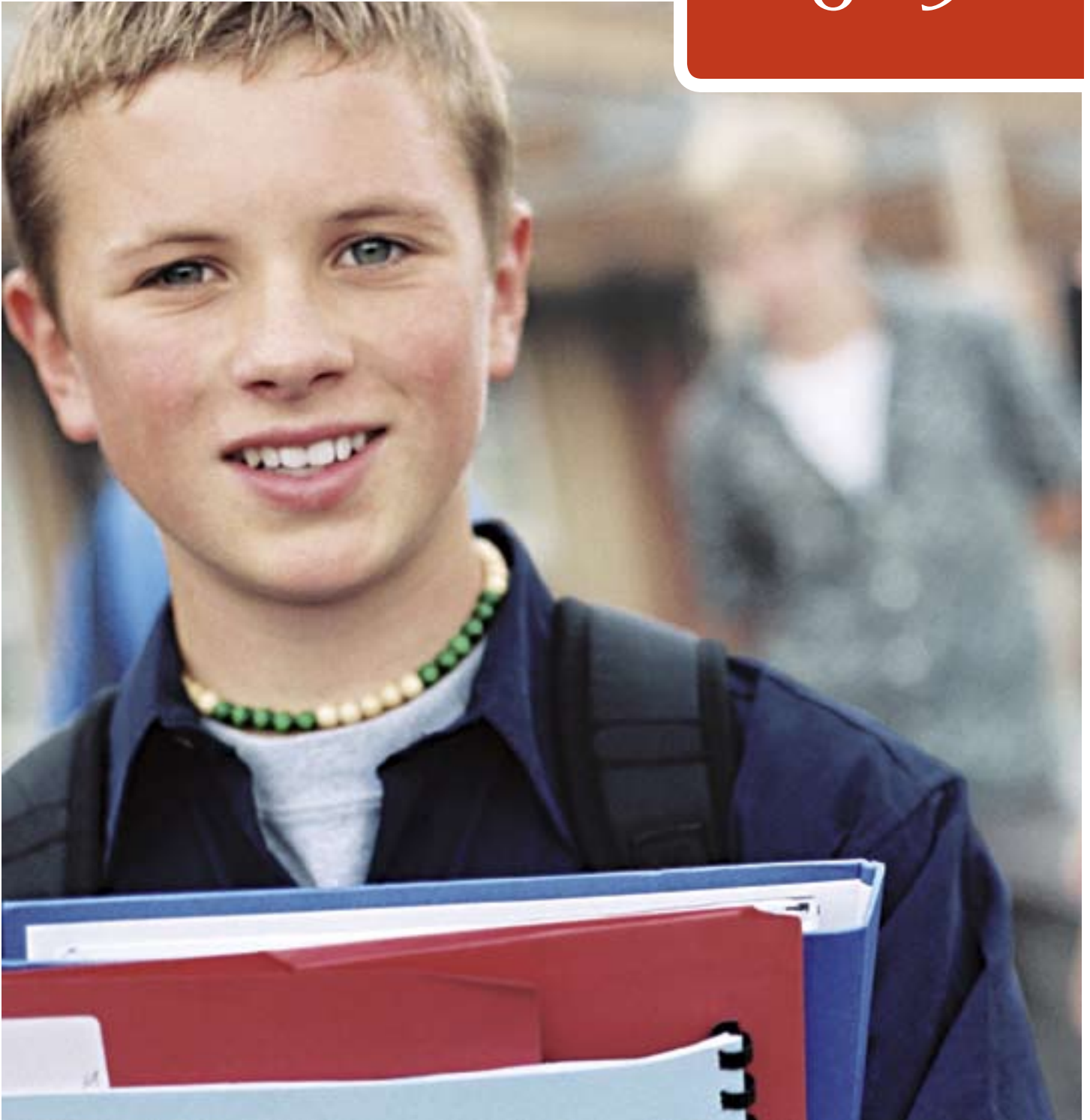


Helping Your Child Learn

8-9



Helping Your Child Learn: An Introduction

One of the most important things you do for your children is to help them learn. The following resource has been developed with input from parents and educators, and is designed to:

- provide an overview of learning standards and what you can expect your child to learn at each grade level;
- set out goals for your child's progress and achievement;
- provide tips and advice on how you can help your child learn.

We hope you will find beneficial tips and information here to help your child achieve success.

HELPING YOUR CHILD LEARN: GRADE 8 - 9

SECTION 1

GRADE 8–9 LEARNING STANDARDS	1
What are Grade 8–9 Students Like?	1
A Look at All Subjects	1
English Language Arts: Required	2
Math: Required	2
Social Studies: Required	3
Science: Required	3
Physical Education: Required	4
Career and Personal Planning (CAPP): Required	4
Second Language Studies: Required in Grade 8	4
Fine Arts: Options	4
Applied Skills: Options	5
Information Technology: Integrated	6

SECTION 2

PARENTS AND FAMILIES CAN HELP	6
How to Make a Difference in Your Child's Learning	6
Success Strategies for Parents to Help Teens Learn	6

SECTION 3

FAQS BY PARENTS AND FAMILIES	9
Frequently Asked Questions (and Answers!)	9

SECTION 4

TIPS FOR STUDENTS	12
------------------------------------	-----------

1 | Grade 8–9 Learning Standards

What are Grade 8–9 Students Like?

In Grade 8–9, teens undergo dramatic changes—socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. Most young teens are skilled in literacy, math, problem-solving and the use of technology. Some show exceptional talent in specialized areas, such as athletics, music, writing, dance or academics. Students tend to be interested in community involvement, career exploration and global awareness. Although adolescents mature at different rates, parents and teachers see patterns of development as students move from Grade 8–9.

Students in Grade 8

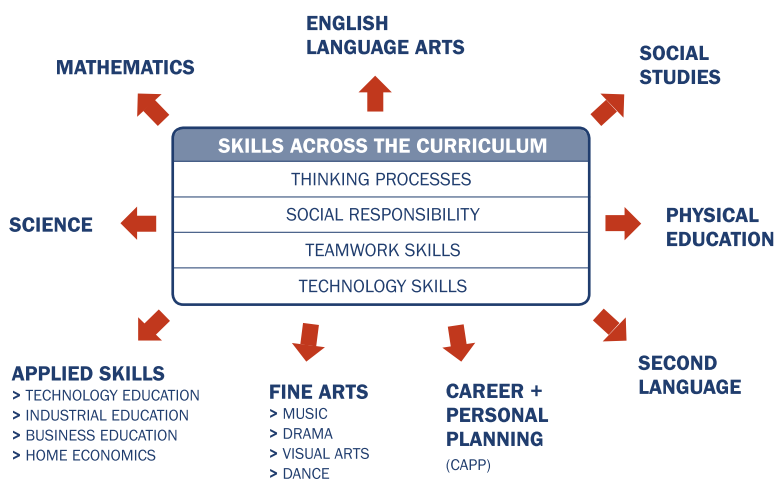
Grade 8 students want to be respected by parents, teachers and peers. They have high expectations of themselves, and they need guidelines. They explore their independence and test boundaries. Parents and teachers must make sure that boundaries are clear and consistent. Generally, Grade 8 students are tentative in their explorations. Most are willing to accept authority but want increasing independence. Many students say that they no longer want to be seen with their parents, but parents who are visible and involved seem to lend a degree of reassurance to their Grade 8 children. Grade 8 students still enjoy family activities but also feel the pressure of peer group influences. Friction between friends can have a strong impact on adolescent personalities. New “roller coaster” emotions often emerge. Parents may find that communication with the school decreases in Grade 8. Some students continue to share information about what is going on at school, but newsletters sent home by the school don’t always arrive.

Students in Grade 9

Students in Grade 9 challenge authority and question rules. Peer group acceptance is sometimes more important than excelling academically. Many students seek opportunities to be leaders. Grade 9 students may want to limit parental involvement in all aspects of their lives. They increasingly protect their privacy. Students in Grade 9 spend more time away from the family. They usually resist parental influence, but they can also be fond of much younger siblings and might take on a caring role with younger children for short periods of time. Grade 9 students speak up for themselves. They may display an unusual aptitude for a specific subject, such as math, science, English or one of the fine arts. Their ability to communicate, analyze and problem-solve is refreshing to both teachers and parents.

A Look at All Subjects

Some skills are part of every subject from Grade 1–12. These are skills that people need to succeed in school, in further learning after leaving school and throughout life. These skills include thinking processes, social responsibility, teamwork and the use of technology.





English Language Arts: Required

Students in Grade 8–9 English language arts are encouraged to use the English language confidently and competently. Language is presented as a system of communication that is dynamic, evolving and governed by rules. The curriculum for Grade 8–9 English language arts extends students' abilities to communicate (i.e., speak, listen, read and write). Communication skills are important foundations for learning in school and functioning in society. Specifically, students in English language arts in Grade 8–9 will:

- > read fluently at many levels for various purposes: for enjoyment, to locate information, to analyze authors' intentions, to experience adventures vicariously and to understand character motivation;
- > access and use a wide range of print and electronic material: novels, poetry, short stories, plays, magazines, newspapers, graphs, specialized reference books, articles, reports, charts, brochures, almanacs, encyclopedias and Web sites;
- > state opinions and support them with relevant facts, discuss an author's word choice and visual imagery, appreciate different literary genres, and apply communication skills throughout the subject areas;
- > write in a variety of formats, depending on audience and purpose: five-paragraph essays, reflective journals, letters to the editor, original short stories, poems, legends, detailed reports, instructions, charts, PowerPoint presentations and Web pages;
- > observe the rules of standard English in writing and presenting thoughtful, original work.

Math: Required

To help students prepare for the demands of further education and the workplace, the math curriculum:

- > emphasizes the development of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes;
- > supports the creative and esthetic aspects of math by exploring the connections between math, art and design;
- > promotes the development of positive attitudes, problem-solving, communication, reasoning and the use of technology.

Problem-solving is a key part of the curriculum and is integrated across four curriculum topics. The topics are:

- > numbers—whole numbers, rational numbers, square roots, fractions and exponents;
- > patterns and relations—variables, expressions, equations and graphing;
- > space and shape—perimetre and area, measurement, ratios and two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes;
- > statistics and probability—data collection, data analysis and probability of independent events.

Math after Grade 9

After completing Grade 9 math, students must choose one of three provincial math programs:

Applications of Math program - The Applications of Math program has a practical focus that encourages students to develop their math knowledge and skills in the context of their lives and possible careers. Teachers emphasize concrete activities. Students who choose this program are prepared for post-secondary programs that do not require theoretical math (such as calculus) as part of the program of study.

Essentials of Math program - The Essentials of Math pathway helps students understand how math ideas are part of daily life, business, industry and government. Teachers emphasize concrete activities. Students following this pathway can use math in their personal lives as citizens and consumers and can enter a limited number of post-secondary programs, such as trades and vocational programs.

Principles of Math program - Students following the Principles of Math pathway study theoretical math concepts such as algebra, trigonometry, functions, statistics and probability. A primary purpose of Principles of Math is to develop the skills and knowledge students will need to pursue a wide range of post-secondary programs, particularly those that require the study of theoretical concepts, such as math, science and engineering.

Social Studies: Required

The social studies curriculum is designed to produce thoughtful, responsible, active citizens who consider a range of opinions on issues and can make reasoned judgments. The social studies curriculum provides students with opportunities to learn about their communities, their province, their country and the world. Students also compare past societies with today's world. In Grade 8, students develop skills in data gathering and analysis, critical thinking, presentation and problem-solving. They study world civilizations from 500 to 1600 A.D. They also learn about:

- > aspects of family life, traditions, religions and artistic expressions in various world cultures and cultural periods, such as the Renaissance;
- > aspects of individual rights and citizenship in a variety of civilizations, the impact of contact and conflict on civilizations and the importance and influence of government systems;
- > economic systems, forms of exchange and the impact of science and technology on world civilizations from 500 to 1600 A.D.

In Grade 9, students develop more sophisticated skills in data gathering and analysis, critical thinking, presentation and problem-solving. They study European and North American societies of the 16th to 19th centuries. They also learn about:

- > daily life, roles and relationships between First Nations and European peoples in the development of Canada;
- > the concept of a national identity;
- > colonialism, imperialism, nationalism and the roots of Canadian political and legal systems;
- > initial exploration and settlement of North America and the effects of colonialism on trade and conflict;
- > the effects of the Industrial Revolution on society and the nature of work.

DID YOU KNOW?
THAT STUDYING OUT
LOUD CAN HELP YOU
REMEMBER UP TO
FOUR TIMES BETTER?

DID YOU KNOW?
THAT A GOOD WAY TO
LEARN SOMETHING
IS TO TEACH IT TO
SOMEONE ELSE?

DID YOU KNOW?
THAT SINGING HELPS
PEOPLE MEMORIZE?

Science: Required

In Grade 8–9, students revisit and consolidate the scientific ideas and skills they learned in Grade 4–7. They further develop their knowledge, skills and thinking abilities and are introduced to the basis of major science disciplines in the following topics:

Life Science—Life Science is the study of diversity, continuity, interactions and balance among living things and their environments. In Grade 8, students become aware of the diversity of plant and animal life adapted to such major geographical regions as the tundra and the effects of human activities on the earth. In Grade 9, they focus on the human body, relating structures to functions and developing an overview of the human body as a dynamic and complex entity of interrelated components.

Physical Science—Physical Science is the study of matter and energy and their interactions. It includes the traditional areas of physics and chemistry. Grade 8 focuses on the properties of matter, the periodic table and light and heat energy. Grade 9 emphasizes elements, compounds, reactions, forces and energy.

Earth and Space Science—Earth and Space Science is the study of the universe and the structure of the earth. In Grade 8, students learn about the surface features of the earth and the geological processes by which they can be changed. In Grade 9, the focus shifts to learning about the universe, beginning with the solar system and expanding to the nature of stars.

Physical Education: Required

Physical education aims to enable all students to improve their quality of life through active living. The physical education program in Grade 8–9 provides students with opportunities for regular physical activity. Students participate in individual, dual and team activities such as alternative-environment activities, dance, games and gymnastics. Outdoor activities in a natural setting are encouraged. Students are also encouraged to develop self-respect and respect for others as they learn and practise communication and co-operation skills.

Career and Personal Planning (CAPP): Required

During CAPP in Grade 8–9, students relate their classroom learning to the demands of the working world and the expectations of society. Students of CAPP in Grade 8–9 are encouraged to show initiative and accountability in decision-making. They develop planning skills, including management, self-assessment, goal-setting and finding support sources. Students make plans and decisions and examine personal health issues. They develop prevention skills in the areas of child abuse, substance abuse and injury prevention. Parents, in consultation with the school, may choose to opt for alternate delivery of some of the more sensitive topics studied in the personal development section.

Second Language Studies: Required in Grade 8

Students must study a second language in Grade 8; however, in Grade 9, students can choose whether or not to continue their second language studies. Different school districts offer different second language options. The list of available languages throughout the province is growing every year. In addition to French, some school districts have also developed second language options in German, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Punjabi and Spanish. The curriculum for second language education in Grade 8–9 focuses on:

- > Communicating—students listen, read, speak and write in their second language. Real-life experiences provide a context for learning activities.
- > Acquiring information—students use the second language to get information from books and other resources written at their level of proficiency in the second language. These resources include non-fiction, fiction and media, such as video, television, the Internet and digital resources.
- > Experiencing creative works—students listen to, read and look at creative works in the second language (e.g., literature, film, music, dance, storytelling and art). They respond to poetry, journal entries, dramas, songs and paintings.
- > Understanding culture and society—understanding the language’s culture improves the language-learning process by showing students the role of language in culture.

Fine Arts: Options

In Grades 8–9, students must take one of the following four fine arts subjects: dance, drama, music or visual arts. The fine arts subjects provide opportunities for students to express their ideas and emotions as they create, perform and respond to the arts.

Dance - Students learn about the language and art of dance, the contribution dance makes to our society and career opportunities in dance. Students extend their creative, expressive and technical abilities in composing and presenting dance performances. Students create movements and choreograph dance sequences in response to sound and music. They tailor their presentations for specific purposes, audiences and venues. Dance students develop skills and attitudes appropriate to dance experiences, both as performers and audience members. They apply the principles of fitness, health and safety to their dance and movement experiences. Students also analyze the role of dancers in a specific dance, critique the work of self and others, and learn about the historical and cultural contexts of dance.

Drama - Students examine human experiences through imaginary roles and situations. Students also learn to appreciate the dramatic arts and theatre from various historical and cultural contexts. Students in Grades 8 and 9 drama explore, express and reflect on their thoughts, feelings and ideas. They learn to use the body and voice expressively, maintain concentration while portraying a character and create a setting for a drama experience. Drama students respond to and reflect on the cultural, historical and social contexts of drama. They investigate career possibilities in which drama skills and knowledge may be useful.

Music - Music students create, perform and listen to music in many forms. Students in Grade 8–9 explore the structural components of music, such as rhythm, melody, expressive properties (e.g., dynamics, tempo, texture) and form (e.g., blues, verse-chorus). They learn about the historical and cultural contexts of music, such as the purpose for a piece of music and where the piece originated. Students also learn the appropriate skills and attitudes for performers and audience members. They become aware of health and safety issues associated with the performance of music as well as career opportunities related to music.

Visual Arts - Students perceive, respond to, create and communicate through images. Students use a variety of materials, technologies and processes as they apply the principles of art and design to their work. Grade 8–9 students analyze and use a variety of techniques, design strategies, materials and processes to create images that are two-dimensional (e.g., paintings, drawings, logos) and three-dimensional (e.g., sculptures, ceramics, weavings). They solve design problems by considering the intended purpose of an artwork. Students identify characteristics of artworks from a variety of cultures and historical eras. They also incorporate selected elements (e.g., line, colour, shape) into their own artwork to create effects or moods. Students apply safety and environmental considerations while creating their artwork. Students investigate visual arts-related careers, as well as the roles of artists and artwork in society.

Applied Skills: Options

The applied skills include the following subject areas: technology education, business education and home economics. Students in Grade 8–9 must complete at least one applied skills course. In many schools, Grade 8 students rotate between mini-courses in two or three of the applied skills areas. In Grade 9, they generally have an opportunity to choose one applied skills area that interests them most. Applied skills courses in Grade 8–9 provide introductory skills and knowledge that students can further develop in more specialized courses during Grade 10–12.

Technology Education - Students who take technology education in Grade 8–9 learn about traditional tools and machinery found in many wood and metal shops (i.e., wood-working and metalworking). They solve problems using technology. A major emphasis is on learning about the safe use of specialized tools and machinery. Students also think about how they will use technology in daily life and the workplace.

Business Education - Students who take business education in Grade 8–9 learn about the connections between school, the workplace and society and the role of individuals in the local, national and global economy. They learn effective business communications and use computers to gather, organize and present information. They develop interpersonal and teamwork skills to solve problems.

Home Economics - Students who take home economics in Grade 8–9 develop skills to manage their time, money and energy effectively. They participate in practical, hands-on learning that prepares them for future independent living. Classroom activities provide students with opportunities to prepare food, use textiles and compare individual needs with family needs.





Information Technology: Integrated

Information technology is often called the computer curriculum, as it addresses the use of computers and related hardware, networks and software. The key parts of the information technology curriculum are included in the required subjects in Grade 8–9. Some schools offer separate courses in computers or information technology as an applied skill. In Grade 8–9, students:

- > use a variety of information technology tools to access information;
- > research topics using information technology;
- > apply information technology to all walks of life and to future careers;
- > demonstrate an understanding of ethics and acceptable use of information when accessing and processing information;
- > demonstrate safe ergonomic strategies (such as posture, height of keyboard and position of monitor) while using electronic technology.

2 | Parents and Families Can Help

How to Make a Difference in Your Child’s Learning

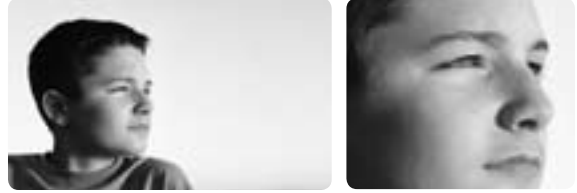
Parents are their children’s first teachers. We know that students are more successful in school when families and teachers work together as active partners in their students’ education. Research shows that parental involvement directly supports improved student achievement. In addition, adolescents need non-academic support from home—a good night’s sleep, interested parents and regular exercise—in order to do their best at school. It’s important to build and keep strong ties with the school at all grade levels. Parents help teens succeed by working with teachers to support their teens’ learning. You can show your teen that you value education by taking an active role in their schooling. Some parents say they are not sure what the school expects from their teens—or from them. Some teachers say they do not know enough about how a teen behaves at home or the challenges they face outside of school. Sharing information is essential, and both teachers and parents can make that happen. The decision-making process is very important in Grades 8 and 9 as students choose courses, adopt successful study habits and find ways to expand their abilities in different areas (such as sports, music, extra-curricular activities and part-time work). Parents can be part of the decision-making process by asking thoughtful questions of their teens and their teens’ teachers.

Success Strategies for Parents to Help Teens Learn

Tips for parents and families

Get early success

Making an extra effort with your teen at the start of the year will provide benefits throughout the months ahead. Do everything you can to help your teen do their best from the start. When your teen starts strong, that early confidence can last all semester.



Be a coach

Be a coach, not a player. Don't do your teen's work. Help them do their best by offering to work together on learning strategies. When you suggest ways to use study time wisely, set goals, point out ways to relax and recommend ways to be organized, you are assuming the appropriate role of coach and encourager. Be mindful that the responsibility for success has shifted to your teen.

Get to know the school

Learn all you can about your teen's school's rules and regulations. Ask for a school handbook. This will answer many questions that come up over the year. Being actively involved requires knowing about school activities and events. Ask if the school has a Web site and check it regularly. If your school doesn't have a handbook, ask questions, such as:

- > What are the behavioural expectations of students in our school (e.g., dress code, attendance and conduct)?
- > What are the school policies on bullying, drugs, alcohol suspension and expulsion?
- > Do you charge school fees? For what purpose?
- > Am I invited to all school functions (e.g., assemblies, sports days, dances)?
- > What role does the Parent Advisory Council play at this school?
- > What school committees are parents welcome to be involved in?

Find out about homework

Contact the teacher as soon as you suspect your teen is having problems with their schoolwork. You may have noticed that the problem exists before the teacher does. By alerting the teacher, you can work together to solve a problem in its early stages. Talk to the teacher about the number of homework assignments that can be expected, dedicated homework time and using an agenda or planner to communicate with the teacher.

Talk to your teen

In Grades 8 and 9, students are often reluctant to talk about what they are learning in school. They are also less likely to ask for help. Here are some parent-tested techniques to get you and your teen talking about school:

- > Start by talking about your own day. Share some of the challenges or problems you experienced.
- > Ask your teen about a specific subject, their favourite part of the day, or a project you know they are working on.
- > Ask to see your teen's day planner for information about assignments.
- > Talk to your teen's friends about school when they visit.
- > Keep an ear open when driving groups of students on field trips. Teens often view the parent driver as invisible, and their conversations can be informative!
- > Ask your teen how they think they did on a test. Ask if there were questions on the test that surprised them.

Make reading important

Teens who are interested in reading often do well in school. Encourage your teen to pick up a book and read it. Introduce yourself to the school teacher-librarian. Ask what books fly off the shelves. Sign out a couple. Buy a few. It's hard to imagine a skill more important for school success than reading. Be a reader yourself and set a good example!



Use setbacks as a learning experience

Things get harder in middle school and secondary school. Life becomes more complicated. Make a pact with your teen to use setbacks as an opportunity to learn and make adjustments. Tell your teen about a failure that you had and the lessons you learned as a result. Get your teen to reflect on experiences in the same way.

Use report cards to encourage

How you react to your teen's report card is important. Your unguarded comments can have a big impact on future success. But if you handle report cards carefully, they can be a powerful catalyst for positive change.

Do not look at the report card when you are in a hurry or tired. Instead, pick a time when you and your teen can sit and look at the report together. This report card is not an evaluation of your parenting ability. Stay calm and be objective. Remember, you don't have to wait for your teen's report card—check in with teachers periodically or when you have a specific concern.

Communicate with the teachers

Teachers can gain insight into the unique needs of your teen from knowing about everyday things, such as what they enjoy and what gives them problems. Teens often behave differently at school than they do at home.

You can gain insight into your teen as a student in school when teachers describe what your teen is like in school and what makes the classroom unique. To find out about your teen's behaviour in the classroom, you might want to ask the following:

- > Can I access my teen's attendance records? How will I be notified when my teen is absent?
- > How will I know if my teen is in trouble academically, socially or otherwise?
- > How will I know if my teen has submitted incomplete assignments?

A few more suggestions:

- > Comment on the better grades first.
- > Let your teen do most of the talking.
- > Set goals that flow from the report card.
- > Celebrate success.
- > Keep the report card private.
- > Thank your teen for showing you the report card.

Build a relationship

Build a good relationship with your teen. Do not let anything destroy it—including your teen's grades or friends. There are lots of challenges during the secondary years. Be firm, fair and fun. Rely on your wisdom. Now, encourage your teen to read the tips on pages 24–26!

3 | FAQs by Parents and Families

Frequently Asked Questions (and Answers!)

The following list of questions and answers is intended to help you help your teen throughout their Grade 8–9 years.

How much homework should my teen be doing in Grades 8 and 9?

Homework varies from subject to subject and teacher to teacher. For example, some teachers assign work for students to complete in class. If students need more time, this work becomes homework. Not all students need extra time to complete work assigned in class, but they can all benefit from more practice at home. Assigning work to be finished at home is one way that teachers accommodate different rates of learning. Students in Grades 8 and 9 need to set aside time each day to do their homework. If there is no specific assignment to work on, students are encouraged to review what they have learned. They can read over their notes, develop an understanding of what they are working on, read related materials, practise the skills they have learned, review key terms or formulas and ask themselves questions about what they have read. Students also need to be organized. They should record assignments and due dates in their school agenda or planner. Parents should encourage their teens to show their planners and should ask questions about homework and assignments. Ask open-ended questions, such as “What did you work on in science today?” Homework can also take the form of exploring interesting topics. The key is to encourage your teen to be enthusiastic about learning, reading and investigating beyond the classroom.

My teen says, “I don’t have any homework.” What can I do?

The homework load will vary throughout the year. At the beginning of the term, there may be some review and less homework. Students are usually familiar with the material, so the homework load may be light. At test time, however, or close to the end of the term, many projects may be due and the homework load will be heavier. From time to time, there may be a lull in homework. This is the time to emphasize study skills. Encourage your teen to review concepts, make study notes and practise their comprehension skills by reading about related topics or making time for personal reading. Homework can also mean having discussions at home about topics of interest. Encourage your teen to participate in discussions. Ask them to share ideas and express opinions. Help them find ways to explore areas they are interested in, such as crafts, fine arts, sports, current events or politics. Getting involved in extra-curricular activities helps teens form habits and skills they can transfer to their schoolwork. Teens should be encouraged to ask questions about other topics and to relate new information to what they already know.

DID YOU KNOW?

THAT YOUR BRAIN REMEMBERS THE FIRST AND LAST THINGS YOU LEARN BEST?

DID YOU KNOW?

THAT ALMOST 268,000 B.C. STUDENTS ARE ENROLLED IN FRENCH IMMERSION?

How can I help my teen prepare for quizzes and tests?

Every day, ask your teen if there are tests or quizzes scheduled—and look at your teen’s planner. (Teachers encourage students to write the dates of quizzes and tests in their planners.) Help your teen identify what topics will be on the exam, or refer to the study guide that the teacher might have developed. Next, ask your teens to divide the material into three categories:

- > information they know so well that they can explain it to someone else;
- > areas that are a bit fuzzy;
- > material they don’t have a clue about.

DID YOU KNOW?

THAT STANDING UP WHILE YOU STUDY HELPS YOUR BRAIN GET MORE OXYGEN AND REMEMBER MORE INFORMATION?

These categories will help teens see where they need to spend the most time studying and where they should begin.

Work with your teen to set up a quiet environment for studying—no TV, audio or other distractions. Some teens feel hungry when they start to study. Some learn better at different times of day. Ask your teens what works best for them and then plan a series of daily study times so they do not have to cram at the last minute. Some students study effectively with a friend or study group. Students can develop their own study guides by listing the topics, turning them into questions and developing answers. Address the fact that this should be done over a number of days, not the night before the test.

How much help should I give my teen?

Some teens need more support than others. Some need models (someone to show them the steps). Others need someone to talk to as they do their work. Some teens need help staying focused, getting involved or figuring out how to get started. Help students understand how they learn best:

- > Do they need time to talk about what they've read?
- > Do they need to hear it read aloud?
- > Do they need to see it in pictures or diagrams?
- > Do they need to link new information with what they already know?

Sometimes a student who asks for help is looking for a simple answer. In that case, help your teen find the place in the text (e.g., the paragraph or the page) that has the answer and read the passage together. Then ask, "What do you think the answer is?" If a student is having real difficulty with an assignment, contact the teacher to discuss the situation. Ask the teacher how you can best support your child.



How much help is too much?

These guidelines will help students develop a process for learning, researching and proofreading. Simply ask yourself:

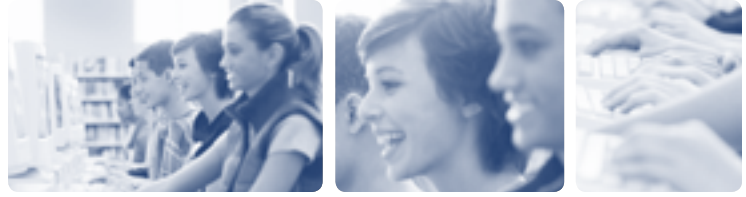
- > Who is holding the pen?
- > Who is reading the book?
- > Who is creating the answers?

If the answer is you, consider why. Is your teen finding the work too difficult? Your teen may need to ask for school support, such as learning assistance. Teens often take longer to complete a task; the parent's role is to encourage them to stay focused and get the job done. Some students need guidance finding appropriate sources to get information for research projects. These resources need to be at the appropriate reading level for your teen. Sometimes they will need someone to explain the information to them: a neighbour, tutor or older relative can often provide helpful assistance. How much help is too much? Parents can proofread an assignment for spelling but should not rewrite the essay. If you are not sure how much help you should offer with specific assignments, ask the teacher. If you see that your teen has answered a question incorrectly or written faulty information, don't provide the correct answer immediately. Instead, ask questions to get your teen to rethink the reasons for the answer.

How can I help my teen plan for and meet deadlines?

Planning and organizing for deadlines is a critical skill that students learn over time. Talk to your teen about how you meet your own deadlines and how you plan your time to avoid getting behind and feeling rushed. It's hard for teens to understand that they need to break a large task down or "chunk" it into pieces and do these bits and pieces before the due date. To help your teen, find out when the deadlines are. Consult agendas/planners or the class Web site, or ask the teacher. Then help your teen allocate time each day to do a portion of the work so that the project is complete before the deadline.





How can I help my teen learn study skills?

A specific homework time is very helpful for good study habits. Encourage your teen to organize all notebooks. Every person processes information differently. Help your teens understand what works for them as individuals to learn new information. For example, do they need to make notes to help them remember? Do they need to say the ideas aloud? Will it help to make diagrams that show similarities and differences? Does summarizing the information in writing help? What is the best way for them to connect information so that they can remember it?

How will I know if my teen is meeting expectations?

Report cards let you know if your teen is achieving a satisfactory level of competence. Attend the parent/teacher conferences that are held around the time report cards are issued. If your teen is having trouble meeting expectations, discuss the situation with the teacher and put a plan in place. Of course, you can ask for a meeting with your teen's teacher at any time. Some students have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) with adaptations in their program to help them meet expectations (e.g., some students have a reader or a scribe, more time to write tests, etc.). These adaptations are recorded in the IEP. A few students with IEPs are on modified programs and are not working toward the same outcomes; their learning goals are identified in the IEPs. These students do not receive letter grades.

How will I know if my child is not meeting expectations before the report card comes home?

Interim reports, phone calls or notes from the teacher alert parents that the student is having difficulty. If this is the case for your teen, contact the teacher to find out how you can support learning at home. Teens sometimes need extra supervision to make sure their homework gets done.

How can my teen meet the expectations of different teachers?

When a student has more than one teacher, expectations for assignments will vary. Students need to learn what each teacher expects. In some schools, teaching teams or departments may develop common expectations for written assignments. It is important to learn what these expectations are. Ask the teacher if there is a handout with guidelines available. Many schools have parent open houses on an evening early in the year. During that time, teachers often hand out a course outline that describes their expectations for the students.

How can I help my teen with math or science if I don't understand it myself?

Ask your teen to explain homework assignments. If your teen is having difficulty, perhaps a friend can help. Talk to the teacher and ask if there is a study group, peer tutoring or staffed resource room for students. Contact the Learning Assistance teacher at the school for support. Ask about any other resources that are available. Your teen might also benefit from after-school tutoring.

Please note: For homework help on the Web, go to "Ask Jeeves" at www.ajkids.com or "Yahooligans" at www.yahooligans.com

How can I help my teen with the social and emotional aspects of school?

Grades 8 and 9 can be stressful years for both girls and boys. Encourage your teen to talk to a school counsellor or peer support group. Getting your teen involved in a community group for adolescents is often beneficial. Extra-curricular activities help boost students' self-esteem. In addition, you might find it helpful to join a parent group to help you develop more skills to deal with your adolescent. Listen to your teen. Talk with them about their friends and experiences at school. Remember to ask open-ended questions.

Which math courses should my teen take? Which ones lead to university?

Choosing the appropriate math course is important for your teen's career path. Different courses are needed for different employment opportunities. Post-secondary institutions often change their requirements, so be sure your information is up-to-date. Talk to a school counsellor and consult the institutions' Web sites, as well as the provincial graduation Web site at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation and Work Futures at www.workfutures.bc.ca/EN/def/home_e1.html. To help teens determine which math course is appropriate, parents need to consider their teens' strengths and aptitudes. Talk to the math teacher to find out how to help your teens make the right choice. Alternatives to university include community colleges, trades and apprenticeship programs, fine arts schools, computer training institutions and many other options.

How can I be involved in my teen's course selection?

Ask your teens to show you the course selection booklet. Talk to them about their goals and aspirations. Help your teens understand their skills and abilities, and talk about the wide range of careers that they can explore.

How will the new graduation requirements affect my teen's course selection?

Students who enter Grade 10 in September 2004 or later will have to meet the new 80-credit graduation requirements. Information about these requirements is available on the provincial graduation Web site at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation. School counsellors also have specific information and can answer most of your questions. Many schools will hold information meetings to explain the new program and the courses required.

4 | Tips for Students

Make homework a priority

Do your homework, do your homework, do your homework!

Make homework your number one priority. When you don't do your homework, you send a message to your teachers: "I don't care." Low grades will follow, and that will make tomorrow's work harder. Homework must come before TV, computer, friends, extra-curricular activities, even a job. Do at least one hour every day (more if you are older). On evenings when you don't have a lot of assigned homework, do some review, work ahead, read or practise your skills. The secret is to do some every day. Don't let it build up. If you haven't developed the homework habit, start now! You'll need it in later years.

Don't skip the small stuff

Pay attention to the little things. Your letter grade is usually a combination of a lot of things: quizzes, tests, projects, class participation, book reports, homework checks, etc. Do not make the mistake of thinking "it's only a 10-mark quiz" or "it's only one homework assignment." The small stuff adds up.



Keep a ‘to do’ list

Life is busy in middle school and secondary school. Staying organized is absolutely essential for your success in school or anywhere else! A simple “to do” list can be your best friend. Write it all down: assignments, due dates, quizzes, appointments, meetings, volleyball practice, chores, errands, etc. Write it in your agenda book or put it on a 3" by 5" card and carry it in your pocket. Update it every day. Cross off things that are done. This will make you feel in control of your life.

Keep well rested

Teenagers often don’t get enough sleep, so make sure you do. Lack of sleep makes it hard to think in class the next day. To be healthy and sharp, most people need nine hours of sleep each night, so get to bed, take naps, rest and look after yourself.

Study for recall, not recognition

Have you ever noticed that understanding something does not guarantee you will be able to remember it? Many students study to the point of recognition only. This is fine for multiple choice or matching, but what if your teacher gives you a question requiring a written answer? If you want to score higher on all types of tests, study for recall. When you understand something, ask yourself, “How am I going to remember this?” Study recall methods include flash cards, cover cards and “look/say/look.” Try to study at least 10 minutes a day in every subject (even if you don’t have homework). This will lock the information into your long-term memory.

Watch out for math

Lots of students get tripped up on math. Math is one of those subjects you can’t cram for. It’s like learning to play the piano. It takes commitment. You have to master each step as you go. Do some math every day. If you don’t understand something, ask the teacher that day. Get a friend or a parent to help. Hire a tutor. Learn math vocabulary completely. Make flash cards. Recheck your work.

Always be honest

Whenever you take a test, you are actually taking two tests: a test on the subject and a test on honesty. If you can only pass one test, make sure it is the test on honesty. Cheaters trade real learning and mastery for a few extra marks; long-term success just isn’t in the cards for cheaters. The end consequence is a loss of self-respect. Remember, if you’ve tried your best, you have the right to be proud of your work—regardless of the result.

Talk with your parents about school

School is a big part of your life. Make sure it’s a big part of your parents’ life, too. Research shows that when your parents are involved in day-to-day school stuff, you do better. Students whose parents are involved do more homework, get better grades, have better school attendance, have fewer learning problems, have better attitudes, are more likely to go to university and are more likely to resist peer pressure.

So, tell your parents about your day. Talk about your successes, your failures or the “dumb” video you saw in class, or share a funny story. Show them newsletters, notices, school newspapers and yearbooks. Tell them about upcoming special events or invite them to chaperone a field trip. The more your parents are involved and the longer they stay involved—all the way to the end of Grade 12—the better it is for you!

Our commitment to education:

Education is the most important investment we can make in our children’s lives. The Province of B.C. is committed to building a top-notch system that puts students first. For more information, visit AchieveBC.ca