

Home & School

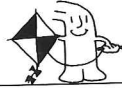
CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

March 2020

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal
Title 1

SHORT NOTES



Heads or tails logic

This brainteaser will encourage your youngster to think logically. Have each family member line up four pennies with heads facing up. The challenge is to turn them all to tails. The catch? Flip over exactly three pennies each time. Who can do it in the fewest number of tries?

A day in the life

What would life be like if your child were a shoe? How about a bicycle? Suggest that he write a diary entry from an object's point of view. Prompt him to imagine and write details about what the shoe or bike would see, hear, feel, and think.

Summer plans

Day camps and other summer programs often fill up fast. If you're looking for one for your child, consider signing up soon. Ask her school about programs—some may be free depending on your income. Also, browse the parks and recreation catalog or website for summer programs that match your youngster's interests.

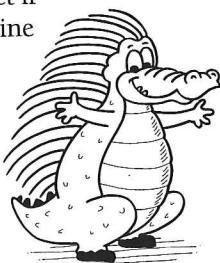
Worth quoting

"The beautiful thing about learning is nobody can take it away from you."
B. B. King

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What do you get if you cross a porcupine with an alligator?

A: I don't know, but you probably shouldn't hug it.



Standardized test success

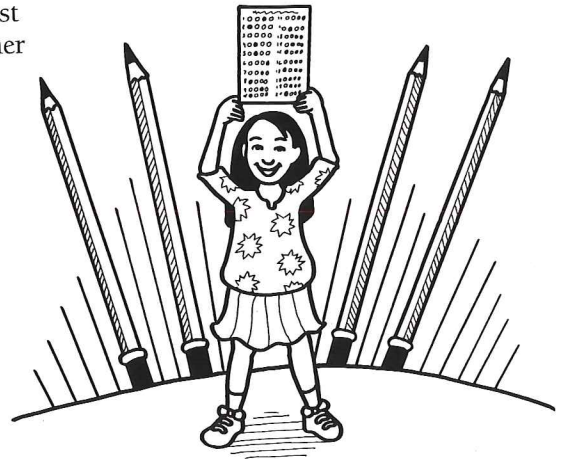
Doing well on a standardized test starts way before your child's teacher says, "You may begin." Boost your youngster's confidence and help her do her best with these tips.

Focus on schoolwork

The work habits your child uses all year long are the same ones she'll need on test day. Have her keep a list of what she does well when she does schoolwork, such as double-checking math answers or proofreading her essay. The night before the test, she can give herself a "pep talk" by reviewing her list.

Try a strategy

Let your youngster practice a key test-taking strategy in a stress-free way. Make up imaginary questions like "What is a unicorn's favorite food?" List answer choices, including one that's "right" (A: rainbow sprinkles), one that seems wrong (B: coal), and two that sound possible (C: pasta, D: pizza). While the question isn't real, the strategy is—discard any



obviously wrong answers, then weigh your first instinct against the remaining choices.

Practice keyboarding

If your child will take tests on a computer, help her work on keyboarding. She might type a story she wrote or email a relative, for instance. She'll practice typing, using special keys (shift, enter), and pointing and clicking the mouse on commands (save, send). *Tip:* No computer at home? Head to the library where she can use one for free. ♥

Sports: A winning attitude

Everyone likes winning. Losing? Not so much. Regardless, here are ways your youngster can be a good sport no matter the outcome:

- Cheer each other on when good things happen ("Nice catch!"), and sympathize when they don't ("You'll get the next one!").
- Shift your child's thinking. Instead of focusing on coming in first or scoring the most goals, suggest that he work on beating his personal best.
- When you watch sports together, point out examples of good sportsmanship. Perhaps his favorite basketball player helps an opponent up after a fall. ♥



Learning as a family

Keep your youngster excited about learning by making it a family affair. With these ideas, he'll see that learning is a lifelong journey.

Interview relatives. Your child can learn from relatives who remember living through an event or a time period he's studying in history. The whole family could gather around to hear about a grandparent's experience watching the first moon landing on television.



Give a lesson. Let your child be the teacher! Say he's learning about states of matter in science. He might help you cook and point out that water turns into a gas (steam) when it boils. Or he could make ice pops to demonstrate that water changes to a solid in the freezer.

On the go. Find family outings related to what your child studies. A high school orchestra concert lets him hear more experienced musicians playing instruments he uses in music class. If he's learning ways to protect the environment, consider participating in a local watershed cleanup as a family.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Money smarts

The first time a relative sent my daughter Lauren a gift card, she spent it right away. It occurred to me that she might find it harder to part with cash than a piece of plastic. So the next time she got a gift card, I traded her bills and coins for it.

Lauren put the money in a jar to keep on her dresser and labeled it with the total. Now



when we go to the store, she thinks carefully about whether she wants to dip into her jar for a pack of trading cards or a stuffed emoji. If

she does, she can take out the money before our next shopping trip and write the new total on her jar.

So far this strategy is working. Lauren immediately "sees" how much she's spending—and she doesn't want her jar to be empty.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Make an engineering lab

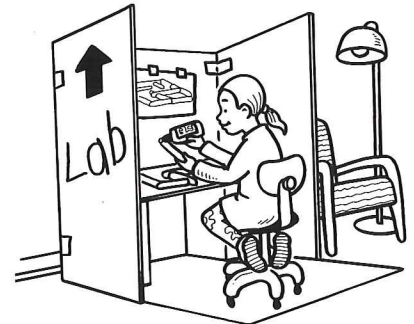
Let your child loose in her own engineering "lab" where she can design objects and solve problems as she builds them. Follow these steps.

1. Gather supplies. Help your youngster collect household objects, craft supplies, and recycling bin items to use for engineering projects. Examples: rubber bands, balloons, index cards, craft sticks, tape, glue, string, bottles, boxes.

2. Brainstorm projects. Together, list contraptions she might design in her lab. Can she dream up a way to create a balloon-powered boat? Or maybe she has an idea for building a marble maze.

3. Get to work. Encourage your youngster to set up her lab in a corner of the family room, pick a project from her list, and get started.

Idea: Spark new projects and solutions by having her add supplies from time to time, such as bubble wrap or a cut-up pool noodle.♥



Q & A

Anxiety in children

Q: I've been hearing about kids being diagnosed with anxiety disorders. My son tends to worry a lot. How can I tell the difference between normal worrying and a serious problem?

A: Some anxiety is just part of everyday life. For example, it's perfectly natural if your child is nervous about giving a speech in class or worries that a friend is angry with him over a disagreement.



With an anxiety disorder, those feelings interfere with daily life. Talk to your son's doctor if you notice any symptoms, which include difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, unexplained stomachaches or headaches, irritability, trouble concentrating, and avoiding regular activities.

If the doctor suspects an anxiety disorder, your child may be referred to a therapist who will work with him on new ways to react to things that worry him.♥

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Math+Science Connection

Beginning Edition

Building Excitement and Success for Young Children

March 2020

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal
Title 1

TOOLS & TIDBITS

How many parking spots?

A cardboard box makes a great garage for your child's toy cars—and it's a counting tool, too. To find out how many parking spaces she needs, ask her to count her cars, touching each one as she says each number. Then, she could use a marker to draw that many spaces in her "garage," numbering one space for every car as she goes.

Left hand, right hand

Encourage your youngster to try everyday tasks with his nondominant hand. If he's right-handed, for instance, he'll see that it's harder to throw a ball, write his name, and eat cereal with his left hand. Now share this interesting fact: The left side of his brain controls his right hand, and vice versa.



Book picks

■ *12 Ways to Get to 11* (Eve Merriam) shows combinations of numbers that add up to 11. A colorful introduction to addition.

■ *A Journey Through Space* (John Haslam and Steve Parker) takes your youngster on a trip to discover planets, comets, asteroids, and more.

Just for fun

Q: What did the dog get when he ate two dog treats plus four dog treats?

A: A full belly!



All kinds of patterns

Colors, movements, numbers ... there are lots of ways for your child to make patterns. Enjoy these hands-on activities together.

Create a color pattern

Have your youngster cut two different-color sheets of paper, perhaps green and orange, into strips. Help him staple the ends of a green strip together, loop an orange link through it, and staple its ends. Let him repeat the pattern (green, orange, green, orange) until he runs out of links. *Variation:* Use three colors (red, red, yellow, green, red, red, yellow, green).

Continue a dance pattern

Perform a routine with a pattern of simple movements. After a few repeats, stop so your child can complete the pattern. *Example:* Slide left, slide right, spin around, slide left, slide right, spin around, slide left. Then, your youngster should slide right and spin around. Now he starts a dance for you to continue.

Adopt a tree

"That's my tree!" Encourage your youngster to learn about seasonal changes by choosing a special tree to watch throughout the year.

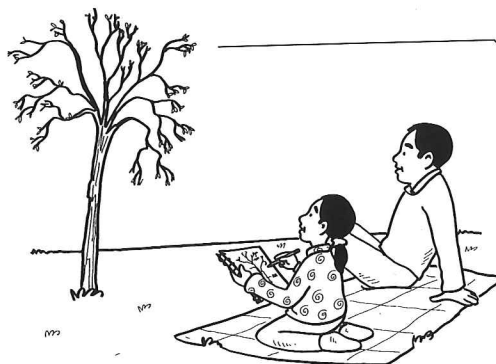
Get a notebook and crayons, and take a walk to let your child pick out her tree. She can sketch it and label its parts (trunk, branches). Have her write observations ("The branches are bare") and add the date.

Now visit her tree regularly as winter changes to spring. Soon she may notice tiny buds on the branches and, later, flowers, leaves, and perhaps even a bird's nest. What will the tree look like in summer or fall?



Grow a number pattern

Play with growing patterns where the same number is added to each number before it. Secretly choose a number between 1 and 10 (perhaps 6). On a piece of paper, write a number pattern (starting at 1), adding your number repeatedly: 1, 7, 13, 19. Can your child determine your secret number based on your pattern? Next, he could give you a pattern to grow.



Muffin tin math

A muffin tin makes a great math tool for practicing a variety of skills your youngster learns in school. Try these ideas.

Sequencing. Have your child number a dozen cupcake liners 1–12. Mix them up, and see if she can put them into the tin in order. Rearrange them—can she start with 12 and put them in reverse order?



Sorting. Give your youngster a bin of craft supplies (pom-poms, beads, buttons, googly eyes) or other small objects that will fit into muffin tin cups. Suggest that she find a way to sort them, and you guess her sorting rule. Maybe she'll sort by color (yellow, pink, white) or by material (fabric, plastic, metal). Now you sort them and let her figure out your rule.

Money. Turn the muffin tin into a “vending machine.” Ask your child to write “prices” (5 cents, 25 cents, 41 cents, 83 cents) inside cupcake liners and put them in the tin. Now she can add a small toy (plastic dinosaur, bouncy ball) in each liner. Dig up spare change, and take turns “shopping” for a toy, putting the correct coins into the cup.

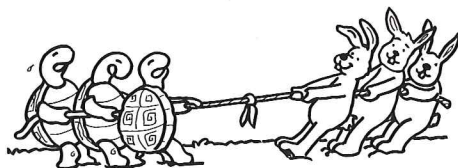
SCIENCE LAB

Tug-of-war science

Your youngster will have a field day with this experiment while he learns about two forces: pushes and pulls.

You'll need: jump rope, “flag” (bandanna, dish towel), two safety cones or trash cans

Here's how: Play the popular field day game tug-of-war. Help your child stretch out the rope on the ground and tie a flag in the center. Now he should put a cone at each end of the rope. To play, partners or teams stand on opposite ends, holding the rope. On “Go,” tug on the rope to get the flag over the cone on your side.



What happens? Tug-of-war involves pushes and pulls. You push your feet firmly against the ground while pulling on the rope. The person or team that pushes and pulls the hardest wins.

Why? Pushes and pulls are both forces. When applied in opposite directions, as when two opponents pull on a rope, an object moves toward the greater force.



PARENT TO PARENT

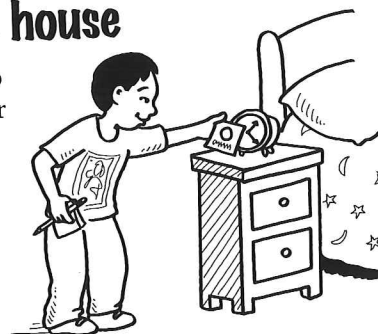
Math around the house

Last week my son woke up and told me about his funny dream—he said our whole house was made of numbers and shapes! We had a good laugh, but it actually gave me an interesting idea.

When he got home from school that day, I told him we were going to make his dream come true. “Let’s put math all through the house. We can label everything with a number or shape.” He thought that sounded like fun and got out sticky notes, construction paper, crayons, and tape.

First we labeled a window (“4 windowpanes”) and bookcase (“3 shelves”). Then, we drew shapes and wrote their names on sticky notes. My son put them onto matching shapes, such as “rectangle” on the dishwasher door and “circle” on his alarm clock.

We’ve left the labels up, and now he can walk around the house and read them. His dream turned into a clever activity, and I’m happy that he’s practicing his math skills and vocabulary.



MATH CORNER

Symmetry quilt

This “quilt” lets your youngster explore symmetrical designs—ones where each half is a mirror image of the other.

She’ll need 20 index cards. She can fold each card in half vertically or horizontally, unfold, and draw a symmetrical picture. For instance, she might draw a heart or a flower with the line of symmetry (the

crease in the card) vertically down the exact center. Or on a card with a horizontal fold, she could create a symmetrical design—say, zigzags, stripes, or polka dots—on the top and bottom halves.

Have your child line up the cards in even rows and columns, and help her use clear packing tape to connect them all into a quilt. Now she can hang up her symmetrical quilt for all to see!



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Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

March 2020

Frazier School District

Title I

INFO BITS

Factor your age

What factors are in your youngster's age? If he's 10, he would say 1 and 10, and 2 and 5 (because $1 \times 10 = 10$, and $2 \times 5 = 10$). For a bigger challenge, have him tell you the factors in your age. Is any family member's age a prime number (its only factors are 1 and itself)? *Note:* The smallest prime number is 2.

Home sweet home

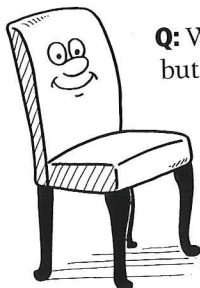
When you're out with your child, encourage her to look for animals in their habitats. She may notice ducks in a pond or deer in the woods. Now suggest that she ask faraway relatives about their local animal habitats. An aunt who lives in a desert may see lizards, and grandparents at the beach may spot seagulls.

Book picks

■ *The Girl with a Mind for Math: The Story of Raye Montague* (Julia Finley Mosca) tells the true story of a persistent young girl who grew up to become an award-winning engineer.

■ Explore the world of geology with your youngster in *My Book of Rocks and Minerals: Things to Find, Collect, and Treasure!* (Devin Dennie).

Just for fun



Q: What has four legs but can't walk?

A: A chair!

Working with decimals

Decimals are a part of everyday life that children begin to learn about in the upper elementary grades. These activities will let your youngster use them at home.

Hunt for decimals

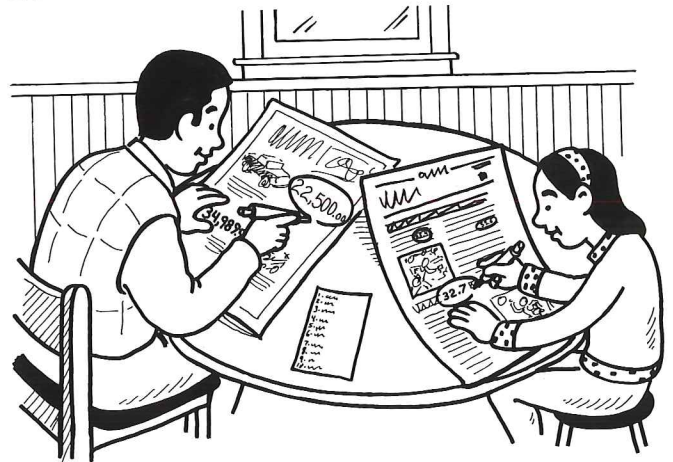
Your child can discover different ways decimals are used. Together, list 10 types of numbers with decimals to locate in a newspaper (a number with three digits to the right of the decimal point, a price, a sports statistic). Each person takes a page or section and circles as many as possible—then compare your finds.

Play decimal war

On separate index cards, have your youngster write 20 decimals, such as 0.4, 0.31, 0.70, 0.06, 0.85, and 0.7. Shuffle the cards, and deal them evenly to two players. Now play war as usual: Each player flips over a card, and the person with the bigger number takes both cards. If they're equivalent, turn over another card each. Whoever has the larger number takes all four cards. Collect all the cards to win.

Add decimals

Ask your child to use a grocery circular to plan her favorite meal and calculate the total cost. She could estimate, then add to check. Remind her to stack the numbers in a column, being sure to line up the decimal points. Aside from that, adding numbers with decimals is the same as adding whole numbers! 📦



Science haiku

Your child can combine science vocabulary with poetry by writing a haiku. This traditional Japanese poem contains three lines—the first and third lines have five syllables each, and the second line has seven syllables. Here's an example:

Planets

Eight unique planets
Revolving and rotating
Through our galaxy.

Space is just
one science
topic your
youngster
could write
about. Encourage
him to think of

more, such as weather, atoms, or the rain forest. Then, he can write a haiku, weaving in science vocabulary. Listen while he reads his haiku, and ask him to explain terms he used.

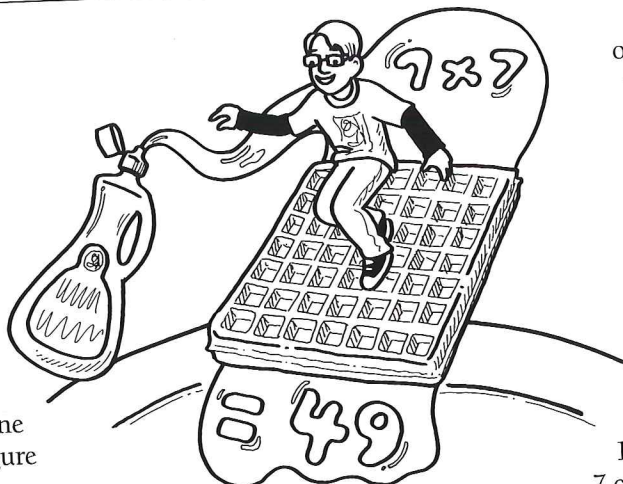
Idea: Each time he finishes a new science unit in school, suggest that he write a haiku about it. 📦



Fun with area

What's the area of that waffle your child is eating? How about the room he's sitting in? He can practice calculating area any time with these ideas.

Waffles. A waffle square makes a tasty unit of measurement. As your youngster pours syrup onto his waffle, encourage him to count the squares along one edge (perhaps 7). How can he figure



out the number of squares in the whole waffle without counting each one? *Hint:* He should use the formula for area (length x width). If the waffle is a square, he would multiply $7 \times 7 = 49$.

Floor tiles. Let your child use floor tiles to calculate the area of a room. He could measure one tile in your kitchen or bathroom, or in a waiting room, then count the rows and columns of tiles. If each tile is 1 square foot and there are 9 rows and 7 columns of tiles, what is the area of the room? (Answer: $9 \times 7 = 63$ square feet.)

SCIENCE LAB

Fly a hovercraft

How does air help a hovercraft ... well, hover? This project lets your young engineer see the phenomenon with her own eyes.

You'll need: pencil, paper plate, straw, uninflated balloon, tape

Here's how: Use a pencil to poke a hole in the center of the plate. Have your child turn the plate over and stick the straw in the hole so about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch comes out the bottom. Now help her fit the balloon over the top of the straw, secure it with tape, and blow through the bottom of the straw to inflate the balloon. Carefully pinching the neck of the balloon so air doesn't escape, she can set her "hovercraft" down with the balloon on top—and let go.



What happens? The plate hovers above the table, scooting around until the balloon deflates.

Why? Your youngster blew air into the balloon. As the air escaped, it formed an air cushion under the plate, causing the hovercraft to lift off the table.

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PARENT TO PARENT

My daughter Lyla will take a standardized math test this month. When she showed me a completed practice test, I was surprised by how different it was from the ones I took as a kid.

I asked the teacher about the test, and she said students will be asked to apply math problems to real situations like converting a recipe for six servings to one with four servings. They'll also be required to show their work and explain their reasoning for each test problem. These are skills they've worked on all year, the teacher said, so Lyla can feel confident that she's prepared.

Finally, the teacher suggested that I have Lyla tell me about problems on the practice tests she brings home. She said that explaining her reasoning out loud will help Lyla do well on test day.

Understanding state math tests



MATH CORNER

Explore line graphs

A line graph is used to measure data over time and spot trends. Here's how your youngster can create his own on a sheet of graph paper.

1. Decide what to plot. Maybe your youngster would like to track how many pieces of mail you receive each day.

2. Set up the graph. He should write the days you get mail (Monday–Saturday) across the bottom of his paper and numbers 1–10 up the left side. Have him label each axis ("Day of the

week" and "Number of pieces of mail") and add a graph title ("Mail received per day").

3. Track data. If you get 4 pieces of mail on Monday, he'd make a dot at the point where the Monday line and the 4 line cross. Each day, he can connect the new dot to the previous one.

4. Analyze. On which day did you get the most mail? Let him graph more weeks—does he notice any patterns?



Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

March 2020

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal
Title 1

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Frankly, Frannie* (AJ Stern)

Frannie is still in elementary school, but she's ready for a real job. During a field trip to the local radio station, she might get her chance. The radio host is missing—in the middle of his show!



She's determined to fill in, with hilarious results. Book one in the Frankly, Frannie series.

■ *The Great Gran Plan* (Elli Woollard)

What do you get when you cross the Three Little Pigs with Little Red Riding Hood? A picture book adventure where the big bad wolf is plotting to eat Granny, and a pig is on a mission to rescue her! (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Bring Me Some Apples and I'll Make You a Pie: A Story About Edna Lewis* (Robbin Gourley)

Edna was raised on a Virginia farm where she learned to cook with foods her family grew, including apples. This true story tells how she grew up to become an award-winning chef who was known for using farm-fresh ingredients.



■ *The Truth About Bears: Seriously Funny Facts About Your Favorite Animals* (Maxwell Eaton III)

A trio of bear narrators—polar, brown, and black—add humor to this nonfiction book. Your child will discover where bears live, how big they are, and what their tracks look like. Includes cartoon illustrations and easy-to-read text, maps, and diagrams.



Writing about me

"Personal narrative" is just a fancy term for a true story about the person your child knows best—herself! She's learning to write that kind of story in school, and you can help her at home with these activities.

Outstanding openings

A strong opening makes readers want to keep reading. Ask your youngster to name something your family did recently (say, visited a museum). Then, each of you can write two opening sentences for a story about it. Write one that doesn't give much information ("We went to a museum") and one that's more inviting ("My favorite museum has a giant elephant statue"). Trade papers, and tell which sentence you each like better and why.

Details

Vivid details paint pictures for readers. You and your child could each secretly think of a topic and write three sentences that give details about it. If your youngster picks music class, details might include



"The piano has smooth black and white keys," "We shake shiny bells while we sing," and "Sometimes we dance to music." Read your sentences aloud, and try to guess each other's topic.

Excellent endings

It's common for new writers to wrap up a story with "Then we went home" or "Then we went to bed." Work together to write a more creative final sentence for a story about your day. ("The March wind howled outside, and we fell asleep hoping to dream about spring.")♥

A celebration of reading

March 2 is Read Across America Day. Celebrate with your youngster by using books to learn about different places and languages in our country. Here's how:

- Look for a library book set in a different part of the country. Depending on where you live, your child could read about a youngster growing up in a seaside town, a mountain village, or a big city. As you read together, encourage him to compare his life to the character's—how are they similar and different?
- Many languages are spoken in America! Ask a librarian to help you find a book with words in two languages, including the one your family speaks at home. You and your child could learn a few words in the other language and use them in conversations.♥



Use your knowledge bank

Your youngster's brain holds a key to better reading comprehension—his “bank” of knowledge. Try these strategies that will help him use what he already knows to understand new information.

Before. Unlock your child's knowledge by doing a book preview together. Look at the pictures, and ask him what they make him think of. He might say a photo of a bulldozer reminds him of a construction



site in your neighborhood. Then you could ask what other construction vehicles he thinks the book might mention.

During. Keep your youngster on the lookout for familiar and unfamiliar information while you read to him. He could write “I knew that!” to stick on a page that mentions a bulldozer scooping dirt and “Cool new fact!” to put on a page that explains what a forklift does.

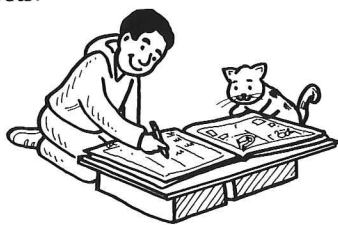
After. Go back to the pages your child marked, and let him tell you what he learned. Did he find a new fact about

something that was familiar? He might say he discovered that some bulldozers have wheels instead of tracks.♥

Parent to Parent

Write a nonfiction book

My son Samuel loves nonfiction books. He especially seems to enjoy the diagrams and other graphics. One day, after we'd read a book about sea animals, I noticed him drawing and labeling a diagram of our house. I asked what he was doing, and he explained that he was writing his own nonfiction book about our pets.



Samuel's diagram showed our cat lounging in a sunny window and our cockatiel on her perch. Next, he wrote a page comparing cats and birds. It was adorable—he wrote that you can snuggle with a cat, but a bird can ride on your shoulder.

He stapled the pages together and drew a book cover. Next, Samuel is going to write a nonfiction book about soccer.♥

Q&A

Reading to siblings

Q My daughters, ages 4 and 6, have very different interests. Do you have any tips for picking books to read aloud that they'll both enjoy?

A Here's an idea: Ask each child to choose a library book she thinks the other would like. Your little one might pick a story about origami for her big sister, and your older daughter may choose a story about rock collecting for your younger one. They'll learn kindness, and they'll be more inclined to listen to stories they picked out.

Then, when you choose books, keep in mind that your older child may enjoy a story that's too young for her if it's on a favorite topic. And your little one will find it easier to pay attention to a harder book that matches her interests. Finally, broaden their interests by selecting books on topics unfamiliar to both children.♥



Fun with Words

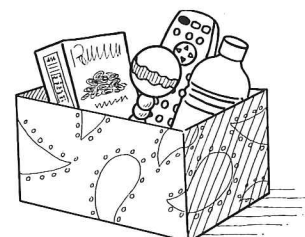
What doesn't belong?

Which word doesn't sound like the others—*button*, *bean*, *noodle*, or *bow*? If your youngster said *noodle*, she's paying attention to beginning sounds (*noodle* is the only word that doesn't begin with the *b* sound). Play this game to help her practice hearing sounds in words.

Let your child fill a box with three objects having the same beginning sound (*rattle*, *raisins*, *remote*) and one that starts with a different sound (*bottle*).

Then, you pick the item that doesn't belong in the box (*bottle*). Or you might deliberately make a mistake (*rattle*). Can your youngster correct you? Now you refill the box, and have her figure out which of your objects doesn't belong.

Variations: Choose items that share an ending sound (like *-en* as in *mitten*) or vowel sound (perhaps short *a* as in *cap*).♥



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Reading Connection

March 2020

Working Together for Learning Success

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal
Title 1

Book Picks

■ Boys of Steel: The Creators of Superman (Marc Tyler Nobleman)

In 1934, high schoolers Jerry and Joe combined their writing and drawing skills to create the celebrated superhero Superman. This comic-style book tells the true story of how the duo convinced publishers to take a chance on Superman and how the character became a household name.



■ Me, Frida, and the Secret of the Peacock Ring (Angela Cervantes)

Paloma doesn't realize that her love of mystery books is going to come in handy during a visit to Mexico. Siblings Gael and Lizzie are supposed to tutor her in Spanish, but instead they invite her on a search for the missing ring of famed Mexican artist Frida Kahlo.



■ Science Experiments You Can Eat (Vicki Cobb)

Young scientists will enjoy testing these edible experiments in the kitchen. Make rock candy to explore crystals, whip up salad dressing to see how liquids are suspended in oil, and more. Includes a glossary of science terms.

■ Sled Dog School (Terry Lynn Johnson)

To bring up his math grade, Matt takes on an extra-credit project to start a business. The one thing he's really good at: training sled dogs. Follow along as Matt learns to handle customers and track his expenses while juggling his day-to-day school responsibilities.



Keep reading aloud

When your youngster listens to you read, good things happen. He uses his imagination, adds words to his vocabulary, and boosts his comprehension.

Plus, even though he probably reads on his own now, reading aloud can help your child develop a love of books that will last a lifetime. Try these ideas.



Choose books together

Novels, short stories, and non-fiction books all make good read-alouds. Spark your youngster's interest in listening by having him help you decide what to read. Look at lists of award-winning books at your library or online. Or ask his teacher, a librarian, or a bookseller for recommendations.

Find time daily

Try to read to your child a little every day. When you're reading a long book, a few pages a day can help him remember what's happening. *Tip:* If he has reading to do for class, you might suggest that

he finish it first and then play outside or have a snack before he settles down to enjoy a read-aloud.

Include the family

Invite everyone to listen when you read to your youngster. Create a relaxed atmosphere by stopping to laugh at funny parts or asking for opinions about a character's decision. At the end of story time, build excitement for the next installment by letting each family member predict what will happen. ■

Be a fact finder

Use trivia as a fun way to get the whole family learning together. Gather almanacs, record books, or trivia books from the library, and do these activities:

- Let your youngster pose a fact-based challenge. ("Find a fact about outer space.") Everyone searches the books, and the first person to find a fact that fits reads it aloud. ("All planets rotate counterclockwise except Venus and Uranus.") Then, that family member asks for the next fact.
- Play a board game with a twist: To move, answer a question from another player based on a fact from a book. *Example:* "What was Thomas Edison's middle name?" (Alva) The first player to circle the board wins. ■



Organize before writing

Help your youngster set herself up for writing success! She can turn in better reports and essays by organizing ideas and information before she starts writing. Encourage her to use this three-step method.

1. Get focused. The first step is pinpointing the main idea of her paper. If your child's teacher assigns a report on the Underground Railroad, her main idea could be "The Underground Railroad was a secret network that helped some enslaved people escape to freedom."



category. She can set aside any that don't support her main idea and rearrange those that belong with a different subtopic. Now, she's ready to write. ■

2. Choose subtopics. As your youngster does research, suggest that she write each fact on a separate index card. Then, she can sort the cards into subtopics ("Leaders," "Routes," "Opposition"). She might label an envelope for each category and store the cards in the appropriate one.

3. Review notes. Before she writes her paper, she should read over the note cards in each



Fun
with
Words

Write a "list poem"

Your child can learn to describe a topic thoroughly by writing a list poem. It's just what it sounds like: a list of words and phrases that go together to make a poem.

First, have your youngster pick a person, place, or thing and write a title for his poem ("My Best Friend," "The Roller Skating Rink," "A Rainy Day").

Next, he can list words and phrases underneath. Encourage him to pick a variety of vivid vocabulary words, such as action words or words that describe colors and senses. Finally, he might wrap up his poem by repeating the title as the last line. Here's an example:

A Rainy Day

Drips, drops, sprinkles
Gray sky
Dark clouds
Lightning flashes
Thunder booms
Clouds burst open
A rainy day. ■



Parent
2
Parent

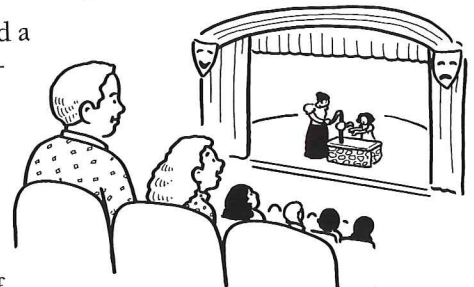
Read a book, see a play

Last spring, I discovered a new way to share my love of theater—and reading—with my daughter Eva.

My neighbor gave our family tickets to her son's high school play. After the performance, Eva surprised me by asking to read the book the play was based on. We borrowed a copy from our neighbor, and by the end of the week, we had both finished reading it.

Now I keep an eye out for plays inspired by books, either at the high school or at our community theater. Sometimes we read the book first. Other times, we see the play first. Then we compare the two versions.

We recently saw *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and next we have tickets for *The Jungle Book*. Eva has already finished reading both books! ■



Q&A

Ready for testing

Q My son has standardized tests coming up. How can I help him prepare for the reading sections?

A Start by asking him what kinds of questions will be on the test. He can find out from his teacher or look at sample exams given out in class or posted online. Then, he can use homework assignments as practice.

If the exam will be timed, your child could time himself when he writes an English essay. Or he might use strategies for

reading-comprehension questions when he has history assignments.

For instance, suggest that he start by reading the questions in a handout or a textbook chapter—and then read the relevant passages. This will tell him what information to look for, and he'll be ready to try this technique on test day.

Note: Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast before his test (and every day). ■



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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