

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

December 2015

Lindenwold Middle School

Book Picks

Like Pickle Juice on a Cookie (Julie Sternberg)

Eleanor is sad and grumpy when her long-time babysitter, Bibi, moves away and a new babysitter takes her place. But over time Eleanor realizes that even though Bibi isn't her babysitter anymore, she can still turn to her for help. The first book in the Eleanor series.



Circus Mirandus (Cassie Beasley)

Are Grandpa's stories of a fantastic circus really true? Micah believes they are, especially when he learns that one circus performer owes Grandpa a miracle. Hoping that the miracle will heal his sick grandfather, Micah sets out to find the circus and make the performer keep his promise.

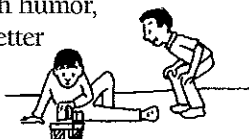


Eruption! Volcanoes and the Science of Saving Lives (Elizabeth Rusch)

In 1985, a sleeping volcano in Colombia suddenly woke, killing 23,000 people. Were there clues that could have prevented this tragedy? U.S. Geological Survey scientists work to uncover early warning signs of an eruption in this book from the Scientists in the Field series.

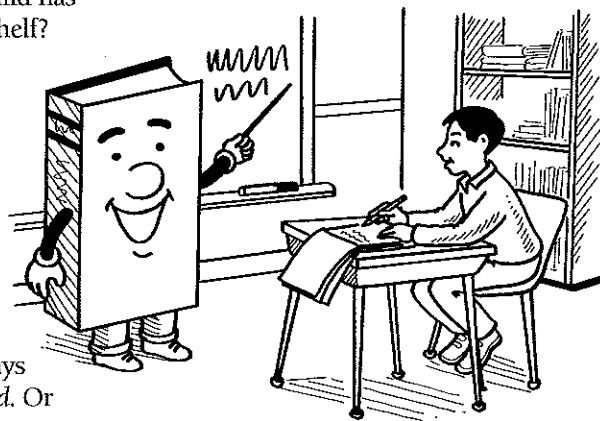
How to Talk to an Autistic Kid (Daniel Stefanski)

Fourteen-year-old Daniel Stefanski is funny, curious, and good at building things. He also has autism, so he may talk too loudly or stand too close to you. This young author's upbeat book uses anecdotes, explanations, and advice, along with humor, to help readers better understand autism.



Learning from authors

Did you know that your child has writing teachers on his bookshelf? The next time he sits down to read, suggest that he keep his eyes open for ideas and inspiration to try in his own writing. Here are areas he can explore.



Choosing words

A precise word has a big impact on what the reader imagines. Maybe the author says a character *tiptoed* or he *stalked*. Or that the lake *glimmered* or was *stagnant*. Each word conjures up a different image. Your youngster could collect vivid words and phrases from books and consult the list when he's writing.

create a handy reminder of different ways to write his own tales.

Deciding on structure

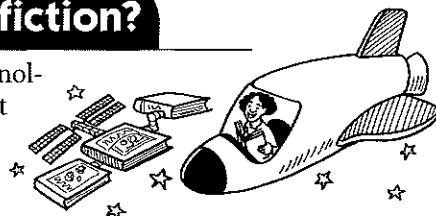
How did the author organize the novel? One book might tell a story through a series of letters or emails. Another may start in the present and flash back to the past. Encourage your child to jot down titles, along with notes about the books' structures. For example, "*The Neverending Story* (Michael Ende): a story within a story." He'll

Selecting point of view

Every person will tell the same story a little differently, depending on his point of view. Shel Silverstein's poem "Point of View" tells what Thanksgiving dinner would look like from a turkey's viewpoint, for instance. Recommend that your youngster examine his own ideas from different angles to decide whose point of view works best. Will his pirate story be more interesting if told by the villain, the hero, or a captive on the ship? ■

Science fact or science fiction?

Science fiction is full of futuristic technology to spark the imagination. But could it really happen? Send your youngster on an investigation to find out.



1. Help her get a science fiction book she'll enjoy. For example, if she likes history, she may like a story where the character travels back in time.
2. After she finishes reading, she could look for nonfiction books, magazine articles, or websites to investigate the science behind the story. She might follow up a book about life in space by researching space stations and rocket travel.
3. Let her tell you about the science in the story vs. the real-life facts she uncovers. Will time travel be possible in the future? Is the space station in the story realistic? ■

Understanding cause and effect

The ability to recognize cause and effect will boost your child's reading comprehension whether she's reading fiction or nonfiction. These fun ideas will give her practice.

Mix and match. Together, write zany sentences involving cause and effect. (*Hint:* Cause and effect sentences use "signal words" like *then, because, if, since, so, consequently, as a result, or the reason for.*) First, brainstorm 10 "real" cause and effect sentences, such as



"Because Mars has no atmosphere, nothing lives there" or "The kids were bored, so Sam played a song." Then, pair each cause with a different effect to make illogical combinations. "Because Mars has no atmosphere, Sam played a song."

Show a chain reaction. Suggest that your youngster make a paper trail to track the causes and effects in a story she reads. She could write each cause on one color of paper and each effect on another color. *Cause:* "Hansel and Gretel are left in the woods." *Effect:* "As a result, Hansel and Gretel become lost." *Cause:* "Since they have no food, they are hungry." *Effect:* "They eat the gingerbread house." As your child lays down her paper trail, she will see how cause and effect drive the plot. ■



Comma quest

Play this game to help your youngster remember the sometimes tricky rules on when and where to use commas.

Materials: index cards, pencil, books, magazines, newspapers

1. On separate index cards, have your child write rules for using commas. He might find rules in a textbook, in class notes, or online. *Examples:* Use a comma after introductory phrases ("In the morning, we broke camp"). Use a comma before a conjunction when it joins two independent clauses ("He wanted to read, but he had no books").



2. Shuffle the cards, and spread them out facedown. Take turns flipping one over. Then, race each other to find an example of the rule in a book, magazine, or newspaper.

3. The winner reads the sentence and the rule aloud and claims the card. The person with the most cards at the end is the comma champ! ■

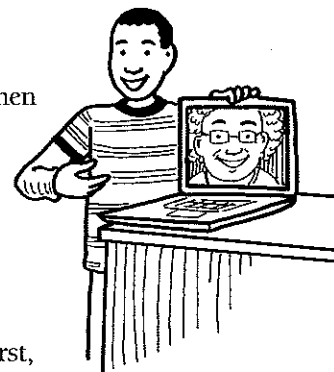


Stellar presentations

Our son Cameron became nervous when he had to make presentations in class. I mentioned this to his teacher, and she recommended having him practice by making presentations for our family.

So when Cameron wanted to do something special for his grandma's birthday, I suggested he make a presentation about fun times they've had together. He decided to do a full-blown multimedia production. First, he wrote a script and recorded himself reading it. Next, he created a slideshow complete with music, sound effects, and photographs.

On the day of the party, Cameron pretended to be a newscaster and gave his birthday presentation. It went so well that his aunt wants him to create one about our family tree for our family reunion this summer! ■



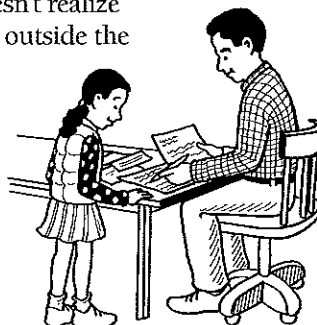
Real-world writing

Q My daughter thinks writing is just something she does for school. How do I convince her that writing is an everyday thing?

A Your child probably doesn't realize how much writing happens outside the classroom. Give her a look at real-world writing by pointing out the different ways people write every day. For instance, you might show her a letter from your neighborhood association or an email from her soccer coach.

And be sure she sees you writing, too. Point out when you type a new recipe into a computer file so you'll remember how to make it again. Let her see you fill out job applications or update your resume.

Occasionally, read what you've written and ask your youngster for input. You'll reinforce the idea that writing and revising go together—and that you can improve upon what you've written. ■



OUR PURPOSE

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

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