

NASET's HOW TO Series

July 2017

How To Identify High Risk Students

Introduction

A high-risk student is usually a student that is experiencing possibly severe emotional, social, environmental or academic stress. As a result of this intense turmoil, many symptoms are generated in a dynamic attempt to alleviate the anxiety. They can show up in many different behavior patterns. Some of the more common ones that can be exhibited by either elementary or secondary students while in school are:

OBSERVED IN SCHOOL

_____ History of adequate or high first quarter grades followed by a downward trend leading to failures in the final quarter.

_____ History of excessive absences.

_____ History of excessive lateness.

_____ Frequently cannot separate from parent at the start of the school day. While this can be normal behavior in very young children, it becomes a more serious symptom after age 6 or 7.

_____ High achievement scores and high school abilities index with a history of low academic performance.

_____ Consistent failure in two or more quarters of at least two subjects.

_____ History of parent "coverage" for inappropriate behavior, poor work performance, poor attitude, failures, or absences.

_____ Students wandering the halls after school with no direction or purpose.

_____ History of constant projection onto others as a reason for a lack of performance, handing in work, failures, or cutting.

_____ History of feeling powerless in the student's approach to problems.

_____ Recent stress related experiences i.e. divorce, separation, death of a parent or parent's loss of employment.

_____ History of constant visits to the nurse.

_____ Social withdrawal from peers with an emphasis on developing relationships with adults.

OBSERVED AT HOME

_____ Selective forgetting: The selectivity of the forgetfulness usually centers on areas of learning that may be creating frustration.

_____ Forgets to write down assignments day after day: The avoidance of a perceived failure experience is accomplished through the use of this behavior.

_____ Takes hours to complete homework: This symptom also occurs if a child is under tension and cannot concentrate for long periods of time. He/she will tend to "burn out "quickly and day dream the night away.

_____ Finishes homework very quickly: In this type of symptom the child's major objective is to get the ego-threatening situation (homework) over as quickly as possible. Every attempt is made to "rush " through the assignments with little if any care or patience.

_____ Can't seem to get started with homework: When a child's anxiety level is very high it makes it very difficult to "start the engine." They may spend a great deal of time getting "ready " for the homework by arranging their books, sharpening pencils, getting the paper out, opening the textbooks, getting a glass of water, going to the bathroom and so on, but never really starting their assignments.

_____ Frequently brings home unfinished class work: Students for several reasons frequently exhibit this symptom:

- One reason is a low energy level and therefore problems dealing with tasks involving sustained concentration.
- The second reason may involve the concept of learned helplessness and may arise when a parent constantly sits next to a child when he/she is doing homework. The child becomes conditioned to this assistance and is helpless without it.
- The third reason may involve the child's need for attention. Bringing home-unfinished class work necessitates some parents need to sit with them and complete the work. This "captive audience" of parent attention is reinforced when a parent tries to leave.

_____ Consistently leaves long term assignments until the last minute: Avoidance of school related tasks, especially long-term ones, is a frequent symptom of children with low energy levels

_____ Complains of headaches, stomachaches and other physical ailments before or after school: Very high-tension levels over an extended period of time may result in somatic (bodily) complaints. These complaints, while real to the child, may indicate an avoidance of an uncomfortable or ego deflating situation. When a child has a pattern of these types of complaints, then the teacher needs to see this "signal" as a symptom of a more serious problem.

_____ Exhibits "spot light "behaviors: "Spot light "behaviors are any behaviors that bring the focus of attention to the child i.e. calling out, laughing out loud, getting up out of seat, annoying other children. When this occurs it is usually a release of tension.