



Growing readers!

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How to Read a Report Card

In a typical school year, report cards come home every nine weeks or so. The purpose of report cards is to communicate about a child's progress across subject areas. Most report cards also include a Work Habits, Social Skills, or similar section.

Some kids, especially those having difficulty in school, dread report card time. Here are some suggestions for making report card time a little less scary and a little more productive.

- Become familiar with the grading system in your district and at your grade. Many schools use a different report card for K-2 than they use for 3-5. Are letter grades used? A numerical score from 1-3? Other letters such as O, G, S, N?
- Make sure you understand the different competencies on the report card. Many use vague descriptors such as "Uses time constructively." If something is not clear to you, ask your child's teacher.
- As you look at your child's report card, RESIST THE IMPULSE to jump directly to an area with a lower score. Find an area with a good grade or score and focus on that first. "You did a great job in ____! You must be so proud of all your hard work."
- Once you've focused on the positive, talk about areas in which your child's grade was lower. "Tell me how things have been going in science lately." Start a safe, open dialogue with your child about the difficulty he or she might be having with the subject matter.
- Together, develop strategies to help in subject areas that are difficult for your child. Is there a textbook that needs to come home more frequently? Is there a website that can help with math fact drills? If you're not sure how to best help your child, call the teacher to set up a conference.
- Last, let your child know that she is more than just a report card. Remind her of all the things that make her special and important in your family. Too much of a focus on grades can only increase the amount of stress your child feels.

Report cards should not contain any huge surprises about how your child is doing. Most teachers work to talk with parents if a child is having particular difficulty, whether it's through interims or informal phone calls. If that is not the case with your child and his report card, call the teacher to talk about that. An open, ongoing conversation is the best way to manage everyone's expectations.

See also this post from our blog [Sound It Out: I'd give this report card comment an N \(for needs improvement\)](http://www.readingrockets.org/blog/28384) <http://www.readingrockets.org/blog/28384>

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