

WARDLAW + HARTRIDGE

LOWER SCHOOL

Summer Home-to-School Connections

June 2026

Rising Kindergarten

Dear Junior 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 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, mathematical thinking, while modeling a love for reading, writing, and mathematics, even when school is not in session!

While summer is a wonderful time for vacations, PLAY, and exploring new interests, we also encourage families to make time for reading aloud, writing stories, and enjoying educational games together. The activities on the following pages are simply optional suggestions to support learning in fun and engaging ways throughout the summer!

Have a safe, healthy, and happy summer!

Your JK Teachers - Mrs. Martha Restrepo & Ms. Laura Huffman

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

WRITING ACTIVITIES:

Writing at Home Tips

Summer Postcards

ADDITIONAL:

Self-Help and Routines

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL...**PLAY.**

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Summer Read Aloud

Every Junior Kindergarten moving to Kindergarten is receiving a copy of the book, *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens. We ask that you read it together over the summer as there is great importance in reading aloud with family. A growing body of research describes the complex and permanent effects of reading aloud. Reading aloud at home and with family 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.

Enjoy this special reading time with your child!

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Reading at Home Tips

Read, read, read! Read aloud to your child each day. Even our youngest students are readers before they can actually decode text! Being read to is one of the best ways to begin to develop as a reader. Read his/her favorite stories over and over again. Take your child to the library to let him/her choose books to read, too! Many public libraries offer reading programs for your little one, which include fun literacy related activities and incentive/rewards for reading. As your child grows as a reader, it is important to make sure that they are understanding what they are reading. Here are some quick tips and prompts to encourage your growing reader!

- Do a picture walk.

You do not have to just jump right in and read the words. Children love to look at pictures. Explore these pictures with your child. A picture walk is just that – a ‘walk’ through the book, talking about the pictures, pointing out words that they may know and talking about what might happen in the book.

- Label pictures and count things.

Talk about what you see. A dog? A cat? Label everything. After you see the picture of a dog, try to find the word that would say ‘dog.’

Example: What does Dog start with? D-D-Dog? D? OK - let us find the letter D and see if it sounds like dog. Oh! There it is! You are right! That does say dog!

“Oh, wow! Kittens. I see the word Kittens. K-K-K-Kittens. Do you see more than one kitten? How many do you see? Three kittens - that is right! What if one more kitten came? How many would we have?”

- Read with expression.

When you are ready to read the words, you want to make it FUN! If you talk in a monotone voice, your child will not be engaged. You want to capture his/her attention!

- Read, and reread.

Children of this age like to have the same story read to them over and over again. This is normal and developmentally appropriate! As they begin to remember the story and memorize the words, they are still reading. In this way, they are associating the words they hear with the print on the page. So, even if you think they are just reciting, as long as it goes along with what you are reading, it is okay!

- 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. The “WH” Questions, who, what, when, why, and where, are all good ones to help your child think as they read. Here are some additional questions you can ask:

- What was the best part of the story? Why?
- Is there a character you are similar to? Why?
- How is the character in the story feeling?
- How do you know?
- What was the problem in the story? How was it solved?

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Suggested Reading List

- *The Camping Trip* – Jennifer K. Mann
- *The Smart Cookie* - Jory John & Pete Oswald
- *I Am Perfectly Designed* – Karamo Brown
- *I Am Every Good Thing* – Derrick Barnes
- *Mango, Abuela, and Me* – Meg Medina
- *Elephant & Piggie* series – Mo Willems
- *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* – Laura Numeroff
- *Llama Llama* series – Anna Dewdney
- *Can I Be Your Dog?* – Troy Cummings
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* – Bill Martin Jr.
- *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* – Michael Rosen & Helen Oxenbury
- *Dear Zoo* – Rod Campbell
- *Little Blue Truck* – Alice Schertle
- *The Gruffalo* – Julia Donaldson
- *Room on the Broom* – Julia Donaldson
- *Blue Hat, Green Hat* – Sandra Boynton
- *Harold and the Purple Crayon* – Crockett Johnson
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* – Eric Carle
- *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes* – James Dean
- *The Day the Crayons Quit* – Drew Daywalt
- *Dragons Love Tacos* – Adam Rubin
- *The Pigeon HAS to Go to School!* – Mo Willems
- *Bear Snores On* – Karma Wilson
- *Last Stop on Market Street* – Matt de la Peña
- *Ada Twist, Scientist* – Andrea Beaty
- *The Mixed-Up Chameleon* – Eric Carle
- *Little Tiger Finds a Friend* – Vivian French & Andy Cooke

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. In this space, we are talking about the often 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, pictures, letters, and 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.

In the preschool years, the children should draw pictures and label or write about their illustrations. After they write, ask them to tell you about their work, and you can add your own captions to remember what they wrote.

Spelling is not important at this age. At this point, children should be familiar with both upper and lowercase letters, and numbers one to 30. Please make sure they are forming those correctly. Keep the examples of the letters available so they may use it as a reference to write.

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 to 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

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, two, and three 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 will prepare students for the daily routines they will learn to follow independently in Kindergarten. As your child grows you will notice new developmental changes in their ability to be independent. Four and five-year-olds can make some choices on their own with your support. Provide them with choices throughout their days to allow them to exercise their growing need to do things themselves.

Summer Home-to-School Connections

Play

Most importantly, the best thing you can do with your child over the summer is to spend quality 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 in 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 their 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"?

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. Enjoy play time!

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!