

Help is Available—What Parents Can Do

As a parent, you can support your teen’s education in many ways—from helping them with course selection and planning a career pathway, to assisting with everyday schoolwork. While answering their questions, you might have your own questions about the best ways to help, what else you can try, and where to find more information.

Here are some general tips and strategies that apply to many situations that involve math and education.

Help is available!

Common answers to frequently asked questions

Q. How do I help with ...

- Homework?
- Course selections?
- Career choices?

A. It is not a parent’s job to be a teacher or make decisions for teens. When teens ask for help, it is more useful for a parent to be a good listener and coach, and to support and encourage them as they go through the process and learn for themselves.

- Don’t do the work for them.
- Do ask questions about what they are doing and how they are doing it.
- Express confidence in their ability to succeed.
- Be positive.
- Help them see errors as opportunities for learning.
- Suggest other sources of help and information.
- Help them set realistic short-term and long-term goals.
- Make attendance at school a priority.
- Encourage and help them to stay organized.
- Make sure they keep a healthy balance between schoolwork and other activities such as sports, clubs, and friends.
- Read curriculum documents for your teen's grade, available at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

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Listening is as important as talking

How to really listen

Academic success, career choices, and the future are all big subjects, and talking about them with your teen can take more than one conversation. Listening is as important as talking in big conversations like these. According to parenting expert Alyson Schafer, teens are more likely to consider a parent’s advice and guidance when they feel their own point of view is being respected. It is easier to trust someone who seems to be really listening and not just promoting their point of view. Schafer outlines three levels of listening:

Level One: Listening with an agenda.

Superficial listening. We hear what the other person is saying, but focus on promoting our agenda. Example: “I don’t care what you say – you are not dropping math!

Level Two: Listening from our own perspective.

We hear what the other person says, but analyze it through our experiences. Example: “I hear you. Chemistry doesn’t interest you. But when I was in high school, my parents forced me to take it. In the end, I was happy I did.”

Level Three: Listening with an open mind. The deepest level of listening.

You can suspend judgment about the other person and their past. Example: “Sounds like this is a tough decision for you because it’s about more than course selections. You feel that if you take applied math and your friends all go for academic, you won’t be in the same classes anymore.”

Tip for respectful conversations:

Summarizing what the other person says is a good way to validate their opinion. Restating doesn’t mean you agree, but confirms you are listening and understand their perspective.

Source: Spotlight on Science Learning: Exploring Parental Influence,” p. 20 (paraphrase, not direct quotation)

Learn more about how parents can help teens choose high school courses

- **Course choices.**
<http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/secondary/descript/descri9e.pdf>.
- **Fact sheet.** <http://www.peelschools.org/students/40hours/volunteerjobboard/Documents/helpyourteenchoosehighschoolcoursesbybuildingonsuccess.pdf>. Peel School Board.
- **Booklet.** “Getting from there to here: Moving from Grade 8 to Grade 9. A Guide for Parents and Students 2013.” <http://successforlife.ca>. Avon Maitland District School Board.

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Learn more about how parents can help teens choose a career pathway

- **Info for new immigrants.** <http://settlement.org/ontario/education/colleges-universities-and-institutes/apply-for-post-secondary-education/how-can-i-help-my-child-with-making-an-informed-career-choice/>.
- **Policy.** <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/cps/>. Ministry.

Learn more about how parents can help with math

- **Article.** <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/math/math-tips-for-parents/middle-school-math/>. Diana Goldberg. **“Supporting Your Child in Middle School Math”**
- **Fact Sheet.**
[http://www.peelschools.org/Documents/15.%20Help%20your%20child%20succeed%20in%20math%20-%20\(M\).pdf](http://www.peelschools.org/Documents/15.%20Help%20your%20child%20succeed%20in%20math%20-%20(M).pdf). Peel School Board.