

## Books for "Back-to-School"

by Brette McWhorter Sember

Reading about school is a great way to get kids interested and help prepare them for the unfamiliar territory ahead. Check out some of these books to introduce the idea of school.

**Little Bunny's Preschool Countdown** — by Maribeth Boelts, illustrated by Kathy Parkinson (Albert Whitman & Company, 1996, \$6.95). Little Bunny nervously counts the days until preschool starts. His older cousin adds to his nerves with her comments. When the first day of school arrives, he dawdles but finally arrives. The book has a wonderfully realistic moment when he asks his parents if they will always come back for him and they reassure him that they will. He wipes a tear from his eye and suddenly discovers all the fun that preschool offers.



**Maisy Goes to School** — by Lucy Cousins (Candlewick, 1992, \$13.99). Maisy goes to school and readers get to participate in the fun by lifting flaps and pulling tabs. The interactive nature of the book will delight toddler and preschoolers as it introduces them to the basic concepts of school.

**Curious Kids Go to Preschool** — by Ingrid Godon (Peachtree, 1995, \$13.95). Each page in this book shows a scene from preschool, such as the playground or art class. The perimeter of each page is filled with individual labeled objects that can be found in the picture. The illustrations are lively and fun and kids will enjoy learning the words for all the objects.



**Get Set for Kindergarten: The World Around Us and Get Set for Kindergarten: Discover and Explore** — by Rosemary Wells (Puffin, 2001, \$5.99 each). These terrific books teach basic kindergarten skills and concepts as the reader joins kindergartners in classroom activities. Each activity is followed by "The Next Step," a way to develop the concept further and continue thinking about the topic. Wells' warm illustrations make the books feel comfortable. These are great ways to sneak some concept based learning into your kindergartner or preschooler's day without using a workbook or other dry materials.

**Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!** — By Nancy Carlson (Puffin, 1999, \$5.99). Henry is so excited to go to kindergarten that he has to be reminded to get dressed, eat breakfast, and pack. Once he arrives, he is suddenly scared and wants to go home. But once he looks around and sees all the fun waiting for him, his enthusiasm returns. The book presents a very positive message about starting kindergarten and assures children that their fears are normal. Carlson's illustrations are fun and happy.

**Welcome to Kindergarten** — by Anne Rockwell (Walker & Company, 2001, \$15.95). Tim gets his first peek at kindergarten on kindergarten round up day. The building seems big and intimidating when he arrives. In the classroom, he is delighted by the glimpses he gets of all the centers. He makes a new friend and sees all the exciting activities he will be able to do. As he leaves with his mother, he realizes the school seems to be just the right size for him. Rockwell's bold and bright illustrations add to the positive feelings the text offers.

**Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten** — by Joseph Slate, illustrated by Ashley Wolff (Puffin, 1996). Miss Bindergarten gets the classroom ready for the first day of kindergarten, while all of her students get up and make their way there. Miss Bindergarten's activities show readers all the activities the kindergarten offers. The book has the added feature of teaching ABC's as the children are presented in alphabetical order. Teacher and students are portrayed as different animals, adding to the fun of the book.

**Back to School** — by Maya Ajmera and John D. Evanko (Charlesbridge, 2001, \$6.95). This beautifully photographed book has a simple text that discusses basic activities children do at school. The book is special because the photographs show schools across the world, in many countries and cultures.

- Reread your child's favorite books again and again, as often as they request them
- Give your child your undivided attention when reading
- Allow dads, brothers, sisters, grandparents, etc. to share in this family experience
- Encourage book talk and book play
- Have lots of books available for your child
- Take your child to visit the public library regularly; or have Grandma take her
- Have lots of writing tools (markers, crayons, chalkboard, paper, etc.) available for your child (many early readers are also early writers)
- Encourage child care facilities to include daily read aloud experiences

Reading aloud is an essential part of childhood. If you as a parent could do one thing to ensure your child's success in reading, that one thing could be as simple as reading aloud.

### Suggested Books

Picture books to share with young children

- **Goodnight Moon** — by Margaret Wise Brown
- **I Love You as Much** — by Laura Krauss Melmed
- **Time For Bed** — by Mem Fox
- **Drummer Hoff** — by Barbara & Ed Emberley
- **Pat the Bunny** — by Dorothy Kunhardt

For older readers

- **The Polar Express** — by Chris Van Allsburg
- **The Snowy Day** — by Ezra Jack Keats
- **Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood Story from China** — by Ed Young
- **Tar Beach** — by Faith Ringgold
- **Owl Moon** — by Jane Yolen
- **Where the Wild Things Are** — by Maurice Sendak

**DR. GAIL BAUMAN**, a former elementary school teacher, is currently an Assistant Professor of Elementary Education and teaches courses in Children's Language and Literature. She is also the owner of Wiggles — an interactive parent-child play program and is the proud mother of a three-year-old daughter.



# Preparing for Preschool and Kindergarten

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## Books for your kind of family

**B**ooks can help children understand and accept their own family situations as well as those of families that are different from theirs. Exploring types of families through books is an excellent way to promote and deepen understanding and acceptance. Enjoy these titles with your child as you deepen your own relationship through reading.

### Grand Grandparents

*Grandma Tells a Story* by Lois G. Grambling, illustrated by Fred Willingham. (Whispering Coyote, ©2001). The grandparents in this story are lonely and hoping to have a grandchild. When one is on the way, they are overcome with joy. When their grandchild is born, they hurry to go visit and their excitement and love fill the pages. This story is for any child with a grandparent and clearly spells out the special love grandparents give. The warm drawings are like visual hugs. The book has a lovely inscription page for grandparents to inscribe the book to their grandchildren.

### Children of Divorce

*Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce* by Cornelia Maude Spelman, illustrated by Kathy Parkinson (Albert Whitman & Company, ©1998) brings the reader into Dinah Bear's world, where everything seems happy until Mommy and Daddy Bear tell her they are getting a divorce and Daddy moves out. The story guides children through the first tumultuous days of adjusting to their parents' separation. Dinah Bear talks about how sad she feels when she is away from one parent. Dinah soon gets used to the new routine and comes to accept that she will always have both parents and they will both always love her. The story will help even the youngest children adjust to the changes divorce brings.

*Two Homes* by Claire Masurel, illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton (Candlewick Press, ©2001). Alex has a mom and dad who live in different homes. Alex (who could be a boy or girl in this story) lives with each of them at different times. Each house has a

room for Alex, a place for Alex's coat, a toothbrush, and a cozy chair. The houses and things in them are different but each house is filled with love for Alex.

The story shows children that having two homes can be a normal and comfortable thing. The happy and bright drawings will reassure children that they too can be comfortable with two houses.

### Families with Special Needs

*Ben, King of the River* by David Gifaldi, illustrated by Layne Johnson (Albert Whitman & Company, ©2001). Chad is thrilled to go on a camping trip with his family. But nothing seems to go quite as Chad would like because of his younger brother Ben, who has a developmental disability. Ben is easily upset, has behavioral problems, and is often outgoing in embarrassing ways. Chad learns that he loves lots of things about his brother as he and his special brother are accepted by other children. This book is one of several published by Albert Whitman & Company that address coping with a handicapped sibling. The books aren't just for siblings of special needs children, but are for all children so that they can come to understand, and learn to accept, children with special needs.

### Accepting Our Families

*All Families are Different* by Sol Gordon, Ph.D., illustrated by Vivien Cohen (Prometheus Books, ©2000). No two families are alike. Some have one parent, a step-parent, foster parents, bi-racial parents, homosexual parents, or relatives who care for the children. This wonderful book is for any

child, in any family and emphasizes that it is okay for families to be different. The book helps children talk about their own families and accept them the way they are, while encouraging discussion of how the family situation impacts (positively and negatively) each child's life. The important message of the book is that children should not blame themselves for the way their families are and that they should instead find joy in what they do have. Workbook pages at the back of the book encourage children to express themselves through drawings. The simple charcoal illustrations in the book will make children feel comfortable adding their own drawings.



### Other books that might fit your family

*When They Fight* by Katryn White, illustrated by Cliff Wright (Winslow Press, ©2000): a book for helping young children cope with parents who fight.

*How I Was Adopted* by Joanna Cole, illustrated by Maxie Chambliss (Morrow Junior Books, ©1995): a beautiful explanation of how an adoptive child becomes part of a family.

*Remembering Mum* by Ginny Perkins and Leon Morris (A&C Black, ©1996): a look at two real boys and how they cope with the loss of their mother and go on to live through the sadness.

*Saying Goodbye to Daddy* by Judith Vigna (Albert Whitman & Company, ©1991): a story about how a young girl learned of her father's death, her feelings of confusion and loss, as well as some of the real things children worry and think about in these situations.

*I Wish I Had My Father* by Norma Simon, illustrated by Arieh Zeldich (Albert Whitman & Company, ©1983): Father's Day comes again for a young boy who has no contact with his father and he must once again cope with his not-so-unique situation.

*What's Wrong With Grandma?* by Margaret Shawver, illustrated by Jeffrey K. Bagby (Prometheus Books, ©1996): a gentle look at how Alzheimer's disease affects a family.

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