

## USING PICTURE WALKS TO TEACH EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

## THINK ABOUT . . .

A picture walk is when parents or educators preview the cover and pictures in a storybook before reading it to children. By doing this, children become familiar with the story prior to the words. Picture walks are best done with books that have a lot of interesting and detailed illustrations that are easily relatable to the words. For example, see one of our favorites, *The Lion and the Mouse*, by Jerry Pinkney. Picture walks help children develop their language and literacy skills.



## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Books with good illustrations

## PREPARATION:

The first step in doing a picture walk is planning. Read the book you chose to yourself first. As you are reading it, look closely at the illustrations, the words, and the structure of the book. What elements of the book will be challenging for the child? What elements of the book will excite or surprise the child? How can you grow their eagerness to hear the story read aloud? How can you lay the foundation for their understanding?

## ACTIVITY

While you are doing your picture walk with your child, remember to:

1. Model how to look closely at the illustrations to make sense of what you are seeing. Talk about what you notice and what you are wondering about. By doing this, you are modeling for your child the reading strategy of using visual cues. This strategy is one that early readers will rely on when making meaning from their own books.
2. Point out any important text features or book structures that will aid in comprehension. For example, if you are doing a picture book with a nonfiction text, point out the headings or labels and let the children know the purpose of these features.
3. Point out some of the vocabulary from the book that might be new or challenging. If there is a picture of an object in the book and this word is central to the story, use it while pointing it out in the illustrations.
4. Ask questions. As you slowly turn the pages of the book, ask your child some general questions about who the story might be about, where it is taking place and what is happening. Questions such as these will help children realize that illustrations carry powerful information.
5. Respond to children's replies vaguely. Telling them they are correct or incorrect makes this activity seem like a quiz when in fact what you are doing through your picture walk is helping children learn how to preview and predict. You might respond to their answers by saying, "I wonder if that will happen..." or "It looks that way...Let's come back to that idea when we read..."

## QUESTIONS EXAMPLES:

1. What is the story about?
2. What do you think is happening?
3. What do you see here?
4. Who is in the story?
5. Where is the story taking place?
6. Why did that happen?
7. When did they do that?

## HELPFUL TIPS:

While you are reading the book, remember to return to some of the predictions the children made to confirm if they were correct. This reinforces their thinking and supports their enthusiasm.

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