

# Home & School

## CONNECTION<sup>®</sup>

Working Together for School Success

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Middlesex Elementary School  
Dr. Susan Smith, Principal

### SHORT NOTES

#### Homemade gifts

Does your family celebrate a holiday by giving gifts? Have everyone draw names from a hat and make gifts for each other. You'll spark creativity and teach your child generosity. *Ideas:* Put a seed packet in a flowerpot and paint a design on the pot; decorate plastic coat hangers by wrapping them in colorful ribbon.

#### Unplugged games

Cut back on video games by suggesting that your child act out his favorites instead of playing them. If he enjoys a game with characters who dodge obstacles, help him design an obstacle course in your living room using pillows and boxes. If he likes racing games, he can set up a race-track for toy cars.

#### Busy hands

Make handwriting practice fun and keep your child occupied during errands. Carry postcards, paper, and pens in the car. Let her write notes to friends and relatives to mail at the post office. On the way to the store, dictate a shopping list, and have her add her own items.

#### Worth quoting

"Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much."

Blaise Pascal

### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** What do you call a snowman with a suntan?

**A:** A puddle.



## Good thinking!

Like our muscles, our brains need workouts. Your youngster will do better in all subjects if he knows how to think logically, solve problems, and use his imagination. Here are ideas for keeping your child's mind in top shape.

#### Hide-and-seek clues

Pick a theme, such as winter. Choose several objects related to your topic (warm hat, ice scraper). Place a sticker on each item, and have your youngster search the house for things with those stickers. When he has them all, ask him to guess the theme.

#### Recycled creations

What can your child make from a milk jug? He might create an indoor basketball goal, a space station, or an ice cream truck. Encourage him to use art supplies (markers, colored tissue paper) and household materials (aluminum foil, paper clips) to finish his masterpieces.

#### 1, 2, or 3?

Place 11 small objects (coins, crayons) on the table. Take turns removing



1, 2, or 3 items. Whoever takes the last object loses. See if your youngster can figure out a way that the first player can always win (*answer:* on your first turn, take two, and on your second turn, leave five for the other player).

#### Circle of meaning

Ask your child to choose two random words and try to find a connection between them. For example, he might pick *surfing* and *tigers*. People go *surfing* in the *ocean*. *Whales* swim in the *ocean*. And whales are *mammals*, like tigers. Then, let your youngster give you two words to link. ♥

## School spirit

Showing interest and pride in your child's school activities will motivate her to do her best. Try these ideas.

■ Plan school-related fun. Meet your youngster for lunch in the cafeteria once a month. Attend school events together, such as an art fair, a math night, or a talent show.

■ Recognize success. If your child writes a creative story, surprise her by "publishing it." You can type it and staple the pages together into a book for her to illustrate. When she brings home a good grade on a vocabulary quiz, congratulate her at the dinner table and post it on the refrigerator. ♥



## Doing your part

Teach your youngster to be a good citizen by helping her help others. She just may start a new habit that the whole family can feel good about. Try these suggestions:

▲ “Adopt” a neighbor who is sick, older, or lives alone. Your child can call the neighbor regularly to check in with her. Together, you could take in her mail, shovel the walk, or play cards with her.

▲ Hold a “charity fashion show.” Have your youngster model last year’s clothing, and together decide whether it still fits or



should be donated. Then, let her choose a charity (church group, homeless shelter), and take her along to drop off the giveaway clothes.

▲ Share a hobby or an interest with others. For example, your child could teach a younger neighbor to knit or make jewelry. If she

likes to read, your family could offer to read to seniors in a nursing home.

▲ Throw a party and ask guests to bring donations. Your youngster might collect canned goods for a food pantry, pet supplies for an animal shelter, or toiletries for military care packages.♥

## Q & A Vacation schedules

**Q:** We’re visiting family during winter break, and we wish we had more time. Would it be okay for our son to miss a few days of school?

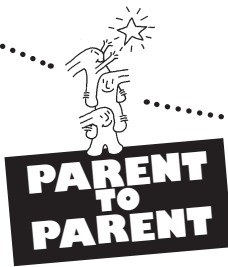
**A:** Children learn best when they’re in school every day. You’re right to schedule your trip during your son’s break, but try to time it so he won’t be out any extra days.

Being absent causes him to miss lessons and assignments and sends the message that learning isn’t a top priority. Also, schools normally won’t excuse absences that aren’t caused by illness or emergencies.

Finally, keep in mind that youngsters can lose skills during school breaks. Take advantage of learning opportunities whenever possible. For example, your child might help you plan a vacation budget and keep track of money you spend. Or suggest that he write about his trip in a diary every day.♥



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## History that hits home

While walking in our city’s downtown area, my daughter spotted the visitors center. Sarah asked what it was for, so we went inside.

The manager explained that visitors stop by to learn about our town’s history and discover fun things to do here. Then, she showed us photos of some of our area’s original buildings. Sarah couldn’t believe that her school started out with just one room. She was also surprised that her favorite diner had been the first restaurant in town.

Since Sarah was so interested, the manager suggested we stop by a local history museum. There, we saw horse-drawn buggies, farm equipment, and old-fashioned dresses. We tried to imagine what life was like before cars or malls.

On our way out, Sarah picked up some brochures about other historic places nearby. We decided to pick one to visit every month.♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Library spy

Teach your child to find books in a library with this version of I Spy.

Together, go through the children’s fiction section in your public library.

Show your youngster that the books are arranged in alphabetical order by the author’s last name. Then, give him clues about one of the books. For *Ralph the Mouse*, you might say, “I

spy a book about a mouse. The author’s last name is Cleary.” Your child should go through the “C” authors for Beverly Cleary’s books. He can look at a few to see which one has a mouse. When he guesses, it’s his turn to choose a book for you to find.

With a little practice, your child will get more comfortable with how library books are organized. Plus, he’s likely to want to read the books he “spies.”♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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