

## The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

### Staying Involved In Your Teenager's Schooling

from the American Counseling Association

We all know how much a good education matters in today's world. But as our kids enter high school, many parents become less involved in their teen's education. As our teenagers become more independent, it's natural to expect them to learn responsibility by handling school work successfully or dealing with the consequences.

But while teenagers do need more freedom, it's not unusual for teens, especially those with busy schedules, to make poor decisions about time usage, often relegating school work to the bottom of the priority list.

As a parent of a teenager, it's great to encourage teen responsibility, but you also want to offer much needed guidance regarding time management and achieving school success. Staying involved in your teen's schooling can help achieve academic benefits and a stronger relationship with your child.

And how do you do this without being an overbearing parent? Start by taking an interest in your teen's classes. Encourage discussion of the school day and individual classes. Yes, starting such communication can be difficult. Often you'll hear only complaints or refusals to talk. But stick with it and offer positive, understanding feedback, rather than criticism.

It's also important to keep in contact with the school. Go to parents' nights, schedule teacher or counselor conferences when you have concerns, and pay attention to progress reports and test grades.

You can also help directly with time management. Offer your assistance in setting up a schedule that includes not only homework time, but also time for friends, sports and fun activities.

Setting clear, reasonable expectations for grades and schoolwork is also important. Talk with your teen about his or her goals, abilities, interests, classes and teachers, then make the final expectations a joint decision. Together decide on consequences if expectations aren't met, then monitor school progress. Let your teen know you're there to help with trouble spots, not just to criticize or punish.

Although most teenagers are desperate to be more independent and to make their own decisions, it's easy for teens to be overwhelmed at times by all the choices, responsibilities and consequences that come with that decision making.

Find ways to stay involved with your student's schooling while still supporting of his or her growing independence and you'll have a teen who will do better academically and may even appreciate your efforts, though it might be years before that's ever said out loud.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACACorner@counseling.org](mailto:ACACorner@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

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