

During the school year, NNHS distributes a monthly "Healthy Huskies Letter." The goal of the newsletter is to enhance our school's partnership with families, particularly by sharing our knowledge of various topics related to your child's social, emotional, and physical health, and what families and the school can do to promote teen healthiness. Each issue addresses a different health topic and will contain resources for further exploration of that topic. Professional staff at NNHS as well as the School, Family, Community Partnership (SFCP), are advisors for these newsletters; we encourage parents and students to suggest topics and resources. Send suggestions to kpobst@naperville203.org.

Healthy Huskies Letter

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Each spring we have an opportunity to address the seniors in April. Essentially, the message is to "finish strong." One element of that message is that this can be a dangerous time of year for teens; it is a season of celebrations and parties. Risky behaviors mixed with impulsive decision-making can result in tragedy. We encourage the seniors and juniors to exercise patience, be reflective, and make good judgments. We also encourage them to look out for one another—it is a great asset to have a friend by your side who exercises good judgment.

Our NNHS School, Family, Community Partnership organization (SFCP) gathered advice from veteran parents of high school-aged students about how to deal with the "Prom and party season." We have compiled their advice for this edition of the Healthy Huskies Letter. While the overall theme of this collection of advice is "be vigilant," we encourage you not to allow your concerns to undermine the joy and excitement of these celebrations for you and your child.

Let's start with Prom

Parenting. This is not the weekend to be your child's best friend. Practice being the groovy parent some other time. If you have not had the detailed discussion with your child about logistics by today, make sure you have it as soon as possible. Be prepared to have the courage to change the plan.

Timeline. Establish a timeline with your child, and hold him or her to it. Do not leave any part of the plans open-ended. Last-minute planning or changes in plans open the door for impulsivity and risky decision-making.

Driving I. Have parents meet the limos, vans, and buses hired to take the kids to the Prom or to an after-Prom event. Make sure the driver understands your expectations. Make sure the vehicle is in good shape; make it clear to the teens that if the vehicle breaks down they know who to call to make alternative arrangements—do not let them make extemporaneous plans on their own.

An Overnight at Your House. If you choose to host an overnight event, have more chaperones than you think you could ever possibly need. Your number one responsibility is the safety of your guests, not respecting their privacy. Require all purses and bags to be surrendered at arrival and locked in a bedroom. If a student wants access, a parent or chaperone can take them in to retrieve what he or she needs. Require all car keys to be surrendered on arrival. If a child leaves before the morning, call their parent and do not let them return.

The Law. Make sure you are aware of your legal responsibilities when you host a party. Here is [a link](#) to a Power of Choice document that spells out your responsibilities.

An Overnights at Another House. If you allow your child to attend an overnight, have the conversation—awkward or not—so you know how many chaperones will be there and who they are. Volunteer to help chaperone if you are uneasy about whether supervision will be sufficient.

The Conversation. Have the conversation—awkward or not—with the host of the sleepover you have decided to allow your child to attend. Find out the rules of the sleepover. You may well be helping the host firm-up their plans by asking them for details. Ask the parent what they will be doing to ensure

that there is no alcohol or drug use. Ask if there are guns in the house. If the rules and their intentions are vague or unacceptable, your child may be better off making other plans.

Driving II. If you choose to allow your child to travel a distance for an after-Prom event, provide coaching for safe driving. Encourage the students to rotate drivers. Designate one student to not drive so that student can accept all texts and calls from parents during the trip. All other passengers and the driver should shut off their phones. Make sure that each child knows that they have the power to take away the car keys and change drivers if they think it is necessary.

Sex. Make sure your son or daughter understands that it is not a tradition or expectation that Prom involves sex. Don't avoid the subject. If you think there is any possibility that your son or daughter may have that mistaken notion, address it.

Trust your gut. If it feels wrong or risky or age inappropriate, it is. Say, "no."

Graduation Parties

Drinks. This is not the time to declare that a senior is "of age." He isn't. If he attends someone else's graduation party where those parents make this mistake, make sure your son or daughter knows that he or she should decline the opportunity.

Keep Track. Keep all beverages for adults centralized. Assign trusted relatives or friends to monitor access throughout the party. Assign older siblings or cousins who deserve your trust to keep an eye on the high school-aged teens and to let you know if anything seems amiss.

Expectations. Make sure your son or daughter communicates to his or her friends what the expectations will be at your home. Tell them not to invite anyone who can't be trusted. Get a list of which friends have been invited and make sure you talk with each friend when they arrive.

Party Hopping. It's possible that kids may come to your party after visiting a party where parents exercised poor judgment about under-aged drinking. Always be prepared to take away the keys, whether the child is yours or someone else's. Don't let a child leave if they are a danger to themselves or anyone else.

Younger Teens, Establishing a Foundation for the Future

Trust. Build a foundation of trust with your child. Communicate in an open and respectful manner. Listen to what he or she has to say.

Know your child's friends. Talk with them. Let them see you as a trustworthy adult who respects and cares about them. They will not want to disappoint you and they will share their apprehensions with you.

Connect with the parents of your child's friends. Share your thoughts and views with each other without criticizing. Keep each other informed. Look out for each other's child. Talk to them if you think there is a problem. When in doubt, call your child's friends' parents.

Always ask Who? Where? When? What? Be willing to give this information to them when you go out. This will become a courtesy you show to each other, not a parent - child struggle.

Boundaries. Set clear boundaries, discuss those boundaries, and enforce them.

Safety. Let them know you are concerned about their safety and well-being. Couch your decisions in your concern for their safety: "I trust you; I just don't trust other people."

Insist on Accountability. Teens learn good decision-making by experiencing the benefits of good decisions and the consequences of poor ones. Let them experience the consequences of their decisions. Let them know that while they must accept the consequences of bad decisions, you will stand with them as they do so.

Take the Call. Make it an expectation that your son or daughter will call for you to come and get them if the situation is uncomfortable. Sort out how the situation came about only after he is safe and everyone is calm.

Be Their Excuse. Encourage your child to use you as their excuse not to engage in negative behavior: “My mom will ‘kill’ me” can be a very helpful escape from situations.

One Special Tip for Senior Parents

Group pictures. The Commemorative event is a great place to take pictures of your son or daughter with their closest friends. They usually sit with their friends at this event. Take family pictures after everyone is dressed for Commencement.

Please, consider Naperville North High School to be your partner in keeping our teens safe.