

Pointers For Parents

Tips On Staying Connected With Your Kids

(NAPSA)—As children enter school and pursue new interests, more and more parents are doing their homework on finding ways to stay connected with them. Add in MP3 players, cell phones and social networking, and shared experiences may feel like a thing of the past. But connecting doesn't have to be state of the art, and technology can actually bring families together. Here are a few tips parents can use to keep family ties tight while riding the waves of change:

- **Set a date.** Arrange weekly one-on-one time with your kids. Take turns choosing the agenda for the day, and whether you spend the hours piecing together a puzzle or volunteering, you'll bond over joint interests and perhaps even find some new ones—together. Dates can be done on a budget, too. Keep your eyes peeled for free or low-cost community events and resources. You may be surprised by what you'll find right in your own backyard.

- **Be in the know.** Talking with your kids about what interests them—either at school or during their free time—will be more productive if you ask questions other than “What did you do today?” Note what activities, toys and games keep them engaged, and try to work them into the discussion. Educational toys offer the best of both worlds, and LeapFrog has a free online resource for parents called Learning Path. Learning Path actually lets you plug in kids' LeapFrog products to see exactly what games have kept



Travel time is a good time to note what activities and games interest your kids and ask them questions about those.

their attention, what they've learned and what milestones are on the horizon. You can learn more at www.leapfrog.com/learn ingpath.

- **Make table talk.** Kids may grumble when asked about their day as soon as they walk in the door. Try saving discussions for the dinner hour, when they've had a chance to unwind and relax and are more open to chatting. Get the conversation flowing with some shared slicing and dicing, then keep the talk going over the meal you've prepared together.

- **Get in their groove.** Music is the international language, crossing even the so-called generational divide. Surprise your kids by popping in their favorite CD or asking them to play deejay. By familiarizing yourself with their tunes, you can strike a new chord and maybe even discover that you like a band you'd never heard of. Consider making a mix CD—with a few of every family member's favorite songs—for an inexpensive holiday gift for loved ones.