The Storybook Journey:
Pathways to literacy through story and play, (McCord, 1995) provides the approach to curriculum for inclusive toddler and preschool classrooms and peer interaction groups at the Child Learning Center at the University of Colorado at CU Boulder.

Unique to the Storybook Journey: Exploring one story sequence over a period of time (3-6 weeks); immersing children in the vocabulary, concepts, and narrative of the story; and engaging children with the story at their own pace through multiple learning experiences across the developmental domains.

(Differs from “theme approaches” that incorporate children’s literature, but do not explore one story narrative sequence over time)

This poster explores the evidence base for the practices of the Storybook Journey by providing examples of:

Critical components of the Storybook Journey:
• Home-school connections
• Responding to children’s interests
• Repeated Readings/ interactive reading strategies
• Story retell and reenactment
• Exploring the story through multiple developmental domains

Child and family perspectives

Clinicians’ Experiences

Research support

“Corduroy lost his button. OH NO! Corduroy can’t find his button. We have many, many Corduroys. One Corduroy lost his button. One did not. Corduroy sad – he can’t find his button. I play cash register. People give me money. I put money in.”

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES

Content: Vocabulary


When presented with videotaped stories, 5 year old children with SLI required additional exposures to acquire vocabulary than NL peers.


Compared gains in vocabulary through the use of story context and explicit teaching through interactive techniques for SLI/NL groups of kindergartners. Comparing results of this study with Rice et al. (1994), the authors suggest that more total exposures of target vocabulary, more exposures within sessions, and more frequent sessions are indicated for intervention.


Compared vocabulary gains of high and low vocabulary skill groups of kindergartners in repeated small group reading sessions exposed to 60 novel words in non-elaborated and elaborated conditions (treatment) to comparison group. “Children in the treatment group made significantly greater gains in elaborated words relative to children in the comparison group; no influence of storybook reading exposure was seen for non-elaborated words.”

Form: Narrative skills, Syntax


4 children with language impairments used greater syntactic complexity and asked more questions during manipulative than purely narrative storybooks. “Manipulative books appear to facilitate the length and complexity of children’s language output along with providing a context in which children are motivated to become more active conversational partners.”


Children told more elaborate narratives during book related pretend play than during storytelling alone. “Pretend play seems to have a decisive effect on facilitating narrative recall.”


Evidence suggests that storytelling facilitates greater story comprehension while story reading facilitates greater language complexity. “Combining [storytelling and story reading] could provide powerful literature experiences to influence the oral language development and story comprehension of young children.”

Use: Social language


An ethnographic exploration of children’s spontaneous book related play suggested children create direct links between books and their play experiences. Literacy related play appeared to enhance “comprehending books, expressing one’s reactions, experiencing books in affective and kinesthetic ways, and participating in literacy events,” as well as literacy development.


“Opportunities for mutual growth of social-emotional skills and emergent literacy are evident when teachers select and read books with social-emotional content.” These books “present models of adults and children solving problems and interacting, and they have the potential to connect children emotionally with the [character’s experiences].”
LITERACY OBJECTIVES:

Print awareness
The use of shared storybook reading with a print focus had a positive influence on print awareness skills (Words in Print, Print Recognition, and Alphabet Knowledge) in preschool children from low-income households.

In Head Start classrooms, combining literacy-rich play settings with active assistance from an adult regarding literacy positively impacted the preschoolers’ emergent literacy skills, including reading environmental print and labeling the function of print.

Phonological awareness
Results indicated that embedding sound talk, such as sound segmentation and deletion, within naturalistic literacy experiences of shared reading and writing led to gains in phonemic awareness in 5 and 6 year-old children.

Writing
“Children learn written language through active engagement with their world...By observing and interacting with other literate individuals, they learn what to attend to, how to use various materials; and what thinking processes to employ.”
“Credible evidence supports the claim that play can serve literacy in several ways by: providing settings that promote literacy activity, skills, and strategies; serving as a language experience that can build connections between oral and written modes of expression; and providing opportunities to teach and learn literacy."