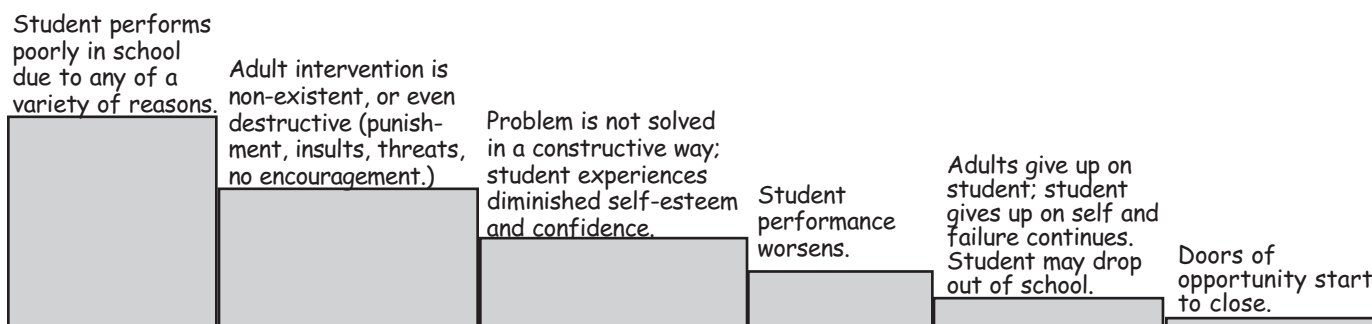


Leading Youth Back to the Path of Success: Tips for Parents

Most students experience a time when their school performance slumps. This usually happens during a life change, such as the transition between grades or a change in schools. With guidance from parents and educators, youth usually adapt and quickly get back on track. However, if their difficulties continue past a grading period or semester, this should alert teachers and parents to deeper problems that will require intervention.

THE "CYCLE OF FAILURE" CAN BE A DOWNWARD SPIRAL:



According to ERIC Digests, the following are warning signs of an adolescent at-risk for school failure. Recognizing these warning signs is the first step in helping youth:

- ◆ A history of difficulty in paying attention (Attention Deficit Disorder)
- ◆ Multiple grade retentions (staying back)
- ◆ Performs at barely average or below average (poor grades)
- ◆ Lack of involvement with the school or extra-curricular activities
- ◆ Behavioral problems, ranging from acting out or withdrawing from class activities or discussions
- ◆ Lack of self-confidence or belief in their abilities; feel that they do not have control over their lives
- ◆ Limited future goals, including career goals

According to a survey by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 8th and 10th graders dropped out of school for a variety of reasons:

- ☐ 51.2% - did not like school
- ☐ 39.9% - were failing at school
- ☐ 31.3% - could not keep up with schoolwork

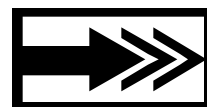
Other reasons included not getting along with teachers or other students, not feeling safe, pregnancy, needing to work, etc. (Those surveyed could choose multiple reasons. For the full report, visit www.dropoutprevention.org.)

THE STATISTICS...

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, high school dropouts are 72% more likely to be unemployed and they typically earn 27% less than high school graduates. Furthermore, they are more likely to have jobs that provide no health benefits and have little chance for advancement or job security.

The Coalition of Juvenile Justice (CJJ) states in its 2001 Annual Report, **Abandoned in the Back Row: New Lessons in Education and Delinquency Prevention**, "...youth who receive an inadequate education or are alienated from school often enter the juvenile court system and frequently graduate into the adult prison system."

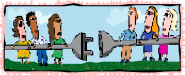
CONTINUED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE...



Leading Youth Back to the Path of Success: Tips for Parents (continued)

BUT THERE IS HOPE..

Providing support such as listening to children's/adolescent's feelings, suggesting coping strategies, or helping with homework is all it may take to guide them in the right direction. In addition, parents can:



ADVOCATE & WORK AS A TEAM WITH THE SCHOOL: If students are struggling, set up a team meeting with teachers, guidance counselors, principal, and student. The goals should be to discover why the child/adolescent is failing in school and what can be done to get the student back on track. Use a less than stellar report card as a communication tool to get to the bottom of the problem, not as a punishment. Learn what services the school can provide. Is there remedial help or tutoring available? Are there study groups in the community? Find out what to do at home to help your children/teens learn.

ENCOURAGE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR: Set expectations and boundaries at home, such as "You can watch TV after you have finished your homework." Stick to the rules you set and follow through with consequences, for example, "You did not clean your room as I asked, so your friend may not visit tonight." Avoid insults, as they succeed in hurting self-esteem, but fail to get the child or teen to behave appropriately.

BUILD SELF-ESTEEM & CONFIDENCE: Help develop your child's/adolescent's out of school support system by encouraging them to participate in positive extracurricular activities, such as sports, volunteering, clubs, etc. When youth feel they have no friends in school, a network of peers outside of school can provide the support they need and help them build confidence.

ENCOURAGE SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT: When students feel like they are connected to the school, they are more likely to stay in school. Encourage participation in school functions, such as sporting events, science fairs, etc. As a parent, participate in family nights and other school run activities.



HELP STOP BULLYING: Many students can not concentrate on schoolwork if they are being bullied. Some skip classes (or school) to avoid the bully; others drop out because they do not feel safe. Oftentimes, they will not tell adults, fearing that the situation will worsen. Truancy will hurt a student's academic performance. Bullies damage one's self-esteem, which can negatively affect learning. If you think your children are being bullied, talk with them about it. Notify school staff of the problem. Find out the school's behavior policies and procedures for violence prevention and bullying. Work together to ensure that the school is a safe learning environment.

BUILD RESILIENCY: Resilient people can better cope with life's surprises. They tend to have a positive outlook and can better cope with stress. They are proactive in that they take control of their lives, rather than letting life "happen to" them. When youth have adults in their lives who care, have positive and high expectations of them, as well as opportunities for community participation, they are likely to develop resiliency. In addition to encouraging participation in out-of-school activities, make sure children and teens share quality time with positive role models, such as adult family members or friends, or a mentor from a community organization such as Big Brother/Big Sister.

TALK TO THE THE YOUTH'S PEDIATRICIAN: If you suspect your child or teen is suffering from depression - a condition that can affect motivation and learning - discuss this with their doctor.

TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL AND LIFE'S OPPORTUNITIES: For example, saying, "I know you do not like math, but most jobs will require you to understand it, so it is important that you learn it." Help the child or adolescent think about life goals and future career options. Show that doing well in school keeps the "doors of opportunity" open.

HANG IN THERE: Even if nothing you have tried has worked to get your children/teens out of that academic slump, do not give up! Continue to search for ways to help put your children and teens back on the path of success.

Sources: "Bullying: Advice for Parents" by the Brent Education Service of the United Kingdom at www.brent.gov.uk; "Promoting Resilience in Children: What Parents Can Do", by the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice at <http://cecp.air.org/familybriefs/docs/Resiliency1.pdf>; "What Can Parents and Teachers Do if an Adolescent Begins to Fail" by the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Digests at www.eric.ed.gov/resources/parent/fail.html; Juvenile Justice Monitor On-line, Vol. 5, Issue 6, 2001 at www.juvjustice.org/publications/jjmonitor/0001.html.