

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

Working Together for School Success

February 2016

Aurora Public Schools



## SHORT NOTES

### Groundhog Day

When was the first Groundhog Day? How often is the groundhog right about the weather? Encourage your child to find the answers to these questions and more by researching Groundhog Day in library books or online. Then, she can make her own predictions about when spring weather will arrive—and see if she and the groundhog agree!

### Illustrate a feeling

Drawing or painting a picture is often an easier way for youngsters to express difficult feelings. If you sense that your child feels nervous, sad, or afraid, try getting out art supplies. He might sketch a portrait of himself with butterflies across his stomach if he's nervous or a scary monster if he's afraid.

### Family workouts

On cold winter days, your youngster can still get the 60 minutes of recommended daily physical activity—while enjoying family time. Play “baseball” with snowballs, scoring one run for each ball you hit. Build an indoor or outdoor obstacle course. Or hold “yoga class” by following a video.

### Worth quoting

“You can't stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.” A. A. Milne

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What musical instrument can you hear but not see or touch?

**A:** Your voice!



## Read, create, and retell

In school, your child will be asked to think deeply about books and to pay close attention to details as he reads. That means doing activities like analyzing characters, visualizing book settings, and retelling stories. Let him practice at home with these fun projects.

### Character cereal

Have your youngster cover an empty cereal box with paper and decorate it based on his favorite storybook character. For example, *The Rainbow Fish* (Marcus Pfister) learns to be a good friend, so your youngster could name his cereal “Friendly Flakes.” Encourage him to draw the character on his box and describe the cereal (“Sparkly and colorful”). He could add an activity on the back, such as a quiz. (“Why did the other fish ignore him at first?”)

### Setting map

Suggest that your child draw a map of a book's setting. He'll imagine what the setting might look like and think about how each part is important to the story. If he's mapping *Holes* (Louis Sachar), he could



use a circle to represent Camp Green Lake, where the prisoners dig holes. He can add an onion for the field where onions grow and are used as medicine.

### Plot bag

Let your youngster fill a paper bag with items related to a story and use them to retell the tale aloud. After he reads *A Chair for My Mother* (Vera B. Williams), he might put a fabric swatch and coins in a bag. He can pull out each piece and explain its significance as he retells. (“I added coins because the kids saved money to buy their mom a chair. She worked hard and needed a place to relax.”)♥

## School pride

If your youngster takes pride in her school, she's likely to feel more connected to it—and more motivated to learn. Help her develop strong school ties with these tips:

- Make school events into family events by attending as many as you can. Your child will feel proud to show off her school to you.
- Post school news and announcements on the refrigerator. Providing a place of honor for these items reminds her that school is an important part of your family's life.
- Encourage your youngster to get involved in a school activity. Being a member of the chess club or safety patrol squad will give her a sense of pride—and of belonging.♥



# A respectful student

School is more pleasant for both students and teachers when children behave respectfully. Share this advice with your youngster so she can do her part in creating a respectful place to learn.

**Respect for all.** Point out that everyone—from the principal to the custodian, and from the popular kid to the unpopular one—deserves to be treated with respect. Encourage your child to smile or wave at school staff members and fellow students. You can set an example by letting her see you give everyone (receptionists and doctors, cashiers and store managers) the same respect.



**Respect for property.** In school, students share library books, playground space, restrooms, and more. And these things will be nicer to use when youngsters take care of them. Suggest that your

child do simple acts that show respect for school property. *Examples:* Returning library books so others can read them, putting trash in wastebaskets so the playground and restrooms look nice and stay clean.♥



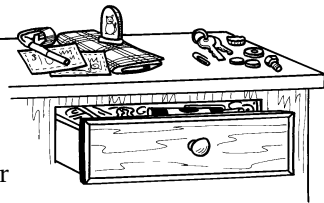
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Junk-drawer creativity

Look no further than your kitchen junk drawer to give your youngster's creative thinking a boost. Try these ideas.

#### Reuse

Suggest that your child come up with different uses for objects in the drawer. He could use rubber bands to make a ball or turn a cork into a pincushion, for example. Take turns thinking of ways to reuse a bottle cap, a handheld mirror, and other junk-drawer items.



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#### Sort

Let your youngster sort items according to a secret criterion, and you try to figure out his rule. Say he puts a paper clip and a key in one group, and a coupon and a gift bag in another. You might guess that he's sorting by materials (metal, paper). Next, you sort objects into piles, and have him determine your rule.♥

## Q & A

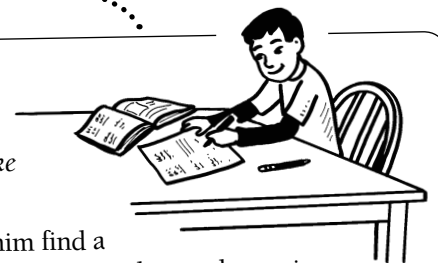
### Strong study habits

**Q:** My third grader has to spend more time studying this year. How can I make sure he studies effectively?

**A:** Set your son up for success by helping him find a distraction-free study spot. Also, have him come up with a study routine. For instance, he could reserve time each evening to review his textbook and notes in the days leading up to a test or quiz.

Then, many students find it helpful to jot down a purpose each time they study at home. Your child might write: "I will learn the definitions of all the bold-faced words in chapter 7, section 1."

Finally, encourage him to experiment with study strategies to find what works best for him. He could close his eyes and imagine how a word is spelled or draw a grid with 9 squares to solve 3 x 3. Or he might find it easier to spell or recite math facts aloud in rhythm or to a familiar tune.♥

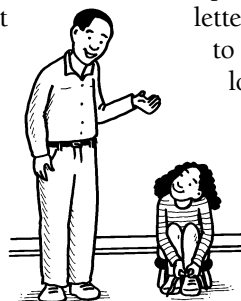


## PARENT TO PARENT

### Perfect...or close enough

My daughter Sasha gets upset if her handwriting isn't "perfect" or if her shoes aren't tied a certain way. My mother pointed out that I'm kind of a perfectionist, too. While it helped me work hard in school and now at my job, she said it often led to frustration when I was Sasha's age.

She suggested that I try what worked with me: Have Sasha think about what might happen if something isn't perfect. So the next time I found my daughter retying her laces over and



over, I asked, "What's the worst that could happen if the knot is a little off-center?" At first she said she would trip and fall, but then she smiled and said, "I guess nothing." Another day, she wanted to rip up her homework because every letter wasn't perfect. I encouraged her to do a different assignment and look at the first one again later—she did, and she decided she could live with it after all.

Sasha may always be a perfectionist, but I hope she's learning to tell the difference between what really matters and what she can let go.♥

## OUR PURPOSE

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

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