

READING WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Reading and talking about books is such a pleasure for both of us, it is such fun to spend time exploring the topic with all of you.

Listed below are a few of Tracey's favorite authors for toddlers:

Helen Oxenbury - great for infants and very young toddlers

Bruce McMillan – beautiful photos and simple text

Eric Carle – Needs no introduction!

Mem Fox – explores emotions and experiences that are meaningful to toddlers

Denise Fleming- wonderful nature themes, colorful images

Lois Ehlert- beautiful language and simple paintings

Don and Audrey Wood- fun themes and pictures

Taro Gomi – simple text and pictures that engage children

Jim McMullan- books about garbage trucks and tug boats

Lucy Micklethwait- Spot a Cat and Spot a Dog, both encourage young children to look closely at paintings

There are many more wonderful authors and beautiful simple picture books. I recommend spending time in the library looking for books that speak to the current season, recent events at your house, or your child's latest passion. Choose books with realistic pictures, about a sentence of text per page, and offer both board books and those with real pages to turn. Both rhyme and rhythm help lead a child into the story and can make the story more predictable. As Ellen mentioned, very young children are interested in books that contain texture such as a fluffy sheep or simple doors to open on the page.

Warm cuddly, child-led reading times foster a love for reading. Different personalities and stages of development impact a child's ability to sit through one book or many. Allow your child to set the pace, and let your interest and excitement guide him/her toward longer story times. When you begin a book, talk about both the person who wrote the book and the person who drew or perhaps painted the pictures. Later, they can learn that we mean authors and illustrators. As you read, take time to talk about the story and wonder about the characters and their experiences. It is especially valuable to talk about how the characters are feeling and what their expressions might mean. Children are better able to manage conflict if they develop their understanding of perspective.

Model "I wonder questions" when reading with young children is an excellent way to enter into a dialogue to more fully understand what they have been thinking about during the story. A few "thinking out loud" type of conversation starters either during the reading of the book or right after are a great way to have a mini book club type of conversation with your child. The questions can be as simple as, "I wonder how that caterpillar felt once he'd eaten all of that food" or "What would you do if you swallowed a fly?" - whatever seems like appropriate topics to wonder about based on the book. This suggests to the child that you have a curiosity about learning more and that you want to share/discuss with others what you read. This leads to a richer more participatory reading experience for both the reader and the child and invited the child to share opinions and ideas.

Children who see their adults reading are more likely to engage in reading themselves. Some research suggests that seeing significant adults is more important to developing reading skills than even reading to your child. So, I hope you have a chance to curl up with a good book of your own sometime soon!

