

Family Literacy Reflections...

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The Value of Dialogic Reading

In this issue we feature:

- The development of dialogic reading and its principles
- Early learning through stories and books
- Book reading as an intervention with preschool children who have limited vocabularies

Dialogic Reading

Dialogic Reading was developed as an intervention program by Grover J. (Russ) Whitehurst and his colleagues in the 1990's as a strategy to actively involve children during shared reading to support their language and vocabulary development. The program is based on three broad principles:

- (a) encourage the child to participate by using questions, For example, "What is that?"
- (b) provide responses to the child that expand or embellish their answers, "It's a red truck," and
- (c) adapt your reading style to the child's growing linguistic abilities. In other words, ask more intricate questions as the child's capability develops.

In this newsletter, we are including some research that has been done that shows the benefits of early exposure to books and how dialogic reading enhances the storybook sharing experience for children.



List of suitable books for dialogic reading:

Sheep in a Shop by Linda Shaw
Trucks by Byron Barton
Something from Nothing by Phoebe Gilman
Is Your Mama a Llama by Deborah Guarino
The Wheels on the Bus by Sylvie Kantorovitz Wickstrom
Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown
Harry the Dirty Dog by Gene Zion

There are so many great books to choose! Look for books with rich illustrations.

Links to more research on dialogic reading:

Reading Rockets

Reading Rockets is a great website devoted to learning to read. This article is about the Dialogic Reading strategy which is proven to improve children's language skills and narrative skills.

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/400>

What Works Clearing House

Established in 2002, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) is a central source of scientific evidence for what works in education. An initiative of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, the WWC:

Produces user-friendly practice guides for educators that address instructional challenges with research-based recommendations for schools and classrooms;
Assesses the rigor of research evidence on the effectiveness of interventions (programs, products, practices, and policies), giving educators the tools to make informed decisions;

http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/29/e1/30.pdf

The Chinese University of Hong Kong: Simple Dialogic Reading Technique Improved Children's Vocabulary Development

<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/cpr/pressrelease/050617e.htm>

Family Literacy Program Directory

If you have not already done so, add your Family Literacy program details to the directory that NALD is compiling by following the link to:

<http://www.abc-canada.org/fld/familyliteracydirectory.shtml>

Early Learning Through Stories and Books
(various research sources)

In the past two decades, thinking has changed a great deal about children's development in their pre-school years. Studies have challenged the belief that learning begins mostly at school age. Research by developmental psychologists has shown that learning begins at birth. The early years learning programs that accompanied this research have provided evidence that children who participated in pre-school learning programs consistently demonstrated improvements in academic achievement in their subsequent schooling (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1980, McKay et al., 1985).

Questions arose from the research over what the best methods were to nurture this early learning capability. Further research indicated that children who engaged in meaningful play, as well as some structured activities, acquired a range of skills that developed a solid foundation for later learning and development.

There are three main areas that indicate a sound early learning program: the first is the social aspect of the program. Are the children encouraged to develop socially and emotionally by learning to respect others, develop self-esteem and a healthy attitude towards learning?

The second is support for young children to develop emergent literacy skills. Emergent literacy skills include phonemic awareness, a growing understanding of the alphabetic principle, vocabulary development, print awareness, print motivation and narrative skill. Does the learning program include book sharing and reading activities that help to develop language skills by encouraging communication, speaking and listening skills?

The third area needed in a sound learning environment is the exposure to written and oral stories. Stories help to enrich the imagination and provide knowledge of a range of experiences that children can draw on to give them confidence in their daily encounters with the world. According to Gordon Wells, an influential researcher, stories provide children with a framework within which "behaviours can be interpreted" and given meaning (Language, Learning and Education, Windsor, NFER-Nelson 1987). Exposure to books and stories helps children acquire the skills for learning to read and write. Parents who read with their children reinforce the work being done in their child's program.

A Book Reading Intervention with Preschool Children Who Have Limited Vocabularies: The Benefits of Regular Reading and Dialogic Reading
by Anne C. Hargrave & Monique Sénéchal

Several research projects have been completed to study the effectiveness of dialogic reading. Dr. Monique Sénéchal of Carleton University in Ottawa is a Canadian researcher whose work has largely been carried out in that area.

The goal of this study was to assess whether children with poor vocabulary skills learn new words from listening to book readings in the daycare they attended. Two different reading methods were used: 1) a group of daycare teachers were asked to read in their usual manner; 2) another group of daycare teachers were trained in the dialogic method. The books chosen had to meet specific criteria for text, content, illustrations, age appropriateness, and ones that the children had not read before. The same books were used for both groups over a four-week period. Each book was read twice. The pattern was also used at home with the cooperation of parents.

"The results of the study showed clearly that preschool children with poor vocabulary skills could learn expressive vocabulary from listening to two readings of storybooks in which novel words are introduced in print and illustrations. The benefits of story book reading were evident for children in the regular reading condition as well as for children in the dialogic reading condition. These benefits were more extensive for the children in the dialogic reading group." The children exposed to Dialogic Reading during this one-month period gained four months of expressive vocabulary.

Shared storybook reading has been consistently identified as having a positive effect on the acquisition of literacy skills and is beneficial because it involves the child in conversations that interpret and construct meaning. Parents who make book reading a rich and cognitively challenging event are also helping their children to develop a familiarity with how books work and what needs to be done to read one. Engaged shared reading supports the more sophisticated skills of story comprehension and story production. Dr. Sénéchal says that in a busy world, when time is precious, the best choice parents can make is shared reading time because, "it's a wonderful way to interact with my child and enhance her language at the same time."