



Valley Grove Elementary School
<http://sugarcreek.vgsd.org/>

Volume 4, Issue 4

April 2012

The Valley Grove Villager

Family News and Views



Build key critical thinking skills with planning and reflecting

As an adult, you make plans all the time. You plan the meals you're going to prepare before you head to the market. You plan how you're going to fit everything into your busy day. Then after you've carried out your plan, you look back to see what you might have done better.

Those skills of planning and reflecting turn out to be critical thinking skills for children. It turns out that children who learn the essential skill of planning, which is thinking ahead, end up with stronger reading skills. Then as they further refine their plans

(and later reflect on what they did), they develop a richer vocabulary. That, too, is helpful as they learn to read.

Sometimes, parents think that planning and making choices are the same. While a plan does require choice, it is more than just selecting from some options. Planning involves making choices based on a desired outcome. Choice A is more likely to work than Choice B. Planning also involves thinking about possible problems and

ways to avoid or overcome them.

So let your child make plans. "How could we walk to Madison's house?" Ask questions that may help your child consider potential trouble spots. "Where's the safest place for us to cross Main Street?" Then carry out the plan soon after. Later, reflect on how well the plan worked. You'll be helping your child develop skills that will help her think through any problem.

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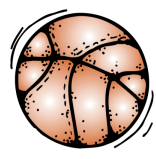
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Bird Buzz



Congratulations to the 5th and 6th grade boys travel basketball team for winning the St. Patrick's school tournament!



PSSA testing for math and reading is complete! Thank you, parents and other family members for making sure your

children got their rest and got to school on time everyday. One of the areas the State of Pennsylvania uses to judge whether our school is performing adequately is the attendance rate for the PSSA testing. While we don't yet know how students performed in math and reading, we do know that our attendance rate will be okay.

But don't relax too much yet! If your child's grade is scheduled for science or writing PSSAs, you will need to check the April calendar

and make sure they are in school on those days. Grade 4 will take the science tests the week of April 23-27. Grade 5 will take the writing PSSAs the week of April 30-May 4. If you are doing any long-range educational trip planning, make sure you check the PSSA calendar for next year's PSSA and avoid those dates!



"YOU ALWAYS PASS FAILURE ON THE WAY TO SUCCESS"

—Mickey Rooney

Primary

Encourage your kindergartner to practice writing every day

Throughout school and life, people use writing to communicate feelings and knowledge. They write stories, letters, emails, essays, job applications and more. To help your kindergartner become a strong writer (and enjoy it!):

- Keep writing supplies handy. Provide a variety of materials that will interest him, such as pencils, markers, crayons, lined paper and construction paper. Make time to use them often.

- Ask questions that inspire writing. If your child draws a picture, have him describe it. "Can you tell me a story about the person in your picture?" If he can't write the story, do it for him.
- Make a book. Have your child draw a series of pictures and put one on each page. Attach the pages with staples. Add words and read it together.
- Look for opportunities to write. Your child might copy a favorite

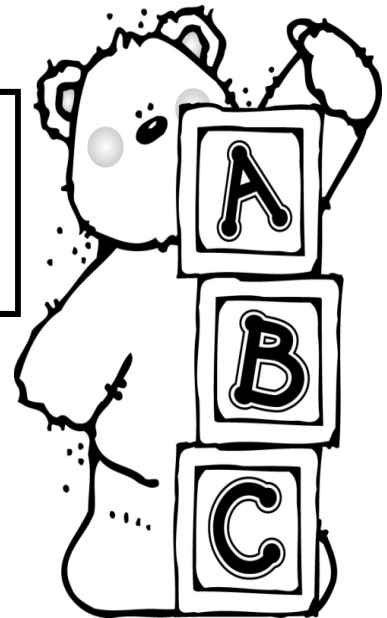
poem, keep a journal, make a shopping list, take notes on a nature walk or send a card. You can also deliver "mail" to each other!

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Valley Grove Schools EASTER VACATION

APRIL 5-10

LET'S HOPE THIS EARLY SPRING CONTINUES
TO BRING US THE BEAUTIFUL SUNSHINE



Improve your kindergartner's reading skills

Kindergarten has been underway for months and you may be wondering, "When will my child learn to read?" Many kindergartners read simple books by the end of the year. But every child is different, and that's okay!

No matter what stage of reading your kindergartner is in, it's important to:

- Use new words. Mention them in ways that show what they mean. "Clifford is the biggest dog I've ever seen! He's gigantic!" This builds your child's vocabulary. Then she's

more likely to recognize words when reading.

- Read a variety of materials. Eventually your child will read all kinds of things, such as poems, instructions, biographies and more. If you've exposed her to many printed materials, she'll be more comfortable with them.
- Encourage participation. Many kids memorize their favorite books. When you're reading aloud, let your child chime in and "read," too. If she can't figure out a word, let her give it a good try before sounding it out together.

- Play with letters. Practice making words out of letters, such as child-safe refrigerator magnets. You can also cut letters out of paper and arrange them into words together.

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Elementary

Researchers say grit is key to school success

What do spelling champions and West Point cadets have in common? It's a quality known as grit--the ability to stick with something even when it's hard.

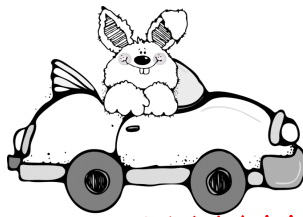
These days, researchers say grit is important. People who persist when a task gets challenging are most likely to be successful. To build grit:

- Teach your child to focus on how good it will feel to finish a tough task. "You did your homework. Now you can relax and enjoy yourself."
- Emphasize starting. People with grit don't put off unpleasant tasks. So help your child develop

the habit of getting started. "You work on homework and I'll clean these drawers. Let's see what we can finish in 15 minutes."

- Stress effort versus ability. Tell your child that success requires dedication and effort as much or more than intelligence.

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Do you know why your child needs to know math facts?

Teachers often ask parents to work on math facts at home. You may wonder whether it's really important to learn these facts. Can't your child just check a math problem on a calculator?

The answer is that a solid foundation of math facts is the basis for most higher math. By the time students reach third or fourth grade, they shouldn't have to concentrate hard to figure out the sum of 8 plus 2, or the product of 7 times 3.

When students stop to figure out these answers, they'll lose their

ability to focus on the higher-level math. They may decide they're "no good in math" and quit trying altogether.

What should parents do? Make sure your child learns the math facts so he doesn't even have to stop to think about them. Try quizzing each other in the car: "Tell me what 9 times 6 is--fast!"

You'll boost your child's knowledge of math. You'll also give him confidence to try higher-level math problems.

Technology puts a new twist on studying spelling words

Is your child tired of studying spelling words the old-fashioned way? Try using computer programs instead! Your child can:

- Type spelling words into a word-processing program and put them in different fonts (print types). She can change their color, size and design.
- Create a spreadsheet with one word in each cell--and then let the computer put them in alphabetical order.
- Combine spelling words and clip art (free illustrations that come on many computers) to make a memorable study guide.

Play online games with spelling words. A free puzzle maker is available at www.puzzlemaker.com, where your child can make word searches and more.

- Make a short presentation that displays words and their meanings. This can be done with a photo, movie or office program.

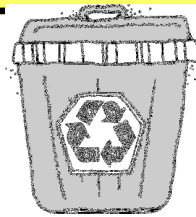
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Intermediate

Teach your middle school child to bounce back from failure



CELEBRATE EARTH DAY APRIL 22

Earth Day first began in 1970 with 20 million people across the US estimated to have participated out of concern that we were doing too much damage to our planet. Now its celebrated every year by more than a billion people in 180 nations around the world.

Activities you can do:

- Plant a tree or garden
- Build a birdhouse or animal feeder
- Clean up debris in parks or highways (NEVER DO THIS ALONE! FIND A GROUP YOU CAN HELP WITH)
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (Did you know even the foil wrapper on Hershey's kisses can be recycled?)
- Carry cloth bags to the store instead of plastic

No parent ever wants to see his child fail. But failure is a part of a life, and many students first begin to realize this during the middle school years. Now classes are more challenging. More study is needed. And a lack of organization can really set a child back.

You can't always prevent your child from falling. But you can do something even more important: Encourage her to get back up and try again. To do this:

- Be a role model. Adults do not succeed at everything they try either, especially the first time. Every day, show your child you are trying, whether it is to get a new job, learn a new skill or get organized at home. Say things like, "Sometimes I get discouraged, too, but I know I will make this happen if I keep at it."
- Emphasize effort. Children often

think that ability is the only key to success. If they fail a math test, they may say: "I just stink at math." The way not to "stink" at something is to keep practicing it. Praise your child's efforts and not just results.

- Encourage interests. Your child is just like any other person--she is more willing to stick with an activity she enjoys. And by sticking with it--whether it is reading, sports or piano--she will get better. This helps her overall self-concept. With a boost in confidence, she may be more willing to tackle less desirable and more difficult activities, because she believes she can eventually prevail.

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Middle school students often need a refresher course in respect

A child with a sense of fairness, kindness and responsibility is a child who respects others. However, these qualities don't always come naturally. And even when they do, a child may have to recommit to them in middle

school, where negative peer pressure sometimes makes it hard to do the right thing.

To reinforce respect in your home:

- Emphasize empathy. Middle school students are going through many changes. As a result, they are pretty wrapped up in themselves. So remind your child that his actions can affect others, too. Example: "You walked right past Grandma

and Grandpa without even saying hello. How do you think that made them feel?"

- Work on solving problems. Not everyone is going to agree with your child. Teach that the first response should be: "Okay, how can we cooperate?" This is a tough one. Middle school students like to have their way. But keep at it. (Cont. page 5)

(Cont. from page 4)

- Make clear you don't approve of media and games that seem to glamorize disrespectful speech or behavior. You can't police your child every moment. But you can label such media offensive and not allow them in your home.
- Don't tolerate disrespect. Your child should have consequences for disrespectful talk and

behavior. Letting it go sends the wrong message--your child will interpret it as not being a big deal. But remember that discipline must be done respectfully too. Do not insult or ever use physical punishment. That can undo in an instant all the good lessons you have been trying to teach for months.

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**YOU ARE BRAVER
THAN YOU
BELIEVE,
STRONGER THAN
YOU SEEM AND
SMARTER THAN
YOU THINK
—A.A. MILNE**

**Chef Grover
suggests:**



**CHICKEN CHILI CHEESE
CUPS**

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 1 cup cooked chicken, finely diced
- 1 (4 oz.) diced green chilies
- 2 Tbsp finely chopped cilantro
- 1/2 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 30 mini phyllo shells

Instructions:

Heat oven to 350 degrees. In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, cream, salt, and pepper. In another bowl, toss together the chicken, chilies, cilantro and cheese.

Place the phyllo shells on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Spoon 1 rounded tsp of chicken filling into each shell, then add about 1 tsp of the egg mixture. Let the shells sit for about a minute so the egg can settle to the bottom. Then add about another tsp of egg mix to each shell, filling it close to the top.

Bake the cups until the custard is set, about 15 minutes. Then enjoy! Or after the cups have cooled, freeze them for up to 2 weeks. Simply reheat them at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes.

SPRING BOOK FAIR

APRIL 16-20

MAY 15 "A World Tour"
*presented by gifted students
grade 1-6*

MAY 24 AR grades 4-6
ERIE SEAWOLVES GAME

MAY 25 AR grades 1-3

FUN IN THE SUN

MAY 31 grade 6 to

**WALDEMEER PARK and
MINI RELAY FOR LIFE/
FUN DAY for K-5**

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

JUNE 5

Per serving (1 quiche)

46 calories, 2g carbohydrates,

1g saturated fat

<http://familyfun.go.com>