

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

January 2020

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal
Title 1

SHORT NOTES

Snow day plan

Make sure you have a plan in place for weather-related school closings and delays. You might ask a coworker to swap shifts or see if you could telework when school is canceled. If you can't get home in time for an early closing, find a relative or neighbor to pick up your child from school or meet him at the bus stop.

What's that sound?

Play this game to sharpen your youngster's listening skills. Have her close her eyes while you make a noise. Can she identify the jingle of the dog's leash or the "pop" of the toaster? Trade roles, and let her create a sound for you to figure out.

Support for grandfamilies

If you're raising a grandchild, ask the school counselor about "grandfamily" support groups. You'll meet other grandparents to swap advice and discuss the joys and challenges of parenting the second time around. Some may even offer grandparent-grandchild activities where your youngster can meet other kids with families like his.

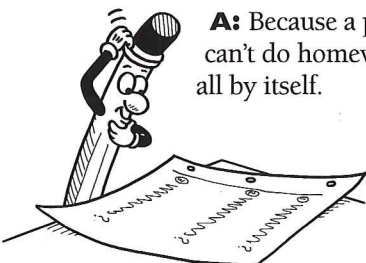
Worth quoting

"If you see a friend without a smile, give him one of yours." *Proverb*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Why do you do homework with a pencil?

A: Because a pencil can't do homework all by itself.



Goal setting: A recipe for success

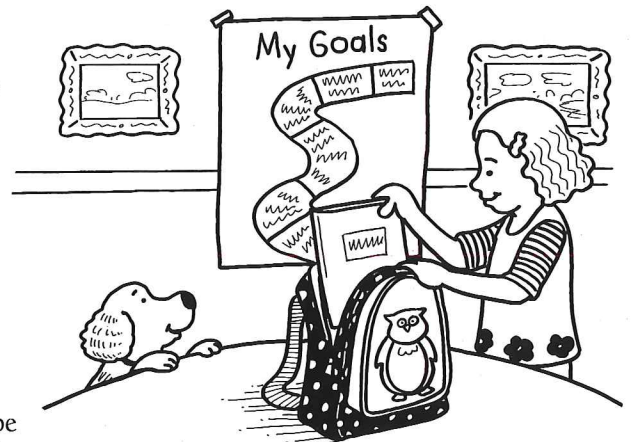
Reaching a goal involves more than just hoping and dreaming. Here's how your child can practice setting, tracking, and achieving goals—skills that will serve her well now and in the future.

Be specific

What would your youngster like to accomplish? Maybe she wants to earn higher grades or become a better gymnast. Suggest that she narrow down the goal so it's more targeted. Her goal might be "I will turn in all of my assignments on time" or "I will move up one level in gymnastics this year."

Map it out

Breaking a goal into small steps makes it feel more manageable. Your child could draw a winding road on paper, add lines to divide it into segments, and write a step in each one. Examples: "Put my planner in my



backpack when school ends" or "Do my beam routine five times in a row without falling off." She can color each step as she completes it.

Check in

Support your child in sticking to her plan. Say she falls behind on a long-term project. Together, look at her planner and find slots of time where she can catch up. Or if she has to miss gymnastics class one day, offer ways to practice at home like using a strip of duct tape as a balance beam. ♥

Parent helpers

School volunteer opportunities come in all shapes and sizes to fit anyone's schedule. Consider these ways you might help your youngster's school.

● **Contribute supplies.** Offer to save recyclables to use in the classroom. Ask the teacher what he needs—perhaps plastic bottle caps for math games or baby-food jars for snow globes. *Note:* If you have clothes your child has outgrown, find out whether the school nurse could use them.

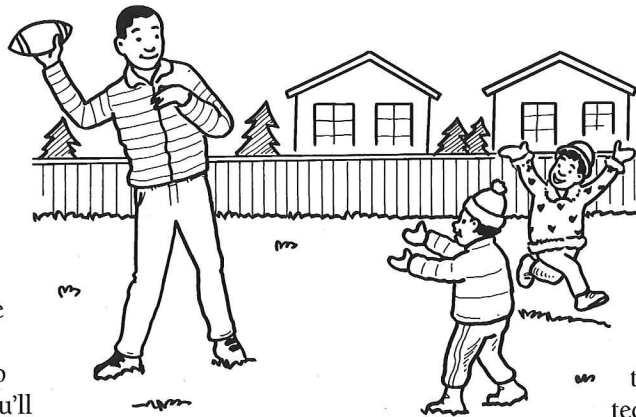
● **Share a talent.** See if you can help with an after-school or evening activity. Love music? Maybe you could tune students' instruments before a concert. If you're a runner, you might help coach a running club. Or if you enjoy arts and crafts, volunteer to make scenery or sew costumes for a play. ♥



Screen-free play

Studies show that kids who spend less time in front of screens tend to be healthier and earn higher test scores. Encourage your youngster to enjoy “unplugged” play with these ideas.

Nature time. Electronics don’t grow on trees—so going outside to play is one of the easiest ways to avoid screen time. You and your child can bundle up and go for a walk or throw a football around. You’ll both enjoy being outdoors and spending special time together.



A screen-free corner.

Create a spot for your youngster to store his favorite non-electronic items like jigsaw puzzles, board games, and play dough. He could put them on shelves or in bins and hang up a sign that says “Screen-free zone.”

He’ll have an inviting place to exercise his brain without technology.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER A dancing snake

Air currents make a paper “snake” wiggle and dance with this simple science experiment.

Materials: crayons, paper plate, scissors, yarn, lamp



Have your youngster use a crayon to draw a spiral on the paper plate. She can decorate the snake with patterns, then cut it out. Poke a small hole in the snake’s head, and tie on a piece of yarn.

Turn on the lamp, and let your child hold her snake by the yarn at least 1 foot above (not touching) the warm light-bulb. Her snake will dance and spin.

What’s going on? As warm air created by the lamp rises, cooler air moves in to replace it. This constant motion creates air currents that move the snake around.♥

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Write organized reports

This three-step strategy will set your youngster up to write a clear, well-organized report.

1. Choose your topic

Say your child is supposed to write about an animal. The process will be more fun if she picks an animal she finds interesting—and her enthusiasm is likely to come through in her writing.

2. Brainstorm questions

What does your youngster want to know about her topic? If she chose penguins, she might decide to research what they eat or how many eggs they lay at a time. She could write each question on a separate index card.

3. Collect facts

Your child can read about penguins in library books and online. As she researches, she should fill each card with facts. She might write information about a penguin’s diet on one card and offspring on another. *Tip:* She can use each card to write one paragraph in her report.♥



Q & A Keep an eye out for bullying

Q: My son has been coming home from school with bruises. He keeps saying he fell at recess, but I worry he’s being bullied. What should I do?

A: Start by talking to his teacher. Tell her what you’ve noticed, and ask if she’s aware of any recess accidents. If she isn’t, let her know you’re concerned about bullying, and ask her to keep an eye out.

Then, ask your son if he has ever felt unsafe in school or if he has seen anyone being hurt or being teased repeatedly.

Also, explain that he should always get adult help right away if anyone is hurting him or someone else. After all, bullying isn’t a problem he’s expected to handle alone, and it can get worse if adults don’t step in.

Once you get the ball rolling, he might open up. If he admits to being bullied, meet with the teacher to make a plan for putting an end to it. And if he doesn’t, the teacher will be aware of the situation and can alert you if she observes bullying.♥



Math+Science Connection

Beginning Edition

Building Excitement and Success for Young Children

January 2020

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal

Title 1

TOOLS & TIDBITS

Twinkle, twinkle

Stargaze together—no telescope necessary!

Share this hint with your youngster to tell if he's viewing a star or a planet: Stars appear to twinkle, but planets usually don't. Can he spot a planet (or two)? *Tip:* Get a sky guide from the library or use a free app so he learns the names of stars, constellations, and planets.

Odd and even addresses

On many streets, houses or shops on one side have odd numbers, and those on the other side have even numbers. Look for streets like this when you and your child are out. She could read the numbers and figure out whether they're odd or even. *Hint:* A number is odd if the digit in the ones place is odd and even if the digit in the ones place is even.



Book picks

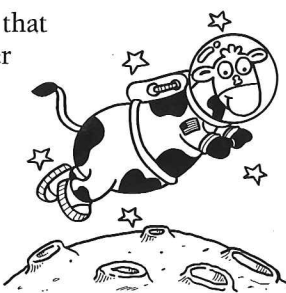
■ Cute little animals decide the best way to divide into equal teams in *Equal Shmequal* (Virginia Kroll).

■ The average snowflake has 180 billion water molecules! Fascinating facts like that are sprinkled throughout *Curious About Snow* (Gina Shaw).

Just for fun

Q: Who was the first animal in space?

A: The cow that jumped over the moon!



Survey says: Graphs are fun!

Graphs are packed with information. Your child can practice reading them and then make his own with these ideas.

Be a detective

Encourage your youngster to learn facts from graphs. Perhaps he'll notice a graph in the doctor's office showing how much sleep kids need. Help him find his age group to see how long he should sleep. Or maybe he'll spot a graph in school about a fundraiser. How many rolls of wrapping paper did his grade sell—and which grade sold the most?

Tell a story

Have your child make a graph based on a book. For instance, he could create a bar graph comparing the elements in a fairy tale (castles, dragons, knights). Invite him to use his graph to tell you a story. ("Once upon a time, 3 knights



lived in 1 castle. There were 6 dragons, so each knight got 2.")

Graph your day

Keeping track of everyday activities is easy with a picture graph. Your youngster might draw an apple to stand for a meal or snack, a book to represent reading, and a hand for each time he washes his hands. At the end of the day, ask questions about his graph. ("How many times did you eat?" "How many more times did you wash your hands than read?")

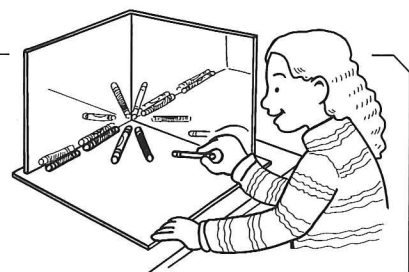
Mirror science

Mirror, mirror, on the wall, how do you reflect it all? Here's how your youngster can explore the science behind this fascinating everyday object.

Let your child form a right angle (like an L) with two mirrors, then lay down several crayons so their tips point toward the angle. The reflections create a colorful pattern!

When light hits a mirror, everything in front of the mirror is reflected back. When two or more mirrors are placed at an angle to each other, they reflect light back and forth, creating multiple reflections—this is how a kaleidoscope works.

Idea: Encourage your youngster to experiment with other objects (googly eyes, pipe cleaners, building blocks). What patterns and shapes can she make?



A zero's job

Poor little zero...it's often treated like "nothing." But it's just as important as any other number! Your youngster will discover what zero does with these activities.

Add and subtract. Take turns making up real-life story problems with zero. Your child could say, "I went down the slide 8 times at recess. The teacher said it was time to go



inside, so I went down zero more times. How many times did I slide?" You say the number sentence for her problem: $8 + 0 = 8$, so you went down the slide 8 times." Your problem might be, "I packed 12 grapes in my lunch. I ate 12 grapes. How many were left?" Your youngster should answer "Zero, because $12 - 12 = 0$."

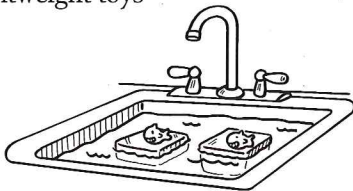
Search. Get notebooks and pencils, set a timer for 5 minutes, and race to find zeros around the house. Write down the numbers and where you found them. Your child might spot page 102 in a book or 20 degrees on the thermometer. What would happen without zeros? (You'd have page 12 and 2 degrees.) She'll see that zero can show there are no tens in the tens place or no ones in the ones place.

SCIENCE LAB

Floating on ice

Try this experiment where toys float on "icebergs." Your child will discover how an iceberg's mass can affect how long it floats.

You'll need: ruler, water, two identical small plastic containers, two identical lightweight toys



Here's how: Help your youngster use a ruler to measure 2 inches of water into one container and 4 inches of water into the other. Freeze 4–5 hours, until solid. Fill a sink with cold water, and have your child carefully flip over the containers and tap on the bottoms to remove the icebergs. Now he can float them in the water, put a toy on each one, and check back every few minutes.

What happens? The thinner iceberg melts faster, so the toy on that one winds up in the water first.

Why? The thinner iceberg has less mass—there is less ice to melt, so it melts before the thicker iceberg does.

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PARENT TO PARENT

Domino math

My parents were coming to visit, and I wanted to think of math games my son Aaron could play with them. I asked them what games they might enjoy, and they said they both had fond memories of playing dominoes with their grandparents.

So I got a set at the dollar store and showed Aaron how to match the dots to play. We turned the tiles facedown and each drew seven. Then, we turned our dominoes faceup. Aaron put out the first tile—it had three dots on one half and four dots on the other. I made a match with a tile that had four dots on one half and one dot on the other. He looked at his tiles until he found a half with one dot.

By the time we finished, Aaron was able to quickly recognize the number of dots on each domino without counting them. And he was more than ready to play dominoes with Grandma and Grandpa when they came to town!



MATH CORNER

Above or below?

Is the cat *in* the hat? Or is the hat *on* the cat? Describing relative positions is an early geometry skill that your youngster can work on with this challenge.

1. Make a list. Together, brainstorm words that tell where objects are located in relation to other objects. Examples: *beside, next to, in front of, behind.*

2. Draw and describe. Sit back-to-back

with paper and crayons. Draw two objects on your paper (say, a house and a tree). Using words from the list, give your child instructions to draw the same items in the same positions. ("Draw a tree *beside* a house.") After she follows your directions, she draws something and gives you instructions. ("Draw a cloud *above* the house.")

3. Compare your pictures. Are the objects in the same places relative to each other?



Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

January 2020

Frazier School District

Title I

INFO BITS

That's my number!

Give your youngster practice reading big numbers with this idea. Have him look at a phone keypad and say the number that goes with the letters of his name. *Example:* Isaac = 47,222. Can he make a word or write a short note using the digits in your phone number?

Our "wonder board"

Encourage your child to write "What we wonder about science..." on a poster board and display it where family members can write questions.



She might write "Do hibernating animals stay asleep all winter?" or "Why do

we close our eyes when we sneeze?" Then, go to the library or look online to find answers together.

Book picks

■ A knight and a lady learn all about fractions when they go shopping in *Sir Cumference and the Fracton Faire* (Cindy Neuschwander).

■ *Case Closed? Nine Mysteries Unlocked by Modern Science* (Susan Hughes) follows curious scientists who shed light on ancient mysteries using DNA, CAT scans, and more.

Just for fun

Q: What did the mouse say at the science fair?

A: "I trained this student so well that when I run through the maze, he brings me a snack!"



Comparing volume

Would your child rather have a cup of pennies or a bucket of pennies? The bucket! Its volume is greater, so it holds more pennies. These activities will help her learn about volume.

Arrange cups

Gather several cups of different shapes and sizes. By eyeballing their volumes, your youngster should try to arrange them from least to greatest. To check the order, let her fill the first cup with water and pour it into the second, fill the second cup and pour it into the third, and so on. If a cup won't hold all the water, she'll need to rearrange.

Serve popcorn

Help your child use paper and tape to create two bags—one tall and narrow and the other short and wide. Now pop popcorn and ask her to predict which bag will hold the most. She could count the kernels as she fills the bags. She'll discover that height, width, and depth together determine volume. *Idea:* Play



"popcorn stand." Each family member can make and fill a bag.

Count squares

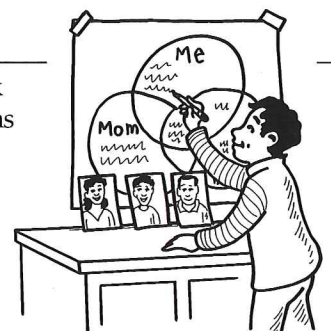
Suggest that your youngster wrap graph paper around a small object (dish sponge, remote control). Let her count the rows and columns of squares to find the item's dimensions (rounded to the nearest square). *Example:* length = 24 squares, width = 8 squares, height = 1 square. Then, she can multiply the three numbers to get the total *cubic units* ($24 \times 8 \times 1 = 192$ cubic units).

Trace your traits

Where did your child get his curly hair or cheek dimple? This investigation lets him use Venn diagrams to compare inherited traits and explore genetics.

Have your youngster draw three overlapping circles and label one "Me," one "Mom," and one "Dad." In the shared space, he should write shared physical traits. In each person's separate space, he can list traits the others don't have, such as brown hair, attached earlobes, or left-handedness.

Now suggest that he make diagrams to compare his traits with his grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins. He'll likely see patterns emerge, like curly hair on Mom's side or dimples on Dad's.



Algebra games

Finding the missing number is a big part of algebra. Your youngster can play these games to practice.

Find the factor. Have your child and a friend each secretly write a number (1–12) on a separate slip of paper. Look at both numbers (perhaps 12 and 4), multiply them, and say the product (48). Each player uses the product and his own number to figure out his opponent's number. Whoever calls it out first wins the round. If your youngster wrote 12, he might think, " $12 \times 4 = 48$ " or " $48 \div 12 = 4$." Play until someone wins five rounds.



Fill in the blank. Remove the 10s and face cards from a deck of playing cards (ace = 1, joker = 0). Deal four cards to each player, and stack the rest facedown. On paper, write a double-digit addition problem, leaving out one addend ($__ + 43 = 84$). Players solve the problem in their heads or on paper and then try to collect the cards that form the answer (4 and ace, since $41 + 43 = 84$). On each turn, draw one card from the stack and discard one card from your hand. The first person to get a 4 and an ace wins the round. 🎲

card from the stack and discard one card from your hand. The first person to get a 4 and an ace wins the round. 🎲

MATH CORNER

Happy leap year!

There aren't 365 days in a year—there are 365.242189! That extra 0.242189 adds up over time, so we have a leap year to keep our calendar accurate. Let your child celebrate the fact that 2020 is a leap year with these fun math problems:

- What fraction is close to 0.242189? ($\frac{1}{4}$) Since $\frac{1}{4} \times 4 = 1$, we add 1 extra day every 4 years—February 29.



- Which other years are leap years? *Hint:* The number of the year must be evenly divisible by 4, but it can't be evenly divisible by 100 unless it's also evenly divisible by 400.
- How many leap years has your youngster experienced in his life? Was he born in a leap year? 🎲

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PARENT TO PARENT

Do math, save money

My daughter Maisie has started saying that she doesn't need math "in real life." So I decided to take her grocery shopping to show her how math can help us save money.

I gave Maisie a \$15 budget, and she filled our cart with spaghetti (\$1.49), sauce (\$2.99), lean ground beef (\$4.68), grated cheese (\$3.99), and bagged salad (\$2.49). When she added everything up, she realized she was 64 cents over budget and didn't have enough money for dessert and tax.

I pointed out ways to save like buying store-brand spaghetti and sauce, choosing turkey instead of beef, and getting a block of cheese to grate ourselves.

Maisie got her total under \$15, and she had enough for ice cream and tax. Next I'll show her how math will help her buy more clothes for less money. 🎲



SCIENCE LAB

Water on the run

Which water droplet will travel faster—cold or hot? Your youngster can see how *surface tension* works with this race that's also a science experiment.

You'll need: tape, wax paper, $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. measuring spoon, water, two drinking straws

Here's how: Tape wax paper to a table. Now let your child put two $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. droplets of tap water, one cold and one hot, at one end of the paper. On "go," each of you uses a straw to blow a droplet to the opposite end.



What happens? The cold droplet wins because it stays together better. The hot droplet breaks into multiple tiny droplets that take longer to blow across the paper.

Why? Water molecules cling to each other—a property called surface tension. When water is heated, its molecules are separated, weakening the surface tension. That's a bad thing when it comes to winning this race, but a good thing when it comes to washing dishes, as the molecules work their way into nooks and crannies to help remove food. (Soap also reduces surface tension, making hot, soapy water ideal for dishwashing!) 🎲

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2020

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal

Title 1

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ **Spend It!** (Cinders McLeod)

Sonny Bunny has a big list of things to buy. But his allowance doesn't stretch very far—especially when he wants a bouncy castle that costs 100 carrots. With a little help from his mom, Sonny learns a lesson about money. This is the first book in the Moneybunny series.



■ **The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid** (Jeanette Winter)

Young Zaha Hadid loved designing clothes, furniture, and buildings. When she grew up, she wanted to be an architect, but her designs were so unusual that no one wanted to build them. This biography tells how Hadid's persistence helped her realize her dreams.

■ **Moldylocks and the Three Beards** (Noah Z. Jones)

The Three Beards aren't home when Moldylocks and her friend Princess drop by for a visit. So the girls enjoy some chili, test the chairs, and jump on the beds. What will happen when the Three Beards return? Book one in the Princess Pink series. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ **Book of Bones: 10 Record-Breaking Animals** (Gabrielle Balkan)

This award-winning nonfiction book invites your child to explore animal skeletons. He'll get answers to questions like "Which creature has the most bones?" and "What has a skeleton but no bones?"



The give and take of conversation

A good conversation is a two-way street that includes speaking and listening—two skills your child needs to succeed in school. Use these ideas to help her practice.

Take turns

Sit on the floor facing your youngster, and roll a ball back and forth as you carry on a conversation. The person with the ball is the speaker, and the other is the listener. Your child will learn to listen and wait for you to roll the ball before it's her turn to talk.

Ask questions

Let your youngster see how questions keep a conversation going and show interest in what the other person said. Make a statement and ask a question. *Example:* "I like cookie dough ice cream. What's your favorite flavor?" Then your child answers your question and asks a related one: "Strawberry. What's your favorite topping?"



Build on

Create a block tower to show your youngster that a conversation involves building on each other's ideas. Lay down a block, and start a discussion. ("Monopoly is a fun game.") Your child puts a block on yours and adds to what you said. ("It is fun, but it takes a long time.") Keep talking and adding to your tower until you run out of things to say. Now your youngster gets to start a new tower—and a new conversation. ♥

Throw a book party

Celebrate reading with a party based on a book of your youngster's choice. You'll improve his comprehension by giving him fun ways to connect with the story. Here's how.

● **Play.** Let your child plan an activity inspired by the story. For *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (Crockett Johnson), everyone might draw with purple crayons. Have your youngster imagine he's Harold—what might he draw that wasn't in the book?

● **Eat.** What party snacks would go well with *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* (Judi Barrett), for example? Ask your child to think of foods mentioned in the story, like meatballs, dill pickles, and cherry tomatoes. If he lived in the town of Chewand-swallow, what other foods would he want to rain down? ♥



Winter at the library

Imagine a cold winter afternoon. You and your youngster are at the library. It's warm and cozy, and there are books everywhere!

Sound magical? Try these suggestions for making library visits special.

Explore different sections. Have your child name a topic that interests him, such as polar animals or engineering, and find related materials in various parts of the library. Your youngster might get a picture book about a seal family, a magazine with an article on



jellyfish, or a biography of an oceanographer.

Enjoy family reading time. Walk around the library to select a perfect reading spot. Perhaps your child will pick a table by a window or a corner with beanbag chairs. You could each read your own book silently, or read aloud quietly to your child.

Attend special events. Ask a librarian or check the library's website for a calendar of events.

Then, plan to attend one as a family.

Maybe a children's author is coming to share her latest book or there's a family book club you could join. ♥

Fun with Words Move and spell

With this activity, your youngster will "spell" words by doing a series of movements—one for each letter.

Ask your child to write the alphabet down the left side of a piece of paper, one letter per line. Together, think of a different action for each letter. *Examples:* A = act like a chicken, H = hop on one foot, T = touch your toes.



Secretly choose a word from your youngster's spelling list or the dictionary. Spell it for her using the movements instead of the letters. For instance, spell *hat* by hopping on one foot, flapping your arms while squawking, and touching your toes. Can she figure out your word? Now she acts out a word for you to identify. ♥

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Parent to Parent

Writing + board games = fun!

When my daughter Sonja needed to work on handwriting, we looked for ways to make it fun. Our favorite was adding writing to our weekly family game night.

Some nights, we play games that have writing built in, like Hangman or Scattergories Jr. Other times, we have to use a little creativity. For example, we write down our guesses in Clue Jr., our answers to questions in trivia games, and our requests for cards in Go Fish. We've also made Sonja our official scorekeeper—she gets to write our names and the numbers for our scores.

This has been a great way to improve Sonja's handwriting, and it feels more like play than practice! ♥



Q&A Choose specific words

Q My son is learning to pick more specific words when he writes stories. How can I help him with this at home?

A Specific words create pictures in the reader's mind. For example, there are many ways to say *run* (*jog, sprint, scamper, race*). Each has a slightly different meaning, bringing to mind a different image.



After your son writes a rough draft, suggest that he use a highlighter to mark words to replace. If he can't decide, ask questions like "Which breed of dog is that?" or "What kind of house does the family live in?" He could replace *dog* with *poodle* or *mutt*, and *house* with *townhouse* or *cottage*.

Tip: If he can't think of a replacement, look in a thesaurus together. He can read his sentence aloud, substituting each new word to see which one sounds best. ♥

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

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Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal
Title 1

Book Picks

■ *Fablehaven* (Brandon Mull)

Kendra and Seth discover a secret: Their grandfather is the caretaker of a forest filled with magical creatures. When Seth breaks a rule, everyone is in danger, and it's up to the children to save everyone. Book one in the Fablehaven series. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *The Poetry of US*

(Edited by J. Patrick Lewis)

Organized by regions of the United States, this collection includes poems by Langston Hughes, Robert Frost, Maya Angelou, and many others. The poems highlight things found in America, from plants and animals to songs and food. Where will the next poem take you?

■ *Crow Smarts: Inside the Brain of the World's Brightest Bird*

(Pamela S. Turner)

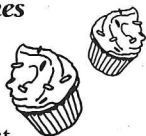
In this nonfiction book, your youngster will find facts about brilliant birds who can solve puzzles and build and use tools. Includes photographs and an "Ask the author" section. Part of the Scientists in the Field series.



■ *It's Raining Cupcakes*

(Lisa Schroeder)

Winning a trip to New York City in a cupcake-baking contest is Isabel's only hope for summer travel. But she'll need to beat her best friend, Sophie, and avoid upsetting her mom, who has her own ideas about the contest. A story about following your dreams.



Write around the house

How does writing make your child's life easier and more fun? Show him with these ideas for building writing into your family's routine.

Weekly calendar

Place a calendar in a central spot, and have family members write their activities on it. This encourages your youngster to take responsibility for his schedule and helps everyone plan ahead. *Idea:* Have each person use a different ink color for their calendar entries—you'll be able to tell who has what at a glance!



Grocery list

Post a sheet of notebook paper on the refrigerator where your child can keep a running grocery list. He could list things you're getting low on like whole-wheat pita bread, hummus, or clementines. Before going grocery shopping, see how many items he remembers from the list without looking at it. He'll realize that a written list is a handy tool.

Jokes

Ask your youngster to write down jokes or riddles he comes across. He might look for them on cereal boxes, in joke books, or online. Or he might write his own! Suggest that he read his jokes at dinner or hide them around the house (behind a picture frame, under a pillow) for people to uncover and get a good laugh. 📖

Reading symbols on a map

Symbols are everywhere, from your youngster's math and science textbooks to street signs and electronics. Here are ways your youngster can use maps to practice reading symbols:

- Cover up the key on a map. Point to a symbol, and ask your child to figure out what it represents. *Example:* star = capital city. She can check the key to see if she was right and then pick a symbol for you to identify.
- Suggest that your youngster draw a map of a familiar place (your neighborhood, her school). She could include a key to show what each symbol means, perhaps a slide for a playground and a desk for a classroom.

Idea: Ask your child to read symbols when you're out together. For instance, at the airport, she might see a fork and knife to represent a restaurant or a suitcase for baggage claim. 📖



Tackling longer books

Books with lots of pages stretch your youngster's reading skills—and can teach her about perseverance. Try these tips to motivate her to choose and stick with longer books.

Look for breaks. Help your child find books with short chapters. When each chapter is just a few pages long, the task won't seem so big. Plus, she'll feel a sense of accomplishment with each chapter she finishes.



Follow interests. Check the library for more challenging titles on a subject your youngster loves. If she has some background knowledge about the topic, she may be more likely to try a longer book.

Read together. Read the same book your youngster is reading. Decide on stopping places (maybe every two or three chapters), and discuss what's happened so far. Sharing a book with you will motivate her to read on.

Give it a chance. Suggest that your child read 30 pages of a longer book to give it a solid chance. If she reads that far and doesn't like the book, she can move on to another one. ■

Parent & Parent Snapshot stories

My daughter Lara loves photography. She'd rather take pictures than do almost anything else. And she likes to show us her photos and tell the stories behind them, which gave me an idea for encouraging her to write more.



When she took a picture of her brother playing football, I suggested that she write about the game. She liked that idea, so she wrote a true story describing the suspense of the winning touchdown run and how the team went out for milkshakes to celebrate.

Later, I surprised Lara by framing her story alongside the photo to give to her brother. Now she often chooses pictures to write about and frame. Her new hobby has turned into a great way to practice writing—and decorate the walls! ■



Fun with Words

Backward spelling

Your child can practice spelling and creative thinking by playing these two “backward” games.

1. Write a word in reverse order on a piece of paper. For example, *freezer* would be *reezerf*. Ask your youngster to sound out the backward word, then give it a silly definition. *Example:* “reezerf: The sound screeching tires make.” Next, let him write a backward word, and you make up a definition.

2. Take turns secretly thinking of a word, writing it backward, and saying it aloud. Can the other person figure out your word? *Tip:* Write down the sounds you hear, then reverse the letters to discover what the word is. ■



Q&A

A thinking reader

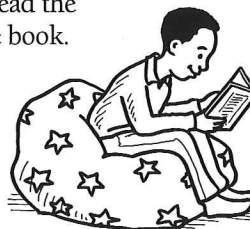
Q When my son has assigned reading, he rushes through and can't always answer the comprehension questions. How can I encourage him to think more about what he is reading?

A Suggest that your child read the questions before he starts the book. He'll get an idea of what he should be thinking about as he reads.

Also, get in the habit of asking him about his reading assignments—and

about books he reads just for fun. One way is to have him describe some of a book's themes, or “big ideas.” For example, he might say that *Tuck Everlasting* (Natalie Babbitt) is about doing the right thing.

Or you could ask your son about the characters. What traits made the hero a hero? What did the main character do that surprised him? *Tip:* Look for discussion questions in the back of the book or on the author's website. ■



OUR PURPOSE

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

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