

## Responsibility

Educators are under constant pressure to improve test scores and overall academic performance. If their students' standardized test scores are not up to snuff or if students have academic difficulties that can't be explained, the principal finds his or her way into the classroom for an observation to try to find something wrong with the teacher's instructional methods. The question that gets raised is: Who is responsible for a student's academic performance?

I was not the best student in elementary or high school. I struggled just to get Cs and an occasional B, and never did anyone question how good my teachers were; instead, I was questioned about what my responsibilities were as a student. My father knew when report cards were issued. Once he had that report card in hand, he would sit me down and go over my grades. For any grade below a C, he would ask me what was going on in the class and what my responsibilities were in order to raise my grade. I remember once I tried to pull a fast one and told him that the teacher didn't like me. He didn't buy it and told me that the teacher didn't have to like me and I didn't have to like the teacher; my job was to work as hard as I could to understand what the teacher was teaching me. When I was a freshman in high school, I failed Algebra I. I went home and told my father that it was no big deal and that I would take it again during my sophomore year. He said to me, "No, you won't. You failed because you didn't apply yourself." I ended up in summer school, and it was the best thing that ever happened to me because the following year I got straight As in Algebra II; it was a breeze. My father told me that he would give me all the help that he could give me, but if I failed, I did it on my own. And, of course, if I passed, I did that on my own also. He made me responsible for my own education and did not want to hear any excuses.

My friend's son, whom I have known since he was eleven years old, never complained about homework assignments, not having enough time to study, poor teachers, or not understanding something. He took responsibility for every aspect of his schoolwork. I looked at his high school transcript when he graduated, and there wasn't one A; he earned all A+s. He was the valedictorian of his class, and he is now a Dartmouth College graduate. Before kids can be successful as students, they have to be made aware by parents and teachers that it is their responsibility to be prepared to learn and to accept failure as an indicator that they are not putting forth their best effort.