

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

SIGNS OF PROBLEMS

When children are having difficulty at school the results are often observable at home. It is important for parents to learn to detect these early warning signs of school problems in order to take action and confront the problem. Some warning signs may include:

- Complaining about schoolwork, saying there is too much or they do not understand the work.
- Showing signs of frustration such as slamming doors, short temper, arguing, etc.
- Not finishing work at school.
- Spending too much time on homework.
- Having trouble completing assignments or starting them over.
- Not being satisfied with work that has been done.
- Doing sloppy work or work that is not up to ability level.
- Wasting time while trying to do homework.
- Procrastinating.
- Watching too much television.
- Developing headaches and stomachaches before and during school.
- Sleeping problems.
- Frequent "minor" illnesses or complaints.
- A change in general behavior or a change in friends.

If a combination of these warning signs become evident, parents should begin to take action. Talk with the teacher or school administration to discuss the situation so that a plan can be developed.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued on a regular basis to evaluate children's school progress. They are used to identify strengths and weaknesses and allow teachers, children, and parents to make plans for improvement. Report cards are effective tools when utilized for evaluation purposes rather than promoting rewards and punishment.

Problems are created when report cards are used for rewards. When rewards are given for each "A", some children will work strictly for the reward without striving to do their best for the sake of learning. Bright students will do just what it takes to get by, while others may learn materials for tests which will promptly be forgotten. Rather than providing monetary or concrete rewards, praise children for good grades and doing their best.

Problems are also created when children are punished for low grades. Extreme pressure to succeed may cause children to develop a poor attitude about learning. They may become disruptive at school, show signs of frustration, or just quit trying. Rather than punishing children by taking away privileges, degrading them, or spanking, try some alternatives.

1. Talk with the teacher to discuss the grade(s).
2. Set up a regular uninterrupted study schedule with your child.
3. Work with your child on a regular basis to review material.
4. Determine if your child needs special help or may have a learning problem.
5. Discuss the grade(s) with your child to see what plan of action he/she wants to take.

Report cards are only part of the overall evaluation of a child's school progress, reflecting both effort and ability. Used correctly, they can help build on strengths and improve weaknesses. When your child's next report card arrives, remember to reward and punish appropriately to help your child maintain the best attitude toward school and learning.

*"It is a wise father that knows his own child."
William Shakespeare*