

The importance of 10th grade

The importance of loving help from adults

Important things to know about— Making the most of the 10th grade

- What to expect from 10th graders.
- Ten tasks of teens.
- Parents still matter!
- Opportunities for earning college credit.

What's going on with your 10th grader?

OK, take a deep breath and relax a little, because 10th grade should be easier than 9th grade. Your child learned how to get around in high school, get to classes, understand how high school works, made some new friends, and found a place to fit in. Tenth graders are more relaxed and more outgoing, too. They are in an “expansion mode” when their bodies, intellects, emotions, and spirits take big leaps forward. The chart on the back describes some of the things you can expect in the next two years.

Mostly, you can expect *change*. Some educators compare 10th graders to quicksilver, because they are constantly re-evaluating some of the choices they made:

Did I really do my best in school?

If I want to go to college, will I have to work harder?

Am I going to make it on the sports team, in the band, or in drama?

Are my friends really the kind of friends I want to have?

Your 10th grader may change friends, quit some activities and join others, take up a new cause, or decide that they really like a subject that used to be hard for them. These are big decisions and a very necessary part of growing up. Teens need to find meaning in their lives and get committed to interests they can follow into satisfying careers.

Whatever you do, don't just let them “float” through 10th grade. Help them find themselves and what's important to them, so they stay committed to growing and learning.

A Harvard School of Public Health project on parenting adolescents cited the following ten tasks that teens need to accomplish if they are to become successful, independent adults.

1. Learning to adjust to sexually maturing bodies.
2. Establishing the key parts of their personality.
3. Developing and applying abstract thinking processes.
4. Learning to understand complicated human relationships and how to put themselves in others' shoes.
5. Applying new decision-making skills to schoolwork, family, and friends, and learning how to resolve conflicts.
6. Identifying moral standards, values, and belief systems.
7. Understanding and expressing more complicated emotions, and learning how NOT to act out of emotions, but learn what they want or need, decide, and then act.
8. Forming relationships that are deeper, closer, and more supportive.
9. Taking on increasingly mature roles and responsibilities.
10. Renegotiating relationships with parents—balancing independence with deep connections.

A. Rae Simpson, Ph.D. *Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and Foundation for Action*. 2001.

It's quite an impressive list isn't it? As one educator put it: *They are so busy becoming people, that it is a wonder they learn anything in school!* But they do learn, and somehow their growing bodies, emotions, spirits, and intellects learn to work together as they progress through high school. ***But not without constant loving, loving, loving support from parents, other adult family members, church and community organizations, and educators working together to help them make the right decisions and stay on the right path.***

Taking a bite out of college tuition costs while still in high school

One big job for high schoolers and their parents is to look ahead to life after high school. For many students, that means two- or four-year colleges—*if* they have good skills and good work habits.

Many school districts offer ways that students can get college credit while they are still in high school. These programs are great in at least two ways. First, some of them can provide mental challenge for students who are feeling a little ho-hum in regular high-school classes. Second, and most important for any family worried about the high price of college, the college credit comes at little or no cost to the high schooler's family.

Advanced Placement—after completing an AP class at the high school, students can take a test and may earn college credits in that subject. AP classes are high level, so students need high skills going in. There's a fee for taking each test.

College in the High School—qualified students earn both high school and college credit for successfully finishing certain enriched and challenging classes at the high school. Students need high skills. There is a per-credit fee which is about half what it would cost at the college.

Running Start—qualified juniors and seniors can earn both high school and college credits for classes they take at local community colleges. There is an application process to complete, and students have to take an assessment/placement test. Students pay for their labs, books, and transportation to the college.

Tech Prep—after HS graduation, students can get community/technical college (CTC) credit for certain professional and technical classes taken at the high school. Students must earn a B or better in their HS Tech Prep class and then must apply to the CTC and take sealed HS transcripts to the college.

Ask your high school counselor which programs are available at your school. More importantly, ask your child: *Do you know about these free college classes? Are you working hard enough in school to qualify? Do you know how much money you could save? Do you know how much time in college you would save?* Tell them: *I want you to work hard and take advantage of these opportunities!*

DEVELOPMENTAL OVERVIEW OF THE HIGH-SCHOOL YEARS

	10th Grade	11th Grade
Physical	Boys are beginning to catch up. Anything within normal is OK; anything not normal is terrible. Boys are concerned with "bulking up." Girls are concerned with body image and may start to develop eating disorders. Lots of sexual energy.	Boys are caught up in physical maturity. Lots of sexual energy. Body image is a major concern for both boys and girls. Everyone becoming more relaxed—in fact, working hard at being relaxed.
Mental / Academic	Getting into the swing of HS schoolwork. Still unsure about how to relate to adults. <i>How much does schoolwork really matter to me?</i>	Feeling internal and external pressures about this year and about the future (college? career?) <i>What will happen to me after high school? Who is making these decisions, anyway?</i>
Social	Social groups shifting—natural groupings vs. shared interests. Decisions about joining groups (e.g., "party scene"). <i>I have people to hang out with, but are they real friends? What group am I part of/do I want to be part of?</i>	Changing relationships with adults and authority figures. More serious experimentation. Strong desire for closer friends. HS social scene is getting a little boring.
Friendships	Concern about friends and friendships. Friends increasingly important as family relationships shift. <i>Life would be super if only I had a boyfriend/girlfriend.</i>	Close friendships are changing and/or deepening. <i>Life would be super if only I had a boyfriend/girlfriend.</i>
Personal Identity	Concern about identity, especially sexuality. Extreme self-consciousness. <i>Who am I, other than not my parents? Am I in charge of myself? Do I like what I am?</i>	Idealistic. Stronger sense of self, but it is fragile and changes rapidly. High expectations for self, lots of "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts" and some guilt at not meeting own standards. Strong sexuality.
Family Relationships	Can't wait to get driver's license. Starting serious re-negotiation of parent's roles. Much more talking with friends about parent and family issues.	Driving more, experimenting with new behaviors more. Want to be seen as grown up and responsible. Serious questioning of parents and their choices. <i>Why can't you treat me like I'm an adult?</i>

Based on Michael Riera, Ph.D., *Uncommon Sense for Parents with Teenagers*, 2004.