Home & School CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

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SHORT NOTES

Estimate everything!

Weave estimation into daily life to build your youngster's math skills. While cooking, you might ask, "How many cherry tomatoes do you think are in that container?" Or in a waiting room, challenge her to estimate the number of ceiling tiles. Have her count to check. The more she practices, the better she'll get at estimating.

Take initiative

Part of developing initiative is learning to recognize what needs to be done. Instead of guiding your child through each step in a task, get him in the routine of figuring out what to do next. If he's clearing the table and forgets to wipe it off, say, "Take a look at the table—what's the last step?"

Family fire drills

Use National Fire Prevention Week (October 6–12) to create a fire escape plan with your youngster. Encourage her to draw a map of your home with two exits per room and a meeting place outside. Then, hold a fire drill. *Note:* Studies show that many kids sleep through smoke alarms, so be sure your plan includes waking everyone up.

Worth quoting

"Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere."
Chinese proverb

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What do you get when you cross a stream and a brook?

A: Wet feet.



Secrets of better behavior

It's no secret that parents want their children to behave appropriately. But what really works? Try focusing on teaching your child to behave rather than punishing him for misbehavior, and you're likely to see better results. Consider these tips.



Be a mirror

Your youngster looks to you for guidance, so model the behavior you expect. For example, if he sees you staying calm when you're angry, he'll be less likely to throw fits when he's upset. Talk through your actions, too. You might say, "I had a stressful day at work. I'm going to relax with my book for a little while so I'm not cranky."

Make rules together

Children find it easier to remember and follow rules that they have a role in creating. Sit down together, and write a list. Be sure your youngster understands the reason behind each rule. For instance, ask, "Why shouldn't we leave things on the stairs?" (Because someone could trip and fall.) *Tip:* If you need to add or change a rule, include him in that discussion, too.

Highlight success

When you praise your child, emphasize the good feelings he gets from behaving well. Saying "You must be proud of yourself for waiting so patiently" gives him a sense of accomplishment. That feeling of pride will motivate him to repeat the behavior in the future.♥

Mistakes make your brain grow

Did you know that mistakes actually help kids learn more? Use these ideas to encourage your youngster to make the most of her mistakes:

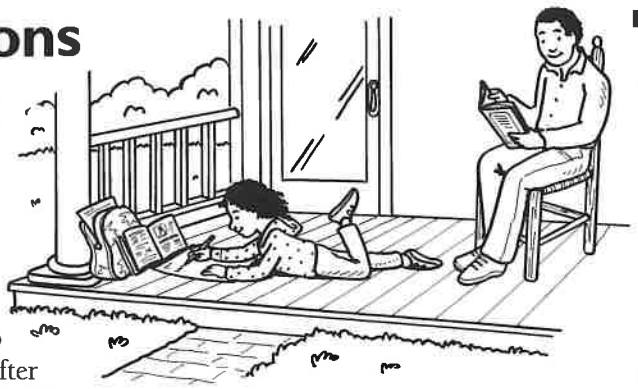


- Give your child room to "mess up." You might suspect that masking tape isn't strong enough to hold her project together. But she'll gain more from the experience if she tries, fails, and comes up with a new solution all by herself.
- Help your youngster put mistakes in perspective. Perhaps she forgot to include an important point during her class presentation. Ask her what part went well—maybe her graphics were cool and her classmates seemed interested in her topic.♥

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Homework solutions

Whether your child is new to homework or has been doing it for years, your support can help her do her best. That's important, because homework reinforces what she's learning in school. Here's how to set her up for success.



Find a good schedule

Set aside a specific time for homework so it becomes a habit, perhaps right before or after dinner. Also, suggest that she figure out a plan that works best for her. She could start with the easiest assignment to gain momentum or get the hardest one out of the way first.

Eliminate distractions

Make sure your child turns off electronics before she starts homework. Also, you might encourage everyone in the house to have "quiet time" while she does her assignments. Maybe you'll read or pay bills while younger siblings color, for instance.

Troubleshoot problems

When your youngster gets stuck, offer to help—but avoid telling her the answers. If she's confused by the directions, try reading them together. Or if she's struggling with an addition problem, offer to walk her through a few sample problems in the back of her math book.♥



PARENT TO PARENT: Engineer a maze

Ever get lost in a corn maze? That's what happened to our family last week at a fall festival. When we made our way out, the farmer explained that engineering and technology were used to create the maze.



My son Mason was fascinated. We learned that a designer drew the maze on a computer. Then, an engineer generated GPS coordinates, which guided the farmer as he mowed the corn into the maze.

At home, Mason decided to create his own maze. He drew a castle-shaped design and plotted it out in the yard with tent stakes. Next, he arranged pool noodles, lawn chairs, and other outdoor items between the stakes. When it was ready, he invited friends over to go through his maze.

Now Mason is busy planning his next maze. I can't wait to see what it is!♥

ACTIVITY CORNER: Be a true friend



Children who form friendships with classmates tend to do better in school. Inspire your youngster to "treasure" his friends with this writing activity.

1. Draw: Have him draw a treasure chest on a sheet of paper and make "coins" by cutting circles out of yellow paper.

2. Identify: Take turns naming things you each value in a friendship. *Examples:* Being loyal, enjoying the same things, helping each other. Your child can write each idea on a separate coin.

3. Discuss: Let him glue the coins onto his treasure chest. As he adds each one, you can both share real-life examples from your own friendships. Your youngster might say, "Raul and I like to read together at language arts time," and you could say, "My friend Jess helped us by bringing meals over after your sister was born."

Hang up his treasure chest as a reminder of qualities he'll look for in his classmates—and will remember to show in himself.♥

Q & A: The parent-teacher team

Q: *I want to be more involved in my daughter's education. Where should I start?*

A: Teaming up with your child's teacher is a great way to get started. Send the teacher a nice email, perhaps about a classroom activity your daughter enjoyed, and let him know you'd like to stay in touch throughout the year. You might ask if you can volunteer in the classroom or from home.



Also, look over papers the teacher sends home. You'll see how your child is doing in various subjects. Then, if she's struggling with anything, you can reach out to the teacher for advice.

Finally, tell your daughter that you and her teacher are a team, with the same goal—helping her succeed in school.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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