



to Prepare Your Teens for College and Work

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

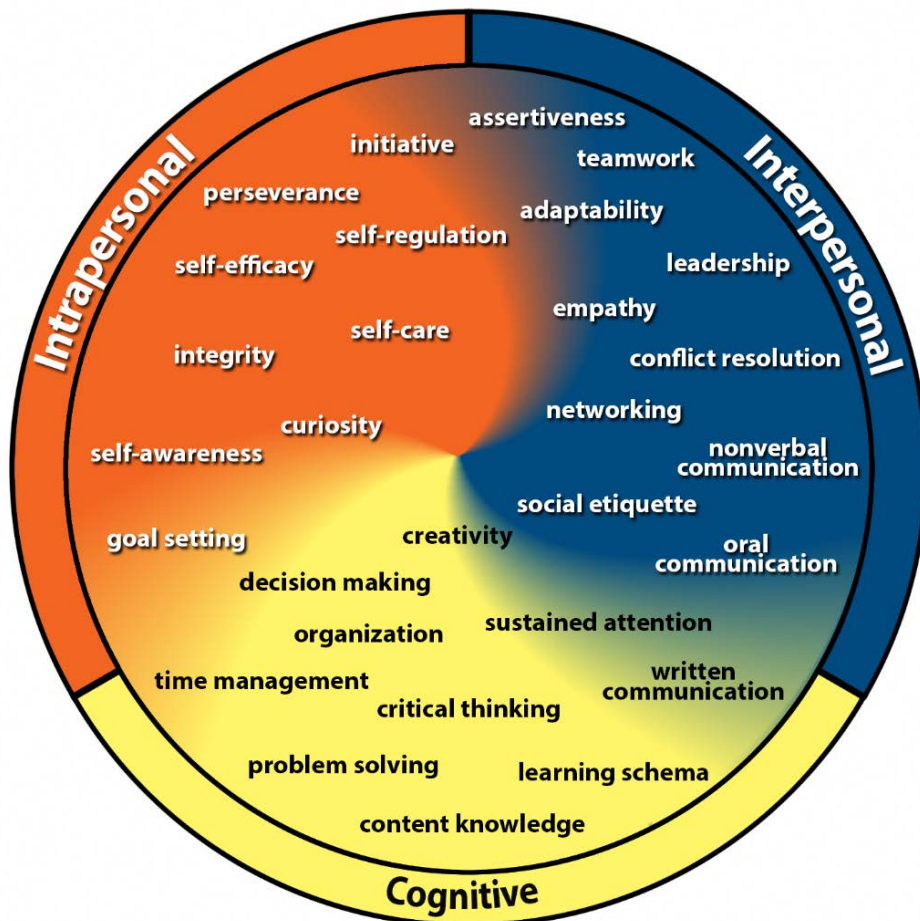
Why do some high school graduates do well in college or the workplace while others do not? As families, how can we help our teens succeed? Education and business leaders are saying that **intrapersonal** (internal), **interpersonal** (social) and **cognitive** (academic) skills are all equally important for a successful life after high school. To experience success, our teens need to develop all three types of these skills or competencies.

Collectively, these intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competencies can be referred to as college and career competencies. College and career competencies help students to better organize their days, manage their work schedules, double-check that they are getting tasks completed, seek support when needed, resolve conflicts, and read social situations to interact appropriately.

School staff work to teach college and career competencies in a purposeful way so that students develop these skills. Teaching these competencies in the classroom is not enough and families play a major role in developing these skills outside of school.

Is your teen developing college and career competencies?

College and Career Competency Wheel



Gaumer Erickson, A.S., Soukup, J.H., & Noonan, P. (2013). *College & Career Competency Wheel*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning. Derived in part from Pellegrino, J.W., & Hilton, M.L. (Eds.). (2012) *Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.



To develop college and career competencies, teens need to practice them at home. Schools and families can partner to teach, practice, and reinforce college and career competencies at school, at home, and in the community. The following is a list of strategies that can be practiced at home in order to develop college and career competencies in your teen:

- 1 Ask your teen to predict his or her grade on several exams. Then discuss with your teen the actual grade vs. the predicted grade. Discuss why the prediction was successful or not successful. If your teen predicts a bad grade (e.g., “I’ll be lucky if I get a C on...”), ask why he or she thinks that. For an upcoming project or test, ask the teen what success would look like. This helps build **self-awareness** and **self-efficacy** (i.e., belief in your ability to achieve goals and meet expectations).
- 2 When your teen needs your help with issues like a broken phone, car repair, or navigating a purchase, let him or her take the lead and attempt to solve issues with as little support from you as possible. Encourage researching issues online, asking for help, using active listening skills, and expressing questions and concerns throughout the process. Provide feedback on observed strengths and let him or her make mistakes as s/he attempts to solve the issue. This builds **problem solving** and **assertiveness**.
- 3 Explain to your teen that intelligence is not fixed, but can be grown with persistence. If your teen tells you that he or she can’t do something or isn’t good at it (e.g., “I will never be good at math”), ask why s/he thinks that. Talk about the brain as a muscle that grows stronger with exercise. Don’t reinforce this self-concept with statements like, “I know, I was never good at math” or “our family is good at a lot of things but math isn’t one of them.” Reinforcing the concept that ability can grow builds **self-efficacy**, which helps the teen take on and master challenges.
- 4 Ask what your teen’s top goals are for the quarter, the summer, or a class. The goal could be getting a position on a sports team, getting a role in a play, or getting a part-time job. Ask your teen what s/he thinks the biggest hurdle will be to achieving the goal. Brainstorm with your teen ways to address any hurdles. This helps ensure that **goals** are teen-centered, which makes it more likely that your teen will **persevere** in trying to accomplish them.
- 5 Don’t admonish or criticize your teen if he or she isn’t successful at accomplishing something. Instead, ask why s/he thinks s/he wasn’t successful and what s/he would do differently. This helps reinforce **self-regulation** by getting your teen to reflect on why something didn’t work and identify strategies that might work next time.
- 6 If your teen is complaining about conflict with a teacher, peer, or sibling, ask why s/he thinks the other person is acting the way that they are. Ask the teen how s/he reacted during the conflict, and what s/he wanted to get out of the exchange/situation. This reinforces **empathy** and **conflict management**.
- 7 When you hear your teen speak with others, point out examples of language and tone that may be acceptable in one setting, but not in another. Ask your teen to think about how the language or tone might have been received. How would he or she feel if someone talked to them that way? Then ask your teen to identify instances in which talking about a particular topic or using certain language might not be appropriate and why. This helps build **communication** and **empathy**.
- 8 Welcome opportunities for you and your teen to meet with educators. Support your teen so that he or she can express personal preferences, interests, and goals during the meeting by helping your teen draft a list of questions or thoughts. This will reinforce the competencies of **assertiveness** and **conflict management**.
- 9 If your teen has a job, ask your teen to look at the wheel to identify which competencies are most important for doing well at his or her job. Ask your teen to identify 1-2 areas for improvement and discuss. Suggest taking the competency wheel to the teen’s supervisor and asking the supervisor to identify the three most important competencies for that job.
- 10 Attach a copy of the competency wheel to your fridge, and as you see your teen demonstrate an intra or interpersonal competency, give positive feedback by saying something like, “all the concepts on this wheel are skills that you will use in college or in a career - you just demonstrated this competency!” Give specific examples about how your teen’s behavior illustrated the competency.