

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

November 2010

Community Consolidated School District 15
Literacy Programs

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ Turkey for Thanksgiving Dinner? No Thanks!

What happens after E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* ends? In Alma Flor Ada's story, a little spider is inspired by her great-great-grandmother Charlotte, who saved a pig's life. When she meets a frightened turkey, she decides to rescue him from becoming Thanksgiving dinner. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ Odd Velvet

Velvet is different from the other children in her class, but she doesn't care. Her big glasses, hand-me-down clothes, and unusual interests set her apart. Without trying to fit in, Velvet begins to make friends who appreciate her for who she is. A story about acceptance by Mary Whitcomb.

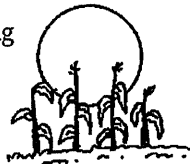
■ When Everybody Wore a Hat

Youngsters will get a glimpse of New York City life nearly 100 years ago in this autobiography from children's author William Steig. In pictures and words, Steig shows today's children what it was like to grow up in a time when horses pulled fire engines and doctors made house calls.



■ Hello, Harvest Moon

On a beautiful night, a full moon lights up cornfields and colorful trees. It's quiet and peaceful, but a lot happens: moonflowers bloom, moths and geese fly, a cat plays. Ralph Fletcher's poetic language and oil-painting illustrations capture the mood of an autumn night.



Fluency: The magic link

A fluent reader recognizes words easily, knows or can figure out their meaning, and comprehends what she reads. Think of fluency as the link between reading individual words and understanding a book—and use these suggestions to help your youngster become a more fluent reader.



Book preview

Set your child up for success by helping her get to know a book before she reads it. Have her flip through the pages and look for words that might trip her up. Ask her to try sounding them out and guess what they mean. If she struggles, help her look them up in a dictionary so she won't get stuck and disrupt the flow of the book.

Punctuation play

Commas, periods, and other punctuation marks give clues about how a sentence should sound. Let your youngster write down a paragraph from a book and use different-colored markers to highlight the marks. She might use yellow for

commas (slow down), red for periods (stop), green for exclamation points (sound excited), and blue for question marks (make her voice go up). Then, have her read the paragraph aloud, using the colors to remind her of the punctuation.

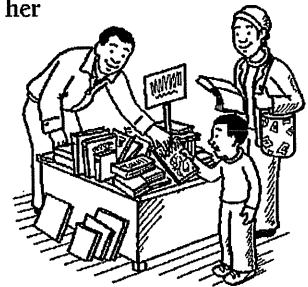
Repeated readings

A new or struggling reader can become more fluent by rereading familiar books. With each read-through, your child will recognize more words instantly—a key to fluency. Tip: Books that repeat phrases are great for building fluency. Try *Are You My Mother?* by P. D. Eastman or *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood.♥

A reading holiday

November is National Family Literacy Month. Celebrate together with these reading ideas:

- Visit a used-book store, and let each person pick out a book. You'll build your family library, and your child can practice choosing her own reading materials.
- Read a book that has been made into a movie. Watch the movie when you finish. Talk about how the two are similar and different.
- Share reading with others. If you have a youngster in day care, ask if you can read to the little ones. Or if a relative lives in a senior home, offer to read aloud to residents.♥



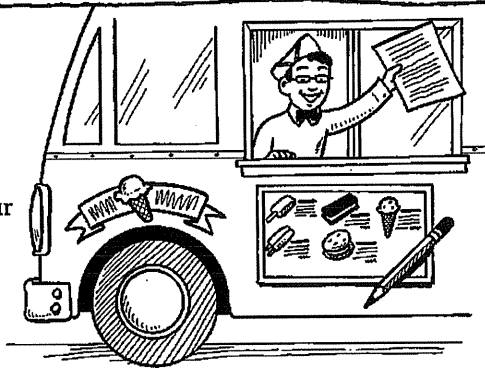
What should I write?

Deciding what to write about gives your youngster a chance to be creative. But it can also be a challenge. Here are some fun ways for your child to come up with story ideas.

Listen to music. Put on a CD or the radio.

Ask your youngster what he thinks a song is about or what it reminds him of. He can use his thoughts to write a story.

Pretend to be someone else. Your child might imagine that he is a teacher at his school or an ice cream truck driver. Have him write a story from that point of view.



Read a book. Your youngster can turn his favorite part of a book into a completely different tale. For instance, after reading *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister, he might write a story about a colorful bird who lives in the rain forest.

Talk to a friend. He can call a classmate to brainstorm story topics—putting their heads together may lead to a great idea.

Look at art. A painting can inspire an interesting story. Visit a gallery, go to www.nga.gov/kids, or get an art book such as *Museum ABC (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)*. Suggest that your child choose a picture and pretend it's the illustration for his story as he writes.♥

Fun with Words Vowel bingo



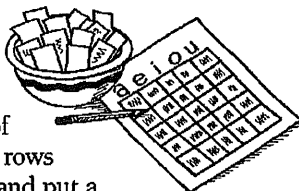
This homemade bingo game will help your youngster learn about vowels.

Together, think of 25 three-letter words—5 each with a different vowel (a, e, i, o, u) in the middle. *Examples:* rap, met, dim, top, sun. Have your child write each word on a separate slip of paper and place the slips in a bowl.

Then, help her make bingo cards.

Draw lines to divide sheets of paper into five rows and columns, and put a vowel at the top of each column. Pull one word at a time and write it under the correct vowel. *Note:* Put the words on different spots on the cards so each one is different.

To play, a caller picks a slip and reads the word aloud. Each player covers that word with a coin. Ask your youngster to listen closely so she'll hear the vowel sound. The first player to get five words in a row calls, "Bingo!" *Idea:* For extra practice, trade cards and play again.♥



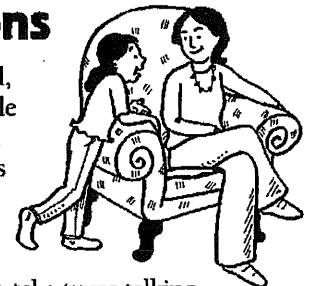
Parent to Parent

Better conversations

My daughter got a nice report card, but her oral language grade was a little low. Celina talks constantly at home, so I was surprised. When I asked her teacher, I learned a lot about the skills her grade was based on.

Mrs. Ross explained that Celina has a good vocabulary and participates in class discussions. But like many children, she is still learning to listen to what others say, take turns talking, and stand on topic.

I asked how we could help Celina at home. The teacher suggested that we encourage Celina to practice listening and taking turns during our regular family talks. She said she gives students gentle reminders—she taps her ear for "listen" and holds up her index finger for "wait your turn." I have been trying these ideas, and they seem to be working. I'm hoping Celina's oral language grade will go up next quarter—and I think all of us are enjoying our family conversations more!♥



Parts of speech

Help your child learn about different parts of speech with these games that you can play at home or on the go.

- Some words label people, places, and things—they are called **nouns**. Use this activity to teach your youngster to be specific with nouns. Look around you and say a general word for each category you see (*woman, room, tool*).

Ask your child to think of three words that are more exact (*doctor, office, stethoscope*). Play again with new words.

- Tell your youngster that authors pick action words (**verbs**) carefully to make their writing exciting. Observe the

people around you, and take turns saying a word that describes their actions. At a bank, for example, you might watch people *write, wait, count, talk, type, sit, and even fidget*.

- Descriptive words (**adjectives**) make writing more colorful. Have your youngster pick any object he sees and add a

word that describes it (*green curtain*). You repeat his word and add your own (*soft green curtain*). Continue adding descriptive words until you run out of ideas. Then, choose a new item to describe.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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Book Picks

Smart Dog

Sherlock is a talking, computer-

using dog on the run from scientists who want to study his brain. Amy is a fifth-grader struggling with a school bully. The two join forces to solve their problems in this humorous fantasy by Vivian Vande Velde.



The Time Machine

What will life be like in the future? In H. G. Wells's science fiction classic, a man travels in a time machine. He discovers a society without disease, poverty, or war—but the people have also lost the special qualities that make each one unique. (Also available in Spanish.)

Almost Astronauts

In the 1960s, you had to be a man to become an astronaut. That didn't stop the "Mercury 13" women from trying. Tanya Lee

Stone's true story tells of the struggle that led to American women going into space nearly 20 years later.

Big Nate:

In a Class by Himself

Nate has a lot of confidence. After all, his fortune cookie said that he will "surpass all others." But every time he tries to outdo his classmates, something goes hilariously wrong. Will his day get better, or is he doomed to detention? Find out in this book by Lincoln Peirce.



Nonfiction fun

Juggling, trains, knights... if your youngster wants to read about a particular topic, he can find a nonfiction book about it. And when he reads nonfiction for fun, he's building skills that will help him understand textbooks and do school assignments. Here are ideas for sparking his interest.

Follow directions. How-to books let your youngster practice reading and following instructions while he learns something new. Encourage him to read all the steps carefully before he starts a task—and then follow them as he goes along. For example, he might build something (a bird feeder, a mini-greenhouse) after reading *Steven Caney's Ultimate Building Book*. Or he could try juggling—look for *Juggling for the Complete Klutz* by John Cassidy and B. C. Rimbeaux.

Research a topic. Encourage your child to become the family expert on a topic, and he'll build research skills that can help with essays and reports. Have him choose a subject that interests him (trains, pyramids), and let family



members submit questions to him. He can search for the answers in nonfiction books or encyclopedias or on Web sites.

Explore "extras." Your child will get used to textbook features like glossaries, charts, and maps by seeing them regularly in other nonfiction books. Help him find books with a variety of elements—he might try a DK Eyewitness book such as *Knight* or *Forensic Science*. Ask him how the graphics add to the text. For instance, a timeline might help him put the historical events a book describes in context. ■

Write about a hobby

Hobbies offer plenty of opportunities for your child to stretch his writing muscles. Suggest these three ways:

- Perhaps your youngster enjoys painting pottery or decorating cakes. She can photograph her finished products and write descriptions of them. Encourage her to be specific (include materials, colors) so she'll learn to use details in her writing.
- Suggest that your child create a monthly newsletter for family and friends about her favorite sports teams. She can practice summarizing by writing a few sentences about each game she watches.
- A youngster who loves the outdoors might keep a nature journal. She'll learn to record observations as she tracks seasonal changes ("Our tree is completely red now") or notes animal behavior ("The geese flew in a V shape"). ■



Online reading and writing

Computers and MP3 players are tools that children love—and they can motivate your youngster to read and write. Try these tips.

Magazines. Many online magazines encourage kids to read articles and write responses. This can teach your child to use information from her reading to support what she writes. For example, at www.odysseymagazine.com, she



might read about a mysterious space object and then send in her ideas for what it could be.

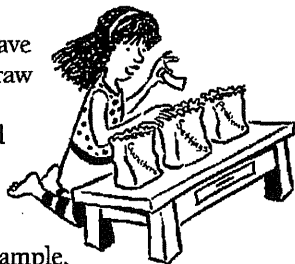
Stories. Let your youngster download audiobooks to enjoy on a computer or an MP3 player. (Check your public library's Web site or www.childrensbooksonline.org.) Encourage her to follow along in the print version as she listens—she'll learn new words by hearing and seeing them. *Idea:* Suggest that your child write her own story and record it as a podcast. She can create MP3 files for free at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>.

Fun with Words Improv night

Turn the whole family into storytellers with this activity that will build your child's language skills.

Ask your youngster to write imaginary story characters (duck, superhero) on 10 slips of paper and place them into a bag. Have her fill a second bag with 10 settings (restaurant, playground) and a third bag with problems that characters might face (flat tire, don't know the language).

To play, have your child draw a slip from each bag and begin telling a story using the ideas. For example, if she picks "duck," "restaurant," and "don't know the language," she might say, "Gee, I'm hungry, but I can't read this menu." Then, other family members add to the story. You might respond, "I'm sorry. Let me get someone who speaks duck." The goal of improv is to be funny and keep the action moving smoothly. So everyone has to listen carefully to what others say and play along based on what pops into their minds.



When you're finished with one scene, draw new slips and play again.



Parent 2 Parent

Graphic novels

My son Thomas used to avoid reading. But then his cousin came for a sleepover and brought a graphic-novel version of *The Boxcar Children*.

I'd never seen a graphic novel before. It looked kind of like a comic book, with drawings and balloons for the characters' lines. Thomas really enjoyed it, so I asked his teacher if graphic novels counted as "real" books. Mr. Brooks told me that all reading is good practice.

Since then, Thomas has collected an entire shelf of graphic novels. All of that practice seems to have made him more comfortable with reading, because lately he has been reading more regular books, too. In fact, he liked the graphic-novel version of *The Call of the Wild* so much that he went to the library and checked out the original version to read!



Other Picks

SOFTWARE

■ Bonnie's Bookstore

Click on letter tiles to form words in this storybook-themed game. Your child can choose to race the clock or play with a limited number of turns. Bonus tiles, "writer's blocks," and three levels of play add to the fun. *PopCap Games*

■ I Spy Fantasy

Solve riddles and search for hidden items on an alien planet, in an underwater cavern, and in a sandcastle. This game, like the "I Spy" book series, will build your youngster's observation skills and boost her memory and thinking.



Scholastic

WEB SITES

■ WayBack

This Web site takes readers on a trip through history. Your youngster will find articles about U.S. presidents, the first airplanes, and civil rights activists. Children are also encouraged to enjoy offline activities such as exploring your family history and planning a reunion.

<http://pbskids.org/wayback>

■ National Geographic Kids

Visitors to this National Geographic Web site can read news and see photographs of animals, people, and places around the globe. Articles cover cultures, conservation, space exploration, scientific discoveries, and more.

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com>



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