

Poor Grades

There are few things that create more guilt, fear and feelings of failure... for us parents... than seeing our children performing poorly in school. Fortunately, we can guide them toward success by employing a solid plan:

Remember that good relationships are the foundation.

The research is clear: Kids who enjoy loving relationships with their parents enjoy more success academically and are more likely to avoid high risk behavior like drugs, sex, gangs, etc.

Avoid unwinnable power struggles like the plague.

Learning is something that we cannot make another person do. The harder we try, the more they rebel and the more our relationship with them suffers.

Model love of learning through "eavesdrop value-setting."

Allow them to overhear you talking with excitement about your own learning. What they overhear is often far more powerful than what they are told.

Set aside a time and place for daily learning.

This is a time or place for them to learn by either doing their homework or thinking deeply about it. This time is NOT for playing video games, watching TV, playing with friends or siblings, etc.

Use empathy to help them learn from their mistakes.

When our children "learn" by thinking rather than doing, they will obviously get some poor grades. Responding with sincere empathy rather than anger makes all of the difference: "I can't imagine how bad it must feel to get that grade. I love you. Let me know how I can help."

Teach them to give.

Most importantly, our kids need to learn that it is better to give than to receive. Today, too few make contributions to their families in the form of chores... or contributions to their communities in the form of service. Entitlement, low self-esteem and lack of motivation are the predictable result.

As a psychologist I've studied underachievers. As a child I was one. From this professional and personal experience I can assure you that no quick fixes exist. The great news, however, is that we can still enjoy loving relationships with our kids and see them grow more mature and motivated. That is if we stay committed to a positive plan.

-Dr. Charles Fay, Love and Logic Institute