

PARENTING



Last Minute Back to School Specials Inside

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Meet Your Local Merchants

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Special pullout section



The first bus ride

The annual School Bus Orientation Day was held Saturday at both Georgetown and Acton District High Schools in order to familiarize new students with bus safety and travel. At Georgetown High Chris Dawes, of Georgetown, guided son Simon, 3, aboard a First Student Canada (formerly Laidlaw) bus.

Photo by Calvin Dyke

Communicating with your child's high school staff

Having a child in high school means that parents/caregivers are now connected to a whole new group of adults who are responsible for their child.

Interestingly enough, parents who were once very involved in their children's educations, often step back and don't always know what their children are doing and how they are achieving. There are progress reports and an opportunity for a scheduled 10 minute interview, but if that is not enough for you as a parent, then there are things that you can do to increase the level of communication with the school staff:

- Each student will receive a course outline for each subject, either on the first day of during the first week. Review it with your child, and if the teacher's extension number is not on the outline, ask your child to have the teacher write it on the outline. Include also, the best time to call.
- Many teachers have websites where they will post notes and assignments. Bookmark them on your computer and refer to them weekly.
- After the third week of school, phone each of your children's teachers: introduce yourself and let them know any particulars about your child and that you would be eager to hear about any changes in progress. (Make the conversation short—more than five minutes is too long.)
- If you are comfortable with the idea, suggest to the teacher that you will call every few weeks to touch base. This may apply to parents who don't get much feedback from their kids.

Most teachers won't be adverse to you calling them. If you put the onus on them to call you, then you have to remember that they may be teaching up to 80 students, and it is only after several marks are tallied in the computer that they have a chance to call you. Don't wait for that call. You only have one or a few children to watch over in this partnership. Don't be afraid to take initiative, teachers will appreciate it.

- In late October or early November book an appointment with your child's guidance counsellor. Have your child attend as well. Speak to the counsellor about course options for the future and anything that you should be aware of down the road. (i.e. Is it okay for a student to take applied or college math with academic or university English? Are they closing the door to university?)

As a parent, I know how important it is for teenagers to feel that they are trusted. But, I wouldn't let independence override parental responsibility. As a guidance counsellor I know that many kids wait for things to improve before they face reality, and often, it is too late.

Keep the communication between your child, yourself and the staff as positive as possible, and begin right at the beginning of the new school year. Each high school year is important—communicate now.

—By Aldona Morrison, CHOICES, (Career consulting for teens...watch for the website)



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