

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

March 2014



Portage Area Elementary School
Title I Program

SHORT NOTES

March weather

You never know what the weather will be like in March. Your child may want to wear shorts one day and a sweater the next! Put him in charge of checking the forecast each evening. Laying out appropriate clothing the night before will make mornings go more smoothly.

Review for standardized tests

When your youngster takes a standardized test, she'll probably be quizzed on what she learned in earlier grades. She can refresh her memory by reading library books about previous years' topics (ancient Egypt, magnets). Try a non-fiction picture book by Gail Gibbons or a fact-filled story from Joanna Cole's Magic School Bus series.

Need help?

Could your family use extra support? Your child's school counselor may be able to direct you toward resources like food pantries, health clinics, or donated clothes or school supplies. Don't hesitate to ask—the counselor knows that youngsters do better in school when their needs are met.

Worth quoting

"There are no shortcuts to anyplace worth going." *Helen Keller*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Why does the Statue of Liberty stand in New York Harbor?

A: Because it can't sit down.



Eager to learn

"I don't know the answer, but I can't wait to find out!"

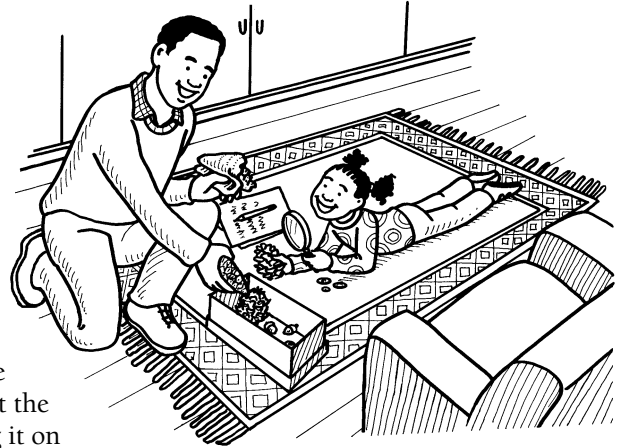
As a parent, you want to raise a child who sounds like that—one who is motivated to learn and takes on new challenges. Here are strategies that can help.

List of "wonders"

Have your youngster write "I wonder..." in big letters at the top of a piece of paper. Hang it on the refrigerator, and family members can add things they wonder about. *Example:* "Are all my fingerprints different?" Then, your child could try to find the answers (press each finger on an ink pad and onto paper and examine the prints).

Exploration box

Fill a shoebox with interesting items (mushrooms, feathers, foreign coins) and tools like a magnifying glass, pencils, crayons, and paper. Then, watch what your youngster does with them. She might look at a mushroom or a feather with the magnifying glass and sketch what she sees. Or



she could examine the coins' shapes and compare the numbers that show how much they're worth. *Idea:* Keep her interest by switching the contents frequently.

Good risks

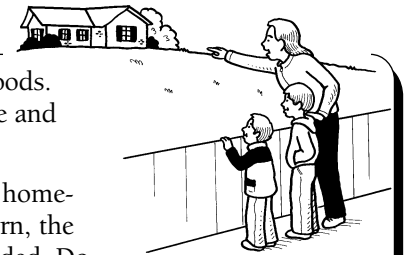
Encourage your child to take chances when it comes to learning. Challenge her to put away the instructions for a Lego set or a train track and see what she can design. Or suggest that she try a new activity like a robotics club or a drama group at school or the library.♥

When I was little...

Kids love hearing about their parents' childhoods. Use these ideas to take a trip down memory lane and strengthen your bond with your youngster.

● **Point out places.** If you live in or visit your hometown, show him the hospital where you were born, the first house you lived in, or the schools you attended. Do you live far from where you grew up? Check out a library book about the state or country you're from, and read it together. Or find your hometown on Google Earth so your child can take a peek!

● **Share "artifacts."** Your youngster can learn about your past by looking at your baby pictures, high school yearbook, or wedding video. Items like these will spark conversations about special days in your family's history.♥



Encourage kindness

Kindness can be contagious! Encourage your youngster to notice good deeds that others do and remember to be kind himself. Try these tips.

Catch the “bug.” Have your child draw a cute bug (dragonfly, ladybug) on construction paper and cut it out. When he sees a family member do something nice, he can give that person the bug. For example, maybe his older sister drove a grandparent to the grocery store without being asked, or perhaps you brought flowers



to your spouse. Then, that person looks for more kind acts and passes on the bug.

Look for opportunities.

Suggest that your youngster think of ways to be kind at school. He could invite a student sitting alone on the bus to share a seat with him. Or he might compliment his art teacher on a bulletin board that she decorated. After

school, ask him, “What did you do today that was kind?”♥



Q & A Helping with homework

Q: My daughter sometimes asks me to help her with homework. But as her work gets more difficult, it’s harder for me to help. What can I do?

A: It’s actually okay if you’re not sure how to do the assignments. Homework shows the teacher how much your child knows, so it’s important for her to do it by herself. But if she’s stuck, there are ways you can help even if you’re unfamiliar with the material.

For example, have your daughter teach you what she is learning. Talking about it may jog her memory or clear up her confusion.

Also, encourage her to use resources like old tests, textbook glossaries, or the Internet—she could start with links on her school website or at kids.usa.gov. Or she might call a friend who could walk her through a math problem or point out a helpful section in a social studies chapter.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

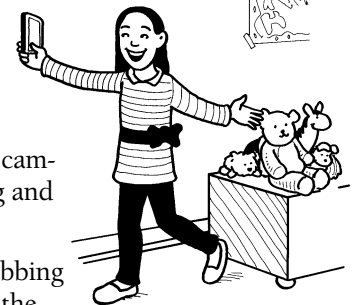
Be a filmmaker!

Making a movie can be even more fun than watching one. Share your cell phone or camcorder with your youngster, and let her practice writing and speaking skills with these two projects.

1. Your child can practice thinking on her feet by ad-libbing her way through a tour of your home. She could hold the camera and describe each room in a loud, clear voice. Encourage her to alternate between turning the camera on herself (“We have lived in this home for eight years”) and filming rooms and belongings (“This is my room, and those are my stuffed animals”).

2. Suggest that your youngster film a funny video. Have her recruit “actors” (siblings, friends). She might write a script with jokes or silly family stories, making each person’s lines a different color. Then, they can take turns filming each other.

Idea: She can share her video by holding a “premiere” for your family. Or help her upload it to a website (youtube.com, vimeo.com) and click on “privacy settings” to make sure only people she knows can watch.♥

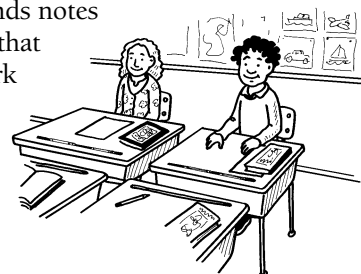


PARENT TO PARENT

Good classroom behavior

My son Jackson brought home a note saying he was talking to friends instead of listening to the teacher. He and his friends’ desks had been moved apart, but I wasn’t sure whether to punish him at home, too, so I called his teacher.

Mrs. Ross said she sends notes home so students know that parents and teachers work together to help them succeed. She wasn’t asking me to punish Jackson, but she suggested that I might speak with him.



When I talked to Jackson, he complained that his friends started the conversations. I pointed out that he didn’t have to respond. I asked what he could do next time, and he said he should keep his eyes on the teacher and talk to his friends at recess. I also reminded

him not to start conversations while the teacher talks.

I’m glad his teacher told me what was happening. Now she and I will stay in touch to help Jackson behave in the future.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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