

## **Emergent Literacy Strategy – Print Referencing**

**According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s position statement, speech-language pathologists have a role in literacy. The government’s push in *Reading First* and *No Child Left Behind* is stressing early intervention for literacy. Speech-language pathologists are in a position to play a significant part in this early intervention. What literacy teaching strategies can be easily incorporated into the speech therapy sessions?**

**During the emergent literacy period from birth to pre-school children are developing the three pre-reading skills of print concept, word concept, and alphabet knowledge. Examples of print awareness are that print is left-to-right and top-to-bottom and that a picture can be represented by a word. Word concept refers to understanding that words are discrete units of oral and written language. This is the beginning of phonological awareness. Alphabet knowledge indicates an awareness of letter names.**

**One evidence-based strategy, print referencing, advocated by Justice and Ezell can be used by speech-language pathologists, teachers, and parents to address these three skills for children with developmental delays, those at risk, and those who lack exposure to a language-rich environment. Print awareness refers to non-verbal and verbal cues embedded into shared storybook readings. The non-verbal cues are pointing to print and tracking print. The verbal cues are questions, comments and requests about print. These cues can be used during adult-child shared storybook reading.**

**Four recommendations by Justice and Ezell when using print referencing during adult-child interactive reading are:**

- 1. There should be a balance of the number of times print referencing is used during a story in order to keep the story fun and relaxing. Use print referencing about 3-5 times during the reading of a book but use it on a regular basis each time you read.**
- 2. Make the task slightly beyond the child’s ability and provide assistance in order to help the child move to a higher level.**
- 3. Involve parents.**
- 4. Do not consider the strategy of print referencing as a panacea but only as one technique in teaching emergent literacy.**

**For more detailed information on using the print referencing strategy refer to:**

**Justice, L.M., & Ezell, H.K. (2004). Print Referencing: An Emergent Literacy Enhancement Strategy and Its Clinical Applications. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 35, 185-193.**