

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

Working Together for School Success

September 2018



## SHORT NOTES

### Attendance adds up

Students who attend school regularly tend to have better attitudes toward school—and they're more likely to read at grade level. Try to schedule your child's doctor and dentist appointments outside of school hours. Also, be sure to create a backup plan for getting her to school if she misses the bus or you can't drive her.

### The importance of integrity

What would your youngster say if a classmate asked him to cheat? Talk to him about how to respond if he's pressured to share answers or let others copy his work. For example, he could say, "Let's study together so we both do well," or "I don't want to risk getting a zero."

### DID YOU KNOW?

The average child with a parent in the military moves every two to three years. Encourage your youngster to introduce herself to all new students. If you're a military family, contact your school liaison officer and the school counselor about programs available to help your child adjust.

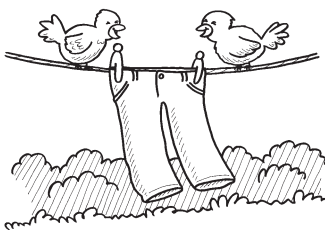
### Worth quoting

"All the world is a laboratory to the inquiring mind." *Martin H. Fischer*

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What has two legs but doesn't walk?

**A:** A pair of pants!



## A great beginning

The story of your child's school year is about to unfold. A strong opening chapter will help to set the tone for a great year. Try these strategies.

### Introduce the characters

Your youngster's teacher will play an important role in his life this year. Write her a short note, and attach a picture of your family. You might mention your child's hobbies, favorite school subjects, and family members' names. Also, find out how the teacher prefers to be contacted. Getting to know each other now will help you work together in future "chapters."

### Get to know the setting

Invite your youngster to tell you about his classroom, the library, and other places at school. What decorations hang on the walls? What books or games are on the shelves? When possible, see for yourself by going to events like book fairs and



math nights. *Idea:* Encourage him to draw you a picture of his classroom to hang on the refrigerator.

### Enjoy the plot

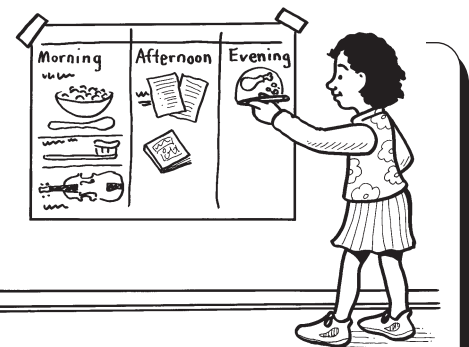
Attend back-to-school night to find out what your child will learn this year. Then, plan family outings or activities related to the topics. If he'll study your state's history, you could visit historic sites. Or if there's a plant unit, let him help you work in the garden or plant seeds in pots. ♥

## Routines that stick

Little habits make a big difference in the kind of day you and your youngster have. Here are things each of you could do to create routines for smooth days.

**Your child can:** Make a picture chart of what she needs to do every morning, afternoon, and evening. She might draw a backpack as a reminder to show you papers she brings home. A picture of a violin could prompt her to practice her instrument.

**You can:** Have her go to bed in time to get 9–11 hours of sleep and to eat a healthy breakfast in the morning. Set aside downtime after a busy day (perhaps 20 minutes when she gets home) so she'll be recharged for homework, chores, and family time. ♥



## Strengthen social skills

School is more pleasant for everyone when children share classroom materials and compromise to solve problems. Consider this advice for improving your youngster's social skills so she learns to get along with others now and later.

### Practice sharing

Do activities with your child that require sharing. For example, color together, and let her



practice asking for the purple or the green crayon nicely. She could say, "May I use that when you're done?" And you might reply, "Sure, I'll give it to you as soon as I finish coloring this dragon."

### Learn to compromise

Your youngster and her classmates may disagree on how to approach a group project or a science experiment. Help her prepare by looking for ways to find middle ground at

home. Say she and a sibling argue over what book they'd like you to read at bedtime. They could take turns choosing a story every other night or ask you to read one chapter from each book. If they can't compromise, offer a suggestion like reading a book you pick.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Outdoor magic

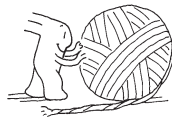
I used to play outside all the time when I was little, but my sons never seem interested in leaving the house. One day, while reminiscing with my sister about all the fun we had outdoors as kids, an idea struck me.

I labeled a bin "Outdoor fun" and put it near the front door. Then, I asked my boys



to fill it with things to play with outside. They found a yo-yo, balls, a Frisbee, a jump rope, and sidewalk chalk. I added a magnifying glass, a jar for collecting rocks and other treasures, and a bucket and shovel for digging in the dirt.

Having this bin in plain sight reminds my sons how much fun it is to play outside. I love seeing them using their imaginations outdoors and getting exercise. And surprisingly, they're not asking for screen time as often.♥



## Q & A

### Smart money management

**Q:** We've started giving our third-grade daughter a small allowance. How can we teach her to be responsible with her money?

**A:** Learning to manage money wisely will give your youngster financial skills to use throughout her life.

Encourage her to write a budget for herself. She could list inexpensive items she asks you to buy for her, such as hair accessories or slime-making supplies. She can also include something she wants to save up for and gifts she'd like to buy others for birthdays and holidays.

Help your daughter look up prices of the items. Then, she should decide how much money to save each week. Consider letting her open a savings account, too. You can show her how to check the balance—she'll feel pride as she watches her savings grow.♥

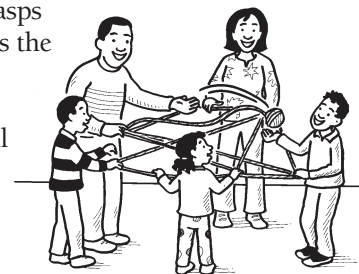


## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Attention stretchers

Boost your child's attention span with these hands-on ideas that use everyday materials:

- Create a "spiderweb." Have everyone stand in a circle with one person holding a ball of yarn. That person grasps one end of the yarn and tosses the ball to any other player. Your youngster must pay attention so he'll be ready when the ball comes his way. Toss it back and forth enough times, and your child will be delighted by a giant web of yarn!



- Try this classic game that requires focus. You'll need three cups and a small toy like a plastic frog. While your youngster watches, put the toy under one cup. Now slide the cups around for 30 seconds, constantly mixing up their order. Can your child tell you which cup the toy is under?

Then, let him try to stump you. *Idea:* For a bigger challenge, increase the time or add more cups.♥

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# Home & School

## Working Together for School Success

### CONNECTION®

October 2018



#### SHORT NOTES

##### Exercise your brain

Your child's brain is like a muscle—the more he uses it, the stronger it will become. Suggest that he give his brain a workout with activities like using his nondominant hand to throw a ball or to color. Learning to speak a foreign language or play a musical instrument are also known brain boosters.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

If your youngster qualifies for free or reduced-price meals, your family may also be eligible for low-cost internet. Contact local internet providers to find out. In addition, most libraries have computers with internet access. Your child can use them to do research for school or to look up topics she's curious about.

##### Family talent show

Stage a talent show to help family members appreciate one another's skills. Each person can choose something he likes to do (singing, juggling). Encourage practice time, and choose a night for your event.

##### Worth quoting

"The world is round so that friendship may encircle it." *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Teacher:** Jill, name four members of the bear family.

**Jill:** Mom, dad, sister, and brother!



## Super homework support

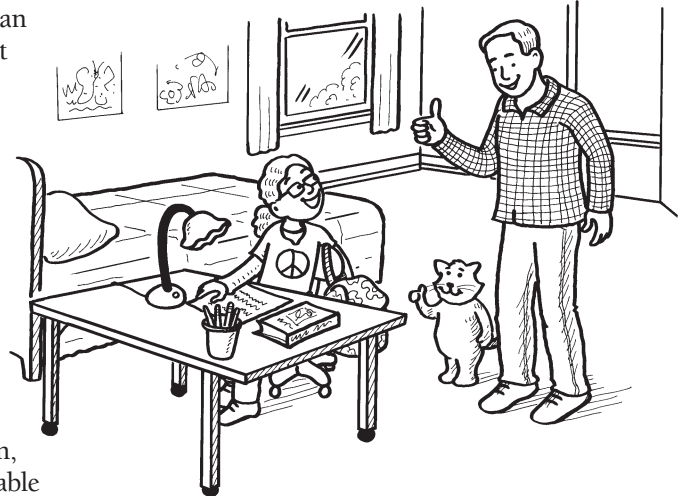
Making homework an important part of life at home will show your youngster that her education matters. Letting her work independently will also send the message that you believe in her. Consider these strategies.

##### Provide backup

Allow your youngster to work on her own, but tell her you're available if she needs you. Say she's confused about the directions for an assignment. You could encourage her to reread them slowly or maybe read them aloud to her. If she's not sure how to approach a math problem, you might look at similar problems together in her textbook.

##### Give feedback

Point out to your child what she's doing well—you'll inspire her to repeat the behavior in the future. For instance, if you notice she started a long-term project the day it was assigned, you could say,



"Nice move! Now you have plenty of time to come up with good ideas and do your best."

##### Show interest

Glance over finished homework so you know it's done and your youngster knows you care. Also, look at returned assignments. She might proudly share a nice comment her teacher wrote on her essay. Or if a paper has spelling errors, ask how she can avoid the same problem next time, perhaps by looking up unfamiliar words in a dictionary.♥

## Organization made easy

Good organizational skills will help your child find what he needs—and save time. Try these tips:

- Encourage your youngster to help with jobs that teach organization. For instance, have him organize your toolbox. Let him try his ideas, such as grouping together same-size screws or arranging wrenches from shortest to longest.

- Point out that *staying* organized is easier than *getting* organized. If he cleans out his school desk and his backpack every Friday, those tasks won't be overwhelming. *Idea:* He could put sticky notes on his desk and bag that say "Please clean me on Friday!"♥



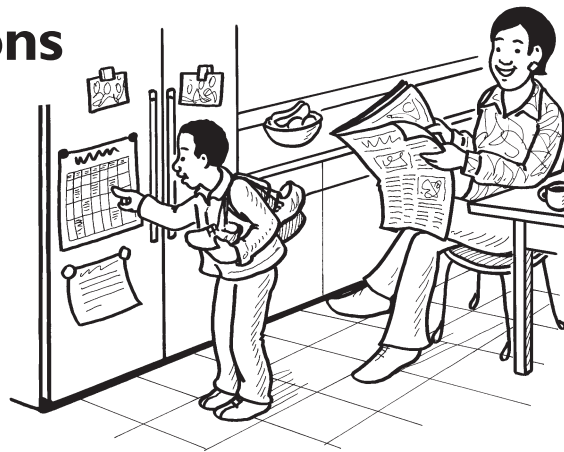


# Setting expectations

Andrew always wears his sneakers to PE class and returns his books on library day. Robert sometimes forgets his sneakers and misses out on PE, or he leaves his library books at home and can't check out new ones.

What's the difference? Andrew's parents expect him to keep track of his schedule. Here's how to set expectations for your youngster.

**Discuss in advance.** Be clear about what you expect, and remind your child regularly. For example, if you want him to manage his schedule,



you might post it on the refrigerator and tell him that it's his job to check it each day. Or if you're getting a pet, explain what he'll need to do to care for it. ("You'll be in charge of filling the food bowl every evening.")

**Be reasonable.** Set expectations that your youngster can live up to. If he plays soccer, for instance, you might not expect him to

score goals, but you could expect him to attend every practice, show good sportsmanship, and try his best.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

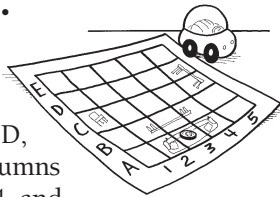


### Build map skills

This version of hide-and-seek lets your youngster practice finding places on a grid. She'll have fun working on map skills and spatial reasoning.

**1. Draw a grid.**

Have your child make a grid with 5 rows (labeled A, B, C, D, and E) and 5 columns (labeled 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Her grid will represent a room in your home.



**2. Add pictures.** Next, your youngster should draw furniture or other items in the boxes to indicate their locations in the room. Say your couch is centered along the front wall of the living room. She could draw a couch on her grid across boxes A2, A3, and A4.

**3. Hide an object.** Take turns closing your eyes while the other person hides something (perhaps a toy car) in the actual room. Then, place a penny on the grid to show where you hid the item. If you put the penny on A3, your child might figure out that the toy is under the center of the couch.♥

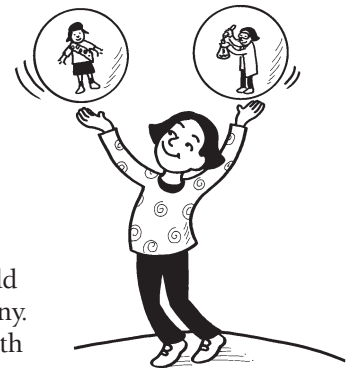
## PARENT TO PARENT

### After-school activities: Find a balance

My fifth grader, Alicia, was already in Girl Scouts and the school science club when I agreed to sign her up for martial arts. Before long, she started coming home too tired to do homework, and she had little time to play.

Alicia and I realized she needed to cut back on her extracurricular activities. She wasn't thrilled, but I explained that school comes first—and that she would enjoy each activity more if she weren't juggling so many. We talked about what to drop. She wanted to stick with her friends in Girl Scouts, and she loves the experiments she does in science club. In the end, she decided martial arts would be the one to go.

Alicia has more time for homework and play now. And maybe she can try martial arts next summer when school is out.♥



## Q & A How to talk about lockdown drills

**Q:** My son came home anxious about a lockdown drill they did in school. How should I discuss this with him?

**A:** Lockdown drills help students know what to do in an emergency that requires them to shelter inside the school.

Explain to your son that his teacher and principal want to keep him and his classmates safe. That's why the school holds drills to prepare the children for

situations like intruders, fires, tornadoes, or earthquakes. Although it's scary to think about emergencies, having a plan can make him feel more in control.

Ask your son to name other ways we stay safe, such as wearing a seat belt in the car, looking both ways before crossing the street, or going indoors during a thunderstorm. He'll realize that he knows how to do a lot of things that help to protect him.

*Note:* If he continues to feel anxious, contact the school counselor for advice.♥



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November 2018



## SHORT NOTES

### Eye on the goal

Boost your youngster's motivation by encouraging her to set goals. Say she wants to make it to the district spelling bee or science fair. She can brainstorm strategies like learning 10 spelling words each day or reading about previous winning science projects. Suggest that she write down her ideas and post them to stay on track.

### Say no to secondhand smoke

Children who breathe cigarette smoke tend to get more respiratory illnesses and ear infections. Second-hand smoke can also trigger asthma attacks. It's best not to let anyone smoke inside your home or car. Since youngsters breathe at a faster pace than adults and are still growing, no amount of smoke exposure is safe.

### A reading nook

Let your youngster create a special spot just for reading, perhaps in a corner of the family room or his bedroom. He might include a beanbag chair, a lamp, a box or low shelf for books, and a stuffed animal or two. He'll be inspired to curl up and read in his cozy nook.

### Worth quoting

"It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed."

*Theodore Roosevelt*

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** How much dirt is in a hole 4 feet deep and 8 feet wide?

**A:** None!



## Parent involvement at home

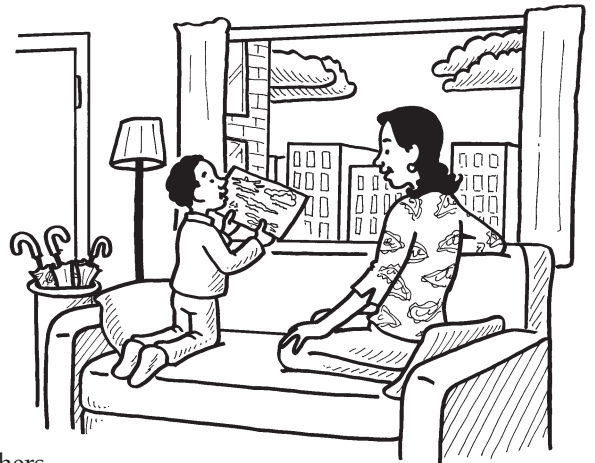
Did you know that supporting your child's education begins at home? Consider these everyday ways to talk about school, deepen his learning, and keep track of school news.

### Foster a positive attitude

If you're enthusiastic about school, your youngster is likely to be as well. Ask him about projects he's working on or topics he's studying. Be sure to listen closely, and follow up with questions or comments. Also, you can influence his attitude toward teachers by being positive. ("Mrs. Reeves picked a really cool field trip for your class. I can't wait to hear about it.")

### Tie learning to his world

Show your child how what he learns is useful outside of school. If he's studying clouds, ask him to identify types you see in the sky and try to predict whether you'll need an umbrella. Or challenge him to spot vocabulary words on window signs or package labels, and talk about how they're used in different ways.



### Stay up to date

Be aware of what's happening in your youngster's classroom, school, and district. Subscribe to email lists, read newsletters, and check websites. Mention upcoming activities to your youngster (school carnival, class play) that you might attend together. Also, put important dates (book fair, math night) on your calendar. It will show your youngster that his school is a priority.♥

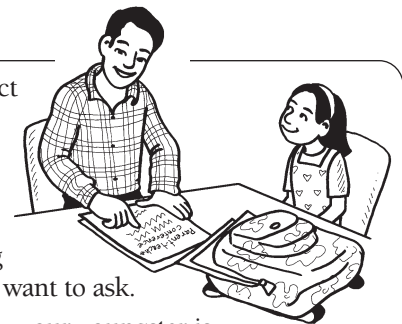
## Connect at conferences

Fall parent-teacher conferences are the perfect opportunity to strengthen the bridge between home and school. Here are tips.

**Before.** Watch for notices in your email or your youngster's backpack, and sign up for a time slot. Also, prepare ahead of time by looking over your child's work and listing questions you want to ask.

**During.** Listen to the teacher's feedback on how your youngster is doing, then ask your questions. Be sure to have the teacher explain anything you don't understand.

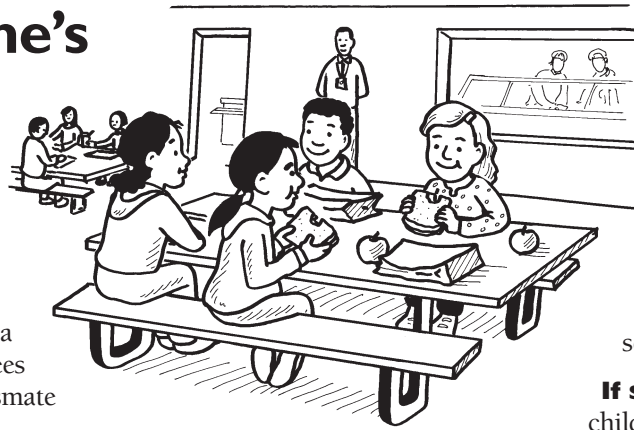
**After.** Talk with your child about the conference. Point out what she's doing well (reading more challenging books, finishing classwork) and areas that need improvement (writing legibly, taking turns).♥



# Bullying is everyone's business

Good news: Your youngster can use strategies to help kids who are bullied *and* to protect herself if she's a target. Suggest these ideas for handling bullying situations safely and effectively.

**If she's a witness:** Your child should get a teacher or another adult right away if she sees someone being physically harmed. If a classmate



is verbally bullied (being called names, for instance), it's best to ignore the bully. Instead, your youngster might give the person being targeted an escape ("We need to go to lunch now"). She could also offer to go with the person to tell a grown-up.

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Graphic organizers for the win

Graphic organizers are a visual way for your child to organize information in any subject. Share these activities.

#### Juggling monkey

To plan a report, suggest that your youngster draw a monkey juggling coconuts. If he's writing a social studies paper on a state, he could put his topic (say, Virginia) on the monkey's belly. Then, he can label each coconut with a fact he needs to find (capital, population). As he researches, he can add information to each coconut (Richmond, 8.5 million).



#### Football field

When your child writes a persuasive essay, have him first draw a football field. He can write each side of an issue in a separate end zone ("Kids should have chores," "Kids should not have chores"). On each half of the field, he should write statements to support the view in that end zone. *Examples:* "Teaches responsibility" on the pro-chores side, "Interferes with play time" on the anti-chores side.♥

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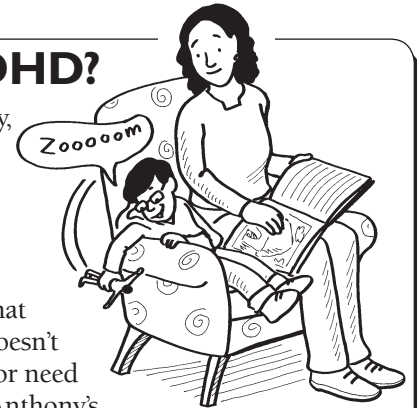
## PARENT TO PARENT

### Could it be ADHD?

My first grader, Anthony, seems easily distracted and sometimes has trouble sitting still. When my friend's child was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, I wondered if Anthony could have it, too.

I talked to our pediatrician and found out that just because a child gets distracted or wiggly doesn't mean he has ADHD. He might just be excited or need to burn off energy. He suggested that I talk to Anthony's teacher, and he gave me a form the teacher can fill out if she's concerned.

The teacher said Anthony's attention span is normal for his age and that it should continue to grow as the year goes on. She's going to keep the form on hand. If she notices problems, she'll let me know right away, and I can follow up with the pediatrician. I'm relieved that Anthony is on track—and that his doctor and teacher are on my "team."♥



## Q & A

### Explain your math strategy

**Q:** My daughter's teacher often writes "Explain your thinking" on her graded math assignments.

*How can I encourage my child to do this?*

**A:** When your daughter works on math problems, it's important that she understand what she's doing and why. Explaining her thinking is one way for her to check on her own understanding—and to show the teacher what she needs help with.

At home, your daughter could think out

loud. Have her look over completed homework and ask herself questions like, "When I solved  $32 \times 45$ , what steps did I take?" and "What other strategy would work?"



You might also invite her to discuss her math thinking during daily activities. For example, say, "We're having 11 guests for Thanksgiving, and I need  $\frac{1}{3}$  pound of potatoes per person. How can I figure out how many 5-lb. bags to buy?"♥