



## Preschool Update

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#### GUEST AUTHOR: SARAH POWERS, PRESCHOOL & LOWER SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

I have the privilege of working with our youngest Spartans in the Preschool and Lower School libraries. Our students are inquisitive, thoughtful, and so entertaining. I love being able to experience books anew through their eyes. They are delighted to hear new stories, and that excitement is contagious. Throughout the year, our students have been exposed to a variety of themes, characters, and creators from all backgrounds. We are currently in one of my favorite units—book awards!

There are numerous awards for children's books. These books are engaging, informative, and of exceptionally high quality. You might be familiar with some of them, like the Caldecott or Newbery awards, but our libraries have several other book awards for children. There are book awards for everything from celebrating cultures to representing disabilities. Each award offers an opportunity to develop empathy and create a better understanding of our rich, diverse world. I hope that these books can introduce our students to new ideas and continue to enrich their learning experiences.

The first book award we're focusing on is the Georgia Children's Book Award. I'm currently serving on the selection committee for this award, but it's actually students across the state of Georgia who vote and choose the winner. It's very exciting! The Georgia Children's Book Award does a wonderful job highlighting various communities, providing different perspectives, offering a range of art styles, and, most importantly, giving students books with which they can connect and engage. During class time, books are paired with an extension activity suitable for each grade. So far, we've worked together to unscramble letter magnets after reading about the pesky cat in *Bathe the Cat*, and we practiced writing in Chinese after discussing language barriers in *Grandpa Grumps*. In the coming weeks, we'll explore the importance of illustrators with *It Fell from the Sky* and learn about Ghana with *Red Shoes*. After reading these and the other picture book nominees that are appropriate for our preschoolers, we will vote on our favorite!



Athens Academy seeks to promote an appreciation for such exceptional literature through our annual Awards Reading Challenge. This challenge is completely optional, but I recommend it as a way to add more intention and variety to your at-home reading routine. We ask that Preschool students read 10 award winning or nominated books in the duration of the challenge. The books can be read aloud, with a sibling, or independently for our beginning readers. Books can come from your home, a public library, or our school. We have a section of "dot books" where each award is represented on the spine by a different colored dot if you or students want to find them at our library. I love seeing students feel successful and proud after completing the challenge! If you would like more information, including FAQs, book suggestions, and reading logs, please visit our [challenge website](#).

If you haven't had a chance to visit our library yet, there's still time! The second half of the year, we invite guest readers to visit during class time. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and family friends are all welcome. This is a special way to connect with students at school. I've picked out books for the next few months, so there's no need to worry about what to bring! Please see the link from Preschool receptionist Cindy Wood to sign up.

The library is a magical place, and it's a joy to bring a bit of wonder to our students through stories.