Home & School CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

February 2019

Harmony Elementary School
Dr. Barbara Griffieth, Principal

SHORT NOTES

A parenting mission statement

Can you name the three most important things to you as a parent? Putting them in writing will help to guide your parenting. Fill in the blank in the sentence, "I'm raising a child who ___ " ("is kind to others," "works hard in school").

Find learning treasures

A secondhand store offers more than clothing and household items—you can find learning tools there, too. Help your youngster look for gently used books or board games (check to make sure all the pieces are there). He might also find magnetic letters or numbers, arts and crafts supplies, and small whiteboards or chalkboards.

Practice cursive

If your youngster is learning cursive, suggest creative ways to practice. She could make nameplates for family members' bedroom doors or write greeting cards and thank-you notes in cursive. *Idea:* Encourage her to use cursive when she takes notes in class. It's faster because she doesn't lift her pencil off the paper after each letter.

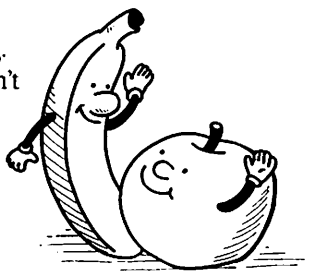
Worth quoting

"Joy is not in things; it is in us."
Richard Wagner

JUST FOR FUN

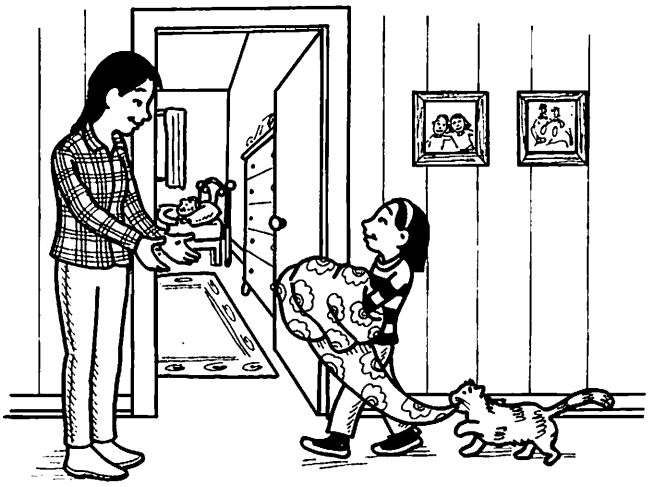
Q: What did the banana say to the apple?

A: Nothing. Bananas can't talk!



Embrace empathy

When Claire notices a classmate on crutches struggling with his books, she senses his frustration and offers to help. She has empathy—she can understand and share others' feelings. Build empathy in your child with these ideas.



Read feelings

Learning to identify other people's emotions is the first step toward feeling empathetic. Take turns acting out a feeling for family members to guess. For example, open your eyes and mouth wide to show fear. Or slump your shoulders and look down to display sadness. *Variation:* Draw faces on paper plates, and guess the emotions.

Create an "empathy identity"

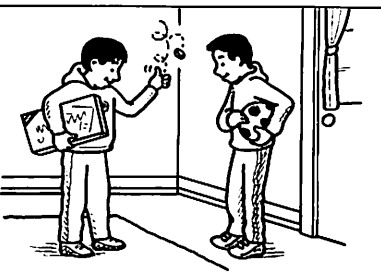
Notice ways your youngster shows that she cares how people feel. You might say, "I can tell you feel bad that your brother is sick. It was nice of you to bring him a blanket." You could also point out others showing empathy, too—in real life and in books and movies.

Respond appropriately

When someone is having a hard time (say, a friend's parents are getting divorced), your child may not know what to say. The good news? Sometimes people just want another person to listen and express empathy. Brainstorm honest responses like "I'm not sure what to say, but I'm glad you told me," or "I'm sorry this is happening. I'm here if you want to talk."♥

Let's collaborate!

Knowing how to collaborate with classmates will help your youngster work well and learn in a group. Try these tips to practice collaboration skills at home.

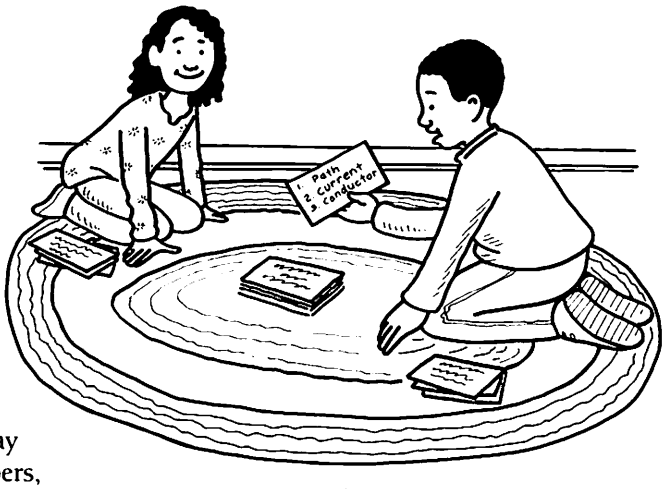


Balance speaking and listening. During family discussions, give each person a chance to talk. Your child should listen carefully so he can acknowledge what everyone says and build on their ideas. ("I liked what you said about _____. I think _____.")

Encourage compromise. If your youngster has a disagreement with a sibling or friend, such as whether to play indoors or outdoors, think of it as a learning opportunity. Ask them to think of a way they could both feel satisfied, perhaps by doing a jigsaw puzzle outside at a picnic table. Or they might flip a coin to decide which to do first.♥

Mix-it-up study methods

Fresh techniques will breathe new life into your child's study sessions. Share these ways to add variety and help him stay motivated.



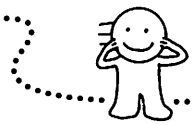
Create a mural

Suggest that your child hang a big sheet of paper on a wall. On it, he can write and illustrate facts, concepts, and procedures he's studying. Say his math test includes rounding numbers, he might write the rule ("If a number ends in 5–9, round up") in big orange letters across the bottom and add examples in green going sideways up the mural. Let him design a new panel for each subject. He'll have a handy study tool—and a colorful piece of art.

Play with clue cards

Encourage your youngster to make and play a card game with a study partner. He could write each concept on a separate index card and list three clues on the back. For "electric circuit," clues might include "path," "current," and "conductor." He can shuffle the cards and stack them clue sides up. Players take turns drawing a card, reading the clues, and saying what's on the other side. Keep the card if you're right—the person with the most cards wins.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



Write a picture book

Your youngster can use her imagination to retell a familiar story, then preserve her version in a homemade book! She'll practice experimenting with characters, setting, and plot as she writes.

First, let your child pick a story and think of ways she could put her own twist on it. She might write a plot based on *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Roald Dahl) but use herself and her friends for the main characters. Or maybe she'll pick a story set in another country, such as *Madeline* by Ludwig Bemelmans, and have it take place in the United States.

Next, have your youngster write each sentence or paragraph of her story on a separate sheet of paper and illustrate it. Finally, invite her to read her book aloud to your family.♥

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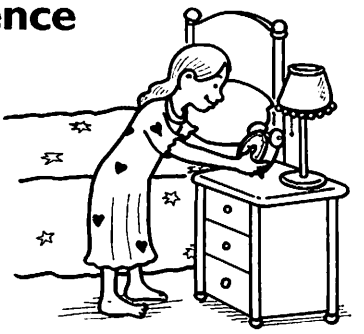
PARENT TO PARENT

Boost independence



Coaxing my daughter, Grace, through her routine on school mornings was no easy task. I decided that she needed to become more independent—and that our mornings could be more pleasant. So I've started having her get ready by herself.

I let Grace pick out an alarm clock and showed her how to set it. Then, on her closet door, we posted a list of her morning tasks, including getting dressed, brushing her teeth, and fixing her hair.

Now when we're both ready, we meet downstairs for breakfast before we head out the door. Our mornings are much easier, and I think Grace is proud of her newfound independence.♥

Q & A

Time for a cell phone?

Q: *My fourth-grader says some of his friends are getting cell phones, and now he wants one. Are cell phones appropriate at this age?*

A: Most kids this age don't really *need* a cell phone, since they're supervised by adults who carry phones. And owning a phone, especially one with internet access, is a big responsibility. To decide when to give your son a phone, first think about your family's budget. Also, consider how well he follows safety rules and takes care of his belongings. Those are good indicators of how he will behave with a phone.

If you feel he's ready, you might start with a lower-cost one with limited features. Then, create guidelines. Perhaps he may use his phone only to call or text family members and close friends. Discuss consequences for breaking or losing it. And set times when his phone is off-limits, such as during family meals, in the hour before bedtime, and after lights-out.♥

Beginning Edition

Math+Science Connection

Building Excitement and Success for Young Children

February 2019

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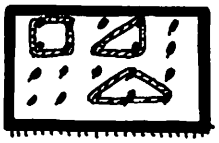
TOOLS & TIDBITS

Geoboard geometry

Explore shapes with this homemade geoboard. Help your child press pushpins into a bulletin board in evenly spaced rows and columns, perhaps 5 x 5 or 10 x 10. She can wrap colorful yarn around the pins to make geometric shapes, perhaps four pins to make a square or three for a triangle.



An engineering journal

Inspire your child to think like an engineer. In a notebook, he could draw or write project ideas. Explain that engineers aim to solve problems like how to keep people warmer in winter (say, by designing better coats). Maybe he'll draw a puffy coat with gloves attached, for example.

Web picks

At *ictgames.com/resources.html*, your youngster can put leaves in order for a caterpillar to munch on, save odd- and even-numbered dragon eggs, and more.

Your child will find experiments like growing edible crystals, creating bubbles in liquid, and making fossils at *scholastic.com/kids/books/the-magic-school-bus/*.

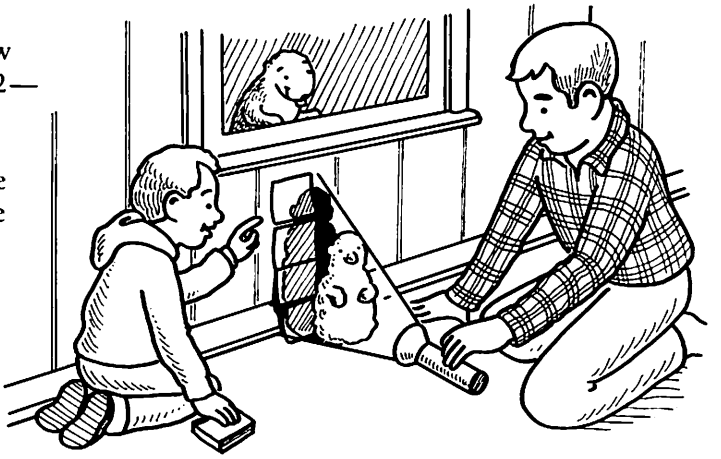
Just for fun

Q: Which month has 28 days?

A: All of them!

Groundhog Day fun

A groundhog named Phil looks for his shadow every year on February 2—but your child can find shadows any day! These activities let him practice measurement skills as he learns about the science of shadows.



Blocking light

Help your youngster understand what makes a shadow by testing different types of objects. Let him hold a book, sunglasses, and a clear glass under a bright lamp. What does he notice about the shadows they cast (or don't)? He'll see a dark shadow from the book, a dim one from the sunglasses, and no shadow from the glass. The answer? Solid objects block light—and make the best shadows!

A growing shadow

Encourage your child to sculpt a play dough groundhog and measure its shadow. In a dark room, shine a flashlight on the groundhog while your youngster lines up a column of sticky notes on its shadow. Have him count the notes. How could he make the shadow taller or shorter? Suggest that he experiment by moving the groundhog closer to the flashlight (the shadow grows taller) and farther away (it gets shorter).

Human sundial

Does your youngster know that shadows helped ancient people tell time? On a sunny day, he can find out how. Each hour through the day, have him stand in the same spot while you trace around his shadow with chalk and he marks the time. At the end of the day he'll have a clock formed by his shadow appearing in different locations as the Earth turned.

Floating fruit

Fruit is a handy tool for exploring *density*. Here's how.

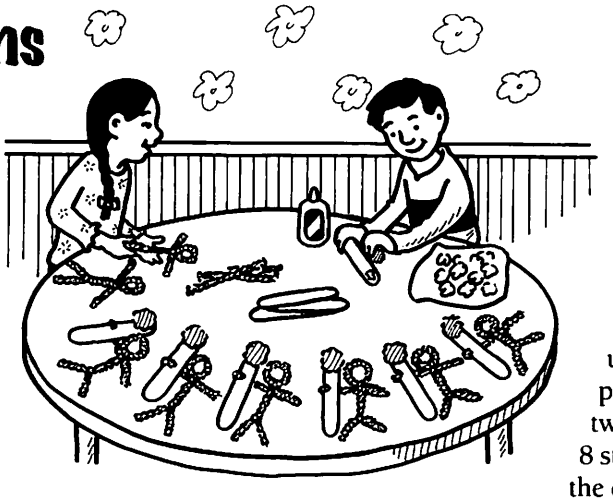
Have your youngster fill a large bowl with water. Then, she can examine different fruits (apple, orange, lemon, banana, strawberry, grape) and predict which ones will float.

Let your child test her predictions by putting the fruits in the water, one at a time. She may be surprised that a heavy apple floats while a lightweight grape sinks!

Explain that fruits that are *porous* (contain air pockets), such as apples, float because they're less *dense* (the *molecules*, or tiny particles, inside are more loosely packed together). Fruits without air pockets, like grapes, sink because they're *denser* (the molecules are more tightly packed).

Artsy story problems

Arts and crafts projects are a great way to help your child visualize—and solve—story problems. Try these.



- *Seven bluebirds perched on a rooftop. Three redbirds joined them. How many birds were there in all?*

Let your youngster make a mini book by cutting a sheet of paper into fourths and stapling the pieces together. She can write a title on the cover ("Birds on the Roof") and draw one step of the problem on each page (7 bluebirds on a roof on the first page, 3 redbirds beside them on the next page). The last page is for the number sentence: 7 + 3 = 10. Now invite her to "read" her book to you.

- *A clown had six balloons. Eight kids wanted a balloon. How many more balloons does the clown need?*

Suggest that your child use craft supplies for this problem. Perhaps she'll twist pipe cleaners to create 8 stick figures representing the children. Then, she could make 6 balloons by gluing pompoms to craft sticks. Help her match one balloon to each kid—she'll see that the clown needs 2 more balloons (8 – 6 = 2).

PARENT TO PARENT Newspaper math

When my son Marcus was putting newspapers into the recycling bin, he began reading numbers in the sports headlines. I mentioned this to my sister, who is a teacher, and she gave me ideas for using the newspaper to help Marcus build more math skills.

First, she said Marcus might cut numbers from the newspaper and glue them in order on poster board. So far he has found numbers in news articles, the weather report, and the movie listings. My sister also said Marcus could cut out words containing different numbers of letters (3, 4, 5) and glue them onto separate pages labeled with the numbers.

Marcus is having a great time with his newspaper activities, and I'm glad he's practicing what he's learning in school!

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MATH CORNER Greater than, less than

Your youngster will build number sense by creating and playing this game to explore *greater than* and *less than*.

Have her make two sets of index cards, each with stickers or drawings representing the numbers 1–12. Shuffle the cards, and stack them facedown.

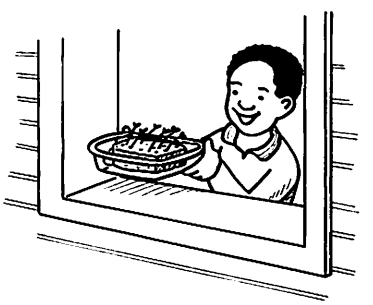
To start each round, players take a card without looking at it. On "Go," everyone flips over their cards onto a table and tries to slap the card that has the most stickers. The person who slaps the correct card first takes all the cards. For example, if one player turns over a card with 8 stickers, another flips one with 6, and a third player's card has 4, everyone would try to slap the 8 card. If there's a tie, skip that turn and play again. The player with the most cards at the end wins. Then, play again—but this time, slap the cards with fewest stickers.

SCIENCE LAB Plant a sponge garden

This indoor garden experiment lets your child observe the effect of sunlight on plants.

You'll need: tablespoon, grass or other fast-growing seeds, two shallow containers, measuring cup, water, two sponges

Here's how: Have your youngster spoon 1 tbsp. of seeds into each container. He should soak them in warm water overnight and drain off the water in the morning. Ask him to put a sponge in each container, wet each sponge with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water, and divide the seeds equally on top. Now he can set one container in a sunny window and the other in a dark cabinet, and water both daily.



What happens? In a few days, tiny sprouts emerge on the sponges. The sprouts in the sun keep growing, but the ones in the dark will die.

Why? Plants use sunlight to make their food. While seeds can sprout without the sun, they need light to grow and become mature plants.

Intermediate Edition

Math+Science Connection

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

February 2019

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INFO BITS

Clocks with hands

An analog clock helps your child understand elapsed time. Have him use one when he's getting ready in the morning. Ask how long it took him to eat breakfast or how many minutes are left until the bus comes. He'll develop a sense of what 5 minutes, 15 minutes, or 30 minutes looks like on a clock.

Go to a science fair

Visit your school district's website for announcements about upcoming middle and high school science fairs. Then, plan to attend one with your youngster. Seeing what big kids do will get her excited about science, and she may discover experiments to try at home.

Web picks

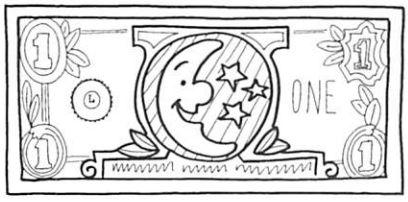
Your child can practice math facts by playing games like Archery Arithmetic or Marlan's Magical Maths Mission at *mathsframe.co.uk*.

Visit *earthcam.com/events/animalcams/* to watch live feeds of meerkats, otters, eagles, lions, and other animals.

Just for fun

Q: How is the moon like a dollar?

A: They both have four quarters.



The shape of things

Whether your child is eating hexagon-shaped soup crackers or spots a sign with an acute angle, she can explore geometry. Share the terms in the box below as you try these ideas.

Name me

Take turns giving each other clues to figure out a mystery shape. If your child chooses a trapezoid, she might say: "I'm a quadrilateral. One pair of my sides is parallel. I can have two acute angles and two obtuse angles, or two right angles, one acute angle, and one obtuse angle. What am I?"

Find me

Take your youngster and her friends on a search for shapes and their attributes. Give them each a list, such as: "Triangle, obtuse angle, quadrilateral, perpendicular line." Challenge them to find the items and sketch them on their lists.

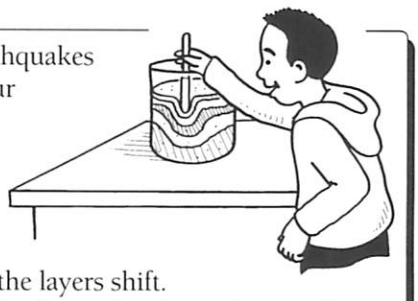
Draw me

Ask your child to draw a building, an object, or a landscape using as many different shapes and attributes as she can think of. She might draw the Eiffel Tower with lots of triangles and parallel and perpendicular lines. Have her label each shape.

Geometry vocabulary

- **quadrilateral:** a shape with four sides
- **parallelogram:** a quadrilateral with two pairs of parallel sides
- **right angle:** a 90° angle
- **acute angle:** an angle that measures less than 90°
- **obtuse angle:** an angle that measures greater than 90°
- **parallel lines:** lines that never cross
- **perpendicular lines:** lines that intersect (or meet) at 90° angles

Rocks reveal the past



Colorful rock layers tell scientists when earthquakes occurred. Enjoy the following activity with your youngster to see how this works.

Have your child layer colored sand in a clear bowl by pouring in one color at a time. Ask him to pretend the layers of sand are layers, or *strata*, of rock. Now let him slide a butter knife down the side of the bowl and watch the layers shift.

An earthquake creates breaks in the strata. One layer of rock continues to form higher than the spot where it began. Scientists know how long rocks take to form, so a break reveals when an earthquake took place.

Note: No colored sand? Combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar with 3–4 drops food dye.

Play with place value

Understanding that the 8 in 8,324 is worth 8,000, the 3 = 300, the 2 = 20, and the 4 = 4 is what place value is all about. As your youngster plays this game, he'll pay attention to the value of each digit.

Materials: 4 index cards, paper and pencil, coin

1. Have your child write "ones," "tens," "hundreds," and "thousands" on separate index cards. Shuffle the cards, and stack them facedown.

2. To play, each person writes a four-digit number like 4,365 or 7,134 on his own paper.

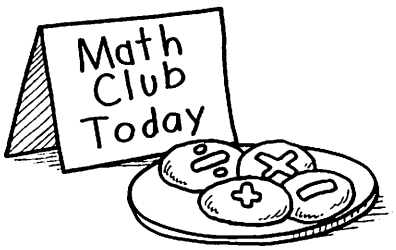
3. Next, your youngster draws an index card (say, "hundreds") and tosses a coin.

4. Take turns calling out the value of the hundreds place in your number. So a player with 4,365 would say 300. If the coin landed on heads, the person with the highest value scores a point. For instance, 4,365 beats 7,134 because 300 is greater than 100. But if the coin landed on tails, the player with the lowest value gets the point. (In a tie, no one gets a point.)

5. Play until all four index cards have been drawn. Write new 4-digit numbers, and start a new round. The first player to 10 points wins.

PARENT TO PARENT Start a math club

When my teenage daughter and her friends decided to start a book club, it gave me an idea for my younger daughter, Julie. Since she likes math, I thought she could start a math club. She was excited about the idea and immediately called her two best friends.



The girls met at our house last week to plan activities for their weekly meetings. For example, they're going to play games involving math, such as Yahtzee, Uno, and Set. They also want to have a Sudoku contest. Plus, they're talking about filming math videos. Their plan is to put on a play that helps little kids understand concepts like fractions or division. I can't wait to see what they come up with!

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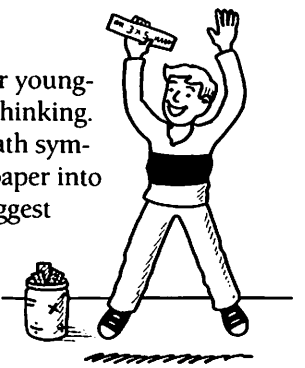
MATH CORNER My multiplication jar



A "multiplication jar" will give your youngster practice with solving problems—and explaining his thinking.

Let him decorate a clear jar by writing numbers and math symbols in permanent marker. Now he can cut construction paper into strips and write a multiplication problem on each one. Suggest problems with fun instructions ("Do 3 x 5 jumping jacks"), multiple steps ("6 x 2 x 7 = ___"), and double digits ("25 x 4 = ___").

Each day, have him pull out a slip, solve the problem, and explain how he got his answer. For the jumping jacks problem, he might do 3 sets of 5 jumping jacks and call out the number after each set ("5, 10, 15—the answer is 15").

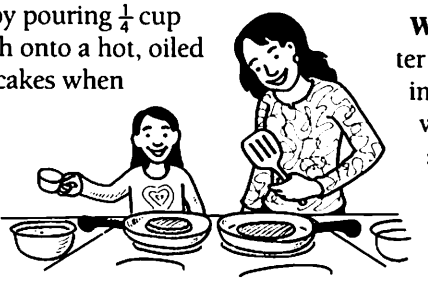
SCIENCE LAB Fluffy pancakes—or not?

A chemistry lesson is only one breakfast away! Help your child make pancakes two ways and observe a chemical reaction.

You'll need: pancake ingredients (see recipe to the right), measuring cup, spoon, 2 bowls, stove, skillet, spatula

Here's how: Together, make two batches of pancake batter, but omit the baking powder (the leavening) in one. Cook two pancakes by pouring $\frac{1}{4}$ cup batter from each batch onto a hot, oiled skillet. Flip both pancakes when bubbles pop on one.

What happens? Bubbles form in the batter with baking powder, and the pancake becomes fluffy. The other batter doesn't have bubbles, and the pancake is flatter and denser.



Why? The milk in the batter causes the acid and alkali in baking powder to react with each other, forming small carbon dioxide bubbles. The bubbles make the pancakes light and fluffy.

Pancake recipe

Stir 1 cup milk, 1 egg, and 1 tbsp. vegetable oil. In a separate bowl, mix 1 cup flour, 2 tbsp. sugar, 1 tbsp. baking powder, and 1 tsp. salt. Combine the wet and dry ingredients.