



Dealing with Discipline:

Helping your teenager get the most out of school

For many parents, dealing with a teenager is perplexing. Teenagers require special patience and wisdom. This brochure is designed to help with some of

the common concerns – particularly how parents can help make the school years more productive.

Discipline: Let children know you care!

The fundamentals of good discipline include:

- ***Setting standards:*** Don't assume children know what you expect. Tell them!
- ***Applying those standards consistently:*** Show concern for the child's self-esteem. The behavior may be unacceptable, but the child still a worthwhile, loved human being. Make sure you say that.

The particular needs of teenagers include:

- ***Having reasonable academic standards:*** The assumption is that teenagers need to be pushed, that they're not performing to ability. That's true for many. But others push themselves too hard, and that's just as damaging. You need to be sensitive to your child's abilities and attitudes.
- ***Taking responsibility for their own actions:*** Painful as it may be for both children and parents, teenagers must accept the consequences of their behavior.



When children have problems, it is tempting to rescue them. But teenagers are becoming adults; they must learn firsthand that we're all account-

able for our actions.

It is also tempting to blame ourselves. Parents often ask, "Where did we go wrong"? That question can only lead to blame and self-doubt. A healthier question is, "How can we help our child to go right?"

- ***Sensing that their parents respect them:*** Even when you "know" your children are wrong, you must listen to them. Sharing feelings and reasons is essential to their well-being as well as to our understanding. If you stop listening, they'll stop talking.



- ***Recognizing the impact of peer pressure:*** To many teenagers, their friends' views are more important than their parents' views. Downgrading those friends or their views usually drives the teenager even farther away.

On the other hand, don't relinquish your parental role and become "one of the gang." Children need responsible adults with high standards who care about their welfare. Respect the fact that peer pressure exists, but tell your children when you think that pressure is leading them in the wrong direction—and why!

Discipline and school: How parents can help

- ***Understand the school's discipline code:*** Jeffco Public Schools has a written policy on discipline—a student code. It outlines unacceptable behavior and establishes penalties.



Ask your child, or the school, for a copy. Read it, and let your child know you've read it.

You gain the respect of your child and the school staff when you take an interest in the rules of behavior. Stress the importance of an orderly school environment. If your child has a problem, contact the school. Both you and the school staff want what's best for your child. Be positive. Ask how you can help.

- **Encourage regular attendance:** Understand the policies of the school. Sometimes academic standing is affected by absences. (The school needs to know if there is a special problem.)

Check to see that your child makes up the work missed when absent. Let your child know that school records follow a person and that employers place a high premium on regular attendance. Recognize that frequent absences are often a sign of other problems. Consult with both your child and the school.

Attend teacher-parent conferences

Virtually every school conducts regularly scheduled conferences. Unfortunately, parents of teenagers often neglect these conferences. **Don't!** Look at conferences as an

opportunity to:

- Learn what will be happening in class that year and how you can help.
- Provide information that will help the teacher work with your child.
- Ask about the evaluation system. What do grades mean? How are they determined?

Work with teachers

Sometimes a particular concern arises and you would like to talk to an individual teacher. Do so! Teachers welcome the interest and help of parents.

Whether you or the teacher arranges that conference, remember: Contact the teacher first. If you feel the problem has not been resolved, ask for a joint conference with a guidance counselor or the principal. If you go over the head of the teacher, you are sending the wrong message to both the teacher and your child.

A decision to include the child, or anyone else, should be a mutual one.

Listen with an open mind. Share your feelings and concerns calmly.

Remember that the goal is resolve the problem, not to fix blame.

Working with teenagers is a challenge. Cooperation between the school and parents makes the job easier for everyone.



*Teachers and parents:
The more we work together,
The more we help our children!*

For more information, visit the "Parenting" page of the JCEA website: www.jcea-cea.org.