

Home & School

CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

February

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School
Jenny Hetzler, School Counselor



SHORT NOTES

What could it be?

Use magazine pictures to sharpen your child's powers of observation. Cut a small circle from the center of a photo. Have him look closely at the circle. What does he think it's showing? Let him glue the circle to paper, draw a scene around it, and compare his picture to the original.

Appreciate thoughtfulness

Encourage your youngster to consider the thought that goes into gifts she receives. *Example:* "Aunt Lisa must have noticed your dollhouse didn't have patio furniture. How thoughtful of her to give you some." This will help her know what to say in a thank-you note—and how to make others happy when she gives gifts.

Talking about current events

If a scary event is in the news, you may wonder whether to discuss it with your child. In general, wait for him to bring up the topic. Concerned he'll hear about it in school? Try starting a conversation by asking what people are saying. Then, stick to the facts, and talk about what you're doing to help him stay safe.

Worth quoting

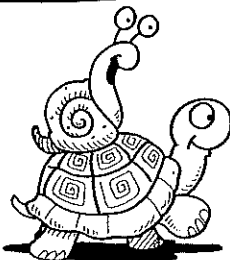
"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What does a snail say when it's riding on a turtle's back?

A: "Whee!"



Conversations about school

When you think of parent involvement, do you picture moms and dads volunteering in classrooms? That's one way to help—but research shows that supporting your child's education at home is even more important. Here are four conversations that will help you stay involved.

"Let's see what you brought home."

Look at completed work to find out what your youngster is learning and how well she's doing. You could comment on her geography report or pottery project, for instance. ("You know a lot about our state's history!") Also, respond to notes from her teacher, and sign her weekly folder or daily planner if required.

"Show me what you have for homework."

It's your child's job to do her homework, but you play a role, too. Make sure she knows what she's supposed to do by having her explain the assignments to you. After she's done, glance over the work to see that it's complete.

"Describe a book you enjoyed today."

This gives you an idea of what your youngster prefers to read. Then, build a daily reading habit by asking what she'd like to read tonight. Encourage her reading and listening skills by reading aloud to her and letting her read to you.

"Tell me what you learned that you'd like to know more about."

Use her interests as jumping-off points for activities to share. If she likes geometry, you might do tangrams

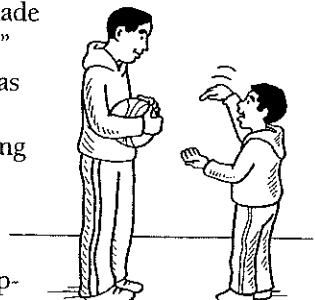


together. If she's fascinated by how animals adapt to winter, take her to the library to research the subject or to the zoo to see live animals. ♥

After-school questions

Asking "How was school today?" might not get you very far. Instead, try these questions for a better picture of your youngster's day:

- "What's the coolest thing that happened? What wasn't so cool?"
- "Pretend you're the teacher—how would you describe the day?"
- "What made you laugh?"
- "What was the most creative thing you did?"
- "How were you kind or helpful today? Was anyone kind or helpful to you?"
- "What new word did you hear today?" ♥

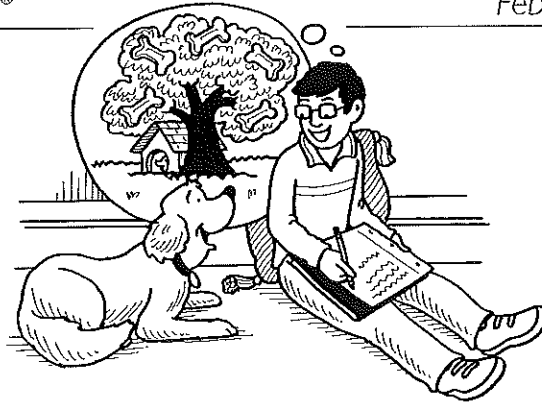


Finding a story topic

“But I don’t know what to write about!” If this is your youngster’s response when he has a creative writing assignment, share these ideas.

Think of an audience. What kind of story would his dog or his best friend want to read? Your child might come up with an idea for a tree that grows dog biscuits or one about the baseball game where he and his friend each hit a home run.

Catch your dreams. Sometimes good ideas come to writers in their sleep. Encourage your youngster to keep a pencil



and a notepad by his bed and write down his dreams as soon as he wakes up. That dream about driving an ice cream truck may spark an interesting tale!

Get inspired by books. Suggest that your child browse

through books at home or at the library—a topic or an idea could jump out at him. For instance, a funny school story might remind him of the time the class guinea pig escaped from its cage. Or a book about Mars can get him thinking about an outer space adventure.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

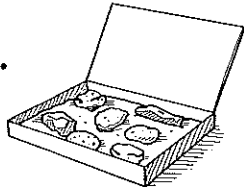


Collecting objects... and more

Children who collect rocks, stuffed giraffes, or just about anything also collect a lot of personal skills along the way. Here are three.

1. Organization.

Will your youngster arrange her key chains alphabetically by where they came from? Should she group her erasers according to color or size? As she decides how to store or display her collection, she’ll practice sorting and organizational skills.



2. Responsibility. Your child won’t want her snow globes to get dusty or her marbles to roll off her dresser and get lost. Keeping her collection in good condition will encourage her to be responsible for her possessions.

3. Personal finance. It’s fun to watch a collection grow. If your youngster gets birthday money or an allowance, she could budget for additions. Also, you can help her research how much the items she owns are worth.♥

Q & A

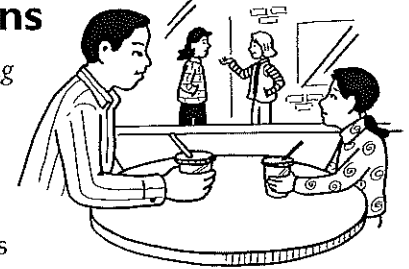
Peer pressure concerns

Q: As my daughter gets older, I’m worrying more about peer pressure. How can I help her handle it?

A: It’s true that friends’ opinions become more important each year. But your values and beliefs will continue to influence her, whether she shows it or not.

Look for regular opportunities to talk about what matters to you, such as staying healthy and being kind to others. If she sees someone smoking, you could quietly say, “I hope you choose not to smoke when you grow up.” Or if you hear a mean remark on TV, you might say, “It’s sad when people make fun of others.” Knowing where you stand can help her withstand peer pressure.

If she mentions a friend is pressuring her, help her practice how to respond. (“I’m not going to cheat on homework. I’ll see you later.”) Remind her that friends should make her feel good about herself—if they don’t, it’s time to find friends who do.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

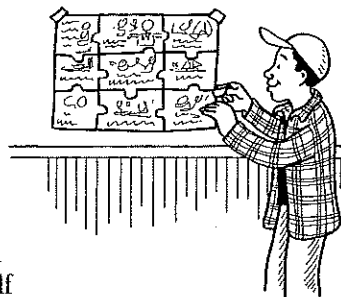
A perfect fit

My son William told me about a project his class did to celebrate differences. His teacher cut a big sheet of paper into puzzle pieces, and each child decorated one to show what makes him interesting or different. Then, they put the puzzle back together.

William thought this would be fun to do with our family. He cut up a poster board and mailed pieces with instructions to relatives. Meanwhile, we drew and wrote on our own pieces. William drew himself

doing a science experiment with his guitar nearby. My husband wrote that he has a birthday only every four years because he was born on February 29. And I put that I travel a lot for work and have been to 45 states.

Once everyone mailed back their pieces, William taped the puzzle together so we could hang it up. It’s a great reminder of how we are all different—and yet still “fit” together as a family!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Making up work

When your child returns to school after being absent, remind her to ask her teachers about make up work. She'll avoid missing out on learning, and she'll make sure she has material that may appear on a quiz or test. At home, have her set aside time to complete the assignments.

Find the similarity

Play this game to stretch your youngster's thinking. Take turns naming two unrelated objects (flower, skyscraper). Encourage him to think about each object's attributes and come up with creative ways that they're alike (both stand up tall).

Follow through

An apology means more if your tween follows up on it. When she makes a mistake, ask how she plans to avoid a repeat. For example, say your trash can overflows because she forgot to put it out on pickup day. After she says, "I'm sorry," she might tape a reminder on the fridge ("Trash: Tuesday and Friday").

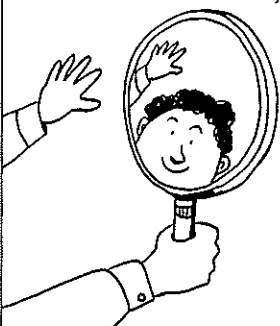
Worth quoting

"There is nothing like a dream to create the future." *Victor Hugo*

Just for fun

Q: When you look at me, I look at you. When you raise your left arm, I raise the right. What am I?

A: A mirror.



Solid research skills

With so much information available, there's plenty for your tween to draw on when he does research for reports, essays, or presentations. The key is knowing how to dig through the material and determine what he needs. Share these tips.

Stay on topic

Encourage your child to use specific search terms online so that what turns up will be closer to what he's looking for. Say he's writing a science paper on earthquakes. Simply typing "earthquakes" into a search engine may bring up news on recent quakes. He'll get better results if he instead tries "earthquake science" or "What is an earthquake?"

Get organized

Suggest that your middle grader develop a note-taking system that works well for him. For instance, he might write each fact and its source on a separate index card. When he's finished, he



could sort the cards into categories. He'll be able to see holes in his research, such as main ideas that need more supporting evidence.

Consider the source

Your tween should choose sites that are up to date, in-depth, and credible. Sites published by schools or universities (ending in *.edu*), government agencies (*.gov*), and nonprofit organizations (*.org*), tend to be more trustworthy. Also, it's important to verify facts by finding them in at least three places. 👍

Mindfulness for middle graders

Tweens face stress from daily activities like handling homework and navigating friendships. Being *mindful*, or present in the moment, may ease the pressure. Help your child practice with these ideas.

■ **Create a "calming jar."** Let your tween fill a clear jar with water and sprinkle in glitter. Have her screw on the lid and shake the jar, focusing on her feelings as she watches the glitter settle. Point out that when the glitter is still, it's easier to see through the jar—much like being calm helps her see a situation more clearly.

■ **Take a walk.** Pay attention to what you and your middle grader feel, hear, see, and smell as you walk together. What sound do your feet make when they hit the ground? What does the breeze feel like on your face? What scents come from the homes you pass? 👍



Is it bullying?

What does bullying look like, and what can you and your middle schooler do about it? Consider this advice to help her recognize and respond to bullying.

Be aware of “silent bullying.” Some bullying is easy to spot, such as one student deliberately tripping another. But it can also be less obvious. A child might take another student’s belongings or threaten a classmate when no one else is around. Encourage your middle grader to reach out to a classmate who seems fearful or withdrawn. A simple



“Hey, is everything okay?” could give a person who is being bullied the courage to confide in her.

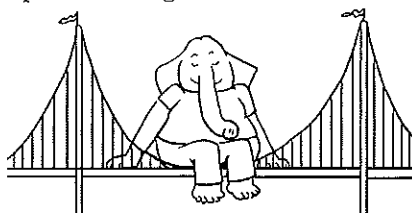
Know when behavior crosses the line.

Your tween may not realize that she is being bullied. Say a classmate repeatedly makes unwanted comments about her appearance—that’s a form of bullying. Let her know she can come to you if

she feels uncomfortable with how she’s being treated. Together, you could decide how to handle it (for instance, talking to her school counselor). 👍

Engineer a suspension bridge

Suspension bridges rely on cables to support the weight of vehicles traveling across them. Your child can explore engineering by making his own model suspension bridge.



First, have him look for suspension bridges when you’re on the road, in books, or online. What features does he notice? *Examples:* towers, cables, a deck.

Now let him select household materials and build the strongest suspension bridge he can. He might use paper towel tubes for the towers, fishing line for the cables, and heavy cardboard for the deck. How will he attach the cables to the towers and the deck?

He can test his bridge by counting how many toy cars it holds without sagging. Then, suggest that he redesign to build a stronger bridge that holds even more cars! 👍



Q&A

Pleasant chats with tweens

Q Whenever I try to have a nice conversation with my son, he ends up getting annoyed. Why is he acting this way, and how can we communicate better?

A There are several reasons your son may become easily irritated. At this age, he wants to be more independent—yet he knows he still needs your guidance, which may feel annoying to him. Plus, he’s dealing with changing hormones.

You might find that you have nicer conversations when you’re doing something side by side, such as putting away groceries or shopping to find a gift for a relative. It could also help to talk when your middle grader is relaxed like at bedtime or on a weekend afternoon while you’re sitting on the porch.

Finally, you’re more likely to keep the conversation upbeat if you ask about things he’s interested in, perhaps what happened in drama club today or in the last episode of his favorite podcast. 👍



Parent to Parent

Foreign language: Learn together

My daughter Kelsey is taking French this year. While she was studying for a quiz recently, I recognized a couple of the vocabulary words from when I took French. So I asked Kelsey if she would teach me more words.

She had fun helping me pronounce the words and quizzing me on their meanings. I learned that *la pomme* means

apple and *l’oiseau* is *bird*. Throughout the week, she even tried to weave the words into our conversations to see if I’d remember them.

Then, for family movie night, I surprised Kelsey by downloading a movie in French with English subtitles. As we watched, we listened for words we recognized.

Kelsey is doing well in French class—I think speaking and hearing the language at home is really helping. 👍



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