

# Home & School

## Working Together for School Success

### CONNECTION®

October 2018



#### SHORT NOTES

##### Exercise your brain

Your child's brain is like a muscle—the more he uses it, the stronger it will become. Suggest that he give his brain a workout with activities like using his nondominant hand to throw a ball or to color. Learning to speak a foreign language or play a musical instrument are also known brain boosters.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

If your youngster qualifies for free or reduced-price meals, your family may also be eligible for low-cost internet. Contact local internet providers to find out. In addition, most libraries have computers with internet access. Your child can use them to do research for school or to look up topics she's curious about.

##### Family talent show

Stage a talent show to help family members appreciate one another's skills. Each person can choose something he likes to do (singing, juggling). Encourage practice time, and choose a night for your event.

##### Worth quoting

"The world is round so that friendship may encircle it." *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Teacher:** Jill, name four members of the bear family.

**Jill:** Mom, dad, sister, and brother!



## Super homework support

Making homework an important part of life at home will show your youngster that her education matters. Letting her work independently will also send the message that you believe in her. Consider these strategies.

##### Provide backup

Allow your youngster to work on her own, but tell her you're available if she needs you. Say she's confused about the directions for an assignment. You could encourage her to reread them slowly or maybe read them aloud to her. If she's not sure how to approach a math problem, you might look at similar problems together in her textbook.

##### Give feedback

Point out to your child what she's doing well—you'll inspire her to repeat the behavior in the future. For instance, if you notice she started a long-term project the day it was assigned, you could say,



"Nice move! Now you have plenty of time to come up with good ideas and do your best."

##### Show interest

Glance over finished homework so you know it's done and your youngster knows you care. Also, look at returned assignments. She might proudly share a nice comment her teacher wrote on her essay. Or if a paper has spelling errors, ask how she can avoid the same problem next time, perhaps by looking up unfamiliar words in a dictionary.♥

## Organization made easy

Good organizational skills will help your child find what he needs—and save time. Try these tips:

- Encourage your youngster to help with jobs that teach organization. For instance, have him organize your toolbox. Let him try his ideas, such as grouping together same-size screws or arranging wrenches from shortest to longest.

- Point out that *staying* organized is easier than *getting* organized. If he cleans out his school desk and his backpack every Friday, those tasks won't be overwhelming. *Idea:* He could put sticky notes on his desk and bag that say "Please clean me on Friday!"♥



# Setting expectations

Andrew always wears his sneakers to PE class and returns his books on library day. Robert sometimes forgets his sneakers and misses out on PE, or he leaves his library books at home and can't check out new ones.

What's the difference? Andrew's parents expect him to keep track of his schedule. Here's how to set expectations for your youngster.

**Discuss in advance.** Be clear about what you expect, and remind your child regularly. For example, if you want him to manage his schedule,



you might post it on the refrigerator and tell him that it's his job to check it each day. Or if you're getting a pet, explain what he'll need to do to care for it. ("You'll be in charge of filling the food bowl every evening.")

**Be reasonable.** Set expectations that your youngster can live up to. If he plays soccer, for instance, you might not expect him to

score goals, but you could expect him to attend every practice, show good sportsmanship, and try his best.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

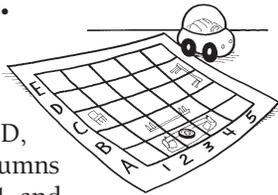


### Build map skills

This version of hide-and-seek lets your youngster practice finding places on a grid. She'll have fun working on map skills and spatial reasoning.

**1. Draw a grid.**

Have your child make a grid with 5 rows (labeled A, B, C, D, and E) and 5 columns (labeled 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Her grid will represent a room in your home.



**2. Add pictures.** Next, your youngster should draw furniture or other items in the boxes to indicate their locations in the room. Say your couch is centered along the front wall of the living room. She could draw a couch on her grid across boxes A2, A3, and A4.

**3. Hide an object.** Take turns closing your eyes while the other person hides something (perhaps a toy car) in the actual room. Then, place a penny on the grid to show where you hid the item. If you put the penny on A3, your child might figure out that the toy is under the center of the couch.♥

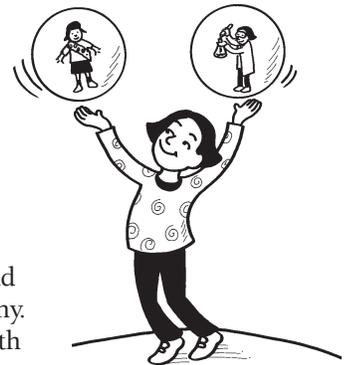
## PARENT TO PARENT

### After-school activities: Find a balance

My fifth grader, Alicia, was already in Girl Scouts and the school science club when I agreed to sign her up for martial arts. Before long, she started coming home too tired to do homework, and she had little time to play.

Alicia and I realized she needed to cut back on her extracurricular activities. She wasn't thrilled, but I explained that school comes first—and that she would enjoy each activity more if she weren't juggling so many. We talked about what to drop. She wanted to stick with her friends in Girl Scouts, and she loves the experiments she does in science club. In the end, she decided martial arts would be the one to go.

Alicia has more time for homework and play now. And maybe she can try martial arts next summer when school is out.♥



## Q & A How to talk about lockdown drills

**Q:** My son came home anxious about a lockdown drill they did in school. How should I discuss this with him?

**A:** Lockdown drills help students know what to do in an emergency that requires them to shelter inside the school.

Explain to your son that his teacher and principal want to keep him and his classmates safe. That's why the school holds drills to prepare the children for

situations like intruders, fires, tornadoes, or earthquakes. Although it's scary to think about emergencies, having a plan can make him feel more in control.

Ask your son to name other ways we stay safe, such as wearing a seat belt in the car, looking both ways before crossing the street, or going indoors during a thunderstorm. He'll realize that he knows how to do a lot of things that help to protect him.

*Note:* If he continues to feel anxious, contact the school counselor for advice.♥



**OUR PURPOSE**

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

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# Home & School CONNECTION<sup>®</sup>

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## SHORT NOTES

### Eye on the goal

Boost your youngster's motivation by encouraging her to set goals. Say she wants to make it to the district spelling bee or science fair. She can brainstorm strategies like learning 10 spelling words each day or reading about previous winning science projects. Suggest that she write down her ideas and post them to stay on track.

### Say no to secondhand smoke

Children who breathe cigarette smoke tend to get more respiratory illnesses and ear infections. Second-hand smoke can also trigger asthma attacks. It's best not to let anyone smoke inside your home or car. Since youngsters breathe at a faster pace than adults and are still growing, no amount of smoke exposure is safe.

### A reading nook

Let your youngster create a special spot just for reading, perhaps in a corner of the family room or his bedroom. He might include a beanbag chair, a lamp, a box or low shelf for books, and a stuffed animal or two. He'll be inspired to curl up and read in his cozy nook.

### Worth quoting

"It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed."

Theodore Roosevelt

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** How much dirt is in a hole 4 feet deep and 8 feet wide?

**A:** None!



## Parent involvement at home

Did you know that supporting your child's education begins at home? Consider these everyday ways to talk about school, deepen his learning, and keep track of school news.

### Foster a positive attitude

If you're enthusiastic about school, your youngster is likely to be as well. Ask him about projects he's working on or topics he's studying. Be sure to listen closely, and follow up with questions or comments. Also, you can influence his attitude toward teachers by being positive. ("Mrs. Reeves picked a really cool field trip for your class. I can't wait to hear about it.")

### Tie learning to his world

Show your child how what he learns is useful outside of school. If he's studying clouds, ask him to identify types you see in the sky and try to predict whether you'll need an umbrella. Or challenge him to spot vocabulary words on window signs or package labels, and talk about how they're used in different ways.



### Stay up to date

Be aware of what's happening in your youngster's classroom, school, and district. Subscribe to email lists, read newsletters, and check websites. Mention upcoming activities to your youngster (school carnival, class play) that you might attend together. Also, put important dates (book fair, math night) on your calendar. It will show your youngster that his school is a priority.♥

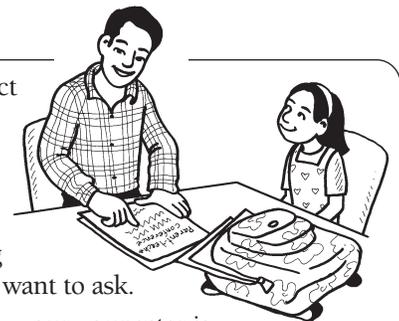
## Connect at conferences

Fall parent-teacher conferences are the perfect opportunity to strengthen the bridge between home and school. Here are tips.

**Before.** Watch for notices in your email or your youngster's backpack, and sign up for a time slot. Also, prepare ahead of time by looking over your child's work and listing questions you want to ask.

**During.** Listen to the teacher's feedback on how your youngster is doing, then ask your questions. Be sure to have the teacher explain anything you don't understand.

**After.** Talk with your child about the conference. Point out what she's doing well (reading more challenging books, finishing classwork) and areas that need improvement (writing legibly, taking turns).♥



# Bullying is everyone's business

Good news: Your youngster can use strategies to help kids who are bullied *and* to protect herself if she's a target. Suggest these ideas for handling bullying situations safely and effectively.

**If she's a witness:** Your child should get a teacher or another adult right away if she sees someone being physically harmed. If a classmate



is verbally bullied (being called names, for instance), it's best to ignore the bully. Instead, your youngster might give the person being targeted an escape ("We need to go to lunch now"). She could also offer to go with the person to tell a grown-up.

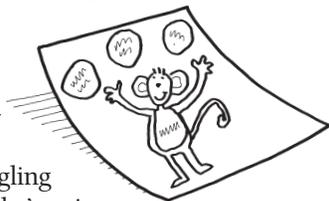
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Graphic organizers for the win

Graphic organizers are a visual way for your child to organize information in any subject. Share these activities.

#### Juggling monkey

To plan a report, suggest that your youngster draw a monkey juggling coconuts. If he's writing a social studies paper on a state, he could put his topic (say, Virginia) on the monkey's belly. Then, he can label each coconut with a fact he needs to find (capital, population). As he researches, he can add information to each coconut (Richmond, 8.5 million).



#### Football field

When your child writes a persuasive essay, have him first draw a football field. He can write each side of an issue in a separate end zone ("Kids should have chores," "Kids should not have chores"). On each half of the field, he should write statements to support the view in that end zone. *Examples:* "Teaches responsibility" on the pro-chores side, "Interferes with play time" on the anti-chores side.♥

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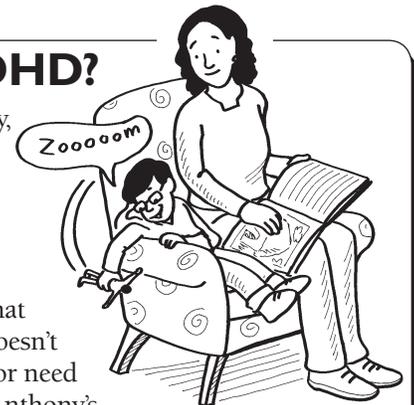
## PARENT TO PARENT

### Could it be ADHD?

My first grader, Anthony, seems easily distracted and sometimes has trouble sitting still. When my friend's child was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, I wondered if Anthony could have it, too.

I talked to our pediatrician and found out that just because a child gets distracted or wiggly doesn't mean he has ADHD. He might just be excited or need to burn off energy. He suggested that I talk to Anthony's teacher, and he gave me a form the teacher can fill out if she's concerned.

The teacher said Anthony's attention span is normal for his age and that it should continue to grow as the year goes on. She's going to keep the form on hand. If she notices problems, she'll let me know right away, and I can follow up with the pediatrician. I'm relieved that Anthony is on track—and that his doctor and teacher are on my "team."♥



## Q & A

### Explain your math strategy

**Q:** My daughter's teacher often writes "Explain your thinking" on her graded math assignments.

*How can I encourage my child to do this?*

**A:** When your daughter works on math problems, it's important that she understand what she's doing and why. Explaining her thinking is one way for her to check on her own understanding—and to show the teacher what she needs help with.

At home, your daughter could think out

loud. Have her look over completed homework and ask herself questions like, "When I solved  $32 \times 45$ , what steps did I take?" and "What other strategy would work?"



You might also invite her to discuss her math thinking during daily activities. For example, say, "We're having 11 guests for Thanksgiving, and I need  $\frac{1}{3}$  pound of potatoes per person. How can I figure out how many 5-lb. bags to buy?"♥

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December 2018

#### SHORT NOTES

#### Put memory to work

Many card games build *working*, or short-term, memory. This kind of memory lets your youngster remember and use information he learned recently. Play Go Fish or Crazy Eights together. By keeping track of which cards have been played, your child will make better moves!

#### Taking the lead

You may have heard the phrase “a born leader.” But leadership skills, such as speaking up and taking initiative, can be learned. Encourage your youngster to practice during group projects. For example, she might suggest a way to divide up tasks or offer to give the introduction during the group’s class presentation.

#### Busy parents can volunteer

Whether you have a little time or a lot, you can pitch in at your child’s school. Ask teachers and PTO or PTA officers for ways to volunteer that fit your schedule. Maybe you’ll listen to students read for 20 minutes during your lunch break or compile families’ book catalog orders on the weekend.

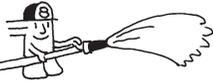
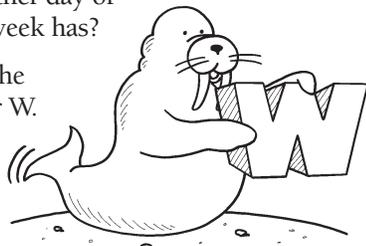
#### Worth quoting

“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.” *Milton Berle*

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What does Wednesday have that no other day of the week has?

**A:** The letter W.



## Smart discipline

Disciplining your child is all about guidance. You’re training her to follow rules and behave in an acceptable way—without your nagging or yelling. Consider these strategies to make discipline easier and more effective.

#### Stay positive

Rather than telling your youngster what she *can’t* do, try explaining what she *can* do. Instead of “Don’t shove your brother,” you might say, “Keep your hands to yourself, and politely ask Billy to move out of the way.” Giving your child clear instructions will inspire her to cooperate.

#### Watch body language

When you correct your youngster, speak face-to-face rather than calling to her from across the room or another part of the house. You could get down on her level, gently touch her shoulder, and speak softly. Sensing that you’re in control of yourself will keep her calm so she focuses on what you’re saying.



#### Be consistent

If your child breaks a rule, announce a consequence right away. This helps her see cause and effect. For example, if she eats in the living room and that’s not allowed, ask her to vacuum up the crumbs right away. *Tip:* Being consistent with consequences shows that you’re serious. If she knows you won’t change your mind, she’ll be better about sticking to the rules.♥

## Engineering at play

Every time your youngster has fun on the playground swings, he has engineers to thank! Let him explore engineering for himself by constructing a play swing set.

He might use craft sticks for the frame, yarn for the chains, and cardboard for the seat.

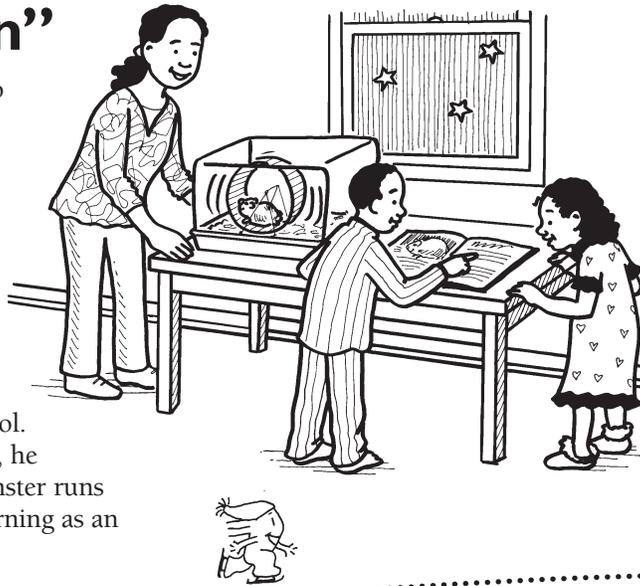
How could he make a swing that gives a longer “ride”? Suggest that he adjust the length of the “chains,” and then test it each time. He can set a timer for one minute, pull back the seat, and count the swings per minute. What does he notice? (The shorter the chains, the more swings per minute.)♥



# “I love to learn”

Children devote more energy to learning when they're motivated. These ideas will boost your youngster's thirst for knowledge.

**Show enthusiasm.** Tell your child what you learn. (“I found out that about 90 percent of the world's population lives in the Northern Hemisphere!”) Also, ask him to teach you information he learns in school. If he's studying nocturnal animals, he might explain to you why his hamster runs on its wheel at night. He'll see learning as an



everyday activity for kids and grown-ups, and your attitude will be contagious.

**Inspire curiosity.** Express interest when your youngster poses questions. If he asks why we get the hiccups or whether owls really are wise, you could say, “That's a good question! Let's find out together.” Then, help him look up the topic in a library book or online. When you discover the answer, encourage him to share it with friends or relatives so they can learn more, too.♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Frosty science

With this experiment, your child can see frost and learn why people sprinkle salt on icy sidewalks and roads.

**How?** Have your youngster rinse out two empty soup cans, remove the labels, and fill each halfway with ice. She should stir  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup salt into just one can and set both cans aside.



**What happens?** After 10 minutes, she'll notice frost on the “salty can” and water on the other one.

**Why?** Salt lowers the melting point of the ice, so the can with salt got colder than the other can. When water in the air condensed onto the cans, it froze into frost on the one with salt. That's why salt is useful in winter—it melts snow and ice, making it safer to walk or drive.♥

## Q & A

### Grit: A family challenge

**Q:** My son wanted to learn to ice skate, but he changed his mind after he fell one time. How can I teach him not to give up when something is tough?

**A:** Children (and adults) may believe they should be able to easily do whatever they try right away. Understanding that setbacks are normal will help your son develop *grit*, or perseverance toward long-term goals.

Talk about times when you were successful even though you struggled at first. Maybe you were afraid to put your face in the water but you learned to swim by taking lessons and working hard to overcome your fear.

Then, consider having a “family grit challenge.” Each person can choose one thing to tackle that is hard for him and requires persistence, such as following a fitness routine or cutting back on screen time. Compare notes after a month, and then set your next goals!♥



## PARENT TO PARENT

### Making a difference

I wanted my daughter, Charlotte, to learn about the importance of helping our community.

While grocery shopping one day, we saw a sign announcing that each customer could pick a favorite charity for the store to support. I let Charlotte choose, and she decided on a non-profit that benefits kids with cancer. Now every time we buy groceries, she reminds me that we're helping sick children.

That led us to think of other ways kids can make a difference. Recently, we decided to bake brownies and take them to the fire station. I explained that this would show appreciation for the hard work that firefighters do.



Charlotte felt proud when the firefighters thanked her. I realized that the more ways we can find to serve our community, the more likely it will become a habit as she gets older.♥

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