**How You Can Help Your Student:**

1. When he/she says he/she has no homework, it probably means “I don’t have anything due tomorrow.” In fact, there is always something a student could be doing. Here are the things we do regularly in English class:
   * Read novels and plays as a class. They usually have reading to do, and if we’re reading a play in class, they should be reading ahead, so when I call on them to read a part, it’s not for the first time they’ve seen the passage.
   * Study vocabulary. The students have a list of 10 or so words every week, and I provide the part of speech and definition. Their assignment is to write a complete, grammatical sentence that provides some context for the word. For example, a sentence such as: “She’s so (adjective)” isn’t a good sentence, because it doesn’t show any understanding of what the word means. They must bring their sentences to class, usually on Thursday, when we’ll go over the words using these sentences. I won’t collect the homework, but I will ask every student to put a sentence on the board, and will note those students who are not prepared – this is part of the participation grade.
   * Study grammar. Pretty much every Wednesday is Grammar Wednesday, and I give them handouts and exercises to do, which we go over in class. Periodically there are tests on what we’ve worked on in a unit. If a student is uncertain about grammar, the best way to get better is to go over the sheets and the exercises – and perhaps go to one of several good sites on the Internet where the can practice the concepts – on a regular basis at home.
   * Write a variety of assignments, usually associated with what we are reading. Sometimes these are formal essays, and sometimes more informal exercises. The skills I (and the other English teachers here at Northgate) are trying to teach include improving reading comprehension, making inferences, analyzing structure, character, theme, and style – and learning to discuss these things and write clearly and well on a topic. When writing formal essays, learning to write drafts, get feedback, and then use the feedback to revise and improve are crucial skills.
   * Write in their journals. Every Tuesday and Friday, I give the students a topic to write on for 5-10 minutes at the beginning of class. They must write a minimum of half a page to get credit for the entry. They are also responsible for writing one entry on their own (again, half a page, minimum) for each week. I collect the journals each quarter, near the end of the quarter – and I tell them at least a week in advance how many in-class and how many at-home entries are required to get full credit. They get no credit for partial entries. If they miss an in-class journal prompt, it can be found in the class scribe book, which remains in the classroom.

Whenever a student misses class, he or she should check the scribe book upon returning. The scribe book should have some notes on what went on during the student’s absence, and should have any handouts distributed, or news on assignments made or collected. It’s probably good to ask your student to find a reliable friend to ask if he/she needs information about an activity or assignment he/she missed – particularly if it’s the night before something is due!

In my experience, a student who does his/her work and is conscientious about keeping up, and asking for help when he/she needs it, will succeed in my class. I **never** quit on a student who is trying hard!