

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

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Zachary Elementary School

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SHORT NOTES

Car chats

If you carpool, your child's conversations with the other kids can shed light on what's happening at school or with activities. Later, use what you heard to start a conversation. ("You mentioned something about a new science club. Is that an activity you'd be interested in?")

Double-check homework

Looking over completed assignments carefully will help your youngster turn in her best work. She should check for skipped questions and math errors like adding numbers instead of subtracting them. Suggest that she pay attention to mistakes she often makes. Then, she could write reminders ("Put my name on my paper!") to post in her homework area.

Which group am I in?

As your child gets older, you may notice him placing more emphasis on how he fits in with peers. Explain that it's natural for youngsters to form groups, but it's nice to be friends with a wide variety of people. For example, he might have friends in class, friends from soccer, and neighborhood friends.

Worth quoting

"You can observe a lot just by watching." *Yogi Berra*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Can a kangaroo jump higher than the Empire State Building?

A: Of course. The Empire State Building can't jump!



In real life: Beyond screen time

Today's children—and parents—are spending more and more time in front of computers, tablets, smart-phones, and TVs. And that means fewer opportunities to interact as a family. Try these steps for cutting back on screen time and increasing the amount of time you enjoy together.

1. Track habits

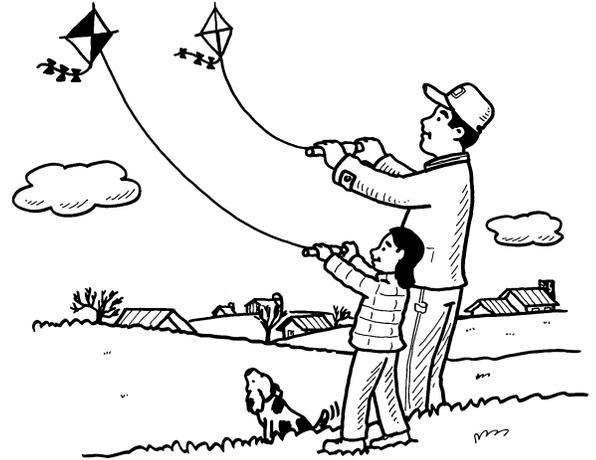
A little screen time here and there really adds up. For one week, have each person carry a small notebook to log usage. Every bit counts—your youngster might write "Music video on laptop, four minutes," and you could write "Facebook on phone, two minutes."

2. Set ground rules

Share your logs to see how you spent your screen time. Then, come up with rules to help you cut back, and ask your child to write them down. Her rules might include doing homework first, turning off screens an hour before bed, and not using devices in the car. A whole-family rule could be no screens during meals.

3. Brainstorm alternatives

Together, think of screen-free activities for home and on the go. *Examples:* Fly kites, play hangman on restaurant napkins, read aloud to each other from magazines in the doctor's office. *Tip:* Post the list. Have your child refer to it regularly—and add ideas to it, too.♥



RE + MANIA

Encourage your youngster to explore word parts and sounds by making his own *rebuses*, or puzzles that use pictures, symbols, and letters to represent words and phrases.



Take turns making rebuses for each other to figure out. For instance:

 +  = tree house

 +  + U = I love you

Suggest that your youngster say words aloud to get ideas. He will hear word parts that may help, such as *arrow* in *wheelbarrow*:

 + B + →

Mention that he can subtract letters, too! What does he think this one means?

 - s + 

Answer: *unlock*

How to talk about report cards

Report cards are one way that teachers communicate with parents about how their youngsters are doing. Use these ideas to discuss grades with your child.

Start out positive. First, ask your youngster to tell you about his report card. Have him show you something he is proud of, such as maintaining a good grade in writing or bringing up his social studies mark. Then, point out something positive you noticed.

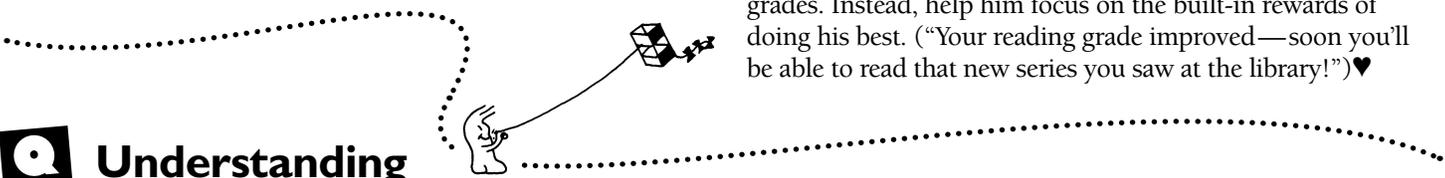


but his effort grade went up. He'll appreciate hearing, "You're really trying in math. Keep up the good work."

Note: Avoid paying your child or giving him prizes for grades. Instead, help him focus on the built-in rewards of doing his best. ("Your reading grade improved—soon you'll be able to read that new series you saw at the library!")♥

Focus on the future.

If your child gets a low grade, or a grade that drops from last quarter, discuss ways he could improve. He may need to get help from his teacher, or he might have to put in more study time. Pay attention to effort grades, too. Maybe your youngster's math grade stayed the same



Q & A Understanding state tests

Q: My daughter will be taking "performance-based" tests this month. What are these, and how can I help her prepare?

A: These tests ask students to perform tasks based on information they're given. For instance, your daughter may have to read a graph, answer questions about it, and then create her own graph. Or she might need to read two nonfiction articles on the same topic and compare the facts in them.



ACTIVITY CORNER Pin the magnet on the map

Where in the world is Iceland? How about South Africa? This version of Pin the Tail on the Donkey will help your youngster learn locations on a map.

Hang a world map on the refrigerator, and stand with your backs to it. One person names a continent or an ocean. Each player takes a turn closing her eyes, spinning around, and trying to place a refrigerator magnet on the correct location. *Variation:* Call out countries or states, and have players "pin" small sticky notes onto them.



Who came the closest? Let your child use a length of string or a ruler to measure the distance from each person's magnet to the place. Older students could use the map's scale to calculate how many miles away it is. The person who wins that round picks the next spot.♥

The best way for your child to prepare is by working hard in school each day and by reading regularly for pleasure. If the teacher sends home a test review packet or a practice test, look it over together when your youngster has finished—this will give both of you an idea of what to expect.♥

PARENT TO PARENT Parent volunteering: A first-time experience

I recently changed to the second shift at work, and the first thing my son Tony said was that now I could be a classroom volunteer like some of his friends' parents. I figured it was too late in the year, but I sent a note to the teacher anyway. I was glad when he called and said he'd love to have my help.

It turns out that my ability to speak Spanish and my sewing skills have come

in handy. First, I worked with a group of Spanish-speaking students who are learning English. Now I'm sewing costumes for the class play.

Mr. Brown told me that even if my hours at work change again, he has ways for me to lend a hand. Tony was happy to see me at school, and he and his classmates are excited about wearing the costumes in the play.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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