

SEPTEMBER 2015

LET'S READ

Joanne Hughes, M.S. CCC-SLP

Choosing engaging read-aloud books can be a daunting task considering the multitude of choices that line bookstore and library shelves. Linda Higham, owner of the The Storyteller a children's literature store in Lafayette, offers the following tips for selecting quality books for young children.



- Consider the age and interests of the child when choosing read-aloud books.
- Look for well illustrated books with large, simple pictures that support the story.
- Choose books that feature patterned language. Rhythm, repetition and rhyming help hold the child's attention. Books with repetitive phrases, such as *"Everybody Sleeps, But Not Fred"* by Josh Schneider naturally give children opportunities to fill in phrases. Moreover, exposure to these elements supports beginning literacy.
- Look for books that encourage involvement. This includes "lift the flap" books, such as *"Fuzzy Yellow Ducklings"* by Matthew Van Fleet, which entices children to explore concepts of texture, color and shape that are hidden behind irresistible fold-out panels.
- Consider award-winning books. Each year a committee of the American Library Association compiles its Notable Children's Book List, which identifies the "best of the best" in children's books, recordings and videos. Newbery, Caldecott and Geisel award recipients are automatically included on this annual list. Refer to <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists> for listings.

HAVE YOU HEARD?

SPG is excited to announce that a new office is opening in San Mateo this September:

1650 S Amphlett Blvd #108,
San Mateo, CA 94402

If you would like to inquire about SPG services in San Mateo, Walnut Creek, Berkeley, San Ramon or East County please contact scheduling@speechpath.com or (925) 945-1474

When asked to list her top picks for children aged 0 - five, Linda Higham laughed, claiming to have many favorites but ultimately narrowed it down to the following titles:

From Birth - One Year Old: *Ten Little Fingers, Ten Little Toes* by Mem Fox.

For the Two Year Old: *Good Night Gorilla* by Peggy Rathmann.

For Three year Olds: *The Little Blue Truck* by Alice Schertle.

For Four year Olds: *The Wolf's Stew*, by Keiko Kasza.

For Five Year Olds: *Muncha, Muncha, Muncha*, by Candace Fleming.

Linda Higham and a colleague, Sharon McKissick, both teachers and credentialed reading specialists, left their respective classrooms in 1986 to open The Storyteller. Now approaching its 30th year in business, The Storyteller is located in Lafayette at 3506 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Suite E in the courtyard behind Peet's Coffee.

Besides an extensive inventory of books, the Storyteller also offers Story Time or Puppet Shows every Saturday morning at 10:00. For additional literacy-based experiences, check your local library for free half hour programs, such as *Toddler Time*, *Preschool Time*, *Peek-A-Book Time* that feature books, songs and age appropriate activities for young children.

BILINGUAL & MULTICULTURAL Q&A

Emily DeRoos, MS CCC-SLP

Q: What language should I speak to my child?

A: Whatever language you are most comfortable speaking. Even if your child responds in a different language, it is okay to continue speaking as you are most comfortable. It is more important that you talk and read with your child often and about many topics than that you force yourself to use a language that does not come easily to you. Children need rich language models with a wide variety of vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, and exposure to literature to develop their own fluency in a language. If they lack this exposure early on, attaining fluency in any language later on will be more difficult, and conversely, the higher the quality of the exposure to their first language, the easier it will be to acquire later languages. Exposure to rich language models is also required for many hours a day! If that sounds too challenging, chances are that you are struggling to teach your child a language in which you are not fluent yourself. However, there are many other ways for your child to gain exposure and even fluency in a second or third language. Attend family or community events to help your child develop a "language community" so that you are not the sole teacher. Having peer models of other children speaking to adults in the target language can be a powerful teaching tool for your child. Attend story hour at the library, find a language-specific playgroup in your neighborhood, or encourage relatives to speak the language with your child. Whatever exposure you can give your child when they are young will give them an advantage if they choose to study this language (or any additional language) later in life because the bilingual brain areas will already have been developed. And in the mean-time, do what feels natural for you and your family.



Q: I have a child with suspected speech/language delays who is bilingual. How can a monolingual speech-language pathologist help?

A: One of the first tasks of a speech-language pathologist (SLP) will be to help you perform a

differential diagnosis between a language difference and a language disorder. People who learn a second (or third or more!) language both simultaneously (being exposed to two or more languages since birth) or sequentially (perhaps once starting school) learn language differently than monolinguals. The first language may influence the pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and word order of the second language; a child may go through a "silent period" after being exposed to a new language so they can focus on listening; children and adults may exhibit "language loss" in their first language when vocabulary may not come to mind as readily - and all of this is considered typical. Even speech therapists who do not speak the child's home language can help determine whether or not the child is following a typical developmental course.

Q: My child has been diagnosed with a speech/language disorder/delay. Should I cut back on their exposure to a second language?

A: No. Research indicates that bilingual children may have cognitive advantages over monolingual children, including superior executive function. This includes the ability to concentrate on important details while filtering out extraneous distractions and being cognitively flexible by changing their responses based on the demands surrounding them. Bilingualism promotes growth in brain areas that lead to advantages in learning in the short term as well as in the long term and may even protect against dementia later in life!

Q: In what language should my bilingual child receive services?

A: This much-debated question depends on many factors including the amount of time the child is exposed to each language, the language in which the child is most fluent, the availability of a speech-language pathologist who speaks the child's home language, and the family's preferences. Services in any language can help family members develop communication strategies to support their child's language development at home in the home language. Communication is a complex process that involves far more than just words, so a speech-language pathologist can also help address many non-verbal aspects of communication that may be affecting the child's development.