

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

February 2017



Snowflake School District # 5

Title I

SHORT NOTES

On time every day

Arriving at school on time allows your child to settle in and take full advantage of every learning activity. Let him take the lead on this important responsibility by teaching him to set an alarm. *Tip:* Suggest that he place the clock across the room so he has to get out of bed to switch it off.

A “mind rehearsal”

Have your youngster “practice” challenging situations in her mind to boost her confidence. Before a cheerleading competition, for example, she could picture herself nailing her routines. Or if a big test is coming up, she might imagine staying calm and answering questions to the best of her ability.

Field trip learning

When you sign a field trip permission slip, show interest—you’ll inspire your child to learn more from his outing. Ask him to predict what he will see and learn. Together, look up the destination online or in books, and say something like, “I can’t wait to hear which instrument is your favorite at the symphony.” Then, follow up with him afterward.

Worth quoting

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

JUST FOR FUN

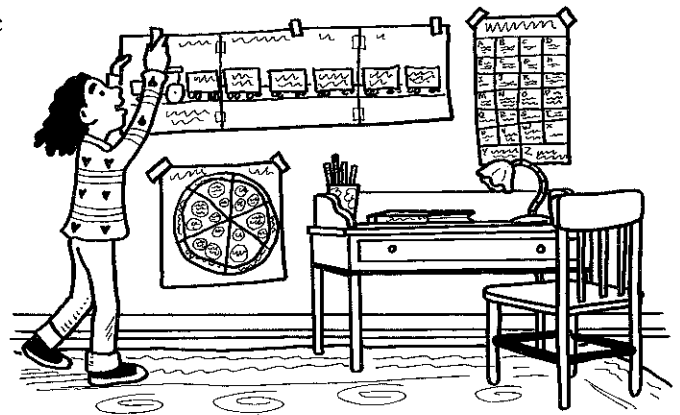
Q: Why can’t you tell a joke while standing on ice?

A: Because it might crack up.



Great graphic organizers

Organizing information in creative ways can make studying more interesting and productive for your youngster. Encourage her to try these graphic organizers—and to invent some of her own!



Cars in a train

Drawing a train is one way to understand and study steps in a process or events in a sequence, such as the parts of the scientific method or the plot of a novel. Suggest that your child label each train car with a step (“Ask a question,” “Make a hypothesis”) and add a picture to illustrate it.

Toppings on a pizza

Have your youngster draw a pizza to visualize facts. On each slice, she should write a category of information (*example:* “Lewis and Clark,” “Cartier,” and so on for a quiz on explorers). She can draw toppings (pepperoni, mushrooms) and put a fact on each one. On the Lewis and

Clark “pepperoni,” she might write, “Started in St. Louis” and “Ended at the Pacific Ocean.”

Letters of the alphabet

Let your child divide a sheet of paper into 26 squares and label them A–Z. Then, she could write a fact that begins with each letter. If her topic is habitats, she can define *desert* in the D square and *rain forest* for R. Being creative with less-common letters will get her thinking more deeply about the material (“Quick temperature drops happen at night in the desert” for Q).♥

Respect all around

Every day, there are plenty of opportunities for your child to show respect for others. Here are examples.

● **At home...** The dinner table is a great place to start. Teach your youngster to thank the cook. He’ll show respect for the person’s time and care in preparing the food.

● **In school...** Encourage him to be respectful of other children’s backgrounds by learning greetings in the languages they speak at home.

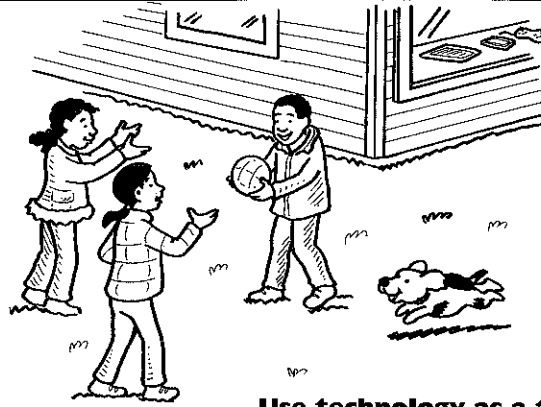
● **In your community...** Explain that shoppers respect store employees by not creating extra work for them. If you decide you don’t need an item in your cart, help your child return it to where it belongs. After you load groceries into your car, have him walk with you to return the cart.♥



Keep screen time in check

Do you worry that your child spends too much time in front of a screen? Do you wonder how he could best use technology? Consider this advice for helping him to balance screen time with other activities and to make the most of the time he does spend on electronics.

Aim for a mix. Together, look for ways to balance screen time with schoolwork, active play, and



family time. Make rules about where and when your youngster uses a computer, tablet, smartphone, or video game (say, in the living room after homework is finished). Have him set a timer while he uses a device—when it goes off, it's time to go out and play or help you prepare dinner, for example.

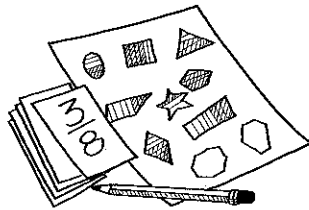
Use technology as a tool. Encourage your child to regard a device as a tool to use for specific purposes. He might download an astronomy app to help spot constellations in the night sky or a birding app to identify bird calls during a hike. He'll learn to rely on technology for real-life purposes.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER Fraction art

Your youngster can practice identifying and representing fractions by creating this colorful mosaic with you—fraction by fraction.

Materials:
pencil, paper, index cards, crayons

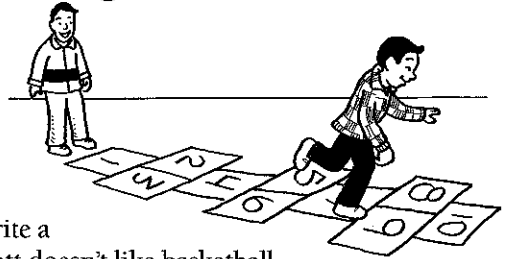


1. Let your child draw 10 geometric shapes on a sheet of paper, such as circles, squares, rectangles, triangles, trapezoids, and pentagons.
2. On separate index cards, have her write any 12 fractions (examples: $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{2}{6}$, $\frac{3}{8}$). Shuffle the cards, and stack them facedown.
3. Take turns flipping over a card (say, $\frac{3}{8}$). Pick a shape, and color in that fraction on the shape (draw lines to divide it into 8 equal parts, and color 3 parts).
4. When you've used all the cards, shuffle and keep going. Continue until you've filled as many shapes as possible.

Note: If you get a fraction that isn't available to color, turn over cards until you select one you can use.♥

A plan for problem solving

When your child faces a problem, having a solid plan can help him figure out how to solve it. So whether he's had a disagreement with a friend or has fallen behind on his schoolwork, suggest this approach.



- **Identify the problem.** Let him write a quick summary of what's wrong. ("Elliott doesn't like basketball, but that's what I usually play at recess.")
- **Imagine the ideal solution.** For instance, he probably wants to remain friends and still play basketball.
- **Figure out alternatives.** Encourage him to brainstorm solutions. *Examples:* "Offer to play with Elliott at recess every other day." "See if he wants to find something to play that we both like."
- **Choose a solution.** He could pick the solution he likes best or that he thinks is most likely to work.
- **Evaluate.** Have him try out that solution and ask how it went. If it didn't work, then he can consider another alternative from his list.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

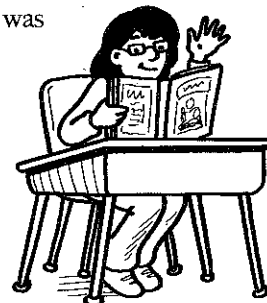
Overcoming shyness

My daughter Gabrielle has always been shy and quiet around people she doesn't know well. This year, her teacher told me she was worried because Gabrielle rarely speaks in class.

We met with the school counselor, who had some good advice. For example, I'm trying to let Gabrielle speak for herself rather than jumping in to "rescue" her. When someone asks her

name, I smile at her and wait instead of saying it for her. I'm also encouraging her to order her food in restaurants and to speak up at places like the hair salon and the dentist's office.

The counselor helped Gabrielle set a goal of raising her hand to answer a question at least once a day. We're having fun practicing by playing school at home—and her teacher just sent home a note saying she's seeing a little progress!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

February 2017

Snowflake School District # 5

Title I

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Kitten's First Full Moon*

(Kevin Henkes)

Is that a bowl of milk in the sky? An adorable kitten sees the full moon for the first time and tries her hardest to drink from the "bowl." But no matter what, it never seems to get closer. After a night of mishaps, she returns home to a surprise on her porch. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Mama Panya's Pancakes: A Village Tale from Kenya*

(Mary and Rich Chamberlin)

In this story about sharing, Adika and his mother go to the market where Mama Panya makes pancakes. Even though she doesn't have much money, she cooks enough to feed everyone in the village. Includes facts about Kenya, greetings in Kiswahili, and, of course, a pancake recipe!



■ *Her Idea* (Rilla Alexander)

A little girl named Sozi has a big imagination and is always dreaming up ideas. Like many kids, she figures she'll do something with them later. Then an unlikely helper gives Sozi the perfect place to save her ideas—and the motivation to follow through.

■ *I See a Pattern Here*

(Bruce Goldstone)

Patterns are everywhere—in nature, on buildings, and on your youngster's clothing. This nonfiction book will encourage your child to look for patterns, figure out



what comes next in the patterns pictured, and even create his own.

Build empathy with stories

Some of the same strategies that boost your child's reading comprehension can also help her develop empathy. These activities let her practice recognizing and thinking about feelings as she explores books.

"I know how she feels..."

When you read to your youngster, have her look for clues that hint at emotions. If a story says, "A tear rolled down her cheek," your child might say that the character is sad. Identifying characters' feelings will help her understand people's emotions in real life, too.

"If I were that character..."

Encourage your youngster to put herself in a character's shoes. What would she do differently, and how would that change her feelings—and the story? For example, in *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (Crockett Johnson), the little boy felt scared after he drew a dragon to guard his apple tree. Your child may say she'd draw a friendly dragon and feel



happy—but her dragon wouldn't make a very good guard!

"This reminds me of..."

Help your youngster make connections between storybook characters and real people. This can deepen her understanding of the story and build empathy. Perhaps a character who moved to a different town makes her think of the new kid in her class. How did the character feel, and how does she think her classmate feels? (She might answer, "Scared," "Nervous," or "Excited.")♥

Make your own books

Your youngster will feel like a real writer when he creates a homemade book. Try this plan.

Draft. Help your child write a rough draft. A fun title for a little author is "All About Me." He could write about his family, friends, school, and favorite things.

Publish. Cut sheets of white construction paper in half. On each page, your youngster can copy one sentence from his draft and illustrate it. When he's finished, staple the pages together.

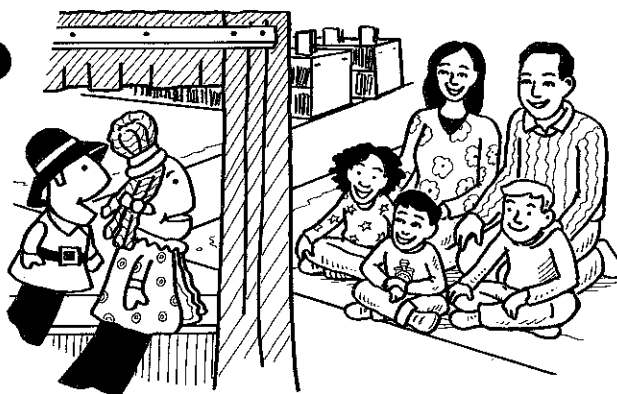
Share. Hold a "Meet the Author" night. Your child gets to read his book aloud to your family and answer questions about it.♥



Great reasons to visit the library

Making the public library a regular family hangout spot has a lot of benefits. Consider these points.

It's a nice place to read. Your child will never run out of books. Plus, there may be plenty of cozy reading spots like beanbag chairs and quiet corners. Let him pick a few stories, and choose a place where you can read—and enjoy time together.



There are fun activities. Ask about special reading-related events, and plan to attend some as a family. You might make a craft after listening to a story, watch a puppet show based on a favorite book, explore ABC books and do alphabet activities, or even read with dogs.

Reading opportunities are endless. Your youngster may decide to read every book by a particular author or all the books in a series. He could check one out each time you visit the library. Or perhaps he'll pick a topic he'd like to learn about. Let him check out nonfiction books to become an "expert" on his choice, whether it's polar animals or hockey.♥

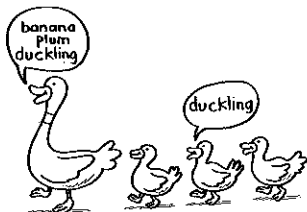


Odd word out

Build your child's vocabulary and thinking skills with this simple game that you can play at home or on the go.

1. Ask your youngster to listen carefully while you say three words—two that go together and one that doesn't "belong."

2. Have her tell you which is the odd word out. For instance, if you chose



banana, plum, and duckling, she would probably say *duckling*, because the other two are fruits.

3. If she picks a word you didn't expect, that's okay! Let her make a case for it, and she'll stretch her thinking. Maybe she'll say *plum*, because bananas and ducklings are both yellow.

4. Now it's her turn to say three words, and you decide which doesn't belong.♥

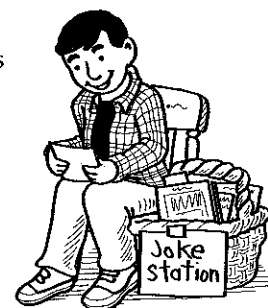


A household joke station

My son Leo has been on a joke kick lately. It seems like every day he tells us a new joke he heard or made up. Because he's learning to read, we decided to create a household "joke station" where he could read jokes whenever he wants.

We got a few joke books and put them in a basket in the family room. Soon afterward, when I read Leo a funny joke I found online, he asked if I would print it out and put it in the basket. And now when he tells me a joke, I help him write it down, and he adds it to the station.

Our family joke station has become a favorite household spot. If we're feeling silly or someone needs to be cheered up, we visit the station and take turns reading jokes aloud. Leo's reading skills are improving—and there's more laughter in our home!♥



Q&A Writing backward?

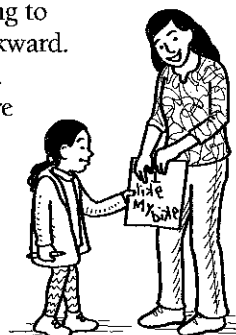
Q My first-grader sometimes writes letters or words backward. They look just like mirror images! Could she have a learning disability?

A When children are first learning to write, they occasionally write backward. Most kids outgrow this. But if you notice your daughter doing it more often, talk to her teacher.

Find out whether the teacher has any concerns. Is your child performing below grade level? Does she have a hard time spelling new words? Are her skills uneven (she reads well but struggles with

writing, for instance)? If you suspect a problem, or the teacher does, ask about the possibility of testing your daughter to see if she needs extra help.

In the meantime, you could work with her on writing correctly at home. Remind her that we write the way we read—from left to right. Whenever you see her writing backward, ask, "Do you notice anything unusual about those letters?" Then, help her correct them.♥



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Leaping Beauty and Other Animal Fairy Tales (Gregory Maguire)

Your youngster will enjoy reading fairy tale favorites with a twist! Sleeping Beauty is anything but a princess—she’s a frog. Humans are replaced with animals in eight tales, including “Cinder-Elephant,” “Rumplesnakeskin,” and “Goldiefox and the Three Chickens.”



Esperanza Rising (Pam Muñoz Ryan)

During the Great Depression, Esperanza and her mother must leave El Rancho de las Rosas, their Mexican homestead. Once settled at a California camp, they realize how different their lives will become. Can they overcome their challenges? (Also available in Spanish.)



Anyway*: A Story About Me with 138 Footnotes, 27 Exaggerations, and 1 Plate of Spaghetti (Arthur Salm)

Twelve-year-old Max wants to be cool, so he turns himself into the daring Mad Max. Funny misadventures help Max understand that his risk-taking behavior isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. Now he must decide who he really is.

How to Make a Movie in 10 Easy Lessons (Robert Blofield)

Lights, camera, action! This book leads hopeful filmmakers through plotting, writing, editing, and recording their masterpieces. Each section focuses on a different part of the movie-making process. Your child may be delighted to know that a big Hollywood budget isn’t required!



Write with 100 letters

To celebrate the 100th day of school, try these fun family writing challenges using just 100 letters. Your youngster will have to choose her words carefully as she practices persuasive, descriptive, and explanatory writing.

Persuade buyers

Ask your child to name any household item (slippers, TV, mop). On sheets of paper, each person writes a 100-letter classified ad to persuade others to buy the item. “For sale: My mom’s used slippers that still feel cuddly and warm in the winter! Pink with yellow trim. They just got washed, too.” Vote for the best ad. Then, the winner chooses the next item to “sell.”

Describe the scene

Let your youngster clip photos from the newspaper, leaving off the captions. Place one picture where everyone can see it. Then, write 100-letter captions describing the image. If a picture shows a group of people walking, your child might write, “The Carver family from Idaho trekked hundreds of miles this week to make their way here for the



VFW post bingo tournament.” Share your captions with each other.

Give instructions

Have your youngster start by writing a “how to” title on a sheet of paper. Example: “How to wash a car.” Pass the paper clockwise. Everyone writes a step for the total 100-letter set of directions, counting as they go before passing it on.

1. Fill a bucket with soapy water. Take it outside. (38)
2. Spray car with hose. (16)
3. Soak sponge in soapy water. (22)
4. Scrub. Rinse. (10)
5. Repeat if needed. (14)

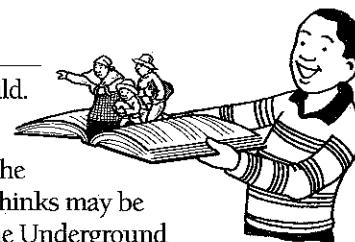
Decide together if the instructions work. Were any steps forgotten?

Hooray for history!

Historical fiction brings history to life for your child. Here are suggestions to take his reading further.

Find facts. As your youngster reads a story set in the past, have him jot down interesting details that he thinks may be true. For instance, if he’s reading a tale set during the Underground Railroad, he might list “Ended in Canada” and “It was not really a railroad.”

Investigate. When your child finishes the book, he could put on his detective cap and read encyclopedia entries, nonfiction books, or articles to uncover the truth behind those details. He’ll learn that the Underground Railroad had many routes that led north to free states and Canada, and it even had some routes to Mexico.



Keep on reading aloud

Did you know that hearing you read aloud can increase your child's vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension? Use these tips.

Aim high. Most kids understand books written two or more levels above what they can read on their own. So try choosing read-aloud books that are harder than what your youngster normally picks. He'll be able to follow the plot or the nonfiction information more easily if you read than if he reads it himself. *Idea:* Ask your child's teacher or a librarian for recommendations that will suit your youngster.

Think out loud. If an author's word choices are interesting to you, say so. If you have an "aha!" moment while reading a



mystery, share it with your youngster. You'll show him that it's fun to talk about what you're reading—and it builds understanding.

Read more than fiction. Look for everyday opportunities to read aloud. You might read a quote on a tea bag, a funny blog post, or the recipe you're making together. Or

read your child a short story or magazine article. He will pick up new words and phrases from a variety of materials.

Note: Remember that you don't have to be an expert reader to read to your youngster. He will enjoy the together time and learn from your reading no matter what! ■

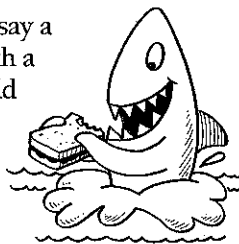


Verbs at play

Devoured, slurped, chomped—each of these

verbs is a potential replacement for the more common verb *ate*. Do this activity together, and your youngster will gobble up a fun lesson on choosing vivid verbs when she writes.

1. Have your child say a simple sentence with a plain verb. She could say, "The shark ate the sandwich."



2. You repeat the sentence and replace the verb with a more descriptive one. "The shark devoured the sandwich."

3. Then, it's your youngster's turn again. "The shark chomped the sandwich."

Keep taking turns until you run out of verbs. Let your child look up the original word in a thesaurus and see if there are any synonyms (words with similar meanings) she missed.

The player who made the last successful change thinks of a new sentence to start the next round. ■



Read, draw, and learn

My daughter Simone loves to draw—and that gave me an idea that would help her with studying. I suggested that she pretend to be an illustrator for the sections she was reading in her Chinese textbook. To do that, she would have to carefully consider what the text said and then represent it with a picture.

Simone liked the idea, so as she studied vocabulary, she copied the Chinese characters from her textbook, drew a picture to match the word, and labeled it in English as well.

Knowing she was going to be drawing the material helped Simone think about—and remember—the new words she was learning. Now she plans to use this "artistic" technique when she studies other subjects, too. ■



"My child mumbles"

Q People are always saying they can't understand my son because he mumbles. How can I help him work on this?

A First, does he understand what mumbling is? Play a game where you take turns speaking clearly (the other person can understand you) or mumble (the sounds are jumbled together). Call out "Clear!" or "Mumble!"

Then, try keeping an audio journal with your child to let him practice speaking clearly. Use a smartphone, a computer, or another recording device, and have

him start by recording himself talking about his day. Perhaps he'll tell a funny story about something that happened in the cafeteria.

Next, you record your response. If your son mumbled, you could say, "I'm so interested in your story, but I couldn't understand the part about the lunch line. Can you record it again so I can laugh, too?" Continue your audio

conversations on a daily basis—and listen for improvement in his speaking! *Note:* If you're still concerned about your child's speech, talk to his teacher. ■



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