

March 2009

High School **1** YEARS

Working together for lifelong success

Short Clips



Happy Pi Day

Math fans around the world will observe Pi Day on March 14 (3/14)—since pi represents the number 3.14. The number, which continues infinitely without a repeating pattern, is used to calculate a circle's circumference. Celebrate with pie for dessert. Have your teen measure the diameter and multiply it by 3.14 to find the pie's circumference.

Lending etiquette

Teach your child to be a dependable borrower. If a friend lends her a CD, she can ask when he wants it back and mark the date on her calendar. Also, remind her to return items in their original condition. For instance, she should wash clothing or refill her gas tank.

Cutting caffeine

Soda, coffee drinks, chocolate... caffeine can add up. And the energy boost it provides can wear off quickly, leaving your teen tired and edgy. Suggest that he track his caffeine intake for a few days. Then, discuss ways he can cut back. At a coffee-house, for instance, he could order hot cider or herbal tea.

Worth quoting

"There are no shortcuts to any place worth going." *Beverly Sills*

Just for fun

Q: Six kids and two dogs were walking under one umbrella. Why didn't they get wet?

A: It wasn't raining.



Go global

In a few years, your teen will enter a workforce where she could be e-mailing customers around the world or working for an office based overseas. To succeed, she'll need to be comfortable with diverse people and places. Introduce her to life in a global marketplace with these activities.

Read international news. Newspapers and news Web sites can teach your high schooler about geography and global politics. Encourage family members to bring interesting world news articles to discuss over dinner. Locate each city and country you read about on a map or globe.

Use foreign languages. Make your child's Spanish or French class part of family life. Play instructional CDs in the car, have her order in Spanish at a Mexican restaurant, or use foreign words during games like Scrabble or Boggle.

Chat across oceans. Your teen can learn about another culture with an e-mail pen pal. Help her find one on www.studentsoftheworld.info or www.epals.com. A pen pal in Argentina, for example, might tell her about a soccer game or a class project.

Visit foreign Web sites. Encourage your child to read pages created in other countries. She can visit www.google.com/language_tools?hl=en to find sites written in other languages and have them instantly translated into English. *Idea:* Suggest that she compare American and foreign viewpoints on historical events. For example, she could browse American and Russian Web sites about the launch of Sputnik. 👍



Report card tips

Is report card time stressful in your house? Here are two ways to help:

- Keep track of marks throughout the semester. If your school offers online grade reporting, sign up for e-mail updates and check regularly. Or ask your child for graded papers and test outcomes. Staying in touch with your child's progress will keep you from being surprised when final grades are out.



- When your teen brings home a report card, point out high or improved marks first ("Your hard work in chemistry paid off—you raised your grade!"). If some grades are disappointing, agree on a plan to improve them (get extra help, form a study group, spend more time on homework). 👍

Parenting teens

Parents love to hear a teen say, “Cool, Mom!” But being liked by your teen doesn’t have to come at the expense of rules and discipline. Try these suggestions for setting limits and having a nice relationship with your child.

Set limits

Create rules, and be sure your child understands them. Writing them down will make things clear—consider creating a contract with rules and consequences that you both sign. Then, you will have a document to refer to if your teen breaks a rule. When you do have to discipline him, try not to get too angry or upset. For



instance, if you say no to a later curfew and he yells, “I hate you!” let him know you won’t tolerate disrespect. Then, stick to your decision. Your teen may not seem to like you at the moment, but he’ll respect you in the long run.

Enjoy time together
Spending time with your high schooler can make it easier to talk when disagreements crop up. Find things you both enjoy, such as racquetball or art museums, and plan outings together. Also, have conversations where you agree not to discuss areas of conflict (driving privileges, clothing choices). 👍

Money matters



Your teenager gets an offer in the mail that seems too good to be true: a “pre-approved” credit card. She just has to call the bank, and it will be activated instantly.

Take time now to teach her good money management with these ideas:

■ Together, read the fine print on offers

(interest rate, annual fee).

Help your teen calculate how long it

would take to pay off the card if she charged the maximum amount and made only minimum monthly payments. Explain that late payments can hurt her credit, making it harder to get a cell phone contract or car loan.

■ Consider getting your child a bank debit card. That way, she can only spend money she already has. You can help her set up an account for allowance or waitressing money and show her how to keep track of debit transactions online. 👍



Parent to Parent

Standardized test time

When I reminded my daughter Rachel about her school’s upcoming state test, she said it was no big deal. Since the exam would not count toward her grades, it didn’t matter to her.

I explained that standardized tests help the school system see how well the curriculum is working. I also told Rachel they would give her a chance to work on test-taking skills that will help her when she takes regular tests or the SAT and ACT.

Finally, I suggested that she think of the test as a personal challenge. Since she loves competition, I explained percentiles: if her vocabulary score is in the 80th percentile, she did better than 80 percent of students who took the exam. Now she’s waiting to see where she ranks! 👍



Q & A

Staying in school

Q My nephew recently announced that he was quitting school. My son says he’s tired of school, too. How can I keep him from dropping out?

A Getting involved now is critical—it can be hard to change a teen’s mind once it’s made up. Schedule a meeting with your son and his guidance counselor. If he’s struggling with classes, ask about ways he can get help or ideas for lightening his schedule. Or consider

alternatives that will hold his interest, such as work-study, internship, or vocational programs.

Keep in mind that the more connected your son feels to his school, the more likely he is to stay enrolled. Help him find something there that he enjoys, such as a new elective (astronomy, graphic design) or an extra-curricular activity (debate team, year-book committee). 👍



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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