

You too could do better if you tried

IT'S that time of year again. The issuing of school report cards to anxious thousands of high school students across the state. Undoubtedly a tense time for many parents, too, not to mention the teachers who have to write them.

This is it. The crunch. The culmination of months of . . . well, of whatever the particular student in question has been doing with them.

For many, it has been an endless list of assignments, essays and tests dutifully and conscientiously completed and for some, an endless list of assignments, essays and tests dutifully and conscientiously ignored.

The writing of students' reports is an important part of a school's yearly program and an enormous amount of effort goes into their preparation. Each student's overall progress must be analysed carefully, including grades obtained for the various tasks set, test results, homework record, punctuality, attitude and behavior. Often, recommendations or suggestions for improvements will need to be included.

Every report needs to be checked, usually by a year-level coordinator, and rewritten if necessary. Finally, the reports are collated and then read and signed by the school principal. On average, a teacher may have anything between 100 and 150 reports to write.

The functions of a report card are, first, to make both students and parents aware of how the child is progressing and, second, to provide an effective and efficient means of communication between parents and the school. Achieving either or both of these depends on two things: how well the reports are *written* and how well they are *read*.

In my experience as a teacher, I have found that many students and their parents do not make the most of the child's report card, probably because they don't really know how to. In many cases, it is read and then simply put away and forgotten. Considering the amount of effort that has gone into its creation, it seems fair that your child's report be read and discussed properly and thoroughly. The benefits of doing this — for both parent and child — will become evident as the school year progresses.

REPORTS

ARIANA FABRIS

How do you, as a parent, make the most of your child's report?

- Read through the report with your child and have a pen and paper handy.
- Praise your child for things done well, and identify weaknesses or areas that can be improved. Jot these down.
- Discuss strategies that may be useful in helping your child to overcome weaker areas. For example, if lack of organization is a problem, a school diary, checked regularly by you, may help. If a particular subject is causing concern, some tutoring or extra practice at home may be needed. Whatever strategies



you and your child decide on, it is very important that they be followed through.

- Try to avoid getting angry. A lot more will be achieved if you stay calm.
- Listen to what your child has to say.
- Make a list of things you would like to discuss with your child's teachers at the next parent/teacher evening and bring it along.
- Serious problems regarding behavior and/or attitude should be addressed immediately. Discuss the situation with the teacher or teachers involved, or with the appropriate year-level coordinator. Try to be as objective as possible, even though this can sometimes be difficult.

A teacher's job is not an easy one and your help and support as a parent will always be welcomed and greatly appreciated.