



Teaching strategies

Young children ascribe meaning through their mark making and, when reciting and eventually reading familiar stories from memory, draw on the prosody of the narrative to suggest meaning. Learning to read is a complex human process and we need to make sure that teaching reading isn't reduced to just one strategy. Dependence on synthetic phonics may win immediate gains but these are shown to be short-lived, making little academic difference later on if not aligned with reading for meaning.

Understanding children's stages of development when learning to read combined with knowing about the pedagogy that supports the orchestration of strategies and cues helps us to develop well-rounded readers who read for meaning and pleasure. Every child brings a unique perspective to a text based on their own life, language and reading experiences. All children deserve to be actively involved in making personal sense of texts and interpreting the world through their relationship with book characters.

Engaging in dialogue around books is an obvious way to develop understanding and so the books you share need to be inspiring. Tune in to a child's fascinations and draw on your knowledge of high-quality texts that will stimulate interest and inspire discussion. Choose books to share and read aloud to which children can make connections to their own experiences, or stories they already know. Share stories that help children deal with important themes and interpret their world. Seek

out illustrations that add extra layers of meaning to the text and promote discussion or even role play. Revel in language that is used in lively, inventive ways.

There are a few key teaching approaches that CLPE's research shows work well in developing deeper response to texts supporting the development of inferential understanding from a very young age, and they are outlined below.

Book talk

Aidan Chambers' (aidanchambers.co.uk) work on developing 'book talk' began with his interest in why adults formed book groups. Why do we need to relate to others about the books we have read, the stories we have been touched by?

His observations suggest that rather than being a solitary experience, there is a social nature to reading; that we seek to share our personal responses and find confirmation in them. Through discussion and debate, we may take more meaning from the reading experience.

GETTING TALK STARTED...

Once they have heard a book read aloud, your class can begin to explore their responses to it with the help of what Chambers calls "the four basic questions". These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:

- Tell me, was there anything you liked about this book?
- Was there anything that you particularly disliked?
- Was there anything that puzzled you? Do you have any questions?
- Does it remind you of anything you know, in stories or real life?

The openness of these questions encourages every child to feel that they have something to say. They allow everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the 'wrong' answer. It is enabling and inclusive, and works beautifully with even very young children. It embraces the knowledge that each child brings something unique to the reading experience and the sustained shared thinking that follows.

As children reply, it can be useful to write down what they say under the headings 'Likes', 'Dislikes', 'Puzzles' and 'Patterns'. This written record

