

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

December 2020

Snowflake School District # 5

Title I



SHORT NOTES

Active listening Listening challenge!

Ask your youngster to listen while you describe a recent meal in detail: "For breakfast, I had a fried egg, toast with peach jam, a Gala apple, and black coffee." Then ask questions like "How was my egg cooked?" and "What kind of apple did I eat?" Now he can give you a listening challenge.

Keep germs away

When your child touches her face, she can transfer germs from her hands to her eyes, nose, and mouth. Help her touch it less often by keeping her hair trimmed and out of her eyes and having tissues available. If she wears face masks or glasses, make sure they fit properly so she's not constantly adjusting them.

Practice being polite

Role-play to help your child remember his manners. Take turns naming situations where politeness is called for (introducing people, receiving a gift). The other person acts out how to handle it politely. Your youngster might pat his dog on the head, look you in the eye, and say: "Dad, I'd like you to meet Domino."

Worth quoting

"It's easier to go down a hill than up it, but the view is much better at the top." *Henry Ward Beecher*

JUST FOR FUN

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

A: Because it can't sit down.



Wordplay boosts vocabulary

A rich vocabulary gives your child the words she needs to express her thoughts and understand her schoolwork. Try these playful activities to help her learn new words.

Clever combinations

A *portmanteau* is a new word formed by blending two existing words (*jeans + leggings = jeggings, breakfast + lunch = brunch*). You and your youngster can make up portmanteaus for each other to guess. She might say, "What do you call a rainbow on a snowy day?" (A *snowbow*!) And you could ask, "What do you call a documentary that's comical?" (A *doccom*.)

Words within words

Pick a word (say, *monitor*) for each family member to write on her paper. Set a timer for 5 minutes, and list words you can make using letters in the word. A fun twist: You may use any letter multiple times within the same word, so *mirror* is allowed even though *monitor* has only one R. When time's up, read



your lists aloud. Did anyone learn a new word from someone else's list?

Synonym suns

Have your child draw a big sun on a sheet of paper and write a common word (say, *good*) in the center. Take turns adding a ray to the sun and writing a synonym (*excellent, great*). On your turns, try to choose words your youngster may not know, such as *stupendous*. When you can't think of more synonyms, start another sun with a new word. ♥

Brighten someone's day

Sometimes the smallest gesture can make another person happy, especially in a difficult situation like the pandemic. Here are ways your youngster can add a little sunshine to others' lives:

- Let your child mail thank-you notes to your family's doctors and their staffs. He could also leave thank-yous for delivery-truck drivers, mail carriers, and trash and recycling workers.
- Suggest that your youngster host an online talent show. Relatives might sing or play musical instruments, dance, or do magic or card tricks for each other.
- Run errands for elderly neighbors. Your child could call to get their grocery list, then help you order the items or shop and deliver them. ♥



How to handle cyberbullying

Many kids are spending more time using technology to do schoolwork and to socialize this year. That means more potential for cyberbullying. Share these strategies to help your youngster avoid it.

Be informed. Explain to your child that cyberbullying includes texting, chatting, or posting unkind or threatening messages. It's also cyberbullying to spread rumors, intimidate people, or share private information that would embarrass someone.



React appropriately. Does your youngster know what to do if he's cyberbullied? Talk frankly about tactics that help (telling an adult) and *don't* help (responding to the person doing the bullying). Together, learn how to take screenshots of texts or chats in case he needs proof of a cyberbullying incident.

Provide guidance. Set clear guidelines for your child's online behavior. For example, he shouldn't

send a message or photo to another child that he wouldn't want you or his teacher to see. It may be a good idea to point out that other kids and their parents can take screenshots, too.♥

Signs of affection

Even when life gets hectic, remember to show your child on a daily basis that you love her. Simple words and actions like these will go a long way in making her feel loved and secure.

Leave notes

Secretly leave a loving message in your youngster's "home office" or backpack. ("Have a great school day! Love, Dad.")



Eat together

Plan special school-day breakfasts with your child. You'll connect before a busy day. Also, consider joining her for lunch on days when you're both home.

Share photos

Look at old family photos with your youngster, or show her "on this day" pictures on social media or photo-sharing sites. Say what you loved about her then ("You were so little and cuddly") and what you love about her now ("I still love hugs from you—plus I love our interesting conversations").♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Geography: Maps and more

Your youngster's day is filled with opportunities to explore geography. Here are three ideas.

1. Food. Ask your child to read stickers on fruits and vegetables you buy to find out where the food was grown. Together, look up the weather in those states or countries. She'll see what produce is grown in warmer or cooler temperatures.

2. Mail. Let your youngster check postmarks, find the locations on a map, and calculate how many miles the mail traveled to reach you.

3. Time zones. Plan a phone call with a relative who lives in a different time zone, and help your child look up the time there. Then, she could see what time it is in other places around the world.♥



Q & A Doing well on tests

Q: My son struggled on his last two tests. How can I help him do better on future ones?

A: Test success begins with knowing the material. Have your child get in the habit of studying a little each evening rather than cramming the night before a test. Offer to help by quizzing him, or suggest that he make up—and take—his own quizzes.

On the morning of a test, remind your son to read the test directions

first and ask his teacher about anything he doesn't understand. You might recommend that he look over all the questions and start by tackling easier ones. That will give him some momentum and boost his confidence.

Finally, encourage your child to be the "boss" of his thoughts. If he thinks, "I can't do this," he can take a few deep breaths and instead think, "I studied hard and I will do my best."♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

December 2020

Snowflake School District # 5

Title I

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ **Earmuffs for Everyone! How Chester Greenwood Became Known as the Inventor of Earmuffs** (Meghan McCarthy)

Chester Greenwood is credited with inventing earmuffs. But he wasn't the first person who designed a product to keep our ears warm. This book shows how inventors often stand on the shoulders of those who came before them.



■ **Smashy Town** (Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha)

Follow Mr. Gilly on an eventful day of work at a construction site as his machines crush buildings to make room for new ones. Colorful illustrations and onomatopoeias (words like *vroom* and *hiss* that sound like what they describe) make this an exciting story for budding readers.



■ **Outside In** (Deborah Underwood)
Nature isn't just something that's only outside. From houseplants to sunlight streaming through windows, nature is indoors, too. This inspiring story describes how nature can be a friend to people and encourages readers to appreciate it wherever it's found.

■ **Thank You, Omu!**

(Oge Mora)

Omu means *queen* in Igbo, the language of the author's parents, and it's the name she called her own grandmother. In this story, Omu can't wait to eat her delicious stew. But when visitors follow their noses to her door, Omu shares every drop. A final knock brings a special surprise. (Also available in Spanish.)



Let's tell stories

Add excitement to story time by making up your very own stories. Not sure where to start? These activities will turn anyone into a storyteller—and build your child's speaking skills and creativity.

Read and tell

What would happen if Wilbur the pig from *Charlotte's Web* met the Three Little Pigs? Read two familiar books with your youngster, and together, make up a story that combines elements of each. Maybe the little pigs will live on Wilbur's farm, safe from the Big Bad Wolf. Your child will stretch her reading comprehension as she thinks of ways to connect the two plots.

Share family tales

Children love to hear stories about when they were "little"—and these tales of her past are nice examples of nonfiction. Ask your youngster to pick a memory (say, her first trip to the beach), and begin a story: "Stella saw the ocean for



the first time when she was five years old." Now take turns adding details. ("She built a big sandcastle.")

Make story dice

Let your child make three giant "dice" out of empty cardboard boxes. Help her write nouns (*cereal, house*) on one die, verbs (*fly, dance*) on another, and adjectives (*tasty, striped*) on the third. Take turns "rolling" the dice and telling a short story using all three words you roll. ("Once upon a time, I got to fly over my house in a striped hot-air balloon.")♥

How to build a snowman

Whether it snows where you live or not, your youngster can build a snowman with this idea for writing instructions.

First, have your child cut snowman parts out of construction paper: three circles for the body and head, plus eyes, nose, mouth, buttons, and hat. Now he can build his snowman by gluing the parts on a big sheet of paper. As he adds each one, help him write an instruction beside it for building a real snowman. ("Step 1: Roll up a big snowball." "Step 2: Put a smaller snowball on top." "Step 3: Add an even smaller snowball for a head.")

Then, if it snows, he could use his instructions to make a snowman outside!♥



All kinds of lists

List making lets your youngster practice writing and recording his thoughts. Here are different types of lists he might create.

Favorites journal. Have your child fill a notebook with lists of his favorite things. He could write a different topic (books, foods, animals, toys) at the top of each page, then add items as he thinks of them. *Idea:* Suggest that he invite a friend or relative to do the same, and they can compare lists to see what they have in common.

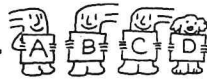


Screen-time alternatives. Show your youngster that lists are practical. Listing screen-free activities he likes can help him cut down on using electronics. He might include “Collect acorns and pinecones,” “Make a maze in the hallway with streamers,” and “Read a book to the dog.”

Questions collection. Encourage your child to keep a list of questions he has, like “Why are clouds

different shapes?” or “Why do our eyes close when we sneeze?” He could use his list to pick out library books that might have the answers or post his list by the computer so you can research his questions together online.♥

Q&A Virtual read-alouds



Q My daughter’s favorite part of school is when her teacher reads books in class or on video chat. Now she wants to watch more online read-alouds. Any suggestions?

A Consider setting up virtual story times for her with grandparents, aunts, and uncles. She’ll get to hear different reading voices, and everyone will discover it’s a great way to stay in touch!



Also, the internet is full of high-quality read-alouds these days. Your local library may offer online story hours—call or visit the website to find out.

Your child might also watch authors read aloud online. Some children’s writers, like Dav Pilkey, Mo Willems, and Susan B. Katz, provide free virtual readings on their websites or social media pages. Help your youngster search for specific book titles or authors followed by “read-aloud.”♥

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Alphabetical order

Send your child on these missions that will encourage her to read words around the house and arrange them in ABC order. *Bonus:* She’ll help to keep things organized!

Organize the pantry

Let your youngster sort foods in the kitchen by type of container (boxes, cans, bags, jars), and arrange each section in alphabetical order. When you need an item, ask her to use her ABCs to find it: “I need a can of beans—where would it be?” She might say the *beans* are between the *artichoke hearts* and the *carrots*.

Arrange colors

Ask your child to put crayons or markers in ABC order. She’ll need to look beyond the first letter of each color word (*black, blue, brown*). As she puts each crayon in its spot, she can say the first letter and read the color word. (“G is for green.”)♥



Neighborhood book exchange

One day my son Aiden and I found a book on our porch. A note from our neighbor was attached: “My son just read this and thought Aiden would love it!” And with that, our neighborhood book exchange was born.

Aiden and I emailed neighbors to see who would be interested in lending and borrowing books. Several people replied with book titles they

were willing to share—for children and adults—and I helped my son type titles we could lend. Now anyone can request a book from someone else and have it delivered to their porch.

Aiden and I enjoy reading new-to-us books, and it feels good to share with neighbors. Sometimes, before we return a book, my son writes a note to tuck inside. He’ll thank the person for the “share” and tell what he liked about the story.♥



INTERMEDIATE EDITION Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

December 2020

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Book Picks

■ *The Dragon with a Chocolate Heart* (Stephanie Burgis)

In this magical tale, Aventurine the dragon breaks her family's rules and sneaks away from her cave. When she's offered a sip of hot chocolate, the brave dragon is turned into a human girl. With no dragon powers left, she has to figure out how to survive as a human.



■ *Earth Verse: Haiku from the Ground Up* (Sally M. Walker)

Science and poetry come together in this beautiful book of haiku. Readers will learn about Earth, minerals, rocks, fossils, volcanoes, and more with haiku, illustrations, and a fact-filled section at the end.



■ *The Extraordinary Mark Twain (According to Susy)* (Barbara Kerley)

This biography of author Mark Twain is based on the journal entries of someone who knew him well: his 13-year-old daughter, Susy. The author weaves together Susy's original writings with information about the lives of both father and daughter.

■ *Comeback Catcher* (Jake Maddox)

Meet Eddie Jackson from the Jake Maddox Graphic Novels series. He's in a band and also plays baseball. But baseball becomes tricky for Eddie when he gets nervous every time he's up to bat. Find out how Eddie overcomes his fears. Includes a glossary with baseball terms. (Also available in Spanish.)



Winter reading traditions

Short days and chilly weather make reading a great indoor winter activity. Use these suggestions to encourage your child to snuggle up with good books.

Pajama party

On a weekend night, put pillows and sleeping bags in the living room and share a book of short stories. Pass the book around and take turns reading to each other by flashlight. Or use the cozy time for everyone to read their own books. *Tip:* Ask a librarian or your child's teacher for book recommendations based on your family's interests.



have each person try to recite the poem from memory. The family member who comes closest to the original chooses the next poem.

Comedy fest

Read jokes for an evening of laughter. Have each family member find a book of jokes or riddles from the library, browse through them, and mark favorites to share. Everyone can vote for the funniest jokes. *Idea:* Your youngster could write his own jokes and do a stand-up comedy set. ■

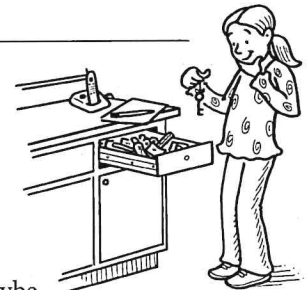
Game night

Suggest that your child invent games that involve reading. For example, he might suggest a poetry contest. One person could pick a short poem from a book and give everyone five minutes to memorize it. Then, close the book and

Story ideas: Look here!

Does your family's junk drawer tell a tale? Is there a story behind a lost-and-found notice or a song on the radio? When your youngster has a creative writing assignment or writes just for fun, suggest that she find inspiration in one of these places.

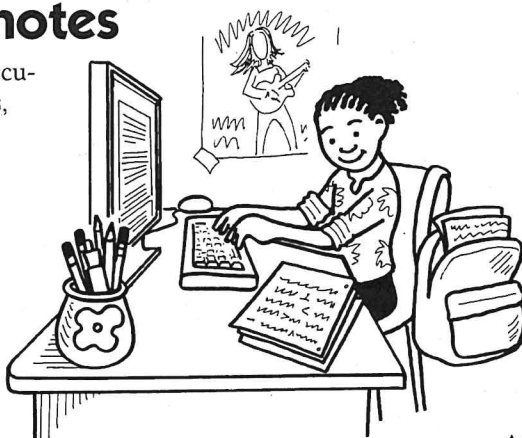
- **The junk drawer.** Let her pick a few random items, such as an old key and a business card. Maybe she'll imagine that the key unlocks a secret room at the address on the card.
- **Online posts.** Show your child posts on neighborhood forums. She might write about a lost dog being reunited with his owner or a girl who starts a successful snow-shoveling business.
- **The radio.** Your youngster can use a line or a verse from a song to make up her own story. For instance, a song about traveling on a plane may prompt a tale of a trip to a desert island. ■



A guide to taking notes

Being able to take notes quickly and accurately is a skill your child needs now. Plus, it'll come in handy in later grades as well as in college and on the job. Share these strategies for your youngster to become a first-rate note taker.

Before. Have your child prepare to take notes on new material by reading the previous day's notes. At the beginning of class, she should label her notes with the date and topic (12/11/20, American Revolution) so it's easier to put them in order for studying.



During. Suggest that your youngster use abbreviations and symbols for faster note taking. *Examples:* T for *the*, V for *every*, > for *more*. Point out that she should always write down dates, formulas, and definitions exactly as they're given. When the teacher says, "This is an important point," your child could highlight that section in her notes. Finally, she might leave extra lines so she has room to add comments or questions later.

After. Encourage your youngster to go over her notes and underline main points. If the notes are hard to read, it's a good idea to rewrite or type them. Copying them not only makes the notes more legible, it will help her remember the information better. ▣

Parent ² Parent Editing out loud

My son Lucas used to rush through writing assignments and make a lot of careless mistakes. When I asked his teacher what to do, she suggested that we have Lucas edit his work by reading it aloud. She said hearing his words out loud would help him hear his mistakes.



We started by having Lucas read his writing to me. I pointed out what I liked about it and asked questions about parts I didn't quite understand. And Lucas noticed that he used some of the same words over and over and caught a couple of grammatical errors. Then, he used our feedback to edit his paper.

Now Lucas regularly reads his papers aloud to himself. He seems to be catching more mistakes—and he's getting better grades on his written assignments. ▣



An occasion for reading

Turn gift giving into an opportunity for your child to read. Here are some ideas:

- Book reviews will help her choose novels as gifts for others. Your youngster can look at library book lists or newspaper reviews. Encourage her to check for words and phrases such as "a must-read" or "action-packed."
- Suggest that your child make a craft for someone. She might create finger puppets, a mosaic, or a bracelet. To find possibilities, she could look through craft books (*The Best Craft Book Ever* by Jane Bull) or check online (craftsforkids.com) and then read them as she follows the instructions.
- Young bakers can use cookbooks to prepare homemade treats like cookies and muffins. Let your child select recipes and write a grocery list. Then, remind her to carefully read recipes again before she starts baking. ▣



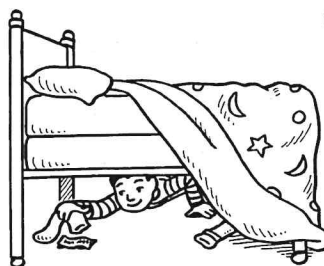
Fun with Words Read the clues, find the treasure

Treasure hunts are fun for all ages. And figuring out the clues will help your youngster learn to infer, or read between the lines.

First, hide a treasure (a new book, a small toy). Then, hide a set of clues that will lead your child to it. The first clue should give instructions for finding the second clue, which should lead to the third, and so on, until your youngster discovers the treasure.

Try to come up with clues that give hints—but make your youngster think. For example, if you want him to look under his bed, you might write, "Find the next clue in a place socks like to hide." Or get him to open an end-table drawer with "Look under the lamp and coasters."

Once your child tracks down the treasure, have him create a treasure hunt for you or a sibling. ▣



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