

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

2021



SHORT NOTES

Think like a scientist

Does your child understand the difference between an *observation* (what she sees) and an *inference* (what she concludes from the evidence)? Help her by pointing out things you observe and what she can infer. (“There are footprints in the mud, so someone probably walked there after it rained.”)

Car safety

Keep your youngster safe in the car by making sure his lap belt lies across his upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across his chest. If his seat belt doesn't fit right, he still needs a booster seat. Most kids “graduate” from a booster when they're 4 feet 9 inches tall, typically between the ages of 8 and 12.

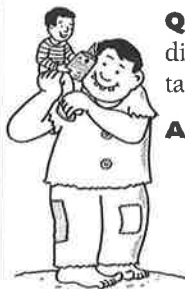
Dealing with swearing

Youngsters sometimes experiment with curse words to impress friends or express anger. Consider making a “nice language” rule that applies to children *and* adults, since your child will follow your example. And let her know what the consequence will be for swearing.

Worth quoting

“Reading is important, because if you can read, you can learn anything about everything and everything about anything.” *Tomie dePaola*

JUST FOR FUN



Q: Why do you need a dictionary when you talk to giants?

A: They use big words!

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Holy Family School

Mrs. Maryalice L. Doherty, Principal

Organized for a new year

It's no surprise that students who are organized tend to do better in school. Could your youngster use some help in this department? Share these strategies for overcoming common pitfalls and starting 2021 off on the right foot.

Problem: “I forgot to do my assignment.”

Solution: Lists and calendars

Encourage your child to end each day by making a to-do list for tomorrow. He can add to it as he gets new assignments. He'll be less apt to forget anything, and he'll find it satisfying to cross out completed tasks. Also, he could keep a calendar for upcoming tests, presentations, and projects.

Problem: “I lost my homework.”

Solution: A filing system

Suggest that your youngster keep his backpack nearby while he does homework. After he finishes each assignment, he can put it directly into his backpack. Learning online? Help him create a computer folder for each



subject—each with a subfolder just for homework. Also, have him back up files regularly to a thumb drive or a school-approved cloud app.

Problem: “My book is here ... somewhere.”

Solution: The five-minute rule

Let your child in on a little secret: The time he spends staying organized will actually save him time in the long run. This is where the five-minute rule comes in. Before he begins working each day, have him set a timer for five minutes and organize supplies, papers, and books until the timer goes off.♥

What did you learn today?

Expressing interest in school lets your child know her learning is important to you. Consider these tips:

- Ask your youngster to demonstrate something she did in school. She might teach you the steps in long division or a song she sang in music. If she's learning remotely, ask her to show you what apps she uses and how she submits assignments.

- Weave a conversation about school into your evening routine. For example, while you make dinner, invite your youngster to tell you all the cool facts she learned about ancient Egypt during today's history lesson.♥



Mindfulness for kids

Mindfulness is the practice of slowing down and focusing on the moment as a way to relax. Suggest that your youngster try these strategies to reduce stress.

Five senses. Encourage your child to notice something different with each of her five senses. She might see snow falling, hear the dog snoring, touch her cozy sweatshirt, smell the fire burning in the fireplace, and taste an orange.



Thought balloons. Have your youngster sit quietly with her eyes closed. She should focus on breathing in slowly for a count of four and holding her breath for four seconds. Next, she can exhale all the air slowly, pretending she's blowing any worries into a giant balloon. Then, she could imagine the balloon—and her worries—floating away.

Limp noodles. Ask your child to lie on the floor and pretend she's an uncooked noodle by stiffening all her muscles. Now have her loosen her toes, feet, ankles, legs, and the rest of her body until she's a completely limp (and relaxed) noodle!♥

PARENT TO PARENT



At-home field trips

My son Carson loves school field trips, but he hasn't been able to go on any since the pandemic began. So we've been taking virtual field trips—and they're inspiring real-life learning!

This past fall, we "toured" national parks online to see fall foliage in different parts of the country. Then, we walked around our neighborhood, and Carson sketched the colorful trees he saw.



Another time, we "rode" roller coasters on theme-park websites. This led Carson to experiment with building a roller coaster for his toy cars out of cardboard tubes.

While our virtual trips aren't the same as going to real places, Carson is learning a lot from them, both online and with his projects afterward. And we're having fun exploring the world as a family—from home.

Find more virtual field trip ideas at rfeonline.com/FieldTrips.♥

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ACTIVITY CORNER

Paper engineering

Why do so many buildings have cylinder-shaped columns? Let your child experiment to find out.

Materials: three sheets of construction paper, tape, hardback books

Have your child make three paper columns like this:

1. Roll paper lengthwise into a cylinder, and secure with tape.
2. Fold paper into fourths lengthwise. Unfold, and shape into a rectangular column. Tape the edges together.
3. Fold paper into thirds lengthwise. Tape into a triangular column.

Now it's time to test the columns. Your youngster can stand them up and carefully stack books, one at a time, on top.

What happens? The cylinder supports multiple books, while a single book instantly crushes the other two columns. Can your child figure out why? (The cylinder's shape distributes weight evenly. The folds in the rectangular and triangular columns create points of weakness.)♥



Q & A

Talking about drugs

Q: My daughter is in third grade. Is it too soon to talk about drugs?

A: Actually, children are never too young to start learning about drugs. At this age, your daughter is more likely to be open about her questions and opinions—and to listen to yours.

Watch for teachable moments in everyday life. If her doctor prescribes medicine, you could use the opportunity to talk about why she's not allowed to take medicine that wasn't prescribed for her. If you give

her over-the-counter medicine, ask her to help you carefully read the label and double-check the dosage. Explain that it's dangerous to take more than the recommended amount. Or let a TV commercial about addiction spark a discussion about what addiction means (being dependent on drugs).

Note: Stay up to date on the latest information about children and drugs by visiting websites like drugabuse.gov or getsmartaboutdrugs.com.♥



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“How-to” writing

Here’s a fun way for your child to practice writing explanations. Ask him to list step-by-step instructions for creating something out of play dough—without telling you what the object is. Follow his directions exactly as written. Is your object the one he intended?

Apologies in action

When your youngster needs to apologize, explain that taking responsibility for her actions means more than just saying “I’m sorry.” For instance, if she loses pieces to her brother’s board game, she might use her own money to replace the game or offer to make homemade game pieces.

DID YOU KNOW?

People blink less than usual while staring at a computer screen. And that can lead to dry eyes and eyestrain. Encourage your child to take “blink breaks” when he’s online. He might look away from the screen and blink several times while he waits for a program to open, for example.

Worth quoting

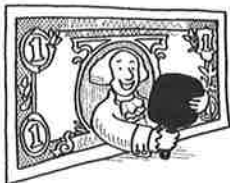
“A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees.”

Amelia Earhart

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What’s the easiest way to double a dollar?

A: Put it in front of a mirror.



The nitty-gritty on grit

Children who have grit are able to overcome setbacks and stick with challenges. Nurture your youngster’s persistence with these ideas.

Be independent

Let your child do as much as possible for herself. Maybe her smoothie is lumpy or the gift she wraps is messy, but resist the urge to fix them. You’ll show her that you believe in her—and that will help her believe in herself.

Find “lightbulb” moments

A comic-strip artist might draw a lightbulb to show that a character has a “bright” idea. When your youngster struggles to learn something (say, how to juggle), suggest that she draw a lightbulb and fill it with steps to success. *Examples:* “Learn to juggle scarves first.” “Juggle one ball at a time.”

Declare a “do-over”

Remind your child that a setback simply means she needs more practice. For instance, if she’s showing you how she can do a cartwheel but doesn’t land on



her feet, declare a “do-over.” She’ll learn that it’s okay to try again and again.

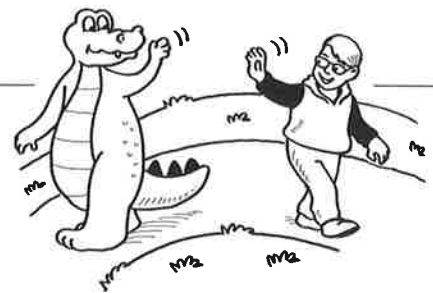
Use self-motivation

Kids tend to stick with things they’re interested in, and that teaches them the rewards of perseverance. Steer your youngster toward projects that fit her passions. If she wants to design video games someday, you might help her find a coding class or an online tutorial.♥

Attention, please!

These kid-friendly activities can stretch your child’s attention span:

- Play “Spot the Difference.” Draw two nearly identical pictures. Perhaps you’ll sketch two pizzas with a pepperoni in a different spot or a different number of mushrooms. Tell your youngster how many differences there are. Can he find them all?
- “See you later, alligator.” “After ‘while, crocodile.” With your child, take turns thinking of ways to say “goodbye”—each should rhyme and mention an animal. *Examples:* “Gotta go, armadillo.” “In a few, kangaroo.” How long can your youngster stay focused as you go back and forth?♥



Big project, big success

School projects give your child a chance to be creative as he shows what he has learned. Share these tips for successful projects from start to finish.

Make a connection. Your youngster will learn more—and be more motivated to work hard—if he picks a topic he cares about. Say he’s asked to write a report on pioneer days. He might focus on daily life as a pioneer kid or on popular games from that time.

Break it down. Suggest that your child think of a big project as a series of smaller



assignments. He can set a deadline for each step, including researching, writing, and revising. Remind him to leave some wiggle room in case a task takes longer than he anticipated.

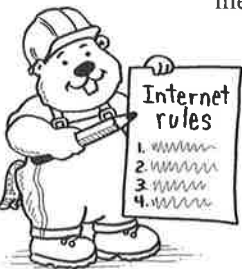
Add flair. How could your youngster make his project stand out? Encourage him to include extras like models, posters, or audio or video clips. Maybe he’ll make a cardboard model of a one-room schoolhouse like those many pioneer children attended. If his project includes a class presentation, he could demonstrate a game from the time period like jackstraws (similar to pickup sticks).♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Online safety 101

My daughter Peyton does many things online these days—from going to school to hanging out with her friends. I was worried about her safety, so I found an online cyber safety course at sos.fbi.gov/en/, and we took it together.

We were both surprised by what we learned. For instance, online contests can be used to collect names and email addresses. And who knew that social media quizzes can trick you into sharing your birth month or pet’s name to help hackers figure out your passwords?



After our class, Peyton made an illustrated list of rules to keep by the computer. Her rules include blocking sites that aren’t kid friendly, not sharing passwords with friends, and asking my permission before downloading anything. Now, both of us are more careful when we work and play online.♥

Q & A Handling cheating

Q: My son got caught giving his friend answers during a test and received a zero. How should I handle this at home?

A: Start by asking your child why he cheated. If he says he just wanted to help his friend, explain that cheating is always wrong—regardless of the reason. Also, it doesn’t actually help anyone. Your son got a zero on his test, and his friend didn’t learn that studying is the right way to earn a good grade.

Or if your youngster felt pressured to share the answer, help him plan what to do the next time someone asks him to cheat. He might simply say, “Sorry, I can’t,” and keep his eyes on his own paper. Later, he could suggest they study together for the next test.

Finally, let your child know what the consequences will be at home if he cheats again (say, losing electronics for a certain period of time).♥



ACTIVITY CORNER Math squares: A brain workout

Boost your youngster’s spatial reasoning—an important part of success in geometry—with this fun brainteaser.

1. Have your child cut out five squares, all the same size, from construction paper.
2. Now she can position the squares to form different *pentominoes*: arrangements of five squares in which each square shares



at least one side with another square. Can she find all 12 possible pentominoes? (If she gets stuck, help her search online for “pentominoes.”)

3. After your youngster makes each pentomino, she can draw it on graph paper so she remembers which ones she has found.

Challenge: Ask your child to cut out the pentominoes she drew on graph paper. Now she can arrange all 12 into a big square with a square hole in the middle.♥

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