

# Home & School

## Working Together for School Success

### CONNECTION®

May 2011

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

#### SHORT NOTES



##### Year in review

Your child can relive memories—and look ahead to next year—by reading her yearbook or looking at her school's Web site. Ask her to point out classmates and tell you about projects they did or games they played together. Look at photos of activities (spelling bee, band), and ask her which ones she might like to try next year.

##### Good language

Most youngsters experiment with “bad” words at some point. If you hear your child using language you don't like, let him know how you feel. Then, help him come up with alternative words (“Banana peels!”). The sillier the phrase, the more likely he'll be to use it.

##### Smart consumers

It's never too early to help your youngster become a good consumer. Together, look for advertising “tricks” like a funny animal character in a commercial for sugary yogurt or happy-looking children in a magazine ad for expensive jeans. Then, compare them to reality (“The yogurt we buy is healthier,” “The jeans you have are really cute”).

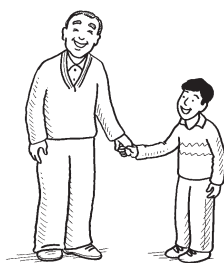
##### Worth quoting

“The earth laughs in flowers.”  
*e. e. cummings*

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** How old is your grandpa?

**A:** I don't know, but we've had him a long time.



## Family learning

How can you inspire your child to keep learning while school is out? It's easy when your whole family learns along with him. Here are some activities everyone can enjoy.



##### Poetry reading

Visit the library to check out poetry books and encourage family members to memorize their favorite summertime poems. Your youngster might pick verses about seashells, fireflies, picnics, or campfires. Then, set aside an evening for reading and reciting poetry.

##### Stargazing

Go outside together on a clear, moonless night to look for constellations. Take a sky map—try [www.fourmilab.ch/yoursky](http://www.fourmilab.ch/yoursky) or Michael Driscoll's *A Child's Introduction to the Night Sky*. It's easiest to find the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper first and use them to spot other constellations. *Idea:* Suggest that your child “connect the dots” to find his own shapes or objects among the stars.

##### Cooking

Make healthy treats with your youngster. Using a recipe teaches him to follow directions, and measuring ingredients builds math skills. You might find a blueberry muffin recipe and add cranberries for a colorful July 4th breakfast.

##### Researching

Ask everyone what they'd like to know about your family's history. Your child can write all the questions down. Beside each question, have him write the name of a person to ask. Together, call or visit that relative to find the answer. *Examples:* “When did our first relatives come to the United States from Italy?” “How many brothers and sisters did our great-grandparents have?” ♥

## Thank teachers

Letting a teacher know what your youngster enjoyed this year is a great way to show appreciation. These ideas can help:

- A younger child could draw a picture of her favorite field trip or classroom activity. Perhaps she liked visiting an apple orchard or listening to the teacher read aloud after lunch.
- An older child might make a mini-book with a page for every subject. On each sheet, she can write about something she enjoyed learning (how ants work together in a colony, how to do long division) and illustrate it. Then, have her staple the pages together and write a dedication to her teacher. ♥



## Become more independent

This summer, your youngster may take steps toward becoming more independent. She might learn how to swim, or she could sleep over at a friend's house for the first time. Consider the following suggestions to help her feel comfortable trying new things:



- Allow extra time. It might be tempting to pack your child's baseball bag or make her sandwich instead of waiting for her, but she'll gain confidence if she can do it herself. Have her get ready ahead of time or practice skills when you aren't in a rush.

- Encourage your youngster to find out things she doesn't know and to get information on her own.

For instance, let her call a business to ask about their hours or whether they carry an item she wants.

- Show your child that you trust her growing independence. When she's invited to sleep at a friend's house, let her try. If it doesn't work out and you have to pick her up, let her know she can try again another time. ♥

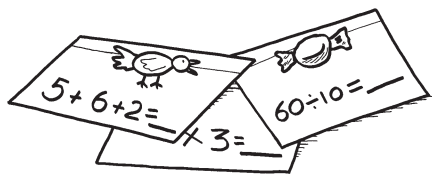
### ACTIVITY CORNER

### Word problems

Making up math stories can build your youngster's problem-solving skills and encourage him to use math regularly. Here are three ways.

**1. Look for math in nature.** During a visit to a park, your child might say: "I found 5 black birds, 6 red birds, and 2 blue birds. How many birds did I see in all?" ( $5 + 6 + 2 = 13$  birds)

**2. Think of word problems based on books.** After reading Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, he might come up with: "Willy Wonka's caramels change color every 10 seconds. If I chewed for 60 seconds, how many colors would I chew?" ( $60 \div 10 = 6$  colors)



**3. Tell math stories in the car.** If your youngster sees a billboard advertising a hotel for \$89 per night, he might say: "Our family stayed in a hotel for three nights. It cost \$89 per night. How much did we spend?" ( $\$89 \times 3 = \$267$ )

**Idea:** Suggest that your child write each problem on an index card with the answer on the back. ♥

#### OUR PURPOSE

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

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### Q & A

## Reading over the summer

**Q:** How can I keep my daughter's reading skills from sliding over the summer?

**A:** Students can definitely get out of practice if they don't read regularly. Try signing your daughter up for a summer program at a library or bookstore. She'll get a reading list and be asked to finish a certain number of books or spend time reading each day.

Another possibility is to help her create her own reading program, either by herself or with friends. She can list books she'd like to read and set goals. For example, a beginning reader might aim to finish three picture books a week, or an older child might read a chapter a day or a novel every two weeks.

Your youngster will feel good about reaching her goals, and her reading skills will stay sharp. Plus, reading regularly over the summer can help her get into a reading habit year-round! ♥



### PARENT TO PARENT

## Enjoy active days

When school is in session, I know my sons exercise at recess and in PE. But during the "lazy" days of summer, I worry that they aren't active enough. This year, I asked the PE teacher for advice.

Mrs. Winkler suggested enrolling my children in classes at the community center or parks and recreation department. That way, she said, they'll get regular exercise while having fun with other kids. I



looked around and discovered a rock-climbing class for my older son and a sports program for my younger one.

The teacher also said that seeing my husband and me staying active would encourage our kids to exercise, too. She suggested that we do fun activities as a family, such as playing tennis, walking to the school after dinner to shoot baskets, or jogging in the neighborhood. ♥