

Home & School

CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

October 2009

Toluca Lake Elementary School
Parent Center - 818-980-4980



SHORT NOTES

Be there!

Regular attendance in elementary school sets up a good pattern for your youngster's entire school career. Show your child that school comes first by trying to save days off for illnesses and family emergencies. Also, schedule routine doctor and dentist appointments for after school or during school breaks.

Practice patience

"Mom? Mom!" Does your youngster keep calling you when you're busy and can't answer? Agree upon a gesture to let him know you hear him. Then, try to answer as soon as you can. Using a signal like this will help your child learn to be more patient.

Make recess count

Your youngster needs at least an hour of exercise each day—and recess can help her get it. Encourage her to be active on the playground. You might talk at home about fun games she can play, such as hopscotch, tag, and foursquare. Then at dinner, ask what she did at recess that day.

Worth quoting

"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." *Mother Teresa*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Why did the monster buy three socks?

A: Because she grew another foot.



Homework: A play-by-play

Your youngster is doing homework and asks you for the answer to a history question. Should you step in?

When it comes to homework, thinking of yourself as the coach and your child as the player can keep your roles straight. Here are some tips.

Make a schedule

Help your youngster figure out the best time to do homework. For example, if she starts assignments during after-school care, she might play when she gets home and finish her work after dinner. Then, try to fit in family activities (bike rides, grocery shopping) around her homework schedule.

Understand the game plan

Remind your child that it's her job to keep track of assignments. She should write down her teacher's directions and bring home books and worksheets. You can help by listening as she explains the instructions ("I have to circle the nouns and underline the verbs") and



by stocking your home with school supplies (paper, pencils, markers).

Stay on the sidelines

Be available if your youngster needs support, but let her know that you won't do her work. For instance, if she asks you to help with a poster about explorers, you might take her to the library to check out biographies. Resist the urge to jump in—even if you think she isn't doing the project "right." After all, homework assignments show your child's teacher what she can do by herself. ♥

"Green" craft box

Tap into your child's creativity and teach him to throw out less trash with this idea.

Give him an old shoe box where he can save items that your family would otherwise throw away: paper scraps, bits of yarn, rinsed yogurt and applesauce cups, toilet paper tubes.

He can use materials from his box for craft projects. For example, he could tape two cardboard tubes together to make pretend binoculars. Yarn might be used for hair on paper bag puppets. And plastic cups will hold paint or glue.

Let your youngster display his finished projects on shelves or tabletops. They'll remind everyone how easy and fun it is to reuse household materials. ♥



Understanding feelings

Recognizing how other people are feeling and knowing how to express feelings will help your child build relationships. Try these suggestions.

Notice expressions. Teach your youngster to “read” feelings on people’s faces. Ask him to cut out photos of people from old magazines. Discuss the expressions on their faces (happy, sad, excited, scared), and have him sort the pictures into categories. A smiling child on a swing, for example, could go in the *happy* pile.



Describe feelings. Use specific words to describe how you feel (“I’m *frustrated* that my softball game got rained out” or “I’m *excited* about going to the play tonight”). You’ll teach your child ways to express his emotions, too. And recognizing his feelings will help him sense how others feel.

Walk a mile. Encourage your youngster to put himself in his friends’ shoes. For instance, if a pal feels homesick during a sleepover, you might say,

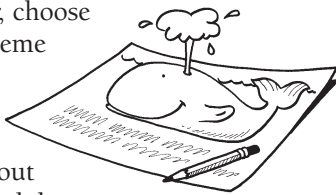
“José misses his mom. What would make you feel better if you were him?” Then help him follow through (make a special snack, let José decide what to play). ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Words of the week

From *parallelograms* in math to *colonies* in history and *evergreens* in science, vocabulary words are important to your youngster’s success in every subject. Try this activity to teach her new words:

1. Together, choose a weekly theme related to a topic she is learning about at school. Ask her to illustrate the subject on a large sheet of paper. For example, she might draw a whale to represent ocean life.



2. Hang the picture on the refrigerator or a bulletin board, and encourage everyone to add related words. *Hint:* Your child can look for words in stories, non-fiction books, or a thesaurus, or online.

3. At the end of the week, have your youngster read the words aloud. You might award prizes for the shortest (*eel*) and longest (*zooplankton*) words. ♥

Q & A

Speaking up in class

Q: My daughter doesn’t like to raise her hand in class because she’s afraid she’ll sound “stupid.” How can I make her feel more comfortable?

A: Getting plenty of speaking practice at home will help your daughter relax at school. One idea is to have her talk in front of a mirror. She could tell a joke or read a story aloud. Have her try doing the same things in front of you and then in front of the rest of the family.

Also, encourage your daughter to talk to people when you’re out together. She can place your order at the deli counter or ask a clerk where something is in the drugstore. If you take a tour at a nature center or attend story hour at a bookstore, suggest that she raise her hand and ask a question or share a thought. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

A camping tradition

Our family loves to spend time outdoors. But now that school and sports have started again, we have less time for exploring.

One Friday night, we decided to try an at-home campout. The boys made trail mix using cereal rings, yogurt-covered raisins, pretzels, and chocolate chips. Then, we pitched a tent in the backyard. At bedtime, we crawled

into sleeping bags, read books by flashlight, and talked until we fell asleep. The kids had so much fun sleeping outside that we decided to do it at least once a month. During cold weather, we’ll bundle up for a walk outside and then “camp” on the living room floor.

This new tradition lets us spend more time together. And I hope it’s something the kids will remember when they have their own families! ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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