

# Home & School

## Working Together for School Success

### CONNECTION®

December

#### SHORT NOTES

##### See and learn

Boost your child's memory skills. Ask her to look carefully at a picture in a magazine, such as an advertisement, while you slowly count to 10. Then, turn the picture over. Ask her questions, such as "How many people did you see?" or "What was the man doing?"

##### Banishing bad words

Most kids try cursing or bad language at some point. To keep it from becoming a habit, don't laugh or get angry. Explain that certain words are ugly and unacceptable in your family. Consider offering your children humorous words they could use instead, like "Balderdash!" or "Dagnabbit!"

##### "When I grow up..."

What does your youngster want to do for a living when he's an adult? Give him ideas by introducing him to people in a variety of occupations. Examples: writer, architect, plumber, doctor, secretary, artist, veterinarian. One of them may spark his interest!

##### Worth quoting

"When you can do the common things of life in an uncommon way, you will command the attention of the world."  
George Washington Carver

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What's the best thing to put in an apple pie?

**A:** Your teeth!



## Solving squabbles

"Hey, I was playing with that." "It's mine!" "It's my turn to watch TV." "No fair!" Sound familiar? Even the most loving brothers and sisters bicker from time to time.

Whether your children need help getting along with each other or with their friends, you can help reduce the friction with these strategies.

##### Make niceness a family policy.

Try creating a kindness rule, like "In our family, we don't hurt each other with words or actions." Give your kids examples of polite behavior, such as taking turns and asking permission before using someone else's things.

##### Provide calming alternatives.

When your children get upset with each other, teach them ways to deal with their feelings. Example: "I can tell you're really mad at Ethan. Why don't you go to another room and take a few deep breaths before saying anything to him."

**Stay out of it.** Whenever possible, try not to take sides when your youngsters bicker. If they can't solve the situation on their own, consider a family meeting. Talk about each child's feelings. Then, ask your children to suggest solutions and to choose one that everyone can agree on.

**Applaud tattling—about the good stuff.** Challenge siblings to try to mention good things about each other, such as "Megan helped me rake the leaves," or "Sean let me use his new baseball glove." ♥



#### Learning gifts

Ever notice that the simplest toys are sometimes the most educational? The best ones encourage kids to use their imagination and learn new skills while having fun.

If you're looking for gift ideas, consider saying no to the latest high-tech toys and yes to these instead:

- modeling clay or Play-Doh
- sketch pad with watercolors
- magnifying glass
- playing cards
- jewelry-making or model kits
- tape recorder with blank tapes
- simple musical instruments, like a harmonica
- magnets
- journals and colorful pens
- how-to books for kids, such as *Juggling for the Complete Klutz*



## Full speed ahead!

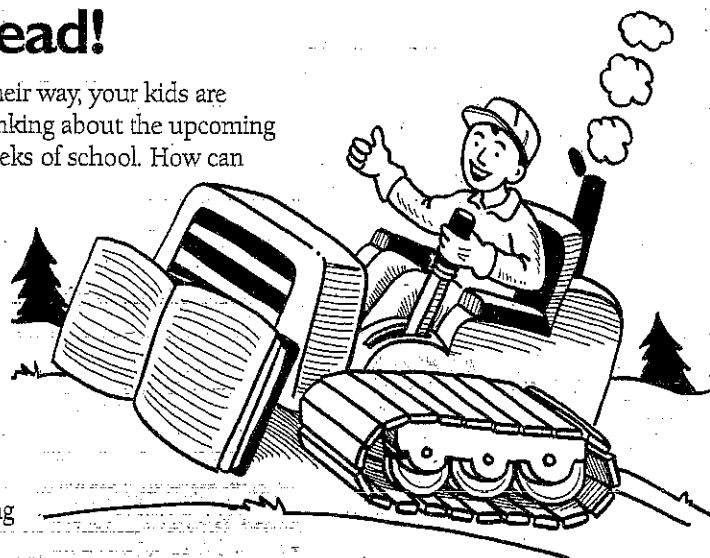
With the winter holidays on their way, your kids are probably spending more time thinking about the upcoming break than about the next few weeks of school. How can you help them stay on course?

### Take no detours

Make sure your children are in school all day, every day. Taking them out of school for holiday parties, shopping, or travel can send them the message that school isn't important.

### Focus on the road

If your youngsters are struggling to concentrate on homework, try



giving them an incentive to get their work finished—like the chance to play a game before bed or make a favorite dessert together after dinner.

### Keep the motor running

Let your kids know you expect them to work hard and do their best right up until school lets out. *Tip:* Keep your children's brains active and learning over the break with activities such as visiting the library and checking out books, or writing letters or e-mails to friends and family. ♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Hands-on math

Our middle child was having a tough time in math. So my husband and I talked with Brianna's teacher. She said our daughter's addition and subtraction skills seemed weak and suggested that Brianna might do better in class if we coached her at home. The important thing, the teacher explained, was to let Brianna practice adding and subtracting in a hands-on way.

We began playing games that involved addition, subtraction, and counting. For example, instead of using flash cards, we helped Brianna practice adding and subtracting with a pile of dried beans. We also let her be "the banker" whenever we played Monopoly Junior, and she was in charge of counting spaces in Snakes and Ladders.

The teacher was right! Brianna understood math concepts much better when she was able to see and handle the items she was adding and subtracting. ♥



## Q & A

### Staying healthy

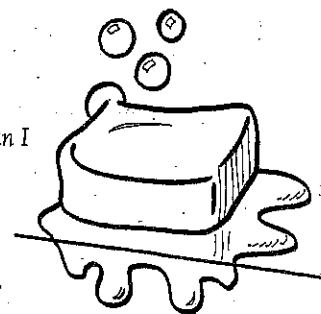
**Q:** Since my children started school, I've noticed that we're more prone to colds and other illnesses. What can I do to keep us healthy this winter?

**A:** Here are several suggestions for protecting your family.

The simplest way to stop the spread of colds and other infections is hand washing. Be sure everyone washes their hands with soap and water before preparing or eating food, after using the toilet, and before bedtime.

Tell your youngsters that germs are spread when we touch our eyes, nose, and mouth. Remind them to cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing. They should also avoid sharing food, drinks, and eating utensils.

*Tip:* To avoid reinfection, replace the toothbrush of anyone in your family who has been ill. ♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

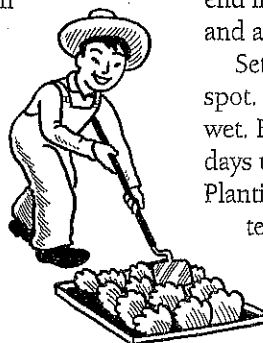
### Winter wonder garden

In many parts of the country, the gardening season is definitely over—that is, the *outside* season. With just a few kitchen scraps, your kids can start an *indoor* vegetable garden this month.

Fill the bottom of a glass jar or pan with about two inches of potting soil and gravel. The next time you cook with fresh beets, carrots, parsnips, turnips, or rutabagas, slice about an

inch off the stem end. Then, with the cut side facing downward, put the stem end into the soil. Add some water and a pinch of plant fertilizer.

Set the plant in a warm, sunny spot. Keep the soil moist but not wet. Have your children count the days until green leaves appear. Planting, watching, and waiting will teach them gardening and observation skills. ♥



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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