

Home & School

CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

November 2007

Wesley Matthews Elementary School

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SHORT NOTES



Qu'est-ce que c'est?

Introduce your youngster to another language with this family activity. Write a foreign phrase on an envelope, and ask everyone to guess the meaning. Have family members write down their ideas and slip them in the envelope. Then, read the guesses and the actual meaning aloud. Did anyone get it right? (Look for phrases at www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm.)

Give 'em a boost

Keep your child safe in the car by using a booster seat until he's 8 years old or 4 feet 9 inches tall. A booster seat raises your youngster so a seatbelt fits him safely. The lap belt should lie across his upper thighs, and the shoulder belt should fit across his chest.

Ha, ha!

Want a great way to increase your youngster's confidence and have a little fun, too? Encourage her to tell jokes. It's great practice for speaking skills and telling ideas in sequence. Plus, she'll feel great when she makes you laugh! Help your child find joke books at the library, or search online (try keywords such as "kids jokes").

Worth quoting

"The best things in life aren't things."
Anonymous

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Why was the centipede dropped from the soccer team?

A: It took him too long to put his shoes on.



Building social skills

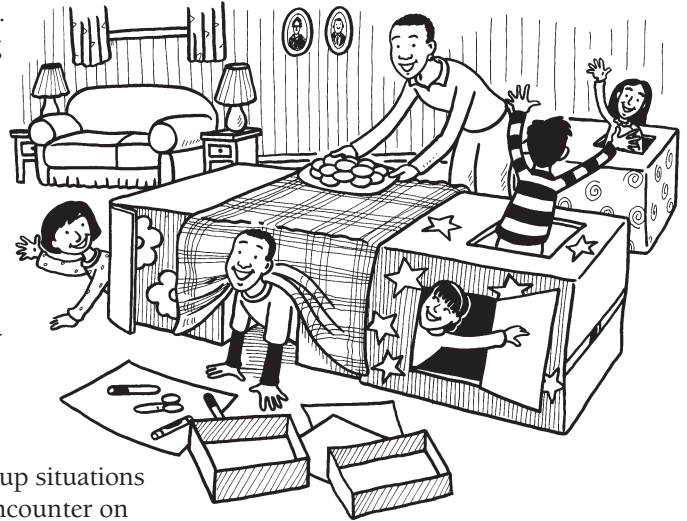
Reading, writing, and... social skills? Getting along with others might not be an official part of the curriculum, but it's an important part of school and life.

Having friends makes school more fun and encourages kids to share, cooperate, and solve problems. Use these ideas to help your child make and keep friends.

Role-play. At home, set up situations that your youngster will encounter on the playground. For example, if he finds it hard to approach other children, try this: Toss a ball with your spouse or other child. Have your child ask, "Can I play catch with you guys?" Encourage him to look one person in the eye, rather than addressing the group.

Share activities. Help your youngster find friends with similar interests. If he wants to take gymnastics, look for someone he knows who is signing up. Take them to the first class together, and share a snack afterward. If your child likes computers, encourage him to find a classmate to join the computer club with him.

Try groups. Youngsters sometimes struggle at playing with more than one person at a time. Give your child practice by letting him invite three friends over. Suggest a group activity, such as four square or a board game, where everyone participates. Your youngster will see how much fun it can be to play with several friends. ♥



Words and writing

Learning to use interesting words will make your youngster's writing stand out. Share these strategies:

★ Be specific when choosing words. Instead of "kids," your child might try "students" or "athletes." She can describe a "brown" house as "chocolate-colored" or "walnut brown." Explain that these kinds of words will help the reader picture her story.

★ Use verbs that show action. Your youngster could say "sped" or "crawled" instead of "went." Also, stories are more exciting if they tell what someone did, rather than what was done ("The girls raked leaves" instead of "The leaves were raked by the girls").

Tip: Have your child highlight the nouns, verbs, and adjectives in her story. Using a thesaurus, what substitutes can she find? ♥



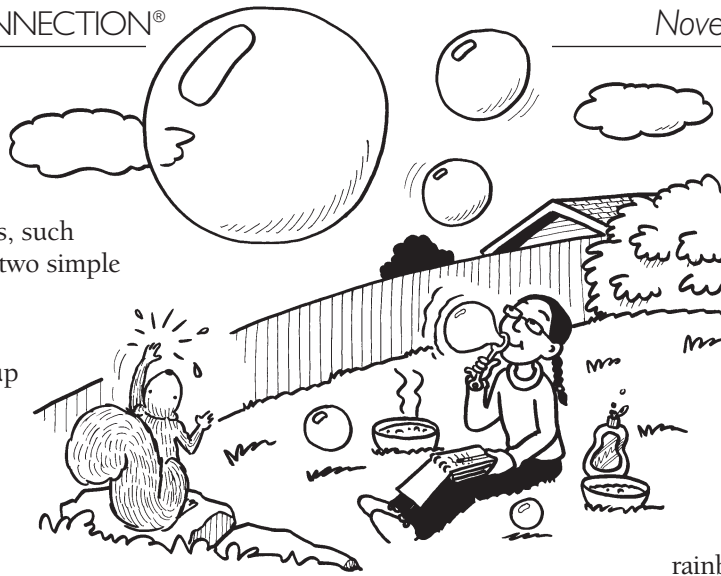
Science fun

You don't need fancy equipment to turn your home into a laboratory. Instead, find science in everyday items, such as dish soap and flashlights. Here are two simple experiments.

Hot and cold bubbles

Together, make bubbles using $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of dish soap, 1 cup of cold water, and 1 teaspoon of sugar. Make a second mixture using the same ingredients, but with hot water instead of cold. Blow bubbles with each mixture. What happens?

Explanation: Tell your youngster that hot air rises. That's why the warmer bubbles float up in the air faster than the cooler ones.



Sink rainbow

Have your child fill the kitchen sink a quarter full with water and put a small mirror underwater (tilted slightly against the side). Then, let her shine a flashlight onto the mirror. She'll be delighted to see a rainbow appear!

Explanation: Water and light are needed for rainbows—that's why they

sometimes appear when the sun shines during a rainstorm. In your youngster's experiment, the flashlight acts as the sun, and the sink water as the rain. ♥



Think positive!

Q: My son tends to see the negative side of things. How can I teach him to be more positive?

A: You can start by showing him the good side of things and, if something goes wrong, help him make the best of it.

For instance, you planned a trip to the playground but woke up to rain. Say, "I know you're disappointed, but rainy days can be cozy." Suggest a fun indoor activity (art project, puzzles) while listening to the rain. Then, make plans to visit the park another day.

If your son says something negative about himself, respond with a positive comment. *Example:* He complains, "I'll never understand long division." You can say, "You learned addition and subtraction quickly when you were younger. I know you'll be able to learn division, too." ♥



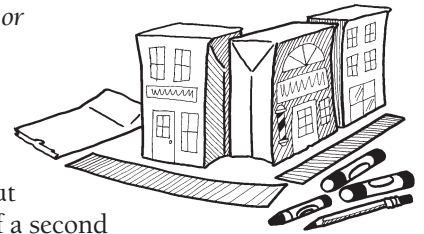
Paper bag city

Let your youngster create his own 3-D community. He'll practice map skills and learn about urban planning as he decides where to put the buildings in his town.

Materials: paper lunch bags, newspapers, crayons or markers, black construction paper, scissors, tape

Have your child think of buildings to include, such as a bank, grocery store, school, library, and houses. He can make them by drawing doors, windows, and signs on flat bags (on the side without the flap). For every bag he decorates, have him stuff a second one with newspaper. Then, he should open each decorated bag and slide it over a stuffed bag so his "buildings" will stand up. For the roads, he can cut black construction paper into strips and tape them together.

Finally, have your youngster lay out his roads and arrange his buildings alongside them to make his very own town. ♥



Conference questions

My parent-teacher conference was coming up, and I was nervous. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to look over Alyssa's report card, think of the right questions, and get them all answered.

I spoke with a friend who has older children, and she gave me some great advice. She asks the teacher about her child's lowest grades first. If she runs out of time, she finds out how she can follow up.

At my conference, I found out Alyssa was doing well. I did ask why she got "outstanding" in reading but "satisfactory" in writing. Mr. Shelton explained, and he even gave me ideas for helping Alyssa at home. He also said I could e-mail him if I thought of more questions.

I was glad to learn about Alyssa's progress—and happy I know how to stay in touch with her teacher. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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