

# Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

April 2017

Homer-Center Elementary School  
Mrs. Lisa Weaver, Reading Specialist

## Book Picks

### ■ *Phoebe and Her Unicorn* (Dana Simpson)

Phoebe dreams of being special. When she befriends a unicorn, she thinks she's found her chance. But she soon discovers that being friends with the magical creature is tougher than it looks. The first book in the graphic novel series, *Phoebe and Her Unicorn*.



### ■ *Looking Back: A Book of Memories* (Lois Lowry)

The Newbery Medal-winning author of *The Giver* and *Number the Stars* describes her memoir as a book "about things that happened, which caused other things to happen." Lowry shares personal stories and family photos, and she describes what inspired her to write novels.

### ■ *Flying Lessons & Other Stories* (Edited by Ellen Oh)

This book of short stories pulls readers into the lives of diverse characters.



From the basketball player with a disability to the poor girl trying to fit in among wealthy kids,

readers learn that although we are each different, we are also the same.

### ■ *Tortuga Squad: Kids Saving Sea Turtles in Costa Rica* (Cathleen Burnham)

Here's nonfiction for children who are concerned about endangered wildlife. The book follows a group of youngsters dedicated to rescuing sea turtles. Each hatching season, the young volunteers protect turtle eggs and help baby turtles reach the ocean safely.



## Which book to choose?

Fiona walks into the library looking for a new book to read. But surrounded by rows of books and thousands of titles, she isn't sure how to find one she will like. Sound familiar? Use tips like these to help your child locate her next great read.

### Narrow the field

Have your youngster make her own "book search" bookmark. On a strip of sturdy paper, she can write her favorite topics, types of books, and authors. For example, her list may include soccer, animals, mysteries, and authors Shannon Hale and R. L. Stine. Then, your child could browse the library shelves, bookmark in hand, for books that match her list.

### Sample the new arrivals

Uh-oh. That book your youngster planned to read is checked out. Now what? Invite her to "taste test" books on the new-arrivals display. She might pull one out that catches her eye and read the front flap, the back flap, and the first few pages. If it snags her interest, she can check it out.

### Get recommendations

When your child knows what she likes and wants to find something similar, encourage her to ask a librarian for help. If your youngster mentions a few books she enjoyed, the librarian will guide her toward similar titles. *Tip:* Librarians often feature their personal favorites in a "recommended reads" section—another good place to look for books to take home. ■



## Beyond the books

Books may be what libraries are known for, but they have so much more to offer! Your youngster could consider free options like these:



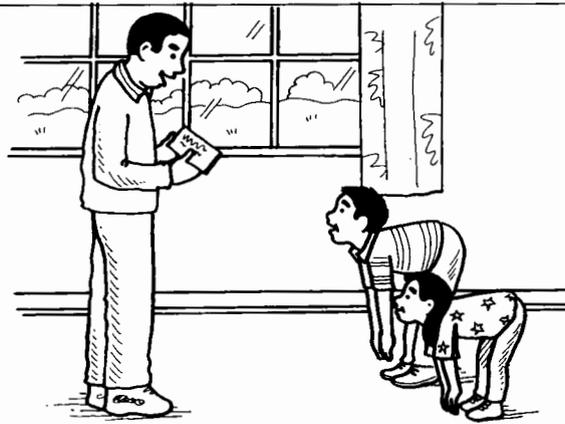
- Join a young writers group.
- Sign up for a theater club, and put on plays and skits.
- Share in a family mystery night.
- Take a workshop to learn Internet search techniques.
- Attend a "meet the author" event.
- Watch a film series based on books.
- Take part in a foreign-language conversation class.
- Drop in for homework help.
- Participate in arts and crafts classes.

*Tip:* If you live in an area with more than one library branch, check them all out. ■

## Listen “actively”

Children who are *active listeners* absorb more of what’s said—an important skill for understanding lessons, taking notes, and following spoken directions. To listen actively, your youngster needs to concentrate fully on the speaker so he can remember and respond. Try these fun ways to practice.

**Outrageous declarations.** Start by making three silly claims. “My dog is green. I eat spaghetti with a straw. I’ve got furry purple feet.” Your child repeats



them and adds three of his own. “Your dog is green, you eat spaghetti with a straw, and your feet are furry and purple. I like polka dot asparagus. I’ve been to the moon twice. I have night vision.” Take turns repeating the last three claims and trying to top them with three new ones.

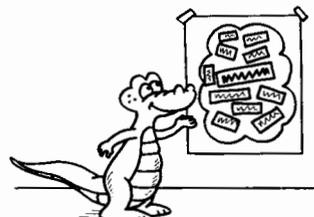
**Crazy directions.** Together, write 20 random instructions on separate index cards. (“Take two steps left.” “Touch your toes.” “Wink your right eye.”) Shuffle the cards. Draw five cards, and read them aloud to your youngster. He waits until all the directions are read, counts to 10, and acts them out in order. If he succeeds, he scores a point. If not, you score the point. Trade roles, and play again. The winner is the first person with 10 points. 📌

## Fun with Words

### Cloudy with a chance of words

Let your child channel her inner artist with a vocabulary-building “word cloud.” With this fun project, she’ll think of words that are connected in some way and then display them in a colorful cloud-shaped image.

First, she’ll need a subject (friendship, a famous person). Have her brainstorm words related to her choice. Words for *friendship* might include *laughter*, *loyalty*, *confide*, and *understanding*.



Next, she’ll write the words in various sizes, colors, and styles (or type them

in different fonts) to indicate their importance. She might use large letters and a bright color for *loyalty* and smaller letters and a pale color for *laughter* to show she thinks *loyalty* is more important.

Finally, she can cut out the words and glue them into a big cloud on a sheet of paper. She may want to decorate her room with a wall of word clouds! 📌

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## Use a proofreading checklist

Encourage your child to proofread writing assignments carefully before she turns them in. This checklist will help.



- I capitalized...** the first word in every sentence and the first letter in proper nouns.
- I punctuated...** every sentence with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point. I checked commas, apostrophes, and quotation marks, too.
- I checked for misused words...** like its/it’s, there/their, and you’re/your. And I double-checked words I often misspell.
- I examined my sentences...** each one has a subject and a verb. There are no missing words.
- I looked for confusing passages...** and made sure that what I wrote makes sense and is easy to understand.

*Hint:* Suggest that your child take a break (20 minutes or more) between writing and proofreading so she can see her work with fresh eyes. 📌

## Q&A Supporting independent readers

**Q** When my son was starting to read, helping him was easy. How can I support him now that he reads on his own?

**A** One way is just to talk about what he’s reading. Have him describe books he reads at school and for pleasure. Telling you about the plots in a novel or the facts in a nonfiction book gives him an opportunity to

think more deeply about their content—and lets you gauge his understanding.

You could also look through his textbooks and library books and ask a question or two. For instance, you might say, “What’s the most important part in this section on fossils?” or “What happened to the knight in this chapter?”

Also, occasionally touch base with your son’s teacher about his reading progress. The teacher can share strengths and weaknesses and offer suggestions for supporting your child at home. 📌



# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

April 2017

Homer-Center Elementary School  
Mrs. Lisa Weaver, Reading Specialist

## Book Picks



### Read-aloud favorites

#### ■ *Rosario's Fig Tree* (Charis Wahl)

A little girl believes her neighbor, Rosario, is a magician because he grows things in his garden. Rosario knows just when and how to plant seeds that give him eggplants, tomatoes, and even figs. When the girl becomes Rosario's helper, she discovers she can do magic, too.



#### ■ *I am Jim Henson* (Brad Meltzer)

As a child, Jim loved to laugh, act out movies he saw at the theater, and draw happy monsters and birds. This picture book biography introduces little readers to the boy who grew up to create *Sesame Street* and *The Muppet Show*.

#### ■ *Armadillo Rodeo* (Jan Brett)

Bo the armadillo is in for an adventure when he wanders off from his mother and follows a new "friend" to a Texas rodeo. The "friend" turns out to be a child's red cowboy boot that Bo mistook for another armadillo! By the time his mom finds him, Bo has had a great time riding a horse and going to a barn dance at the rodeo. (Also available in Spanish.)



#### ■ *The Earth Book* (Todd Parr)

This nonfiction book explains simple ways to help take care of the earth. Read it together, and then celebrate Earth Day (April 22) by starting a new tradition inspired by the book. For example, ride bikes to the store instead of driving, or reduce food waste by enjoying a weekly leftovers dinner.



## Keys to better conversations

If discussions with your child mostly involve things like "What should we have for lunch?" or "Please put on your shoes," you're not alone. Here are ways to enjoy rich conversations and help your youngster build speaking and listening skills.



### Make a "spark" jar

Fill a jar with questions that will spark fun discussions. Family members can write conversation starters on slips of paper. Then, pull a "spark" out of the jar before you sit down to dinner or get in the car, and you'll have something interesting to talk about. *Example:* "What's the first thing our hamster would say if she could talk?"

### Play "piggyback"

Encourage your child to listen closely to what others say and piggyback on their ideas with lines like "That reminds me of..." or "Good idea. What if we also..." Maybe someone suggests that

you celebrate the 100th day of 2017 on April 10. Your youngster might add, "That reminds me of the 100th Day of School party. We could make a 100-link paper chain like we did at school."

### Expand your range

Give your child chances to talk to a variety of people. Their different experiences and perspectives will provide new topics to discuss. She might speak with guests at your home or call or video-chat with relatives. Ahead of time, help her think of what to say. ("Aunt Terry works as a nurse, and she lives in Minnesota where it's still cold. What could you ask her?")♥

## Let's read the mail

What's in the mail? Opportunities for your youngster to read and write! Try these activities:

● Little ones love to get mail addressed to them. Encourage relatives to send your child letters, cards, and postcards. Read them together, letting him read the words he recognizes. Then, help him write back to each sender.

● Give your youngster catalogs and circulars that come in the mail. He could pick a category, such as clothes or food. Next, he can cut out pictures, glue them on a sheet of paper, and practice writing by labeling each item ("Pajamas," "Socks").♥



# Read-alouds boost imagination

Reading to your child can exercise his imagination and sharpen his comprehension. Consider these ideas.

**Picture the scene.** While you read a story, ask your youngster to close his eyes and imagine what the illustrations look like. He'll practice visualizing the characters, setting, and plot. After you



finish reading, suggest that he draw some of the pictures he "saw." Then, let him look at the real illustrations to see what they have in common with his.

**Create an ending.** How would your child like the story to end? About halfway through, close the book. Have him use his imagination to make up the

rest—just like when he writes his own stories. Now open the book, and finish reading. Which version does he prefer?

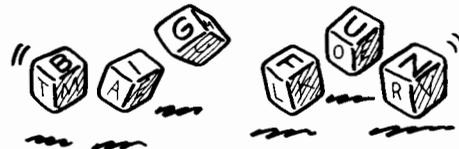
**Think deeply.** Pose questions that stretch your youngster's imagination as you read. You might ask what he thinks of a character's decision or how the story would be different if it took place in a city rather than in the country.♥

## Fun with Words

### Roll and spell

How many words can you and your youngster make from six letters? Play this spelling game to find out.

**Materials:** six dice, masking tape, pen, timer, paper, pencil



1. Cover the dice with bits of masking tape.
2. Use two dice for vowels (A, E, I, O, U, Y), writing one set on each. The remaining dice are for consonants. Your child should write a different one on each side of a die, leaving one side blank on each die.
3. Let your youngster roll all the dice at once. Set a timer for five minutes.
4. Work together to spell as many words as possible. (A blank can stand for any letter.) Say your child rolls I, O, C, B, L, and X. She might move the letters around to spell *cob*, *boil*, *oil*, *ox*, *box*, and *lox*. Help her write down each word you spell.
5. Roll the dice again, and play with the new letters.♥



## Family writing games

Write a sentence—and pass it on. These games encourage your child to practice creative writing as you build stories together, one line at a time:

- Help your youngster write one sentence of a story on a sheet of paper, and hand it to the next player. That person reads the line silently, adds a sentence, and folds the paper so the first line is hidden. Keep passing the paper around, each time adding a line and folding the paper so only the new sentence shows. When the paper is full, let your child unfold the story and read it.
- Have your youngster pick two unrelated objects, such as a shoe and a carrot. Then, she starts a story about one of the items ("Last week, I got a new pair of shoes"), and gives the paper to the person beside her. The goal is to tell a story that makes sense and ends with a line using the second item. Your story might continue: "I put them on and went for a walk. I saw a vegetable garden. There was a cute bunny eating a carrot."♥



## Parent to Parent

### Our growing home library

I want my son Jason to have his own library of books at home, but we can't afford bookstore prices. When I mentioned this to a friend, she said her family had built a nice collection of books by shopping at yard sales.

So Jason and I started scanning yard sale ads for mentions of children's books. Our new Saturday morning ritual is going to these sales and browsing

through the books together. Jason loves picking out his favorites. And I love that we can sometimes get a bag of books for a dollar!

At one yard sale, another shopper gave me a great tip. She said you can get good books for really low prices at library and church yard sales. Now we're shopping at those, too. Soon our problem won't be that we need more books—it will be needing more bookshelves!♥



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# Home & School CONNECTION<sup>®</sup>

Working Together for School Success

Homer-Center Elementary School  
Mrs. Lisa Weaver, Reading Specialist

## SHORT NOTES



### Picture this

Good readers form mental pictures as they read. To improve your child's comprehension, read a book without letting him see it. Then, ask him to guess what the illustrations look like. *Examples:* How are the characters dressed? Is the setting bright or gloomy?

### Be there!

Regular attendance in elementary school sets up a good pattern for your youngster's entire school career. Show your child that school comes first by trying to keep days off for illnesses and family emergencies. Also, schedule routine doctor and dentist appointments for after school or over school breaks.

### Line them up

Sometimes children get math problems wrong simply because they haven't lined up the numbers correctly. Try this: Have your youngster do problems on graph paper, using one box per number. Once she gets used to this system, she'll be able to transfer her lining-up skills to regular paper.

### Worth quoting

"Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much." *Blaise Pascal*

## JUST FOR FUN

**Teacher:** Name one important thing we have today that we didn't have 10 years ago.

**Brian:** Me!



## Pitching in

Would you like your child to be more responsible, hardworking, and persistent? Here are ideas for working as a family to help your youngster develop these important traits.

### A group approach

Thinking of herself as a "team player" can encourage your child to be responsible. Explain that your family operates as a team.

Everyone must play a part to get things done. *Example:* You take her shopping for her clothes and sports equipment. She chooses her outfit each morning and keeps track of her bat and glove.

### Hard workers wanted

Your youngster probably has regular chores to do. You can motivate her to work extra hard by placing "want ads" on the refrigerator. Choose a challenging job, and offer a benefit. *Example:* "Wanted—a hardworking family member to clean



out a corner of the basement. Reward—a nice place for kids to play."

### Sticking it out

Working toward small goals can make it easier to complete a big task. Perhaps your family room needs a fresh coat of paint. Write down the steps (move furniture and lay down drop cloths, prepare walls, roll paint on walls, paint trim). Tell your child you'll take a fun break after each step is done (go to the playground, take a bike ride).♥

## Parent power

There are many ways you can support your youngster's learning and his school. Try these tips:

- Spend a few minutes every evening looking over handouts your child brings home. Fill out forms to return the next day.
- Tell your youngster's teachers if you can help them out at school or from home.
- Make sure teachers know you appreciate their efforts. From time to time, send a thank-you note or an email.
- Contact your child's teacher immediately if you see a problem. Working together will help your youngster succeed.
- Attend conferences, parent meetings, and school events regularly.♥



# Standardized tests

## Choose to do well

True or false: Standardized tests are tough. The answer depends on how prepared your youngster is. Consider these four steps to help him handle test week.

1. Explain that the tests will show how much he has learned. Encourage him to try his best, but don't put so much emphasis on the tests that he feels stressed.
2. Practice the test format. For example, your child might have to read a paragraph and answer questions. Using one



of his textbooks, have him look at the questions at the end of a section first and then read the passage. That will help him know what to read for and how to find the answers.

3. Limit activities the night before tests. You may want to avoid having guests for dinner, or let him skip his brother's baseball game if it means being out late. Be sure your youngster gets to bed on time and sets an alarm for the next morning.

4. On test day, give him an energy-boosting breakfast. Try to include both protein (eggs, yogurt, milk) and carbohydrates (fruit, oatmeal, toast).♥

### ACTIVITY CORNER

### Paper bag city

Let your child create her own 3-D community. She'll practice map skills and learn about urban planning as she decides where to put the buildings in her town.

**Materials:** paper lunch bags, crayons or markers, newspapers, black construction paper, scissors, tape

Have your youngster think of buildings to include, such as a bank, a grocery store, a school, a library, and houses. She can make them by drawing doors, windows, and signs on flat bags. For every bag she decorates, have her stuff a second one with newspaper. Then, she should open each decorated bag and slide it over a stuffed bag so her "buildings" will stand up. For the roads, she can cut black construction paper into strips and tape them together.



Finally, have your child lay out her roads and arrange her buildings alongside them to make her very own town.♥

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### Q & A

## Bullying: The bystander's role

**Q:** My child has been coming home from school upset because kids frequently pick on a classmate and never let her play with them. What advice should I give my daughter?

**A:** Tell your youngster that her classmate was being bullied—and that she may be able to help stop it! There are several things she can do. If she feels safe, she could say something like, "That's not nice," and then ask the classmate to walk away with her. Or she might invite the child who is being bullied to join her in a game or school project.

Also, remind your youngster to report bullying to a teacher or other adult when she sees it. Let her know this is not tattling, but a way to help someone who is being hurt. You can explain: "Asking an adult to help a child who is being bullied is like asking the nurse to help a child with a scraped knee."♥



### PARENT TO PARENT

## Thinking games

Between school, errands, and activities, my family spends lots of time on the go. I decided to use some of it for "thinking games."

I taught my kids a game my parents used to play with me, called "Would You Rather?" I offer two options and ask which they prefer and why. For example, I might say, "Would you rather live near the beach or the mountains?"

My son came up with a game he named "Three Favorites." Someone picks a category (outfits, movies), and we all tell our top three

choices. My daughter thought of "What Doesn't Belong?" We take turns naming items and asking the others to explain which is the odd one out and why. The kids especially like this game because there can be more than one "right" answer. For example, when I named owl, ostrich, and eagle, my daughter said, "Ostrich, because it can't fly." My son's answer was, "Owl, because it hunts at night."

Now they want to play all the time. I'm glad because we're having fun—and they've gotten better at thinking through their ideas.♥

