

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

December 2015

Public School 214 Q
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SHORT NOTES

My kind of town

When you travel to a different town or state, encourage your youngster to compare and contrast it with your area. She might notice that a suburb has shorter buildings and more open space than the city she's from. Or if you live near mountains, she may be surprised by how flat a plain is.

Volunteer for class parties

This time of year, your youngster's teacher may need help with a class party. You could volunteer to coordinate food and activities or to pitch in on party day. Or you might offer to contribute craft supplies or a nutritious treat (fruit kebab, baggies of popcorn and raisins). The teacher will appreciate your involvement—and so will your child!

Shared space

Arguments over the bathroom can throw a wrench in your youngsters' morning routines. Have them work together to come up with a schedule. They should decide who will go first on which days and how long they can spend getting ready in the bathroom. Creating the routine themselves will make them more apt to stick with it.

Worth quoting

"At first, dreams seem impossible, then improbable, and eventually inevitable." *Christopher Reeve*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What do you call a snowman in summer?

A: A puddle.



Raise a generous child

Whether your child is making a gift for a grandparent or putting together a care package, he is learning to give to others. Use these suggestions to nurture his generosity.

The gift of time

Being generous doesn't have to cost money. Encourage your youngster to take a little extra time to do things for others. For example, he could handle a chore for a sibling who has a big test the next day. Or he might organize and lead games for younger cousins at a family gathering.

A "wish list" for others

Does your child list gifts he hopes to receive? Let him make a list for others, too. He could write down presents he would like to make or buy for relatives and friends. Have him carefully consider what each person might want ("Grandma loves to hear me play piano, so I'll make her a video of me playing her favorite songs"). This can help him discover how good it feels to give.



My special cause

Your youngster may feel more eager to give to a cause that is personally meaningful to him. For instance, if you have a relative in the military, he could help you put together care packages for troops. Or if he loves animals, he might gather towels and blankets and donate them to a shelter.

Tip: Help your child see himself as a giving person by pointing out his generosity. ("It was generous of you to offer your brother your last slice of pizza.") ♥

A lifelong learner

Learning isn't just something that happens in school—show your youngster it's a practice she'll do all her life. Consider these ideas:

- Tell your child about things you're learning and ways you're educating yourself. For example, if your office is switching to a new accounting system, talk about training sessions you attended and how they helped you do your job.
- Encourage self-help. If your family wants to try camping for the first time, work together to investigate where to camp, the gear you'll need, and the best time to go. You might consult workers at an outdoors store, read books about camping, or search online for campgrounds. ♥



Write to persuade, write to explain

Writing serves various purposes. Here are two important reasons your youngster will write in school, along with ways she can practice at home.

Persuade. Encourage your child to think through both sides of a topic before she writes by staging a pretend debate with two dolls or action figures. She could pick a topic, like whether kids need more recess, and speak for each “person.” Then, she should decide which side she agrees with and write an argument from that point of view.



She'll see the importance of being precise when explaining something in writing. After you guess what you're acting out, write a set of instructions for her.♥

Explain. Let your youngster think of a task (say, washing your hair). Without telling you what it is, she should write instructions for you to act out. (“Turn a bottle upside down. Hold one hand under the bottle...”) As you go through the motions, she may realize she left out a step and needs to edit her directions.



Q & A

Drugs: Start a conversation

Q: How should I talk to my second-grade son about drugs?

A: Try starting with what your child already knows. Ask him what he has heard about drugs, and talk about those facts or myths.

If he says all drugs are bad, remind him that when he's sick, you or his doctor may give him drugs to help him get well. Then, talk about the dangers of illegal drugs. Explain that they may damage the brain or heart, cause people to make poor decisions, and be *addictive* (hard to stop taking). And even legal drugs can hurt him if taken incorrectly or not prescribed for him.



Finally, encourage your youngster to tell you in the future what he's hearing about drugs. And keep the conversation going by bringing up the subject from time to time.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Getting to know you

December is when many families get together with far-flung relatives. Encourage cooperation and learn more about each other with these two activities.

Silent lineup

Family members must work together in this cooperative game. Have your child get one index card per person and number them (say, 1–8 for 8 people). Turn the cards upside down, mix them up, and give one to each player. Tape the card you're dealt to another person's back. Then, players try to get in numerical order without speaking. Or write letters on the cards and work together to get into alphabetical order or to spell a word.



Name the criteria

Here's a fun way to see what family members have in common. Let one person name a category, such as “is a morning person” or “likes ketchup on eggs.” Then, lay a jump rope on the floor. Everyone who meets the criterion sits on one side of the line, and those who don't sit on the other. Have another player pick a new category, and rearrange yourselves.♥

Become more independent

As your child gets older, she'll be expected to do more for herself. Help her prepare with these strategies.

● **Assume she can.** There's a better chance that your youngster will be able to accomplish a task on her own if she sees that you expect her to.

Example: “I'll rinse the plates while you load the dishwasher.” Then, focus on rinsing, and leave her to figure out her own way of loading the dishes.

● **Ask, “What do you think?”**

Including your child in family decisions prepares her for independent decision making. You might seek her opinion on what to make for dinner or where to hang a picture, for instance.

● **Let her start.** If she asks you to put her hair in a bun, encourage her to try the first steps by herself. Tell her you're there to help finish the job if she gets stuck.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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