

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

November 2011

Holyoke Public Schools
Curriculum Department

Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *Pirates Go to School*

In Corinne Demas's rhyming story, pirates share treasures during show-and-tell, carry parrots into class, and don't always behave. But they love school, and, just like the rest of the students, they read, work on math, and do arts and crafts.



■ *Wonder Horse: The True Story of the World's Smartest Horse*

Horse fans will enjoy Emily Arnold McCully's nonfiction book about a colt named Jim who knew letters, colors, numbers, and more. His owner, a former slave who became a veterinarian, took him on the road to perform for audiences and to encourage people to treat animals with kindness.

■ *The Littlest Pilgrim*

Mini is a young Pilgrim who wants to help out with the chores in her village. She tries to bake bread, stack wood, and do repairs, but she is too small. Then, Mini discovers something she *can* do. A sweet story about friendship by Brandi Dougherty.



■ *The Runaway Tortilla*

A tortilla runs away in this twist on *The Gingerbread Man* from Eric A. Kimmel. Tía Lupe and Tío José chase the tortilla—and so do donkeys, rattlesnakes, and other animals. Who will finally catch it? (Also available in Spanish.)



Sound it out!

Why does *treat* rhyme with *neat* but not with *great*? And why do *knock* and *knee* start with *k* but sound like *n*? As your child learns to read, he will discover that the English language can be tricky! Try these ideas for helping him make sense of letter sounds and patterns.



Beginning sounds

Encourage your youngster to listen closely to beginning sounds when you read aloud. Ask him to choose a letter, and each time he hears a word starting with it, he can ring a bell or snap his fingers. When he's trying to read a difficult word on his own, you can say, "Get your mouth ready to say that word," which will call his attention to the beginning sound. *Tip:* Point out words that have surprising first letters (*phone, knee*), and suggest that he keep a list to help him remember them.

Vowel pattern

Go on a pattern hunt! Vowel sounds can be spelled in several ways. For example, a long *o* is spelled by *oa* in *boat* or by *o/consonant/silent e* in *role*. In the car

or during a walk, take turns choosing a vowel pattern to look for on signs. If you pick *ay*, you might see "One Way" and "Children Playing." Explain to your youngster that some patterns make more than one sound. For instance, *ea* sounds like *a* in *break* but like *e* in *leak*.

Consonant combinations

Your child can learn letter combinations like *ch* and *pr* while he draws. Each of you secretly choose a combination (say, *ch*) and draw a scene full of items that contain it (*chairs on a porch*). Swap pictures and guess each other's letter combination. Then, help your youngster label the objects in the drawings. ♥

Writing nonfiction poetry

Poetry can help your child learn facts. Here are two kinds of nonfiction poems she might write:

● A "found" poem is made of words and phrases that the poet finds. Read a biography such as *Abe Lincoln's Hat* by Martha Brenner with your child. Ask her to choose a few important words or phrases (*Abe Lincoln, tall man, tall hat, smart lawyer, great president*). She can create a poem by writing them on her paper in an order that she likes.

● An acrostic starts with a single word, written vertically. Have your child pick a topic she's learning about in school, such as space. Then, help her come up with a line that begins with each letter in the word.

Example:

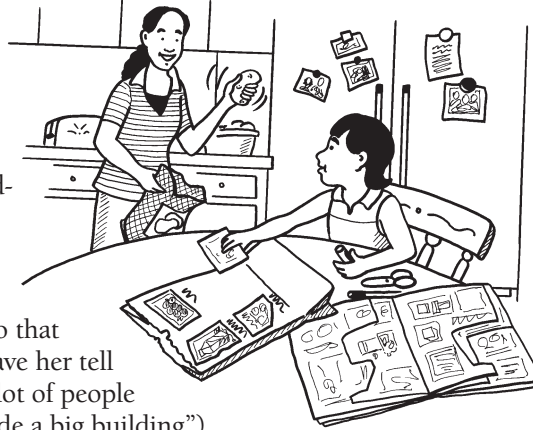
Sun shines
Planets circle
Astronauts fly
Comets soar
Earth spins. ♥



Discover the newspaper

Spark your youngster's interest in reading the newspaper—she'll explore different parts of the paper while she practices reading, writing, and spelling.

Photos. Ask your child to choose a photo that she likes from your community paper. Have her tell you what's happening in the picture (“A lot of people with colorful umbrellas are standing beside a big building”).



Then, read the real photo caption together to see how closely it matches her description.

Headlines. Help your youngster read several headlines in the sports section. Explain that these are titles for the articles. Let her pick a simple one (“Girls’ softball finishes strong”), and read it together. She can cut it out, glue it on paper, and draw a picture to illustrate it.

Advertisements. Your child can practice recognizing and spelling food names by making a picture grocery list. Give her a large paper grocery bag and the newspaper section with food ads. Call out each item that you need (potatoes, chicken, grapes), and have her cut its picture out and glue it on the bag. Ask her to print the name of each product underneath. Be sure to take her list along when you shop—and reuse it to bag your groceries.♥

Fun with Words

That reminds me...

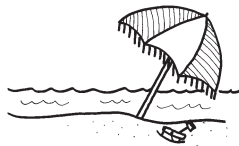


Boost your child's vocabulary with this quick word association game.

You say a word, and he replies with the first word that pops into his head. For example, if you say “cold,” he might say “hot,” “winter,” or “ice.” Encourage him to come up with a word quickly, without thinking about it too much. Then, you continue the game by saying a word in response to his (if he says “hot,” you might think of “sun”), and then he might say “beach.”



hot



beach

When you can't think of any more words, talk about how you came up with your answers. (“When you said *hot*, I said *sun* because it's hot. Then, the sun made you think of the beach!”)

Tip: Try starting the game with a word you don't think your youngster knows well. You can explain its meaning to jump-start his thinking.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q&A

Think small

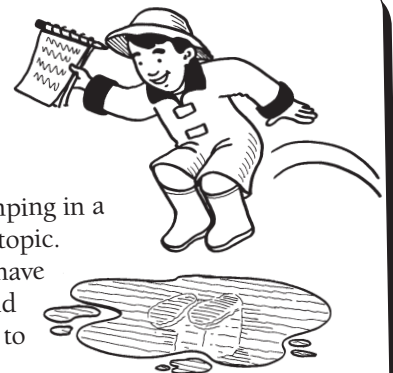
Q For a weekly homework assignment, my son has to fill one page in his journal. Sometimes he doesn't know what to write about. Any suggestions?

A Tell your child that something small, like jumping in a puddle or seeing a train go by, can make a good topic.

By choosing little things to write about, he'll have many ideas to pick from. He will also learn to add details and expand on his ideas, since he'll have to be specific to fill the page.

If he writes about a puddle, for instance, he can tell where he saw it, what it looked and felt like, what it reminded him of, or what it made him wonder.

Example: “I was in the post office parking lot with my mom when I saw a huge puddle. It was shaped almost like a heart. I wonder why.”♥



Parent to Parent

A growing reader

My daughter is learning to read this year. At first, she was embarrassed because some of her friends were reading harder books in their reading groups.

I talked to her teacher, and he encouraged me to explain to Danielle that just because a book looks longer or more difficult doesn't mean it's more exciting or interesting. He suggested ways my daughter could respond if a friend made fun of her book. For example, she might say, “It's just right for me.

What's yours about?” or, “It looks easy, but it's really good.”

He also said that it might help to remind Danielle that she gets to pick out her own library books and that she can read whatever she likes during “Drop Everything and Read” time in class.

I shared the teacher's advice with my daughter, and she seems to feel better. Now, she knows what to say to her friends, and she has been bringing home more challenging library books lately. I'm noticing an improvement in her reading already.♥

