

Home & School CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

September 2020

Snowflake School District # 5

Title I



SHORT NOTES

My handwashing poster

Ask your child to design a poster that reminds family members to frequently wash their hands. She could include a clever slogan (“Wanted: Clean hands!”) and write and illustrate instructions for washing properly. *Examples:* “Scrub for at least 20 seconds.” “Wash fronts and backs of hands, between fingers, and under nails.”

Natural rewards

Show your youngster that good behavior has its own rewards. For instance, point out that there’s time to play a board game because he put away his toys the first time you asked. He’ll be more apt to repeat the behavior next time.

Sort the foods

Sorting items into categories boosts your child’s thinking skills. After you make a grocery list, have her rewrite it in a way that will help you shop more efficiently. She could organize items by the aisle where they’re located (produce, frozen foods). Then, she could think of other ways to sort for fun, maybe by color or food group.

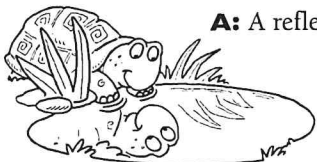
Worth quoting

“Use your smile to change the world; don’t let the world change your smile.” *Chinese proverb*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: You can see me in water, but I never get wet. What am I?

A: A reflection.



Confident about school

School may look different this year, but one thing is the same: Parents and teachers want to keep children safe and help them learn. Here are answers to questions you may have as the new school year gets underway.

Q: My child thinks school will be too hard this year since he hasn’t been in class for so long. What can I do?

A: Many students had a longer-than-normal summer break, and teachers are ready to help them catch up. So let your youngster know he’s not alone. If you discover he is struggling (say, stumbling over sight words or math facts he knew last year), contact his teacher so you can work as a team to get him on track.

Q: With all the changes COVID-19 has brought, my son seems anxious. Any ideas for making him feel better?

A: Youngsters feel less anxious when they know what to expect. If he’s adjusting to a new school schedule, post it on the refrigerator. At home, try to keep



things as much the same as possible. Eat meals together regularly, and plan weekend activities he can look forward to like hiking or playing backyard games.

Q: When my child works online, how much should I be involved?

A: Your youngster’s work is his responsibility, but you can offer support. To help him stay on task, make sure he has a quiet place to learn and the materials he needs. You might sit nearby and do your own work, or simply be available in case he has a question or a technical problem (like a dropped internet connection). Consider keeping a notepad handy so he can write his questions if you’re busy.♥

Get to know teachers

Now’s the time to open the lines of communication with your youngster’s teachers and set the stage for a successful year. Consider this advice:

- Attend events like back-to-school night and PTA or PTO meetings, whether they’re held virtually or in person. Introduce yourself to your child’s teacher, and try to meet specialists, too. The librarian, school counselor, and art, music, and PE teachers all play important roles in your youngster’s education.
- Send a note or an email to find out how teachers prefer to be contacted. Also, include a personal detail or two about your child, perhaps how she’s coping with the pandemic or a hobby she enjoys. You might also ask the teacher how he’s been doing during this time—he’ll appreciate your recognizing that it has been hard on everyone.♥



Reading adds up

Did you know that children who read for pleasure at least 20 minutes each day do better in school? Use these tips to fit more reading into your youngster's day.

Keep it front and center.

Your child will be more likely to read during her free time if materials are easily available. Stash kid-friendly magazines in the living room, and leave comics



on the breakfast table. When you know you might need to wait, such as at the dentist or vet, take books along or download e-books from the library to your phone or tablet.

Add it to other activities.

Bedtime is a natural opportunity to read. But so is playtime—and even chore time. If your youngster wants to pitch a tent in the backyard, suggest that she fill it with books and magazines to read while she hangs out inside. Also, audiobooks can make reading hands-free, so you could listen to a story together while you do yard work or fold laundry.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Create a family yearbook

Encourage your child to preserve family memories, and practice writing, by starting this fun project he can work on all year long.

Together, look through old school yearbooks—his and yours—to find out what they contain. Your youngster will see individual and group portraits as well as pages dedicated to activities and special events. What will his homemade book include? He might create a binder with sections for birthdays, holidays, and accomplishments, for example.



Now your child can write up yearbook entries and take photos to go along with them. Maybe he'll begin with a page about himself learning to play the guitar and another dedicated to his sister's fall art exhibit. Have him add each page to the matching section in his binder, and keep his work-in-progress on the coffee table for everyone to leaf through.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
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128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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PARENT TO PARENT

We're a cleaning team

When I stepped up our household cleaning routine because of the pandemic, I decided to get my sons involved. I told Nate and Seth that we're in this together and that we need to share responsibility for keeping the house clean—and keeping germs at bay.

Our boys came up with a great idea. They decided to make a "chore spinner." They divided a paper plate into sections labeled with chores like sweeping, mopping, vacuuming, and dusting. I added emptying trash cans and wiping down surfaces we touch a lot, such as doorknobs, TV remotes, banisters, and counters.

Now when it's chore time, Nate and Seth spin the wheel to see who does what. They're showing more responsibility for their chores than before—and they've even started calling themselves "The Clean Team."♥



Q & A

Screen time: Find a balance

Q: My daughter has had more screen time than usual in recent months. How can I help her cut back?

A: For many children, technology has been a valuable tool for learning and for staying in touch with friends and loved ones lately. So the amount of time spent in front of a screen isn't necessarily a problem—what matters is how your daughter uses technology.

Have your daughter make a chart with three columns labeled "Screen-free time," "Quality screen time," and "Other screen time."

The first column can include things like family meals, physical activity, and playing with toys. In column two, she might list schoolwork, video-chats with relatives, and educational videos. And the last column is for purely fun screen time like (parent-approved) video games and apps.

Explain that the goal is to spend most of her time on activities in columns one and two. For column-three items, set a time limit that works for your family.♥



Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

September 2020

Snowflake School District # 5

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Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *The New Small Person* (Lauren Child)

Life as an only child is going well for Elmore, until a new little person comes along to interrupt his TV shows and knock over his toys.

But as his brother gets older, Elmore realizes that a sibling can become a friend—maybe even enough of one to share his prized jelly beans with.

■ *The Word Collector* (Sonja Wimmer) Luna loves to collect magnificent words, but one day she notices words disappearing from her collection. Soon she discovers that they're missing because people are too busy to remember them. Can Luna bring love, friendship, and fun back into their lives through the power of words? (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Even Superheroes Have Bad Days* (Shelly Becker)

Superheroes could use their powers to do naughty things, like change the weather or cause chaos when they are sad or mad—but do they? Readers will find out how even the mightiest superheroes work through their emotions to make a difference in the world.

■ *How Did That Get in My Lunchbox? The Story of Food* (Chris Butterworth)

Where do common foods like bread, cheese, and carrots come from? This nonfiction book describes their journeys from farm to lunchbox. Your child will discover that it takes a lot of work to grow and produce yummy foods.



Adventures in reading

What's between the pages of a book? An adventure that your youngster could go on—without leaving home! These ideas will show him all that he can learn on his nonfiction reading expeditions.

Take an animal safari

Together, look for animals outside, and help your child make a list of the ones you see. Then, read books or look online to learn facts about each one. What does it eat? What are its babies called? Does it sleep at night or during the day? Encourage your youngster to write each fact (or dictate it to you) in a notebook to carry on future walks. How many new animals can he “meet”?

Meet people

Scientists, artists, civil rights leaders ... biographies are full of fascinating people. Suggest that your youngster make a trading card for each person he reads about. He could write facts like the person's name, birthplace, and accomplishments. Or he might write a letter (real



or pretend) to the person that includes questions he has.

Visit new places

Let your child plan an imaginary trip to a book's setting. After a story about a rain forest, read a nonfiction book on jungles. He can use facts he learns to make a packing list for his journey. He'll have to think about the climate (hot, rainy) to decide what he needs (wide-brimmed hat, lots of water, umbrella). He could also write a pretend postcard from his destination.♥

Fine-motor fun

Playing with tiny objects strengthens little hands—building the fine-motor skills your child needs for handwriting, drawing, and more. Try these activities.

● **Cotton-ball race.** Give each player an empty bowl and a bowl containing 12 cotton balls or other small, soft items. Using tweezers or your thumb and forefinger, race each other to transfer them—one at a time—to the empty bowl. Who will win the race?

● **Yarn wrapping.** Let your youngster use safety scissors to cut long pieces of colorful yarn. Then, have her tape one end of each to the outside of a cup, wrap the yarn around and around, and tape down the opposite end. *Idea:* She could use her creation as a pencil or crayon holder.♥



Ready, set, write!

Drawing is the first way children express their thoughts on paper. You may also have noticed—or will soon notice—your youngster writing scribbles, letters, or words on her pictures. Use these strategies to support your little writer at every stage.

Drawings. Invite your child to tell you all about pictures she draws. Ask questions that encourage her to tell a



story: “Who is in your drawing?” “What are their names?” *Tip:* As your youngster learns to write her name in school, have her start printing it on pictures she draws at home.

Scribbles. Is your child adding scribbles or letter-like shapes to her pictures? Combining drawing and writing is a big step toward learning to write. Acknowledge her efforts by asking, “Can you read that to me?”

Writing. When your youngster begins writing actual letters or words, help her list words she uses frequently. *Examples:* *the, like, Mommy, Daddy.* She can label her list “Words I Know”—and refer to it to help her write captions for her pictures.♥

Q&A Reading aloud—together



Q My son loves when I read to him. Any tips for using story time to help him learn to read himself?

A Sure! Start by asking your child to join in when you read. Try reading a book with a refrain, perhaps *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle) or *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (Laura Numeroff). After a few pages, pause before the repeating part—your son will feel proud to finish the page himself (“But he was still hungry!”).



Your child will also learn from listening to you read rhyming books. Stop before you say each rhyming word to let your youngster fill it in.

Finally, develop his reading comprehension by talking about stories. Share your reactions (“That part really cracked me up!”), and listen while he tells you his response.♥

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Fun with Words

Plant an alphabet tree

Read an alphabet book with your child, then encourage him to build his own alphabet tree to identify and remember letters.



1. Let your youngster plant a “tree trunk” (an empty cardboard paper-towel tube) in a cup filled with dirt or sand. Then, help him cut small slits into the trunk and insert craft stick “branches.”
2. Have your child draw 26 “alphabet leaves” on green paper, cut them out, and write a letter on each leaf. *Tip:* He could flip through the alphabet book to remind himself what each letter looks like.
3. Together, recite the alphabet (or sing the alphabet song) while he tapes each leaf to any branch.
4. Read the book again—can your child find each letter on his tree?♥

Parent to Parent

Family show-and-tell

When my daughter Erica began kindergarten, she was hesitant to speak up during show-and-tell. Her teacher suggested that we practice at home, so we decided to hold a weekly family show-and-tell night.

Every Friday, we gather in the living room and take turns sharing something that’s important to us. Each person explains why her show-and-tell item is special. Then we

ask questions, such as, “What do you like best about it?” or “Where did you get it?” We’ve shared books, drawings, souvenirs, and more.

What began as a way to help Erica practice speaking has turned out to be a great family conversation

starter. Now Erica is in second grade—she’s speaking up more in class, and we still look forward to family show-and-tell each week.♥



Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

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Book Picks

■ *Crazy About Cats* (Owen Davey)

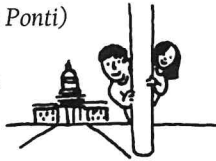
From wild cats like ocelots and pumas to house cats, this nonfiction book from the About Animals series teaches readers all about cats. Your child will discover where cats live, what they eat, and the special features they have.



(Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Framed!* (James Ponti)

Twelve-year-old Florian Bates is no ordinary middle schooler. When his family moves to Washington, DC, he starts his own spy agency with the help of his new friend Margaret. Follow along in this spy adventure as the young sleuths help the FBI solve a big case.



■ *The House That Lou Built* (Mae Respicio)

Lou loves her woodshop class, and for a school project, she's planning to build her own tiny house on a piece of land she's inherited. But she quickly realizes that building a new structure isn't as simple as it seems. Determined, Lou finds creative solutions to the many roadblocks she faces along the way.



■ *Go Figure! Big Questions About Numbers* (Johnny Ball)

Your youngster can learn about ancient numbers, explore "magic" numbers, and imagine a newspaper with no numbers in this nonfiction book. He'll also see how numbers are used in all aspects of life. Includes quiz questions and answers.

Strategies for a new year

As your youngster reads more complex stories and textbooks, she'll need new strategies for understanding and remembering new material. Help her start the year off right with these activities.

Fill a "thinking cap"

When your child needs to tackle a challenging chapter, have her get a baseball cap. Each time she finds a new fact or unfamiliar word, she can write it on a slip of paper and put the slip in the hat. After she finishes reading, she should reread everything in her thinking cap and look up definitions of words she doesn't know. Writing and reviewing the information will help her learn it.

Draw a comic strip

Suggest that your youngster create a comic strip about what she's studying (stick figures are okay!). Say she's reading about the water cycle in her science book. She could draw one panel with a character boiling a pot of water and explaining evaporation, and another panel with someone walking in the rain



and talking about precipitation. This is a fun way for her to visualize the material.

Take a "commercial break"

Your child can pretend there's a commercial break at the end of each chapter in a novel she's reading. Her job is to write a "teaser"—a question to encourage the audience to stay tuned. If she's reading *Bunnacula* (Deborah and James Howe), she might write, "Will Bunnacula get caught in the vegetable garden?" Then, have her predict the answer. Asking questions and checking predictions let her monitor how well she understands a story. ■

Fact or opinion?

"It's the best toothpaste for your family!" When your child reads a sentence like this in an advertisement, does he understand that it's an opinion? Distinguishing fact from opinion is an important reading skill. Suggest that he ask himself these questions to tell the difference:

- "Would most people agree?" A fact is true regardless of who wrote it ("Trees are plants"), while an opinion reflects the writer's feelings or beliefs ("Trees shouldn't be cut down").
- "Does it rely on adjectives?" Descriptive words ("Apple pie with ice cream is the perfect dessert") frequently indicate opinions, while facts are more likely to stand alone ("Apples are harvested in autumn"). ■



Add details to writing

Vivid details make your youngster's writing come alive. And getting a firsthand look at something he's describing can help him be more specific. Share these ideas to use when he writes stories.

Specific verbs. Suggest that your child think of active verbs that illustrate what he sees rather than using bland verbs like *was* or *went*. When he's outside, he might notice how a tractor moves along a road. Later, he can incorporate the details



into a story about a boy living on a farm: "The tractor crept slowly along the dirt road" (instead of "The tractor went down the road").

My five senses. Have your youngster use at least one of his senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch) in his description. If he's writing about making s'mores, you could toast marshmallows together so he can notice how

they smell and look. That may lead him to write, "A sweet, toasty scent filled the air as my marshmallow turned golden brown." 📖

Q&A Is my child on track?

Q As the school year gets underway, how can I tell if my daughter is on track with reading and writing or if she needs help?

A The best way is to stay involved with what your child is doing in school. Go through her backpack with her daily, and look over her work. Review the teacher's comments on her assignments or tests, and monitor the grades she's receiving.



Also, notice what she's reading for pleasure—or if she's reading for pleasure. Take turns reading aloud to each other, and when it's her turn, listen for whether she reads smoothly or seems to stumble over words.

If you're concerned, contact your daughter's teacher. He can let you know if your child is on track, and if she's not, he'll work with you to provide help. 📖



Better listening = better learning

Good listening skills help your child learn information from lessons, class presentations, and videos. Encourage him to become a better listener with these challenges.

• **What's different?** Read a paragraph from a newspaper or magazine to your youngster. Then read it again, but switch a few details. For example, you might change the name of a person or a city. It's your child's job to listen closely and tell you what's different the second time around.

• **Listen and answer.** Together, listen to a podcast or an audiobook for five minutes. Each of you can jot down a question the other person should be able to answer—if you listened carefully. Then trade questions, and answer them. Replay the audio to check if you heard right. 📖



Fun with Words Build a word

The word-making possibilities are almost endless in this vocabulary game.

Have your youngster write each letter, A–Z, on separate slips of paper and scatter them in a bowl. For each round, draw three letters, lay them faceup, and set a timer for three minutes. Each person writes words that contain all three letters in any order. The goal is for players to come up with

the most words that no one else thought of and the longest possible word they can define. For M, L, and P, a player might write *monopoly* or *planetarium*.

When time's up, read your words aloud to each other. Earn one point for every word that no one else wrote—and a bonus point for giving the correct definition of your longest word. *Tip:* Keep a dictionary on hand to check answers. 📖



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