

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2009

Seneca Middle School
Gemma M. Salvia, Principal



Book Picks

■ Lawn Boy

Lawn Boy has it figured out:

If he earns enough money mowing lawns, he'll be able to get his bike fixed. But when a customer helps him invest his profits, he ends up with more business, employees, money, and trouble than he can handle. A humorous story by Gary Paulsen.



■ The Wind in the Willows

In Kenneth

Grahame's classic book, Mole, Water Rat, and Badger embark on one adventure after another—thanks to the mischievous Mr. Toad. When Toad is imprisoned in a huge castle, his loyal friends must figure out a way to help him escape. (Available in Spanish.)

■ It Figures! Fun Figures of Speech

Simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, alliteration, hyperbole, personification... Marvin Terban's book covers them all. Each chapter explains a different writing technique and gives examples by famous writers. Terban also suggests ways youngsters can use these ideas to spice up their own stories, poems, and essays.

■ The Mayor of Central Park

Oscar isn't your typical mayor. He's a squirrel, and he's also manager of Central Park's baseball team. When rats invade his park, Oscar must stop them before they drive out the other animal residents. Fans of animals and baseball will enjoy this tale by Avi.



Tackling textbooks

Whether your child is reading about explorers in history or studying atoms in science, she needs strong reading comprehension skills. Here are three strategies that will help her focus on the important points and get the most out of her textbooks.



"KWL"

Before your youngster starts reading, have her divide a sheet of paper into three columns: "Know," "Wonder," "Learned." Say she's going to be reading about mammals. Column one is for things she already knows ("People are mammals"), and column two is for questions she has about the topic ("Are there any mammals that fly?"). After reading, she can fill in column three with answers to her questions ("Bats are mammals that fly") and other facts she learned.

under each one. After reading a section, she can write a short summary under its heading. When she's finished, she'll have a ready-made study guide. *Idea:* Suggest that she use a different notebook for each subject.

Sticky questions

Have your youngster write the end-of-chapter questions on separate sticky notes. As she reads, she should look for each answer and stick the matching question on top. To review the information, she can flip through the chapter, lift up the notes, and reread the facts. ■

Chapter summary

Ask your child to scan the chapter first and write the section headings in a notebook, leaving a few blank lines

S-p-e-l-l-i-n-g

Try this day-by-day plan to help your youngster learn his weekly spelling words.

Monday: Give your child a pre-test. Let him study the list for one minute and then spell the words as you say them.

Tuesday: Have your youngster write the words, leaving a blank for every other letter ("b_l_o_n" for "balloon"). He can use a different ink color to fill in the blanks.

Wednesday: Ask him to print each word on an index card, cut them into syllables, and mix up all the pieces. Then, have him put the words back together.

Thursday: Make a practice test for your child. Misspell each word, and let him correct your mistakes.

Friday: Give him a final quiz at breakfast. Show him any words he missed, and quiz him again on those. ■



Stop, drop, and write

When is the best time to write? Anytime! Turn your child into an enthusiastic writer with these spur-of-the-moment activities:

- Store a spiral notebook in the car for writing on the go. You might have your youngster look out the window and choose a person (jogger), place (coffee shop), and thing (umbrella). Ask him to write a news report that uses all three. When he finishes, he can pretend to be a TV or radio reporter and “broadcast” his story to you.



- Hang a poster board on your child’s bedroom door, and let him use markers and colored pencils to cover it with “graffiti.” He can write interesting quotes, compose poems, or draw comic strips. When the board is full, he’s ready for a new one.

- Keep index cards on hand for “writing breaks.” A family member can hand out cards and ask everyone to stop and write about what they’re thinking or doing. *Idea:*

Exchange cards and take turns reading each other’s words aloud. 📖



Q&A Volunteer at school

Q Every year, I think about volunteering at my daughter’s school, but I’m not sure how to help. Any ideas?

A Start by calling the office or sending a note to your child’s teacher letting her know when you’re available.

If you have time during the school day, the teacher may ask you to talk with youngsters who are learning English or



listen to students read stories they’ve written. After-school ideas might include setting up a book fair or helping children rehearse for a play. Or you could volunteer from home by making award certificates or e-mailing other parent volunteers about a field trip.

Whether you have a lot of time or a little, your help will benefit the school. And you’ll show your daughter that you think her education is important. 📖

OUR PURPOSE

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

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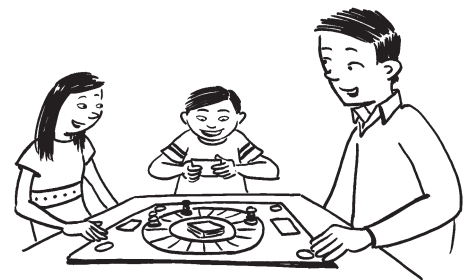
Parent 2 Parent

Reading fun

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

For example, when we play Trivial Pursuit for Kids, the reader is in charge of asking the questions. In Balderdash, the “dasher” picks a category and reads players’ answers 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: he reads the rules to the rest of the family. Now I look forward to hearing one of the kids shout, “It’s my turn to read!” 📖



Other Picks

WEB SITES

■ All Terrain Brain

This site is packed with activities designed to build thinking skills while teaching responsibility, goal setting, and perseverance. Children earn badges by completing online activities like designing a newspaper or solving a word puzzle.

www.allterrainbrain.org

■ Athropolis

From “Frosty Games” to “Cold Icy Links,” this site is filled with information about the Arctic. Youngsters will find maps, current weather conditions, and information on topics such as icebergs, the Northern Lights, and sled dogs.

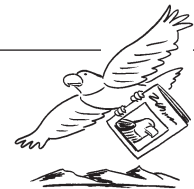
www.athropolis.com



MAGAZINES

■ Zoobooks

Each issue of *Zoobooks* highlights a single species—from birds of prey and koalas to manatees. Readers learn about the species’ anatomy, habitat, and behavior through articles, photos, and detailed illustrations. 800-992-5034, www.zoobooks.com



■ Jack and Jill

The stories and activities in this bimonthly publication focus on science, health, and fitness. Your youngster will enjoy reading about real-life “Health Heroes” and trying the recipes in “Jack and Jill’s Deli.” Each issue also includes crafts, science experiments, and poems. 800-829-5579, www.jackandjillmag.org