

**Family Newsletter**

April 2019

**Enhancing Creative Development**

The potential to foster creativity among 11-13 year olds is tremendous! Middle schoolers are capable of problem solving in creative ways that will drive their own discoveries and their skills allow them to identify nuances and possibilities. Unfortunately, as we have seen in previous stages, opposing developmental forces conspire against the creativity of children this age, often leaving them following the herd and under-challenging their own sources of interest. Yet parents can make a difference!

Here are a few ways to foster creative thinking:

* Make learning hard enough to be challenging (so that your child will not be bored, and so they will see the value in investing their time), but easy enough to avoid total frustration. For young teens, feeling “not smart” is an instant turn off to learning. Allow manageable frustration around learning.
* Encourage experimentation as a component of learning. Ask your child to try several different methods of approaching a problem or project and then have him reflect on what was the best or most effective way of doing it.
* Encourage your child to become more observant of their own experiences. This will help give him some perspective, as well as allow him to notice what he is noticing (metacognition again). Support him to move from observations to conclusions about his observations.



* Help your child become an expert in something that interests her. For example, if your child likes science, Wondervillle is a fun interactive site to gain knowledge, confidence, and expertise while thinking creatively and having fun!
* Break Convention: Children this age are often locked into peer norms. Make home a safe place to get fanciful and go against norms. Make a dessert for dinner day, or implement a wear-your-clothes-backwards-day or stay-up-as-late-as-you-can- day. See what you and your kids can create!
* Ban the Buts: Make your house a can-do place. Help your child rephrase insecurities and hesitations by avoiding “stopping” words like “can’t” or “yes, but.” Switch them out for “yes, and” or “what if”.
* Take advantage of online creativity sites: Take advantage of the finding that children will explore new ideas behind the safety of the monitor.
* Ask open-ended questions that foster original ideas:
  + What are 3 ways that the world would be different if everyone could fly?
  + Are you more like a mountain or a valley? Why?
  + Would you rather be a highlighter or a hole punch, and why?
  + Imagine you are in London in the 1800’s. There is no electricity. How do you cook a meal?

Information provided by Scholastic.com at <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/family-life/creativity-and-critical-thinking/development-milestones/creative-development-adolescents.html>

**Learning a Second Language**

A parent’s attitude toward language learning is crucial to a child’s success, and parents don’t always recognize the value of learning a second language in a changing world. Adult Americans are for the most part monolingual. Why learn a language? It’s likely to help your child become a better thinker, as well as giving her an advantage in the work world.

Here’s what you can do to support language classes at your child’s school and language learning at home:

**Help your child make time to practice.** Learning a language is like learning to play an instrument, says Paula Patrick, foreign language coordinator for the Fairfax County, Va., public schools. There needs to be time to practice.

**Have your student teach you to say something in the language every day.** Explaining is learning. Let your child laugh at your mangled pronunciation – and correct you.

**Ask the teacher for resources your child can use at home.** The Internet offers a wealth of language resources unimaginable even a few years ago. “Challenge that teacher to think outside the box,” says Tom Welch, a former French teacher, Kentucky Teacher of the Year and principal, and currently an education consultant. “If the teacher’s not responsive, say to your child, ‘Let’s get online together and find out what we can discover that can help you.'”

**Provide videos, books and music in the language.** “You can even use these in beginning language class,” Patrick says. “You can get meaning even if you don’t get every word.” Ask the teacher for suggestions before you buy to make sure the resources are geared toward a young learner rather than an adult business traveler.

**Be an advocate.** Having a great program in elementary school doesn’t guarantee that classes will be available in middle or high school to increase your child’s skills. Ask about your district’s plans to provide continuous language-learning opportunities for students at all grade levels, and learn how you can help. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages offers tips for parents who want to advocate for language programs in their communities.

Information provided by GreatSchools.org at <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/learning-a-second-language/>

**Using Math in Everyday Life**

Unlike reading, writing, or PE, math is harder for children to recognize in day to day activities. Math is always there, whether they are counting the minutes until recess, the days until Christmas, or bargaining over how many pieces of broccoli they have to eat for dinner, children use math constantly though they may not realize it. Here are some fun and practical ways to sneak in some extra math practice in the everyday.

1. THE GROCERY STORE

Have your child ask for 2lbs of oranges or apples and see if they can measure it out on one of the hanging scales. Have him order your meat and cheese at the deli counter, directing them on how many ounces or pounds you need. For an added treat, allow your children a certain dollar amount to pick out a special snack or juice to pack for their lunches, leaving it to them to figure out if he has enough. There are many more ways to involve your children while grocery shopping, so think practically and creatively as you browse the aisles.

2. THE CAR

Ask your child to keep track of the miles on the freeway or how many miles until your next exit. The child can also help pump the gas, and bring her attention to the price per gallon and how many gallons your car can hold. Talk about how many minutes it will take to get to your destination, and see if she can guess if it’s one she is familiar with.

3. THE HOME

Cooking at home can be a fun and educational activity for the whole family and a great way to teach your child math. Understanding how ingredients have relationships to each other in a recipe is an important concept in cooking and in math. Remind your child that in math, this relationship between two quantities is called a ratio. All recipes are written to serve a certain number of people or yield a certain amount of food. You can also walk your child through reducing or increasing the serving amount in a given recipe and how to measurements for certain ingredients will change. After your math lesson, you and your child will be able to enjoy a treat!

Information provided by HorizonPrep.org at <http://www.horizonprep.org/blog/how-parents-can-teach-math-in-the-everyday>

**Answers:**

1. B 2. C 3. B 4. A 5. D  
6. A 7. C 8. D 9. C 10. D

**Understanding Common Core**

If you have a school-aged child currently learning under the Common Core Standards, you might have noticed that the curriculum your child is learning is vastly different from what you remember from your own school days. Does your third grader's homework seem impossible to you? Does your second grader mention terms you've never heard before? As Common Core takes hold, many parents have been left in the dark about what these Standards are, why they were created, and what it means for their child's education.

**What is Common Core?**

The set of Common Core Standards is an education initiative sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) that details clear, consistent educational expectations for students in the United States to achieve in each grade (K-12) in the areas of English language arts and mathematics. The Standards emphasize mastering fewer subjects, rather than a basic understanding of several topics; and analyzing and applying information rather than simply recalling it.

The goal of the Standards is to help students across all states compete with other students on a national and global scale, and ultimately prepare all graduating high school students for a 2- or 4-year college program, or the workforce. Texas, Virginia, Alaska, and Nebraska are the only states that have not yet voluntarily adopted any of the Common Core Standards, while Minnesota has only adopted the English language arts standards, so for most U.S. children, this is the new reality in school.

In an effort to bring parents up to speed, most schools distribute a "Parents' Guide" at the start of the school year when they're implementing the Common Core to help explain new terminology and concepts that apply to children's homework.

More information regarding Common Core and the changes to your child’s school curriculum can be found here: <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/parent-child/understanding-common-core-curriculum-guide-parents>

**Are you as smart as your 7th grader?**

1. What is the study of photosynthesis?
2. Photography c. Animals
3. Plants d. Insects
4. Where did Wilber and Orville Wright fly their first plane?
5. Dayton, OH c. Kitty Hawk, NC
6. Timmy, TI d. Miami, FL
7. 4/5 is equal to what?
8. 21/25 c. 90/101
9. 48/60 d. 3224/3421
10. What is on the Japanese flag?
11. Red dot c. Green dot
12. Blue dot d. Yellow dot
13. This is the main language spoken in Switzerland.
14. Swiss c. Mandarin
15. English d. German
16. A green pepper is
17. Fruit c. Meat product
18. Vegetable d. Dairy
19. The capital of Texas is
20. San Antonio c. Austin
21. Houston d. Nashville
22. A parallelogram is a
23. Triangle c. Nonagon
24. Dodechagon d. Quadrilateral
25. Beef is basically
26. Pork c. Beef
27. Red meat d. Fish
28. Who was the third President of the United States?
29. John Adams c. Ben Franklin
30. George Washington d. Thomas Jefferson

“Dr. Herbert Benson, a pioneer in mind/body medicine and author of *The Relaxation Response*, says that the repetitive action of needlework can induce a relaxed state like that associated with meditation and yoga. Once you get beyond the initial learning curve, knitting and crocheting can lower heart rate and blood pressure and reduce harmful blood levels of the stress hormone cortisol.”(well.blogs)

These sources might help you get started:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHjftEZQxNc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONVQCK_-rKc>

Articles adapted from [www.healthfitnessrevolution.org](http://www.healthfitnessrevolution.org) and <https://well.blogs.nytimes/com/2016/01/25/the-health-benefits-of-knitting/>,



Articles written by Miranda Findlay.

**Some Health Benefits of Knitting**

By Shirley Brozzo

If you thought that knitting was just for Grandma, think again! Research has shown that Granny may be on to something.

1. It keeps your mind active. You have to follow the pattern in order for your project to turn out right. After all, no one wants a sweater with three arms or no neck hole!
2. There is a sense of purpose. Any knitter can’t wait to get to the end of the project and see the final results. It’s just like finishing a jigsaw puzzle.
3. Knitting (and crocheting) can help to relieve stress. The patterns help you to focus on the project at hand, and not to worry about other things.
4. This concentration also helps you to calm hyperactivity and give you something tangible to work on.
5. There is some evidence that knitting also helps to improve your memory. Much like riding a bike, you will get better with practice. Also, you will recall earlier mistakes you make and work to correct or prevent them from happening again.
6. Taking on a project like knitting also helps to build and promote good habits. Even though much of this is a repetitive action, you don’t have time to engage in mindless eating, smoking, or restless movements.
7. Still another side benefit is gaining more strength in your upper limbs, particularly your hands and arms.
8. It’s a great break from technology. You are unplugged and can work in a group setting, if you choose.
9. Knitting may not have a reputation as a sport, but it can be considered one. This is a leisure time activity, just like a game of touch football.
10. Remember that group setting? There are many knitting and crocheting groups that you can join for comradery and companionship. Having others around with similar interests could also strengthen your skills or add to your body of knowledge.

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