

# Home & School CONNECTION<sup>®</sup>

Working Together for School Success

November 2013

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



## SHORT NOTES

### Play is for everyone

Play boosts imagination and relieves stress for kids of all ages. Try to make sure your youngster has time each day that's free of structured activities. You might encourage him to take out toys he hasn't used in a while—many elementary schoolers still enjoy building with blocks or racing toy cars.

### Celebrate progress

Suggest that your child create a fun reminder of all the things she has accomplished. Let her cover a container with construction paper and label it "I did it!" Then, she can write each success ("I memorized the state capitals") on a slip of paper and put it in the container. When she's feeling discouraged, have her read the slips.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Many smokers tried their first cigarette between the ages of 11 and 13. That means now is an important time to tell your youngster that you don't want him to smoke and why (it's addictive, it's unhealthy). If you smoke, you might explain how hard it is to quit, and avoid smoking around him.

### Worth quoting

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to try and cheer somebody else up!"  
Mark Twain

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What's yellow and smells just like green paint?

**A:** Yellow paint.



## Critical thinking

There's an important skill that can help your youngster do well in every school subject: thinking! Consider these ideas for helping her to think critically.

### Spot similarities

Choose two objects in the room that don't appear to have anything in common (say, a clock and a sneaker). Ask your child to find at least one thing that's similar about them. She could say that numbers are printed on both or that each has "body parts" (the clock has a face and hands, the shoe has a tongue and a heel).

### Flip a fairy tale

Critical thinkers can look at situations through different lenses. Encourage your youngster to write a fairy tale from another character's point of view. For instance, how would the wolf tell *The Three Little Pigs*? He might think of himself as hungry rather than "big and bad." If the mother pig were the narrator, how might the story be different?



### Play strategy games

Games like checkers, chess, Connect Four, and Mastermind build thinking skills. Play some of these together, and share your thought process: "If I move here, you'll probably move there, and then I could capture your piece." Suggest that your child talk herself through her moves, too. *Idea:* Solo games and activities like Sudoku, Rubik's Cube, and Rush Hour can also make her a better thinker. ♥

## The ABCs of conferences

Try these suggestions to get the most out of your next parent-teacher conference.

**A**sk questions. A written list will help you remember what you want to know. You might ask whether your child participates in class or how well he gets along with classmates.

**B**e positive. You could tell the teacher about a classroom activity or lesson that your youngster particularly enjoyed. Sharing good news helps create a strong working relationship.

**C**heck back. If, for instance, your child needs extra help with math facts or struggles with taking turns, see what you can do at home. Then, find out how and when to follow up on his progress. ♥



# Bullying: Reach out

Even if your child has never participated in bullying or been a bully's victim, odds are he has seen a classmate being teased or threatened. And he can play an important role in helping those who are bullied. Here's how.

**Reporting vs. tattling.** He could interrupt a bully by asking the victim to play or read with him. If he doesn't feel safe doing so, however, he should get an adult's help right away. When it comes to bullying,



telling an adult isn't tattling. Make sure your youngster knows the difference: *tattling* gets someone *in* trouble while *reporting* gets a person *out* of trouble. Then, ask him to think of grown-ups he can go to if he sees bullying (teacher, coach, school counselor).

**"Pull-ups" vs. put-downs.** Encourage your child to say nice things to students who are teased. He might compliment a classmate on a presentation ("Your science project was cool!") or ask, "Hey, want to sit together at lunch?" His friendly words will act as "pull-ups" to help counter the put-downs these kids hear.♥

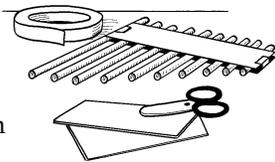
## ACTIVITY CORNER



### A musical experiment

Why do musical notes sound high or low? Your youngster can find out by making her own set of windpipes. She'll learn about music and science at the same time.

**1.** Have your child cut nine straws to different lengths and leave a tenth straw whole.



**2.** Ask her to lay them side by side, leaving a little space between each straw.

**3.** Help her put tape across the straws, front and back, to hold them together.

**4.** She should cut two pieces of cardboard that are wide enough to cover the straws and tape one piece to each side.

Now your youngster is ready to play her instrument! Suggest that she blow through one straw at a time. Does she know why each straw makes a slightly different sound? *Answer:* The shorter the straw, the faster it vibrates (and the higher the pitch) when air is blown through it.♥

## Q & A Write for an audience

**Q:** My daughter has to share her writing in class, and she feels uncomfortable. How can I help her?

**A:** Your youngster might feel more confident if she gets used to sharing different types of writing outside of class.

For example, if you want to advertise furniture in the newspaper or on Craigslist, have her write the ad. Show her the published ad, and be sure to let her know when people respond. Or if you take a day trip or vacation, let your daughter pick out postcards. She can write about her adventures and mail the cards to friends or relatives.

Another idea is to encourage her to write a funny story that she could read to cousins at a family get-together. As they enjoy her story, she'll get a boost that could help her be more comfortable sharing her writing in school.♥



## PARENT TO PARENT Be a good citizen

At our local playground, my son Jack and I noticed a lot of trash on the ground. He said it was "gross" and asked why people didn't throw it away. I told him that good citizens help make our community a nice place to live, and he suggested that we clean up the playground.

We put on gloves and got bags for picking up the trash. The playground looked

much better, but Jack pointed out that people would just keep on littering. So he decided to hang up a poster reminding people to use the trash can.

Jack came up with a slogan: "Here's a fun place to play. Throw your litter away!" Then he drew a picture of kids—

and even a few pets—putting snack wrappers and empty juice boxes in the trash. He's excited to go back and see whether his sign is making a difference.♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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