March 2020

Dear parents,

Hope you and your families are all staying healthy and well in this time of uncertainty. Priority for everyone is to stay safe at this time and remind everyone to wash hands and take necessary precautions such as social distancing.

The closure was so sudden on Thursday 12th, there was little time to prepare work for children and we all believed that it was just for 2 weeks which included the St. Patrick’s Bank Holiday weekend, thus we were only going to be missing a few days of instruction. Now it appears, it could be for much longer period.

**Play** is so **important** for Junior infants, whether it be board games, jig-saw, lego, make-believe, dress up, soft toys & dolls, construction, playdough, water/sand play, outdoor play or whatever resources you have available to you. Playing alone using self-initiative, play with siblings and family is all good.

It is a time to make learning fun…e.g. **mathematical** activities can be done in a practical way, *counting* objects, *sorting*, helping to sort out the laundry basket using maths terms such as big/small, tall/sort, wide/narrow, long/short etc. We were about to explore ‘**weight**’ next as a topic. Basically raising awareness of and comparing ‘lighter than’ and ‘heavier than’. E.g. your child can be a human weighing scales. Hold one object in one hand (e.g. apple) and another object in another hand (e.g. book). Ask your child which is heavier? How do you know? (Because one hand is falling down more). Do this with several objects in a fun way. Older and younger siblings can also join in.

**Combining** is the terminology we use for **addition** in Junior Infants.

Combining objects up to 5.

Get 5 objects and perhaps 2 plates…. Use various scenarios of putting e.g. 2 bricks on one plate and 3 on the other and count how many altogether. E.g. 2 and 3 make 5,

 4 and 1 make 5, 2 and 2 make 4.

There are corresponding pages to this in your child’s ‘Planet Maths’ copy. Unfortunately, the big ‘Planet Maths’ books are at school. This doesn’t matter, the practical act of combining objects is more important for your child’s understanding. E.g. 2 dolls and 3 teddies make 5 toys.

You could also put a pencil/straw in the middle of a large plate to use as a dividing line to practice this concept. E.g. 3 carrots on one side **and** 1 on the other side is 4 **altogether**.

Money can also be introduced in a fun way. The junior Infant programme introduces recognize brown coins 1c, 2c, and 5 c. Perhaps discuss how many 1c are needed to make 5c to promote understanding of value. There is a few ‘money’ pages at back of Planet maths copy. This topic is usually covered in May/June.

**Regarding Phonics/sounds.**

The girls know most of their basic sounds. ***Qu qu*** is the next sound on our Jolly Phonics Programme. Use the small purple sounds book to revise sounds known. Play I spy or ask your child to identify words that begin with/ end with or contain various sounds. Weekly, I will use class dojo to promote learning of new sounds and send pictures of examples. Perhaps, you could oversee your daughter forming the letters of these sounds. The ‘jolly phonics’ app, sound buzz and word buzz are also beneficial ways of revising and consolidating letter sounds. I gave each child sheets with sounds.. I forgot to give a copy of first 6, ‘s’ ‘a’, ‘t’, ‘i’ ‘p’ ‘n’. but each girl should have these in her word box anyway. It would be great to get your child to cut out these sound sheets and use to practice blending sounds to make words. Let them at it and see what they sound out, prompt if you see necessary.

**Sight Vocabulary and Reading**

Check that your child can identify words in her word box: yellow form Reader 1 and red from reader 2. When you are happy that she is proficient and more than capable with these, you can start to introduce the vocabulary for the third class reader ‘Splash’. While you child will not have access to this book, I will post a picture of various pages via class dojo. The ‘sight word vocabulary’ is available on the last page of your child’s ‘Activity Book’ which she brought home. Perhaps you could jot these words on card/paper at home and cut out and give a new word or 2 per night to your child following the Easter holidays. Once your child has built up her sight vocabulary, I will send Pictures of relevant pages to read. Using the Activity book as a guide, perhaps teach words that come up in corresponding pages e.g. ‘Mum’, ‘Dad’. It is building up ability to both phonologically recognize/blend and identify words and to also recognize words that are not phonological.

**Tricky words**

At the back of their purple sounds book are lists of sight words- (this means that they are not phonological). Your daughter may already recognize some but it might be useful to jot down on card- like new words. The first list includes:

**I the he she me we be was to do**

Generally reading any stories or picture books with your child will help develop your child’s oral language skills, word bank, competence and enjoyment of reading and books. Get your child to read or tell a younger sibling a story or perhaps an older child can help your Junior infant as their reading buddy.

If you have a copy book or any sheet or jotter at home, your child could practice her writing or even a diary as she writes the news. She will probably need to see an example or support with this. E.g. ‘Our News’

 Today is Monday.

 It is wet.

 We are at home.

All other areas of the curriculum can be covered in your daily lives, whether it is recognising animals/growth in the garden, promoting kindness and sharing, sing songs and listen to music together, enjoy drawing, colouring books and any other arts and crafts you have access to. If it is religion, explain the story of Easter in a child-friendly way. Practice saying prayers: Junior Infants know their ‘Morning Prayer’, Prayers before and after meals, Angel sent by God to guide me, Glory be to the father and Evening Prayer’. These can be used during your daily routines if you wish and can sometimes bring calm at the start/end of day. Your child might practice some ‘yoga poses’ or meditation that have been practiced in school. While I don’t promote the use of unsupervised youtube, ‘Cosmic kids Yoga’, ‘Go noodle’ and ‘Just dance kids’ are nice family activities for you to do indoors via youtube. ‘Alphablocks’ is a nice cartoon to reinforce sounds on a wet day.

Plenty fresh air, exercise, stay safe and stay positive and we look forward to seeing everyone before long.

Kind regards,

Ms. Harrington.