

Making the Grade

*Have your child take responsibility for his grades.
Don't let him say, "The teacher gave me this grade."
Instead, have him say, "I earned this grade."*

Has your child ever come home very upset because of a poor grade on a project or assignment? He might not understand why the grade was so poor and may even think the teacher was unfair in his grading.

Before you react, take a few minutes to sit down with your child and go over the assignment or project together. Can you see where he made his mistakes? Can he explain to you the goal of the assignment or project and then decide whether or not he achieved the goal? Together, you should be able to determine where he went wrong. If neither of you can find the errors that brought down his grade, make a list of questions for your child to ask his teacher about the project. If you have a young child, you may want to send a note with him to school asking the teacher to call you at a convenient time. On the note, tell his teacher which assignment you want to talk about so he can be prepared when he calls you.

Teachers don't enjoy writing poor grades in their grade book. A teacher's goal is to have every student master the material presented. A "D" on an assignment means the student has not mastered the objective. Like you, your child's teacher wants your child to learn the information, so here's a suggestion. Find out if his teacher will accept "extra credit." Talk with the teacher and your child to come up with a variety of projects he could choose from to complete and use as extra credit to bring up his grade (perhaps even just fixing up the assignment in question). Not only will the extra credit help improve his grade, but also he will be reaching the goal: learning the material he was supposed to master in the first assignment. Very few teachers would refuse to let an enthusiastic, willing child do extra work to improve his grade as long as the extra work being done will help the child learn the material.

If his teacher does not accept extra credit, still encourage your child to find and correct his mistakes. Even if the grade cannot be improved, doing the extra work will ensure your child has mastered this assignment's skills before moving on to new ones. If your child hesitates at doing extra work because he is not going to "get" something out of it, reassure him that he *will* be getting something very important: *knowledge!*