



Read Alouds and Using Books With Children

A Guide for Teachers



Welcome to SEE Every Child

Our Mission and Vision

Mission: The Somerville Early Education department ensures that young children in Somerville have equitable access to a curriculum approach where they are engaged in joyful, robust, challenging, child-centered experiences grounded in play, discovery, and their own interests, and guided by state and national learning standards.

Vision: Children are born ready to learn and have the right to equitable access to a curricular approach that reflects who they are and what they are interested in. It is the job of the adults in a child's life to prepare an environment and experiences that support a child's ability to grow to their full potential. In order for children to be confident and happy learners in school and life, the adult, environment, and child work together.

Roots of SEE Every Child

This curriculum builds on both current research and established theories[i] about how young children learn. SEE Every Child is...

Centered on the whole child. Research shows that for young children to grow and thrive, teachers need to think of them as whole beings, focusing on social and emotional development to help children build emotional awareness, skills for social interaction, and empathy for others.

Anti-bias focused. Anti-bias goals are integrated into each thematic project and all learning experiences are designed to be flexible and have multiple entry points, so that children with special needs, multilingual learners, and children developing at their own paces all have meaningful ways to engage with the curriculum.

Learning through play. Influenced by the Montessori and Reggio Emilia approaches, children have extended time daily to engage in purposeful, guided play, leading their own learning through active engagement with materials in a prepared environment, with mentoring and support from thoughtful teachers.

Thematic and interdisciplinary. Children understand the world through active exploration, constructing knowledge as they investigate, asking questions, and interacting with people and materials. SEE Every Child is organized around thematic projects that offer opportunities for children to explore concepts and build skills across content areas while investigating topics that matter most to them.

Flexible and adjustable. SEE Every Child is designed with flexibility to be culturally responsive to the children in your class. While each class will take unique paths in the curriculum, cultivating unity and collaboration across our city's many vibrant ECE programs can make children's experiences stronger.

Responsive and co-constructed. Educators have been a part of developing this curriculum from the start, sharing their ideas and visions, generating suggestions for curriculum topics, and giving feedback on draft materials. Educators adapt the curriculum based on the funds of knowledge of children and families.

Classroom Environments and Intentional Teaching

The classroom environment can be referred to as a "third teacher;" (alongside parents and educators) where the environment guides children to make choices, to engage with materials, ideas, and each other, and to behave in certain ways (Gandini, 1998). Preparing environments for learning involves intentional teaching. An intention is a purposeful aim, plan, or provocation that guides teachers' productive action in the classroom. SEE Every Child is grounded in the Four Intentions (Kuh & Ponte, 2021), directly related to practices that all teachers can carry out daily as they work with children and develop purposeful curriculum. The Four Intentions complement each other and when used together, allow a rich curriculum to emerge:

Compelling Materials

Explicit Presentation

Responsive Scaffolding

Following Children's Interests

Key Practices and Routines

While each program will have a unique schedule to fit their context, certain key practices and routines are implemented across programs to allow children a variety of opportunities to learn and explore.

One key practice in SEE Every Child is engaging in thematic project-based learning, guided by Big Ideas. Each month, teachers choose from among several projects, outlined in the Big Idea Guides available on the website. Exploring topics through Big Ideas allow children to develop deeper understanding and to make meaningful connections between learning and their lives. Different times of day act as entry points for children to access curriculum through the project approach and Big Ideas.

Some of these entry points offered by SEE Every Child include:

Meetings Throughout the Day

Choice Time

Small Group Times

Whole Group Experiences

Outdoor Time

Mealtimes

SEE's routines and teaching practices are designed to be flexible. Educators incorporate them into their daily schedules as appropriate to their learners and the structure of their program.

Learning Opportunities in All Domains

Within the daily routines and practices outlined above, children are engaging in integrated learning across all domains. Projects, guided by Big Ideas, connect and integrate the learning. These domains consist of:

- **Social Emotional Learning.** SEE Every Child uses the *Second Step Early Learning* program (*Second Step*, n.d.) which encourages children to explore social emotional skills through storytelling, songs, games and group activities.
- **Balanced Literacy.** SEE Every Child's Literacy component was designed with researchers from the Lectio group (Lectio Group, n.d.) and includes evidence-based practices to help children become strong emergent readers, writers and communicators.
- **Mathematical Thinking.** Based on the *Building Blocks Pre-K* curriculum (Clements & Sarama, 2013), SEE embraces math as a language through which children can better communicate and understand their experiences.
- **Science and Engineering.** SEE Every Child aligns with *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS Lead States, 2013) and allows children to investigate the world around them through hands-on, play-based exploration.
- **Artistic Expression.** SEE Every Child encourages making connections to Big Ideas through artistic expression in order to allow children to explore artistic media and to communicate their ideas creatively.
- **Physical Development.** SEE Every Child's dedication to educating the whole child means mindful incorporation of physical development. Children spend regular time outdoors, as well as play games and participate in activities that allow for movement and that make connections to Big Ideas in new ways.

Woven throughout SEE's curriculum is an emphasis on Anti-Bias Education (Derman-Sparks, Edwards, & Goins, 2020), which is integrated into projects and Big Ideas in order to promote positive self-image, empathy for others and an understanding of fairness. Anti-bias education is centered on 4 main goals for children: **Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action.** Through incorporation of these concepts, children are encouraged to be confident, understanding and compassionate, as well as develop their ability to identify injustices and use their voice to work towards fairness for themselves and others.

We hope you enjoy working with SEE Every Child. Feedback is welcome on our website.

[i] For a full reference list and additional research that underpins the SEE Every Child approach, please see the full Preschool Curriculum Guidelines on the SEE website.

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Read Alouds: Modeling a Love and Care for Books

Read Alouds are an opportunity for teachers to model a love for books and storytelling.

While a teacher is reading an engaging story, they should also be demonstrating how to:

- Carefully hold books
- Gently turn pages
- Treat books respectfully



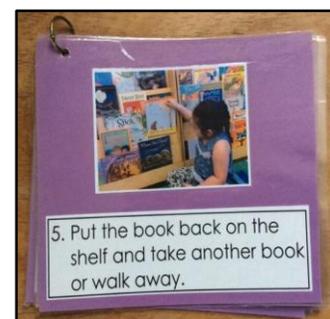
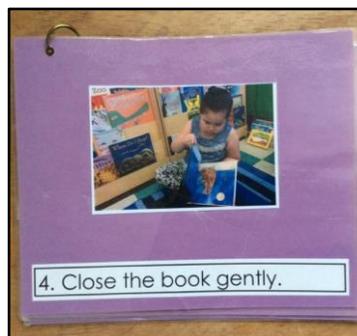
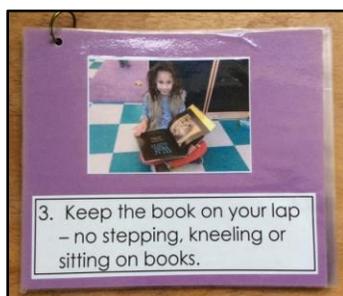
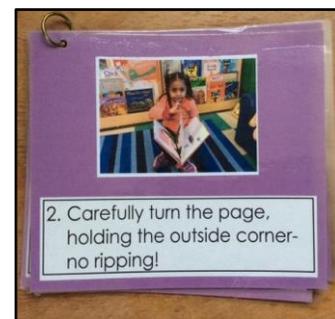
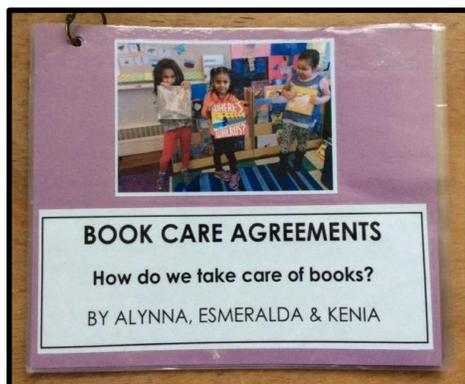
In the beginning of the year, use specific language that highlights how to care for book.

Explicit Presentation of Book Handling

- Presentation can be done in either a small or whole group.
- “I have something special to show you today. I have a book. Tell me what you notice about how I am holding the book.” (Prompt: Careful holding, protecting it.)
- “All books are special. Books tell stories, some teach us new information, some make us laugh, some help us when we are feeling sad or scared. Books are precious and it is our job to protect them.”
- “I’m going to show you how to hold the book, look through the pages and how to put it back on the shelf or in the book box. Pretend that I’m a student. I’m going to hold the book in my hands, keeping it safe from falling. I’m going to hold the page at the corner and gently turn the page so that the paper does not rip. When I get to the end of the book, I carefully close the book, making sure that none of the pages are folded. Then I carefully place it on an open space on the bookshelf or a spot in the book box.” (Model process)

Give opportunities for children to practice safe and careful book handling skills (quiet reading, collecting books from the class, sitting in the book area at choice time, etc.) share with the entire class when children are seen demonstrating careful book handling skills.

Make a book care agreement book

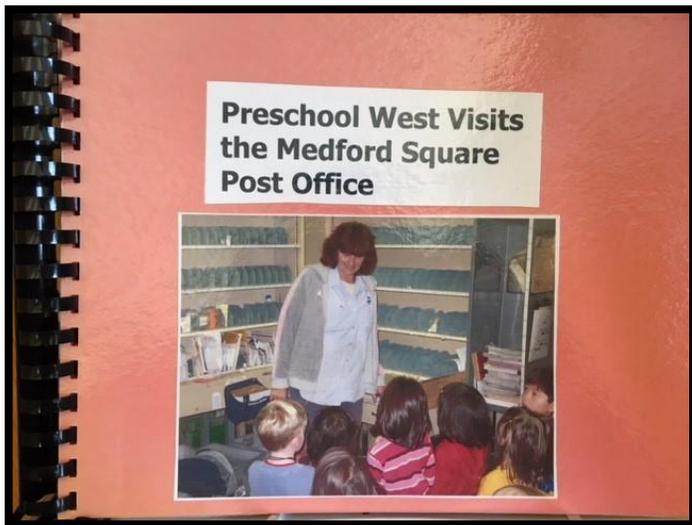


Agreement books are an excellent tool for empowering children to care for the classroom and build classroom community. In the example above, children experienced an explicit presentation of book handling skills, and then a small group of children were invited to answer the question, “How do we take care of books?” and then modeled the desired behaviors. The agreement book was on the bookshelf throughout the year and was resource revisited by children and the teacher to re-teach book handling skills.

Making and Using Class Books

Agreement books are just one kind of Class Book. Making simple Class Books early in the year builds community through shared authorship and storytelling.

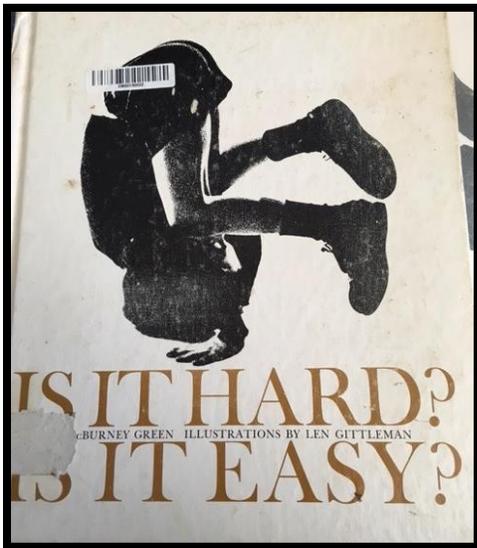
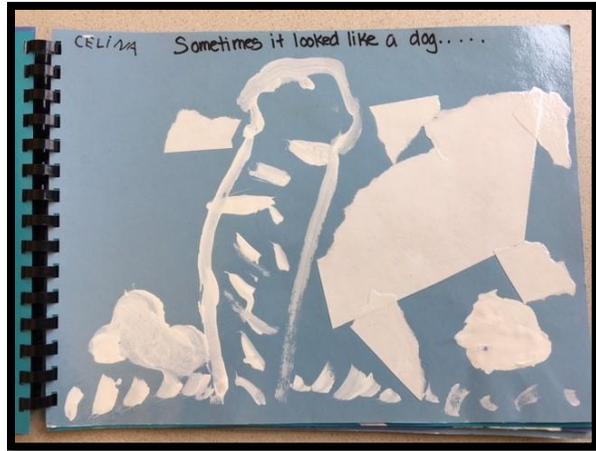
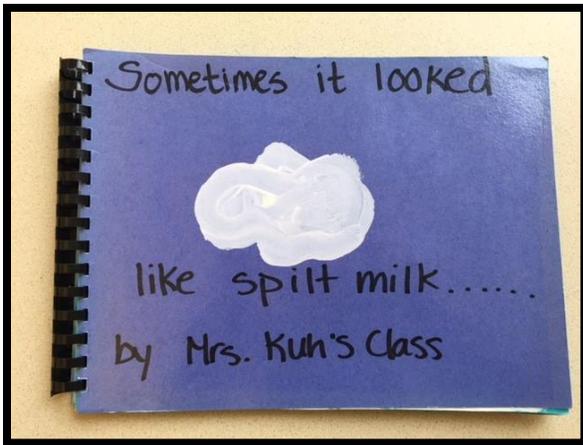
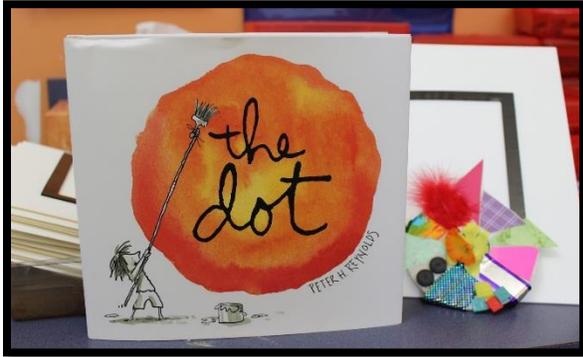
Class Books with photos, drawings, mixed media (collage, paint), can be created to:



- reinforce routines
- collections of children’s own stories related to a theme
- based on a repetitive book
- document a field trip, walk around the building, neighborhood



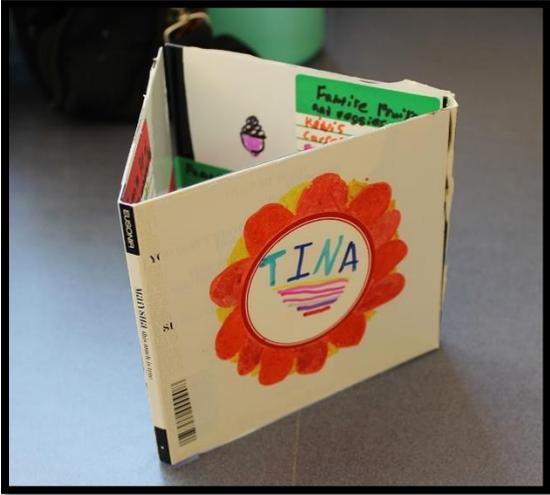
Class Books Based On Children's Literature



Book Making Techniques



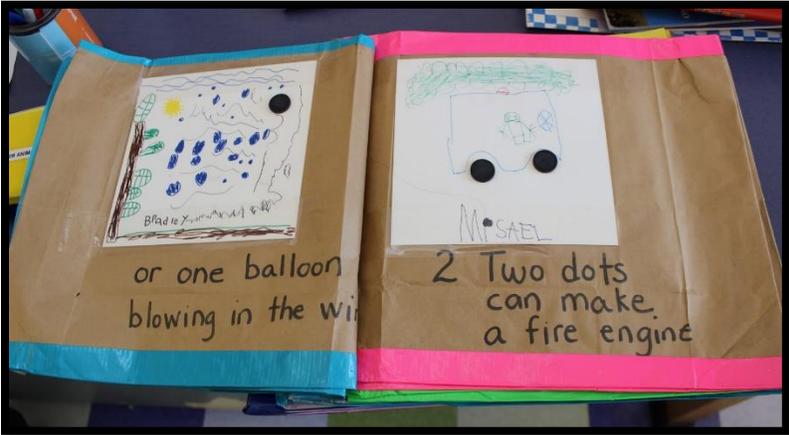
CD sleeves with a wire & bead binding

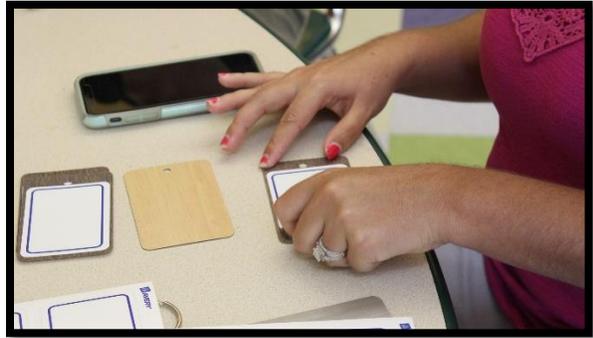


CD cover tri-fold book, contact paper cover



Paper bag books, cut open paper backs, edge and bind with duct tape





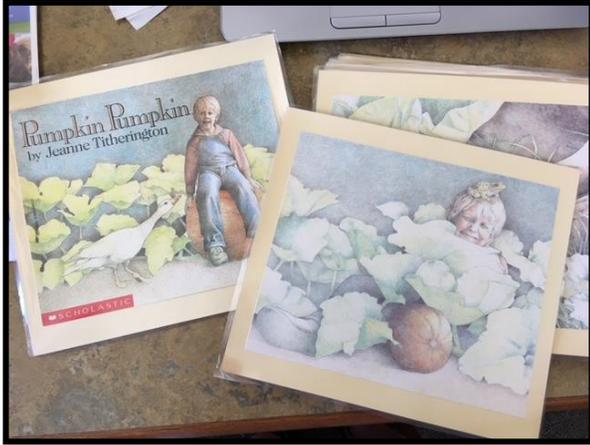
Tile/laminate sample ring books, can write directly on them with sharpie or use labels. Great for names, , little picture books, sight words, vocabulary, etc.



Chopstick or dowel books. Cardstock covers (children can draw, paint covers, punch two holes, thread rubber band through one hole and slide in chopstick, repeat for other hole.

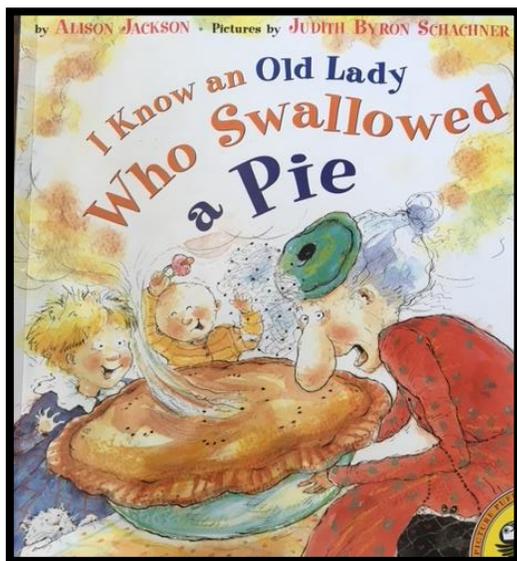
Modifying Books

Some children may benefit from modified texts so that they can access the pictures, story narrative, and text in smaller chunks that enable them to better connect with literature.



Using infant and toddler board books (single word per page) as a tool to teach, revisit, practice new words and key vocabulary helps introduce children to book handling. When introducing to children to standard books copy and laminate book pages into more manageable “chunks” to help children connect with text without becoming overwhelmed. The lamination also makes books accessible to children whose sensory needs make book handling challenging.

Props in the form of objects from the story also help children connect with text. A story box can be used during the reading to “act” out the story.



This modification adds Board Maker-style text and pictures to simplify the story and promote repetition of text, memorization of words, and understanding of a simple narrative.

Quality Read Alouds: Which books are best?

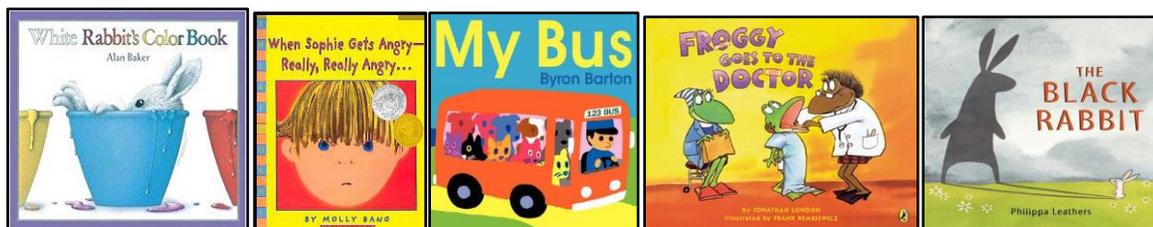
When selecting a book, consider:

- **The group of children** - Do they have the stamina to get through an entire story?
- **Point in curriculum trajectory** - Just introducing a topic? In the middle? The end?
- **The goal** - Intro vocabulary? Learn about a social concept? Academic concept?

Consideration of these elements is an important step of Read Aloud preparation. Later in the year, books can have more text, and some children may even be ready for longer stories or chapter books (rest time is a great time for this).

The Big 3

<p>Low-text</p>	<p>-There shouldn't be too many words on each page. -Pages might have between 1-5 sentences. -Quantity should not compromise quality! -Select books that have rich vocabulary and use this as an opportunity to build child vocabulary.</p>
<p>High-Interest</p>	<p>-Select books with characters children can relate with, concepts that are familiar and topics that are of interest to them -Preview the text! If it doesn't hold your interest, chances are it won't hold the attention of 18 4-and 5-year olds!</p>
<p>Large Illustrations</p>	<p>-Select books with illustrations and details that can be seen from the back of your group area. -Reserve books with smaller illustrations for independent or small group reading.</p>



Types of Read Alouds: Reading Books with Intention

Read Alouds can be implemented for different intentions. Here are a few different types of Read Alouds that can be implemented when reading with children.

Type of Read Aloud	Examples of Read Aloud Purpose
Book Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Preview or introduce concept-Spark interest, connect with prior knowledge and experiences-Notice illustrations-Make predictions about what might happen in story-Teach parts of book (title, author, illustrator, etc.)
Predictable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Rhythm-Rhyme-Repetition of vocabulary-Repetition of story structure and pattern
Vocabulary Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Teach new vocabulary-ELL: Dr. Calderon's Pre-teaching Vocabulary in Five Steps
Reading for Pleasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Share a joy for reading-Tell a good, compelling story
Re-Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Revisit a story after learning more about a topic-Reading a story after doing a picture walk
Story Acting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Using familiar texts and stories to practice story elements-Exposure to folktales and oral storytelling traditions

Book Walk <https://spedellreadingstrategies.weebly.com/bookpicture-walk.html>

Varying the type of read alouds throughout the year is a way to differentiate learning for specific children and goals. Taking the time to intentionally select a variety of read aloud types to meet different purposes is a tool for early childhood educators.

Perhaps the idea of planning for every single read aloud feels cumbersome. Different types of read alouds require different amounts of preparation, and not all read alouds need to involve an extensive lesson plan. It is the judgment of the educator to decide when a specific type of Read Aloud would be the most beneficial to their class at any given group time.

Read Aloud Elements: The Basics

Not all read alouds are created equal, but it is important for teachers to do the following practices for a quality, Read Aloud experience.

Before you Introduce the Book to Children:

1. Select a story that meets the BIG 3 Criteria: Low-Text, High Quality and Large Illustrations.
2. Read the book in advance and select a purpose and type of read aloud that best matches the book.
3. Plan for the selected purpose.
4. Plan for child responses. When and how will questions be asked of the children? Which type of questions will be asked? How will children be able to respond to the story and engage in related conversations. **Select from the CROWD strategies in the next sections for different types of questions.**

Introducing the Book to Children:

1. Show and discuss the cover. What do you see? What do you think this book might be about?
2. Identify the title and author/illustrator. Point out any awards the book may have received and the significance of those (Caldecott, etc.)
3. Present any new vocabulary using pictures or objects that may impact comprehension of the story.



Dialogic Reading

Dialogic Reading is an interactive reading strategy that encourages educators to ask questions and prompt discussions during read aloud. There are different types of prompts that can be used to help children connect with the text. Use the planning sheet on the next page to plan your prompts



Note: *Each Dialogic Reading doesn't need to include every CROWD strategy. In fact, you may decide to read a book all the way through at the first reading. Select one, two or a few that feel appropriate for each read aloud (text type, read aloud purpose, group abilities, etc. Over time, as children develop dialogic read aloud skills, the type and amount of CROWD strategies used can be adapted to meet their abilities.*

CROWD Strategies

C - Completion Prompts - Leave a 'blank' at the end of the sentence and invite the child (ren) to fill it in. Focus on language structures (rhyme and repetition).

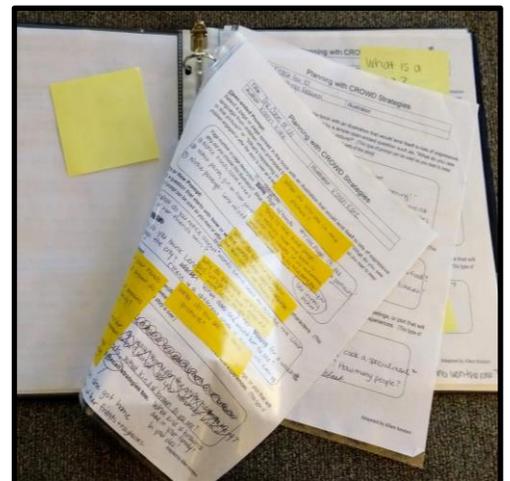
R – Recall Prompts – Ask questions about what happened in the book, or earlier in the book. Focus on plot and sequencing.

O – Open-ended Prompts - Invite children to express their ideas by asking questions that have no clear answers. Focus on the pictures (“Tell me about . . .”) and predictions and hypotheses (“I wonder . . .”).

W – Wh Prompts – Ask what, where, when, why and how. Focus on questions that start with WHY and HOW.

D - Distancing Prompts – Ask children to relate pictures and words to their own experiences in the world (Have you ever . . .”).

Use the CROWD Planning Sheet in advance to prepare for Dialogic Reading. **Use post-it notes to strategically place CROWD prompts on pages of the book to remember when and what to ask the group.** Save completed planning sheets and post-its to build a CROWD strategies archive for future reference! During CROWD Strategy work, take children back to the text to confirm and process their questions. Invite children, especially for repetitive books, or a book you have read several times, to join you in reading the words.



Planning with CROWD Strategies

Title:	
Author:	Illustrator:

Open-ended Prompt:

Select a page or page spread in the book with an illustration that would lend itself to lots of expressive language from children when prompted by a simple open-ended question such as, "What do you see in this picture?" or "What's happening in this picture?" *(This type of prompt can be used as you read to keep children engaged or after the story is over as a way to revisit parts of the story)*

Page number or page description:

Why did you choose this illustration? What objectives might it help you meet?

Why or How Prompt:

Plan a question that starts with **how** or **why** and that is specific to the story and its characters. *(This type of prompt can be used as you read or after the story is over.)*

Distancing Prompt:

Plan a question or prompt that is specific to the story, its characters, setting, feelings, or plot that will help children make connections between the story and their own lives and experiences. *(This type of prompt can be used as you read or after the story is over.)*

Remember to use Completion and Recall strategies too.

Adapted by Allen Kesten

Different Text Formats

Differentiate the format you select for Read Aloud. Text formats include:

- storybooks
- patterned cumulative books (i.e. Big Turnip)
- song books
- rhyming books
- non-fiction
- poetry
- song charts and chants
- Class books

Large Format Text: Big Books, Poems, and Song Charts Developing Print Awareness

- Large Format Text is designed to be read to groups.
- Helps children understand that text is made up of words and sentences.

Big books, poems on charts, and song charts, as well as group stories provide opportunities for children to interact with text in ways other than a picture book. This contributes to the development of print awareness - an understanding that text is organized in particular ways, that print is:

- read from left to right and top to bottom
- words consist of letters, sentence consist of words
- spaces appear between words

Some Tips for Using Large Format Text

- Create a space where charts can hang, big books can rest on an easel.
- Run your finger or a pointer under words as you read, leaving short but clear “sound spaces” between words.
- Engage in choral reading with familiar text.
- Echo read in call and response style with new text.
- Ask children if they remember words or sentences from the story or pick out a sentence you know they particularly like. Write it on a sentence strip. Then in front of children cut up the sentence into words and put it back together in front of the children.

Reading Rockets has great ideas for books, read aloud strategies, and parent resources.

<http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/professionals/preschool>

Shared Reading, Choral Reading, Echo Reading are important strategies for repeating and reinforcing print awareness, vocabulary development, and phonological and phonemic awareness.

http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/shared_reading

