

## Literacy Squad Show Notes

### 01 | Developing pre-readers' comprehension skills.

#### Reading Aloud Everyday

There are a variety of strategies that teachers use to help children develop their ability to begin reading and one of the most effective strategies is reading books to children out aloud. Children love listening to stories and when they are read aloud with enthusiasm by the teacher or parent (regardless of the topic), children really become interested in the story. By reading to children out aloud, the teacher or parent is encouraging children to relate to the characters and story, whether it is fiction or nonfiction. There is a lot of research that supports this and it is still one of the most powerful ways to encourage children to read. When they see you enjoy reading, they are much more likely to want to read themselves and this desire is what will also develop their comprehension skills. As one of the keys to developing comprehension is getting children *interested* in what they are reading. When they are interested, they are much more likely to want to read, retain what they have read and really give it a go.

#### Active Talking and Listening

*Talking* to children about the world around them too is also what develops their comprehension as they build their background knowledge and this enhances their understanding of what they are reading or listening to and further develops their reading skills. In fact, talking to children and sharing stories is one of the most powerful strategies for developing their speaking and listening skills, as well as their comprehension.

#### Interesting and Relatable Books

Another very effective strategy is to provide children with books that they find interesting and relatable, meaning that the books are targeted to what the children are interested in their early years of life (say 3 to 5 years of age). For example, the book *Are You My Mother?* which was popular when I was beginning to read and is still very popular with children (and teachers and parents) is a perfect book for pre-readers. The content is really relatable to children as they are able to *empathise* with the little bird who is looking for his or her mother. This makes *Are You My Mother?* and other similar books the perfect book for igniting children's interest in the story, thus making them want to read the words and understand what they mean. It is also the perfect book to ask questions about the story that the child would understand, such as "Is the truck the bird's mother? Why or why not?"

#### Decodable Books

A good way to find books that are really targeted to your children is to find books that are designed specifically for pre-readers, such as those with "decodable" language, words that help children learn letter/sound relationships or help them recognise the letter patterns in words. These books should include words that enable children to sound out the letters in

each word to say whole words. They also contain common sight words for the child to also build up their sight word vocabulary by repeatedly seeing non-decodable words repeated time and time again, such as the word “are” or “you”, two words that can’t be sounded out and rely on repetition.

Another feature of a pre-reader is that they include rhyming words and word patterns (such as one fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish in Dr Seuss’s book of the same title). Words that rhyme and continue in a rhythmic pattern make the words easier to remember and children love finishing the sentence if they know what is coming up. Appealing imagery is also important, particularly imagery that children find interesting and relatable (such as a cat running from a dog or a bird trying to find its mother) is what they understand, what they are curious about and this will make them want to read.

### **Active Reading**

Another effective strategy is to ask children *questions* about the book they are about to read. This is often done by asking children what they think the story is about by reading out the title aloud and looking at the book cover. This encourages children to make a prediction about what they think the story is about and ignites their interest in the book, encouraging them to read themselves. Asking questions whilst they are reading and after they’ve finished reading also helps children recall what they have read and to make connections with what they already know.