



Be Involved!

Success in school is extremely important in fostering confidence in children and having them develop healthy attitudes about themselves and the world around them. As a pediatrician, I am interested in how the young people who come to me are doing in school because it is often a reflection of their emotional and mental state.

In my practice, I have found that children who do poorly in school tend to have more of a negative, cynical, and pessimistic view of life. They are frustrated and have given up because they think they are “stupid.” They stop trying to do well because in their mind it won’t make a difference. They tell themselves things like, “Why should I bother? No matter how hard I try, it doesn’t make a difference. I will never get this. I hate school.” As a parent, you are often unaware of this inner dialogue and become frustrated when your child seems to have an “I don’t care” attitude about school and life in general.

If your child is failing and has always had trouble academically, it’s vital that you talk with your pediatrician and investigate whether or not he or she has a learning disability that needs to be addressed. If there is an issue, the school is obligated to make adjustments to fit the needs of your child. You are their best advocate, so you have to communicate often with the school to make sure your child’s needs are met.

An A student who suddenly starts to get C’s and D’s on his report card sends up a red flag that something is going on in his life that needs addressing. Is he being bullied? Is something going on at home? Is he depressed? Is he hanging around the wrong crowd or experimenting with drugs and alcohol? Is there a problem with the teacher? The primary goal of the parents and pediatrician is to get him the resources to be successful.

Your child may have the ability to do well but not feel motivated and appear to be doing the bare minimum. Perhaps she isn’t being challenged enough or has given up because she doesn’t think she can meet your expectations. She may feel that she is being compared to older siblings and isn’t capable of following in their footsteps. There are a multitude of reasons behind kids’ actions and behavior. You just have to get at the source using patience, good listening skills, and a non-judgmental approach.

I have two words for you—GET INVOLVED! The more involved a parent is in a child’s education, the more success-

ful a child can be in school. As a parent, it’s often difficult to participate in school activities and stay on top of schoolwork, especially if you are working one, maybe even two jobs. You may have more than one child attending different schools and be completely exhausted after coming home from work. How can you do it all?

Developing a partnership with teachers is extremely important. Attend parent-teacher conferences and let them know you are committed to your child’s success in the classroom. If you cannot attend, email the teacher or set up another time to meet with them. Address your concerns early rather than waiting for the final grade on the report card. If your concerns aren’t addressed adequately, don’t be afraid to speak to the vice principal or principal to get the issue resolved.

Join the Parent-Teacher Organization/Association so that you know what’s going on in school and volunteer in at least one activity so your child can see that you are involved. Try to attend your child’s school performances or send a family member or friend. A child becomes more interested in school when he sees that his loved-ones are interested.

Success in school helps to foster an overall sense of well being in children. They spend the greater part of their childhood in the classroom. Their educational environment influences who they are and how they view life. Get involved. Stay involved. Your role is vital in helping them lead healthy, productive lives. ■

About Dr. Liz

Dr. Elizabeth Robinson Henry (Dr. Liz) has dedicated her life to providing youth with the knowledge and confidence to lead healthy and productive lives. She is the founder of Dr. Liz Consulting, a practice focused on making a difference in the lives of adolescents by addressing their physical, emotional, and mental needs. Teens, tweens and their parents can find resources on how to build self-confidence, manage anger and stress, and overcome issues such as bullying, emotions, fitting-in, and obesity at www.drlizforyouth.com.

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