

# Rivergate Pediatrics



## Five Tips for Handling a Bad Report Card

By third grade, your child's warm and fuzzy progress report will likely give way to the cold, hard, letter-grade report card. A disappointing grade can become an emotional tripwire for parent and child alike.

The best advice? Don't react with disappointment. A poor grade is often a red flag for a potential problem area, not a measure of your child's worth or your parenting skills. Collect your thoughts and respond in a calm, clear way:

**1. Praise, praise, praise!** Acknowledge the A in art, the good attendance, the well-mannered attitude. Then focus on areas of improvement. Assure your child that the grade does not make him a failure and that together you can find helpful strategies.

**2. Discuss, don't lecture!** Kids tune out lectures. Instead, ask this question: "What do you think happened, and does this reflect the work you put into it?" Your child will likely point you to the problem and the solution. Does the teacher talk too fast? A recorder could help. Is homework incomplete? A structured routine is vital.

Kids need some downtime to recharge before tackling homework. Build homework into a daily routine that includes a protein snack for fuel, some physical play, a half hour of tube time, chatting with friends, or a daily chore like feeding the dog.

**3. Identify and acknowledge motivational patterns.** Reward — and inspire — by recognizing and building on success and special interests. If your son stumbles in math, a learning-based computer game could make numbers click. Don't punish poor grades. It's better to restructure time (such as limiting instant messaging) to foster progress. Fear can block learning. Focus on a fresh start.

**4. Think proficiency, not perfection.** Some kids are C students, yet excel at music, art, or athletics. Nurture their gifts but discuss expectations. Rather than striving for straight A's, expect that your child be proficient in academic and social-emotional learning for their grade level. This

includes lifelong learning skills, such as team membership, problem solving, critical thinking, and communication.

**5. Meet with the teacher.** Learn about the teaching style, rules, ways you can help your child, and access to tutoring. The more you learn and communicate, the greater the chances of your child's success. If you think a grade is unfair, call the teacher or counselor and act as your child's advocate. Perhaps your child should be tested for learning, behavioral, or other problems.

