

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

October 2011

Van Vleck Independent School District
John R. O'Brien, Superintendent



SHORT NOTES

Humor box

Help your child create a “humor first aid kit” that she can use to cheer people up. She could collect items that will make others laugh (joke books, comic strips, funny sayings). Suggest that she pull out her kit when a family member is sick, bored, or feeling down.

I’m a lefty!

If your youngster is left-handed, a few tweaks can make schoolwork easier for him. Be sure he has a supply of left-handed scissors and smudge-free pencils and pens. Also, suggest that he take pages out of a three-ring binder before he writes. His work will be neater, and he’ll be more comfortable.

Join the crowd

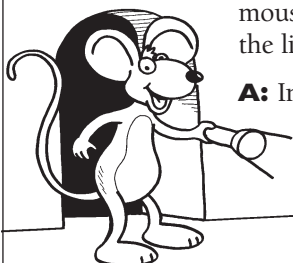
This year, try joining the parent organization (PTA or PTO) at your child’s school. You’ll discover ways to help the school while you get to know other parents, teachers, and staff. Members also get the “inside scoop” on fund-raisers, legislation, and school events.

Worth quoting

“Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor, summer an oil painting, and autumn a mosaic of them all.”

Stanley Horowitz

JUST FOR FUN

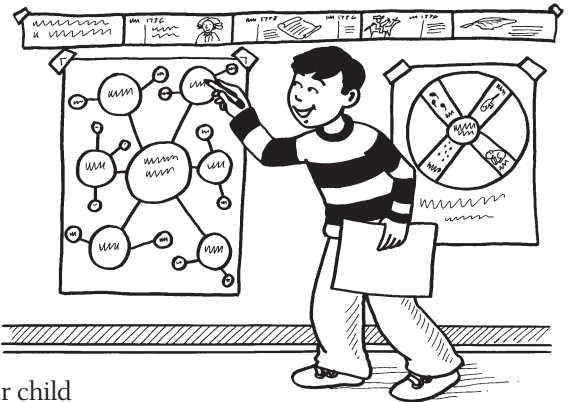


Q: Where will the mouse be when the lights go out?

A: In the dark.

Organize and learn

A *graphic organizer* is a special type of drawing that lets your child arrange information that he’s learning. It can show him how ideas are related, and it’s a great tool for studying—just the act of making one will help him remember facts. Suggest that your youngster try graphic organizers like these.



Around and around

A wheel is an ideal format if your child is studying a cycle, such as seasons of the year or the life of a butterfly or frog. To show a frog’s life cycle, for instance, your youngster would label and illustrate each spoke of the wheel with a stage of frog development (egg, tadpole, frog with tail, adult frog without tail).

Follow the dates

Time lines let your youngster put story events or historical dates in order. Encourage him to cut sheets of paper in half lengthwise and staple them end to end to make one long strip. Have him write dates and events that he’s studying

(Paul Revere’s ride, the signing of the Declaration of Independence) across each piece and illustrate them. *Tip:* Suggest that he hang his time line on a wall where he can see it.

Wonderful web

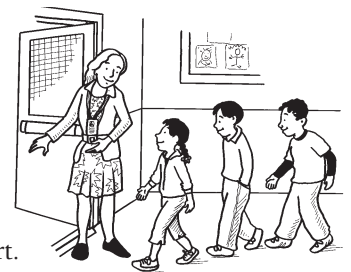
Your child might draw a web to summarize a textbook chapter or to plan an essay. Have him put his topic (Ancient Greece) in a large circle in the middle of his paper. Then, he can draw lines to medium-sized circles and write in categories (government, architecture, sports). Finally, smaller circles branch off for individual facts (“City-states had their own governments”).♥

Safe at school

Teachers and administrators put a lot of effort into making your youngster’s school a safe place to learn and play. Of course, your child must do her part, too. Here’s how.

- **Follow school rules.** Explain that rules keep students safe. By walking (not running) in the hallway and staying seated on the bus, for example, your youngster will help make sure no one gets hurt.
- **Pay attention during drills.** Listening to her teacher’s instructions during fire drills will help your child be prepared. *Idea:* Let her teach you the drills, and practice them at home.

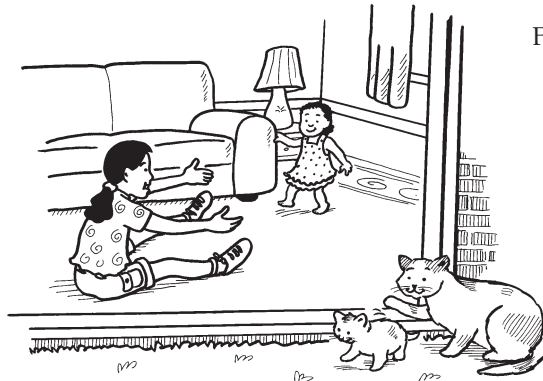
Note: Remind your youngster never to go with a person she doesn’t know. Also, she should tell a staff member if she sees an adult at school without a badge.♥



Self-esteem pointers

How your child feels about herself can affect the way she treats others. It can also determine whether she gives into peer pressure. Boost her self-esteem with these ideas:

- Give specific, honest praise—but don't overdo it. You might simply thank your youngster or let her know you noticed something.



For instance, you could say, “Thanks for cleaning up without being asked.”

- Teach your child to speak up. Explain that it's okay to tell a friend, “I would come over, but I already have plans” or, “I'm not allowed to watch that movie. Let's pick another one.” She'll also learn to accept it when a friend says these things to her. *Tip:* Role-play so she can practice speaking with confidence.

- Ask your youngster what she feels good about (“I know a lot about animals,” “I helped my little sister learn to walk”). You might suggest that she write these things in a notebook so she can read them if she needs a dose of confidence.♥

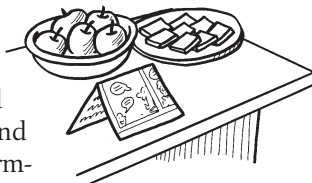
ACTIVITY CORNER

Party for the planet

An earth-friendly celebration can inspire your whole family to adopt new habits. Help your youngster follow these steps for throwing a “green” party.

Make recycled invitations. Suggest that your child cut cardboard panels from snack boxes and cover the printed sides with newspaper comics. On the other sides, he can write party details. (“Go green! Meet in the kitchen Sunday at 2 p.m. to learn how.”)

Serve locally grown snacks. You and your youngster can get fruits, vegetables, and local cheeses and jams from a farmers' market or grocery store. Consider adding some of the items to your family's regular diet.



Play a “green” game. Think of ways your family can protect the environment (unplug appliances, pick up litter). Write each one on a separate index card. Then, take turns picking a card and illustrating it on paper for others to guess. *Tip:* Try to incorporate the ideas into your daily routines.♥



Finding new traditions

Family traditions give your child something to look forward to—and to look back on as he gets older. We asked families to share rituals that keep them close. Here's what they said:

- ♥ “On Sundays we have ‘afternoon tea’ and talk about our plans for the week. We drink iced tea in summer and hot tea with milk during cold weather. It's a great way to relax and catch up.”
- ♥ “Sometimes we invite another family over and ask them to bring photo albums to share. We learn about their experiences and interests, and they learn about ours.”
- ♥ “About once a month, we visit someplace we've never been before. We've discovered a go-kart track, attended a high school hockey game, and checked out a hobby shop. Going to interesting places gives us something to enjoy and talk about together.”♥



Q & A Reading, reading everywhere

Q: My daughter seems to be losing interest in reading for fun. What can I do?

A: Ask a librarian to help you choose some books that are popular with children your daughter's age. Once she discovers a series or an author she enjoys, she might be hooked on reading!

Also, surprise her with stories at unexpected times. Carry a book to the playground or on a hike. Read if you stop for a rest or before you pack up to go home. She'll

discover the joy of reading for pleasure in different locations.

Then, try thinking “outside the book.” Encourage your child to read recipes while you cook or instruction manuals as you do home projects. She'll practice reading directions, and she'll learn new words (*edamame, calibrate*).

Finally, look for reading materials when you're out together. For instance, historical markers and store brochures let your youngster read for information. You could encourage her to be “the family reader” and have her read items out loud to everyone.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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