

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

September 2015



SHORT NOTES

TV-free mornings

Consider keeping the TV off on school mornings. When your child is ready for school before it's time to leave, he might draw, work on a jigsaw puzzle, or sort his baseball cards instead. Doing something that actively engages his brain, rather than zoning out in front of the television, will get him ready to learn.

Family teamwork

A big project like washing the car, painting a room, cleaning out the garage, or planting a garden can teach your youngster about teamwork. Plus, it's more fun when the whole family pitches in. An added bonus: Including younger children in adult jobs builds useful skills for later.

Parent education

Make parenting a little easier by arming yourself with as much information as possible. Look for free parent education nights offered by your youngster's school or in your community. For instance, you could learn about topics like discipline, nutrition, single parenting, or ADHD.

Worth quoting

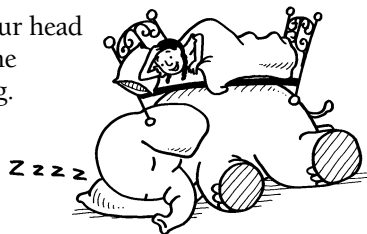
"Be happy with what you have while working for what you want."

Helen Keller

JUST FOR FUN

Q: How do you know if there's an elephant under your bed?

A: Your head hits the ceiling.



Organized for success

Does your child know that being organized can help her do better in school? As she launches into the new year, here are tools and strategies for keeping track of activities, homework, and school supplies.

Use a calendar

Hang a family calendar in a handy spot, and put your youngster in charge of adding things like picture day, field trips, and study group meetings. She could also color-code days she has special classes. For instance, maybe she'll put a green dot on band day to remember her instrument and a blue dot on library day so she doesn't forget her books. Then each evening, she should check the calendar as part of her getting-ready routine.

Write to-do lists

Starting each day with a to-do list is a good lifelong habit. Your child can use her student planner or a spiral notebook to make a list in the morning or the night before. She could list items in order of importance, or put stars by the most critical tasks. And she might put a time frame by each one. ("Practice



presentation from 4 to 4:30 p.m.") Have her cross off each item as she accomplishes it—she'll feel a nice sense of satisfaction.

Make a "school zone"

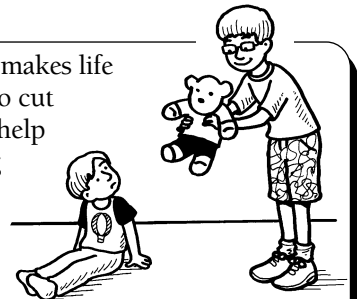
Set aside a special spot at home where your youngster can keep everything school-related. It might be in a corner of the kitchen or a basket in her room. Then, she could stock it with items like books, supplies, paperwork, long-term projects she's working on, and the school lunch menu. Encourage her to keep the area neat so she can easily find what she needs.♥

"I know how you feel"

In the classroom and at home, showing empathy makes life more pleasant for everyone—and has been shown to cut down on bullying. With these suggestions, you can help your youngster learn to sense how others are feeling and to reach out to them.

Show empathy. When your child is sad or anxious, tell him that you understand how he feels, and share a time you felt the same way. *Example:* "My best friend moved when I was 7, and I felt lonely."

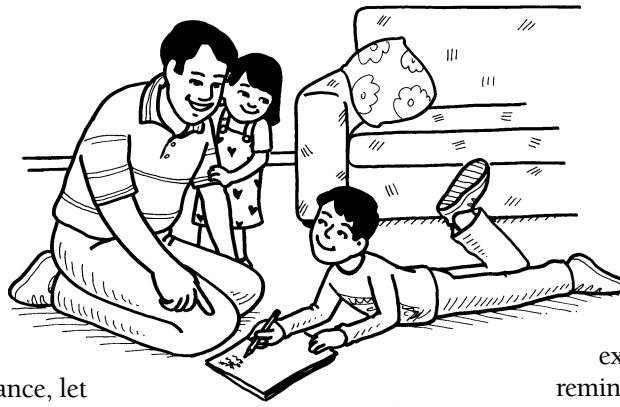
Recognize empathy. If you see your child (or someone else) being empathetic, point it out. ("You could tell your little brother was upset. It was nice of you to give him your stuffed animal to hold.") Your youngster will be inspired to show empathy for others in the future.♥



Expectations: Aim high

If you have high, yet reasonable, expectations for your child, he will be more likely to rise to them. Consider this advice for setting and communicating your expectations:

- Focus on your youngster's actions rather than his intelligence. For instance, let him know you expect him to work hard, turn in every assignment, and listen to you and his teacher (rather than "I know you're smart, so you'll get good grades").



- Remind your child of your expectations regularly. You can state them directly ("I expect you to follow the rules in class") or indirectly ("I wonder what you'll study in college"). You could also express them as encouragement: "I know you'll try your best on today's science quiz."

- Help your youngster set high expectations for himself. One way is to remind him to think of himself as a good student, perhaps by mentioning past achievements. For example, if he's experiencing writer's block, pull out a creative story that his teacher wrote a nice comment on.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Word games to go

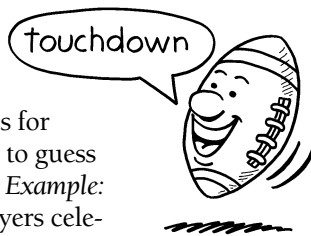
Watch your child's vocabulary grow by playing word games with her. Here are two you can enjoy anywhere you go.

Words to grow by

One person says a two-letter word, such as *do*. The next player says a three-letter word beginning with the same letter (*dog*). Then, the next person says a four-letter word that starts with the letter (*drum*). Continue until you can't think of a word that is one letter longer.

Riddle me this

Pick any word. Pretend to be the word, and give clues for other players to guess who you are. *Example:* "Football players celebrate me." "The endzone is my favorite place." "I start with *t* and end with *n*, and I have 9 letters." (*Answer: touchdown.*)♥



Q & A Choosing an activity

Q: My daughter would like to try after-school activities this year. Should I sign her up for a few?

A: Extracurricular activities are great for helping children learn new skills and make friends who share their interests. On the other hand, too big of a time commitment to after-school clubs and teams can interfere with schoolwork, family time, and just playing and being a kid.

Look over an activity list together from the school, community center, or parks department. Then, let her pick just one to start with. For example, she might choose a running club, an arts and crafts group, or a student council committee. If she's interested in more than one, she could try one now and add another if she successfully juggles everything. You can support her by working out rides home, attending events, and asking her how it's going.♥



Steps to parent-teacher teamwork

Start the year off on the right foot with these four ideas for getting to know your youngster's teacher.

1. Try to meet the teacher as early in the year as possible—back-to-school night is a good opportunity. You'll get an overview of your child's daily routine and what he'll be learning, and you'll show the teacher you want to work together.

2. Find out the best way to stay in touch (notes, emails, phone calls). Communicate regularly

so it will be easier to reach out with questions or concerns.

3. Tell the teacher about your youngster's home life. You could write a note introducing your child and your family. ("Andy loves science and music. He and his big sister are at their dad's house every other weekend.")

4. Ask what you can do at home or in the school building to help your youngster and the teacher. She might offer tips for reading aloud to your child or invite you to volunteer in the classroom.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5621

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

October 2015



SHORT NOTES

Enjoy poetry

It's fun to think about what a poem might mean. Let your youngster check out a volume of poetry from the library, and take turns reading aloud from it. Talk about what the poet could be saying. Your child will work on reading comprehension as she discovers the joy of poetry.

Support for special needs

If your youngster struggles with friendships because of a disability, a social skills group may help. He'll practice strategies like starting conversations, listening to what others say, and waiting his turn to speak. Plus, he might make friends he can get together with outside of the group. *Tip:* Ask your child's school counselor, doctor, or therapist to recommend a group.

Promote self-confidence

Nothing builds success like success itself, so give your youngster plenty of chances to shine. Let her pursue her interests—even if they're not what you would have chosen for her. Or encourage her to learn a new hobby. Feeling capable is a great confidence booster.

Worth quoting

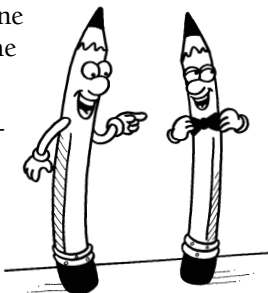
"Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm."

Abraham Lincoln

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What did one pencil say to the other?

A: You're looking sharp!



Positive attention = positive behavior

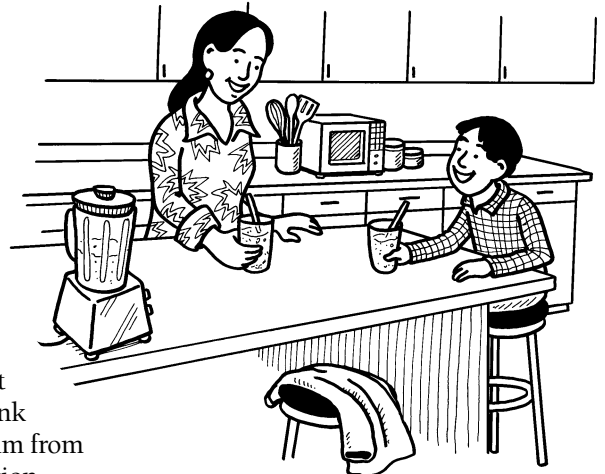
A little attention goes a long way toward helping your child behave well. Here are loving ways to inspire better behavior.

Announce a "time-in"

It's the "opposite" of a time-out—you and your youngster take a short break together *before* a situation where he tends to misbehave. During your time-in, you might color, play a quick game, or drink smoothies. This may prevent him from acting out to get negative attention.

Be playful

Pretending or being silly can make things go more smoothly. For example, to prevent your child from dragging his feet while getting ready for school, you could say, "Let's pretend we're astronauts. T-minus 10 minutes to blastoff!" Your playful discipline may not work every time, but your youngster just might discover that it's fun to cooperate.



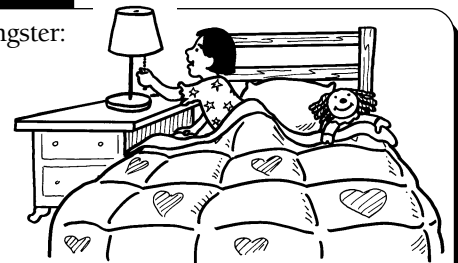
Inspire a turnaround

Steer your child toward better behavior while you run errands by giving him jobs to do. In a store, you could say, "Okay, you're the leader. Can you find the garden department?" Or at the bank, have him count the coins while you count the bills. He'll feel important—and be less likely to get bored and misbehave. ♥

Early to bed, ready to learn

Share this interesting fact with your youngster: While she's asleep, her brain is busy organizing and storing information she has learned. Use these guidelines to help her get a good night's sleep and improve learning and memory:

- Elementary school students need 9–11 hours of sleep—experts recommend a range because some kids require more sleep than others. If your child has a hard time waking up or feels drowsy in school, move to an earlier bedtime.
- The light from a computer (or any screen) can prevent your youngster from winding down. Have her turn off anything with a screen at least an hour before bed. ♥

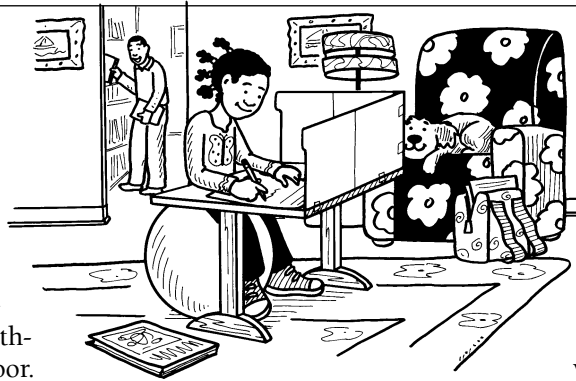


Hints for homework time

Make homework more pleasant for your youngster with these ideas for starting out strong and staying on task.

Get comfortable. Some children concentrate best by sitting at a desk, while others do better sprawled on a bed or the floor. Kids who tend to fidget might think better while balancing on a big exercise ball. Let your child experiment to see what she prefers. Then, she'll be able to focus on her work—not on getting comfortable.

Get focused. Your youngster could work in her room, away from siblings and the TV. If she shares a room or likes doing



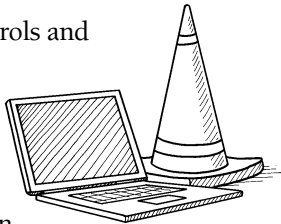
homework in the kitchen or living room, help her set up a file-folder “cubicle” to block out distractions. She should staple together file folders (long edge to long edge) and stand them up to block off her work area. *Idea:* Have her write helpful information on the sides facing her, such as math facts or words she frequently misspells.

Get started. Sometimes beginning her homework is the hardest part. Encourage your child to start with an easier assignment—the satisfaction she feels from finishing it may give her momentum to tackle more challenging work. Or she could tell herself that if she completes one subject, she can take a break to ride her scooter or call a friend.♥

Q & A How to be careful online

Q: My son is just starting to use the Internet. We set up “parental controls,” but I know they’re not perfect. Other than watching him every second, what can I do to help him stay safe online?

A: Parental controls and supervision are important, but it’s also a good idea to teach your son habits to use on his own.



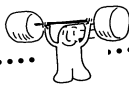
First, explain that “real life” safety rules apply online. For instance, he shouldn’t talk to strangers or go places that you haven’t approved. When he wants to visit a new website, he needs to let you know so you can make sure it’s appropriate. Keep in mind that sites with user comments or chat features usually aren’t good choices because they allow strangers to post or to talk to him.

Finally, just as in real life, he should tell you right away if a stranger tries to contact him or if he sees something confusing or upsetting.♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5621

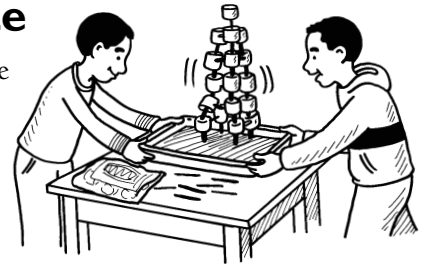


ACTIVITY CORNER

Shaky science

Can your child create a building strong enough to withstand an “earthquake”? With this activity, he will practice thinking like an engineer.

1. Together, prepare an 8½ x 11 pan of gelatin dessert. Cover and refrigerate overnight, until set.
2. Have your youngster connect toothpicks with marshmallows to create a building that rises out of the gelatin.
3. Grasping opposite ends of the pan, gently shake it back and forth to create an earthquake. Does his building tumble, or do pieces fall off? He can redesign and test again. Which designs work best?
4. Talk about how engineers might make earthquake-proof buildings. For example, a low, wide building may fare better than a tall, narrow one. Also, which shapes (squares, rectangles, triangles) make the base or walls stronger?♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Fun with family photos

My daughter Annabelle loves storytelling. She often uses her imagination to act out tales with her miniature people and animal figures. When I heard her naming them after our family members and pets, I had an idea.

We gathered family photos, including ones with her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Then, I helped her flatten empty pasta and cracker boxes and glue photos to them. She cut out around each person

and pet and stuck the cardboard figures in globs of play dough to make them stand up.

Now Annabelle likes to act out family stories using the figures. She reenacts beach vacations, holiday meals, and more. Sometimes we play along with her,

each pretending to be a different person. It’s a great way to build her language skills—and to “spend time” with relatives we don’t see often.♥



Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

November 2015



SHORT NOTES

Take good notes

Help your youngster practice note taking with this idea. During a family discussion, appoint him as secretary. Explain that he doesn't have to write every word that's said, and he can use abbreviations and symbols. Instead of "We are going to Katie's chorus concert on Friday at 7 p.m.," he could write, "Katie's chorus Fri @ 7."

Dress for the weather

Your child will enjoy winter recess more—and get more exercise—if she's warm enough. Plan ahead by making sure she has a winter coat, mittens or gloves, a hat, and boots. *Note:* If your family needs assistance getting these items, let the school counselor know, and she may be able to help.

Make your own audio books

Would your youngster like a collection of audio books? Encourage him to record himself reading favorite stories aloud. He can practice using expression by trying a different voice for the narrator and for each character. Then, he'll be able to play back the recordings whenever he wants to listen.

Worth quoting

"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you." *B.B. King*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: When you lose something, why do you always find it in the last place you looked?

A: Because once you find it, you stop looking!



Parent-teacher conference FAQ

Whether this will be your first parent-teacher conference or you've already been to several, these answers to common questions will help you get the most out of your meeting.

Q: *What should we expect at a typical conference?*

A: The teacher will tell you what your child does well, show you work samples, and go over any problems. She may also explain how she's helping your child and suggest things to try at home. Plus, you can share information about your youngster.

Q: *How can I prepare for our meeting?*

A: It's helpful to write down questions ahead of time. You could ask about schoolwork, your child's behavior, and how she gets along with others. Also, include anything your youngster wants you to discuss.

Q: *My child isn't having problems in school. Do I still need to attend the conference?*

A: Yes! A conference lets you talk one-on-one with your youngster's teacher and hear how your child is doing. And



it strengthens your relationship with the teacher so it will be easier to reach out to her in the future.

Q: *I'm nervous about going into the school and talking to the teacher. How can I feel more comfortable?*

A: Keep in mind that the teacher wants you to be her partner in your child's education. Knowing that you are welcome—and needed—may help you feel confident. Arrive early so you're not rushed, and arrange child care (perhaps swap with another parent) so you can talk without distractions.♥

Explain your math thinking

"I know that $3 \times 26 = 78$ because 3 quarters = 75 cents, plus 3 more pennies = 78 cents!" When your youngster explains how he solved a math problem, it helps the process become more automatic for him. Encourage him with these ideas.

Talk. Let your child hear you do math out loud when you calculate a tip or estimate how long a car trip will take. He'll discover different ways of solving problems and learn that math thinking is an important part of everyday life.

Listen. When your youngster finishes his math homework, pick a random problem, and ask him to explain how he figured it out. Talking it through will deepen his understanding of math concepts—and it may help him correct any errors or find a more efficient method.♥



Steps to project success

School is full of projects, from science experiments to social studies reports and more. No matter what kind of project your youngster has, these steps can help him do his best.

1. Pick a topic. Your child will enjoy his project and learn more if his topic interests him. If the teacher assigns a project about the Middle Ages, a Lego fanatic could build a castle to use in his presentation, for instance.

2. Do research. Encourage your youngster to become an expert on his topic, whether he's experimenting with simple machines or researching state history. He should do this by



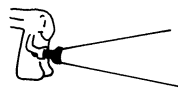
reading various sources, such as nonfiction books, textbook chapters, magazine articles, and websites.

3. Make visuals “pop.”

A bright background in his rain forest diorama or a colorful bar graph on his science project poster will catch his teacher's eye. But visuals must also be neat and accurate—for example, he wouldn't include an elephant in his rain forest.

4. Review and rehearse. Have your child look over his project carefully to make sure he addressed all the requirements. If he has to present it to the class, let him practice in front of you so he'll work out the kinks and feel confident.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



My name, your name

Your child's name is a big part of her identity. Encourage her to explore it with these activities that help her learn about culture, history, and geography:

- Tell your youngster the story of her name—why and how you chose it. Perhaps she is named after a relative or the name is important in your religion. Then, let her look it up in a baby-name book or online.



- Have your child research relatives' and classmates' names. She will discover what the names mean and what countries they're from. Together, find the countries on a map.

- Visit ssa.gov/oact/babynames to see the most popular baby names by year. For example, John and Mary were number one a century ago, while last year it was Noah and Emma. Build thinking skills by asking “Why do certain names become popular?” or “Why do you think Noah and Emma are most common now?”♥

Q & A In control of fears

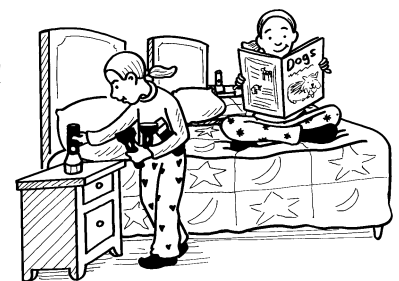
Q: I have twin girls. Suddenly, one is scared of storms, and the other is afraid of dogs. What should I do?

A: Fears are normal for kids—typical ones include bugs, the dark, and doctors, as well as storms and dogs. The good news is that most childhood fears go away over time. Try talking to your girls about their fears and coming up with strategies so they feel more in control.

With your daughter who fears storms, discuss ways your family prepares for weather emergencies. Then, let her do a specific task like gathering flashlights and placing one in each room.

You could have your other twin check out library books about dogs. Often, being more knowledgeable about something can make it less frightening.

Note: If either girl's anxiety interferes with sleep or schoolwork, talk to her doctor.♥



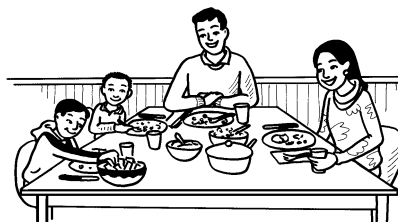
PARENT TO PARENT A bowl full of thanks

As we were discussing our Thanksgiving plans, my son Bradley remembered our tradition of going around the table and saying what we're thankful for. Then he asked a good question: Why do we only talk about being thankful one day a year?

His question led to what we hope will become a new year-round tradition. Once a week before dinner, we each get a slip of paper and write one thing that made us feel thankful

that week, such as a delicious lunch or seeing an old friend. We put the slips in a bowl. Then, we take turns pulling out a slip and reading it aloud—and everyone tries to guess who wrote it.

We have only done this twice so far, but Bradley said that now he regularly thinks about what he's thankful for so he has something to share at dinner. And it's fun to guess why others are thankful!♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5621

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

December 2015



SHORT NOTES

My kind of town

When you travel to a different town or state, encourage your youngster to compare and contrast it with your area. She might notice that a suburb has shorter buildings and more open space than the city she's from. Or if you live near mountains, she may be surprised by how flat a plain is.

Volunteer for class parties

This time of year, your youngster's teacher may need help with a class party. You could volunteer to coordinate food and activities or to pitch in on party day. Or you might offer to contribute craft supplies or a nutritious treat (fruit kebab, baggies of popcorn and raisins). The teacher will appreciate your involvement—and so will your child!

Shared space

Arguments over the bathroom can throw a wrench in your youngsters' morning routines. Have them work together to come up with a schedule. They should decide who will go first on which days and how long they can spend getting ready in the bathroom. Creating the routine themselves will make them more apt to stick with it.

Worth quoting

"At first, dreams seem impossible, then improbable, and eventually inevitable." *Christopher Reeve*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What do you call a snowman in summer?

A: A puddle.



Raise a generous child

Whether your child is making a gift for a grandparent or putting together a care package, he is learning to give to others. Use these suggestions to nurture his generosity.

The gift of time

Being generous doesn't have to cost money. Encourage your youngster to take a little extra time to do things for others. For example, he could handle a chore for a sibling who has a big test the next day. Or he might organize and lead games for younger cousins at a family gathering.

A "wish list" for others

Does your child list gifts he hopes to receive? Let him make a list for others, too. He could write down presents he would like to make or buy for relatives and friends. Have him carefully consider what each person might want ("Grandma loves to hear me play piano, so I'll make her a video of me playing her favorite songs"). This can help him discover how good it feels to give.



My special cause

Your youngster may feel more eager to give to a cause that is personally meaningful to him. For instance, if you have a relative in the military, he could help you put together care packages for troops. Or if he loves animals, he might gather towels and blankets and donate them to a shelter.

Tip: Help your child see himself as a giving person by pointing out his generosity. ("It was generous of you to offer your brother your last slice of pizza.")♥

A lifelong learner

Learning isn't just something that happens in school—show your youngster it's a practice she'll do all her life. Consider these ideas:

- Tell your child about things you're learning and ways you're educating yourself. For example, if your office is switching to a new accounting system, talk about training sessions you attended and how they helped you do your job.
- Encourage self-help. If your family wants to try camping for the first time, work together to investigate where to camp, the gear you'll need, and the best time to go. You might consult workers at an outdoors store, read books about camping, or search online for campgrounds.♥



Write to persuade, write to explain

Writing serves various purposes. Here are two important reasons your youngster will write in school, along with ways she can practice at home.

Persuade. Encourage your child to think through both sides of a topic before she writes by staging a pretend debate with two dolls or action figures. She could pick a topic, like whether kids need more recess, and speak for each “person.” Then, she should decide which side she agrees with and write an argument from that point of view.



She'll see the importance of being precise when explaining something in writing. After you guess what you're acting out, write a set of instructions for her.♥

Explain. Let your youngster think of a task (say, washing your hair). Without telling you what it is, she should write instructions for you to act out. (“Turn a bottle upside down. Hold one hand under the bottle...”) As you go through the motions, she may realize she left out a step and needs to edit her directions.



Q & A

Drugs: Start a conversation

Q: How should I talk to my second-grade son about drugs?

A: Try starting with what your child already knows. Ask him what he has heard about drugs, and talk about those facts or myths.

If he says all drugs are bad, remind him that when he's sick, you or his doctor may give him drugs to help him get well. Then, talk about the dangers of illegal drugs. Explain that they may damage the brain or heart, cause people to make poor decisions, and be *addictive* (hard to stop taking). And even legal drugs can hurt him if taken incorrectly or not prescribed for him.



Finally, encourage your youngster to tell you in the future what he's hearing about drugs. And keep the conversation going by bringing up the subject from time to time.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Getting to know you

December is when many families get together with far-flung relatives. Encourage cooperation and learn more about each other with these two activities.

Silent lineup

Family members must work together in this cooperative game. Have your child get one index card per person and number them (say, 1–8 for 8 people). Turn the cards upside down, mix them up, and give one to each player. Tape the card you're dealt to another person's back. Then, players try to get in numerical order without speaking. Or write letters on the cards and work together to get into alphabetical order or to spell a word.



Name the criteria

Here's a fun way to see what family members have in common. Let one person name a category, such as “is a morning person” or “likes ketchup on eggs.” Then, lay a jump rope on the floor. Everyone who meets the criterion sits on one side of the line, and those who don't sit on the other. Have another player pick a new category, and rearrange yourselves.♥

Become more independent

As your child gets older, she'll be expected to do more for herself. Help her prepare with these strategies.

● **Assume she can.** There's a better chance that your youngster will be able to accomplish a task on her own if she sees that you expect her to.

Example: “I'll rinse the plates while you load the dishwasher.” Then, focus on rinsing, and leave her to figure out her own way of loading the dishes.

● **Ask, “What do you think?”**

Including your child in family decisions prepares her for independent decision making. You might seek her opinion on what to make for dinner or where to hang a picture, for instance.

● **Let her start.** If she asks you to put her hair in a bun, encourage her to try the first steps by herself. Tell her you're there to help finish the job if she gets stuck.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5621

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

January 2016



SHORT NOTES

Resolution: Success!

This year, have your child make resolutions that will motivate him to do his best in school. For instance, he could pick a subject to improve in or a challenging book series to read. Encourage him to draw a picture of himself meeting his goal and share the drawing with his teacher.

Hands-on history

Let your youngster take white paper and an unwrapped crayon on a walk around town. She can place the paper over engravings on historical markers or plaques and rub lightly with the side of the crayon. At home, suggest that she write a caption for each rubbing to tell a “local history” story.

Sick time

When your child is sick, notify the school as soon as possible that he will be absent. Then, follow school policy about how long he must be symptom-free before he may return to class. *Note:* He could ask a sibling or friend to bring home his work. Or when he goes back, he can talk to his teacher about making up the work.

Worth quoting

“Every time you tear a leaf off a calendar, you present a new place for new ideas and progress.” *Charles Kettering*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Can you name three consecutive days without saying *Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday*?

A: Yes! Yesterday, today, and tomorrow.



The three Cs of group work

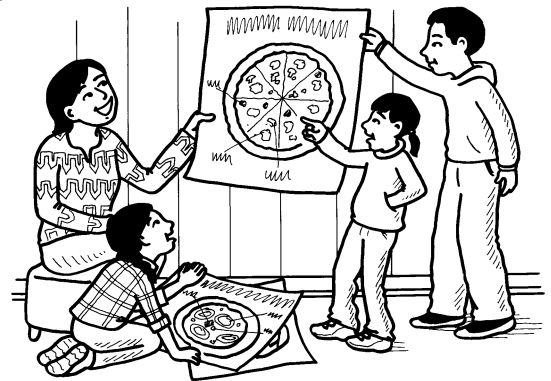
Three kindergartners work together on a mural in art class. Several fifth graders discuss a novel they read in reading group. No matter how old your child is, being able to communicate, collaborate, and compromise is important when she works with others. Consider these ways to practice at home.

Communication

Group members communicate better when one person speaks at a time. Let your youngster create a “talking stick” by covering a ruler with aluminum foil or decorating a paper towel tube. During a family discussion, pass the stick around—only the person holding it may speak. This will remind your child to wait her turn and listen to what others say.

Collaboration

Show your youngster that when people combine ideas, they often come up with new or better ones. Pretend you’re a restaurant marketing team in charge of designing a pizza or burger. Start by looking at menus for interesting twists (barbecue pizza, burger with fried egg), and create something differ-



ent (blue cheese pizza, Caesar burger). Then, work together to make your new menu item for dinner.

Compromise

When group members disagree on a topic for their presentation or on who will take what role, it’s important to compromise. That means stating what you would prefer—and what alternatives you’re willing to accept. Your child can try this at home when your family makes a decision. For example, maybe one sibling wants to go sledding while another would prefer ice skating. They could agree to sled first—but the one who wanted to ice skate gets to choose the hill they’ll sled on. ♥

Keep track of progress

By staying on top of how your youngster does in school, you can support his achievements and nip any problems in the bud. Try these strategies.

- **Go over papers.** Look at each graded assignment your child brings home. This is an easy way to see what he’s doing well and what he needs to work on.
- **Use electronic tools.** If the school posts grades online, check them regularly.
- **Communicate with the teacher.** Contact her if your youngster says a subject is difficult or brings home low grades. You could ask about ways to help him. ♥

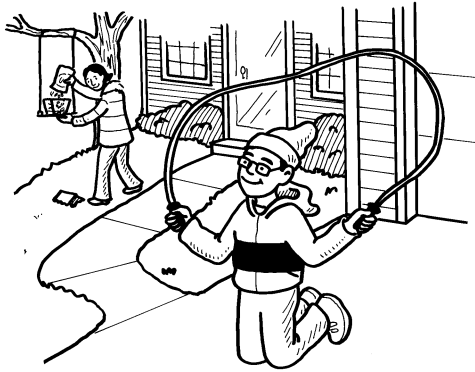


Behavior “mysteries”

Is your youngster’s behavior sometimes baffling? Here are solutions to common scenarios parents face.

My child behaves in school but acts out at home. Your youngster probably feels more relaxed at home and can let his guard down more with you. Rest assured this is normal. Remind him of the consequences for misbehaving at home, and follow through when he acts out. (And be glad that your child behaves at school!)

After school, my youngster doesn’t want to talk about his day or start homework. Your child may be



struggling to switch out of “school mode.” Try giving him a break first—he may appreciate a few minutes to unwind, just as some adults do after work. Suggest a snack and exercise, such as riding his bike or jumping rope.

My child only obeys me when I raise my voice. If your youngster knows he has to do what you ask only when you shout, he’ll probably wait for your raised voice before he listens. Tell him that you’ll ask nicely once, and after that, there will be a consequence for not listening.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Experiment with evergreens

Your child may wonder why some trees stay green throughout the year (*evergreens*) and others lose their leaves (*deciduous*). With this activity, she can find out.

Let your youngster cut out two green construction-paper “leaves” and sprinkle them lightly with water. She should wrap one in waxed paper and lay both leaves in the sun for at least two hours. What happens? (The bare leaf stays dry, but the protected one remains moist.)



The science: A deciduous tree loses water through its leaves’ tiny pores, so it gets rid of the leaves to conserve water in harsh weather. But evergreen leaves have a waxy *cuticle*, or covering, kind of like the waxed paper that protected your child’s paper leaf. This coating keeps the water from evaporating, so leaves can remain on the tree through the winter.♥



Spell-check pitfalls

Q: My daughter says spelling is no big deal because we have spell-check and autocorrect.

How can I convince her that spelling still matters?

A: Spell-check and autocorrect are handy tools. But they’re not foolproof, and they’re not always available.

When your child writes a school report, sit with her while she runs spell-check. Together, look for examples of mistakes caused by relying on the computer. This often happens with homophones (*it’s* and *its*, *you’re* and *your*), for instance. She’ll need to know the difference to use the correct word.

Also, help her think of situations where she won’t have spell-check or autocorrect, such as taking a test or using special software that doesn’t include the feature. And if she can’t spell a word, she may not recognize it when she reads, which can interfere with her comprehension.

Finally, point out that if she studies her spelling words, thinks carefully about how words are spelled, and proofreads her work, she’ll find that the best spell-check is in her own head!♥



Helpful strategies for ADHD

My fourth-grader, Ryan, has ADHD, and he often loses books and papers and forgets to turn in assignments or to bring home slips for me to sign.

I talked to a fellow PTA parent whose oldest son has ADHD. She said her son puts sticky-note reminders everywhere—on his desk and binders and beside the front door. He also does better in school if he gets 11 hours

of sleep, about two hours more than his siblings need.

I got colorful pads of sticky notes for Ryan, and he came up with a system for color-coding his reminders. Also, we are moving up his bedtime by a few minutes each night until we notice a difference. I know Ryan will still forget things from time to time, but it’s helpful to know that we have strategies to try.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5621