

Reasons Students Are Earning Grades of C, D, or F:

In Descending Order of Importance

1. Not completing homework or submitting poor quality homework
2. Failure to submit major assignments or submitting after due dates
3. Lack of participation in class
4. Refusal to seek extra help
5. Inability to study for tests or quizzes
6. Coming to class unprepared to contribute
7. Complying with tasks to get them done, but not showing effort, care, or concern
8. Inconsistent effort – hopes that one or two good grades can balance a quarter-year of non-performance
9. Need to accept personal responsibility for success and/or failure
10. Fear of striving to succeed and not making it.

Conversations for parents and their kids

1. Not completing homework or submitting poor quality homework
Use some common sense to identify when and where homework can be completed. Have students do homework in a public space, not their bedrooms, and not in the order that they have their classes each day. Rather, do the least pleasant, most difficult homework first.
2. Failure to submit major assignments or submitting after due dates
Put a calendar on the fridge for each kid to write in due dates. Review it at dinner, or at least once a week.
3. Lack of participation in class
Urge your kid to participate at least one time per class. Teachers often rely on memory when assigning participation grades, and if the student trains the teacher to expect one contribution per day, then the teacher will remember him/her as a participant.
4. Refusal to seek extra help
This one befuddles the principal. In addition to getting help from the teacher, we have the Writing Lab, the Academic lab, the A/V Lab, and the library available during the day. Teachers are required to provide extra help sessions every week although not every day.
5. Inability to study for tests or quizzes
This is not an intuitive skill. Parents can help students develop a plan for studying. Too often kids think that by looking at their documents they are studying. You can help students use their visual memory by moving them into a unique location in the home when they study such as the formal parlor.

6. Coming to class unprepared to contribute

If the child works or is involved in sports ask them why they always show up to work with the proper tools or equipment, but they don't bring materials, pens/pencils, and completed assignments to their classrooms. The answer, ironically, is that teen logic dictates that, "If I don't have a pencil, I cannot do the work." Explain to them that the only get out of jail free card is found in Monopoly.

7. Complying with tasks to get them done, but not showing effort, care, or concern

This is a conversation that best takes place between parents and their children. Talk about pride and share your own work experiences. Consider taking a low-performing child to work for a day.

8. Inconsistent effort – hopes that one or two good grades can balance a quarter-year of non-performance

This can be addressed simply. Have your child add the following numbers and divide by ten: 50, 45, 13, 0, 99, 65, 43, 0, 0, 99. Kids tend to remember the two good grades and forget the rest. Consider making a deal with your child. If he or she gets a poor grade, tell him/her that if it is posted on the fridge before you learn about it, then you cannot get upset or angry. You then will calmly discuss the grade.

9. Need to accept personal responsibility for success and/or failure

This is another message that has to come from the values of the home.

10. Fear of striving to succeed and not making it.

Many kids prefer to earn low grades rather than strive to improve. Sadly, many have internalized poor performance grades over years, and they feel better confirming low performance rather than risking the emotional involvement of trying again. I recommend talking about how they have changed biologically and see if they think of themselves as young adults now, not as children. Sing them the song about the little old ant who thought he could move a rubber tree plant.