

What to Do If Your Child Is Struggling in School (Without an IEP)

You're Not Alone

If your child is having a hard time with school — academically, socially, emotionally, or behaviorally — you might feel unsure of what to do next. Many students struggle at some point. The good news is that schools have tools and supports available even before special education is considered.

Step-by-Step: What You Can Do

1. Talk to Your Child

- Ask open-ended questions: What's the hardest part of your day? What's going well?
- Look for patterns in what they say or how they act at home

2. Reach Out to the Teacher

- Ask how your child is doing in specific subjects or activities
- Share what you're seeing at home
- Ask if your child is receiving any support through MTSS or classroom interventions

3. Track What You Notice

- Keep notes on your child's mood, schoolwork, sleep, and behavior
- Save examples of work or teacher notes that raise concern
- Document what strategies you've tried at home

4. Ask About General Education Supports

- Schools in Kansas use MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) to provide help early
- Ask: Is my child receiving any small group or extra support right now?

- Request to see any screening or progress monitoring data

5. Request a Problem-Solving Meeting

- Most schools have Student Intervention Teams or similar groups
- Ask to meet with the team to brainstorm strategies and next steps
- Parents can attend and provide valuable insight

6. Keep Communicating

- Follow up regularly with teachers or staff
 - Ask for updates or data if your child is receiving interventions
 - Share what's working or not working at home
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? When to Ask About Evaluation

If your child continues to struggle despite multiple supports, it may be time to talk about a special education evaluation. You can request this in writing at any time. However, early steps often include intervention and data collection.

What Parents Say

- “I thought I had to wait for an IEP, but the school helped before that.”
 - “Keeping notes helped me explain what was really going on.”
 - “The team worked with me and gave great strategies I could try at home too.”
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Important Reminder

You do not need to wait for a crisis to speak up. If you have concerns, trust your instincts and start a conversation. Your voice matters, and schools are your partners in helping your child succeed.

To learn more about school supports in Kansas, visit www.ksde.org or speak with your child's teacher, counselor, or principal.

If you would like additional guidance navigating school supports, Bison Bridge Behavioral Insights offers resources, consultation, and advocacy for families across Kansas. Visit bisonbridgebi.com to learn more.