

Wowing your Patients with (Pictures and) Words: Choosing a Waiting Room Collection

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IS YOUR WAITING ROOM KID-FRIENDLY? If not, children's books are the answer. There is no better way to wow your patients than through the power of (pictures and) words. In honor of both National Family Literacy Day (November 1) and National Children's Book Week (November 14-20), we've put together a few suggestions for creating the ideal waiting room collection. According to

book aficionado Kirsten Cappy, a Raising Readers consultant and owner of online book service Curious City (www.curiouscity.net), waiting room collections should be "a mixture of fun and distraction." When selecting titles, it is important to:

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE — Is your pediatric practice primarily babies or adolescents? Is the population culturally diverse? The answers to these questions will help you to select books appropriate for your patients. Aim for books that will appeal to children of various backgrounds and ages. One such book is *Eyes, Nose, Fingers, and Toes*. As Kirsten Cappy points out, the illustrations for this book include "many different faces, so every kid should be able to see themselves in its pages." For non-readers, or non-English speaking patients, choose wordless books, such as Tana Hoban's *Black on White*.

MAKE THINGS INTERACTIVE — Reading is more fun when kids get involved. Toddlers can practice naming objects with Denise Fleming's *The Everything Book*, while older children will enjoy *Which Would You Rather Be?* Kirsten also suggests Joan Steiner's *Look-Alikes*, whose author successfully uses everyday objects to set interesting scenes, leading to "distraction and fascination in every square inch of this book."

MAKE THINGS FUN — Humor is important to children of all ages, and can make a book more interesting for adults. For older kids, try *To Market, To Market*, or *The Best Pet of All*, in which, "a young boy ends up with a dragon as pet and chaos ensues." For younger children, consider perennial favorite *Jamberry*. Kirsten likes this one because "the words get sillier and sillier as the characters celebrate each type of berry. Reading this aloud leads to breathless frivolity."

FOCUS ON SPECIFIC THEMES — Find books on topics that are relevant to your practice. These may include healthy food choices (*Eating the Alphabet*) or picky eaters (*I Will Never, Not Ever Eat a Tomato*). You may also want to find books that deal with illness in a humorous way, such as *Rachel Fister's Blister* (by Maine author Amy McDonald) or *A Bad Case of Stripes*. Another suggestion from Kirsten is *How Do Dinosaurs Get Well Soon?*, featuring "fabulous pictures of dinosaurs with their human parents, which teaches kids good hygiene while sick."

MAKE THEM STURDY — Be sure your books can stand up to their young audience. Older children can handle hardcovers such

as *How I Became a Pirate*, while infants and toddlers may need more indestructible board books such as the *Bright Baby* series. Kirsten likes *Bright Baby: Animals* for its "bold photographs of common and not so common animals."

ROTATE YOUR COLLECTION — Choose seasonal titles, including those that focus on specific months or holidays. For November, this might include *My Book of Thanks*. Kirsten also likes Jonathan London's *Giving Thanks*, "a stunning picture book, in which a

father teaches his son to appreciate the beauty of the world around him, from the earth and the sky to the animals and the trees." Keep unused titles in storage, taking them out at the appropriate time of year. This will keep the waiting room fresh and exciting for young visitors.

ASK THE EXPERTS — Feeling overwhelmed by the idea of making choices for your waiting room? Try award winners, such as *Farfallina & Marcel*, or Kevin Henkes' 2004 Caldecott Award winner *Kitten's First Full Moon*. You can also ask an expert to help. Local librarians, bookstore employees, teachers and daycare providers have a wealth of experience on the subject of kids and reading, and are usually glad to be of service.

ASK FOR DONATIONS — Can't afford to buy books for your waiting area? Use your own kids' leftovers, or those gleaned from yard sales. Consider asking your patients or community members for book donations. Put some in your waiting area and save ones that are 'gently used' to give to siblings of your Raising Readers patients—those who have aged out of the program but who appreciate books nonetheless.

Alternatively, give them out at sick visits, when patients aren't eligible for Raising Readers books.

MAKE YOUR CHILDREN'S READING AREA SPECIAL — Give kids a quiet place to enjoy their literary treasures. Assemble a physical space, perhaps using a rug surrounded by a few kid-sized chairs or beanbags. Create a boundary around the area with small dividers. Put your books in front-facing bookshelves, to make them more attractive, or in bins, to make them more accessible. Place simple book-themed posters on the walls (a Raising Readers Poster, perhaps?). Finally, put a list (or pictures) of Raising Readers books in your 'reading room.' This will remind your patients of forgotten favorites from their home collection.

Choosing a waiting room collection can be a worthwhile adventure. Most children (and adults) love beautiful books, and will appreciate your efforts. National Family Literacy Day and National Children's Book Week are perfect excuses for refreshing your collection. November is a great time to wow your patients with (pictures and) words.



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For a list of former and current Raising Readers books, visit www.raisingreaders.net.

NOVEMBER 2005 Choosing a Waiting Room Collection ■ Waiting Room Collection Favorites



raising readers

A Family Health and Literacy Program
for Maine Children Ages Birth to 5 years

Waiting Room Collection Favorites



Eyes, Nose, Fingers and Toes

by Judy Hindley (Candlewick, 2004)
ISBN 0763623830

How Do Dinosaurs Get Well Soon

by Jane Yolen (Blue Sky Press, 2003)
ISBN 0439241006

To Market, To Market

by Anne Miranda (Harcourt, 1997)
ISBN 0152000356

How I Became a Pirate

by Melinda Long (Harcourt, 2003)
ISBN 0152018484

The Best Pet of All

by David LaRochelle (Dutton Juvenile, 2004)
ISBN 0525471294

Three Stories You Can Read to Your Dog

by Sara Swan Miller (Houghton Mifflin, 1997)
ISBN 0395861357

A Bad Case of Stripes

by David Shannon (Scholastic, 2004)
ISBN 0439598389

Farfallina & Marcel

by Holly Keller (HarperTrophy, 2005)
ISBN 0064438724

The Three Grumpies

by Tamra Wight (Bloomsbury, 2005)
ISBN 1582349851

Which Would You Rather Be?

by William Steig (Joanna Cotler, 2002)
ISBN 0060296534

Jamberry

by Bruce Degen (HarperFestival, 1994)
ISBN 0694006513

I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato

by Lauren Child (Candlewick Press, 2003)
ISBN 0763621803

Look-Alikes

by Joan Steiner (Megan Tingley, 2003)
ISBN 0316713481

Kitten's First Full Moon

by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow, 2004)
ISBN 0060588284

Rachel Fister's Blister

by Amy MacDonald (Houghton Mifflin, 2003)
ISBN 039565744X

Eating the Alphabet

by Lois Ehlert (Red Wagon Books, 1996)
ISBN 015201036X

Bright Baby: Animals

by Roger Priddy (Priddy Books, 2004)
ISBN 0312492480

Black on White

by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow, 1993)
ISBN 0688119182

The Everything Book

by Denise Fleming (Henry Holt and Co, 2004)
ISBN 080507709X

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