

# **WHAT IS A FRUSTRATED PARENT TO DO?**

## ***Preparing Your Son or Daughter***

### ***for a Bright Future!***

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<http://www.memspan.com/parents.html>

We find ourselves locked into a hectic survival pattern! There is never enough time in the day. Even though we find ourselves coming and going, and we can't neglect our children's futures. As concerned parents we *do care, and it takes careful planning.*

How our children turn out as young adults reflects upon us. Today, parents may not think ahead or try to visualize what type of individual their child will become. The old adage "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" says that what you do today will be reflected in your future. Young people should have the opportunity to reach their full potential, become productive members of society and earn a good living. Although we are guardians of the future, we may be unaware that many of our youth may not be working up their potential and very well might be unproductive as adults.

We are often so caught up in our work, personal relationships and everyday survival that we fail to devote personalized time and attention to our children's educational and career path development. Parents are not taking the responsibility they should for their children's education, discipline and self-development. As a result, teachers are finding that their roles have increased from

simply educating the children to "raising" them as well. This report is intended to make you aware of this tremendous problem and how important it is to maintain the family value system.

The first requirement for us, as parents, is to understand the importance of education. A recent study revealed that resources devoted to education, such as per-pupil spending, and teacher salaries have little or no correlation with student achievement. It was concluded that student achievement is influenced by three primary factors: student aptitude, school organization and family background.

We may not take education seriously, in contrast to the Japanese, who devote much time and effort to the educational process thus ensuring future job satisfaction and career success. Many parents allow their children to spend more time on attention-getters such as video games, surfing the Internet, sports, and social events than on academics and time for extra-curricular reading. I asked a parent how much time was spent doing homework. The response was "Our daughter will be a senior this year. We realize that she's had very low grades, but she has a heavy schedule with the class play besides track and cross-country. I don't know if she really has time to spend on homework and extra reading assignments. This attitude carries a serious implication. Academics often take a back seat to extra-curricular activities that show off our children to others. Are we willing to change our priorities? Can we begin to think about our child's future well-being as an adult?"

While athletic and music events and socializing are important for maturational development; we must keep them in perspective by looking at the big picture. If we spend too much time with sports or any other extracurricular activity, academics will suffer. By refocusing, we can learn to prioritize these important activities.

Unknowingly, we as parents are role models for our youngsters. We serve as our child's first teacher. If we let our bills pile up, fail to answer correspondence, and take little personal and civic responsibility, we are setting a poor example. As "non-doer" adults, we produce "non-doer" children. These "monkey see, monkey do" attitudes do not end with the present generation. Poor attitudes

continue like falling dominoes into succeeding generations, creating mentally weak unmotivated descendants.

What does this do to a low-achieving student's self-esteem and confidence? They rapidly diminish. The student becomes "pigeon-holed" as an underachiever. He not only begins to believe it, but also acts accordingly. This soon develops into learned helplessness, in which one feels a lack of control over events.

Current studies enlighten us how parent, teacher and student expectations reflect the self-fulfilling prophesy phenomenon. The book Pygmalion in the Classroom, by Lenore Jacobson and Robert Rosenthal, explores how students behave and learn according to their perceived self-image. Their educational research is based on the Greek myth, Pygmalion. This myth also inspired George Bernard Shaw's play that was later revised into the all-time favorite musical "My Fair Lady." The heroine, a poor English Cockney street-girl, was taught to adopt the mannerisms of a lady of social position, rather than to reflect the behavior of a street girl. In other words, you perform accordingly to your self-concept.

If you think you are "are unintelligent" you may compensate by behaving as the class clown, or losing all desire to learn with a "give up" attitude. This attitude manifests learned helplessness, which is a state of depression, a feeling of a lack of control over events, resulting from a lack of external gratification. It's important to realize that behavior is learned.

The following true story illustrates how being classified as developmentally disabled can turn into both a self-fulfilling prophesy and learned helplessness. A young teenager increased her mental abilities and intelligence following my specialized Bridge To Achievement ® training. As a result, she no longer fit the classification of "developmentally disabled". Her schools verified her post-test IQ score of 110, well above average and began a series of aptitude tests that were required to allow full mainstreaming with other classmates.

Since she had been led to believe that she was "slow" by her social peer structure, both she and her socially prominent, highly educated parents did not want their child re-evaluated. She felt

more secure in the developmentally disabled resource room where she did not have to exert herself academically. Not understanding what the ultimate consequences would be, her parents made no effort to change her self-fulfilling prophecy. They had always known that she would be a dependent and living at home, but now that she exhibited new above-average capabilities, they began to consider what she might do to be on her own or earn a living. Unfortunately, she had received only minimal literacy skills in her schooling process and was prepared only for semi-skilled labor. The lack of motivation and foresight she and her parents had exhibited now entrapped her.

Interestingly, another Learning Disabled classmate befriended her, and offered support and encouragement. Together, they began to believe in themselves. The girl eventually became a receptionist for a dental office, as she had developed high auditory-listening skills.

Self-fulfilling prophecy is frequently present in children whose parents are high school dropouts or illiterate. The lack of environmental influence to achieve greatly increases the chance of failure.

A nation-wide sample and longitudinal study-survey of 27,000 high school sophomores revealed that 2,400 (14.4%) dropped out before graduating. A more recent study gives the public school drop-out rate after the ninth grade at 28%. Of the dropouts, 22.9% had fathers with less than a high school education, and 24.9% had mothers who had not graduated from high school. Thus, it was predicted that one in four students whose parents do not have a high school education will drop out.

Self-fulfilling prophecy can also be manifested when parents have higher academic and future expectations for boys than girls. Research indicates that parents do not encourage their girls, at early ages, to enter science and math fields because right-brained glamorous careers such as journalism news-casting, ad layout, drama and art seem more appealing. Parents may unconsciously allow them to play girl-directed board games and activities. Critics state that these games and activities encourage young females to be ornaments, to be passive and dominated by males, and to be avid consumers. Other activities are needed to direct girls toward scientific fields and teach them how to

be competent in their environment. Many other countries have an edge in producing scientists and engineers, and that foreigners fill these academic fields in the United States. If we continue to eliminate half of our population by ignoring females, we no doubt will remain behind in producing these professionals.

College students often moan, in hindsight, that it is almost too late for them to enter business, science or medical fields because they have skipped earlier years of the important foundations of math and science. By doing so, they have decreased their career options.

Spatial and analytical abilities leading to good critical thinking are foundations for learning science. Since our children may not be naturally endowed with these whole-brain necessities, we as parents need to direct them, during their formative years, into spatial and sequential activities that promote whole-brain thinking.

You can involve your children in easy, fun and inexpensive home-directed activities that develop their spatial and sequential abilities. Sewing, cooking, assembling models and kits, science experiments, composing skits and music, coloring and dot-to-dot books, puzzles and painting craft designs can all enhance these abilities.

Self-discipline and responsibility need to be taught at an early age. Teens should learn responsibility and how to put forth quality effort by handling outside jobs along with their extra-curricular activities and schoolwork. Responsibility includes the good citizenship that America needs for the 21st century and beyond. Volunteer or community services are good methods for teaching children to understand their civic responsibility and the needs and concerns of the less fortunate. These experiences encourage proper time management, courteous behavior and respect for a teacher, employer or any other adult, along with teaching self-efficacy.

To have self-efficacy means to believe in your own ability to effectively perform a task. It means fostering independence by encouraging your children to hold part-time jobs and take responsibility for their own actions. Advise your children to contribute to their own basic needs and teach them to be responsible for items that are lost or damaged by an accidental mishap. Advise

them to pay for personal needs and wants such as clothes and activity fees. This will help them appreciate their possessions and opportunities.

The first step in teaching your children these traits is to create a weekly routine of necessary chores. Next, assign these chores to various members of the family according to a daily plan. By assigning responsibility inside the home, young people learn to stand on their own later. Being taught to organize tasks, school assignments and do ordinary housework are good ways to instill the work ethic. Many children today have never run the washing machine, painted a chipped wall, mowed the lawn, or even brought in the mail.

This coddling or ignoring the disciplining of your offspring inadvertently instills negative values. Often young people foster a smug "I don't care" attitude and know only how to make demands. Overindulging young people by handing out money and then requiring little responsibility in return is not doing them a favor.

When our children focus on the material objects overtly displayed on television and have little parental attitudes such as "the world owes me a living" often result. Young people with this upbringing are ill prepared to face life's complexities.

### **Attitudes and Behaviors that Prevent Children from Optimizing Their Potential**

We need to recognize and understand the inherent lack of our awareness of behavior and attitudes that manifest problems with the learning process. These are some of the attitude and behavior problems that can affect a student's maturational development and school achievement.

Students may have trouble performing one or more basic skills crucial to learning. Because learning disabilities are sometimes difficult for parents to detect, they assume that their children aren't trying or that they're going through a phase. For years, processing problems have been attributed to poor motivation, which certainly does exist. One has to wonder what the cause of a learning problem is.

Let's consider:

- 1) Is it simply a lack of motivation and a poor attitude,
- 2) Is it a deeper problem such as poor memory and processing weaknesses?
- 3) Or is it a combination of both?

These deficiencies are not interchangeable. Poor memory and thinking can create poor motivation, but poor motivation cannot create poor memory and thinking. Unfortunately, until now, not enough descriptive easy-to-read literature has been written or made available on this subject, so we may not be aware of memory and thinking processing weaknesses. There are reasons why we avoid reconciling memory and thinking problems.

Social pressure can make it difficult for parents to admit their child's obvious weaknesses. For many parents, it is often socially unacceptable to discuss their children's' academic "failures" for fear of appearing inferior. This social pecking order places pressures on both the parent and the child. As a result, many parents fall into the trap of self-deception, failing to recognize or address the learning issue. They want to believe that their child is an achieving student and deficiencies will disappear at any time.

When a need arises for outside or special help classes, such as summer school, students often refuse to attend for fear of becoming stigmatized by peers. Additionally, they do not want the extra work. Peers tend to quickly stratify themselves according to their capabilities and accomplishments.

Frustration and rejection can be seeded at very young ages. Usually, already emotionally insecure children are the first to suffer. People exhibit insecurity through different behavior patterns. Some of them hide, some bully, some boss, some gossip extensively, others simply follow the leader. Some may be isolated on the playground, as others are reluctant to play with them.

A "pecking order," like that of the bird and animal kingdoms, begins within the system even as early as the second and third grades. This order is well entrenched by the junior high level. Students who have similar personalities and value systems seem to gravitate to each other. For example, rebellious or trouble-making students attract one another. As the old adage goes, "water seeks its own level."

Social cliques can be found on any grade school playground. Children are often quite vicious when putting down a weaker or unpopular student. Like lightning, children are quick to spot one and others weaknesses. Once children have been "pecked out," their self-esteem can suffer irreparably.

Unfortunately, there are a few educators who want to maintain the status quo and avoid parent criticism often give students undeserved high marks. Often, elementary school students are given A's and B's merely for being in attendance and doing their work in a mediocre fashion. This practice tends to hide basic academic problems.

Mediocrity and rebellious attitudes have become a comfortable way of life for many students. Often, young people do not have cooperative attitudes because they see no reason for them. Average-to-low average achievement cannot be accepted, where students merely "coast along."

Many students are oblivious to modern-day job competition, the current economy with corporate downsizing and layoffs, let alone job requirements. Schools focus on obtaining minimum requirements, failing to discuss the higher levels of science and math requirements that are needed to attain and succeed in many types of jobs. Defined categories of white-collar, blue-collar, manual labor, technical and professional jobs are often minimally covered or placed in perspective for students. Television adds to the problem with its unrealistic and distorted portrayal of various careers and their requirements for entering a certain field. In the fantasy world of television, people just "turn into" doctors, attorneys, television newscast personalities and professors. The perceived illusion is that of an easily attainable job with little effort or commitment. Our children need to realize that this does not automatically happen. And, if it does happen, it will be with long, hard work. There are no special entitlements.

Additionally, parents will not prioritize education. This is primarily because the child's improvement in behavior and academics may not be seen immediately. They think there should be instant solutions or quick fixes, such as taking pills like Ritalin, or drinking caffeinated drinks, for the problems that exist. Unfortunately, educational training takes hard work.

Many young people and their parents live on the faith that "everything will eventually work out for the best." They depend on hope and then try to cope, which is often an impossible task. It takes more than hope to achieve success.

Early on, young people fail to identify, choose and prepare for substantial and satisfying careers. They need to be advised when selecting their school courses or fields. Students should not become overly specialized too early. For example, they should not take only art or shop courses through high school, but instead focus on obtaining a broad education.

In past generations, uneducated and unskilled people could find a niche or good job. However, in today's technical and automated world, qualifying for a desirable position is becoming increasingly difficult without focus, dedication, and training. High school and college counselors, although often inundated with students, must make students aware that many fields are overcrowded to the point of job unavailability.

Recently, a college counselor made a revealing statement about the field of communications. He said that if every career person in the communications field left their job today, there would be four times that number of college communications majors available to take their places. Unfortunately, this is true for many other professions among them acting and art. Although this should not dissuade a person from pursuing a career path for which he has a burning desire and a high aptitude, we must face this reality of job unavailability, especially in a lagging economy.

Some young people have distorted ideas concerning the value of their training and immediate qualifications for specific jobs. They often disregard the need for experience. Not long ago I had a conversation with a college business major that planned to become a consultant upon graduation. I wonder how many industry executives would be willing to engage recent college graduates as consulting experts.

In junior high, and perhaps as early as the fifth or sixth grade, young people should take advantage of parental guidance, school counseling, and mentors from local businesses and professions to explore the academic requirements and rewards of various jobs and careers. They

should also begin to develop their own desires, ambitions and mental capabilities with their career options. A student who does not focus early on, but takes the path of least resistance, will often bypass the more demanding college preparatory courses, thus limiting his options or flexibility at a later date when difficult choices have to be made. Don't let fear of the unknown inhibit you or your child from trying something new, which might be beneficial.

We need to maintain a positive attitude, even though it is easy to become bogged down with our disappointments and frustrations. We can start by fostering a positive attitude in our children. If we encourage their achievements, they will respond in a positive manner. We can learn a lesson from the second grade children of an elementary school in Des Moines, Iowa. They thought that the school should have a slogan. One youngster came up with the acronym HAPA for "have a positive attitude." Now the principal has HAPA on his license plate and the children have the slogan on their sweatshirts.

### **Correcting School Failure?**

Many students perform far below their grade level in basic reading, math, spelling and writing competencies. Therefore, they simply move through the educational system. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that national testing revealed the following facts:

Over one-quarter of all 13 year-olds were unable to add, subtract, multiply and divide using whole numbers or solve one-step math problems.

Over 50 percent of all high school seniors were unable to understand specific government structures and functions. 43 percent did not know that presidential candidates are nominated by party conventions.

Almost 94 percent of high school seniors were unable to solve multi-step math problems or use basic algebra.

Almost 60 percent of high school seniors were unable to understand and summarize relatively complicated reading material.

If students do not feel that they are required to learn, they don't. Solid classroom structure and management encourages students to stay on task by making assignments interesting and tied to

practical world knowledge. Unfortunately, many students do not fully pay attention to their teachers, thus they remain in a relaxed brain wave state. In other words, they are "dozing". This lackadaisical "half-awake" attitude is not conducive to learning. Classrooms must be structured with strict discipline with a highly motivating, emotionally warm atmosphere for maximum learning to occur.

## **The Choice Movement**

In 2001, President George W. Bush implemented "Parent School Choice" what was initiated back in 1990, by his father, President George Bush. The elder Bush advocated that each parent select which school their child could attend if their performance scores were low. This preference movement was to be conducted through each state's legislation to include magnet schools, open enrollment, tuition tax credits and vouchers. The program, directed toward both inner and outer city schools, will encourage each school to have educational accountability.

Schools do not have the same management results. Edison Schools, a leader as an educational management company, now operate many inefficiently run schools. As successful schools fill up, lagging schools will improve their management, teaching, and discipline standards.

As a parent, you need to be aware of how the school in your neighborhood operates and encourage action for improved literacy and critical thinking. Your children compose the schools; therefore you need to become involved. With your child as the final product, you can't afford to lose.

## **The Regimen Needed To Achieve Excellence For Your Child**

Changing to new ways of teaching takes time, effort, risk and money. Many companies, and even individuals, are now donating computers to classroom. Teachers can take the responsibility for taking accompanying training for their instructional use. Many schools are near colleges that offer software instruction at nominal, or even no-cost fees.

Media applications include classroom use of computers, auditory tapes and video monitors. Unless there is widespread public support for interactive media technology, the probability of your child having them available for use in his classroom is remote. Over 95% of all elementary and secondary schools have at several computers available per classroom, and 91% have videocassette recorders and VCR's.

Motivated and innovative teachers who do plan media instructional projects also face resentment from the other staff members for "tying up" the equipment, or compete for the computer lab's schedule. This negative social pressure discourages teachers from trying new teaching methods and software.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance that Parent-Teacher-Organizations seek public donations for both computers and video equipment, so EVERY classroom has one computer for every four children (6 computers), plus one videocassette recorder for daily instructional use. Without parental enthusiasm and support, the technological instructional age will remain a vision of tomorrow.

Often, teachers show a low support response for the use of in-class technologies with an enthusiasm level that ranges only 10 - 33% . Teachers like to see evidence of good short-range gains for the effort it takes them to learn new teaching and media procedures. Therefore, if the teachers go to the trouble of learning and implementing new ways of teaching, support them by congratulating them, and encourage the administration to give more rewards for their excellence of teaching.

Work with your schools by encouraging them to develop remediation programs for the slow learners and acceleration programs for the fast learners, so that all students can work at their own speed and levels. This can be accomplished through sophisticated computer software, Distance Learning, inter-active video or auditory tape programs that offer interesting drill-and-practice. Gradually critical thinking skills can be applied as they move through the following sequential chart. Every child should achieve a higher-order of critical thinking skills.

You, as a parent, should request that your administrators and teachers adhere to the policy of teaching not only basic literacy but critical thinking capability.

***A Parent's Guide For:***

***How and When Schools Should Implement  
Higher-Order Thinking Skills***

*Note - that these areas overlap throughout the grades*

**How:**

**When:**

***Pre-screening pre-kindergartners and kindergartners perceptual skills***

***Kindergarten to 1<sup>st</sup> gr.***

***Teaching perceptual skills: phonetic decoding & visual memory for details, spatial skills***

***1st - 4th grades***

***Teaching spatial & sequencing skills, visual and listening memory, inferential thinking, cause and effect***

***2nd - 6th grades***

***Teaching critical thinking & problem solving***

***6th - 9th grades***

***Teaching advanced critical thinking solving in science, math, humanities***

***10th - 12th grades problem***