

Sharing books with little ones leads to language gains

What does research tell us about how reading to infants and toddlers affects their early language development?

Parents and caregivers who spend time sharing books with their young children are helping advance and strengthen the children's early language development.

This finding was made clear by analyses, conducted by researchers at the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL), of six studies of shared reading interventions with infants and toddlers. Their goal was to determine if interventions that increased the frequency and type of reading opportunities provided to infants and toddlers had beneficial effects on their language abilities.

They found that shared adult-child reading interventions promoted the development of both expressive and receptive language. The interventions also were determined to be more effective the earlier they were started and the more frequently they occurred.

Unfortunately, information that might have provided a better picture of the characteristics of the shared reading sessions was limited. However characteristics important in shared reading have been provided through other CELL research syntheses. Those findings showed that beneficial adult-child reading experiences are created by making them fun, enjoyable, and interesting to the infants and toddlers involved.

Reading experts tend to recommend that the same kinds of practices be part of shared reading times with young children: reading with enthusiasm, responsiveness to children's



attempts to engage in looking at and playing with books, reading stories that include rhythm and rhymes, following children's interests, reading children's favorite stories and rhymes over and over, and engaging children in reading episodes just long enough to maintain interest.

This *CELLnotes* summarizes findings reported in Dunst, C. J., Simkus, A., & Hamby, D. W. (2012). Effects of reading to infants and toddlers on their early language development, *CELLreviews* 5(4), 1-7.

Acting on the Evidence

Download free, two-page *CELL* practices guides in versions for parents or practitioners at www.earlyliteracylearning.org

Staff of CELL have created a number of practice guides especially for parents and early childhood practitioners to encourage putting this research evidence to use in home, community, and classroom settings. All of the two-page practice guides listed below are available for free download on the CELL project web site: www.earlyliteracylearning.org. At this web address you can also find interactive posters called *CELLpops* and multimedia practice guides such as videos that illustrate practices supported by this research.



Especially for PARENTS

Infants:

Baby's First Picture Books
Show Me the Funny
The Right Touch

Toddlers:

A Book By Its Cover
Book Reading Made Fun for All
Let Me Tell the Story

Preschoolers:

Let's Read Together
Read with Me
Read It Again

Especially for PRACTITIONERS

Infants:

ABC Books for Beginners
First Picture Books
First Word Books
Touch-and-Feel Books

Toddlers:

A Picture Book for Learning Letters and Books
Picture Book Fun
Reading Together Out Loud

Preschoolers:

Tales for Talking
Read and Repeat
One for the Books