

Communication and language...

Story of the week

Frequent repetition of stories can help to develop a child's vocabulary, explains *Rebecca Wilson*



Reading the same stories over and over again to young children may feel tedious sometimes, but it has a hugely beneficial effect on their learning, so I introduced a story of the week.

EVIDENCE

One study was carried out at the University of Sussex. There, psychologist Dr Jessica Horst and her team exposed a group of three-year-olds to a story containing a made-up word for an unfamiliar object. Some were read the story repeatedly over the course of a week, while the others heard it once. When all were tested, only the children who had heard the word more than once could remember and recall it.

ACTION RESEARCH

After reading this research, I wondered how to incorporate it into my everyday practice in the two- to three-year-olds' room where I work. I firstly observed the children and how they would often seek out books that had been read to them either at home or in our setting.

Story of the Week is based on the children's interest, and can often be linked to their 'PLOD' (Possible Lines of Direction). Every week, we choose a new book, which is read at the end of each day. The book is left on display

throughout the day so the children can access it when they want. As well as becoming familiar with the story and its characters, the daily story means the children are often able to recall certain parts of it.

As a team, we began to incorporate Story of the Week into our continuous provision in order to extend children's learning experiences. For example, a group of boys were interested in the Smartboard, so we used it to look at characters from *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. We used the paint programme to create our own pictures of caterpillars and encouraged the children to give meanings to their marks.

We have extended Story of the Week to the creative area, creating collages, painting pictures and using playdough to make models of characters. The children have their own display board on which they can display their artwork if they choose.

We have used small images of characters for collages. This has provided a useful visual aid for children with speech and language difficulties as they are able to link words that they have heard repeatedly to the image.

The children in our setting can borrow a book for a week from our onsite library. We have found that they occasionally borrow books that have been a Story of the Week, so enabling to extend their own learning at home.

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IMPACT

From our observations, we have noticed that:

- many aspects of the children's learning have increased, especially in the areas of Communication and Language and Literacy
- some children are meeting higher age bands within the EYFS
- a number of children are showing more interest in books and even exploring books in continuous play
- children are more aware of how to handle books and look after them
- children are building special relationships with staff and peers through a love of reading.

NEXT STEPS

I'm currently extending Story of the Week to another of our rooms for two- to three-year-olds, and staff are already noticing an improvement in children's language development.

I didn't appreciate that I could become an action researcher and that an innovation so simple could have such an impact on children, their parents and staff. ■

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