

**Module: Communication and Emergent Literacy:
Early Intervention Issues**

Session 5: Interventions to Facilitate Emergent Literacy

Handout M: Dialogic Reading

EIVI Training Center. (2005). *Dialogic reading*. Chapel Hill, NC: Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments, FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-CH.

Interventionists can train parents and caregivers in dialogic-reading technique through the use of two helpful memory aids: the words PEER and CROWD.

The basic method of dialogic reading is summarized by the acronym PEER (Whitehurst, 2004; Whitehurst, Epstein, Angell, Payne, Crone, & Fischel, 1994). PEER stands for:

- Prompt
- Evaluate
- Expand
- Repeat

The PEER interaction is a short exchange in which the adult *prompts* the child to comment on the book; *evaluates* the child's reply by responding in some way; *expands* the child's reply by paraphrasing it and elaborating on it; and *repeats* the expansion through a second prompt, to make certain the child has understood the expansion.

The acronym CROWD stands for the five kinds of prompts that can be used in dialogic reading (Whitehurst, 2004; Whitehurst et al., 1994):

- Completion
- Recall
- Open-ended
- Wh-
- Distancing

Completion prompts are used mainly with rhyming or repetitive stories. A blank is left at the end of a sentence, which children may fill in. For example, a parent might pause at the end of a nursery rhyme, "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great . . ." and allow the child to chime in, "Fall!"

Recall prompts ask children to describe something that happened in a story. Recall prompts can be used in the middle of a story or, if a child has read the book previously, before beginning to read. For example, a parent might ask a child who is familiar with David Kirk's *Little Miss Spider*, "Who helped Miss Spider?"

Open-ended prompts help children problem solve and increase their expressive fluency. Open-ended prompts should begin with words such as *why* or *how* or phrases such as "What do you think about . . ." Open-ended questions may be about the storyline, tactile illustrations, pictures, or accompanying objects. For example, a parent might prompt a discussion of the book *Little Miss Spider* by asking, "What do you think about what the sly spider did?"

Wh- prompts are questions that begin with *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, or *how* and are used to build vocabulary. Like open-ended prompts, they may refer to storyline, tactile illustrations, pictures, or accompanying objects. For example, a parent might give the child a storybook object and ask, "What's this?"

Distancing prompts ask children to relate the pictures and storyline to their own experiences. For instance, if a parent and child are sharing a book about trucks, the parent might say, "Remember when we watched those workers fix the road? They were so loud! What kinds of sounds did we hear?"

Although distancing prompts are most appropriate for 4- and 5-year-olds, some younger children may benefit from simple distancing prompts that relate to recent experiences and daily routines.

In the following example, dialogic reading is used with a child who is blind.

Doug, who is familiar with dialogic reading technique and has been trained in the PEER method, is sharing a book about dogs with his 2-year-old son, Jonas, who has bilateral anophthalmia. Doug and his wife have made story bags for many of Jonas's books to enhance interaction and communication during shared storybook reading.

Jonas sits in Doug's lap as Doug reads, "The big furry dog chases the ball in the park."

Doug prompts his son: "What is the dog doing?"

Jonas says, "Ball!"

Doug evaluates Jonas's response by saying, "You're right!" and giving him a gentle squeeze. Jonas is pleased by his father's response and wiggles happily.

Doug reaches into the story bag and gets out a ball. He hands it to Jonas as he expands on Jonas's reply by saying, "The dog is chasing the ball." Jonas giggles and pats the ball.

Doug then repeats the expansion, this time phrasing it as a new prompt: "That big dog sure knows how to catch a ball. What other games can we play with dogs?"

Jonas says, "Big dog stick."

Doug notices that Jonas's responses grow in sophistication when he is prompted using the PEER method.

References

- Whitehurst, G.J. (2004). *Dialogic reading: An effective way to read to preschoolers*. Retrieved March 18, 2005, from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article.php?ID=431>.
- Whitehurst, G.J., Epstein, J.N., Angell, A.L., Payne, A.C., Crone, D.A., & Fischel, J.E. (1994). Outcomes of emergent literacy intervention in Head Start. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 86*(4), 542-555.