

Parents Still Make the Difference!



Encourage your teen to take responsibility for learning

Your teen earned a bad grade--actually, a terrible grade--in Spanish last marking period. What should you do?

Perhaps the most useful thing you can do is to help him "own" it. Most teens have quite a knack for placing the blame elsewhere--on the teacher, on the "stupid" test. Instead, help your high schooler figure out exactly what he did to earn the bad grade.

Until your teen takes responsibility for what he did, he's not going to be able to make the changes he needs to make. Here are some questions he should consider:

- Did he invest the time he needed? How much time did he actually spend working on his Spanish? Did he review the new vocabulary he learned in class? Did he turn in his homework? Did he study for tests? He is responsible for how he uses his time.
- Does he know how to study? Sometimes, teens think that if they just skim the chapter, they have "studied." Teens need to learn that studying is an active process. If he doesn't know how, encourage him to ask his teacher how to study. He can also search the Internet for college study sites.
- Did he assume he is just "not smart" in the class? Remind your teen that nearly any subject can be learned with effort.

Make sure your teen is in every class, every day

Many teens think skipping class isn't a big deal. They're wrong. Studies show that students who skip class frequently:

- Report that they are bored in class.
- Fall behind and become unmotivated because they don't understand the topics being taught.
- Feel disconnected from their school.
- Are more likely to consider dropping out of school.

Insist your teen attend every class, every day. Be sure to:

- Make school attendance a priority and talk about why it is important.
- Contact the teacher if you suspect your teen may be skipping a class. If your teen knows you will check up on her, she will be more likely to stay in school.
- Remind your teen that attendance is the law--skipping even one class is considered truancy.

Seven character traits may determine your teen's success

When you think of "good character" you may think of a person who is kind, generous and thoughtful.

These are great characteristics for a person to have. But recently, research has been focusing on other aspects of character: zest, grit, self-control, social intelligence, gratitude, optimism and curiosity.

Students who possess these qualities are more likely to succeed in school. They're more likely to keep trying after setbacks. In fact, students with these characteristics are more likely to succeed than students who are intelligent but not as driven.

To build:

1. Zest, show enthusiasm for what your teen is learning. "Wow, zebra fish can regrow their fins? That's really interesting!"
2. Grit, praise your teen's perseverance. "I'm really proud of how you stuck with that geometry homework until you got it."
3. Self-control, give your teen responsibilities. Being able to complete tasks at home without being reminded means he will be able to direct himself at school.
4. Social intelligence, suggest that your teen put himself in others' shoes. "Why do you think Will reacted like that?"
5. Gratitude, go beyond just making sure your teen says please and thank you. Discuss why he feels grateful.
6. Optimism, encourage your teen to look at the bright side of events.
7. Curiosity, help your teen explore more about what he is learning. Head to the library or research information online.