

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

December 2009

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



SHORT NOTES

Learn spelling words

When your child gets her weekly spelling list, suggest that she design “logos” for each word. Maybe she’ll make polka-dotted bubble letters or write in fancy cursive. During quizzes, she can picture her creations to remember how the words are spelled. *Tip:* To give her ideas, point out product names on packages.

Tell the truth

Show your youngster that being truthful matters—even in situations where no one would know the difference. For example, if you leave a store without noticing an item at the bottom of your cart, let your child see you return to pay for it. Explain that being honest is the right thing to do and it makes you feel good.

Snow plans

Does your family have a plan for early school dismissals? When the forecast calls for snow or another weather emergency, check the radio, TV, or Internet throughout the day. That way, you’ll know to pick up your child or meet her bus. Choose a backup person (neighbor, relative) who will help if you can’t leave work.

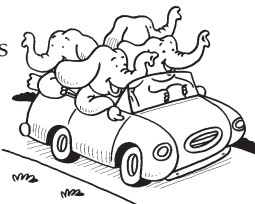
Worth quoting

“The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.” *B. B. King*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: How do you fit four elephants in a car?

A: Two in the front, two in the back.



Family fun on a budget

How much does it cost to entertain your family? With a little planning, you can have fun together—and build in some learning—for almost nothing. Here are three ideas.

Go on outings

Help your youngster look in the newspaper or on your town’s Web site. Together, read about free or low-cost family activities (parades, high school plays, kids-eat-free nights at restaurants). Encourage your child to print or cut out her favorites and post them on the refrigerator. She can highlight ones you plan to attend.

Join with friends

Start a ritual with another family that has children around the same age as yours. You might have make-your-own-pizza parties on Friday evenings. Ask your youngster to look in a cookbook for a recipe and help read the directions and gather the ingredients. Also, consider



swapping books, games, and DVDs so you can enjoy new entertainment for free.

Try new hobbies

Find an activity everyone likes, and look for budget-friendly ways to do it. Try scrapbooking, for example. Use construction paper and leftover wrapping paper for borders and backgrounds, and let each family member fill a few pages with photos. Have your child add captions. Or call your parks and recreation department to learn about nearby hiking trails. Wear sneakers, pack lunches, and enjoy free workouts together.♥

Think hard

Sharpen your youngster’s thinking skills by encouraging him to think about everyday objects in different ways. Try questions like these:

- “Which household items would work just as well upside down?” *Ideas:* mirror, drinking straw. Your child will need to consider different objects, think about how they are used, and imagine them turned upside down.
- “How else could we use this?” Pick out some things around the house and challenge your youngster to find new ways to use them. He can think about their size, shape, and weight, and what they’re made of. For instance, a stapler might serve as a paperweight, or a pillowcase could be used to store small toys.♥



Story starters

Plant an idea in your child's mind, and a story can bloom. Share these tips when he has a writing assignment for school.

Follow the alphabet. Suggest that your youngster write each sentence of his tale so that it begins with a different letter of the alphabet. He can write the letters down the left side of a page and then fill in the lines. *Examples:* **A**n ant went to a picnic. "**B**oy, am I hungry!" it said. Or he could think of words starting with each letter and write a story that uses all 26—in any order.



Conduct an interview. An interesting conversation can provide story ideas. Your child might ask a grandparent about his most prized possession or find out how his music teacher chose her job. Then, he can create characters and make up a story based on his interview.

Start in the middle. Have your youngster think of an event in his life (camping trip) and tell you about it. Encourage him to pick an

unusual or exciting part (a downpour in the middle of the night) and begin his story there. He'll see that starting in the middle can be more interesting than simply telling the story from beginning to end.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Feed the birds

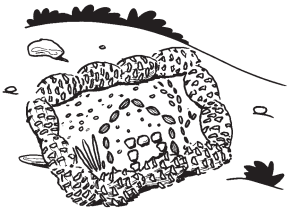
Have your youngster make an unusual birdfeeder this winter. She'll help her feathered friends—and get a chance to observe them coming and going.

Materials: birdseed or corn kernels, sunflower seeds, nuts

Go outside to help your child collect natural items on the ground (twigs, leaves, evergreen needles.) *Note:* Remind her not to pick anything that is still growing.

Then, have her use a stick to draw a picture, such as a bird, house, or snowman, in the dirt or snow. Let her "color in" her design by filling it with the birdseed or nuts and seeds. Finally, your youngster can decorate the picture with the items she gathered—the colors will attract birds.

Together, check back frequently to see birds feasting on her artwork. Suggest that she sketch the birds she sees and notice which food disappears first.♥



Q & A

My chores

Q: My daughter won't do her chores unless I remind her over and over. How can I get her to do them without nagging her?

A: If you make your child responsible for her own chores, she'll feel more grown up and will be more likely to accomplish them. Here are two suggestions. First, you could have her create her own chore kits. She might put window cleaner and paper towels in a plastic container, or furniture polish and a cloth in a bucket. In the mornings, set out the kit for each chore she needs to do. As she completes a job, she can put its kit away.

Another idea is to snap a photo of your youngster as she does each chore (putting away silverware, hanging up clothes). Keep the pictures in a small bag. Each morning, lay the photos of that day's chores on the kitchen table. When she finishes a chore, she can put the picture back in the bag.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Talking about drugs

I've heard it's never too soon to talk to children about drugs. But I didn't know that my first grader's scraped knee would lead to that conversation. Ryan asked for a "pill" because his knee hurt. He had watched me take allergy and headache medicine, and he said, "You take pills to feel better."

I explained that my pills are medicines, and my doctor advised me to take them. And I told him that he isn't allowed to take a pill unless

his doctor, his father, or I give it to him. I said that he didn't need medicine for his knee—just soap, water, and a bandage.

Finally, I asked Ryan what he'd do if a friend offered him some of his medicine. My son said he'd tell his friend he isn't allowed to take someone else's medicine. I'm glad Ryan knows how I feel about drugs, and I'll keep reminding him as he gets older.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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