Home & School CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

March 2011

St. Patrick Catholic School
Catholic School Parent Council

SHORT NOTES

Fun with mazes

Mazes can help your child improve his hand-eye coordination and encourage creativity and strategic thinking. Look for maze books at dollar stores, or you and your youngster can draw your own for each other to complete. Mark "start" and "finish" points at opposite corners of your paper. Connect them with twisting paths that include a few dead ends.

The volunteer habit

Raise a youngster who is used to doing community service. Ask her school about local organizations like scouts, 4-H, and Kiwanis Kids. Or suggest that she apply to be a safety patrol at school, choose items to donate to a charity, or participate in a neighborhood cleanup.

Safe online

Remind your child to work and play safely online with this project. Have him cut a stop-sign shape from red construction paper. Then, help him list rules on his sign and post it by the computer. *Examples:* "Don't share personal information." "Close pop-ups right away."

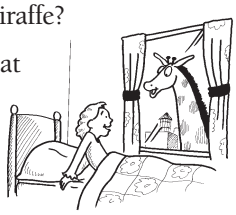
Worth quoting

"If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right." *Henry Ford*

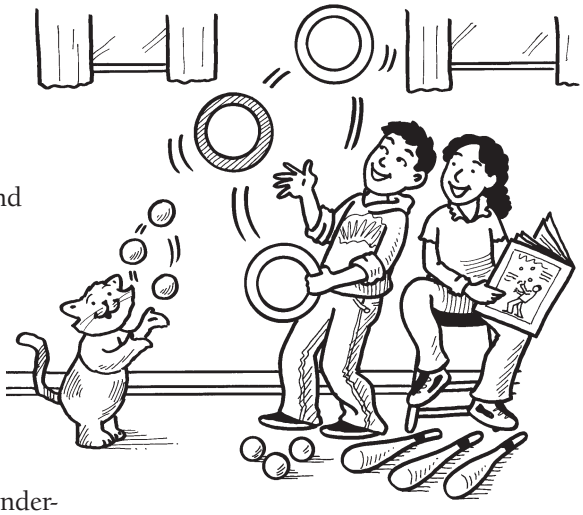
JUST FOR FUN

Q: What do you get when you cross a rooster and a giraffe?

A: An animal that can wake people on the top floor of a building.



Learning partners



Children learn a lot from their teachers and parents—and they can also learn from each other. Here are ways your youngster can sharpen skills he needs in school while working and playing with friends.

Share studying. When your child has a test or quiz coming up, suggest that he study with a friend. Each person could review a different section and then explain it to the other. Talking things through aloud will help your youngster understand and remember them. Or have both children read all the material silently and then discuss it together. They'll probably have different thoughts and ideas, which means twice as much learning.

Explore science. Your child and his friend can have fun with experiments they've done in class. They might put a variety of objects (coins, a sponge, a jar lid) in water to see which ones sink and which ones float. Or they could build simple machines (ramps, pulleys) with materials like cardboard boxes, string, and blocks. *Idea:* Offer to help them make a "science show" by recording their experiments with a cell phone or video camera.

Do research. Is there something your youngster has always wanted to learn how to do, such as card tricks or juggling? Suggest that he find a friend who is interested, too. They could meet at the library to look up the topic. They'll build research skills, like checking multiple sources and taking notes. Then, they can get together to practice what they've learned.♥

Time for families

Regular family outings can help you and your child stay connected and enjoy special time together. Try these ideas:

- Local businesses may offer free or low-cost workshops. Ask for program calendars when you're out. Then, make colorful sand art projects at a craft store or learn about dog care at a pet shop.
- Check your town's newspaper or Web site for free events. Your family might be able to attend a puppet show, book signing, or health fair.♥

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A recipe for respect

Ava listens quietly when her teacher talks. Ben claps for each performer at his piano recital. These children show respect for others. Here's how you can encourage your youngster to do the same.

Demonstrate

Your child will learn respectful behavior by watching the way you treat others. When she makes a mistake, for instance, gently tell her what she's done wrong—and out of earshot of others. Also, let her see you respect ideas and beliefs that are different from your own. For example, point out that you're happy a friend is voting in an election even though you each favor a different candidate.

Notice

When you see your youngster acting respectfully, let her know that you've noticed ("I like the way you asked your sister before borrowing her sweater"). Your words and attention will encourage her to show respect in the future.

Tip: If you see disrespectful behavior on TV (a child rolling his eyes or talking back to a parent), tell your youngster that isn't okay in real life. Then, ask her to be on the lookout for respectful actions by characters. How many can she spot before the program ends? ♥

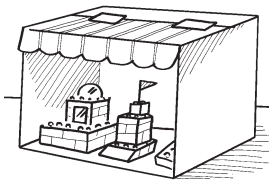
ACTIVITY CORNER

My museum

Let your child create a museum exhibit at home. He'll learn planning and organization skills, and he'll feel proud when family members "visit" his museum. Suggest these steps:

1. Choose a theme. Have your youngster think about his interests. For instance, he might create a Lego exhibit or a display about his swim team.

2. Decide what to display. For a Lego exhibit, your child could take pictures of his creations and also build new models. A swimming display might contain ribbons, photos, and newspaper articles.



3. Set up the exhibit. Your youngster can turn a large cardboard box on its side and arrange the objects in it. Have him label each item using a sticky note or an index card. Put his exhibit in the family room or living room where everyone can see it.

Tip: Encourage your child to keep his museum interesting by changing the theme each month.♥

Standardized test tips

It's the season for standardized tests. Help your youngster be prepared, confident, and relaxed with these strategies:

- When the school announces a test, put it on your calendar and discuss it with your child. Be upbeat—tell her you know she'll do her best. Listen if she has questions or seems anxious.
- Looking at sample tests can help your youngster feel comfortable with the format. Check the school Web site or ask her teacher how to find samples. Then, have her do a few questions each day.
- Have your child go to bed on time the night before a test. In the morning, give her a healthy breakfast that includes protein, whole grains, and fruit.♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Supporting an advanced learner

When our son Ben was identified as gifted and talented this year, we weren't sure what to expect. First, we noticed that his homework assignments were more challenging. For example, he wrote his own word problems rather than just solving the ones in his math book, or compared two stories instead of answering questions about them.

We talked to his teachers, who explained that the assignments encouraged Ben to come up with his own ideas. The teachers suggested ways to fit assignments into everyday activities. For instance, when we go to the doctor or bank, we'll say, "Find a story problem while we're here!" Or we'll check out library books that share a theme and talk about how they're similar and different.

Ben is doing well in his new program. We've been trying his teachers' ideas with our other kids, too, and they're all more excited about learning.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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