



SUPERINTENDENT UPDATES

May 24, 2024

Good afternoon,

On **Saturday, June 1st, from 9:45 AM – 1:00 PM** at the Krause Memorial Library in downtown Rockford, we will celebrate the 15th annual Reading Rocks in Rockford reading festival.

With that as a backdrop I would like to reinforce the message that reading is a great activity anytime, but it is especially a great activity in the summer. Adam Grant, a psychologist, has said: Reading fiction isn't just for fun. It has small but meaningful benefits for empathy. In 70 experiments on the impact of reading: concerns for and understanding of others grow more through reading than watching shows and movies. Immersion in words about imaginary worlds can help us see realities beyond our own.

In addition to the benefits of reading on developing empathy, research suggests that students who do not read lose ground over the summer. I would encourage your family to establish good reading habits this summer. That might include such activities as family reading time, read-alouds (parents reading to children), and trips to our Krause Memorial Library - part of the Kent District Library, or to Epilogue Books, one of my favorite stores in Rockford.

To that end, here are some books that I would recommend:

Steve the Dung Beetle on a Roll by Susan Stoltz and Melissa Bailey

- Reading age: 4-8 years old
- This is a picture book about a dung beetle, but it has messages about how the dung beetle helps the environment. It also shares wonderful pictures about African animals. It is a fun book to read aloud with children.
- Plus, with the main character named Steve how could you go wrong?

You Stole My Name by Dennis McGregor

- Reading age: 4 years old and up
- This is a wonderful picture book with amazing pictures that talks about animals with the same name – Bull and Bullfrog for example. It leads to great conversations about why animals are named what they are named.

The Night Walk by Marie Dorleans

- Reading age: 3 years and up
- A fun story about a family getting up early to go and see the sunrise. It creates opportunities to talk with your children about what we see and notice as we walk through the world.

The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate

The One and Only Bob by Katherine Applegate

The One and Only Ruby by Katherine Applegate

The One and Only Family by Katherine Applegate

- Reading age: 8-12 years old but I loved each one of them
- If you have not yet read these books by Katherine Applegate I would encourage you to start with *The One and Only Ivan* and go on from there. The first story takes a true story about a gorilla locked up inside a roadside mall for many years and weaves a magical fictional account. The stories deal with Ivan the ape, Bob the dog, Ruby the elephant, and, finally, Ivan becoming a parent.

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Dogtown by Katherine Applegate and Gennifer Choldenko

- Reading age: Grades 2 and up
- A fun story about a dog pound, robot dogs, and finding kindness in the world.
- The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise by Dan Gemeinhart

Coyote Lost and Found by Dan Gemeinhart

- Reading age: Late elementary to middle school
- These two books share the story of Coyote and her Dad as they, in the first book, struggle with finding their way after the tragic loss of Coyote's mother. While it sounds a bit depressing it is actually a joyful book of finding your way. The second book continues the story and focuses on finding closure and moving forward.
- These are great stories to read with your daughters and sons.

The Labors of Hercules Beal by Gary D. Schmidt

- Reading age: grades 4-8
- This story follows Hercules as he has to try and figure out how to fulfill the 12 labors of the mythical Hercules – only in modern life. It is a story of grit and resilience and building relationships. A great story.

The Lost Year by Katherine Marsh

- Reading age: Middle school
- A story about a family coming to grips with their own story of the historic Ukrainian Famine of the 1930s. This novel set in the early 2020s traces family connections back to the Ukrainian famine in the 1930s.
- A well written and compelling work of historical fiction.

The First State of Being

- Reading age: Middle grades and up
- A story of time travel, making friends, and discovering who you are. A very interesting and captivating book.

One Summer by Bill Bryson

- Reading age: High school and up
- Tells the remarkable story of the summer of 1927. Babe Ruth, Charles Lindbergh, a tabloid murder trial, record flooding in the American south. It was quite a summer, and this book connects and weaves an engaging tale.

The Wager: A tale of shipwreck, mutiny, and murder by David Grann

- Reading age: High school and up
- This is a fascinating true story about exploration in the 1700s. It deals with English society and tells a story that unfolded during the English war with Spain. It is full of twists and turns and survival.

I hope this summer you make great memories and that you find time to read.

Steve

Dr. Steve Matthews
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