



Belle Chasse Academy

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# PARENT POWER

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A Letter From Our Principals, April Vincent & Rene Thompson

February 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

It's that kind of brown and gloomy time of year in southeastern Louisiana. The winter holidays are long past and Spring Break is in the distance. Students and teachers are back in the groove and buckling down as the third quarter comes to an end and testing dates loom on the horizon. As always, you are urged to communicate with the school regarding your student's progress and individual needs. We welcome and need your perspectives and ideas.

Additionally, if you've time, please volunteer to help in a classroom as we offer each student the individual attention and instruction he/she needs to ensure everyone attains grade level proficiency and the requisite skills for success, both in the classroom and in life. Please contact our Parent/Volunteer Coordinator, Ms. Juli Braatz (Extension 245 or [jbraatz@bellechasseacademy.org](mailto:jbraatz@bellechasseacademy.org)) if you'd like to assist. Juli will match you to just the right classroom to maximize the impact or your sharing of your knowledge and skills.

Unlike students in other parts of the country, we do get a small break from the midwinter routine! We have President's Day on February 17<sup>th</sup> and Mardi Gras break on February 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup>. If, like the majority of our families, you're not native to southeastern Louisiana, we hope you enjoy this opportunity to experience a regional cultural tradition.

Finally, statewide testing will begin in April. Students in grades 5-8 will take the computer based LEAP test in Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies, April 21<sup>st</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>. Our elementary students in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades will still take the paper based LEAP test, April 27<sup>th</sup> - May 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Inside this issue:

Letter from the Principals	1-2
Reading Connection	3-4
Helping Students Learn	5-7
Amazon Smile	8

## Points of Interest & Important Dates

- February 4<sup>th</sup>—Progress Reports
- February 11<sup>th</sup>—Falling in Love with Literacy
- February 17<sup>th</sup>—NO SCHOOL (Presidents' Day)
- February 19<sup>th</sup>—Coffee with the Principals
- February 24-26<sup>th</sup>—NO SCHOOL (Mardi Gras Break)
- Write to Learn
- Be a Reading Volunteer
- Stay on Top of Attendance
- Encourage Healthy Eating

We are confident that our students are fully prepared to conquer this test. If you would like more information on the LEAP test it can be found on the Louisiana Department of Education's website. <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/family-support-toolbox> .

As always, thanks for allowing us to partner with you in the education of your child.

Throw me something, Mister!

Rene Thompson  
April Vincent



# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

February 2020

Belle Chasse Academy  
Rene Thompson, Principal K-4

## Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites



### ■ *It's Only Stanley* (Jon Agee)

The Wimbledon family is trying to fall asleep, but every time they do, Stanley the dog wakes them up. First he howls, then there are clanks, buzzes, and other random sounds. What's all the noise about? Stanley is up to something wonderful in this rhyming story.



### ■ *Starring Jules* (As Herself)

(Beth Ain)

Second-grader Jules Bloom is in a panic. She has an audition for a commercial that she's sure will lead to fame. But she's going to need the help of her ex-best friend and a potential new best friend to make it happen. This early chapter book is the first in the Jules series.



### ■ *Little Libraries, Big Heroes*

(Miranda Paul)

How did Little Free Libraries get their start? Readers will find out in this biography about Todd Bol. He created the first Little Free Library to share his mother's love of reading with others. Since then, the movement has spread, turning Todd into a reading hero for people all over the world.

### ■ *I Am Earth* (Rebecca and James McDonald)

Earth itself "narrates" this nonfiction book about gravity, changing seasons, orbits, and more. Information on keeping the planet healthy is woven in, and comic-style illustrations and speech balloons make the book easy to read. (Also available in Spanish.)



## Clever decoding strategies

What goes through your child's head when he's reading and comes to a word he doesn't know? Encourage him to think like a detective by asking himself these questions that will help him "decode" unfamiliar words.



### "Does it remind me of a word I know?"

Once your youngster learns to read a word, he can use it to read other words. For practice, take turns picking a word and saying words it makes you think of. See a stop sign? Your youngster might say *stop* starts like *step* or rhymes with *top*. Now have him use this strategy when he reads. Example: "*S-t-o-m-p* looks like *stop*. But there's an *m* in it. *Stomp!*"

### "Is there a part I recognize?"

Even if your child doesn't know a long word, chances are there are small words inside it that he can read. Choose a long word in a book, and see who can find the most words in it. In *window*, your youngster may see *win* and *wind*. Or maybe he'll notice that *macaroni*

contains *car* and *on*. Putting together the familiar parts can help him read the whole word.

### "Does it have a pattern?"

What do *cake*, *lime*, and *note* have in common? They all follow the pattern consonant / long vowel / consonant / silent *e*. When you read with your child, encourage him to look for words that fit patterns he is learning in school. Spotting the pattern might help him correctly read *mine* instead of saying *min*, for instance. ♥

## Trace the groundhog's shadow

Will the groundhog see his shadow this Groundhog Day? The groundhog in this activity will—and by tracing the shadow, your youngster will give her "writing muscles" a workout.



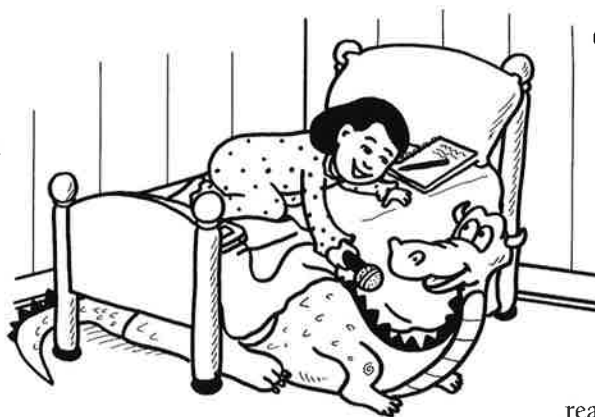
● **Sculpt.** Let your child use clay or play dough to make a groundhog. She'll strengthen her fingers as she rolls and shapes the dough.

● **Trace.** Have your youngster trace her groundhog's shadow to work on hand coordination. Lay a sheet of paper under a lamp. She can position the groundhog so the light casts a shadow on the paper. Then, she could use a crayon to trace around the shadow's outline. ♥

# Write to learn

As your child learns to write, she can also use writing to learn. Here are a few ideas.

**“What I know” journal.** Encourage your youngster to start a notebook about what she’s studying in school. After a science experiment with magnets, she might list things that she discovered are magnetic, then test household objects and add to her list. Or if she’s learning to solve story problems in math, she could make up her own problems and illustrate them.



**Character interviews.** What would your child ask a famous person or a fictional character? She can use her imagination by writing pretend interview questions and making up answers. Maybe she’d ask, “What’s the hardest thing about being a dragon?” and reply: “Hiding under the bed!”

**Reading log.** Suggest that your youngster keep track of books she reads. She could practice summarizing by writing a sentence or two about each title. She may even rate each book with 1–5 stars—she’ll practice critical thinking as she compares books and decides which ones she liked more or less than others.♥

## Q&A Silent reading

**Q** My daughter has started reading silently. What is my role now?

**A** The ability to read silently shows that your child is becoming more independent as a reader. Still, she’ll benefit from the same kinds of things you did when she was just beginning to read.



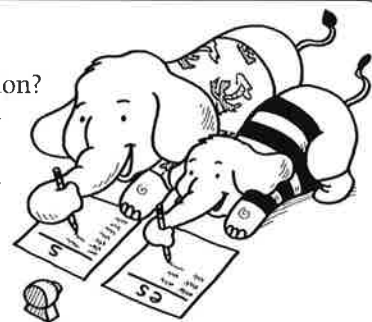
For example, make sure she has plenty of reading material. Take regular trips to the library, and encourage your daughter to choose a variety of books. Also, set aside time to read. You might snuggle up and read your own book alongside her—you’ll show her that reading is a lifelong pleasure.

Finally, talk about books with your youngster. Ask her about what she reads in school and at home, and tell her what you’re reading. The two of you might even read the same book and discuss it when you’re finished.♥

## Fun with Words

### Play with plurals

What do *s* and *es* have in common? They turn singular words into plural ones! Play this game to help your youngster discover guidelines for choosing the correct ending when he writes.



1. Have your child label two sheets of paper, one with *s* and the other with *es*. You take one sheet, and he gets the other.
2. Set a timer for three minutes. Each of you should look through a book and write plural words you find with the ending on your sheet. For *s*, your youngster might list *arms*, *birds*, and *cups*. For *es*, you could write *dishes*, *couches*, and *boxes*.
3. When time’s up, have your child count the words on each sheet. Which ending “wins” (is most common)? He’ll see that most plural words end with *s*.
4. Ask your child what he notices about the *es* words. He may realize that many have *ch*, *sh*, *s*, *o*, *x*, or *z* before the *es*, while other words take an *s*. Then, suggest that he keep the lists handy when he writes so he can refer to the examples.♥

## Parent to Parent

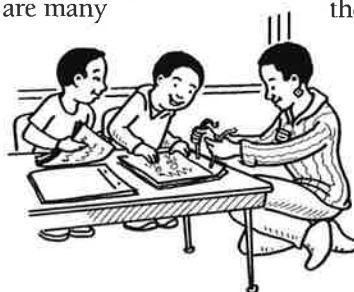
### Be a reading volunteer

I wanted to support the reading program at my son Ricky’s school. Since I stay at home with my infant twins, I emailed the teacher to ask if she had take-home projects I could do.

I found out that there are many ways I can help. Sometimes the teacher sends home instructions and materials for me to make classroom games like spelling bingo and vocabulary tic-tac-toe. Other

times, she has asked me to write poems or sentences on poster board. The projects are fun, and Ricky is always interested in what I’m doing.

I’ve also volunteered in the classroom a couple of times while my mom watched the twins. One morning, I read with small groups, and another day, I helped students turn their stories into books. Ricky likes seeing me in his classroom, and I like that I’m making a difference at his school.♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



February 2020

Belle Chasse Academy

## Act now to reduce your middle schooler's risk of substance abuse

Experts say that people are more likely to misuse drugs during times of transition. For many students, middle school can be a challenging transition period.

Middle schoolers face new classmates, harder classes and more expectations. At the same time, they want to try new things. Drugs and alcohol may seem appealingly new and adult.



But because they aren't adults, middle schoolers don't always see the risks of this behavior. Substance abuse early in life increases the risk of addiction and damage to brain function. It's critical to prevent it before it starts.

Take action now to protect your child. Here's how:

- **Ask what he has learned** in school about substance abuse. Reinforce those messages at home.
- **Make it clear that you expect** him to avoid drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping products. Discuss the dangers of misusing prescription drugs. Enforce your rules consistently.
- **Build a strong relationship** with your child. Participate in activities together. Make family time a priority.
- **Be a good role model.** Your example is the most powerful teacher.

Source: "Preventing Drug Misuse and Addiction: The Best Strategy," National Institute on Drug Abuse, [nisdw.com/drugfree](http://nisdw.com/drugfree).



## Talk about what should go into notes

It's nearly impossible for students to simply remember everything teachers say in class. They need to be able to take effective notes that will remind them of key facts and concepts. Share these note-taking tips with your child:

- **Write down** what the teacher writes down. If it's on the board, it's usually something your child should learn.
- **Listen for lists.** If the teacher says, "Three factors caused the conflict ..." your child should write them down.
- **Make the most of pauses.** A teacher who stops talking is likely giving students a chance to write.
- **Notice extreme words** like *best*, *most* and *last*. When the teacher uses them, your child should take notes.
- **Write down information** the teacher repeats.
- **Pay special attention** at the end of class. Teachers sometimes squeeze in important information if they realize they are running out of time.

## Stay on top of attendance

In the second half of the year, the pace of instruction picks up and exam preparation is added to students' regular workloads. Kids who miss school find it more difficult to catch up. Emphasize the importance of attending every class. Accept no excuses except an illness or emergency.



## Decisions affect the future

Studies show that thinking about how a decision will affect the present *and then* the future helps people make better choices. Encourage your child to:

- **Anticipate consequences.** If she completes her homework now, she'll be able to relax later. Then tomorrow she'll get full credit for the assignment.
- **Imagine alternatives.** If she plays a game now, she may be too tired to do her homework later and then she won't get any credit for it.

She may see that making a small sacrifice in the present can lead to a long-term benefit.

Source: "Sequential options prompt future thinking, boost patience," ScienceDaily, [nisdw.com/sequence](http://nisdw.com/sequence).

## Supervise social media use

Social media is replacing social interaction in many middle schoolers' lives—and that can be a problem. Research links high emotional investment in social media with high anxiety. To foster your child's well-being:

- **Set limits** on social media time.
- **Discuss what is appropriate** to post and what's not.
- **Follow his accounts.** Let him know you'll look at them.
- **Encourage him** to invite friends over for real-life activities.



Source: K. Barrett, "Social Media's Impact on Students' Mental Health Comes Into Focus," *neaToday*, [nisdw.com/socialmedia](http://nisdw.com/socialmedia).



## How should parents handle cheating on homework?

**Q:** My child has been copying the answers from friends' homework. She says "everyone does it." What should I do?

**A:** Cheating is a major issue with serious consequences. So it's important to take time to talk about it with your child.

Be clear that copying homework is cheating, and cheating is always wrong. It's dishonest, and unfair to others who don't cheat. And it cheats your child of the skills and knowledge she needs.

Explain that you are unhappy about the cheating, but you're also worried about why she cheated. Is she afraid of disappointing you? Is she struggling with the topic? Did she just not want to do the work?

Make sure not to put too much emphasis on grades. Instead, stress the value of learning for its own sake. Then help your child find solutions that let her complete work without cheating. For example, she could:

- **Improve time management.** Review her schedule and help her schedule ample homework and study time.
- **Develop strong study habits,** such as organization, goal-setting and persistence.
- **Ask the teacher to suggest resources** she can check if she can't understand the homework—and follow up if she's still confused.



## Are you providing relationship guidance?

Middle school transitions aren't all academic. Many students will begin to explore romance in these years. Are you helping your child navigate relationships responsibly? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

\_\_\_ **1. Do you discuss** the basics of dating—respect for yourself, respect for the other person, kindness and consideration?

\_\_\_ **2. Do you establish** rules about relationships and remind your child that school takes priority?

\_\_\_ **3. Do you keep** your cool on the topic? Middle school dating is often more about friendship than getting serious.

\_\_\_ **4. Do you talk** with your child about values as well as the consequences of risky behavior?

\_\_\_ **5. Do you show** respect for your child's feelings?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are guiding your child as he enters this new phase.*

*For each no, try that idea.*

*"When teaching your kids about the concept of respect, teach them of their worth as a person."*

—Claire Stranberg

## Inspire your child to strive

A carrot may motivate a horse. Motivating a middle schooler, on the other hand, isn't quite as simple. To encourage your child to do her best:

- **Challenge and support her.** Urge your child to aim high. Remember that if she falls short, she still needs your love and acceptance.
- **Avoid comparisons.** "Your sister got an A-. Can you beat that?" Competitions only motivate people who feel they have a shot at winning. If your child thinks she might fail, she'll have no desire to try.

## Use report cards to plan

Reviewing your middle schooler's report card together is a useful way to help him chart a course for the rest of the year. If he has done well, discuss his plans to keep up the good work.

If he's struggling, help him brainstorm ways to do better going forward. "You did a great job with your science homework, but stumbled on tests. What if I quiz you for 10 minutes each night the week before a test?"

## Encourage healthy eating

A healthy diet helps students stay alert in class and retain what they learn there. You can't watch every bite your child puts in her mouth, so help her become an informed eater. To promote responsible food choices:

- 1. Expose your child** to lots of healthy foods. Bring home new produce to try.
- 2. Cook together.** Involve your child in preparing nutritious meals.
- 3. Offer smart snacks.** Toss the soda and chips. Stock up on cut veggies she can grab on the run.



Source: L. Wiggins, "Middle Schoolers Learning Nutrition Education," University of Florida, [nswc.com/healthy](http://nswc.com/healthy).

## Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

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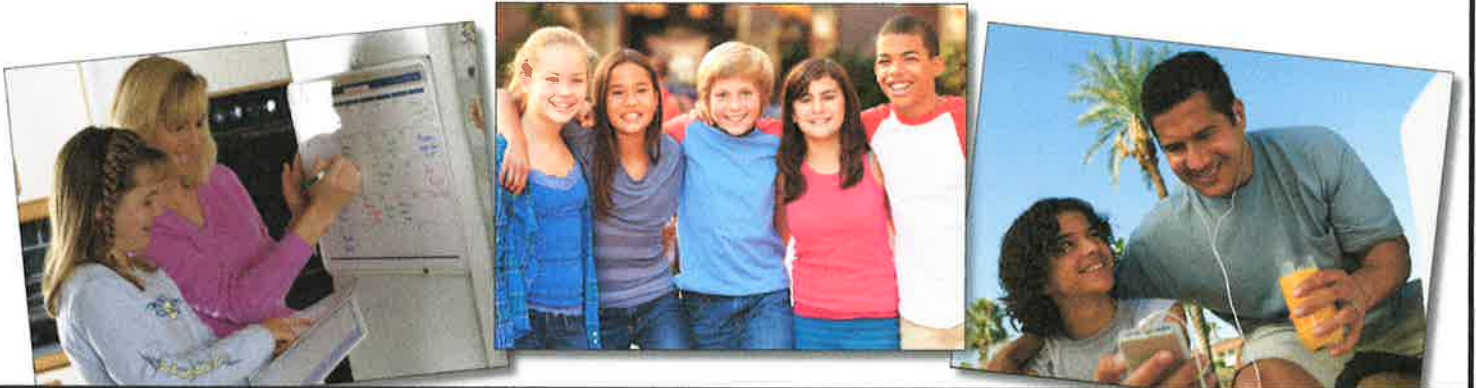
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# Daily Learning Planner

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

Belle Chasse Academy



THE  
**PARENT**  
INSTITUTE

## February 2020

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

- 1. With your child, brainstorm ways to reduce screen time.
- 2. Let your child daydream sometimes. It can strengthen creativity and coping skills.
- 3. Talk about your family's ethnic background with your child.
- 4. Encourage your child to brainstorm ways to solve problems at school—before asking for your help.
- 5. Watch a TV commercial with your child. Notice and discuss the techniques it uses to influence people.
- 6. Ask your child to add two four-digit numbers. Can she figure it out on paper before you can with a calculator?
- 7. Suggest a few activities that your child can do alone, such as drawing and putting together a jigsaw puzzle.
- 8. Have your child time how long a bus or car trip takes. How many miles did you travel? What was your average speed?
- 9. Patiently explain the reason for a rule your child doesn't like.
- 10. Help your child think of tough situations he might face. How would he handle them?
- 11. With your child, look for ways to add peaceful moments to your lives.
- 12. Encourage your child to be a humble winner and a gracious loser.
- 13. Have each family member prepare one part of a meal, then enjoy it together.
- 14. Cut out small paper hearts. Write a reason you love your child on each one. Tape them together to make a chain of hearts.
- 15. Practice active listening with your child. Listen carefully while she talks. Repeat what you hear in your own words.
- 16. Spend 20 minutes on DEAR time today (Drop Everything And Read).
- 17. Make raisins dance. Have your child add a few to a glass of clear soda. They rise as bubbles collect, and fall after bubbles pop at the surface.
- 18. Be positive about your child's ability to learn, even if he is discouraged.
- 19. Write your child a note of thanks for a time she helped you.
- 20. Look for an educational TV show or video to watch with your child tonight.
- 21. Make up trivia questions about your family. Quiz one another at the dinner table.
- 22. Take a walk with your child and use all five senses to observe the world around you.
- 23. Give your child a cereal box. Ask him to calculate how many calories he will take in if he eats one serving a day for 25 days.
- 24. Faced with a difficult parenting situation? Teachers and other parents at school can be helpful sources of advice.
- 25. Is your child overwhelmed by a task? Have her commit five minutes to working on it. She may realize it's not so bad.
- 26. Read a newspaper editorial with your child. Tell him if you agree with the opinions stated. Ask what he thinks.
- 27. Think about your expectations of your child. Ask if there's a new responsibility she thinks she could handle.
- 28. For more time with your child, create a new weekly ritual together.
- 29. Ask your child to recommend a book for you to read.

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

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## *Do you ~smile~ and support Belle Chasse Academy?*

### **What is AmazonSmile?**

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support Belle Chasse Academy every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. You can choose from nearly one million organizations to support.

### **How do I shop at AmazonSmile?**

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.

### **Can I use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?**

Yes, you use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

### **How do I select a charitable organization to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?**

On your first visit to AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)), select Belle Chasse Academy to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. We will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) will result in a donation.