

WILLIAM ROWEN

HEALTHY ROAR

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 2

SPRING 2026

Librarian shares her love of books

Every day, Mrs. Naderah Brooks goes to work in a place she's known since childhood—the West Oak Lane branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

“Reading can help you understand the world around you and connect to people,” said Mrs. Brooks in a recent interview with fourth-grade reporters in Mr. Desper’s class.

As a lifelong reader, Mrs. Brooks shared her own experiences and reflected on the mental health benefits reading has had on her.

Mrs. Brooks is the children’s librarian at The West Oak Lane library. In that job, she makes sure there are books that kids are interested in and are relevant to the things they’re experiencing.

“Reading can help you understand the world around you and connect to people,” she said.

“Learning to read builds confidence,” Mrs. Brooks said.

When children are learning to read, she enjoys watching them light up. As children figure out words and their meaning, she feels as though she watches them grow.

(See *Reading on Page 2*)



Illustration by Morgan Frazier

Seek healthy social connections

Social connections are when people interact with each other, according to Mrs. Parker, Rowen school counselor.

In a recent interview with *Healthy Roar* reporters, she talked about healthy versus unhealthy connections.

A healthy social connection happens when people “respect each other,” she said. A healthy social connection should be fun and build closeness with the people you are with.

An unhealthy social connection happens when a person makes you feel isolated or lonely. They might try to be your only friend and get mad when you spend time with other people. That person might make fun of you and make you feel like you don’t fit in.

Sometimes, it can be hard to form social connections. A good way to start is to “talk to someone about things that they like,” Mrs. Parker said.

(See *Connect on Page 2*)

Reading books has health benefits

(Continued from Page 1)

As a child attending the West Oak Lane Charter school, Mrs. Brooks said one of her favorite memories was the annual Scholastic Book Fairs where she was able to pick out books to read at home and at school. She also remembers going to the West Oak Lane library to find books to borrow and bring home.

Her childhood memories of reading inspired her to continue reading as an adult and to work in the library with children. Besides her duties as librarian, Mrs. Brooks also plans programs for kids, such as LEAP, an after-school program to help kids with their homework.

She also can step in as branch manager and works in community outreach, where she helps to educate people about the importance of the library and how they can use it.

For both children and adults, reading “can take you on different journeys and teach you about cultures, religions, and different parts of the world,” said Mrs. Brooks.

Reading can help your mental health, improve learning skills, and build connections with people, according to healthline.com, a digital health and wellness website. Through reading, you can build empathy, create strong bonds with a parent, and have better learning outcomes.

Mrs. Brooks finds reading relaxing. “I can carve out time for myself and lose myself and forget about what’s on my mind,” she said.

She encourages students to find books and series that interest them and says those memories of books



Illustration by Surine Abdul Salaam

will stick with them for a long time. In fourth grade, Mrs. Brooks enjoyed the *Goosebumps* book series and even dressed up like a character from one for Halloween. She still enjoys books with strong characters she can relate to.

Mrs. Brooks also talked about how technology has changed the way people can access books. For example, when she was a child, she relied on a dictionary to help her understand new words, but today she can pull out her cell phone and ask Siri for help. The library has Wonder Books, where you can plug in headphones, and the story will be read to you.

This makes reading accessible to more people, and she said she hopes more people will be able to lose themselves in a story and learn about the world around them.

—By *Healthy Roar* staff

Connect with people you trust

(Continued from Page 1)

“You can also ask them to tell you about fun things they have done,” she said.

Mrs. Parker gave students some additional tips for building and creating social connections.

- Be friendly toward others and connect with someone you feel close to.
- Respect people’s feelings.
- Make sure you are connecting with people you trust and who make you feel as though you belong.
- Find people whom you feel good around.

While making social connections in person is important, experts at the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention say virtual connections like video calls or playing games online together can also help strengthen connections. But it’s important to limit screen time. —By *Healthy Roar* staff

William Rowen Healthy Roar

The *Healthy Roar* is a publication of William Rowen Elementary School in The School District of Philadelphia. Fourth-grade staff members make up the core staff. They include Surine Abdul-Salaam, Denim Anthony, Cylie Clark-Battle, Elijah Bernard, Constance Cooper, Morgan Frazier, and Aden Taylor, Jeremiah Walker. The *Healthy Roar*’s faculty advisor is Mr. Desper and the school principal is Ms. Ryans.

A Healthy NewsWorks® project • www.HealthyNewsWorks.org
This document is protected by applicable law. All rights reserved.

Book reviews by *Healthy Roar* staff

Learning to appreciate differences

Yoko

Written and illustrated by Rosemary Wells

Yoko is a story about how being different can lead to friendship.

Yoko is about a little girl who brings her favorite food, sushi, to school for lunch. When her classmates see her eating sushi, they make fun of it and call her weird.

Her teacher decides to use this incident to hold an international food day, where families would bring a dish from another country. Only one boy tries the sushi and loves it. Because he isn't afraid to try something different, he and *Yoko* become friends.

Healthy Roar reporters who reviewed the book said the story is about friendship and trying new things. The book teaches that it takes only one friend to help a person feel connected and understood.

Making connections with friends is important for our health because friends can support you and help you feel less lonely.



Illustration by Denim Anthony

The book's illustrations help students understand the story better. If a food is new to the reader, they could see it in the picture.

The three students who reviewed *Yoko* loved the book. Even though *Yoko* is feeling left out, one student helps her feel important. So many kids would enjoy this story and learn about how just one connection can help you.

Taking an adventure with books

Dog Loves Books

Written and illustrated by Louise Yates

Dog Loves Books is about a dog who loves books so much that he decides to open a bookstore. When he finds himself sitting around with nothing to do, Dog starts taking down books from the shelves and reading them. He forgets that he is waiting for customers and is able to take adventures through the books he is reading. Reading helps him feel less alone and even makes him forget he was waiting for customers to come into the store.

The illustrations are helpful because even though Dog doesn't share the adventures with the reader, you know what's happening. For example, while the words in the book don't tell you about dinosaurs or flying in planes, the pictures do.

Just like in the book, reading can help keep you healthy by taking your mind off what you're thinking about and can make you feel less alone.

The fourth-grade Rowen readers said the book was interesting. This book would be good for many different students. Even if you can't read the words, the pictures help tell the story.

—Reviewed by Elijah Bernard and Jeremiah Walker

Reading sparks the imagination

Max's Castle

Written by Kate Banks and illustrated by Boris Kulikov

In *Max's Castle*, three boys are using alphabet blocks and their imaginations to tell an adventure story. They use the blocks to spell out rhyming words that help them escape from the dungeon of a castle.

Even though the story isn't specifically about health, the fourth-grade Rowen readers thought that reading and using your imagination are both healthy things to do because they get you off screens and give you a chance to work together with friends.

The illustrations in *Max's Castle* help tell the story because the blocks spell out the words they are as tools. For example, in the story, an "adder" becomes a "ladder," and the ladder helps the boys escape from the dungeon.

All three reviewers of this book said they enjoyed it because they liked how the boys use their imaginations. The story is exciting but not violent.

The reviewers said most people would enjoy this book—especially kids who can read harder words.

This book could be good for students who want to be inspired to use their own imaginations.—Reviewed by Morgan Frazier and Constance Cooper

Cub Corner

Friendship is a skill to practice

Friendship can help keep you healthy, kindergarten reporters in Ms. Dougherty's class recently learned.

Experts at the Mayo Clinic say that friends can help you make good choices, practice social skills, feel better about yourself, and reduce stress.

Four tips that can help you make a new friend include:

1. Say "Hello!"
2. Be polite.
3. Be kind.
4. Share.

When you see a new friend, try some of those tips and see if they help you connect with them.

—By Ms. Dougherty's Cub Reporters



Illustrations on this page by Kindergarten reporters

Tips to keep your heart healthy

Healthy habits are important for keeping our hearts healthy, kindergarten reporters recently learned.

Health experts say three ways kids can help make their hearts stay strong and healthy by: 1. Drinking water. 2. Eating healthy food. 3. Getting enough sleep.



Mrs. Dougherty's kindergarten reporters shared some of their favorite ways to keep their hearts healthy. Read their list below.

What exercises do you like to do?

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Going on a walk | Jumping |
| Swimming | Doing push-ups |
| Playing tag | Riding a bike |
| Playing football | Running |
| Playing soccer | |