

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

East Broadway Elementary School

Parents Guiding Students for School Success

Stay calm if grades drop

When a child brings home a poor report card, some parents respond with anger and frustration—and threaten to ground their child for life!

Here are some guidelines to follow instead:

- **Keep grades in perspective.** Your child already knows she didn't do well, and this can sap her confidence. Make sure she knows that grades are certainly important, but they aren't a measure of her worth.
- **Look for causes.** A disappointing report card can be a sign of other difficulties, such as poor study habits or too many extracurricular activities. Ask your child what *she* thinks is the problem.
- **Contact teachers.** Sometimes students blame teachers for low grades. Be sure to get everyone's view of the situation. Ask what your child's teacher has observed in the classroom.
- **Set realistic goals.** If your child gets mostly C's in social studies, don't expect a quick turnaround to straight A's. Work with her and the teacher to make a reasonable plan for improvement.
- **Accentuate the positive.** Point out areas in which your child does well. Is she a good writer? A great athlete? Talk about what methods she uses to succeed in those areas. Perhaps she can use them to raise her social studies grade.



Source: "Five Tips for Handling a Bad Report Card," University of Rochester Medical Center, www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=3037.

Reluctant reader? Use a subtle nudge

You know how critical reading is to your child's overall academic success, but what do you do if you have a reluctant reader? Here are some tips:

- **First, know what not to do.** Avoid nagging and using reading time as punishment.
- **Make low-key requests.** In the store: "Can you find out which of your favorite cereals has the least amount of sugar?" In the kitchen: "Could you check the recipe to see how long I have to beat this batter?" Don't make a big deal of it. Simply say, "Thanks for reading that."
- **Keep interesting reading materials around the house,** including comic books and graphic novels.



Source: N.L. Roser, *Helping Your Child Become a Reader*, International Reading Association.

"Prime time" isn't just the best time to watch



TV. Prime time is also the best time to have some quiet one-on-one time with your child.

Your child's bedtime is usually when you and your child are most relaxed. It's a great opportunity to discuss the day with him. Ask your child to name the best and the toughest parts of his day. Talk about something you're looking forward to the next day. Be sure to end with, "Sweet dreams. I love you!"

Daydreams lead to critical thinking

Is your child's head "in the clouds" more than ever? That's normal, especially as kids get older—and it's also healthy.



When children daydream, they imagine different situations and how they might handle them. This makes it easier to face new challenges.

So don't worry that your child is tuning you out. She's tuning in to new thinking skills.

It's all in the details

Do you want your child to respond to your instruction? Then be specific!

Saying, "Knock it off or you'll be sorry" doesn't really mean anything to your child. Instead, let her know exactly what will happen if she doesn't behave. "If you don't stop kicking your soccer ball in the house, I'm going to take it away for one week."

The clearer and more direct you are, the better.



Give your child a confidence boost

Sometimes kids don't do their homework because they lack confidence. They're afraid they won't be able to do it, so they avoid it altogether. Some well-directed praise can make a huge difference. Try these suggestions:

- **Be positive.** You might say, "Math can be hard. But I know you—and I know you can do it! Would you like me to help you get started? Let's take a look at it together."
- **Be consistent.** Whenever you see your child working hard, reward him with praise. Remember to praise effort as well as success.
- **Be specific.** For example, "You didn't give up on that problem. Good for you!" Reinforce your praise with a hug, a smile or a pat on the back. And sometimes, let your child overhear you tell someone, "Brian did his homework today without any reminders. He studied for an hour. I am so proud of him!"



Questions & Answers

Q: My child has always been fairly respectful. But now that she has entered middle school, her manners have become a problem. What can I do?

A: Tremendous changes take place in early adolescence as kids start to explore the world around them. The need to express their independence sometimes results in rude and disrespectful behavior. Some kids think rudeness is cool, while others simply haven't developed appropriate social skills yet.

These tips can help:

- **Earn respect—don't demand it.** Your child is more likely to respect you if you respect her. For example, instead of getting upset with her in front of friends, wait until you're in a private situation. And if you do get angry, try to remain calm. Don't yell or use abusive language. Keep in mind that you are modeling appropriate behavior for her.
- **Review some basic social skills,** such as shaking hands, making eye contact and saying, "Hi. How are you?" She may roll her eyes now, but be assured that she will remember the lesson. Gently discuss any skills that seem to be difficult for your child.
- **Watch TV together** and notice examples of respect and disrespect. Choose shows your child likes. Talk about whether behaviors that seem okay on TV are really acceptable. Don't lecture. Start a friendly discussion by asking, "How do you think that would affect a real-life relationship?" Then listen to her answer and let her know that you respect her opinion.



Practice one behavior at a time

Teaching new behaviors is most effective when done one step at a time.



If your child always has a messy room, for example, expecting him to suddenly have it clean and tidy because you told him to might not be very realistic.

Instead, patiently work on one behavior at a time. You might start by having him make his bed every morning or tidy up his school papers every evening.

Have him practice one behavior until it becomes a daily habit. Then add a second one.

Be sure to offer encouragement and lots of praise along the way.

Reprogram your procrastinator

"I'll do it later." We've all said it or thought it at one time or another. To keep procrastination from becoming a habit for your child:

- **Set concrete tasks.** Don't give her open-ended jobs to do.
- **Help her set goals** and talk about how to meet them.
- **Encourage her** to break large school assignments into smaller parts.
- **Let her make some** of her own choices when possible.

Source: A. Weinstein, "Why Kids Procrastinate and How to Help," Education.com. www.education.com/magazine/article/Why_Kids_Procrastinate/%20

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