

How Best to Handle Report Cards?

To save shocks and upsets, gently discuss from time to time “how things are going at school” with your child. Something casual, such as, “How did the math test go?,” “How did you do on the history report?,” “How’s your science project coming along? Need any help?” are questions that aren’t the “third degree” but indicate interest.



Find out if it is a policy at your child’s school to send out “warning notices” when work isn’t going well. Generally, such notices require the parent’s signature to verify that the parent has indeed been alerted. This is the time to contact the teacher of course, along with your child, to learn what the difficulty may be. If such notices aren’t sent, then grades on projects and reports and from tests may be the sole source of information short of what your child wishes to share.



Be tuned in to statements such as “he’s an awful teacher,” “She goes too fast,” etc. this may be the child’s way of indicating frustration in understanding content or lack of study time with the subject. However, depending on your child’s age, be cautious in contacting teachers without your child’s knowledge. It could disrupt good feelings between you, destroy trust, and seem as if you are spying or interfering.

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Are Your Children Wealthy?

One sociologist, looking over 8,000 years of human history, writes that **the measure of wealth is the ability to own a book and be able to read it.** Literacy is the ultimate luxury. Instill a love of reading in your children by reading books with them and discussing the contents. *Make your children truly rich in spirit—read with them.*



Creator God,
There is so much to learn,
so much to understand.
Your world is full of wonder.
We have only begun to understand
the forces of nature
and the laws of your universe.
We have only begun to understand
the gifts that each person brings
to the family of humankind.
We have only begun to understand you
in all your greatness and love.
Open our eyes and ears and hearts
to appreciate more deeply the wonders
of creation, the beauty of persons,
and the mystery of your love.
As we end a year of learning,
fill us with your understanding.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
your Son. Amen.

From *Family Faith and Fun: Activities, Games and Prayers for Sharing Faith at Home* by Gary Boelhower, HI TIME Publishing, 1996

Want to help your child excel? Then let him play. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, many kids are overwhelmed by activities geared toward turning them into super achievers. But an important part of a child’s development is simply playing. In fact, unstructured playtime will help your children develop imagination and creativity, problem-solving skills, and discover their own interests. So let them look for bugs in the backyard, go through the kitchen cabinets, or dig in a sand pile. You don’t need a week full of structured activities to raise successful children—and you may even find the calmer schedule better for you, too.



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Give us, Lord, the wisdom and sensitivity we need to help our children become good, honest, caring, giving, and loving individuals.

- Renee Bartkowski



Successful Study Habits

Not all kids are going to get A's, but there are ways to promote more successful study habits. Here are some ideas you may find helpful.

- ☑ **Teach kids to eliminate what they already know.** This is not as obvious to young kids as it is to adults, and a lot of study time is wasted reviewing known facts. Whatever it is that your child has to memorize, give her an oral “pre-test” before any studying has been done. Immediately eliminate the items that she knows from the list. As she goes over the information, more and more will be eliminated, and your child will see the task getting smaller, shorter, and easier—all great self confidence builders. Then the night before the test, review everything one last time.
- ☑ **Have kids create folded study sheets.** These tools are good for memorizing definitions or number facts, and once they know how, kids can easily create their own. Take a sheet of lined paper, and fold it in half lengthwise. Unfold the paper, and have your child list the number facts or glossary words down the left side of the paper and the answer or definition to the right of the fold. Then, refold the paper and have him test himself. These folded study sheets are especially good because kids don't get a “split second” peek at the answer like they do when covering material with their hands. As your child reviews the list, have him put a dot or check next to any items he doesn't know. At the end, he will know exactly which ones to eliminate and which to focus on. This “list system” promotes independent study habits and also gives you a ready-made review test to use when your child is done studying.
- ☑ **Provide colored index cards.** They are sold in any large drug store, come in multicolor packs, and are great for visual learners and kids who have difficulty organizing and sorting ideas. I've had kids use them to mark different sections of text books—for example, yellow cards to mark chapter review question pages and purple cards for chapter summary pages. This simple method enables kids to flip back and forth to reference pages quickly—it's amazing how much study time kids can waste finding the same pages over and over again. I have also used index cards to help kids who are comparing literature books or short stories—they give them an easy way to track each title's characters, themes, and conflicts.
- ☑ **Show kids how to make test grids.** Even the earliest tests require kids to memorize and compare information. The easiest way to study for these is by setting up a one-page grid. For example, say your child has an elementary social studies test on the 13 colonies—who founded them, who settled them, and what the settlers did for a living. Together, create a test grid with four columns: Colony Name, Founder, Settlers, Making A Living. In the first column, have your child list the names of the colonies. Then have her complete each row, filling in the information under the remaining headings. Not only are test grids a great way to organize notes for studying, they also condense the information onto a single page—making the task look less threatening.

Effective studying is a skill that evolves over time. Kids should use their test results as feedback for their methods: How well did I study? What didn't work? What could I change for next time? Help your kids ponder these questions and come up with a “game plan” for next time. Strive, though, to create independent study times. Begin pushing independence as soon as your child starts to study, but do it gradually—you don't want your child to feel like you've pulled the rug out from underneath him. Even if you begin with short increments, your message is still clear: Studying is something I expect you to do by yourself.

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Praise Effort More Than Outcome

Carol S. Dweck at Stanford University did a

study with 400 fifth graders. Half were randomly praised as being “really smart” for doing well on a test; the others were praised for their effort. Then they were given two tasks to choose from: an easy one that they would learn little from but do well on, or a more challenging one that might be more interesting but also produce more mistakes.

The majority of those praised for being smart chose the simplest task, while 90% of those commended for trying hard selected the more difficult one.

So what's the take home? ***If you want your kids to take risks and not melt in the face of fear, praise effort more than outcome.*** Encourage them to stretch themselves, even if it means greater risk. ***And be sure to let them know that you love them, and are proud of them for not always doing the easy thing, but the best thing.***



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