

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

February 2013

St. Joseph School
Catholic School Parent Council



SHORT NOTES

Explore magazines

Magazines are available for every age—and they're a great way to encourage regular reading. When you visit the library, have each family member choose a magazine, and then sit and read together. A younger reader might enjoy *Ranger Rick Jr.* or *Ladybug*, while an older child could try *Appleseeds* or *National Geographic Kids*.

Be a good sport

If you watch basketball or hockey with your youngster, see how many examples of good sportsmanship the two of you can find. You might point out a player helping an opponent up after he falls or coaches shaking hands after the game. Then, when your child goes to practice or a game, he can imitate the actions he saw.

Song lyrics

You may have discovered that your youngster knows quite a few songs from the radio. If you hear a song with questionable lyrics, take the opportunity to discuss your values with your child. Also, if you let her download music, you can use the parental controls to restrict access to songs labeled "explicit."

Worth quoting

"For every minute you are angry, you lose 60 seconds of happiness."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

JUST FOR FUN

Q: If you see a kangaroo 20 miles away, what do you need?

A: I don't know, but you don't need glasses.

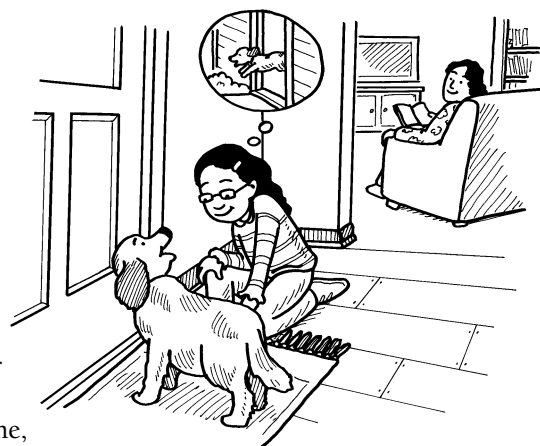


A sense of empathy

"I know how you feel." When your youngster says this to someone, she is expressing empathy—understanding and caring about how another person feels. Try these tips to help her grow up with a strong sense of empathy.

Set an example. Your child learns by watching you. When she is upset about something (say, a classmate made fun of her journal), try to put yourself in her place. You might say, "I'd feel sad if a coworker made fun of something I wrote." Or when you show empathy for someone, explain your thinking. For instance, if your neighbors' power goes out, you could say, "We would be cold and hungry if we didn't have electricity, wouldn't we? Let's invite them over."

Practice with stories. Imagining how book characters feel is a good way to work on empathy. Read a story to your youngster, and then have her retell it from a different character's point of view. For instance, in Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, how did the



mother feel while her son was on his wild adventure?

Take care of others. Being around pets and babies can help your child learn empathy. That's because they are dependent on others to figure out how they feel and to meet their needs. Ask your youngster to think about how a dog or a baby cousin feels, and have her explain how she knows ("I think the dog needs to go outside, because he's barking at the door").♥

Homework solutions

Is homework sometimes a challenge in your home? Here are two complaints you may hear, along with solutions to consider:

- **"I don't want to do homework."** Make homework time more pleasant by helping your youngster find a quiet, well-lit place to work. You can also encourage him to reward himself for working hard. For example, he might decide to take a break to play after he works for 30 minutes. *Tip:* If you find he rushes through homework to watch TV or play video games, consider limiting electronics on school nights.
- **"This is too hard."** Ask your child to read the directions aloud and tell you what he's finding hard. Then, suggest that he look through his textbook for a similar problem or call a friend who might be able to help. *Note:* If your youngster frequently struggles with assignments, talk to his teacher.♥



Raise a lifelong learner

Learning never stops! Help your child continue learning throughout his life by instilling these traits in him.

Curiosity

Encourage your youngster to ask questions and come up with ideas. Post an interesting newspaper or magazine photo (without the caption) on the refrigerator, and hang up a blank piece of paper for family members to write questions and thoughts. *Example:* "This might be in Paris because that looks like part of the Eiffel Tower." After a few days, post the



might want to grow tomatoes or beans at home and use them in recipes. Or he could look online or in the newspaper for "field trip" ideas. Perhaps he wants to go to a museum to see flags and objects from around the world or visit a nature center to observe insects and reptiles. ♥

caption and ask your child to compare everyone's ideas.

Enthusiasm

Your youngster will probably be more excited about learning if he sees how it relates to real life. Have him choose something he's studying in school and think of ways he could explore it firsthand. If he studies plants in science, he

ACTIVITY CORNER

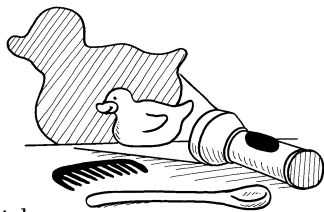
Shadow science

Play a guessing game with shadows to help your youngster learn about light.

Materials: flashlight, small household objects (examples: rubber duck, comb, wooden spoon)

In a dark room, have your child face a wall. Standing behind her, shine a flashlight on the wall above her head, and hold an object in the beam of light. Can she figure out what the item is by looking at the shadow? Then, let her make shadows with different objects for you to guess. Ask her how she thinks a shadow is made. (The object blocks the light from coming through.)

Together, experiment with holding the items closer to the flashlight and then farther away from it. What happens? (When you put an item closer to a light source, it blocks more of the light and creates a bigger shadow.) ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Family meetings

My son's favorite part of school is his weekly class

meeting. When he explained that the meetings help people get along, we decided to try a family meeting.

Ryan had us sit in a circle just like at school. We started with a "beach ball greeting"—we took turns rolling a ball to each other and telling about something in our lives. Ryan said he was invited to a birthday party, and our daughter, Chloe, shared a new cheer she learned.

Next, it was problem-solving time. Ryan gave us examples of problems they'd solved at school, like long lines at the pencil sharpener. I suggested that we figure out how to avoid leaving on too many lights, and we agreed to put sticky-note reminders on doors. Finally, we decided to meet every Friday after dinner to connect with each other and solve household problems. ♥



Q & A

Talking about the news

Q: I want my daughter to know what's going on in the world, but sometimes the news is scary. How can I make sure she's informed but not upset?

A: You're right—it is important for children to follow current events. The key is to do it in an age-appropriate way.

Let your daughter see you read the newspaper or check the news online, and mention articles that affect her. You might say, "It's going to snow! What groceries should we stock up on?" or "They're building a subway station near our house, so we'll be able to ride more

often." Also, encourage her to think critically. You could say, "Some people don't want a station in our neighborhood. Why do you think that is?"

If she mentions something upsetting, like a war or natural disaster, try asking what she has heard about it. Then, take your cues from her. A younger child might need to be reassured that she's safe because the war is far away. An older child may be ready for more information or want to help (say, by sending a care package to a soldier or gathering supplies for storm victims). ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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