

THE TOP 10 REASONS STUDENTS STRUGGLE IN SCHOOL

- 1. Lack of Background knowledge:** Probably the number one reason students struggle in school is that they do not have the background knowledge they need to engage in more rigorous material. They have gaps in their learning or they have only a surface understanding of content rather than a deep understanding of concepts. Without this background knowledge, they struggle with reading comprehension and they struggle with more complex concepts and skills.
- 2. Missing Soft skills:** Soft skills are things like knowing how to study, knowing how to manage time, and knowing the unwritten rules of engagement in the classroom. Students who do not have the appropriate soft skills—who do not know how to read the textbook effectively or take notes from which they can later prepare for the test, write under timed conditions, or monitor their own learning – have a much more difficult time keeping up with their work and may soon fall behind.
- 3. Pacing Moves too Fast:** Some students need additional time to learn concepts or acquire new skills. Or, they need more time to practice those concepts and skills in order to really understand them. If the pacing is too fast, they acquire a surface or incomplete understanding of the concepts and skills and they quickly fall behind.
- 4. Lack of Stamina:** Doing well in school requires sacrifice and delayed gratification. Many students have not developed the stamina it takes to work toward long-term goals and struggle to remain engaged.
- 5. Boredom:** If the work is not interesting, intellectually challenging, and meaningful, many students will lose their motivation to stay engaged. Other times, students cannot see the value of the learning and therefore do not put in much effort to achieve the goals. In these cases, students may turn in their work, but they do not engage deeply with the material or integrate it into their long-term learning.

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6. **Personal Problems:** When students face difficulties outside of the classroom, it can directly affect their ability to be successful in the classroom. Tough home lives, depression, abuse, poverty, and the like can all distract students from the work going on in the classroom or sap students' motivation to be successful.
7. **Lack of Ownership:** If students do not feel as if they own their work, it is hard for them to be personally invested in it. Students need choice and a sense of agency in order to stay motivated and to persist with challenging work. If students do not feel a sense of ownership over their own learning, they may struggle not only to remain motivated, but to see the relevance of their learning to their lives.
8. **Lack of Coherence:** Students who cannot see how one concept builds on or relates to another concept can become confused and lost in the lesson. Or, if the learning outcome is unclear, and the connection between the learning activities and the learning goals vague, students can struggle to meet those learning goals.
9. **Learning Disabilities:** There are times when students have undiagnosed learning disabilities that interfere with their ability to grasp key concepts or develop key skills. These students need testing and additional support, skills, or accommodations to help them be successful.
10. **Fear of Failure:** Some students struggle in school because they are afraid to try and fail at a given task. They lack confidence in their abilities so much so that they either have trouble getting started, or they give up early in the process and do not persist to completion.