

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

Working Together for School Success

December 2010

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

## SHORT NOTES



### Scrub-a-dub

Hand washing is an easy way to avoid spreading germs—especially during cold and flu season. Suggest that your child hang a sign above the sink to remind family members and visitors to wash their hands. She might list the steps and draw a picture for each one (wet hands, lather with soap, scrub for 10–15 seconds, rinse, dry).

### Note-taking practice

Help your youngster take better notes in class by practicing during family discussions. Ask him to jot down important information, and remind him that he can use abbreviations and symbols to make note taking faster. After the discussion, have him read his notes back to the family.

### Good sportsmanship

When you watch competitions with your child, point out athletes who demonstrate good sportsmanship. You might see a professional football player complimenting the other team during a post-game interview, or local high school gymnasts applauding for opponents. Encourage your youngster to keep these examples in mind when she competes.

### Worth quoting

“It takes a lot of courage to show your dreams to someone else.”

Erma Bombeck

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** Which word in the dictionary is spelled wrong?

**A:** Wrong!



## Stress busters

Setting aside time to relax and finding ways to prevent stress are important for children as well as adults. Here are four tips to help your family.

### 1. Laugh together.

In addition to being a great stress reliever, sharing a laugh can strengthen relationships. Find ways to make each other laugh throughout the day. Tell funny stories at dinner about things that happened at work or school. Or make up knock-knock jokes and riddles while riding in the car.

**2. Get exercise.** Physical activity is fun—and it can reduce stress. To help your youngster let off steam, go outside together to toss a football or hit a beach ball around. On weekends or over school breaks, consider heading to a bowling alley, an ice rink, or a miniature golf course.



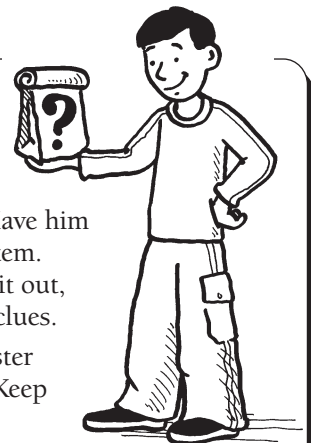
**3. Plan downtime.** Your child may be busy with school projects, sports practices, and family parties. Be sure that she also has time to enjoy relaxing activities (toys, puzzles, board games).

**4. Stick to a routine.** Have a regular schedule for meals, homework, and bedtime. Knowing what to expect is comforting to children and helps eliminate arguments. *Note:* If your youngster's habits change during a school break, help her ease back into her regular routine a few days before school starts again.♥

## Listening games

One key to learning a lot in school is listening well. Practicing at home helps make listening a habit that your youngster can take to class with him. Try these games:

- With your child not looking, put an object in a bag. Have him listen carefully while you give him five clues about the item. Then, he can guess what is in the bag. When he figures it out, it's his turn to pick an object and your turn to listen to clues.
- Sing the first word of a song that you and your youngster both know. Have him try to guess what you're singing. Keep adding one word at a time until he can name your song. Swap roles, and let him sing while you guess.♥



## Writing secrets

Good writers know that little things can make a big difference. Share these secrets with your child to help him write stronger sentences and paragraphs:

- Encourage your youngster to mix things up by varying the length of his sentences and starting each one with a different word. For example, instead of “The state bird is a cardinal. The state tree is a pine. The state flower is a dogwood,” he might write, “North Carolina’s state bird is a cardinal. Its state tree is a pine, and the dogwood is its state flower.”



**Tip:** When he finishes a report or an essay, suggest that he go back and list the first word of each sentence on a separate sheet of paper. Then, he can rearrange the words to vary his sentences.

- Help your child stay on topic within each paragraph. Before he starts writing, suggest that he put each main idea in a separate circle (“Every state has special symbols”). He can surround each big circle with smaller ones for supporting details (bird, tree, flower). Have him use a sentence from a big circle to begin each paragraph and then add the details.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER



### Homemade art

Stretch your child’s creativity with fun art projects that use household materials.

#### Food

Your youngster can turn different fruits and vegetables into stamps. Let her dip apple halves or zucchini slices into paint and press them onto cardboard to make interesting prints. Or she might make faces by gluing snacks on construction paper. For instance, she could use cereal rings for eyes, a cracker for a nose, and licorice for a mouth.



#### Toys

Any toy that rolls can spread paint. Suggest that your child paint the wheels of a toy car and roll it around on paper. Or cut a circle of paper to fit in an old pie pan and let her squeeze paint in several spots. She can roll a marble around the pan by tilting it in different directions—creating a swirly picture on the paper.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### The story of my name

When we were thinking of names for our new baby, our daughter Emily asked how we chose her name. Our talk ended up being a nice family history lesson.

I explained that Emily was my grandmother’s name. And Margaret, Emily’s middle name, comes from my husband’s grandmother. She wanted to know more about them, so we told her stories about her great-grandparents, including where they grew up and how many siblings they each had. She especially enjoyed hearing ways she resembles them, such as how she likes to bake, just as her great-grandmother Emily did.

We also looked up her name in our book of baby names. We discovered that Emily means “eager” and Margaret means “pearl.” Now Emily is excited about picking a name for her baby brother—and we’re looking forward to telling him how we chose his name.♥



## Q & A Rewards or not?

**Q:** My brother’s children get stickers for good behavior, and my neighbor’s daughter gets toys from a “treasure chest” when she behaves. Should I start something like this for my son?

**A:** Instead of rewarding your child with stickers or toys, why not show him that good behavior has its own rewards? That way, he’ll be more likely to behave well when you’re not around to hand out prizes.

If your youngster is patient while you run errands, for example, you might say, “You were really helpful. We finished so fast that you’ll have time to play before lunch.” Or when he shares a toy, you could point out that his friends will be more likely to share with him next time.

You might also explain how you reward yourself, so he’ll learn to do it, too. If you finish a big project, you could say, “I worked hard. Now I can read my book.”♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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