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## **2023 Bill Martin, Jr. Picture Book Award Winner Announced**

What happens when two old rivals meet on the beach? Readers of the 2023 Bill Martin, Jr. Picture Book Award winner were delighted to find out in the book *Beach Toys vs. School Supplies* written and illustrated by Mike Ciccotello.

“Bill Martin Jr. said, ‘It’s a wonderful thing to observe how children cope, how children deal with the realities, how children develop selfhood. I would like to think that these books help kids know who they are. That’s a pretty big order, but that’s what I hope for.’ I believe the selection of this book reflects Bill Martin Jr’s sentiment.” said Dr. Heather Caswell, chair of the Bill Martin, Jr. Picture Book Award Committee.

The Bill Martin, Jr. Picture Book Award aims to promote an appreciation of quality literature in young children across Kansas.

*Beach Toys vs. School Supplies* is the second book by Ciccotello, who also is the author-illustrator of the book *Twins*. He lives with his family in New Jersey.

*Beach Toys vs. School Supplies* was published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2021.

Nominees for the 2024 award, along with previous years’ winners and nominated works can be found at [www.emporia.edu/bmjaward](http://www.emporia.edu/bmjaward).

Each year, books are suggested by teachers, parents, communities, and librarians. A committee chooses nominations from the list of suggested books. The annual nominations are announced in the spring and, during the following winter, Kansans vote for the winning title. This provides time for children and adult interaction before voting for a winner.

The Bill Martin, Jr. Picture Book Award was established in 1996 by the Kansas Reading Association. Since March 2018, the award became a statewide award presented by Emporia State University. The purpose of the award is to promote an appreciation of quality literature in young children across Kansas. The award is named for Kansas native Bill Martin, Jr., American educator and author of more than 300 children's books.

Martin graduated with a teaching certificate from Emporia State University. He worked as a teacher and principal before starting his career as a children’s book author. Through the years he gave children some of their favorite books, including *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do you See?* (illustrated by Eric Carle) *The Ghost-Eye Tree, Barn Dance, Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom* and many more.

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