

# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

February 2008

 **Boulder Valley School District**  
Department of Reading and Literacy

## Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

### ■ *So You Want to Be President?*

What does it take to be president? Well, it might help if you're named James like six former presidents or live in a log cabin like eight others did. Judith St. George's book includes fun facts about our past

presidents and shows children that anyone can grow up to be president!



### ■ *Mortimer*

Mom, Dad, 17 brothers and sisters, and 2 police officers can't make Mortimer go to bed. Is he going to sing his silly song ("Clang, clang, rattle-bing-bang") all night? Read how he finally falls asleep in this comical story by Robert Munsch. (Also available in Spanish.)

### ■ *Chicka Chicka 123*

Numbers 1 through 99 make themselves at home in an apple tree. There's "sweet little 20" and "long-haired 70." But poor little 0 feels left out. Find out what makes him special after a swarm of bumblebees scares everyone away.

Youngsters can practice counting in Bill Martin Jr.'s follow-up to *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*.



### ■ *The Biggest Valentine Ever*

When Clayton and Desmond are making a valentine for their teacher, they end up ripping it in half after disagreeing about the design. They decide that they'll each make their own. But they soon realize they can make a better card by working together.

A nice cooperation lesson from Steven Kroll.



## Sounding it out

How can you build a strong foundation for reading success? Lay the groundwork by teaching your child letter combinations, word beginnings and endings, and vowel sounds. Here are three fun ways to practice.



### Name that sound

One player secretly thinks of a consonant blend, such as *sl*. On a large piece of paper taped to the wall, he draws pictures of objects that have those letters (slide, slipper). The other players try to figure out what sound the items have in common. The first to guess correctly becomes the new sketcher.

### Mix and match

Cut circles, triangles, and rectangles out of construction paper, and then cut each shape in half. On the left halves, write word beginnings, such as *br*, *sp*, *th*, and *cl*. Write endings (*ing*, *eak*, *ank*, and *oud*) on the right sides. Have your child put the puzzles together to make words (bring, speak, thank, cloud).

### Vowel toss

Divide a piece of poster board into 16 squares. Write a vowel or vowel sound in each square (*u*, *ea*, *oo*). Make a beanbag by filling an old

sock with beans and tying it closed with a rubber band. Lay the poster board on the floor, and take turns tossing the beanbag onto it. Players have to say a word with the vowel sound of the square they hit (put, eat, tool). ♥

## Science stories

Colorful pictures and short chunks of information make children's books about science easy to understand. Try these ideas to get your child interested in science:

● Show her diagrams and labels. *Example:* Have her read the captions in Gail Gibbons's *From Seed to Plant*. She'll learn plant parts and varieties. Then, encourage her to draw and label her favorite flower.

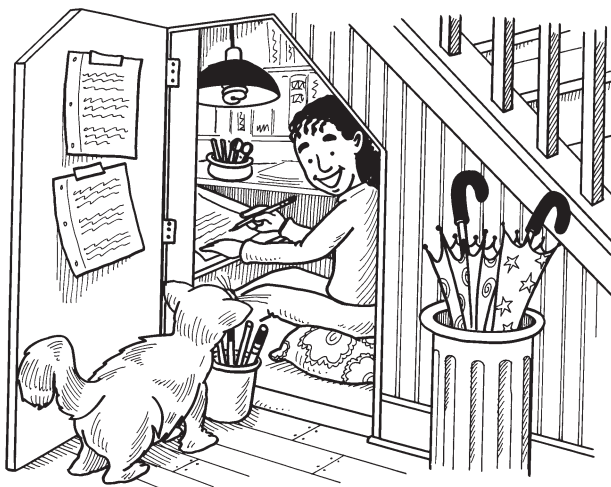


● Point out boxes of facts, and help your youngster follow up. For instance, a note in Joanna Cole's *The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System* says, "The moon does not make any light of its own." Find a book that explains more, such as *What the Moon Is Like* by Franklyn Branley. ♥

# In the writer's den

Create an inviting space in your home that's just for writing. A writer's den can be big or small. As long as it's comfortable, well lit, and stocked with supplies, it's sure to inspire your youngster:

■ Your child can use a table in the corner of a room, a chair with a lap desk, or pillows and a tray to write on. Even the corner of a large closet—one that has a light—can work.



■ Collect different writing materials to put in the nook. *Examples:* lined paper with a decorative border, blank books, postcards, greeting cards, pencils, colored pens. Also, be sure to include art supplies (crayons, markers, chalk, paint) so your youngster can illustrate her stories and books. *Tip:* Keep everything in shoe boxes for easy access.

■ Encourage your child to go to her special spot whenever she has writing to do. She

might use it for homework, composing her own stories, or writing thank-you notes for birthday gifts.♥

## Fun with Words

### Story web

Weave a tangled web with this family storytelling activity. You'll build your child's

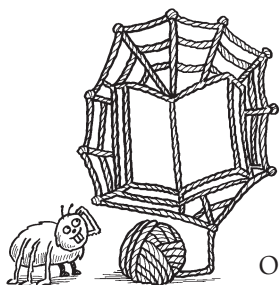
reading comprehension and speaking skills.

Grab a ball of yarn and some tape, and sit in a circle on the floor.

One person holds the yarn and starts

a story. *Example:* "Once upon a time, there was a little girl." He tapes the end of the yarn on the floor and then rolls it to the next person, who might add: "She lived in a huge castle." Take turns taping and passing the yarn and telling the story—a web will be woven in the center of the circle.

This activity can even work with two people. After each turn, the player moves to a new spot. Players continue rotating around the circle and taping the yarn at each new place.♥



## Parent to Parent

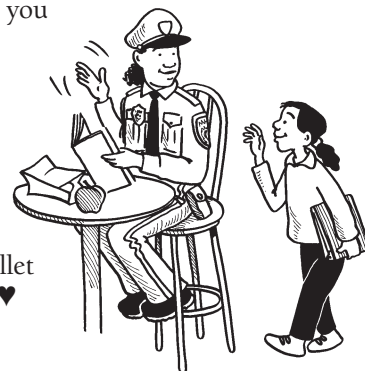
### Real-life reading

The other day my daughter said she didn't see why she had to learn to read better. "Ballet dancers don't have to read, and that's what I'm going to be," she said. I told Alexis that all jobs—even dancing—require reading.

She seemed doubtful, so I suggested that we interview family and friends to find out. We thought of two questions to ask: "How often do you read in your job?" "What do you read?"

Her uncle, a pharmacist, said he reads prescriptions and medicine labels very carefully all day long. Our neighbor, a police officer, reads manuals to understand the law. And Alexis asked her ballet teacher, who said dancers read the stories ballets are based on.

"I guess most people do have to read in their jobs," Alexis said after the interviews. She still wants to be a ballet dancer—but she knows she will need to read well, too!♥



## Q&A Vocabulary tests

**Q** My son Ben has a good vocabulary, yet he struggles with vocabulary tests. How can I help him prepare?

**A** Go over old tests and try to figure out what caused him trouble. Maybe he can match words with definitions but gets stuck when he has to define a word within a sentence.

When your child studies, have him practice in the test format. For example,

you can write sentences using his vocabulary words and have him give the meanings. When you read books aloud, stop sometimes to ask about a word. *Example:* "We bundled up when the cold wind blew." Then, ask what it would mean if the sentence read: "He bundled up in his blue jacket."

You can remind your youngster to read the whole sentence—not just the word—to figure out definitions for his vocabulary tests.♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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