



Suggested Strategies for Reading Diverse Books *With* Children

Many adults express anxiety or hesitation when it comes to reading diverse books with the children. They want to have “Brave Conversations,” but are unsure of where to begin and what to say. Using a Whole Book Approach may make the experience easier and more enjoyable by allowing you to meet your child where they are at by following their lead.

The Whole Book Approach (WBA) was created by Megan Dowd Lambert, in association with The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, and its methods foster organic relationships between the reader, the listener and the book itself, creating an interactive story sharing experience. When using the Whole Book Approach, we shift from reading a book *to* a child to reading a book *with* a child. Here are a few steps to help you make that switch:

- 1) Read through the chosen book yourself, before reading it to your child. This gives you the opportunity to identify possible illustrations and words your child might be drawn to, allowing you to prepare for possible questions they might ask. It also allows you to think about ideas you may want to emphasize.
- 2) With your child, look at all the parts of the book such as the jacket (be sure to remove the jacket or take a peek at the cover beneath it) and the spine, etc. Note the names of the author(s) and illustrator(s) as well.
- 3) As you read from page to page, pause to ask your child, “What is happening here?” Be sure to give them the time and space they need to verbalize what they notice. If they are struggling to reply, you can point out some of what you see, to get the conversation going.
- 4) Next, paraphrase what your child has said and then ask, “What do you see that makes you say that?” Point to the illustrations that go along with their comments. Then ask, “Hmmm, what else can we find?”

Remember, it is OK when your child notices racial and cultural differences. Embrace those differences by using positive language in response.

It's OK to admit when you don't know the answer! Responding with, “That's a good question” or “I don't know, let's research that” can be great replies.

Happy reading!