Helping Children to Develop Early Literacy Skills with Dialogic Reading

 *By Pearson Early Learning*

Several research studies have supported a notion that many teachers have had for a long time: that children who have been read to at home come to school with important early literacy skills. They are prepared to learn to read and write. Children who have not had many experiences listening to books read aloud or talking about books typically start school with poor early literacy skills. These children often fall behind early in reading and writing and stay behind.

**Dialogic Reading**

Reading to young children has been shown to ready them for school However, some ways of reading to children help them build early literacy skills more than others.

Through carefully controlled studies with preschoolers across the United States, researchers discovered something important. They learned that the way we read to children is just as important as how frequently we read to them. When the child is an active participant in the reading experience, the child shows greater language gains than when an adult simply reads a book to the child.

As a result of extensive research involving children, Grover J. Whitehurst has developed an interactive reading technique called **dialogic reading.**[1](http://www.getreadytoread.org/early-learning-childhood-basics/early-literacy/helping-children-to-develop-early-literacy-skills-with-dialogic-reading#footnote1) This technique encouraged the child to become the storyteller over time. The role of the adult is to prompt the children with questions, expand the child’s responses, and praise the child’s efforts to retell the story and name objects and actions in the book.

Dialogic reading has produced significant gains in language development. When children were read to dialogically both at school and at home, they improved their expressive language abilities and they increased their vocabularies. Children were better able to identify sounds and letters. They demonstrated emergent writing skills, such as printing from left-to-right, distinguishing between uppercase and lowercase letters, and writing their own names. Children also demonstrated an enhanced knowledge of print concepts such as distinguishing among words, pictures, and numbers or successfully identifying people who were reading amid a picture of people doing various activities.[2](http://www.getreadytoread.org/early-learning-childhood-basics/early-literacy/helping-children-to-develop-early-literacy-skills-with-dialogic-reading#footnote2) These gains, moreover, were retained over time.

1Dialogic Reading: A Shared Picture Book Reading Intervention for Preschoolers by Andrea A. Zevenbergen and Grover J. Whitehurst.

2The gains were demonstrated on the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT), the revised Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-R), the Expressive Language subtest of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA-VE), and the Developing Skills Checklist (DSC).

Portions excerpted from Read Together, Talk Together™: A Dialogic Reading Program for Young Children. Based on research by Grover J. Whitehurst, Ph.D. Copyright © 2003 Pearson Education, Inc. publishing as Pearson Early Learning, New York, New York, 10036.

Read Together, Talk Together™ is a program designed to make reading to young children more enriching by guiding parents, teachers, and caregivers through a simple set of techniques to use while they are reading to toddlers and preschoolers.

The Read Together, Talk Together™ products are available for purchase on the [Pearson website](http://www.pearsonschool.com/index.cfm?locator=PSZu68&PMDBSUBCATEGORYID=28139&PMDBSITEID=2781&PMDBSUBSOLUTIONID=&PMDBSOLUTIONID=6724&PMDBSUBJECTAREAID=&PMDBCATEGORYID=3289&PMDbProgramId=22109).

http://www.getreadytoread.org/early-learning-childhood-basics/early-literacy/helping-children-to-develop-early-literacy-skills-with-dialogic-reading