

Home & School

CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

January 2021



Snowflake School District # 5

Title I

SHORT NOTES

Think like a scientist

Does your child understand the difference between an *observation* (what she sees) and an *inference* (what she concludes from the evidence)? Help her by pointing out things you observe and what she can infer. (“There are footprints in the mud, so someone probably walked there after it rained.”)

Car safety

Keep your youngster safe in the car by making sure his lap belt lies across his upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across his chest. If his seat belt doesn't fit right, he still needs a booster seat. Most kids “graduate” from a booster when they're 4 feet 9 inches tall, typically between the ages of 8 and 12.

Dealing with swearing

Youngsters sometimes experiment with curse words to impress friends or express anger. Consider making a “nice language” rule that applies to children *and* adults, since your child will follow your example. And let her know what the consequence will be for swearing.

Worth quoting

“Reading is important, because if you can read, you can learn anything about everything and everything about anything.” *Tomie dePaola*

JUST FOR FUN



Q: Why do you need a dictionary when you talk to giants?

A: They use big words!

Organized for a new year

It's no surprise that students who are organized tend to do better in school. Could your youngster use some help in this department? Share these strategies for overcoming common pitfalls and starting 2021 off on the right foot.

Problem: “I forgot to do my assignment.”

Solution: Lists and calendars

Encourage your child to end each day by making a to-do list for tomorrow. He can add to it as he gets new assignments. He'll be less apt to forget anything, and he'll find it satisfying to cross out completed tasks. Also, he could keep a calendar for upcoming tests, presentations, and projects.

Problem: “I lost my homework.”

Solution: A filing system

Suggest that your youngster keep his backpack nearby while he does homework. After he finishes each assignment, he can put it directly into his backpack. Learning online? Help him create a computer folder for each



subject—each with a subfolder just for homework. Also, have him back up files regularly to a thumb drive or a school-approved cloud app.

Problem: “My book is here ... somewhere.”

Solution: The five-minute rule

Let your child in on a little secret: The time he spends staying organized will actually save him time in the long run. This is where the five-minute rule comes in. Before he begins working each day, have him set a timer for five minutes and organize supplies, papers, and books until the timer goes off.♥

What did you learn today?

Expressing interest in school lets your child know her learning is important to you. Consider these tips:

- Ask your youngster to demonstrate something she did in school. She might teach you the steps in long division or a song she sang in music. If she's learning remotely, ask her to show you what apps she uses and how she submits assignments.

- Weave a conversation about school into your evening routine. For example, while you make dinner, invite your youngster to tell you all the cool facts she learned about ancient Egypt during today's history lesson.♥



Mindfulness for kids

Mindfulness is the practice of slowing down and focusing on the moment as a way to relax. Suggest that your youngster try these strategies to reduce stress.

Five senses. Encourage your child to notice something different with each of her five senses. She might *see* snow falling, *hear* the dog snoring, *touch* her cozy sweatshirt, *smell* the fire burning in the fireplace, and *taste* an orange.



Thought balloons. Have your youngster sit quietly with her eyes closed. She should focus on breathing in slowly for a count of four and holding her breath for four seconds. Next, she can exhale all the air slowly, pretending she's blowing any worries into a giant balloon. Then, she could imagine the balloon—and her worries—floating away.

Limp noodles. Ask your child to lie on the floor and pretend she's an uncooked noodle by stiffening all her muscles. Now have her loosen her toes, feet,

ankles, legs, and the rest of her body until she's a completely limp (and relaxed) noodle!♥

PARENT TO PARENT



At-home field trips

My son Carson loves school field trips, but he hasn't been able to go on any since the pandemic began. So we've been taking virtual field trips—and they're inspiring real-life learning!

This past fall, we “toured” national parks online to see fall foliage in different parts of the country. Then, we walked around our neighborhood, and Carson sketched the colorful trees he saw.



Another time, we “rode” roller coasters on theme-park websites. This led Carson to experiment with building a roller coaster for his toy cars out of cardboard tubes.

While our virtual trips aren't the same as going to real places, Carson is learning a lot from them, both online and with his projects afterward. And we're having fun exploring the world as a family—from home.

Find more virtual field trip ideas at rfeonline.com/FieldTrips.♥

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ACTIVITY CORNER

Paper engineering

Why do so many buildings have cylinder-shaped columns? Let your child experiment to find out.

Materials: three sheets of construction paper, tape, hardback books

Have your child make three paper columns like this:

1. Roll paper lengthwise into a cylinder, and secure with tape.
2. Fold paper into fourths lengthwise. Unfold, and shape into a rectangular column. Tape the edges together.
3. Fold paper into thirds lengthwise. Tape into a triangular column.

Now it's time to test the columns. Your youngster can stand them up and carefully stack books, one at a time, on top.

What happens? The cylinder supports multiple books, while a single book instantly crushes the other two columns. Can your child figure out why? (The cylinder's shape distributes weight evenly. The folds in the rectangular and triangular columns create points of weakness.)♥



Q & A

Talking about drugs

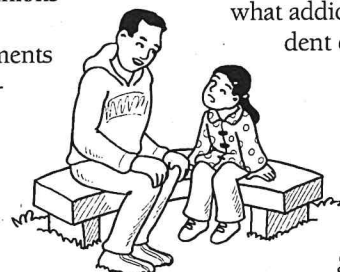
Q: My daughter is in third grade. Is it too soon to talk about drugs?

A: Actually, children are never too young to start learning about drugs. At this age, your daughter is more likely to be open about her questions and opinions—and to listen to yours.

Watch for teachable moments in everyday life. If her doctor prescribes medicine, you could use the opportunity to talk about why she's not allowed to take medicine that wasn't prescribed for her. If you give

her over-the-counter medicine, ask her to help you carefully read the label and double-check the dosage. Explain that it's dangerous to take more than the recommended amount. Or let a TV commercial about addiction spark a discussion about what addiction means (being dependent on drugs).

Note: Stay up to date on the latest information about children and drugs by visiting websites like drugabuse.gov or getsmartaboutdrugs.com.♥



Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2021

Snowflake School District # 5

Title I

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites



Flashlight (Lizi Boyd)

If you went outdoors at night, what would you see with your trusty flashlight? That's what the boy in this wordless picture book wants to find out. Your child can explore the woods as the boy meets charming characters and discovers the not-so-scary secrets the night holds.



Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match / Marisol McDonald no combina (Monica Brown)

Marisol adores her world full of colorful clothing and creative games. The other kids think she's too "mismatched." In this bilingual English-Spanish story, Marisol decides to be more like her friends. But it doesn't take her long to realize she's wonderful just the way she is.

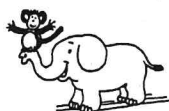


The Black Book of Colors (Menena Cottin)

What does red taste like? How does green smell? This black-and-white book gives readers insight into what it's like for visually impaired people to "see" with their other senses. The words in the book are also printed in Braille—a writing system of raised dots.

The Opposite Zoo (Il Sung Na)

Explore a zoo full of opposites, where animals of all types—shy and bold, slow and fast, and hairy and bald—live together. Your youngster can follow an adventurous monkey through enchanting exhibits to learn about opposites before the zoo opens again for a new day.



Flex reading "muscles"

Just like muscles get stronger with regular exercise, your child will become a stronger reader with regular reading practice. Help him work out his reading "muscles" all year long with these ideas.

Read the rainbow

Encourage your youngster to draw an outline of a rainbow with six stripes and label them red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Now help him find a library book for every color, perhaps *Green Eggs and Ham* (Dr. Seuss) or *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (Crockett Johnson). After reading each book, he can write the title on the matching stripe and color it in.

Read with others

Let your child start his own book club! He could invite a few friends or family members to help choose a book to read. Then, suggest that they set a date to meet (in person or online) to discuss the book—and pick their next one. *Idea:* He can ask each member to



bring at least one interesting discussion question to the meeting.

Read something new

Becoming familiar with different book genres prepares your youngster to read all kinds of books in school. Have him pick a topic (say, airplanes) and read books from various sections of the library. He might check out a story about a child's first airplane ride, a biography of Amelia Earhart, and a how-to book on paper airplanes.♥

Write me a riddle

Q: What building has the most stories?

A: The library!

Give your youngster practice writing questions and answers as she creates her very own riddles.

Let her think of an answer for a riddle, perhaps a favorite animal, food, or sport. She can use facts about the answer to write her riddle on one side of an index card. If she picks pizza, she might write, "I am round, cheesy, and can be delivered to your front door. What am I?" Then, have her write and illustrate the answer on the back.

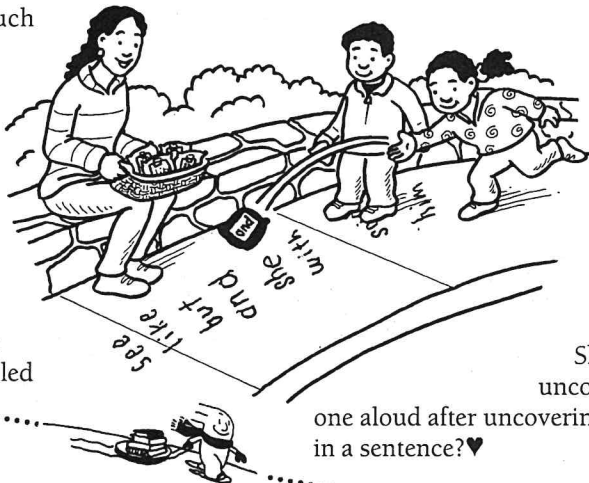
Suggest that she read her riddles to friends and family. Can she stump them?♥



See the sight words!

Instantly recognizable words—such as *and*, *the*, and *play*—appear in many of the books your youngster reads. Ask her teacher for a list of these *sight words* or find one online, and try these activities to help your child learn them.

Beanbag toss. Together, write 10 sight words with chalk on a sidewalk or blacktop, and again with pencil on separate sticky notes. Tape each word to a beanbag (or a sock filled



with dry beans and secured with a rubber band). Take turns picking a beanbag, reading the word, and tossing the bag onto the matching word. Whoever matches the most words is the winner.

“Treasure” hunt. Send your child on a search for “buried” sight words. Write 10 words randomly all over a sheet of paper. Lay the paper in a shallow baking dish and let her “bury” it in dry rice.

She can move the rice around to uncover the words. Have her read each one aloud after uncovering it. Can she use each sight word in a sentence?♥

Q&A Read to understand

Q My son will sometimes read every word in a story correctly and still be unable to tell me about what he just read. What should I do?

A It’s great that your youngster knows so many words. It’s possible he’s choosing books with plots that are too complex for him. Or he may not be paying attention while he reads—in this case, suggest that he read in a spot free from distractions like TV or people talking.

Also, while the teacher will let you know if she’s concerned about his progress, you can tell her what you’ve noticed, too. She may suggest books he can read (and understand) at home.



Finally, try this strategy: Ask him to “pre-

view” a book before he reads it. He can read the title, look at the cover, and flip through the pictures. Knowing what to expect will prepare him to understand the book.♥

Fun with Words

Vowel patterns

Encourage your child to explore common vowel patterns that can help him sound out words. Here’s how.

1. Write the letters A–Z on separate slips of paper, and make an extra set of vowels (a, e, i, o, u). Put all the vowels on the table or ground and the other letters (the consonants) in a paper bag.
2. Ask your youngster to pull two consonants from the bag and lay them on the table or ground.
3. Help him combine those consonants with any two vowels to make as many four-letter words as possible. For *m* and *t*, he could make *team*, *meet*, and *moat*. Have him read each word. He’ll hear that *ea* in *team*, for instance, makes a long *e* sound.
4. When you can’t make any more words, return the consonants to the bag. Pick two new ones, and play again.

Note: The letter *y* is sometimes a vowel when it’s used to make vowel patterns like *oy* in *toy*.♥



Parent to Parent

Give your sentence a partner

My daughter Anna is learning to write stories in school. Up until this point, she was drawing a picture and writing one sentence underneath. Now she’s ready to give her sentence a “partner,” the teacher said, meaning to write a second sentence to support the first. So I’m helping Anna practice at home.

Sometimes I’ll say a sentence like “It’s snowing a lot.” Then Anna comes

up with a logical partner for my sentence, such as “Tomorrow we can go sledding.” Next it’s her turn to think of a sentence, and I’ll give it a partner.

Anna seems to be getting the hang of this—the other day when I was reading to her, she noticed that a page had only one sentence. She said, “The author should have given that sentence a partner!” And I had to agree.♥



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Reading Connection

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Book Picks

■ Voyage of the Dogs

(Greg van Eekhout)

Lopside, Champion, Bug, and Daisy are barkonauts—dog astronauts. When their human crew abandons their spaceship, the pack must

work together to figure out how to get back to Earth. Each dog brings a special strength and talent to the mission in this sci-fi adventure.



■ Spilling Ink: A Young Writer's Handbook

(Anne Mazer and Ellen Potter)

This nonfiction guide is chock-full of tips and stories to inspire young writers. Written in a friendly question-and-answer format, the book includes advice about writing “ugly” first drafts, bringing characters to life, creating suspense, and keeping a journal.

■ Cosmic Commandos

(Christopher Eliopoulos)

This exciting graphic novel tells the tale of identical twins Jeremy and Justin. When Jeremy finds a charm in a cereal box, his favorite video game comes to life! The twins may look alike, but they are total opposites, and they have to join forces to win the game.



■ Smart About the Fifty States: A

Class Report (Jon Buller and others)

Discover facts about every state in the USA, from Alabama to Wyoming. Your child will learn state nicknames, capitals, historical facts, and much more. Each state's section contains an illustrated map that highlights important places. What will your child learn about your state?



Vocabulary games

A rich vocabulary can help your youngster get her point across during a conversation or find the right word when she's writing. Strengthen her word power with these fun games.

Dictionary charades

Take turns flipping to a random page in the dictionary and choosing one word to act out. If your child picks *mountainous*, for example, she might pretend to climb mountains. The first family member to identify the word gets to act out the next one.

Definition bingo

Together, choose 25 vocabulary words from a dictionary or your youngster's textbooks, write each definition on a separate slip of paper, and put the slips in a bowl. Each player draws a bingo board and writes the words randomly in the squares. Now a caller reads the definitions, and players put a penny on the



matching word. Cover five in a row to call “Bingo!” *Tip:* Have the winner read out the words and check the definitions.

Synonym sense

Each person secretly chooses a theme, such as winter, for the other players to figure out. Players jot down five words that fit their themes. Then, they each get one minute to browse through a thesaurus (or *thesaurus.com*) for synonyms. If your child's list includes *cold*, she might add *brisk* and *shivering*. Take turns reading the synonyms from your lists and trying to name each other's themes. ■

Think outside the book

The world is full of things to read. Share some with your youngster each day, and watch him become a well-rounded reader. Here are a few suggestions:

- Turn your refrigerator door into a reading center. Encourage everyone to post reviews of books, movies, restaurants, and gadgets. You could also hang up comics or fortune cookie slips.
- Email each other. You might send schedule reminders, news about your day, poems, or inspirational quotes.
- Share cards and letters that come in the mail. Use takeout menus and catalogs for reading practice, too—ask your child to find coupons or to tell you about foods or products that interest him. ■



“Just right” books

Most of the time, reading shouldn't be too easy or too hard for your youngster. Ask him to read aloud to you, and then help him find books he'll enjoy—and that stretch his reading ability—with these tips.

Too easy? Does your youngster read the book quickly? Can he recognize each word and easily understand the plot? The book may be too easy. Although it's perfectly fine for him to read books like that, more challenging material will offer new vocabulary and more complicated plots. And that will prepare him for the increasingly complex texts he'll read in school.



Too hard? Is your child's reading slow and choppy? Does he stumble over several unfamiliar words per page? Is he confused about what's happening? These are clues that a book is too difficult for now. Offer to read it aloud to him or read it together.

Note: If he struggles with assigned reading, talk to his

teacher to see if he needs extra help.

Just right! Can your child read most of the text smoothly? Did he find a few new words? Can he understand what's going on with a little thought? His book sounds like a good fit—it provides enough of a challenge without frustrating him. ▮

Fun with Words

Name that phrase!

Here's a word game that will stretch your child's thinking skills. All you need are pencil and paper.

First, show your youngster these examples of how arranging words in a particular way can turn a phrase into a brainteaser.

million = one in a million

eiln pu = line up in alphabetical order

MIND matter = mind over matter

Once your child has the idea, take turns making up brainteasers for one another to work out. *Hint:* To find phrases to use, suggest that she look for them when she's reading or listen for them during conversations. It helps to choose phrases that use prepositions, such as *in*, *on*, *over*, and *under*.

She can also find examples online by searching “frame games.” Or she could look in library books like *The Big Book of Frame Games* by Terry Stickels. ▮

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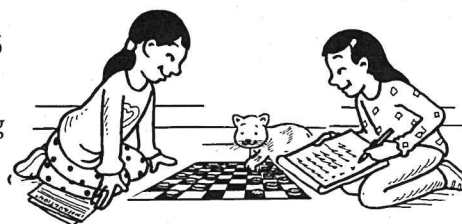
Q&A In my own words

Q My daughter knows she can't copy from sources when she's writing reports, but she says it's hard to think of new ways to say the same thing. Is there a way I can help her with this?

A Your daughter is right—copying others' words is known as plagiarism. Not only is it dishonest, but it can cause her to lose credit for an assignment. Help her practice paraphrasing, or putting material in her own words, with this activity.

Ask her to read a short item, such as board game rules or a recipe. Put it away, and have her rewrite it to be as different as possible from the original. Instead of “Checkers is a two-player strategy game,” she might write, “You need two people to play checkers. Use strategic thinking to win.”

Encourage her to use the same method when she does research for a school report. She can read a page or section, then look away and write about it in her own words. She should check her writing against the source to make sure it's not too similar. ▮



Tips for writing dialogue

It's fun to make characters “talk”!

Inspire your youngster to write his own stories with dialogue for each character. He'll learn to develop a plot and show how his characters respond to various situations.

To start, suggest that he think about who the character is, what the situation is, and what his tone would be. For instance, a child would speak more formally to a teacher (“Good morning, how are you?”) than to a friend (“Hey, what's up?”).

When your youngster finishes his story, he should read it aloud. Does the dialogue sound realistic—like something a person would actually say? He may realize he should change “You cannot go in there” to “You can't go in there,” since people often use contractions when they speak.

Tip: Paying attention to dialogue in books, plays, and movies is a great way for your youngster to recognize how different characters speak. ▮

