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www.TeachingK-8.com

The Parent Connection

A Monthly Newsletter for Parents

Springtime Stress

Coping is a skill

Children face a lot of stress in the springtime with all the standardized testing and added springtime sports schedules. These situations offers parents the perfect opportunity to teach some life skills that are vital to maintaining balance in today's world.

Keep the perspective positive

First, watch out for test stress. It can show up as headaches, stomachaches or "the grouchies." One coping strategy to practice is keeping things in perspective. Don't let the test be larger than life. The evenings of testing weeks are a great time to go for pizza, call Grandma for a game of cards or take a carload of kids roller skating. Make sure your children know that there is no correlation between test scores and love.

Another potential stressor, ironically, is springtime sports. Although exercise is a great outlet for stress, it is easy to get over-extend-

ed with all the good things that life has to offer. Prioritizing and persevering are vital. Which activities can your child add to their current schedule without letting schoolwork fall apart right at the end of the year? Activities that are begun should be followed through to completion, but perseverance does not always come naturally. Bedtime, homework schedules and chore lists that were established last fall need to be maintained, as order and routine are important antidotes to stress.

Another School?

What to do when you have to move

One topic that received a lot of coverage right after Hurricane Katrina has largely been forgotten since: that thousands of children who were forced to attend a new school this year. It was and continues to be a difficult matter for these students, but they did have one advantage that many children do not have – they switched schools before the year began. Most children have to face moves in the middle of the year and encounter profoundly disturbing problems that can be overlooked by parents busy with unpacking boxes and starting new jobs.

The U.S. General Accounting Office reported in a study based on 1994 statistics that by the end of third grade, one of every six children in the United States will have attended three or more schools. Also, according to that same data, within a four-year period the proportion of students who remain in the school for the full year can fall below 50 percent in many schools. That is not to say that mobili-

continued on next page

Books to Share

April is Poetry Month, so share some of these poetry books with your kids and see how relaxing this activity is for the whole family.

Tea Party Today: Poems to Sip and Savor by Eileen Spinelli (Wordsong, 1999). This lovely book features "Teatime Tips" on each page, which might just inspire a family tea party.

You Read to Me, I'll Read to You: Very Short Stories to Read Together by Mary Ann Hoberman (Megan Tingley, 2001). This book contains 13 two-page humorous rhyming stories intended to be shared aloud.

A Pizza the Size of the Sun by Jack Prelutsky (Greenwillow, 1996). Here's a collection of zany, laugh-out-loud poems.

The Mouse Was Out at Recess by David L. Harrison (Wordsong, 2003). This book features a wide selection of school-themed poems.

Have You Ever Done That? by Julie Larios (Front Street, 2001). Readers are asked if they've ever slept outdoors on a hot summer night, swung on a rope swing and other nature-oriented adventures.

Field Trips from Home

- 1) www.usbr.gov/dataweb/dams/ca10186.htm is a great place to virtually visit one of California's 386 hydroelectric plants at the Shasta Dam.
- 2) www.mlsnet.com is the site at which to Follow Major League Soccer together.
- 3) www.ellisland.org and www.teacher.scholastic.com/immigrat/ellis/index.htm are good sources for learning about the Ellis Island immigrant experience.

TheParentConnection

continued from previous page

ty is always detrimental or involuntary. But when the classroom has a revolving door, the school's ability to provide a strong education is hampered.

Many of these moves are due to economical issues, natural disasters or changes in family make-up. The moves still have to be made, but perhaps the negative impact on the children's education can be limited.

Make the best of a hard situation

Whenever possible, plan the move for between terms, grading periods or even levels (elementary, middle, junior high, high school). Look into the schools in your new location. Compare the curriculum with your current school or call the school and ask them to make the comparison for you.

Meet with the personnel at the school your child has been attending. Ask a lot of questions; they see a different child than you do at home. Learn as much as possible about your child's academic and social strengths and weaknesses in order to share them with the new teacher.

Prepare your children for the move. Let them help pack boxes, have parties with friends, make scrapbooks and address books that include contact information of pals as well as favorite teachers.

Most importantly, be especially attentive to your children both before, during and after the move. It's the only thing that really helps everybody get through a move.

Keep Reading Real

Tie reading to real-life interests to make it relevant

Do you sometimes have trouble getting your kids interested in reading? Don't presume they are weak readers, or lazy kids. Maybe they haven't yet made the connection between books and fun – but you can help. You know best what your children are most interested in. If their passion is

Websites for Parents

- 1) www.e-copp.com is an educational program designed by police officers in Ohio to teach kids web safety.
- 2) www.mediawise.org is an initiative of the National Institute on Media and the Family to help parents be as aware as possible about their children's media consumption.
- 3) www.producepassport.com introduces an innovative way to interest kids in eating more



fruit. Kids collect the UPC code stickers off their fruit, placing them in a Produce Passport (available through the website for about \$2.50 plus s/h each). The Produce Passport features nutritional information, facts about the fruits' main countries of origin and other fun trivia.

trucks and excavation machines, then those are the book subjects you need to look for in the library. If they live for video games, then get magazines on this topic. You'll gain respect and open a door to reading that makes sense for your children.

Everyday reading

Helping children find fun as well as a purpose in reading can happen while filling time in an airport or waiting in the car for a sibling to finish with practice. Try magazines, comic books or funny greeting cards. Read aloud, listen to books on tape...just expose children to print and stories of all kinds as part of everyday living. If reading is an integral part of your lifestyle and you love it, then share it with your kids. ↓

Skill-Builders at Home

1) **Math with Cards** – Take any regular deck of cards. Remove the face cards (jack, queen, king) as well as the jokers. Shuffle the cards and play with as many people as are available. Turn over two cards at a time and add the depicted numbers together (later try subtraction or multiplication). If the player gets the correct answer, he or she gets to keep the cards; if not, they stay in the deck. Play until all the cards are used. The player with the most cards wins.

2) **Estimation Station** – Put a glass jar in the kitchen and each week fill it with objects that are all alike (such as marbles, then pretzels, etc.). Give the kids a few days to estimate how many items are in the jar. Pick one evening a week to check all the estimates that have been written on slips of paper. Use the same jar each week but vary the size of the objects. Move from guesses to educated estimates and always ask the winner how the estimate was determined.

3) **Grocery Manager** – Provide your children with your grocery list. Have them arrange it according to the section in the supermarket in which things will be found, such as dairy, frozen food, paper products, produce, etc. Provide paper and a clipboard for the next grocery trip. Kids can plan the sequence in which the shopping is done according to the store layout. Encourage the older kids to handle the coupons.