

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION[®]

November 2016

Monongalia County Schools Federal Programs
"Working Together For School Success"



SHORT NOTES

Fall back

Does your youngster know why people in most states will turn their clocks back an hour on November 6? Help her read up on the history of Daylight Saving Time—she'll practice research skills for a real-life reason. Then, she could share what she discovers with your family and change your clocks.

Assistant chef

Let your child help you with Thanksgiving dinner and look for ways to make it more nutritious. For instance, use whole-wheat bread for stuffing or mash cauliflower instead of potatoes. Involve him in every step of the process, and he'll learn about planning healthy meals, shopping for ingredients, and cooking.

Put away cell phones

Whether or not your youngster uses a cell phone, she'll notice the phone habits of adults around her. Make a point of putting away your phone during meals and while talking or playing with her. Your example will show her that it's polite to give others your undivided attention—and more fun to talk to the person you're with.

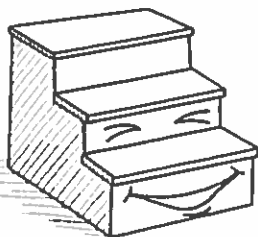
Worth quoting

"Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why we call it the present." *Eleanor Roosevelt*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What goes up and down but does not move?

A: Stairs.



Secrets to better behavior

You know what they say: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That's true when it comes to effective discipline, too. Try these ideas for heading off problems, and then sit back and enjoy a more pleasant household.

Notice triggers

Being aware of what causes misbehavior goes a long way toward preventing it. Perhaps your youngster acts out when he's tired—make sure he's getting 9–11 hours of sleep. Or maybe he misbehaves when he's bored. Let him write a list of activities for when there's "nothing to do" (examples: play solitaire, finger paint, do crossword puzzles).

Offer choices

Give your child some control in situations where he struggles to behave. Does he typically grumble or whine while you're running errands? Consider letting him pick the order in which to do them. ("We need to go to the laundromat and the store. Which should we do first?") Is it hard to get him to dress



up for family events? He might like to choose the color of his shirt or pick out a pair of fun socks to wear.

Be a coach

Coaches demonstrate, encourage, and celebrate. Why not use this approach for behavior you want your youngster to change? If he should be putting dirty clothes in his hamper, for instance, "coach" him on tossing in his T-shirts. He'll see that it's more fun to "make a basket" than to drop clothes on the floor. When you find his floor free of dirty clothes the next time, give him a high five. ♥

Questions for parent-teacher conferences

Parent-teacher conferences go by fast! Make the most of your time by writing a list of questions in advance. Consider these suggestions:

- "What are some of the most important things my child should learn this year?"
- "How does she get along with classmates when she works in a group?"
- "What subject do you think she enjoys the most?"
- "What are my youngster's strengths?"
- "What can we do at home to help her do her best in school?" ♥



Household elections

An election lets a group of people make a decision, whether it involves citizens electing a mayor or children choosing student council officers. Show your youngster democracy in action by holding elections in your home.

1. Choose topic. Have your child pick an issue to vote on. It could be practical (“Should we paint the bathroom green or blue?”) or fun (“Should we get a fish or a hamster?”).

2. Campaign. Each person can campaign for her side, presenting reasons why others should



vote her way. You may decide to make posters or give speeches to persuade family members.

3. Create ballots. Let your youngster make a ballot for each family member and get an empty tissue box to put the ballots in.

4. Vote. Select an evening for your election. Cast your votes, and your child can tally them and announce a winner.

Tip: Use this activity as an opportunity to talk about the national elections this month. Take your youngster with you when you vote, explain the choices you make, and watch the results together on election night.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Create a chain reaction

Your youngster can watch a chain reaction before his very eyes—all he needs is a set of dominoes.

Have him stand the dominoes in a line, making sure the distance between each one is about



the same. What happens when he knocks down the first domino? (It will topple the whole line of dominoes in turn.) Suggest that he try putting them closer together or farther apart, or even arranging them in a circle, U-shape, figure 8, or spiral. He could use a timer to find out which spacing or arrangement makes the dominoes fall fastest.

As he experiments, he'll learn about chain reactions, where energy is transferred from one object to another.

Idea: Encourage your child to look for examples of real-life chain reactions, such as how the pins fall when he bowls.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

It pays to be kind

We recently stopped to pay a toll, only to be told that the driver ahead of us had paid our way. My son John said, “But he doesn’t even *know* us!”

I explained that the driver had done a “random act of kindness”—something kind without being asked or expecting anything in return. Big or small, I told John, these good deeds make the world a better place. My son said he wanted to do a random act of kindness, too. So after raking the leaves in our yard, he secretly raked our next-door neighbor’s. He felt so good seeing her smile when she got home that he started looking for a way to be kind to someone else.

Now random acts of kindness have become a regular thing in our household. And John has discovered that when he does something for someone else, *he* is the one who feels good.♥



Know your library

The local library is a great place for your child to discover books she will treasure, find information for school projects, or simply settle in and read. Help her establish a library habit with these ideas.

Get a card. Have your youngster sign up for her own library card. This will make her feel like she belongs at “her” library.

Become acquainted. Explore different sections of the library together. Encourage her to get to

know the librarians—they will recommend titles or help her locate resources.

Return books on time. Fines can add up and keep your family from checking out more books. Suggest that your child decorate a reusable bag to hold books and add a sticky note with the due date. Each time she checks out books, she could replace the note with a new one—and a new due date.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Monongalia County Schools
Title I Parent Involvement

Rereading and revising are critical steps in the writing process

Your child has finished writing an essay or book report. "I'm done!" he proclaims. Not so fast. Part of the writing process involves reading and editing. To help with these important steps:

- **Offer to read or listen to the report.** Give lots of compliments—and a little constructive criticism, if necessary.
- **Encourage a new perspective.** Challenge your child to look at his paper as if he were the teacher. What would he suggest be added, removed or changed? What would he leave just as it is?
- **Supervise revisions.** Encourage your child to improve the report. Watch—and celebrate—as it goes from rough draft to final version!



Source: S. Peha, "The Writing Process Notebook," Teaching That Makes Sense, niswc.com/revising_writing.

"She read books as one would breathe air, to fill up and live."

—Amie Dillard

Enjoy synonyms, antonyms and family time

Here's a way to work on *synonyms* (words with the same meaning) and *antonyms* (words with opposite meanings) with your child while spending quality time together. You and your child should each take a piece of paper divided into three columns. Then:

1. **In the first column**, describe yourselves in positive terms. For example, "I am ... kind, generous."
2. **In the second column**, write a synonym for each word. "I am ... nice, giving."
3. **In the third column**, write antonyms for each word in the first column. "I am not ... mean, stingy."
4. **Exchange pages.** Read about each other. Then play the game again—this time describing the other person. What similarities are there in the way you and your child describe each other? How does your child see herself? How many different synonyms can you each think of for various traits?

Literature circles enhance reading

If your child takes part in a literature circle at school, you may wonder what that is. Literature circles are like book clubs. They give kids the opportunity to participate in group discussions about books.



To build on what your child is doing in his literature circle, read the same book and ask him questions to start a conversation, such as, "What do you think of that character's decision?"

Old favorites provide hints for choosing new books

If you're looking for a book your child will love, start thinking about her favorite things. Favorite author? Maybe he or she has written something new. Favorite hobby? Look for a how-to book. Favorite food? Read together about how to prepare it.



Be a fluency role model

You are building your child's fluency just by reading together.

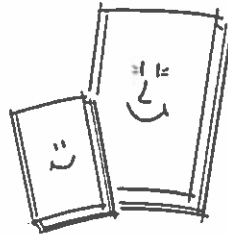
When you read smoothly—with emotion and enthusiasm—you show that effective reading is similar to talking. It flows with ease. Your child can also hear fluent reading on audio books or at story time at the library.



After you've modeled fluent reading, have your child practice by reading aloud to you.

Everyday conversations can boost your child's vocabulary

According to research, the conversations that children have with their parents have great influence on the children's vocabularies—and their reading skills. The more you talk with your child, the more new words she learns. When she is familiar with a word, she is more likely to recognize it when she reads.



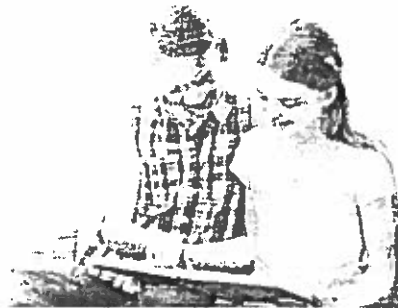
For example, find something new to mention at the grocery store. "These mangoes are ripe." Then provide more details. "Mangoes are delicious. They're green or red on the outside and orange or yellow on the inside. Mangoes are sweet, juicy and even a little slimy. Where do you think mangoes grow? Let's try one at home." See if your child can find *mango* on the receipt. Chances are the word will become unforgettable!

Source: "Building Your Child's Vocabulary," Reading Rockets, nswc.com/conversations_vocabulary.

Spice up your regular reading routines

Reading with your child every day is one of the most important things you can do to help her learn. But you don't have to always do it the same way! To build your child's excitement about reading:

- **Find new reading spots.** Pick unusual places to read, such as in a fort your child builds with pillows in the living room.
- **Read as a team.** Have your child follow words with her finger while you read aloud. Or take turns reading sentences or paragraphs.
- **Plan a performance.** Choose a favorite passage and help your child master reading it aloud. Gather an audience to admire her skills!



- **Celebrate reading success.** When you reach a goal (such as 100 reading minutes in a week), do something special!



Q: How can I tell if a book is too challenging for my child?

A: Stay in touch with the teacher about your child's reading level. This will help when choosing books to read. You can also try the "five-finger rule" to assess a book's difficulty. Have your child read a full page. Hold up one finger each time he struggles with a word. If all five fingers are up by the end of the page, save that book for later.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

Challenge your child with analogies

Standardized tests sometimes examine how well kids understand *analogies* (comparisons of different, yet related, things). For example, *leg* is to *foot* as *arm* is to *hand*. Working on analogies builds important vocabulary and thinking skills. Try this example with your child: "House is to builder as pie is to what?" (Baker.)



Source: "Analogies," VocabularySpellingCity.com, nswc.com/practice_analogies.

For lower elementary readers:

- *Zip, Zip ... Homework* by Nancy Poydar (Holiday House). Violet can't wait to have homework. Finally, the day comes when she's given an assignment!
- *Finding Wild* by Megan Wagner Lloyd (Alfred A. Knopf). Wild can be found in all kinds of places, from deep in a forest to the side of a mountain.



For upper elementary readers:

- *Girls Who Rocked the World: Heroines from Joan of Arc to Mother Teresa* by Michelle Roehm McCann and Amelie Welden (Aladdin). Learn all about a number of remarkable women who have shaped the world's history.
- *Because of Mr. Terupt* by Rob Buyea (Yearling). Seven fifth-grade students start their school year, each bringing a unique perspective to Mr. Terupt's class.

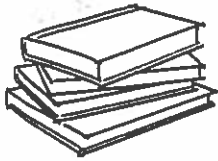
Building Readers™

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

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Encourage your child to explore nonfiction



As your child grows, he will begin to read a variety of nonfiction items, including books, newspapers and magazines. Reading nonfiction requires a different approach. He can learn this skill by practicing

reading interesting nonfiction materials, which might:

- **Boost excitement about reading.** If your child isn't excited about reading novels, he may be more interested in reading about the real world. If he loves one nonfiction book he reads, he may want to look into more books on the same topic.
- **Introduce him to new kinds of writing,** such as how-to manuals or interviews. When your child has a writing assignment, he may try using some of the techniques he has noticed in his reading.



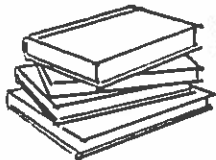
- **Assist with standardized test preparation.** Both fiction and nonfiction passages are used in reading sections of exams, so it is helpful for your child to be familiar with nonfiction. To enhance your child's nonfiction reading, ask questions that provoke thought: "What do you think about what you just read?" You can also connect reading to real life: "Let's look at the sky tonight and point out some of the constellations you learned about."

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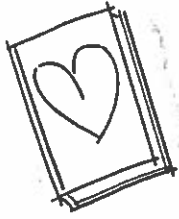
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Enlist everyone in some family reading fun



Reading is a wonderful activity for families to do together. Not only will your child be reading more, she'll also be spending quality time with you! To make family reading an enjoyable habit, you can:

- **Read the same book.** Check out several copies at the library and take turns reading aloud. Have frequent conversations about what you're reading.
- **Read about the same topic.** Find several books or articles on the same general subject. Some can be fiction and others nonfiction. Have your child assign each family member a different book or article to read. When you've all finished, tell each other what you've learned.
- **Include long-distance relatives.** Technology makes it easy for everyone to communicate! Use video



chats and phone calls to include family members who live farther away in your reading adventures.

- **Keep a journal.** Encourage your child to write about your family's reading experiences. She can take pride in what you've accomplished together and enjoyed doing, and she'll have a record of all that you read!

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**Reading
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Have conversations to build comprehension



Comprehension is an essential part of effective reading. Imagine reading something without understanding what it means. It would be pointless!

To ensure your child comprehends her reading, have conversations with her about what she's reading. You should talk:

- **Before reading.** Ask questions to focus your child's thinking about the book she will read. "That book looks like it will be really interesting! What do you think will happen based on the cover? What did you learn about the book by reading the back cover?"
- **While reading.** Help your child work through challenging words or sections. "Can you figure out what that word means from other words in the sentence or the pictures?" "Let's look that word's definition up later.



Then we can reread the paragraph, and I bet it will make more sense."

- **After reading.** Review what your child just read and ask questions to help her demonstrate her understanding. "How did the story end? Who were your favorite characters and why? If you could change the ending, what would you make it?"

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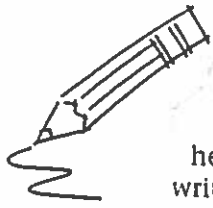
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Reading can boost your child's writing skills



Reading is an excellent way to learn about writing. More exposure to reading will improve your child's writing—the more he reads, the more he'll know about different elements of writing, from structure to style.

When it comes to your child's writing, reading will help him:

- **Build vocabulary.** Once your child reads a new word and understands its meaning, he will be able to use it in writing.
- **Use different writing styles.** It's enlightening for kids to read different types of writing, such as humor, persuasive argument or suspense. This can provide inspiration! Encourage your child to try a new genre of writing after reading a particularly enjoyable book.



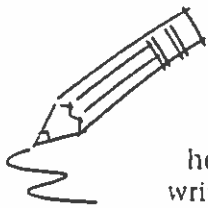
- **Increase knowledge.** Reading helps students learn about new topics and favorite subjects. Encourage your child to write about topics he's interested in and include any new ideas he may have on the subject.
- **Be reflective.** When your child reads, he can think about the writing and learn from it. Writing in a journal afterwards can reinforce what he learned.

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There's always time for your child to read!



Your child's reading time doesn't have to be limited to her designated homework time or right before bed. The more your child reads, the more she may be inclined to pick up her book and continue reading—and become hooked!

It's easy to find a few minutes here and there for your child to read. Help your child find a few extra minutes to pick up her book and learn to read for pleasure. And before she knows it, your child will be finished with her book and ready for the next one!

She can read:

- **While waiting.** If your child has a magazine with her, she can read while waiting for the doctor or while in line at the post office or the grocery store. She can pull out a book while waiting for a sibling to finish soccer practice.



- **On the go.** If your child keeps a book or magazine in her backpack, she can always pick it up while in the car or on the bus.
- **In the morning.** If your child is up and ready to go before it's time to head out for school, encourage her to read for a few minutes! Not only will she get the benefits of reading, it'll be a calming way for her to ease into her busy day.

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Help your child connect with reading



Your child might be learning to read, but that doesn't mean he will automatically love the task. You can help your child make connections with what he's reading, which may develop his interest in it. For example, you can:

- **Ask questions that encourage your child** to relate to what he's reading. "The main character in your book had to face a fear. What fears have you faced? How has that made you feel?"
- **Be flexible about what your child reads.** If he's not interested in reading a novel, have him read a comic book or a how-to article. Then talk about what he has read.
- **Create family routines that are based on reading.** Make it a habit to read together on a regular basis. Visit the library together, hold regular reading nights,



act out plays together. When your child associates reading with fun, he'll look forward to your family reading activities.

- **Surround your child with positive messages** about reading. Keep a wide variety of materials around the house. Set an example to show him that reading is an important part of your life. Show respect for your child's reading choices by encouraging him to read what he likes best.

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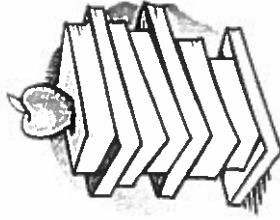
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**Reading
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Certificate of Reading Excellence



This is to Certify That

Has Demonstrated Commendable Achievement in Reading by

And is Hereby Awarded This Certificate

On This ___ Day of _____ in the Year _____

Signed