



Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork Interactive Homework

TIPS-Transitions: Prepare for the Transition to High School

Four interactive homework assignments enable students in grade 8 to conduct a conversation with a parent or family partner about their hopes and dreams for success in high school. Students and a family partner will discuss the importance of:

- Good Attendance
- Course Passing
- Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Success in High School

A teacher or counselor of students in Grade 8 will prepare students to conduct the conversation at home and follow up with a class discussion when the assignment is due. For teachers of students in Grade 8.

See the guide for teachers and the four activities, below.

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**Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork
Interactive Homework**

TIPS-Transitions: Preparing for the Transition to High School

Directions for Teachers, Counselors, and Leaders of Family and Community Engagement

TIPS-Transitions Interactive Homework Activities guide 8th grade students to conduct conversations with a family partner to prepare for the transition to high school.

Attached are 4 *TIPS-Transitions* activities. The activities focus on how to succeed in high school with family support for (1) having good attendance, (2) passing every course, (3) earning good report card grades (for a cumulative Grade Point Average-GPA), and (4) thinking about long-term goals and interests in high school.

Teachers or counselors who meet with 8th grade students may make the assignments and discuss the topics in class. Each school will decide which teachers or counselors will incorporate *TIPS-Transitions* into their units of work with all students who are moving on to high school.

The four activities are in PDF format to print copies for students to complete at home. These may be turned into WORD files and shortened, enriched, or revised by teachers to meet their needs.

We recommend that teachers or counselors:

- Print each activity on light-colored paper on 2 sides of one page. Distribute to 8th grade students. Use the same colored paper each week to identify the activities as a set.
- Assign one activity per week for 4 weeks for students to discuss with a parent or family partner at home. Ask students to write in the due date and sign their names on the letter to parents.
- Encourage students to discuss the activities with a parent or family partner in their home language. The students will complete the written work on each activity in English.
- Treat the assignments as regular homework for all students to complete. Reinforce that you (the teacher) want them to conduct each activity with a parent or family partner.
- Give students at least 2 days to find time to talk with a parent or family partner, or assign the activity over the weekend.

We suggest that teachers or counselors:

- Take 5 minutes in class when assigning TIPS to introduce each topic and its importance for success in high school. Point out the sections where students will discuss the topic with a parent or family partner. Check for students' questions.
- Take 5 minutes on the due date for each assignment to discuss students' ideas and questions about high school, their families' reactions to the activity, and your expectations for their success.
- Collect and give students credit for completing the activity with a family partner.

TIPS-Transitions activities help students and their families think and talk together about important factors for success in high school.¹ The activities aim to help parents see that they will remain important partners in their children's education through high school. The discussions also help students learn that they will have family support for their work in high school, starting in grade 9.

¹ Epstein, J. L., Mac Iver, D. J., Mac Iver, M. A., & Sheldon, S. B. (2020, under review). *Interactive Homework to Engage Parents with Students on the Transition from Middle to High school*. Preprint available on request.

TIPS-Transitions activities are part of collaborative grant R305H150081 to Johns Hopkins University from the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, to improve school, family, and community partnerships as student transition from the middle grades to high school.

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Absences Add Up

Dear Parent or Family Partner,

I am learning about high school and what I can do to make sure that I graduate on time. Attending school every day helps a lot. I hope you enjoy this activity with me. This assignment is due _____.

Sincerely,

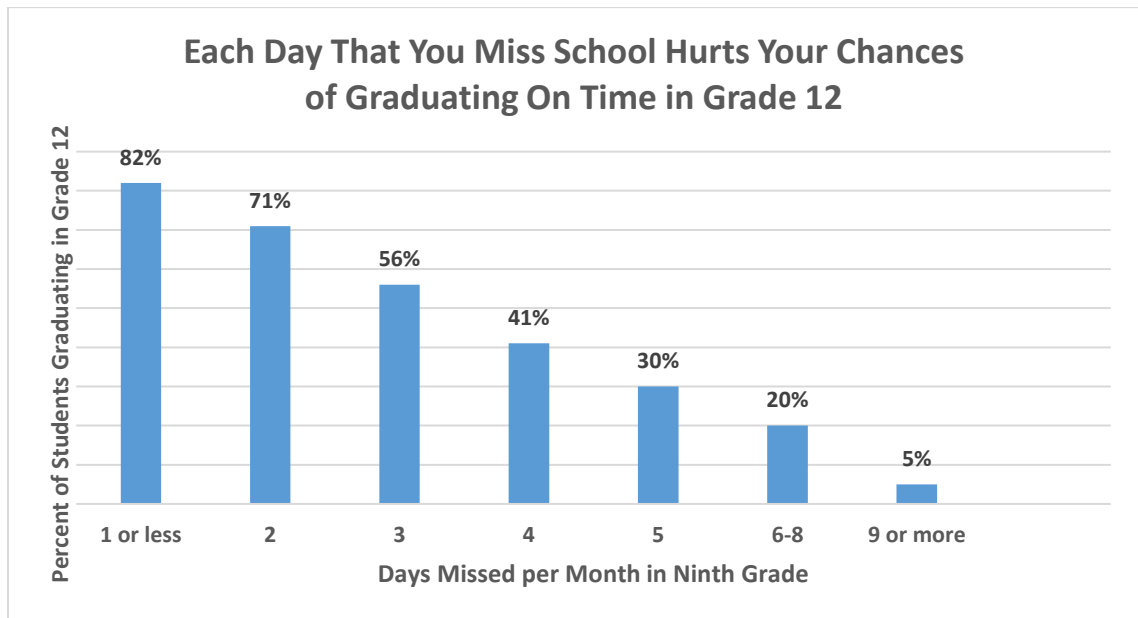
Student Signature

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

If you graduate on time from high school, you will have a better chance to prepare for the college or career that you really want.

PROCEDURE

With a family partner to look over the graph. Who is working with you? _____



The graph reports data from students in a big city in the U.S. Data from other cities show similar trends. You can see that students' good attendance in grade 9 increased their chances of graduating from high school on time when they completed grade 12.

Talk with your family partner about the information in the graph.

Check all of the statements that you and your family partner agree are shown in the graph.

- Ninth graders who miss even two days of school per month are less likely to graduate from high school on time at the end of grade 12.**
- Ninth graders who miss just one day of school a month are two times more likely to graduate on time than students who miss four days a month.**
- Fewer than one third of the ninth graders who miss five days of school a month graduate on time.**
- [Something else:] _____**

TEXT MESSAGES FROM A MENTOR

Some schools provide some ninth graders with a mentor to help them succeed in high school. The mentor is usually a volunteer who communicates regularly with a student. **Pretend that YOU are mentoring 3 students during their first year in high school.**



Below are descriptions of the 3 students. Read each one aloud to your family partner. Then, check the graph on page 1 to see what the data say about the likely outcome of the student's attendance habits.

Together, create a text message to send to each student. YOU write the message that you and your family partner agree on. For example, you might write a message to warn, encourage, inspire, or offer to assist the student.

Student 1. This ninth-grader often skips school on rainy days and Mondays. She is absent about 5 days a month. What message will you send to this student?

Student 2. This ninth-grader comes to school every day. He was absent just one day in the first semester when he had the stomach flu. What message will you send to this student?

Student 3. This ninth-grader misses about 2 days of school per month. That adds up to 18 days across the whole school year. What message will you send to this student?

TWEET IT!

***Every Student, Every Day* is a project to improve student attendance across the country. Let's say that the leaders asked YOU to send a message about attendance to all students entering high school. Using the graph on page 1 and the ideas you discussed with your family partner, write a TWEET to tell 9th grade students about the importance of attendance (up to 140 characters including letters, spaces, and punctuation).**

HOME-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Dear Parent or Family Partner,
Please give your reactions to this activity. Write **YES** or **NO** for each statement.

1. _____ My teen understood the homework and was able to discuss it.
2. _____ My teen and I enjoyed the activity.
3. _____ This assignment helped us talk about the importance of attendance in grade 9 and in high school.

Comment: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Destination Graduation: STAY IN THE PASSING LANE

Dear Parent or Family Partner,

We are learning what to do in Grade 9 to stay on schedule to graduate from high school on time. I hope you enjoy this activity with me. This assignment is due _____.

Sincerely,

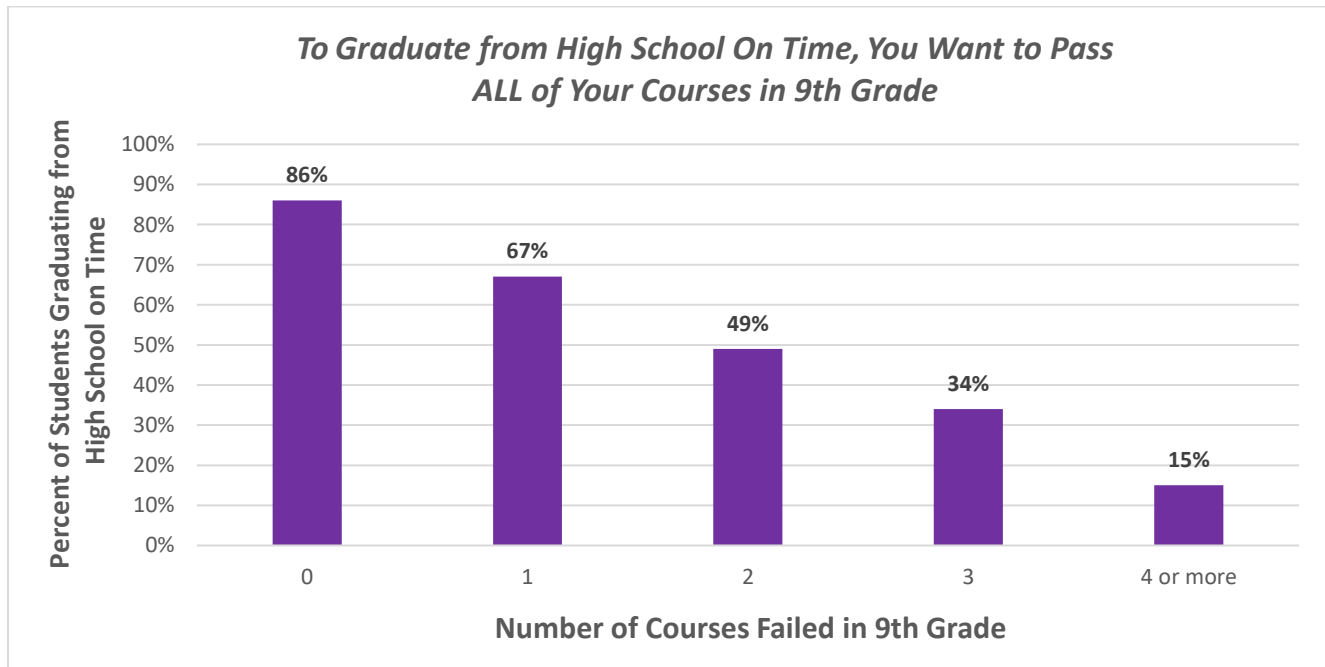
Student Signature

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Most students have wonderful memories of their high school graduation ceremony—they entered the auditorium to the tune of *Pomp and Circumstance* with the other members of their class after four years of work and walked across the stage to receive their diplomas.
- Passing every course in grade 9 is the best path to on-time graduation. Failing even one course can delay this important achievement.

PROCEDURE

With a family partner, look over the graph below. Who is working with you? _____



Note. These data are from a city in the eastern U.S. Data from other cities show similar trends.

Talk with your family partner about the information in the graph. YOU write sentences on 2 facts that you and your family partner think are interesting and important.

1. _____

2. _____



EXCERPTS OF FACEBOOK POSTS BY HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

During May and June of their senior year, students often experience strong emotions and share them with their friends on *Facebook*. Depending on the student's situation, it can be a time of elation, a time of anxiety, or a time of frustration and regret.

Below are excerpts from two real *Facebook* posts from high school seniors. **Only part of each post is given. With your family partner, read and discuss these messages.** After reading the post aloud and talking about it with your family partner, **YOU** write the rest of the post to show what you and your family partner agree on what each student might have said.

Ben's Post: *June – The month most seniors live for. The end of one life and the beginning of another. My high school years end next week. I'll have my last few lessons, clear out my locker, say my final goodbyes to classmates and teachers, and then walk across that stage and get my diploma. Some people think that graduating from high school is just a tiny chapter in life, but to me . . .*

When I think about graduating from high school, I _____

Avery's Post. *I am not graduating with my Class. It feels weird seeing all my Classmates posting on *Facebook* about graduation. I need to retake and pass one more Class in summer school to get my diploma. Then, I plan to*

My sister starts high school next year. My advice to her is _____

HOME-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Dear Parent or Family Partner,

Please give me your reactions to this activity. Write YES or NO for each statement.

1. _____ My teen understood the homework and was able to discuss it.
2. _____ My teen and I enjoyed the activity.
3. _____ This assignment helped us talk about the importance of passing all courses starting in 9th grade.

Comment: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

GAINING POWERFUL ADVANTAGE with a GOOD GPA

Dear Parent or Family Partner,

We are learning about high school and how doing well in 9th grade and having a good Grade Point Average (GPA) is important for my future in high school and beyond. I hope you enjoy this activity with me. This assignment is due _____.

Sincerely,

Student Signature

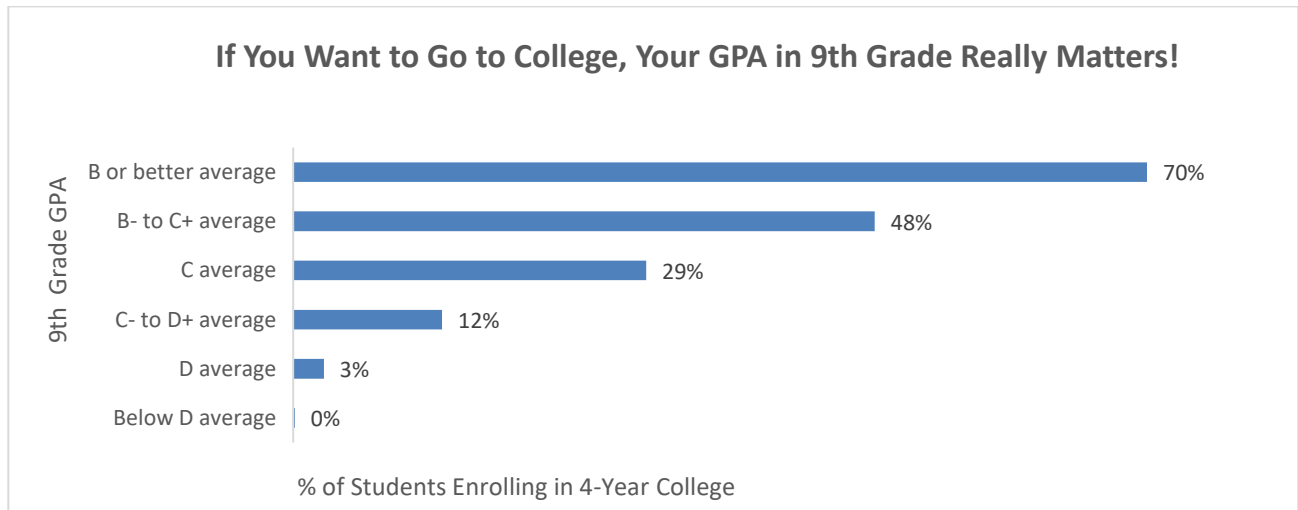
PROCEDURE

1. Pretend you have a cousin named Cary who is in 8th grade, but will soon enter high school. Cary wants to go to a 4-year college to prepare for a high-paying career. Unfortunately, Cary recently developed the habit of skipping some classes and assignments. As a result, he had low grades on his last report card.

Carefully examine the data in the chart below with a family partner.

Who is working with you? _____

The graph displays real data from a big city showing the percentage of 9th graders who went on to graduate from high school and entered a 4-year college, based on their average report card grades (Grade Point Average-GPA) in 9th grade.



FAMILY DISCUSSION

Look over the graph and discuss the following questions with your family partner. YOU write an answer to each question that you and your family partner agree is true.

1. **To have a good chance of making it into a 4-year college, what Grade Point Average (GPA) does a 9th grader need to earn?**

2. **What data in the graph would convince a student who is satisfied with earning a C average to exert greater effort to improve these grades?**

TRY THIS

E-mailing Cary: You plan to e-mail Cary to explain why it is important to earn good grades in all of his 9th grade courses. **Talk with your family partner and plan what you might say.**

A. Write down two main points that you want to make in your e-mail to Cary.

- _____
- _____

B. Now, YOU write your e-mail to Cary. Make a strong argument that explains why he must earn good grades in 9th grade if he wants to go to college. Include **at least one fact from the graph on page 1 to persuade him to put forth the effort needed to meet his goals.** State clearly one or two actions you think that Cary should take to improve his grades. Then, summarize your argument in a concluding sentence.

From: (your name) _____

To: Cary

Subject: So, you want to go to college!



Check your work. Circle YES or NO on each line.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| a. Did you tell Cary why you are e-mailing him? | YES | NO |
| b. Did you give details to support your ideas? | YES | NO |
| c. Do you have a concluding sentence? | YES | NO |
| d. Did you proofread your spelling and look up difficult words? | YES | NO |
| e. Did you check your punctuation? | YES | NO |

C. Read your e-mail aloud to your family partner.

ASK: How can I make this e-mail more persuasive?

YOU: Write the suggestion(s) here:

HOME-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Dear Parent or Family Partner,

Please give me your reactions to this activity. Write YES or NO for each statement.

1. _____ My teen understood the homework and was able to discuss it.
2. _____ My teen and I enjoyed the activity.
3. _____ This assignment helped us learn about the importance of the GPA in high school starting in 9th grade.

Comment: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

ready. set.
go!  **ON TO HIGH SCHOOL**

Dear Parent or Family Partner,

We are learning about how high school is different from the middle grades and how to plan for success in grade 9. I hope you enjoy this activity with me. This assignment is due _____

Sincerely,

 Student Signature

FAMILY DISCUSSION—GO for the GOAL!

Many things are different in high school from the middle grades. With some good ideas and clear plans, you will be ready to succeed in high school.

Talk with a family partner about your goals in high school. **Who is working with you?** _____

For each goal listed below, YOU write one idea of your own. Read your statement to your family partner. Ask your family partner for one idea of how he/she will help you reach that goal. YOU write that response.

1. **In high school, attendance is very important.** If you miss class time, you will miss a lesson and it is hard to “catch up.” What is your plan for regular, on-time attendance?



My idea:

ASK your family partner: How will you help me meet my goal for good attendance in grade 9?

2. **In high school, passing your courses is very important.** If you fail a course, you will not have the credits you need to graduate from high school on time and with your friends. You will be more likely to pass if you attend class every day, do your homework, and study for tests. What is YOUR plan to pass your courses?



My idea:

ASK your family partner: How will you help me meet my goal to pass my courses in grade 9?

3. **In high school, it is fun to participate in activities that interest you—such as sports, music, art, drama, community service, or other clubs.** You will meet new friends, build your talents, and have some great experiences. **What is your plan for participating in extra-curricular activities?**



My idea:

ASK your family partner: How will you help me meet my goal to participate in activities that interest me?



PREDICT THE FUTURE

Next year is the start of something **big**. You will be a freshman in grade 9. Then, you will move on to grades 10, 11, and 12 and will graduate from high school. The path to graduation starts in grade 9 with a plan for success.



Take a look into the future.

1. What do you want to accomplish in Grade 9?

In grade 9, I predict that I will accomplish the following: _____

Read your prediction to your family partner.
ASK: Look into the future. How will you help me succeed in grade 9?

2. Why do you want to graduate from high school on time?

I predict that I will graduate from high school on time because I want to _____

Read your prediction to your family partner.
ASK: Look into the future. How will you help me graduate from high school on time?

HOME-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Dear Parent or Family Partner,

Please give your reactions to this activity. Write **YES** or **NO** for each statement.

- 1. _____ My teen understood the homework and was able to discuss it.
- 2. _____ My teen and I enjoyed the activity.
- 3. _____ This assignment helped me think about how I can help my student succeed in grade 9 and beyond.

Comment: _____

Parent Signature: _____

