

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

February 2017



Blairstown Elementary School
Mr. Bruce P. Leal, Principal

SHORT NOTES

On time every day

Arriving at school on time allows your child to settle in and take full advantage of every learning activity. Let him take the lead on this important responsibility by teaching him to set an alarm. *Tip:* Suggest that he place the clock across the room so he has to get out of bed to switch it off.

A “mind rehearsal”

Have your youngster “practice” challenging situations in her mind to boost her confidence. Before a cheer-leading competition, for example, she could picture herself nailing her routines. Or if a big test is coming up, she might imagine staying calm and answering questions to the best of her ability.

Field trip learning

When you sign a field trip permission slip, show interest—you’ll inspire your child to learn more from his outing. Ask him to predict what he will see and learn. Together, look up the destination online or in books, and say something like, “I can’t wait to hear which instrument is your favorite at the symphony.” Then, follow up with him afterward.

Worth quoting

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

JUST FOR FUN

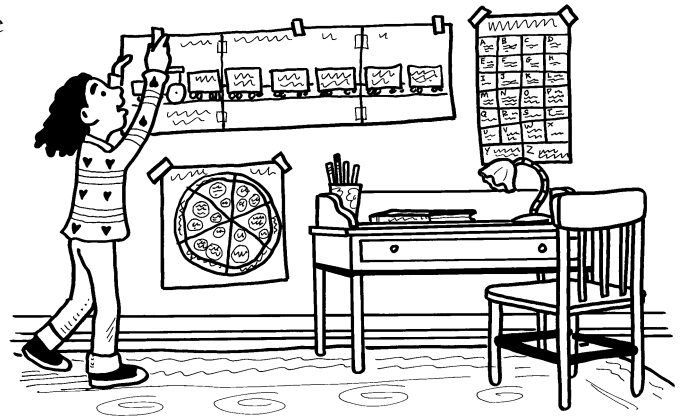
Q: Why can’t you tell a joke while standing on ice?

A: Because it might crack up.



Great graphic organizers

Organizing information in creative ways can make studying more interesting and productive for your youngster. Encourage her to try these graphic organizers—and to invent some of her own!



Cars in a train

Drawing a train is one way to understand and study steps in a process or events in a sequence, such as the parts of the scientific method or the plot of a novel. Suggest that your child label each train car with a step (“Ask a question,” “Make a hypothesis”) and add a picture to illustrate it.

Toppings on a pizza

Have your youngster draw a pizza to visualize facts. On each slice, she should write a category of information (*example:* “Lewis and Clark,” “Cartier,” and so on for a quiz on explorers). She can draw toppings (pepperoni, mushrooms) and put a fact on each one. On the Lewis and

Clark “pepperoni,” she might write, “Started in St. Louis” and “Ended at the Pacific Ocean.”

Letters of the alphabet

Let your child divide a sheet of paper into 26 squares and label them A–Z. Then, she could write a fact that begins with each letter. If her topic is habitats, she can define *desert* in the D square and *rain forest* for R. Being creative with less-common letters will get her thinking more deeply about the material (“Quick temperature drops happen at night in the desert” for Q).♥

Respect all around

Every day, there are plenty of opportunities for your child to show respect for others. Here are examples.

● **At home...** The dinner table is a great place to start. Teach your youngster to thank the cook. He’ll show respect for the person’s time and care in preparing the food.

● **In school...** Encourage him to be respectful of other children’s backgrounds by learning greetings in the languages they speak at home.

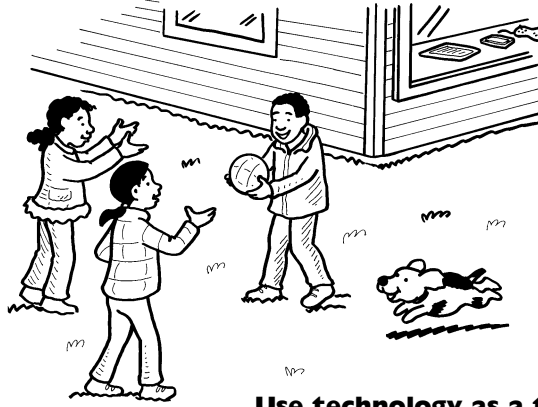
● **In your community...** Explain that shoppers respect store employees by not creating extra work for them. If you decide you don’t need an item in your cart, help your child return it to where it belongs. After you load groceries into your car, have him walk with you to return the cart.♥



Keep screen time in check

Do you worry that your child spends too much time in front of a screen? Do you wonder how he could best use technology? Consider this advice for helping him to balance screen time with other activities and to make the most of the time he does spend on electronics.

Aim for a mix. Together, look for ways to balance screen time with schoolwork, active play, and



family time. Make rules about where and when your youngster uses a computer, tablet, smartphone, or video game (say, in the living room after homework is finished). Have him set a timer while he uses a device—when it goes off, it's time to go out and play or help you prepare dinner, for example.

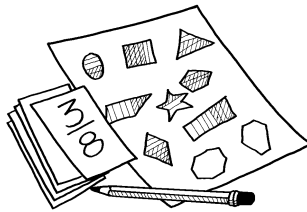
Use technology as a tool. Encourage your child to regard a device as a tool to use for specific purposes. He might download an astronomy app to help spot constellations in the night sky or a birding app to identify bird calls during a hike. He'll learn to rely on technology for real-life purposes.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER Fraction art

Your youngster can practice identifying and representing fractions by creating this colorful mosaic with you—fraction by fraction.

Materials:
pencil, paper,
index cards,
crayons

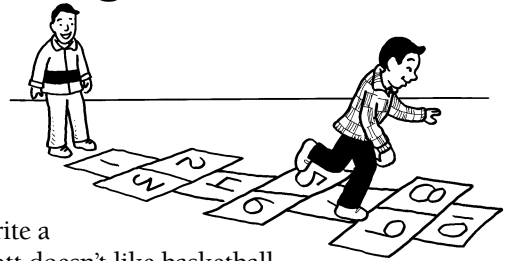


1. Let your child draw 10 geometric shapes on a sheet of paper, such as circles, squares, rectangles, triangles, trapezoids, and pentagons.
2. On separate index cards, have her write any 12 fractions (examples: $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{2}{6}$, $\frac{3}{8}$). Shuffle the cards, and stack them facedown.
3. Take turns flipping over a card (say, $\frac{3}{8}$). Pick a shape, and color in that fraction on the shape (draw lines to divide it into 8 equal parts, and color 3 parts).
4. When you've used all the cards, shuffle and keep going. Continue until you've filled as many shapes as possible.

Note: If you get a fraction that isn't available to color, turn over cards until you select one you can use.♥

A plan for problem solving

When your child faces a problem, having a solid plan can help him figure out how to solve it. So whether he's had a disagreement with a friend or has fallen behind on his schoolwork, suggest this approach.



- **Identify the problem.** Let him write a quick summary of what's wrong. ("Elliott doesn't like basketball, but that's what I usually play at recess.")
- **Imagine the ideal solution.** For instance, he probably wants to remain friends and still play basketball.
- **Figure out alternatives.** Encourage him to brainstorm solutions. *Examples:* "Offer to play with Elliott at recess every other day." "See if he wants to find something to play that we both like."
- **Choose a solution.** He could pick the solution he likes best or that he thinks is most likely to work.
- **Evaluate.** Have him try out that solution and ask how it went. If it didn't work, then he can consider another alternative from his list.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Overcoming shyness

My daughter Gabrielle has always been shy and quiet around people she doesn't know well. This year, her teacher told me she was worried because Gabrielle rarely speaks in class.

We met with the school counselor, who had some good advice. For example, I'm trying to let Gabrielle speak for herself rather than jumping in to "rescue" her. When someone asks her

name, I smile at her and wait instead of saying it for her. I'm also encouraging her to order her food in restaurants and to speak up at places like the hair salon and the dentist's office.

The counselor helped Gabrielle set a goal of raising her hand to answer a question at least once a day. We're having fun practicing by playing school at home—and her teacher just sent home a note saying she's seeing a little progress!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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