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Dear Parents,

Let's face it: school days can be chaotic. There's the morning hustle to get the kids awake, dressed, and off to school. After-school activities flood the afternoons: sports, language programs, and classes on computer coding (yes, that's a real thing now). Trying to tackle homework amidst cooking dinner and settling sibling arguments fill the evenings. Oh, and let's not forget the dilemmas and distractions of raising a child in the digital age—the perils of parenting in a world with YouTube are endless!

Schools desire parent involvement not because they want to add to your already hectic schedule, but because studies have shown that students are more successful when there is a strong connection between home and school. Creating a supportive and positive learning environment at home fosters knowledge, sparks curiosity, and builds self-confidence.

This parent guide will not burden you with more tasks and to-do lists; rather, it will empower you with useful tools, meaningful advice, and resourceful activities to help you create opportunities for learning in the moments that make up your everyday life.

Not every activity in this book needs to be completed. Choose what works best for you and your family. Take small steps. Live in the moment with your child. If you do that, you will naturally create a learning environment that will connect your home and school beautifully and seamlessly.

Let's Write!

Writing for a Reason ↗

Students will be writing across all subject areas this year. Legible penmanship, correct grammar, and a clear voice and purpose for writing are all important components of writing proficiently in the fourth grade. Students at this level should understand that there are different forms of writing for different purposes (to inform, persuade, or entertain). Here are some ways to strengthen and support writing at home.



Just Journaling

The more your child writes, the more her writing will improve. Purchase a few spiral notebooks, or recycle old spiral notebooks you have lying around your home. Label each notebook with a different topic. Have your child decorate the covers with drawings or pictures to go with the topics. Ask her to write an entry in at least one journal each day. Meet with her once a week to discuss what she wrote. Here are some suggestions for journal topics:

Feelings: Angry? Sad? Happy? Excited? Nervous? Elated? Tired? Have your child keep a feelings journal. Entries can consist of the different emotions she is feeling on any given day and why she is feeling that way.

Media: With television, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat, the constant barrage of media is endless. Have your child write about the media she encounters and her thoughts and feelings about what she heard, read, or saw.

Sports: Is your child a sports fanatic? Create a sports journal. Entries can be summaries of games (played or watched), feelings about games, biographies of players, etc.

The Natural World: Encourage your child to unplug and get outside. Have her write about the sights, sounds, smells, and wildlife associated with the great outdoors.

Good Times: Birthday parties, amusement park trips, winning an award—anything that makes your child happy—have her write about it in this journal.



Parent Pointer

Reluctant writers may be more willing to write if they are writing for their eyes only. Purchase a special journal for your child. Make it clear that you will not read it. This journal is for her eyes only.



Money-Saving Tip

Use one journal for two topics. Decorate the cover to represent one topic and the back cover to represent another topic. Two journals for the price of one!

Learning the Language

Help your child learn about descriptive details and powerful imagery with these activities.

Metaphor Mosaic

Be sure your child understands that a metaphor compares two things by saying one is the other. Go over the metaphor samples below. Then, grab some colorful wrapping paper, tissue paper, or construction paper. Rip the paper into different-sized pieces. Work with your child to write a different metaphor on each piece. Lastly, glue the pieces down on a large piece of cardboard or poster board to create a beautiful metaphor mosaic! Now, hang it in his room or study area to help him with his writing.

- *I am a night owl.*
- *They are two peas in a pod.*
- *Your brain is a computer.*
- *It's raining cats and dogs.*

Synonym Sampler

To help increase vocabulary and improve his writing, get your child to think like a thesaurus. Pick up some paint-sample cards next time you're at your local hardware store. On the top of each sample, write a word your child uses often. Then, work with him to look up each word in a thesaurus and write a different synonym in each of the colors on the sample. Place the samples on a loose-leaf ring binder. Have him use this synonym sampler whenever he writes.



Superhero Similes

Be sure your child understands that a simile uses the words *like* or *as* to compare two things. Go over the simile samples below. Then, print out some pictures of various superheroes. Or have your child draw his own superheroes. Now, work together to write as many similes as you can about each hero.



- *quick as lightning*
- *sings like a bird*
- *blind as a bat*
- *slept like a log*



Parent Pointer

Challenge your child to use the language skills discussed on this page in his journal entries and school assignments.

Illustrated Idioms

Being familiar with idioms is important. Your child should know what an idiom is and what it means before he uses one in his writing. Help your child become familiar with idioms through illustrations. Write an idiom on one side of an index card. Discuss the meaning of each idiom. Next, have your child illustrate the idiom by drawing a little picture or a simple sketch on the back of the index card. Keep the index cards in a jar or a box. Whenever your child hears or reads a new idiom, have him add it to the collection!

- *at the drop of a hat*
- *can't judge a book by its cover*
- *best of both worlds*
- *last straw*



Awesome Advice

Be sure your child knows when it is appropriate to use idioms. He should not use idioms in formal academic writing. It is also important not to overuse idioms when writing.