

Shared Reading Strategies to Support Language Growth

Childhood is an excited period with lots of changes, activities, and opportunities that occur with you and your child. It is also a time where shared moments with your child, such as reading together, can have a significant impact on their current and later development.

Shared readings, when you and your child read together, present a great opportunity for not only bonding, but also being exposed to key areas of language. While simply reading is great for supporting language, there are also a variety of strategies caregivers can use to enhance shared readings and further support language development.

Shared Reading Strategies

- ❖ **Praise** – While it may come across as common sense, praising and making positive comments towards a child’s attempts to read or even simply engage with you and your shared book are critical for creating a positive reading environment.
- ❖ **Book Play** – Shared reading time does not have to be the only time a child encounters a book. Having accessible children’s book for your child to independently interact with books supports familiarity with books. Whether they are alone or with you, allowing the child to practice holding a book right-side up, flipping pages, and even “pretend” reading before they even know how are critical for supporting early, positive reading and language experiences.
- ❖ **Sound Identification** – When reading asking your child to identify letters (“What letter is this?”) and describe what sound do they make (“What sound does the letter ‘m’ make?”) exposure your child to elements found in written language. Sound identification also helps prepare your child for later reading.

- ❖ **Wh-Questions** – Wh-questions (who, what, where, when, why) are very beneficial for confirming comprehension of the story and, when your child is read, starting conversations between you and your child.

Advanced Shared Reading Strategies

The following strategies can be used for older children who you can begin to ask more complex questions and have discussions based on the book you are reading together.

- ❖ **Content Expansion** – Is where the caregiver makes comments about occurrences in the story. “Expansions” that occur during reading are statements about story elements that also add new vocabulary words and parts of language not included in the book (“‘The cow jumped over the moon,’ Look at that! I see the big cow jumping over the bright, yellow moon at night.”).
- ❖ **Generalizations** – Using generalizations during shared readings is beneficial for taking story content and applying it to your child’s own life (“Look at Sam apologizing to Jenny for eating her cookie. When has there been a time when you have had to apologize for something?”). Generalizing prompts provide the caregiver and child to engage in conversations as well as use receptive and expressive language.

