

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2017

South-Western City Schools



Book Picks

Leaping Beauty and Other Animal Fairy Tales (Gregory Maguire)

Your youngster will enjoy reading fairy tale favorites with a twist! Sleeping Beauty is anything but a princess—she’s a frog. Humans are replaced with animals in eight tales, including “Cinder-Elephant,” “Rumplesnakeskin,” and “Goldiefox and the Three Chickens.”



Esperanza Rising (Pam Muñoz Ryan)

During the Great Depression, Esperanza and her mother must leave El Rancho de las Rosas, their Mexican homestead. Once settled at a California camp, they realize how different their lives will become. Can they overcome their challenges? (Also available in Spanish.)



Anyway*: *A Story About Me with 138 Footnotes, 27 Exaggerations, and 1 Plate of Spaghetti (Arthur Salm)

Twelve-year-old Max wants to be cool, so he turns himself into the daring Mad Max. Funny misadventures help Max understand that his risk-taking behavior isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. Now he must decide who he really is.

How to Make a Movie in 10 Easy Lessons (Robert Blofield)

Lights, camera, action! This book leads hopeful filmmakers through plotting, writing, editing, and recording their masterpieces. Each section focuses on a different part of the movie-making process. Your child may be delighted to know that a big Hollywood budget isn’t required!



Write with 100 letters

To celebrate the 100th day of school, try these fun family writing challenges using just 100 letters. Your youngster will have to choose her words carefully as she practices persuasive, descriptive, and explanatory writing.

Persuade buyers

Ask your child to name any household item (slippers, TV, mop). On sheets of paper, each person writes a 100-letter classified ad to persuade others to buy the item. “For sale: My mom’s used slippers that still feel cuddly and warm in the winter! Pink with yellow trim. They just got washed, too.” Vote for the best ad. Then, the winner chooses the next item to “sell.”

Describe the scene

Let your youngster clip photos from the newspaper, leaving off the captions. Place one picture where everyone can see it. Then, write 100-letter captions describing the image. If a picture shows a group of people walking, your child might write, “The Carver family from Idaho trekked hundreds of miles this week to make their way here for the



VFW post bingo tournament.” Share your captions with each other.

Give instructions

Have your youngster start by writing a “how to” title on a sheet of paper. *Example:* “How to wash a car.” Pass the paper clockwise. Everyone writes a step for the total 100-letter set of directions, counting as they go before passing it on.

1. Fill a bucket with soapy water. Take it outside. (38)
2. Spray car with hose. (16)
3. Soak sponge in soapy water. (22)
4. Scrub. Rinse. (10)
5. Repeat if needed. (14)

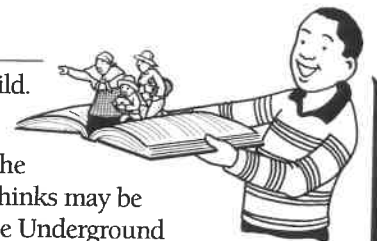
Decide together if the instructions work. Were any steps forgotten?

Hooray for history!

Historical fiction brings history to life for your child. Here are suggestions to take his reading further.

Find facts. As your youngster reads a story set in the past, have him jot down interesting details that he thinks may be true. For instance, if he’s reading a tale set during the Underground Railroad, he might list “Ended in Canada” and “It was not really a railroad.”

Investigate. When your child finishes the book, he could put on his detective cap and read encyclopedia entries, nonfiction books, or articles to uncover the truth behind those details. He’ll learn that the Underground Railroad had many routes that led north to free states and Canada, and it even had some routes to Mexico.



Keep on reading aloud

Did you know that hearing you read aloud can increase your child's vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension? Use these tips.

Aim high. Most kids understand books written two or more levels above what they can read on their own. So try choosing read-aloud books that are harder than what your youngster normally picks. He'll be able to follow the plot or the nonfiction information more easily if you read than if he reads it himself. *Idea:* Ask your child's teacher or a librarian for recommendations that will suit your youngster.

Think out loud. If an author's word choices are interesting to you, say so. If you have an "aha!" moment while reading a



mystery, share it with your youngster. You'll show him that it's fun to talk about what you're reading—and it builds understanding.

Read more than fiction. Look for everyday opportunities to read aloud. You might read a quote on a tea bag, a funny blog post, or the recipe you're making together. Or read your child a short story or magazine article. He will pick up new words and phrases from a variety of materials.

Note: Remember that you don't have to be an expert reader to read to your youngster. He will enjoy the together time and learn from your reading no matter what! ■

Fun with Words

Verbs at play

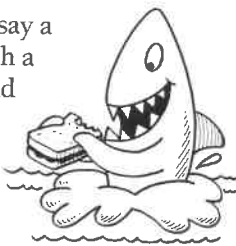
Devoured, slurped, chomped—each of these

verbs is a potential replacement for the more common verb *ate*. Do this activity together, and your youngster will gobble up a fun lesson on choosing vivid verbs when she writes.

1. Have your child say a simple sentence with a plain verb. She could say, "The shark *ate* the sandwich."

2. You repeat the sentence and replace the verb with a more descriptive one. "The shark *devoured* the sandwich."

3. Then, it's your youngster's turn again. "The shark *chomped* the sandwich."



Keep taking turns until you run out of verbs. Let your child look up the original word in a thesaurus and see if there are any synonyms (words with similar meanings) she missed.

The player who made the last successful change thinks of a new sentence to start the next round. ■

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

Read, draw, and learn

My daughter Simone loves to draw—and that gave me an idea that would help her with studying. I suggested that she pretend to be an illustrator for the sections she was reading in her Chinese textbook. To do that, she would have to carefully consider what the text said and then represent it with a picture.

Simone liked the idea, so as she studied vocabulary, she copied the Chinese characters from her textbook, drew a picture to match the word, and labeled it in English as well.

Knowing she was going to be drawing the material helped Simone think about—and remember—the new words she was learning. Now she plans to use this "artistic" technique when she studies other subjects, too. ■



Q&A "My child mumbles"

Q People are always saying they can't understand my son because he mumbles. How can I help him work on this?

A First, does he understand what mumbling is? Play a game where you take turns speaking clearly (the other person can understand you) or mumble (the sounds are jumbled together). Call out "Clear!" or "Mumble!"

Then, try keeping an audio journal with your child to let him practice speaking clearly. Use a smartphone, a computer, or another recording device, and have

him start by recording himself talking about his day. Perhaps he'll tell a funny story about something that happened in the cafeteria.

Next, you record your response. If your son mumbled, you could say, "I'm so interested in your story, but I couldn't understand the part about the lunch line. Can you record it again so I can laugh, too?" Continue your audio

conversations on a daily basis—and listen for improvement in his speaking! *Note:* If you're still concerned about your child's speech, talk to his teacher. ■

