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

Party helper

Attending or helping with class parties is a fun way for parents to be involved at school. You might offer to take a snack, organize a game, or supervise a craft project. Your youngster will enjoy having you in his classroom, and his teacher will welcome your participation.

Learn, use, and remember

Your youngster is more likely to remember information if she uses it right away. When she meets someone, encourage her to say the name ("Nice to meet you, Kate"). If she's memorizing state capitals, she might look each one up to see what it's known for and then tell someone the fact ("The U.S. Naval Academy is in Annapolis, the capital of Maryland").

Being brave

Courage can help your youngster read aloud in class, learn to swim, or even stand up to a bully. When he needs to feel brave, share ways you personally show courage (giving a presentation at work). He'll realize that everyone gets nervous sometimes. Then, ask him to remember times he has been brave (taking the training wheels off his bike).

Worth quoting

"Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves." *J. M. Barrie*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What does Wednesday have that no other day of the week has?

A: The letter W.

Homework solutions

Like an actor rehearsing his lines or a batter working on his swing, your child does homework to practice what he learns in school. And if he's like most youngsters, homework brings occasional challenges. Here are solutions to common problems he might face.

Getting started

When your child gets home from school or after-school care, he might want to relax for a little while, or he may want to jump right in and work. Have him try each method for one week and keep track of how it goes. He could write notes in each day's calendar square. ("Went great!" or "Hard time getting started.") After two weeks, he can review the notes to see which routine worked best.

Staying motivated

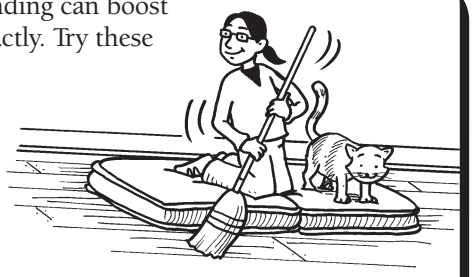
Does your youngster ever feel restless when he's doing homework? Suggest that he get up and move to a new spot. For example, he might finish his vocabulary assignment at the kitchen table and read his science chapter on the porch. A planned break (say, to have a snack or take a walk) can also give him a second wind.

Solving problems

Help your child make a list of strategies he can use when he gets stuck. For a math assignment, he might try tools like a number line or find sample problems in his book. When he's reading, he could look up words in a dictionary or reread a paragraph. *Tip:* If he's still stumped, he might call a friend or write down his question to ask his teacher the next day.♥

Let's pretend!

No matter how old your child is, pretending can boost her creativity and teach her to think abstractly. Try these activities:



- Ask your youngster to close her eyes and imagine she's a person she has studied (explorer, inventor) or that she's visiting a place she has learned about (White House, rain forest). Encourage her to describe what she sees, hears, and smells. In the rain forest, for example, she might see colorful birds, hear monkeys howling, and smell damp leaves.
- Pick a random object (sponge). Have each family member list creative uses for it (pincushion, hamster tumbling mat, ice pack). After three minutes, compare your lists. The person with the most ideas gets to pick the next item.♥

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Handling family conflicts

Throughout life, your child will run into conflicts—at least some of the time. Here are ideas that can teach her conflict-resolution skills and help her get along with others at school and at home.

Plan ahead. Every family has situations that cause conflict. And these issues are easier to deal with when everyone is calm. Hold regular family meetings, and use part of each meeting to discuss problems. *Example:* "We get short-tempered when we're running late in the mornings. Let's get up earlier."

Use "I" messages. Explaining how others' actions make you feel can be an effective way to resolve conflicts. Try posting this sentence on the refrigerator: "I feel _____ when _____." If a family member has a concern, she can say it aloud, filling in the blanks. You might tell your child, "I feel frustrated when I trip over toys" instead of, "Your room is a mess."

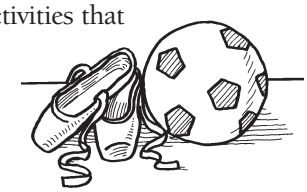
Make compromises. When a disagreement crops up ("You always shower first!"), have each person write her ideal solution on a slip of paper. Place the slips at opposite ends of the table. Then, they should write down several compromises, lay them between the two extremes, and choose the one that best suits both sides. For instance, the person who rides the earliest bus showers first on weekdays and last on weekends. Suggest that they hang the schedule outside the bathroom where everyone can see it.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

The importance of downtime

My daughter Lucy plays soccer and takes ballet lessons. Last fall, she started cheerleading, too. She was enjoying it, but about halfway through the school year, she started complaining that she was tired all the time. One day, she said she didn't like any of her activities anymore.

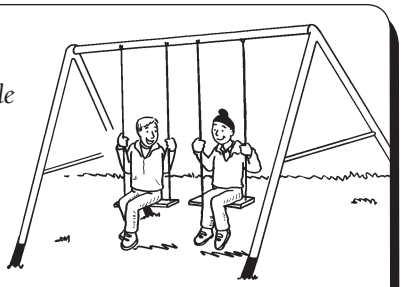
I was confused—soccer had been Lucy's favorite sport since she was little. I talked to my friend Pam, who told me the same thing happened to her daughter. Pam said her daughter was involved in so many activities that she "burned out" and became tired and stressed. As we talked, I realized that Lucy needs free time—to dig in the dirt, play hide-and-seek, and do absolutely nothing—more than she needs another structured activity.



I told Lucy she could stick with two activities and she could pick which two. She chose to continue with soccer and ballet and to drop cheerleading. Now she seems to have more energy for her favorite activities, and it's nice to see her just being a kid. ♥

Q & A

Respect differences



Q: *We recently moved to an area where people speak many different languages, and our son has a lot of questions. How should we answer him?*

A: It's great that your son is being exposed to a variety of cultures. You can use his curiosity to help him learn about respecting differences.

Explain that in many parts of the United States, people speak different languages, eat different foods, and wear different clothing than your family does. At the same time, they do many of the same things (play at the park, watch movies).

To help him understand, ask him to name one classmate who speaks English and one who speaks another language. Have him tell you something he has in common with each child (skateboarding, wearing sneakers) and one thing that they don't share (number of siblings, language spoken at home). He'll discover that language is just one of the many things that makes a person similar to or different from him.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Be a storybook character

With this guessing game, your child will learn to ask questions and pay attention to details in books.

Materials: *sticky notes, colored pencils*

First, have each family member secretly think of a well-known story character (Clifford, Horton). He should write his character's name and draw a small picture of him on a sticky note.

Then, each player puts his sticky note on another person's back. The object of the game is to figure out which character is on your own back by asking questions that can be answered "yes" or "no." *Examples:* "Am I an animal?" "Do I have fur?" "Am I a pet?" When you think you know who you are, ask, "Am I Clifford?"

Play as many rounds as you like. When you're finished, choose a book that features one of the characters, and read it aloud together.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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