



WARDLAW + HARTRIDGE
LOWER SCHOOL



Summer Home-to-School Connections

June 2026

Rising Fifth Grade

Dear Fourth Grade 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 2025-2026 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 Lower School Office

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:

- Rising 5th Grade Summer Read
- Reading at Home Tips
- Choosing the Right Book
- Engaging Readers with Questioning
- Responding to Reading
- Suggested Reading List

WRITING ACTIVITIES:

- Writing at Home Tips
- Summer Themed Writing Prompts
- Parent's Guide to Writing Mechanics
- Summer Postcards

MATHEMATICS ACTIVITIES:

- Math Practice

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Educational Apps to Support Learning
- Self-Help, Self-Control, and Routines
- Guidance to Support the Related Arts

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL...PLAY.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Rising 5th Grade Summer Read

Every present fourth grade student rising to the fifth grade will be receiving a book, *Frindle* by Andrew Clements. We will discuss this book when we return to school in September.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

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, but also choose some yourself.

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. They should additionally read to themselves for at least 20 minutes per day.
- 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. Picture books are NOT only easy readers. There are many available at higher reading levels.
- 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

Choosing the Just Right Book

Children become good readers one book at a time. But, how do you help a child choose the right books? You don't have to be an expert to guide your child to books that are a good fit for them: entertaining, enlightening, and challenging (but, not overwhelming).

Selecting a book is a useful skill that children should fine-tune at every age. Choosing a book independently teaches a child that we seek out books for different reasons. With the following easy strategies, you can coach your child to make this important decision for him/herself.

□ WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

Introduce the idea that everyone reads with a purpose in mind, even if that purpose is pure enjoyment/entertainment.

Ask him/her:

- What type of book are you looking for today? Why?
- Are you looking for fiction or non-fiction?
- Tell me a little bit about why you picked this one.

□ SAY YES!

Give your child agency when choosing books. Say yes to their choice as often as you are able to. A book your child wants to read is the one you want to take home. Don't worry if you feel a book seems too short or too easy. All of those things are perfectly acceptable for leisure/pleasure reading.

□ USE THE FIVE FINGER RULE

A great rule of thumb is the Five Finger Rule. Open the book to a random page and have your child show one hand. Have your child read the page aloud to you. For each word, they are not able to decode or count on a finger. If all five fingers are counted before the start of the next page, the book is most likely too challenging for the child to read independently.

□ TOO CHALLENGING?

If you find a book is too challenging for your child to read independently, do not worry. This is a great book for you to read together. Another great option is to pair the book with the audiobook. Listening to words read and following along with the text also helps readers grow.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Engaging Readers with Questioning

As your child grows as a reader, it is important to make sure they understand what they are reading. In this stage, they will become a more and more confident reader. They shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” It becomes very important in Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade for students to have a literal and inferential understanding of both fiction and nonfiction texts. Here are some quick and easy prompts you can ask to encourage comprehension.

FICTION

Any question that can be answered directly in the text is considered a literal question. Often, these questions start with who, what, when, and where.

Literal questions ask the reader to recall facts explicitly stated in the text. Students should be able to locate answers in the text with increasing proficiency in the upper elementary grades. Help them practice this skill by asking “Where did you find that?”

- ☐ Who are the characters? What are they like?
- ☐ How did the character feel when _____? How do you know?
- ☐ Why did the character _____?
- ☐ Who is telling the story? From what point of view?
- ☐ How does the character change in the story?
- ☐ What is the setting? Where does the story take place? When does the story take place? Does the setting change throughout the story?
- ☐ What is the problem? What is the solution?
- ☐ What lesson do the characters learn?
- ☐ What do you predict will happen next?
- ☐ How did the story begin?
- ☐ How did the story end?
- ☐ What happened first? Second? Last?
- ☐ Where in the book would you find _____?

Any question that cannot be answered directly in the text, and needs an opinion, is considered an inferential question. Inferential questions ask the reader to apply knowledge from the text to form their own opinion responding to some element of the text. The reader has to go beyond the text to answer a question. The answer is often implied. Students should be able to locate evidence in the text that might support their thinking, but they are unlikely to find a specific thing to answer the question. These questions are typically more challenging for children to answer. Help them practice this skill by asking “Why do you think that?”

- ☐ Why should other kids read this book?
- ☐ What was your favorite part? Why was that your favorite part?
- ☐ Why did the character feel?
- ☐ What made the character do _____?
- ☐ Explain why the characters acted in the way they did.
- ☐ What do you think (excerpt a quote from the book) means?
- ☐ How would the story have changed if _____?
- ☐ How is _____ similar to _____?
- ☐ How is _____ different than _____?
- ☐ What was the turning point?
- ☐ What were the motives behind _____?
- ☐ What are some other possible outcomes to _____?
- ☐ What might have caused _____?
- ☐ What is the moral of the story?

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

Responding to Reading

Writing about reading is a great way to practice both important skills in the summer. Your child can write about some of the books they read using the following prompts to help them get started. Each entry should have the title and author of the book, so it can be referred to again.

FICTION

- What was your favorite part of the story? Why was this part important?
- How did the main character change in the story?
- What lesson did the character learn in the story?
- Does this book (or a part of the book) remind you of another book? Explain why.
- Does this book (or a part of the book) remind you of someone or something in your life? Explain why.
- What was unique about the way the author wrote the book?
- Describe the main character. What are some character traits that describe him/her?
- What was the setting? How does the setting impact the story?
- What was the problem? How was the problem solved?
- How are you similar or different from the main character? Use at least two reasons to describe your thinking.

NONFICTION

- What new or interesting information did you learn in this book?
- Describe two nonfiction text features that you noticed. How did they help you understand the topic?
- What was the main idea of the book? What did the author want you to learn?
- What is something unique about this nonfiction book?
- Why do you think the author chose the title? Is it a good title? Why or why not? If not, come up with an alternate title.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Suggested Reading List

FICTION

- *The Stories Julian Tells* – Ann Cameron
- *The Hundred Dresses* – Eleanor Estes
- *Where the Sidewalk Ends* – Shel Silverstein
- *Wringer* – Jerry Spinelli
- *Wonder* – R.J. Palacio
- *Frindle* – Andrew Clements
- *How to Train Your Dragon* – Cressida Cowell
- *Fantastic Mr. Fox* – Roald Dahl
- *The Tale of Despereaux* – Kate DiCamillo
- *Rules* – Cynthia Lord
- *The One and Only Ivan* – Katherine Applegate
- *Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes* – Jonathan Auxier
- *Dragon Slayers Academy* – Kate McMullan
- *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* - J.K. Rowling
- *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* – Louis Sachar
- *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* – Jacqueline Kelly
- *The Boxcar Children* – Gertrude Chandler Warner
- *Charlotte's Web* – E.B. White
- *Mango and Bambang: The Not-a-Pig* – Clara Vulliamy
- *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* – Bette Bao Lord
- *Summer of the Gypsy Moths* – Sara Pennypacker
- *May B.* – Caroline Starr Rose
- *When You Reach Me* – Rebecca Stead
- *Upside Down Magic: Showing Off* – Sarah Mlynowski, Lauren Myracle & Emily Jenkins
- *The Mysterious Benedict Society* – Trenton Lee Stewart
- *Harper and the Scarlet Umbrella* – Cerrie Burnell
- *Heartwood Hotel: A True Home* – Kallie George
- *Jada Jones Series* - Kelly Starling Lyons
- *The Expeditioners* – S.S.Taylor
- *The Funniest Man in Baseball: The True Story of Max Patkin* – Audrey Vernick
- *Grilled Cheese and Dragons* – Nancy Krulik
- *Jasmine Toguchi, Drummer Girl* – Debbi Michiko Florence
- *Lunch Lady* – Jarrett J. Krosoczka
- *Mercy Watson to the Rescue* – Kate DiCamillo
- *Never Girls* – Kiki Thorpe
- *Strongheart: Wonderdog of the Silver Screen* – Candace Fleming

NON-FICTION

- *100 Things to Be When You Grow Up* – National Geographic
- *The Official DC Super Hero Joke Book* – Michael Robin, Sarah Parvis & Noah Smith
- *Seymour Simon Books*
- *If You Were a Kid...* – Scholastic
- *A Picture Book of...Biographies* – David Adler
- *Let's Read and Find Out Series*
- *True Books Series*
- *National Geographic Kids 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
- *Math for All Seasons* – Greg Tang
- *How Things Work in the House* – Lisa Ernst
- *National Geographic Weird But True Series*
- *Who Was... Biographies*
- *What Was... Series*
- *Around the World on Eighty Legs* – Amy Gibson
- *Scholastic True or False*
- *If You... Series*
- *Lincoln Tells a Joke: How Laughter Saved the President (And the Country)* – Stacy Innerst
- *Glow Animals with Their Own Night-Lights* – W.H. Beck
- *The Quickest Kid in Clarksville* - Pat Zietlow Miller
- *Beatrix Potter and the Unfortunate Tale of a Borrowed Guinea Pig* – Deborah Hopkinson
- *DNA Detective* - Tanya Lloyd
- *Tree Lady: The True Story of How One Tree-Loving Woman Changed a City Forever* – H. Joseph Hopkins
- *The Notorious Benedict Arnold* – Steve Sheinkin
- *Nice Work, Franklin* – Suzanne Tripp Juryman
- *Mean Machines Customized Cars* – Kane Miller
- *The Kid from Diamond Street: The Extraordinary Story of Baseball Legend Edith Houghton* – Audrey Vernick
- *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker* – Robbie Robertson
- *I Am Series*
- *Yaks Yack Animal Word Pairs* – Linda Sue Park
- *Masterpieces Up Close Western Painting from the 14th to 20th Centuries* – Claire d'Harcourt
- *Biggest and Smallest! Guinness World Records Over 300 Fun Facts*

Summer Home-to-School Connections

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's all that matters. Correct spelling is important for words they should know. Words that can be phonetically encoded, should be spelled correctly. However, more challenging words may be spelled using their former inventive strategy. Try not to interfere too much with their spelling. Look for initial sounds, blends they know, and final sounds to be accurate with those next-level words. (For example, inspurashun would be appropriate for inspiration). The goal at this point in their development is to let them continue to sound out/encode words, yet hold them accountable for other words. However, we know they have added many more sight words and encoding strategies to their toolbox. Encourage them to hear the sounds in the words, and encourage them to use resources where they might find words they look to spell. Keep a word list or word journal handy. As they learn correct spellings of new words, they can write them in alphabetical order as their personal spelling dictionary.

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.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Summer Themed Writing Prompts

If your child has trouble thinking of what to write from time to time (or even most of the time!), give them the following prompts to get their juices flowing!

- What is your favorite family summer tradition?
- How would summer vacation be different if it was taken during the months of December through February?
- Describe how to build a sandcastle. Use sequence words to help you.
- Does your family have any special rules during the summer? What are they?
- What is your favorite summer memory so far?
- What is your favorite summer treat? Why?
- Should you catch lightning bugs and keep them in a jar? Why or why not?
- Is it better to be outside or inside during the summer? Explain your thinking.
- Bedtime should be later during the summer. Agree or disagree? Explain why.
- Should teachers assign summer homework? Why or why not?
- How did you spend the 4th of July?
- Which month of summer is best? Why?
- Write a poem describing a beautiful summer day. Use your five senses to help!
- Write a story from the perspective of a fish. What would it be like to live underwater?
- Write about the first time you jumped or dove into the deep end of the pool.
- Have you learned a new skill this summer? If so, write about it. If not, what would you like to learn?
- How are the beginning and end of summer different?
- Write about a summer camp experience.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Parent's Guide to Writing Mechanics

As adults, we are tempted to go in there with a red pen and fix it all. Remember, writing has developmental levels just as any other subject. As children learn to write, they must internalize rules for spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar so they can communicate their ideas clearly and efficiently.

My child has a hard time remembering and/or using the punctuation rules.

- Have your child read a familiar story, but before he/she begins, instruct them to replace all punctuation with a funny sound. This will help children learn to look for punctuation as they are reading aloud.
- Deliberately leave out punctuation marks when you are writing emails or letters to friends/family and have children read and add in punctuation for you.

My child has a hard time remembering and/or using the capitalization rules.

- Provide your child with a list or paragraph of completed sentences with no capital letters. Have him/her correct which letters should be capitalized. Sentences from books, magazines, or even comic strips can be used.
- Provide students with an editing checklist that includes the rules of basic capitalization (beginnings of sentences, proper nouns, etc.) Have them outline those capital letters with colored pencils to have them stand out.
- Have your child keep a personal spelling dictionary or word wall close to where they do their homework or writing each day. Help them add the correct spelling of words and hold them accountable for spelling these words correctly on all writing moving forward.
- Stay out of the drafting phase. Let children spell and write as they see fit, initially. Once they have their ideas on paper, THEN help them edit.
- Familiarize children with how to use spell-check on word processing programs.

My child struggles to remember and/or apply grammar rules, such as noun-verb agreement when writing.

- Have your child read work out loud and prompt errors with “Does that sound right?” If your child cannot identify his/her error (most often they can!), present them with two choices (incorrect and correct) and say “Does this sound right, or does this sound right?”
- Use favorite picture books or chapter books to highlight different grammar concepts to hold interest longer. Author Brian P. Cleary’s series about parts of speech is a funny, fun way to explain grammar.

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 mathematical skills is to continue building their knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication & division facts and reviewing concepts taught throughout their fourth grade school year. One of the most important concepts in this grade is continuing to exercise mental math abilities. Children should work on their mental math skills by utilizing ten in both addition/subtraction and multiplication/division operations. For example, $22 + 34 = ?$ {Think: $20 + 34$ is 54, so $22 + 24$ is 56.} Or, $25 \times 16 = ?$ {Think: 100×16 is 1600, so half of that (50×16) would be 800, and half of that (25×16) would be 400!} In this case, do not write it down! They can practice their mental math this summer with anything! While children of this age have a varied set of knowledge and abilities, as they enter Fifth Grade, the best way to review the important concepts taught in Fourth Grade is to play games and to work through the Singapore Math Fact Fluency workbook provided. 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 things you see and make up operational 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 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.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Educational Apps to Support Learning

Authentic, tactile experiences will always be best for your child's learning. However, there are some excellent apps on the market, which are good supplemental ways to add to your child's learning experience. Below find a list of apps you might like to try.

-Speed Reading Academy

-EPIC Virtual Library

-Reading Rainbow

-Time for Kids

-Starfall

-Endless Spanish

-Dr. Seuss Treasury

-Splash Math

-Khan Academy

-FlowPlus

-Marble Math Junior

-Mental Math

-Bubble Math

-Lola's Fruit Shop Sudoku

-Mystery Math Town

-iTooch

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Self-Help, Self-Impulse Control, & 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. Your child is still learning and it's our job, as parents and teachers, to be patient and teach them these skills also.

Help your child learn to grow as a member of the classroom community by learning how to share, take turns, be kind, and honest, and respect others. You can also have them practice by following multi-step directions to follow within their routines. Following some sort of daily routine that you determine will prepare students for the daily routines they will learn to follow independently in Fifth Grade. As your child grows, you will notice new developmental changes in their ability to be independent. Nine and ten-year-olds can make many 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.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Summer Ideas from Teachers of the Related Arts

There are also many things your family can do to support the work your child learned in classes such as Spanish, Music, and Art.

ART

- Plan to visit some museums over the summer. Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton is a great place for a day out with the family. The Princeton Museum at the University is also a nice first size museum to go to together.
- Have plenty of art supplies on hand, especially paper. Do art activities together, but also allow your child to have the gift of freedom of expression.
- As you read picture books with your child, have them describe to you not only what they see in the book, but also have them describe what they see in their mind.
- Limit time on devices, encourage building with blocks, playing board games, rollerblading, and riding bikes together. This helps them develop ideas for their drawings.

SPANISH

- Review what we studied in Fourth Grade using the LS Spanish Haiku Page by saying the words you find there, and have your child point them out on the webpage.
- Help your child become more familiar with Spanish by watching Spanish TV Programs with English captions.
- Read bilingual books with your child checking them out from your local library.
- Teach a friend or relative what you learned in Fourth Grade in Spanish class.

MUSIC

- Listen to music with your child! All types of music!
- Classical music is an excellent way to calmly start the day. Listen to classical music during breakfast, or a transition time.
- There is a wide variety of different musical toys to expose children to new instruments without making a financial commitment to the instrument itself.
- Podcasts designed for children are also a great way to develop your child musically.
 - *PeaceOut*
 - *Saturday Morning Cereal Bowl*
 - *OKTK Kids' Music Monthly*
 - *KidsCorner*

Summer Home-to-School Connections

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. Play is still important for early adolescence.

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 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.