Homeschool Connections

Autumn 2010

To contact PPLD’s Homeschool Committee, please email gsohns@ppld.org.

Literacy in the Library

The Library is addressing this need for skills in several ways. East and Penrose libraries both offer a program called Baby Time. Almost every library offers Toddler Time. Both of these programs focus on nursery rhymes, music, and very short books. Saying nursery rhymes to young children allows them to hear rich language with unusual words. Children need to hear us speak many, many words every day to develop good language skills themselves. Board books allow the very small to practice holding a book, turning the thick pages, and pointing to pictures. As adults, we should identify, or name, the different items on a page, things in a room, or what we see at the grocery store so that our young children have the opportunity to develop good vocabularies. As our children grow a little older, we should continue these practices and add a few more.

Preschool children, ages 3 - 5, should now be able to tell us what happened in the story we just read. Picture books are just the right length, although there are some very long picture books that are meant for school-age children, so do look for brief text on the pages when choosing books for the very young. Our preschoolers should be aware of the words on the page, and be starting to see differences in letters. They should understand that the words are telling the story that they see in the pictures. We should continue to name things, use our best language skills and the biggest words we know, at least part of the time, with our preschool-age children. Point to letters, help them find the letters in their own name, and sing that alphabet song! Formal instruction in reading is fast approaching.

Once your child has mastered the alphabet, and understands the sounds that letters make, begin checking out the easiest of the books that the library labels “Readers.” The Level A books are the easiest, but there are 10 separate unmarked levels in this section – some will be very good beginner books, while others are much too hard for a beginner. Continue reading to your child, and have him tell you the story in his own words. Level A books are kindergarten/early first grade. Level B are late kindergarten/first grade, level C are late first grade/early second grade and Level C are solid second grade/third grade books.

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Hidden away in the nonfiction, but mostly in the 900s, is a series of books published by Sleeping Bear Press. The authors of this series select topics and then apply the alphabet as a learning structure. There are two parts to the books, the easy reading text and the in-depth information. It is this extra information that makes these books so unique. Use “Sleeping Bear and alphabet” as your search terms to find these in the catalog.

P is for Peace Garden: a North Dakota Alphabet by Roxane B. Salonen

As you read through the state alphabet books in this series, you will get a glimpse into the distinctive features of each state. Agriculture, bisons, ground squirrels, kuchen, mosasaur, tereoed petrified wood, and occart are just a few of the delightful tidbits of information that grace the sidebars of the pages.

There are alphabet books on gladiators, the Smithsonian, airplanes, plants, writing, art, and other cultures. Do explore this series!

Children's literature is a big, important field for both literacy and art. Thousands of picture books are published each year, and awards are bestowed on the best books each January. Reading the Caldecott winner and honor books with your children is a great way to enrich your curriculum. You will find books with science, history, poetry and humor. You may like the Honor book more than the book that won the gold medal. Make reading the Caldecott books a family activity.

The easiest way to find this list is to go to ppdl.org, select Kids Web and then click on Book Ideas. In the left-hand column, select Award Books and you will then click on Caldecott Medal. Since 1990, over 80 books have been selected; the Caldecott Award was first given in 1938, so you can imagine how many titles are on this list!

Remember that many of these picture books are for school-age children. Your independent readers will be able to enjoy many of these, too. Read the description in the PPLD catalog when you place your holds. The little “sunshine” icon can give you more information on suggested reading levels.

Database Focus: Literacy

The meaning of the term “literacy” runs the gamut: listening, reading, writing, spelling, critical thinking, numeracy, and technology. PPLD’s databases and recommended websites offer many resources for early literacy as well as those that encourage lifelong literacy. This article will focus on reading.

From ppdl.org, click on Kids Web, and then Book Ideas (the “Jackalope”), where you’ll find Booklists for Kids, which includes Battle of the Books, the four levels of Beginning Readers, and several popular genre lists. Tumblebooks is a fun database of picture books and chapter books for children to listen to and read along. On the Kids Blog, kids have an opportunity to comment on posts written and moderated by one of our Children’s Librarians.

NextReads takes you to a list of email newsletters you can sign up for to get periodic genre-specific reading suggestions for kids, teens, and adults. You can also request the Homeschool Events newsletter and Homeschool Booklist here. Reading Websites includes three great sites that have reading lists, learning games, and educational activities. Series & Sequels is the place to go to find what book to read next. And finally, Online Storytimes has several filmed storytimes featuring one of our “famous” Children’s staff members, as well as another link to Tumblebooks. At the top of the page, Pikes Peak KidsRead takes you to pictures of other kids and the books they’re excited about. Check out the other parts of Kids Web to find help with writing reports (Homework Help) as well as educational games & keyboarding practice (Fun & Games).

For older kids, Teen Zone is the place to be. From ppdl.org, click on Teen Zone and then Read It for some awesome book suggestions. Click on Homework then English & Literature for websites about creative writing. Shakespeare, poetry, and monologues. Click on Boredom Relief and brush up on your vocabulary by playing some fun crossword puzzles.

We don’t want to forget you parents! From ppdl.org click on Find a Good Book, you will find plenty of resources to get a great read.

Hopefully these resources will help you encourage your family to enjoy reading together!

All Pikes Peak Reads

Put your imaginative and innovative thinking to work and participate in All Pikes Peak Reads (APPR)! Through the end of October, APPR hosts authors, art exhibits, book discussions, children/teen programs, and film screenings that focus on the selected books.

Young readers should grab The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick (upper elementary, middle school) and view the life of young Hugo through vivid sketches throughout the pages. Also, pick up Snowflake Bentley by Jacqueline Briggs Martin (elementary school) and discover the beautiful mysteries of snowflakes! Parents can participate alongside their kids with The Invention of Everything Else by Samantha Hunt, The Devil in the White City by Erik Larson, and Lightning in His Hand: the Story of Nikola Tesla by Inez Hunt and Wanetta W. Draper.

Awesome Award Winning Books for Kids

Caldecott Medal Winners
J-EASY (PICTURE BOOKS)
Song and Dance Man by Karen Ackerman
Arrow to the Sun by Gerald McDermott
The Paperboy by Dav Pilkey
Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin by Lloyd Moss
Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold
Grandfather’s Journey by Allen Say

Newbery Medal Winners
J-FICTION
Whittington by Allan Armstrong
Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary
From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E.L. Konigsburg
A Single Shard by Linda Sue Park
The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin
Charlotte’s Web by E.B. White

Winners of Caldecott or Newbery Medals
J-NONFICTION
In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World by 291.24 H221
Sugaring Time by 633.645 L345S
The Voice that Challenged a Nation by Ellen Raskin
812.6 S344G
26 Fairmount Avenue by 813.54 D419T
Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow by 943.086 B292H

Match the Book With the Author

Match these award winning children’s chapter books with their authors. If you know the authors, you can find them on the J-Fiction shelves!

Bridge to Terabithia
Dave Barry
Caddie Woodlawn
Carol Ryrie Brink
The Door in the Wall
Bruce Coville
Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher
Marguerite de Angeli
Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane
Meindert DeJong
Peter and the Starcatchers
Kate DiCamillo
Sarah, Plain and Tall
Madeleine L’Engle
Shiloh
Lois Lenski
Strawberry Girl
Hugh Lofting
The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle
Patricia MacLachlan
The Wheel on the School
Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
A Wrinkle in Time
Katherine Paterson