

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

September 2016

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

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Dad's First Day* (Mike Wohnoutka)

In this twist on a first-day-of-school story, Oliver's dad is the one who is nervous. Oliver is excited, but his dad isn't ready for summer to end or for his son to start school. Your child will laugh as the dad complains of a tummy ache and ends up having a tantrum when it's time to leave Oliver at school.



■ *Ruby Lu Brave and True*

(Lenore Look)

Ruby Lu lives in Seattle with her family. She loves to put on backyard magic shows and dress up. But she doesn't love going to Chinese school on Saturdays. This first book in the Ruby Lu series includes "Ruby's Fantastic Glossary and Pronunciation Guide" with Chinese words.

■ *Edmund Unravels* (Andrew Kolb)

A ball of yarn named Edmund always loved adventure and travel. But whenever he went too far, he'd unravel, and his parents had to wind him back up. As he gets older and bigger, Edmund goes farther away to explore the world. The farther he goes, the smaller he gets, and eventually he misses the familiar tug from his family.



■ *Ada's Violin* (Susan Hood)

Read the true story of an orchestra in Paraguay that plays instruments made entirely from recycled materials. Young Ada never thought she'd be able to play the violin until a new music teacher got creative with materials found in a landfill. (Also available in Spanish.)



Fall into reading

Autumn is quickly approaching! Your youngster can learn all about the new season while he practices reading for information. Here are fun opportunities.

Collect facts

How do pumpkins grow? Why do leaves fall off trees? Read non-fiction library books about fall, and encourage your child to listen for interesting facts.

Then, let him cut out autumn shapes (pumpkins, leaves) from construction paper, and help him write down the facts. *Example:* "Pumpkins grow on vines." He could hang up the shapes for a colorful autumn display to read again and again.

Read autumn "news"

Take a walk around town, and look for fall-related announcements. A police station sign might remind drivers that students are back at school, a street banner may announce an autumn festival, and a sign in a store window could advertise



a fall sale. Ask your youngster to read any words he knows, and read the rest to him.

Research fall produce

Visit an apple orchard, a farmers' market, or the grocery store, and help your child discover fall fruits and vegetables. Together, read signs or brochures to learn about them. For instance, which apples are more popular for baking pies—Golden Delicious or Granny Smith? Where was the cauliflower grown? What is quince used for?♥

Show me what you wrote in school

Invite your child to "read" a story she wrote in class. You might be treated to an elaborate tale while she points to a drawing with random letters underneath—that's okay! She has picked up on the fact that printed words tell a story, and she is taking her first steps toward writing them.

Then, encourage her to talk about her writing by asking open-ended questions like these:

- "How did you come up with the idea for your story?"
- "What do you think will happen to the characters next?"
- "Does the story remind you of anything that has happened in real life?"♥



Alphabet fun

Lines, loops, circles, and tails...each letter of the alphabet has its own shape. And being able to instantly recognize every uppercase and lowercase letter is an important foundation for reading success. Try these activities.

ABC collage. Have your youngster cut out letters in different colors and sizes from cereal boxes, magazines, newspapers,



and catalogs. She can arrange and glue them onto paper however she likes. Take turns pointing to a letter and saying its name. This will help her recognize letters out of order and in various sizes and fonts.

Mystery letter. What has one big vertical line with three smaller horizontal lines attached to it? (A capital E.) Think of a letter, and give your child directions to draw it on

paper. For a lowercase g, you might say, "Make a circle at the top. Add a tail going down that curves up to the left." Can she tell you what letter she made? Next, she could give you one to draw. She'll learn to notice small differences between letters—a key to mastering letter recognition. For example, ask her what happens if she erases the bottom horizontal line on a capital E. She has an F!♥

Parent to Parent

Pictures contain clues

My son Jackson is just starting to read, and he often looks at the pictures to help him figure out words. I wondered if he should be sounding out words instead, so I asked his teacher.

To my surprise, Mrs. Thomas said using picture clues and sounding out words are both good strategies for early readers.



For example, Jackson might come to a word that starts with R and see a rainbow in the illustration. Using what he knows about beginning sounds, he could guess that the R word is rainbow. Mrs. Thomas said this builds confidence and teaches children to try different strategies.

She suggested that when Jackson and I choose library books, we get some with just a few words on each page and pictures that match. A librarian helped us find books, and Jackson is enjoying practicing his reading strategies at home.♥



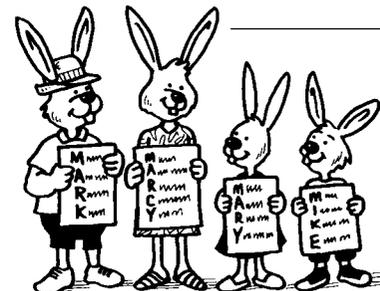
Fun with Words

Family acrostics

Your youngster will stretch his vocabulary as he selects just the right words to describe himself and his family.

On separate sheets of paper, have family members write their first names down the left margin. Then, each person adds a word or phrase that begins with each letter in his name and tells something about him. For instance, Luke might think of "Loves to laugh," for L and "Ultra strong" for U. *Note:* Keep a dictionary on hand in case anyone gets stuck.

When everyone is finished, read your acrostics to each other. Next, work together to make one with your last name. Maybe the Barr family will write, "Barbecue fans, Adventurers, Readers, Riders of bikes."♥



Q&A Fine-motor play

Q My daughter is just learning to use a pencil and cut with scissors. Can you suggest ways I can help her practice at home?

A Playtime is ideal for strengthening little hands for writing, cutting, and other fine-motor tasks.

For example, let your daughter make a car wash for her toy cars. In a sink or big plastic bin, she can squirt shaving cream onto her vehicles and use a spray bottle to rinse them off. Pressing the dispenser on the

shaving cream and squeezing the spray nozzle are both great workouts for her "writing muscles."

Or encourage your child to use kitchen tongs when she builds with blocks. She'll think it's fun to pick up each block with the tongs and add it to her tower. And she'll work on hand-eye coordination as she tries to see how tall she can make her building before it topples over.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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Working Together for Learning Success

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Book Picks

■ *The World According to Humphrey*

(Betty G. Birney)

Being the class pet is a big job for little Humphrey. The hamster helps a shy girl speak up, finds friends for a lonely janitor, and has his own notebook. Then the regular teacher returns, and she hates hamsters. Can he win her over? Book one of the Humphrey series. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *If: A Mind-Bending New Way of Looking at Big Ideas and Numbers*

(David J. Smith)

If 100 coins represented all the money in the world, half of the population would share one coin.



This nonfiction book scales down huge concepts in ways your youngster can understand. She will think

about food, water, time, and more in a whole new way.

■ *Raymie Nightingale* (Kate DiCamillo)

Raymie thinks that if she can beat her rivals and win the title of Little Miss Central Florida Tire, her runaway father will come home. But something unexpected happens as the competitors prepare for the pageant—they become friends.

■ *Whoosh! Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions*

(Chris Barton)

Welcome to the world of Lonnie Johnson, inventor of the Super Soaker. This is the story of a young engineer who kept designing and building despite obstacles in his way. A true story of perseverance and dedication.



Motivated to read!

Reading is more than a fun way to pass the time—it's also a key to success in school and on the job. Keep your child interested in reading with these ideas.

Make time

Help your youngster work reading into his day wherever possible. Share jokes over breakfast, put magazines in the bathroom, and slip a book into his backpack to read when he has a few minutes. *Tip:* Visit the library regularly so your child has a steady supply of interesting reading material.



Build interest

Look for a “hook” that will make your youngster want to read. If he's a natural problem solver, get him the first volume of a mystery series. A child who dreams about outer space might love science fiction. For a budding athlete, try a biography of a sports hero or a book of records. Whatever his passion, there's a book for it!

Read for a reason

Make your youngster the directions reader or movie-review reader in your

house. You'll give him reasons to read, and he'll feel important. For instance, when you're putting together a bookcase, he can read the instructions aloud. Or he might read reviews to choose a video for family movie night.

Be an example

The more your child sees you read, the more likely he is to view reading as a part of everyday life. Talk about the novel or nonfiction book you are enjoying and the books you are looking forward to. Then, ask what books he would like to try next. ■

Polish your writing

A few finishing touches can make the difference between a so-so paper and one that shines. Remind your youngster to review these things before she turns in assignments.

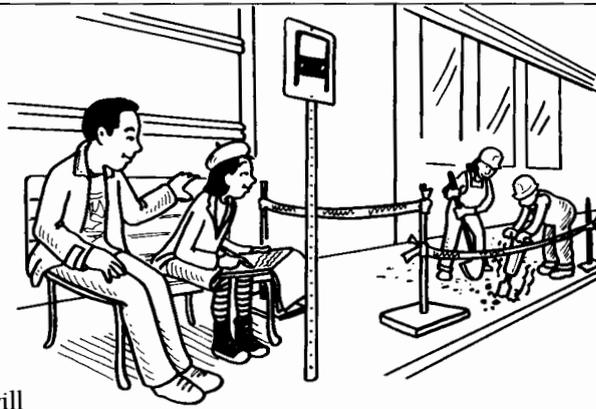
- **Originality.** Encourage your child to double-check that what she has written is her own work. She should understand that copying someone else's words is plagiarism.
- **Clarity.** Have her read her paper out loud, listening to be sure each sentence is clear and makes sense. Are there any fragments or run-on sentences? Did she leave out any words?
- **Grammar.** Misspelled words, missing punctuation, and forgotten capitalization will hurt her grade. Suggest that your youngster reread her work once for each type of error. ■



Think like a writer

Authors have a keen sense of observation. They notice things around them that may inspire their writing, such as an interesting news story or the scent in the air before a rainstorm. Here are ways your child can see the world like a writer, too.

Words. Paying attention to words in books, on signs, or during conversations will help your youngster spice up her own stories and poems. Have her make a three-column list for storing these words as she discovers them: “Unusual nouns,” “Specific verbs,” and “Colorful adjectives.”



Sights and sounds.

Encourage your child to start a journal of things she sees, hears, smells, touches, and tastes. She might describe the clanging and beeping at a noisy construction site, for instance. Later, she can draw on her descriptions to add concrete details to her writing.

People. Writers often fictionalize real people. Ask your youngster to imagine people she knows as characters in her stories. She might base a hero on her cousin who is good at fixing things or create a chef inspired by her aunt. Using real-life people as models may make her fictional characters more realistic. ■



Fun with Words Spelling “hot potato”

When does p-o-t-a-t-o spell *fun*? When your family plays this familiar game with a spelling twist!

Stand in a circle. One player calls out a word from your youngster’s spelling list or the dictionary. Then, he says the first letter and quickly tosses a small toy or beanbag “hot potato” to the player beside him. As each person catches the potato, he gives the next letter in the word and tosses the potato on.



Remind your child to listen carefully so he can think about which letter comes next. Say a wrong letter, and you’re out for that round. When the word has been spelled correctly, the last person spells the entire word aloud. Choose a new word, and play again. ■

Parent 2 Parent Siblings as reading buddies

My older son, Mark, just started fifth grade. As one of the “big kids” in elementary school, he is paired with a kindergarten “reading buddy” who needs help. That gave me an idea. Since my first-grader, Dylan, is struggling with reading, I suggested that Mark and Dylan become reading buddies at home.



I knew Dylan would learn from his big brother—what I didn’t realize was that the arrangement would help *both* boys. Mark typically reads silently, but by reading to his brother, he hears his own mistakes and corrects them. As a result, he is reading more fluently, and he seems to be getting more confident, too.

When it’s Dylan’s turn to read, I smile hearing Mark give his little brother hints about how to figure out big words. And Mark said that now he remembers strategies to use when he’s stuck, even though he’s “older” now! ■

Q&A After-school literacy fun

Q We’re looking for after-school activities for my daughter. Any suggestions for ones that would help her with language arts?

A Book clubs, poetry circles, and conversation groups for English-language learners are all great ways for youngsters to practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Drama club is a good fit, too. If your child lands a role in the school play, she’ll need to read her lines many times as she memorizes them. And

singing in the chorus requires reading words *and* music. Even a photography club can boost reading and writing skills. Your daughter could read about new picture-taking techniques and write captions for her photos.

Ask about after-school programs at your youngster’s school, and check with the public library or community center. Then, help your child pick out the ones she likes best. ■



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