, guidance and support. Make efforts to talk with your teen every day, so they know that what goes on at school is important to you. When teens know their parents are interested in their academic lives, they'll take school seriously as well.

