

Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2013

Sweetbriar Elementary School

Book Picks

■ *It's Raining Cupcakes*

Winning a trip to New York City in a cupcake-baking contest is Isabel's only hope for summer travel. But she'll need to beat her best friend, Sophie, and avoid upsetting her mom, who has her own ideas about the contest. A story about following your dreams by Lisa Schroeder.

■ *Encyclopedia Brown and the Case of the Carnival Crime*

This book from the classic series by Donald J. Sobol includes 10 mysteries. Fifth-grade detective Encyclopedia Brown takes on cases at a carnival, museum, ballpark, zoo, and more. Your child can solve the mysteries as he reads and then check the solutions at the end of the book.

■ *Glory Be*

It's the summer of 1964 in Mississippi, and 11-year-old Gloriana Hemphill is confused by the civil rights movement. She can't understand why the town pool is closed or why new people from up North are suddenly in town. This historical fiction novel is based on events from author Augusta Scattergood's life.

■ *Scholastic Discover More: Dinosaurs*

What can we learn about dinosaurs by studying their skulls? Where did the prehistoric creatures go? Penelope Arlon's nonfiction book includes the latest information on dinosaurs, facts about fossils, and a code that lets readers access special online content. (Also available in Spanish.)



Choose your words wisely

Deciding what to say—and how to say it—is a skill every successful writer needs. Help your youngster learn to make good word choices with these tips.

Be specific

Precise nouns tell the reader the exact type of person, place, or thing your child is writing about. After she writes a rough draft, ask her to circle all the nouns. Then, she can try to replace each one with a more specific word. For example, she might change *dog* to *beagle* or *snack* to *brownie*.

Add variety

Encourage your youngster to make a list of words and phrases she uses often (*a lot, pretty, really*). Next to each, she should write alternatives (*a great deal, gorgeous, absolutely*). When she works on a story, she can look at her list to find substitutes for overused words. This will get her to try different words and to



think of new ways to phrase her sentences. *Tip:* Let her consult a thesaurus if she gets stuck.

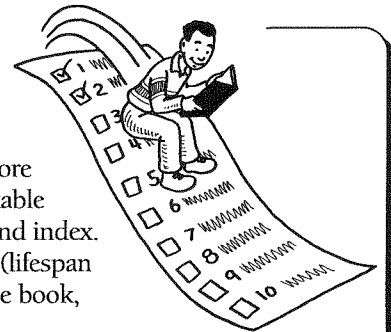
Experiment with dialogue

Does your child use too much dialogue in her stories? Too little? Help her find the right balance by suggesting that she write a sentence both ways—with dialogue and without. Then, ask her to read aloud what she wrote to see which sounds better. ■

Finding facts

To do well in all subjects, your child needs to be able to read for information. Here are ways to help him find facts in nonfiction:

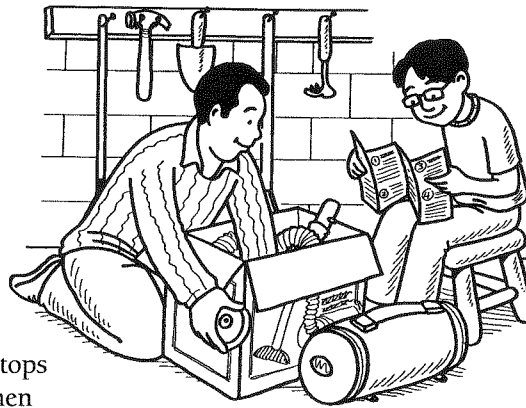
- Have him browse through a nonfiction book before he reads it. He should skim only “extras” like the table of contents, headings, picture captions, glossary, and index. Then, tell him to list 10 things he expects to learn (lifespan of a gecko, temperature of lava). When he reads the book, he can check off each fact as he locates it.
- Help your youngster find a nonfiction picture book on a topic from his textbook. Encourage him to look for features the books have in common (bold words, captions). Explain that these are key places to look for information. Can he spot at least one fact in each book that the other one doesn't have? ■



Three keys to fluent reading

Good comprehension, automatic word recognition, and smooth reading are important parts of fluency. These everyday ideas can help your child develop all three skills.

1. Let him give directions. A fluent reader stops when something doesn't make sense and then rereads the part he didn't understand. Whether you're learning to play a game or putting together a new vacuum cleaner, ask your youngster to read the instructions aloud and explain them to you. Suggest that he reread any part that doesn't make sense.



2. Build his vocabulary. Part of being a fluent reader is recognizing and understanding words instantly. Make new words easier to grasp by offering your child books and magazines with a lot of illustrations. He'll better understand what a *scarab* is, for example, if he sees a picture of one while reading about Egyptian mummies.

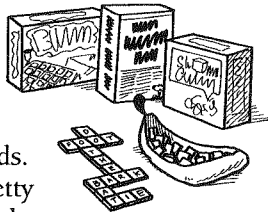
3. Read plays. This is a fun way for your youngster to practice reading smoothly and with expression. Ask a librarian to recommend a book of plays he might enjoy, and set aside time to read them aloud as a family. Each person can take the part of a different character. ■



Fun with Words Game night

Many popular games can improve your youngster's spelling, writing, and grammar. Consider having a family game night to work on these skills.

Words. Look for games that ask players to make, find, or unscramble words. In PDQ (The Pretty Darn Quick Word Game), players must quickly think of a word that contains three randomly drawn letters (*example*: pick LUG, and shout out "language"). *Also try*: Boggle, Bananagrams, Last Word.



Grammar. Play games that teach your child about sentence construction. In Mad Libs Card Game, players combine different parts of speech to make sentences. *Also try*: Go to Press, Man Bites Dog, Punctuation Bingo.

Storytelling. Build creative-writing skills with games like Once Upon a Time. You'll get to make up stories using cards with common fairy-tale elements. *Also try*: Rory's Story Cubes, Tell Tale, The Storymatic Kids. ■

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Parent 2 Parent

We love the newspaper!

My kids were never really interested in the newspaper until a snowstorm knocked out our power, and cabin fever set in. After the third chorus of "I'm bored," I pulled out the newspaper and suggested that my daughter, Hannah, help me work the crossword puzzle.

Before long, my son, Brian, wandered in and asked what we were doing, so I invited him to help us. When we finished the puzzle, we each took a section of the newspaper to read. I got the front page, Hannah chose the entertainment section, and Brian picked sports. As we read, we shared discoveries with each other. We also picked some community events to attend, including a musical and a high school basketball game.

Since then, sharing the newspaper has become a way for the kids to fit in extra reading practice while finding out what's going on in our area. No snow required! ■



Q&A A reluctant writer

Q My son says he doesn't like to write. How can I help him enjoy it more so that he'll do well on writing assignments?

A Ask your son what he doesn't like about writing. Does he dislike writing in general, or does he just not enjoy writing assignments? Are there some types of writing that he likes more than others?

Then, try building his interest by suggesting fun reasons to write. For instance, if he's part of

a school club or scout troop, he might create an email newsletter for members about events and activities. Or help him start a blog about a favorite hobby, such as BMX racing or making model airplanes.

The more he practices, the easier it will be for him to write all sorts of things—which may help him enjoy writing assignments more.

Note: Check with your son's teacher to rule out the possibility that a learning problem makes him dislike writing. ■

