



Belle Chasse Academy

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PARENT POWER

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A Letter From Our Principals, April Vincent & Rene Thompson

March 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Mardi Gras vacation is over and its almost spring time again. Traditional thoughts of spring conjure images of lengthening days, buds on trees, greening grass, and that certain energy that signals a change of the seasons.

For schools, however, spring also signals the season when all members of the school community (educators, students, and their families) are focused on the LEAP test.

While the mention of the word "test" may sometimes evoke negative emotions for both adults and children, it is important that we (the BCA community) focus on the positive impact of such assessment. First and foremost, these tests inform our instruction of your children. They tell us how well our students have learned and how well our teachers have taught. They guide our adoption of educational curricula and the design of instruction.

Therefore, it is important that we focus on our students, not as "test takers," but as "learners." We need to radiate an encouraging and optimistic message to our students: Test days are just more days of learning...a chance for each student to demonstrate his unique gifts and knowledge.

We (the school staff) and you are a team—a partnership—in your child's education. It is important that we cultivate a calm, confident, and encouraging environment during testing. This will contribute to a positive test-taking experience and higher student achievement.

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Points of Interest & Important Dates

- March 7—4H Car Wash
- March 13&14—Beauty & the Beast
- March 17—Report Cards
- March 17—Coffee w/ the Principals
- March 27—No School for Students
- Writing About Me
- Reading to Siblings
- Make Study Time Count
- How Can I Plan a "Staycation" For My Child
- Daily Learning Planner

We ask your buy-in and conveyance of this confidence we have in our students to them. By keeping the focus on student learning and creating a positive attitude toward testing, we can ensure a school-wide atmosphere that is both encouraging and stress-free. Our message to our students needs to be that we recognize these assessments as a necessary part of the teaching/learning continuum, **AND** that we are confident they will superbly demonstrate their knowledge and abilities.

You are always a welcome presence in our school. And, as always, thank you for giving us the opportunity to learn and grow with your child.

Warm Regards,
Rene Thompson, K-4
April Vincent, 5-8



Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

March 2020

Belle Chasse Academy
Rene Thompson, Principal K-4

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Frankly, Frannie* (AJ Stern)

Frannie is still in elementary school, but she's ready for a real job. During a field trip to the local radio station, she might get her chance. The radio host is missing—in the middle of his show!



She's determined to fill in, with hilarious results. Book one in the Frankly, Frannie series.

■ *The Great Gran Plan* (Elli Woollard)

What do you get when you cross the Three Little Pigs with Little Red Riding Hood? A picture book adventure where the big bad wolf is plotting to eat Granny, and a pig is on a mission to rescue her! (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Bring Me Some Apples and I'll Make You a Pie: A Story About Edna Lewis* (Robbin Gourley)

Edna was raised on a Virginia farm where she learned to cook with foods her family grew, including apples. This true story tells how she grew up to become an award-winning chef who was known for using farm-fresh ingredients.



■ *The Truth About Bears: Seriously Funny Facts About Your Favorite Animals* (Maxwell Eaton III)

A trio of bear narrators—polar, brown, and black—add humor to this nonfiction book. Your child will discover where bears live, how big they are, and what their tracks look like. Includes cartoon illustrations and easy-to-read text, maps, and diagrams.



Writing about me

“Personal narrative” is just a fancy term for a true story about the person your child knows best—herself! She's learning to write that kind of story in school, and you can help her at home with these activities.

Outstanding openings

A strong opening makes readers want to keep reading. Ask your youngster to name something your family did recently (say, visited a museum). Then, each of you can write two opening sentences for a story about it. Write one that doesn't give much information (“We went to a museum”) and one that's more inviting (“My favorite museum has a giant elephant statue”). Trade papers, and tell which sentence you each like better and why.

Details

Vivid details paint pictures for readers. You and your child could each secretly think of a topic and write three sentences that give details about it. If your youngster picks music class, details might include



“The piano has smooth black and white keys,” “We shake shiny bells while we sing,” and “Sometimes we dance to music.” Read your sentences aloud, and try to guess each other's topic.

Excellent endings

It's common for new writers to wrap up a story with “Then we went home” or “Then we went to bed.” Work together to write a more creative final sentence for a story about your day. (“The March wind howled outside, and we fell asleep hoping to dream about spring.”)♥

A celebration of reading

March 2 is Read Across America Day. Celebrate with your youngster by using books to learn about different places and languages in our country. Here's how:

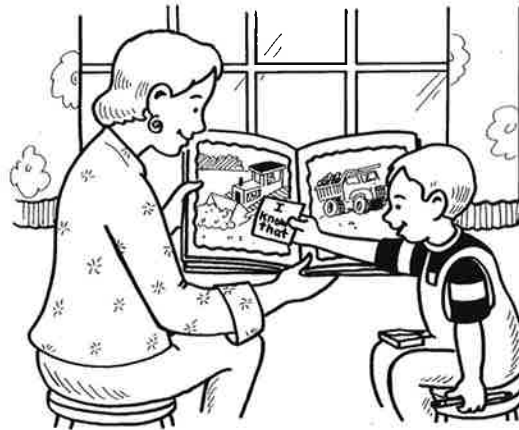
- Look for a library book set in a different part of the country. Depending on where you live, your child could read about a youngster growing up in a seaside town, a mountain village, or a big city. As you read together, encourage him to compare his life to the character's—how are they similar and different?
- Many languages are spoken in America! Ask a librarian to help you find a book with words in two languages, including the one your family speaks at home. You and your child could learn a few words in the other language and use them in conversations.♥



Use your knowledge bank

Your youngster's brain holds a key to better reading comprehension—his "bank" of knowledge. Try these strategies that will help him use what he already knows to understand new information.

Before. Unlock your child's knowledge by doing a book preview together. Look at the pictures, and ask him what they make him think of. He might say a photo of a bulldozer reminds him of a construction



site in your neighborhood. Then you could ask what other construction vehicles he thinks the book might mention.

During. Keep your youngster on the lookout for familiar and unfamiliar information while you read to him. He could write "I knew that!" to stick on a page that mentions a bulldozer scooping dirt and "Cool new fact!" to put on a page that explains what a forklift does.

After. Go back to the pages your child marked, and let him tell you what he learned. Did he find a new fact about something that was familiar? He might say he discovered that some bulldozers have wheels instead of tracks. ♥

Parent to Parent Write a nonfiction book

My son Samuel loves nonfiction books. He especially seems to enjoy the diagrams and other graphics. One day, after we'd read a book about sea animals, I noticed him drawing and labeling a diagram of our house. I asked what he was doing, and he explained that he was writing his own nonfiction book about our pets.



Samuel's diagram showed our cat lounging in a sunny window and our cockatiel on her perch. Next, he wrote a page comparing cats and birds. It was adorable—he wrote that you can snuggle with a cat, but a bird can ride on your shoulder.

He stapled the pages together and drew a book cover. Next, Samuel is going to write a nonfiction book about soccer. ♥



Q&A Reading to siblings

Q My daughters, ages 4 and 6, have very different interests. Do you have any tips for picking books to read aloud that they'll both enjoy?

A Here's an idea: Ask each child to choose a library book she thinks the other would like. Your little one might pick a story about origami for her big sister, and your older daughter may choose a story about rock collecting for your younger one. They'll learn kindness, and they'll be more inclined to listen to stories they picked out.

Then, when you choose books, keep in mind that your older child may enjoy a story that's too young for her if it's on a favorite topic. And your little one will find it easier to pay attention to a harder book that matches her interests. Finally, broaden their interests by selecting books on topics unfamiliar to both children. ♥



Fun with Words What doesn't belong?

Which word doesn't sound like the others—*button*, *bean*, *noodle*, or *bow*? If your youngster said *noodle*, she's paying attention to beginning sounds (*noodle* is the only word that doesn't begin with the *b* sound). Play this game to help her practice hearing sounds in words.

Let your child fill a box with three objects having the same beginning sound (*rattle*, *raisins*, *remote*) and one that starts with a different sound (*bottle*).

Then, you pick the item that doesn't belong in the box (*bottle*). Or you might deliberately make a mistake (*rattle*). Can your youngster correct you? Now you refill the box, and have her figure out which of your objects doesn't belong.

Variations: Choose items that share an ending sound (like *-en* as in *mitten*) or vowel sound (perhaps short *a* as in *cap*). ♥



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[®]

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



March 2020

Belle Chasse Academy

Boost knowledge and skills to help your child read for meaning

Reading for meaning involves more than understanding the words on a page. Students also need to be able to identify the main idea and draw inferences (use evidence in the text to make conclusions that aren't directly stated). Many middle schoolers struggle with these tasks.

To strengthen your child's reading comprehension skills, help her:

- **Build prior knowledge.** Your child's ability to understand what she reads is linked to what she knows before opening the book. Encourage her to read news articles on all kinds of topics. Attend exhibits and cultural events as a family. Share your knowledge about places you've been or things you have experienced, too.
- **Ask questions before reading.** Have your child scan the headings, pictures and boldfaced text in a reading assignment. What questions do they raise in her mind? As she's reading, she can jot down other questions that come up. When she's finished reading, can she answer her questions?
- **Enlarge her vocabulary.** Encourage your child to write down new words she encounters, along with their meanings.
- **Increase fluency.** Reading faster and more easily aids understanding. Look for brief articles that will interest your child, and time her as she reads. Then challenge her to read at a faster pace and still grasp the main idea.



Source: M. Pressley, "Comprehension Instruction: What Works" Reading Rockets, nswc.com/read-meaning.



Employ emotions to promote learning

Emotions play a big role in the way middle schoolers see the world. That's because the part of the adolescent brain that processes emotions matures sooner than the part that handles rational thinking.

To engage your child's emotions and maximize his ability to learn:

- **Use humor.** Middle schoolers love to laugh and make jokes. Encourage your child to find funny cartoons, GIFs or videos about what he's learning.
- **Link learning to life.** Adolescents tend to think the world revolves around them. So help your child relate to what

he's learning. If he's studying the Revolutionary War, ask him to think about a time he felt like revolting against authority.

- **Put imagination to work.** Ask him questions like, "What would it have felt like to be with Washington at Valley Forge?"

Source: T. Armstrong, Ph.D., "Maximize the Power of the Middle School Brain," MiddleWeb, nswc.com/mid_brain.

Have fun with math facts

Students who lack a firm command of basic math facts often struggle to learn abstract concepts. Reinforce your child's fact recall with these games:

- **Hot potato.** Call out an equation (9×8) as you toss a ball to your child. Ask her to say the answer before she catches the ball.
- **Multiplication race.** Remove the face cards from a card deck. Each player turns over one card. The player who first says the product of the cards wins them.



Make study time count

Not all study strategies are equally effective. To help your child prepare for tests, suggest he use these research-proven techniques:

- **Self-quizzing.** Your child can make up his own questions, then answer them.
- **Summarizing** material in his own words.
- **Studying** in multiple short sessions, spaced out over time.
- **Studying** a variety of related material (different types of math problems) in a single session, rather than just one type.

Source: E. Kang, "5 Research-Backed Studying Techniques," Edutopia, nswc.com/study-tips.

Essential ways you can help

Here are three critical ways to stay involved and help your child achieve in school:

1. **Communicate** your expectations.
2. **Expand on** what's being taught. Help your child apply what she's learning.
3. **Talk about** the future. Help her investigate the education and training necessary to prepare for careers of interest.



Source: N.E. Hall and others, "Parental involvement in education during middle school," *Journal of Educational Research*, Taylor & Francis.

Helping Students Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

MIDDLE SCHOOL

March 2020



How can I plan an enriching 'staycation' for my child?

Q: My son insists that "everybody" is going away for spring break. I have taken the week off from work, but we are staying home. How can we make the most of our week without breaking the bank?

A: It is likely that "everybody" won't really be heading off on fancy trips. But you are wise to plan a few entertaining—and even educational—ways to spend time with your child during your week off.

Consider these ideas:

- **Shadow a professional.** Does your child love animals? See if you can arrange a day where he can volunteer or observe at a nearby veterinary clinic.
- **Be tourists at home.** What draws visitors to your area? What museums and parks showcase local treasures? Do some exploring with your child and try seeing your hometown with fresh eyes.
- **Visit a nearby college.** If you don't want to schedule a formal tour, just walk around campus and check out the library and student union.
- **Host a movie night.** See if your child can find a school friend who is also home for the break. Invite him over for pizza, popcorn and movies.
- **Plan a "vacation day."** For 24 hours, give your child a break from chores and routines. Let him sleep in, stay up late and eat a favorite meal.



Are you reducing peer pressure's power?

Middle schoolers care a lot about their friends' opinions. But peer influence can often lead them astray. Are you teaching your child to rely instead on her own good judgment when making decisions? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you discuss** the importance of doing the *right* thing, rather than the *easy* thing?
- ___ **2. Do you help** your child think things through? "If you skip last period with your friends, what might happen?"
- ___ **3. Do you make sure** your child understands your family rules?
- ___ **4. Do you sympathize** with your child about the desire to fit in? Does she know she can talk to you if she feels pressured by friends?

- ___ **5. Do you help** your child practice saying *no* to things she knows are wrong?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you're helping your child resist negative peer pressure. For each no, try that idea.

*"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are."
—E.E. Cummings*

Encourage leadership traits

Many of the qualities that make someone a good leader also boost school success. To nurture your middle schooler's inner leader, encourage him to:

- **Welcome new ideas.** Leaders know they can learn from others.
- **Be flexible.** It doesn't always work to do everything the same way. Sometimes it helps to try a different approach.
- **Get organized.** Leaders plan ahead.
- **Show enthusiasm,** and be optimistic that with his effort, things will go right.

Source: B.A. Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? For Teens*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Hold an after-test review

Your child is used to being tested on what she's learned. But does she know that a test is also a *way* to learn? Encourage her to:

- 1. Make notes** as soon as possible after the test. What was easy? What is she still confused about?
- 2. Correct any errors** and keep the test as a study guide for midterms or finals.
- 3. Analyze mistakes.** Were they careless? Or should she have studied more?

Help your child use this information to plan ways to study more effectively next time.

Enter the high school zone

If your child will be moving up to high school in the fall, smooth his transition by helping him:



- **Find answers.** Suggest that he discuss questions or concerns with his school counselor.
- **Think ahead.** Discuss classes he wants to take. Have him ask current students about their experiences.
- **Feel confident.** He's achieving a huge milestone! Tell him you're proud of him.

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

March 2020

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

- 1. Schedule some one-on-one time with your child this month.
- 2. Sometime today, exchange notes with your child instead of talking.
- 3. Keep computers and digital devices out of your child's bedroom at night. Kids should be sleeping, not online.
- 4. Call out words from the dictionary at breakfast. Take turns spelling them.
- 5. Let your child know that the things that make him unique also make him precious to you.
- 6. Suggest that your child record key ideas from a chapter she's reading and play them back to study.
- 7. Watch your child's favorite show with him. Ask questions such as "Who is your favorite character? Why?"
- 8. Encourage your child to draw a self-portrait.
- 9. Tell your child a joke today.
- 10. Ask your child to imagine life 150 years ago. How about 150 years in the future?
- 11. Challenge your child to create a new recipe and write it down.
- 12. Have your child solve a silly math problem, such as "How many hours until your birthday?"
- 13. Give your child a say in something: which movie to watch, what kind of pizza to order or which gift to buy.
- 14. Teach your child to keep a daily to-do list.
- 15. Ask your child to teach you how to play her favorite game.
- 16. Read and discuss an editorial from today's paper with your child.
- 17. Talk with your child about your family's values and how you expect his behavior to reflect those values.
- 18. Challenge family members to learn and use three new words a day. That's over 1,000 words a year!
- 19. Emphasize the importance of attendance in school and the workplace.
- 20. Index cards are great for study notes. Students are forced to write down only the most important points.
- 21. Does your child forget to bring home books and other homework supplies? Have her post a take-home checklist inside her locker.
- 22. If your child has strong opinions on an issue, encourage him to write a letter to a public official or the editor of your newspaper.
- 23. Teach your child a three-step process for any job: *Plan, do, finish*.
- 24. Thank your child for something she did well around the house.
- 25. Look at a map of the country. Point to a region your child has never visited. What does he know about it? Help him research some facts.
- 26. Help your child set priorities when studying. What is most important? Due first? Most difficult?
- 27. Save your next five grocery receipts. Then ask your child to calculate the average amount you spent on food.
- 28. Discuss a controversial issue with your child. Ask, "What do you think?"
- 29. Tell your child what life was like when you were in school.
- 30. Let your child experience the consequences of misbehavior.
- 31. Talk with your child about a mistake you once made. What did you learn from it?

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