

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

March 2009

Washington Elementary School
Mark C. Hoyt, Principal

SHORT NOTES

Idea notebook

Your child can have a ready-made list of topics for creative-writing projects with this suggestion. Have her keep a small notebook handy and jot down ideas when she thinks of them. *Examples:* "I wonder what the dog is thinking." "Someday I'll travel all over the world." When she has an assignment, she can check her book for possibilities.

Stranger safety

Teach your youngster a simple rhyme—"say no and go"—in case a stranger approaches him. If an unfamiliar person asks him to do something (ride in a car, take candy), he should just say no and quickly walk away. Then, he should immediately tell an adult he trusts (relative, teacher, neighbor).

DID YOU KNOW?

About 6 percent of U.S. students are considered "gifted and talented." These youngsters often look at things in unique ways and have a real thirst for knowledge. If you think your child might qualify for gifted programs, ask her teacher about the screening process.

Worth quoting

"One person can make a difference, and everyone should try." *John F. Kennedy*

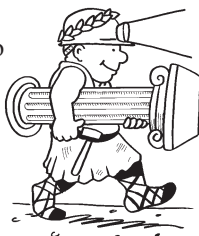
JUST FOR FUN

Teacher: When was Rome built?

Emily: At night.

Teacher: Why do you say that?

Emily: Because my dad always says that Rome wasn't built in a day!



Together time

As your child grows up, she'll get busier with friends, homework, and after-school activities. Try these ideas for spending time together now—you'll build bonds that will keep you close later.



A few minutes

- Have breakfast with your youngster, and talk about what's happening in school that day. Tell her what you're doing, too. Some days, you might walk or drive her to school and continue the discussion.

- If a babysitter or relative watches your child after school, start a ritual of calling during that time. Ask your youngster specific questions about her day: "What did you write about in your journal?" "What games did you play at recess?"

An hour

- Schedule a date with your child each week. Let her decide what to do. You can go someplace, like a park, or stay home and play with toys in her room.

- Learn something new together, and practice it for an hour a week. Get a book or visit a Web site that explains how to do magic tricks or decorate cakes.

An evening

- Make the last Friday of each month "Family and Friends Night." Let your youngster invite a friend—you'll motivate her to keep participating as she gets older. Play board games, watch a movie, or plan a relaxed dinner (spaghetti, hamburgers).

- On a weeknight, surprise your child by stopping in to watch her gymnastics practice or choir rehearsal. Then, go out for an ice cream cone afterward.♥

Learning outdoors

Once spring comes, most youngsters want to be outdoors. Here are two ways your child can practice school skills while playing outside:

1. Use learning tools from nature. Let your youngster solve math homework problems by counting with pinecones or rocks. Ask him to write spelling words by arranging twigs to form letters.

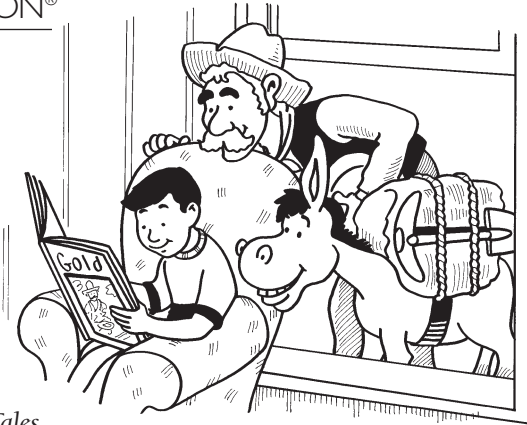


2. Combine learning with physical activity. If you're planting a garden, ask your child to measure how far apart to put the seeds. At the playground, hide a toy, and give directions until he finds it ("Run to the left. Climb the ladder").♥

A reading sampler

Encourage your youngster to try all different kinds of books—he's sure to find a perfect fit! Here are three types to sample:

1. Historical fiction tells made-up stories about real events. Have your child find books based on his favorite social studies topics by typing keywords into a library database. A search for "California gold rush" or "Colonial America" might turn up *Gold Fever! Tales from the California Gold Rush* (Rosalyn Schanzer) or *You Wouldn't Want to Be at the Boston Tea Party!* (Peter Cook). As he reads, can he tell which events are fact or fiction?



2. Mysteries provide clues that help detectives crack a case. Trying to solve the mystery before the characters do will help your youngster build reading comprehension and reasoning skills. He might try the Young Cam Jansen series by David Adler or *Cabin Creek Mysteries* by Kristiana Gregory.

3. Science fiction is fantasy based on ideas that might be possible, like flying cars or life on another planet. Suggest that your child try *Mars Needs Moms!* by Berkeley Breathed or *Pet Robots* by Scott Christian Sava. Together, discuss how realistic the plots are.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

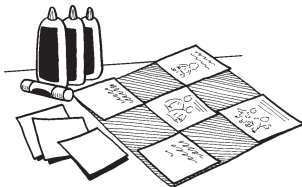


Character quilt

When your child makes this simple quilt, she'll learn about good character traits.

Materials: 1 large felt square (18" x 18"), 4 smaller construction paper squares (6" x 6" each), pencil, crayons, glue, fabric paint or glitter glue

Together, brainstorm a list of character traits. Then, ask your child to choose four that she wants to work on (patience, respect, honesty, responsibility). On each paper square, have her describe a trait and write an example: "Patience means waiting nicely for dinner." "Responsibility means taking care of my things."



Have her glue the paper squares onto the felt, leaving squares of felt in between to create a checkerboard pattern. Then, she can use fabric paint or glitter glue to decorate the felt sections. *Idea:* Hang her quilt in the family room where everyone can see it.♥

Q & A

How to handle anger

Q: My daughter seems to get angry quickly. How can I help her calm down?

A: Everyone gets angry—it's the way we handle it that counts. Be careful not to downplay your daughter's feelings. Saying things like, "Don't get so upset!" might just make her madder or cause her to hide her anger and take it out on someone later.

Instead, help your child learn how to express her feelings. She can practice words to use in place of angry ones. Instead of, "You're not my friend anymore!" she can try, "I'm really mad right now. Let's talk later."

Activities like shooting baskets or doing a jigsaw puzzle might help her cool down. Then, the next time she sees her friend, she can calmly explain what upset her ("I was hurt that you talked about me to Jenny").♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Taking standardized tests

My son Jonathan took his first standardized test last week. He had been nervous beforehand, so I asked his teacher for advice.

Mrs. Coleman said students are sometimes anxious about standardized tests because they're different from regular exams. They are timed, have "bubbles" to fill in, and may include unfamiliar material.

To help Jonathan relax, she suggested that I encourage him to do his best but not put too much

pressure on himself. Mrs. Coleman also reminded us to be sure Jonathan got a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast before the test.

She mentioned that some students benefit from relaxation techniques, like deep breathing. We practiced a few times at home.

Jonathan laughed, but after his first test day, he admitted that taking a few deep breaths helped him relax. He said he did okay, and he seemed less nervous about the rest of the week.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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