

# Home & School CONNECTION<sup>®</sup>

Working Together for School Success

March 2010

Christian Cultural Center's  
Brooklyn Preparatory School

## SHORT NOTES



### Have courage

When your child is nervous about a class play or a doctor's appointment, remind her how she handled past situations bravely. You might say, "Remember when you were afraid to read in front of the class, and then your teacher said you did a great job?" Taking pride in her courage will help her deal with new challenges.

### Homework helper

Help your youngster make an instant homework station by folding a piece of poster board into thirds. He can set it up around him to block out distractions when he works. He can also tape handy information to it, like a multiplication table or a United States map.

### Which way?

Use everyday conversations to improve your child's sense of direction. During an after-dinner walk, point out the sunset in the *west*. On the highway, show her road signs (Route 1 *South*). *Idea:* Have her make *north*, *south*, *east*, and *west* signs. Help her hang them on the correct walls in her bedroom.

### Worth quoting

"Do not go where the path may lead.  
Go instead where there is no path,  
and leave a trail."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** Why did the dinosaur paint her toenails red?

**A:** So she could hide in the strawberry patch.



## Discipline solutions

Does your child sometimes test the limits you set for him? It's easy to get frustrated when he doesn't listen to you. But having a clear plan for handling misbehavior can help you stay calm and get him back on track more quickly. Try these suggestions.

### Communicate clearly.

If you find yourself repeating instructions several times before your youngster "hears" you, try getting his attention first. You might gently touch him on the shoulder and say his name. When he makes eye contact, state exactly what you need him to do ("Please walk—don't run—in the house").

**Explain rules.** Your child will be more likely to follow rules if he understands the reasons for them. But trying to explain while he's misbehaving can lead to an argument. Instead, wait until he's calm. Then say, for instance, "You have to ask permission before you go outside so I know where you are." Also, let him



know the consequence of breaking a rule (staying inside for 30 minutes).

**Look for reasons.** When your youngster has a day where he keeps getting into trouble, find out if something is bothering him. *Example:* "You seem out of sorts today. Do you want to talk about it?" Perhaps he argued with a friend or got a low grade on a book report. Talking about his problems lets him see that you care—and may help break the cycle of misbehavior.♥

## Test tips

Spring is the time for standardized tests at many schools. If your youngster is taking one soon, share these tips:

- For multiple-choice items, suggest that she try to answer the question without looking at the responses first. Then, she can check to see if her choice is among the answers. If it is, it's probably correct. If she doesn't know an answer, she should guess. Chances are her first instinct will be right.

- On reading-comprehension sections (a passage followed by questions), suggest that she read the questions first. That way, she'll know what she's looking for when she reads the paragraph.

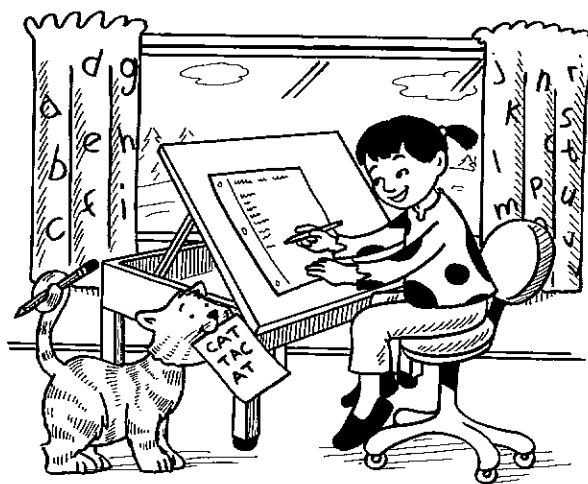
*Tip:* Encourage your youngster to try her best, but remind her that it's okay if she doesn't know all the answers.♥



## Wonderful words

A good vocabulary will help your youngster do better in all subjects. You can play these games to increase the number of words she knows and uses:

- Teach your child to find words inside words. On separate sheets of paper, have each family member write his or her full name (first, middle, last). Set a timer for five minutes. See how many words players can make using the letters in their own names.
- Stretch your youngster's thinking while teaching her about letter patterns. The first player says a word with four letters (*late*). The



next person changes just one letter to make a new word (*date*). Continue playing as long as possible.

- Help your child find interesting words in stories. Secretly choose a book she knows, write down 5–10 favorite words from the pages, and read the list to her. Can she guess the book? Talk about why you liked each word (“*Suspect* sounds sneaky, and the suspect in a mystery is sneaky”) and what it means (someone accused of doing something). Then, let her select words from a book for you. ♥

### ACTIVITY CORNER

### Musical glasses

Your child will have fun making music—and learn about sound—with this experiment.

**Materials:** 3 identical glasses, water, spoon

Let your youngster fill three drinking glasses with different amounts of water. He can fill one glass three-quarters full, another half full, and a third glass one-quarter full.



Then, have him tap on the side of each glass with a spoon. What happens? They each make a slightly different sound. Water makes the glass vibrate faster, causing a higher-pitched sound. Less water causes slower vibrations and a lower-pitched sound.

Next, give your child more glasses, and encourage him to experiment with different amounts of water to create more sounds. He might even play a simple tune like “*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*” or “*Row, Row, Row Your Boat*.” ♥

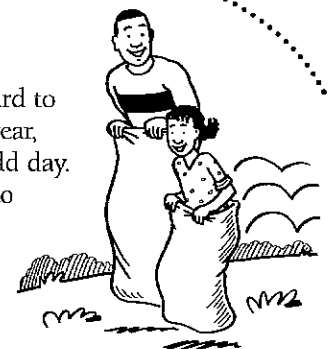
### PARENT TO PARENT

### Family field day

Our daughter Molly looks forward to field day in school every year. Last year, she came up with the idea of starting our own family field day. It turned out to be a great workout—and an ideal way to spend time together.

Molly chose a few of her favorite events, including the three-legged race, the sack race, and the egg-and-spoon relay. Then, on a warm spring afternoon, I invited my sister and her kids over for our field day.

We divided into teams and did relays at a field in our neighborhood. We used pillowcases for sacks and golf balls as eggs. Molly even taught us the sponge relay. We soaked up water from a bucket with sponges and then ran across the field to squeeze the sponges into another bucket. Our family field day was so much fun that we're planning another one this year! ♥



### Q & A

### Looking beyond stereotypes

**Q:** My son Dylan told me that he doesn't like a boy in his class because he's from a different country. What should I say?

**A:** This is a good time to discuss stereotypes and try to teach your child about tolerance and diversity. You can explain that a stereotype is a judgment made about a member of a particular group without really knowing the person. And since each person is an individual, stereotypes are unfair. For example, you

could say, he wouldn't want people making an assumption about him based on his appearance or background.

Encourage Dylan to tell you how he feels about his classmate. He might say, “He's not like me.” Then, suggest that he

try playing with him at recess or invite him over to work on a school project. Once your son spends a little time with him, he may discover that they're more alike than he thought. ♥



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Resources for Educators,  
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540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
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# Math+Science Connection

Beginning Edition

Building excitement and success for young children

March 2010

Brooklyn Preparatory School

## TOOLS & TIDBITS



### Count all day

Find reasons for your child to count all day

long. She can count the books on her shelf, the squares of the sidewalk, and the apple slices on her plate. Asking, "How many are there?" throughout the day will get her used to counting and improve her number sense.

### Bird watching

Here's a way for your youngster to observe bird behavior. Have him put scraps of string, yarn, felt, and ribbon in an empty mesh onion bag. Hang the bag from a tree, and let him watch birds take pieces for their nests. Can he spot any of the items in bird nests around your neighborhood?

### Book picks

Stripes, dots, colors, and words make up the patterns in Trudy Harris's story of ocean life. *Pattern Fish* begins with simple patterns and moves on to more complex ones.

*Marvelous Mattie: How Margaret E. Knight Became an Inventor* (Emily Arnold McCully) tells about the first woman to get a U.S. patent. Children will delight in Mattie's life story and the sketches of her inventions.

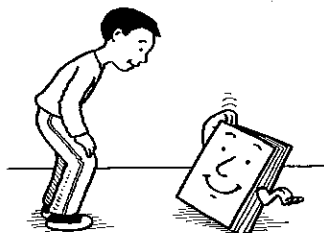
### Worth quoting

"There are not seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million." *Walt Streightiff*

## Just for fun

**Q:** What did the math book say to the student?

**A:** Please solve my problems.



## Sort it out

When your child groups toy cars by color or divides books into those about animals and those about people, he is *sorting*.

Sorting helps him see the similarities and differences between objects—an important skill for both math and science. Use these steps to practice:

1. Describe an object for your youngster by giving its *attributes*—the details that make it unique. For example, you could say a basketball is orange, round, bumpy, big, and heavy. Ask him to use attributes to tell you about a few items.
2. Help your child see different ways to sort objects. You might lay out a dozen toys and say, "Show me all the blue ones." Next, ask him to find all the ones that have wheels. Finally, have him sort out the ones that are both blue and have wheels.



3. Play "Guess the Rule." Take turns pointing to objects that have an attribute in common. The other person has to figure out what trait they share. For example, you might point to a grapefruit, a baseball, and a globe. *Answer:* They're all round.

4. Let your youngster decide how to sort items. He might group a deck of cards by color (red, black), suit (hearts, clubs, diamonds, spades), or number (2s, 3s, and so on). Or have him sort different kinds of dry pasta. When he's done, ask him how each pile is the same. *Examples:* "These are straight. Those are curvy."

## Red celery?

Here's an activity that lets your youngster turn celery red—while learning about plants.

Leaving the leaves attached, cut a piece of celery so the stalk is 4 inches long. Then, have your child mix 10 drops of red food coloring into  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water. She can stand the celery stalk in the water and check on it regularly. Within a few hours, the celery stalk and leaves will start to turn red! *Note:* The longer the stalk sits in the water, the brighter red it will become.

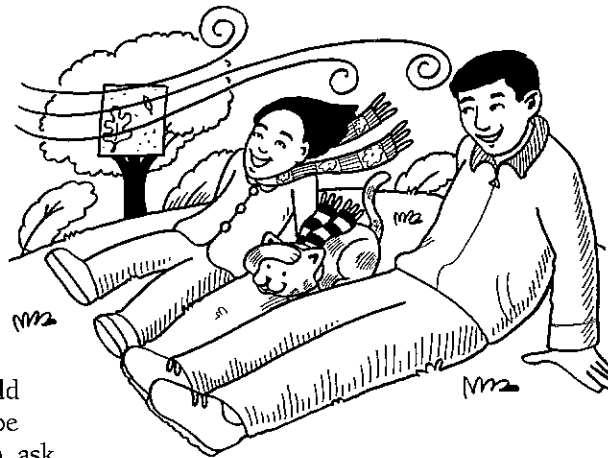
You can explain that *capillary action* causes the red water to travel through the narrow tubes (called *capillaries*) in celery. These capillaries carry water and nutrients through plants and help make the food they need to grow.



# Windy days

Is March coming in like a lion? Use the opportunity to help your youngster learn about wind. Try these suggestions.

**Experience the wind.** Put on hats and scarves, and go outside for a walk in the wind. What does your child notice? She might see tree branches swaying or a leaf being blown across the yard. Have her hold up a washcloth or paper napkin—she'll be excited to see it blowing in the wind. Also, ask



what the wind feels like on her face. See if she can tell you where the wind is blowing from ("behind me" or "in front of me").

## What can the wind carry?

Poke a small hole in the top of a piece of cardboard (8½ x 11 inch or larger), and tie a piece of string through it. Have your youngster spread something sticky (petroleum jelly, pancake syrup)

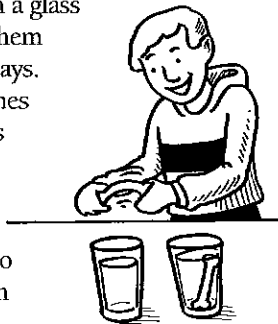
on one side, and hang the cardboard from a tree on a windy day. After about an hour, take it down, and let your child see what is stuck to the cardboard. There might be seeds, leaves, or dust. She'll see how the wind carries things from place to place.

## SCIENCE LAB Strong bones

This experiment will show your child what happens to bones that lose minerals—and help him see why it's important to drink milk!

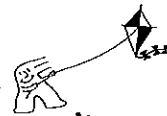
**You'll need:** 2 poultry bones, 2 glasses, water, vinegar, paper towel

**Here's how:** After having chicken or turkey for dinner one night, wash two bones and let them dry overnight. Have your youngster put one bone in a glass of water and the other in a glass of vinegar. Let them soak for three days. Remove the bones from the glasses and dry them with a paper towel. Then, ask your child to try to bend each bone.



**What happens?** The one soaked in vinegar will be soft and bendable. The one that was in water will not have changed.

**Why?** The vinegar causes a chemical reaction that dissolves the calcium in the bone. The other bone still has calcium, so it remains strong.

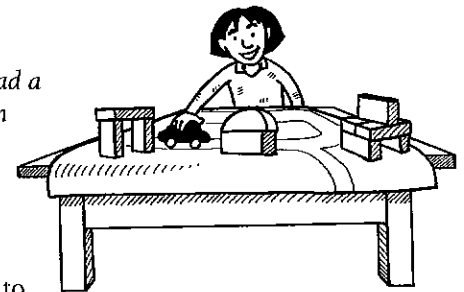


## Q & A Making maps

**Q:** My daughter wanted to help me read a map the other day. How can she begin to learn map skills?

**A:** A good first step is to have her make a map. She can start with a 3-D version by building a block city. Encourage her to line up blocks to create intersecting streets and to build stores and houses along them. Have her use toy people to show you different routes through her town. For example, ask how they would go from their house to the bank ("They go straight down this street and turn right").

Then, have your youngster draw a map of her block city on a piece of paper. Suggest that she stand up and look down on it so she can see the shapes of her buildings and streets. Ask her questions that show relationships, such as "What is next to the red house?" or "What is in front of the bank?" Learning to make and read maps will help her understand directions and build spatial skills.



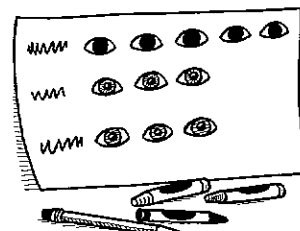
## MATH CORNER Take a survey

Your child can find interesting information about family and friends and learn ways to analyze the data with these two ideas:

- Have him take a survey of a family trait (eye color). He can check with your immediate family as well as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. To show his findings, suggest that he make a **pictograph** by drawing different-colored eyes in separate rows (5 brown for the 5 people with brown eyes, 3 blue, 2 green).

- Let him survey friends about their favorite pets, ice cream flavors, or TV shows. First, have him list choices (example: favorite pets could be dog, cat, hamster, or guinea pig). As he asks each friend, he should make a tally mark next to the animal chosen.

Then, he can add up the tally marks and report the results. ("Six people like dogs the best. Two people like cats the best.")



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128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
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# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

March 2010

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## Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

### ■ Knuffle Bunny

Trixie's favorite stuffed bunny accidentally ends up in the wash at the Laundromat. But because the little girl can't talk yet, she's having a hard time explaining why she's upset. When her dad finally rescues the toy, Trixie speaks her first words: "Knuffle Bunny!" Mo Willems's tale is cleverly told in words and pictures. (Also available in Spanish.)



### ■ The Wolf Who Cried Boy

In Bob Hartman's twist on the original folktale, a little wolf keeps telling his parents that he sees a boy. Each time, they get their hopes up that they'll have their favorite dish for dinner. Find out what happens when the wolf really does see a boy.

### ■ Night in the Country

There's something special about a night so quiet that you can hear an apple fall from a tree. Cynthia Rylant describes the sights and sounds of a country night: fireflies blinking, a screen door closing, a pig rolling in the straw. A good bedtime read-aloud.



### ■ Alvin Ailey

Dancers twirl, leap, and soar in this picture-book biography by Andrea Pinkney. Young readers will learn how Ailey became a famous dancer and choreographer—from his childhood in Texas to his first lessons in Los Angeles and the founding of his own dance company in New York City.



## Love to read

Reading alongside your child can inspire in her a life-long love of books. When she reads a story for school or just for fun, sit down with her and enjoy a book of your own. Try one of these ideas to help her get the most out of your special reading time:



♥ Make a reading date. Let your youngster choose a spot, such as a playground or a lake. Then, pack up your books and a blanket to sit on, and head out. Your child will see that she can read anywhere! *Idea:* For twice the fun, let her invite a friend along on a reading field trip.

♥ Show your youngster that reading is fun *and* interesting. Don't hesitate to laugh out loud if your book is funny. Stop to read a passage to her that you especially like, or tell her about an interesting part of your story. Encourage her to share sentences and pictures with you, too.

♥ After reading, discuss your books. You'll help your child understand and remember what she reads. You might talk about how the stories are similar and different. For example, your youngster might say, "Mine has a girl main character," and you could respond, "Mine does, too. Mine is a grown-up. How old is yours?" Or you might each make a personal connection to your book ("I'm a mom just like my character, and you're a big sister just like yours"). ♥

## Reading break

Almost everywhere your youngster looks, there's something for him to read. Here are several suggestions.

**Crayons.** From red to cornflower blue, help your child read the color of every crayon in his box.

**Instructions.** Ask him to help you read directions before you play a board game or build a toy racetrack.

**Menus.** Save carryout menus so your youngster can look for food words that he recognizes. In restaurants, he can read the children's menu.

**Packages.** Have him read the cereal box while he eats breakfast or find words he knows on the cracker box when he has a snack. ♥



# Planning a story

A good story begins with a plan. When your child comes home with a writing assignment, help him get started with these ideas.

## Think

Have your youngster brainstorm a list of words about his topic. For instance, if his teacher asked him to describe his spring vacation, he might jot down *picnic*, *baseball*, and *hike*. His list will help him remember everything he wants to include when he's writing ("I saw a grand slam at the baseball game").



## Discuss

Hold a "writing conference" with your child. Ask questions to get him thinking about what information his story needs ("What games did you play when you had your sleepover?"). You might also help him come up with different ways to begin or end his story.

## Observe

Taking a firsthand look at his subject can get your youngster's imagination going. Say he is supposed to draw a picture and write a story about his favorite toy. He can keep the toy next to him while he works. If he's writing about something that he can't see (the pyramids, Mars), help him find pictures in a library book or online. ♥

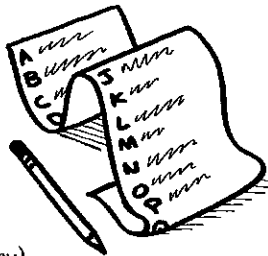
## Fun with Words

### Jump for j

This action-packed game will teach your child about beginning sounds.

Have your youngster write 10–15 letters down the side of a sheet of paper. Together, think of a motion to go with each letter. *Examples:* hop for *h*, kick for *k*. Write the actions beside the letters.

Next, let her choose any letter (*k*). You say several words, including some that begin with the letter and some that don't (*kitten*, *banana*, *key*).



Your youngster should kick every time she hears a *k* word, and stay still for the other words. Then, you choose a letter and have her call out words for you. Keep taking turns until you've used all the letters.

*Variation:* An older child can choose actions that start with consonant blends (*clap* for *cl*, *stomp* for *st*). ♥

## Q&A

### It's a piece of cake!

**Q** When my daughter reads a story, she gets confused by expressions like "on the tip of my tongue." How can I help her?

**A** Idioms, or sayings that aren't literal, can be challenging for beginning readers. You can improve your child's reading comprehension by explaining these idioms and using them in everyday conversations.

Start a list of idioms from stories that she reads. When she comes across one, talk about what it means, and help her write it in a small notebook. *Examples:* "A piece of cake" is something that's easy ("Her homework was a piece of cake"), and "apple of my eye" is someone who is cherished ("You are the apple of my eye").

Try to use the phrases from the list whenever you can. Or choose a saying of the day, and have a contest to see which family member can use it the most. ♥



## Parent to Parent

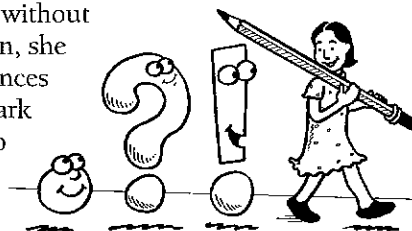
### Proper punctuation

When my second-grader started writing, she often put periods, question marks, or exclamation points where they didn't belong.

Katie's teacher explained that this was a common habit for beginning writers. He suggested that I have Katie write a few sentences without any punctuation. Then, she should read the sentences aloud, putting in a mark each time she came to a stop. Mr. Draper said that if she heard her voice

going up, she needed a question mark. If she read a sentence that was exciting or scary, she should use an exclamation point. Otherwise, she could add a period.

He also said that I should ask Katie to point out punctuation in books when we read aloud. That way, she will see how authors use the marks. His ideas have really helped Katie use the right punctuation when she writes. And now that she's paying attention to punctuation in stories, she's reading more smoothly, too. ♥



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