



G.H. Robertson Intermediate School

227 Cross Street, Coventry CT 06238
(860)742-7341



Dates To Remember

- 1/27—modified half-day of school
- 1/31—GHR Concert
- 2/1— PTO meeting
- 2/14—Report Cards Issued
- 2/20 —No School: Presidents Day

Getting ready for CMTs!



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A Message From the Principal ~ Mr. Troy Hopkins

Dear GHR Families,

I hope that all of our GHR families are off to a productive 2012. Certainly, at GHR our students have been focused on improving their skills in both academic and social areas. Overall, students are making better behavioral decisions compared to last year. They are showing cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control, and many have been officially acknowledged through our Spike CARES program. In each grade level hallway, certificates are displayed for every student recognized by a staff member or another student. We hope that every student will be recognized during the school year.

You may have noticed that we started early this school year with some specific activities to ensure that our students are prepared for the Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs). Once again we are running the CMT Preparation Challenge using Study Island. Every week since the beginning of December, students have had the opportunity to complete a specific assignment on the Study Island website and earn really cool pencils and a change to win a larger prize. All students have usernames and passwords provided by their teachers and are able to access school computers during the hours of 8:10 – 8:40, and 3:10 – 3:40. Other school times can be arranged through your child’s teacher. I hope that you are able to find some time outside of school to take advantage of Study Island with your student. It can be a fun family activity! In addition, we recently had a whole school practice reading comprehension activity that has provided valuable data on the capabilities of our students. Instructional adjustments are being made to address any performance gaps. The CMTs take place during the month of March. These assessments measure student abilities in reading comprehension, mathematics, writing, editing and revising, DRP (Degrees of Reading Power – basically vocabulary), and in grade 5, science.

In the last newsletter, I disclosed that my family was going to implement family meetings. Well, we did and I am pleased to report these gatherings helped to elevate moods and relieve anxiety in every family member during a somewhat hectic time of the year. Moving forward, we are looking to evaluate and modify routines, which is now a regular agenda item for family meetings. I believe, and research supports, that we will reap many rewards by tightening up on routines. Some routines to be examined include planning and preparing healthy meals and snacks, establishing a consistent sequence of events at bedtime, determining where personal items (backpacks, etc.) are placed, and packing up for the day. You may have other areas to examine, such as homework routines, weekend events, or routines around entertainment games or TV. Some probable rewards for my family and yours include:

- Children know better what to expect and what is expected of them
- Children feel more secure
- Children are more agreeable
- Children sleep better and are healthier
- More time for individuals and family
- Less hectic rushing to get out the door
- Children develop self-regulation skills (technically called executive functioning)

When children have better control or self-regulation over their actions, thoughts, and feelings they are able to exercise the concentration and thought processes necessary to learn their best. Practicing this control is the best way to improve it. We can assist them by establishing routines to which we hold them accountable. So possibly the most significant reward of family routines is



increased student learning!

As our lives become busier and technology advances faster and faster, we are increasingly challenged to maintain healthy routines. What new devices and capabilities should have a place in our routines and daily/weekly schedules? Is technology helping us to achieve goals or is it a distraction? We have to be careful to model good use of time and goal-achieving routines for our children. They learn a lot from watching us adults. I think about this often. "Do as I say, not as I do" doesn't work so well.

Please make sure to take a look at the Home School Connections flyers at the end of this newsletter for additional ideas related in family routines. Winter can be challenging time to stay focused on achieving goals. Establishing and maintaining routines can be an essential part of staying ahead. I look forward to our conversations on this topic of routines and other matters that support our children.

Hope to see you soon!



News From Grade 3 ~ Mrs. Brown, Ms. Burke, Mrs. Emerson, Mrs. Gianna, Mrs. Gwozdz, Mrs. Spangle, Mrs. Sroka, Mrs. Stiles

It's the winter season, and we find bare oak trees reaching their glassy arms toward the slate-grey skies, clouds rushing in behind blustery winds, and snowflakes falling gently on a field as white as a downy blanket. Third grade writers have been hard at work creating wonderful pictures in readers' minds, and they are striving to incorporate great author's craft techniques. Similes, metaphors, personification, and alliteration are just a few of the techniques that students are feeling more comfortable with using on an independent level.

Our "Empowering Writes" program has turned even the reluctant writers into authors who are recognizing the purpose and enjoyment in putting pencil to paper. Our writing program teaches children to break down the writing process into five main parts: an exciting beginning, description of the setting, building suspense, the main event, and extended ending. Each skill is introduced in isolation with an opportunity for teacher modeling, guided support, and independent practice. As students become more comfortable with using each technique, we encourage them to incorporate it into their longer written pieces.

Student writing is typically scored on a Six Point Rubric. Writing will be scored from a 1 (lowest) to a 6 (highest), based on four main criteria: description, organization, fluency, and focus. A third grader is expected to create a story that flows in order of events, stays on topic, and contains a good amount of specific details.

Ask your child what he or she has written lately. Perhaps they'll teach you a thing or two about author's craft! If you are interested in a copy of the narrative writing diamond and other tools your child uses during writing, contact your child's teacher.

Since the new year offers an opportunity to set new goals and get a fresh start, personal responsibility is an area in which we encourage our students to seek growth. In order to foster independence in your child, we can work together to help our children to grow into responsible learners by monitoring a few things:

Homework is an area of responsibility that we expect of our students. In third grade we have math homework nightly (Monday through Thursday) and each child is expected to study his or her spelling and vocabulary words for Friday's tests. Reading logs are due either Friday or Monday. This flexibility in the reading log due date allows for you to help your child learn time management, as well as to establish a nightly routine that works best for your family. Third graders have a weekly Study Island Challenge that is assigned on Mondays. Be sure your child is completing those weekly challenges. He or she is entered into a weekly raffle when scoring a 70% or above on the assignment.

Making appropriate choices for clothing is a task that third graders can accomplish successfully.

With the cold winter days on our doorstep, please be sure your child brings appropriate snow gear for outdoor play (mittens, hats, scarves, coat, snow pants, boots). Also, children should plan to dress in comfortable layers for the climate inside the building.



Making good book choices is another area of growth for our readers. At this time of the year, third graders can read a chapter book at their appropriate reading level. Beginning readers might choose a book like Henry and Mudge. More skilled readers might opt for A Series of Unfortunate Events. Students should be self-selecting mostly chapter books.

We hope that your New Year is filled with prosperity, happiness, and health!

News From Grade 4 ~ *Mr. Daigneau, Mr. Dzwonchyk, Mrs. Goldsnider, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Licata, Mrs. Staron, Mrs. Wade*

We have finally started to see the first signs of winter! Please make sure children are prepared for the outdoor weather. Coats, hats, gloves, scarves and boots (when it snows) are essential, especially if students want to participate in outdoor recess.

The giving spirit was in fourth grade this past holiday season. We are happy to report that our students collected a total of 185 cans and presented them to the Coventry Food Bank. Thank you to all who contributed.

Many of the children have been working hard on Study Island. If you are unfamiliar and have a computer at home have your children show you what a great tool this is for preparing for the CMT.

Coming to fourth grade this March: *Iditarod 2012*. We will be asking students to design and create their own sleds! Look for more information to follow in February.

Next month we will start announcing winners from each room for our annual 4th Grade Math Bee. Students participate in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division flash card rounds.

In science we are wrapping up our unit on Biomes. The fourth graders are hard at work integrating technology into their curriculum. Each student will be presenting a power point within a small group based on a specific biome they researched.

Next month, students will begin to study Connecticut History in their social studies classes. They will learn all about developing colonies around various water sources.



News From Grade 5 ~ *Mrs. Bernier, Mr. Carlson, Mrs. Piteo, Mrs. Sandberg, Ms. Steeves, Ms. Woodin*

In **math** students are finishing up a study of the properties of division. Next they'll be focusing their attention to the wonderful world of fractions. As always we encourage parents to assist students in staying sharp on their multiplication facts.

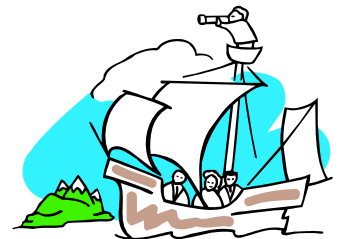
Science classes will be continuing their study of two sensory systems of the human body: the eye and ear. For each, they will discover the different parts and analyze their functions. They'll also examine how the brain responds to aural stimuli. It promises to be a sensational topic for all involved!

In **social studies**, the students will embark on a nautical journey into the great unknown as they study about the Age of Exploration and its effects on Native American and European society. They will examine historic evidence of what life was like on board ships hundreds of years ago. In addition, they will be learning about a variety of explorers throughout history and in the present day.

For **reading**, all classes have been involved in a unit on nonfiction. As part of this, they have been experimenting with note-taking methods, determining fact vs. opinion, and examining author's purpose. Topics include: "Wolves", "Trapped in Tar", and "Earthquakes".

In **language arts**, children have been focusing on aspects of nouns, including proper, common, singular, plural and possessive. Next, as part of our year long study of expository writing we will focus on introductions, conclusions, and "golden bricks".

Seasonal reminder: With colder temperatures upon us, students need to dress responsibly for the weather!



From the School Psychologist ~ Ms. Marie Pappano

What Is Gratitude?

In a most simple way, gratitude can be described as thankfulness in response to receiving a gift. However, a more encompassing definition could be that an individual with the strength of gratitude can be said to have a grateful disposition, and this individual is inclined to notice what he or she has received and to express his or her appreciation for those gifts freely and comfortably.

Gratitude has clear benefits for the individual and relationships. Research has shown that people who practice gratitude report fewer physical symptoms, greater optimism, greater life satisfaction, more positive emotions, higher levels of attention, and more exercise (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Furthermore, grateful individuals are less likely to base their happiness on material possessions and are less likely to measure success by material gain. Gratitude not only has benefits to the grateful individual but the benefits extend to others as well. For example, individuals who incorporate gratitude into their daily lives were more likely to help someone and offer emotional support, and were described as more helpful by people in their social networks.

Try this: jot down 3 simple things for which you are grateful for at the end of every day in a journal.



Challenge & Enrichment ~ Mr. Jeff Spivey

Students in the GHR Challenge and Enrichment program have been working on completing independent learning assignments through the Renzulli Learning Program. A wide variety of projects have been started and completed. From code making and breaking to acids and bases research, the students have created some wonderful products that they will be sharing with their fellow classmates in a project fair to be held in the upcoming weeks. Students in 4th grade shared their work with their fellow students and their teachers on Monday, January 23rd. Students in 5th grade will share their products on Monday, January 30th. The 3rd grade students will share their work on Monday, February 6th.

In addition to the projects that the students have been competing, they have also been involved in a number of curriculum related mini lessons and activities. We have worked with math in the reading content area. We have delved into roman numerals, prime and composite numbers, and math logic puzzles. With third grade, we have been looking at the construction of stories. Specifically we have been working with the component of character, setting, theme, and plot. We will continue with these curriculum enhancements as the year continues.

Finally, I am looking forward to involving students in the Coventry 300 project as we look for individuals from the town of Coventry to share their oral histories of the town with us through interviews.

We intend to video tape these interviews and then produce them to be shown on the CNHS Morning News Show as well as on Public Access Channel 13 and Channel 17. The year is flying by and we have so much going on!

From the School Nurse ~ Mrs. Therese McKeever

It maybe just a cold but my child feels terrible!

Unfortunately, colds and other viral infections won't be helped by antibiotics. And the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) recommends limited use of cough & cold medicines for children and not at all for kids under the age of 4. So what can be done to help your child feel more comfortable while the illness "runs its course" for possibly the next 2 weeks?

First of all keep your healthcare provider informed if your child's illness gets worse, symptoms last longer than expected, or new symptoms appear. In addition to your doctor's advice for upper

COVENTRY
300th
Anniversary
Anniversary



respiratory infections, such as sore throats, ear infections, sinus infections, colds, and bronchitis, you may want to try the following:

- Ensure your child gets plenty of rest
- Encourage her/him to drink plenty of fluids
- Use a clean humidifier or cool mist vaporizer
- Avoid smoking, second-hand smoke, & other pollutants near your child
- Relieve pain or fever with acetaminophen or ibuprofen (consult your health care provider about what is best for your child)
- Use a saline nasal spray to help relieve nasal congestion
- Soothe a sore throat with ice chips, sore throat spray, or lozenges (do not give lozenges to young children)
- Apply a warm damp towel over her/his nose, cheeks and eyes to ease facial pain.



Have her/him inhale warm water vapor from a hot shower, or drape a towel over her/his head & breathe in moist air from a bowl of warm water to relieve congestion.

Please read and follow label directions... many over-the-counter products are not recommended for children younger than certain ages. Keep in mind over-the-counter medicines may help relieve symptoms such as runny nose, congestion, fever and aches, but they do not shorten the length of time you or your child is sick.



From the Reading Room ~ Mrs. Suzanne Hansen



Reading Activities to Improve Fluency

One goal of reading instruction is to help students to become fluent readers. Fluent readers read with appropriate pitch, pace, phrasing, and expression. Fluency is necessary for good comprehension and enjoyable reading.

Strategies that have shown to improve fluency include repeated reading, partner reading, choral reading, and echo reading, and listening to good fluent reading by an adult or on a tape.

In echo reading, you read a phrase or sentence and the child repeats the same line after you while looking at the text. Increase the number of lines you read one at a time as the child's reading improves. Remember, the child should be looking at the words as you read. During choral reading, you and your child read the same text aloud together. Poetry works well when choral reading. When partner reading, you and your child take turns reading. Start by reading one sentence and asking your child to read the next sentence. As the child's fluency improves, you read a page and he/she reads a page. In repeated reading, the same book, story, or poem is read more than once in the same week.

Remember, when reading with your child use as much expression as you can so that your reading sounds like speaking and the story comes alive.



From the Art Room ~ Mr. Berent

The students have been very busy during their second quarter of art classes and have created some excellent projects.



All three grades completed work on scratch paper or scratch board drawings. An emphasis was



placed on the use of line, texture and balance.

In the third grade, students also completed texture drawings using texture plates to create simulated and/or abstract textures. The students also created a hot air balloon using plaster wrap over a balloon and painted them with acrylic paints.

The fourth grade students completed work on human or animal masks created with plaster. Details were added with Sculptamold, which is a papier mache pulp. The masks were completed using acrylic paint. The students also created multi colored block prints using Styrofoam and water based markers.

The students in fifth grade completed non objective/abstract sculptures made with plaster and cardboard. The students also designed the inside of a locker. Their locker drawings contained either realistic or fantasy items.

**GHR Band
Debut Performance!**

Tuesday, January 31, 7:00pm
Veteran's Auditorium,
Coventry High School

5th grade students welcome members of the CHS Jazz band at their premier performance. Don't miss it!

A "Note" From the Music Room ~ Mrs. Labelle

January and February are for reviewing our music theory. Grade three students are learning the letter names of the lines and spaces of the music staff. They are also being challenged to identify four Mystery Songs – songs they know but there are no words, only numbers that they use to play the songs on the bellstair. Then they recognize each song and each student has a turn to play the songs on the bellstair. Fourth grade is reviewing their lines and spaces, and using some of those notes to play on their recorders. We are learning a gospel song and will be starting a blues song. Fifth graders are experiencing the beat of music. First they learn some songs in duple and triple meter, then, they conduct the songs and count the beats. After that they take turns conducting the class while they sing the various songs. The students will be learning a two-beat pattern, then a three-beat and a four –beat conducting pattern.

PTO News ~ Jen Oberlin, Doreen Hurley, and Tracy Wunch

Happy Winter to everyone!
Thanks to all who helped out with the Annual PTO Craft Fair on December 3rd. Our portion of the profit is over \$2400 so it was a huge success for everyone involved. We couldn't have done it without our wonderful volunteers!
We would also like to say thank you to everyone who took a mitten (or 2) from the Human Services Mitten tree....your contributions were greatly appreciated!
In February, keep an eye out for information about our Spring Fundraisers. We are planning a cookie dough sale as well as a Yankee Candle fundraiser. The sales will be running from February 22nd through March 7th and we are hoping to use the money we raise to purchase more playground equipment for the school.
Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 1st at 6:30 PM. Hope to see you there!



Come meet the new Superintendent of Schools, David Petrone:

As I begin my tenure as the Superintendent of Schools, one of my initiatives is to meet with as many parents and members of our Coventry community as possible. Open communication is a key component for true collaboration. I invite you to keep informed about education in our town by attending any of my Open Door meetings this school year. All of these informal gatherings will be held in the Administration Building conference room at 1700 Main Street.

Tuesday, February 7 at 5:30 p.m.	Friday, May 4 at 9:30 a.m.
Monday, March 12 at 11:00 a.m.	Thursday, May 31 at 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, April 11 at 3:30 p.m.	

Home & School

Working Together for School Success

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January 2012

G.H. Robertson School
Mr. Troy Hopkins, Principal

SHORT NOTES

Just because

Does your child love science experiments? Or did she enjoy a book her teacher read aloud? From time to time, send a note or an email to let the teacher know what your youngster likes about school. Teachers appreciate hearing good news from parents—and it helps them get to know students better.

Winter mornings

It's dark out, the alarm has gone off twice, and your youngster is still in bed. Sound familiar? Try turning on several lights and playing upbeat music or a funny audiobook. This will help your child feel more energetic and begin to get ready for school.

Be a good neighbor

This year, encourage your family to do at least one volunteer activity per season. During colder months, you might deliver food for Meals on Wheels or collect gloves and coats to donate to shelters. When it's warm, consider planting trees at schools or parks or participating in neighborhood cleanup days.

Worth quoting

"A library is infinity under a roof."
Gail Carson Levine

JUST FOR FUN

Student: "I was born in California."

Teacher: "Which part?"

Student: "All of me."



Friendship matters

Children who have friends tend to do better in school and enjoy it more. Share these ideas to help your youngster make and keep friends.

Start with one

Just one strong friendship can give your child the skills and confidence to build others. Role-play reaching out to a classmate she'd like to know better. She might say, "Nice lunch box. I like fairy tales, too." Remind her to make eye contact, smile, and ask questions ("What's your favorite fairy tale?").

Share good times

Give your youngster opportunities to strengthen bonds with old friends and to find new ones. She could join after-school activities (computer club, chorus) and attend special events (spirit night, math fair). At neighborhood playgrounds and basketball courts, suggest that she be friendly and play with other children so she can make friends who live nearby.

Treat friends like treasures

Your child can be a good friend by remembering that each person is valuable. Ask her to tell you what she likes best about her friends (good sense of humor, fun to play games with). Also, encourage her to show friends that she cares by being supportive when things are going well ("Congrats on the home run!") and not so well ("Sorry you're sick—I'll bring over some magazines after school").♥



Nouns, verbs, and more

Knowing about parts of speech can make your child a better writer. Here are two fun ways to practice.

1-2-3 poem. Have your youngster write a noun (person, place, or thing) on a piece of paper. On the next line, he should write two adjectives (words that describe the noun).

Below that he can add three verbs (action words) about the noun. *Example:*

Dog
Soft, furry
Sleeping, running, fetching.

Fill-in-the-blank story. Write a sentence with one or more missing words ("Once upon a time, there was a _____"). Underneath each blank, write the part of speech that should go there (adjective, noun). Your child fills in the blanks ("colorful rainbow") and adds his sentence. Take turns until you agree that your tale is finished. ♥



Real-life math

When your child closes his math book, the learning doesn't have to end. Try these suggestions for fitting math skills into everyday activities:

- Appoint your child scorekeeper for family games. He can practice doing math in his head by adding up points for Yahtzee, Scrabble, or Hearts.
- At the grocery store, ask your youngster to estimate 2 lb. of green beans or 3 lb. of potatoes. Then, let him check the weights on the produce scale.



- How much space does he need for a jigsaw puzzle? Have him look at the dimensions on the box (say, 18" x 24") and use a ruler or yardstick to find a spot that's at least 18" wide and 24" long.

- How long will it take to fold a load of laundry or drive to the bank? Suggest that he write down his estimate and then time the task on a cell phone or car clock.

- When you bake, put your youngster in charge of measuring ingredients (1 cup milk, ½ tsp. salt) and finding the right-sized pan (11" x 7", 13" x 9").♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Family Bill of Rights

When my son Jack studied the Bill of Rights, his teacher did something that I thought was clever. She used it to help the kids come up with classroom rules. They listed students' rights and made a rule to protect each one. For example, "Be quiet in class" goes with "the right to learn."

I decided that we would use the Bill of Rights to make household rules. Just like the class, we started with our rights. Jack and his brother came up with "the right to share your opinion" and "the right to privacy." Then, we added a rule to each one ("speak respectfully" and "knock before entering someone's room").

I think linking rights with rules is helping the boys understand why rules are important. And our household is running more smoothly lately!♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Snowy fun

Even when there's snow on the ground, your family can get outdoor exercise. Here are two games for everyone to play.



Snowman relay

Collect two sets of snowman accessories (hat, scarf, carrot, buttons), and place each set in a separate bucket at one end of the yard. Divide your family into teams, and have each team build a snowman at the other end of the yard. Then, team members run to the bucket one at a time, grab one accessory, and put it on the snowman. The first team to complete a snowman wins.

Snow-hop

Follow in each other's footprints with this snowy version of hopscotch. Let your child create a hopscotch course in the snow by hopping forward 10 times, landing each time on either one foot or two feet. Everyone else must hop the same way he did so they land in his footprints. Keep playing until each person gets a chance to be the leader.♥

Q & A Dealing with perfectionism

Q: My daughter is a perfectionist. She'll erase handwriting that isn't perfect or throw away a drawing if she makes a mistake. How should we handle this?

A: It's great that your daughter sets high standards for herself. But as you've discovered, perfectionism has its down side. To help her get through assignments without becoming frustrated or sidetracked, suggest that she finish an entire page without erasing. Then, she can go back and decide what she can let go and fix what she really isn't happy with.

When she draws a picture, encourage her to think of it as a rough draft. She might relax if she knows her first attempt doesn't have to be perfect. Then, if she starts over, have her save her drafts so she can look back and see how much she's improving. This can help her be happy with progress rather than perfection.

Finally, treat imperfections as a normal part of life so she can learn to take pride in doing her best. For instance, if she brings home an almost-perfect test, say something like "Your studying really paid off" rather than "Wow! You got only one answer wrong!"♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfcustomer@womensduwer.com
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Home & School

Working Together for School Success

CONNECTION®

February 2012



G.H. Robertson School
Mr. Troy Hopkins, Principal

SHORT NOTES

Party helper

Attending or helping with class parties is a fun way for parents to be involved at school. You might offer to take a snack, organize a game, or supervise a craft project. Your youngster will enjoy having you in his classroom, and his teacher will welcome your participation.

Learn, use, and remember

Your youngster is more likely to remember information if she uses it right away. When she meets someone, encourage her to say the name ("Nice to meet you, Kate"). If she's memorizing state capitals, she might look each one up to see what it's known for and then tell someone the fact ("The U.S. Naval Academy is in Annapolis, the capital of Maryland").

Being brave

Courage can help your youngster read aloud in class, learn to swim, or even stand up to a bully. When he needs to feel brave, share ways you personally show courage (giving a presentation at work). He'll realize that everyone gets nervous sometimes. Then, ask him to remember times he has been brave (taking the training wheels off his bike).

Worth quoting

"Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves." J. M. Barrie

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What does Wednesday have that no other day of the week has?

A: The letter W.



Homework solutions

Like an actor rehearsing his lines or a batter working on his swing, your child does homework to practice what he learns in school. And if he's like most youngsters, homework brings occasional challenges. Here are solutions to common problems he might face.

Getting started

When your child gets home from school or after-school care, he might want to relax for a little while, or he may want to jump right in and work. Have him try each method for one week and keep track of how it goes. He could write notes in each day's calendar square. ("Went great!" or "Hard time getting started.") After two weeks, he can review the notes to see which routine worked best.

Staying motivated

Does your youngster ever feel restless when he's doing homework? Suggest that he get up and move to a new spot. For example, he might finish his vocabulary



assignment at the kitchen table and read his science chapter on the porch. A planned break (say, to have a snack or take a walk) can also give him a second wind.

Solving problems

Help your child make a list of strategies he can use when he gets stuck. For a math assignment, he might try tools like a number line or find sample problems in his book. When he's reading, he could look up words in a dictionary or reread a paragraph. *Tip:* If he's still stumped, he might call a friend or write down his question to ask his teacher the next day. ♥

Let's pretend!

No matter how old your child is, pretending can boost her creativity and teach her to think abstractly. Try these activities:

- Ask your youngster to close her eyes and imagine she's a person she has studied (explorer, inventor) or that she's visiting a place she has learned about (White House, rain forest). Encourage her to describe what she sees, hears, and smells. In the rain forest, for example, she might see colorful birds, hear monkeys howling, and smell damp leaves.

- Pick a random object (sponge). Have each family member list creative uses for it (pincushion, hamster tumbling mat, ice pack). After three minutes, compare your lists. The person with the most ideas gets to pick the next item. ♥



Handling family conflicts

Throughout life, your child will run into conflicts—at least some of the time. Here are ideas that can teach her conflict-resolution skills and help her get along with others at school and at home.

Plan ahead. Every family has situations that cause conflict. And these issues are easier to deal with when everyone is calm. Hold regular family meetings, and use part of each meeting to discuss problems. *Example:* “We get short-tempered when we’re running late in the mornings. Let’s get up earlier.”



Use “I” messages.

Explaining how others’ actions make you feel can be an effective way to resolve conflicts. Try posting this sentence on the refrigerator: “I feel _____ when _____.” If a family member has a concern, she can say it aloud, filling in the blanks. You might tell your child, “I feel frustrated when I trip over toys” instead of, “Your room is a mess.”

Make compromises. When a disagreement crops up (“You always shower first!”), have each person write her ideal solution on a slip of paper. Place the slips at opposite ends of the table. Then, they should write down several compromises, lay them between the two extremes, and choose the one that best suits both sides. For instance, the person who rides the earliest bus showers first on weekdays and last on weekends. Suggest that they hang the schedule outside the bathroom where everyone can see it. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

The importance of downtime

My daughter Lucy plays soccer and takes ballet lessons. Last fall, she started cheerleading, too. She was enjoying it, but about halfway through the school year, she started complaining that she was tired all the time. One day, she said she didn’t like any of her activities anymore.

I was confused—soccer had been Lucy’s favorite sport since she was little. I talked to my friend Pam, who told me the same thing happened to her daughter. Pam said her daughter was involved in so many activities that she “burned out” and became tired and stressed. As we talked, I realized that Lucy needs free time—to dig in the dirt, play hide-and-seek, and do absolutely nothing—more than she needs another structured activity.

I told Lucy she could stick with two activities and she could pick which two. She chose to continue with soccer and ballet and to drop cheerleading. Now she seems to have more energy for her favorite activities, and it’s nice to see her just being a kid. ♥



Q & A

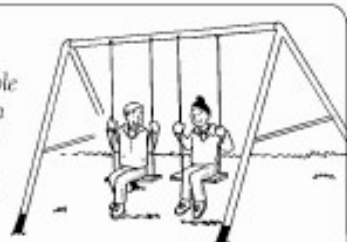
Respect differences

Q: We recently moved to an area where people speak many different languages, and our son has a lot of questions. How should we answer him?

A: It’s great that your son is being exposed to a variety of cultures. You can use his curiosity to help him learn about respecting differences.

Explain that in many parts of the United States, people speak different languages, eat different foods, and wear different clothing than your family does. At the same time, they do many of the same things (play at the park, watch movies).

To help him understand, ask him to name one classmate who speaks English and one who speaks another language. Have him tell you something he has in common with each child (skateboarding, wearing sneakers) and one thing that they don’t share (number of siblings, language spoken at home). He’ll discover that language is just one of the many things that makes a person similar to or different from him. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Be a storybook character

With this guessing game, your child will learn to ask questions and pay attention to details in books.

Materials: sticky notes, colored pencils

First, have each family member secretly think of a well-known story character (Clifford, Horton). He should write his character’s name and draw a small picture of him on a sticky note.

Then, each player puts his sticky note on another

person’s back. The object of the game is to figure out which character is on your own back by asking questions that can be answered “yes” or “no.” *Examples:* “Am I an animal?” “Do I have fur?” “Am I a pet?” When you think you know who you are, ask, “Am I Clifford?”

Play as many rounds as you like. When you’re finished, choose a book that features one of the characters, and read it aloud together. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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