

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

December 2016

Snowflake School District # 5

Title I



SHORT NOTES

Weather emergency kit

Let your youngster help you prepare for winter emergencies. Brainstorm what you might need if the power goes out or if you're stuck inside during a snowstorm. *Examples:* Flashlights, batteries, bottled water, canned goods, first aid kit. Together, put the items in a box and find a safe place to keep it.

Thinking games

Stretch your child's thinking skills by playing Fortunately, Unfortunately. One person states a good event ("Fortunately, all the stoplights have been green"). The next player says a silly, but related, "bad" event ("Unfortunately, the law changed, and green means Stop"). Continue until you get stuck—then start over.

Your child's digital footprint

It's tempting to post cute pictures of your youngster or tell funny parenting stories on social media—but first consider his feelings. And since his online trail will stick with him forever, think about how he'll feel when he's older. Get his permission before posting, or let him decide who will be able to see it (say, only relatives).

Worth quoting

"Wishing to be friends is quick work, but friendship is a slow-ripening fruit." *Aristotle*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Why did the girl wear one mitten and one boot?

A: Because she heard there was a 50 percent chance of snow.



Connect reading and writing

Reading will make your child a better writer—and vice versa. That's good news, because both will help her do well in every subject. Here are ways she can explore the link between reading and writing.

Try genres

Introduce your youngster to a wide variety of books, from fairy tales and science fiction to graphic novels and biographies. Reading different genres will give her more options to think about—suggest that she branch out and try writing in one of those new genres.

Collect "gems"

Have your child keep a notebook of her favorite parts of stories. She could choose interesting words or lines. She'll get in the habit of paying close attention

to the language that writers use, which will give her ideas for her own writing.

Review books

Your youngster could be a budding book critic and write reviews about what she reads. She'll practice opinion writing and deepen her reading comprehension as she summarizes the plot. Encourage her to include details and quotes from the book to back up her opinions. ("The main character showed empathy when he said, 'I know what it's like to be the new kid in school.'")♥



Volunteer success

Whether you're volunteering in your youngster's school or from home, consider these tips.

Contact the teacher. Let him know you'd like to help, tell him when you're available, and find out what he needs.

Follow the rules. Ask questions if you're not sure what's expected. For instance, are home-baked goods acceptable, or do treats have to be store-bought and sealed, with ingredients listed? Are younger siblings allowed to come along? What are the guidelines for keeping student information confidential?

Enjoy the experience! Volunteering is rewarding for parents, teachers, and students. Know that you're making a difference, and talk to your child about how you're helping out.♥



A dependable child

Kyle's parents count on him to walk his little sister home from school. And Jamal's parents know he'll remember to set the table without being asked. These parents are raising dependable youngsters—and you can, too, with these suggestions:

- Talk to your child about who depends on you. You could say, "My company relies on me to be on time, so I have to leave for work now." Your youngster will see that being dependable is a part of life.



- When you need your child to do something, let him know you're counting on him. He'll be likely to meet your expectations if you say something like "I know I can depend on you to feed the dog."

- Show your youngster how good it feels to follow through when someone is relying on him. You might have him sign up to

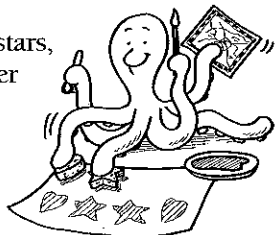
work with a student who is learning English or who needs extra help with math. Use encouraging comments such as, "I know Julian looks forward to seeing you every day," or "I bet David is learning a lot from you."♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

DIY wrapping paper

Let your child design homemade wrapping paper—and show thoughtfulness by personalizing each person's package. Try these ideas.

Sponge stamps. Help your youngster cut apart large brown paper bags. Then, she could cut sponges into stars, hearts, or other shapes, and dip them into paint. Suggest that she stamp them onto the paper in a pattern (heart, star, star, heart, star, star).



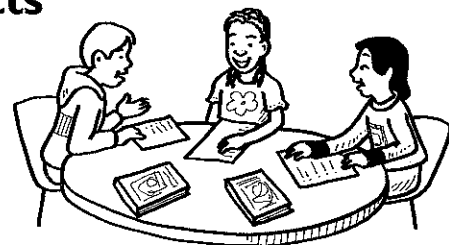
"Mapping" paper. Have an old atlas? Your child might cut out maps and tape them together to make sheets of wrapping paper. If she's sending a gift to a relative in another state or country, she could select a map of that place.

Artwork. Who wouldn't love to receive your youngster's original artwork? Ask her to wrap a few gifts in her own paintings or sketches.♥



Navigating group projects

Learning to work on assignments as a group is an important part of school. Share this advice for helping your youngster succeed with projects and presentations.



Get input

Everyone in the group should give input. Your child might get quieter members to express their opinions by asking, "Which format do you like for our presentation?"

List duties

At the first meeting, one person can write and distribute a list of responsibilities, including due dates for each task. That way, everyone will remember what they're supposed to do.

Update each other

During follow-up meetings, group members should give updates on their progress and brainstorm solutions to any problems. If anyone is falling behind, other members could offer support or ideas.♥

Q & A Be your own "CEO"

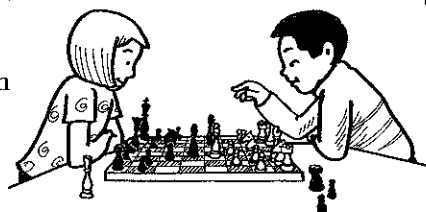
Q: I've been hearing a lot lately about executive function skills. What are they, and should I be helping my son work on them?

A: These skills let your child manage himself, like an executive overseeing the operations of a company or an air-traffic controller directing flights for landing. A student with good executive function skills is able to juggle tasks, plan

ahead, stay organized, and make decisions about his actions.

You could help your son sharpen these skills with strategy games. For example, chess is ideal because players must plan several moves in advance and consider multiple possibilities. Or try 20

Questions, since players have to keep in mind answers to all previous questions as they decide what to ask next.♥



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Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

December 2016

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Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ **Lou Caribou: Weekdays with Mom, Weekends with Dad** (Marie-Sabine Roger and Nathalie Chowx)
Lou is a young caribou who has two homes, and both are filled with love. This cute rhyming story shows Lou having fun with his mom during the week, then packing his suitcase each weekend for more fun with his dad. A nice read-aloud for children whose parents live apart.

■ **The Squiggle** (Carole Lexa Schaefer)
During a walk to the park, a little girl sees a red “squiggle” on the sidewalk. She picks it up and begins to imagine all the things it could be—a trail of fireworks, ripples in water, or even part of a storm cloud. Your child will enjoy imagining what else a squiggle might be.



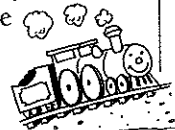
■ **Ice Cream: The Full Scoop** (Gail Gibbons)



Does your youngster know that the first ice cream recipe included snow? Combining history and science, this nonfiction book explains how the dessert has changed through the years. Readers will discover interesting ice cream trivia and learn about different ways the treat is served.

■ **The Little Engine That Could** (Watty Piper)

“I think I can. I think I can!” This classic story of perseverance tells of a little blue engine who believed in herself. When the big red engine breaks down, it’s up to the little engine to deliver toys and food to the children on the other side of the mountain. (Also available in Spanish.)



Read between the lines

If your child reads “The snowman looked smaller than it did yesterday,” can she figure out the snowman is melting? Making *inferences*, or understanding what’s happening when the author doesn’t come right out and say it, is an important comprehension skill. Try these strategies.



Make up riddles

Take turns thinking of a person, place, or thing and giving each other clues to guess it. *Example:* “Sometimes I am round, and sometimes I’m a crescent shape. You see me at night. What am I?” (The moon.) Then, pose “riddles” from stories you read together: “In the story, the girl frowned and stomped off. How do you think she feels?” Your youngster may answer, “I think she is angry.”

Solve mysteries

Read a mystery, and let your child pretend to be a detective. She might get a small notepad and a pencil to jot down or dictate clues. (“Jack was not at work

the day the vase was stolen.”) Her mission is to use the clues to solve the mystery before the book characters do.

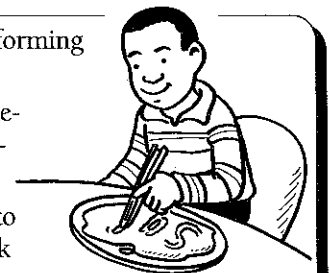
Infer in real life

Get your youngster in the habit of making everyday inferences. If you put a skillet, a loaf of bread, and cheese slices on the kitchen counter, invite her to infer what you’re cooking (grilled cheese). Or if you place the cat carrier by the front door, ask her what inference the cat could make—he’s probably going to the vet!♥

Playful printing activities

These hands-on ideas make it enjoyable to practice forming letters.

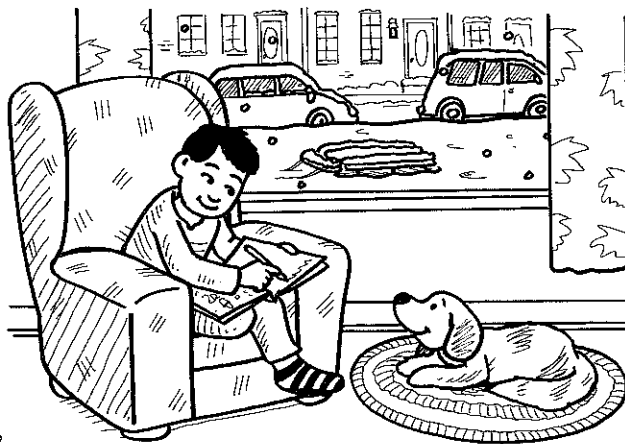
- **Disappearing letters.** Write letters or words on a whiteboard or chalkboard. Your child can trace over each letter with his finger or a cotton swab to make it vanish.
- **Toothpicks and clay.** Have your youngster roll clay into a large ball and flatten it. Then he could use a toothpick to “write” letters in the clay.
- **Snack-time writing.** Cover a plate with a thin layer of hummus. Let your child drag celery stalks or pretzel rods through it to write his name—and eat the dipped treats when he’s finished!♥



Winter writing

Winter brings plenty of opportunities to write. Whether your youngster is just starting to write words or can write complete paragraphs, keep his skills sharp with these suggestions.

Weather calendar. Draw or print out a blank calendar page. Before bed each night, your child could record the day's weather with a symbol (snowflake, raindrop, sun) and write the weather word.



ter vacation. Encourage him to write about what he does every day. When he goes back to school, he could share his journal with his teacher.♥

Resolution list. Let your youngster interview family members about their New Year's resolutions. Help him list them on a sheet of paper. Then on New Year's Eve, invite him to read them to everyone.

Winter break journal. Help your child staple together paper—one sheet for each day of winter



Q&A Catch the mistake

Q My daughter doesn't always notice if she makes a mistake while she's reading aloud. She'll just keep going even if a sentence doesn't make sense. What should I do?

A Strong readers learn to "self monitor," or catch their mistakes and try to correct them.

When your child makes an error that affects a story's meaning, wait, and give her a chance to correct herself. If she doesn't, encourage her to think about whether the word she said looks like the printed word or makes sense in the sentence. If she says *soft* instead of *sofa*, point out that the word looks like *soft*, but that a puppy wouldn't sleep on a *soft*.



Note: If your youngster often makes mistakes and doesn't seem to understand what she's reading, talk to her teacher.♥



Syllable shout-out

Who can spot something with two syllables? How about three? With this game, your child will practice listening to separate syllables—a skill that will help her sound out words.

Materials: pencil, paper, picture book or magazine

Let your youngster write each player's name across the top of a piece of paper. Then, she flips to a random page in the book or magazine and says either "one," "two," or "three." Everyone looks at the open page for an item with that number of syllables. The first person to find one points to the object and says its name slowly, pronouncing each syllable separately. (For three, someone might spot a *car-ou-sel*.)

Help your child write the word and the number of syllables under the player's name. That person goes next and turns to a new page. After 10 rounds, add the scores, and the player with the highest total wins.♥



It's poetry night!

For a cozy family evening filled with reading and fun, try holding a poetry night. Check out children's poetry books from the library, and enjoy these activities.

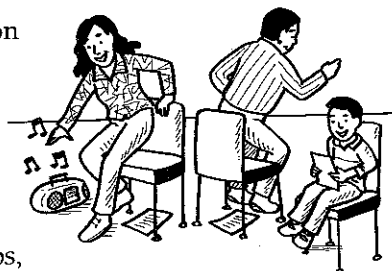
"Musical" verses

Line up a row of chairs, one for each player and a few extras. Each person chooses two short poems, writes them on pieces of paper, and places each sheet under a chair. Then, play music while everyone walks around the chairs. When the music stops,

sit on the closest chair, and read the poem underneath—no one is out. Keep going until everyone gets a chance to read every poem.

Poem-in-a-bag

Before poetry night, every family member picks a poem, puts related "props" into a brown bag, and writes the title on the bag. For a poem about lemonade, for example, your youngster might include a lemon, a sugar packet, and a cup. Pull out your props as you read your poem to everyone.♥



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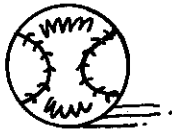
Book Picks

■ *Laugh-Out-Loud Jokes for Kids* (Rob Elliot)

Aspiring comedians can find hundreds of jokes packed into this volume. Youngsters will get plenty of giggles while sharing funny stories, silly poems, knock-knock jokes, and tongue twisters. The first book in the Laugh-Out-Loud series.

■ *Tortilla Sun* (Jennifer Cervantes)

All Izzy knows about her father is that he died before she was born. While spending the summer with her nana in New Mexico, Izzy is determined to learn more—especially why he wrote the words *because* and *magic* on a baseball.



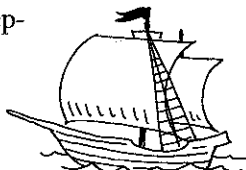
■ *Science on the Loose: Amazing Activities and Science Facts You'll Never Believe* (Helaine Becker)

Fooling the brain, making ice cream, and testing reflexes are just a few of the experiments your child can do using common household items. Interesting explanations, along with facts and trivia, add to the fun of exploring real-world science.



■ *Infinity Ring: Mutiny in Time* (James Dashner)

Fifth-grader Dak Smyth gets to see history firsthand after he and his friend Sera discover a time-traveling device. When Dak's parents are lost in time, the friends must travel back to 1492, while keeping the device a secret. Book 1 in the Infinity Ring series.



Be a word collector

Your child might collect stickers or coins, but how about collecting words? Starting a word collection will increase her vocabulary and make her a stronger reader and writer. Share these ideas.

Get artsy

When your youngster draws a picture, ask her to think of a creative way to add words to it. For instance, after drawing an elephant, she could read an article about the huge mammals. Then, she might write words she learned (*pachyderm*, *herbivore*, *endangered*) as a spray of water coming from the elephant's trunk.

Sprinkle on "spice"

Let your child turn empty spice containers (or any empty jars) into a collection of "zesty" words to use when she writes. Have her label each container with a common word like *pretty*, *great*, or *went*. She can hunt in books, a thesaurus, or a dictionary for replacements (*gorgeous*, *astounding*, *scurred*). Have her write each one on a slip of paper and



add them to the matching container. Encourage her to use these words to spice up her writing!

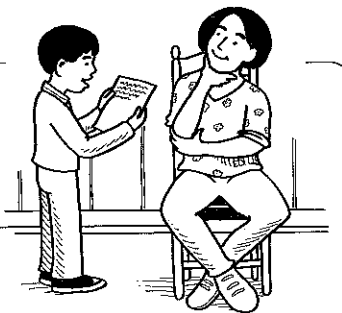
Play games

Suggest that your youngster write interesting words on index cards and play word games with them. She might play War where the longest word, or the word with the most vowels, wins. Or try this: Flip Scrabble tiles upside down. Each player picks a word card. Take turns drawing tiles—the first person to spell the word on her card is the winner. Tip: Have your child keep blank cards on hand for adding to her collection. ■

In a nutshell

Writing summaries helps your youngster remember and describe key ideas in a story. Foster this skill at home with these everyday activities:

- Suggest that your child keep a two-sentence diary. Every night he could think of details about his day that stand out and then summarize them in two sentences. "I finally saved enough money to buy a fish tank. Mom bought me my first two fish."
- Have your youngster secretly pick a movie and think about the plot by asking himself the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *why*. His challenge? To summarize the answers in one paragraph. *Your* challenge? To guess his movie! ■



Family winter reading fun

Winter break means a vacation from school—not a vacation from reading. Keep your youngster turning pages with family-friendly activities like these.

Season's readings. Hold family read-alouds with books that have a winter theme. Ask your child to bring home a selection from the school library, or check out books from your public library. Then, take turns reading chapters from fiction like



Snow Treasure (Marie McSwigan) or nonfiction about winter weather or animal habits, such as *DK Eyewitness Books: Arctic & Antarctic* (Barbara Taylor).

Silent party. Help everyone unwind with a silent reading party. Family members can each bring a book and a blanket and gather in the living room. Snuggling and reading is the best feeling!

Stories in motion. Turn a favorite tale into an evening's entertainment. As one person reads aloud, another acts out the story. At the end of each chapter, let a new reader and actor take over. 📖

Fun with Words Ready, set, punctuate

This editing game will strengthen your child's punctuation powers.

Materials: newspapers or books, paper, pencils

Have each player write a random sentence from a newspaper or book, leaving out the punctuation marks. Count the number of deleted punctuation marks and jot it down at the end of the sentence. For this sentence—*Sally ate apples, bananas, and oatmeal.*—your child would remove the two commas and the period and then write 3.

Trade papers, and add the missing punctuation. Compare your corrected sentences with the originals. Score one point for each mark you missed. At the end of five rounds, the low score wins. 📖



Q&A Developing digital literacy

Q My son's teacher says he needs to be more thorough when he does online research. How can I help?

A It's common for kids—and adults—to do simple Google searches and rely on the first links that pop up. Show your son how digging deeper leads to better results.

Have him search online for something he is interested in, perhaps "most popular sport." Then, brainstorm ways to change the search to get more targeted results. For example, he might type "most popular sport in Minnesota" or "most popular winter sport." He'll see the difference a few words can make.

Also, help him evaluate which sites are more trustworthy. For instance, a site from a company that sells winter sports gear might be less reliable for the information he seeks than a site from a university or a government agency. 📖



Parent 2 Parent Bring characters to life

Our older daughter, Chloe, loves making up characters for stories she writes. So when our younger daughter, Emma, needed help dreaming up characters for a creative writing assignment, I asked Chloe for ideas. She invented a fun activity to do with her sister.

They each found a picture of a person in a magazine. Then, they imagined 10 things about that person. Is she funny? Does she like to dance? What kind of pet does she have?

Using their lists, they wrote a letter from their character introducing herself to them. Chloe showed Emma how she makes a character's language reflect that person's background. For instance, her cowgirl opened her letter with "Howdy" instead of "Hello." Emma decided that

her character would be French and begin with "Bonjour."

Emma really enjoyed doing this. Now I'm looking forward to seeing what characters she comes up with for her stories. 📖



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