

Home & School CONNECTION[®]

Working Together for School Success

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Holy Spirit School
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SHORT NOTES

Coding for kids

Your child isn't too

young to learn about simple computer programming. In fact, coding games, apps, and classes can help her develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills—and she may discover her future career! Try a free mobile app like Kodable or Tynker, or a website such as Scratch or Mozilla Thimble.

Let's cook together

When you're making holiday meals, ask your youngster to help you. You'll spend time together, and he'll feel proud of his contributions (tearing lettuce for a salad, peeling potatoes to mash). *Bonus:* Following recipes, measuring ingredients, and seeing chemistry in action build skills that will help your child succeed in school.

Be honest

Does your youngster know that honesty is a habit? If you see her being dishonest (say, you overhear her telling a friend she's sick to get out of plans they made), explain that people may hesitate to trust her in the future when they find out the truth. *Tip:* Set an example of telling the truth yourself—she is likely to follow your lead.

Worth quoting

"Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else." *Fred Rogers*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: How do porcupines play leapfrog?

A: Very carefully!



Our family's rules

Personalized, positive, and consistent—these are characteristics of rules that children tend to stick to. Consider these suggestions for creating rules that make sense for your family.

Decide what matters

Let your youngster know that your rules might not be the same as his friends' rules. For instance, some families eat only in the kitchen, while others allow food elsewhere in the house. It's easier for kids to remember a few simple rules instead of a long list, so pick ones that you really care about.

Involve your child

Try this: Sit down together with poster board, pencils, and crayons, and talk about what's important in your house (for instance, treating each other nicely or cleaning up after yourselves). Have your youngster write each rule in his own words and illustrate it. Encourage him to write rules that sound positive ("Knock before entering a room") rather



than negative ("Don't open a door without knocking").

Follow through

Enforcing rules consistently is a key to success. If you allow snacks in the living room "just this once," your child may ignore the food rule in the future. Also, let him know what the consequences are for breaking rules. Be sure to relate the consequence to the rule so he understands the connection (*example:* writing a note of apology after speaking unkindly).♥

Learning is for everyone

To raise a curious, thoughtful youngster, show her that learning doesn't end when you grow up. Here's how.

● **Share your discoveries.** You've probably asked your child after school, "What did you learn today?" Why not tell her what you've learned, too? You could take turns around the dinner table sharing one thing you know now that you didn't know when you woke up.

● **Ask questions.** Have you ever wondered why geese fly in a V formation or whether an avocado is a fruit or a vegetable? Try asking your youngster. If she doesn't know either, look it up in a library book or online. She'll see that you want to learn new things—even though you're an adult!♥



Fall for math

Whether your youngster is collecting autumn leaves or eating freshly picked apples, you can add in math practice.

Leaf arithmetic. Take turns rolling two dice on the sidewalk. On each turn, add the numbers together, and collect that many leaves from the ground. For example, if you roll a 3 and a 5, gather 8 leaves. Keep a running tally, and the first player to collect 25 leaves wins. *Variation:* Older kids could multiply the numbers on the dice.



Apple fractions. Colorful apples are a tasty way to explore fractions. Slice a red apple in half, a yellow one in quarters, and a green one in eighths. Then, ask your child to put $\frac{1}{2}$ of each apple on a plate. How many slices of each color will equal $\frac{1}{2}$? She'll learn that 2 yellow quarters (2 out of 4 slices, or $\frac{2}{4}$) and 4 green eighths (4 out of 8 slices, or $\frac{4}{8}$) are the same as 1 red half—because $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, and $\frac{4}{8}$ are equivalent fractions.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

DIY art supplies

Spark your child's creativity by letting him make his own art supplies. Try these two ideas.

1. Puffy paints

Your youngster can use custom-colored paints to create 3-D art. For each color, he should mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shaving cream and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup glue. Have him add food coloring until he gets the exact shade he wants and stir until stiff peaks form. Then, give him a paintbrush and construction paper to create his masterpieces.



2. Scented play dough

Use different flavors of powdered drink mix to whip up clay that smells yummy. In a saucepan, your child should combine 1 packet drink mix plus 1 cup flour, 1 cup water, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt, 1 tbsp. vegetable oil, and 2 tsp. cream of tartar. Stir it over low heat until it's the consistency of play dough. When it cools, he'll be able to mold the dough into sculptures.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q & A

Parent-teacher conferences: What to ask

Q: I want to prepare for my upcoming parent-teacher conference. What questions should I ask about my son?

A: It's good that you'd like to plan ahead. You'll want to find out how your son is doing academically as well as socially, so you might ask questions like "Does he usually finish assignments on time?" or "Does he get along with the other kids?" You could also ask what you can do at home to help him.

Another idea is to find out what your child would like you to bring up during the conference. He may wonder how he could improve his language arts grade or when the class is going to learn about the Middle Ages.

Tip: If your youngster has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), ask how he is progressing toward his goals and whether he's using his accommodations.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Turning off cell phones

Like most people I know, I tended to pull out my phone frequently to check email, text friends, or look at Facebook. One day, my daughter Kate surprised me by complaining that I was "always" on my phone.

I realized that she was right and that my phone was distracting me from conversations with Kate and the rest of my family. Not only was this impolite, but it kept

me from really hearing things they said to me. Plus, it occurred to me that when Kate gets a phone, I won't want her on it all the time.

Now I'm more aware of my phone use. I make sure to leave it in my pocket when we're out and to check it only occasionally at home. I'm hoping Kate now sees that she's much more important than my phone, which is, of course the truth!♥

