



Tips for Home or School Making Squishy Books

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Shared reading is a technique that emphasizes conversation between a child and the reader about different aspects of the story. This powerful technique can account for at least 10% of the variance among reading and non-reading children (Ezell & Justice (2005). Good shared reading supports children to ask and answer questions and to make comments about each page of a book. Effective shared reading also includes readers who can ask appropriate questions, wait for answers, and who make comments and connections regarding the story and the print on each page to meaningful words and events in the child's life (Ezell & Justice, 2005).



Through our observations made over several decades of working with children with significant disabilities, we discovered that children were more likely to interact with books and participate during shared reading if we made books out of materials that reflected the children's sensory interests. We added text to the books related to the children, their friends, and their family interests. The following pages offer photos and descriptions of how to make some of the books that we have found children with significant disabilities to enjoy and explore during shared reading.

Squishy Books

Several children with cognitive, motor, and sensory impairments with whom we have worked, seemed to enjoy squeezing "squishy" materials such as play-dough, putty, and even their diapers. We used this interest to make "squishy books" to give the children appropriate options to explore their interests, to learn to turn pages, and to participate in shared reading. As children make comments, or adults could come up with simple phrases related to the pages in the book, these comments are written on "sticky-notes" and attached to each page and used as text.



Shared reading is often difficult for children with disabilities due to the high level of language that is shared and expected during a conversation (Kaderavek & Sulzby, 1998). Appropriate scaffolding techniques used by the communication partner along with augmentative and alternative means for the child to participate are required (Dale, Crain-Thoreson, Notari-Syverson, & Cole, 1996). Pierce and Erickson (2006) list several suggestions of appropriate interaction techniques (e.g., pausing, using gestures and pictures) to use with children with disabilities.

Interesting books may also facilitate longer engagement and enhanced participation during shared reading with children with disabilities. Building on children's interests has been found to be an effective approach to enhance engagement and learning (Dunst, 2006). Children with disabilities



Directions to Make Squishy Books

Ingredients:

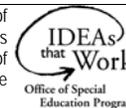
- Several heavy-duty, freezer-quality, ziplock bags (1 quart size)
- "Squishy" materials such as alcohol-free hair gel (variety of colors), hand-lotion (with and without glitter), "gak" (water and corn starch with food coloring), vegetable oil and food coloring, sand, dirt, paper strips/packaging materials, etc.
- Small plastic letters, objects
- Clear packaging tape



A sample squishy book



may demonstrate typical topic-related interests (e.g., puppies, babies), but may also demonstrate less topic-related and more sensory-related interests (e.g., sounds, vibration, textures). Family-members, teachers, and service providers may discover varying topic and/or sensory-related interests by observing children with disabilities in different settings and with different types of materials.



Fill a ziplock bag (page) with something “squishy”. Before closing the bag, add small objects like plastic animals and plastic letters that might spell the name of the animal into the bag. Zip it shut. After filling several bags, tape the zippered-parts together with packaging tape to make a book. Usually 3-4 pages can be securely taped together.

Variations on the theme:



Animal food books: Pages filled with different types of animal foods, (e.g., dry dog food, dry cat food, bird seed, hay) and with the logo/label from the food container. You may have to use sample-size of the animal food to have the right size of the label/logo to put in the baggie with the food.

Breakfast food books: Pages filled with different types of cereal along with the label/logo from the box of cereal. It is helpful to use “snack-size” boxes of cereal in order to have the right size label to put in each bag. White paper strips could also be added as “milk” for the cereal. We found that puncturing the bags with a needle in several places help the pages to remain flat.

Sand books: Pages filled with sand, seashells, seahorses, and letters to spell these words. Children with visual impairments often seemed to interact more with these books when glitter was mixed with the sand.



Dirt books: Pages filled with potting soil, plastic insects, worms, and letters to spell related words.

ABC book: Pages filled with a plastic letter and small objects starting with that letter, (e.g., B, bug, baby, ball). The pages also have a fun substance in them like hair gel.



Name book: Each page has a plastic letter and items that begin with that letter from a child’s name, (e.g., P, pig, next page, A-ant, next page, T-tiger, next page, S-soap, last page, Y-yellow gel). All pages have different fun squishy stuff in them.

Wallpaper/Fabric Sample Books

Wallpaper/Fabric Sample books are made from old sample books by gluing objects, pictures, and text on each page. These books are heavy enough to remain stable for ease in page turning and hold up to much moisture and rough usage. The colors and textures are interesting to many children.



Children enjoying wall paper and fabric sample books
Photo provided by Patsy Pierce

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