

"Yellow Pages" for a New Neighbor

Whether they know it or not, fourth graders are natural authors. They've got lots to say, even if it happens to come with fearless spelling sometimes. And every time they create a sentence, whether it's for a card, letter, shopping list, or complaint to you, they're expanding their reading and writing skills.

Here's an activity that lets your fourth grader take his writing skills beyond the classroom, and into the community, by offering a warm, compassionate greeting to a new neighbor...who may turn out to become a very good friend, too.

What You Need:

- Yellow copy paper or construction paper
- Colored pencils, pens, and markers
- Phone book with Yellow Pages

What You Do:

1. Help your child understand the purpose of "yellow pages" by flipping through some pages in your phone book and reading some of the ads. Remind him that the yellow pages are there to help people find the goods and services they need.
2. Now give your child some yellow paper, and an assortment of writing utensils. Have him write a title at the top, such as "The Johnson Family Yellow Pages." Then have him write your address and phone number at the top of the page.
3. Assist your child in brainstorming a list of each family member's talents. Does Mom make a super banana bread loaf? Dad knows how to expertly prune fruit trees? Big sister is birdwatcher, and can name every bird that frequents the neighborhood? Your first grader loves to read books to younger children, and enjoys raking leaves?
4. Have your child list each family member's name on the paper, along with a brief description of each person's talents, interests, or skills. These are all wonderful little tidbits to help a new neighbor get to know your family, and to let them know that you'd like to offer a helping hand when they need it.
5. On the backside of the paper, have your child write similar descriptions for what he sees as the Top Five attractions in town. These should be kid-centered and fun: the best ice cream store; the best place to swim in summer; the best park to visit, and so forth. Do encourage your child to write with complete sentences, and the richest detail he can manage.
6. Next, have your child decorate the paper as he wishes, with borders and other embellishments.
7. Finally, accompany your child in visiting some new families in your neighborhood. Consider bringing a loaf of bread, or perhaps a bunch of flowers, and offer your new neighbors a copy of your Family Yellow Pages. It's a great way to welcome new folks, break the ice, and build up your fourth grader's writing skills while you're at it.

