

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION[®]

September 2009

WILLIAMSBURG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



SHORT NOTES

Parent-child notes

Exchanging notes with your children can help you stay connected now that they're back in school. Tuck an encouraging note inside a school folder or by their breakfast plates. They just might surprise you by leaving notes for you to find, too.

DID YOU KNOW?

Music can boost reading and math skills. Song lyrics teach rhyming words and build vocabulary, and clapping to a beat helps your youngster learn about patterns. Make music part of daily life by singing together in the car, playing the radio while you cook dinner, and attending free community concerts.

Getting acquainted

Encourage your child to get to know his classmates better. First, have him list the students' names. Next, ask him to think of one thing he knows about each person. He can write it next to the child's name on the list ("Trevor: has a pet frog," "Eva: speaks Spanish").

Worth quoting

"The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today."

H. Jackson Brown Jr.

JUST FOR FUN

"I'm glad I'm finally eight. This is the oldest I've ever been in my entire life!"



A good start

You can help make this school year a great one for your child. Here are a few simple things you can do at home to help him succeed in school.

Follow a routine

A routine at home will prepare your youngster for a schedule at school. For example, every day after school, he might wash his hands, eat a snack, and do his homework.

Promote independence

Say, "You can do it!" when your child asks for help with something you know he can do on his own. *Examples:* organizing his binder, finding his lost glasses. This will encourage the independence he'll need in the classroom.

Build attention span

Have your child focus on one activity while sitting at a table or desk for 15 to 20 minutes each day. He can draw, practice handwriting, or write a story—anything that motivates him to pay



attention. Practicing like this will get him used to doing classwork.

Recognize effort

Praise your youngster for trying. For example, if he's been struggling with division, you might tell him, "You worked hard this week and got most of the problems right. Good job!"

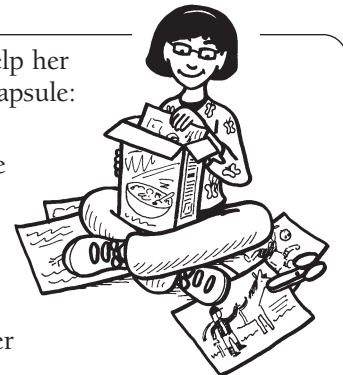
Have conversations

Teach your child to talk about his experiences. If you visit a zoo or a park, ask, "What was your favorite part of our trip?" Talk during family meals, while running errands, and at bedtime. ♥

Setting goals

What would your child like to learn this year? Help her set—and reach—goals with this homemade time capsule:

1. Ask your youngster to choose a few goals (read Beverly Cleary's *Ramona* books by herself, memorize all the state capitals).
2. Have her write each idea on a separate sheet of paper and draw a picture to go along with it.
3. Let her cover a cereal box with construction paper and label it "My Goals." Then, she can put her papers inside and tape the box closed.
4. Suggest that she keep the time capsule on her dresser as a reminder of her goals. She can open it at the end of the school year to see which ones she met. ♥



Staying involved

When parents get involved in education, kids do better in school and enjoy it more. Luckily, there are many ways you can participate. Here are several:

- Talk to your youngster about what happens in school. Ask her to show you something she learned. *Example:* “Can you recite the poem you memorized?” Or have her call a grandparent or other special person to tell about her day.
- Visit the school. If you work during the day, try to attend an evening event



(math night, fun fair). If you are available during school hours, ask the teacher what you can do to help. She might have you organize the classroom library or help students in the lunchroom or computer lab.

- Read information that your child brings home, such as class notices and school newsletters. These let you know what she is studying and alert you to important events like back-to-school night or picture day. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



Spot the good behavior

When you notice your youngster behaving well, mention it! He'll be more likely to repeat the good behavior.

Here's an activity that will help.

Make a tic-tac-toe board by dividing a sheet of paper into nine squares. Ask your youngster to think of five behaviors to work on. *Examples:* “Put away my toys,” “Share with my brother,” “Talk nicely in the grocery store.”



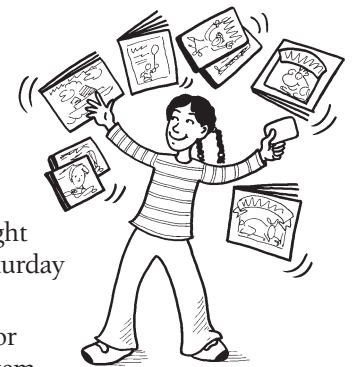
Then, have him write one behavior in each corner square and one in the center square. In the other four squares, he can write fun activities to do together (play a board game, draw with sidewalk chalk).

Each time you spot him doing a good behavior from the board, point it out and have him circle that box. When he gets three, let him choose one of the activities to do with you. ♥

Love the library!

The public library is full of wonderful things for your child to discover, and it's free! Your family can enjoy the library with these ideas:

- Consider starting a regular library tradition. You might visit every other Tuesday afternoon or on the third Saturday of the month.
- Let your youngster choose a theme, such as plants or castles, for each visit. Try to find at least one related item from each section (fiction, nonfiction, biography, magazine, video). She'll see that the library offers many ways to get information.
- Take advantage of special features. For instance, your library might include a local history collection or a special-needs section. Or it might have art displays, story hours, puppet shows, or craft workshops. *Tip:* If your library has several nearby branches, take turns visiting them so you can try all the different things each one has to offer. ♥



Q & A After-school activities

Q: *Our son has tried soccer and art class. He wasn't excited about either one and wanted to quit.*

How can we help him find an activity he'll like?

A: Joining a team or club can build your son's confidence and introduce him to kids who share his interests. Try asking him what he liked and didn't like about each activity. For instance, maybe he enjoyed being on a team but didn't like the running involved in soccer. In that case, you could suggest T-ball or swimming.

His favorite school subjects might also provide clues. If he likes science, he could sign up for a nature program.

If he prefers reading or writing, help him find a book club or a writing group.

When he makes a choice, encourage him to go to all the sessions. Hopefully, he will like it—and you'll teach him the value of sticking with something. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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