

WARDLAW + HARTRIDGE

LOWER SCHOOL

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Rising First Grade

Dear Kindergarten Families,

It has been a wonderful year full of learning and fun! Our students have worked incredibly hard and have grown tremendously as learners. We are proud of all of the progress they made during the 2024-2025 school year.

As the school year winds down, we encourage you to plan for a summer of reading, writing, and mathematics with your children. It is so important that we continue to expose our youngest learners to quality literature, and mathematical thinking while modeling a love for reading, writing, and mathematics, even when school is not in session!

Of course, the summer is a time for vacations, camping, and pursuing new interests. However, we do encourage you to make time to read aloud with your child, write stories, and play educational games.

We respect your vacation time and the need for children to play in the summer is paramount. The activities and suggestions on the following pages are recommended, yet they remain optional.

Have a safe, healthy, and happy summer!

The W+H Lower School Teachers

Summer Home-to-School Connections

In the following pages, you will find activities and guidance for academically supporting your child over the summer months.

READING ACTIVITIES:

- Summer Read Aloud
- Reading at Home Tips
- Suggested Reading List
- Engaging Young Readers with Questioning

WRITING ACTIVITIES:

- Writing at Home Tips
- Summer Postcards

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Self-Help and Routines

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL...PLAY.

Summer Home-to-School Connection

Summer Read Aloud

Every Rising Junior Kindergarten through Rising First Grade student is receiving a copy of the same book, The Gardener, written by Sarah Stewart. We ask that you read it together over the summer. We ask you to take the time so that your family can participate in this special activity. There is great importance in reading aloud at home. A growing body of research describes the complex and permanent effects of reading aloud. Reading aloud at home is valuable because it better prepares your child to be an effective reader, and it is also a fun, worthwhile family activity. Children who are ready to learn to read more easily and become better readers. Literacy skills provide the basis for a lifetime of learning and productivity.

We know that you'll enjoy this special reading time with your child. When we return in the fall we will discuss this book with your child.

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Reading at Home Tips

Read, read, read! Read aloud to your child each day in addition to their own independent reading. Being read to is one of the best ways to begin to develop as a reader. Read his/her favorite stories, and have him/her read to you. Take your child to the library to let him/her choose books to read, too!

This is an exciting time for our child as a reader. We have a long summer to relax, so it is important that beginning readers continue to practice their reading skills every day to keep them sharp. As your child grows as a reader, it is also important to make sure that they understand what they are reading.

- Children should continue to read out loud to you for 10-15 minutes per day from a “just right” book. A “just right” book should be a book that your child can read comfortably and understand with only a little help from you.
- Continue to read aloud to your child from a variety of different genres and from books on a variety of different topics. You never know what will spark interest.
- Choose a series together to read over the summer and follow the same character through different adventures.
- Encourage your child to reread for fluency or “reread until you sound like you are talking.”
- Explore audiobooks! Listening to a book (while following along in print, or just listening) is a great option if a selected book is too challenging for the reader.
- Read, and reread! Picture books are great ones to repeat to allow your child to see the words and connect them to what they hear.
- Ask questions before, during, and after reading. As you read together, ask your child questions about the story. These questions will help them develop strong reading comprehension skills, and at the same time, will help you monitor their comprehension. On the next page, find examples of questioning techniques.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Engaging Young Readers with Questioning

As your child grows as a reader, it is important to make sure they understand what they are reading. Here are some quick and easy prompts you can ask to encourage comprehension.

FICTION

- Who are the characters? What are they like?
- How did the character feel when _____? How do you know?
- Why did the character _____?
- Did the character change in the story? How?
- What is the setting? Where does the story take place? When does the story take place?
- What is the problem? How is the problem solved?
- What lesson do the characters learn?
- What do you predict will happen next?
- How did the story begin?
- What was your favorite part? Why was that your favorite part?
- Why should other kids read this book?
- How did the story end?

NON-FICTION

- What did you learn about this topic?
- What was the big idea in this book? What did the author want you to learn?
- Do you think this is a good title for this book? Why or why not?
- What are some new words you learned?
- Do you have any questions after reading this book

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Suggested Reading List

FICTION TO READ TOGETHER

- Sprout Street Neighbors –
Anna Alter
- Magic Animal Rescue –
E.D. Baker
- Humphrey Series –
Betty G. Birney
- Zoey and Sassafras –
Asia Cirto
- Beverly Cleary Stories
- Leroy Ninker Saddles Up –
Kate DiCamillo
- Sam the Man Series –
Frances O’Roark Dowell
- Little Bo Series –
Julie Andrews Edwards
- My Father’s Dragon –
Ruth Gannett
- Nuts About Science Series –
Michelle Houts
- Park Pal Adventures Series –
Johanna Hurwitz
- Toys Go Out –
Emily Jenkins
- Grasshopper Magic –
Lynne Jonell
- Gooney Bird Greene Series –
Lois Lowry
- Winnie the Pooh –
A.A. Milne
- Gooseberry Park –
Cynthia Rylant
- Paddington Treasury –
Michael Bond

BEGINNING READERS SERIES

- Frog & Friends –
Eve Bunting
- Owl Diaries –
Rebecca Elliot
- Flat Stanley –
Jeff Brown
- Cork and Fuzz –
Dori Chaconas
- Mercy Watson –
Kate DiCamillo
- Princess Posey –
Stephanie Greene
- Bramble and Maggie –
Jessie Haas
- Sophia Martinez –
Jacqueline Jules
- Poppy, the Pirate Dog –
Liz Kessler
- Sam and Charlie –
Leslie Kimmelman
- Judy Moody –
Megan McDonald
- Fancy Nancy –
Jane O’Connor
- Amelia Bedelia –
Peggy Parish
- The Berenstain Bears –
Stan & Jan Berenstain

NON-FICTION TO READ TOGETHER

- Tarra and Bella – Carol Buckley
- My First Book of... – Sports Illustrated for Kids
- Pet Perspectives Series – Flora Brit
- If You Were a Kid... – Scholastic
- Curious George Science Storybooks – H.A. Rey
- Who Wants to Be a Princess? – Bridget Heos
- Animal Talk – Seon-Hye Jang & Hyeong-Jin Lee
- National Geographic Readers
- 10 Fascinating Facts About... – Rookie Star
- You're Pulling My Leg – Pat Street
- What Happens to Our Trash – D.J.Ward
- If Sharks Disappeared – Lily Williams

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Writing at Home Tips

During the summer, routines are especially important, as your children are out of the school routine. Routines are as simple as when you get home - putting shoes in a specific place each time, but in this space, we are talking about the oft-forgotten routine of daily writing.

A big part of writing is getting ideas out even prior to writing. Ask those open-ended questions about what they think about things to allow them to explore language and express their ideas.

Writing is also like a marathon, one needs to begin somewhere. Have children keep a writing journal, and remember, it doesn't have to be all narrative stories. They can keep a diary of their day or special trips. They can create poems and acrostics, they can include photos of experiences and just label those photos with captions. They might cut things out of magazines or newspapers that they really like and caption those as well. They could make lists, even your grocery shopping list. Writing is writing and in the case of stamina, that is all that matters. Inventive spelling is key at this age. Try not to interfere too much with their spelling. Look for initial sounds, blends they know, and final sounds to be accurate-ish. (For example, ise creem would be appropriate for ice cream). The goal at this point in their development is to let them sound out/encode words. At this point, children are familiar with the correct formation of all uppercase and lowercase letters, therefore check to be sure they are forming those correctly. Keep the examples of the letters available so they may use it as a reference to write, as they may forget from time to time.

Finally, most often, good writers begin as good readers. Familiarity with quality literature and stories opens your mind to creating your own. All of the reading tips help with writing. Additionally, there are great podcasts out which will continue the improvement in both areas. Little Stories for Tiny People and Circle Round, are examples of podcasts designed specifically for children ages 3-5.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Summer Postcards

Feel free to send us postcards from your summer, whether you travel far and wide, or stay close to home! We would love to stay connected!

Please address postcards to:

The Wardlaw + Hartridge School
Lower School
1295 Inman Avenue
Edison, NJ 08820

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Math Practice

The best way to continue to develop your child's mathematic skills is to continue building their one-to-one correspondence (the ability to match number of objects to the number they are reciting), subitizing (the ability to 'see' a number of objects and know what they are without counting) and reviewing concepts taught throughout their Kindergarten school year. While children of this age have a varied set of knowledge and abilities, as they enter First Grade, the best way to review the important concepts taught in Kindergarten is to play games. Whenever possible, provide concrete representations of the numbers/concepts. For example, if you are practicing addition stories, provide your child with items like Cheerios, legos, marbles, etc. to allow them to "see" and visualize the numbers.

Here are a few tips, as well, for summer math learning:

- View road trips as a mobile classroom.

Have children count cars, trucks, etc on the highway. Talk about shapes you see and make up addition and subtraction stories about your travels.

- Use everyday errands as learning opportunities.

At the grocery store, review numbers while you choose groceries, for example, adding the quantity of apples, and do simple number/cardinal (1st, 2nd) recognition while standing in line.

- Transform routine chores into fun lessons for young children.

Sort laundry: colors, whites, and darks; bake and cook together: measuring, counting, etc.

- Turn children's collections into math lessons.

Children love to collect and gather items, especially at the park, beach, forest, or even in the backyard. Encourage children to sort their items by size, color, shape or texture.

Self-Help & Routines

As children grow, their ability to care for themselves in small ways also grows. Help your child develop self-help skills over the summer. Students should be able to use the bathroom, put on/zip jackets, and eat independently.

Help your child learn to grow as a member of the classroom community by learning how to share, take turns, be kind, honest, and respect others. You can also have them practice by following one and two-step directions to follow within their routines. For example: When I get ready for bed, I use the bathroom, wash my hands, and brush my teeth. Following some sort of daily routine that you determine will prepare students for the daily routines they will learn to follow independently in First Grade. As your child grows, you will notice new developmental changes in their ability to be independent. Five and six-year-olds can make some choices on their own. Provide them with either/or choices throughout their days to allow them to exercise their growing need to do things themselves.

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Play

Most importantly, the best thing you can do with your child over the summer is to spend time together, rest, and let them play! Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact with the world around them.

As outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, play is the work of the child for many important developmentally crucial reasons.

1. Children make their own decisions.

When children choose how to play for themselves, they experience freedom in making those choices. They also begin to see connections between choice and the consequences or results of that choice. The type of toys or materials parents offer can help their children make more meaningful decisions. Open-ended materials can be used in many ways so children can decide for themselves how to use them. For example, a child can imagine a block to be a fire truck or any number of things. A toy fire truck, on the other hand, is usually used as a fire truck. Foam pieces, little wooden sticks, ribbon scraps, and other reusable resources are all open-ended materials that inspire creative thinking and delight when children use them to make something no one has ever made before.

2. Children are intrinsically motivated.

The impulse to play comes from a natural desire to understand the world. This play impulse is as strong as your child's desire for food or sleep. It is this intrinsic motivation that allows a child to regulate their own feelings and desires in order to keep playing. Because children eventually find it more important to be part of play with their friends than to satisfy their own wants and needs at that moment, children learn self-control. And self control has been shown to lead to success in later years, especially in today's information age, where distractions are part of daily life.

3. Children become immersed in the moment.

In true play, children are so fully engaged that they lose awareness of their surroundings, time, and space. In this risk-free atmosphere where reality is suspended, children have the security and safety they need to experiment, try new ideas, and investigate the laws of nature. Although they are immersed in their play, children still can recognize reality versus fantasy, something parents often wonder about.

4. Play is spontaneous, not scripted.

Often, play is totally unplanned. Other times, play is planned but a child impulsively makes a change. One child changes his mind, or perhaps a toy does not cooperate. This sense of the unknown provides children with opportunities to develop flexibility in their thinking and decision making, which is a vital life skill.

5. Play is enjoyable.

Play always has an emotional response attached to it. Without this emotional connection, the experience is simply an activity; it is not PLAY. Enjoyment is the direct result of engaging in play. It is FUN! These five essential elements of play outline why play provides your child with a rich experience. And isn't that what we want for our children, to develop play memories that will become the "good old days"?

And so, all of the suggestions and recommendations we provide you with cannot take the place of play. They are all supplemental to the core of the work of the child. Let them play.

Have a great summer.

Your Lower School Teachers