

# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

April 2020

Weakley County School System

## Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites



### ■ *Bots: The Most Annoying Robots in the Universe* (Russ Bolts)

What happens when a pair of robots discover a camera that Earth launched into space and forgot about? They become reality stars and broadcast their lives, of course! Your youngster will laugh at their funny adventures in this graphic novel. The first book in the Bots series.

### ■ *Girl Running*

(Annette Bay Pimentel)

In 1966, women weren't allowed to run in the Boston Marathon. Men said women weren't strong enough to finish the long race. But that only made Bobbi Gibb more determined to prove them wrong. This picture book biography portrays the determination of the first woman to run the race.



### ■ *The Lost Stone (The Kingdom of Wrenly)* (Jordan Quinn)

Clara and Lucas are unlikely friends who live in the magical kingdom of Wrenly. When the queen's emerald goes missing, the pair embark on a journey and meet everybody from fairies to wizards along the way. Book one in the Kingdom of Wrenly series.



### ■ *Skip Through the Seasons* (Stella Blackstone)

This nonfiction book shows children enjoying the outdoors in each season. They ice skate in winter, play in spring rain, build sand castles in summer, and rake autumn leaves. The final pages are filled with facts about the calendar and seasonal changes. (Also available in Spanish.)



## Mix up family reading time

Enjoying books as a family every day can help your child grow as a reader. Try these suggestions for adding variety to reading time—and maximizing his learning.

### Vary the format

Give your youngster chances to read aloud, listen to others read, and read independently. Some days, take turns reading books to each other. Other times, listen to an audiobook together, or have everyone read on their own. *Idea:* Include extended family by inviting them over to read or arranging a video chat.

### Discover different materials

Expose your child to a wide variety of reading material with this idea. Make a “bingo” card by dividing a sheet of paper into five rows and five columns. In each square, help your youngster write the name of something to read. *Examples:* fairy tale, poem, recipe, biography, graphic novel, cereal box, newspaper, magazine. Each time your family



reads something on the card, your child gets to color the square.

### Explore in depth

Reading several related books lets your youngster dig deeper into a topic or notice similarities between books by the same author. Brainstorm a list of themes like Science Saturday or Roald Dahl Week. Take your list to the library and check out books to match. As you read each book, compare it to the ones you read before. ♥

## On-the-go storytelling

Boost your youngster's language skills and creativity by telling stories while you run errands. Use these ideas for inspiration:

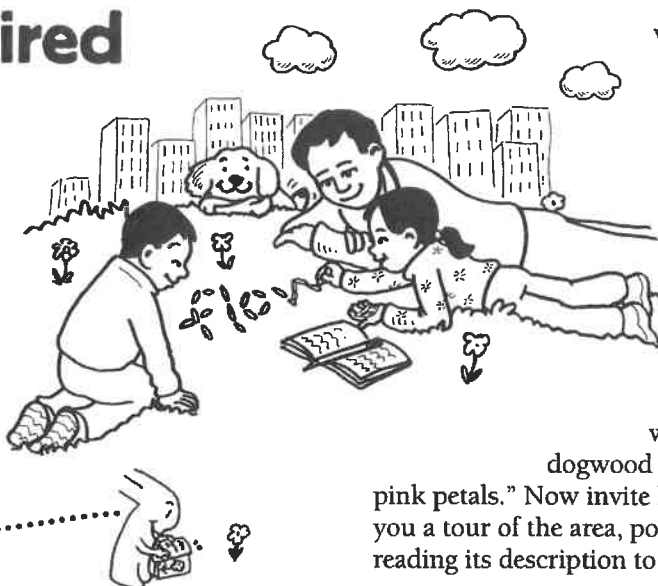
- Ask your child to choose a person or an animal who would make an interesting main character in a story. At the pet store, she might begin a story starring a colorful fish in an aquarium. She can give him a name and describe an adventure that he and his tankmates go on.
- Stuck in line at the post office or bank? Use it as the setting for a story you tell together. You might say, “Once upon a time, a little girl visited the post office.” Your youngster could add, “She wanted to mail herself to Grandpa, but there weren't enough stamps.” ♥



# Writing inspired by nature

Spring is perfect for a walk in the park or a romp in the backyard. While your youngster explores the great outdoors, encourage her to practice writing, too. Here's how.

**Use natural objects.** Help your child gather pebbles, flower petals, twigs, and other items from the ground. She can "write"



words by arranging the objects to form letters. She might write her name with blades of grass, use twigs and stones to form her spelling words, or create a message for you using flower petals. ("I love you!") Let her "save" her writing by taking a picture of it.

**Make a field guide.** In a small notebook, have your youngster draw and color plants or animals she sees outside. Then, she could write about each one. *Example:* "Our

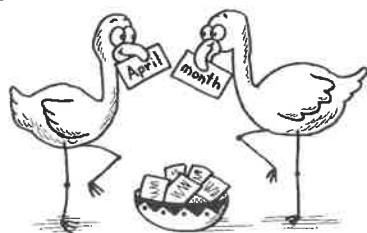
dogwood tree blooms in the spring. It has pink petals." Now invite her to use her field guide to give you a tour of the area, pointing out each plant or animal and reading its description to you.♥

## Fun with Words

### Proper nouns

This game will help your youngster identify proper nouns—names of people, places, and things that are always capitalized.

On 10 separate slips of paper, have your child write proper nouns (*Jack, Maryland, April*). Then, he should make 10 more slips, each with a common noun (*boy, state, month*) to match each proper one.



Mix up all 20 slips in a bowl, and take turns drawing two. If they match (*Chicago and city, Mrs. Jones and teacher*), keep both, and set them aside. If not, keep either one, and return the other slip to the bowl. As you draw more slips, you may also keep any noun that matches one you previously saved.

When all the slips have been drawn, the player with the most pairs of nouns wins.♥

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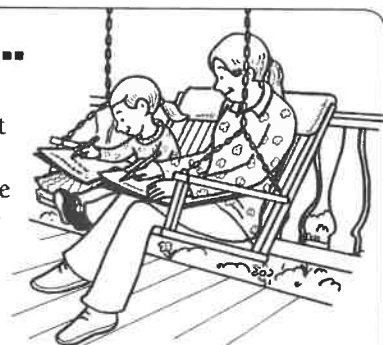
## Parent to Parent

### I like it because ...

My granddaughter Danielle was given a writing assignment that inspired the two of us to learn more about each other. She was asked to write one thing she liked and one thing she didn't, then explain her opinions. I knew she loved unicorns, but I had no idea she didn't like the color orange.

So I suggested that we each list five things we like and five things we don't, and write our reasons. We traded lists and took turns reading them aloud. I discovered that Danielle enjoys rainy days because they're cozy, and she learned that I've loved rock music ever since I started playing the drums in my teens.

This was a good way for Danielle to practice opinion writing and for us to bond. Now when she visits, I know not to put marshmallows in her hot chocolate—but cinnamon is just fine!♥



## Q&A

### Questions for better comprehension

**Q** I want to talk to my son about the books he reads. What kinds of questions should I ask him?

**A** Asking your child questions about books gets him thinking about what he reads, improving his comprehension skills. Try choosing questions that require more than a one-word answer. For example, rather than "Who is the main character?" you could ask, "What lesson did the main character learn?"

Also, encourage your youngster to dig deeper by asking questions with answers that aren't in the book. *Examples:* "What did you like best about the book?" "What would you have done differently if you were the king?"

Finally, suggest that your son pose his own questions.

He could get your opinion of a book or ask about a part that confused him.

Your answers will give him new perspectives and help him understand what he reads.♥



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May 2020

Weakley County Schools - Title I  
Parent and Family Engagement Program

## Book Picks

### Read-aloud favorites

#### ■ *Say Something!* (Peter H. Reynolds)

Every voice matters. This picture book shows how kids can make a difference in the world—through words *and* actions. Readers will be inspired to do good deeds, stand up to bullying, and more. (Also available in Spanish.)



#### ■ *Little Owl's Night*

(Divya Srinivasan)

Little Owl is happy in the forest at night. He and his animal friends gaze at the moon and stars. But he's curious about daytime, so one night, he tries to stay awake until the sun comes up. Will he get to see what happens when night ends?



#### ■ *The Post Office Book: Mail and How It Moves* (Gail Gibbons)

Everyone knows that mail starts its journey at the post office and gets delivered to its destination. But what happens in between? Your youngster will discover what it takes to move mail from place to place and get it in the correct mailbox.



#### ■ *Tap the Magic Tree*

(Christie Matheson)

This story asks your child to tap the pictures, shake the book, clap his hands, and more. After he does each movement and turns the page, "magic" happens—the bare tree grows leaves, apples drop to the ground, and snowflakes fall from the branches!



## A fairy tale summer

Castles and giants and talking animals, oh my! Fairy tales invite your child into magical worlds—and they're filled with opportunities to strengthen her reading comprehension. Enjoy these activities together.

### Design a house

What kind of house would be best for the three bears? Read a fairy tale to your youngster, and let her design a home for the characters using recyclables and craft supplies. What was the problem in the story? What design features could solve it? For example, the bears had an uninvited visitor (Goldilocks), so your child might make a home security system using string and a bell.

### Create a map

After reading a fairy tale, suggest that your youngster draw a giant map of its setting on the sidewalk or driveway. She could draw the Gingerbread Man's path through the countryside or map Hansel and Gretel's route through the forest. Invite her to walk through the map, retelling the story as she goes.



### Read and compare

Together, ask a librarian to help you find multiple versions of fairy tales like *Cinderella* or *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Read them with your child, and talk about how they're similar and different. Maybe they take place in different countries or an author retold a story from the villain's point of view. *Idea:* Suggest that your youngster pick a fairy tale and write her own version. ♥

## Write a story for a pet

This fun idea gives your youngster practice writing for a specific audience: pets!

First, let your child choose a pet, such as his goldfish or a neighbor's puppy. Next, help him decide what the animal might like to read about. The fish would probably appreciate a story about a sunny lake, while the puppy may enjoy a how-to book on walking his person.

Remind your youngster to think about his audience as he writes. What other fish live in the lake that the goldfish could play with? What important rules does the puppy need to know? Now have him read his story aloud to the pet—and to you. ♥



# Have a ball with wordplay

Throw, catch, and shoot! Get a ball, and head outside with your child for these games that combine wordplay with physical activity.

**Word catch.** Work on beginning and ending sounds. Say a random word (*fireworks*), and toss a ball to your youngster. If he catches the ball and says a word starting with the last letter of your word (*sunshine*), the game keeps going. How many words can you string together before someone misses the ball or can't think of a word?



**Spelling basketball.** Play H-O-R-S-E with these twists. Take turns trying to sink a basket, but instead of getting a letter for missed shots, earn one for each shot you make. Start by using any six-letter word. For a game of F-R-I-E-N-D, players would get an F for the first shot made, R for the second, and so on. The first player to collect every letter picks the word for the next game.♥

## My puppet show

Putting on a puppet show lets your youngster work on speaking and telling stories. Here's how.

First, let your child choose a familiar story to act out, such as *The Tortoise and the Hare*, and make a puppet for each character. He could draw faces on paper lunch bags or construction paper taped to craft sticks.



Now your youngster can hide behind a couch or chair and hold up his puppets to put on a show for your family. Encourage him to use a different

voice for each character—and for a narrator. When the tortoise crosses the finish line, the fox puppet can announce, “Slow and steady wins the race!”

*Idea:* Suggest that your child keep his puppet theater open all summer and put on shows using other stories.♥

## Q&A Read and write poetry

**Q** My daughter is excited about the poetry unit her class is doing. How can we enjoy exploring poetry outside of school?

**A** It's no wonder your child is excited—poetry is a lot of fun! Start at the library, and check out volumes of children's poetry. Then, hold a family poetry night where you take turns reading poems aloud. Work together to write your own poem, and your daughter can read it to everyone.

When you pick out greeting cards, look for ones that contain poems, and let your youngster read them aloud. Suggest that she make cards and write poems inside for friends and relatives.

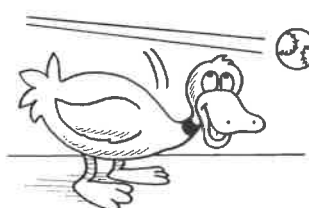
Finally, listen to music in the car—can your child hear that song lyrics are often poems, too? Say your favorite lines or verses. Your daughter might even be inspired to write lyrics that rhyme.♥



## Fun with Words One word, two meanings

“Duck!” That's a word your youngster can say if she's pointing out a duck swimming in a pond—or warning someone to dodge a flying object. Strengthen her vocabulary by having her make a comic book about words with two meanings.

**1.** Together, list words that can be both a noun (person, place, or thing) and a verb (action word). For instance, trees have *bark* (noun), and dogs *bark* (verb). Other examples: *play*, *fly*, *run*, *jam*, *wave*, *color*.



**2.** Have your child draw two comic panels for each word—with the illustration and caption showing the word in different ways. For *play*, she could draw an actress on stage and write “This girl starred in the school *play*.” Then she might draw a checkerboard and write “I like to *play* checkers.”

**3.** Staple the pages together to make a book, and let her read it to you. Encourage her to keep an eye out for new words to add.♥

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INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

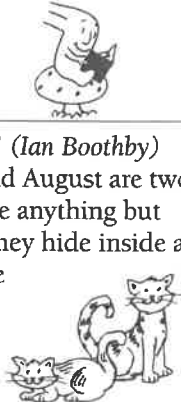
April 2020

Weakley County School System

## Book Picks

### ■ *Sparks!* (Ian Boothby)

Charlie and August are two cats who are anything but ordinary. Every day, they hide inside a mechanical dog while they save lives. Join them in this graphic-novel adventure as they try to stop an alien named Princess from taking over the world.



### ■ *Inventions That Could Have Changed the World ... But Didn't!*

(Joe Rhatigan)

This nonfiction book gives readers a glimpse into some of the wacky inventions people request patents for. Imagine a TV you can smell, an alarm clock that lunges you out of bed, and a screeching doll, to name a few. Find out what could have been in this hilarious read.



### ■ *Stella Diaz Has Something to Say*

(Angela Dominguez)  
Stella has a lot to say, but she's still learning English and is nervous about speaking in front of her classmates. This year in school she wants to make a new friend and compete in the spelling bee, and she has to give an oral presentation. Follow along as Stella gains courage and finds her voice.

### ■ *Poetry for Kids: William Shakespeare*

(William Shakespeare, edited by Marguerite Tassi)  
Introduce youngsters to Shakespeare in this illustrated volume. The book includes excerpts from 35 well-known poems, verses, and sonnets, with definitions and explanations.



## Writing warm-ups

Creative writing is like any other skill—it gets easier with practice. Your child can limber up her imagination and stretch her writing muscles with these fun ideas.

### Collect characters

Let your youngster cut pictures of people from old magazines and newspapers. Then, she can glue each one onto an index card and write a “character sketch” (description) on the back. Suggest that she include lots of details: the person’s name, his personality traits, and what’s important to him. She’ll have a cast of characters to use in her creative writing assignments.



### Ask questions

This exercise is good for brainstorming plot twists. Give your child a small notebook, and encourage her to jot down “What if?” questions whenever they strike her. For example, while working on her science fair project, she might think, “What if a science experiment made the whole school invisible?” She can use her questions as inspiration for stories.

### Pick a point of view

Have your youngster keep a list of story starters from different points of view. She might imagine how a ballerina feels before a recital—and how her ballet slippers might feel. (“We were nervous as we warmed up for the big performance.”) Tip: Suggest that your child write the same story from a different object’s or character’s point of view. How does the story change? ■

## Use your library

Tap into your hometown library to foster your youngster’s love of reading and find free family activities. Consider these ways to put library trips into your regular routine.

**1. Make time.** Pick a day that works for your family. You might visit on the third Saturday of each month or every other Friday afternoon.

**2. Make each trip different.** Your child might read magazines on one trip and explore music or videos on another. Ask your youngster what he would like to dig into each time.

**3. Make it a family affair.** Check the library bulletin board or website for events your whole family would enjoy. Keep an eye out for club meetings, storytelling, concerts, and movies. ■



# Reading + community service

Encourage your child to share his love of reading with others, and he'll learn valuable lessons in generosity and compassion. Try book-related community service projects like these:

- Ask your youngster to decorate cardboard-box "donation stations" where people can drop off gently used books. He can ask businesses or places of worship to



display the boxes. Together, collect the books and donate them to a homeless shelter.

- Your child might invite friends along to read to seniors at a nearby assisted-living home. *Note:* Make sure an adult can chaperone.

- Turn outgrown picture books into audiobooks for younger children. Have your youngster record a story and give the tape and book to a day care center.

- Host a different kind of birthday party. Ask guests to bring children's books for your child to donate to the pediatric floor of your local hospital. ■

## How many words?

Good writers vary the lengths of their sentences so the writing is more interesting and flows well. By making a simple graph, your youngster can see how her sentences stack up. Here's how.

1. Have her choose two or three paragraphs from one of her stories, reports, or essays. Let your child draw a bar graph showing the length of each sentence. If the first sentence has five words, she would draw a bar that is five squares tall.



2. Your youngster can compare the bars to analyze her writing.

If they are all about the same height, suggest that she edit her paragraph. She might use conjunctions (*and, but, or*) to combine two short sentences. Or she could break a long sentence into two shorter ones.

3. She can graph her revised paragraphs to see the difference—and then read the before and after versions to hear the improvement! ■



## Singular to plural

Does your youngster get confused about how to make some words plural? Play this card game to help her remember.

Together, think of 20 words with tricky plurals (*fungus/fungi, shelf/shelves, deer/deer, potato/potatoes*). *Tip:* You can find lists of irregular plurals online.

Have your child write each singular word on one side of an index card and its plural on the other. Shuffle the cards and lay them out in rows on a table with the singular words faceup.

To play, take turns reading a card and, without looking, spell the plural version of the word. If you're right, keep the card, and go again. If not, return the card to the table, and it's the other person's turn. When all the cards have been collected, the winner is the player with the most. ■



## Series books build comprehension

As a child, I read all of the books in my favorite science fiction series. So when my son David showed an interest in Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* books, I encouraged him to keep on reading. Every time he finishes a book, we stop by the library or a bookstore for the next one.

Although I knew I loved my books, I didn't know at the time that series books help readers build confidence and

comprehension skills. The familiar characters and words are helping my son become a faster reader, and he feels successful when he finishes each one.

I've also discovered some terrific adult series, and David and I are enjoying reading our books side by side. He says that after he finishes the first series, he's going to get started on the *Secret Coders* series by Gene Luen Yang. ■



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Working Together for Learning Success

May 2020

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## Book Picks

### ■ *Straight Talk: The Truth About Food* (Stephanie Paris)

This book explores food from many different angles. Charts, diagrams, and detailed photos combine with entertaining facts to help your child learn about and choose nutritious foods. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Saving Winslow* (Sharon Creech)  
When Louie's dad brings home a sick baby donkey, Louie takes responsibility for nursing his new buddy Winslow back to health. Then, the tables are turned when Winslow winds up being a comfort to Louie after the boy's older brother leaves home to join the military.



■ *Clang! Ernst Chladni's Sound Experiments* (Darcy Pattison)  
In 1806 the scientist Ernst Chladni went on the road with his sound experiments to raise money for his research. In this nonfiction book, learn how Chladni entertained his way through Europe, popularizing science and exploring acoustics along the way.

### ■ *Home Sweet Motel* (Chris Grabenstein)

P.T. and his friend Gloria want to do everything they can to save P.T.'s family business, the Wonderland Motel. The duo combines P.T.'s creativity and Gloria's business ideas to try to keep the Wonderland open. The first book in the Welcome to Wonderland series.



## Reading all summer long

For some kids, summer reading comes naturally. Others need a little motivation. Either way, you can use these tips to make reading a big part of your child's life while school is out.

### Take books along

Encourage reading on the go. Help your youngster fill a backpack with things to read. Along with novels, tuck in joke books, brainteasers, and comics. Complete the package with a word search or crossword puzzle book and a pencil. Taking the backpack on the road will make it easy for your child to read and play word games anytime.

### Go outside

Find opportunities to read outdoors. Borrow nature books from the library, and take a neighborhood hike. Your child might start a leaf collection or list all the different bugs he can identify using a field guide. Read books about constellations and the solar system, and

stargaze together at night. Your youngster will see that books can help him enjoy and learn about nature.

### Plan events

Show your child how reading makes it easier to plan summer fun. He can check newspaper listings for upcoming events or read your town's website to find places to visit. When you go to the pool or community center, have your youngster scan the bulletin boards for interesting flyers.



## The power of persuasion

Advertising a summer business can help your youngster practice persuasive writing. Share these secrets for creating eye-catching ads:

- Have her look for convincing words in magazine ads and make a list for her business. For example, "ice cold" and "refreshing" are good choices for a lemonade stand.
- Teach your child persuasive techniques, like using logic or appealing to emotions. ("Don't have enough time to play with your cat or guinea pig? My pet-care service provides the attention your pets need!") *Tip:* Help her post flyers around the neighborhood to advertise her business.



## Writing to communicate

The more your child writes, the more easily her words will flow. Try these activities that will encourage her to communicate with you and other family members on paper or via email.

### Start a conversation journal.

Begin by writing a sentence or two in a notebook (“Guess who I saw at the store today”). Pass the journal to your child or leave it in an agreed-upon spot (kitchen counter, coffee table). She can respond (“Was



it one of my teachers?”) and give it back to you. Continue the discussion as long as possible. Encourage her to start your next conversation on a new page.

### Have a pen pal.

Invite relatives to participate in a family pen-pal exchange. Your youngster could put names in a hat and each month draw one to be her pen pal. In her letters, she can ask about what’s going on in the person’s life (“Are you going to play hockey this year?”) and share her own news (“I have my first piano recital this week”).



## Parent & Parent

### Play and read

My wife and I recently discovered a way to give our children extra reading practice. We let them take turns choosing a board game and being the official reader.

For example, when we play Trivial Pursuit Family Edition, the reader is in charge of asking the questions. In Apples to Apples, the reader reads the green apple cards aloud.



Playing games together has also inspired us to add to our collection. We shop at yard sales, flea markets, and thrift shops. And when we play a new game, the reader has a big job: reading the rules to the rest of us. Now I look forward to hearing one of the kids shout, “It’s my turn to read!”

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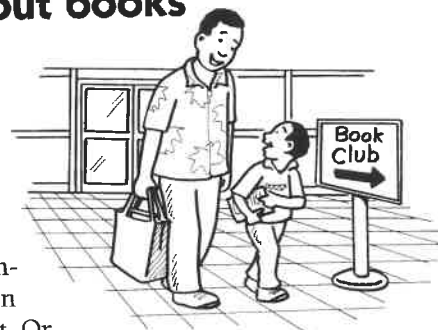
## Q&A

### Think critically about books

**Q** My son loves reading, but he struggles when he’s asked to do things like “analyze” or “evaluate.” How can I help him with this at home?

**A** When the teacher asks your child to analyze or evaluate what he reads, she’s asking him to think critically. For instance, he might have to give his opinion and back it up with details from the text. Or he may need to consider an article’s purpose and how the author’s viewpoint influenced his own thinking.

Over the summer, talk with your son about things you’re reading, and encourage him to do the same. Another idea is to suggest that he join a book club at the library. As he discusses books with others, he’ll work on reading critically.



## Fun with Words

### Bowling for words

This homemade version of bowling will boost your child’s vocabulary and sentence-building skills.

Have your youngster cut 10 strips of masking tape. Then, he can flip through a book, pick 10 random words, and write one on each strip. *Examples: bear, mysterious, garden.* He should stick the strips to the bottoms of half-filled water bottles. Then, let him set up the bottles like bowling pins.

Take turns “bowling” with a tennis ball or softball. Read the words on the pins you knock down, and try to say a sentence that includes as many of the words as possible. (“The bear discovered a mysterious new vegetable growing in his garden.”) Score 1 point for each word you use, and set up the pins for the next player.

After five rounds, the person with the highest score wins. Write new words, and play again!

