

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

Working Together for School Success

April 2016

Nordstrom Elementary School  
Debbie Grove, Principal



## SHORT NOTES

### Solve the mystery

When your youngster reads a mystery, encourage her to pretend she's the detective. Can she solve the case before the book ends? Suggest that she jot down clues as she goes and try to predict the solution. She'll practice comprehension skills that will make her a better reader—and she'll enjoy the story more.

### Treasure traditions

Every family has traditions, even if you don't realize that's what they are. Talk about activities you do regularly, such as eating a special brunch on birthdays or taking a walk on the first day of spring. Then, tell your child about traditions you remember from childhood. Your youngster may discover one he wants to try.

## DID YOU KNOW?

About 10 percent of 12-year-olds say they've had alcohol at least once—a percentage that increases sharply in older kids. Help prevent your child from sampling alcohol now by making sure she knows it's illegal and may make her sick. Also tell her that people who start drinking before age 15 are more likely to develop alcohol problems than those who wait.

### Worth quoting

"I would like to paint the way a bird sings." *Claude Monet*

## JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** How many peaches grow on a tree?

**A:** All of them.



## Build background knowledge

Everyday activities, conversations, and outings have something in common: They can boost your youngster's *background knowledge*. This collection of information will help him to understand and analyze material in school. Consider these tips.

### Experiences

Give your child opportunities to touch and handle new things. For instance, if you use a garlic press or a Phillips screwdriver, tell him what it's called, and teach him how to use it. Show him how you check the oil in your car or sew a button on a shirt, and let him try. He'll learn how things work and gain new vocabulary.

### Conversations

When you have company, invite your youngster to participate in the grown-ups' discussions sometimes. He will learn about the world by listening to adults talk about current events, their jobs, or their daily lives. And if your guests are from a different cultural



background, he may also pick up information about their language or customs.

### Field trips

A visit to the post office, the grocery store, or even a dentist's office can turn into a field trip. Before you go, help your child list questions he might ask or find answers to. *Examples:* "What's the newest stamp you have?" or "What does an eggplant look like?" Also seek out new or unusual places to visit, like a yarn store, garden center, or tack shop. ♥

## How to prepare for IEP meetings

If your child has an IEP (Individualized Education Program), here is advice for the next meeting you attend to review and update her plan:

- You're an important part of the IEP team, so plan to share information and ideas. Write up a summary of your youngster's strengths and needs. Also, list questions you have, such as "How many students will be in her small group?" or "How will you help her calm down if she's upset?"
- If possible, take a spouse, relative, or friend with you. There may be a lot of people around the table, so having a support person could make you feel more confident.
- Have a positive attitude. Remember that every member of the team has the same goal: to help your child do her best. ♥



# Bullying: Know the facts

Teaching your child about bullying can help her handle it better if she sees it and also make her less likely to bully others. Share these facts.

## Verbal bullying is more common.

Teasing and threatening happen more often than physical bullying like hitting or shoving. If your child is bullied verbally or physically, she should tell a grown-up right away.



**Bystanders make a difference.** Studies show that more than half of bullying incidents stop when a bystander steps in. Have your youngster think of things she could say if a classmate is being bullied. (“Want to play with me?” “Let’s go sit over there.”)

## Excluding others can be bullying, too.

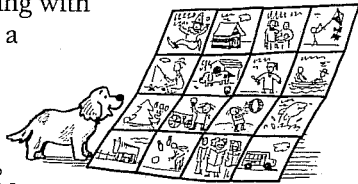
When a child urges other kids not to be friends with someone, that’s bullying. Encourage your youngster to be kind to everyone and not to exclude others. She might say something like, “I decide who I’m friends with.” ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### A family history quilt

Youngsters love hearing about relatives’ childhoods. Making this “quilt” together can teach your child about his family’s past.

1. Give each person an 8" x 8" square of poster board. Your youngster could mail squares to out-of-town relatives.
2. Ask everyone to draw a favorite childhood memory on one side. *Examples:* cooking with Grandma, a trip to the state fair. On the other side, they should write about the memories. (“While Grandma and I made chicken parmigiana, she would tell me about growing up in her little village in Italy.”)
3. Help your child arrange the squares into a quilt and connect them with clear tape.
4. Use the quilt to enjoy your family’s history. You might take turns picking a square and talking about the memory, or make a family time line based on the squares. ♥



## Q & A

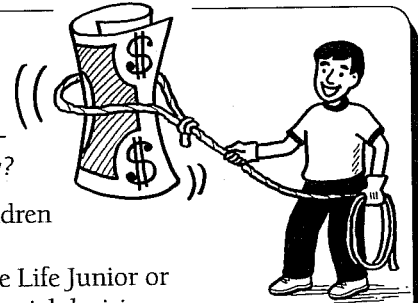
### Money managers

**Q:** We can’t afford to give our son an allowance. How else can we help him manage money and get off on the right foot financially?

**A:** Games and books are ideal for teaching children to make decisions about money.

Choose board games that involve money like Life Junior or Payday. When it’s your turn, talk about the financial decisions you make. (“I’m going to save money instead of borrowing more because I don’t want to pay interest.”)

Also, read stories with financial literacy themes and nonfiction books on the topic. Ask a librarian for suggestions, or try books like *Sam and the Lucky Money* (Karen Chinn) or *The Everything Kids’ Money Book* (Brette McWhorter Sember). Encourage your youngster to retell the stories or “teach you” the information. He’ll show what he learned about how to spend wisely or pay bills. ♥



### Learn to take initiative

Do you want your child to do chores or fill out her reading log without being asked? Teachers and employers value initiative, too. Here are ways to help your youngster become a self-starter.

do. You could say, “Do you have everything you need for school?” instead of “Don’t forget your backpack.” Try this regularly, and you may find her asking herself the same questions!

#### Write a list

Making her own list can inspire your child to take initiative. Suggest she check off each item as she completes it—she’ll see how good it feels to accomplish everything on her list.

#### Recognize progress

When your child takes out the trash or starts homework without a reminder, point out that she’s showing initiative. Tell her how helpful it is that you didn’t need to prompt her, and she will be more likely to repeat the behavior in the future. ♥

#### Ask questions

Rather than telling your youngster what to do, ask about what she should



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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# Reading Connection

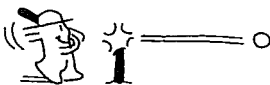
Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

April 2016

Nordstrom Elementary School  
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## Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

### ■ *The SheepOver* (John and Jennifer Churchman)

When an orphaned lamb named Sweet Pea gets sick, her owners help her recover—and write this picture book about her. Based on a true story, the book tells how the Churchmans threw a “sheepover” party for the lamb and her “friends” to celebrate her good health.



### ■ *Peter's Chair* (Ezra Jack Keats)

Peter is unhappy because his parents are painting his baby furniture pink for his new sister. His little chair isn't pink yet, so he runs away with it—to the sidewalk in front of his house. There, he discovers he can't fit in the chair anymore, and he knows just what to do with it. (Also available in Spanish.)



### ■ *Museum Mayhem* (Carolyn Keene)

After an expensive sculpture is smashed to pieces during an art museum field trip, Nancy Drew and her classmates become suspects. Now Nancy must use her detective skills to prove their innocence. Part of the Nancy Drew and the Clue Crew series.

### ■ *Henry Builds a Cabin*

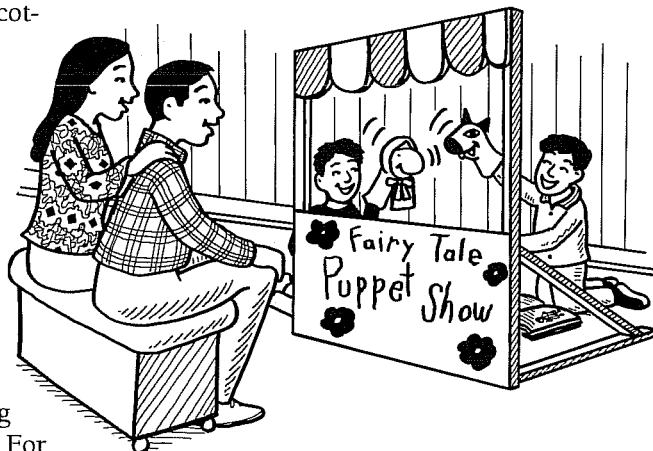
(D. B. Johnson)

Author Henry David Thoreau's love of nature inspired this story. A bear named Henry builds a tiny log cabin in the woods. Like the real-life Henry, the bear believes in living simply. When the other animals tell him to make his home bigger, he shows them how it's fine the way it is.



## Fairy tale adventures

Big bad wolves, candy cottages, gleaming castles—your child's favorite fairy tales are full of magical characters and places. Here are activities that tap into his love of fairy tales to build reading comprehension skills.



### Explore the world

Ask a librarian for fairy tales from other lands, and read them along with the familiar versions. For instance, pair *Little Red Riding Hood* with *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* (Ed Young). What details show that the stories are set in different countries? *Example:* The Chinese children call their grandmother Po Po instead of Granny.

### Stage a puppet show

Performing a fairy tale with sock puppets will help your youngster think about what came first, next, and last in a book. Let him draw characters' faces on old socks and use props to remind him of story events. He might build a Lego

bridge for the sock puppets to cross in *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, for instance.

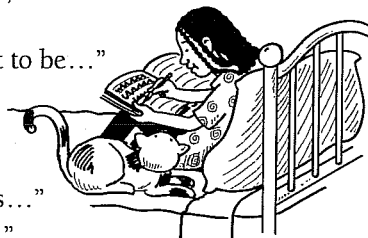
### Make an ABC book

Suggest that your child collect fairy tale words and write his own book. As you read fairy tales, he should pick out a word to match each letter (*apple* for A, *beast* for B). Have him write the words on separate squares of paper, illustrate them, and staple the pages together. Now he can read his fairy tale book to you and explain how each word fits into the story it came from. ♥

## Journal writing: Get started

Encourage your youngster to write regularly by keeping a journal. Together, put “prompts” like these at the top of pages in a notebook. She can complete them with words, sentences, and drawings.

1. “When I grow up, I want to be...”
2. “The most surprising thing that happened today was...”
3. “My very first memory is...”
4. “Last night, I dreamed...”



5. “My favorite hobby is...”
6. “If I were invisible, I would...”
7. “The best place in the whole world is...”
8. “If my pet could talk, he would tell me about...”
9. “My family is special because...”
10. “I want to invent a...” ♥

# Outdoor vocabulary

Spring has sprung! As the weather warms up, use the great outdoors to help your youngster learn new words. Try these ideas.

- **Nature ID.** Your child may be familiar with *bird*, *tree*, and *flower*, but does she know *cardinal*, *magnolia*, and *daffodil*? Expand her nature vocabulary by taking a field guide to the park. When she spots a colorful bird or an interesting plant, look it up in the guide, and read its name and description aloud.
- **Motion words.** Streams *flow*, squirrels *scamper*, and leaves *rustle*. Look around, and think of fun verbs to describe the



action you see. Let your youngster mimic the movement and say the word—she'll discover new verbs as she gets silly! For example, she can pretend she's a worm and announce, "I'm *wriggling* on the grass."

- **Color match.** Carry along a box of crayons, and have your child discover color words by matching them with colors in nature. She might choose *apricot* for the sunset and *cerulean* for a pond. Help her read the label as she chooses each crayon. Can she find something to go with every crayon in the box?♥

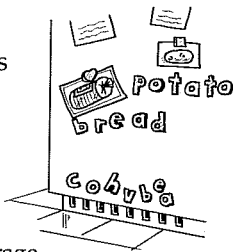
## Fun with Words

### Phonics in the kitchen

The kitchen is a fun place to explore letters and sounds. These tasty suggestions can boost your youngster's phonics skills.

#### Picture labels

Cut food pictures from grocery circulars or magazines, and post them on the refrigerator along with magnetic letters. Encourage your child to sound out the food names and spell them with the letters. *Idea:* Spell part of a word on paper, leaving off the first and last letters for him to fill in. *Examples:* \_ r e a \_ with a photo of a loaf of *bread* or \_ o r \_ below a picture of a *corn*.



#### Snack combinations

At snack time, challenge your youngster to find two or more foods that begin with the same consonant or combination of consonants. He can read packages or say the words aloud to hear their sounds. *Examples:* *muffins* and *milk*, *cheddar cheese* and *cherry tomatoes*. While you eat, brainstorm more foods that start with those letters (*macaroni*, *chicken*).♥



## Parent to Parent

### "Readable moments"

During a recent hailstorm, my son Andy was fascinated by the tiny balls of ice hitting our windows. He asked how there could be ice when it wasn't freezing outside—and I didn't know the answer.

We went to the library and checked out a non-fiction book about weather. The librarian called the storm a "teachable moment," but when we sat down to read, I told Andy it was a "readable moment." We learned that hail forms high in the sky where it's very cold, and it falls quickly before it melts.

Now, we look for more readable moments. When Andy started T-ball and had a hard time hitting the ball, we read a book with tips. And when I was wondering about the best way to paint a room, I got a how-to book—I wanted to show Andy that grown-ups have readable moments, too. We're finding reasons to read nonfiction almost every day, and Andy is learning how useful "real-life" books can be.♥



## Q&A

### Learning with playtime conversations

**Q** I've heard that kids learn language skills when they play. How can I help my daughter with this?

**A** You're right! Children learn many things from play, and communication is one of the most important. Join your daughter sometimes when she plays, and carry on conversations with her.

You might describe what you're doing as you play house or store and ask questions to get

her talking, too. For example, say, "I'm going to dress the baby now. What should she wear?" or "Welcome to our office. How may I help you?" Or hold conversations from a doll's or stuffed animal's point of view. ("Hi, Gator. I just got back from school. What did you do today?")

Your child will enjoy—and get practice in—asking and answering questions, making conversation, and taking turns speaking.♥



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## Book Picks

### ■ *This Side of Wild* (Gary Paulsen)

Bears, horses, and dogs are just a few of the animals that have taught award-winning author Gary Paulsen lessons in his life. In this memoir, he shares true stories of animals he has encountered, what he has learned from them, and how that knowledge has shaped his life and his fiction.

### ■ *Book Scavenger* (Jennifer Chambliss Bertman)

After moving around her whole life, 12-year-old Emily feels most at home in the online gaming community of Book Scavenger. So she's excited to move to San Francisco, where the game's creator lives. But when he is attacked in real life, the game may be over forever—unless Emily and a fellow gamer can unravel the mystery.



### ■ *Geronimo Stilton: Lost Treasure of the Emerald Eye* (Geronimo Stilton)



A mouse named Geronimo is content with his job as a newspaper editor until his sister persuades him to go on a treasure hunt. Geronimo might recover the treasure, but first he'll have to survive a hurricane, a shipwreck, and his sister. The hilarious first book in the Geronimo Stilton series.

### ■ *Sports Illustrated Kids Big Book of Why* (Sports Illustrated Kids)

Why are left-handed pitchers called southpaws? Why do competitive swimmers use a flip turn at the end of a pool? Readers will find the answers to these questions and many more in this volume. Includes photos of athletes in action.



## Be your own editor

Good writing can become great when your child revises his reports or stories to make them clearer and more creative. Suggest that he use these strategies to analyze and improve his writing.

### Rearrange

Encourage your youngster to think of his rough draft as a room of furniture that can be moved around. He should ask himself whether the paragraphs are in a logical order and if any sentences belong in a different section. In a geography report, for example, he might move a sentence about population density into a paragraph on access to clean water. *Idea:* Have him mark up his draft in red pen, circling parts to move and drawing arrows to where they will go.

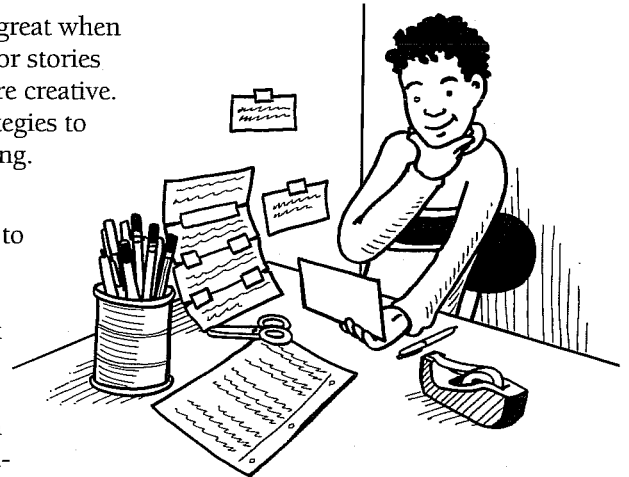
### Rethink

Tell your child to look for places to make his writing more eye-catching or informative. He could insert details, quotes, or examples to add supporting facts or explanations. For a report on the history of the automobile, he may decide to open with a Henry Ford quote and add

descriptions of assembly line jobs to a paragraph about the factories.

### Reword

Your youngster can improve his paper by varying his words. Suggest that he read his work aloud and highlight words he has repeated often, such as *saw*, *can*, or *went*. Have him list different options for each, reread the sentences substituting the new words, and pick the ones he likes best. In a creative writing piece about a teenage explorer, he might substitute *spotted* for *saw* or *dashed* for *went*.



## Celebrate poetry

April is National Poetry Month. Let your family join in the celebration by getting poetry books from the library and trying activities like these.

● **Read and paint.** Poems often contain vivid descriptions. Get paper and paints, and read a poem aloud. Family members can paint on paper the images they see in their heads! Share your paintings, and tell which words and phrases inspired them.

● **Select and share.** Have your child pick a topic that a relative or friend likes (say, baseball for her grandfather). Together, look through the poetry books to find verses with that theme. Then, she could read each poem aloud to the person in a phone or video call.



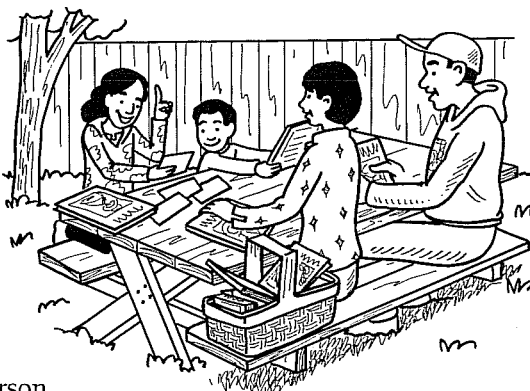
# The family book club

Join the club—the book club, that is. Starting a family book club can motivate your youngster to read, boost her comprehension, and create memories.

Each month, let a different person choose a book. Check out library copies, and give everyone enough time to read. Then, hold a meeting with fun discussion ideas like these.

**Cast a movie.** Select a character, and ask each person to name an actor for the movie version. Explain why your choice is the perfect one (the actor looks the way you imagined the character, he has played similar roles in the past).

**Share a review.** Take turns pretending you're a radio personality reviewing the book. Summarize the story, tell what you



liked or didn't like, and explain your reasoning. *Idea:* Interview the other book club members about their opinions.

**Play "Who said it?"** Ask each family member to choose five different lines of dialogue from the book and write each line (and the character's name) on a separate index card. Have your child

read one of her cards aloud. The first person to guess which character said the line keeps the card and reads one of her own. When you've read them all, the player with the most cards wins. 📖

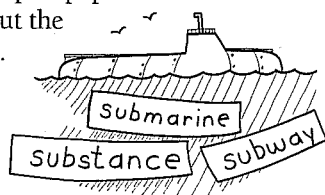
## Fun with Words

### Word sort

What do *domino*, *bureau*, and *panorama* have in common? (They all end in vowels.) Your child will sharpen thinking and spelling skills with this game.

Ask your youngster to list 20–30 spelling or vocabulary words from teacher handouts, textbooks, or nonfiction books. Together, print each word on a separate slip of paper.

Spread out the slips faceup. The first player searches for three words that



have something in common. It's up to him to decide what that something is, perhaps words that are synonyms or that begin with *sub-*. He places those words in front of him, and the other players try to figure out his category.

The first one to shout out the category scores a point. Return the cards to the table, and the next person sorts words into a set for others to guess. Score 10 points to win. 📖



## Parent 2 Parent

### Beyond "sound it out"

When my son Lucas asked for help reading a hard word, I would tell him to sound it out. That's what I was taught, so I was surprised to learn at a school literacy night that about half of all English words can't be easily sounded out.

The presenter explained strategies for kids to use when a word isn't spelled like it sounds. For example, Lucas can cover all but the first letter of a word and reread the sentence, saying only the word's first sound. We tried this when he got stuck on *bright*. He read, "Bees buzzed among the b\_\_\_\_, colorful flowers," and he figured it out by thinking about what word made sense.

Or he can look for word parts that he knows, such as *bio-* in *biography* or *-ful* in *thoughtful*. If the word is still a mystery, he could check the dictionary or get help from someone.

Now when Lucas tells me he doesn't know a word, I ask, "What strategies have you tried?" 📖



## Writing on the road

It's easier—and more fun—for your youngster to write about her favorite animals or foods if she's actually looking at them! Let her take a notebook along to practice writing when you're out and about.

### Zoo

Suggest that your child jot notes as she observes the animals and reads the signs. She could write an informational piece on the zoo or a fictional story about the animal she likes best.

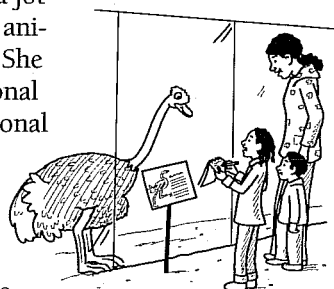
### Restaurant

Your youngster might write a menu blurb for the

dish she orders. Encourage her to use mouthwatering details that would make customers want to try the item. *Example:* "Creamy cheddar cheese and fresh tomato slices sandwiched between perfectly toasted sourdough bread."

### Park

Sit on a bench together, and your child can write about the sights, sounds, and smells all around her. She could describe the scent of barbecue from a grill, the laughter of children, or the "thump thump" of a basketball. 📖



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