

TODAY'S Parent

Celebrating Family Life



Today's Parent Wire Service photo
Geographical knowledge is an essential part of a well-rounded education.

Expand your child's knowledge of world geography

By Stacy Mintzer Herlihy
TODAY'S PARENT WRITER

In 1987, Congress established National Geographic Awareness Week. Since then, every November children across the country devote a week of classroom time to this important topic.

This year, National Geographic Awareness will be held from Nov. 15-21. Students will spend a week learning about the customs, languages and geographical features that lie between the Arctic Ocean and the area of South America's Tierra del Fuego.

However, there is no reason why children can't celebrate geography year-round.

Knowledge of geography is an essential part of a well-rounded education. An understanding of geography helps students make sense of the world. They may gain insights as to how people interact with each other and why.

They may learn how one nation's climate and mountainous regions affect the nation's political system. They may learn how and why the issues of global warming affect us all.

In short, geography is one of the fundamental subjects that help children become well-informed adults. In addition to helping your child with classroom lessons on geography, there are steps you can take to help your child master many basic geographical concepts.

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New Discoveries

Use daily experiences to spark your child's interest in science.

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Brushing Up

These tips will make your child's dental health something to smile about.

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On the Money

Teach your teen how financial discipline can prepare him or her for the future.

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Puppy Love

Before you embark on your pet adventure, read these tips to help you adopt the right shelter dog.

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Sending Your Child To College 101 Student Electronic Needs

By Marie Carr

SPECIAL TO TODAY'S PARENT

The 2009 graduating class is perhaps the most technologically savvy class of students to date and bringing these skills to college is increasingly important. Below are 5 essentials that every student will need.

1. **Computers** – they're expensive, but every student will need one and many computer manufacturers and colleges offer student discounts. Students need to inquire and take student IDs with them when purchasing. Today's computers can multitask. I suggest investing in some external speakers and if the computer doesn't have an internal DVD/CD-ROM drive, purchase an external one. Now the computer can double as an entertainment center, playing both music and allowing one to watch movies or TV on it. Modern monitors can also be hooked up to cable, and used as a screen for watching TV. In this case, the keyboard controls act as a TV remote for changing channels. If your computer contains a webcam, you can use it to web chat with the free downloadable program Skype. Skype offers visual and auditory communication through computers.

A word of caution: unauthorized downloading, uploading or possession of copyrighted material, including songs and movies, is illegal. Use of file sharing programs has exposed students to costly lawsuits from record and movie industry groups.

2. **Ethernet cable** – plan on purchasing a 14 foot Ethernet cable. This will be sufficient for almost every situation to connect your student's computer to the college network in the dorm room. Many colleges prohibit personal wireless access points or routers in their residences as they interfere with network traffic.

3. **Printers** – before you purchase a printer, inquire if your college provides each registered student with a print allowance or a set number of pages that a student can print from any of the net-

worked printers on campus. In some instances, colleges offer as many as 1,000 pages per student, per semester.

4. **Portable memory chip also known as a thumb drive or USB key** – a 2gb or less thumb drive is adequate, as this will primarily be used for the transport and transfer of data between campus and the dorm room. It's advisable for students to email important documents to an email account they can access from any computer on campus. Thumb drives will act as critical back-up should the Internet be down.

5. **Cell phones are also a necessity with our Generation Y students.** Once again, these can multi-task and many phones can act as cameras, alarm clocks, calculators, and electronic calendars in addition to communication devices. Fancier models can offer GPS, Internet connections, note taking capabilities etc. It's best to understand call plans and warranties as telephone companies charge additional fees for text messages, information calls, and Internet use that is not included in the original call plan.

Lastly, before you pack those items to go to college, it's a good idea to take an inventory that includes purchase receipts along with the model and serial number, warranty information and photographs of these higher priced items. This could help in recovering stolen or damaged property, or working with the insurance company. ☺

Marie Carr's latest book "Sending Your Child to College" is the winner of both the iParenting Award for the Best Parenting Book in 2009 and one of 2009 best products from Parent Testing Parent Approved media. It is available in bookstores, from Amazon and also www.PreparedParent.com.

Oral Health And Expecting Mothers

By Gene Sherman, DMD, MBA

SPECIAL TO TODAY'S PARENT

Did you know that research has shown a relationship between dental disease and pregnancy? Dentists often observe that pregnant women may experience "pregnancy gingivitis" or "periodontal disease" during pregnancy.

Pregnancy gingivitis is extremely common. According to the American Academy of Periodontology, about half of women experience it especially during months two through eight. The rise in your hormones during pregnancy can play a leading role in the development of pregnancy gingivitis. These higher levels of hormones leave your gums and teeth more sensitive to the bacteria that hide in plaque, increasing your chances of developing pregnancy gingivitis. Some symptoms are swollen, bleeding or tender gums. Pregnancy gingivitis usually has no long term effects unless left untreated. If pregnancy gingivitis is left untreated, it can lead to periodontal disease.

Periodontal disease is a serious gum infection that inflames the gums and destroys the underlying bone. It can cause permanent damage to your mouth, resulting in the loss of your teeth and the deterioration of your gum tissues. Studies have shown a relationship between periodontal disease and pre-term, low birth-weight babies. According to the American Academy of Periodontology, pregnant women who have periodontal disease may be seven times more likely to have a baby that is premature or "low birth weight."

Approximately 12.8% of babies born in the U.S. are born premature and the rate of premature births is increasing, according to The March of Dimes. When babies are born prematurely, they have an increased risk for breathing problems and might have to spend time in the newborn intensive care unit. Premature babies also face an increased risk of learning disabilities, mental retardation, behavioral problems and other diseases, as well as

vision and hearing loss.

What can you do to avoid these issues?

- Educate yourself on the effects that dental disease can have on pregnancy before getting pregnant.
- Make sure you have had a recent visit to a dentist shortly before or after you become pregnant.
- Discuss the effects of pregnancy on your oral health and vice-versa with your dentist early in your pregnancy.
- Be diligent about your oral hygiene. Frequent brushing, flossing and proper nutrition are most important.

Whenever possible, take care of essential dental needs before planning to become pregnant. This will lower the potential for oral infections and their potential harmful effects on your pregnancy, as well as decrease stressful emergencies.

Your oral health is extremely important during pregnancy. Increased hormone levels can cause dental problems to intensify. ☺

Dr. Gene Sherman is Senior Vice President, Business Development and Professional Relations for Starmount Life Insurance Company and AlwaysCare Benefits, Inc. He came to Starmount Life in 2003 as the company's Chief Operating Officer. Dr. Sherman joined the dental benefits industry in 1994, after more than 17 years of private dental practice in varied settings. He served on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Dental Plans (NADP) as a board officer and chair of several NADP committees. He has been a speaker at numerous national forums on dental benefits as well as a contributor to a publication on dental benefits.

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