

How Can I Help My Child If They Are Struggling in School?

By Kevin Hedrick, Vice President of Residential Services

My child is struggling in school and he doesn't seem to care! I believe this is a common issue that many parents will face and many parents do not know how to help. My experience as an educator for 10+ years, being married to an educator for 12 years, and being a father of three have helped me understand some reasons for school failures.

Many students have legitimate reasons for struggling in school. Some of these reasons are attention problems, learning disabilities, emotional problems, social problems, and embarrassment. Many of these issues will need to be handled by professionals within the school (attention deficits and learning disabilities), but others can be addressed through communication and strategic relationships.

Because of normal adolescent behaviors, students are often interested in things other than school work. As teenager's social life increases and choices of positive friends decreases the academic achievement can often suffer. Not because your child is getting dumber, but because they are getting less interested in school. Often times parents are clueless to this decrease in academics because they don't ask the right questions or seek out additional information from the school. As a parent, it is our responsibility to ask the right question to our children and to the school.

Many times students start to care more about friends than they do homework which leads to the student falling behind in class. Once a student falls behind they often are too embarrassed to ask for help and therefore fall further behind. To save the embarrassment of feeling dumb they sometimes put up the front that "school is stupid" or "I don't need school". This is not because students really believe this; it is because this is easier than facing the battle of getting caught up in class.

What to do?

Here are a few of the techniques I have found to be successful.

- Find an older peer that is positively engaged in school to mentor your son or daughter. Peer influence is very powerful, take advantage of that.
- Find a teacher that will invest in your child in school and out. Once kids realize that teachers care their performance will improve.
- Find a teacher you can talk to. Teachers spend time with your kids and often have insights that you won't about what is really going on in your child's life.
- Be bold in stressing to your child how important school is. An education opens up opportunities for a lifetime.
- Be bold in asking questions of the school. Your child is worth fighting for!

Proverbs 4:13: Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

Other Resources

- *The ABCs of School Success: Tips, Checklists and Strategies for Equipping Your Child* by Wesley Sharpe
- *Theology of the Body for Teens, Middle School Edition* by Brian Butler
- *A Mind at a Time* by Mel Levine