

# HELPING HAND

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## Helping Students Make the Grade

Teachers and parents have equally important jobs when it comes to helping students succeed in school. Homework is exciting for some children who see it as a sign of growing up, and provokes anxiety in other students if they have trouble keeping up with assignments or finding time and space to study.

Whether a child must memorize math facts or solve differential equations, practice spelling words, or analyze the symbolism in *Jane Eyre*, the parents' assignment is to help their students make the grade.

From Kris Berggren, author of *Strategies for Stay-at-Home Parents* (Meadowbrook Press), here is a primer on creating a healthy homework climate to share with all parents:

### Do communicate with the teacher.

Attend back-to-school night and conferences. Prioritizing "face time" with the teacher puts names and faces together and makes it easier to contact him later on if issues arise. Find out the teacher's expectations of students and parents in the homework process. Does she have a website where you can monitor your child's grades or review assignments? Does he welcome calls at home or prefer messages left at school? If your child commutes between two parents' homes, let the teacher know your preferred channels of communication, too.

### Do make homework do double duty.

Spelling or vocabulary lists, multiplication tables, beginning essays or reports are vehicles for quality time with your children. Offer to go over their spelling list with them (maybe in the car on the way to soccer practice or piano lessons). You'll learn a lot about what children are thinking, and they'll be flattered that you're interested.

### Do schedule homework time with your child.

Today's kids keenly feel the time crunch. Help your children use time well without burning out by planning the week's work in advance. For example, if you know that Tuesday is band practice, then basketball, but Wednesday is free, encourage your children to designate harder or longer assignments for Wednesdays. Provide a calendar to write down which assignments they'll do and when. They'll feel satisfied to cross something off as it's finished.

### Do create the conditions for homework success.

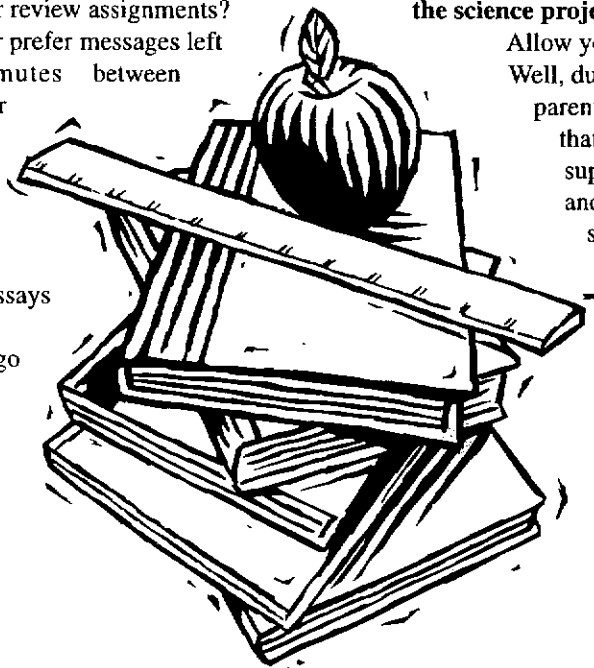
Students need a place to study (and despite occasional protests to the contrary, this is not in front of the television during "The O.C.," or sprawled out on the floor with headphones blaring Eminem.) They need nourishing snacks after school and adequate sleep. They need a desk and comfortable chair, good task lighting, and room to spread out books and papers. Homework space can be shared, such as a kitchen table, or private, such as the child's room — but it should be at least relatively quiet.

### Don't do the math (or the five-paragraph essay or the science project).

Allow your child to do his or her own work. Well, duh, you say — but some zealous parents forget their place, and forget that homework is where mistakes are supposed to be made and corrected — and learned from. Besides, teachers have seen it all, and they'll likely recognize when you, and not your child, have done the work. If your child complains that he doesn't "get it," talk with the teacher.

### Don't make excuses for tardy or sloppy homework.

Curb the natural impulse to defend your child. ("But he had a hockey game until 11," or "She had play practice all week.") Your child needs to learn that his or her actions have consequences, and to plan ahead.

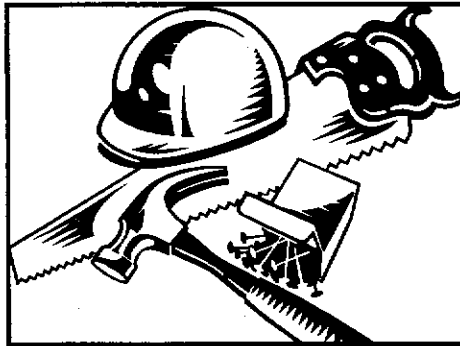


# A Tool to Prevent Underage Drinking

This prom and graduation season, teens will be exposed to a number of high-risk activities as they celebrate some of the most memorable milestones of their lives. Now, a publication developed by CADCA, in collaboration with the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), offers parents and drug prevention leaders a new tool to reduce the risk of underage drinking in their communities.

The publication, titled *Using Science to Combat Underage Drinking*, highlights the latest scientific research on underage drinking and offers practical strategies that can be used to prevent and reduce alcohol use among teens.

Evidence shows that the high school prom and graduation season is among the most risky times for teens. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), nearly half of all 15-20-year-olds killed in car crashes during prom season in 2004 involved alcohol. In addition, during weekends around prom, 46% of traffic crash fatalities among 15-20-year-olds



were alcohol-related; and of these fatalities, 72% involved a 15-20-year-old driver with alcohol in his/her system.

CADCA's publication summarizes research on the prevalence and scope of underage drinking, risk factors for youth, the influence of the environment on underage drinking, and what is currently known about developmentally-appropriate interventions. It also discusses the

problems associated with drinking among college-age youth and highlights comprehensive, integrated strategies that target individuals, the student body as a whole, as well as the college and its surrounding community.

This Practical Theorist is available on CADCA's online store at [www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org). Members receive a complimentary copy and can download the publication for free in the "Membership Central" section of CADCA's website. For more information about CADCA membership, e-mail [membership@cadca.org](mailto:membership@cadca.org)



## The Dog Ate My Homework ... and Other Fibs

Quick fact: Most people are likely to encounter over 200 fibs and fabrications each day — every day, no matter where they go in this world, and the schoolhouse is no exception. Sure, we've all heard the one about the dog, but are there any concrete ways to decide if a student isn't being particularly forthcoming?

Writer Conner O'Seanery has studied the ins and outs of lies and lying and has created an incredibly useful tool so the rest of us will know when someone is trying to pull the wool over our eyes. In his new book, *You Won't Get Fooled Again*, he reveals how to spot the verbal and non-verbal signs of deception, and all the different ways people divulge they are lying.

So what are some of the verbal signs of deception?

**Expansion and Contraction:** "I didn't stay up all night instant messaging my friends" becomes "I *did not* stay up all night instant messaging my friends," with an indignant look thrown in for good measure.

**B-b-b-bad to the Bone:** Someone who is not telling the truth might stutter, stammer, and otherwise wrap his tongue around his forehead.

**Pause and Insert Here:** A tall tale may include odd, non-word sounds to fill the uncomfortable silence. "Ah," "er," and "um" are the vowels of a lie.

**Grunts and Groans:** Caught in a fib, a student might clear his throat often and make other strange, guttural noises.

**Let Me Qualify This:** A lie tends to make judicious use of qualifiers such as "however," "sometimes," and "generally."

**Could You Repeat That?** This question buys time for those who aren't telling the truth.

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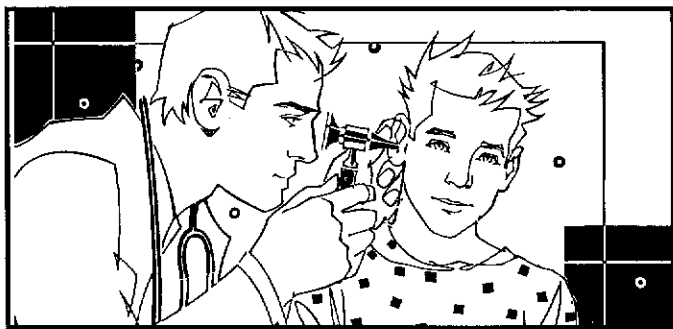
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# Few Pediatricians Follow Through on Smoking Cessation

Most pediatricians ask parents whether they smoke and advise them to stop if they do, but few follow through with smoking-cessation interventions, a survey of Ohio doctors reveals.

*Medical News Today* reported that the survey found that 80% of Ohio pediatricians asked about parental smoking, but only 16% recommended nicotine-replacement therapy.



And while 80% of pediatricians considered environmental tobacco smoke a significant health hazard for children, about a quarter described smoking-cessation counseling of parents as a waste of time or of limited value.

“Pediatricians felt that ‘the parent is not the patient,’” noted lead researcher Joseph Dake, PhD, of the University of Toledo. “Our take is that their smoking status is one of the most important environmental factors in the health of the child.” Experts said that most parents would accept stop-smoking advice from their child’s doctor.

Pediatricians said that lack of time, reimbursement, and knowledge about smoking cessation and related resources presented barriers to smoking interventions. However, a recently-developed free program called “Clinical Effort Against Secondhand Smoke Exposure” (CEASE) provides advice and instruction to pediatricians.

The study appears in the September/October 2006 issue of the *American Journal of Health Behavior*.

## Risk of Victimization Increases With Early Puberty

Adolescents who experience puberty earlier than their peers are more likely to be physically victimized through fights or offending behaviors such as bullying.

“There’s a lot of literature in psychology and especially in the social sciences that says that puberty can have some adverse effects,” said Alex Piquero, a University of Florida (UF) criminologist who co-authored the study with Dana L. Haynie, an Ohio State University sociologist. “The literature has shown that puberty can lead to more aggression, more offending, but it had never been linked to victimization.”

The study, published in the *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, is the first to link puberty to victimization, primarily in the form of assaults and fights. Sexual victimization was not investigated as part of this study, but Piquero is researching its links to early puberty.

Piquero and Haynie sampled more than 10,000 adolescents, through the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a national sample also called the Add Health, which is one of the premier longitudinal studies of adolescents in the United States.

“When someone undergoes puberty, they are going to start hanging out with different kinds of people, they are going to have different kinds of experiences and they are going to

associate themselves with older people,” he said. “And that’s something, especially if they experience early puberty, that’s more of a risk factor than not.”

Parents should learn about the social changes their children are experiencing during puberty, Piquero said, and parents should encourage children to involve themselves in positive relationships and activities, rather than those that could put them at risk for becoming victims.

“It really is a challenge for parents to figure out how to keep their kids in environments that aren’t as risky,” said Julia Graber, a UF associate professor of developmental psychology, who was not a researcher in the study. “One of the things that we’ve found is that younger adolescents that start to associate with peers who look older really are at risk, and it’s very hard to control those social networks because kids may be seeking them out.”

Graber suggested that parents and teachers keep adolescents engaged in structured and productive activity, not necessarily just school and homework, but fun activities such as clubs, organizations, teams and sporting events. Such activities channel an interest in maturity and provide experiences away from parents while allowing children to be supervised.

Children also begin to view themselves as more mature as they experience puberty, and may fall victim to substance abuse and other activities marketed to teens, she said. As children seek activities to feel more mature, they will be drawn to older kids who are already engaging in risky behaviors.

# What to Tell Young Students About Personal Safety

Today, more than ever, it's very important that young students are aware of protecting their own personal safety. There are many steps that educators and parents alike can share with young students to keep them safe at school as well as at home or in other places, including the following ideas:

Teach students how to contact parents (at home and work), how to call emergency services, and help students memorize their own personal information.

Share tips with young children about personal safety when out and about such as: Always check first with the adult who is caring for them before they go anywhere with anyone, even someone they know.

- Use a family "secret code word" and don't go with anyone, for any reason, who does not use the code word.
- Ask for the code word while standing a safe distance away from the car.
- Never hitchhike.
- Use the "buddy system" in public places, and always walk and play in groups.
- Never go into public toilets alone.
- Call home when they get to their destination, and call again before they leave to return home.
- Don't play in or take shortcuts through dangerous or deserted areas.
- Don't go door-to-door selling something without an adult.
- If they are followed or frightened they should knock on the nearest door and ask for the police to be called. They should not hide.
- Walk on the left facing traffic so that they can see if a car stops near them.
- Find and go to a store cashier, mom with kids, or security person (not to the parking lot) if they get lost or separated from you while shopping.
- If they are separated from you, they should never leave the area (like a store, the mall, or a zoo), even if the person helping them asks them to step outside.



## For more information, contact:

For more information on Chippewa Valley Schools Student Assistance (drug and violence prevention) programming and/or the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families, please contact 723-2360.