

Children's active participation in reading and storytelling can enhance early literacy learning

What does research tell us about the importance of children's active participation in literacy-rich learning opportunities?

Actively involving a young child in reading opportunities can be accomplished by asking and answering questions about a story being read or told. Active participation in "story time" begins with the child selecting a story of particular interest to him or her. This participation continues as the child answers different "Wh_" questions asked by the adult where the child's response is used to prompt elaborations and expansions.

During this reading time, the adult and the child switch roles so that the child learns to become the storyteller with the help of the adult who is both a listener and questioner. This interactive book reading or story telling style occurs before, during, and after book reading or story telling. These interactive techniques can be used with one child or several children and need not last more than 10 or 15 minutes at a time.

Three types of early reading practices were the focus of a research synthesis conducted at the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL). The investigators examined 13 studies that had been reviewed in three separate *What Works Clearinghouse* research syntheses to determine the characteristics of the interventions that were most important in helping young children learn early skills for reading and writing.

Results from this synthesis showed that active reading experiences for young children were more likely to result in positive benefits for children in two areas: linguistic processes, which include listening comprehension, phonological awareness, and oral language; and print-related processes including alphabet knowledge, print awareness, written language, and text comprehension. The strategies for promoting active participation



included elaboration, expansion, and use of "Wh_" questions to develop both print and linguistic concepts. The results showed that these reading strategies were most effective with older children (3 and 4 years of age) though younger children also benefited from these experiences. Shorter (15 minutes or less) reading episodes were more effective than longer sessions.

This *CELLnotes* summarizes findings reported in Trivette, C. M., & Dunst, C. J. (2007). Relative effectiveness of dialogic, interactive, and shared reading interventions, *CELLreviews* 1(2), 1-12.

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 of toddlers!
I Wanna Be a Storyteller
Storytelling and Listening

What is the practice?
Toddlers love to hear stories about themselves or other family members. Family storytelling creates toddlers' love to listen to stories and the desire to become storytellers in their own right. It is a way of sharing ideas, memories, and experiences with family members.

What does the practice look like?
When a toddler appears to show an interest in a story, the parent or caregiver should respond by telling the story again. If a toddler requests a story, the parent or caregiver should respond by telling the story again. If a toddler requests a story, the parent or caregiver should respond by telling the story again.

How do you do the practice?
Find a time and place to tell a story. Choose a story that is interesting to you and your toddler. Tell the story in a way that is fun and engaging. Use props and pictures to help tell the story.

How do you know the practice worked?
Your toddler is listening to you when you tell a story. Your toddler is asking you questions about the story. Your toddler is telling you the story.

Take a look at more storytelling activities
Storytelling Together
Have a 2-year-old listen to you with the stuffed dog. Put a book on the table and let the child look at the pictures and listen to you read. Have a 2-year-old listen to you with the stuffed dog. Put a book on the table and let the child look at the pictures and listen to you read.

At the Library
Encourage your toddler to listen to stories. Read a book together. Encourage your toddler to listen to stories. Read a book together.

Photos Prompt Storytelling
Use photos to prompt your toddler to tell a story. Use photos to prompt your toddler to tell a story.

Especially for practitioners working with toddlers!
A Picture Book for Learning
Storytelling and Listening

What is the practice?
Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills. Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills.

What does the practice look like?
Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills. Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills.

How do you do the practice?
Choose a picture book that is interesting to you and your toddler. Use the picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills.

How do you know the practice worked?
Your toddler is listening to you when you read the picture book. Your toddler is asking you questions about the picture book. Your toddler is telling you the story.

Take a look at more ways to share books
"Find What I Say!"
Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills. Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills.

"Reading" the Title
Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills. Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills.

Signs and Reading
Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills. Use a picture book to teach vocabulary and listening skills.

Especially for PARENTS

Infants:
Tell Me More, Tell Me More
The Right Touch
Baby's First ABC Book

Toddlers:
I Wanna Be a Storyteller
Looking at Books Together
Let Me Tell the Story

Preschoolers:
Let's Read Together
Read It Again!
Read With Me

Especially for PRACTITIONERS

Infants:
Repeated Reading
Touch-and-Feel Books
ABC Books for Beginners

Toddlers:
Creating Young Storytellers
A Picture Book for Learning
Reading Together Out Loud

Preschoolers:
Read and Repeat
Tales for Talking
One for the Books