



PARENTING POSTS

A newsletter for parents of fourth-grade students

The World Connection

The fourth-grade student is entering an exciting time of life. Preadolescence is a new stage of development and a new way of seeing things. Suddenly your child is connecting with many meaningful experiences. School and studies inform them about the real world. Math can be used to solve shopping problems. Science reveals things he or she sees in the child's environment. Reading involves stories with real plots. The skills practiced in the first few grades finally are usable. The student is ready to be an active contributor to their own life. This student is ready to discover more. The early grades are where your child has learned to read; fourth grade is where the student begins to read to learn!

Making Choices About Their World

Offering choices will open new opportunities for your child. Children are not an extension of their parents and should not be expected to fulfill the parents' dreams. A parent who had wanted to be a national baseball star may well have a child more interested in music than baseball. Children grow and change, as do their interests, and parents need to be flexible and supportive. A youngster who loved ball as a preschooler may get his or her fill of local competition early in his or her school years and decide to pursue something else.

Because peer identity is becoming more important, this can be a great time to choose a club or group to join. **Children this age have a need to belong to a group.** Groups, positive and negative, may develop on their own. Research the variety of clubs, teams and activities available for your child's age.



Guiding your child to explore a variety of interests during these preadolescent years is important. This is the time a child can try many things to determine what he or she enjoys.

Stress Less Activity



Stress is part of everyone's life. Even young children! Try this activity with your child to help reduce stress and enjoy time together.

Invite your child to create their own calm down space. Talk about what helps them feel calm, where the space could be located and what they will keep there. Will the space include books, crossword puzzles, building blocks, solitary games, music, a favorite blanket and pillow?

Consider how the groups are organized and led. Talk to the adult leaders to determine the amount of time this activity really will take. Do these groups have practices, expectations, volunteering by parents, added expenses, travel, clothing or equipment needs? Will this activity take more than its fair share of the family resources? Does the goal of the group match your family beliefs and values? How interested and possibly committed is your child?

Looking to an adult other than parents is an exciting experience for the fourth-grade student. Clubs, teams or other activities can be a positive option for youth to channel energies in a meaningful direction.

Because every child needs to feel accepted and worthwhile, **choose a group where successes are applauded and failures are minimized.** Choose activities that also help the child build personal skills and that they can compare with his or her past performances, but not necessarily to others.

Joining groups or taking classes can be overdone. Parents need to help their child adjust to and balance additional activities. Set realistic expectations based on the child's developing interests and abilities. Age guidelines can help. Give the child an opportunity to try a variety of activities. Observe carefully. Is there an option to try a short session first? consider all of the costs and benefits of each sport, club and activity. Support your child's interests and opportunities to participate and grow.



Go here for more information on this and other topics.

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Making Choices About Their Problems or Conflicts

At times, parents need to offer choices for a different reason. Children this age experience conflicts and need to be aware of options available in problem solving. Problem solving involves making choices.

When you and your child, or your child and siblings or peers, become involved in conflicts, consider the following problem-solving steps useful for working through concerns.

Situation:

Anna and Charlie each get one hour of TV time a day. They are quarreling over who gets to sit in the comfortable chair to watch television.

Get agreement on what the problem really is before trying to solve it.

Some examples:

- They both sit in the chair together or they alternate at commercials.
- One child can use a stool.
- The child who sits in the chair will set the table for the next meal.
- Get a parent to decide whose turn it is.
- The person who is using his or her TV time gets the chair.
- One child can pursue another meaningful activity at this time.
- Turn off the television until a peaceful solution is reached.

Choose some ideas to try:

Together select an idea to try. Revisit the plan in a couple of days (or as needed) to see how the solution is working. If it's not working, choose another solution. Repeat.

(Adapted from Pick Up Your Socks, © 1990, Elizabeth Cray. Used with permission of Parenting Press Inc., P.O. Box 75267, Seattle, WA 98125.)

Not living with your child?

If you are able to do so, volunteer to help with a group, club or activity your child attends. If distance prevents you from being there with your child, consider paying for the activity, the "gear" or instrument rental. Show interest in the child's latest endeavors when you are able to connect. Recognize that your child is learning about his or her world and the many possibilities in it, so the child will make a variety of attempts before landing on a favorite pastime.