Especially for practitioners working with young children!

Read and Repeat

Children love to hear their favorite books over and over again. Repeated readings help young children ages 3-5 master the narrative, ideas, and language of a story.

What is the practice?

Repeated reading exposes children to books multiple times so that they become familiar with the vocabulary, repeated themes, and use of language. Early childhood practitioners can use repeated readings of a story to help preschool children understand, talk about, and participate in the story. Since many young children, especially those with speech and language delays, are not able to grasp an entire story on the first reading, hearing books read several times helps children understand and notice new things.

What does the practice look like?

When you read a story to a child several times, she can often figure out what an unfamiliar word means by the rest of the words that are read. Repeated reading gives the child opportunities to notice repeated sound patterns. If you point out some letters and words as you read the book repeatedly, she will be able to pick out specific words that are easily recognized and specific letter-sound relationships.

How do you do the practice?

Here are some ideas that will help you make repeated readings interesting and engaging to a preschool child.

- During repeated book readings, encourage children to participate actively. Provide opportunities for them to interject, predict what’s next, ask for clarification, etc.
- Repeated readings are valuable because they allow preschool children to become so familiar with a particular book they can start to understand it better and think more about the story. A great place to start is by reading the child’s favorite book, and starting to ask questions about it as you read, helping him make connections between the story and his own life.
- Let the child choose the story. Preschool children will often choose the same book over and over on their own.
- Be enthusiastic about the story even when you’re reading it for the umpteenth time. Read-aloud sessions involve much more than saying words and turning pages. When you express your own excitement about the pictures, story, setting, and characters, the child will be excited too.
- Let children “read” the story to you. Children get to know the words or plot to a story that has been read repeatedly, and they enjoy saying the words and turning the pages, just as if they were reading the book.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Do the children bring the same book to be read over and over?
- Do they seem to have “picked up” new vocabulary words or understanding of the story?
- Do the children interject comments about the story or tell what’s going to happen next?
Take a look at more repeated reading

From Listening to “Reading”

Ms. Nelson’s 3-year old class has been fascinated by the caterpillars that they find on the playground. During circle time one day, she reads *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, taking time to let the children enjoy each picture. When they reach the end of the story, one of the children asks Ms. Nelson to read it again. She opens the book to the beginning and begins reading to the several children who remain in place, eager for the second reading. This time she points out different things in the pictures. The next day, the children are happy when Ms Nelson gets the book out, and quickly join her on the circle-time rug. She reads it to them again, pausing at the end of each page to let the children enjoy the pictures, talk about what’s happening in the story, and talk about “their” caterpillars on the playground. After a few days, Ms. Nelson overhears some of the children “reading” the book aloud to each other or to themselves.

A Clear Favorite

Four-year-old Zara finds a book about a bear in the reading center of her classroom. She sits comfortably among the pillows on the rug and begins to look at the book. Noticing her interest, an assistant in the classroom joins her. They look at the book together, with Zara “reading” the book to the assistant. When they reach the end of the book, Zara hands the book to the assistant. “You read it,” she requests. The assistant reads the book to Zara while asking questions about the bear’s adventures and pointing out interesting things in the pictures. When they are finished, the assistant places the book in an easily seen location on the book shelf to support Zara’s interest in reading the book. They read the book together almost every day, with Zara remembering more details and taking over more of the reading each time.

The Sign Says...

Three-year-old Joshua has severe language delays and uses signing to communicate. Joshua has a book about trains from his big sister, and lately it’s the only book he is interested in. Joshua brings the book to his early interventionist while she is at their home visit. “Do you want me to read the train book again?” asks the interventionist as she makes room for Joshua next to her on the sofa and begins to read. As she reads, she points to the pictures and engages Joshua by asking, “What is that?” Joshua smiles and gives the sign for “train.” “Yes, that’s the train,” says the interventionist while signing and carefully articulating the sounds in the word. When they have finished the book Joshua signs, “Again!” This time, his mother joins them on the couch and reads the story from the beginning, asking questions that Joshua can answer by signing.