



ANJALI PATEL IS AN EARLY YEARS AND PRIMARY ADVISORY TEACHER AT THE CLPE.

Reading between the lines

To develop our children's early comprehension skills, we must find ways to harness their inner drive to engage with print, says Anjali Patel...



HOW DO WE ENABLE OUR EARLIEST readers to develop their comprehension and inferential understanding as they embark on their path into reading? Well, where better to start than with the child?

We live in a print-dependent culture so children see us engaging with words in a variety of ways and naturally they are keen to join in. We write ourselves reminders and notes, fill in forms, and read letters, signs, newspapers, magazines and books – as well as sending and receiving emails and SMS messages, and using social media. Whilst we are doing this we are modelling literate behaviour to our young observers, who will mimic this interaction with print and the meaning it promises.

Children who have had a good balance of sharing high-quality texts with enthusiastic adults whilst simultaneously being encouraged to take an interest in, and tune in to, the print itself are more likely to want to read. We know reading takes practice and needs stamina, and this relies on maintaining the interest of our earliest readers. We need to harness children's drive to find meaning in print; to support them in lifting words off the page, rather than merely barking at text that holds little significance for them.

Learning to read is a complex process, so we need to make sure that teaching reading isn't reduced to just one strategy.