



# Tips for Parents: Keeping Kids in School

## Who drops out?

Typically, the potential dropout has low grades, low test scores, and spends little time on school work. There is usually a history of disciplinary problems and unpopularity with fellow students. Often, dropouts have problems and obligations outside of school that are higher priorities than studying.

## Are there warning signs?

Yes. If your child is often absent from school, is failing courses, and has had a few suspensions, he or she is in danger of dropping out. Trouble with police and involvement with juvenile court are other warning signs.

## How can I keep my kids in school?

As a parent, you are the single most important influence on your child's decision to stay in school. In fact, your example largely determines how much importance your child attaches to school. Even if you didn't have the chance to finish school yourself, you can show your child that school is important by getting involved in his or her education. You don't have to know the subjects. You just have to be enthusiastic, understanding, and supportive.

**Start early.** A child can show signs of being a potential dropout as early as fifth grade. If your child is falling behind in class, doesn't make friends, complains about school, doesn't do homework, and has become a discipline problem for the teacher, it's time for action.

**Show your interest.** The simple actions listed below force your child to notice that education matters to you. This is the most powerful statement you can make.

- Sit at the same table while your child does homework.
- Discuss what your child likes and doesn't like about school or class.
- Ask about the schoolwork your child is doing in class and for homework.
- Encourage your child to read. (You can do this simply by reading more yourself.)
- Raise your own expectations for your child's education and academic achievement.
- Tell your child what you expect. Express your confidence that your child can meet your expectations

## Things to do at the school

**Put in an appearance.** You'd be amazed how much of an impression it makes when a parent shows up at school. The school is forced to notice that you care about your child's education, and the school will respond, regardless of your own educational background.

**Talk.** When you show concern by talking to teachers, talking to counselors, talking to administrators, and talking to your child, you force people to notice that you value education. This is a powerful statement.

**Make statements such as:**

- I'm concerned that my child is not doing well in \_\_\_\_\_ class.
- I care about the relationship between my child and his/her teachers.
- I want to make sure that my child's teachers expect him/her to succeed.

**Get involved.** Attend school activities for parents, such as PTA meetings. Your presence shows you are concerned about education and allows you to develop positive relationships with school staff.

**Be an advocate.** There are a number of effective dropout prevention programs available. Find out if there is one in place your child's school. If not, contact your school administrators about starting a program at your child's school.

**Require the school to be responsive**

**Ask questions such as:**

- What can we do together to help my child improve in school?
- What subject gives my child the most trouble in class?
- What subject does my child like the most?
- Do you have a Stay-In-School program at this school? How does it work?

For more information, see:

**Videos**

“Dropping Out: Don't Let Your Child Be Next.”

“Dropping Out: Keeping Your Kid in School AND Out of Gangs.”

**Both titles are available from:**

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