

# Student Report Cards



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Parents try a wide range of strategies to ensure their children are putting in the effort needed to bring home a strong report card. Many parents offer incentives, special meals, trips, events, and even cash to get kids to put in the work for their grades. While these tactics may work in the short term, the real goal should be to build intrinsic motivation for kids to do their best. Research shows that these external rewards (also known as extrinsic motivation) may fall short in the long run.

## Talk About Academic Performance

So, what will work? Research shows that increasing motivation requires a focus on long term outcomes, values, and goal setting. These are not fully developed skillsets in children. Parents need to step in and help kids along the way. Here are some things you can do to help build this motivation from home:

Don't wait for report cards to discuss grades.

Teaching kids the importance of grades and to always

try their best are values that are developed through regular discussion about expectations. These are not only expectations for grades, but for all activities: sports, art, music, and school. As my mother used to say, "Anything worth doing is worth doing right." Whether kids are cleaning their room, working on a project, or studying for a test, we have to constantly teach them to put their best foot forward. Help kids set goals. Whether kids are knocking it out of the park or they are performing below your expectations, there is always room for growth. Help kids choose tangible steps for growth that will help get them to the next step. At times you will have to temper kids' expectations and other times you will need to push a bit. Finding the sweet spot for steps towards growth is a process in and of itself. Kids need help to learn this important skill.

Continually remind kids that they are not alone. You are there with them to help along the way. They need to be reminded of this. Kids will need you to plan. They will need you when they succeed. Most importantly, they will need you when they fail. Kids need to know that you are in their corner and you are with them for the journey, no matter what.

Celebrate the wins! Yes, I realize this may sound contradictory to my opening comments, but it's important to recognize growth and effort. I would advise against grandiose gestures. Be sure to talk up your child. Tell your child that you are proud of their accomplishments. Maybe, get some dessert to recognize their efforts and growth. If they put in the work, it's important to be there to celebrate and to continue to encourage that effort. The words and

tone you use with your child becomes their inner monologue. You have the opportunity to build an inner voice that encourages growth and effort, or one that is self-defeating. When you're there to celebrate the wins and to offer encouragement in the losses, your kid will learn to speak encouragement to themselves without even realizing it!