

What to Do If Your Child is Having a Problem in School

Sooner or later, almost every child will face a problem in school. Perhaps it's a subject or skill he or she can't seem to master. Maybe it's a behavior problem, homework, a problem getting along with a teacher or with other students.

Luckily, most problems are easily resolved when parents and schools work together. Perhaps the most important thing is to act quickly, before the problem gets out of hand.

1. Talk calmly with your child. Ask questions and listen quietly. Often the solution will become clear just by talking about it.
2. Talk with the teacher or teachers involved. Include your child in the discussion if the teacher thinks that would help. Teachers will see things from another point of view. Listen politely. Explain your views and ask your child to do the same. Don't be concerned with assigning blame; concentrate on finding a solution.
3. Talk with your school principal. If you and your child and the teachers cannot find a good solution, ask to meet with your principal. The principal will add yet another perspective and lots of experience with student problems. A calm, courteous discussion is almost sure to produce a solution agreeable to everyone. If not, the principal can advise you about next steps you can consider.

When is it Time to Call the Teacher?

1. You see a dramatic change in behavior. Your happy child suddenly becomes withdrawn. A child who loved school starts crying at breakfast.
2. Grades drop. Whether it's in one subject or in all of them, a dramatic drop (more than one letter grade) indicates there's trouble.
3. You suspect your child may be telling you things that aren't true. When, day after day, your child says there's no homework – but other parents say their kids have assignments – you want to get the real story.
4. There's been a change in your family. A change in a child's home environment can affect school performance.

What if My Child Doesn't Like One of His/Her Teachers?

Acknowledge your child's feelings. You might say, "It's okay not to like every teacher. But sometimes we have to learn to work with people we don't like." Find out as much as you can about why your child doesn't like his/her teacher. Listen and take notes...but remember that there are two sides to every problem. Don't necessarily believe everything your child says.

Ask for a meeting with the teacher. Be open and honest. Often, you can solve the problem by talking about it. Be supportive of your child – but let the teacher know you understand that teaching is a difficult job.