

The power of shared reading

What does research tell us about how various characteristics of shared reading affect young children's language development?

When parents and other caregivers spend time sharing books with young children, they can do a variety of things that have a positive impact on their children's receptive and expressive language development.

Researchers at the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) examined 21 studies that included 1,275 toddlers and preschoolers to identify the characteristics of shared (and dialogic or joint) adult-child book reading that are most beneficial for early language learning. Eleven characteristics of the adult reader were analyzed in each of the studies. These were:

- Gaining the child's attention
- Naming an object, its properties, or an ongoing action
- Making general talk that does not include labeling
- Repeating what the child says
- Connecting a picture or event in the book with the child's experience
- Using corrective comments such as "No, it is a dog."
- Using praise or comments such as "That's right"
- Evoking speech from the child which goes beyond yes/no answers
- Using statements that go beyond labeling or commenting, or statements that expand on what the child is talking about
- Following up the child's comments or answers with a question
- Following the child's interest. For example,



lets the child pick the book or "reads" the pages the child wants to read

Findings from the research analysis showed that nine of these characteristics had at least a noticeable level of benefit in terms of children's total language development. The most effective of the characteristics were those that encouraged children's engagement and active participation in the shared reading episodes.

The results also showed that the techniques that proved most beneficial are fairly easy to teach to parents using either face-to-face individual and group trainings or individual training with videos. When a young child is given reading opportunities with an adult who follows the child's lead, relates the reading material to the child's own experiences, expands on what the child says, asks open-ended questions, and follows the child's interest, the language development of the child will likely be enhanced.

This *CELLnotes* summarizes findings reported in Trivette, C. M., Dunst, C. J., & Gorman, E. (2010). Effects of parent-mediated joint book reading on the early language development of toddlers and preschoolers. *CELLreviews* 3(2), 1-15.

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 *CELL*pops and multimedia practice guides such as videos that illustrate practices supported by this research.



Especially for PARENTS

Infants:

- Baby's First Picture Books*
- Baby's First Word Books*
- 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!*
- Book Is the Word*

Especially for PRACTITIONERS

Infants:

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

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*