

Mrs. Nixon's Class Notes
March 2020

March 14, 2020

Dear Families,

With two weeks at home, many of you have requested some guidance in keeping your children working on school projects. Here are some guidelines:

Reading: They should all be reading every day. If your child is already doing this of his/her own volition, just let that continue. Usually if we are keeping reasonable limits on tech-time, most of them will read. If you have a beginning reader or reluctant reader, you can tell them I have asked that they read at least twice a day for at least 20 minutes each time. Please remember to continue reading to your child every day. I always gravitate toward historical fiction or historical story books which will hook our children on knowing about the richness of our human family. Go with the topics that most interest your child, but then surprise them every now and then.

Writing: They should all be writing every day. Again, if your student has become hooked on writing, let them continue as they are driven. If not, just give a choice of a couple of times for them to choose from. With the younger ones, you will get more from them if you take a break and enjoy writing yourself alongside your child. Possibilities include letters to family and friends; drawing and writing a story; making lists of nouns in your house, things that are blue, activities your family enjoys, the names of planets, dogs, friends, etc. The sky is the limit!

Math: If your student enjoys math with you, have a blast. If not, this can wait awhile. The older ones should have gone home with their Saxon math tests. One of these a day should suffice.

Projects and games: Remember all those Lego sets or building sets in your closet left from Christmas and birthdays? Perfect timing to pull those out! Board games are another great activity. Don't forget chess! Many of our students know how to play it now and can even teach you. Cooking offers many possibilities: cookies, breads, etc. (Some students are even doing whole meals now.) Art projects are always fun. You just have to contain the mess and enforce cleaning up afterwards.

Outdoors: Please make sure they are outside. They all love our woods and the possibilities of climbing, digging, making forts.

Cleaning: We have times at school when everyone is expected to clean a bit extra. This should be part of their home environment as well. Most students reap the

benefits of calmness and a keener sense of purpose from cleaning projects. Their need to contribute to the well-being of family is strong at this age. Take advantage!

It is all too easy to let their wonderful brains be taken in by computers, TVs, and phones these days, but the other possibilities are so much more fun, if we give them a chance.

Below you will see some photos from the week, which include the lovely lesson on handwashing to get rid of germs given by Megan Van Stry, Stephen's mom.

Enjoy these extra days with your families.

Sincerely,

Mona

March 27, 2020

Dear Families,

As we all work and play through each day, the reality of little contact with others for a couple of months can give all of us a panicky feeling at times. Variety is the key when dealing with elementary age children. They still need to repeat things for mastery, but they don't quite have that tenacious love of routine that they had as primary children. They still need routine, but a bit more variety within that routine. Many of the children will find their own best pattern if we provide the right tools.

One of the main things they need is each other, so those of you with more than one child can at least take advantage of this. If you have only one child, you will need to be the playmate more than usual, which can be challenging in maintaining your own well-being. All the more reason to develop a routine that works for everyone. I am working this out with Gage each day, and I will pass on to you some of our successes and things we are learning about each other.

Independence: For decades now I have been helping parents learn how to allow their children to be more independent, so the last few days have humbled me. With more time available, I am finding there are things I have just done for Gage that he is very capable of doing for himself. Then there are a few things he can easily learn to do if I just take a minute to give him a few pointers or demonstration. I have found that at times I just have to reorganize (and thin out) his toys, and then he takes off with them without needing me involved.

Cooperation: Expect them to help out. Sometimes just a quick, "I need your help with this," will enlist their participation. They also need to know they are contributing to the well-being of the whole family, so just as at school we have a time that everyone does jobs, at home they need to be taking care of a task for the family each day. Gage takes care of our chickens (not without whining at times.) He is also our cookie-baker (no whines.)

Expectations: What are the things you expect your child to do each day? There is some research that is showing that making one's bed each morning actually contributes to well-being. If your child takes music lessons, he most likely practices each day. Elementary children need to be reading each day. In the DeMato's home, they have a chart that everyone checks off each day. They each have their own colored marker. We are starting this in our home today.

The children really will be happier if we provide the needed structure, without filling up every minute. Children can become too dependent on someone scheduling their time. They DO need time to play and daydream (and I don't mean with electronics.) We are engaging in activities that often get ignored: puzzles, more read-aloud time, throwing balls (both inside and out.)

On Sunday I will start sending out a few suggestions each week for your children so that they can continue their academic habits and skills. Planning on around two hours each day, broken up in a way that works for your child, seems reasonable. Hopefully, they will sometimes get so involved that they don't even think about time. The other point to keep in mind is that some days no academics may happen because the activities your family is involved in may be more important. This is actually the best time of the year for all of us to have time to explore the outdoors with our children.

Meanwhile, I would suggest that everyone has on hand a wall-size map of the world, a globe, and an atlas. The best I have found are from the online Rand McNally store. The junior atlas or classroom atlas works fine for all of our elementary students. You might also consider purchasing a recorder instrument and basic recorder book from West Music for 3rd-6th graders.

Please feel free to email or call me with any questions or concerns, and let your children know they can email or call me as well.

I've enclosed a few photos to share what we have been up to.

Sincerely,

Mona



