

## REPEATED READ-ALOUD

From *Getting Into Words: Vocabulary Instruction that Strengthens Comprehension*  
by Shira Lubliner, pp. 134-135

Bedtime stories provide young children with warm memories and rich educational opportunities. The key factors that make this activity so beneficial include exposure to the conventions and language of print, repeated exposures to a wide range of vocabulary words, development of content knowledge that will support future learning, and the strengthening of emotional bonds between young children and their parents. Even when children whose parents have not read to them enter school, it is not too late to capitalize on the benefits of reading aloud. Research has demonstrated that when teachers incorporate repeated oral readings of high-interest children's books into early literacy instruction, disadvantaged children make large gains in vocabulary acquisition (Biemiller, 2004).

A repeated read-aloud program should be carefully structured to maximize children's vocabulary growth. The teacher selects high-interest fiction and nonfiction books with plenty of challenging, high-utility vocabulary words. Instruction begins with a picture prediction activity. The teacher asks the children to look at the cover of the book and predict what it will be about. Prereading discussion focuses on key vocabulary and concepts that may be unfamiliar to the children.

During the first read-aloud, the teacher does not stop to discuss vocabulary, allowing children to concentrate on global comprehension of the story. She rereads the story several more times during the next few days. During these repeated reading sessions, the teacher stops frequently to discuss challenging words and concepts. She also uses the new words as often as possible in normal classroom discourse. The teacher reads each story at least three times, providing repeated exposures to the new words and increasing the likelihood of vocabulary growth.

Teachers often worry that children will become bored with repeated reading-aloud books. Fortunately, however, young children enjoy hearing favorite stories over and over. They enjoy asking questions and pointing out familiar words and illustrations in the text. When children's vocabulary is severely underdeveloped, teachers need to find a variety of ways to increase these children's exposure to repeated story reading . . .

As children grow older they continue to benefit from hearing stories read aloud. It is not until middle school that most children's reading comprehension catches up with their oral comprehension. Until that time, children benefit immensely from hearing stories read aloud. When teachers read aloud, they expose children to complex language and vocabulary that children rarely encounter in oral discourse or independent reading.

There is currently a trend toward limiting the range of vocabulary in children's reading books to encourage the development of fluency. Although fluency is important, limiting the number of words that children read may be harmful to their vocabulary development. Without frequent exposure to a wide range of new words, children are unlikely to acquire enough vocabulary to comprehend the textbooks and trade books they will encounter in the upper grades. It is essential that teachers who are using texts with controlled vocabulary provide additional exposure to challenging words by reading aloud to children. Neglecting vocabulary instruction may cause serious long-range problems for children, particularly those who enter school with limited language and vocabulary.

A comprehensive vocabulary development program for young children includes a range of instructional methods. In addition to vocabulary instruction based on repeated read-aloud, teachers help children learn to monitor their own comprehension and provide explicit instruction in word-learning strategies.