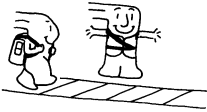


Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

September 2017



SHORT NOTES

Sign your work

Encourage your youngster to get in the habit of writing his name on his paper before he begins an assignment. He could think of it as “autographing” his work, just like artists sign their masterpieces. His teacher will know who the paper belongs to, and he’ll get credit for his hard work.

Safety smarts

Help your child travel safely to and from school. Explain that it’s important to avoid horseplay at the bus stop and to stay away from the street. If your youngster walks to school, make sure she sticks with a group. And if you drive, drop her at the designated spot, and remember to stop for school buses loading or unloading children.

Extra fun, extra learning

Extracurricular activities let your youngster explore hobbies and find friends with similar interests. He might join an art club, a robotics group, or a sports team, for instance. To find options, check in the school office or on the school website.

Worth quoting

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” *Nelson Mandela*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Which side of a duck has the most feathers?

A: The outside!



Great year ahead

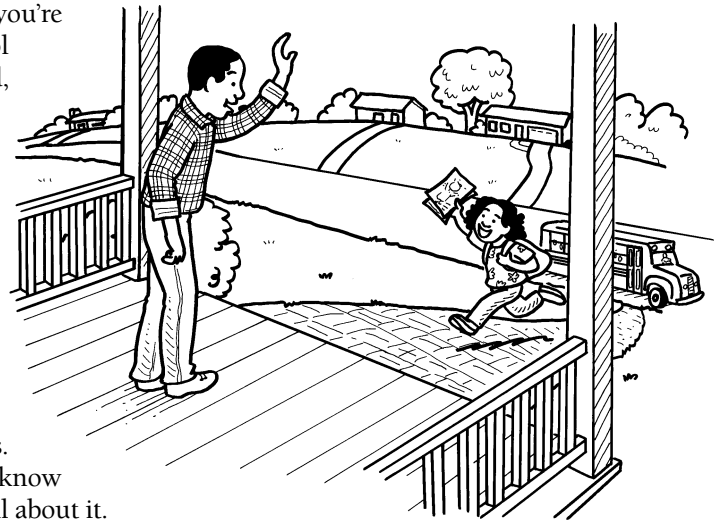
Showing your child you’re excited about the school year will get her excited, too. Encourage her to share what she learns and to make the most of each school day with these strategies.

“What will you learn today?”

Talk about your youngster’s day at school *before* it happens. In the morning, let her know you can’t wait to hear all about it. She’ll be on the lookout for things to tell you. She might even jot down notes to remember the highlights (a science experiment she enjoyed, the words to a song she sang in music class).

“Show me what you did!”

Ask your child to demonstrate something she learned. Perhaps she’ll show you how to measure the area of a room or write a line of code. You’ll get to see what she’s working on in school. Plus, explaining something out loud will help



her understand and remember it—and build her confidence.

“What’s new this year?”

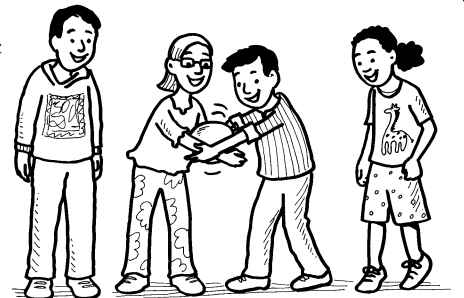
Each school year brings something exciting that your youngster couldn’t do the year before. Maybe she’ll go to recess on a different playground, join the chorus, or change classes for math or reading. Build enthusiasm by talking up these experiences in the first weeks of school, and keep her motivated by following up as the year goes on.♥

Team up for success

Teamwork is an important part of life in school *and* at home. Try fun games like these to help your youngster practice cooperating with others to reach a common goal:

- Line up, and pass a balloon from one person to another without dropping it—using anything but your hands.
- Stand in a circle, and hold hands.

Then, have everyone turn around so they’re facing the opposite direction. The catch? You can’t let go of each other’s hands!♥



Organized all day long

Being organized can reduce stress and make the school day go more smoothly. Here's a checklist that will help.

Morning

- ❑ Show your child how to set an alarm that will wake him up in time to get ready for school.
- ❑ On a sheet of paper, help him draw or list morning tasks, such as "make bed" and "brush teeth." Let him post the list where he can see it (say, by his bed or on the bathroom mirror).



After school

- ❑ Have your youngster go through his backpack to take out homework and throw away trash. To store work he wants to save, he might use folders or a shoebox.
- ❑ Ask him to place papers for you in a special spot, perhaps a basket. Look them over, and sign papers as needed.

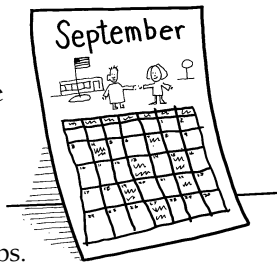
Nighttime

- ❑ Before bed, your child should put needed items in his backpack. *Examples:* completed assignments, signed permission slips, show-and-tell objects.
- ❑ Suggest that he pick out clothes and choose breakfast foods for the next day. He could get a head start by setting out cereal, fresh fruit, and a bowl and spoon.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

A homemade calendar

Encourage your child to use a calendar this school year by having her make her own. Follow these steps.



1. Label. Have her draw a calendar page for each month, labeling the month and days of the week. She can refer to a real calendar to fill in the dates.

2. Illustrate. What does each month make her think of? Let your youngster illustrate the top of each sheet—maybe she'll draw herself making new friends in September and painting pumpkins in October.

3. Fill in. Now she can write in regular events (library day on Mondays, spelling quizzes on Fridays). As the year goes on, she could add assignment due dates, tests, or other reminders.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Building knowledge—on a budget

I heard that giving your kids lots of experiences in the community provides "background knowledge" that helps them succeed in school. We're on a tight budget, so I looked into outings for my daughter, Carly, that don't cost a lot.

First, we searched online for free days at nearby museums. I even saw an ad for "Museum Day Live!" on September 23, when many museums offer two free tickets per family. Carly picked out one on pioneer life and another with hands-on engineering projects.

Then, at the farmers' market, someone mentioned a farm that gives free tours. We visited last Saturday, and Carly got to pick apples and see how cows are milked. I'm glad Carly is having new experiences—and we are sticking to our budget.

Editor's note: See smithsonianmag.com/museumday/museum-day-live-2017/ for more information about Museum Day Live!♥



Q & A How to manage screen time

Q: My son could spend hours watching videos or using apps. How can I set reasonable limits?

A: The goal should be for your son to have enough "unplugged" time to finish schoolwork, be with family and friends, get exercise, and relax. Experts suggest coming up with a plan that suits your family.

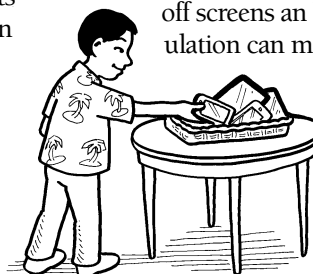
Think about what your youngster uses devices for. A fifth grader may need a computer for homework, while a younger child might simply play on a tablet. Then, set limits that make sense.

Maybe you'll decide on a half-hour of screen time on school days (after homework is done) but give him an hour a day on weekends.

It also helps to name times for everyone to stay off screens, perhaps during meals and car rides. Also, consider turning off screens an hour before bed—the stimulation can make it harder to fall asleep.

Note: Set aside a place for stowing devices so they're out of sight.

To create a plan, see healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx.♥



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October 2017



SHORT NOTES

Speak clearly

To boost your child's communication skills, let her introduce herself when she meets people rather than doing it for her. Also, encourage her to be clear and specific when asking for help. If she says, "I can't do this," you might respond, "What are you asking for help with?"

Rested and ready

When your youngster wakes up easily and feels ready to start the day, that's a good sign he's getting enough sleep. But if he's too groggy in the morning or he's sleepy in school, try slowly adjusting his bedtime until he feels alert in class. *Note:* Experts recommend 10–11 hours of sleep per night at this age.

DID YOU KNOW?

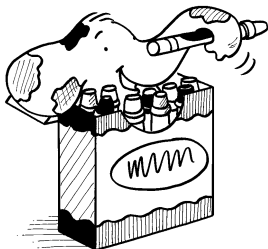
Repetition helps your child's brain form new connections. Say she wants to improve her soccer dribbling skills. She might practice for a certain number of minutes every day. Or if she'd like to learn origami, she could check out a library book on the topic and work on her favorite designs.

Worth quoting

"The whole world opened to me when I learned to read." *Mary McLeod Bethune*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Why did the elephant paint himself different colors?



A: So he could hide in the crayon box!

Consequences that work

Matthew was supposed to put away his toys and games, but he didn't. So when his mom tripped over a block, she thought carefully about what an appropriate consequence for him might be. Consider the following ideas to set consequences that encourage your youngster to listen and follow rules.

Make it logical

A consequence should relate to the situation at hand and promote the behavior you want. If your child, like Matthew, doesn't put his things away, you might say he has to store them away for a period of time. Living without them may make cleaning up more important to him.

Keep it reasonable

Take into account your youngster's age and stage of development. A little one may lose screen time for a day if he won't turn off the TV when you ask him to. An older child might have to go



without electronics for a week if you see him posting on a social media site he's not allowed to use.

Allow natural outcomes

Let your youngster learn from what happens naturally. Say he wants to wear his school T-shirt on Spirit Day, but he didn't put it in the hamper. The result? He will need to wear something else. Or if he forgets his trumpet on band day, he won't be able to play his instrument with the rest of the class.♥

Attention! Attention!

Staying focused during class will help your child do her best work. Here are strategies that can make a difference.

Role play. Pretend you're the teacher, and have your youngster show you what a student who is paying attention looks like. She might sit quietly with her eyes focused on you.

Stretch attention span. Suggest that your child do activities that require concentration. Examples include putting together jigsaw puzzles or building a house of cards.

Remove distractions. Encourage her to keep only what she needs on her desk. For instance, she should put away art supplies during a social studies lesson.

Note: If your youngster has trouble focusing at home, ask her teacher how well she focuses during school. The teacher can share what she notices and offer advice.♥



Pumpkin power

What's orange and round and full of opportunities to learn? A pumpkin! Your child can try these activities.

Math

Have your youngster estimate how many "stripes" (ridges) are on a pumpkin and count to see how close she came. She could paint each stripe as she counts it, switching colors to create a pattern. The colors will help her keep track of the number of stripes—and she'll have a pretty pumpkin to display!



Writing

Suggest that your child design a brochure for an imaginary pumpkin festival. Encourage her to give her festival a name and describe features, such as mini-pumpkin hunts, pumpkin catapults, or hayrides.

Science

Your youngster may be surprised to discover that pumpkins float. Let her try making boats out of them. She could start with a whole-pumpkin boat (cut off the top and scrape out the insides). Then, help her carve boats of different sizes and shapes, perhaps deep and wide or shallow and narrow. How does the design affect whether they float or sink?♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

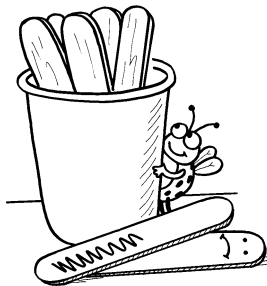


"Sticky" vocabulary

Play this game with your youngster to help him learn vocabulary words.

Materials: marker, craft sticks, cup, dictionary or textbook

Let your child write each vocabulary word (or boldface word from a textbook) on the end of a craft stick. On three



more sticks, he should draw "frowny faces" instead of writing words. When he's finished, have him place all the sticks in a cup, printed ends down.

Take turns pulling out a stick and using the word in a sentence that makes its definition clear. Check the dictionary or textbook—if you're right, keep the stick. If not, return it to the cup. But be careful: Draw a frowny face and you lose all your sticks! (Set each frowny face aside after it's drawn.)

When all sticks have been claimed, the player with the most wins.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Blending together

I recently got remarried, and my children now have a stepbrother and a stepsister. My husband and I want us all to bond, so I reached out to a coworker to see how she had successfully blended her new family.

Nancy recommended that we find pastimes everyone can enjoy together. That way, the children will get to know each other in a more relaxed way. We asked the kids for ideas, and they thought of bowling, skating, and playing board games.

My friend also mentioned the importance of respecting each other's space and belongings. So my husband and I made sure to talk to our kids about knocking before entering each other's rooms and asking for permission before borrowing items.

For now, we're taking one day at a time. Recently, we went bowling and had some good laughs. Feeling like a family may not happen overnight, but at least we're on our way.♥



Q & A Healthy after-school snacks

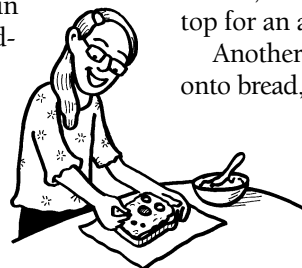
Q: My daughter is hungry after school, but it's hard to come up with nutritious snacks that she's excited about eating. Any recommendations?

A: Add a fun twist to healthy sandwiches by presenting them in a whole new way. Try a sandwich-on-a-stick, for example. Help your child cut whole-grain bread and cooked turkey into small pieces. Then, she can thread them onto a toothpick or bamboo

skewer along with cheese cubes and cucumber slices.

Or core an apple and slice it into rounds. Let her spread peanut or sunflower butter on one slice, sprinkle with raisins, and place a second apple slice on top for an apple sandwich.

Another idea is to scoop tuna salad onto bread, and your daughter can create a smiley face on top. She might use sliced green olives as eyes, a grape tomato for the nose, and chickpeas for the smile.♥



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SHORT NOTES

Practice patience

Patience is a lifelong skill that will help your youngster in school—and in life. The key is knowing how to pass time pleasantly while waiting so he doesn't feel anxious or frustrated. Together, come up with special "waiting activities" like saying the alphabet backward or counting down with the crosswalk sign.

A future job

Help your child make the connection between school and the career she could have someday. Point out workers using school subjects like a nurse writing on a chart or a TV weather forecaster describing a cold front. Also, friends and relatives might tell your child what they studied in school and how it's related to their jobs.

See that illustration?

Understanding the meaning of images in books, magazines, and newspapers will boost your youngster's reading comprehension. To build *visual literacy*, ask your youngster to explain what's happening in illustrations and graphics. He might even enjoy making up his own captions.

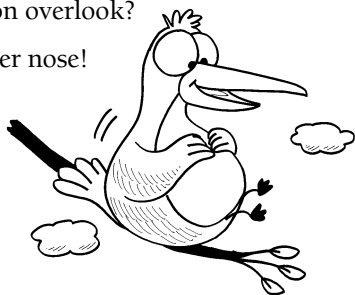
Worth quoting

"Adventure is worthwhile in itself."
Amelia Earhart

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What does even the most careful person overlook?

A: Her nose!



Doing my own homework

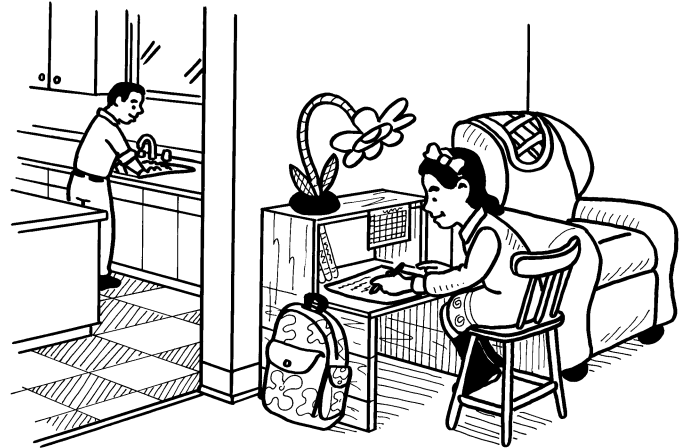
When your child is the one responsible for her homework, she will form good habits that will benefit her throughout her school career. Use these tips to help your youngster be independent at homework time.

Your child's job: Let her choose a usual place and time for homework. That will make her more likely to stick with her routine.

She may want to work at the kitchen table after school or at her desk after dinner.

How to help: Make sure your family's evening activities don't interfere with homework time. From time to time, ask your youngster whether she needs more supplies, such as pencils, erasers, markers, or glue.

Your child's job: She should tackle homework on her own. Not only will this help her learn, it will also show the teacher how well she understands the material.



How to help: If your youngster gets stuck, suggest that she reread the directions or look for similar examples in her book. Offer to play study games with her. Also, check to see that her homework is finished.

Your child's job: It's up to her to hand in completed work. She can find a way to remind herself, maybe by posting a note on her backpack.

How to help: Together, choose a visible spot to keep her backpack and anything else she needs for school. ♥

An attitude of gratitude

Around Thanksgiving, people often talk about what they're thankful for. These activities can inspire your youngster to express gratitude now—and all year long.

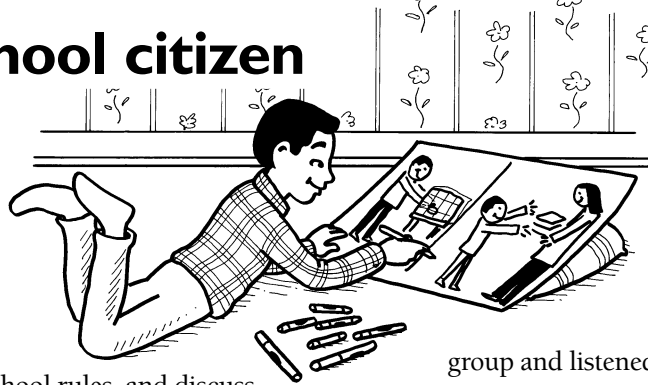
On the calendar. Brainstorm categories of things to be grateful for, such as people and nature. On a calendar, list one category per day for a week. Then each day, have family members name something they're grateful for in that category (a healthy grandparent, a beautiful fall day).

Behind the gift. When your child receives a gift, ask him to think about what the giver put into it. For instance, if his aunt sends him a sweater that he doesn't like, he might say it was nice that she took the time to find out what style is popular with kids his age. ♥



Be a good school citizen

Your child can make his school a better place to learn and play by following school rules and being considerate of his fellow students. Encourage him to be a good school citizen with these ideas.



Follow rules

Have your youngster name school rules, and discuss what would happen if they didn't exist. What if no one had assigned seats? (People might waste time deciding where to sit.) What if students could run in the hallways? (They might get hurt.) He'll see why it's important to follow the rules—just like people must obey laws.

group and listened to others without interrupting.

Do your part

Every school citizen has an important role to play, and helping teachers and classmates is a part of that role. Suggest that your youngster draw himself doing classroom jobs like feeding the class guinea pig or delivering papers to the office.♥

Be considerate

Part of good citizenship is treating others the way you want to be treated. Ask your child to share examples of considerate things he did today. Maybe he got off a playground swing so another student could have a turn. Or perhaps he waited quietly before speaking up in a



PARENT TO PARENT

Sparking curiosity

My daughter Hailey used to be curious about everything from whether butterflies dream to why she has curly hair. As she grew older, she didn't ask as many questions. I wanted to keep her curiosity alive—so I decided to start asking *her* questions.

For example, when we saw ants carrying big leaves, I wondered aloud how they can hold stuff that's bigger than they are. Hailey looked it up, and she was proud to teach me that ants' muscles are thicker than ours compared to their body size. And these muscles don't have to support much body weight, freeing them up to hold other things.

Hailey enjoys telling me facts I don't know. We are both learning new things, and she's discovering that you're never too old to be curious and ask questions!♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Design a city

If your youngster could create her own city, what would it look like? Suggest that she pretend to be an urban planner. She'll use thinking, planning, math, and engineering skills as she follows these steps.



- 1. Pick a location.** Have your child decide where her city will be located. It could be near an ocean, in a desert, or even in outer space.
- 2. Add services.** Encourage her to consider where people will live, work, grow food, and spend free time. Also, how would they get around? They might travel by car, subway, bike, hovercraft, spaceship—or use an entirely new form of transportation.
- 3. Make a plan.** Let her draw a map of her city, revising it until she's satisfied.
- 4. Build and play.** Suggest that your youngster make a model using household materials (construction paper, empty boxes, paper towel tubes, plastic cups, string). She can see how her city functions by adding toy people, animals, and vehicles.♥

Q & A

A successful parent-teacher conference

Q: *I'm attending the parent-teacher conference for my son this month. How can I get the most out of it?*

A: First, write down what you want to say before you go. List any questions you have. Also, include information to help the teacher learn more about your child, such as the kinds of books he reads or activities he's involved in.

Then, be sure to arrive on time, and set a friendly tone by mentioning something

your son likes about school. *Example:* "Dylan loves science. He especially enjoyed learning about polar bears."

Listen closely to find out where your youngster is doing well or where he needs to improve. Ask how to support his learning at home—perhaps by helping him review math facts.

Finally, agree on how to follow up throughout the school year so you can stay connected and help your child do his best.♥



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