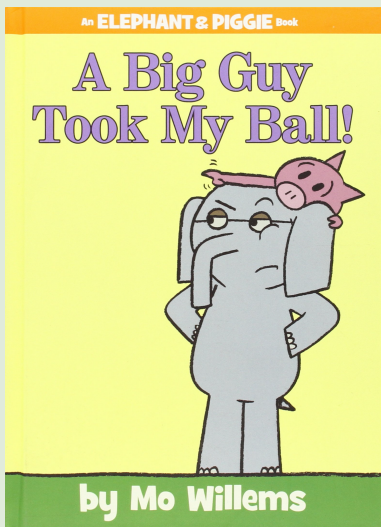# Book Nook

This month's Book Nook topic is...

Building Print Knowledge with *A Big Guy Took My Ball!*

Print knowledge is a key early literacy skill that helps set your child on the path to reading and writing success.

Before children learn to read and write, they must first learn that print is meaningful. Exposing children to books is a great first step, but exposure alone is not enough. If children are to learn that it's print, not the illustrations, that tells the story, or that the letters of the alphabet have names, then adults must draw their attention to how print functions.

Here are some simple tips for showing your child that print has meaning.

Let's get started!

The Book

A Big Guy Took My Ball! by Mo Willems

Why I picked it

All of the print in this story appears in speech or thought bubbles that come from the characters. This makes the print easy for your child to notice, especially when you draw his attention to it.

The story is about a little pig who gets his ball taken by a giant whale. The little pig enlists the help of his friend Gerald the elephant to get his ball back. By the end of the story, all three animals – large and small – discover that they can have fun playing together!

This book is particularly good for showing that print has meaning because it uses large print and capitalization when the pig yells, when the big whale uses his big voice, and when the word "big" itself is emphasized. The print gets so large, it becomes even more eye-catching than the illustrations, providing the perfect opportunity for you to point out print.

POP to build print knowledge:

A key strategy you can use to show your child that print has meaning is to **POP** or Point Out Print. Often children ignore print and just look at the illustrations. But by making an effort to point out the print, you give your child opportunities to think and talk about the print he sees, and to recognize that it has meaning.

The first time you read the book:

The first time you read the book, track the words with your finger as you say them to help your child connect what you are saying with the symbols on the page. You could add a comment like, "Look, I'm reading these words. These words are telling me the story."

The second time you read the book:

Now that your child is more familiar with the story, you can pause a few times during the reading to Point Out Print. When you pause, try making a comment like, "This is a speech bubble coming from the pig. All of the words in here are what the pig is saying." When Gerald starts to talk, you could point to Gerald's speech bubble and say, "Let's see what Gerald says" before reading his words. Continue to track the words with your finger as you read them.

The second time you read the book:

This time, you might POP to show your child that print is meaningful not just in that it tells us what the characters are saying, but how they are saying it. For example:

- When the little pig cries, "HE TOOK MY BALL!" the text inside his speech bubble gets capitalized and becomes much larger. This is a great opportunity to POP and discuss lower case versus upper case letters. You could make a comment like, "Wow, look how big those letters are. All of those letters are upper-case. The pig must be crying very loudly." Then, change your voice to emphasize the pig's loud words as you read them.

- You can highlight the difference between upper and lower-case letters by using a regular voice as you read lower-case text, and making a comment like, "Look at what Gerald is saying. Only the first letter is upper-case. All of the other letters are lower-case. He must be using a regular voice. He's not being loud like the pig."

- The giant whale's speech bubbles present more opportunities to talk about upper-case text as everything the whale says is illustrated using large print and upper-case letters. You can POP by talking about how everything the whale says is big and sounds loud because he is so big!