

DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

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You may not be the parent of a teenager thinking of dropping out of school, but if you have children younger than this level, still take heed. None of us know how our children's minds work, especially if they are facing current academic challenges.

Most parents desire to have their children become even more successful than they were. We pour our time and resources into challenging them to become the best they can be, only to find that our dreams for them are shattered by some stumbling blocks we never envisaged. I have discovered an amazing phenomenon as I work with elementary, middle and high school students. Most students don't even know why they are at school!

Time and time again I have asked students the reason why they are in school. I have even cajoled elementary students to believe that mom and dad need a rest so they send their kids off to the best baby-sitting organization called 'school'. Some will eventually say they come to school 'to learn', but when I ask, "Why do you need to learn?" they are stumped! It seems as if parents and teachers have not realized that children need the reason and the plan laid out before them to give them an understanding why they do what they do.

This is what I tell them. You come to school to learn so that you will develop into an adult who can contribute to society with all the abilities you were given. I talk about their purpose and potential. I accentuate the need to develop a positive attitude towards their studies and to create effective study habits, even from kindergarten level. These children are capable of understanding this. I tell them that they need to learn all they are taught in elementary and middle school so that they can get their high school diploma.

The diploma will allow them to go to college to get an even better job with higher pay. This will enable them to live a better life without having to have a second job to pay their bills. By doing well in college and getting a great job they will eventually have enough money to not only lead a great life, but to be able to give some money away. The majority of students have never heard it put that way.

What makes kids want to drop out of high school? Here are some of the reasons: No goals or incentives. Lack of support or encouragement from parents. Academic deficiencies or disabilities. Mixing with other academically-challenged peers. Family dysfunction. Personality clashes with school faculty. Chronic disrespect of teaching staff and ongoing inappropriate behavior. Family demands that necessitate the student leaving school to find work. For a few students school just does not seem to fit their development, personality or life-plan.

Each of these factors is a story in itself. Most of the issues can be changed positively when parents engender high academic expectations. Surrounding your children with books and providing a quiet place for study is helpful. Giving homework support, leaving out those stories about how you were no good at that subject either, and fostering a close liaison with the school is necessary. Where there are academic deficiencies, arranging Support-Team meetings or seeking an academic evaluation is in order. Regular contact with teachers allows you to work cooperatively to resolve problems before they become too difficult to fix. Give the teacher(s) your email address for easier communication.

The school cannot deal with family dysfunction. If your child cannot concentrate at school because of what's going on at home, seek help from a professional organization. Otherwise, your child's future can be permanently marred by the hurts and chaos around them. Too much emotional upheaval at home is a major reason for a student to drop out of school.

Ensure that you are regularly communicating with your children and encourage them to share their fears, hurts and joy with you. Cautiously guide them towards positive friends that are doing well in school. Praise them and work alongside them constantly, giving them the incentive to perform at the level they are capable of. Above all, pray for each of your children that they will find the purpose and potential God planted in them before they were born. Only then will they have a fulfilling and exciting life.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.