



Belle Chasse Academy

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PARENT POWER

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A Letter From Our Principals, Mary Bekeris & Rene Thompson

October 2019

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

An article excerpted from the Richmond Times-Dispatch, details the remarkable academic and social success of Woodville Elementary School, an inner-city comprised of "590 students from some of the city's poorest, toughest neighborhoods..." The story reveals that one of the daily features of school life is the presence of many volunteers. "The key to success," says the principal of Woodville Elementary, "is accepting help with a smile and sharing the load. It's about distributed accountability. It's not a dictatorship. I didn't do it. She didn't do it. He didn't do it. **We did it.**"

Each day in our schools across the nation volunteers of all ages are doing a variety of jobs that add value and meaning to school goals. At Belle Chasse Academy we have volunteers in the classroom, in the media center, in the cafeteria, and in after-school activities. Our volunteers tutor, read to children, do clerical work, and talk with our youth. All schools are better places because of volunteers, and BCA is no exception. Volunteers are a valuable resource, and at BCA we strive to make volunteering satisfying and enriching personally, as well as helpful to the school. Ms. Juli Braatz jbrazatz@bellechasseacademy.org coordinates school volunteer needs to match a "position" with just the right person. Please, *please* peruse our Parent Resource Center site (linked from our school homepage) to check out the many volunteer opportunities and to find your perfect "match." Or check with your child's teacher.

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- Important Upcoming Dates
- Oct. 11—Early Dismissal (11:30)
 - Oct. 14—No School Columbus Day
 - Oct. 15—No School School-Home Teaming
 - Oct. 16—Picture Day
 - Oct. 21—Coffee with the Principals
 - Oct. 22—Report Cards
 - Oct. 28-Nov. 8—Scholastic Book Fair
 - Oct. 30—Math-Tober

Even if you don't have time to volunteer, we want you in our school. We are a team—a partnership—in your child's education. Please visit frequently and often. You're welcome any time during the school day with no advance notice required. And there is a wealth of information to be gleaned at meetings of the Board of Directors. You can find the meeting schedule on our website. We welcome the opportunity to share information, discuss future plans, and communicate needs. Your honest criticism and/or advice is welcome as well.

Schools are maintained to meet the needs of students. Schools belong to the people. Educators are the stewards of the school for the people.

Therefore, we cordially invite you to, "*COME TO SCHOOL*," and discover exactly what students, teachers, support staff, and administrators are doing at Belle Chasse Academy. We think you'll receive a pleasant surprise! See you around campus.

Rene Thompson, Principal K-4

Mary Bekeris, Principal 5-8



Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Belle Chasse Academy



October 2019

Create an environment that makes your child want to read

Studies show that screen use is up and reading is way down on most middle schoolers' lists of fun things to do. But strong reading skills are critical for success in school. Helping your child learn to enjoy reading—and spend more time doing it—nurtures those skills.



Here's how to start:

- **Show the way.** Your reading habits can have a huge impact on your child's reading habits. Let him see you choose to relax with a book instead of streaming a movie, or read the newspaper instead of watching the news on TV.
- **Designate a daily reading time.** During a short period each day, turn off the TV, music and other digital devices. Suggest that family members use this time to read. Don't force your child, though. Just kick back with your own reading and see if he follows your lead.
- **Turn to magazines.** Whether he's obsessed with sports, cars or music, there's probably a magazine devoted to one of your child's interests. Consider subscribing, or bring home the latest issue from the library.
- **Let him choose.** A graphic novel about his favorite big-screen action hero can be a good choice if it inspires him to read.

Source: J.M. Twenge and others, "Trends in U.S. Adolescents' Media Use, 1976-2016: The Rise of Digital Media, the Decline of TV, and the (Near) Demise of Print," *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, niswc.com/readmore.



Help your child study math like a whiz

What do top math students do that could help your middle schooler? Researchers surveyed students who participated in a well-known math competition about habits that contribute to their success. These students:

- **Try to understand** the concept behind a problem, rather than simply memorizing a formula to solve it. This helps them recognize similar problems.
- **Practice.** Once they figure out how to solve a problem, they practice solving similar problems.
- **Concentrate.** Most of the students say they study alone, and nearly half minimize distractions

such as TV, music and social media while they study.

- **Don't give up.** When working on a challenging problem, these kids keep trying. If one method doesn't work, they try another approach. Many also seek help from a teacher or go online to find solution strategies.

Source: L. Loewus, "Survey: Habits of Talented Math Students," *Education Week*, niswc.com/mathsuccess.

Preparation calms nerves

Your child will be able to go into a test more relaxed if she knows she is prepared. When a test is coming up, encourage her to:

- **Start studying** several days in advance. If your child doesn't understand something, she'll have time to get help.
- **Take practice tests.** She may find some in her textbook, or she can use her reading and class notes to make her own.

Share this thought process

Mistakes are opportunities to learn. But sometimes, that doesn't happen and students make the same errors again and again. Learning takes thought. Review this process with your child for thinking through mistakes:

1. **Notice** what went right.
2. **Figure** out what went wrong.
3. **Take steps** to correct the problem.
4. **Apply** the knowledge to a new situation.

Communicate with care

It may not always seem like it, but you have a great deal of influence on your child. To be a positive source of support and guidance:

- **React calmly** to middle school drama. If your child thinks you'll overreact, she may not tell you what's going on.
- **Avoid making snap judgments** about your child. Try to find out the cause of her behavior and address that.
- **Use examples** from books, movies or the news to start discussions about important topics with your child. This avoids the embarrassment many kids feel when things get personal.



Source: P.L. Fagell, LCOC, *Middle School Matters*, Hachette.



How can I counteract the influence of mean friends?

Q: My daughter is hanging around some not-so-nice kids in middle school, and I'm afraid she'll give in to peer pressure and become not-so-nice herself. What can I do?

A: Have a conversation with your child, but not necessarily about particular people. Instead, ask questions about her friends in general, such as: What activities do they like to do together? What does your child enjoy about hanging out with them? What values do they share?

It could be that these friends make her feel more mature. Or it could be that she isn't really comfortable about the way they act, but isn't sure what to do about it.

To help your child navigate this tricky area:

- **Avoid negative comments** about her friends. Belittling them or their upbringing may make your child feel the need to defend them.
- **Ask gentle questions.** "How did you feel when Danielle acted that way toward the new girl?"
- **Offer support.** Peer pressure can be overwhelming. Listen to your child if she brings a difficult friend-related problem to you.
- **Be firm.** If you have real misgivings about some of her friends, set boundaries. Supervise the time your child spends with them.



Are you strengthening school ties?

Students who feel connected to school are more likely to perform better academically. Participation in clubs and activities reinforces this connection. Are you helping your child get involved? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

___ **1. Have you looked** over the list of school activities with your child?

with teachers after school, or join a homework club?

___ **2. Do you urge** your child to participate in at least one club or activity of his choice?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child feel part of the middle school community. For each no, try that idea.

___ **3. Do you show** enthusiasm if your child wants to try a new club or activity?

___ **4. Do you encourage** your child to attend school plays, concerts, games and events?

___ **5. Do you suggest** that your child take advantage of time

"Education is all a matter of building bridges."

—Ralph Ellison

Avoid using harsh discipline with your middle schooler

Research shows that using harsh discipline on children—hitting, verbal or physical threats—damages family relationships. This causes kids to rely on friends instead, which often leads to risky behavior and problems in school. To discipline without damage:

- **Establish a set of rules** and the consequences for breaking them. Discuss these with your child.
- **Enforce consequences calmly.** Anger won't help.
- **Reward good behavior** with trust.

Source: Society for Research in Child Development, "Harsh parenting predicts low educational attainment through increasing peer problems," ScienceDaily, nswc.com/harsh.

Meet with teachers to hear how to support learning

There doesn't have to be an official parent-teacher conference day for you to meet with a teacher. You can always request a meeting to ask questions or discuss your child's progress.

Bring a list of questions with you, so you won't forget what you want to ask. If the teacher mentions a concern, ask for ideas on addressing it. Work together on a plan of things your child can do in class and you can do at home.



Expect specific expectations

Your child is more likely to live up to your expectations in school if you make them clear. It's also important for him to be clear about his expectations for himself.

If your middle schooler says he expects a good grade on his next test, have him tell you exactly how he plans to achieve it. Suggest that he put his plans in writing.

Helping Students Learn[®]

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Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas parents can use to help students
do well in school*

Belle Chasse Academy



THE
PARENT
INSTITUTE

October 2019

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Parents Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

- 1. Learn a magic trick with your child.
- 2. Kids who read regularly earn the highest grades. Set a daily reading time for the entire family.
- 3. Offer to take your child and his friends somewhere.
- 4. When your child tells you something important, restate it in your own words to confirm your understanding.
- 5. Provide some personal space for your child.
- 6. Invent a recipe together. If it doesn't work, brainstorm ways to fix it.
- 7. Challenge your child to use the dictionary to find as many five-syllable words as she can.
- 8. Remind your child that there are no stupid questions. Encourage him to ask questions in class.
- 9. Designate a place in your home for library books. Your child will always be able to find something to read.
- 10. Suggest that your child set a timer while doing homework to remind her not to waste time.
- 11. Thank your child for something he did today.
- 12. Help your child create a study schedule before a test. She's more likely to remember material studied over several days.
- 13. Have each member of your family create a collage from magazine pictures. See if family members can guess who made which one.
- 14. Admit and apologize to your child when you're wrong.
- 15. Help your child make a savings plan for a special purchase.
- 16. Read a textbook assignment with your child. Then ask him to tell you about it in his own words.
- 17. Ask your child to tell you what the word *success* means to her.
- 18. "Because I said so!" is frustrating for middle schoolers to hear. Explain your reasoning.
- 19. Ask your child what he most enjoys doing as a family. Plan to do it.
- 20. Play math *Jeopardy*. Give a number. Who can come up with a problem for which your number is the answer?
- 21. It's School Bus Safety Week. Review safety rules with your child.
- 22. Talk with your child about mistakes. What are some ways people can learn from their mistakes?
- 23. Let your child take over a new responsibility. Tell her why she's ready.
- 24. Have family members write activities and commitments on a family calendar. This teaches organization and helps manage conflicts.
- 25. Ask your child a thought-provoking question, such as "What do you think the future will be like?"
- 26. It's Make a Difference Day. Discuss ways your family could improve your community.
- 27. Take a walk with your child today.
- 28. Help your child manage homework without actually doing it for him.
- 29. Ask your child, "Who is your favorite author and why?"
- 30. Require adult supervision when your child visits a friend's home.
- 31. Challenge your child to tell you how washing hands prevents the spread of disease.

Helping Students Learn
MIDDLE SCHOOL
TIPS Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

October 2019

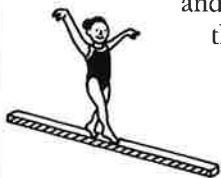
Belle Chasse Academy
Rene Thompson, Principal K-4

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Gymnastics Time!* (Brendan Flynn)

This nonfiction book takes readers inside a gym to see gymnasts in action. It explains basic facts about the sport, such as how to get started and what equipment the athletes use.



Part of the Sports Time series.

(Also available in Spanish.)

■ *We Don't Eat Our Classmates*

(Ryan T. Higgins)

Penelope Rex is a little dinosaur who ate her classmates on the first day of school. (Could she help it if they were delicious?) Now no one wants



to be friends with her. It takes a lesson from the class goldfish to put Penelope on the right track.

■ *Space Taxi: Archie Takes Flight*

(Wendy Mass and Michael Brawer)

Archie Morningstar is excited to spend Take Your Kid to Work Day in his dad's taxi. But when he climbs in the car, he discovers that his dad is a taxi driver for aliens from outer space. Instead of a trip around the city, Archie is on an intergalactic adventure! The first book in the Space Taxi series.

■ *A Full Moon is Rising*

(Marilyn Singer)

Poetry, geography, and culture come together in this volume. Each poem is about a full moon in a different part of the world. A special section offers interesting facts about each place mentioned in the poems.



Writing is practical

Show your youngster how useful writing can be by giving him real-life reasons to put pencil to paper. Here are a few ideas.

To-do lists

What does your child want or need to do this week? Help him make lists to keep track. He might list Lego structures he plans to build (castle, rocket) or chores he needs to complete (water plants, dust). Or maybe he'll list upcoming events, such as going to the book fair and eating dinner with Grandma. He can check off each item as he finishes it.

Reminders

Let your youngster be your secretary and write reminders for you. *Examples:* "Buy milk." "Sign field trip form." Provide a pad of sticky notes (and a little spelling help) for him to jot them down. Then, set up a place to leave the notes where you will see them. Encourage reading practice by leaving notes for him, too.



Memory book

Suggest that your child start a notebook of favorite memories. Each night before bed, he could write and illustrate three things he wants to remember about the day. *Examples:* Jumping in a pile of leaves, listening to his teacher read a good book, learning a funny joke.

Note: If your youngster is just learning to write, ask him to write letters or words he knows, and help him fill in the rest.♥

A record of my reading

These ongoing craft projects will help your child keep track of books she reads this year—and show her how she's progressing as a reader.

● **Paper chain.** Help your youngster write each book title on a strip of construction paper. She can link the strips together to form a colorful chain that will get longer the more she reads. *Idea:* Suggest that she use different-color strips for different types of books (green for animal tales, purple for poetry).

● **Patchwork quilt.** Have your child write book titles on separate construction-paper "quilt" squares. Encourage her to decorate each one—maybe she'll make a red-and-white striped square for *The Cat in the Hat* (Dr. Seuss). Now help her tape or staple the squares together in rows and columns for a quilt that grows throughout the year!♥



I can learn from nonfiction!

Nonfiction books are fun for your youngster to read—and they build knowledge she needs in school now and later. Help her become a fan of nonfiction with these tips.

Explore school subjects. Let your child check out nonfiction library books that are related to topics she studies in school. As she learns about



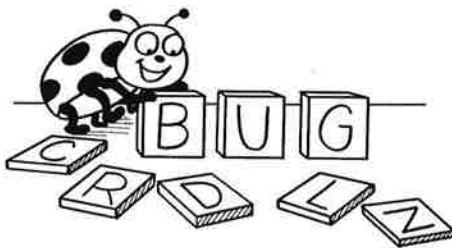
numbers and shapes, for example, read math picture books. Or she could find a biography of a historical figure she's studying. She'll learn new facts and gain a deeper understanding of the topic.

Read graphics. Many nonfiction books include charts, tables, maps, and diagrams like those your youngster will see in textbooks. When you read together, be sure to read the graphics, too, so she becomes comfortable with them. For instance, she'll learn to read the titles, captions, or data they contain. *Idea:* Suggest that she make her own graphic. After reading a chart about endangered animals, perhaps she'll draw a chart showing animals that live in your neighborhood.♥



Real or nonsense?

How are the words *fan* and *can* related? They both belong to the *-an* word family! Give your youngster's reading and spelling skills a boost with this word family game.



1. Get a set of magnetic letters or letter tiles. Set aside the vowels, and mix up the consonants in a bowl.
2. Let your child choose a word family, such as *-an*, *-op*, *-ug*, or *-et*, and find the magnetic letters or tiles for his "family."
3. Take turns drawing a consonant from the bowl and saying it with the word family. Does it make a real word or a nonsense word? For instance, adding *b* to *-ug* makes *bug* (real). But adding *g* makes *gug* (nonsense).
4. If it's a real word, the player writes it down. When all the consonants have been used, the person with the longest list picks the next word family so you can play again.♥



Autumn fine-motor play

Your child's hands need to be strong and coordinated for tasks like writing and cutting with scissors. Try these fall-themed activities to give his little fingers a workout.



- Pumpkin pincushion.** Let your youngster stick pushpins all over a small pumpkin. Then, he could stretch colorful rubber bands between the pins to create designs.
- Apple tree.** Have him draw the outline of a tree on paper. He can place red pom-pom apples on his tree and then use tweezers to "pick" them up.
- Leaf rubbing.** Together, gather leaves from the ground outside. Encourage your child to tape one to a table, place a sheet of paper on top, and rub the side of an unwrapped crayon over it. The leaf's outline will appear!
- Seed signs.** Ask your youngster to create a sign for your door by gluing apple or pumpkin seeds onto paper to spell "W-E-L-C-O-M-E."♥

Q&A Working with the reading specialist

Q My daughter meets with the school reading teacher each week. How can I work with the teacher to help my child do her best?

A Start by asking the reading specialist what you and your daughter can do at home. For example, the teacher might suggest specific cues to give your child when she reads a word incorrectly. Or maybe she'll have ideas for word games that are

especially helpful for students who struggle with reading.

The specialist may also tell you what your daughter is doing well and where they're working on ways to improve.

Finally, be sure to attend all IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings. The teacher will answer your questions, explain anything that you don't understand, and help you plan for your daughter's reading success.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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BCA PARENT VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Parents: Brandi Sykes & Holly Moore

Staff Member: Heather Pellegrin

Brandi Sykes is the mother of Michael (5th), Pierre (3rd) and Averi (2nd) Skyes.

Holly Moore is the mother of Hayden (7th), Haleigh (6th) and Holden (1st) Moore.

Mrs. Sykes and Mrs. Moore volunteered helping Mrs. Pellegrin sell yoyos as part of the NED Show's Pay It Forward program. Both ladies also volunteer in the Parent Resource Center and in their children's classrooms. Mrs. Sykes recently came in during DEAR and read to students.



We would love to see you in and around the school. Please remember that we love "helicopter" parents.

Parent: Vanessa Roque

Teacher: Tracy King & Jessica Nobles—4th Grade

We had a parent volunteer for our Brain Break Literacy activity, DEAR. Mrs. Vanessa Roque offered to volunteer during our DEAR and created an amazing activity that extended the students understanding of the book but also extended their knowledge of what it means to have good Character!

Mrs. Roque read "Mr. Peabody's Apples" to our students then set up an activity where the students created their very own "pillow cases". She then gave them five feathers to color and fill with kind words like "You are amazing", "Keep up the good Work", etc. Mrs. Roque explained to the students, "negativity is often spread, but let's try spreading positivity and kindness instead". As the students finished their feathers, Mrs. Roque then had them find 5 friends and ask them to fill their friend's pillow cases with kind words of encouragement.

We are so very thankful for the time and energy Mrs. Roque put into her literacy lesson for our class. She not only made it fun and engaging, but a great lesson that I am sure our students will not forget!

Thank you Mrs. Roque for all your hard work! We loved having you in our class!



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