



How to Talk to Your Kids About Their Report Cards

It's here...Report Card time! Whether you're pulling it out of a backpack or pulling it up on Power School there's a moment of anticipation and maybe even dread. The following "Dos" and "Don'ts" might be helpful to you when speaking to your child when they walk through the door with their report in hand.

DO stay positive. Find something to praise initially, even if it's only to comment on the slight improvement in your child's Language Arts mark or how well she gets along with her classmates. If the marks aren't stellar, but your child has worked hard and tried her very best, she deserves recognition for what she's achieved.

DON'T compare. Avoid the temptation to talk about his sister's, cousin's or friend's exemplary reports. It's very easy to get caught up in the grade craze. You need to focus on having reasonable expectations for each of your children, not on everyone else.

DO listen to the key player. Some parents fail to realize that children are insightful about their own strengths and weaknesses. Ask your child what she thinks about her report card, what she's most proud of, or disappointed in, and why she thinks she received the marks she did. Remember to keep calm, cool and collected — this is a conversation, not an interrogation.

DON'T lose sight of the big picture. A report card is just a snapshot of the work your child produced during a specific period of time. A lower mark doesn't always mean she's slacking off or slipping in a subject. Your child may bring home an A in math one term, and a B the next if the course content has changed. Look carefully at the teacher's comments as well, since they can give you a better idea of how your child is performing overall.

DO prepare a follow-up plan. Take time on report card day to focus on and celebrate successes. Then begin fresh the next day with plans for improvement. Ask your child what he thinks he has to do, both at home and at school, to get better marks. Report cards sometimes reflect a lack of effort more than a lack of skill, so maybe he needs to limit TV or cut back on extracurricular activities. Offer your own suggestions and then, together, set small, realistic goals. You may also want to talk to your child's teacher about what your child can do to bring up his grades, especially if they're not reflective of the time and effort he's putting in.