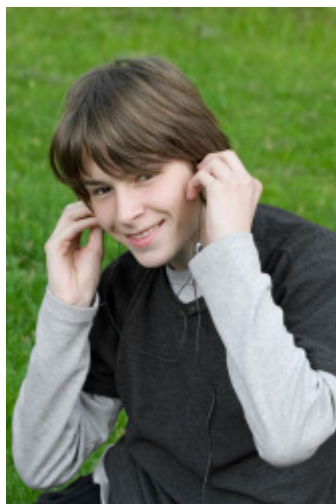


Why Kids Skip School and What You Can Do About it



by Sue Douglass Fliess

If trends persist, 75% of today's students entering high school will not complete the post-secondary education required to thrive in our globalized world. Yikes. According to the Freshman Transition Initiative (FTI) of George Washington University, a student's plans for post-secondary education often hinges on the attitudes they develop in the 8th and 9th grade about themselves, their futures, and their educations.

When you think of a high school drop-out, your mind may first go to a child who lacks motivation or goofs off. Rebecca M. Dedmond, Ph.D., and Director of FTI says that, in fact, many drop-outs are very bright. "The kids who are not engaged or tend to be truant simply don't see what they're learning in school as relevant to their life. They don't see the relationship." Andrew Jackson, the 7th U.S. President, dropped out, studied law in his late teens and became a lawyer. Certainly not a slouch, perhaps he just wasn't challenged enough?

Dedmond says once students can see how what they're doing in school can help them reach their future goals, they are much more likely to stick around and embrace their education.

So what can schools do to get on the same page as their students? First, says Dedmond, "We need to listen to the students. As long as we show them 'what's in it for me,' they actually don't mind working hard and being challenged." Schools can help students balance their skills and interests as well as deemphasize competition, which allows more students the opportunity to participate.

But it's not entirely up to the schools. Dedmond says as parents, there are a few things you can do as well. Get involved with your child's school. Talk to the teachers about your child and what piques her interests. Discuss how that may be incorporated in lesson plans during her day. In addition, Dedmond tells parents to encourage their children to join after-school sports. If they don't show up for school, they can't be on the team.

Schools and parents alike need to ensure the teens of today have what they need to become world leaders of tomorrow. If you get engaged with your child's education, your child will too.

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