

You and Your Child's Report Card

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Dear Parents,

When it comes to your child's education, it's important that you play an active role throughout the school year. This guide was created by Sylvan Learning to help you understand your role in your child's academic future and provide you with tips on how you can help him achieve better grades on each report card.

A report card is more than just a series of letters. It's an invaluable tool to help you evaluate your child's academic progress and assess his strengths and weaknesses. Take the time to review it in detail with your child and be sure that you understand every grade, comment and note from the teacher. Don't be alarmed if there's something you don't understand, but do take action.

Speak with your child and his teacher about report cards and your child's progress in school. Take the time to communicate and set goals for the year ahead and discuss ways to track progress together. Identify potential trouble spots and keep your child on the right track. And remember to celebrate successes. It's just as important to acknowledge your child's achievements as it is to identify problems.

Before long you'll be a report card pro and will be well on your way to ensuring your child's success. Good luck!



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A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child Achieve Academic Success

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Communication

In a survey by Sylvan, 50 percent of teachers said that parents admitted they are not involved enough in their child's school experience. So, make communicating with your child a regular routine at the end of every school day. Set aside time to discuss her performance in different subject areas, as well as her strengths and weaknesses, and those subjects that excite her most. As report card time nears, talk about the grades she expects to receive in each class.

Fifty percent of teachers said that parents admitted they are not involved enough.

When your child brings home her report card, sit down together to talk about her overall feelings about the school term before you even look at her grades. If she's nervous about showing you her report card, be sure to make her feel comfortable, helping to ensure open lines of communication.

Review the report card with your child, paying special attention to any grades that come as a surprise. Encourage your child to talk about her school performance, including both positive and negative academic experiences, and any difficulties she may have in certain subject areas. If your child receives a poor report card, use it as an incentive for change, not a reason for punishment.

Set Goals

Take time to set academic goals with your child at the beginning of the school year, and review and/or modify them each month or each term. Be sure to cover all of his subjects and work together to set attainable goals. If he received a "C" in math last term, it may not be realistic to set a goal of an "A." Rather, set a goal of a "B."

Talk with your child about areas of improvement, and develop goals that focus on ways to turn the situation around. Is his goal to hand in all of his homework on time? Achieve an "A" on one or more of his essays? Participate more often in class discussions? When a goal is reached, talk about what it took to achieve a goal so he can repeat and improve on that behavior.

When he receives his report card, review his grades and discuss whether or not he met his goals. Make changes to his goals and/or talk about ways to help him better meet his goals next term. Encourage your child to do his best, and make sure to set attainable goals that can boost his self-confidence.



Organization

To help develop the skills, habits and attitudes for lifelong success, it's important to help your child stay organized both inside and outside of the classroom. Below are a few tips to ensure your child reaches her full academic potential:

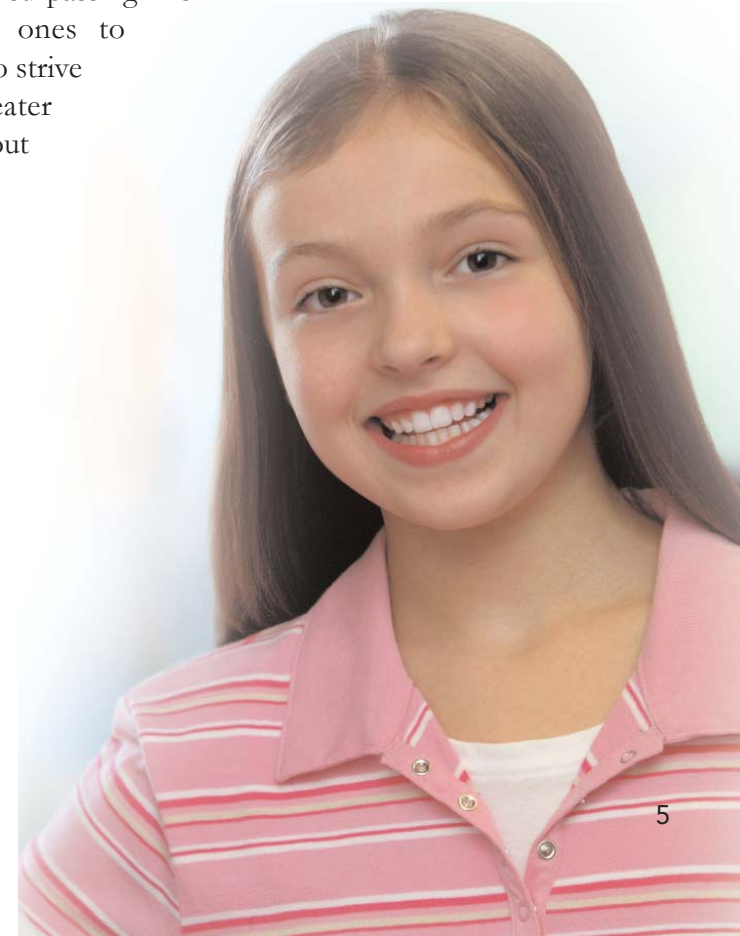
- **Create a Calendar.** Track all of your child's homework assignments, tests, chores and extracurricular activities on a master calendar. Keep the calendar in a common area so she isn't caught off guard by any projects or tasks. (See Page 13 of this booklet for suggestions and guidelines for creating a schoolwork calendar.)
- **Sort by Subject.** Help your child organize her school notebooks, papers and tests. Set up a separate binder and color coding for each subject. Having all of the subject materials in one place will come in handy at test time.
- **Have a Homework Zone.** Set up a special place in your home for your child to complete homework and study for tests. Make sure the area is well-lit, free from distractions, and that all of her supplies and study materials are close at hand.

You'll also want to set a good example for your child. Let her know that schoolwork comes first. When he is studying quietly, lessen distractions and read a good book, demonstrating to him that reading is enjoyable and useful.

Tracking Progress

On a regular basis, track your child's progress against the goals you created together. If his goal is to hand in homework assignments on time, check in with him from time to time to find out if he's having trouble meeting this goal. If he is, try to find out why. It may mean starting homework a bit earlier each night or getting extra help or tutoring in certain subject areas.

Regular progress checks with your child will help him stay on track. Keep in mind that if he's having trouble meeting some of his goals, you may need to modify them. This will give him self-confidence that he is succeeding, helping to ensure he is on the right path to better grades. If he's surpassing his goals, set new ones to encourage him to strive for even greater success throughout the year.



Identifying Trouble Spots

As a parent, you should be on the lookout for academic trouble spots. By maintaining open lines of communication with your child and reviewing each term's report card, you can help recognize areas of difficulty before it's too late.

Talk about school together with your child and find out if there are any subject areas your child doesn't enjoy or finds difficult. Also, look out for signs of trouble. Does she dislike going to school every day? Does she avoid talking about a specific subject area? If the answer is yes to either question, your child may be having trouble in certain subjects, making schoolwork more of a chore.

Academics is a shared responsibility.

Talk with your child and his teacher about potential academic problems. Then, examine his work space, his organization, and the possibility that he may need extra help or tutoring in certain areas to get him back on track.



Your Child's Teacher

Your child's teacher has direct contact with your child each school day and can offer valuable insight into his academic progress and abilities. Develop a relationship with your child's teacher and talk regularly, either by phone, by email or in-person, about how your child is doing throughout the year.

Don't wait for report card time or parent/teacher nights to talk to the teacher. Early on, find out the teacher's expectations for the year and what type of curriculum she has set for her students. Knowing what is planned for the year ahead will help you set goals with your child.

**Develop a relationship
with your child's teacher
and talk regularly.**

Once your child receives her report card, have a conversation with her teacher to find out why she received certain grades. Look for insight into your child's performance in the classroom, suggestions and advice and other thoughts on your child's academic career. These tips and ideas can help you to help your child become a better and more engaged student.

Celebrating Successes

Celebrate your child's successes, whether she consistently earns good grades or has made an improvement in her performance. Remind your child that you're proud of what he has achieved. Be particular when you praise your child. Talk about a specific academic subject or a particular extracurricular project.

Don't just look for improved grades. If your child has committed to regularly handing in homework on time and has reached that goal, then recognize this success as well. Communication is key - children need to know that you're aware of milestones and goals they've reached. Some ways to celebrate successes include:

- **Special Rewards.** Buy a book by her favorite author or a new writing journal.
- **Family Recognition.** If your child receives an "A" on a test, post it on the refrigerator to celebrate the success and encourage the good work.
- **Gold Stars.** Post a bulletin board in your child's homework space. Affix a gold star for every good mark, which can later be exchanged for academic rewards.

If you need to discuss a trouble spot with your child, be sure to celebrate a success, too. By praising your child's strengths, you help build her confidence and motivation, which ultimately can help her succeed in other areas of her life.



Questions You Should Ask Your Child

Don't wait until report cards are issued to talk with your child about school and grades. Frequently discuss performance in each subject and what grades he anticipates in specific subjects. Throughout the year and when report cards come home, consider the following questions and discussion points to ask and talk about with your child:

- Is he surprised or disappointed by any of his marks? Was he expecting to do better or worse in certain subjects? Why?
- Did he meet his goals set at the start of the school year? Do you need to set new goals?
- If your child is having trouble in a specific subject, try to find out what is causing trouble. Does he need a better method to organize his schedule, assignments and regular homework? Is he handing in assignments late or missing them altogether?
- Is he too busy with extracurricular activities? Or is homework taking too long?
- Do you need to revisit his study plan or habits? Is he cramming last-minute or forgetting topics he studied a week ago?
- Does he get along with his classmates? Does he like the teacher and what he's learning in school?

Keep open lines of communication with your child and be aware of anything that may be troubling him at home or at school. Take the time to talk about subjects that may be difficult for your child, but as well, those that he is enjoying.

Questions For Your Child's Teacher

Your child's teacher can provide valuable insight into your child's education as she sees what's going on in the classroom and how your child interacts with others. Stay in touch with the teacher throughout the school year, and be sure to address the following when you do:

- How has your child performed compared to other students? Is the teacher happy with your child's progress? Are you?
- What are your child's strengths and weaknesses? Are you identifying the same areas that she is?
- Find out what the teacher's expectations are for the year and what type of curriculum she has set for the students. Have this insight at the start of school and keep track of it throughout the year.
- If you were expecting different marks in certain subjects than appeared on your child's report card, talk about how your expectations were different. Find out why your child received the marks she did.
- Does the teacher expect more from your child than she's delivering? Should she be doing better in certain subjects?
- Talk to the teacher about any major programs or activities that are set for the year. Is there an annual science fair? A field trip schedule? Major papers? Tests?

Remember - teachers are busy people, too. Find out the easiest way to communicate - by email, phone or in-person. Finding the right communication method will make it easier to speak on a regular basis.

Foster a Love of Learning Tips for Parents and Children

Sylvan Learning offers a variety of free activity booklets and journals online to help students develop a love of learning. By visiting the "Parent Resources" area of www.SylvanLearning.com, you can download each of the activities below.

Writing Journal. A fun writing journal with weekly topics, including a personalized journal cover

Family Learning Fun Booklet. Enjoy seven days of fun educational activities with this complimentary booklet. Filled with fun and educational activities, this brochure is great for the entire family at any time of the year.

Math Activities Booklet. Sustain and renew your child's interest in math learning and discovery with 30 days of math writing topics, trivia, questions, and puzzles that the entire family can enjoy.

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Create a Schoolwork Calendar

Whatever your child's age or grade, a calendar... showing a daily homework schedule, daily and weekly assignments, upcoming tests, paper or project deadlines, report card dates... is a great way to get organized and ultimately get better grades.

Exactly how to make the calendar depends on your child's situation in school and at home. Here are some guidelines:

1. Make it simple, easy to fill in, easy to change, easy to read.
2. Make it fun with age-appropriate little drawings, funny notes from Dad, etc.
3. Make it matter, being sure to keep it up to date, and check it regularly.
4. Make it a together activity, with you and your child working as a team to create the calendar, keeping it up to date, and checking it daily.
5. Make one for each child.

