



Highschooland:

5 Hints from a single mom and High school guidance technician

1. Make sure a homework routine is in place everyday with no distractions. Give them a snack and breaks. Connect with your child everyday: she is never too independent or too old. She should be your number one priority. No matter how your day went and how tired you are, communicate with her. Always ask about her day, her teachers and her friends. Use dinner time at the table to ask about school. Listening to your child is a powerful tool: sometimes that is what they need the most instead of a right answer.

2. Encourage your child every day by reminders that he is handsome, bright, awesome and talented, or whatever words best describes his strengths. He may not look at you or respond at all, but he is always hearing you. In an impersonal world, you are his per-

sonal cheerleader. Be sincere; even a young child and especially a teenager can tell when someone is being phony.

3. Read to your child every night. You are your child's first teacher. She will learn, act, aspire, persevere and succeed by your example. Play, sing and color with her, as these years will pass quickly. Get down on the floor and wrestle or play ball. The human touch is a powerful and gentle instrument that tells your child she is loved and safe. Create ways to make learning fun like counting and memory games. Encourage her performance by rewarding her with a special time with you, as when she is very young, your time is more valuable than money or toys. That changes later, we all know, but during the elementary years, your time and attention are the best things in the world.

4. Contact the school for tutorial services, mentoring programs, and outside resources that would help you as a single parent. Be involved and support your child and his school. Participate and attend all of his functions and conferences and do it joyfully; kids can tell when we adults are doing something grudgingly. Encourage sports or performing arts for your child and help him start a hobby through art, sports or music. Apply school assignments to his life and make them personally interesting: you know him better than anyone. Never give up being hopeful and positive. Avoid showing your frustration or anger and don't play the blame game. Do not, under any circum-

stances, compare your child to anyone else at any time. Hug him even tighter when he pushes you away physically or emotionally.

5. Too many high school students have too much "alone time." Idle time is not a teenager's best friend. Supervision or accountability should be in place. Destinations and knowing who he is with are requisite, but allow him opportunities to have some independence. He has to learn how to make choices by trial and error just as you did. Teens want boundaries but they are definitely not going to ask for them or thank you for them! In fact, they will rebel, and this is normal. It would be weird if they didn't test boundaries and your patience. Look at the long view. You don't need to win every battle, but you want to win the war! Structure, consistency, love and support are vital.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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A high school counselor since 1978, Karyn Rashoff has met with thousands of students and their parents in their quests to achieve. Leading parent groups on college admissions and testing timelines, academic planning and orientation for high school, common questions and concerns arise. Among various locations and ethnic groups runs a common thread of yearning for excellence, no matter what personal goals, socioeconomic status or parent education. Visit her blog www.highschooland.com.