

## Picture Walk

A picture walk can be a wonderful introduction to a book for a child. It is a shared activity with an adult – often a parent, teacher, or volunteer. It is a means of familiarizing a child with a story by previewing the pictures in the storybook.

Picture walks open the story to the child. He gets a feeling of where and when the story happened, who the characters in the story are, and some idea of what might happen as the story progresses. Picture walks are one way of setting the purpose for reading and helping children activate prior knowledge. New vocabulary words can be introduced as the child examines the pictures. Picture walks also help a child learn that the use of visual cues is a reading strategy.

The volunteer is the model for this activity especially if the child is hesitant to respond at first. Begin with a book that is full of colorful illustrations. Tell the child that you and he are going to look at the pictures together to guess what the book is about. Then you will read the book together to see if your guesses are correct.

Begin with the cover and go through the book looking at every picture in order. Ask open-ended questions using “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why,” and “how.” “Who is that hiding behind the tree?” “What do you think that girl is doing?” “Where do you think the little dog is going?” “What do you think will happen next?” Sometimes children are hesitant to express their thoughts, so the volunteer can model with a think aloud. A think aloud means describing what you are doing as you read or look at pictures. You model a strategy for the student. For instance, you look at a picture and say, “Oh my, that little dog looks frightened. Look his eyes are open so wide and his fur is standing up. Do you think he looks frightened? Why do you think he is frightened?”

Acknowledge the child’s input without indicating whether the response was correct or not. You might just restate what the child has said and suggest that when you read the story you can see if any predictions are valid. Once you have examined all the pictures, you and the child can read the story. As you read, check the predictions and look for the vocabulary words you identified and discussed during the picture walk.

Picture walks are a fun way to help increase a child’s comprehension of a story before even reading a word of the story.