

Dealing with School-Related Problems

If the school's consequences for problems are effective, there is no need to further punish children at home. That would be "double jeopardy." However, there are times when parents need to take action.

BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

When students have persistent difficulties, they may have attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, or they may have lost or never had a bond with a significant caretaker. Older children who show sudden changes in behavior may have been traumatized or become involved in substance abuse. In addition to seeking evaluations for such problems, parents can:

- Make the rules and expectations for appropriate behavior very clear, preferably in writing; review these expectations frequently, together with consequences for meeting those expectations (focus on positive consequences for appropriate behavior rather than on punishment for misbehavior).
- Require daily school reports (brief notes, e-mails, rating scales) to stay in close contact with teachers.
- Offer rewards (TV, video games, computer, telephone, soda, special snacks, etc.) on days when students bring home a good report.
- Take away important privileges while students are serving out-of-school suspensions.
- Write essays about what can be done to prevent further suspensions.
- Investigate medication for children who may be hyperactive and impulsive and qualify for a diagnosis of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

HOMEWORK AND POOR GRADES

Ask the school to have children tested for learning disabilities or attention disorders if academic problems have been present since the third grade or earlier. You may need to be persistent. Employ any of the strategies below that are helpful:

- After eating a snack, children should finish homework before watching TV or playing.
- Require a study hour until grades improve. If children deny having homework, supply your own. Although you can make children sit with books, you cannot make them study.
- Require children to bring home a satisfactory daily or weekly school report to have evening or weekend privileges. Parents can consider shortening restrictions if children are responsible enough to bring home a report.
- Arrange rewards for good school reports if this motivates students.
- When parents are engaged in many other power struggles with children, it may be best for young people to experience the natural consequences of failure until other issues improve.

SKIPPING CLASSES AND TRUANCY

Teens who miss school may be experiencing peer pressure or developing serious conduct problems. However, anxiety due to panic or fears of looking foolish can require therapy. It is common for children to have "school phobia" in fifth through seventh grades due to the transition to larger schools. Allowing children to avoid school can aggravate problems, so take immediate action to get them back on track:

- Verify attendance and withhold privileges unless children have been in school all day.
- In serious cases, accompany students to school and escort them between classes.
- If children refuse to go to school, physically carry them and enlist the aid of other adults if needed.
- Do not allow children to stay or come home early unless they have a temperature

SCHOOL REPORTS

Many schools have their own form to communicate with parents when students are having academic or behavioral problems. If none are available, parents can use the generic forms below. Minimum standards can be set for students to gain rewards or to have evening and weekend privileges:

- **Rewards:** Stickers, special snack, prize from a grab bag/treasure box, purchase points (earning points which can be used to buy desired objects or privileges), money.
- **Privileges:** Television, video games, telephone use, visiting with friends, leaving the house, stereo, CD or cassettes, computer use, snacks.

SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM

Home ↔ School Communication			
Student:	Date:		
Points: 2 (mostly) 1 (sometimes) 0 (rarely)	Self-Rating before Lunch	After Lunch	Teacher's Rating and Initials
Followed classroom rules			
Stayed on task			
Finished and turned in assignments			
Turned in homework: __ Yes __ No			
Test/quiz grades:			
Major projects due:			

__ Points = __ minutes __ playing video games, __ watching TV, __ using the telephone.

CHANGING CLASSROOMS

Home ↔ School Communication					
Student:	Date:				
G = Good S = Satisfactory NI = Needs Improvement	Behavior: G S NI	Complete Assignments	Missing Homework	Test/Quiz Grades	Teacher's Initials
1 st Period:					
2 nd Period:					
3 rd Period:					
4 th Period:					
5 th Period:					
6 th Period:					
7 th Period:					
Next quiz/test dates:					
Major projects due:					