

The power of exploring books together

What does research tell us about how parents sharing books with their young children affects the children's early language development?

Researchers at the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) examined 11 characteristics of adult-child shared reading experiences, nine of which were found to have beneficial effects on young children's expressive and receptive language development. The most effective characteristic was encouraging children's engagement and active participation in shared reading episodes.

In studying joint book reading or shared book reading, the CELL researchers analyzed findings from 21 studies of 1,275 toddlers and young children, 12 to 42 months of age. In addition to examining the characteristics of books and book reading experiences that contribute to young children's language development, they also analyzed other factors that might influence the effects of shared book reading.

The study findings showed that early expressive language development was facilitated by joint reading strategies that engaged, supported, and promoted children's active participation in the book reading opportunities. Relating the story to the child's own experiences, providing

positive feedback to the child during book reading, expanding on the child's comments, asking the child open-ended questions, and following the child's interests while sharing books all encouraged the child's participation in the shared reading experience. The longer a child stayed engaged in the book reading

activity, and the more the adult encouraged the child's active participation by expanding on what the child said or by asking open-ended questions, the greater the positive effects the reading experiences had on the child's language development.

The research indicates that the shared book read-

ing techniques that proved most important are fairly easy to teach to parents and can be taught using either face-to-face individual and group training or individual training using videos. Another finding was that reading sessions are more effective if they last longer than five minutes and involve several books.



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

<p>More looking at books with your toddler</p> <p>Reading While Waiting</p> <p><i>Especially for parents of toddlers!</i></p> <p>Looking at Books Together</p> <p><i>Storytelling and Listening</i></p> <p>What is the practice?</p> <p>What does the practice look like?</p> <p>How do you do the practice?</p> <p>How do you know the practice worked?</p> <p>A Touch of Reading</p>	<p>Take a look at more reading together out loud</p> <p>Book Talk</p> <p><i>Especially for practitioners working with toddlers!</i></p> <p>Reading Together Out Loud</p> <p><i>Storytelling and Listening</i></p> <p>What is the practice?</p> <p>What does the practice look like?</p> <p>How do you do the practice?</p> <p>How do you know the practice worked?</p>	<p>Bring Bedtime Stories</p> <p>Shared Reading</p>
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Especially for PARENTS

Infants:
The Right Touch
Baby's First Picture Book
Baby's First Word Book

Toddlers:
A Book by Its Cover
Looking at Books Together
Letters and Books

Preschoolers:
Let's Read Together
Read With Me
Book Is the Word

Especially for PRACTITIONERS

Infants:
Touch-and-Feel Books
First Picture Books
First Word Books

Toddlers:
Reading Together Out Loud

Preschoolers:
Tales for Talking
One for the Books