

# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

March 2015

St. Johns County School District  
Title I Services

## Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

### ■ *Sonia Sotomayor: A Judge Grows in the Bronx* (Jonah Winter)

This picture-book biography describes the life of the first Latin American woman on the U.S.

Supreme Court. As a little girl, Sonia Sotomayor faced poverty and illness, but she worked hard in school and had a loving, supportive family. Written in both English and Spanish on each page.



### ■ *Hide and Sheep* (Andrea Beaty)

In this silly counting book, a farmer is trying to round up his uncooperative sheep. They've escaped into town and are doing goofy things like posing in an art museum or going to the beach. How will the farmer ever find all of his sneaky sheep?



### ■ *Subway Story* (Julia Sarcone-Roach)

Jessie, a cheerful blue subway car, is proud of her job carrying people to work and school. When she "retires," she gets another cool job—she is sunk into the ocean to become an artificial reef for sea creatures. Includes an author's note with information about how old subway cars are recycled into reefs.

### ■ *The Farmer and the Clown* (Marla Frazee)

In this wordless picture book, a baby clown falls off a circus train and is rescued by a farmer. Using the beautiful pictures and his own imagination, your child can tell the story that he sees as he turns the pages.



## Be a critical reader

"I wonder what that character is thinking." "Hmm, how did the author pick the setting for this story?" *Critical* readers think about things like this when they read. These activities can help your youngster practice reading critically at home.

### Hold imaginary conversations

If Peter Rabbit could chat with Curious George, what would he say? What would a conversation between Miss Frizzle and Encyclopedia Brown sound like? Read two books with your child. Then, each of you should pick a character to be, and carry on a conversation. *Idea:* Suggest that your youngster use what he knows about the characters (Peter and George tend to get into trouble) to predict what they'll discuss (ways to stay out of trouble).

### Switch the setting

Encourage your youngster to think about how a book's plot and setting are related. Read a story to him, and have him draw a picture of a new setting for it. Maybe he'll draw Encyclopedia Brown solving a mystery in a desert or on a cruise ship instead of in the town of



Idaville. *Idea:* Ask him to retell the story to you using the new location. He will see how changing the setting affects the story.

### Know the author

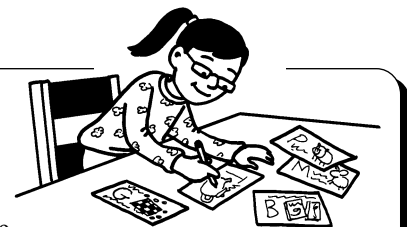
Let your child get several books by the same author. As you read them together, talk about what they have in common. ("The main character in all of her books is an animal.") What can your youngster guess about the author based on her books? For example, she probably likes animals, and maybe she has pets or has lived on a farm. *Idea:* Look up an author online or read the "About the Author" section in a book to learn about her life.♥

## Our family dictionary

From A to Z, this homemade dictionary celebrates family members' personalities and favorite things—and lets your child work on writing definitions.

Help her think of a word for each letter of the alphabet that has something to do with your family (*active, spaghetti, zoo*). Together, come up with a unique definition for each word. Then, help her write it on an index card (or write it for her), and let her illustrate it. *Example:* "Spaghetti: Our family's favorite food."

She might do a few each day. When her dictionary is complete, she should check that the cards are in ABC order. Then, hole-punch the top left corner of each one, and connect them with a binder ring or yarn.♥



# Planning to write

Getting ready to write can be as important as writing! Encourage your youngster to think first with these ideas.

**Talk.** Talking through her ideas will help your child organize her thoughts. Listen as she explains, and ask questions to guide her. For example, “What will happen next?” *Tip:* Offer advice when she wants it, but avoid criticizing her ideas or telling her what to write.

**Draw.** Suggest that she draw and color a picture of her ideas with as many details as



possible. Visualizing what will happen can make writing easier. And working out the details first may lead to more descriptive characters, settings, and plots.

**Diagram.** Have your youngster create a graphic organizer. She could make a story map, with her title in a bubble in the middle of

her paper. Then, she can draw lines to smaller bubbles all around the large one and sketch or write a plot event in each one. Or she might divide a sheet of paper into four boxes labeled “Characters,” “Setting,” “Problem,” and “Solution” and fill them in.♥

## Fun with Words



## Letters good enough to eat

Your child can eat his way to letter recognition with this tasty treat.

Together, mix up dough for your favorite biscuit, bread, or cookie recipe. Let your youngster roll small pieces of the dough into long, thin, snake-like pieces. Show him how to form the pieces into the shapes of letters. He probably will want to start with the letters in his name. Then, bake the dough according to the recipe.



When the letters cool, he could move them around to form words—and then eat his words! Can your child tell you the names of the letters he made? What about their sounds?♥

## Read the directions

Whether your youngster is taking a test or putting together a toy, reading the instructions can help her do a better job. Share these tips.



**1. Read carefully.** Encourage her to read the instructions all the way to the end. She'll get an overview of what she has to do.

**2. Take it step by step.** Your child could circle key words like *subtract*, *underline*, or *discard*. She should reread any part that confused her—or ask for help if she needs it.

**3. Refer back.** If your youngster is doing a school assignment, suggest that she glance back at the instructions as she works. If she's putting up a play tent, she might reread each step before she does it and check it off when it's finished.♥

## Q&A Choosing books I can read

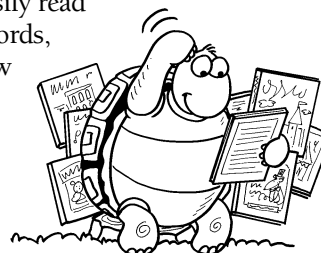
**Q** How can I tell if the books my son picks at the library are at the right reading level for him?

**A** “Just right” books—ones that aren't too easy or too hard—help your son stretch his reading ability. These are books in which he can easily read about 95 percent of the words, leaving him with just a few to figure out.

Don't worry, there's no need to get out your calculator. Simply listen to him read, and if he seems comfortable and

struggles only occasionally, the book is probably at what teachers call his “instructional level.” This is the level that teaches him new words without making him frustrated or confused. After he reads a just-right book a few times, it may even become an easy one!

It's good for your son to pick out easy and hard books, too. Easy books are relaxing and enjoyable. And reading hard ones aloud to him will expose him to bigger words and more complex plots.♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,  
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128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
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