

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

November 2020

Snowflake School District # 5

Title I



SHORT NOTES

Memory builder

Strengthen your youngster's memory with this playful idea. Have her look away while you build a small block tower. Then, let her study it for 30 seconds and turn her back. Can she duplicate it from memory, using the same shapes, colors, and positions for her tower? Now let her build a structure for you to copy—and test *your* memory!

Prepared for conferences

You can make the most of parent-teacher conferences—whether yours is virtual or in person—by listing questions ahead of time that you'd like to ask. Here are three to include: "What does my child seem most interested in?" "What is hardest for him?" "How can I support him at home?"

A vote for good citizenship

Good citizens take an active role in selecting their leaders. Show your youngster how it's done. Talk about the candidates you prefer and what they stand for. Then, take her to the polls when you vote this month, or let her watch you fill out a mail-in ballot and put it in the mailbox.

Worth quoting

"The difference between winning and losing is most often not quitting."
Walt Disney

JUST FOR FUN

Q: If people count sheep to fall asleep, what do sheep count?

A: Nothing. Sheep can't count!



Learn to manage emotions

Is your youngster's behavior sometimes a mystery to you? Acting out can be a child's way of showing you he's angry or upset. Use this advice to help him express his feelings in more positive ways.

Make a chart

Together, brainstorm a list of emotions, such as happy, frustrated, excited, and bored. For each one, your child can draw and name a character (Happy Henry, Frustrated Fred). If he misbehaves (say, he yells at his sister for touching his toys), he could use the characters to talk about his feelings. ("Uh-oh, I'm acting like Angry Andy!")

Ask "why?"

Simply asking "Why do you think you feel that way?" and listening carefully to your child's answer helps in two ways. First, it allows him to recognize and describe how he's feeling. ("I'm frustrated because my project isn't turning out the way I wanted.") Second, he



will feel heard and cared about. As a result, he may be less apt to take out his frustration on others.

Find coping techniques

Equip your youngster with strategies for handling negative emotions. You might mention things you do when you feel the same way he does. ("If I'm worried about something, it helps me to put it in writing. That might help you, too.") With time and patience, he'll develop his own strategies for managing his feelings. ♥

Reviewing report cards

Look at your youngster's first report card of the school year as an opportunity to help her succeed going forward. Consider these tips:

- Start by reading the key that explains what the marks or grades mean. Do they indicate how well your child performed or how much progress she made—or both?

- Ask your youngster to tell you about her report card. She's a good judge of what's behind the grades. Also, put any low marks in perspective. Your child has probably adjusted to a lot of changes in this unusual year. Let her know you understand and that she has time to finish the year strong. ♥



Doorways to creative writing

Coming up with a good story idea is the first step toward writing a good story. Unleash your youngster's imagination and boost her writing skills with these two ideas for getting started.

1. Book titles. Suggest that your child use the title of a favorite book as inspiration for her own story. If she chooses *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*



(Judi Barrett), she might describe a rainy afternoon spent making spaghetti and meatballs with her grandma. Or for *Where the Wild Things Are* (Maurice Sendak), she could write about a hike in the forest—what wild animals will her character see?

2. Flashbacks. Instead of writing the beginning of her story first, your youngster can start at the end! She might open with, "And that's how we discovered that our cat was a secret agent." Then she could write the rest of the tale as a flashback, with the cat disappearing unexpectedly and the family finding spy disguises like wigs and fake mustaches around the house.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Paper-cup phone

This old-fashioned "phone" is a fun way for your child to explore sound waves.

Materials: pencil, two paper cups, scissors, string, two paper clips

Have your youngster use the pencil to poke a hole in the bottom of each cup and cut a piece of string about 50 feet long. Now he should put opposite ends of the string through the bottoms of the cups and tie each end to a paper clip inside the cup.



Time for a phone call! Each person holds a cup. Walk apart until the string is taut, and carry on a conversation, taking turns speaking into your cups. To listen, hold your cup to your ear.

Now talk at the same volume *without* the phone. Your child will notice your voice isn't as loud. That's because sound waves vibrate, and the vibrations travel better through a solid (the string) than through air.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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PARENT TO PARENT

Tag ... you're out!

Our sons love our local playground, but because of the pandemic, we don't go when it's crowded. So we look for creative ways to stay active outside. Recently, the boys started making up new versions of tag.



Brody invented Pizza Tag. When "It" tags you, you have to call out a pizza topping before "It" counts to 3. If you can't think of one, or you pick a topping another player already said, you're out. Then Ben came up with Sticker Tag. "It" tags you by putting a sticker on your back. If a player gets three stickers, he's out.

In all of our games, the last person out becomes "It" and decides which version of tag we'll play next—or invents a brand-new one. And all that running around means the boys get plenty of exercise!♥

Q & A

Develop stronger social skills

Q: My daughter seems to have trouble making and keeping friends. How can I help her learn better social skills?

A: Strong social skills will help your child become a good friend. Plus, knowing how to interact with others can also improve her academic achievement and her attitude toward school.

Discuss ways to show she cares about a friend's opinions or interests. Your daughter might ask questions ("What kind of dance class do you take?") and follow

up to show she's listening ("What songs do you dance to?"). Friends also celebrate each others' accomplishments and strengths. Your child could tell a classmate that he used awesome graphics in his presentation, for instance.

Finally, encourage your daughter to stay in touch with friends and set up get-

togethers to maintain strong relationships. For example, they might have dance parties or sing-alongs via video chat.♥



Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

November 2020

Snowflake School District # 5

Title I

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites



■ *Big Red Lollipop* (Rukhsana Khan)

Rubina is excited about going to a birthday party. But then her mother insists that her little sister Sana tag along, and Sana eats Rubina's party favor! Later, when Sana is invited to a party, she makes it up to Rubina. Based on a true story from the author's childhood.



■ *The Secret Explorers and the Lost Whales* (SJ King)

A diverse group of young adventurers must rescue a pod of humpback whales in this first book of the Secret Explorers series. Your child will learn facts about whales as marine-life expert Connor and his fellow explorers try to successfully complete their mission.



■ *How to Read a Book*

(Kwame Alexander)
This vivid picture book presents reading as an experience to savor. It begins with suggestions for finding a great spot to read, compares opening a book to peeling a juicy clementine, and encourages readers to take their time and enjoy every word.

■ *Good Night, Mr. Panda/Buenos Noches, Sr. Panda* (Steve Antony)

Mr. Panda is ready for bed, but each of his friends has forgotten to complete a task in their nighttime routine. As he reminds them what to do, he realizes that he can make an occasional

mistake, too. This bilingual English-Spanish book is part of the Mr. Panda series.



A growing vocabulary

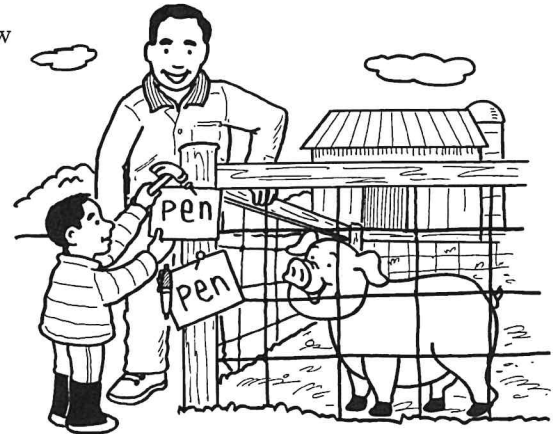
Hearing, learning, and using new words can make them a permanent part of your youngster's vocabulary. Try these strategies to increase the number of words he knows.

Weave in words

When you talk with your child, try using a few words he may not know. If you're gardening together, you could say, "These beets are a nice color. Can you think of anything else that's *magenta*?" or "The sky is *overcast* today. Look at all those clouds." Hearing new words on a regular basis will naturally expand his vocabulary.

Draw pictures

Illustrating new words will make it easier for your youngster to remember them. When he hears one (say, *parched*), tell him what it means (very thirsty), or look it up in a dictionary together. Then, help him write the word on a sheet of paper and suggest that he draw a picture. For *parched*, he might draw himself reaching for a big glass of water. *Idea:* Suggest that he staple his drawings



together to make his own vocabulary booklet.

Multiple meanings

Pick an everyday word that has two totally different meanings, such as *pen* (a writing tool or a place for pigs). Say one definition, and ask your child to come up with the other. *Additional ideas:* *ball* (a round toy or a big dance), *star* (a shining object in the sky or a celebrity), *foot* (a unit of measurement and a body part). How many can your youngster think of?♥

Write an ode

Your child can show gratitude during the Thanksgiving season—and enjoy writing poetry at the same time—with this activity.

Explain that an ode is a poem that expresses emotion toward a person, place, or thing. Ask who or what she's thankful for. She might choose a grandparent or a teacher, or perhaps your home or dog. Have her think of what she appreciates about the person or object.

Now help your youngster write the ode as if she's addressing the person or object—and include specific details she's grateful for. *Example:* "Oh, Grandma / How I love your silly jokes! / Your smile is always bright / Playing games with you makes my night."♥



Explore plot patterns

Predictable books follow a pattern—and noticing patterns can help your child follow the story. Here are popular patterns along with craft projects that will boost your youngster's comprehension.

Repetitive story. Read a book with a repeated refrain, such as *It Looked Like Spilt Milk* (Charles G. Shaw). Afterward, your youngster could glue cotton balls on blue paper to show each cloud in the book. Have her repeat



the refrain—"Sometimes it looked like"—and point to each cloud. Also try: *Goodnight Moon* (Margaret Wise Brown), *The Little Red Hen*, and *The Gingerbread Man*.

Circular plot. These stories end the same way they began. Read *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* (Laura Numeroff), and help your child make a paper chain. On separate strips of paper, she can draw and label something the moose was given. Have her tape the ends of each strip together, linking all the loops in a circle. Now she can use the chain to tell the story. Also try: *The Mitten* (Jan Brett), *The Relatives Came* (Cynthia Rylant), and *Stephanie's Ponytail* (Robert Munsch).♥

Q&A Lowercase first?

Q When I was in school, we learned to print capital letters first. Why is my son starting with lowercase letters?

A Lowercase letters appear more frequently in books than capital letters. And since learning to write letters also teaches your child to recognize them, knowing the more common ones first will make reading easier.



The trickiest part of writing lowercase letters is remembering where to write different parts of each letter.

Try this: Draw a "road" (with a dotted line between two solid lines) and add a line below it for the road's "shoulder." Now your son can write letters with each part in its own "lane." For *d*, he would put the circle under the dotted line and the stick extending to the top solid line. And for *p*, the stick would go down to the shoulder.♥

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Parent to Parent

Reading diverse books

My daughter Andrea recently found a library book about a little girl whose family came from Guatemala—just like ours. Andrea seemed proud and excited to recognize Spanish words sprinkled throughout the book and to see pupusas on the family's dinner table.

I asked the librarian for more books with Spanish-speaking characters. She was happy to help, and said children feel comforted and valued when characters remind them of themselves. The librarian also explained that kids learn to appreciate diversity when they read about characters whose lives are different from their own.

Thanks to this advice, Andrea and I have also read books about families from Mexico, Peru, Nigeria, and Japan. My daughter is discovering that she has a lot in common with children who speak or eat differently than she does—from the games they play to the way their parents tuck them in at night.♥



Fun with Words

Terrific tongue twisters

Tongue twisters are tricky-talking-tremendous teachers! They help your child hear sounds in words and pronounce words more clearly. Here's how he can say and create his own tongue twisters.

1. Recite familiar tongue twisters such as "How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?" Ask your youngster to tell you what sounds are repeated (*w* and *ch*).

2. Together, brainstorm a list of words that start with the same sound, like *penguin*, *park*, and *purple*.

3. Now your child can use the words to make up a tongue twister. ("The playful penguin went to the park to

play on the purple playground.") Have a silly time together saying his tongue twisters. What a fun way for him to hear and say the sounds!♥



Reading Connection

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Book Picks

■ *Liberty Porter, First Daughter* (Julia DeVillers)

Liberty's life changes when her dad is elected president of the United States. Follow along as she gets used to living in the White House, attending a new school, and following all the rules that come with being the president's child. Book 1 in the First Daughter series.



■ *Ostriches* (Rachel Poliquin)

From the Superpower Field Guide series, this nonfiction book is filled with fascinating facts about ostriches. Your child will meet an ostrich named Eno and learn how this grumpy two-toed animal survives in the African savanna,



what special features he has, and much more.

Includes illustrations and a glossary with science terms.

■ *Poetry for Young People: Langston Hughes* (David Roessel and Arnold Rampersad)

Young readers are introduced to a famous African American poet in this illustrated collection. The compilation contains Hughes's poems about hopes and dreams, plus an introduction and a biography of his life.

■ *The Vanishing Coin*

(Kate Egan)

When fourth-grader Mike and his new friend Nora discover the local magic shop, owner Mr. Zerlin teaches Mike his first magic trick. From that point on, Mike is hooked! Find out how Mike's life changes—and learn magic tricks—in this first book in the Magic Shop series.



Subject-area writing

When your youngster answers questions in her social studies book, explains how she solved a math problem, or completes a science lab report, she needs strong writing skills. Encourage her to practice writing with these at-home activities for each subject.

Social studies

Suggest that your child interview a relative or family friend about a historical event she studied in class. A grandparent, an aunt, or an uncle might remember watching the first moon landing or the fall of the Berlin Wall. Your youngster could write about the event through that person's eyes and include details like names, dates, and places.

Math

Hooray! Your child figured out the math problem that had her stumped. Before she moves on to the next one, have her write a step-by-step description of how she did it. She'll practice explaining her math thinking and putting her



thoughts in logical order. Plus, she'll have a handy reference when she needs to solve similar math problems.

Science

Which brand of stain remover or lint roller works best? Ask your youngster to do a science experiment using household products. She can write an explanation of her procedure and record the results, just like she does in science class. *Tip:* Let her post the write-up, complete with photos, on the refrigerator so family members can learn which product "won."

Hooked on classic fiction

Spark your child's interest in fiction by steering him toward tales you enjoyed at his age or ones he liked listening to when he was younger. Here are two ideas.

1. Read classics. Suggest books from your childhood. He might like Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* or Fred Gipson's *Old Yeller*, for instance. Perhaps he'll be inspired to read more classics and find his own favorites.

2. Rediscover fairy tales. Different cultures have their own versions of various fairy tales. Have your youngster type a familiar title (*Cinderella*) into a library database. He may be surprised by the differences in *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China* by Ai-Ling Louie or *The Rough-Face Girl*, an Algonquin Indian version by Rafe Martin.



A reading checklist

Good readers use many different strategies to help them understand books. Share this checklist with your child. He can monitor his comprehension—and get back on track if things don't make sense.

- Before I begin reading, I ask myself what I already know about the topic. I use this knowledge to help me learn new information in the text.
- When I read difficult material, I stop and think after each paragraph or section to make sure I understand it. I might summarize it in my head or on paper.



- I reread parts that are confusing. If I'm still stuck, I ask a teacher or parent for help.
- I read between the lines to figure out events or information that the author didn't come right out and explain.
- I jot down questions when I read nonfiction. I check to see whether my questions are answered later in the text.

Mark it, flag it

A bookmark that's also a tracking tool? We have just the thing! Your youngster can make this simple bookmark and use it to learn and get ideas from what he reads.

First, have him cut a bookmark-size strip from cardboard and decorate it with crayons or markers. Then he could glue a small pad of sticky notes to the top. As he reads, he can use the sticky notes to:



- Write down unfamiliar words to look up later.
- Flag passages to share in class.
- Think of character names or details for a story of his own.
- Mark names of cities or countries he'd like to visit.
- Note a new sport or hobby to try.
- Jot down a personal experience, a movie, or another book that he's reminded of. 📖



- I predict what's going to happen next in a novel. Then I read on to see whether my prediction was accurate. 📖

Q&A How to give—and get—feedback

Q During “writing workshop,” my daughter’s classmates give each other feedback on their stories. Nicole feels uncomfortable giving and receiving criticism. How can I help?

A Encourage your daughter to think of feedback not as criticism but as making the best it can be. It's a good idea to start by saying something nice about her classmate's story, such as, “I really like this plot twist.” Then, if she sees something that could be improved, she might try, “I got confused here” or “I'm not sure what you meant when you said ...”



Meanwhile, *getting* feedback will show your child how others view her writing. If a classmate says, “I don't understand why your character would do that,” Nicole may decide to change the character's action. With time, she'll get more comfortable giving and getting feedback—and see its value. And this experience will serve her well in the future, since giving and receiving criticism is often part of a job. 📖

Fun with Words Don't make a word!

Force your opponent to add the last letter to a word in this game that boosts spelling and vocabulary skills.

To start, think of a word (*moment*), and write the first letter (*m*) on a sheet of paper. Your child should come up with a word that begins with *m* (it will probably be different from yours) and write the second letter of her

word (add *a* to *m* for *match*). On your turn, think of a word that starts with *ma* and add the next letter (*r* for *marble*).

Continue until a player is forced to complete a word that has four or more letters. For example, if your youngster adds *e* to *mar*, she spells *mare* and loses.

Note: A player must have a real word in mind when adding a letter. If someone is challenged, she has to say the word she's thinking. 📖



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