

Helping Struggling Learners

A guide for parents who want to support a child who is behind, overwhelmed, or losing confidence.

When a child struggles, the goal is not to push harder first. The goal is to understand what is making learning harder.

Start with the right question

Instead of asking, "Why will my child not try?" begin with, "What skill, behavior, or support system is missing?" This question moves the focus from blame to problem solving.

Three areas to examine

Academic Skills

Does the child have the foundational skills needed for the current task?

Learning Behaviors

How does the child respond to challenge, correction, multi-step work, or independent practice?

Support Systems

What routines, visuals, models, or tools help the child stay regulated and successful?

How to support without overwhelming

- Use shorter assignments with clearer targets.
- Teach one skill at a time before combining many skills.
- Separate practice from performance. Learning time should feel safe enough for mistakes.
- Let the child explain what feels confusing before correcting the work.
- Track small wins, such as fewer prompts, better stamina, or improved accuracy.
- Avoid comparing the child to grade-level expectations before identifying missing foundations.

For older students who are below grade level

Older students may carry years of hidden gaps. They often need dignity, not babyish materials. Use respectful language, mature visuals, and targeted skill repair. The goal is to rebuild the missing foundation without making the student feel small.

What to say to your child

- "You are not broken. We are figuring out what support you need."
- "We can go back and strengthen the skill without shame."
- "Mistakes give us information. They do not define you."
- "The goal is progress, not pretending everything is easy."

When to seek more clarity

- My child is working hard but still not making steady progress.
- I do not know which foundational skill is missing.
- My child shuts down, avoids, rushes, or becomes emotional during learning.
- Grades or test scores do not explain what is really happening.
- I need a clear next step instead of more guessing.

Next step: If you need a clearer picture of your child's math strengths, learning behaviors, and foundational gaps, start with the KRLF™ Math Snapshot™.