**Guidelines for Incorporating Reach Out and Read in CenteringPregnancy and CenteringParenting**

Over the past 30 years, more studies have demonstrated the importance of early literacy, and of using language and age appropriate books for developmental assessment in well-child visits. At Union Community Care, the recent merger of Lancaster Health Center and Welsh Mountain Medical Center, we have been doing literacy promotion through Reach Out and Read since 2001. When we added Centering Parenting in 2012, we found ways to incorporate the books and modeling ‘out loud’ and dialogic reading into our group times. Recently, we have added a book to newborn night in our CenteringPregnancy groups.

Our books are typically bilingual English and Spanish, since the majority of our groups are in those languages, but based on census, we may have groups in Nepali , and are planning Swahili groups to meet the language needs of our recent refugees .

Here are some tips for incorporating books into the group session.

Logistics:

1. Plan and keep a log of books you use with each group at each age; assign selection to one person. This saves time when you’re prepping for group and ensures that the book is age appropriate and can fit in with the session’s topics. If a book is not a group favorite, consider eliminating it from your collection – it may be happening in individual visits as well, but parents may not be as verbal. Check on reading daily as part of your developmental assessment, and encourage.
2. Learn the literacy and language skills of your participants as soon as you can; we often ask mom’s to “tell the story based on pictures you see – don’t worry about the words”
3. A particularly talkative mom may be the best person to ask to start the reading if you read around the circle or to read the whole book.
4. Identify parent’s reading challenges early on in the group**.**  Assist with literacy referrals, ESL, GED etc as needed privately after group
5. CenteringParenting typically ends after 10 sessions, at about 2 years of age. In our health center, groups are able to continue if parents desire.
6. Make books available in family’s native language, when possible, but give an English book as well for the well-child check
7. Try to vary books so that families who have more than one child do not receive 2-3 copies of the same book.

Techniques for incorporating:

1. **Start talking about literacy during prenatal care**. Even if a patient is not in a group, when you’re talking about baby showers, preparing your home and newborn care, stress the importance of books as gifts and daily reading. We give “I Love You Like Sunshine” by Mariana Glusman, MD and Marta Killner, MD in English and Spanish in our prenatal groups around 32 weeks gestation during the newborn care and appearance session. We also have a lot of used children’s books in our NST room, including some copies of this, and encourage mothers with children to read during their NST’s.
2. **Introduce a book and out loud reading at the first newborn visit**. Because babies’ ages in group may vary slightly, it’s important to select a book based on age. In our practice we give a birth book (Good Night Moon by Margaret Wise Brown) to all moms, a special book to moms with babies in the NICU (When We are Quiet by Stacy Sims), and then subsequent books based on baby’s age. Encourage parents to use bedtime reading as part of a calming routine – *bath, brush, book, bed* works best in English, but certainly the concepts translate. We also register our English reading moms (or who have an English reader in the family) for Stem Starts Now, an email newsletter about growth and development, with links to language development
3. **(0-3 months) Try high contrast books for tummy time**. A great technique for encouraging tummy time is to have moms put all the babies on the mat on their bellies, and then prop a high contrast book in front of them – a perfect way to distract a baby from a position he or she rarely likes! In an individual visit, use the book when you demonstrate tummy time.
4. **If you do the diaper bag game, give an extra prize if mom has included a book**.
5. **(6-12 months) babies like baby faces**. There are multiple baby face and baby feelings books designed to show emotions, and many more that show families of many permutations. Many are available in several languages, such as “My Face Book” and “Families” from Starbright Books. These are great books for emotional and social literacy.
6. **(6-18 months) Help parents add adjectives when they talk to babies**. Sometimes we’ll use items from mat play and ask parents to describe around the circle using as many different words as they can. There are multiple books with items, colors, shapes, numbers, food, animals, vehicles, activities, and other things that can help older infants begin to see groupings and categorize, as well as identify simple descriptors.
7. **(18-24 months) Use familiar songs and rhymes to engage toddlers in singing and dancing. “**The Wheels on the Bus” is a perennial favorite and even 1 year olds can start the motions. Add some personal verses. Ask parents to do nursery rhymes and folk songs from their own countries and have them teach them to others in the group. We have used u-tube videos to help moms who feel unsure about melodies. This is also the time to teach parents that repetition in toddlers is *how* they learn and not a sign of cognitive impairment! Parenting well means singing a silly song or reading the same book over and over to a toddler. Use one of these sessions to talk about how children this age often demand exact repetition. Encourage toddlers to pick their own books for bedtime reading.
8. **(2-4 years) Using short stories helps children learn about what happens next.**  Toddlers this age can sit for longer periods and turn the pages of the book. We often just give them the books and see where they land before starting group reading – laying on their back reading, on a parent’s lap, just walking around holding the book, but participating in book activities.Simple search and find books are good choices for this age and you can add items around the room for “finding” that matches the book topic or a color or shape.
9. **(3-4 years) Children can help make up stories and answer questions about things they see.** Use counting, rhyming and alphabet books to help recognize these important concepts. Remind parents to go back to their old baby age books and try new ideas – like find everything yellow or counting things on pages. Use the book in group to have preschoolers show their color and adverb knowledge; put the book inside a bag, on top, under ,behind, and in front of their parent, opposites

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