

# The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

## Home & School



*"Together We Can Make a Difference"*

Volume 15  
2019, 4th Quarter



Skip Forsyth

In August 1974, I traveled 450 miles to enroll at a small liberal arts college, Washington and Lee University, nestled in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. Being away from home and doing my own laundry wasn't a problem. Eating institutional food in a cafeteria was okay. I was academically ready for first-year classes, but I was not ready for the rigorous study requirements at the post-secondary level.

Learning came easy for me through high school. Pay attention in class, take a few notes, do the homework, read the minimum, and I managed easily. I quickly discovered more was required for success at the collegiate level. I had to become a far better note-taker. I had to read beyond the minimum, and then connect the reading to the notes to expand my understanding. Reviewing material with a classmate and attending study groups were helpful.

As a child in grades 1–12 I was taught what to know but not how to know it. I was taught what to study but not how to study. In my adult years I have learned how to be a learner. Becoming a lifelong learner is necessary in our world of rapid information and changing technology. A few people are "sponges," possessing the ability to soak up and retain information effortlessly. The rest of us must apply a bit of effort to acquire and apply new information.

Although it is never too late to sharpen one's study skills, it will benefit your child to become a learner now and not just a school enrollee. Learning begins with reading. Reading phonetically and understanding sentence structure is necessary. The English language is complex. But the bottom line is comprehension. What is the main point of the reading selection? What is a character's strength and their fatal flaw? What events triggered a variety of consequences? What could the characters have done differently to attain more favorable results? Who is your favorite character and why? Who are you most like in this story? How would you apply the lessons learned in this story to your life? Why would you read other stories by this author or about this topic?

Learning is more than graduating from high school; it is about becoming a "grad of life," learning every day. Our children are tremendous "how-to-ers" when it comes to devices and apps, but they need to translate that ability to reading and math, business and financial management, problem-solving in the community and workplace, and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. This summer encourage your child to read. Then, talk with your child about what was read. Sow the seeds for lifelong curiosity and continuous learning.

## Slow Dance

Have you ever watched kids on a merry-go-round?

Or listened to the rain slapping on the ground?

Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight?

Or gazed at the sun into the fading night?

***You better slow down. Don't dance so fast.***

***Time is short. The music won't last.***

Do you run through each day on the fly?

When you ask "How are you?"  
do you hear the reply?

When the day is done do you lie in your bed  
With the next hundred chores running through  
your head?

***You better slow down. Don't dance so fast.***

***Time is short. The music won't last.***

Ever told your child, "We'll do it tomorrow"?

And in your haste, not see his sorrow?

Ever lost touch, let a good friendship die  
Cause you never had time to  
call and say, "Hi"?

***You better slow down. Don't dance so fast.***

***Time is short. The music won't last.***

When you run so fast to get somewhere  
You miss half the fun of getting there.

When you worry and hurry through your day,  
It is like an unopened gift...thrown away.

***Life is not a race, do take it slower.***

***Hear the music, before the song is over.***

Unknown Author



## COLLEGE CHECKLIST:

### Emotional Preparation

Living in a tiny room with a stranger or two probably isn't something you've experienced before. But here's a secret: It's new for everyone else, too.

Here's how to get yourself emotionally ready for college:

- ⇒ Identify your goals (academic, social, personal).
- ⇒ List your personal beliefs and morals so you ensure that the choices you make in college align with who you are.
- ⇒ Know what activities recharge you and make plans to continue those at school by looking into groups and activities on or near campus. Check out student life pages on the college website and meetup groups in the local area.
- ⇒ Build your confidence by making a list of all your accomplishments. Get your friends and family to tell you something that they think is exceptional about you.
- ⇒ Spend one-on-one time with family members.
- ⇒ Spend one-on-one time with good friends.
- ⇒ Decide on how you'll communicate with friends and family while you're at school.
- ⇒ Take a spontaneous trip and experience what it's like to do something unexpected.
- ⇒ Plan how you'll continue to practice your religion/faith/spirituality away from home.
- ⇒ Know that you'll change because of your new experiences. Remember, sometimes change can feel uncomfortable, but that doesn't mean it's bad.

### Financial Preparation

If you've had a summer job or a part-time gig while in high school, you probably have some handle on financial planning. But moving away to college may be the first time in your life that you're making financial decisions on a daily basis on your own.

Living on a budget isn't impossible, but it's easier if you've done some planning before you head off on your own. Here's how to prep while you still have some support at home:

- ⇒ First off: figure out where your tuition money is coming from (scholarships, grants, work study, job, parents, savings, etc.).
- ⇒ Create your budget so necessary expenses are covered (books, car payments, insurance, etc.) and you know how much money is left over after expenses.
- ⇒ Decide on how much you'll spend on other necessities, like food and college costs (events, fees, etc.).
- ⇒ Use a banking or budgeting app to keep track of your spending.
- ⇒ Stick to your budget in the months leading up to college—remember, practice makes perfect!
- ⇒ Don't add to your budget every month if you have money left over. Put that money into savings and pretend it's not available.
- ⇒ Look at your bank statements each month.
- ⇒ If possible, see if your budget will allow you to start paying back loans while still in school.

Article taken in part from Nitro: <https://www.nitrocollege.com>



## Pell Grants Myths

Pell Grants are one of the most sought-after forms of financial aid. They are awarded by the federal government and can be worth up to \$5,815 annually. Yet, there is a lot of confusion about who qualifies and for how much.

### Let's bust the top five myths about Pell Grants.

**They are only for the neediest students.** It's true that Pell Grants are based on financial need but award isn't based *solely* on family income. It takes into account the cost of attendance—the estimate you find on college websites for everything from tuition to room and board.

Other factors include family income, the number of kids in college, and assets. Consequently, many middle class families can still qualify. The only form needed for the Pell Grant is [the FAFSA](#), and the big plus to filling this out is that it can lead to university grants and scholarships that can ultimately get you more money than the Pell Grant.

**Pell Grants are an all or nothing.** Yes, students could qualify for up to \$5,815, but they may also get \$500 or \$2,000. Any free money is good, right?

Plus, the flexibility in award amount is part of what makes it open to middle class families. Why? The formulas used to estimate family contribution may say a family's financial need warrants a \$2,000 award but not a \$5,815 award. If only the \$5,815 award were an option, many families would lose out on any Pell Grant funding.

**If you qualify once, you'll qualify every year.** Pell Grants are awarded based on your finances and cost of attendance for a given year. You must reapply every year.

Your eligibility may change for several reasons. For instance, your grades may have improved during college and more scholarships were awarded to you—eliminating your funding gap.

Or, perhaps your family's financial situation changed. If a parent lost a job or a family member became disabled, your eligibility may change.

### Pell Grants don't have financial-need exemptions.

Children of service members who died as a result of military service in Iraq or Afghanistan after the events of 9/11 may be eligible to receive the maximum Pell Grant amount, regardless of family income.

Article taken in part from Nitro: <https://www.nitrocollege.com>



# Cheap or Free Summer Activities for Kids!

## EDIBLE HOMEMADE PLAYDOUGH

Ingredients for Peanut Butter Play Dough Recipe.

- 3 Marshmallows
- 2 Tablespoons of Peanut Butter
- 1 Tablespoon of Powdered Sugar



Put marshmallows & peanut butter into a small dish & microwave for 10 seconds.

Stir the peanut butter & marshmallow together until smooth. Sprinkle powdered sugar onto the dough until it is no longer sticky.

If your dough is still sticky, you will want to sprinkle more on.

## MAKE IT YOURSELF, SIDEWALK CHALK ART



1 c. cornstarch

1 c. water

Mix

Add food coloring (the more the better)

- ✓ Jars for paint (baby food jars work great)
- ✓ Paint brushes
- ✓ Bowl of water (to wash out brushes)

The paint is watery-looking at first, but gets vibrant as it dries.

## FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT FUN!

1. Make popcorn and serve it in popcorn bags.
2. Make a sign announcing what is "Now Showing" and at what time.
3. Pretend ticket booth. Use a small table set up with paper tickets, play money, and a calculator or play cash register. Added bonus — sneak in a little learning about counting money or giving proper change.
4. Invite friends. Have each guest bring their favorite blanket, pillow, or stuffed friend.
5. Choose a movie the entire family will enjoy, or take turns selecting the flick so everyone has a chance to pick a favorite to watch together.



## MAKE YOUR OWN HOMEMADE FRUIT POPSICLES

There's nothing like enjoying homemade fruit popsicles on a hot day. The problem with the store-bought kind is that they typically contain high fructose corn syrup and artificial flavors. Not these! All popsicle recipes are 100 calories or less and made with only natural sweeteners!

- **Molds:** Popsicle making technology has impressively advanced. Companies have come up with smart gadgets. Consumers have also gotten impressively creative with shapes, characters, and even light sabers!
- **Fruit:** Puree naturally sweetened fruit with lemon or lime for some acidity to reduce the overly icy texture. Fruit juice such as orange, lemon, guava, grape or apple make the most reliable pops that tend to melt slower. A combination of puree and juice mixed also works to infuse different flavors. To add texture and visual appeal, you can chop small or thinly sliced pieces of fruit like watermelon, strawberry, mango, pineapple or kiwi.
- **Creamy Popsicles:** Adding yogurt for protein and probiotics for digestive health creates a natural creaminess that adds a smooth texture. Pureed bananas with the juice can also create a soft bite. Unsweetened coconut milk adds a creamy popsicle texture with subtle sweet flavor. Mixing or blending juice, whole fruit and something creamy also make for a consistently creamy popsicle.
- **Freeze Time:** Depending on the ingredients, at least 4 to 6 hours is needed to turn the parts from liquid to solid. Overnight freezing is the safest bet, and something to look forward to the next day!

Excerpt from 100 Summer Activities for Kids by Jordan Leigh Francis Page (AKA the "Fun Cheap or Free Queen")

For free or inexpensive summer activities for your children, go online to Parks and Recreation and include name of your city. Each city will have a **Parks & Recreation Summer Guide**. In the guide, you will find class & activity listings, registration dates, & additional information. If you have older children, there are also opportunities for summer employment. Each city has their own specific guide, so be sure to include city when you go online.

## Summer Safety Checklist for Kids

Summer means lots of kids will be playing outdoors, but it's important to keep a safety checklist in mind to keep kids safe while they're having fun. Here are some great tips to keep in mind for kids' safety.

### Guard Against Drowning

Each year, more than 830 children ages 14 and under die as a result of accidental drowning, and an average of 3,600 children are injured in near-drowning incidents. Between May and August, drowning deaths among kids increase by a whopping 89 percent. If you have a swimming pool or if your child will be near one, it is crucial to put multiple safety measures in place to keep kids safe.



### Pool Safety

- ◆ Put barriers around the pool to restrict access.
- ◆ Never leave kids unsupervised.
- ◆ Remember that drownings can happen silently.
- ◆ Learn CPR.
- ◆ Do not assume that a teen or relative will be watching.
- ◆ Learn about the dangers of secondary drowning, which can happen on dry land, hours after a child inhales water into the lungs.

**Apply sunscreen.** It can certainly be challenging to remember to apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outdoors. But that's exactly what you and your kids should do before heading outside, even on cloudy days (that's because UVA rays can go right through the clouds and still cause damage).

**Get some sun-protective clothing.** Dress your kids in hats in wide brims and tightly-woven cotton clothing or clothes that have SPF built-in (many kids' clothes, especially swimsuits, have sun protection in them nowadays).

**Shop for some cool shades.** Don't forget your child's eyes when you are out and about. Look for kids' sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays.

**Use insect repellents to guard against ticks, which can carry Lyme Disease, and mosquitoes, which can carry the West Nile Virus and other viruses.** Many repellents are made with DEET, an effective insecticide that is toxic or even potentially deadly if swallowed. If you do use a product containing DEET, it's crucial not to apply the product to a child's hands or face to avoid possible ingestion; it's also important to wash off the product before bed to prevent overexposure to the chemical. Another effective ingredient found in repellents is picaridin, but DEET is the most effective, and what doctors recommend (at 30 percent DEET concentrations) given the dangers posed by viruses such as West Nile.

### Prevent Dehydration

Whether your child is playing soccer with teammates or running around in the park with some buddies, it's important to keep in mind that frequent water breaks are very important to prevent dehydration. Your child should drink water before exercise and during breaks, which should be about every 15 to 20 minutes. On particularly hot and humid days, it's also a good idea for parents to spray down kids with some water from a spray bottle.

By Katherine Lee



Mark Your Calendar

DECEMBER 12-14  
**2019**  
Statewide Parental  
Involvement Conference

**San Marcos**  
Embassy Suites &  
Conference Center  
1001 E. McCarty Ln  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
**512.392.6450**

When booking a room go to  
[tinyurl.com/y2nln8kg](http://tinyurl.com/y2nln8kg)  
and use group code **PIC**

## ONLINE REGISTRATION

available at:

<http://www.implanners.com/parents/register.php>

or download and complete the registration form, then fax to (888) 267-7913—or email to [implanners@sbcglobal.net](mailto:implanners@sbcglobal.net).

## FUN THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP PREVENT SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

With summer almost here, and parents working hard to find a plan for their children to spend the next three months, we must consider how these children will continue to learn and not lose the knowledge they have gained the previous nine months in school. It is proven that if students are not engaged in learning over the summer, they lose skills in math and reading. For many young people without summer learning opportunities, this is one of the strongest contributors to gaps in achievement, high school graduation rates, and college and career success.

Simple things you can do at home to keep your children learning throughout the summer:

- 1) **Be present.** Just by being around your child you can model good behavior, and ensure they have a positive and healthy home environment that is conducive for learning.
- 2) **Take them places.** The zoo, a museum, the library, a park, a baseball game, anywhere at all! By getting them out of their environment you will expose them to new places, people, things, and words. It will encourage them to observe, investigate, and ask questions, and will keep their brains working.
- 3) **Read with them.** Find out what your child is interested in and encourage that by getting them books, magazines, and comic books on that subject. Visit your nearest library branch for free reading materials. If your child is only interested in comics, then encourage that. At least they are reading! If your child loves learning about dinosaurs, then load up on anything and everything related to dinosaurs. They are much more likely to read about something they are interested in.

Parent involvement during the summer can keep children from falling behind, help boost your student's achievement, strengthen their social skills and self-confidence, and help them do better in school.

Article taken in part from:  
<https://gwrymca.org/blogs/5-fun-things-parents-can-do-help-prevent-summer-learning-loss>

## Easy strategies that will help kick the summertime boredom out of the water.

Make an ultimate summer to-do list. It's so simple:

Get a piece of paper and some colorful markers. Making a list colorful is part of the fun.

Using the markers, let your child cover the paper with anything they want to do before summer ends. It can be a fun activity or just something on their to-do list that keeps being put off. Such as: hike to a waterfall, outdoor movie, learn to play a new sport, etc. Just put down whatever pops into their head! They can even prioritize by writing some things larger than others. And if there is something they'd like to do more than once throughout the summer, write it multiple times!

Hang the paper somewhere they will see it often. Think fridge, bedroom door, mirror, etc.

Start crossing off the list! Every time they find themselves not knowing what to do, they can head over to the list! Have them make it a goal to get as many things crossed off as possible.

Get excited! Whenever they cross something off, congratulate them. They're being productive and they should feel real good about that.

By the end of August they will be able to look at their paper full of colorful stripes and see how much they accomplished this summer! They'll have the pictures to show what an awesome summer they had, plenty for a 2019 summer break.





# Preparing for College: Tips for High School Students

College is an important investment in your future. The amount of time and effort you spend preparing for college can ease the transition and help you get more out of the experience. From proper time management to taking better notes, there are a few things you can work on while you are still in high school to prepare for the demands of college.



As a high school student, you may be evaluating which college you would like to attend after you graduate. While making a decision about where to go is vital to how your college experience will play out, there are many things that you can be doing to prepare for college in the meantime.

Developing good habits in high school will lead to good habits in college, and while a college degree is something that pays off, being properly equipped to handle university-level classes prior to entering college will contribute largely to the enjoyment you receive while studying at a university.

## **Begin the college search as early as possible**

Decide which characteristics are most important in a college (atmosphere, size, location, degree programs offered, career training, etc.) before making a decision about attending college. If possible, visit each of the college campuses you are interested in to get a feel for the campus and find out what student life is like. This will also give you an opportunity to meet with an admissions representative and ask questions.

## **Learn how to take notes**

If you are an organized, responsible student, the best way to grow is to develop your note-taking skills. The primary purpose of going to college is to learn proper training techniques and to become knowledgeable about your future career. When you go to class, your college has hired a professor who is an expert in their field for the sole purpose of providing valuable information that will help you in your future profession. Because of this, the notes you take on what the professor says will be fundamental to your success, both on exams and in your future career.

## **Discipline yourself**

Once you get to college, the temptation to slack may be hard to resist. Don't make the mistake of skipping too many classes or neglecting your study time. It can be very easy to fall behind. Make it a habit to attend every class – even when you don't feel like it – and adhere to your study schedule if you want to **do well in college**. If you miss several classes in a semester, you will miss out on valuable class material and may not complete the semester successfully.

## **Learn time management**

To avoid feeling overwhelmed by the college experience, you must learn to balance school, your social life, and any other obligations you have. Keep a calendar of all paper due dates and exam dates. Set aside a certain amount of time each day that you devote to uninterrupted studying. Sticking to a schedule can help you manage your time effectively without feeling overwhelmed.

## **Be prepared to do a lot of reading**

Prepare for numerous reading assignments when you enter college. Some instructors will expect you to complete a reading assignment before each class. In addition, expect to do a lot of reading when it's time to study for an exam. Learning how to read more efficiently by scanning the material for key points will help reduce the amount of time spent reading and help you retain more information.

## **Brush up on your studying skills**

Learn how to get the most out of your study time. Decide which study methods work best for you while you're still in high school and determine ways to study more efficiently. Perhaps flash cards work for you, or maybe you retain more information when you spend a brief amount of time on a topic before switching to a different topic. Be prepared to do more studying than ever before when you get to college.

<https://fremont.edu/preparing-for-college-tips-for-high-school-students/>

# The Only Parenting Advice You Really Need

## Abide by the three rules of homework.

1. "Eat the frog." That's shorthand for "Do the hardest thing first."
2. Put away the phone. Homework time can't be totally tech-free (computers, alas, are often a necessary evil), but it can at least be free of text messages.
3. As soon as assignments are finished, load up the backpack for tomorrow and place it by the door. This is a clear three-step process that kids can internalize, so there's less nagging from you.

**Memorize the acronym H.A.L.T.** Tantrums often happen because the thrower is: **H**ungry, **A**gitated, **L**onely, or **T**ired.

**Plan not-so-random acts of kindness.** Kids need to know that helping others is an everyday practice, not a visit-a-soup-kitchen-at-the-holidays grand gesture. Challenge yours to complete small tasks every week, like throwing away another kid's trash at lunch or raking a neighbor's lawn. Training your children to focus on others helps curb entitlement.

**Don't pay your kids to clean their rooms.** If you give them a buck to make their beds, then when you ask them to help you carry in the groceries, they'll say, 'How much? Why would I do that for free when you pay me to make my bed? You can give your child an allowance as an introduction to money management and possibly for overall good behavior. But don't tie it dollar-for-dollar to everyday chores.

**To get little kids to be quiet, lower your voice instead of raising it.** This forces kids to focus. Got a whole pack to corral? Whisper, "If you want to hear what we're doing next, hop on one foot." Goofy jumping is bound to be contagious.

**Put on your own oxygen mask first.** In other words, take care of yourself or you can't be a fully engaged parent. Parents who deprive themselves of rest, food, and fun for the sake of their kids do no one a favor. "People feel guilty when they work a lot, so they want to give all their free time to their kids. But you risk getting squeezed dry and emotionally exhausted."

Taken in part from *Real Simple*: <https://www.realsimple.com/work-life/family/kids-parenting/only-parenting-advice-you-really-need>



## TEA Copyright

Copyright © Notice. The materials are copyrighted © and trademarked ™ is the property of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and may not be reproduced without the express written permission of TEA, except under the following conditions:

1. Texas public school districts, charter schools, and Education Service Centers may reproduce and use copies of the Materials and Related Materials for the districts' and schools' educational use without obtaining permission from TEA.
2. Residents of the state of Texas may reproduce and use copies of the Materials and Related Materials for individual personal use only without obtaining written permission of TEA.
3. Any portion reproduced must be reproduced in its entirety and remain unedited, unaltered and unchanged in any way.
4. No monetary charge can be made from the reproduced materials or any document containing them; however, a reasonable charge to cover only the cost of reproduction and distribution may be charged.

Private entities or persons located in Texas that are not Texas public school districts, Texas Education Service Centers, or Texas charter schools or any entity, whether public or private, educational or non-educational, located outside the state of Texas MUST obtain written approval from TEA and will be required to enter into a license agreement that may involve the payment of a licensing fee or a royalty.

For information contact: Texas Education Agency, 1701 N. Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701-1494;

email: [copyrights@tea.texas.gov](mailto:copyrights@tea.texas.gov).

## The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

Home & School

"Together We Can Make a Difference"

The Parent and Family Engagement Connection is posted on our website four times a year for parents and educators of Texas. This newsletter is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, German and Korean.



### EDITOR

**Terri Stafford, Coordinator**  
**Parent and Family Engagement**  
**Statewide Initiative**



### ADMINISTRATION

Ray Cogburn, Executive Director  
Region 16 Education Service Center  
5800 Bell Street - Amarillo, Texas 79109  
Phone: (806) 677-5000 Fax: (806) 677-5167  
[www.esc16.net](http://www.esc16.net)



Cory Green, Associate Commissioner  
Department of Contracts,  
Grants and Financial Administration  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 N. Congress Avenue - Austin, Texas 78701  
Phone: (512) 463-9734  
[www.tea.texas.gov](http://www.tea.texas.gov)