

Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

March 2014



Book Picks

■ Origami Toys That Tumble, Fly, and Spin

Paul Jackson's book shows children how to make folded-paper art that they can play with. There are birds with wings that flap, paper musical instruments that make sounds, and a glider that flies. Includes beginning, intermediate, and advanced projects.

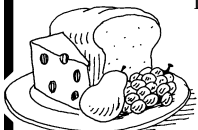
■ Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library

When famous game inventor Luigi Lemoncello hosts an overnight lock-in to play games at the library, seventh-grader Kyle Keely can't wait. But in the morning, the doors won't open—and Kyle and the other kids must solve a riddle to get out. A fun adventure by Chris Grabenstein.



■ Straight Talk: The Truth About Food

Author Stephanie Paris 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.)



■ The Thing About Luck

Twelve-year-old Summer knows about bad luck. Her parents are on an emergency trip to Japan, and her old-fashioned grandparents are struggling to keep the family farm running. So Summer must make her own good luck to save the farm in this award-winning tale by Cynthia Kadohata.



Waller Independent School District
4th Grade, 5th Grade, 6th Grade, 7th Grade, 8th Grade

Be a "thinking reader"

A good reader is a *thinking* reader. She asks herself questions, forms opinions, and makes comparisons that help her understand stories and information. Use these ideas to encourage your child to think deeply when she reads.

Ask questions

Together, pick out a section or chapter of a nonfiction book, and pose questions you think the text might answer. For instance, if you're going to read about the Bermuda Triangle, you or your youngster might ask, "How many ships disappeared there?" or "How do scientists explain the mystery?" Then, look for the answers while you're reading.

Express opinions

Forming an opinion encourages your child to think about and connect with a story. Let her tell you which character she thinks is the most or least realistic or whether she was satisfied with a book's ending. Then, have her point out passages that led her to feel that way. *Idea:* Suggest that she rate a book (1–5 stars).



As she reads, she could think about how many stars she'll give it and why.

Compare texts

Different authors may present similar information in different ways. If your youngster's history chapter interests her, have her look for historical fiction on the same topic. Or if she's fascinated by an experiment in science class, she might read science fiction along the same lines. Can she spot the accurate information—and the imaginary details—in the fictional books? 📖

Strategies for standardized tests

Knowing how to approach standardized tests means less stress for your youngster—and hopefully, better scores. Share these two teacher-recommended strategies.

1. Read carefully. It's important to read the entire question and all the possible answers before marking A, B, C, or D. For example, a test might ask what a word means in a paragraph and list four definitions. Even if your child knows the word, he needs to read the whole selection since the meaning may vary with the usage.

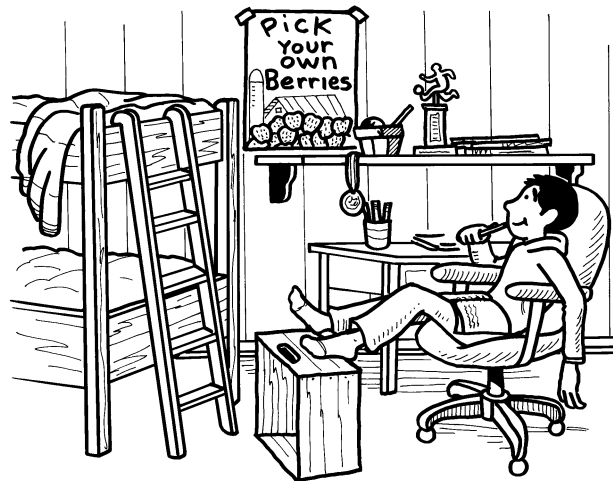
2. Plan before writing. On a writing portion, suggest that he outline his essay in his head before he begins. He should think through the main idea and supporting details for each paragraph. *Tip:* If allowed, he could jot notes on scrap paper. 📝



Memories of me

Encourage your youngster to enjoy writing nonfiction by focusing on a topic he's an expert on: himself! Here are suggestions to help him turn his memories into a memoir.

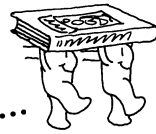
Narrow the focus. A memoir often focuses on one slice of the writer's life. For example, your child might write about the first thing he remembers clearly, such as eating tamales with Grandma when he was little. Or perhaps he wants to describe a turning point in his life, like becoming a big brother.



Choose a format. Memoirs can take different forms. If your youngster likes poetry, suggest that he write a series of poems. Or he could create a picture-book memoir with text and drawings. Another idea is to tell his tale in graphic-novel format.

Dig deeper. An interesting memoir goes beyond simply stating what happened.

As your child writes about an event ("We went strawberry picking on a beautiful spring day"), remind him to weave in his thoughts and feelings ("I was surprised that the strawberries grew so close to the ground").



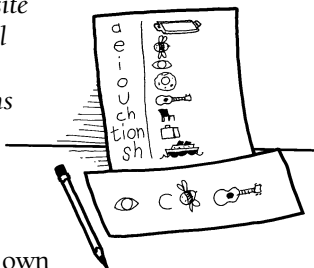
Fun with Words Write like an ancient Egyptian

Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs were pictures and symbols that stood for sounds and words. Your child can practice spelling and writing by inventing and using her own symbol language.

First, have her investigate hieroglyphics at egyptartsite.com/hiero.html or in a book like *Hieroglyphs from A to Z* (Peter Der Manuelian).

Then, have her create her own symbols and make a key. For example, maybe a chair represents the *ch* sound, a bee stands for the long *e* sound, and a suitcase indicates *tion* (as in *vacation*). She could write the sounds in one column and draw the symbols in another.

Once her key is complete, take turns using her hieroglyphs to write short messages for each other to decode.



Q&A In a reading rut

Q My daughter keeps starting books and not finishing them. She can't seem to find one she likes. Any advice?

A Suggest that your daughter give books a fair chance before abandoning them. Depending on their length and her reading ability, she might want to read at least 30–50 pages of a book to decide whether or not she likes it. She may discover that it gets better as she reads.

Also, it's possible your daughter is tired of the kinds of books she normally selects. Encourage her to browse the library for something different. If she normally reads mysteries, she could try fantasy or short stories, for instance.

Finally, tell her to get recommendations from people who share her interests. Ideas from friends just might supply the spark she needs.



Newsworthy conversations

Good news! Talking about current events can improve your child's speaking skills and awareness of his world. Over breakfast or in the car, discuss newspaper, magazine, or online articles with conversation starters like these.

● **"This article reminds me of..."** Once he hears what you relate the news to, he might make a connection to a historical event, a book, or an experience in his own life.



● **"_____ would love to read this."** Name someone you know who may want to read a particular article. Can your child do the same for another article? He'll think about the news from another person's point of view.

● **"I'd like to know more about..."** Share a story that piques your curiosity. Then, have your youngster show you a story about something he'd like to follow up on. Discuss ways to get more information (check out a library book, ask a relative who's familiar with the topic).

OUR PURPOSE

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

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