

Parish Nurses Notes September 2025

12 Back to High School Tips for a Successful Start

Gearing up to begin another year of high school can be equal parts exciting and daunting. These are the final years of schooling before kids spread their wings and fly on their own. While teenagers are fairly certain that they know just about everything, and all is under tip-top control, parents know better. These 12 back-to-high school tips will ensure your teen student is set up for a successful year.

Raising Teens: A Precarious Balance

Remember when everyone told you that those baby years were a bear, and they would be the hardest ones you would encounter in your parenting journey? Those people lied to you. The teenage years are a precarious pickle for many moms and dads. Your children are so close to being grown and fully independent, but they still need to be raised, guided, and cared for. While they might think they have high school in the bag, adults know that setting teens up for success in the new school year is crucial and challenging. These 12 back-to-high school tips will poise your teenager on the path to success, without making them feel as if you are babying them or micromanaging their every move.

Teach Teenagers Effective Organizational Skills

If you have ever seen a teenager's lair, then you know that organization is not exactly their strong suit quite yet. To be successful in the new school year, your high schooler has to be able to effectively organize much of their life. Before the beginning of the new school year, discuss methods of organizing a person's day. Consider day planners, calendars, dry erase boards, or organizational tools on personal devices to help your high schooler better manage their priorities. Talk about the types of deadlines, appointments, or sports practices that might go into a planner or calendar. In the weeks and months before the start of school, make sure children know how to create precedence in their responsibilities and how to set up appointments. This is a life skill that will extend far beyond the high school years.

Know the Go-to People

High school is the big time! Your child likely has a counselor and several teachers and coaches who they see throughout their day. Students need to know who to contact regarding what. If they have coaches, they will need those coaches' emails or phone numbers to directly contact them with any

questions or concerns that pop up. It is no longer your parental responsibility to email the science teacher and check on a project due date. It is also not your job to keep track of what your teenager needs to do in the event of an absence. Set them up for success by making a list of teachers and coaches, along with their contact info. Review absence policies and major dates on any syllabi that get passed out in those initial school days. Model what to know and how to go about accessing and relaying information.

This is particularly important to juniors and seniors. Unless they plan on taking mom and dad to college with them, they will need to know who to contact in all different situations and what the make-up, late, and absence policies are for EVERY SINGLE CLASS.

Help Students Create Study Routines

When children are young, parents establish routines for them. They tell them when to rise, when to eat, when to go get ready for school, and when to tackle homework. Teenagers need to be able to create study-based routines so that when they set out into the world in a few short years, they can manage all that's required of them. When students get their classes and their schedules, help them set up a study routine. Create space in the afternoon and evening to devote to studies. Determine which subjects will require more time, and help teens arrive at conclusions about replacing some recreational activities with academic responsibilities. Explore study hours and tutor possibilities in case they are needed at some point.

Search Out School Communities

A new school year brings about many different clubs, groups, and sports that teens can get involved in. Many of the organization descriptions roll out at the end of summer or the beginning of fall. Team up with your high schooler to seek out some groups that might be of interest to them. Feeling like part of a group is important to the socialization of many children. While the teenage years can feel isolating, they can also be fulfilling when paired with friends, classmates, and mentors. Teens can make meaningful connections with like-minded people who have similar interests to make their high school years even more enriching.

Set Up a Meeting With the Guidance Counselor

If you have an incoming freshman or even a sophomore, the college years can still seem miles away. The truth is, the four years of high school go lightning fast, and you will want to set your high schooler on a good path to their college years right away. You and your student should set up a meeting with the

school guidance counselor to discuss post-high school plans. Of course, goals and aspirations will undoubtedly change throughout the high school (and early college) years, but knowing the classes you need to graduate and move on to prospective higher learning institutions is a great way to start the new school year off right.

Learn the Importance of Health

Once upon a time, you, the parent, dictated every single morsel of food that went into your child's body. Now that they are teenagers, your reign as King or Queen of the Fridge has ended. Teens are happy to have a world of snacks and junk food at their fingertips, but they still need to be taught the importance of healthy eating. As they enter a new school year, don't tell them what to eat for breakfast, snack and lunch, but help them to understand how their food choices affect them, and how they can make nutritional decisions to support their growing minds and bodies.

Together, discover a few simple, healthy recipes that teens can be taught to make for themselves. Give them the independence to come up with cooking ideas. Help them comprise a list of ingredients, and walk them through the process of preparing food for themselves.

Teach Them to Enjoy the Journey, Not Just Strive for the End Result

For some teenagers, high school is a means to get to college and score their dream career. They get so caught up in the end result that they never enjoy the ride. Help your high schooler understand that life is about living in the moment and enjoying the process; it's not solely about trying to reach a finish line.

Stock Up on Supplies

Are you even a parent of a teenager if you haven't heard the words, "Mom, I need a purple notebook by tomorrow," at 11 p.m. the night before? Teens are notorious for thinking they have checked all the supply boxes at the start of a new year, only to discover they fell short. Kudos to them for trying to get everything in order before day one of school, but as the parent, you will still want to double-check their supply lists and make sure they have all they need to hit the ground running.

The Early Bird Catches the Bus

If it were up to your high schooler, they would sleep until 1 p.m., nap at 3, and live in the darkest corners of your home, only crawling out for food or to ask where the remote is. The high school day starts crazy early, which contradicts your teen's tendency to sleep half the day away. Don't think you will set the alarm the day before school starts and be greeted by a fresh-faced high schooler on the first day of

school. Start incorporating summer wake-up calls back into their schedule at least a week before school starts; so when the first day of school comes around, your teenager is accustomed to waking at an early hour.

Quell Navigation Concerns

This is especially crucial to incoming freshmen or teens new to the high school environment. The high school your child attends is likely the largest campus they have ever encountered. It's daunting to think of them walking the endless, winding halls in search of their second-hour classroom, all within the span of five minutes passing time. If possible, see if your child can tour the building (with schedule in hand) before the first day. They might not want you touring with them, but that's okay. You can sit in the parking lot, rocking back and forth as you imagine your child lost in the vast hallway spaces.

Chances are, by touring the high school, you and your student will be at ease with navigating their new terrain on day one.

Be Available for Your Teen

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In the initial days leading up to the first day of high school and the weeks following, be around. Keep asking your kids how things are going, what struggles they are having, what they like, and what they don't like. Know when they are reaching out for help and when they are looking for a sounding board. Being available during the teen years, and learning how to effectively listen to your child, are key components to growing your dynamic and ever-changing relationship.

Be Involved

Don't get it twisted. Being involved in your child's high school experience is not saying you should steer the ship completely and become a [snowplow parent](#) or a [helicopter parent](#). It is saying that you should be involved in some aspects of their teenage learning experience. Read all the school emails that come your way. Attend performances, concerts, art displays, and sporting events that your child is a part of. Know your kid's friends and their parents, and have your ear to the ground. You don't have to work in the school cafeteria or chaperone every dance and outing your teenager goes on, but you'll want to have some concept of what their life looks like outside of your four house walls.

High School Years are Roller Coaster Years

If you had a dollar for every mood shift, phase, and up and down that your teenager will experience during high school, you would be rich beyond your wildest dreams. The teenage years are a wild ride, to be sure, and even the most adept planners find themselves looking for answers when it comes to parenting their high schooler. Know that the ups and downs will indeed come. Be as supportive as you possibly can, and do your best to set your kid up for success at the start of each year.

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