

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

February 2006

Renton School District

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Gretchen Groundhog, It's Your Day*

Imagine a groundhog who's afraid to look for her shadow on Groundhog Day! That's just what happens in Abby Levine's story. But after Gretchen learns that her ancestors were afraid, too, she finds the courage to step out of her hole.



■ *Candy Counting*

Lisa McCourt's book uses candy to teach math. Add and subtract with peppermints, lollipops, gumballs, chocolates, and other delicious counters. For even more fun, let your child use real candy to do the calculations himself.



■ *When Winter Comes*

What happens to flowers and animals when winter comes? A family finds out when they take a walk after the first snowfall. Read about caterpillars wrapped in their cocoons—and other creatures—in Nancy Van Laan's rhyming book.



■ *The Littles*

This beginning chapter book is the first in John Peterson's series about a tiny family that lives in the walls of the Biggs' house. They eat the giants' leftover food and try to stay away from the cat. (Also available in Spanish.)

Read all about it!

Learning with newspapers

Newspapers are crammed with print, which makes them full of opportunities for reading and writing practice. Here are some activities you and your youngster can enjoy by using your daily paper.



Recognize letters

Make an alphabet poster. Cut out all 26 letters in a variety of styles and sizes from the newspaper. Glue them in order on a sheet of colored construction paper, and hang the poster on the refrigerator or in another place where your child can easily see it.

important details—what an article is about, what's happening in a picture, or how cold it will be tomorrow. ♥

Practice reading

Read short, simple articles together. Choose topics your youngster will find interesting, such as the birth of a panda at the zoo, a special storytime at the library, or the opening of a new park.

Explore conversation

Introduce your child to the concept of dialogue by reading comic strips. Characters' words are often in "bubbles" or "balloons" above their heads. Show him that in articles, just like in storybooks, quotation marks surround people's words.

Find information

Find headlines, photo captions, and weather maps. Point out that these items give us

Picture this

Good readers picture images in their minds that help them understand and remember a story. The next time you read with your child, ask her what she "sees." Here are some ways to get her started:

- Begin with a word. For example, what comes to mind when she reads "love"? Perhaps a heart, or a hug?
- Move on to sentences. If your youngster tells you she pictures her dog after reading "I love my dog," help her fill in the details: "I see our dog too. I also see myself petting him."

- Once she can see clear pictures from sentences, try whole paragraphs or pages. Choose a page without an illustration, and ask your child how she would illustrate it. ♥



Testing tips

Teachers use many methods, including tests, to find out how your child's reading and comprehension skills are progressing. Try these ideas to help your youngster on her next test:

▲ Explain that tests are important, but don't make too big a deal of them. Say something like, "Your teacher wants to see what you've learned, so it's important to show her how much you know."

▲ If your child will be taking her first multiple-choice test, she may need practice with the format. Make a sample test by writing down questions and answers. *Example:* What would you



like to do after school on test day? (a) get ice cream; (b) go to the playground; (c) watch television. Have her practice choosing one answer for each question and filling in the circles.

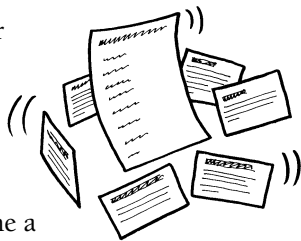
▲ Encourage your youngster to skip any questions she doesn't know and go on to

the next one. When she has finished, she can go back and try to answer questions she left blank. ♥



Building vocabulary

Looking for fun ways to increase your youngster's word smarts? The next time he brings home a vocabulary list, have him try one of these activities:



◆ Look up the definitions in the dictionary and write them in his own words. *Example:* For "emu," he might write, "a bird that lives in Australia and can't fly."

◆ Write each word on an index card and sort them into categories. *Examples:* parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives); words that start with the same letter; rhyming words; and categories of his own (things I like, things I don't like).

Tip: Use your child's vocabulary words in conversation as much as possible. The more he hears them, the more apt he will be to use them himself. ♥

Q&A Cursive made easy

Q My daughter did really well when she learned to print, but now she's struggling with cursive handwriting. How can I help her?

A Part of what makes cursive more difficult than print is linking the letters together. If your child is having trouble with connections, start by having her make rows of the letter "c." (Most letters contain the same stroke and connection as "c," and it's a fairly easy letter to make.)

Also, before your youngster does her writing homework, let her practice making extra-large letters. Use a ruler to draw lines that are about two inches apart on a sheet of paper. Then, gradually decrease the amount of space between the lines as your child becomes more skilled. ♥



Parent to Parent

Bedtime routine

When my son was a baby, we would sit in a rocking chair and sing lullabies before bedtime. As he has grown older, Ian still needs a bedtime routine to settle down—only now we have an evening read-aloud.

We start by choosing two books. Ian usually picks one favorite plus one new title from the library books we check out. We read together in unison or take turns reading sentences and pages. It's fun to hear Ian imitate the expression I use when I read to him. Sometimes I'll also read a chapter from a chapter book or a few pages of poetry.

We write the titles of the books we've read on a chart on the back of Ian's bedroom door. He likes to look at the list and talk about the stories—all the way back to *Goodnight Moon*, which was his favorite as a toddler. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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