



Tips for Parents

Your children need you to be interested and involved in their academic progress. Your children must, however, be responsible for their own grades, attendance, and behavior.

Be Interested. Make sure that your child knows that his/her academic progress is important to you. Attend all open houses and parent conferences. Know when each grading period ends, and make sure that you see all progress reports and report cards as soon as they come out. If you do not see a progress report or report card, immediately call the school and request a copy. *Do not just assume that someone will call you if there's a problem.*

Discuss Classes and Set Goals. Sit down with your son or daughter at the beginning of each grading period and help him/her set realistic academic goals for the term. Your child will better understand what your expectations are, and having goals will give your child something to work towards. For example, at the beginning of the grading period, Kathy and her parents decided that she should be able to earn A's in math, social studies, English, PE, and art. Since Kathy finds Spanish and biology more difficult, they decided that they'd be happy with B's in these two subjects.

Throughout the term, recognize effort and improvement. Acknowledge each academic success, even if it's only a good grade on a quiz or homework assignment. At the end of a term, you can offer "rewards" if goals are met and/or "consequences" if they're not.

Rewards are particularly good when you want to encourage a change in attendance, effort, or behavior. Eventually, doing well will be its own reward. Consequences should be logical whenever possible. For example, a logical consequence for routinely being late to school is an earlier bedtime. Never take away a positive activity (sports, school plays, music lessons, scouting, etc.) as a consequence.

Be Available to Help. Be available to help with homework, but don't give more help than is wanted. Your son or daughter may not ask again. Keep in mind that it is your child's responsibility to be organized, to get homework done, and to prepare for tests.

Listen. Talk to your child about what's happening in school and be a good listener.

Encourage School Involvement. Students who are involved in school-related activities enjoy school more and they have greater academic success. Encourage your child to be involved in one or more activities at school.

Monitor Activities and Jobs. Make sure that your child is not spending too much time watching TV, playing computer games, or talking on the phone. Also, make sure that your child is not working too many hours or working too late at a job.

Important "Don'ts"

- Don't nag about school or grades. Your child will tune you out.
- Don't allow your child to miss school unless he/she is truly ill. You will send a message that school isn't important.
- Don't criticize a teacher in front of your child. Your child will only lose respect for that teacher.
- Don't make your child's failures (or successes) your own. Your child may see getting poor grades as a way to rebel.
- Don't have expectations that are unrealistic. If your child knows that your expectations cannot be met, he/she may not even try.

Work with Your School. Know that teachers, counselors, and principals are there to help your child get the best education possible. A health problem, death in the family, or divorce can affect your child's attitude and/or performance in school. If such a circumstance should arise, contact the principal or counselor and explain the situation.

If you have a concern that relates to a specific teacher or class, call the teacher. For other questions and concerns, call your child's counselor. Be sure to express any concerns that you have in a constructive, respectful manner.

If Your Child is Not Doing Well in School...

Most students who don't do well in school feel like failures. They are frustrated, discouraged, and sometimes angry. The "I don't care"

attitude they often display is a defense mechanism. It's important for these students to know that their parents have not given up on them. They also need to know that their parents are interested, supportive, and willing to take the time to help them figure out how to be more successful in school.

Students who are not doing well in school usually have problems in one or more of the following areas:

Attendance - It is extremely important for students to be in school, on time, every day. Unless a child is truly ill, he/she needs to be in school.

Appropriateness of Courses - We can't expect students to get good grades if they are in the wrong classes. If any of your child's courses are too difficult, too easy, or not right for him/her, call the school counselor. You may also want to look into career-oriented (vocational) programs. Many students are happier and more successful in programs where there is a more "hands-on" approach to learning.

Accountability - It's human nature to be tempted to "slack off" when we're not held accountable. How seriously would most workers take their jobs if they knew that their bosses would never know how hard they were working or how many days they missed?

Your child needs to know that you care, and that you will be checking on how he/she is doing. Your child needs to know that successes will be recognized and that poor performances will be noticed. He/she also needs to know that you will be consistent in your interest, and that you will contact the school if you see a potential problem.

Make sure that you see every progress report and report card, and if your child has a low grade in a class, contact the teacher.

Alcohol/Drug Abuse - Students who abuse alcohol or drugs are often distracted to the point where their school performance is affected. If you know or suspect that your child is drinking or using drugs, talk to him/her about it. If you need information or advice, talk to your doctor or to the school counselor. They can help.

If you believe that there are other reasons for your child not doing well in school, make an appointment to see your child's counselor. Recognizing that there is a problem is the first, and most important, step in finding a solution.