

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Take good risks

Encourage your tween to try an activity that appeals to her, even if she's a little nervous. Maybe she wants to join the cross-country team but hasn't run longer distances. Or perhaps she's interested in the improv club but is hesitant about public speaking. Stepping out of her comfort zone will stretch her abilities and build confidence.

Agree to disagree

If your usually agreeable child starts poking holes in your opinions, that's a sign his reasoning skills are developing. Try not to take it personally, and ask him to share his views respectfully. He'll learn that it's okay to disagree, as long as he's polite about it.

Puzzle me this

Crossword puzzles boost your tween's vocabulary. Have her print free puzzles she finds online or get crossword books from a dollar store. Or she and her friends could make crosswords for each other on graph paper or with a website like puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com.

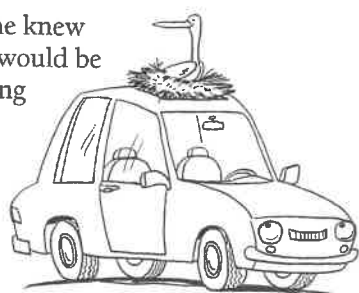
Worth quoting

"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing." *Walt Disney*

Just for fun

Q: Why did the bird build a nest on the car?

A: She knew they would be moving soon!



A good attitude = more learning

Starting the year with a positive attitude about school goes a long way toward a student's success. Inspire your tween to develop a winning outlook with these strategies.

Look for positives

Your middle grader can find something interesting about every class. Suggest that he start a list of fun facts, one from each class every week. After a biology lesson on genetics, he might write, "I had a 50 percent chance of having blue eyes since Mom's are brown and Dad's are blue." Encourage him to share his discoveries with you.

Celebrate achievements

Tell your tween to congratulate himself on a job well done. Maybe he earned a higher score on this week's vocabulary quiz than he did on last week's. Or perhaps he picked a topic for his history paper, even though he was tempted to



put off getting started. Saying "I did it!" will make him feel good about himself and motivated to keep working hard.

Seek help

Successful students know how to get help when they face challenges. For example, your child could post a schedule of teachers' office hours or homework-help sessions in his locker. Then if he's struggling, he can sign up for a slot. Having a plan in place will help him stay upbeat. 🤝

Fall family fun

Strong parent-tween relationships help kids resist risky behaviors and make family life more enjoyable. Try these ideas.

■ **Outings.** Ask your child to find outings that sound fun, such as a fall festival or a paint night. For ideas, she could look in the newspaper or check library and community center websites. *Tip:* Suggest that she ask classmates where their families like to go on weekends.

■ **Projects.** Let your middle grader plan family projects. Perhaps she'll suggest a garage sale. Work together to gather books, housewares, and toys you don't need anymore. She can help to advertise the sale, price items, and greet customers. 🤝



Wanted: Involved parents

What does parent involvement look like in middle school? While you probably won't be volunteering in your child's classroom, she still wants your support (even if she doesn't act like she does). Consider these tips for being a partner in her education.



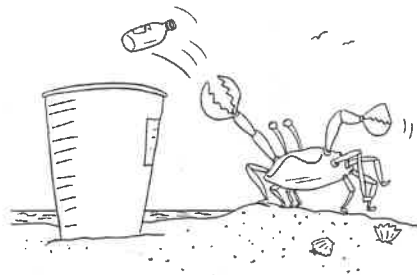
At school. Make it a priority to attend school events like curriculum nights and school plays. Also, look for ways to help that are related to your tween's activities. If she plays in the band, you could volunteer to set up for a concert. If she belongs to a book club, you might offer to shelve library books and talk to her afterward about

books you noticed. Or if she's an athlete, maybe you'll work at the concession stand during sporting events.

At home. Offer to quiz your middle grader on material she's studying or to look over a paper she's working on. To stay in the loop about what's happening in school, read the website regularly and sign up for email or text alerts. Mention the announcements to your child so she knows you're interested in her school. 👍

Q & A Getting started with community service

Q My son is required to complete community service hours this year, but he can't decide what to do. How can I help him?



A Doing community service will let your son help others and gain work experience. The main office or his school counselor may have a list of places where he can volunteer. He could also ask friends, relatives, and neighbors for ideas.

Then, suggest that he choose a job that matches his interests—he'll get more out of it that way. For example, he might participate in a beach cleanup if he's concerned about the environment. Or if he likes working with younger children, he may play games or read with little ones at a homeless shelter while their parents attend job training.

Finally, encourage him to keep track of his work, including names of supervisors, so he'll receive credit—and even have references for a job someday. 👍

Everyday engineering

From shoes and clothing to appliances and electronics, just about every product your tween uses was designed by engineers. Help him discover how engineering affects his daily life with this activity.

1. Encourage your child to consider the engineering involved in his favorite products. Maybe his running shoes absorb impact, the smoothie maker purees big chunks of fruit, or his jacket repels rain.

2. Now let him pick a product to redesign. He could decide to add another layer of foam to his shoes. First, he should run a block and rate his comfort on a scale of 1–10. Then, he can add foam, run another block, and rate his comfort again. What happens if he adds even more foam? How much might be too much? 👍



Parent to Parent

The "elevator speech"

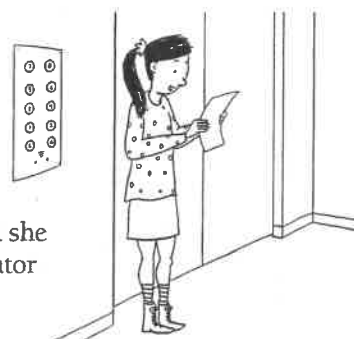
When I was looking for a job, I discovered an interesting technique for "selling" yourself in an interview: the "elevator speech." I shared the idea with my daughter Susan, thinking she could use it to write summaries or make points during class discussions.

I told Susan to pretend she was going to ride an elevator with me and summarize the novel she's reading in

30 seconds or less—about the time it would take to ride from the ground to the top floor of a building.

Susan jotted down what she wanted to say. At first, it took her almost 3 minutes to read it. But she kept trimming her summary until it was about 30 seconds long.

Then, she read it aloud to me. She got to the point quickly, and now she plans to try the strategy in class. 👍



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Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

September 2019

Middle Country School District
Title I - Parental Involvement

INFO BITS

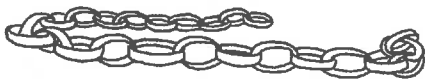


Roll a pattern

A pair of dice is all you need for this pattern game. Let your child roll the dice and use the numbers to start a pattern for you to continue. If he rolls 2 and 5, he could say, "2, 5, 11, 23" (multiply by 2 and add 1). You would say, "47, 95, 191, 383." Now you roll the dice and begin a pattern for him.

Paper chain challenge

Challenge your youngster to engineer the longest possible paper chain using



only one piece of construction paper, scissors, and tape or glue. Encourage her to measure her finished chain. How could she redesign it to make it longer? For example, she might change the length or width of the strips.

Book Picks

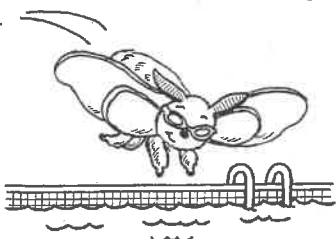
Follow along on a mysterious adventure while solving math and logic puzzles in *Math and Magic in Wonderland* (Lilac Mohr).

Your child can read about animals from all seven continents, from Australia's Tasmanian devil to Africa's Nile crocodile, in *The Animal Book* (Ruth Martin).

Just for fun

Q: Why did the moth take swimming lessons?

A: He wanted to learn the butterfly stroke.



Ready, set, math!

Coming right up: One fantastic year of math! Help your youngster plan for and celebrate success with these activities.

Poster of resolutions

Encourage your child to make math resolutions. Examples: "Double-check my math answers." "Ask questions when I don't understand something." She could cut construction paper into colorful geometric shapes, write a resolution on each, and glue the shapes on poster board.



Scrapbook of success

Suggest that your youngster start a scrapbook for her math papers. She can decorate a binder and add pockets for assignments she's proud of. Maybe she'll save a homework assignment she stuck with even though it was difficult or a test where she showed improvement. Throughout the year, she can flip through her binder to see her progress.

Jar of marbles

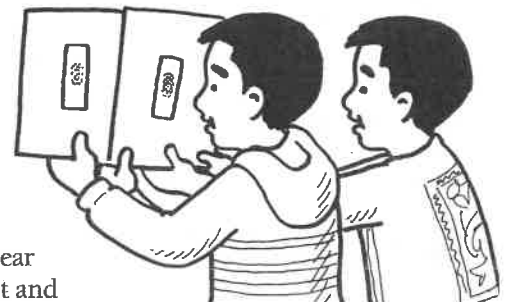
Let your child get a clear jar, marbles, and a notebook. Whenever she uses math *outside* of school, she can add a marble to her jar and write about the math in her notebook. ("I measured my little brother's height." "I multiplied fractions to double a muffin recipe.") She'll have a visual reminder of how useful math is—and an interesting list to read when the year is over!

Fingerprint analysis

Scientists have never discovered two identical fingerprints—not even among twins! Your child will learn about fingerprints with this investigation.

Have each family member use a pencil to shade in a dark circle on a sheet of paper, then press his finger into the circle. Now he should put clear tape on his finger to capture the print and carefully place the tape on a clean sheet of paper.

Using a magnifying glass, your youngster can look for fingerprint features like loops (bean shape), whorls (round), and arches (like a rainbow). Which one is most common in your family? Does anyone have a feature that no one else has?



Strategies for multiplication

As a child begins to learn and master multiplication, practicing with objects helps him visualize and learn the facts. Try these ideas.

Equal groups. Give your youngster a multiplication problem, perhaps 7×3 , and let him use school supplies to solve it. He could form equal groups (say, 7 piles of 3 crayons).



number of checkers to make an array with (say, 24). Have him say the problem that matches (perhaps 6×4 or 3×8).

How many does he have in all? He can think $3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 21$ or skip count 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21 to find the answer.

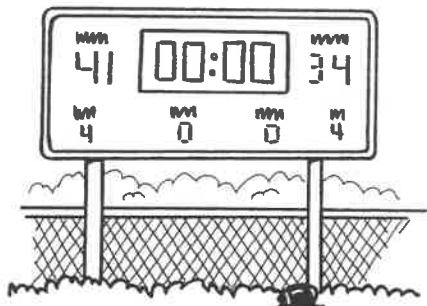
Arrays. A checkerboard is an example of an array, or a regular arrangement of rows and columns. If your child is solving $2 \times 6 = \underline{\quad}$, he can use checkers to cover a section of the board 2 squares tall and 6 squares wide. How many checkers did he use? (12) Or give him a certain num-



PARENT TO PARENT

Football math

Our family loves football season! As we started watching games together this year, I realized that our children could use the scores to play with math.



Each week, we look at the final scores in the newspaper and figure out ways they might have been earned. Last weekend, one score was 41 – 34. Our daughter said 41 points may have come from 5 touchdowns (each with an extra point) and 2 field goals: $(5 \times 7) + (2 \times 3) = 41$. Our son said you can also earn 41 points with 6 touchdowns if only 5 included an extra point: $(6 \times 6) + (5 \times 1) = 41$.

This activity has added a new level of fun to football season—and it's giving the kids a new way to use math.

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SCIENCE LAB

A "centripetal" penny

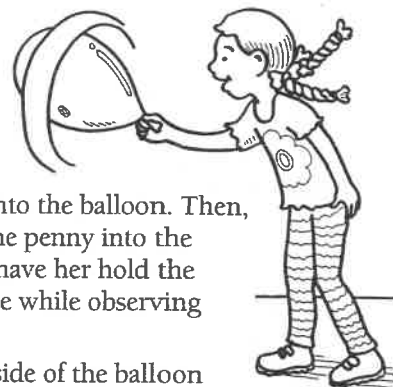
What do a rocket and a penny have in common? By themselves, not much—but when you add the right forces, their motion can be similar.

You'll need: light-colored balloon, penny

Here's how: Let your youngster put the penny into the balloon. Then, blow up the balloon for her (being sure to shake the penny into the bottom so it couldn't be inhaled), and tie it. Next, have her hold the tied end of the balloon and spin it rapidly in a circle while observing the penny's motion.

What happens? The penny spins around the inside of the balloon in a circular motion.

Why? Spinning the balloon in a circle creates *centripetal force*. The force pushes the penny to the sides of the balloon, and the balloon's shape keeps the penny moving in that circular direction. A rocket orbiting the Earth also has centripetal force, this time caused by gravity.



MATH CORNER

Grams in the balance

How many grams does a serving of your child's favorite cereal weigh? He can check the nutrition label to find out—the answer is right next to the serving size. Then, use the foods in your pantry to help him practice estimating weight.

1. Have your youngster make a scale. He should use yarn to tie two identical cups to opposite corners of a coat hanger. Then, he can put the hanger on a doorknob.

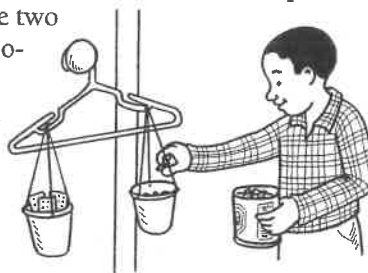
2. Let your child choose a food (say,

crackers), read the label to see how much a serving weighs (15 grams), and put 1 serving in the cup.

3. Ask your youngster to pick a different food and, without looking at the label, take out an amount that he estimates weighs the same as the crackers (perhaps 20 almonds).

4. He can place the almonds in the other cup to check his estimate, then add or subtract almonds to balance the scale.

5. Choose new foods, and do the activity again.



Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2019

Middle Country School District
Title I - Parental Involvement

Book Picks

■ *Lunch Lady and the Cyborg Substitute* (Jarrett J. Krosoczka)

Three students discover that their lunch lady is a secret agent who's investigating a new teacher. The agent and her assistant use special gadgets—like an apron that's really a cape—to help them crack the case. Book one in the Lunch Lady graphic novel series.



■ *Our Story Begins* (edited by Elissa Brent Weissman)

Get a glimpse into the childhoods of 26 favorite children's authors and illustrators in this collection of their earliest works. Readers will find stories, poems, artwork, and more—and may even be inspired to get creative themselves!



■ *Who Was Rosa Parks?* (Yona Zeldis McDonough)

In this biography, readers will learn about the heroic woman who bravely refused to give up her seat on a bus. The book describes Parks's childhood and the changes she inspired. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *A Boy Called Bat* (Elana K. Arnold)



Bat, a boy who has autism, bonds with a baby skunk his veterinarian mother brings home. He names the skunk Thor and wants to keep him as a pet,

but he has to convince his mom. This story about acceptance and friendship is the first book in the Bat series.

Motivated to read

Reading for pleasure is one of the most important ways for your child to build the skills he needs for school success. Get him into the reading habit this year with these ideas.

Find an "in"

Choose a book you think your youngster will enjoy—say, one about a boy his age who is short like he is. Read the first chapter or two aloud to him, and then ask him to read the next one. Don't be surprised if he gets hooked on the story and finishes reading it on his own!

Become a team

Pick a new hobby to try with your child, and team up to learn everything you can about it. The two of you might get into stamp collecting or photography. Check the library for collectors' guides or how-to books related to your hobby.

Use pictures

Colorful illustrations make picture encyclopedias and coffee-table books



hard to resist. Your youngster can explore kid-friendly topics like animals and sports. Leave the books around the house, perhaps on your child's nightstand or an end table. The pictures may spark his interest in reading the words.

Think outside the book

Reading doesn't always have to mean books. Is your youngster a movie buff? Let him read film reviews before you head to the theater. Does he like board games? Steer him toward trivia games that require players to read and answer questions.

Let's agree!

It's important for subjects and verbs to agree—just as it's important for your child to get along with others! Share these tips and strategies to help your youngster choose the correct verb:

- A singular subject (except *I* and *you*) gets a singular verb. Have your child pick a sentence from a book and read it with and without the *s* at the end of the verb. Example: "John *skates* around the rink," "John *skate* around the rink." The subject (*John*) is singular, so the verb (*skates*) is singular, too.

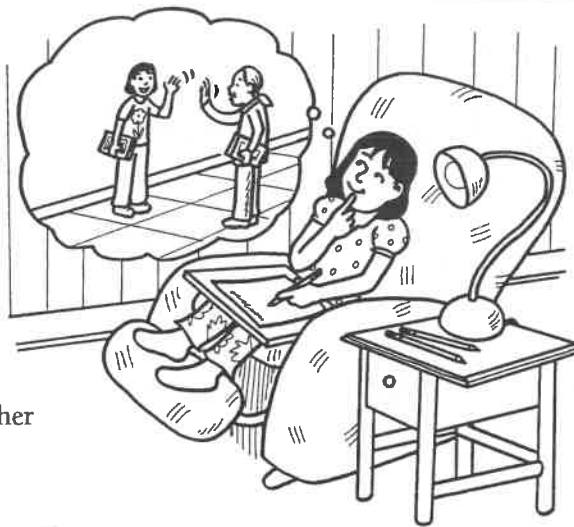
- Even if the subject and verb are separated by other words, they still have to agree. Suggest that your youngster ignore the words between the subject and verb to make sure she selected the right verb: "The *boy with the dogs* *walks* by our house every day."



The elements of a story

Your youngster has been asked to write a story. She has a topic in mind but isn't sure how to begin. Sound familiar? Have her consider these story elements to get her creative-writing juices flowing.

Theme. The theme is the “big idea,” which is different from the topic. For example, if your child's story is about a girl who is new at her school, the theme could be courage or perhaps



friendship. Keeping the theme in mind will help her dig deeper into her topic.

Tone. Will your youngster's story be suspenseful or funny? For a horror story, she might choose words that keep readers in suspense. If she wants to write a funny story, she could think of dialogue that will make readers laugh.

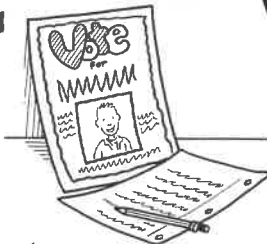
Time. Suggest that your child decide when her story will take place. During a specific period of history? A season of the year, such as winter? She can bring her story to life by including details about things like the clothing that characters are wearing and the weather outside. ■

Read, write, and get involved

Did you know that your youngster can gain reading, writing, and speaking skills by joining after-school activities? Suggest that he check out extracurriculars like these.

Student council

Your child will practice persuasive and explanatory writing when he composes speeches, creates campaign posters, or takes minutes at meetings. And giving speeches is good experience for oral presentations in class.



Publications

Working on a school newspaper, yearbook, or literary magazine offers lots of reading and writing opportunities. Your youngster will write questions for interviews, conduct research for articles, or write stories or poems to be published.

School plays

Memorizing his lines and saying them with expression can make your child a smoother reader. He'll also become familiar with dialogue, narration, and stage directions. ■

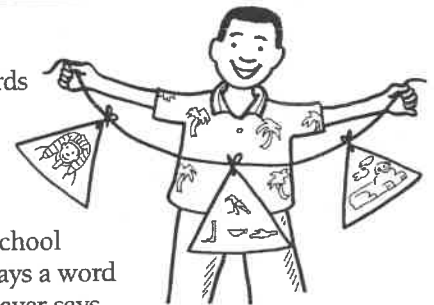
Fun with Words

Create word chains

Making “chains” of related words is a fun way to stretch your child's vocabulary. Play this game together, and see how many words you can link!

Have your youngster think of a category that's related to something he's learning in school (say, ancient Egypt). To start the game, he says a word that fits his category (pyramid). The next player says another word that goes along with the category. But there's a catch! Each new word has to begin with the last letter of the one before it.

A word chain for ancient Egypt, for example, could be: “pharaoh, hieroglyphics, sphinx.” Continue calling out words until someone can't think of a new one. The last player to come up with a word picks the next category. ■



Q&A

Making sense of graphics

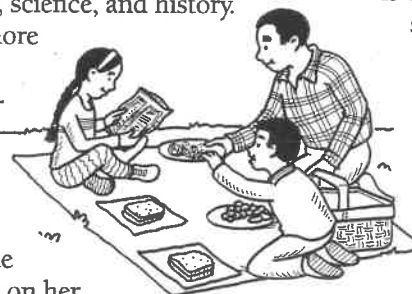
Q My daughter tends to skip over graphics, such as charts and diagrams, when she reads a textbook. What do you suggest?

A Point out that graphics work as a team with words to help her understand subjects like math, science, and history. She can become more comfortable with these textbook features by reading and using graphics that appear in everyday life.

For example, the nutrition-facts box on her

favorite snack contains a chart with useful information. Suggest that she slide her finger across rows and down columns to keep her place as she reads. Explain that she'll need to read the whole thing—“120 calories per serving” is useful only if she knows the serving size.

Also, have her practice using diagrams at home by following them to build toys or to help assemble furniture. She'll see that a visual image makes it much easier to understand the instructions. ■



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Recipes for Success

Practical Activities to Help Your Child Succeed

SEPTEMBER 2019

Middle Country School District

Title I - Parental Involvement

READING

Ball of questions

Build your youngster's reading comprehension with this simple game of catch.

Ingredients: masking tape, scissors, pen, soccer or beach ball, books

Let your child tear off several six-inch strips of masking tape. On each one, she should write a question that could apply to just about any story or novel. *Examples:* "How would you describe the main character?" "What is the theme of the story?" Then, have her stick the strips all over the ball. After you finish, toss the ball back and forth. Each time you catch it, answer the question closest to your right index finger.



HEALTH

Creating a bedtime kit can help your child get to sleep on time. Have him place a flashlight, a book, and a stuffed animal in a basket. He'll look forward to snuggling up



with his stuffed animal and reading his book by flashlight.

STUDY SKILLS

Acting out concepts makes them easier for your youngster to understand and remember. She could pretend she's through the water cycle, for instance. Can she evaporate into the sky, condense into a cloud, and fall back to Earth as rain (precipitation)?



VOCABULARY

What word am I?

Guess the words on your forehead and define them correctly to win this game.

Ingredients: list of vocabulary words, pencil, index cards

Have your child write each word on a separate index card, then shuffle and stack the cards facedown. Now he should take the top card and, without looking at the word, place it on his forehead with the word facing out.



To figure out the word, he can ask you yes-or-no questions. *Examples:* "Is it a type of energy?" "Is it an adjective?" When he identifies the word, he has to define it correctly to keep the card. If he gets it wrong, he returns the card to the bottom of the pile. Then it's your turn. Collect the most cards to win.

MATH

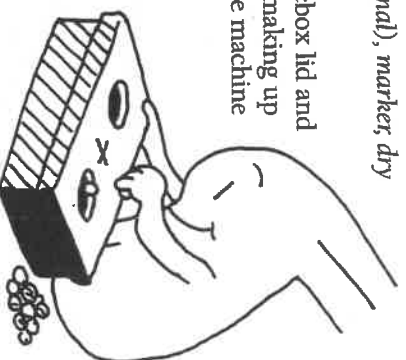
My adding machine

A homemade "adding machine" gives your child a fun way to practice addition.

Ingredients: scissors, shoebox, math book (optional), marker, dry beans (or other small objects), paper, pencil

Help your youngster cut two holes in the shoebox lid and draw a + sign between them. Now take turns making up addition problems for each other and using the machine to solve them.

If you give her $17 + 28 = \underline{\quad}$, she would put 17 beans in one hole and 28 in the other. Have her solve the problem in her head or on paper ($17 + 28 = 45$), then remove the lid and count the beans. Was she right? Now she can give you a problem to solve.



Refrigerator Poster

Just hang your Recipes poster on the refrigerator and sneak in an activity when you have a few minutes. These fun activities will help develop school success and positive behavior. Check off each box as you complete the "recipe."

Recipes for Success

Practical Activities to Help Your Child Succeed

SEPTEMBER 2019

Character Corner

FAIRNESS

Being fair doesn't always mean treating everyone the same. Can your child think of situations where that wouldn't make sense? *Example:* One student needs a bandage, so the nurse gives everyone a bandage. Your youngster will see that it's fair to meet different needs in different ways!

DEPENDABILITY

Let your child cover a coffee can with paper and label it "You CAN count on us." Put a coin in the can anytime a family member acts dependably (say, your youngster keeps his promise to help his sister with homework). When the can is full, donate the money to a charity.

OPTIMISM

Have your child cut a sun out of yellow construction paper and write a positive thought on each ray. ("I'll do my best at whatever I do.") She could post her sun where she'll see it every morning, perhaps on the bathroom mirror.



HISTORY

Your youngster can bring history to life by building models of famous sites. Perhaps she'll use empty paper towel tubes to construct the Parthenon if she's studying ancient Greece. Or if she's learning about ancient China, she might build the Great Wall out of lasagna noodles and cardboard.



ART

Gather around the table, and let your child hand out paper and crayons for this cooperative art project. Each person draws on the paper in front of him for one minute, then moves one seat to the right and continues the drawing at that spot. After a turn at each seat, everyone can describe the drawing in front of them.



SCIENCE

Invisible ink

Writing secret messages shows your child a cool chemical reaction and teaches a fun science lesson.

Ingredients: lemon juice, cotton swab, white paper, lamp or sunlight, hair dryer

Have your youngster dip a cotton swab in lemon juice, use it to write a message on the paper, and hold it up to the light. (The message will be invisible.)

Let the paper dry for a few minutes, then he can hold it while you turn the hair dryer on low and dry the message completely. Now when light shines on the paper, the message appears!

The paper absorbed the carbon-based compound in the lemon juice. The heat released the compound, allowing it to react with the oxygen in the air and darken the juice.



COUNTING

A trip to the grocery store offers plenty of opportunities for estimating and counting. Your youngster could estimate how many potatoes are in a 10-lb. bag or how many varieties of cereal the store sells. Let him count to check each estimate.



Congratulations!

We finished _____ activities together on this poster.

Signed (parent or adult family member)

Signed (child)

CAPITALIZATION

Encourage your youngster to play "capital detective." Write a sentence, using some incorrect capitalization. ("a little Caterpillar wiggled down main Street last Saturday.") Will she catch all the mistakes? Next, let her make up a sentence for you to fix.

Main Street