

# PARENT TOOL KIT



TEEN EDITION



WHAT PARENTS  
CAN DO TO HELP  
THEIR TEENS  
SUCCEED



## A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL OF ONTARIO DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION

The Council of Ontario Directors of Education has developed this **Parent Tool Kit: Teen Edition** to help parents support and encourage teens.

The support that you currently provide your child continues to play a major role in your teen's success in school and the years to come. Studies confirm that your ongoing support at home strongly influences student achievement, credits completed and school completion.

Parents, students and educators from Ontario's English and French language school boards have helped create this **Tool Kit** by participating in consultations and in writing content.

This document is a supplement to a kit called **Building Parent Engagement**, which includes the original **Parent Tool Kit** and a guidebook, entitled **Planning Parent Engagement**. This kit was previously developed and distributed to Ontario schools and serves as a support to parents, parent groups and schools. The guidebook will support your use of this document — **Parent Tool Kit: Teen Edition**.

It is our hope that you will find the tips and suggestions in the Tool Kit useful. Please feel free to share the Tool Kit widely with parents, schools and groups who guide adolescents and teens.

These resources can be found at:

[www.ontariodirectors.ca](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca)

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**Throughout this Tool Kit, the term parents refers to parents, guardians and caregivers.**



## USING THIS TOOL KIT

This Tool Kit is a collection of tips, suggestions and resources for parents. We hope they may be helpful as children move into the adolescent and teen years. They are the result of a number of questions parents have asked about helping their teen in school and many of the suggestions come from parents of teens across the province.

You may find one or several things that speak directly to your experiences and situation in the Tool Kit. The six sections, **Be a Listener**, **Be Informed**, **Be a Coach**, **Be a Mentor**, **Be a Learner** and **Be a Guide**, each have a particular theme that responds to parent questions. There is no set order for you to read this booklet. You can easily flip through and scan the tips or delve deeper into sections that you find interesting.

The following may help you search through the Tool Kit.

- If you are looking for tips on how to listen and talk to your teen without a lot of stress, **Be a Listener** is suggested reading.
- You can check out **Be Informed**, if you are looking for information on what is happening at school.
- If you know your teen is wanting more independence and freedom and you are anxious about letting go, you may find help in **Be a Mentor**.
- **Be a Coach** has some good strategies when issues such as lack of rest, stress or bullying are of interest.
- Teens spend a lot of time using technology. If you want some helpful information flip forward to **Be a Learner**.
- **Be a Guide** has resources you and your teen can use together when planning life after secondary school.

**BE A LISTENER**

**BE INFORMED**

**BE A MENTOR**

**BE A COACH**

**BE A LEARNER**

**BE A GUIDE**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

How to communicate with your  
teen without a lot of stress

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Keeping up on what is  
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Thank you to all contributors

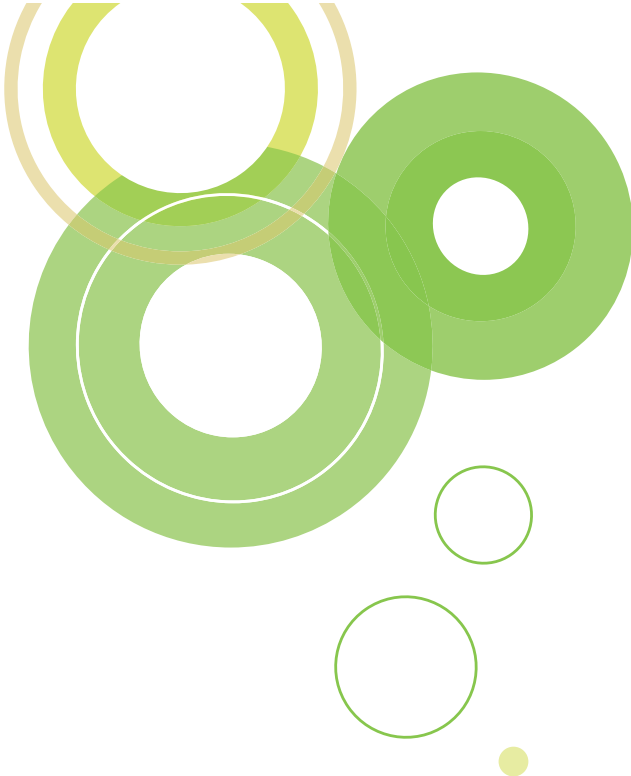
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# **“My teen won’t talk to me; how am I supposed to help?”**

The teenage years can be one of the most challenging times for students. Your teen’s need for independence, the influence of friends, media and technology can make talking to your teen frustrating and stressful.







# TIPS

- **Make the most of the conversations you have**
- **Point them to someone you trust**
- **Talk about things that you both enjoy**
- **Agree to some ground rules**
- **Make communication a two-way street**
- **Use the tools they use**

# BE A LISTENER

## Make the most of conversations that you do have

Listening is a very important part of communication. Being a good listener when your teen is talking will improve the conversation. Make time for communicating with your teen. With busy lives and hectic schedules, families often do not get a chance to talk or do things together. Consider setting one night a week as family time.

Watch online videos, a movie, play board games, take part in a sport activity together. Do chores together. Make the most of the conversations that you do have. Let them start the conversation and ask the questions.

The talks you have may not start to be about school, but when your teens relax and realize that they can talk about anything without judgment they will open up. Teens spend a great deal of time at school and it is sure to become a topic. They may have setbacks or make mistakes. Consider this a time to talk about how to overcome obstacles.

Most teens are using instant messaging, texting and phone calls to communicate with each other. Set yourself up as a contact to send messages.

Encourage safe and respectful communications with everyone. They will more likely answer a text message than a phone call. Texting is a great way for your teens to communicate with you and not feel embarrassed about talking with their parents.

## Use the same tools teens use to talk

## Point them to someone you trust

Let your teens ask you questions, tell you stories their friends told them and talk as much as they want.

If there are some things your teens don't want to discuss with you, don't let it bother you. Instead point them in the direction of someone you both trust to answer their questions, such as older siblings, cousins or family friends. This should allow you to help

ensure your teens are getting accurate information but it also respects their privacy.

When your teen comes to you with a problem that is important to him or her, be sure to listen carefully. Even if you think it is not a big problem, offer some advice or suggest a resource that can help.

You can give your teen the Kids Help Phone number 1-800-668-6868 or suggest a visit to [www.kidshelpphone.ca/teens](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/teens) Recommend talking to someone there.

School and community counsellors are also available to help your teen.

***When your teen comes to you with a problem, be sure to listen carefully***



## Talk about things that you both enjoy

Share the humour you find in the day.

Talking with your teens about a sport that they follow or their favourite TV show will make it easier to move on to more difficult topics such as homework completion, drugs and relationships.

Show interest by showing up. Whether it is to your teen's soccer game, dance recital or school play, nothing says you care like showing up. If you can't, talk about it later.

## Agree to some ground rules to use when conversations blow up

It may help to agree on what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour. As your teens strive for independence there will be numerous times that they will test your patience and push your buttons. Work out what is acceptable behaviour and the consequences for such things as name calling, swearing and move on to other rules such as missing curfew, underage driving, use of alcohol and drugs and disrespectful behaviour to you, their family and their friends.

## *In talking with your teen, it is important to keep an open mind*

Many parents use the "no questions asked rule": Teens can call to be picked up any time, any place and wait until the morning to discuss the issues.

## Make communication a two-way street

In talking with your teen, it is important to keep an open mind. The world has changed in many ways since you were a teen. That doesn't mean that you can't help your teen in dealing with online safety and the use of social media. Your teen may be able to teach you a few things about them. Go online and learn more about the media sites your teens use. Open your

own Facebook account and read the Kids Help Phone page at [www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens) to see the issues that are being discussed there. This may help you communicate. Your teen will enjoy being able to help you with questions surrounding technology and, in engaging with them, you will not only learn but will continue to build mutual respect.

## Resources

**Communication! Teenage as a Second Language: A Parent's Guide to Becoming Bilingual**, Barbara Greenberg & Jennifer Powell-Lunder

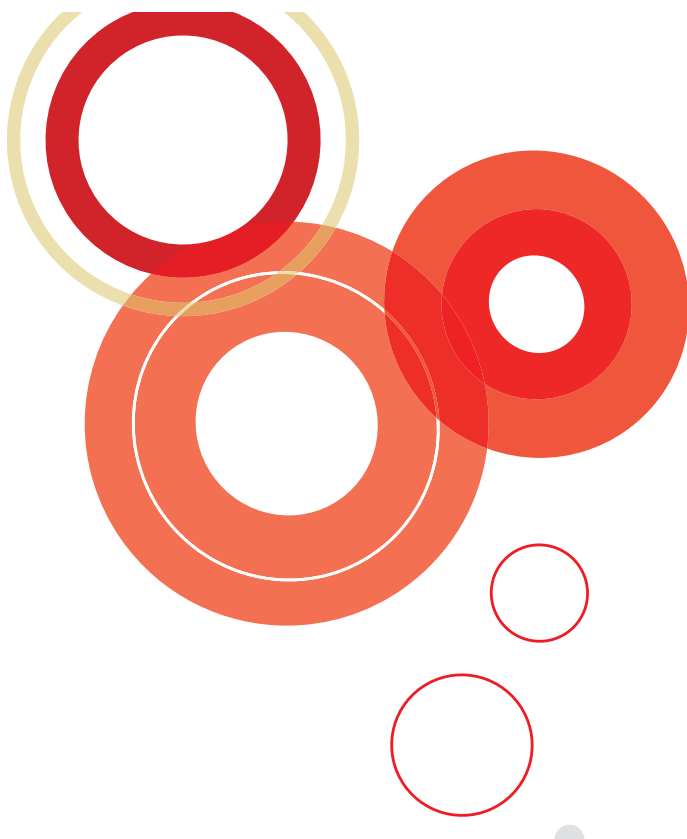
**How to Talk So Teens Will Listen & Listen So Teens Will Talk**, Elaine Mazlilsh

**What Parents Need to Know about Teens – Facts, Myths, and Strategies**, (CAMH) Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

**You're Grounded!:** **How to Stop Fighting and Make the Teenage Years Easy**, Vanessa Van Petten

**“There’s got to be  
a better way to find  
out what is going on  
at school.”**

**Now that your teens are in secondary school they may be less likely to bring home notes or keep you informed about what is happening at school. Making strong connections with your teens’ teachers and school will help fill in the gaps when your teens don’t.**



# TIPS

- **Don't hesitate to connect with the school**
- **Tour the school's website**
- **Keep up with your teen's progress**
- **Build strong relationships with the school staff**
- **Attend school events**
- **Seek out your School Council**

# BE INFORMED

## Take the first step in connecting with the school

You may be unfamiliar with the best way to talk to the teachers or your teen may want to take care of things on his/her own making you reluctant to contact the school. However, it is important for you to build a relationship with staff and feel comfortable speaking with them about any matter that pertains to the education and well-being of your teen. When parents and teachers support each other, teens get consistent ongoing support.

### ***Parents already involved in school and community groups can help you network***

Face to face contact allows for meaningful interaction and building of trust. Some parents find written questions to be helpful. Attending school events or School Council meetings with a friend or neighbour is a way to attend without feeling alone or unsure.

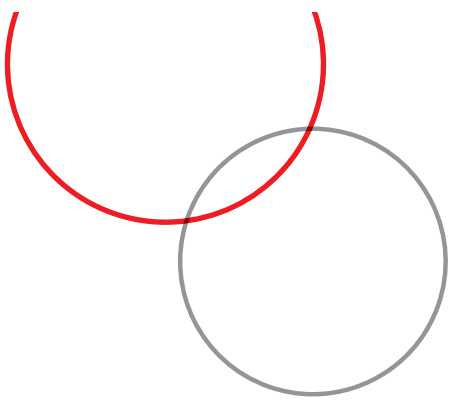
If you are a newcomer to Canada, it may be difficult to understand what is expected of your teen at school. Many

schools have resources to support parents new to the country. Take a friend along if you have difficulty understanding English. Consider having your child, family member or neighbour attend events, interviews and activities with you to help get answers to your questions. There are many publications available online in different languages to explain how to get help. You can ask your teen's teacher or principal to print you a copy if you don't have access to the Internet.

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/getinvolved.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/getinvolved.html)

There are numerous community agencies, in addition to support from your school, that can provide help. The YMCA, local faith based organizations, Newcomers Clubs and cultural associations are a few examples. Settlement workers employed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada are also a good source of information and help. Often settlement workers can be accessed through the school. Resources for parents and students are available at <http://swisontario.ca/Secondary-School-Resources/2/Information-Brochures/27>. The website [www.settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org) outlines how families new to Ontario can benefit from its services. As well, there are local agencies unique to each community to provide support to parents.





## If the school (or a teacher) has a website, your teen can give you a tour of the site

The school's website is a good source of information and may include: contact information for staff, dates of events, extracurricular activities (e.g. school clubs and teams), requirements for graduation, course descriptions and school policies (e.g. code of behaviour), attendance, assessment and evaluation.



If there is a subscription option to the information, have your teen show you how to set up notifications to your computer or smartphone. Check out the clubs and activities your teen finds interesting. Encourage your teen to try out or participate.

Make the most of parent/teacher conference sessions. Very often parent/teacher conferences may be the beginning of conversations with your teen's teachers. Typically secondary school parent/teacher sessions involve line ups and set interview times, so it may be helpful to think of questions in advance.

Book another time if you can't attend on the scheduled date. Ask your teen if there are important topics you should talk about. Make a list of things that you want to know. Maybe your teen is struggling with a math concept and you don't know how to help. Ask for suggestions. Your teen's teacher can explain how work is evaluated and what you can do if your teen is struggling.



## Find ways to keep up with your teen's progress

On a regular basis, ask your teen to provide you with an update of his/her progress in each course and encourage your teen to keep track of assignments.

You may be able to follow what your teen is learning by reading your teen's agenda book or the teacher/classroom/school website.

Some schools have a website with student and parent login permissions. These websites, sometimes called portals, may have information about your teen's homework, assignments, and test reminder dates, as well as an area for keeping track of marks for assignments and tests. These tools provide a good overview for parents to monitor and encourage their teen's progress throughout the school year as well as being a good reference when communicating with teachers.

Think of online reporting as a conversation starter not an inquisition. "I see that you did a great job writing your essay. Congratulations!" "I noticed you are studying *Macbeth*. How's that going?"

Suggest ways your teens can organize their schoolwork and complete assignments. Some parents have found that the use of a whiteboard to record assignments, due dates and school activities helps their teens get in the habit of posting information. Using the whiteboard helped their teens organize their work, complete their assignments and meet deadlines. It is a great way to stop nagging and eliminates the tension and emotional outbursts that arise when talking about schoolwork. You may be surprised that it works so well that your teens will start organizing your schedule. If your teen has a cell phone suggest using the calendar function to track assignments, due dates and exam times. Some teachers are using text message alerts as reminders for test dates.

Plan to attend open houses, curriculum and career nights. School programs do change and schools offer open houses to provide parents with information on programs, course offerings, graduation requirements and extracurricular activities.

***If your teen has a cell phone suggest using the calendar function to track assignments, due dates and exam times***

You also can find out about the different types of courses that are offered at your secondary school. Parents of children with special needs will find information about assistive technology and course accommodations to fit their individual needs. Similar nights are also organized for Grades 6, 7 and 8. Ask your school principal for more information.

## Resources

### Youth Canada

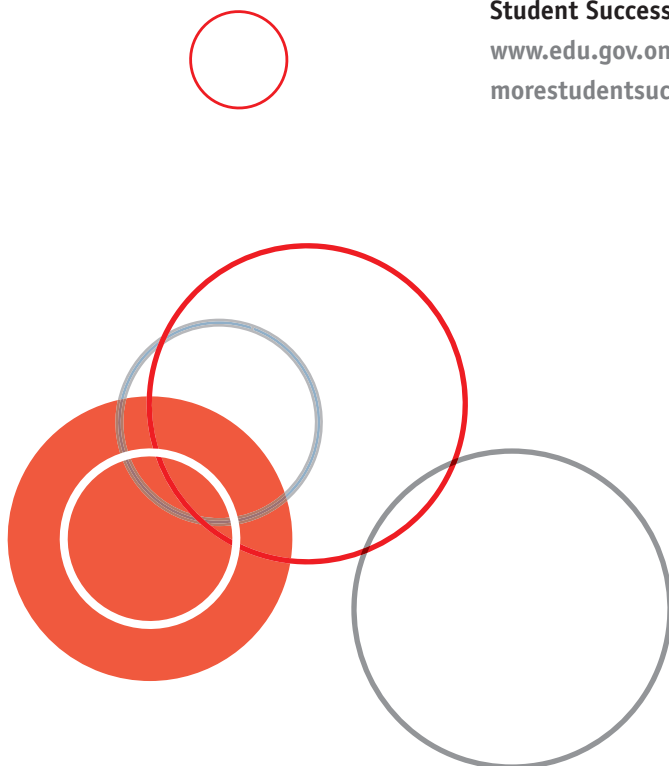
[www.youth.gc.ca/eng/home.html](http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/home.html)

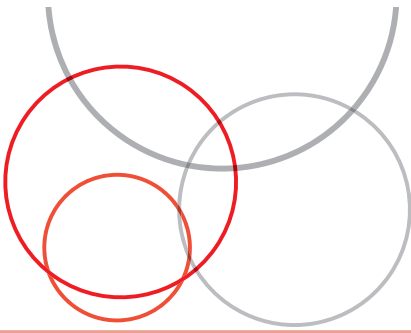
### Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program

[www.oyap.com](http://www.oyap.com)

### Student Success

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/index.html)





## Seek out your School Council for information

## Build a strong relationship with your teen's teachers

If you have questions about a decision taken by a teacher or by other school staff, it is important to speak directly with the teacher. Discuss the concerns before they become an obstacle to ongoing and positive communication.

Family and school schedules often do not match so it is important to make sure you know how best to contact their teachers and principal and they know how best to contact you. If you are using email to communicate, make sure that they know your current email address. Check that emails from the school do not go to your junk folder. Ask to be added to the school mailing list.

A School Council is an advisory body to the school and the school board.

The purpose of a School Council is, through actively involving parents, to improve student achievement. School Councils are intended to improve accountability of the education system to parents. School Councils do this by helping parents understand current learning strategies and programs that are used to increase student achievement in today's classrooms and schools.

One way School Councils accomplish this is by providing input into the development of School Improvement Plans. School Improvement Plans focus on creating strategies to increase student achievement and well-being.

Such strategies could include ideas about how parents can support their child's learning at home, for example, how to help with homework

***It is important to speak directly with a teacher***



through the use of TVO's Independent Learning Centre's Homework Help website. School Councils can also bring in community members to talk about teen nutrition, mental health, addiction, cyberbullying and other well-being issues.

## ***Ask to be added to the school mailing list***

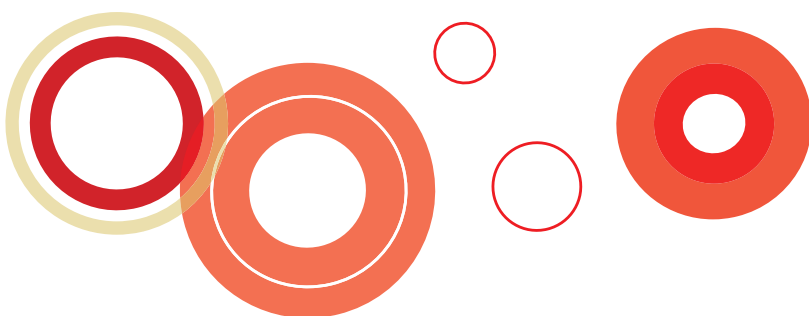
School Councils can give advice on:

- board policies and guidelines
- school year calendars
- safety issues
- dress code
- student behaviour
- electronic communications
- school budget
- process and criteria for principal selection
- other matters related to student achievement, well-being and public accountability

Membership includes a majority of parents, student, community member, principal and some school staff. Parents in the school community are eligible to join a School Council. Elections take place in September.

Some School Councils have websites that you can subscribe to for notification of their activities and upcoming events. Ask to be on their mailing list. Becoming involved in your child's school doesn't always mean that you have to become a member of a formal group.

Finding out information about School Council activities and upcoming events is one way of getting information about how to support your teen at home.



## ***Parents on your School Council gather information and want to hear your ideas***

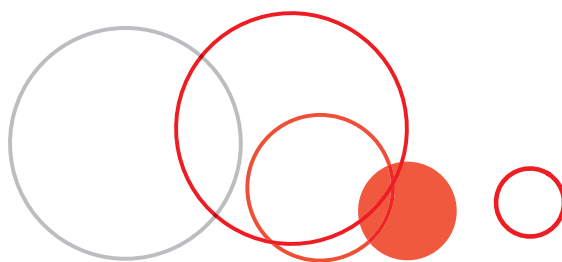
Since one of the roles of School Councils is to consult parents on issues, there are often surveys on School Council websites, or flyers and/or email requests to complete questionnaires. Answering surveys and questionnaires is a good way to provide your input into School Council discussions.

Communication is important, so do find out the ways in which you can get your ideas and suggestions to your School Council. Many

boards have set up Twitter and Facebook accounts to provide timely information to parents and the community.

There are two committees — the School Council at the school level and the Parent Involvement Committee at the school board level. Parent Involvement Committees provide input at the school board level by assisting the board with the development of strategies to improve parent engagement.

Parent Involvement Committees also support School Councils by sharing effective parent engagement practices



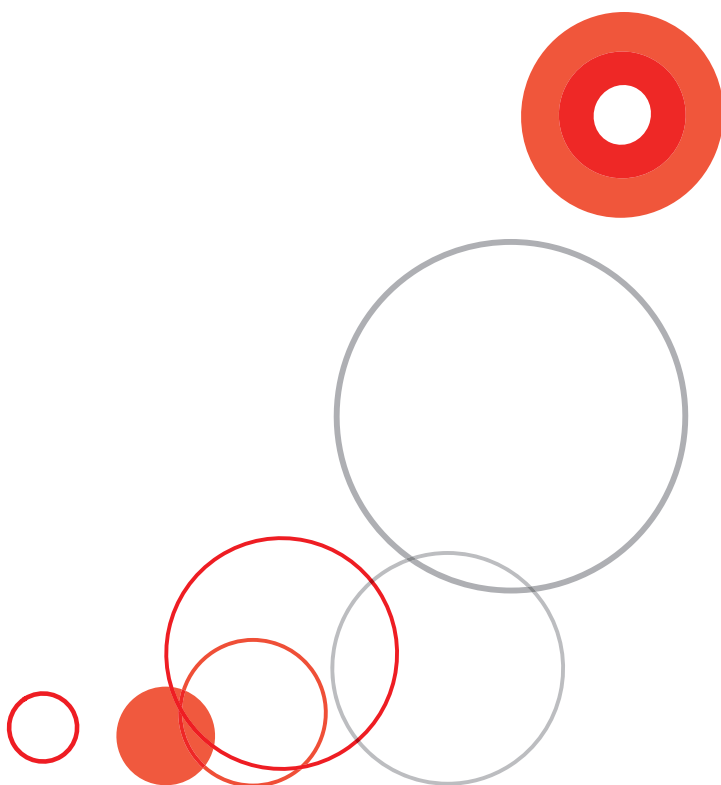
that are occurring throughout the board and the province. Look on your board's website for information on the Parent Involvement Committee and find out in what ways it can help your School Council.

All school boards have a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). It plays a vital role by making recommendations to the board with respect to Special Education programs and services for exceptional students. Lots of information and strategies are shared by parents and staff at SEAC meetings.

The Ministry of Education has also created a communication tool on their website, OPEN: Ontario Provincial Education Network.

If you register for OPEN, you will receive updates on educational initiatives.

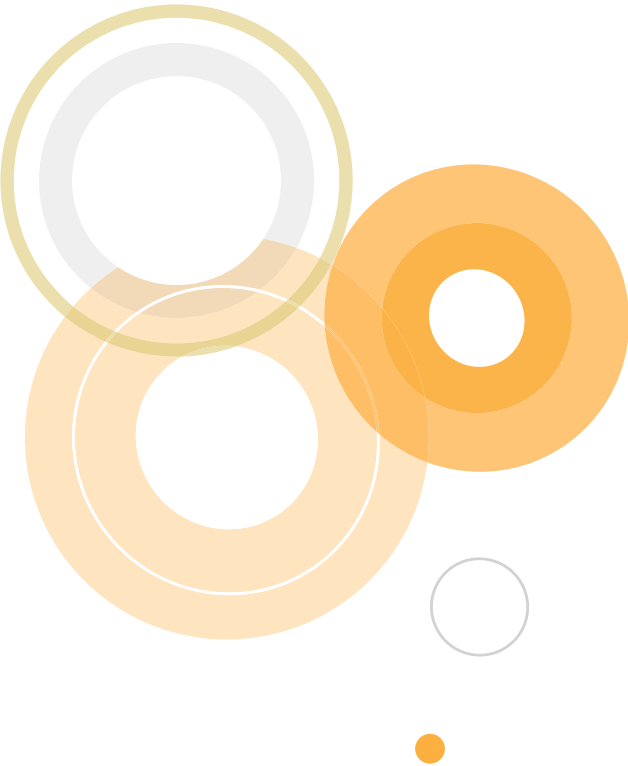
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/tools/eduminister/eng/openlist/](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/tools/eduminister/eng/openlist/)



**“They want to do things  
on their own but it is  
hard to let go.”**

Create opportunities for your teens to make choices that will affect not only them but others. Making mistakes is an opportunity to learn and grow. Be there for your teens, to listen, to support and give advice.





# TIPS

- **Use everyday activities to promote your teen's self-reliance**
- **Plan extracurricular activities and part-time jobs together**
- **Help them learn when they don't succeed**
- **Reach out to other parents**
- **Adjust your approach as they mature**

# BE A MENTOR

## Use everyday activities to promote self-reliance and independence

Safety is always an issue. If teens have a cell phone, program your contact numbers for easy access.

If your teens have money, help them develop a budget. Clothing, electronics and entertainment are high on a teen's want list but it is important that teens recognize the difference between what they want and what they need.

### ***Together, make a list and a budget of what is needed***

Making a budget and showing them how they can get some of the things they want will help them make good choices on their own. Depending on your teen's age and earnings, learning to use a bank card will allow him or her to develop an understanding of how to keep track of spending and keep it in line with the budget.

Teach them how to be safe and confident at home alone. Babysitting courses are a good way to develop safe practices for staying home alone.

Set up a time schedule for getting to school on time and ready to learn. Have them set their alarm clocks 15 minutes ahead to make up for the snoozing later. Teens need to know the importance of getting to school and getting there on time.



## Plan extracurricular activities, volunteer activities and part-time jobs together

Encourage them to select one extracurricular activity at school or in the community. There is a fine balance between too much and too little extracurricular activities and part-time work.

Usually it is suggested that when teens start something, they finish it. However, evaluating things along the way is a good plan. Helping your teen make good decisions is a crucial part of mentoring.

All students in Ontario secondary schools are required to do 40 hours

of community service for graduation. Finding the time and a placement for filling this volunteer requirement can be difficult at times. Encourage your teen to reach out to seniors' homes, faith-based organizations, service

## *Helping your teen make good decisions is a crucial part of mentoring*

clubs and charitable organizations for opportunities to volunteer. Often there are opportunities to volunteer at school in things such as coaching or refereeing.

Placements that are a requirement of a class or course in which the student is enrolled (e.g., cooperative education, job shadowing, work experience) are not eligible. The placement is not eligible if it takes place during the time allotted for the instructional program on a school day. An activity that takes place during the student's lunch break is permissible. Consult your school for details on community involvement activities hours.

*For more examples:*

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/124a.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/124a.html)

## Help teens learn when they don't succeed

It is natural for you to want to protect your teens. Letting them do things on their own is difficult, especially if you know they are making a mistake or may experience failure.

It is important that you continue to offer support and encouragement when they do make mistakes. Dealing effectively with disappointment, guilt and annoyances can be healthy and are all part of maturing into a young adult.

Their ability to come back from failure and succeed will be improved by encouraging them to reflect with these questions: Why did I fail? How does it make me feel? What were the consequences for others and me? What have I learned from this situation? What will I do differently in the future?

## Reach out to other parents

If you listen to your teen's complaints about your rules and expectations, there is a chance you might doubt your ideas. The "all my friends are doing it" statements can wear you down.

Reach out to other parents of teens. You will get support and share experiences that can help you evaluate if you are being reasonable with your teens. It is amazing how many other parents are going through the same thing with their teens.

## Adjust your approach and expectations as teens mature

Find ways to create mutual trust with your teen. As your teens gain more independence they are going to make many decisions without you. Take the time to explain things, such as why you use your current Internet provider or where you buy groceries. Your teens will be better prepared for when they make those decisions themselves. Explaining your reasoning to your

***It is amazing how many other parents are going through the same thing with their teens***

teens will make them feel that you respect them. They will gain even more respect for you and in turn, want to explain things and ask questions of you.

Don't break a confidence or invade their privacy because it can hinder open and honest communications and break the trust that your teen has in you. Recognize the challenges that teens face today. Setting curfew time may be an issue especially when they feel it is too early.

Social networking with platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, are issues with which teens need your help in establishing rules for safety. You may want to talk to your teen about being a friend on Facebook.

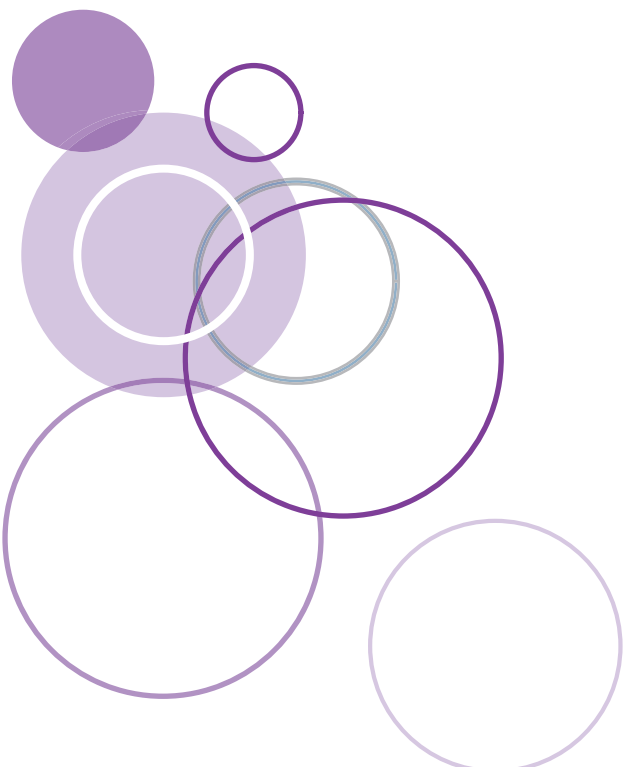
## Resources

**Organizing from the Inside Out for Teens**, Julie Morgenstern and Jessie Morgenstern-Colon

**The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens**, Sean Covey

**“It seems like they  
either shut down or  
freak out!”**

If you help your teens recognize and properly label their emotions, it will increase their ability to express and communicate what they are experiencing. Teens are often fearful about sharing their feelings and emotions and can neglect the care needed for good mental and physical health.



# TIPS

- **Help teens express and communicate their feelings**
- **Talk to teens about bullying**
- **Suggest strategies to help them deal with stress**
- **Encourage healthy habits and behaviours**

# BE A COACH

## Help teens express and communicate their feelings

Create the opportunity to discuss feelings and emotions.

Help your teen recognize and properly label their emotions. This helps teens increase their ability to express and communicate what they are experiencing. For example, what does it look like when someone is anxious? What does it physically feel like? When would someone experience this?

Acknowledge that what a teen is feeling is real.

Recognize that your teen is the expert at being a teen right now. Ask genuine questions such as “What are the kinds of challenges teens face today?” or “How do your friends feel about that?” or “How do you feel about using Facebook?”

Learn about what your teens are passionate about. What do they love doing? How can you support this passion or interest?

Create an opportunity to sit down and talk with your teen about the changes they are experiencing as they move into adolescence and as their brains change.

Be willing to share your emotions and lessons you’ve learned as you face challenging times.

Be honest with your feelings. Try to encourage your teens to feel proud of who they are. Tell them they are great every now and then.



## Encourage your teen to use strategies that help deal with stress

Encourage teens to keep a private journal (pen to paper or on their computer) and encourage them to write in it regularly.

Learn, practice and teach strategies and tools that teens can use to better manage stress, such as deep breathing or taking a break when they find themselves feeling overwhelmed. Try not to tell your teens to “chill out” or “calm down” unless you’ve helped them learn how.

### ***Encourage teens to keep a private journal***

Help your teens identify and practice healthy habits that they can use when feeling stressed or anxious and encourage them to practice when they are feeling that way.

Take the time to explain why you give them the advice you do. For example, explain why deep breathing can help reduce the amount of stress we feel.

## Talk to your adolescent about bullying

It may appear that your adolescent no longer enjoys school or is going through a stage where they complain about most things. It could possibly be a problem related to bullying. A worrisome number of students experience harassment from their peers.

**Thank you to the Director of Youth Programs, Institute for Health and Human Potential for expert assistance in the development of this section.**

## Is your teen being bullied?

Are these things happening with your teen?

- Change in interest in school and attitude toward school
- Change in eating habits (either loss of appetite or over-eating)
- Change in sleep patterns (either loss of sleep or extended hours of sleeping)
- Changes in mood, outbursts of anger
- Change in who he/she spends time with and in what she/he does with those friends
- Wanting to stay home/miss school
- Declining marks

What can parents do?

- Watch for the signs
- When it comes to your child, you are the expert. Should you notice these changes, don't dismiss your concerns without further investigation.
- Talk to your child, consult with teachers or see your family physician

**Parents do not want to think that their adolescent may be bullying**

**Definition of bullying** from Policy/Program Memorandum 144, Ministry of Education

*Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.*

## The bully

Parents do not want to think that their adolescent may be bullying. But if students are getting bullied, some young people are doing the bullying.

### ***If students are getting bullied, some young people are doing the bullying***

What does bullying look like?

- Physical bullying (hitting or punching)
- Verbal bullying (teasing or name-calling)
- Emotional bullying (intimidation or social exclusion)
- Cyberbullying (insulting others via email, text or instant messaging)

*Despite the tremendous benefits of communication technologies more present in our teaching and learning environments, there is increasing evidence that the use of e-mail, cell phones, text messages, instant messaging, and social networking Web sites are being used to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviors intended to harm others. It's called cyberbullying and it's a behavior that can spin out of control.*

***Canadian Teachers' Federation***

Who is the bully?

Your teen may be influenced by others and bullying without your knowing.

Putting a stop to bullying at school ensures a safer future and may end a cycle of violence.

Are these things happening with your teen?

- Is your teen getting into trouble at school for aggressive behaviour with others?
- Can your teen be both a boastful winner and a poor loser?
- Does your teen seem to derive satisfaction from others' fears or discomfort?
- Does your teen seem to blame others for his/her problems?
- Has your teen displayed prejudice toward others?

### What Can Parents Do?

- Talk to your teens about the impact of bullying and make it very clear you will not tolerate bullying
- Talk to your teens about why they may have been bullying. Try not to judge or get angry. Look for what might be causing a change in your teens' behaviour.

***Help your teens get involved in watching for bullying. Bystanders have responsibilities and can make a positive difference***

- Seek counselling and help
- Get to know your teens' friends and where they spend their time
- Monitor your teens' behaviour as much as possible
- Help your teens get involved in watching for bullying. Bystanders have responsibilities. Explain why they need to report any bullying they see to school staff. Talk to school personnel even if it is your teen who is doing the bullying.

### Information on Bullying:

**Bullying. We Can All Help Stop It — A Guide for Parents of Elementary School Students:** Available in 22 languages. Online on the Safe Schools website [www.ontario.ca/safeschools](http://www.ontario.ca/safeschools). Printed copies can be ordered at [www.serviceontario.ca/publications](http://www.serviceontario.ca/publications).

**PREVNet:** PREVNet is an active network of Canadian researchers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments working together to promote safe and healthy relationships for all Canadian children and youth.

**Kids Help Phone:** Canada's only toll-free, 24-hour, bilingual and anonymous phone counselling, referral and Internet service for children and youth.

**Be Web Aware:** Be Web Aware is a national, Canadian bilingual public education program on Internet safety. [www.bewebaware.ca](http://www.bewebaware.ca)

**Media Awareness Network (MNet):** MNet is a Canadian non-profit organization that has been pioneering the development of media literacy programs since 1996.

## Encourage healthy habits and behaviours

Encourage teens to find out about positive initiatives such as “Me to We”. Information can be found at [www.metowe.com](http://www.metowe.com)

Model what you want your teens to do.

Teens are very aware of adult habits regarding alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs. Try to control your temper and connect temper control with adult behaviour. When your teen does not show self control, point it out calmly.

Mental and emotional health is often connected to physical health so it is important that teens learn about exercise and good nutrition and how to practice it. Try to have healthy meals and healthy choices for lunches and snacks. What teens eat affects their energy and mood — if they learn to eat for health they will feel better.

Encourage your teens to make their lunches. After dinner at clean-up time is a good time to do it. Your teen can concentrate on healthy food choices and can prevent last minute lunches that may be forgotten or not

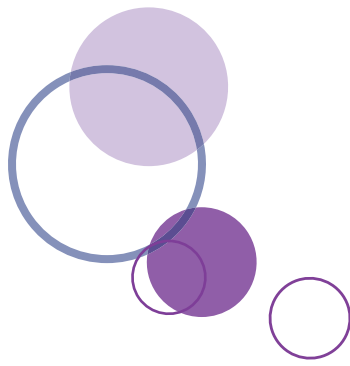
as healthy. You can find healthy ideas and recipes at this website: [www.healthcheck.org](http://www.healthcheck.org)

More advice can be found in the Canada Food Guide, which is available in 12 languages at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php)

It is important to keep fit to stay healthy. Daily exercise is difficult to schedule sometimes. Encourage your teen to take part in sports teams at school and in the community.

Appearance and self-image can be important during the teen years. Be watchful about eating habits that may become eating disorders. Teens can suffer serious health problems as they begin to overeat or deny themselves food. Be aware of how, what and when your teens are eating.





## ***Be aware of how, what and when your teens are eating***

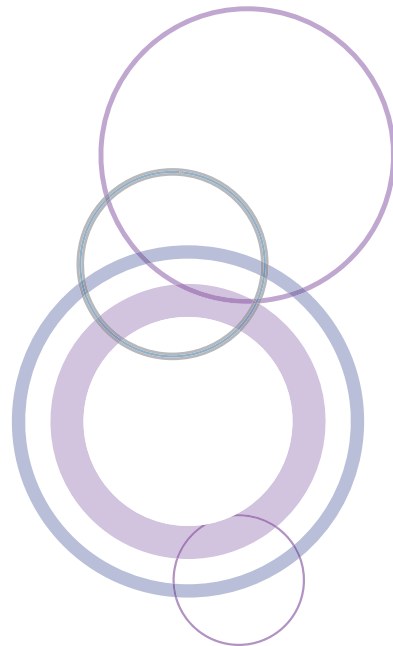
If you have concerns, talk to your teen and/or get some advice at:

- Children's Mental Health Ontario  
[www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/parents/introduction.php](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/parents/introduction.php)
- Eating Disorders, Canadian Mental Health [www.ontario.cmha.ca](http://www.ontario.cmha.ca)
- National Eating Disorder Information Centre  
[www.nedic.ca/resources/websites.shtml](http://www.nedic.ca/resources/websites.shtml)

Challenge teens to walk outside and indoors. Choosing the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator gets the heart pumping and helps them stay fit. Avoid being the taxi and have them bike or walk to school. Get fit with them. Hiking, cycling and camping are excellent ways to enjoy the outdoors together.

Make sure your teens get enough rest. Encourage them to get the sleep they need (about 9.5 hours) each night. It is not always possible (or realistic) that teens can or will get that much sleep. While they cannot catch up on sleep missed, do encourage your teens to get their sleep on weekends. Try to make it practice that distractions like TV are not in the bedroom.

Charging teens' cell phones overnight outside of their bedroom might help eliminate late night texting and talking.



## Resources

**Yes, Your Teen is Crazy, Loving Your Kid Without Losing Your Mind,**  
Michael J. Bradley

**Teen Brain, Teen Mind What Parents Need to Know to Survive the  
Adolescent Years,** Dr. Ron Clavier

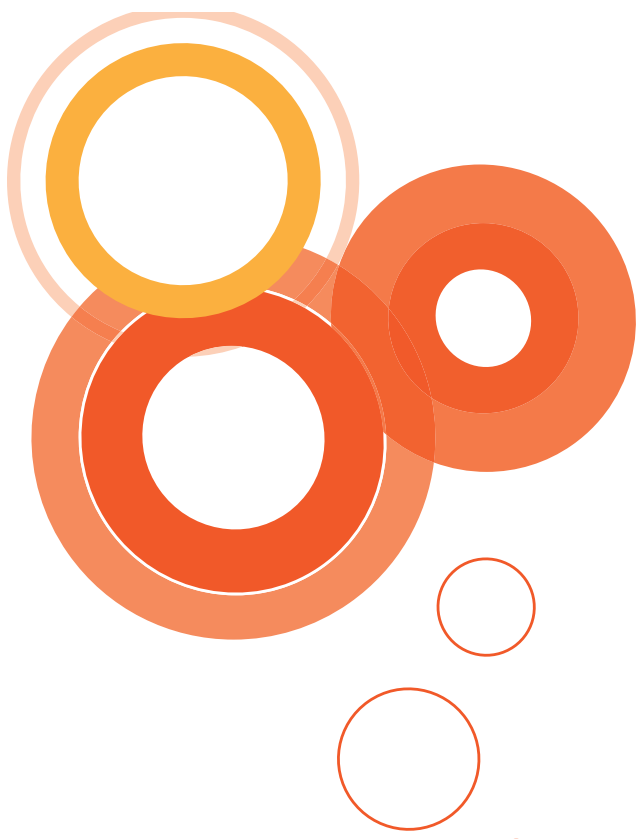
**Teens Gone Wired: Are You Ready?** Lyndsay Green

**What Parents Need to Know about Teens – Facts, Myths, and  
Strategies** (CAMH) [www.camh.net](http://www.camh.net)

**“Every time I look  
around they are on  
their cell phone or  
computer.”**

**In a global economy students need to build strong technological skills with a variety of digital devices for communication, collaboration, projects and research. Digital devices are a central and critical part of contemporary life, education and the workforce. What appears as a playful pastime may be the actual training they need to develop these technological skills.**





# TIPS

- **Show an interest in their media favourites**
- **Try social media websites yourself**
- **Learn the rules of the digital highway together**
- **Suggest your teens check with their school's guidance or student services department about online and e-learning courses**

# BE A LEARNER

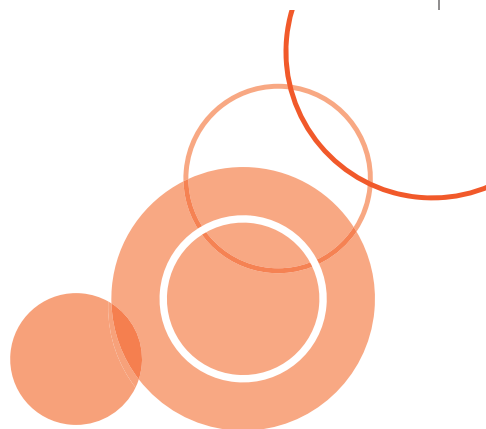
## Show an interest in their media favourites

Critique the latest TV show that you both like. Follow the plot and character development over the series' season. Try to predict who did it or what comes next. Ask them to show you how to download music and video from the Internet.

Teens can make a photo/video/audio collection of people, places and things to use in projects. Many of the projects developed in secondary schools require a variety of multi-media resources. Your teen can use a digital camera or cell phone to collect examples of everyday things that can be used to enhance this type of project.

### ***Teens can make a photo/video/audio collection***

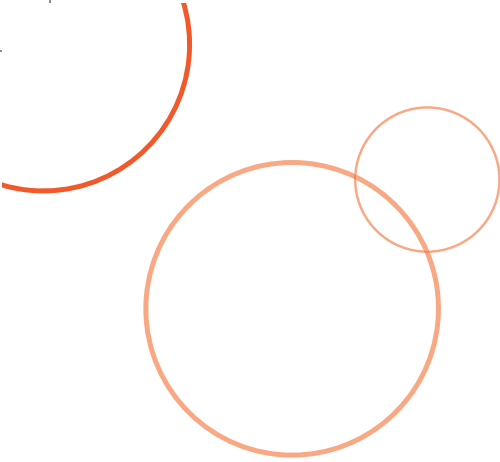
Be sure your teen gets permission if using images and recordings of individuals or performances. Take some time to explain to your teen the implications of using downloaded movies and music that are protected by copyright. Not all pictures, movies or songs found on the Internet are free to use.



## Try social media websites yourself

Have your teen give you a tour of popular social networks and photo/video sharing websites. Ask your teen how to register a Facebook account with the proper security. Keep personal information private. Read the terms of the agreement together to determine how your teen's private information will be used.

Research shows a large number of students have visible profiles that identify their email addresses, phone numbers, home addresses and instant messaging IDs. When students register for sites that offer incentives and prizes they reveal who they are, where they live and their birthdate. Be sure that a friend online is a friend in real life.



computer software to create alerts as reminders for homework, due dates for assignments and exams. Share an electronic calendar to keep track of events and happenings in your family and keep extended family informed about important events.

## ***Be sure that a friend online is a friend in real life***



Read articles in an online newspaper. Start a discussion with your teen about the writer's point of view. Review their comments, blog posts and pictures and discuss the implications of posting information on the Internet.

Remind them that pictures that are posted online, including mobile uploads, are there forever. Photos posted online need only a simple click to be saved on anyone's computer. Pictures can be posted without permission; shared photos on mobile phones can be traced. Ask your teens to think of a future employer or grandparent seeing the photos when they are tempted to post highlights of a party.

Suggest ways they can use technology to help. They can use the calendar function in cell phones or your

### **Learn the rules of the digital highway together**

Develop guidelines and expectations together for using websites and connecting with friends on the Internet.

Ask your teen's teacher for information about using the Internet and cyberbullying. Use VOIP (a technology for making telephone calls over the Internet) applications like Skype and Facetime to connect with family and friends. Limit web camera usage to times when you are present. There are excellent resources about raising a digital teen, Internet safety as well as materials for projects on the next page.

## Resources Include:

### Media Awareness Network

This website offers advice for parents, teachers and students about using the Internet. You will find an e-parenting interactive tutorial to help you keep up with your teen's online activities along with advice about video games, music and television programs.

[www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm)

### PBS Digital Nation — Virtual Worlds

The Public Broadcasting Service website offers a free complete online digital parenting workshop, advice on having a media fast, tips for talking with kids about their use of technology and a long list of resources about cyberbullying and online safety. Video clips on this site feature stories about being online all the time, teenage relationship issues, and inappropriate use of the Internet: [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/resources/parents/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/resources/parents/)

## Internet safety

Royal Canadian Mounted Police offer a website with information about staying safe when using the Internet, cellular phones or webcams; online scams and fraud; cyberbullying and Internet security.

[www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/is-si/index-eng.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/is-si/index-eng.htm)

## Suggest your teens check with their school's guidance or student services department about e-learning courses

Suggest to your teen that they start to collect samples of their schoolwork in an electronic folder and create an e-portfolio. Work with your teen to help them revise and update the portfolio on a regular basis. Samples can be removed or added as your teen's work evolves. Essays, poetry, projects, artwork are just a few examples to include. This portfolio would be useful for future school and job applications.

Students can use free website applications like Blogger, Wikispaces and Google sites to post their work. They can also use the website that is available to school boards as part of the e-learning strategy.

Check with your school's student services or guidance department about e-learning courses that are offered in your secondary school.

These courses are teacher facilitated and use many technological tools

such as blogs and chats to ensure that there is interactive discussion between teacher and students as well as students and students.

Specific information and webinars for students and parents are available in different languages on e-learning at the Ministry of Education website.  
[www.ontario.ca/elearning](http://www.ontario.ca/elearning)

Other information about e-learning courses is at Independent Learning Centre  
[www.ilc.org/index-main.php](http://www.ilc.org/index-main.php)

### Ontario Educational Resources Bank (OERB)

Students and parents also have access to a website called Ontario Educational Resources Bank (OERB) which is part of the Provincial e-Learning Strategy. You and your

teen can get access to the OERB resources at home. Suggest your teen ask a teacher or principal for the student login information. You will find games and activities that will help reinforce some of the concepts used in the classroom. You can search for information on subjects/credits by grade and course.

[www.resources.elearningontario.ca](http://www.resources.elearningontario.ca)

Help them get homework support. Your teens want you to show interest in what they are doing, so show them ways to get help when they need it.

## ***E-learning courses are teacher facilitated***

Online math tutoring is available through TVO's Independent Learning Centre's Homework Help website at <https://homeworkhelp.ilc.org/> Grade 7 to 10 math students receive individualized and confidential online help from certified Ontario teachers from Sunday to Thursday during the hours of 5:30 pm to 9:30 pm.

Videos of tutorials and frequently asked questions are available at any time at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/elearning/homework.html>.

Consult your teen's teachers or Student Services about other types of support during and after school hours.

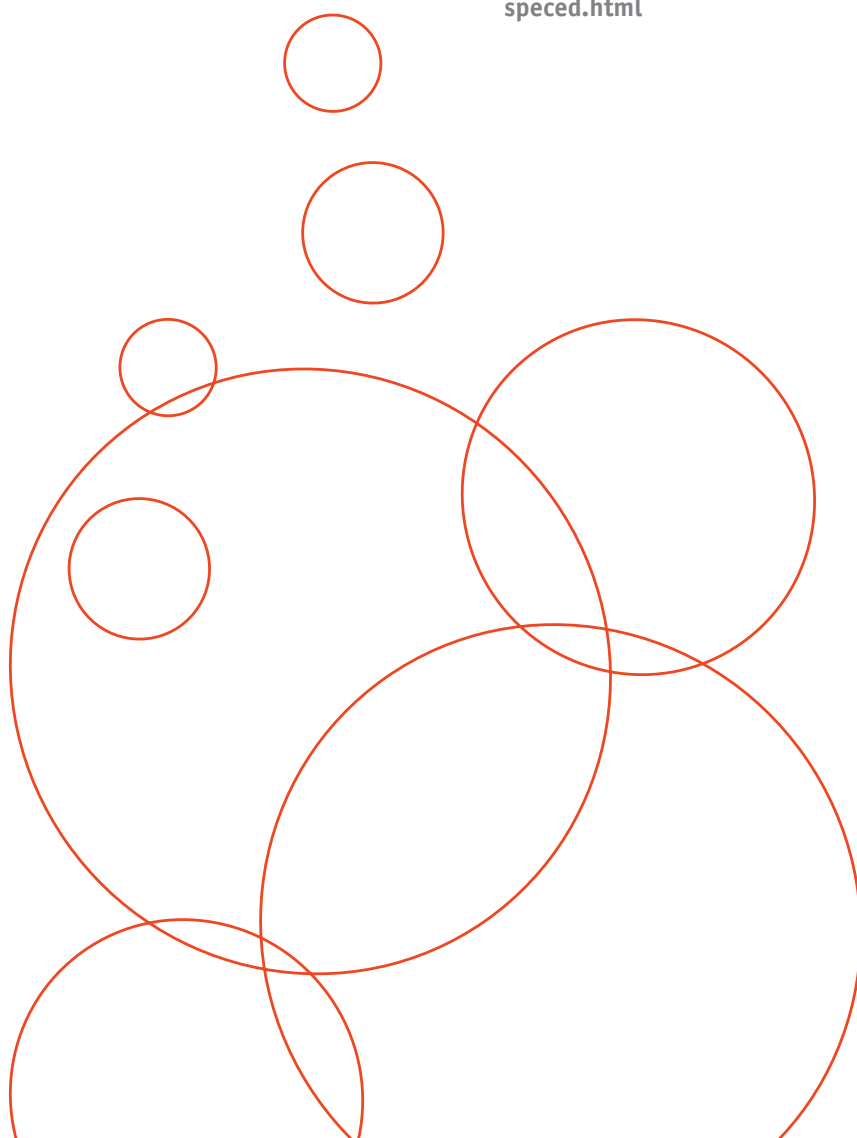
Information about the Student Success program is available at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/teams.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/teams.html).

More resources at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/resources.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/resources.html).

In Ontario, schools are able to provide free technology to assist students with additional learning needs. WordQ is one example. The program suggests words to use when writing and provides spoken feedback to help find mistakes.

You can find more information about these programs by contacting the Special Education Department at your teen's school. All school boards have a Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) which can connect you to support groups and programs. Ministry of Education information on Special Education is posted on their website at:

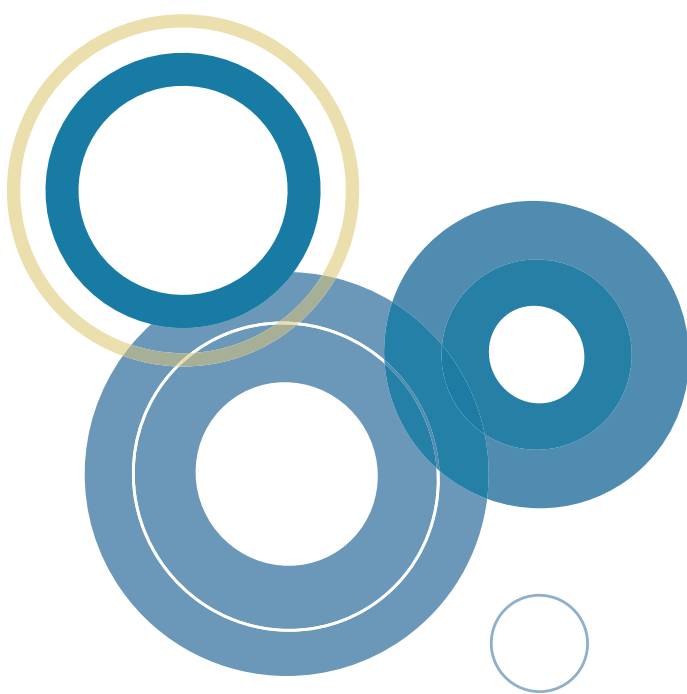
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html)



**“They will graduate before we know it. We don’t feel ready to help them prepare for the future.”**

Let your teens know that you will be there for support throughout their postsecondary plans. Research shows that when parents make postsecondary decisions a priority, teens make better choices. When you determine together what decisions need to be made, you can help your teens develop their career paths.





# TIPS

- **Be proactive in talking to your teen about career choices**
- **Help your teen make connections between the things they love doing, and potential future jobs**
- **Look for information needed for career planning**
- **Investigate the options for financing postsecondary options**

# BE A GUIDE



## Take note of their interests

Are they always on the computer? Do they keep a sketchbook? Always writing in a journal? Do they like working with people? Talk about what education programs and careers might match their interests. Have discussions about what they want to do at an early age.

Write “interest boxes” with different hobbies, talents and favourite subjects in school. Draw lines connecting interest boxes to different careers, and talk about what is needed to get there. Work plans for the future into everyday conversations. Encourage

## ***Research shows that when parents make postsecondary choices a priority for their children, teens make much better decisions about their futures***

One idea you might give your teen is to build a career web. Being a math teacher is not the only career option if you like math: engineers, architects, draftsmen, carpenters, bank analysts and geologists all use mathematics.

your teen to ask relatives and friends questions about their jobs and education. Talk about your own early age work experiences.

## Keep an open mind

You can provide support by providing positive feedback and pointing them towards good sources of specific information they need about trades, apprenticeships, college or university programs, or pathways to work.

Don't worry if your teens are not sure what they want to do after secondary school.

Some teens seem overwhelmed by making decisions about post-secondary choices and careers.

Encourage them to pursue something they are interested in and enjoy. Set up an appointment to meet with their guidance counsellor together. Most secondary schools have resources on postsecondary choices available at the guidance office. You can ask questions about course selection, graduation expectations and the process to make decisions for future opportunities.

Different career paths may have different credit requirements for acceptance into a specific program. Your teen might benefit from talking

to someone who has a job similar to your teen's interests.

Attend information and career nights. Begin early to explore secondary school programs with your pre-teen. Secondary schools usually offer information nights for parents and students in Grades 6, 7 and 8. Understanding the types of programs offered at secondary school will help you to support your child when it comes time to make program and credit selections.

***A single post-secondary program can lead to many different careers***

BE A GUIDE

The design and layout of this Took Kit was created by Humber College AdCentre students.

Look for information needed for career planning. Most secondary schools now offer Specialist High Skills Major Programs. These programs are designed to allow students to focus in on a potential area of career interest. For example the Health and Wellness Specialist High Skills Major could be considered for those students who may want to pursue a career in the medical field, in areas such as personal care, nursing or medical research.

## ***Mentors can help demystify life after secondary school***

The programs also help students to make transitions after completing secondary school to trades apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace.

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/  
studentssuccess/pathways/shsm/  
shsm\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentssuccess/pathways/shsm/shsm_fact_sheet.pdf)

Most secondary schools host career nights. School staff work through the steps that apply for each of the different pathways. Plan to attend so that you can confirm that your teen has the necessary requirements for the career choice that he/she wants to follow.

## ***Seek out mentoring programs***

Encourage your teen to get involved in a community mentoring program if available. Many colleges and universities and other organizations also offer mentoring programs that match a secondary school student with a postsecondary student. Mentors can help demystify life after secondary school by answering questions about a specific postsecondary pathway.



You can provide support by giving positive feedback and pointing your teens towards good sources of information.

## ***Help teens make connections between the things they love doing and their future***

Help your teen imagine himself or herself at college, university or in an apprentice program. Visit a local postsecondary institution and take a campus tour. If you can't visit a local college or university, many institutions have virtual tours available on their websites.

## ***Suggest your teen take a career quiz***



Your teen can take a career quiz at [www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/employmentontario/backtoschool/careerfinder.html](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/employmentontario/backtoschool/careerfinder.html) or [www.jobsetc.gc.ca/toolbox/quizzes](http://www.jobsetc.gc.ca/toolbox/quizzes).

Visit Career Cruising at [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com) to help your teen plan. There are assessment tools, occupation profiles and lots of other information and tools for you and your teen to use.



There are options other than university for teens to explore. He/she may be more interested in a career in the food services, manufacturing or construction industry. Check out the career planning tools and information available at [www.tcu.gov.on.ca](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca). Students can earn credits by taking Cooperative Education courses that allow students to investigate the world of work. Many valuable community networks are started when students participate in a community placement during secondary school.

Encourage your teen to apply for Cooperative Education and/or the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) at their home school. OYAP is both a demanding and a rewarding choice for bright, eager teens who wish to investigate or jump-start their careers. OYAP also addresses the growing skills shortages in the trades, which have been identified by business, industry and labour. OYAP provides a balance between the demands of school and the demands of the work environment. [www.oyap.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=homepage&language=E](http://www.oyap.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=homepage&language=E)

**Apprenticeship information**  
[www.apprenticesearch.com](http://www.apprenticesearch.com)

## Financial Assistance is Available

You can gain some familiarity with the financial assistance options available to your child through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and University website. [www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/)

Students planning to attend college or university can apply for assistance through the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), which provides financial resources not only through loans, but also non-repayable grants. [www.osap.gov.on.ca](http://www.osap.gov.on.ca).

Students can now track the status of their application using a mobile app on their smartphones.

Students planning to enter an apprenticeship program can also apply for grants, bursaries and loans.

Find out more about Apprenticeship Completion Bonus in Non-Red Seal Trades or the Loans for Tools funding at: [www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/employmentontario/training/financial.html](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/employmentontario/training/financial.html)

Explore financial planning options. [www.canlearn.ca/eng/](http://www.canlearn.ca/eng/)  
Research bursaries and scholarships options. [www.electronicinfo.ca](http://www.electronicinfo.ca)

Ontario universities and colleges have application centres with information on programs, costs and application deadlines.

Ontario College Application Services  
[www.ontariocolleges.ca](http://www.ontariocolleges.ca)

Ontario Universities' Application Centre  
[www.ouac.on.ca](http://www.ouac.on.ca)

***Students planning to enter an apprenticeship program can also apply for grants, bursaries and loans***

## Aboriginal Resources

Ontarians can find the Aboriginal Education Strategy at [www.edu.on.ca/eng/aboriginal](http://www.edu.on.ca/eng/aboriginal). The strategy includes a framework to support First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. It also includes an introduction to Aboriginal Education, background on the strategy, information about self-identification opportunities for Aboriginal students, Ontario's Native Language and Native Studies curriculum and teacher tools and resources.

A Government of Canada website [www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca](http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca) is a single window to learn about resources, supports, federal government services and programs for First Nation, Métis and Inuit people.

There are links that offer information on education, employment, language, heritage and culture. The education section provides a method to search for Ontario colleges and universities that provide programs specific to Aboriginal students.

Ontario's Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework provides details about government policies and programs to support access to and success in

postsecondary education and training for First Nation, Métis and Inuit learners. The website also provides links to Aboriginal postsecondary institutes.

<http://www.tcugov.on.ca/eng/postsecondary/schoolsprogram/aboriginal>

### Postsecondary Education Information for Aboriginal Students

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) have funding programs that could provide financial assistance to help offset tuition, travel or living expenses.

Details can be found at [www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033679](http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033679)

Additional information can be obtained from band council offices. If you are Métis, contact the Métis Nation of Ontario, [www.metisnation.org/programs/education--training.aspx](http://www.metisnation.org/programs/education--training.aspx)

Also visit the Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs - Education Resources and Links web page at [www.aboriginalaffairs.gov.on.ca/english/services/education.asp](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.gov.on.ca/english/services/education.asp) Another source for information is the Aboriginal Postsecondary Information Program (APSIP). Visit their site at [www.apsip.com](http://www.apsip.com)

## Special Needs Student Resources

In addition to student loans, the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) provides a number of grants and bursaries to students with disabilities. [www.osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/OSAPStarttoFinish/StudentinSpecialCircumstances/index.html](http://www.osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/OSAPStarttoFinish/StudentinSpecialCircumstances/index.html)

Grants and bursaries are available to students with disabilities, including:

- Bursary for Students with Disabilities
- Canada Student Grant for Services and Equipment for Persons with Permanent Disabilities
- Canada Student Grant for Persons with Permanent Disabilities
- Bursary for Students with Disabilities Attending Out-of-Country Institutions

Specialized assistance with repayment of student loans is also available to students with permanent disabilities including:

- Repayment Assistance Plan for Borrowers with a Permanent Disability (RAP-PD) for the Canada portion of a student's Canada-Ontario Integrated Student Loan
- Ontario Medical Loan Forgiveness  
Canada Permanent Disability Benefit

Information on the above programs is available at [www.osap.gov.on.ca](http://www.osap.gov.on.ca).







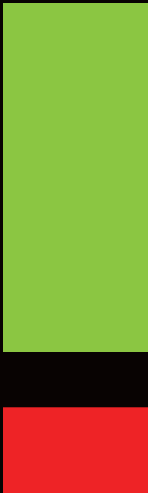
# THANK YOU!

**Many parents, students and educators contributed to this tool kit.**

**The Council of Ontario Directors of Education recognizes their valuable contributions. Those who participated represent the following:**

These resources can be found at:  
[www.ontariodirectors.ca](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca)

Algoma District School Board  
Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board  
Avon Maitland District School Board  
Bluewater District School Board  
Bruce-Grey District School Board  
Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario  
Conseil des École Publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario  
Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud  
Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales  
Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Centre-Est de l'Ontario  
Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Nouvel-Ontario  
Conseil scolaire de district des écoles catholiques du Sud-Ouest  
Conseil scolaire de district du Centre Sud-Ouest  
Conseil scolaire du district du Grand Nord de l'Ontario  
Conseil scolaire catholique de district des Grandes Rivières  
Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord  
Conseil scolaire public de district du Nord-Est de l'Ontario  
Conseil scolaire Viamonde  
Halton Catholic District School Board  
Humber College - School of Media Studies & Information Technology  
Institute for Health and Human Potential  
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board  
Limestone District School Board  
Near North District School Board  
Niagara Catholic District School Board  
Ontario Undergraduate Student Association (OUSA)  
Ottawa Catholic District School Board  
Peel District School Board  
Provincial Schools of Ontario  
Rainbow District School Board  
Renfrew County District School Board  
Superior North Catholic District School Board  
Thames Valley District School Board  
Toronto District School Board  
York Catholic District School Board  
York Region District School Board



These materials have been developed by the Council of Ontario  
Directors of Education and funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

**PARENT**

**ENGAGEMENT**

**IS VITAL**

**TO STUDENT SUCCESS**