

How parents can help their children succeed and stay in school

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Kimberly Greder encourages parents to set goals for their children to help them succeed academically. Credit: Wyeth Lynch

(Phys.org) —Students are back in school and now is the time for parents to develop routines to help their children succeed academically.

Kimberly Greder, an associate professor and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach family life specialist, says parental involvement, more than income or social status, is a predictor of student achievement.

Creating a home environment that encourages learning is the first step to guaranteeing success. Greder says parents need to set high, but reasonable, expectations for the children. Those expectations should not only apply to school achievements, but their future careers. Parents should also be involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

"Involvement means many things, including asking your children regularly about their school day and homework," Greder said. "Make sure your [children](#) have a regular place and time to study. Visit with teachers and school counselors to understand how your child is doing in school and what you can do at home to help them succeed."

These steps are not only important for overall academic success, but can also help students who may be at risk for dropping out of school. The dropout rate for students ages 16 to 24 was 6.6 percent in 2012, the most recent statistics available from the National Center for Education Statistics. Latino students had the highest drop rate of 12.7 percent, followed by black students at 7.5 percent.

Greder says youth who are most at risk of failing a grade or dropping out of school commonly have parents who have low levels of education, low income, are a racial or ethnic minority, and live in a neighborhood that experiences high poverty. Signs of students who are at risk of dropping out include:

- High rate of absenteeism, truancy or frequent tardiness
- Limited or no extracurricular participation
- Lack of identification with school, which may include feelings of not belonging
- Poor grades, which includes failing in one or more school subjects or grade levels
- Low achievement scores in reading or mathematics for two years

or more

Greder suggests parents take these proactive steps to avoid problems in school or potential dropout:

- Regularly talk with your child about his or her school day
- Encourage reading at home and be a role model to read regularly
- Talk to your child's teachers and school counselor for updates on grades and behavior, and identify resources available to help your child at school
- Watch who your child hangs out with and make sure they are doing healthy activities
- Get your child involved in activities or sports to develop leadership skills and positive communication and conflict resolution skills.

Greder recommends a program such as 4-H that helps youth develop skills to help them at school and throughout life. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach also offers a program that helps Latino youth who are at risk for not completing school successfully graduate from high [school](#) and pursue higher education. You can learn more about this program, Juntos: Together for a Better Education, at: www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/juntos.

Provided by Iowa State University

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