

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

November 2018

El Capitan Middle School  
"Where Eagles SOAR"



## Book Picks

### ■ *Pashmina* (Nidhi Chanani)

This award-winning graphic novel follows Priyanka, a young Indian-American girl trying to understand her past.

Thanks to a magic pashmina (a shawl),

Priyanka suddenly finds herself in the faraway land her family left behind. Will she discover the answers she seeks?



### ■ *Top Secret* (Paul B. Janeczko)

People have used codes and other secret communication methods

throughout history.

With this nonfiction guide, readers will learn about spies and find out how to make

and break different kinds of codes, create invisible ink, experiment with cipher systems, and more.



### ■ *Henry Huggins* (Beverly Cleary)

In this chapter book, third-grader Henry Huggins longs for excitement. One day he meets a stray dog, and his life is no longer boring. With Ribsy by his side, Henry rides in a police car, catches earthworms, and gets covered in green paint. (Also available in Spanish.)

### ■ *Baking Class: 50 Fun Recipes Kids Will Love to Bake* (Deanna F. Cook)

Encourage your child to read recipes and discover baking with this kid-friendly cookbook. It includes easy-to-follow recipes for biscuits, pie, and more, as well as tips for decorating cookies. Step-by-step photos will guide your youngster's way to delicious treats!

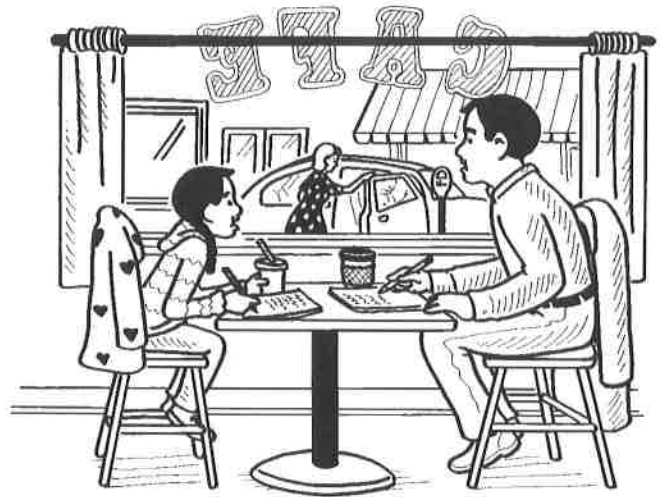


## Details make stories sparkle!

The best stories are full of details that make the reader feel like part of the action. Your child can help readers connect to her writing with these ideas.

### How was your day?

Take turns telling each other about your day, and ask questions to get more specific information. If your youngster says, "We played a fun soccer game in PE," you could ask what made it fun. Maybe she'll add, "We learned a 'Catch Me if You Can' drill for dribbling faster." Do this regularly, and she'll get used to including more details—whether she's talking or writing.



Your youngster will see that there are many choices when selecting details for a story.

### Collect examples

Let your child keep an eye out for interesting details in books. She could jot them in a notebook or on sticky notes and use them to inspire her own writing. For example, she might notice ways an author describes weather ("Cold rain pelted her windbreaker") and characters' feelings ("Her rainbow-striped umbrella matched her sunny mood").

### Observe a scene

With your child, look out the same window for one minute. Now write what you saw, in as much detail as possible. ("A woman wearing a black-and-white polka-dotted dress and red shoes got into a silver car.") Compare your write-ups.

## After-school reading

Getting involved in school and community activities is a great way to strengthen your youngster's reading skills. Consider these suggestions.

● **At school.** Encourage your child to try out for a school play. If he lands a speaking part, he'll get plenty of reading practice as he learns his lines. Or suggest that he join the band, orchestra, or chorus—reading music is a kind of reading, too.

● **In the community.** Animals can be great listeners—and your youngster may feel especially comfortable reading to them! Check your library and local animal shelters for programs that allow children to read to dogs or other animals.



# What should I read aloud?

Your child is becoming an independent reader—but that doesn't mean you have to stop reading aloud. In fact, older readers reap many benefits from story time. Here's advice for deciding what to read.

**Stretch his abilities.** Choose something more challenging than what your youngster can read on his own. You'll expose him to more complex plots and harder words. Stop periodically to



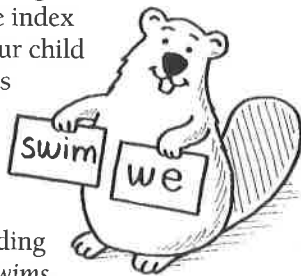
check whether he understands what's going on, and keep a dictionary nearby to look up new words. *Idea:* Scan books or read reviews ahead of time to make sure the content isn't too mature.

**Show enthusiasm.** Pick reading material you and your child will both enjoy. Whether it's a full-length novel or a short article, the pleasure you take in reading it is likely to be contagious. Consider a classic book you loved at your youngster's age or a review of a restaurant the two of you would like to try. ■

## Fun with Words Pronouns and verbs that agree

Matching pronouns with verbs will be easier for your youngster after playing this game.

On separate index cards, have your child write pronouns (*I, you, he, she, it, we, and they*). She should write verbs ending with *s* (*runs, swims, skips*) on 10 additional cards and those same verbs without *s* (*run, swim, skip*) on 10 more.



Stack the pronoun and verb cards facedown in separate piles. On your turn, draw one card from each pile, and say the phrase formed (“we swims”). If the verb is correct, or if you can correct it (“we swim”), keep the verb card. (*Note:* The pronouns *I, you, we, and they* go with the verbs that don't end with *s*. The pronouns *he, she, and it* take verbs ending with *s*.)

Return the pronoun to the bottom of its pile. Continue until no verb cards are left—the player with the most verbs wins. ■

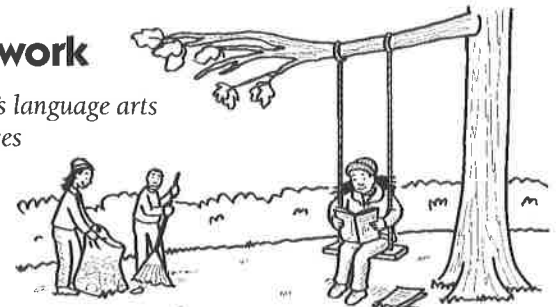


## Q&A Reading homework

**Q** A lot of my daughter's language arts homework this year involves reading silently. I'm used to looking over her finished homework, but I can't do that for reading. How can I support her?

**A** Being nearby when your child reads is a great way to offer support. Show interest by asking what she's reading about. If her assignment is a longer book, find out how many pages or chapters she's supposed to read, and help her set aside enough time to complete it.

When she has finished reading, ask what she liked or didn't like about the book. You might also encourage her to read her favorite part aloud to you. If she's supposed to record her reactions in a reading journal or write answers to discussion questions, you could look over her written work to be sure it's complete. ■



## Parent 2 Parent In my opinion...

My son Ethan recently discovered the letters to the editor page of his favorite magazine. When I explained that the letters were sent in by readers just like him, he wanted to submit one, too.

Because my son has been asking for his own TV, he decided he would respond to an article saying kids shouldn't have TVs in their bedrooms. I told him the editor would be more likely to publish his letter if it mentioned information from the article.

For example, the magazine said kids tend to eat unhealthy snacks in front of the TV, so Ethan wrote that parents could make a rule about no food in bedrooms. The article also said children might see inappropriate shows, and he had a solution for that as well: parental controls.

We're hoping Ethan's letter will be published. Regardless, he got real-life writing practice, and he can always try again. And although I'm still against getting him a TV, now he knows I'm not the only one with that opinion! ■



**OUR PURPOSE**

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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ISSN 1540-5583

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Conferences in middle school

A parent-teacher conference is the perfect opportunity to work with the school to support your child. You may meet with one of his teachers who will share information from all the others. Or you might spend a few minutes with each teacher. If you have questions for specific teachers or need more time with them, call or email to follow up.

### Fit in fitness

An hour of daily physical activity promotes good health. Suggest that your tween calculate how many minutes of exercise she gets each day. She could include walking to school and participating in PE. Encourage her to add more exercise, perhaps by meeting a friend to swim at an indoor pool or by following along with a Zumba video.

### Promptness, please

Being at his desk when the bell rings means your middle grader won't miss class instruction or important announcements. Have him add a five-minute "cushion" to his morning so he has time to deal with the unexpected (missing shoe, early bus).

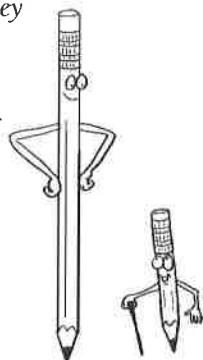
### Worth quoting

"I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions." *Stephen Covey*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What's tall when it's new and short when it's old?

**A:** A pencil.



## Study secrets—revealed

Anna knows what she needs to accomplish when she sits down to study. She stays focused and tends to remember the material. Her secret? Strong study skills! Share these strategies with your tween.

**Skill:** Set goals.

**Strategy:** Encourage your child to jot down specific goals for each study session and check off each one as she meets it. She should be as detailed as possible. *Example:* "Learn 30 vocabulary words before Friday's Spanish test." It may also help to make deals with herself. ("I can take a break after I've learned 15 words.")

**Skill:** Stay focused.

**Strategy:** Suggest that your middle grader eliminate distractions before she studies. For instance, she should silence her phone and put it in another room. Hunger and



fatigue can also make her mind wander, so she could eat a healthy snack or go for a quick jog before she buckles down.

**Skill:** Monitor understanding.

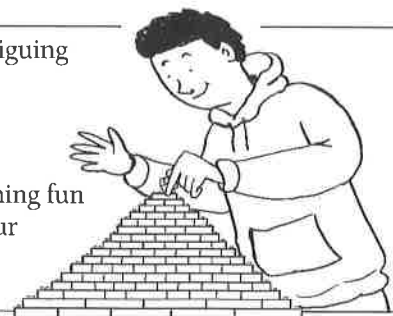
**Strategy:** After your tween reviews her notes, handouts, and textbook, she can make up a quiz. Taking the quiz and checking her answers will show her what she still needs to work on. Have her write anything she doesn't understand on a sticky note and ask her teacher for help. 👍

## Spotlight on history

History is full of fascinating places and intriguing people for your child to discover. With these ideas, he can step into the past—right in your living room:

■ Work separately or together to create something fun that represents a time period. For instance, your family might build a Lego model of an Egyptian pyramid. Or tape large sheets of paper to a wall, and draw or paint an Aztec mural.

■ Have each person secretly pick a historical figure to research, maybe Benjamin Franklin or Amelia Earhart. Then, host a game show where everyone asks yes-or-no questions to guess each other's characters. 👍



# Serving our community

Volunteering as a family can teach your middle grader about empathy and helping others. Here's how to get started.

**1.** Have your tween research community service opportunities for families. He should list ideas that match the ages of family members, and also jot down the time involved for each job. He could visit websites such as [createthegood.org](http://createthegood.org) and [volunteermatch.org](http://volunteermatch.org). He might also call or email community centers, shelters, and places of worship to ask if they need help.



**2.** Review your child's list together. Talk about possibilities that interest everyone, and pick one to sign up for. If your family loves animals, maybe you could feed and play with dogs and cats in a shelter. Or if you like to cook together, maybe you'll volunteer at a soup kitchen or a fire station's spaghetti dinner.

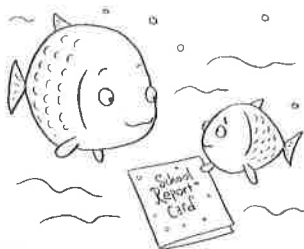
**3.** Talk about those you'll be helping, such as people who don't have enough to eat or animals who need attention and comfort. Considering how others feel will show your middle grader how important it is to help out—and make your volunteer experience more meaningful. 👍

## Parent to Parent

### Report cards: Find the positives

My sixth-grade daughter just got her first report card with letter grades. In elementary school, she always received "Excellent" or "Good," so I was surprised to see a C in English.

I decided to focus on the positives first. I pointed out Chelsea's good attendance, an A in science, and a nice comment from her chorus teacher.



Then, we discussed her English grade. Chelsea said she had fallen behind on assigned readings. As a result, she struggled to answer comprehension questions and participate in class discussions. We brainstormed solutions, including reading a certain number of pages each night and jotting down points to make in class.

Chelsea said that when she gets her next report card, she hopes that one of the first things I can point out will be a B in English! 👍



## Same answer, different strategies

There's often more than one way to approach a math problem. Try these tips for using family game night to help your tween talk through math strategies—and see that for herself!

**Monopoly.** When a player decides to buy (or not to buy) a property or add houses or hotels, have her share her thinking. Your child might calculate how many times an opponent would need to land on her properties to cover the cost. Or she could total her cash, subtract the cost of the hotels, and consider her liability (the rent she would owe if she lands on other players' properties before getting "paid" again).



**Yahtzee.** Let family members explain how they determine where to record their rolls of the dice. Say your middle grader gets four sixes and one five. Will she score it as four of a kind or as her sixes roll? Perhaps she'll consider the probability of rolling four of a kind again (unlikely) and decide to check off four of a kind rather than risk scoring zero in that spot. Or maybe she'll count it as sixes, which will put her on the path to earning a bonus. 👍

## Q & A Concern about anxiety

**Q** Several of my friends and neighbors have mentioned that their kids have anxiety. My son gets stressed out sometimes—could he suffer from anxiety, too?

**A** It's normal for middle graders to feel stressed from time to time about school, friends, or growing up. But if they're excessively anxious for long periods of time and miss

out on activities because of it, that may signal a bigger problem.

Anxiety disorder symptoms include worrying persistently for weeks or months, trouble sleeping, frequent headaches or stomachaches, and avoiding school or friends.

If you notice any of these symptoms in your son, contact your pediatrician. She can refer you to a specialist if necessary. 👍



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ISSN 1540-5540

# Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

November 2018

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## INFO BITS

### Fractions everywhere

Your youngster might be familiar with using fractions when she divides up an apple or a pizza, but a fraction can represent part of a group, too. Challenge her to find this kind of fraction using household objects like socks or crayons. If she has 10 pairs of socks, and 3 pairs have polka dots, she could say that  $\frac{3}{10}$  of her socks are polka-dotted.

### Science comic strips

Drawing can help your child visualize science concepts. Suggest that he create comic strips about science



topics he studies, such as plant growth or

moon phases. The panels of a comic strip on plants might include a character planting carrot seeds, watering them with a hose—and munching on a freshly picked carrot!

### Book picks

With cute rhymes, *The Best of Times* (Greg Tang) offers clever strategies for learning each set of multiplication facts.

How does a bionic leg work? Is there a flying car in your child's future? She'll learn about these and other inventions in *Super Cool Tech* (DK).

### Just for fun

**Q:** How many astronomers does it take to change a light bulb?

**A:** Zero! Astronomers like it dark.



## It's an algebra "mystery"

When  $3 + 7 = \underline{\quad}$  becomes  $3 + x = 10$ , it's now an algebra problem! Encourage your youngster to put on his detective hat and solve the mystery of  $x$  with these ideas.

### Hidden treasure

Get 20 small "treasures," such as jacks or game tokens. While your child closes his eyes, put some of the items (perhaps 14) into a brown paper bag. Have him open his eyes, count the remaining treasures (6), and make up an equation to figure out how many are still in the bag ( $6 + x = 20$ , so  $x = 14$ ). Dump out the bag, and let him count to check his answer.

### Mysterious stories

Make up algebra stories for each other. *Example:* "Jack was an unusual cat. He had 18 lives, which was 2 times as many as his dad, Mack, had. How many lives did Mack have?" Your youngster should use  $x$  for Mack's lives and



write the equation ( $2 \times x = 18$ ). Since  $x = 9$ , Mack had 9 lives.

### Secret equations

Ask your child to number separate slips of paper 0–12. Take turns picking two slips and writing an equation (addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division) involving those numbers. (*Example:* Draw 3 and 5, and write  $15 \div x = 3$ .) Return the slips. After four rounds, trade papers, figure out what  $x$  equals in each of the 4 equations, and add up the 4 numbers. The player with the highest total wins. 📦

## Make your own harmonica

Your child will see how vibrations cause sound as she plays music on this homemade harmonica.

Have your youngster cut a strip of paper the length of a craft stick but slightly narrower. Help her make a "sandwich" by placing the paper between two craft sticks and secure the ends with rubber bands.

Now break a toothpick in half, and slide in one half between the sticks next to each rubber band.

Let your youngster blow in and out on the middle of her harmonica. The air she blows causes the paper strip to vibrate. It bumps into the craft sticks, making musical sounds! 📦



# Area and perimeter

What's the difference between *area* and *perimeter*? Area is the amount of space inside a shape, and perimeter is the distance around it. This activity will help your youngster "dive in" and practice calculating both.

**1.** Imagine you're each designing a rectangular swimming pool. Take turns saying the length and width for your pool, and have your child predict whose will be longer and whose will be wider.

**2.** She can draw each pool and label it with its measurements. Then, she should find the area (multiply length times



width) and the perimeter (add the lengths of all the sides). For instance, an 8-ft. by 10-ft. pool will have an area of 80 square feet ( $8 \times 10 = 80$ ) and a perimeter of 36 feet ( $8 + 8 + 10 + 10 = 36$ ). But a 4-ft. by 5-ft. pool would have an area of 20 square feet ( $4 \times 5 = 20$ ) and a perimeter of 18 feet ( $4 + 4 + 5 + 5 = 18$ )—it's shorter and wider.

**3.** Now pick new measurements for your pools. With practice, your youngster will get better at calculating area and perimeter—and her predictions should get more accurate, too. 📦

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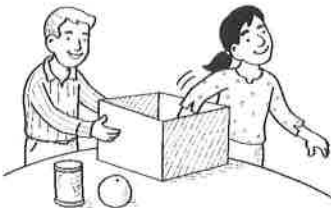


## MATH CORNER

### Look, Ma, it's 3-D!

Solid shapes, or 3-D objects, have attributes just like their flat 2-D "cousins" do. Play this game with your youngster to help her identify attributes of 3-D shapes.

Secretly pick a 3-D object, like an orange (sphere), a soup can (cylinder), or a party hat (cone). Put the item in a box, and let your child reach in and examine it without looking.



Have her tell you about the object, such as that it has 1 face (flat surface) and 1 curved surface. Now she should name the shape (cone) and guess the object (party hat).

Then it's her turn to select an item for you. She might choose a die (cube) or a remote control (rectangular prism). Keep picking objects for each other to describe and identify—soon, she'll be comfortable using math vocabulary for 3-D shapes. 📦

## Q & A Need for speed?

**Q:** When I was in school, our math tests were always timed. But now, my son says, there's no time limit on some of his math tests. Doesn't he need to solve math problems quickly?

**A:** Your child's teacher knows it's important for students to think about the strategies they are using to solve problems, rather than just memorize facts and formulas. She uses tests to find out what students know, and if they're in a hurry, they may make mistakes—even though they know how to do the math.

Your son does need to recall basic facts and choose problem-solving strategies efficiently. This is especially helpful as he moves on to longer and more complex problems. But there's no need for him to rush through his work. Taking an untimed test or having plenty of time to do math homework lets him try different strategies, show his work as he solves problems, and double-check his answers. 📦



## SCIENCE LAB I see an afterimage

Has your child ever seen a dark spot after looking at a bright light? This is called an *afterimage*—your youngster can learn what causes it with the following demonstration.

**You'll need:** scissors, cardboard square (6 inches or larger), transparent tape, flashlight

**Here's how:** Cut a dime-sized hole in the center of the cardboard. Have your child cover the hole with three layers of tape. In a dark room, your youngster should hold the cardboard straight out in front of

him while you shine the flashlight through the hole (toward him). Tell him to stare at the tape-covered hole for 30 seconds and then look away at a blank wall.

**What happens?** He'll see an afterimage the same shape as the hole in the cardboard.

**Why?** Some cells in your youngster's retina got overstimulated and became less sensitive to the light. When your youngster looked at the blank wall, those cells saw the dark shape (the afterimage), and the rest of the cells in his retina saw the wall normally. 📦



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