

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

March 2012

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

SHORT NOTES



Ready, set, test

Your child will feel more comfortable taking standardized tests if he's familiar with the format. Practice at home by posting a fun daily question on the refrigerator. ("What was the first trick our puppy learned?") Include four possible responses under the question with a circle beside each one. He should read all the choices, pick the correct one, and "bubble" in the answer.

Growth chart

Let your youngster keep track of how fast she's growing with this home-made chart. Have her cut two poster boards in half lengthwise and staple the four pieces end to end. Help her mark off inches and hang it up. Every few months, she can record her height and note milestones (lost tooth, new school year).

Finger foods

Snack time is more fun when your child eats food he helps prepare. Together, make healthy deviled eggs by using Greek yogurt (instead of mayonnaise) and topping each with a grape tomato. Or let him blend 2 tbsp. honey with ¼ cup Dijon mustard to make honey-mustard dip for snap peas and bell pepper spears.

Worth quoting

"If you believe you can do a thing, or not, you are right." *Henry Ford*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What has five fingers but is not a hand?

A: A glove.



Reading and writing: A two-way street

Reading can make your child a better writer, and writing can make her a better reader. Help her take advantage of the link between the two subjects with these ideas.



Read, then write. Before your youngster begins a creative-writing assignment, she might get inspired by reading a few pages of a favorite book. She should ask herself what makes the book good. Perhaps the author uses interesting adjectives or makes characters say funny things. Then, she can try those techniques in her own story.

Write, then read. When your child is assigned a chapter in her science or history book, suggest that she jot down what she knows about the topic and questions she has. This will make it easier to learn new information. *Idea:* Have her rewrite each chapter heading as a question. For instance, "The three

states of matter" could become, "What are the three states of matter?"

Read, write together. Start a "buddy journal" with your youngster. She'll enjoy "talking" with you while she practices reading and writing. Each day, take turns writing a sentence or two in a notebook. You can exchange notes on books you're reading or on any other topic. For example, you might write, "If I could go anywhere in the world, I would go to France to see the Louvre." She may respond, "I'd go to Australia to see the kangaroos." ♥

Family time

Time with family is time well spent. Here are some suggestions for making the most of the time you spend together:

- When you play games or have conversations, silence your phone and keep the TV off. Tell stories or sing songs in the car, and leave DVD players and video games at home.
- Make meals a priority. They don't have to be fancy. What's important is that you enjoy eating together. Takeout counts, too—eat pizza at the table and talk about your day.
- Have fun while getting in shape. Walk around the block, work out with exercise videos, or organize a neighborhood kickball league. ♥



Be a good citizen

What does it mean to be a good citizen? When your child is older, he'll participate in society by voting and paying taxes, but he can start learning good habits now. Try these tips.

Obey laws

Ask your child to be on the lookout for signs like "No parking in fire lane" or "Clean up after your dog." He can also spot lists of rules (on the playground, in his classroom). How many different laws and rules can he find? Talk about



why it's important for citizens to pay attention to them ("A fire truck would need to park there during a fire").

Take action

Talk to your youngster about how citizens take part in government. Perhaps your city council is considering adding speed bumps to neighbor-

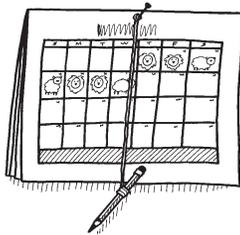
hood roads. You might share newspaper articles about meetings where the topic was discussed or show him an online petition. Tell your child that he can participate in decision making, too. He might run for student council at his school, or you could vote on family issues (what to eat for Sunday dinner, which movie to see).♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Calendar fun

Calendars are full of learning opportunities. Here are three suggestions:

1. Encourage your youngster to observe the changing weather. Share the saying: "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb." Then, have him draw a lamb on the calendar on spring-like days and a lion on wintry ones. At the end of the month, are there more "lion" or "lamb" days?

2. Suggest that your child choose a theme every month. Have family members take turns writing something to go



with it on each day's calendar square. For example, for a March theme of foods, you would write the name of a food on each day. *Other ideas:* animals, hobbies.

3. Ask your youngster to mark a field trip or friend's birthday on the calendar and count the days until the event. Or if it's far enough away, let him tell you how many weeks it is. (Divide the number of days by 7.)♥



Staying focused

If your youngster is like most children, she probably pays attention to things that interest her, but her mind wanders during activities she finds less enjoyable. You can improve her focus with ideas like these:

- Capture her interest before you give instructions. If she loves football, you might call a "family huddle" to announce what needs to be accomplished today. If music is her thing, try prefacing instructions with a drum roll or by humming one of her favorite tunes.
- Encourage your youngster to recognize when she's struggling to pay attention. Perhaps she fidgets at her desk or starts thinking about another assignment. Suggest that she come up with a "fix" for each (looking directly at her teacher, clearing her desk of everything except the assignment she's working on).♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Video game alternatives

Our son Jeff loves video games. We try to limit the time he spends playing them, but he can never seem to get enough.

One day, he came home excited about a friend's toy: a car track based on a video game. That gave me an idea. What if, when Jeff's game time was up, he acted out the games in real life? I suggested the idea to him, and he wanted to try it.

Together, we created a live version of the obstacle course from one of his games. Soon he was running around the backyard—leaping over picnic benches, crawling under lawn chairs, and hopping into and out of hula hoops. Next, he came up with the idea to draw a giant layout of the land where some of his favorite game characters live.

Jeff is still crazy about video games. But I'm happy that he's enjoying "real" alternatives that are helping him stay active and use his imagination.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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