Do You Know

How to stay involved in your child’s education even when they are in High School?

Teenagers may act like they don’t need you, but they do. As a matter of fact, parent involvement in their children’s education is even more important in high school. Evidence based research confirms that teenagers do better in school when their families:

- Show interest in their school work
- Communicate high (yet realistic) expectations
- Offer ongoing praise and support

**Show interest in your teenager’s education**

1. Ask. Ask. Ask……in a non-threatening way. While captured in the car or at Pizza Hut. Include humor. Focus on your child’s interests and strengths. Convey appreciation for the many demands he faces during his school day. Even if your child says nothing back – you are still sending the message that what happens during his school day is important to you.

   “So…what was the weirdest (funniest) thing that happened today?”
   “How is English class treating you?”
   “Does your Science teacher still wear his toupee lopsided?”
   “Did you have a chance to use that cool software program you like?”

2. Need your child’s help to understand. Whatever your child’s response, respect it. Let her know you value her opinion.

   “I never did understand The Lord of the Flies. What do you think was going on with all those boys on the island?”
   “I heard they might move football games to Saturday afternoon rather than Friday nights. Which do you think is better?”
   “Tell me more – your ideas are so interesting.”

3. Get a printed copy of the syllabus for each class or find them on the school website. With a syllabus you can ask specific questions.

   “Is it true that the battle of Gettysburg was really bloody? Why did so many soldiers die?”
   “Still reviewing bugs in Biology? I don’t think I could do it!”

**Hints**

- Respect your child’s privacy—don’t share everything your child tells you with other parents
- Keep talking to your child—find ways to get him to say more than “nothing” when you ask what he did today.
- Ask the teachers how to best communicate with them and then stay on top of your child’s learning.

8003 Forbes Place Ste 310
Springfield VA 22151
800-869-6782 / 703-923-0010
www.peatc.org
4. Be in touch with the teachers – share with each of them what your child enjoys in the class as well as what challenges him.

5. Attend school meetings and events. While high school parents seldom belong in the classrooms, they can get a ‘feel’ for their child’s life at school by volunteering at car washes, sports events, etc. Do not let school meetings take place without you and your child. Chaperone a dance. Drive a group of students to a band competition.

Communicate high (yet realistic) expectations
It is healthy for families to encourage their children to stretch and reach for academic excellence. The evidence is clear: parents who hold high expectations for their teens, communicate those expectations clearly and encourage their adolescents to work hard in order to attain them, make a difference in students' success.

At the same time, it is important to remember that academic success must be uniquely defined for each child. It must be realistically attainable. Parents’ efforts to motivate their child to get straight A’s may be well-intentioned, but such efforts often have the opposite effect. The student, who knows full well that no matter how hard she tries she is unlikely to make an A in Algebra I, begins that course with some heavy baggage. She knows she is likely to fail in the eyes of her parents.

1. Convey your belief that your child can achieve success as it is defined for him. Your level of belief in him will become his level of belief in himself.

2. Catch your child working hard. Recognize and celebrate his efforts.

3. Explore options that might assist your child in finding success. For example: changes in classes or schedule, tutoring, structured homework hours, after school help, a schedule for making up assignments, ongoing counseling. Include your child’s opinion when figuring out how to solve his problem.

Praise and Support

1. Adolescents never outgrow their need for praise – notice when your child works hard and tell her that it matters.

2. Show your pleasure when your children work hard regardless of the test grade that follows.

3. Encourage your child to practice his speech with you. Remember to offer more positive feedback than criticisms.

4. Find the time to ask them vocabulary definitions, discuss current events, look at lab sketches, and display their paintings and bowls.

5. Most importantly, help your child envision his own possibilities. Teens really do listen to adults who tell them that they are valuable and that their lives can be as good as they want them to be.