INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

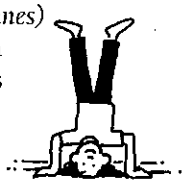
January 2019

Oxford Public Schools
Title I

Book Picks

■ ***The Jigsaw Jungle*** *(Kristin Levine)*
Claudia's world changes when her father disappears. Desperate to put her family back together, she collects clues to solve the mystery of why he left home. The story is told through Claudia's scrapbook, which includes transcripts of conversations via email, text, and phone.

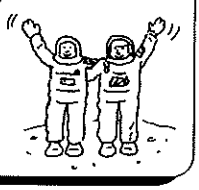
■ ***Beatrice Zinker, Upside Down Thinker*** *(Shelley Johannes)*



Thinking upside down is how Beatrice dreams up fantastic plans to carry out with her best friend, Lenny. But when Lenny finds a new friend and seems to have forgotten her, Beatrice needs all of her upside-down thinking to get things back on track. Book one in the Beatrice Zinker series.

■ ***The Kid Who Invented the Popsicle and Other Extraordinary Stories Behind Everyday Things*** *(Don L. Wulffson)*
This nonfiction book is full of interesting stories about how familiar toys, foods, and gadgets were invented. Your child will discover that ordinary people tinkered and experimented, leading to carousels, teddy bears, sandwiches, and more.

■ ***Astrotwins: Project Blastoff*** *(Mark Kelly)*
How did Mark Kelly and his twin brother Scott become astronauts? Facts about the twins and about space science are woven into the fictional tale of a group of kids who set out to build a rocket. The first book in the Astrotwins series.



Less screen time, more reading time

Amber would rather watch TV than read. Eric used to read at bedtime, but now he asks to play video games instead.

If your child prefers electronic devices to books, you're not alone. Use these ideas to set reasonable limits and motivate her to read more.

Create rules

Your youngster will be more tempted to pick up a book if screen time isn't an option. Decide how much time she's allowed each day—perhaps less on weeknights than on weekends. She could read to settle down at night rather than watch TV or play video games.

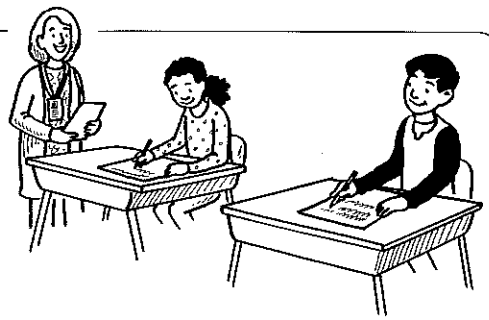
Make reading convenient

Think "out of sight, out of mind." Ask your child to put devices away when screen time is over. On the flip side, keep reading material in plain sight. She might fill a basket with library books and place it in the family room—next to the turned-off TV. And have her leave devices at home and read or listen to audio books in the car or waiting room.

Build on interests

Help your youngster find reading material related to her interests. For example, if her video games feature sports, animals, or outer space, she might enjoy books or magazines on those topics. Also consider having her read books that were made into movies she liked.

Note-taking 101



Taking good notes and using them will help your youngster learn and remember information. Here are suggestions.

Develop shorthand. He might use abbreviations like *w/* (*with*) or *b4* (*before*). He can make up his own and create a key that tells what they mean.

Double-space. Your child could leave a space between each line and use the blank lines to add details or examples as the lesson goes on.

Review. Have your youngster think of notes as a study tool. He might use them to explain the lesson to you or to create a practice quiz for himself.

Sound-it-out strategies

When your youngster comes across a new word in a book, sounding it out is one strategy that can help him keep reading. Share these sound-it-out tips.

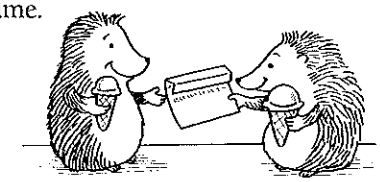
• **Find a part you know.** Your child may spot a familiar portion of a word, such as a vowel pattern or a shorter word within a longer one. Say he comes to the unknown word *feign*. He might think, "*Neigh* and *weigh* have *ei*, and that letter combination makes the *long a* sound. I think that word is pronounced *fayn*."

• **Break it into syllables.** Suggest that your youngster say each syllable separately. If he's not sure how to break up the word, here's a clue: Every syllable contains at least one vowel. For *emancipation*, he might say "e-man-ci-pa-tion" slowly, then read it again smoothly.

Once your child has sounded out a word, it's important that he reread the entire sentence with the word in it. If he can't figure out its meaning from the context, he could ask someone for help or look up the word in a dictionary.

Fun with Words: Write and pass it on!

Writing a story together will get your child's creative juices flowing. Try this back-and-forth writing game.



1. At the top of a sheet of paper, your youngster writes the opening line of a story ("There once was a little hedgehog who loved ice cream") and hands the paper to the person beside her.

2. That player reads the sentence silently, folds the paper to hide it, and writes a sentence that follows logically. ("Her favorite flavor was chocolate-chip cookie dough.")

3. Players continue passing the paper around, folding it so that only the last sentence written is visible.

4. When there's just enough room for one more sentence, the person with the paper writes an ending for the story.

5. Now let your child read the tale aloud.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q&A: Young adult books?

Q *My daughter wants to read books that I think are too mature for her. She says "everyone" reads them. How should I handle this?*

A Luckily for both of you, there are plenty of books out there that your daughter will enjoy—and that are appropriate for her. Explain to your child that some stories can be confusing or upsetting. And while her friends might read a particular book, it may not be a good match for her maturity level or your family's values.

Ask a librarian to help you find books you and your daughter can agree on. She could suggest stories with popular themes (outdoor adventures, friendship) but without subjects that you might consider too mature (romance, horror).

Parent 2 Parent: Editing makes writing better

My son Kevin was working on an essay recently. He was supposed to write a rough draft, edit it, and write a final copy. But after he checked the spelling, grammar, and punctuation in his draft, he declared it error-free and said he didn't need to edit.

I used to work for a publishing company, so I explained to Kevin that there's more to editing than correcting errors—and that even professional writers edit their work.

Then I had an idea. I suggested that my son pick a paragraph from a favorite book and edit it. He made the writer's description of a castle more vivid and added a funny line of dialogue for the king.

He was surprised that he preferred his version. But I pointed out that if the writer reread the book, she'd almost certainly find changes she'd like to make, too. This helped Kevin understand that writing can often be improved.

Intermediate Edition

Math+Science Connection

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

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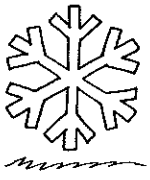
INFO BITS

Guess my coins

Play 20 Questions to help your youngster remember coin values and practice adding them. Give a clue, such as "I have 3 coins in my pocket that total less than $1." She can ask up to 20 yes-or-no questions to determine which coins you have. *Examples:* "Are any 2 coins the same?" "Is the total less than 50 cents?"

Snowflake geometry

Here's a fun fact about snowflakes: Each central angle measures 60°.



Can your child figure out why? (The 6 points are arranged in a circle, a circle is 360°, and 360° ÷ 6 = 60°.) Let him put black paper in the freezer for 2 hours, catch snowflakes on it, and observe them under a magnifying glass. Or he could make craft-stick snowflakes and measure the angles with a protractor.

Book picks

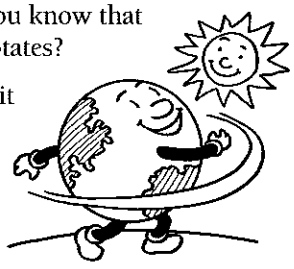
There are about 1 million granules of sugar in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup! Your child will learn this and other fascinating facts in *Millions, Billions, & Trillions: Understanding Big Numbers* (David A. Adler).

A jumping spider in space? *Nefertiti the Spidernaut* (Darcy Pattison) is the true story of a spider who visited the International Space Station for a science experiment.

Just for fun

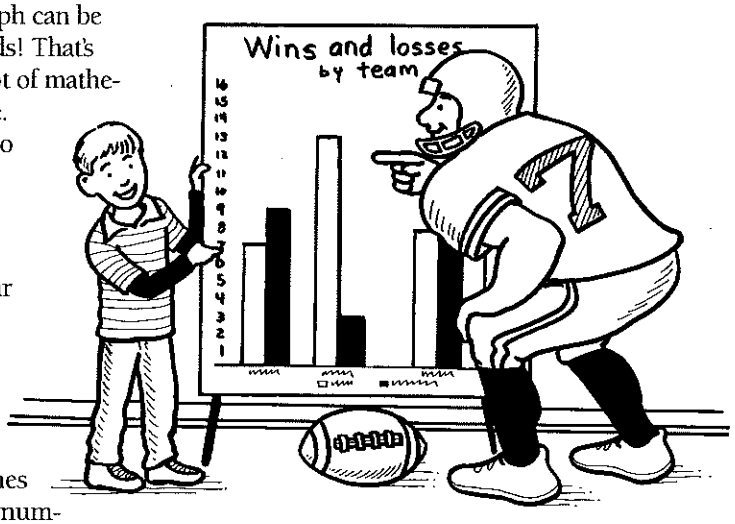
Tom: Did you know that the Earth rotates?

Annie: Yes, it makes my day!



A graph tells a story

Like a picture, a graph can be worth a thousand words! That's because it provides a lot of mathematical data at a glance. Encourage your child to use graphs like these to tell stories.



Sports scores

Now that the regular football season is over, suggest that your youngster make a bar graph showing wins and losses. He should write team names across the bottom and numbers representing games (1–16) up the left side.

For each team, he could fill in a green bar for wins and a yellow bar beside it for losses. Then, ask him questions like "How many more wins did your favorite team get than mine?"

Screen-time patterns

A line graph shows patterns over time. Each week for a month, encourage your child to graph the time he spends using electronics and the time being physically active. He could title his graph "Screen time vs. active time," then label the bottom with dates and the left side with time in 15-minute intervals. Have him plot each day's activities with a dot where the date intersects with the correct amount of time—and connect the dots as he goes.

After each week, he could report his findings. ("Screen time dropped steadily, and active time went up slightly. The biggest difference between screen time and active time on a single day was 1 hour and 15 minutes.")

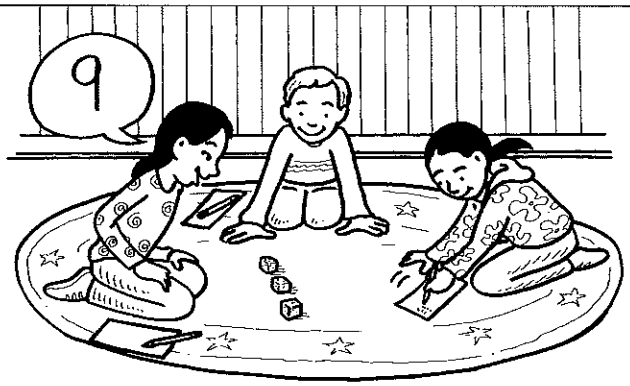
Engineer a sled

Whoosh! What makes a sled zoom down a hill? Your youngster can test *friction* by engineering an indoor "sled."

Let your child wrap three index cards (sleds), each in a different material (plastic wrap, foil, waxed paper). On an uncarpeted surface, she can prop an upside-down cookie sheet against a stack of books. Have her predict which sled will slide the farthest off the ramp. Then, she can test each one and measure. (The material with the least friction—or resistance when sliding over a surface—will travel the farthest.)

The rules of divisibility

How can your child tell if a number will divide evenly into another number or if she'll get a remainder? Help her work on division and discover *divisibility rules* with these ideas.



Divisibility rules

A number is evenly divisible by:
2, if it's even
3, if the digits add up to 3, 6, or 9
4, if the last 2 digits are divisible by 4
5, if the last digit is 0 or 5
6, if it's divisible by 2 *and* 3
8, if the last 3 digits are divisible by 8
9, if its digits add up to 9

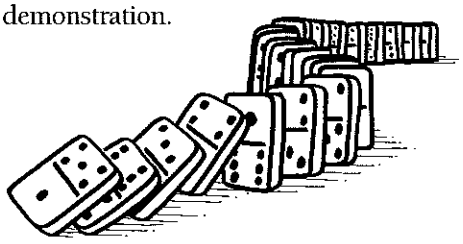
Know the rules. Ask your youngster to divide a few random numbers by 2. What do the ones that divide evenly have in common? (They're all even numbers.) Now let her do the same with 5. (They all end in 0 or 5.)

Avoid the remainders. Play this game where the low score wins. The first player rolls 3 dice to form a 3-digit number (say, 612). She says a number (2–9) that she thinks will divide into it evenly, then divides to check. If there's no remainder (612 ÷ 9 = 68), her score is 0. If there is (612 ÷ 8 = 76, remainder 4), the remainder (4) is her score. Once a player has 10 points, she's out. The last player left wins.

SCIENCE LAB

Dominoes: A chain reaction

Every time the sun warms the Earth or batteries power a flashlight, energy is being transferred. Your youngster will see energy transfer in action with this demonstration.



You'll need: dominoes, flat surface

Here's how: Have your child line up dominoes a short distance apart from each other. Using his finger, he should push the first domino into the one behind it.

What happens? The dominoes topple over, one after the other.

Why? The dominoes have *potential*, or stored, energy. When your youngster pushes the first domino, the potential energy turns into *kinetic* energy (energy of motion). A chain reaction resulted as energy transferred from one domino to the next, on down the line.

Q & A

Math "tricks"—or not?

Q: *My son is learning about fractions in school. I remember a trick I used when I was his age called the "butterfly method." Should I teach it to him?*

A: Instead, why not ask your son to teach *you* methods he's learning in math? They may be different from the way you learned. But if he can explain how to do the procedures and tell you why they work, then they will be effective for him.

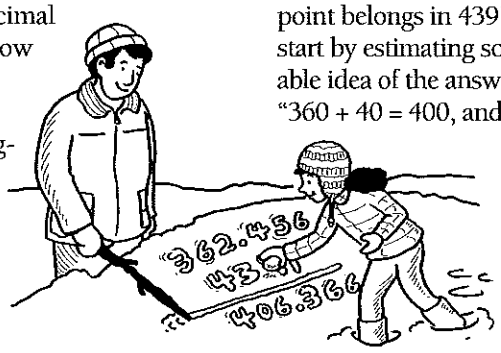
The downside to tricks and shortcuts like the butterfly method is that youngsters may skip the understanding and learning—and go straight to the answer. Your son needs an understanding of math concepts to know whether answers are in the right ballpark. Plus, future math lessons will make more sense if he gets the "why" behind what he's doing now.

MATH CORNER

Find the (decimal) point

One of the most important things for your child to remember when she adds and subtracts decimal numbers is to line up the decimal points correctly. Show her why with this activity.

Give your youngster an addition or subtraction equation with decimal points, leaving the decimal point out of one number. Supply the answer—but it's up to her to figure out where the decimal point goes! *Example:* 362.456 + 4391 = 406.366.



Where does she think the decimal point belongs in 4391? Suggest that she start by estimating so she'll have a reasonable idea of the answer. She might think, "360 + 40 = 400, and 40 is close to 43, so I'll try 43.91." Then, she can add to check:

$$\begin{array}{r} 362.456 \\ +\ 43.91 \\ \hline 406.366 \end{array}$$

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