Every Child, Every Story

A Shared Reading Guide

Shared Reading

Shared reading is an evidence-based instructional approach that emphasizes the interaction, connection, and meaning-making that occur when a child and an adult explore a book together—either one-on-one or in a small group. During shared reading, children actively listen, talk, and participate which helps them to hear and play with sounds in words, recognize letters, understand how print works, and begin writing by drawing and scribbling. These Science of Reading skills—phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, concepts of print, and early writing—are all important building blocks for learning to read and write. When children develop these skills through engaging, shared reading, they strengthen early academic abilities and build the confidence and readiness needed for success in school.

Shared Reading for All Children

Some young children may struggle to fully participate in individual or group shared reading experiences. Early care and education professionals and caregivers may wonder how to offer additional support so that every child can engage meaningfully alongside their peers.

Children may experience a range of developmental strengths and needs that can influence their participation in shared reading, including differences in:

- Engagement and attention
- Comprehension and understanding
- Vocabulary or communication
- Emotional or behavioral regulation
- Fine or gross motor skills
- Vision
- Hearing or listening

Before reading, consider whether the child may benefit from additional support during shared reading. This guide offers inclusive, multisensory strategies to support all children from birth to age 5, including those who need alternative ways to participate. Many strategies benefit all learners by enhancing engagement, understanding, and learning. Completed book-specific Shared Reading Guides are available for 16 OCALI Lending Library books and include titles such as

Barnyard Dance, Brown Bear Brown Bear, No! David, etc. To create your own Shared Reading Guide for a book of your choosing, please refer to the Shared Reading Guide Planning Template.

Selecting a Book for Shared Reading

Choose books that children might be interested in, connect to an instructional theme or topic, or that relate to something they may have experienced.

Locating Books

Quality books can be found through many sources, such as the public library, OCALI Lending Library, Amazon (search by category of children's books, then teachers' or editors' picks, and award winners), or thrift stores.

Book, Author, and Illustrator

List book title, author, and illustrator for discussion. Many authors have websites specific to their books. The websites can provide resources that provide ideas for comprehension and discussion questions, or a wide range of extension activities that are already created and can be easily downloaded for classroom use.

Key Concepts

Identify key concepts from the book. These can help guide your selection of supports and activities. (e.g., animals, colors, counting, rhyming, predictable text, etc.)

Book Specific Target Vocabulary

Identify targeted vocabulary in the book. Targeted vocabulary selected from the story is intended to focus on words that introduce key learning concepts, such as colors, animal labels, numbers, etc., demonstrate action words such as look, see, jump, run, etc., or are part of the early learning core vocabulary for young children.

Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards and Access Strategies Alignment

The Shared Reading Guide Access Strategies are aligned with Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards (OELDS) in the tables below. OELDS describe the skills that children are developing from infancy through the end of preschool in 9 domains including: Approaches to Learning (AL), Cognitive Development (CO), Creative Development (CR), Language and Literacy (LL), Mathematics (MA), Physical Development and Wellness (PW), Science (SC), Social and Emotional Development (SE), and Social Studies (SS).

Professionals can use their program's curriculum and the OELDS to identify access strategies that support all learners' engagement, participation and development of key skills across multiple domains during shared reading activities. These skills include:

- AL– curiosity, initiative, persistence, and problem-solving skills.
- CO– thinking, reasoning, and understanding concepts.
- CR– expression through art, music, and imaginative play.
- LL – communication, vocabulary, reading, and writing readiness.
- MA– number sense, patterns, measurement, and spatial reasoning.
- PW– motor skills, health, and self-care.
- SC– observation, experimentation, and understanding the natural world.
- SE– self-regulation, empathy, and social skills.
- SS – understanding communities, culture, and social responsibility.

Shared Reading Access Strategies

Language and Literacy

Some children may have difficulty understanding spoken words or have limited vocabulary to express what they know through spoken oral language. In addition to limited language skills, these children may become frustrated, exhibit challenging behaviors, or alternatively, they may appear apathetic and disinterested in reading activities. The following strategies may help professionals engage all children in positive reading experiences. For additional ideas consider consulting with a speech-language pathologist (SLP).

OELDS	Access Strategies	Examples
LL 1.a. 1.b. 1.e. 2.a.	**Auditory Supports:** Provide sensory supports to enhance engagement and understanding of the story content.	Emphasize the story's musical pattern. • Sing the text to a familiar tune while using rhythm, clapping, etc. • Search YouTube for specific videos of book songs. Add sound effects to the story. • Use apps such as Novel Effect or Noisy Book- Apps for recording sound effects.

		• Record sound effects on a sequential message voice output device, such as a Step-by-Step found in the OCALI Lending Library, Classroom Communication Kit. For more information on how to set up and use a sequential messaging device, consult the Step-by-Step Spark Guide. Search YouTube versions of stories that combine sound and animation (e.g., The Best Children's Literature Read-Aloud YouTube Channels in 2024).
LL 1.a, 1.b, PW 1b,	**Kinesthetic and Tactile:** Provide sensory supports to enhance engagement and understanding of the story content.	Provide physical manipulatives related to the story content, such as popsicle stick puppets, small plastic animals, or story boxes containing tangible items related to the story or other hands-on activities using free printable story activities. If the child has difficulty holding and using the manipulatives, see the Strategies to Support Fine and Gross Motor Skills for additional ideas.
LL 1.a., 1.b.	**Visual:** Provide sensory supports to enhance engagement and understanding of the story content.	Give each child a picture to match (example) to a corresponding page in the book. Consider making a discovery bottle for children to explore that is related to the book's theme.
LL 1.a., 1.b., 1.c., 1.e.	Provide opportunities for children to participate in the reading of the book.	Ask children to say together the repeating lines in the story or key vocabulary. If the child has limited language, record the repeating lines of text or key vocabulary on a single message voice output device, such as a Big Mack found in the OCALI Lending Library Classroom Communication Kit. For more information on setting up and using a sequential messaging device, consult the Big Mack Spark Guide.
LL 1.a., 1.b.,	Ask probing questions about the story content.	Ask questions before reading the story to encourage predictive thinking skills.

1e.		Throughout the story and at the end of the story, check understanding and comprehension by asking questions such as: • **Completion-** leave a blank at the end of a sentence, students fill it in, typically used in books with repetitive phrases, or rhyme. • **Recall-** questions about what just happened. • Open-ended questions that do not have a specific answer: "Tell me what's happening in this picture." • **Wh-Questions-** typically focus on pictures, "What does that man have?" • **Distance-** Questions that build a bridge between the book and personal experience, "There were farm animals in the book. What farm animals did you see at the farm?" For children with limited language, provide appropriate vocabulary using communication boards or voice-output devices. Boards can be created with Boardmaker or LessonPix symbol sets (both are for purchase products).
LL 1.a. 1.b. 1.c. 1.d. 1.e.	Provide opportunities for children to comment, ask questions, and engage in discussion about the book.	Encourage active participation and engagement by having the child say aloud the repeating lines of text each time it occurs in the story. If the child has limited language, use the Big Mack single-message device from the OCALI Lending Library Classroom Communication Kit to record the repeating lines so the child can activate the device to speak the repeating lines. For more information on Big Mack setup and use, consult **the** SPARK Big Mack **G**uide. Provide opportunities to make comments about the book by using the following prompts: • Lead with a COMMENT - stop and wait 5+ seconds. • Ask a QUESTION - stop and wait 5+ seconds. • RESPOND by adding more.

		Use a communication board or a voice output device if needed, such as one of the voice output devices available through the OCALI Lending Library, the Quick Talker Feather Touch 12 or Quick Talker Feather Touch 23. Use the identified key book vocabulary and core words.

Engagement and Attending

Some children may have difficulty attending to and engaging in a shared reading experience. They may not be able to sit for the time needed to complete a book, tolerate sitting on a lap, or focus on the book to engage in the content and meaning. Professionals can use the following strategies to support child engagement and attention during shared reading.

OELDS	Access Strategies	Examples
AL 1.c. SE 2.a.	Allow the child's choice of the best listening position.	Children can engage in stories while positioned in a variety of ways, such as on a lap, floor sitting, lying on their tummy, standing, etc.
AL 1.c. SE 2.a. SS 1.c.	Provide visual boundaries to designate the expected sitting space for listening.	Use Hula hoops, carpet squares, colored mats, and painters' tape to define personal space.
AL 1.c. SE 2.a.	Provide options for self-regulation with contained movement while listening.	Provide wiggle cushions, therapy balls, wedge cushions, a child's rocker, a deflated beach ball, or other mobile seating solutions to support a child's need to move. Some Alternate seating systems can be trialed through the OCALI Lending Library - Sensory Seating Tool Kit.

		Provide fidgets such as a sensory bag, small manipulatives, or story-related manipulatives. A variety of fidgets can be trialed through the OCALI Lending Library - Sensory Regulation Kit, Preschool/Early Elementary.
AL 1.c. PW 1.a. SE 2.a.	Provide opportunities for self-regulation with structured, large gross motor movement during the story.	Have children take turns gathering small story props placed around the room. Ask children to act like the characters or animals in the story. (hop, gallop, crawl, fly, swim, run, walk, move over, under, or around, stomp, tiptoe, etc.). Provide color mats or large story picture mats around the room that the children can move to when a color or part of a story is mentioned in the book.
AL 1.c.	Explore focused listening supports.	Provide listening devices (a personal FM system usable for children with auditory processing challenges that does not require hearing aids), or a classroom amplification system. Listening devices can be trialed through the OCALI Lending Library: • Rogers Focus Pen HAT System* • Classroom Amplification System Front Row Juno.

Behavior

Some children may exhibit behaviors that make participation in shared reading challenging. They may be unwilling to join in the activity, be disruptive during the activity, or attempt to remove themself before the book is finished. Consider whether these behaviors may be linked to frustrations due to challenges with communication, sensory processing, and/or understanding expectations and classroom routines. Will providing additional supports in these areas help to improve access and participation in shared reading activities? Professionals can use the following strategies to increase child engagement:

OELDS	Access Strategies	Examples

CO 4.a.	Provide adequate transitions for moving to and participating in the shared reading activity.	Provide activity schedules and social narratives/social stories to help children understand participation expectations. To learn more about how to make these supports, explore the following OCALI resources: ● OCALI Lending Library - The New Social Story Book by Carol Gray. ● OCALI Autism Center Grab and Go - What to Do Cards. ● OCALI Autism Center Grab and Go - First Then Cards.
AL 1.c. SE 2.a.	Provide options for self-regulation with contained movement while listening.	Use items already available in the classroom, such as a slightly inflated beach ball on a seat to increase in-seat movement or a child-sized rocker. There are commercially available options such as wiggle cushions, therapy balls, wedge cushions, etc. Commercially available seating options for loan from the OCALI Lending Library - Sensory Seating Kit. Provide fidgets such as a sensory bag or other small manipulatives, or story-related fidgets. Multiple fidget options are available for loan from the OCALI Lending Library - Sensory Regulation Kit, Preschool/Early Elementary.
LL 1.c. AL 1.c. SE 2.a.	Reduce sensory distractions - auditory.	Reduce auditory sensory distractions with earmuffs or noise-reducing headphones. Noise-reducing headphones are available for loan from the OCALI Lending Library - Sensory Regulation Kit Preschool/Early Elementary. Allow the child to use picture supports to indicate to the teacher that the environment is too loud (e.g., "too loud" sign or sound volume scale signs). Picture supports for Too Loud or voice volume scale. Free download. Consider personal amplification systems for children who do not wear hearing aids that block environmental noise, but enhance the teacher's voice. The OCALI Lending Library has the following personal amplification system: Rogers Focus Pen HAT System*.
AL 1.c.	Reduce sensory distractions - visual.	Allow the child to sit in a sensory calming area (e.g., use a box or create a tent by covering a classroom table with a blanket), provide a cozy corner for

SE 2.a.		observation away from the group, or provide one-on-one reading of the book.
LL 1.a. 1.c. 1.e.	Ensure children with communication challenges have the needed communication supports to participate in the shared reading experience (comment, ask questions, discuss, etc.).	Use communication boards and picture supports. See above - Strategies to Support Language and Literacy Development.

Fine or Gross Motor Skills

Some children may have fine or gross motor challenges, which make it difficult to participate with manipulatives used to support the book and story, or have difficulty turning the pages of the book. The following list of suggestions provides examples of supports for children with mild motor challenges as well as for students who have more significant motor challenges. Consider consulting with an occupational or physical therapist for additional ideas.

OELDS	Access Strategies	Examples
PW 1.a.	Position the child among peers in the same way. (e.g., if peers are seated on the floor, seat the child on the floor too). Specialized seating may be needed for some children.	Provide adapted seating such as propping with rolled towels, pool noodles, or a bean bag chair. Additional commercial seating options might include a floor sitter chair, corner seat, bolster seat, Boppy, and ball seat (Consult a physical therapist or occupational therapist if needed).
PW 1.b.	Adapt physical access to the book as needed during 1-on-1 shared reading to assist	Provide page spacers/fluffers. Add velcro dots, foam stickers, adhesive felt tabs, or extenders such as laminated cardstock strips taped to pages, or paper clips between pages to aid in separating pages for turning. This

	the child in being able to turn the pages of the book.	OCALI video provides information on adapting books, Adapted Books, and Page Fluffers. Adapt book pages by providing board book versions of the story or laminate pages with thick laminate. Additionally, consider cutting the spine from the book, hole punch the pages, and put into a three-ring binder or a comb binder so the pages can lie flat for ease of page turning. Stabilize the book. Apply Velcro to the back of the book and fasten it on a cookie sheet or slant board to stabilize the book for one-handed use. Provide an audio version recorded on a Step-by-Step communication device with each page of the book recorded per switch activation. The OCALI Lending Library Classroom Communication Kit has a Step-By-Step that can be trialed. Provide a digital accessible format of the book that is keyboard and/or switch accessible. ● Monarch Reader has many books that have already been adapted. ● The free website AAC Gameplay has ready-made story books and games that can be accessed using multiple interfaces, including touch screen and switches. If a free account is created, it allows the user to upload a YouTube video storybook to customize it for switch access. See example: Brown Bear ● Switch Accessible PPT and Google Slides - Conduct a Google search: "How to make switch accessible talking books using PPT and Google Slides" for the most up-to-date AI-generated instructions. ● Bookshare is a free accessible digital library that provides ebooks in formats such as audio, braille, and large print
LL, 1.b. PW 1.b.	Adapt storytelling manipulatives.	Build up or stabilize manipulatives. Attach shower curtain rings to manipulatives to make them easier to grasp and explore.

		Book theme-related switch toys can be used to encourage active participation. The OCALI Lending Library offers a variety of thematic toys and switches that could be used to support book themes. Search keywords from the book (e.g., frog, bear, colors, etc.).

Low Vision or Blind

Children who are blind or have low vision often have difficulty accessing traditional books and materials. Some children may need large print options, while others may need a braille version of the book as early readers. Many children will use multiple formats, which may also include audio versions of text. The strategies provided cover all formats as well as additional strategies. For additional information about supporting children with low vision or blindness, contact The Ohio Deaf Blind Education Services.

OELDS	Access Strategies	Examples
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Use oversized books.	Provide a Big Book version of the book. These can be purchased commercially through a variety of retailers (e.g., Lakeshore, Amazon, etc.). Large print versions of books can be requested and created by the OCALI AT&AEM Center, Accessible Educational Materials Production Center.
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Alter the orientation of the book.	Lay the book flat on a table, prop up on a book stand, slant board, or large three-ring binder notebook, or place in a vertical orientation. The OCALI Lending Library Pre-Writing/Drawing Kit - EC-COE includes a slant board for trial, and the Reading Kit offers a book stand for trial.
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Offer alternate format materials.	Use twin vision (with added Braille), and large-print books, both digital to be used on a large-screen mobile device and large print paper copies (low vision). The OCALI Lending Library has several twin vision books available for loan. Search for the term “twin vision” to see the entire collection of 127+ books, or use the advanced search link to search for specific book titles (e.g., “Brown Bear”) along with the term “twin vision.”

		Seedlings Braille Books for Children - This program provides braille books for children with vision loss ages birth to 21 in the U.S. and Canada. The child can receive one order of 5 free braille books from Seedlings per calendar year. Accessible Digital Picture Books for Preschoolers - Provides multiple options of digital books that are low vision/blind accessible. A Collection of Alternate Format Books - for children with CVI or low vision, that includes interactive books, high contrast, simplified visual presentation, and extended literacy guides from the Paul V Sherlock Center.
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Magnify and project the book for group or individual viewing.	Use a document camera, an overhead projector, or a slide show (e.g., Google Slides or PowerPoint) projected on a large screen.
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Provide large manipulatives and props.	Use printable story activities such as large manipulatives, colorful picture cards of the book characters or thematic items, black and white outline pictures, a story box, and or a puppet on a paint stick. 3D printed manipulatives - many schools and public libraries have 3D printers. Additionally, there are some non-profit companies that will help, such as See3D, a non-profit organization that manages the printing and distribution of 3D printed models for people who are blind.
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Provide a high-visual-contrast book and manipulatives.	Use of a light box with book-themed manipulatives. OCALI Lending Library - LED Mini Light Box. Provide high contrast versions specific for Cortical Visual Impairments.
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Provide tactile graphics of supporting book materials.	Outline animals with Puffy Paint or glue or add textures to pictures to enhance tactile cues for understanding the content.

LL 1.b. 1.e.	Audio descriptions.	Give verbal descriptions of the book's pages as you read if the text does not adequately describe the illustrations. If using video versions of books, consider searching in the Described and Captioned Media Program holdings for the described version of the book.

Listening, Deaf, or Hard of Hearing

The following supports may be useful for students who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Additionally, some of the listed suggestions may provide support for children who have auditory processing challenges. For additional information about supporting children who are deaf or hard of hearing, contact Ohio Deaf Blind Education Services.

OELDS	Access Strategies	Examples
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Improve visual access and support for the book content and the reader.	Position the child so they can see the reader's lips. Use big books and large-print books for group reading to facilitate better visual monitoring of the text and pictures. Provide supporting pictures and vocabulary on cards or felt boards. Use closed captions (CC) when using video versions of books. Search on YouTube or at the Described and Captioned Media Programs website for video versions of books with CC.
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Provide additional auditory cues and supports to ensure the child understands the story.	Pace reading speed and enunciate well. During reading, periodically summarize key concepts and vocabulary used in the book. Repeat questions posed by the other children.
LL 1.b. 1.e.	Use American Sign Language (ASL to support read-alouds.	Use simple ASL Sign Language for keywords (bear, bird, see, colors, etc.). Provide ASL video-narrated books found on YouTube, such as ASL Storytelling.

LL 1.b. 1.e. AL 1.c.	Personal Amplification Systems.	Hearing Aids - Ohio provides a program to assist families in purchasing hearing aids and other technologies and services for children from birth to 26 years old who are hard of hearing or deaf. Contact the Ohio Hearing Aid Assistance Program (OHAAP) Personal Amplification Systems for children with hearing aids can be paired with the child's hearing aids via special receivers attached to the hearing aid and a transmitter that is often worn by a teacher/adult, which can improve listening for teacher instruction. OCALI Lending Library offers Hearing Assistive Technologies* Personal Amplification Systems can be used for children who do not wear hearing aids but have auditory processing challenges. The OCALI Lending Library offers: Rogers Focus Pen HAT System* for trial.
LL 1.b. 1.e. AL 1.c.	Group or Classroom Amplification System.	Group or classroom amplification systems can be used for students who are hard of hearing but are not yet identified as needing personal listening devices. These systems can be helpful for all children to improve listening and attending to the teacher's instructions. OCALI Lending Library: Classroom Amplification System Front Row Juno.

*PLEASE NOTE: Trials of personal amplification systems require an audiologist to assess, recommend, and borrow from the OCALI Lending Library.

Extension Activities

While searching for shared reading resources, you may also find extension activities related to the learning concept of your selected book. Those activities may provide ideas on how to extend the book's content learning to other areas, such as art, music, science, technology, engineering, math (STEM), and family connection. If using the Shared Reading Template, those resources can be added in the provided chart to extend the learning fun. The Beyond Reading:

Extension Activities resource contains support and activity ideas to reinforce book concepts throughout learning domains.

Other Books to Read

Consider exploring and listing other books to read with similar learning concepts. This may be helpful when recommending books for families to support the learning content or to make available in learning centers around the room.