The Importance of Interactive Read-Alouds

Why Interactive Read-Alouds?

Interactive read-alouds allow us to construct knowledge with children. During our time together, we consciously build relationships and create a community of collaboration. We can read books that kids may not have the ability to read on their own, so the experience is both powerful and motivating.

All children can participate because in planning, reading, problem solving and questioning what readers do, it frees kids up to focus on the meaning of the text. We are scaffolding the learning process, making it accessible to all.

Book Selection Is Everything

Selecting books with our children in mind shifts the focus from adult-driven to kid-driven. Considering strengths and interests lets kids know that we care about them. If our goal is to create a love for reading, curiosity, engagement, and learning, then we have to choose books we know kids will be excited about.

A book may have pertinent content related to real problems children face in and out of school. We might even allow kids to select future books that we can read. Getting to know their needs will help us determine our why and purpose.

Some questions to consider are:

- What are my children’s interests and what might they need next?
- Does this book build on the previous books?
- Does it build on background knowledge?

The Deeper Meaning of the Text

Authors often have an overall message they want their readers to understand. These overall messages are subtle, and taking the time to understand the deeper meaning can help us facilitate learning. Our aim is for children to not only learn about the content but also the important underlying message. Some valuable underlying messages relate to empathy, respect, kindness, problem solving, interpersonal skills, and teamwork.

Questioning Strategies

Planning for questions to ask children ahead of time is beneficial for several reasons. We are better able to plan based on our children’s needs and not just the text. In addition, it frees us up to enjoy the text along with them, instead of thinking as we are reading. We can think about what level of questions to ask, so the conversation goes smoothly. Other aspects to consider:

- Where are some good places to stop reading, which will allow children to think and talk about the meaning?
- Are our questions rigorous enough?
- How relevant are our questions?

Plan for Involvement

Involvement is a must. Children have to know that they are in a safe place and that their voice is heard. Building meaningful conversations allows children to participate and interact with one another around what they are learning.