



Belle Chasse Academy

PARENT POWER

Published Monthly by the Belle Chasse Academy Family Engagement Committee

A Letter From Our Principals, April Vincent & Rene Thompson

January 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

Our teachers and staff have returned from our winter break refreshed, revitalized, and refocused. We want to thank you for your continuous support, cooperation, time, and valuable ideas as we engage in the partnership of educating your children. Your commitment to and participation in our learning community are essential to the success of our school and our children. Please continue to check the school calendar and class websites frequently, and please visit the school often. Please let us know your thoughts and suggestions.

This month we would like to focus on the many non-classroom educational opportunities offered at Belle Chasse Academy. Please encourage your student to participate in these opportunities—both academic and non-academic. Remember, not everything that students learn takes place in the formal classroom. Your child learns and grows by participating in ASA, ELO, sports, field trips, and service projects. Research has shown that students who participate in such activities are better able to problem solve and interact appropriately in social situations. Non-classroom experiences offer new facts, practice of skills (academic and social), and new perspectives.

As you know, Belle Chasse Academy offers an array of varied non-classroom learning experiences through our 21st CCLC after school program. The goal of our programming is to offer innovative and academically enriching experiences that not only engage students, but extend knowledge in new ways. ASAs are open for any student in grades K-8 to register to attend.

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Points of Interest & Important Dates

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—NO SCHOOL—January 20th
- Coffee with the Principals—January 21st
- Book Picks
- Writing + Board Games = Fun!
- Six Elements of Writing
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- Encourage Future Thinking
- Daily Learning Planner

Thanks again for allowing us the privilege of providing educational services to your child.

A warm welcome is extended to our many new students and parents, and here's to a successful, learning-filled second semester.

Sincerely,

Rene Thompson, Principal K-4

April Vincent, Principal 5-8



Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2020

Belle Chasse Academy
Rene Thompson, Principal K-4

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites



■ *Spend It!* (Cinders McLeod)

Sonny Bunny has a big list of things to buy. But his allowance doesn't stretch very far—especially when he wants a bouncy castle that costs 100 carrots. With a little help from his mom, Sonny learns a lesson about money. This is the first book in the Moneybunny series.



■ *The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid* (Jeanette Winter)

Young Zaha Hadid loved designing clothes, furniture, and buildings. When she grew up, she wanted to be an architect, but her designs were so unusual that no one wanted to build them. This biography tells how Hadid's persistence helped her realize her dreams.

■ *Moldylocks and the Three Beards* (Noah Z. Jones)

The Three Beards aren't home when Moldylocks and her friend Princess drop by for a visit. So the girls enjoy some chili, test the chairs, and jump on the beds. What will happen when the Three Beards return? Book one in the Princess Pink series. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Book of Bones: 10 Record-Breaking Animals* (Gabrielle Balkan)

This award-winning nonfiction book invites your child to explore animal skeletons. He'll get answers to questions like "Which creature has the most bones?" and "What has a skeleton but no bones?"



The give and take of conversation

A good conversation is a two-way street that includes speaking and listening—two skills your child needs to succeed in school. Use these ideas to help her practice.



Take turns

Sit on the floor facing your youngster, and roll a ball back and forth as you carry on a conversation. The person with the ball is the speaker, and the other is the listener. Your child will learn to listen and wait for you to roll the ball before it's her turn to talk.

Ask questions

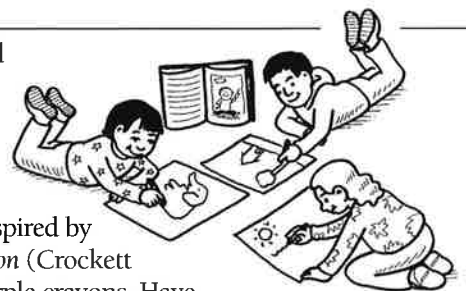
Let your youngster see how questions keep a conversation going and show interest in what the other person said. Make a statement and ask a question. *Example:* "I like cookie dough ice cream. What's your favorite flavor?" Then your child answers your question and asks a related one: "Strawberry. What's your favorite topping?"

Build on

Create a block tower to show your youngster that a conversation involves building on each other's ideas. Lay down a block, and start a discussion. ("Monopoly is a fun game.") Your child puts a block on yours and adds to what you said. ("It is fun, but it takes a long time.") Keep talking and adding to your tower until you run out of things to say. Now your youngster gets to start a new tower—and a new conversation. ♥

Throw a book party

Celebrate reading with a party based on a book of your youngster's choice. You'll improve his comprehension by giving him fun ways to connect with the story. Here's how.



● **Play.** Let your child plan an activity inspired by the story. For *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (Crockett Johnson), everyone might draw with purple crayons. Have your youngster imagine he's Harold—what might he draw that wasn't in the book?

● **Eat.** What party snacks would go well with *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* (Judi Barrett), for example? Ask your child to think of foods mentioned in the story, like meatballs, dill pickles, and cherry tomatoes. If he lived in the town of Chewandswallow, what other foods would he want to rain down? ♥

Winter at the library

Imagine a cold winter afternoon. You and your youngster are at the library. It's warm and cozy, and there are books everywhere!

Sound magical? Try these suggestions for making library visits special.

Explore different sections. Have your child name a topic that interests him, such as polar animals or engineering, and find related materials in various parts of the library. Your youngster might get a picture book about a seal family, a magazine with an article on



jellyfish, or a biography of an oceanographer.

Enjoy family reading time. Walk around the library to select a perfect reading spot. Perhaps your child will pick a table by a window or a corner with beanbag chairs. You could each read your own book silently, or read aloud quietly to your child.

Attend special events. Ask a librarian or check the library's website for a calendar of events.

Then, plan to attend one as a family. Maybe a children's author is coming to share her latest book or there's a family book club you could join.♥

Fun with Words Move and spell

With this activity, your youngster will "spell" words by doing a series of movements—one for each letter.

Ask your child to write the alphabet down the left side of a piece of paper, one letter per line. Together, think of a different action for each letter. *Examples:* A = act like a chicken, H = hop on one foot, T = touch your toes.



Secretly choose a word from your youngster's spelling list or the dictionary. Spell it for her using the movements instead of the letters. For instance, spell *hat* by hopping on one foot, flapping your arms while squawking, and touching your toes. Can she figure out your word? Now she acts out a word for you to identify.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Parent to Parent

Writing + board games = fun!

When my daughter Sonja needed to work on handwriting, we looked for ways to make it fun. Our favorite was adding writing to our weekly family game night.

Some nights, we play games that have writing built in, like Hangman or Scattergories Jr. Other times, we have to use a little creativity. For example, we write down our guesses in Clue Jr., our answers to questions in trivia games, and our requests for cards in Go Fish. We've also made Sonja our official scorekeeper—she gets to write our names and the numbers for our scores.

This has been a great way to improve Sonja's handwriting, and it feels more like play than practice!♥



Q&A Choose specific words

Q My son is learning to pick more specific words when he writes stories. How can I help him with this at home?

A Specific words create pictures in the reader's mind. For example, there are many ways to say *run* (*jog*, *sprint*, *scamper*, *race*). Each has a slightly different meaning, bringing to mind a different image.



After your son writes a rough draft, suggest that he use a highlighter to mark words to replace. If he can't decide, ask questions like "Which breed of dog is that?" or "What kind of house does the family live in?" He could replace *dog* with *poodle* or *mutt*, and *house* with *townhouse* or *cottage*.

Tip: If he can't think of a replacement, look in a thesaurus together. He can read his sentence aloud, substituting each new word to see which one sounds best.♥

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



January 2020

Belle Chasse Academy

Teach your child to concentrate on six elements of writing

Students who learn to express their thoughts effectively in writing are more likely to succeed in school—and in the workplace later on. But middle schoolers are often sensitive to criticism of their work and resistant to suggestions for improvement.

So how can you help your child become a better writer? Try offering guidance *before* she begins a writing assignment. Encourage her to focus on these six areas:

- 1. Ideas and content.** Your child's writing should make a point and stick to the topic.
- 2. Organization.** Her writing should have a clear beginning, middle and end. Details should support the main idea.
- 3. Sentence structure.** The sentences should have a natural flow. Your child should avoid repeating word patterns. For example, one or two sentence may begin with "This is" but the others should all begin differently.
- 4. Word choice.** When your child describes something, the reader should be able to visualize it. Words should add meaning—your child should avoid using extra words just to take up space.
- 5. Voice.** Your child should put her thoughts into her own words. Her personality and tone should shine through.
- 6. Mechanics.** Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation make writing clear. Remind your child to proofread her work carefully.



Refresh smart habits with New Year's resolutions

Have your child's work habits gotten off track? Treat the new year as a fresh start. Suggest that he resolve to:



- 1. Commit** to a homework routine. Have him choose a daily study time and stick to it.
- 2. "Single task."** Multitasking doesn't work. Urge your child to focus on one thing at time.
- 3. Strive for a new goal.** Would he like to raise his English grade? What will it take to reach that goal? Figuring out the steps makes goals easier to achieve.

Just what is responsibility?

To encourage responsible behavior, make sure your child understands what it involves. Responsible people:

- **Do** what they are supposed to—even when they don't feel like it.
- **Do** as much as they can for themselves.
- **Don't** give up when things get tough.

A self-affirmation activity can be motivating

Studies show that writing about a personal value (such as honesty) can boost achievement in school. Groups of middle schoolers were asked to write several times about how their values affected the ways they acted and felt. The students improved their grades, and the next year, they signed up for more challenging classes.



To try something similar at home, help your child brainstorm a list of values she cares about. Give her a journal and suggest she write about them from time to time.

Source: M. Martinovich, "Self-affirmation plays role in minority students' college success," *Phys.org*, niscw.com/affirm.



Peer pressure isn't always a problem

Kids pay a lot of attention to the appearance, words and actions of their peers—and often change their own behavior accordingly. How you respond should depend on the type of influence. Peer pressure can be:

- **Positive.** Your child's friends want good grades. They read interesting books. They enjoy hanging out at one another's homes. Your response: Welcome his friends to your home. Praise the efforts your child and his friends make.
- **Neutral.** Your child wears his hair in a messy style because his friends do. Your response: Do nothing. This is common middle school behavior, and it's innocent and harmless.
- **Negative.** Your child gets caught smoking or shoplifting with peers. Your response: Steer him to positive activities and monitor him closely. Supervise visits with friends who spell trouble. Encourage him to spend time with ethical friends. Allow more freedom when he re-earns your trust.

Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

MIDDLE SCHOOL

January 2020



Stress is getting in my child's way. What can I do?

Q: Stress seems to be a problem for my sixth grader. Everything from homework to the weather upsets him. How can I help him manage his stress so he can learn?

A: The move from elementary school to middle school is a big change. It's normal for kids to feel out of sorts from time to time. But if the stress—rather than whatever sets it off—is affecting your child's learning and well being, it's time to act.



To teach your child to manage everyday stress, help him:

- **See it coming.** Does your child start grinding his teeth or biting his nails when he begins to feel anxious? That's when he needs to take action. Stress is more manageable when it's caught early.
- **Plan ways to respond.** If a big task seems overwhelming, for example, he can break it down into smaller parts.
- **Release the tension.** Taking a break to exercise, read or shoot hoops with a friend may be all your child needs to calm down.
- **Develop healthy habits.** A nutritious diet and adequate sleep can help ease anxiety.

Let your child know he's not alone, and you will help him overcome his stress. Consult his doctor or school counselor if the issue continues.



Are you encouraging future thinking?

Adulthood may seem like a distant dream to your middle schooler. But considering her future now will help her make that dream a positive reality. Are you helping your child think ahead? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your child to take courses that will challenge her?
- ___ **2. Do you ask** your child about types of careers she might like to pursue as an adult?
- ___ **3. Do you talk** about higher education options (college, technical school, etc.) with your child?
- ___ **4. Do you tell** your child that you expect her to gain the maximum education possible?
- ___ **5. Do you help** your child develop study habits that will

help her master more complex work in years to come?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your child focus on the future. For each no, try that idea.

"The best we can do with the future is prepare and savor the possibilities of what can be done in the present."

—Todd Kashdan

Try out some digital tools

Today's students love technology. And it can be an effective way to excite their interest in learning. Your child can use tech tools to:

- **Learn homework skills.** When he wants to know how to solve quadratic equations or cite sources, he can search on YouTube (www.youtube.com) for a video on the topic.
- **Study for a test.** He can use an app or website like quizlet.com or kahoot.com to create custom quizzes and games to help him recall information.
- **Work on a project.** He can find tools to create presentations and posters on prezi.com and glogster.com.

Address protests calmly

You've established rules and consequences, but now your child is ranting about them. To handle an angry outburst:

- **Give your child** some space and time to settle down. Resume your discussion when you're both in control of emotions.
- **Don't give in** if your decisions are reasonable. Show your child that pleading and tantrums won't change your mind.

Support your child's success

Children who feel loved and supported at home are happier and more likely to do well in school. Surveys show that students want parents to:



- **Be good role models.**
- **Offer guidance.**
- **Treat them** with respect.
- **Notice when they** do things right.
- **Avoid lecturing** about mistakes.
- **Encourage them** to do their best in school and elsewhere.

Source: A. Jackson and others, *Making the Most of Middle School: A Field Guide for Parents and Teachers*, Teachers College Press.

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Daily Learning Planner

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

Belle Chasse Academy



THE
PARENT
INSTITUTE

January 2020

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

- 1. Give your child a calendar (in print or in an app). Have her use it to keep track of school assignments and events.
- 2. Encourage your child to start a diary or journal.
- 3. Ask your child to name two ways he could be a better friend.
- 4. With your child, make a list of the best times you had together during the past year. Schedule time to do them again this year, if possible.
- 5. Talk with your child about an abstract concept, such as *justice*.
- 6. Discuss your expectations for your child's long-range education goals.
- 7. Have your child write down an estimate of how long an assignment will take. Then have her time how long it really takes.
- 8. Ask your child, "If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?"
- 9. Review your rules about drug and alcohol use with your child.
- 10. Let your child invite friends to stay for a family dinner. It's a great way to learn more about his peer group.
- 11. Make sure your child eats a nutritious breakfast every day.
- 12. Have your child write a letter to an author, lawmaker or celebrity.
- 13. Ask your child what cartoon character she would be if she could pick any one.
- 14. Try to have a rhyming conversation with your child. It may be tough at first, but you'll get better!
- 15. Fill a basket with newspaper clippings and other conversation starters. Choose one at dinner.
- 16. Ask your child about his most challenging school subject. Together, brainstorm about ways to make it easier.
- 17. While your child does homework, do some quiet work yourself.
- 18. Visit the library. Look for a book your child and you might both enjoy.
- 19. Share a poem with your child. How does she interpret it?
- 20. Don't use problems with homework as an excuse to criticize your child or argue about other issues.
- 21. Keep credit card offers you receive. Ask your child to figure out the monthly interest on a \$100 purchase for each card.
- 22. Comment on one specific task your child did well today.
- 23. Ask your child to teach you something he's learning in school.
- 24. Show your child photos of herself as a baby. Talk about how special she was—and still is.
- 25. Let your child choose a recipe to follow from a cookbook.
- 26. Learn a new word at breakfast. Challenge family members to use it three times during the day.
- 27. Get a deck of cards. Each player turns over one card. The player who correctly multiplies the cards fastest wins them.
- 28. Compliment your child on something about his appearance today.
- 29. A *palindrome* is a word or phrase that reads the same forward and backward, like *mom* and *top spot*. Together, think of others.
- 30. List your priorities, including family. Does your schedule reflect them?
- 31. Point out an example of prejudice to your child. Talk about ways to deal with intolerance.

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

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