

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

Wesley Matthews Elementary School
Dr. Josefina Estrella, Counselor

February 2008

SHORT NOTES

Backpack check

Your child's backpack is full of clues about what's happening in school. Take 10 minutes each day to have her show you what's inside. You can go over homework and look at graded papers. Praise her for assignments she did well, and review those she struggled with.

Get well

When your youngster is sick, it's important for him to stay home so he can rest and get better. Also, avoid spreading germs by keeping him home until he's no longer contagious. *Note:* If your child is out more than a few days, you might call his teacher for assignments or reading he can do when he feels up to it.

Black History Month

February is Black History Month. Tell your child the celebration is one way of recognizing the accomplishments of African Americans throughout history. Read aloud a biography of George Washington Carver, the scientist who made peanut butter popular, or Rosa Parks, whose refusal to give up her bus seat helped spark the civil rights movement.

Worth quoting

"All kids are gifted. Some just open their packages earlier than others."
Michael Carr

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Why do sharks swim only in salt water?

A: Because pepper water makes them sneeze.



Pitching in

Would you like your child to be more responsible, hardworking, and persistent? Here are ideas for working as a family to help your youngster develop these important traits.

A group approach

Thinking of herself as a "team player" can encourage your child to be responsible. Explain that your family operates as a team. Everyone must play a part to get things done. *Example:* You take her shopping for her clothes and sports equipment. She chooses her outfit each morning and keeps track of her bat and glove.

Hard workers wanted

Your youngster probably has regular chores to do. You can motivate her to work extra hard by placing "want ads" on the refrigerator. Choose a challenging job, and offer a benefit. *Example:* Wanted—a hardworking family member to clean out a corner of the basement. Reward—a place for your child and her friends to play.

Sticking it out

Working toward small goals can make it easier to complete a big task. Perhaps your family room needs a fresh coat of paint. Write down the steps (move furniture and lay down drop cloths, prepare walls, roll



paint on walls, paint trim). Tell your child you'll take a fun break after each step is done (go to the playground, take a bike ride, play a game).♥

Stories and poems

Spend an afternoon at the library gathering storybooks and poems on a topic your child likes. You can help your youngster learn a new way to choose reading materials and also to enjoy poetry. Here's how:

1. Let your child pick a topic. Does he enjoy camping? Have him search the library's online catalog for books and poetry collections like *When We Go Camping* by Margriet Ruurs and *Toasting Marshmallows: Camping Poems* by Kristine George.

2. Ask him to compare the story and poems. For instance, a story might use simple words to explain events, while a poem might use colorful words and give your youngster something to figure out. *Example:* "as my pillowed confection slowly reaches golden perfection" is about toasting a marshmallow.♥



Organizing information

Your child can sort out information he learns at school in fun ways that will help him remember it more easily. Share these three creative ways to make graphic organizers.

Build a mobile. Have your youngster draw circles (trace around small, medium, and large cans) and cut them out. If he's studying explorers, he can write the main topic (explorers) on the biggest circle, explorer names on medium



ones (Christopher Newport), and a fact about each person on smaller ones (founded Jamestown). Give him yarn and tape to connect the circles.

Make a chart. What your child knows about a topic (example: space) goes in the chart's first column (Jupiter is the largest planet). What he wants to know goes in the next column (How big is Jupiter?). The third column is for what he learns (Jupiter is 85,000 miles in diameter).

Draw a timeline. When your youngster needs to put events in order, he might draw an ice cream cone with several scoops. Then, he can write the topic on the cone and an event on each scoop. Or he could make cars of a train and write the heading on the engine and the other events in order on the other cars.♥

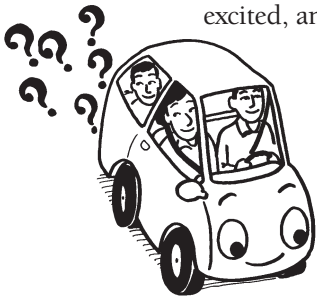
PARENT TO PARENT Mystery trip

One Sunday afternoon, our family was arguing about what to do. Jason wanted to visit a hobby shop, and Tiffany asked to go swimming. Then my husband announced that we were taking a "mystery trip." The kids were excited, and the arguing stopped.

As we drove, they begged for clues. My husband said, "This place is full of words, but it's very quiet." Tiffany guessed the library, but my husband said no. "They have trains, but it isn't the train station," he said.

The kids were surprised when we ended up at a great used bookstore with a train table in the play area.

The day was so successful that now we have a mystery trip each month. So far, we've toured our town's recycling plant, watched planes take off at the airport, and relaxed by a stream in the woods. I wonder where we'll go next!♥

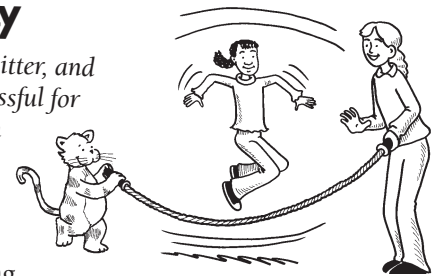


Q & A Smoothing the way

Q: We just hired a new after-school sitter, and I'm concerned the change will be stressful for my daughter. How can I make the transition easier?

A: Try having the new sitter come over a few times when you're there (perhaps in the evening after work). Seeing you talk and laugh with the sitter will help your daughter feel more comfortable with her. Then, leave the two of them to play together while you go into another room.

Also, you can help your daughter adjust by keeping her rituals and routines as close to the same as possible. Even small things make a difference. For example, ask what she liked about her old sitter (she knew cool jump-rope rhymes or read favorite books). Offer to write down the rhymes for the new caregiver, and leave books on the coffee table.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER Listen carefully!

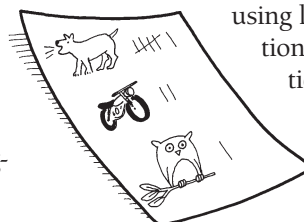
Use these fun activities to improve your child's listening skills.

What did you hear?

Sit quietly outside and have everyone write down all the sounds they hear (siren, motorcycle, dog barking). After five minutes, share your lists and see who heard the most sounds. Did anyone hear something no one else noticed?

Don't say it!

Put three stickers on each person's shirt. Designate a "forbidden word."



Hint: Try to think of one that's hard to avoid, like "dinner," "school," or "Mom." Each time a player catches someone saying the word, he gets one of that person's stickers. Whoever has the most stickers at bedtime wins.

Ask questions

Tell your youngster about your day, using lots of details. Then, ask questions: "What color was my boss's tie today?" "How many e-mails did I get?" Do this a few times, and your child may begin to anticipate the questions and listen more closely.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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