
Programming Development Part 2

Content from: Kaitlin Frick (2018).

1. Have a visual schedule: Visual schedules tell participants what to expect during storytime. This is especially important for children with developmental delays, who often find transitions difficult. Each element of your storytime should have its own easily-identifiable graphic. You can also help children by providing verbal cues about what's going to come next, i.e.: "We're going to sing one more song, and then it's time for our story." Keep these cues simple, though, with no more than the next 2 steps mentioned.
2. Repeat: Not only does this mean it's appropriate to keep songs and stories the same for multiple storytime sessions, but you should also keep certain elements of the storytime consistent from week to week. For instance, having the same welcome and goodbye is really important, as children will be more comfortable if they know what to expect. Consider keeping your other song selections the same, on a rotating basis. For example, bring the same 12 song cards every week and allow each class to choose 4-6 to sing.
3. It's okay to shorten stories: Generally speaking, one or two books are plenty for sensory storytimes, but some stories run a bit long. In those cases, it's okay to paperclip a few pages together and skim over sections.
4. Have designated spots for each child to sit: If you're holding the storytime at your library, it's a good idea to have carpet tiles or cushions for each child, so everyone has their own space.
5. Keep it small: We often have to justify programming with those high participant numbers, but sensory storytime is one thing that needs to stay small. A ten child maximum is ideal, but don't allow more than fifteen into a program.
6. Turn it down: Children with developmental delays often deal with sensory processing issues, so fluorescent lights and loud noises can be overwhelming. Dim the lights and keep the volume low to make sure these participants feel comfortable.
7. Make it interactive: Children who attend sensory storytimes often have a difficult time staying focused on one thing for extended periods of time. Break things up with songs, fingerplays, scarves, egg shakers, bean bags, and/or bubbles so children are engaged. It's also a good idea to have fidgets available for children who don't have their own. These

can be textured balls or bracelets, bendable or squishy toys, etc. Depending on your library's policies and funding, you can either purchase fidgets or create your own.