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The Parent Connection

A Monthly Newsletter for Parents

Play It Again

Repetition is the key to memorization – so make it fun

There is an old saying that has proven itself true time and again: “Repetition is the mother of learning.” It begins with the attitude that we learn best by doing and we get better by doing it over and over again. So, practice the times tables every night on the way home from school; play several times in one evening the audio tape or CD that the teacher sent home. Write the spelling words in pencil, ink, marker, shaving cream and whipped cream.

Variation on a Theme

Now, good old Papa Bach would tell you that repeating is one thing, but if you change it just a little while repeating then it is a really powerful theme. Okay, well, you can do that. Study the states on the worksheet that your child’s teacher sent home tonight. Then to-

morrow night get a map from AAA and see if your child can find the states on that map. Then get a United States map puzzle and put it together on the weekend. Watch the Weather Channel together and quiz your young student on tomorrow’s forecast for the Four Corners region.

Aren’t you just repeating the same thing over and over? Sure, but that’s what it’s going to take for success. You don’t really think the kid is going to parallel park perfectly the first time, do you? Then don’t expect him or her to know all 50 states and capitals the first time or the times tables or the spelling words or anything else really important. Go on now, repeat it all again...this time with a smile.

Point of View

Use reading to convey this tricky concept to your kids

Point of view is a tricky concept to teach children. The idea of “walking in another man’s shoes” helps people understand that things are different for different people. When teaching about maps, teachers often say, “Pretend you are a fly up on the ceiling,” which gives students the perspective they need (until some of the kids realize that if they were a fly on the ceiling, they would be looking at the ceiling).

Sometimes, getting point of view across to kids literally means putting them in another place. Helping them to relate to a dog is easier if you have them sit or lay on the floor. Let them watch the other students walk around, eat, drink and laugh while they learn a dog’s viewpoint. This isn’t for punishment; it’s for

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Books to Share

Color Dance by Ann Jonas (Greenwillow, 1989). This is a lively look at colors and what happens when they overlap, as demonstrated by dancers trailing primary-color scarves. It will be particularly loved by young dancers.

My Truck Is Stuck! by Kevin Lewis and Daniel Kirk (Hyperion, 2002). An exciting story about a dump truck and all the ways friends try to get it out of a sticky situation. It shows problem-solving skills at their best.

Hands Can by Cheryl Willis Hudson (Candlewick, 2003). This rhyming book with great photographs shows many things hands can do. Make this an interactive read-aloud by trying all the hand gestures suggested.

Pretend You’re a Cat by Jean Marzollo (Dial Books, 1990). This book rhymes and challenges the reader to do the slithering, sliding and other activities that animals do.

Stage Fright by Marcia Thornton Jones and Debbie Dadey (Scholastic, 2003). This early chapter book speaks directly to children involved in school plays and programs. It is part of the “Ghostville Elementary” series.

Field Trips from Home

- 1) www.inthechair.com Take your budding musician to this site where he or she can play along with professional bands and orchestras.
- 2) www.acacamps.org, www.summercamp.org Start talking about summer camps by checking the websites of the American Camp Association or the National Camp Association for extensive information about approved day camps as well as recommended sleep-away camps.

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Point of View

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viewpoint. Learning how to see a situation from someone else's view is crucial to writers, judges, police officers and anyone who wants to understand the world a little better.

Becoming Someone Else

A much less drastic way to investigate viewpoints is by reading stories about people who are different from us. Stories from the past could start a discussion with your child about using an outhouse in the middle of a cold winter night. Reading actual accounts from the Mayflower might make you wonder about the price of freedom.

To imagine being someone else in another place and time is the first step to understanding that other person. Feeling the cold, hunger or fear of war makes me stop to think a little more seriously about its ramifications. Thinking about orphans riding a train into the west at the time of the Civil War and being adopted by anyone who needed an extra hand to work makes me think about the gift my family really is to me. Reading words that children have written while they were hiding from soldiers who would take them away to die helps me understand why laws against religious persecution are so important. Point of view can be an eye-opening experience.

Talk To Me

Take advantage of the "captive audience" a car ride provides

The next time you are in the car with the kids, turn off the radio, CD player, iPod, cell phone and DVD player and have a conversation. Car rides provide some of the only time that you have with your children when you can talk. Fewer and fewer American families are having dinner together around a table at home anymore, and that is when a lot of conversation used to take place. The number of Americans who work together in family businesses, which pro-

Websites for Parents

- 1) www.law.ou.edu/hist U.S. historical documents can be researched through this site.
- 2) www.wonderville.ca/v1/home.html 22 different activities revolving around science topics can be found at this site, which was developed by the Science Alberta Foundation in Canada. This is a great spot for science fair project assistance.
- 3) www.kidshealth.org Concerned about test anxiety? For that and any other health concern about your kids, visit this site.


vided many ongoing communication opportunities, has also decreased.

Ask your children about their day, their friends, their dreams. Tell them the names of the streets you are going down and the buildings you are going past. Talk about the traffic laws that you are obeying and why. Tell them about what you liked to do when you were a kid and what you would like to do right now, if you just had a little free time. Talk about the upcoming weekend or vacation plans. Tell them about your parents and grandparents. You probably have some funny memories that would make a car ride a lot of fun.

Modeling Conversation Skills

Kids don't learn to be skilled conversationalists by themselves. If you want your children to talk in a particular way, you must teach them how by modeling these skills.

We all have fun teaching the new baby and toddler words, but sometimes we forget that older children are learning how to speak every time we talk to them. If they learn bad words or incorrect grammar, it is likely from the people they are listening to the most.

Monitor your children's conversation and determine its progress. Use more interesting and complex words as they get older and they will pick them up quickly. But the best way to teach kids how to talk is to just talk with them. 

Skill-Builders at Home

- 1) *Springtime Science* – Take a camera (digital or one-time-use) outside with the kids. Pick one or two objects to study (flowers or trees). Photograph them every day at the same time of day for two weeks. Document changes.
- 2) *Everyday Estimates* – When entering the gas station or grocery store, ask your child to write down an estimate of what it will cost. You write one down, too. Compare your estimates on the way home. Were you close? What caused it to be higher or lower than expected?
- 3) *Musical Moods* – Have the kids clap or stamp their feet to the beat of a song. Ask what instruments are heard. What kind of mood does the music put the kids in?
- 4) *Visible Vocabulary* – Have your child look everywhere for words he or she recognizes. On the way to the dentist can he or she find 10 words he or she knows? Five on the way to school? 20 in tonight's newspaper?
- 5) *Art Studio* – Dedicate a corner of the house as the family art studio. Provide a box full of paper, crayons, markers, scissors, tape, etc. and the time to spend in that corner creating wonderful things.
- 6) *Earth Day in Our Town* – Research environmental happenings in which you and your child can participate.