

# Picatinny School News

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## Child, Youth & School Services

### Don't Forget!

Check out [www.tutor.com/military](http://www.tutor.com/military) for homework help! At Tutor.com, you get a professional online tutor whenever you need help. You work one-to-one with your tutor in our online classroom on your specific homework problem until it's done. This is a FREE service to military family members!

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### Turn "Cabin Fever" into Teachable Moments

January and February are "inside jobs." Young children must spend more time than usual inside, which can lead to some stress and strain both in the classroom and at home-cabin fever! All that togetherness is great but sometime we all need our s-p-a-c-e.

As teachers have discovered, the time you share indoors can provide important mental incubation time for children and adults. This is a great opportunity for you and your child to enjoy personal time and to share activities together. But as every teacher and parent knows, the trick is to find enough things for your child to do so she or he doesn't get cabin fever.

#### **Magic mood-changers.**

Teachers have discovered that this time of year is perfect doing short activities that can quickly change the mood of the day. Studies have shown that the brain remembers the first and last part of a lesson better than the middle. That is why it is better to offer short episodes of learning where there are more beginnings, ends and fewer "middles"!

Here a few favorites that you can try at home:

**Music and movement games.** Can't play fair outside? Do it inside! Put on some of your favorite music and do a cooperative version of musical chairs. The object of the game is to get as many friends and family on the chairs as possible. Nobody is out- each time one chair is removed, everyone has to work together to get each other on the chairs.

**Winter picnic.** Is the wind blowing outside your door? Collect the picnic basket, tablecloths, and folding chairs and spread them out in the living room! Involve your child in planning, preparing, and sharing the food for the event. Set everything up, put on some warm music, and invite the entire family.

**Art projects.** Art is always a great calming activity for children. If you are willing to get a bit messy, you and your child can share some fun moments together. Make food-coloring ice cube paints to share on a roll of paper: Fill ice cube tray with different colors and place a Popsicle stick in each for handles. Freeze. Rub the ice cube "brushes" on the paper and watch as the colors "paint" and mix together!

Or, instead of freezing the paint, freeze the paper. Wet plain white drawing paper and place on a sheet of aluminum foil. Place in the freezer overnight. Have watercolors ready to paint on the paper as soon as you take it out of the freezer. It will melt fast and create some interesting designs.

**Quiet reflection.** Taking a moment to *not do* is almost unheard of. Yet, it is an essential part of creating peace both inside and out. Through quiet perception games, children can learn to calm their minds and bodies quickly and easily. Try this: Invite your child to sit comfortably. Then say: "Without talking, I want you to look around the room and notice something that interests you. Look at it carefully and notice everything you can about it without touching it." (Pause.) "Now pretend you can touch it. Think about how it would feel if you could touch it." You can do just one object or invite your child to find something else to look at this way. This game is not only successful at home, but is wonderful in a crowded waiting room or on line in the grocery store!

## Fifteen-Minute Reading Activities

Make 15 minutes go a long way. Try these quick reading activities with your younger kids.

1. **License to read.** On car trips, make it a game to point out and read license plates, billboards, and interesting road signs.
2. **Better than TV.** Swap evening TV for a good action story or tale of adventure.
3. **Look and listen.** Too tired to read aloud? Listen to a book on tape and turn the book's pages with your children.

You'll still be reading with them!

4. **Labels, labels, labels.** Label things in your children's room as they learn to name them. Have fun while they learn that written words are connected to everyday things.
5. **Pack a snack, pack a book.** Bring along a snack and a bag of favorite books when going to the dentist.
6. **Recipe for reading.** The next time you cook with your children, read the recipe with them. Step-by-step instructions, ingredients, and measurements are all part

of words in print!

7. **Shop and read.** Notice and read signs and labels in the supermarket. Back home, putting away groceries is another great time for reading labels.
8. **Your long-distance lap.** Away on a business trip? Take a few books with you, call home, and have your child curl up by the phone for a good night story.
9. **A reading pocket.** Slip fun things to read into your pocket to bring home. Create a special, shared moment your child can look forward to every day.

## 10 Ways to Help Your Child Tackle His Homework

1. Have him use an assignment notebook so he knows what homework is required each day.
2. Introduce a planning calendar and show her how to use it when she begins to have long-term assignments.
3. Each day he should preview the assignments that he has to do and get the tough tasks out of the way first. He should write down the order in which he

will do assignments.

4. Teach her to review her work frequently.
5. Get him an organizer, and show him how to use it so that he has a system for organizing all his papers.
6. Have her use a book bag to transport books and papers.
7. Encourage him to establish a regular

time for doing homework.

8. She should keep old quizzes and tests to prepare for future tests.
9. Eliminate distractions such as phone calls and television during homework time.
10. Establish a regular place for doing homework.

## Snow Days, Play Days

Try these shiny new suggestions for kids tired of snowmen and snowball fights!

**Snow Van Gogh-** Fill squirt and spray bottles with water dyed with food coloring. Mark off a smooth snowy surface, and let your child go to work. When he's finished, "frame" his creation with branches or pine needles.

**Flake Catcher-** Store a few sheets of black construction paper in the freezer. When snow is falling, give your child a sheet and send her outside to catch some

flakes. After she's filled the paper, bring it inside and study the snowflakes with a magnifying glass. Discuss the different patterns.

**Snow Detective-** Scout out the tracks in snow outside. Can your child figure out who — or what — made the marks? Who in your family has the biggest feet? The most interesting soles? What kinds of animals live in your backyard?

**Weather Gauge -** When the forecast says snow, tape a ruler to the inside of an

empty coffee can or plastic container and set it outside in an open space. Measure the level in the can after each snowfall, and empty it when the snow melts. Create a chart with your child to track total snowfall throughout the season.

**Snow Sundae-** Mix two tablespoons of milk, 1/4 cup of sugar, and one teaspoon of vanilla with three cups of clean, fresh snow. Top this "ice cream" with whipped cream, syrup, and shredded coconut for the ultimate sundae.

## What's Going on in the Schools this Month

### Dennis B. O'Brien Elementary

1/3– School Resumes  
 1/11– Sport Day– Wear Your Jersey!  
 1/12– PTA Meeting 7pm  
 1/16– No School  
 1/20– Talent Show Practice  
 1/25– Early Dismissal (12:48pm)  
 1/26– End of 2nd Marking Period  
 1/27– Talent Show Practice  
 1/30– Food Drive Begins

### Copeland Middle School

1/3– School Resumes  
 1/9– PTA Meeting 7pm  
 1/13– 7th Grade Friday Night Activity  
 1/16– No School  
 1/17– Band Concert  
 1/20– 7th Grade Friday Night Activity  
 1/24– Chorus Concert  
 1/25– Early Dismissal (12:20pm)  
 1/26– End of 2nd Marking Period  
 1/27– 8th Grade Friday Night Activity

### Morris Knolls High School

1/3– School Resumes  
 1/11– Home & School Association 7pm  
 1/12– 8th Grade Parent Night 7pm  
 1/16– No School  
 1/17– Snow Date for 8th Grade Parent Night  
 1/25– Early Dismissal (12:16pm)  
 1/26– End of 2nd Marking Period  
 1/26– Winter Band Concert

## Learn About Leveled Reading

Help your kids become better readers by matching them to the right books at the right time through leveled reading.

Leveled reading uses various assessment tools to determine how well your child reads, and then matches her to books that are challenging enough for her to make progress. Books are categorized into levels of difficulty, which is how a perfect match, based on ability, can be made. Here are three of the most common leveled reading methods:

**Guided Reading Level (GRL)** At the beginning of the school year, your child will sit one-on-one with his teacher and read from a benchmark book (one considered standard for the grade). He may also be asked to answer questions about the

text. Under GRL, books run from A to Z, with A being easiest.

**Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)** Similar to GRL, at the beginning of the school year your child will read a benchmark book to the teacher and then retell the story. The teacher then scores your child on a range of skills. This system starts with level A, for the easiest books, and then switches to numeric levels, running from 1 to 80.

**Lexile® Measures** Your child may receive a Lexile measure in one of two ways: by taking a reading assessment, or by taking a standardized leveled reading test that converts the results to a Lexile measure. Lexile also evaluates books for difficulty, with levels ranging from 200L

to 1700L+ for advanced readers.

### **FAQs:**

*How can I find the “just right” books for my child?* Ask your child’s teacher what level she is at, and request a list of appropriate books. However, when reading at home, educators say that children should read a level or two *below* the one they read at in school, when they are receiving instruction from the teacher.

*How can I help my child become a better reader?* Continue to read to him every day and expose him to the language of books. Have him read to you. If he makes a mistake, simply tell him the correct word. This increases enjoyment and fluency. To increase comprehension, talk about the story after you’ve read it.

## Four Ways to Get Your Child Moving

Fight obesity and bust boredom by going outside to play, move, and groove!

1. **Create an action station.** Make it easy for you and your child to get going whenever the mood strikes. Keep equipment accessible and neatly stored. Add hooks and mesh bags near your door to store balls, jump ropes, and other sports equipment. Or use a large hamper as storage in your hall closet.

2. **Use child-sized equipment.** All skill development sports gear (balls, bats, and racquets) should be child-sized. Studies with kindergarten children have shown that playing catch with an oversized ball resulted in significantly better performance than with smaller balls.

3. **Skip the stroller.** Minimize the time that your young child is confined. If

you're out and about in the neighborhood, have him walk as much as possible, and only use the stroller when he gets tired.

4. **Be an advocate for change.** Push for increased physical education programs at school and for safe playgrounds. Lobby for fresh, nutritionally rich, and higher-quality fast food.



The School Liaison Officer works in conjunction with the Child and Youth Services Division and the local school community to address educational issues involving military children. Through partnering with the local and military community, the School Liaison Officer acts as a communication link between the installation and the surrounding school districts.

For more information, contact your School Liaison Officer.

Kristy Milner

Building 3228

Blacksmith Road

Picatinny Arsenal, NJ 07806

Phone: (973) 724-7892

Email: [kristen.milner@us.army.mil](mailto:kristen.milner@us.army.mil)

## How to Seek Financial Aid for Your Teen

Here are the tasks you and your teen will need to take care of during his senior year. (Expect him to do as much as possible; it's a great way to learn the way the world works.)

Call the financial aid offices at each college your teen is interested in. Ask for a packet of financial aid information, and find out what deadlines you must meet.

- If your teen is considering applying for early decision, ask the college whether you can get early financial aid estimates. If not, and financial aid is crucial, your teen will just have to apply as a regular applicant so he'll be able to apply to several places and compare offers from different schools.

- Request a FAFSA form from the guidance office, and plan to fill it out in December. Mail it shortly after the first of January.

Start gathering the personal information you'll need to fill out financial aid applications. The type of information is simi-

lar to an income tax form.

You'll need:

- Your last paycheck stub
- Bank statements, including checking and savings accounts, money market funds, certificates of deposit
- Investment statements from brokers, mutual funds, or other income sources
- Property records showing the purchase price, value, and outstanding debt on second homes or other real estate (the value of your primary residence is not part of the financial need calculation)
- Business or farm records to establish value and debt levels

- Fill out the form and photocopy it for your records before mailing it.

- After processing, a Student Aid Report will be sent to you. *Check it carefully for accuracy.* If it's inaccurate, follow the instructions provided for making corrections. After you have a correct form in hand, send it to the appropriate colleges.

Most colleges will want a copy of your federal tax return, and some may want state tax returns, medical and dental expense records, or other documents.

### **For Further Info**

The financial aid process can be intimidating and confusing to the best of parents. Luckily, there are several resources you can turn to for help:

- If your teen's high school has a financial aid counselor on staff, you're very fortunate. He or she can advise you on the best packages possible and can help you navigate through the intricacies of getting financial aid.

- In some schools, your teen's guidance counselor is the right person to contact.

For more specific information, phone the admissions office, financial aid office, or academic counselor at your teen's target schools. (Save yourself time by drawing up a list of questions you want to ask before you make the call.)