

## What do you think will happen next?

*What does research tell us about how inferential book reading strategies adults use with children affect young children's language behavior and development?*

There is more than meets the eye when it comes to sharing books with young children.

Research shows that children's language and literacy development are enhanced when adult readers interact with them in ways such as asking questions and making comments that cause the children to use language to think about concepts beyond simply the words and pictures on the page.

Researchers at the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) analyzed 12 studies on inferential reading with 1,134 young children to better understand the characteristics of the practice and to determine which inferential approaches and strategies lead to the best child learning outcomes.

They focused on the following book reading strategies that help children figure out or think about things not directly expressed in a story:

- asking open-ended questions,
- pointing out or asking about similarities or differences,
- providing or requesting elaborations or expansions,
- relating the story to a child's personal experiences,
- asking the child to make predictions or inferences about the story,

- providing or asking for information outside the context of the story, and
- providing or asking for explanations that require the child to make abstract judgments.

The child outcome measures in the studies

included standardized and observational measures of expressive language, receptive language (including comprehension), and different types of literacy-related abilities.

The analysis of the studies showed that all of the inferential reading strategies were associated with benefits in child language and literacy development. The strategies with the largest positive impact were asking children open-ended questions, providing or requesting explanations of a story,

relating events and persons in the story to a child's own life and experiences, and asking for predictions. The findings are especially important because the strategies can easily be included regularly in adult- or teacher-mediated shared reading activities.



This *CELLnotes* summarizes findings reported in Dunst, C. J., Williams, A. L., Trivette, C. M., Simkus, A., & Hamby, D. W. (2010). Relationships between inferential book-reading strategies and young children's language and literacy competence. *CELLreviews* 5(10), 1-10.

# Acting on the Evidence

Download free, two-page CELLpractices guides in versions for parents or practitioners at [www.earlyliteracylearning.org](http://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](http://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.

<p><b>Especially for parents of preschoolers!</b></p> <h3>Let's Read Together</h3> <p><i>Reading and Storytelling</i></p> <p>Children ages 3 to 5 are ready to learn about books and take part actively in reading. From reading picture books with your preschooler to spark her imagination and her love of stories.</p> <p><b>What is the practice?</b> Sharing, reading, and looking at the pages of a picture book with your child is a wonderful activity that helps her develop her language skills and her love of books. When you read together, you are providing her with a model of how to use books. You are also providing her with a chance to share her own ideas and experiences with you. Reading together helps her learn to love books and to use them to explore the world around her.</p> <p><b>What does the practice look like?</b> Let your preschooler choose a picture book to read to her. Find a comfortable place where the two of you can sit together to look at the pictures. Book her interest in the book by asking her questions about the pictures and the story. Let your child ask questions and encourage her to point to the pictures in the story. Ask her questions about the pictures and point out connections between the pictures in the books and her own experiences.</p> <p><b>How do you do the practice?</b> Provide your preschooler with a variety of picture books to choose from. Let her pick out the book she wants to read.</p> <p><b>Ask "wh" questions.</b> Asking your child questions as you read helps her think about and understand the story. Start by asking questions that begin with "what," "who," "where," "when," "why," and "how." For example, "What is the story about?" "Who are the characters?" "Where is the story taking place?" "When does the story happen?" "Why is the character doing that?" "How does the story end?" You can also ask open-ended questions like "What do you think about that?" or "How do you feel about that?"</p> <p><b>Read and reread.</b> Rereading the same book helps your child become familiar with the story and to connect the words that are being said with the words that are on the page. Check your child's comprehension by asking her questions about the story. Encourage her to use the pictures on the page to help her remember the story.</p> <p><b>CELLpractices</b></p>	<h3>Take a look at more reading together</h3> <p><b>Shared Reading</b></p> <p>Four-year-old Ibrahim loves animals. His mom found a workbook of the animal stories that is filled with pictures of animals. Ibrahim loves looking at the book and will spend time looking carefully at each picture. He likes to look at the pictures and tell her what he sees. She will help him with the words. Ibrahim likes to look at the pictures and tell her what he sees. She will help him with the words. Ibrahim likes to look at the pictures and tell her what he sees. She will help him with the words.</p> <p><b>Picture Reading</b></p> <p>After going to the grocery store with her mom, four-year-old Ibrahim brings her mom's book to look at. Ibrahim has a picture of the grocery store. Ibrahim has a picture of the grocery store. Ibrahim has a picture of the grocery store. Ibrahim has a picture of the grocery store.</p> <p><b>Favorite Words &amp; Signs</b></p> <p>Ibrahim has a hearing impairment. When his parents read to him, they use signs to help him understand the words. Ibrahim has a picture of the grocery store. Ibrahim has a picture of the grocery store. Ibrahim has a picture of the grocery store. Ibrahim has a picture of the grocery store.</p> <p><b>CELLpractices</b></p>	<p><b>Especially for practitioners working with preschoolers!</b></p> <h3>Tales for Talking</h3> <p><i>Reading and Print Awareness</i></p> <p>Children's language skills are best developed when they are engaged in reading together. This guide provides ideas you can use with preschool children to make reading together enjoyable and beneficial for your children.</p> <p><b>What is the practice?</b> While reading together, encourage the child to ask questions, talk about the story, and make predictions about what will happen next. Use the child's own words to describe what is happening in the story. Encourage the child to use words to describe what is happening in the story. Encourage the child to use words to describe what is happening in the story.</p> <p><b>What does the practice look like?</b> A child will not read while the adult reads a book. The child listens to the adult read and asks questions about the story. The child asks questions about the story. The child asks questions about the story. The child asks questions about the story.</p> <p><b>How do you do the practice?</b> Interact frequently with your child as you read together. Ask questions about the story. Encourage the child to ask questions about the story. Encourage the child to ask questions about the story. Encourage the child to ask questions about the story.</p> <p><b>How do you know the practice worked?</b> The child asks questions about the story. The child asks questions about the story. The child asks questions about the story. The child asks questions about the story.</p> <p><b>CELLpractices</b></p>	<h3>Take a look at more reading and talking</h3> <p><b>Read and Chat</b></p> <p>Three-year-old Ibrahim chooses a picture book from his preschool's story room. Ibrahim chooses a picture book from his preschool's story room. Ibrahim chooses a picture book from his preschool's story room. Ibrahim chooses a picture book from his preschool's story room.</p> <p><b>Group Story Time</b></p> <p>Mom, Ibrahim, and Ibrahim's friends choose one of the big books for story time. Ibrahim chooses a picture book from his preschool's story room. Ibrahim chooses a picture book from his preschool's story room. Ibrahim chooses a picture book from his preschool's story room. Ibrahim chooses a picture book from his preschool's story room.</p> <p><b>Reading and Experiences</b></p> <p>Three-year-old Ibrahim has a special experience. Ibrahim has a special experience. Ibrahim has a special experience. Ibrahim has a special experience.</p> <p><b>CELLpractices</b></p>
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## Especially for PARENTS

- Infants:**
  - Tell Me More, Tell Me More
  - The Right Touch
  - Baby's First ABC Book
- Toddlers:**
  - Looking at Books Together
  - Let Me Tell the Story
  - A Book By Its Cover
- Preschoolers:**
  - Let's Read Together
  - Read It Again!
  - Read With Me

## Especially for PRACTITIONERS

- Infants:**
  - Repeated Storytelling
  - Touch-and-Feel Books
  - ABC Books for Learning
- Toddlers:**
  - A Picture Book for Learning
  - Reading Together Out Loud
  - Picture Book Fun
  - Letters and Books
- Preschoolers:**
  - Read and Repeat
  - Tales for Talking
  - One for the Books