

RP 26:3

REPORT to PARENTS

Grades

For children, academic grading begins the first time they bring home a picture with a star or a smiley face. From then on, children are evaluated on their work and progress. While some schools don't assign letter or number grades until late in elementary school, all teachers "grade" their students' work so they can monitor each child's progress. Here are some tips to help you and your child get the most out of the grading process:

Get in touch. Knowing and keeping in touch with your child's teacher is one of the best ways to ensure academic progress. Frequent discussions with the teacher will alert you to problems and ways to correct them. It's important to address problems early instead of waiting until your child brings home a poor report card.

Understand the system. Parents should understand the school's grading system. Ask how it works and how your child will be assessed. If the grading terminology is difficult, make sure the teacher—or principal—clearly explains the system until you understand fully.

Establish a routine. Good study habits can make a huge difference in a child's performance. Have a place and time set aside for studying—allowing no distractions (*i.e.*, television or music).

Don't compare. Children develop and master academic skills at different rates. Concentrate on how each child is doing as an individual, rather than comparing one child's grades or progress with another's.

Celebrate improvements. When children improve in a challenging subject, praise them for their hard work and dedication. Remind them that hard work does pay off and that you are very, very proud.

Resist rewards. It's tempting to use money or gifts to reward good grades, but there's a danger, too.

A child who works to get prizes may not be as motivated as one who has learned the personal satisfaction of a job well done. Children should learn that doing well is a reward all its own.

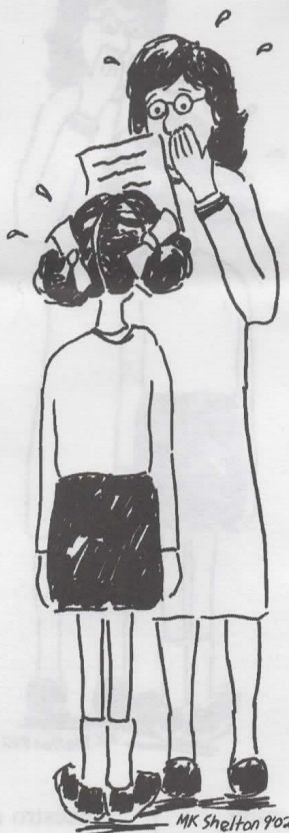
Don't expect perfection. Nobody's perfect. It's unrealistic and unfair to expect a child to always be on top. That shouldn't stop you, however, from setting high expectations. Encourage your children to do their best, help them when they need it, and praise them for their hard work and continual improvement.

Watch for downward slides. Pay attention to the papers and grades your children bring home. Talk with them about trouble they may be having and get the teacher's input immediately. Don't wait until a scheduled conference or until the report card arrives. This may be too long to wait.

Resist punishment. If your expectations are not met, or your child's grades slip, resist the urge to deny activities such as music, sports, or hobbies. Children—and adults—need positive activities and success in their lives.

Pay close attention to report cards. Be sure to read the teacher's comments on your child's report card. Doing so will show you all the ways the teacher sees your child excelling and improving, and give you advance notice about anything that may need extra attention.

Finally, make sure your child's grades are his own. Sometimes, parents help their children too much, even doing some of their homework. While those assignments and projects might get high grades (even though the teacher probably knows who really did the work), the child loses out because he or she didn't learn the material. Provide encouragement and guidance, but make sure your children are the ones earning the grades.



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