

Helping Boys & Girls Learn

Vol 10 - Issue 4E

Parenting for Success in Elementary School

International Children's Book Day - April

Both boys and girls of all ages love to be read to – and what better time to make a commitment to reading to your child each day than International Children's Book Day. Keep these things in mind when reading to your son or daughter:

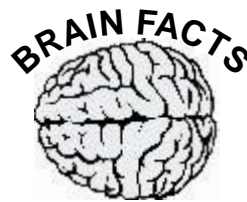
Girls will tend to sit more quietly when they are read to than boys – without as much testosterone urging them to keep moving, they will find it easier to cuddle up and be patient as a story progresses.



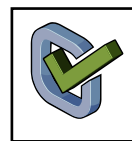
Boys will find it harder to sit quietly while they are being read to, but it doesn't mean they don't want you to read and it doesn't mean they aren't paying attention to the story. If you allow your son to lay on the floor in front of you while you read a story, even fiddle with a little car or some Legos while listening, it doesn't mean he isn't hearing the story. Allowing him to move his body while he listens may actually help him be engaged with the story. If you don't think so, stop periodically and ask him what just happened? And reading doesn't have to be in a chair or on the couch – on the grass works great!



It's important for children to choose the stories they want to hear. You may be tired of reading Horton Hears A Who but the repetition may be just what your child needs and wants! Remember you are trying to instill a love of words and stories and reading in your young child – and open that book one more time!



The cerebellum is the “doing center” of the brain and tends to be larger in the male brain. This means that boys often learn better when their bodies are in motion. Sitting still can frustrate the male system, causing a boy to exhibit behavior that can appear disruptive or impulsive, and sometimes land him in trouble at home and at school. Remember – he may well be just responding to his own male biology!



Check This Out

Resources for Parents

160 Ways To Help The World: Community Service Projects for Young People
by Linda Leeb Duper

Our world would be a better place if we were taught from an early age how important it is to serve and be active members of our communities. This book offers ways to do this.

Things Parents Should Know...

April is National Humor Month

One of the best ways to deal with the every day stress of parenting and taking care of your family is with humor! Here's some suggestions:

TAKE A HUMOR BREAK.

Keep a book of jokes or cartoons handy. If it makes good sense to keep a first-aid kit for medical emergencies why not a mirth-kit to deal with stressful situations?

Ten minutes before a potentially stressful situation read some funny stories. A smile or chuckle will relax and better prepare you for a confrontation. A good laugh makes you feel good and allows you to think more clearly and quickly.

Humor makes you more efficient -- it allows you to function better.



LAUGH AT YOURSELF.

When you make fun of yourself it takes the sting out of what other people say.

It is not necessary to constantly put yourself down but self-deprecating humor shows that you're human. It reveals that you are so self-assured, you can readily poke fun at yourself. And guess what? People like you more!

Humor keeps you from taking yourself too seriously and makes dealing with others easier. Remember: most of us work hard to do the best job of parenting that we can – and things still go wrong – so laugh often and keep your stress level under control!

Learning and Movement

When children speak and listen to one another, as when they invent games on the playground, they're using and expanding their vocabularies and learning important lessons in communication. When they invent rules for those games (as young children like to do), they further enhance their communication skills.

When children perform a “**slow walk**” or “**skip lightly**,” adjectives and adverbs become much more than abstract concepts. When they are given the opportunity to physically demonstrate such action words as **stomp, pounce, stalk, or slither** – or descriptive words like **smooth, strong, gentle, or enormous** – word comprehension is immediate and long-lasting. In all of these instances, the children have heard the word and both felt and seen the meaning. The more senses used in the learning process, the higher the percentage of retention.

This kind of hands-on learning is called implicit – like learning to ride a bike. At the opposite end of the spectrum is explicit learning – like being told the capital of Peru. If you hadn't ridden a bike in five years, would you still be able to do it? And if you hadn't heard the capital of Peru for five years, would you still remember what it was?

Explicit learning may seem to be quicker than learning through physical experiences, but the latter has greater meaning for children and stays with them longer. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that implicit learning creates more neural networks in the brain. Another reason may be that it's simply more fun!

We have spent years and resources struggling to teach children to learn, and yet the standardized achievement test scores go down and illiteracy rises. Could it be that one of the key elements we've been missing is simply movement?

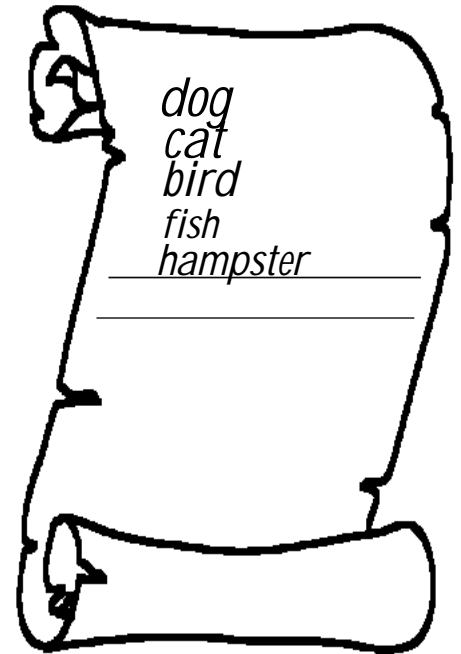
A-B-Cs

Boys generally develop language skills later than girls, so help your boy by including lots of words in his world. Talk to him, read to him, listen to him, play word games--and by all means possible make words fun!

Create A Poetry Contest

Both you and your child write down five fun words in a list. Exchange lists and write poems (both of you) containing the listed words. If this is too easy, make a longer list of words! If it's too hard, limit the word selection to one topic, like things on a farm or favorite foods.

After you create your poems, let you child put the poems in a journal and repeat the contest from time to time. You may find you have a budding poet on your hands! If he wants, let your child decorate the poem, or draw pictures of what the poem means to him.



While girls tend to develop advanced language skills early, their spatial skills may be on a slower track. Including lots of spatial play in their play activities like those listed will be fun and promote early learning of math concepts and skills needed in kindergarten and elementary school.

1-2-3s

National Read A Map Day - April

5th

To celebrate this day, let your daughter create a map of your neighborhood. all you need is some graph paper, a ruler and some colored pencils or crayons.

Pay attention to the detail she puts on her map – what stores does she include? Is there a movie theater?

After she completes her map let her choose one location on her map for you to actual visit – make it a special outing. Keep track of the miles when if you drive. Spatial awareness is a skill we really want to encourage our girls to develop, and map reading can really help!



Family Fun This Month

Celebrate “Keep American Beautiful” Month

Keep America Beautiful Month follows a practical approach that unites citizens, businesses and government to find solutions that advance our core issues of preventing litter, reducing waste, and beautifying communities.

It’s never too early to start our boys and girls on the path to civic pride and good citizenship. Plan a day or a weekend to work on your own space - if you have a yard, do a family clean-up and maybe plants some flowers or seeds. If you live in a neighborhood with community space, help your child organize a community clean-up day. End it with a cook out with each neighbor bringing a snack to share.



Talk to your child’s school about organizing a clean-up day at the school or in a neighborhood park.



Community service is more and more becoming a part of what college’s look for in student applications, and starting to build awareness of volunteer work in elementary school can be good way to help your child be ready when the time comes. It can also be a good, healthy way to spend some quality family time outdoors!

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Love That Dog *by Sharon Creech*

Love That Dog, a boy's free verse journal, is both funny and poignant. At the start of a class poetry unit, Jack recounts his negative feelings about boys writing poetry. But with his teacher's help, he comes to not only appreciate the power of poetry but to create his own poem about the death of his dog. I recommend this for 8-13 year olds.



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Chasing Redbird *by Sharon Creech*

Thirteen year old Zinny Taylor lives in Bybanks, Kentucky with so many brothers and sisters that she often feels lost in the chaos and escapes next door to the quiet of her aunt and uncle's home. The death of her aunt, family mysteries, a boy who is more interested in her than in her older sister, and a mysterious trail that Zinny claims as her own all lead to a summer of growth and new understanding.