

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

January 2011

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SHORT NOTES

Office field trip

Here's a volunteer idea for working parents: Ask your child's teacher and your employer about letting the class tour your workplace. Suggest ways that the visit could tie in with a school subject. For instance, children can learn about health at a dental office or math at a bank.

Calling 911

Does your youngster know how to call for help in an emergency? Show him how to use every phone in your house, including cell phones. Keep each one charged and where it belongs (kitchen counter, nightstand) so he can always find a phone easily.

Conversation starters

Regular conversations help families stay close. Try this. Have each person come up with three facts she thinks no one knows about her ("I've always wanted to play guitar") and write them on individual slips of paper. Mix up the papers, take turns reading them aloud, and guess who wrote each fact. The discoveries you make can lead to interesting talks.

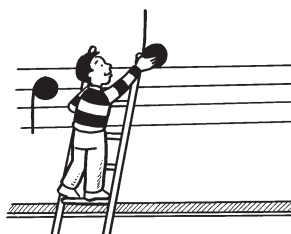
Worth quoting

"To read a poem in January is as lovely as to go for a walk in June."
Jean-Paul Sartre

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Why did the music teacher need a ladder?

A: To reach the high notes.



Love to read!

What can your child do every day this year that will help him improve in all subjects? Read! In addition to expanding his vocabulary and increasing his knowledge, it's an activity he can enjoy throughout life. Here are ways to encourage reading.

Create a reading-friendly home

Keep something to read in every room. You might put a basket of your youngster's favorite stories under a living room table, a box of magazines in the bathroom, and a stack of cookbooks on a kitchen counter. Everywhere your child goes, he'll be able to pick up something to read.

Be a reading family

Regular reading at home will help your child read school materials (handouts, textbooks) more easily. Set aside time each day to read to your youngster and for him to read on his own. Also, listen to him read to you, and let him see you reading. Make sure family members have library cards—and take regular



trips to get new books. *Idea:* Post "wish lists" of books your family wants to read. Then, cross off each one as you finish it.

Match books to your child

Familiar topics and likable characters can motivate your youngster to read. Ask a librarian or bookseller for suggestions. For instance, if science is his favorite subject, he might read science fiction novels like K. A. Applegate's *Animorphs* series or Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. A child who likes to tell jokes and be silly could try the *Mr. Men and Little Miss* books by Roger Hargreaves.♥

Healthy sleep habits

A good night's sleep can help your youngster stay alert in class and behave better—and that means she'll learn more. Try these tips for a well-rested child:

1. Set a regular bedtime so your youngster is used to going to sleep at the same time each night. Establish a comforting routine (bath, story, lights out) to help her wind down. *Note:* Elementary school children need 9–11 hours of sleep a night.

2. Tell your child it's okay if she doesn't fall asleep right away. Instead, suggest that she get cozy and rest until she feels tired. *Idea:* Talk about what to do if she can't fall asleep (focus on something pleasant, play a silent word game such as thinking of a food or an animal that starts with each letter of the alphabet).♥

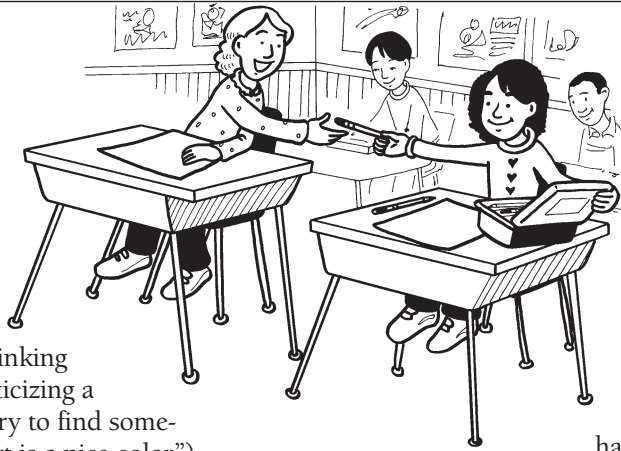


Kindness counts

Thoughts can lead to words, and words can lead to actions. That's why kindness begins with the way your youngster feels about others. Use these suggestions for raising a kind child.

Thoughts

Your youngster will be more likely to speak nicely to others if she is used to thinking kindly. If she catches herself mentally criticizing a friend's clothes, for example, she might try to find something she likes about the outfit ("Her shirt is a nice color").



Words

The words your child chooses can affect her behavior toward people. Remind her to avoid negative labels. Instead of calling someone "selfish," for instance, she might say, "I'm upset that she didn't share with me."

Actions

Doing good deeds on a regular basis can make kindness a habit. Encourage your youngster to be on the lookout for ways to reach out to others. Lending a pencil to another student, helping a younger sibling on the playground, or spending extra time with a pet are simple, everyday ways she can be kind.♥

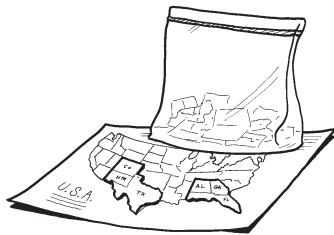
ACTIVITY CORNER



State scramble

Your youngster can learn the names and locations of all 50 states with this homemade puzzle.

First, have your child trace two U.S. maps from an atlas or print two copies from www.google.com/mapmaker. Look over the map together. Can he find your state and recognize any others? Help him read names that aren't familiar.



Using one copy, have him label and color each state and cut them apart to make a puzzle. Younger children could cut the map into 10–20 large pieces, and older children could cut out the individual states.

Then, your youngster can put the puzzle back together onto the uncut map. Keep the states and the extra map in a gallon-sized zipper bag for regular practice. *Idea:* Older children might add state capitals to their puzzle pieces.♥

Q & A

Talking about report cards

Q: My daughter's mid-year report card comes home soon. What's the best way to go over it with her?

A: Start by finding out how your daughter feels about her grades. That way, you can follow her lead, and she'll learn to reflect on her work. You might ask her which subjects she found easiest and hardest. Together, compare her current report card with the last one, and praise her efforts for grades that improved.

Then, ask your youngster about any marks that went down. Discuss ways that she might do better next time (review math facts daily, proof-read writing). Also, call or e-mail the teacher about ways you can help your child at home. About halfway through the next grading period, contact the teacher again to see how your youngster is doing in tough subjects—you'll avoid surprises on her next report card.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

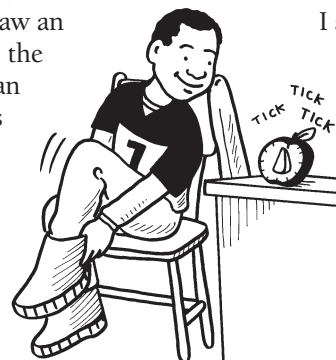
Preventing procrastination

"In a minute!" was my son Patrick's motto. But more often than not, he never got around to doing what he was supposed to. One day, I saw an apple-shaped kitchen timer in the grocery store, and it gave me an idea for a fun way to break his procrastination habit.

Whenever Patrick put something off, like getting his shoes on or starting homework, I set the timer for one minute. I told him he needed to get started by the time the buzzer rang.

After a few times, he began to realize he was wasting a lot of minutes! Also, when he dragged his feet while putting away his toys or getting dressed, I asked him how long the task should take and had him set the timer.

Now Patrick challenges himself to finish things before the buzzer goes off. He has fun trying to beat the clock, and I appreciate not having to remind him to start and finish.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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