

Take a Picture Walk

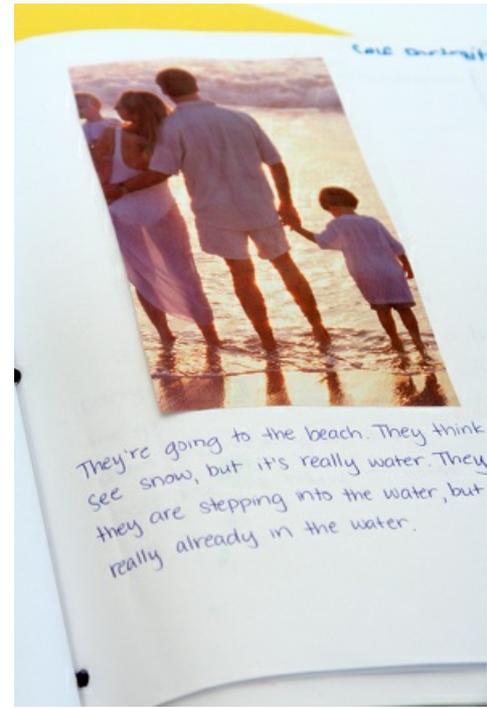
Everyone's heard of taking a dog for a walk. But how about an illustration? Kindergarten teachers have a technique, called a "Picture Walk", that teaches emerging readers to use pictures as clues to understand the meaning of a story, and guess at unfamiliar words. Here's how it works:

What You Need:

- A picture book

What You Do:

1. Hold the book so your child can see the cover. Read the title aloud.
2. Tell your child that this book has words and pictures, and that right now you're going to look at just the pictures and try to guess what's happening in the story. This is called a "picture walk" because you're going to walk through the pictures in the book without reading the words.
3. Start right from the top. Take a look at the cover and give your child a chance to take a look as well. Describe what you see in the picture. For example, "in this picture, I see a mama bear and her little bear cubs having a picnic."
4. Now it's your child's turn! Open to the first page of the story and ask her to describe what she sees happening on this page, just as you did when you described the cover illustration. Encourage her to speak in sentences and to give as many details as possible, referring to the characters, the setting (place), and the story events.
5. Continue in this manner, until there is only one page left in the book.
6. Before you turn to the last page, ask your child to guess how the story ends, based on what she has seen so far. You can give this a fancy word like a "prediction" or a "hypothesis", or you can just ask her to give it her best guess. Then, turn the page and reveal the final picture. Was her guess correct?



Your walk is over. And you've given your child a new tool to put in her reading tool belt. Eventually, she'll learn to read without the need to use pictures for context hints. She'll sound-it-out or use a host of other methods to break down unfamiliar words. But until then, this is a normal, useful, and valuable way to help jumpstart reading. But back to that book! Now that you've done a walk through the pictures, it's time to crack the book open and enjoy the words.

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