**Leaping** into L i t e r a c y

***Reading + Writing Together = Literacy Success for All***  **November, 2014**

 South Elementary School

**Book Picks**

Jeanine Cambra, Reading Specialist

 **Preschool Pick*: A Ball For***

 ***Daisy* by Chris Rashka.** Any

 child who has ever had a

 beloved toy break will relate to Daisy's anguish when her favorite ball is destroyed by a bigger dog. In the tradition of his nearly wordless picture book *Yo! Yes?,* Chris Raschka explores in pictures the joy and sadness that having a special toy can bring.

**Lower El Pick**: ***Me . . . Jane* by Patrick McDonnell** tells the story of the young Jane Goodall and her special childhood toy chimpanzee named Jubilee. As the young Jane observes the natural world around her with wonder, she dreams of "a life living with and helping all animals," until one day she finds that her dream has come true.

**Upper El Pick:  *Breaking Stalin’s Nose* by Eugene Yelchin**. Sasha Zaichik has known the laws of the Soviet Young Pioneers since the age of six, but now that it is finally time to join the Young Pioneers, the day Sasha has awaited for so long, everything seems to go awry. He breaks a classmate's glasses with a snowball. He accidentally damages a bust of Stalin in the school hallway.  And worst of all, his father, the best Communist he knows, was arrested just last night.

***Order great books anytime from Scholastic*** Many classroom teachers participate in the Scholastic Book Clubs and you can order wonderful books more cheaply than retail on a regular basis—most orders even offer books as inexpensive as $1.00. If your child’s teacher does not participate in Scholastic Book Clubs, or you would like to order for younger or older children, either as gifts or for your own children, you may also order online using the code ND38H. . . .

**Homework Helpers**

**Study the same things in different ways and places**

Help your child learn about new words or content in a variety of ways. Talk about new vocabulary words several times over the course of the week, in different settings. This will help enrich your child's understanding of the word.

**Help your child get organized**

Help your child pick out a special homework notebook or folder, and make sure your child has homework supplies, such as:

* pencils
* pens
* writing paper
* a dictionary

**Help your child without doing the homework**

It's important to answer questions if you can — but remember that homework is supposed to help children learn and that doing your child's homework does not help in the long run.

**Making lists is a great way to focus on**

**literacy at home.** Groceries, school

supplies, recipes, or items for a day at

the park or grandma’s house can all

be written down to help build skills. For

younger kids, draw a simple picture of the object, and as children grow as readers and writers, have them read a list you write, or guide them in writing the list on their own. Now comes the fun part . . . have your child help you by gathering the items on your list.

**Literacy at Home**

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**Writing Techniques**

• Continuing the conversations in the car or at

bedtime— what’s going on at school or in the

neighborhood, what family plans are coming up,

or what are your opinions about a recent event

or movie you attended together.

• Plan a family game night – Work on a crossword puzzle together, play Scrabble, or Twenty Questions.

• Subscribe to a child’s magazine.

• D.E.A.R. – Drop Everything and Read for 15 – 20 minutes of family reading time nightly

• When you’re out on the community—the post office, grocery store, doctor’s office, etc., search for new or unusual words and learn about them together.

**Literacy at Home**

**More ways to encourage vocabulary development at home . . .**

***Q.*** *Recently,*

 *I’ve noticed some of*

 *the books my daughter has*

 *been reading have a number*

 *with an “L” after it on the back*

 *cover. What is this?*

***A****.* That number is called the Lexile and it speaks to the difficulty of the text. Lexiles range from below 200L- 1600L. The higher the number, the

 more difficult the text. The Lexile

 can be used as one tool to help

 students choose a just right

 book.

When your child has a creative writing assignment, encourage the use of new ideas. The

following components can make his or her stories stronger and more interesting and will help to bring added

enjoyment to the writing process. **Foreshadowing.** Authors sometimes drop hints about what will happen later. If a scary spider plays an important role in the story, your child might mention the character’s fear of insects in her account. **Titles.** Titles often add interest and intrigue. Try encouraging your young writer to refer to important events in the story for inspiration. Instead of, *My Summer Vacation*, try *Picnic in the Park*. **Flashback.** Why not start the story at the end? Begin with the character’s winning race and then go back and describe the difficulties to train and gain the skills needed to win.

When children first begin to read, they use the words they have heard to make sense of what is on the page in front of them. It is impossible to understand what is being read without knowing the meaning of a good portion of the words students read. Typically, students learn 3,000 new words per school year.

Research shows that there is a connection between vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and overall academic achievement. The larger a student’s vocabulary, the higher his or her academic achievement. It is with practice in school and at home, through speaking, listening, and reading, that students continue to build their vocabularies.

At school students build their content vocabulary with exposure to new topics and concepts, they learn prefixes, suffixes, endings, and word origins to help them understand word meanings. Students are taught how to use resources including a dictionary, glossary, and thesaurus. They learn strategies such as the use of context clues to help determine the general meaning of words when they read. Children are indirectly exposed to words through listening to texts, discussing texts, and reading extensively. They use their vocabularies when writing.

At home, the simplest thing families can do to build vocabulary is to eat together as a family unit. Sharing a meal leads to conversation—the critical speaking and listening components of vocabulary building.

**Eating Dinner Together Boosts Students’ Comprehension Skills**

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