

# STAND UP

## **PARENT TOOL KIT**

Young people need a quality education to succeed in today's demanding global economy. Here are some steps you can take to STAND UP and ensure your teenager thrives in high school and beyond.

## KNOW THE FACTS

America's young people are our nation's single greatest resource. Yet many communities find themselves struggling to provide young people with the learning environments they need to succeed. Here are some ways to find out about the quality of your child's school:

**VISIT WEBSITES LIKE [SCHOOLMATTERS.COM](https://www.schoolmatters.com)**

Here you'll be able to find valuable and detailed information about your school's graduation rate and test scores. You can compare your school to other schools. You can even compare school districts on a regional and national level.

**ATTEND LOCAL PTA AND SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS**

Simply going to meetings lets teachers and administrators know that you care about quality education and will hold them accountable. Learn about your child's school to make sure your child is learning.

## TALK TO YOUR CHILD

It may seem obvious, but talking with your teenagers about high school is one of the very best ways to judge the quality of education they are getting. Establishing this dialogue will reveal many telling details of their experience as well as give you an opportunity to stress the importance of education in your home. Make sure they understand the connection between education and their future. Some good questions to raise are:

**DO THEY KNOW WHAT THEY WANT TO DO?**

If so, do they have a mentor, guidance counselor or teacher who is helping them understand the courses and extracurricular activities they need to succeed in their area of interest?

If not, do they have a mentor, guidance counselor or teacher who is helping them decide what they might want to do and preparing them for success in college?

**DO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ASPIRE TO GO TO COLLEGE? AND IF SO, ARE THEY ON TRACK?**

**SPECIFICALLY:** Do they know the course requirements for your state's colleges? Are they preparing for entrance exams like the SAT and ACT?

## TALK TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHERS

As your child's mentors and educators, teachers can give you critical information about the success of his or her education. Here are some important questions to ask your teachers:

- IS MY CHILD PERFORMING AT GRADE LEVEL IN ENGLISH, MATH, AND READING?
- MY CHILD IS NOT PERFORMING AT GRADE LEVEL, WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IN THE SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY IS AVAILABLE?
- IS MY CHILD ON TRACK TO GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL?
- IF SO, IS MY CHILD PREPARED FOR COLLEGE SO THAT HE OR SHE WON'T NEED TO TAKE REMEDIAL COURSES? Specifically, has my child taken the English, math, lab-based science, social studies and foreign language courses required for entrance to most public colleges?
- IF NOT, WHAT OPTIONS AND RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP MY CHILD?

## LEARN TO NAVIGATE THE SYSTEM

Help your child through the school system by understanding what the high school options in your community are. Using resources at [www.schoolmatters.com](http://www.schoolmatters.com) is a great way to find the high school that is best suited to your child's needs. It is also good practice for the type of research and preparation you'll want to instill in your children as they move towards college. For example:

- Starting with freshman year, help your teenager plan for life after high school. Visit a local college with your child early on so he or she can see the possibilities. It is also a good idea to help them connect with someone who works in the career they want to pursue.
- By junior and senior year, you should be visiting specific campuses of interest and identifying key dates and deadlines such as ACT/SAT application and test days, college application deadlines, financial aid deadlines, recommendation letters and essay due dates.

## DEMAND HIGH-QUALITY HIGH SCHOOLS

STAND UP for your rights. Vote in federal, state and local elections. Demand that your elected officials support academic rigor, relevant coursework and more personalized learning environments that better prepare students for the challenges of college and work. Every single letter, email or call to your local school board member, state legislator or Governor has an impact. Your vote and your voice are powerful tools for change that these elected officials simply can't ignore.

## CONNECT WITH ORGANIZATIONS ALREADY WORKING TO IMPROVE HIGH SCHOOLS

You are not alone. Activist groups and citizen leaders are already uniting like-minded Americans to advance this important cause. Here is a list of some larger organizations likely already working for change in your area:

- **AMERICA'S PROMISE:** America's Promise is an alliance that brings together communities, individuals, companies and organizations from all sectors to improve the odds for children and youth. [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org)
- **COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS:** Communities In Schools National is an anchor to the nation's leading community-based organization helping young people stay in school and prepare for life. [www.cisnet.org](http://www.cisnet.org)
- **HIGH SCHOOL ALLIANCE:** The National High School Alliance is a partnership of nearly 50 organizations representing a diverse cross-section of perspectives and approaches, but sharing a common commitment to promoting the excellence, equity and development of high school-age youth. [www.hsalliance.org](http://www.hsalliance.org)
- **JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT:** In partnership with business and educators, Junior Achievement uses hands-on experiences to open students' minds to their potential. [www.ja.org](http://www.ja.org)

## START A STAND UP MOVEMENT

It's surprisingly easy to get others interested in such an important cause. Start by simply talking to friends and family about the schools in your area. You'll be amazed at how good it feels to be making even a small difference in your community. Just by talking to people, you can create your own group of citizen activists. With your help these meager roots can grow into a significant force of change in your area's school districts. Here is a short plan of suggested actions to get you started:

- ATTEND LOCAL PTA AND SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS** [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) to give members information about the STAND UP movement.
- MAKE A LIST OF THE ORGANIZATIONS YOU BELONG TO** - including employers, faith-based institutions, and others. Find out what they are doing to improve schools in your community. Urge them to do more.
- ORGANIZE A LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN** to elected officials urging them to support the STAND UP movement. Send a letter to the editor of your local paper emphasizing the need to prepare all our young people for the future.
- GENERATE A LIST OF KEY CHANGES** that need to be made in your community and schools to ensure more students are prepared for the future.
- BRAINSTORM A LIST OF ACTIVITIES** like meetings, community events and letter-writing campaigns that may influence opinion on one or more of the key changes you identified.
- PUT TOGETHER A CALENDAR OF COMMUNITY EVENTS** where you may reach parents and other community members to deliver your message. Good examples are fairs, conferences and high school sports events.
- DEVELOP A PROJECT LIST TO MANAGE YOUR PROJECTS.** You'll be able to keep track of what you've done and what you're going to do. You'll have a record of what worked and what didn't.
- SHARE YOUR SUCCESSES WITH THE REST OF US.** Email us at [success@standup.org](mailto:success@standup.org) and we will feature the most inspiring stories of people everywhere standing up for a better future.