



Groves Literacy Partnerships - Parent Tip of the Month: All grades

September			
Kindergarten	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade
<p>Pencil Position Matters In Groves Method, we teach handwriting because “handwriting instruction positively affects reading skills.” Getting the right pencil position helps kids easily write their ideas and keeps them from having wrist and finger pain. Fixing poor pencil position is hard to do if left undetected. Here are a few tips to get your student on the right track:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use shorter pencils (like golf pencils) to help your child develop the correct grip. • Use a pencil with sides (triangular or hexagonal) to aid in the right grip. • Have your child place the pencil on a table with the point towards them. Then, have them clasp the pencil with their thumb and pointer, swinging the pencil up. 	<p>Pencil Check! Habits are hard to break. As we head back to school, it’s important to recheck pencil positions as improper grips may have formed.</p> <p>Remember, the goal is to use the triangular grasp, with the pointer and thumb grasping the pencil and bringing it to rest on the middle finger.</p> <p>If you find your child has slipped into a bad habit, try the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your child has a good grip but the middle/back of the pencil is not between the pointer and thumb, try wrapping a rubber band around their wrist and pencil. • Have your child pick up Skittles or raisins and eat them one-by-one. Ask your child which fingers they used. If they reply that they are using their pointer 	<p>Cursive is Coming You might wonder why we’re teaching cursive in an increasingly digital world.</p> <p>There are excellent reasons to teach cursive including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brain engages at a deeper level as students focus on the continual flow of cursive writing. • Learning cursive improves retention and comprehension of concepts. • Different parts of the brain are engaged when students write letters vs. typing them on a keyboard—parts of the brain that connect with writing also connect with parts of the brain that learn letters/sounds. • Studies found that up to Grade 6, students were writing more words, writing faster and expressing more ideas if they handwrote 	<p>Bridge to Spelling In 3rd Grade, Groves Method really focuses on applying reading knowledge to spelling.</p> <p>It’s natural to question why kids would need to spell words correctly when spell check exists. However, one still has to have an understanding of sentence meaning and word patterns to even choose the correct spelling. In addition, constantly relying on spell check slows writers down from composing their thoughts.</p> <p>In addition, English spelling is much easier to master once you’ve been taught the patterns. In fact, only 4% of all English words are truly irregular (Hanna, Hanna, Hodges, and Rudorf, 1966). Encourage your child to use the spelling rules they’ve been taught and to use the correct spelling so their ideas are valued and heard!</p>



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<p>The goal is to use the triangular grasp, with the pointer and thumb grasping the pencil and bringing it to rest on the middle finger. Your child may not be there yet, but with patience and practice, they will get there!</p> <p><i>Source: William VanCleave</i></p>	<p>and thumb, remind them these are the fingers they should use to grip their pencil, too!</p> <p><i>Source: William VanCleave</i></p>	<p>instead of typed.</p> <p>Many have found that cursive is actually easier to learn because there's less confusion between visually similar letters, like b and d. Lowercase cursive letters in Groves have the same starting point, which makes it easier for kids, especially those who struggled with print. Ask your child to show you some of the cursive they are learning. Second graders are very proud of this new skill and feel a lot more "grown-up" when they add cursive as one of their skills.</p> <p><i>Source: Long, 2017</i></p>	
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<p>Keyword Cards In Kindergarten, we focus on teaching letter names and sounds. Each letter is introduced with a Keyword Card. For example, when students are shown the card for Dd they will respond by saying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter name: d • Keyword: Dog • Sound /d/ <p>We teach kids to say their sounds crisply, without adding extra sounds. So, kids will say the sound for letter “t” as /t/ instead of /tuh/.</p> <p>See if your child can tell you the name, keyword, and sound for any of the letters they’ve learned so far!</p>	<p>Blends The next step in growing Kindergarten readers into first grade readers is reading blends. Blends are two or three consonants next to each other in words that slide together, but still make their own sounds. For example, the letters “dr” in the word “drip” are a blend.</p> <p>Blends can be in the beginning or ends of words. Remind your child they can tap words with blends as they learn to master even longer, more complex words!</p>	<p>Morphemes—say what?? Morphemes are the smallest units of language that have meaning. We work with 2nd graders to recognize morphemes not only because they aid in breaking apart longer words but they are crucial for understanding a word’s meaning.</p> <p>Prefixes (such as re-, dis-) and suffixes (such as -ment, -less) are just two of the different types of morphemes we teach students. Be on the lookout for these word units and see if your students can identify what they mean.</p>	<p>Academic Vocabulary We have different ways of talking in our daily lives. The language we use when texting a best friend is very different than the language we might use to ask for help in a store. The same is true for your child. Children bring such a rich variety of language to classrooms. We want to help students succeed by adding academic vocabulary (words they are likely to see in textbooks) to their reading, writing, and speaking.</p> <p>During class, students have an opportunity to create sentences with a partner to help enrich their vocabulary. Ask your student to tell you some of the bigger words they’ve been learning, such as gist, and see if they can use it in a sentence.</p>



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<p>Tapping 101 Have you seen your child tapping their fingers in a special way? We teach students to sound out words by tapping each finger to their thumb, starting with their pointer finger, and saying one sound for each finger tapped.</p> <p>We do this because our fingertips have lots of connections to our brains. We use our hands because they're always with us! Students will learn to tap words for reading and spelling as they progress in the Groves Method.</p> <p>If you see your student struggling with reading a word, encourage them to use their tappers.</p>	<p>Vowels make 2 sounds??!! First graders are often shocked when they realize that vowels can make a long sound (like their name) and a short sound. As students progress through Groves Method, they learn that there are many ways to spell long vowel sounds, too.</p> <p>For now, it's important to know when a vowel is long or short and why. In first grade, we learn a pattern called VCe (vowel-consonant-silent e). Students are taught that the "e" is silent and it makes the vowel say its name. Help your child look at words closely so they can begin to spot vowel patterns.</p>	<p>What do I do if my child is stuck on a word while reading? It used to be that we coached children to look at the picture or skip the word if they didn't know what it meant. Strategies that take kids' attention off words do not help them become better word readers.</p> <p>Instead, if your child struggles, try prompting them in these ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tap the sounds in this word (for one-syllable words) • Do you see any prefixes? Suffixes? Let's solve those first and then look at the root word or base word that's left. • Can this letter make another sound? Why? • What's the vowel saying? Why? <p>Let's keep kids' eyes on the words when they don't know them and empower them to be word solvers!</p> <p>Source: Margaret Goldberg</p>	<p>Superb Sentences In 3rd grade, we spend time learning parts of speech, such as, adjectives, nouns, and prepositions. We start with rich sentence development so that students can eventually craft multiple sentences into a paragraph. Not only does learning parts of speech in sentences help with writing, but it also helps students better understand sentences, especially the more complex sentences that they will see in texts.</p> <p>Your child has so many great thoughts. Encouraging them to write down their thoughts gives them a chance to share them with specific people and allows their voice to be heard!</p>



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<p>Sight Words We want students to know these words because they appear often in text AND they may have sound patterns that they haven't learned or are not predictable.</p> <p>We teach students to read and spell sight words.</p> <p>We give students extra practice with the sight words by skywriting them and carpet writing them, saying the names of the letters as we write the word and then reading the whole word.</p> <p>If you have sight words you're working on with your child, make sure they are spelling them out loud, as well as reading them. Can they skywrite or carpet write a sight word for you?</p>	<p>Noun or verb? We're beginning to learn if a word is a noun (person, place, thing) or a verb (action word) because we're beginning to add suffixes to the ends of words. Those suffixes can change the meanings of the words, so it's important to know if the word is acting as a noun or verb. Ultimately, we want students to know the meaning of what they are reading, so we teach them to name parts of speech.</p> <p>Playing Mad Libs is a fun way to help reinforce parts of speech AND a source of lots of laughter! Try printing up a few from these sites: https://www.madlibs.com/printables/ https://www.madlibs.com/printables/</p>	<p>Concept Questions - the WHY In Groves Method, we ask a lot of questions. We ask specific questions, called concept questions, to get students analyzing words and applying the concepts learned.</p> <p>We could just tell students the answers or lecture to them, but we know that asking questions promotes more student engagement and deeper learning of concepts.</p> <p>Some questions we ask through the year are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the vowel long or short? How do you know? • Is there a suffix in the word? How does it change the meaning of the word? • Where do we divide this word? Why? <p>Have your child ask you a few questions about words—can they stump you?</p>	<p>Independence One of the biggest changes in 3rd graders is the level of independence they are gaining. We see students growing in independence in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading longer texts on their own • Moving from being taught cursive to applying their cursive to their own writing • Doing more workbook pages on their own, without the assistance of a teacher <p>In short, third graders are beginning to have less guidance and more ownership of their work. Continue to praise your student's independence when they can do things "all by themselves." It's also okay to check in and see if they need a little help, too.</p>



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<p>Reading is NOT Memorizing Many early Kindergarten books have very predictable patterns and encourage students to memorize the text or use the pictures to help them solve words.</p> <p>This can lead parents and caregivers to believe their children are engaging in more skilled reading than they might actually be doing. We want students to focus on the letters and sounds in words because the pictures eventually go away and not all texts are patterned.</p> <p>You might notice your child is bringing home Groves readers with no pictures. This is to allow students to focus on the words and draw their own pictures to show they understand the story.</p> <p>Words are stored in your child's brain through hearing them and sounding them out</p>	<p>Longer Words By now, your student is beginning to read words with more than one syllable. We teach students to tackle longer words by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the vowels in the words • Determining how many consonants are between the vowels • Asking if they know how to divide a word into syllables based on the number of vowels/consonants <p>By figuring out syllable division rules, students have an easier way to approach reading and spelling longer words. If your child is stuck on a longer word, use the steps above to empower them to solve the word themselves.</p>	<p>Small Groups We regularly look at data to make sure we're not leaving kids behind. We screen all students three times a year and continue to assess students throughout the year to make sure they are progressing at the rate needed to become fluent readers.</p> <p>Small groups are tailored to your child's needs—whether they are on grade-level and need a challenge or struggling to read phrases smoothly, your child is supported!</p> <p>Ask your child what is their favorite part of small group work and see if they can tell you what they've been learning.</p>	<p>Learning to Read vs. Reading to Learn Your third grader has spent many years learning to read. They've learned phonics patterns, morphological units, and more. Now is the point where they are taking this knowledge and using it to learn.</p> <p>Third grade can be a big jump for students because they are reading more texts on their own, many of them nonfiction texts. Reading nonfiction stories is exciting but requires a different skill set, especially a deep knowledge of vocabulary that is very content specific.</p> <p>Make sure your child isn't just having a "reading diet" of fiction books. We want students to be able to access all kinds of texts and be wide readers. It's okay to read a non-fiction text with them and help them with vocabulary words, understanding charts</p>



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<p>multiple times. This can give the impression that a child is just “memorizing” the words when much deeper work is going on in the brain.</p>			<p>and diagrams, and using summary boxes and headings to help them understand content.</p>
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February			
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<p>Words are Fun! Kids learn vocabulary through talking and conversing, as well as through listening to books read aloud. Books are found to have much higher levels of vocabulary (rare words) than TV shows (Trelease, 2013). As you're talking or reading to your child, stop and put words in kid-friendly definitions. If you see a word you don't know, model finding the definition. Remind your kids that in different cultures and settings, we use different types of words. It's great to know the <i>plethora</i> of ways words are used!</p>	<p>Hold Your Nose! Nasal sounds (like /m/ and /n/ for example) change the sounds of the vowels next to them. Add nasals to our Minnesota accent, and it can make anyone guess what they're hearing. We teach kids that nasals can change the sounds of vowels next to them, so it's important to tap words out and listen to each word sound-by-sound in order to spell it correctly.</p>	<p>Dictation One of the things your child does each day in Groves Method is they listen for their teacher to say a sound, word, or sentence and they practice writing what was told them.</p> <p>This is an excellent activity for helping glue this information in long-term memory, especially because we better remember what we write.</p> <p>We also know that we're helping students build working memory, the number of "bits" of information they can hold in their brain and manipulate, which is key for more complex learning.</p> <p>You can practice this at home by saying a word or sound and asking your child to write down what you said.</p>	<p>The Elusive Schwa Your 3rd grader has just started learning about the schwa, which is a vowel sound that is muffled and usually sounds like a short i or short u but isn't necessarily spelled that way. It is found in the unaccented syllable.</p> <p>The schwa can be tricky for students because it isn't spelled like it sounds. Because of that, we often pronounce words differently when helping kids spell them so they can better hear the letter(s) they should be writing.</p> <p>Ask your child if they can identify the schwa sound in these words: soda panda alike</p> <p>What letter is used to spell the schwa sound?</p>



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March			
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<p>We're Wired to Talk, Not to Read Many of us, educators included, have mistakenly thought that children are born hard-wired to read. After all, our children just seemed to learn to talk by listening to the people around them. Reading is quite different from talking, though. Reading must be taught. And it must be taught in a very specific way. Reading actually starts with sounds. Then students are taught to map those sounds to written characters.</p> <p>Be patient with your child as they are learning to “crack the code.” Their brains are literally under construction. Some of their brains need many, many exposures of reading and spelling words over and over before they become automatic.</p> <p><i>Source: Hanford, 2018</i></p>	<p>Building Fluent Readers By now, your child might be able to read a longer passage, but it might sound choppy. We want kids to string groups of words together into phrases that make sense.</p> <p>Fluency isn't fast reading; it's learning to use the appropriate rate for the text, reading words accurately, and knowing what words to read expressively.</p> <p>In Groves Method, we work to first develop fluency with word reading, then in 3-4 word phrases, and finally sentences. We take this “ladder-like” approach so that we can build fluency at the easiest level and then build on that fluency when reading those words in longer phrases.</p>	<p>Three Syllable Words! You may have noticed that your child is able to read increasingly longer words.</p> <p>When we read words with more than one syllable or word part, we teach children to look for the vowels and then count the consonants between them. This helps students start to see natural syllable breaks and makes it easier to approach a difficult word.</p> <p>As students progress through Groves method, they will “chop” words for reading and then draw scoops to help them spell each word part.</p> <p>Ask your child to “chop” a word like “disinfect.” Did they chop three word parts? Can they tell you what the word means?</p>	<p>Homophones Homophones can be challenging because they sound the same but have different spellings and meanings. If students don't sort out the difference between homophones, it can cause a lot of confusion!</p> <p>When learning homophones (week/weak), we work to put them into sentences. Then we have students close their eyes and visualize the word and use table writing while spelling the word orally.</p> <p>Can your student tell you a sentence for one of these homophone pairs?</p> <p>waist/waste meet/meat plain/plane</p>



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<p>We Practice Reading AND Spelling Reading and spelling are reciprocal processes. As William VanCleave stated, "Reading is breathing in and spelling is breathing out." Spelling shows a deeper level of knowledge than reading, and we're working to develop students receptive AND expressive language.</p> <p>Students are taught to tap the sounds in a word and then map those sounds to letters in order to write the word. How many CVC words (consonant-vowel-consant words, like "hat") can your child spell? You just might be amazed!</p>	<p>Fluency Part 2 Building fluent readers takes work. Here are some things you can do to help develop your child's fluency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have your child track the words on the page by moving their finger underneath the words with one fluid motion. This can help your student really focus on the accuracy piece of fluency, as well as phrasing. • Have your child listen to you read a phrase or sentence while they follow along with their finger. Then have them read that same phrase/sentence after you, trying to imitate your expression and phrasing. • Choral reading- Read the words at the same time along with your child (like you're one voice). This can help push their rate and give them an expression model. 	<p>How do we spell it? Position matters! Second graders are starting to learn there are many ways to spell our long vowel sounds but the position of the sound will often dictate what letters to use.</p> <p>For example, if students hear the long a sound at the end of a word, it is usually spelled using the letters "-ay." If the long "a" sound is in the middle of a word, it is often spelled using the letters "ai."</p> <p>When in doubt, we often ask students, "Where do you hear the sound in the word?" This helps cue students to think about the appropriate spelling.</p>	<p>Marking the Concept: More than Meets the Eye Have you ever noticed little lines or arcs that your child has written under or over words? In Groves Method, we have students go back to words they've read and practice "marking the concept." For example, if we're learning about vowel digraphs, we'll have students put a line under both vowels to show that the vowel digraph is two letters making one sound.</p> <p>We have students go back to mark the concept to show their deeper understanding of how words work. We like to say this is like looking below the surface of a plant and seeing the root structure deep in the soil. When students mark their words, it lets us know the deeper processing going on in their heads.</p> <p>Ask your child to mark any concepts they've learned in</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have your child read out loud to you a few times in a row. Fluency is built through repeated readings of the same passage. Many children can “fake” their reading if it’s done silently. If you really want to know what’s going on in your reader’s brain, have them read out loud!		<p>these words. You might be surprised at how deep their word knowledge is!</p> <p>aboard stigma recalled harsh</p>
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May			
Kindergarten	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade
<p>We Like to Do Things We Enjoy Adults and kids are similar in that we are pulled towards things we enjoy. If given a choice, most of us will eat our favorite foods for dinner—pizza, anyone? Even before our children can read themselves, the pleasure we associate with reading can be contagious. Sitting with children and reading a good book together is sowing the seeds for a lifetime of reading. Helping kids see reading as enjoyable (with your help) aids in motivation as our students move towards reading independently.</p> <p>Children are never too old to have you read aloud to them and benefit from hearing texts that are above their reading level. As adults, we have the power to introduce kids to different types of books thorough our own voice. Grab your favorite book and head to</p>	<p>Vowel Digraphs Your flourishing reader ended Kindergarten learning that two consonants can make one sound, known as a digraph.</p> <p>Your first grader has now learned that two vowels can make one sound. Digraphs like oa, ee, and ai shouldn't stop your reader! See if they can find any of these new digraphs in everyday words.</p>	<p>Summer Slide The summer slide is real—and no, this is not a fun slide. Summer slide is the loss of learning that occurs when children are not in school over the summer. On average, kids lose two months of growth in reading and math <i>Source: www.littlepassports.com</i></p> <p>Many libraries and businesses have summer reading incentives. You can also create your own incentives. For example, for every 30 minutes of reading, your child might earn 10 minutes of screen time. For every 10 books read, an ice cream outing is in store! Try different formats of reading—reading to your child, with your child, or having your child read to you—to keep reading fun! <i>Source: www.littlepassports.com</i></p>	<p>Reading TO Your Child When your child was little, you probably heard, “Read books to them!”</p> <p>No matter what their age, children still benefit (and enjoy) being read to.</p> <p>When we read to children we're teaching them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● YOU matter and I enjoy spending time with you ● The pleasure of enjoying a book together ● The value of learning <p>When reading aloud to your older child, use the time to read a book that might be a little too hard for them to read on their own but will expose them to vocabulary and concepts that they'll soon encounter.</p> <p>You can also use the time to expose your child to a new genre or author they might be reluctant to read. After all,</p>



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<p>a hammock, couch, tent, or any snuggly spot and read together.</p>			<p>many of the first books you probably read as a child were ones that were read to you.</p> <p>If you need a list of read-aloud suggestions, try: https://www.readingrockets.org/article/how-choose-read-aloud-books-babies-third-graders</p>
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Extra Tips

Concept Questions- the WHY

In Groves Method, we ask a lot of questions. We ask specific questions, called concept questions, to get students analyzing words and applying the concepts learned.

We could just tell students the answers or lecture to them, but we know that asking questions promotes more student engagement and deeper learning of concepts.

Some questions we ask through the year are:

- What does the vowel say?
- What makes the vowel say its long/short sound?
- Is there a suffix? What does it mean?
- Is the base word a noun or verb? How do you know?
- What's the rule when there are two consonants between two vowels—where do we divide the syllables?

Rather than telling students how to read or spell a word, let them do the thinking by asking questions. This promotes their self-confidence and helps develop problem-solving.