

May is Speech and Hearing Month!



Preschool Hotline Newsletter

Spring 2016 Edition

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Contacts:

Northwest
Haida Gwaii 250-626-4715
Prince Rupert 250-622-6380
Terrace 250-631-4233
Smithers 250-847-6400

Northern Interior
Prince George 250-565-7370
Quesnel 250-983-6810

Northeast:
Please contact your nearest Child Development Center in Fort St. John or Dawson Creek

• *The new tree leaves are rustling in the spring breeze.*
• *The robins are flying in the sky and flowers are blooming.*
• *Spring is on its way...*

• Were you able to picture the leave, robins and flowers?

• Our world is an open book just waiting to be described for our little one's ears. And because we love books so much our spring edition, to celebrate May month, is wordless books. I know what you are thinking... WHAT??? No words??? What am I supposed to read? What's the story to tell? But have no fear, inside this newsletter you will find out how to use wordless books, and you will discover the link of wordless books and literacy. We have many rich First Nations cultures in our beautiful Northern part of the province and this newsletter

offers some ideas on First Nations books for children and how to adapt some of those longer stories.

Please be sure to connect with your local Speech Language Pathologist if you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's speech or language development or look for us under Public Health at northernhealth.ca.

Happy "May is Speech & Hearing" Month!

-Your NH Speech & Language Team!



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Wordless Picture Books and Pre-literacy

In this day and age, every parent of a preschooler has heard about the importance of reading to his or her child. These moments between caregiver and child are an important first step in a child's literacy journey. Before learning to read, a child has to develop a variety of skills in the following three areas: **alphabet knowledge**, **phonological awareness** and **vocabulary and oral language**.

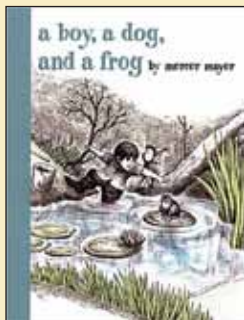
Alphabet knowledge is the ability to name and distinguish the shapes of letters. **Phonological awareness** refers to knowledge of the sounds of language, independent of the letters. This includes tasks such as rhyming and determining what sounds a word starts or ends with. Finally, **vocabulary and oral language** refer to the number of words the child understands and uses, as well as their ability to understand and use different kinds of sentences. All of these skills can be developed through shared book time.

Caregivers can make book time even more valuable by reading *with* your child rather than *to* your child. Some of the best books to promote conversational book reading are actually books with no words at all. The last skill area mentioned, **vocabulary and oral language**, is especially easy to work on when using wordless picture books. By not having written words limiting you, the story can become anything you want it to be! A child's imagination can take center stage as they provide their own dialogue for the story. You can help them tell their story by providing them with a model (I think...) or sometimes a question (What's happening on this page? What might happen next?) Simply describing the picture on each page can be a great activity to develop oral language skills.

Because there is no print it can also be easier to work on **phonological awareness** as your child can concentrate on just the sounds and not the letters. Try to think of some rhyming words for pictures on the page.

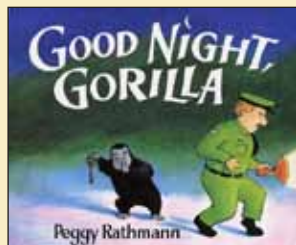
Wordless picture books are a great way to enjoy a slightly different kind of story-time with your child. By turning reading time into a conversation, you are able to better promote those essential pre-literacy skills.

Wordless Books to Explore!



A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog

By: Mercer Mayer
Age Level: 0-3
Reading Level: Pre-Reader



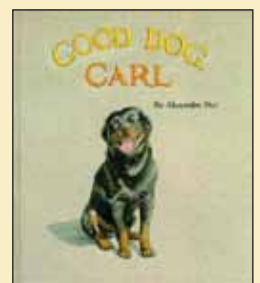
Good Night Gorilla

By: Peggy Rathmann
Age Level: 3-6
Reading Level: Pre-Reader



Find the Kitten

By: Stephen Cartwright
Age level: 2 and up
Reading level: Pre-reader



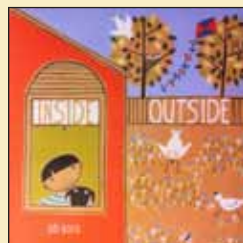
Good Dog Carl

By: Alexandra Day
Age Level: 3-6
Reading Level: Pre-Reader



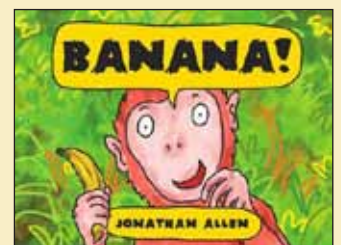
Pancakes for Breakfast

By: Tomie de Paola
Age Level: 3-6
Reading Level: Beginning Reader



Inside Outside

By: Lizi Boyd
Age Level: 3-6
Reading Level: Beginning Reader



Banana!

By: Jonathan Allen
Age level: 3-6
Reading level: Preschool

How to “Read” Wordless Books



I have never met a parent who did not understand the importance of reading to their children, but one of the comments I hear is that their child does not want to listen to all the words. They want to turn the pages and see what happens next. The usual suggestion is to cut out a lot of the words and just talk about the pictures with their child. I also hear that children don't want to attempt re-telling the story because “they can't read.”

Before books there were stories and before written words there were pictures, so we know that children's minds are very open to a narrative that comes without print. It is easy to see why wordless books deserve a place on your child's book list.

Wordless books are created by artists, not writers, and they bring a different perspective to storytelling. The job of putting the visual into words is left to the reader. So how do we do this?

First of all, and most of all, avoid turning the story in to a question and answer session. “What's this? What's this?” can be a tedious way to exchange ideas and move the narrative along. Instead, talk about what you see and wait for a comment to come back. Or you can turn it into an ‘I Spy’ activity. Consider the success of “Where's Waldo?” Clearly many children enjoy scanning and finding. And while they are looking for the hidden object you can help vocabulary development with statements such as “I see a chair but I don't see a spoon.” This type of statement helps your child realise that there is interest in more than one object and also that the fun is in the looking as much as the finding. When you are looking for one thing you generally find another. Reading wordless books is shared exploration.

You can encourage more responses by preceding your comment with an “I wonder..” For example, “I wonder why he has an umbrella,” will likely generate more discussion than simply pointing to the umbrella and saying “What is he holding?”

Take some time just to go through the book together looking at the pictures, naming items, pointing out occasional things, and generally becoming familiar with the book. The second time through you can begin to develop a story. Children develop story telling skills over time, and while we can't all turn out to be Charles Dickens, we can hope to be able to put a story together with a beginning, middle and end. When a story has text this is provided for the reader. When the story has only pictures anything can happen. Small children may lose the plot at first as they become entranced by the visual details, but older children will learn to incorporate these details into their narrative. They will also learn how to use picture clues as they begin to learn to read.

Artists who are creating wordless books will often put in more detail than if they are illustrating a written narrative. The result is a rich background that allows for many expansions and variations of the story. Adults can help with appropriate commenting. For example, “I wonder who is that disappearing behind that tree? Oh look, there he is again,” transfers attention from the main characters to what may be a sub-plot.

Once your child has developed a story for the book, they are ready to share it. They can tell the story to aunts and uncles and grandparents, and feel proud that they “can read books too.”



First Nations Books

The hunt for the perfect children's book can be a challenge. The number of options available can be overwhelming. In British Columbia, especially in the North, we are lucky enough to have access to culturally diverse reading material to offer our children. In particular, books featuring the Northwest's vibrant First Nations cultures provide an opportunity for members of these communities to share their culture with others. For First Nations children, having materials that feature their local culture allows them to see images they are able to identify with and relate to. While it is also important to expose children to topics and subjects outside of their culture as well (broad background knowledge is important to later reading comprehension) having relatable materials can be a great way to transmit important information to the next generation. The problem; sometimes these books are not quite at the level that we need for a particular child. Rather than writing them off, try adapting the books to make them 'just right' for your child's level of development.

Garfinkel Publications has published a lovely series of books about exploring the Northwest Coast. Titles include; *Where is Mouse Woman?*, *Goodnight World* and *Learn & Play with First Nations and Native Art*. The images in these books are beautiful and very eye-catching for young children. Many of these stories are great for toddlers as there are lots of labels and not too much text. How to adapt for the older preschool child? Try describing the pictures in more detail, or have the child make up a story for the images on the page. The picture provides them with a topic and allows them to practice using different kinds of sentences. It also gives the adult a chance to provide additional information that might not be in the book.

One of my personal favourites featuring a Northwest story is the book, *Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest* by Gerald McDermott. This book is a recounting of a traditional Haida story of how the sun came to be. The story is beautifully written but can be a bit long for some preschool children. Try simplifying the story, sticking only to the key elements (this means you will have to pre-read and do a bit of planning). As the child grows you can add in more of the story. Or, choose just a few pages (which ever ones the child is interested in) to discuss.

The great thing about books is there are many ways to read them. Feel free to be flexible in your story time to make whichever books you like, work for you and your child.

