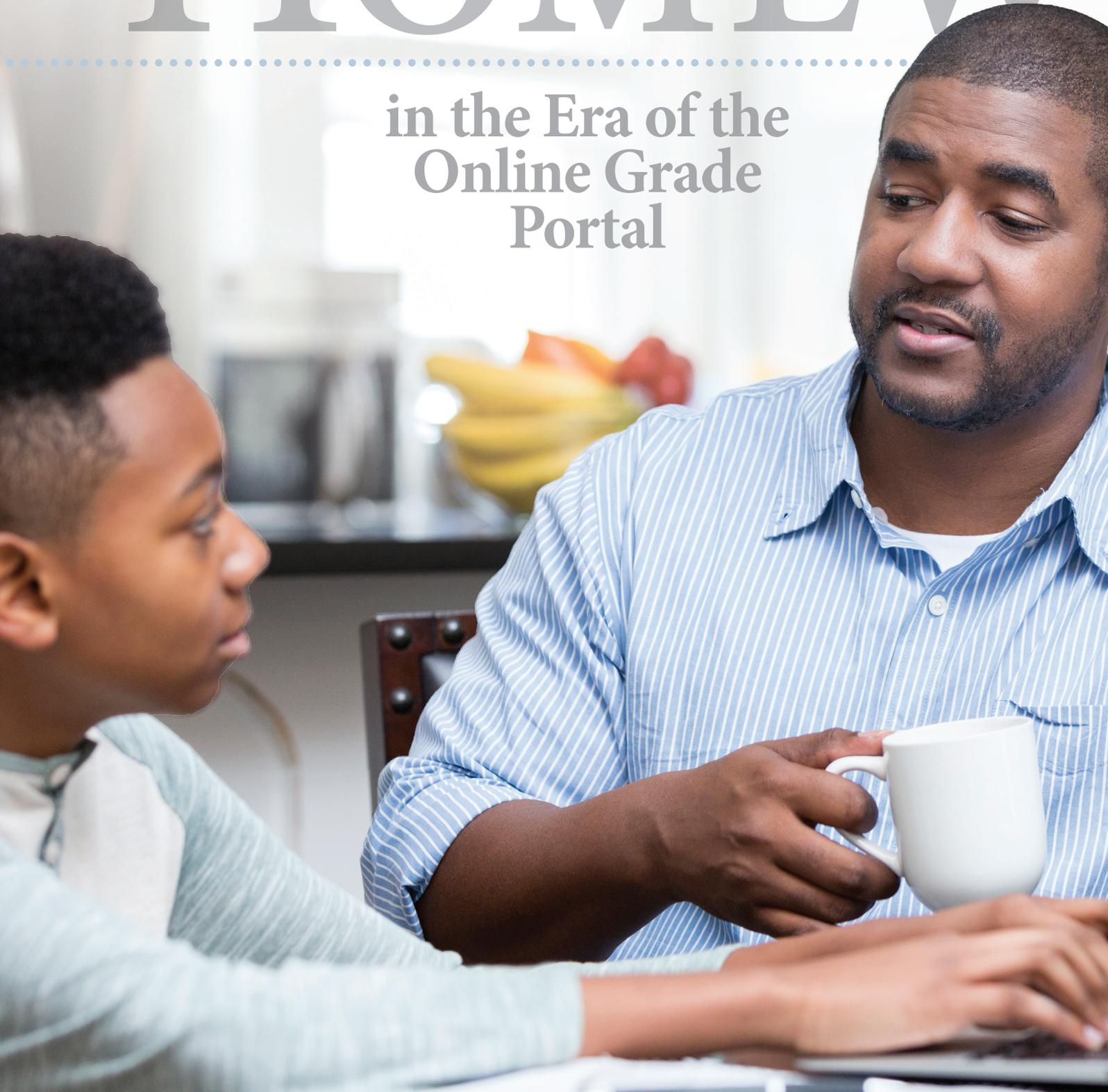


# HOMESCHOOLING

in the Era of the  
Online Grade  
Portal



# ORK



by Carey A. Heller, PsyD

*“I turned that in,” snapped Jack.*

*“According to the online portal, you have a zero,” stated his father.*

**H**AS AN EXCHANGE LIKE THIS happened in your home yet?

More and more schools are providing parents with 24/7 online access to their child’s grades. There are many positives to this. Parents know how their child is doing academically throughout each quarter. This access could give them peace of mind that their child is on top of things and doing well. It can also help them catch issues early on and assist their child in fixing things. Furthermore, it allows parents to contact teachers and bring concerns to their attention more readily.

Trouble keeping track of homework assignments and poor school performance can be a common occurrence for children and adolescents with ADHD. But there are potential drawbacks to parents having instant access to their child’s grades.

Online access can make parents more anxious about grades and focus on every single assignment—even, for example, a three-point exercise where a child lost one point. Parents may become far more involved in the management of their child’s homework than they would be otherwise. Depending on how it is handled, this high level of involvement could impede a child’s ability to learn to manage assignments themselves. This is especially true at the high school level, when increasing independence is particularly important. Furthermore, conflicts at home about school may increase.

Whether there are more positives or negatives to parents having online access to grades probably depends on who you ask. Regardless, many schools offer such portals, and it is unlikely that their availability will decrease over time. So, you'll want to get the maximum benefits and limit the drawbacks on your end as well as from the viewpoint of your child.

### Five strategies you can use

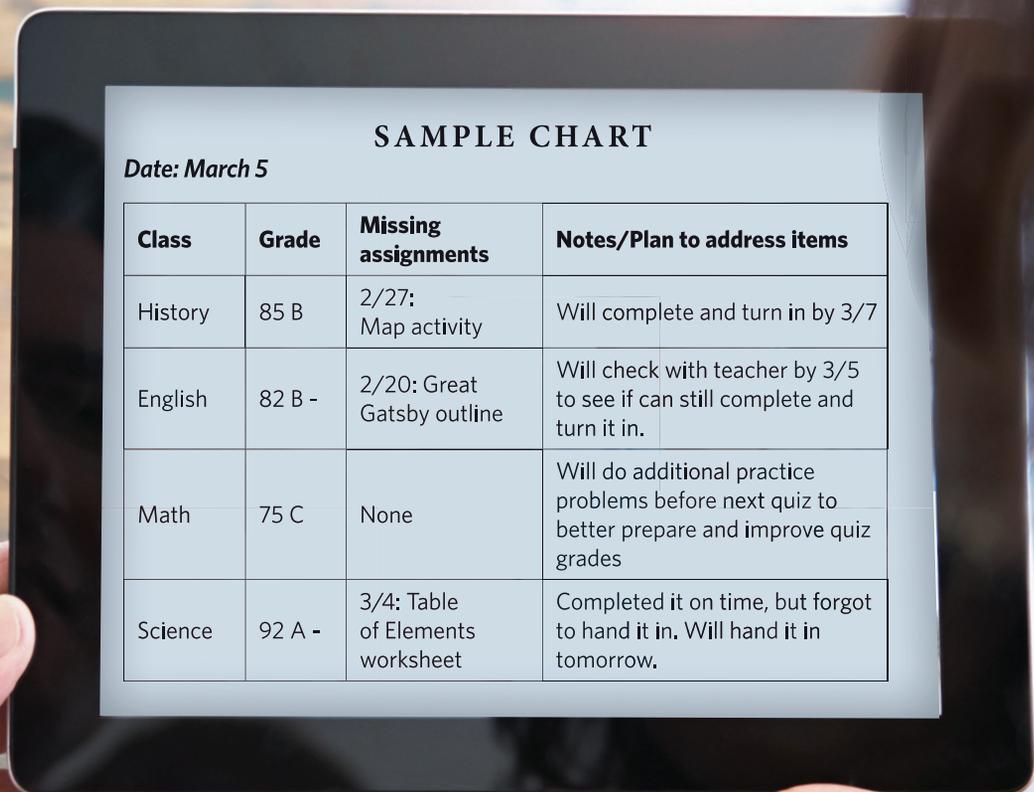
With a variety of strategies and interventions to navigate the use of online grade portals as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing issues in school, children and adolescents with ADHD can thrive academically. Here are some suggestions for parents.

## 1 Create a plan for when you are going to check your child's grades.

In some instances, it may be best only to check grades together with your child. This method prevents you from ruminating about poor grades until you are able to speak with your child about them. Alternatively, if you are likely to get angry at what you see, it may be better to view the grades in advance and give yourself time to regain your composure before you talk with your child about grades.

## 2 Have a plan for when and how you are going to review grades with your child.

Designating set times and creating a plan collaboratively



**SAMPLE CHART**  
*Date: March 5*

Class	Grade	Missing assignments	Notes/Plan to address items
History	85 B	2/27: Map activity	Will complete and turn in by 3/7
English	82 B -	2/20: Great Gatsby outline	Will check with teacher by 3/5 to see if can still complete and turn it in.
Math	75 C	None	Will do additional practice problems before next quiz to better prepare and improve quiz grades
Science	92 A -	3/4: Table of Elements worksheet	Completed it on time, but forgot to hand it in. Will hand it in tomorrow.

with your child is ideal. It is important to use calendar reminders, visual schedules, or whatever is needed to remember these set meeting times. For example, Sunday and Wednesday evenings could work well.

For older children and teens, it is often helpful to re-view the portal together and have your child walk you through each class to the extent that they are able to lead the discussion. This will give them more ownership in the process, and prompts them to review things with you that over time they could learn to do on their own.

- Have the child explain their views on recent test performance, discuss any issues that arose with missing homework assignments or poor grades, and have them identify ways to make improvements that are tangible. For example, if a child got a 68 on a history test, have them think about what types of questions they missed, review the actual test together if possible, and identify specific study tools or things they can do to improve performance on the next one.
- For missing assignments, have your child explain their plan for getting those completed and turned in.
- Set time limits for this meeting. This will help everyone to be efficient with the meeting and may make a child feel more comfortable knowing that it isn't going to last an indefinite amount of time.

### **3 Keeping a written record of each meeting with your child is important.**

First, you don't have to worry about remembering everything that was said. This can also reduce conflicts around differences in opinion of what was stated when later following up on items. It also makes it easy to have something tangible to refer back to in order to see progress.

- Make a template where you include relevant information, such as the numerical value of the grade in each class, notes on recent test or quiz performance. List what items were discussed to do to improve if needed (for example, study for five minutes each day for biology using Quizlet).
- Have older children and teens fill in parts or all of the template by themselves (as feasible).
- Store the notes from each meeting in a manner that allows both you and your child to refer back to it easily. Good options include saving it as a shared Google Doc, printed out in a binder or folder, or emailing it to yourself and your child.

- The record is also helpful to see progress in how grades change from week to week, since most school portals only show the current grades until they are finalized at the end of each marking period.

### **4 For missing assignments or issues with assignments not being recorded properly in the portal, create a second template to complete.**

It may be helpful to write out the assignment, date, and other necessary identifying information. Have your child use this page as a reference on things to follow up on. The next time you review grades, check this list to make sure everything has been addressed.

### **5 Make a plan with your child of how to handle it if issues with school need to be addressed between set meeting times.**

For instance, set up an agreement to do it before homework time, after, or at another ideal time. Give the child advance warning that you need to discuss something about school. This may help the child mentally prepare to talk about school items. For children and adolescents with ADHD, getting lots of oral reminders to do this or that assignment likely are not going to be helpful and may lead to increased stress. Focusing on school in an organized fashion with a structured check-in plan as discussed above is important.

If you keep discussions about grades and school to designated times, children and adolescents will likely be less anxious and reactive. Giving them ownership by not checking in with them about grades daily gives them more autonomy to learn to manage things themselves. Of course, this system is most effective when children and teens have systems in place to keep on top of assignments—such as using a planner and checking it daily.

When parents have a structured system for reviewing their child's academic progress, they are also less anxious and reactive about missed assignments or poor grades. And remember—especially if your son or daughter is in high school—you are not going to have access to their grades when they are in college. Therefore, weaning off constantly checking on them will be beneficial for both the parents and the teen. **A**

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