

Curriculum of the Home: Parent Practices to Help Youth Learn

The “curriculum of the home” is made up of the patterns of family and community/tribal life that support a teen’s ability to learn in school. Your parenting and family/cultural practices and the relationship you build with the school will help your teen succeed. You don’t have to understand advanced math or buy anything special. Talking together often about your hopes and dreams for your teen’s future and what it will take to reach those goals is one of the most important things you can do!

Parent–Teen Relationship

Daily conversation about everyday events

- Spend a few minutes daily with your teen, talking and listening with patience and love.
- Take time to understand your teen’s world—their friends, activities, music, beliefs, values, customs, etc.
- Talk with your teen about strengths and interests you have noticed in him/her, both in school subjects and outside school – including at home and in the community.

Showing affection

- Show love to your teen in many ways, from hugs to praise for effort to special time together.

Family discussion of books, TV programs, web content, games, etc.

- Talk with your teen about what he/she is reading and watching and what you are reading and watching.

Family visits to cultural sites, libraries, museums, zoos, etc.

- Go with your teen to places where learning is a family activity.
- Ask school personnel or other parents for ideas of free or low-cost places your family could visit together.



Encouragement to try new words/phrases

Vocabulary words and phrases are building blocks of thought and expression. If learning a tribal or other language, adding vocabulary in either language will build cognitive competency. In many families, exploration with words and tribal language phrases is encouraged; in fact, it is an ongoing source of family pleasure.



- Make family games out of looking up new words:
 - * Who can find the most new words in something you are reading together?
 - * Who can guess the correct meaning of a new word heard on TV, online, or in the community—before you look it up in a (hardback or online) dictionary?



Routine of Family Life

Teens do best in school when parents provide predictable boundaries for their lives, encourage productive use of time, and provide learning experiences as a regular part of family life.

Formal study time at home

- Make daily study time a "family value," something each teen does with or without homework assignments from school.

A daily routine that includes time to eat, sleep, play, work, study, and read

- Establish a family routine with regular mealtimes, bedtimes, homework/study time, and outdoor play/exercise time.
- Make sure your teen eats healthy, nutritious foods and visits a doctor and dentist regularly.
- Make school attendance a family priority, and have your teen complete makeup work as soon as possible after an absence because of illness or other issues.

A quiet place to study and read

- Find a spot with good light for a reading/studying area.
- Encourage studying and reading all year long, whether school is in session or on break.

Family interest in hobbies, games, and activities of educational value

- Share family stories and traditions; they give a sense of meaning and belonging.
- Set times for family fun, such as a regular weekly game night.



Family Expectations and Supervision

Parents set standards for their children, and these standards determine what children view as important. Families with high expectations for their children's school performance also provide consistent guidance and support for schooling. Also important is a family attitude that accomplishments result from effort rather than ability you are born with or "playing the system"—this is called a growth mindset.

Priority given to schoolwork and reading over screen time and recreation

- You don't have to sell your devices, but DO set time limits on TV, computers/tablets, and phones. Too much time at a screen takes away from time your teen should be spending somewhere else.

Teens are expected to be on time

- Have your teen pack a backpack each night with everything they need for school the next day.

Teens are expected to do their best and take responsibility for what they do

- Emphasize good study habits and a good attitude toward school.
- Praise your teen for real effort and good attitudes about school work.

Concern for correct and effective use of language

- As much as you can, model tribal language.
- Show and model courtesy when talking with your teen by using please, thank you, etc.

Parental knowledge and discussion of what is being watched on TV and computers/screens

- Make sure you know what your teen sees, and use shows as a chance to talk about values.
- Discuss and enforce Internet safety and courtesy rules.

Parental knowledge of school achievement and personal growth

- Talk to your teen, your teen's teacher, and other school staff often.
- Check your teen's progress: review report cards, attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Ask your teen, "Tell me something you learned in (school subject)" rather than yes/no questions.

