

PARENT EDUCATION **THE UNDERACHIEVER**

If your child is slipping in school, get help sooner rather than later. Poor school performance tends to be cumulative. It can do damage to the child's self-esteem and sense of his own future. It can also lead to other problems and acting-out behaviors, especially in teens. Parents need to:

DETERMINE THE CAUSE of POOR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE and TREAT THE CAUSE of POOR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE.

TYPICAL CAUSES OF POOR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

- **Undiagnosed Attention Deficit Disorder;** Bright kids with ADD or ADHD may do well in elementary school, then fall apart in middle school.
- **Undiagnosed Learning Disabilities**
- **Emotional Problems;** Depression, anxiety, and adolescent adjustment issues can cause grades to fall. Emotional issues can be precipitated by the onset of adolescence.
- **Family Problems;** Divorce and other family issues can cause a sudden drop in a child's grades. Family relocation can cause issues for many teens.
- **Social or Peer Problems;** Some kids have great difficulty adjusting socially to a new school.
- **Homework Hassle;** Parent/child power struggles over homework can lead to poor grades, especially in adolescence.
- **Drug and Alcohol Abuse;** Sometimes falling grades are the first signs parents will see.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- **Test for Learning Problems;** The public school will test your child if you request it.
- **Test for Attention Deficit Disorder;** The schools do not test for this. Your pediatrician can evaluate the child. You can also turn to a psychologist or family therapist.
- **Emotional or Family Problems;** Go to a family therapist or psychologist. A psychiatrist can help with depression or anxiety.
- **Drug or Alcohol Problems;** Get your child evaluated for seriousness of the problem by a therapist or adolescent treatment center.

EARLY INTERVENTION IS IMPORTANT

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REMEDIAL HELP

It is important to first know why your child is having school problems and to treat the underlying causes. In addition, if your child is behind due to an accumulation of poor school performance over time, he may need help catching up. Get him remedial help with tutors or at a learning center.

MOTIVATING UNDERACHIEVERS

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS:

- ✦ ADHD Parent Support Group; Parenting classes at Kaiser Walnut Creek. Overview and discussion of problems. Behavioral management. Open to non-Kaiser members also. Call Health Education at (925) 295-4410 to sign up.
- ✦ CHADD; Membership organization that provides advocacy for families dealing with ADHD and learning problems in their children. It offers educational speakers, parent support groups, professional references, and advice to parents on dealing with the public schools. Call (925) 472-9444.
- ✦ Share/Support; Organization that provides support groups for parents of learning disabled and special kids. It also offers educational speakers and symposiums. Groups meet in local homes. Call (925) 820-4079.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- ✦ Ending the Homework Hassle; John Rosemond
- ✦ Get Out of My Life (but first would you drive me and Cheryl to the Mall?); Anthony Wolf
- ✦ ADD Success Stories; Thom Hartman
- ✦ Parenting Teenagers (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting); Don Dinkmeyer and Gary McKay
- ✦ Surviving Your Adolescents; Thomas Phelen, PhD