



ENGAGING VOICES

Mastering Dialogic Reading for Early Childhood Development

Two Hour Training

Introduction

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This independent study training is designed to provide early childhood educators and caregivers with effective strategies to enhance interactive reading experiences with young children.

Throughout this training, you will explore techniques that encourage meaningful conversations during read-alouds, support children's language development, and create engaging literacy experiences. By completing the activities and reflections, you will gain practical tools that can be applied in your daily interactions with children and families. This training is self-paced, allowing you to work through the materials at your convenience. You will be asked to read through content, reflect on key concepts, and apply what you've learned through practical exercises.

Learning Objectives:

- 1. Understand the principles and importance of dialogic reading in early childhood development.
- 2. Learn strategies to implement dialogic reading techniques effectively.
- 3. Enhance their ability to engage children in meaningful discussions during read-aloud sessions.
- 4. Develop skills to support diverse learners, including children with developmental or language challenges.
- 5. Explore methods for engaging parents and caregivers in dialogic reading activities.

Materials Needed:

- Printed training manual
- Pen/Pencil
- Access to online resources (optional)

What is Dialogic Reading?

Dialogic reading is an interactive shared reading practice where the adult and child engage in a dialogue about the text they are reading together. This approach transforms the traditional read-aloud session into a dynamic exchange, encouraging the child to become an active participant rather than a passive listener. By prompting the child with questions, expanding on their responses, and encouraging them to relate the story to their own experiences, dialogic reading fosters deeper comprehension and engagement.

The Importance of Dialogic Reading in Early Childhood Development

Engaging young children in dialogic reading has been shown to significantly enhance their language and literacy skills. Research indicates that this interactive approach supports vocabulary acquisition, improves verbal fluency, and aids in understanding story structure and meaning. By actively involving children in the storytelling process, dialogic reading also promotes critical thinking and comprehension skills, laying a strong foundation for future academic success.

Understanding the PEER Sequence in Dialogic Reading

The PEER sequence is a structured, research-backed method that caregivers and educators use to guide interactive reading sessions with young children. It helps transform reading from a passive experience into an engaging, language-rich conversation. PEER stands for Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, and Repeat, each step serving a critical role in fostering a child's language development and comprehension skills.

1. P - Prompt the Child to Say Something

A prompt is a question or statement designed to encourage the child to interact with the story. Instead of just listening, the child becomes an active participant in constructing meaning.

Types of Prompts in Dialogic Reading (CROWD Strategy)

Prompts can take different forms based on the child's developmental level and the complexity of the book. One effective approach is using the CROWD strategy, which consists of five types of prompts:

• C – Completion Prompts

- Encourages children to fill in the blanks at the end of a sentence.
- Example: "The caterpillar was very... [child fills in: 'hungry']!"
- Purpose: Builds familiarity with sentence structure and reinforces vocabulary.

• R – Recall Prompts

- Asks children to remember details from the story.
- Example: "What happened to the three little pigs when they built their houses?"
- Purpose: Strengthens memory and comprehension skills.

• O – Open-ended Prompts

- Encourages critical thinking and discussion.
- Example: "What do you think will happen next?"
- Purpose: Develops storytelling skills and creativity.

• W (h) – Questions (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How)

- Helps children think more deeply about the story.
- Example: "Why do you think the boy is sad?"
- Purpose: Supports reasoning and inference skills.

• D – Distancing Prompts

- Connects the story to the child's life experiences.
- Example: "Have you ever been to a farm like the one in the book?"
- Purpose: Encourages personal connections and deeper engagement.

Best Practice: Use a variety of these prompts to keep the conversation engaging and developmentally appropriate.

2. E – Evaluate the Child's Response

After prompting the child, the adult evaluates their response to ensure understanding and provide reinforcement. The goal is to acknowledge and validate what the child says, while gently guiding them toward more accurate or expanded ideas when needed.

Ways to Evaluate a Response:

Praise: "Great job! You remembered that the bear was looking for honey!"
Affirm: "Yes, the little girl is happy because she found her dog!"
Gently Correct: "Almost! The puppy is not a cat, but they both have fur and four legs."

Best Practice: Keep feedback positive and encouraging to build confidence and engagement.

3. E - Expand on the Child's Response

After evaluating, the adult expands on what the child has said by adding more detail, introducing new vocabulary, or enhancing their understanding of the story.

Examples of Expanding Responses:

- Child: "The dog is running."
- Adult: "Yes! The dog is running fast because he is chasing a butterfly!"
- Child: "The boy is sad."

• Adult: "That's right! The boy is sad because he lost his toy. Maybe he will feel better if he finds it!"

Best Practice: Try to add at least one new word or idea to the child's response each time you expand.

4. R – Repeat the Expansion

Repetition reinforces learning by encouraging the child to repeat the expanded statement or idea. This step helps children absorb new vocabulary, sentence structures, and story concepts.

Examples of Repeating:

Adult: "Can you say, 'The dog is running fast to catch the butterfly'?"

Child: "The dog is running fast to catch the butterfly!"

Adult: "That's right! The boy is sad because he lost his toy. What might help him feel better?"

Child: "If he finds his toy!"

Best Practice: Gently encourage children to repeat new words or expanded sentences, but don't force them. Let it be a natural part of the conversation.



Why the PEER Sequence Works

✓ Builds Language Skills – Encourages children to express ideas in longer, more complex sentences.

✓ Enhances Comprehension – Helps children connect events, characters, and emotions in a story.

Strengthens Memory – Repeating and expanding on ideas reinforces learning.

 Encourages Active Participation – Keeps children engaged and excited about books.

By using the PEER sequence consistently, caregivers and educators can turn any book into an interactive, meaningful learning experience that supports children's language and literacy development.

Reflection: Understanding the PEER Sequence

Now that you have explored the PEER sequence in dialogic reading, take a moment to reflect on what you've learned. The PEER method transforms passive reading into an interactive and engaging learning experience, helping children build language skills, comprehension, and confidence.

Consider the following questions as you reflect on how you can apply these strategies in your work with young children.

1. Think about a recent time you read a book with a child.

- Did you naturally use any of the PEER steps?
- If so, which ones? If not, how could you incorporate them next time?
- 2. Consider the types of prompts you use when reading with children.
- Do you ask open-ended questions, or do your questions often have a "yes" or "no" answer?
- How can you increase the variety of prompts you use to encourage deeper conversations?
- 3. Expanding children's responses helps them build vocabulary and comprehension.
- What strategies can you use to expand on a child's response in a way that feels natural and engaging?
- Can you think of an example of how you might expand a child's one-word response to encourage a longer discussion?
- 4. Repeating information reinforces learning.
- How can you encourage children to repeat expanded responses without making it feel forced?
- What techniques could you use to make repetition feel fun and engaging for different age groups?
- 5. Applying PEER in your daily practice.
- What are some challenges you anticipate when using the PEER sequence?
- How can you overcome these challenges to ensure children stay engaged during reading sessions?



Strategies for Engaging Children During Read-Aloud Sessions

Reading aloud is more than just saying words on a page—it is an opportunity to create meaningful interactions that build language, comprehension, and a love for reading.

1. Create an Interactive Reading Environment

Children learn best when they feel comfortable and excited about reading. Setting up a welcoming environment can make storytime more engaging.

Tips for Creating an Engaging Space:

Choose a Comfortable Setting: Arrange a cozy reading nook with pillows, rugs, or soft seating.

Limit Distractions: Reduce background noise and put away toys that may take attention away from the book.

Use Visual Cues: Show excitement about the story using facial expressions, gestures, and voice variations.

Reflection: Think about where and how you usually read with children. How can you make your read-aloud sessions more inviting?

2. Use Expressive Reading Techniques

Children respond well to how a story is read, not just what is read. Expressive reading helps hold their attention and makes the story feel more alive.

Techniques for Expressive Reading:

Change Your Voice:

- Use different tones and pitches for different characters.
- Speak slowly for suspenseful moments and quickly for exciting parts.
- 😼 Use Facial Expressions and Body Language:
 - Show emotions like surprise, joy, or sadness on your face.
 - Use hand gestures to illustrate key actions in the story.
- F Adjust Volume and Pace:
 - Whisper during quiet moments to draw children in.
 - Read loudly during action-packed scenes to build excitement.

Try It: Choose a sentence from a favorite children's book and read it in two different ways—one with a monotone voice and one using expressive techniques. How does the experience change?

3. Encourage Participation and Interaction

Children engage more when they are actively involved in the story. Encourage them to participate in different ways.

Ways to Get Children Involved:

- Ask Predictive Questions: "What do you think will happen next?"
- Encourage Sound Effects: "Can you make the sound of the wind blowing?"
- Use Movement: Have children act out parts of the story, like pretending to hop like a bunny.
- Let Children Turn the Pages: This gives them a sense of control and involvement.

Try It: Think of a book you read often. Identify one moment where you could add an interactive element.

4. Make Connections to the Child's World

Children learn best when they can relate the story to their own experiences.

How to Make Personal Connections:

• Ask Relatable Questions:

"Have you ever felt like the character in this story?"

"Do you have a pet like the one in the book?"

• Encourage Storytelling:

"Tell me about a time you went to the park like this character!"

• Use Props or Real-World Examples:

If reading about animals, show a toy or picture of the real animal.

Think About It: How can you help a child connect a favorite story to something in their daily life?

5. Adjust Reading Strategies Based on Age and Development

Different ages require different approaches to keep children engaged.

Age Group	Effective Strategies
	Use high-contrast pictures, simple language, and soothing voice tones.
Toddlers (1-3 years)	Encourage pointing to pictures, repeating words, and making sounds.
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	Ask open-ended questions, involve them in storytelling, and let them "read" parts they remember.
Early Elementary (5+ years)	Discuss character emotions, predict story outcomes, and encourage retelling in their own words.

Try It: Choose a book and think about how you would adjust your reading approach for a toddler vs. a preschooler.

6. Follow the Child's Lead

Some children may want to spend extra time on certain pages, ask unexpected questions, or even tell their own version of the story. Let them take the lead!

Ways to Follow the Child's Lead:

- Pause When They Show Interest: If a child is fascinated by an illustration, take time to discuss it.
- Answer Their Questions: Even if off-topic, engaging with their curiosity keeps them interested.
- Let Them 'Read' to You: Encourage children to make up their own words or tell what they remember.

Challenge: During your next read-aloud, let a child decide how to interact with the story. How does this change the experience?

As you move forward, think about which strategies you already use and which ones you can add to make your reading time even more engaging!

Supporting Diverse Learners in Dialogic Reading

Every child is unique, and in any early childhood setting, you will encounter a diverse group of learners, each with their own needs, backgrounds, and abilities. In this section, we will explore how to adapt dialogic reading techniques to meet the needs of diverse learners, including children with disabilities, children from diverse cultural backgrounds, and children who may have limited language exposure. By using inclusive and responsive strategies, we can ensure that every child benefits from a rich, interactive reading experience.

Adapting Dialogic Reading for Children with Special Needs

Children with disabilities, whether physical, developmental, or cognitive, may face unique challenges in engaging with books. However, dialogic reading can be a powerful tool for these children, as it emphasizes active engagement and personal connection to the text.

Strategies for Supporting Children with Special Needs:

1. Use Multi-Sensory Approaches:

- Visual: Use large, colorful pictures, tactile books (e.g., books with textures), and interactive elements (e.g., flaps, pop-ups).
- Auditory: Incorporate sound effects, songs, or rhythmic reading to capture the child's attention.
- Kinesthetic: Allow the child to engage with props, act out parts of the story, or manipulate story elements.
- 2. Modify Language and Pacing:
- Use simpler language or repeat key phrases for children who struggle with comprehension.
- Slow down your pacing, giving children more time to process information or respond to questions.
- Provide visual aids or gesture-based communication if needed (e.g., using sign language or pictures).
- 3. Use Assistive Technology:
- If available, use audio or video recordings of books to support children with limited reading skills.
- Consider using apps or digital platforms that feature interactive books designed for special education.

? Reflection: Think about how you can adapt your reading materials and methods to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, are included in dialogic reading. What types of modifications might be most effective for your learners?

Promoting Inclusivity with Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

Children come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and understanding the diversity of experiences, values, and perspectives they bring is crucial in creating a positive and inclusive reading environment. Books that reflect the child's culture or experiences can have a profound impact on their engagement and language development.

Strategies for Supporting Culturally Diverse Learners:

1. Choose Culturally Relevant Books:

- Select books that reflect the children's cultural traditions, family structures, and experiences.
- Tip: Include a mix of books that represent various cultures and backgrounds to encourage all children to see themselves in the stories you read.
- 2. Discuss Cultural Contexts and Perspectives:
- When reading books that involve different cultural traditions or practices, take time to discuss these aspects with the children.
- Tip: Be mindful of cultural sensitivities when reading stories about unfamiliar traditions or practices. Approach with curiosity and respect, inviting children to share what they know.

3. Celebrate Language Diversity:

- Encourage the use of home languages during reading activities and make space for children to express themselves in the language they are most comfortable with.
- Tip: Consider labeling classroom objects in multiple languages or using duallanguage books that feature both English and the child's home language.

4. Build Cultural Connections:

- Draw parallels between the story and the child's personal experiences, asking questions like, "Has something like that ever happened to you?"
- Tip: Use distancing prompts to connect the story to the child's life, such as "In your family, do you do something similar to what the family in the story is doing?"

? Reflection: Think about the cultural backgrounds of the children you work with. What steps can you take to ensure that the books you read represent the diversity in your classroom and allow every child to see themselves reflected?

Supporting Children with Limited Language Exposure

Some children may not have been exposed to as much language at home, and dialogic reading can help bridge the gap by providing rich language input in an engaging way.

Strategies for Supporting Children with Limited Language Exposure:

1. Use Repetition and Simple Phrasing:

- Repeat words and phrases throughout the story to reinforce language.
- Encourage children to repeat after you or try using simple phrases, even if they are not yet able to form full sentences.

2. Slow Down and Give Wait Time:

- Give children time to process the language and respond to prompts.
- Allow the child to focus on one or two new words at a time instead of overwhelming them with too much language.

3. Use Interactive and Engaging Stories:

- Choose books that encourage participation and allow for natural language development (e.g., books with actions or repetitive phrases).
- Tip: Use books with repetitive, rhythmic language (like "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?") to encourage active participation.

4. Offer a Language-Rich Environment:

• Create opportunities for the child to engage in conversation outside of reading time. Use everyday situations as language learning moments (e.g., while preparing a snack, during playtime).

Try It: What changes can you make to your read-aloud sessions to support children with limited language exposure? Consider how you can provide a language-rich environment that extends beyond the story itself.

By adapting your dialogic reading strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners, you ensure that every child has the opportunity to engage with language, develop literacy skills, and enjoy the magic of stories. Reflect on the strategies outlined here and think about how you can apply them in your own practice to create a more inclusive, responsive learning environment for all children.

Engaging Parents and Caregivers in Dialogic Reading

Parents and caregivers play a vital role in fostering early literacy development. By involving them in dialogic reading practices, you can extend the benefits of interactive reading beyond the classroom and into the home. In this section, we will explore strategies for effectively engaging parents and caregivers in dialogic reading to create a strong, supportive learning environment for children both at school and at home.

The Importance of Parent and Caregiver Involvement

Research consistently shows that children who have supportive, literacy-rich environments at home perform better in school and have stronger language skills. When parents and caregivers are involved in dialogic reading, children receive consistent, meaningful language interactions that promote comprehension, vocabulary, and overall literacy development.

Key Benefits of Parent and Caregiver Involvement in Dialogic Reading:

- Promotes Early Language Development: Engaging with children through books allows parents to reinforce the language skills learned at school.
- Builds Stronger Bonds: Shared reading experiences help build emotional connections between children and caregivers.
- Enhances Literacy Skills: Dialogic reading can help caregivers teach children how to ask and answer questions, predict story outcomes, and expand on ideas.
- Supports Cultural Continuity: Caregivers can share their family stories and traditions, fostering pride in their culture while enhancing literacy.

Reflection: Reflect on your experiences with involving parents in their children's learning. How can dialogic reading be used to strengthen the connection between home and school?

Educating Parents and Caregivers About Dialogic Reading

Many parents may not be familiar with the term "dialogic reading" or may not understand how to implement it effectively. It is essential to provide clear, practical information and resources to help them feel confident in using these strategies at home.

How to Educate Parents and Caregivers:

1. Offer Workshops or Informational Sessions:

- Host short workshops or webinars to explain the concept of dialogic reading, its benefits, and how parents can incorporate it into daily routines.
- Provide examples, demonstrations, and activities that parents can practice at home with their children.

2. Create Easy-to-Follow Guides:

- Provide handouts, newsletters, or online resources that outline the key principles of dialogic reading, such as the PEER sequence, types of prompts, and how to ask questions during reading time.
- Include book recommendations and simple tips for getting started.
- 3. Use Video Demonstrations:
- Record short videos that demonstrate dialogic reading techniques in action. Parents can watch the videos to better understand how to engage their children with books.

Providing Practical Strategies for Parents and Caregivers

Once parents and caregivers understand the basics of dialogic reading, it's important to provide practical, hands-on strategies they can implement immediately.

Practical Strategies for Parents and Caregivers:

1. Establish a Routine:

- Encourage families to set aside a regular time each day for reading aloud. Consistency is key to making reading a natural part of a child's day.
- Suggest reading before bed or during quiet moments, ensuring that it becomes a cherished ritual.
- 2. Use Books That Match the Child's Interests:
- Recommend books that align with the child's passions or experiences to spark excitement and engagement.
- Offer suggestions for books related to themes like animals, family, or adventure, and encourage families to visit libraries or bookstores to find new titles.
- **3. Set Up an Interactive Reading Environment at Home:**
- Encourage parents to create a comfortable reading space in the home, with books easily accessible and engaging visuals.
- Suggest using props, toys, or materials related to the story for hands-on interaction during reading.

Overcoming Common Barriers to Engagement

While parents and caregivers want to support their child's literacy development, there may be barriers to engaging in dialogic reading. These can include time constraints, lack of resources, or even unfamiliarity with reading techniques. It's important to acknowledge these barriers and provide practical solutions to help families overcome them.

Overcoming Barriers to Engagement:

1. Time Constraints:

- Suggest short, 10-15 minute reading sessions that can be incorporated into daily routines. Parents can read for a few minutes during meals, car rides, or just before bedtime.
- Remind parents that quality matters more than quantity—engaging in focused, interactive reading for a short time can be just as impactful as longer sessions.

2. Lack of Resources:

- Recommend low-cost or free resources such as library visits, online book platforms, or exchanging books with other families.
- Offer booklists with free downloadable or printable stories that parents can use for dialogic reading.

3. Language Barriers:

- For families who speak languages other than English, suggest bilingual books or resources that can bridge the language gap. Encourage parents to read in their first language if they feel more comfortable, as it can help foster a deeper connection to the story.
- Provide translated handouts or guides if needed to make the process easier for families.

Reflection: What are some common challenges that families in your community might face when trying to engage in dialogic reading? How can you help them overcome these challenges?

Building Strong Partnerships with Families

A key part of engaging parents and caregivers in dialogic reading is creating a strong partnership between home and school. When families feel supported and valued, they are more likely to continue engaging in activities that promote their child's development.

Building Partnerships with Parents and Caregivers:

- Maintain Open Communication
- Celebrate Progress
- Foster a Community of Learners

Action Step: Think of ways to build a supportive partnership with parents in your setting. How can you make them feel comfortable and confident in using dialogic reading techniques at home?



Conclusion: Let's Keep the Story Going!

What's Next?

• Take Action!

You've gathered a toolbox full of strategies and ideas to improve your dialogic reading practice. It's time to try them out in your classroom or at home. Pick a book, gather your children, and dive into an interactive reading adventure!

• Keep Reflecting!

Take a moment to reflect on what you've learned and how you'll apply it. What strategies are you most excited to try? What challenges might arise, and how can you overcome them? Keep a journal of your reading sessions and track your progress.

• Engage Families!

Now that you've learned how to involve parents and caregivers, don't hesitate to share your new knowledge! Whether it's through a quick chat, a workshop, or a simple handout, help families bring dialogic reading into their homes. Together, you can build a language-rich community!

Additional Resources

As you continue your journey with dialogic reading, it's helpful to have access to additional resources that can support your growth and enhance your practice. Below are some helpful tools, websites, books, and articles that provide further insights into dialogic reading, literacy development, and family engagement.

Books on Early Literacy and Dialogic Reading

- "The Read-Aloud Handbook" by Jim Trelease. This book is a great resource for understanding the importance of read-alouds in early literacy. It also provides a variety of strategies for engaging children during storytime.
- "Interactive Read-Alouds: Is There a Common Set of Implementation Practices?" by Maryanne Wolf. An in-depth look at the theory and best practices for engaging children during interactive read-alouds.
- "The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research" by Stephen D. Krashen. A comprehensive guide that explores how reading impacts literacy and cognitive development, with a focus on how interactive reading enhances those benefits.
- "The Everything Guide to Early Learning: A Complete Resource for Helping Your Child Grow and Learn" by Lesley Jones. A practical, accessible guide for parents looking to engage with their children in meaningful learning activities, including dialogic reading strategies.

Websites for More Information

- Reading Rockets (www.readingrockets.org). A fantastic resource for parents, caregivers, and educators with articles, strategies, and book recommendations for promoting early literacy.
- National Institute for Early Education Research (www.nieer.org). This site provides research-based information on best practices in early childhood education and literacy development.
- PBS Parents Literacy (www.pbs.org/parents/learn). PBS offers resources on teaching literacy through interactive storytelling and other early education tools.
- Vanderbilt University's Center for Literacy, Education, and Development (www.vanderbilt.edu). Explore strategies for fostering literacy development in young children, including practical guides for dialogic reading.

Videos

- "Dialogic Reading: Empowering Parents and Caregivers" (YouTube). A video that demonstrates dialogic reading strategies in action and offers tips for engaging children during storytime.
- "How to Make Storytime Interactive" (Reading Rockets YouTube Channel). This video series focuses on making read-aloud sessions engaging and educational for young children.

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Multiple Choice Questions

1. What is the primary goal of dialogic reading?

- a) To read a story as quickly as possible
- b) To engage children in conversation during the read-aloud
- c) To memorize a book word for word
- d) To teach children how to read independently

2. What does the "PEER" sequence stand for in dialogic reading?

- a) Prompt, Evaluate, Engage, Respond
- b) Praise, Evaluate, Encourage, Repeat
- c) Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, Repeat
- d) Prepare, Engage, Examine, Reflect

3. Which of the following is an example of an open-ended question during a readaloud session?

- a) "What color is the cat?"
- b) "What do you think will happen next?"
- c) "Can you find the dog?"
- d) "Is the character happy or sad?"

4. In dialogic reading, what is the main purpose of "recall questions"?

- a) To test a child's memory of the story
- b) To make sure the child understands every word
- c) To encourage children to engage with the pictures
- d) To promote critical thinking and predictions

5. Which strategy is key to supporting diverse learners in dialogic reading?

- a) Limiting the types of books read
- b) Using complex vocabulary and phrases
- c) Adjusting the pace and style of questioning based on the child's abilities
- d) Reading the book aloud without interaction

6. Why is it important to engage parents and caregivers in dialogic reading?

- a) Parents can do the reading for the child
- b) It helps extend the learning outside of the classroom
- c) Parents can use technology to read the story
- d) Parents can judge how well children are reading

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7. Which of the following strategies can help engage children during read-aloud sessions?

- a) Asking yes/no questions only
- b) Encouraging children to ask questions and predict what happens next
- c) Reading the story as quickly as possible
- d) Not pausing to discuss the story

8. What does the "CROWD" strategy help with in dialogic reading?

- a) Choosing the right books for children
- b) Using different types of questions to engage children
- c) Teaching children to read independently
- d) Ensuring all children in the group get equal turns to talk

9. Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of an effective dialogic reading session?

- a) Involvement of the child through prompts and questions
- b) Reading the story in a monotone voice
- c) Frequent pauses for children to engage with the text and pictures
- d) Asking the child open-ended questions about the story

10. Which of the following is an example of a "distancing question"?

- a) "What did the character do in the story?"
- b) "How would you feel if you were the character?"
- c) "Where is the cat in the picture?"
- d) "What color is the car?"

Short Answer Questions

How can you use the "Expand" step in the PEER sequence to deepen a child's understanding of a story?

Describe two ways you can engage parents and caregivers in supporting dialogic reading at home.

Completed trainings can be submitted to: connect@thenurture.net