

You could put a small box in each newsletter that gives families specific ideas about how to extend books. Great ideas can be found in *Story S-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-r-s* by Shirley Raines and *Robert Canady* (Gryphon House 1989).

47

The following four articles discuss ways to extend reading in the home. Books take on added value when parents and children make their own books or share planned experiences related to books they've read. Some families may not think about ways of "extending" books unless you help them see the possibilities and benefits.

Book Projects

Written language is acquired by children in many of the same ways they acquire oral language. Two crucial aspects of learning oral language are having opportunities to be a language user and having adult role models.

We can engage children in the exploration of written language by writing with them. Written communication is tied to reading. For the family who enjoys books, many opportunities will present themselves for book projects.

For example, after reading a story about a family, you might suggest making a family book together. You can discuss with the child whom to include in the book, how big the book should be, what shape to make it, and how many pages it should have. The child can decide how to depict family members (in drawings, photographs, or other means), as well as what to write and how to design the cover.

Another opportunity arises when your child makes up a story or tells you about something he did with his class. Perhaps he would like to make his story into a book. If so, he can dictate the words to you or do the writing himself—in his own way, whatever that is—and add pictures.

By providing an accepting, encouraging, and stimulating environment, we foster in children a strong self-image and positive attitude toward writing and reading.

Make Your Own Storybooks

Children love stories and love making things, so take advantage of this terrific combination and make some books with your child. Preschool children are ready to help write and illustrate stories from their own experiences or imaginations. Here's an idea.

1. Write down a story as your child tells it. Be sure to write the child's words, not yours, and repeat the words as you write. This process helps a child recognize that print is "talk" written down.
2. Place an appropriate number of words at the top of separate pages and reread the story with your child.
3. Invite your child to illustrate each page and, if she wishes, to create a cover, title page, and dedication.
4. Arrange pages in order and place in a notebook.
5. Encourage your child to "read" this new book to you.

This same process can be used with photographs that describe a trip to the zoo, a vacation, or a visit from Grandma.

These unique books make wonderful gifts. You might want to photocopy them (color photocopies are great!) and give them to several members of the family or close friends.

Remember, whatever the topic, we adults act only as the scribes for the child's words and as assistants in putting the book together. Children should make all the decisions about the content and creation of their own storybooks!

Bringing Books to Life

Books should be an integral part of a child's life. You can bring books to life for your child by finding books that relate to the family's activities and by extending books that you've already read together.

Books about family activities are relatively easy to find. For example, if you go to the zoo, find a book about animals; if you walk along a park pond, get a book from the library that discusses pond life; if you have a new baby, find a book about infants and siblings. The possibilities are endless.

Ask a children's librarian or someone who works in the children's section of a bookstore to help you find books of interest. Look for other books at used book sales or yard sales and flea markets.

Extending a book the family has already read is easy, too. It's as simple as providing materials for children to draw or paint their favorite part of the book.

Or you can act out what the characters in a book do. If the characters are firefighters or astronauts or chefs, gather a few props to spark the child's play. If the characters plant a garden, you and your child can, too. If the story or a part of it takes place at a bakery or grocery store, in a forest, or at a swimming pool, read it just before you set out for the same kind of place. Then, with your child you can notice things you saw in the book, point out things you haven't seen before, and look at the book again when you get home.

When children read about familiar activities or when they act out favorite stories, books come alive for them. Reading becomes more meaningful, more memorable, and more fun.

Booking and Cooking

When we cook in class, children combine ingredients, mix, stir, and taste. They also use the descriptive words of literature—nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs—to describe the what, how, where, and why, as well as the movements, textures, tastes, and feelings, associated with food and cooking.

This combination of cooking and books can be continued at home. As Sunday morning pancakes are cooked, consider referring to Eric Carle's *Pancakes, Pancakes* (Simon & Schuster 1990) or Tomie de Paula's *Pancakes for Breakfast* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1978). Make split pea soup from the *George and Martha* series by James Marshall (Houghton Mifflin) or porridge after reading a version of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Buy or bake different kinds of bread after you read *Bread, Bread, Bread* by Ann Morris (Mulberry 1989).

Literature and cooking experiences are limited only by your imagination. Use your child's food preferences as a starting place and expand the experiences from there.

As in any other shared reading time, talking about the story is just as important as reading the book. Make comments about the plot as you read, helping connect events in the book to the child's life. For example, when reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (Collins 1979), you might remark, "Remember when we bought those good plums at the grocery store?" Ask questions that help your child think about the story: "How do you think you would feel if you ate everything that the Very Hungry Caterpillar ate on Saturday?"

Connecting books with enjoyable family experiences—like cooking or conversation—sends your child the message that reading is fun for children and grown-ups, too.

50

Few experiences are as much fun for children as cooking, and cooking offers lots of opportunities for connections to books. With your help, parents will see how hands-on experiences like cooking can make books even more special to children. Give parents specific ideas about books with a link to cooking. Here are some ideas:

- *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss (Random House 1976): colored eggs and ham
- *The Gingerbread Boy* by Paul Galdone (Houghton Mifflin 1975): gingerbread
- *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey (Viking 1948): blueberries or blueberry tarts
- *Jamerry* by Bruce Degen (HarperCollins 1983): toast or muffins and jam
- *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock* by Eric Kimmel (Holiday House 1988): fruits and vegetables
- *Chicken Soup with Rice* by Maurice Sendak (Scholastic 1976): chicken soup