Ten Top Tips to Make the Most of the End of Year School Report

1. **Before the report arrives home**, a useful exercise would be to ask your child to write their own school report. Make up a grid similar to this (below) for all subjects, and ask your child to pretend to be the teacher and write about themselves. You could also create a grid that simulates your child’s previous school report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Grade (A-E)</th>
<th>Effort (A-E)</th>
<th>Teacher’s comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This gives your child the opportunity to reflect on his/her own performance at school. It can provide parents with a useful insight and can be a reference to compare the teachers’ perspectives with your child’s viewpoint. It is also a good discussion point when the school report arrives home. And a discussion **should** take place to help your child reflect and evaluate the report with you.

2. **Read your child’s report with your child.** This immediately indicates openness, and provides direct encouragement and support to your child. Wherever there are positives, in either comments, grades, effort and so on, point them out to your child first. Most students will have areas to commend and should be acknowledged by the parent.

3. **The report should be viewed as a vehicle to move forward,** and not be perceived as a final judgment of a child’s ability - because it is not. It’s a “screenshot” and not the whole story. It is important students know they have the ability to modify and change their work ethic or study strategies, and they can improve. Reinforcing that the report is an opportunity to highlight strengths and weaknesses, which will happen throughout their working life through appraisal or performance reviews, can help the student develop goals for next year.

4. **Compare the yearly report to the Semester 1 report and last year’s report.** This can be useful to identify specific subject areas where there has been an improvement or a decline. If grades improved, celebrate this achievement. If the grades declined, ask your child why this may be the case. For example, Semester 1 report grades may have been based on assignments and not exams. This could flag that exams were either not fully prepared for and study skills should be reviewed, or your child needs exam practice as they are a very different mode to demonstrate knowledge, or perhaps new concepts were introduced in Semester 2 and these could be weaknesses to work on!

5. **Don’t just look at grades, focus on effort also.** A child’s performance is not measured solely by grades. Not every child will receive an A or B, in fact the average child would mostly like achieve a C grade (which typically represents the middle 60%). Effort grades however can reflect the teacher’s perspective on how hard your child worked, his/her commitment to fulfill homework, assignments and contribution in class. A child who achieved a C grade, or 55%, yet gained an A for effort should be congratulated. Again, as the report should be viewed as a discussion and evaluation, if the effort grade is lower, ask your child why this might be the case, and make a note of this to form one of the goals for next year.

6. **Consider the “year average” mark or grade.** Many schools will include the year average grade as well as your child’s grade. This is important to consider. If your child attained a 75%, and the year average was 62%, then your child is well above the average. Celebrate this.

7. **Teachers’ comments.** The teachers’ comments are valuable when discussing the report with your child. Ask him or her if they agree with the comment, or why, if they don’t. Encourage your child to consider the teachers’ comments. Obviously if there is a consistent thread from multiple teachers, this needs to be addressed. For example, if many teachers comment on your child’s lack of concentration, or need to focus on answering the question, then the comments suggest a specific area of weakness. Similarly, if multiple comments commend your child on commitment, determination and diligence, it suggests your child’s attitude to school is solid.
8. **TALK to your child about the report, and LISTEN.**

   Help your child not to blame someone or something that resulted in a disappointing report. Blame does not lead to action. If there are extenuating circumstances for a disappointing report (such as a difficult family situation like parents separating, or relocation or demanding co-curricular activities etc), acknowledge these may have affected your child’s focus and give understanding. However help your child accept that they perhaps did not put in the effort, or had not established an effective revision program, or had not given the required commitment. Asking your child what they could do next year to improve or maintain excellence is a good start. Again, it would be worthwhile jotting down your child’s comments to establish goals. Reinforcing that a yearly report is a vehicle to move forward is vital.

9. **Grades varying between subjects, and compare exam results with assessment results.**

   Identify specific subjects where grades were ‘low’ and where others were ‘high’. It is not uncommon for students to have strengths in some subjects and weaknesses in others. Few children excel across all subject areas, particularly in Years 7 – 10 when they have not yet been able to refine their academic program to areas of interest or strength. Talk to your child about why grades may vary, as there could be good reasons. For example, if your child’s report grades range from 98% to 62%, ask why? Most students would be able to articulate the divergence and it could be simply that they did not study for a subject at all, or had misread a heavily weighted question. Again, make a note of your child’s comments, to form goals or strategies for next year. Similarly compare exam grades against assessment grades. If your child’s exam marks are noticeably less than the assessment grades, it could easily identify a weakness in exam technique and/or revision, and not be a reflection of ability or understanding. Remember, examinations are just one medium for determining a child’s knowledge.

10. **Establish goals for next year and consider a holiday review program (even if only 1 hour a week).**

    The report can, and should, be read as an instrument to create goals for next year, and possibly plan a holiday review program. As students in December typically focus on the long summer holidays, freedom and unstructured days, it’s natural for school work to wane. However, now is the time to create goals for next year, whilst the academic year remains in their recent memory. It is more difficult to establish goals in February. Goals are best determined by the child, yet parental input after discussing a yearly report is prudent and can provide direction. Identify 3 – 5 goals for Semester 1, 2015. The goals should be in response to you and your child’s discussion of the report, and teacher recommendations. Some goals could be:
    • Focus on reading the question in assignments/exams carefully to ensure the question is answered.
    • Ensure I make summary notes when I finish each topic.
    • Do at least 30 minutes reviewing what I learned at school each day, in addition to homework.
    • Ask the teacher if I don’t understand a concept.
    • For example, if Maths is a weakness, spend 1 hour a week doing extra Maths practice.

    When the goals are listed put them in a prominent place – fridge, bedroom wall, notice board etc.

    It would also be prudent to develop a holiday review program if there are specific subjects or areas of subjects that are weak. This does not need to be extensive, in fact, shouldn’t, however regular practice of specific subjects that will be required for cumulative learning next year can make an enormous difference. Examples of subjects where knowledge learned this year would be assumed knowledge for next year can include Maths, Science, English and Languages – as well as many others!

    Holiday review programs can easily be incorporated into your child’s vacation plans. For example, if your child sees a movie, they could write a review, or analyse the film techniques. If your child reads a newspaper or magazine or internet site, they could write a short paragraph about bias, purpose, persuasive techniques etc.

    **LASTLY**, if you are very concerned about your child’s report, you should contact the school.

*Learn more this year about how to set goals and be more efficient and effective with your schoolwork by working through the units on [www.studyskillshandbook.com.au](http://www.studyskillshandbook.com.au). You might like to work through a few units over the holidays.*

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*Password:*