Home & School CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

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Queens College School for Math, Science & Technology

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SHORT NOTES

The world is a stage

Acting out stories builds reading skills and creativity. Encourage your youngsters to put on plays for you based on their favorite books. Each child can play a different character, or one could be the narrator. Suggest that they design scenery on poster board, find props around the house, and dig up old clothes for costumes.

School clothes

Do you and your child disagree about what he wears to school? Try putting away clothes that aren't appropriate for the weather so he'll always know what his choices are. If he picks out an outfit that doesn't match, consider letting it go as long as it fits him and follows the school dress code.

Active apologies

When your youngster accidentally bumps into a classmate, she probably knows to say, "I'm sorry." Encourage her to take the apology a step further by offering her help. For instance, she might pick up books that the other student dropped.

Worth quoting

"The beginning is always today."
Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

JUST FOR FUN

Q: I'm full when I'm gone, and I'm empty when I'm here. What am I?

A: A suitcase.

Discover the past

Your child can learn a lot by exploring the way people lived long ago. It will help him get excited about studying history and give him a fresh perspective on how we live today. Here are some ways he can look into the past.

Famous figures

Did someone in your youngster's history book capture his imagination? Perhaps he liked reading about Benjamin Franklin's inventions or Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership. Encourage him to learn more by checking out a biography at the library. Often, just one person can spark interest in other famous people from history.

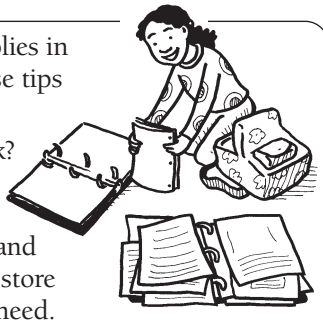
Field trips

Visit historic sites in your area, such as battlefields, homes of famous people, and monuments. For ideas, stop by your town's visitors' center or search online (try *www.waymarking.com*). Your child might even find a "living history" museum or park where people play the part of historical figures or re-create daily life by churning butter or using a washboard. Have your youngster compare these activities to his own life.

Local flavor

Old newspapers, photographs, and letters offer clues about what your town was like long ago. Stop by your public library's local-history section, and look through items like these with your child. Use what you see to imagine the lives of your town's early residents. You may discover clues about where they came from, how they earned a living, and what they did for fun.♥

Clearing out clutter



Winter break is a good time to get papers and supplies in order for the second half of the school year. Share these tips with your child:

- Are papers spilling out of your youngster's backpack? It will be easier for her to find materials if she carries only what she needs each day. Suggest that she dump everything out and make three piles: "today," "later," and "never." She can put the "today" pile back in the bag, store what she wants to save, and recycle what she doesn't need.
- Help your child restock homework supplies like pencils and writing paper, and have her throw away dried-out markers and glue sticks. Let her choose a drawer or cubby (or give her a container and lid) to keep everything in one place.♥

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I wish…I will!

What will your child accomplish in 2012? Perhaps she would like to improve her grades or play basketball. No matter what she sets her sights on, here is how she can work to make it happen:

1. Talk about wishes and goals. A wish is something she would like ("I wish I could get a perfect report card"), while a goal is something that's more specific and doable ("I will get a better grade in math").

2. Ask her to choose a goal (raising her math grade) and draw a picture of it in the center of a paper plate. For example, she might draw herself circling a math grade she's proud of.

3. Help her name the steps involved in reaching her goal (make and use flash cards, find a study buddy). Have her write them around the edge of the plate.

4. As she completes a step, let her use a single-hole punch to poke a hole through its place on the plate. When every step is completed, talk about how close she is to her goal.

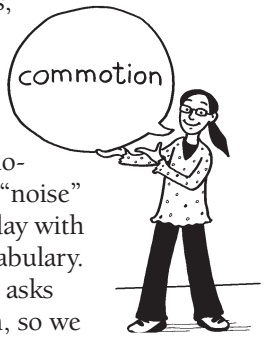
Tip: Encourage your youngster to celebrate progress toward goals and not to be discouraged by a step backward. This will help her move forward.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Using a rich vocabulary

Teachers often comment that my daughter Reena has a strong vocabulary. I think it's because my husband and I have always used "big" words around her. When she was a toddler, my father-in-law suggested that we just talk to her normally. He would simply say "engineer" instead of something like "choo-choo driver," for example.

Over the years, I've kept his advice in mind. During dinner conversations, I might say "commotion" rather than "noise" or report on my day with my real work vocabulary. Reena sometimes asks what words mean, so we keep a dictionary handy.



I think our daughter's vocabulary has been a big part of why she does well in school. It also allows her to participate in family discussions and understand more of what she reads.♥

Q & A

Drugs: An ongoing conversation

Q: *When should I talk to my son about drugs?*

A: Now—and later! You can start talking about drugs, including alcohol and cigarettes, when your child is young, and keep talking about them as he gets older.

You might bring it up by explaining that sometimes kids offer other kids beer, cigarettes, or even marijuana, and you're wondering if anything like that has ever happened to him. Let him know that if it does, it's important to say "no" and then tell a trusted adult right away. Assure him that this is not considered tattling, because it's a serious situation that he doesn't have to handle on his own.

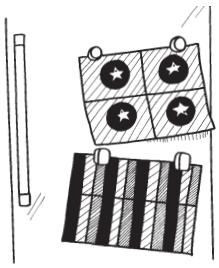
Be sure to tell him why he shouldn't try drugs. They are unhealthy for his mind and body, and they can be addictive—once a person starts, it's hard to stop. That's why the best choice is to say "no" the very first time, and every time, someone offers him any kind of drug.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

What's different?

With this game, players have to look closely to find the part that doesn't match. You and your child will have fun trying to outsmart each other—and he will build observation skills that are important for science and other subjects.

Draw lines to divide a sheet of paper into four equal squares. While your youngster isn't looking, make an identical design in three squares. For instance, color a tiny green star in a red circle on a blue background, and put a black dot in the top point of the stars.



Then, in the fourth square, make one small change. You might put the dot in one of the star's bottom points, for example. How quickly can your child spot the difference? Then, turn the paper over, and let him make designs for you so you can try to find the unique one.

Play several times, and make the drawings increasingly complicated. You might make a pattern of blue, yellow, and red stripes, but in one of the squares, have a blue and a yellow stripe trade places.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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