

What To Do If Your Child Is Struggling in School

If your child is having problems in school, listen to your child's teacher and listen to your child.

Parents often feel that when a teacher reports a child is struggling with class work or has behavior or attention problems, that the teacher doesn't like the child. An experienced teacher usually can spot when a child is having long-term problems.

On the other hand, children may be telling you they need help when they frequently say the work is too hard or they don't understand it. Some children would rather appear 'bad' than 'dumb' to their classmates, and take out their frustration with school work by poor behavior,”

For children with dyslexia or reading and writing disabilities, some of the signs may be mirror writing or reversals--mixing up b's and d's, such as mistaking bat for tab. Other children can sound out words but not understand what they mean or what they are reading. Others may understand what they are reading, but have trouble decoding the words so that reading takes them a long time.

Another group of children may read on grade level but have trouble with math. They have a poor concept of numbers, a poor sense of time and may not understand the meaning of money.

The good news is that there is help. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), helps identify children and their families who may benefit from early intervention or education services. Parents may request an evaluation from their local school district, even if their child does not attend district schools.

The school district will do some simple screening that may help pinpoint any problems or do more in-depth testing and a psycho/educational evaluation if warranted.

The tests indicate different factors. For example, if a child has a high IQ and a low performance, that's a red flag that there may be a learning disability.

Once a problem has been identified, then an accommodation plan to help the child can be developed and remedial help can begin. Early intervention is important.

If ADHD, or other behavior problems are identified, it is important that an experienced pediatrician, psychiatrist, or psychologist does the evaluation and develops an appropriate treatment plan.

Parents shouldn't panic if a child is doing well in school but does not test well on a standardized test. There may be other factors involved, such as confusion about how to

take the test. Discuss that concern with school officials before the child takes another standardized test.

The important thing is to celebrate a child's strengths. Although academics may be difficult for a child, the child may have other gifts, such as a talent in art or music. Parents can encourage children to achieve in these areas.