Literacy Spotlights

Spotlight Topic	Building Schema for Reading Content
Background Information	Schema is just a fancy word that teachers use that means background knowledge. It's basically all the stuff you know that helps you understand what you read. So if you pick up a copy of *The Nightingale* or *All the Light We Cannot See* or decide to watch *Band of Brothers* or *Saving Private Ryan*, novels and movies set during WWII, you're going to use everything you know about WWII to help you make sense of those texts. You might not be aware that it's happening, but information from the texts jumps in your brain and sticks to things you already know about WWII, which helps you comprehend the story. Think of it as velcro--what you know makes the tiny hooks in your brain, and new information you encounter as you read and watch texts is like the soft, fuzzy part. The more tiny hooks you have, the better the soft, fuzzy part will stick because it'll have more to hold on to. So in order to help students grow as readers, parents and teachers need to help them get as many hook-y velcro things into their heads as we can!
Standards	**Inquiry Standard 3:** Construct knowledge, applying disciplinary concepts and tools, to build deeper understanding of the world through exploration, collaboration, and analysis. **Reading Standard 5:** Determine meaning and develop logical interpretations by making predictions, inferring, drawing conclusions, analyzing, synthesizing, providing evidence, and investigating multiple interpretations.
Activity	Here are some suggestions for ways you can help your student build their schema! 1) Family Storytelling During holidays and family get-togethers, encourage students to spend time talking to grandparents and great-grandparents about what their lives were like growing up. If family isn't available, visit and talk with residents in local extended care facilities. These first-hand accounts of history will build background knowledge that can help students understand social studies texts. 2) Current Events Take time to watch and/or read the news with your student. Being aware of current events helps students make connections between history and things happening today.

	3) Make Trips Educational...at least a little Rainy day at the beach? Or did someone forget to reapply their sunscreen and need a day inside as a result? Many relaxing vacation destinations offer local historical sites or museums to visit. You don't need to plan an entirely educational vacation (but, those are pretty cool….). Just a few hours spent visiting one of these places can help your student learn new things about the world, which will help build their schema. And as a bonus, you don't even need to take a trip very far. There are lots of places to visit in Columbia including the Columbia Museum of Art, the SC State Museum, and walking, bus, and house/garden tours with Historic Columbia.