



CIRCLES ARE FOR SQUARES

Making Time for Books and Stories!

Shared with you by Lisa Murphy, M.Ed.

**READ! READ! READ! UNTIL YOU THINK YOUR LIPS ARE GOING TO FALL OFF...
AND THEN, READ ONE MORE!!**

-Bev Bos

If you are going to interrupt a room full of engaged children in order to come to a meeting, it better be a darn good meeting.

-Lisa Murphy

I like the idea of a **CIRCLE TIME SANDWICH**. Two pieces of bread (a starting song and an ending song) with lots of yummy fillings in-between. Suggestions for fillings might include:

- Additional songs
- Books to read
- Stories to tell
- Movement/music
- Voting
- “Who has news?” inquiries, and,
- Exploring a real thing (rock, pinecone, shell, lizard, nest, rock, a tool) think: a unique item of some kind

Sometimes we crave a complex, multi-layer club sandwich and sometimes we are in the mood for simple bread and butter. How do you make sure we place value on both options (and all the options between!)

If you decide to “do” circle here are some Lisa Murphy suggestions:

First off - you can NOT examine your practice until you identify your values!

WHY are you doing circle? What is your goal and purpose? Does it have meaning? Or is it the time of the day when we get to “teach” and end up subjecting children to the “_____ of the day” and who decided the _____ anyway?

What were you TAUGHT that circle/group/gathering should be? How is this possibly different from what you want it to be? Or even more, what the children need it to be?

Is it interesting?

Are your expectations age appropriate?

Are you meeting the needs of ALL your learners? Are all interests being considered?

- Visual
- Auditory
- Kinesthetic

Are you feeling pressure to “make” it last a certain amount of time?
What’s YOUR favorite “F” word?

Somehow capture how you “do” circle. Would you want to go to that meeting?

How are you varying the tone, speed, pattern and intonation of your voice? How’s your general story reading (and telling) ability?

S L O W down! Resist the pressure to hurry up and get to the end of the book!

How do you pick a good book? *“A book that does not make you cry, laugh, vomit, giggle, empathize, sympathize, feel pain, shiver, sigh, weep or fall over in hysterics is a waste of our time, our money and our precious, precious trees.” -Mem Fox*

Is there an emotional connection to the book? If not, choose another one.

What I’m about to do is very very important! -Mem Fox

SUGGESTIONS FOR RELUCTANT READERS (whatever that means)

- Do the pictures express movement?
- Does the book use ACTION words?
- Are the pictures too over-detailed? If so, some children will shut down.
- Can they identify with the main character?
- Can they project themselves onto the hero characters?
- Does the book beg to be acted out?

Some thoughts on **“why some kids don’t read”**: Thomas Newkirk wrote *Misreading Masculinity – boys, literacy and popular culture*. In it he addresses what he calls “the feminization of literacy.”

When you pause before the ending to engage the group - remember this: it has been suggested that boys are able to put a twist on an ending (that they are familiar with) and girls are able to generate an ending.

When you pause to ask questions about the text - remember that response times VARY greatly between children!

Ruslan Slutsky’s research is indicating that children DO choose books by covers. Slutsky wrote an article called, *Judging books by their covers: preschool children’s aesthetic preferences in picture books*. It is a scholarly article, here is a link to the abstract: <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/73987308/judging-book-by-cover-preschool-childrens-aesthetic-preferences-picture-books>

How are you intentionally providing Anti-Biased books?? Some of our past favorites have not aged well. How diverse are your book selections? Do you have books that look like all the kids in the class? Their families? The families in your program?

Take the time to check books for:

- stereotypes
- tokenism
- invisibility
- the copyright date
- who wrote it?

Here are some resources:

<https://showmelibrarian.blogspot.com/2015/02/selection-is-privilege.html>

<https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/>

Be **playful** while reading!

Be silly with the title! One time we spent 20 minutes laughing and suggesting silly new word replacements for the title of *Little Mouse Red Ripe Strawberry and the Big Hungry Bear*. In the end they voted and their favorite alt-title was “The little octopus, the red ripe banana and the big hungry belly button” - is that still literacy? Of course it is!

Put the kids names into the books. Are there children’s books that have YOUR name in it? The kids think that Lisa in *Corduroy* is ME!

- Mess up the words occasionally
- Hold the book upside down
- Say the wrong author
- Describe a picture using obviously incorrect phrases
- Start from the last page and read it backwards

Do your record or film your story times? You make one, family members can make one, the trash man can make one! Who else? Where can you post them or make them available? IGTV, YouTube, Class FB page!!

Read to the babies! Reading to the air in the infant room, reading REAL books, board books of classic stories, books with REAL pictures in them too. Pregnant? Start reading to your bump! They know your voice!

Be realistic!

- Your books will get ripped - sometimes on purpose! Sometimes on accident!
- Make a BOOK HOSPITAL
- Resist the urge to buy cheapie books!
- No one learns how to use books the “right way” if they are locked in the cupboard!

What songs do you know? How often are you singing them? What about finger play songs and chants? Also, like your books, do any of the songs we being sung need to be checked for any stereotypes or inappropriate language or messages?

Vary your offerings:

- Nursery rhymes
- Fairy tales
- Poetry
- Non-fiction (If it's about something that really happened or something that really exists, it is non-fiction)
- Cookbooks
- Traditional picture & story books
- Classic “older kid” chapter books (see a brief list on page 5)
- How-To text (Something you might read if you want to learn a new skill or try out a new hobby. Might not be a book per se, maybe a blog post or an article)
- Coffee table/photography/art books (Think BIG pictures and photographs)
- Informational Text such as: newspapers, cereal boxes, recipes, board game instructions, a bus schedule, the metro line, grocery lists, maps, poster about the life cycle of a butterfly, etc.

Sacred cows make the best burgers:

- Calendar
- Teachy preachy songs and books
- Songs all to the tune of “jingle bells”

If you want them to read – read to them! AND, let them see you read AND, physical exposure to a lot of books!

Avoid books that are nothing more than commercials for TV shows, movies and the related products that encourage their viewing! Beware of commercialized books and any and all books that you might label as teachy, preachy and/or cute. You are looking for meaningful stories that have connections to their lives and stories that children can relate to - not lectures & lessons hidden behind “cute” story lines with instructions from Paw Patrols and Pokemon.

Please please please don't use the book area for punishment! The association will stick for a LONG TIME! The same for writing. Want to make sure the children never develop a love for writing? Have them write over and over 100 times how they won't ever say/do/think/forget something ever again.

And remember, they are going to interrupt you when you read! (It's actually a compliment!)

A **VERY** SMALL LIST OF SOME CLASSIC OLDER KID/CHAPTER BOOKS:

Alice in Wonderland	Narnia (series)
Anne of Green Gables	National Velvet
Babar (series)	Pippi Longstocking
Black Beauty	Peter Pan
Bridge to Terabithia	Peter Rabbit
Catherine Called Birdy	Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry
Charlotte's Web	Secret Garden (The)
Chitty Chitty Bang Bang	Stuart Little
Family Under the Bridge	Swiss Family Robinson
Harriet the Spy	The Good Earth
Jim the Boy	Trumpet of the Swan
Johnny Tremain	Tuck Everlasting
Little House (series)	Where the Red Fern Grows
Mike Mulligan	Witch of Blackbird Pond
Mr. Popper's Penguins	Wrinkle in Time (series)

And, each and every book that **ROALD DAHL** ever wrote...

If you want your children to be smart, read them fairy tales.
If you want them to be real smart, read them more fairy tales.

-Albert Einstein

DOING A BOOK AUDIT

First off:

No books related to movies, shows or toys: this means no Sesame Street, no Disney, no Barbie, no Bob the Builder, no Sponge Bob etc. If you are really ready for an amazing book center, get rid of all the teachy preachy ones too. These get removed immediately for trash or recycling.

Often we have questions about books that were books before they were movies: Clifford, Curious George, Madeline. This can be tricky. How old are the kids? Did they know it as a book first? Or has it always been product related for them? Is there a way for us to know?

When in doubt – run the book in question through the criteria here and see if it passes muster. Especially point #6.

NEW: Along with this, you need to potentially revisit ALL of the books (even the ones you know) and view them through a diversity lens. Maybe it's been awhile since you read THAT ONE BOOK all the way through - it might make you cringe these days. Some books that were past favorites have not aged well, as it were. Make sure you are not reinforcing outdated messages & stereotypes. If need be, update your own understanding of the importance of having multicultural, diverse books that have an anti-bias lens. They still need to be "good books" - be mindful of not just having books that allow you to put a check mark next to the diversity box. This link might assist: <https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/>

Second:

No electronic "push the button" books. These also get removed immediately for trash or recycling. Studies have shown that adults become overly focused on the buttons and sounds; the story and interactive banter of reading a book-book is lost.

Third:

After you have cleaned out and removed the above, you must remove all the books you have never read and put them in another pile. We will come back to them in a minute.

So at this point you should have 3 piles: 1) trash/recycle, 2) books you need to read and 3) books you are familiar with and have read.

Fourth:

You will be dealing with the third pile: books you have read and that you are familiar with. First, you need to go through each one looking for rips and tears.

Right out the gate, all books that are missing covers, missing pages, falling apart or are torn up beyond repair get added to the trash/recycle pile. No exceptions! I don't care how much it cost, how much they love it, it's MISSING PAGES! If they love it that much – go get another copy!!!!

Books needing minimal repairs get placed in the book hospital (we'll come to this in a sec.). But they only leave the hospital with mends and repairs if they pass muster at point #6 and all other criteria listed here.

Start another pile for books that you are familiar with that are not ripped and torn. Jump to #6 to see if they make it back on the book shelf.

Fifth:

Time permitting, sit in a cozy chair and READ all of the books you had on the shelf that you have not yet read and are not familiar with. If you don't have time, you need to make time before you

put these back on the shelf. You have a responsibility to be familiar with all the books you are making available for the children. In the interim, locate books on site, or at the library that you are FAMILIAR with and add them to your book area BUT ONLY IF THEY MEET ALL THE CRITERIA LISTED HERE!!

Just because we found a book in the children's section of the library, or because someone donated it, doesn't mean it deserves place in your book area.

No books are permitted in the book area unless they pass the book audit!

Sixth:

At this point you are going to focus on the pile of books that are NOT related to any commercialized images, are NOT ripped, have ALL their pages and that you have read and are familiar with!

The final question is this...

WOULD YOU READ IT TO ME? (thank you Bev Bos for this)

Go through and look at the books, skim through them – is it relevant? Is it meaningful? Would you read it to your boyfriend? Your mom? Would you call me on the phone and read it to me? Does it make you say OMG! Lisa, you have to listen to this book?!?!?! And If not – I want you to consider why you'd consider reading it to the kids.

So, if you would NOT read it to me. If it's not a "good book" – it goes in the trash/recycle pile and YOU need to take a trip to the library.

Seventh:

You now have a quality book center!!!! Good Work!

A few of comments about donating books:

- 1) This usually gets people fired up but it's my opinion and belief all the same. If I won't provide it to the kids in the center – why should it be donated to other kids? The bottom line is crap is crap. If we have determined that it's not fit for the kids *here* – how is it somehow ok for the kids *there*?
- 2) And if I'm trying to spread the word the commercialized books are just that – commercials for shows and products – why would I give them to parents to read to the kids at home? We are sending seriously mixed messages when we do this.
- 3) Do NOT be afraid to throw trash away! You are making room for books and stories that ALL children are entitled to!!

MAKING A BOOK HOSPITAL:

Get a box and spray paint it white. Paint a Red Cross symbol on each side. If a books gets ripped and there is no time at that moment to fix it, it goes to the hospital and will be scheduled for surgery at a later date.



STALKERS WELCOME!

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**DVDs and BOOKS: All of Lisa’s materials are available from Redleaf Press
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