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Take notes ... it's time for the update

This meeting is now called to order:

It's time for the annual update on sights and experiences on the old home place and beyond — not that “beyond” goes very far.

With more than enough to fulfill my five senses, I admit to being rooted within my personally designated boundary.

There were times this season I felt as though my calendar had been secretly rearranged. Weather and nature obviously don't have the need for calendars, clocks or news programs. There is just an amazing co-existence and adaptability between them.

As usual, we have several hatches of blue birds this year — and some black-capped chickadee joined us in the nesting boxes.

Tid Bits

By Bev Leitch



For the second season in a row, the tree swallows took a short look at their old home before moving on. We miss them, but wish them well in their new habitat. Sightings of a happily nesting pair just down the road at the environmental center has us believing they're not far away.

No turkey on the doorstep or garden gate this spring. Maybe the heavy rain kept them away — but if so, it provided good bugging for the pleated woodpecker in the pine

grove. Like a combination jackhammer and wood chipper, I was able to get so close, tip-toeing on the rain-soaked grass to view it at work that the hair stood up on my arms.

I didn't know I could hold my breath so long or be so still. It was a struggle, but well worth it for such a close-up encounter.

Spring rains also brought us an opportunity to witness the births of white-tail deer fawns. One such occurrence happened under a pine tree bordering our driveway.

Lee was able to get a photo only minutes later.

Up and down the lane through the birthing season, we saw many heavily laden doe laying calmly but breathing a little heavy, only to see little ones on (PAGE 18)

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Create a study area with a little ... class

Story by Sean Clougherty

For many students, homework is a dirty word, making them cringe at the thought of staying inside, pouring over books and worksheets while friends and television shows and other more interesting distractions beckon.

But some changes or additions to your child's homework space could ease the tensions behind homework.

"A lot of parents are more interested in getting their child's room setup at an earlier age," said Janet Parks, sales manager at Ashley Furniture in Easton.

Parks said parents who come in looking for children's furniture



want to make the room as nice as they can, and that usually includes a desk as part of the package.

Having a desk that matches

the rest of the bedroom is a popular trend, she added, and many current styles reflect that, whether it be part of a loft or its own piece.

Providing the best space for a child to reinforce the lessons from school at home can be a balancing act — quiet but not too quiet, comfortable but not too comfortable, etc.

The overall goal of creating a good work space is to give the child the best environment for learning, and each child will favor a different environment.

But for a starting point, education organizations offer some basics on helping parents and children get through each night's work without using any real dirty words.

•*Know what your child needs*•

Some children study and work better with some background noise while others need total silence for concentration. And remember, different assignments may require different needs for working.

Observing your child as he or she works will tell you what is needed.

•*Have space for supplies*•

Most teachers provide a list of the supplies students will need in the classroom and that will make a good cheat sheet to use for home supplies.

Keeping all the necessary supplies in one place and organized will help the child stay organized and reduce distractions or opportunities for procrastinating.

•*Remove Distractions*•

Even if a child can focus with some noise in the background, some noises will keep his or her eyes or mind out of the school books.

Leaving the television off or setting up a space out of eyesight and earshot of the television is usually the first step.

A separate space away from the computer may also be necessary.

Some music will distract also. A child singing along to that week's



Observing your child as he or she works will tell you what else may be needed.

top album won't be as focused on school tasks as if easy listening were playing.

Perhaps the trick is to play something the child doesn't like but doesn't hate either.

A rule that social phone calls can't start until homework is done might be worth considering as well.

The National Parent Teacher

Association recommends trying to have all family members take part in a quiet activity during homework time if you live in a small or noisy household.

•*Get comfortable, but not too comfortable*•

A comfortable place to work will help learning but a place that is too comfortable will help sleeping,

and though many have tried, sleeping on books has not been proven to make you smarter.

Avoid letting kids work or read on their beds, a couch or with the lights off.

The National Education Association says to take the child along when choosing a desk lamp, seat and cushion for the works space.

•*Stay nearby to lend a hand*•

Your child will need help with

their work from time to time.

According to the NEA, more than half of middle school students (57 percent) and their parents (59 percent) report that parents spend at least one hour a night helping with homework.

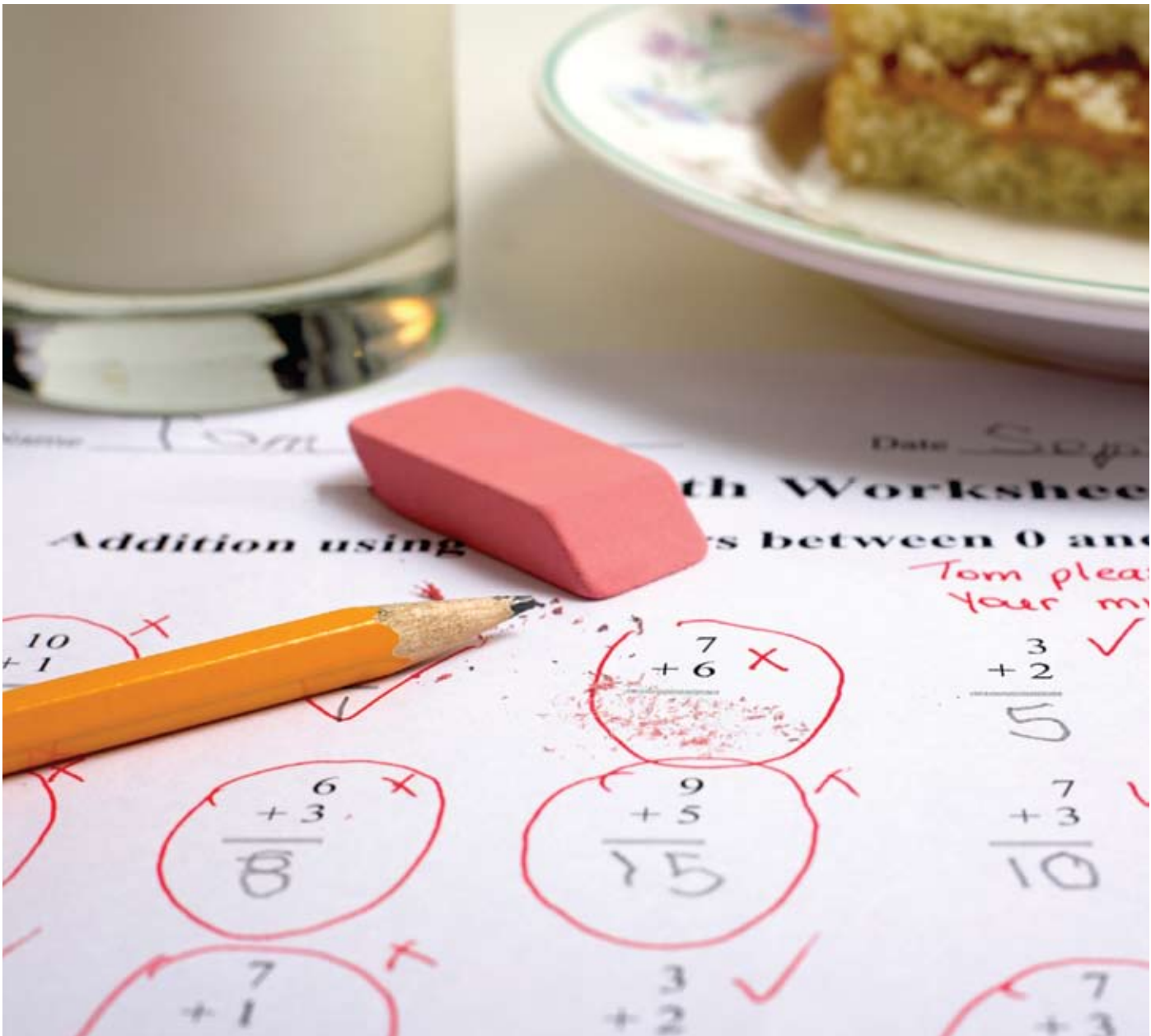
Being close by to help when he or she is struggling will make homework time go that much smoother.

This makes the kitchen table an attractive place, but if there is a lot

of traffic in and out, the distractions would do the child more harm than good.

If that's the case or a student prefers working in another room, checking in periodically will tell the child you are taking an interest in his or her work and also let you see if work is actually getting done.

The PTA suggests having a second chair at the work station for you to sit when help is needed. ➤



The kitchen table can make for an attractive place for homework — but if there is a lot of traffic in and out of that room, the distractions may do the child more harm than good.