

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

February 2014

LaMotte School
LeeAnn Burke, Principal



SHORT NOTES

The five Ws

Spark your youngster's interest in the newspaper by sharing sections with her. Tell her that a news story usually answers the five "W" questions: who, what, when, where, and why. Read an article together, and see if she can spot the answers to all five questions.

Camp registration

In many areas, camp sign-ups begin now. If you want your children to attend, start looking into options. City or county camps will cost less than private camps, and some may offer free or discounted registration to help people afford them. You could also check with community centers and places of worship.

Household fire drill

Your youngster is probably used to fire drills in school—but what about at home? Ask him to draw a map of your house and use a red X to mark two exits from each room. Then, pick a safe meeting place outside (the corner, a neighbor's front yard), and hold a fire drill.

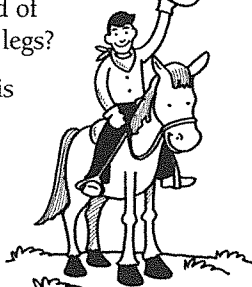
Worth quoting

"Every great dream begins with a dreamer." *Harriet Tubman*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What kind of horse has six legs?

A: One that is being ridden.



Your child's social life

Just like being involved in your youngster's education can lead to his success in school, taking an interest in his social life can help him form healthy friendships and handle peer pressure. Try these strategies.

Ask about friends

When you talk to your child about what he's learning in school, also find out who he plays with at recess or sits with at lunch. During conversations with your youngster's teacher, discuss how he gets along with classmates. If he struggles to make friends, see if there is someone he seems to like or has things in common with. Then, encourage him to invite that child home to play.

Meet other parents

Building relationships with the parents of your youngster's friends makes it easier to manage any problems that arise. Before your child visits a friend's home, call the parent to touch base. Better yet: Drop your youngster off, and introduce yourself in person. You can also meet friends'



parents at school functions (literacy night, concert), sports games, and neighborhood playgrounds.

Explain peer pressure

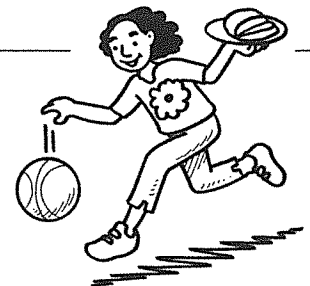
Help your child make good choices when he's with his friends. Point out that kids influence each other in good *and* bad ways, and together, brainstorm examples of each. To determine the difference, he should think about whether a friend's advice is helpful ("You *have* to read this book!") or harmful ("Only babies wear helmets when they ride bikes").♥

Fun with analogies

Here's an easy way to boost your child's thinking and word skills.

Give her an *analogy*, or a sentence comparing how things are related. For example, "Basketball is to sports as mozzarella is to ____." She should say "cheese," since basketball is a type of sport and mozzarella is a kind of cheese. Then, let your youngster give you an analogy to solve.

You could also make up analogies about topics she's studying in school. If she's learning about continents, you might say, "Japan is to Asia as Mexico is to ____." (Answer: North America.)♥



Winter walks

Walking in a winter wonderland can be fun *and* educational. Find a trail in your neighborhood or at a park, bundle up, and have your youngster take along these items.

Camera. Bare branches allow your child to observe details that are hidden when trees are full of leaves. She can choose a favorite tree and take photos of it, zooming in on things like a squirrel perched on a branch or a hole in the trunk. *Note:* Have her come back to the same tree in the spring so she can observe changes like buds and bird nests.



Bag. Suggest that your youngster collect a few natural items from the ground, such as rocks, pinecones, or nuts. At home, help her practice research skills by using library books or websites to identify each object.

Book. Pick a comfortable place to sit, and enjoy an outdoor read-aloud. A volume of nature poems, a story set in the woods, or a nonfiction book about wildlife make nice choices. Encourage your child to look around for images from the book (an icicle dangling from a porch, a deer darting through a field).♥

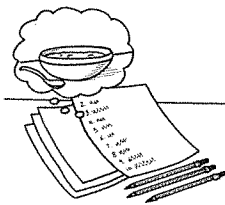
ACTIVITY CORNER



Memory strategies

Try this game to boost your youngster's memory. He'll discover techniques that can help him remember information he learns in school.

1. Write down 10 random words. Let family members look at the list for one minute, then put it away.



2. Give everyone a blank sheet of paper, and have them write as many words as they remember in two minutes. Count to see who got the most.

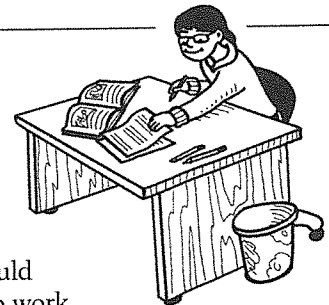
3. Discuss the strategies you each used to recall the words. Maybe your child noticed that *supermarket*, *crisp*, and *bowl* could all be linked to food, and remembering food made him think of those three words. Or perhaps you made up a sentence using four of the words.

4. Play again with 10 new words. Encourage your youngster to try one of the ideas you discussed. Can he remember more words this time?♥

Developing a work ethic

A strong work ethic—a belief in the value of hard work—can help your child in school, at home, and in her future career. Consider these suggestions:

- Show her how you put work before play. You could say, "I want to relax with a magazine, but I have to work on our taxes first." Then, have her do her work first, too. For instance, she should complete homework before she watches a movie.
- Help your youngster recognize the feeling of satisfaction that comes from hard work. After she cleans her room, let her invite family members to take a tour. Or when she finishes a painting that took a long time, you could let her display it in the hallway as a reminder of her effort.♥



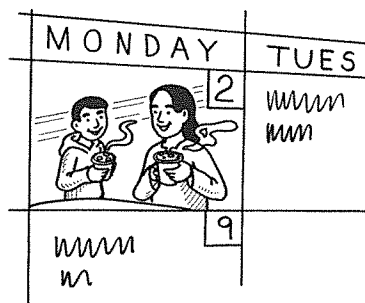
Q & A Create together time

Q: *Our family has a busy schedule, and I feel like I don't spend enough time with my son. How can we stay connected?*

A: Try giving your son a special spot on your calendar. Find a pocket of time, and pencil in his name. Then, ask how he'd like to spend it. Perhaps you could visit the library on Saturday morning or chat over hot chocolate after dinner on Monday.

You might weave "together time" into your existing schedule, too. If you work the evening shift, call him during your break and let him read you a story. When you're in the car or on the bus together, sing songs with your child.

Also, think about ways you can save an hour here or there so you can make time to be with your son. Could you put dinner in a slow cooker once or twice a week? Would switching to online banking help you pay bills faster?♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

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Book Picks



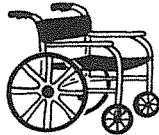
Read-aloud favorites

■ *The Pout-Pout Fish*

A little fish looks sad, so his fellow sea creatures try to cheer him up. Then, a newcomer takes a different approach—can she turn his pout upside down? Your child will be repeating the refrain (“I’m a pout-pout fish”) long after the story ends. The first in a series by Deborah Diesen.

■ *What Do Wheels Do All Day?*

Wheelchairs, strollers, tow trucks, merry-go-rounds...wheels are everywhere. They take us places, help us do work, and even keep us entertained. April Jones Prince’s rhyming nonfiction book lets your youngster explore the many purposes that wheels have. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *The Name Jar*

Embarrassed by her Korean name, Unhei asks her classmates to help her choose an American one. The children write suggestions on slips of paper and put them in a jar. In this story by Yangsook Choi, Unhei learns something important about herself and her fellow students when it’s time to pick a name.



■ *Vincent’s Colors*

This biography introduces young readers to Vincent van Gogh. Your child can see pictures of van Gogh’s most popular paintings, such as *Sunflowers* and *The Starry Night*, and read descriptions of them in the painter’s own words. From the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Let’s go to the library!

Here’s a riddle for your youngster: What has more stories than the tallest skyscraper? Answer: The library!

Take advantage of all those stories—and other reading materials—by using the library often. Try these tips.



● **Create a routine.** Go to the library every other Thursday afternoon or every third Saturday, for instance. Your child will look forward to Library Day, and she’ll get used to returning books on time.

● **Tour the library.** Together, figure out how the library is organized. Find children’s fiction and nonfiction (picture books, biographies), music CDs, audio books, movies, and magazines. Suggest that your youngster pick a few items to enjoy while you’re there or to take home.

● **Put her in charge.** Getting a library card will make your child proud. She can also learn to check out her own books—she’ll get a kick out of scanning the code or stamping the return date. *Note:* Have her take a bag to put her books in.

● **Learn to research.** Encourage your youngster to read about her favorite topics. She could ask the librarian how to search the computer for books on ballerinas or baby pandas, for example. Soon she’ll be able to do it herself.

● **Attend special events.** Go over the library’s calendar with your child, and circle events to attend. You might find story hours, puppet shows, author visits, a young readers’ book club, or even a session for reading to dogs! ♥

Supporting little writers

As your child begins to write, you may wonder what you can do to help him. Consider this advice.

Read it. Ask him to “read” his writing to you—even if it looks like scribbles. Once children learn the alphabet, they often add letters or letter-like symbols to their drawings. When your child starts doing this, he’s figuring out that letters carry a message.

Spell it. Does your youngster ask you how to spell every word? Encourage him to sound out the words and write the letters he hears. He can also refer to spelling tests he brings home or lists of sight words (common words like *said*, *are*, and *look*). ♥

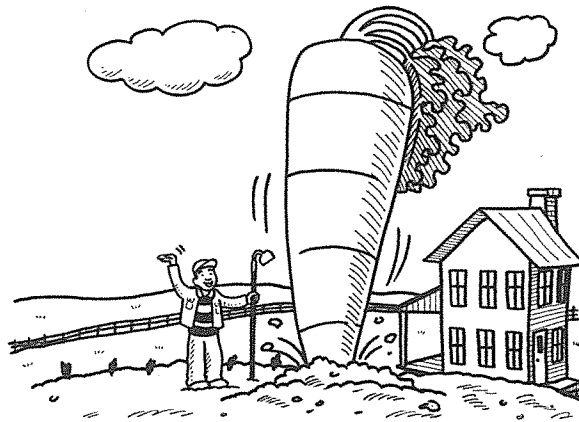


Storytelling fun

Telling stories together can build all kinds of skills in your youngster, from imagination and thinking to listening and speaking. Use these ideas for creative storytelling nights in your house.

Roll of the dice

Let your child cover 3–5 dice with small stickers (animals, sports, dinosaurs). Then, have him roll all the dice at once. Take turns making up lines of a story using the stickers shown. For example, he might start, “The farm animals challenged the dinosaurs to a baseball game,” and you could add, “The horse struck out, and the pig came to bat.”



(“Our carrot grew bigger than a house!”) or tell how fast he and his friends rode their scooters (“Max and I flew down the street faster than a rocket ship!”).♥

Anything but the truth!

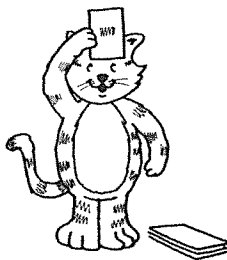
Give your youngster a chance to stretch the truth a little (or a lot) by telling tall tales—stories that use *exaggeration*. First, read one to your child (get a library book or look online). Then, he can pick something to exaggerate. He might describe a huge vegetable that grew in your garden



What's my word?

What's on your forehead? Why, a vocabulary word! Play this game to boost your child's vocabulary.

1. Help her make game cards by writing words from books or vocabulary lists, one per index card.
2. Shuffle the cards, and put them face-down in a pile.
3. On your turn, draw a card and hold it against your forehead so everyone can see the word but you.
4. Ask the other players *yes* or *no* questions about the word until you figure it out. You might ask about its part of speech (“Is it a noun?”), its meaning (“Is it a type of job?”), or its length (“Does it have fewer than six letters?”).
5. Score 1 point for each question. When all of the cards have been used, the player with the *fewest* points wins.♥

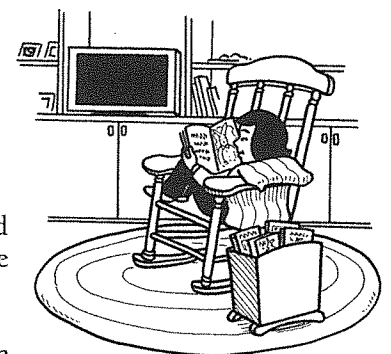


Q&A Less screen time

Q My daughter loves TV and video games—she would rather spend time in front of a screen than with a book. What should I do?

A Experts recommend no more than 1–2 hours of screen time a day for youngsters. Tell your child how much time she can have, and help her decide in advance how to use it (say, a 30-minute TV show and 30 minutes with a video game).

Then, try to incorporate reading into her screen time. For instance, turn on the TV closed-captioning so she gets reading practice. Even if she can't read all the words, she'll be excited to pick out some that she knows. Or look for videos based on picture books. Together, read the book, watch the video, and talk about how they're the same and different.♥



Parent to Parent New learning standards

I had been hearing that children are reading more nonfiction in school, but I wasn't sure why. Attending a school night on the new Common Core State Standards cleared things up for me.

The presenter said the standards are designed to prepare kids for college and careers, where they'll need to read for information. By fourth grade, about half of what students read will be nonfiction. So she suggested that parents read some nonfiction at

bedtime and that we encourage our kids to read nonfiction for pleasure. She shared examples of picture books about frogs and construction vehicles that I'm sure our son, Sean, would like!

I also learned that Sean will be writing more in all subjects. At home, I can help by having him write for different reasons.

For example, he could make a birthday wish list and explain why he wants each item.

I was happy to have the standards explained—and to learn that there are ways we can help our son.♥



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