

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

Working Together for School Success

November 2020

Blue Valley Elementary Counselors



## SHORT NOTES

### Memory builder

Strengthen your

youngster's memory with this playful idea. Have her look away while you build a small block tower. Then, let her study it for 30 seconds and turn her back. Can she duplicate it from memory, using the same shapes, colors, and positions for her tower? Now let her build a structure for you to copy—and test *your* memory!

### Prepared for conferences

You can make the most of parent-teacher conferences—whether yours is virtual or in person—by listing questions ahead of time that you'd like to ask. Here are three to include: "What does my child seem most interested in?" "What is hardest for him?" "How can I support him at home?"

### A vote for good citizenship

Good citizens take an active role in selecting their leaders. Show your youngster how it's done. Talk about the candidates you prefer and what they stand for. Then, take her to the polls when you vote this month, or let her watch you fill out a mail-in ballot and put it in the mailbox.

### Worth quoting

"The difference between winning and losing is most often not quitting."  
*Walt Disney*

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** If people count sheep to fall asleep, what do sheep count?



**A:** Nothing. Sheep can't count!

## Learn to manage emotions

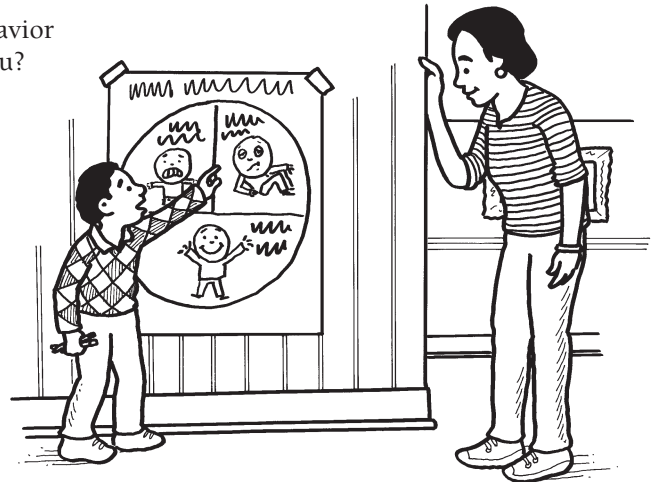
Is your youngster's behavior sometimes a mystery to you? Acting out can be a child's way of showing you he's angry or upset. Use this advice to help him express his feelings in more positive ways.

### Make a chart

Together, brainstorm a list of emotions, such as happy, frustrated, excited, and bored. For each one, your child can draw and name a character (Happy Henry, Frustrated Fred). If he misbehaves (say, he yells at his sister for touching his toys), he could use the characters to talk about his feelings. ("Uh-oh, I'm acting like Angry Andy!")

### Ask "why?"

Simply asking "Why do you think you feel that way?" and listening carefully to your child's answer helps in two ways. First, it allows him to recognize and describe how he's feeling. ("I'm frustrated because my project isn't turning out the way I wanted.") Second, he



will feel heard and cared about. As a result, he may be less apt to take out his frustration on others.

### Find coping techniques

Equip your youngster with strategies for handling negative emotions. You might mention things you do when you feel the same way he does. ("If I'm worried about something, it helps me to put it in writing. That might help you, too.") With time and patience, he'll develop his own strategies for managing his feelings. ♥

## Reviewing report cards

Look at your youngster's first report card of the school year as an opportunity to help her succeed going forward. Consider these tips:

- Start by reading the key that explains what the marks or grades mean. Do they indicate how well your child performed or how much progress she made—or both?

- Ask your youngster to tell you about her report card. She's a good judge of what's behind the grades. Also, put any low marks in perspective. Your child has probably adjusted to a lot of changes in this unusual year. Let her know you understand and that she has time to finish the year strong. ♥



# Doorways to creative writing

Coming up with a good story idea is the first step toward writing a good story. Unleash your youngster's imagination and boost her writing skills with these two ideas for getting started.

**I. Book titles.** Suggest that your child use the title of a favorite book as inspiration for her own story. If she chooses *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*



(Judi Barrett), she might describe a rainy afternoon spent making spaghetti and meatballs with her grandma. Or for *Where the Wild Things Are* (Maurice Sendak), she could write about a hike in the forest—what wild animals will her character see?

**2. Flashbacks.** Instead of writing the beginning of her story first, your youngster can start at the end! She might open with, “And that’s how we discovered that our cat was a secret agent.” Then she could write the rest of the tale as a flashback, with the cat disappearing unexpectedly and the family finding spy disguises like wigs and fake mustaches around the house.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Paper-cup phone

This old-fashioned “phone” is a fun way for your child to explore sound waves.

**Materials:** pencil, two paper cups, scissors, string, two paper clips

Have your youngster use the pencil to poke a hole in the bottom of each cup and cut a piece of string about 50 feet long. Now he should put opposite ends of the string through the bottoms of the cups and tie each end to a paper clip inside the cup.



Time for a phone call! Each person holds a cup. Walk apart until the string is taut, and carry on a conversation, taking turns speaking into your cups. To listen, hold your cup to your ear.

Now talk at the same volume *without* the phone. Your child will notice your voice isn't as loud. That's because sound waves vibrate, and the vibrations travel better through a solid (the string) than through air.♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Tag ... you're out!

Our sons love our local playground, but because of the pandemic, we don't go when it's crowded. So we look for creative ways to stay active outside. Recently, the boys started making up new versions of tag.



Brody invented Pizza Tag. When “It” tags you, you have to call out a pizza topping before “It” counts to 3. If you can't think of one, or you pick a topping another player already said, you're out. Then Ben came up with Sticker Tag. “It” tags you by putting a sticker on your back. If a player gets three stickers, he's out.

In all of our games, the last person out becomes “It” and decides which version of tag we'll play next—or invents a brand-new one. And all that running around means the boys get plenty of exercise!♥

## Q & A

### Develop stronger social skills

**Q:** My daughter seems to have trouble making and keeping friends. How can I help her learn better social skills?

**A:** Strong social skills will help your child become a good friend. Plus, knowing how to interact with others can also improve her academic achievement and her attitude toward school.

Discuss ways to show she cares about a friend's opinions or interests. Your daughter might ask questions (“What kind of dance class do you take?”) and follow

up to show she's listening (“What songs do you dance to?”). Friends also celebrate each others' accomplishments and strengths. Your child could tell a classmate that he used awesome graphics in his presentation, for instance.

Finally, encourage your daughter to stay in touch with friends and set up get-togethers to maintain strong relationships.

For example, they might have dance parties or sing-alongs via video chat.♥



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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ISSN 1540-5621