



## Brief

# Seizing the opportunities? Story time with toddlers in kindergarten

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The study examines reading practices in kindergarten, and focuses on the interactions taking place between the pedagogical staff and children in different reading situations, limited to young children (0–3 years). The discussions are based on a video material of 27 ten-minute sequences. All the video sequences include pedagogical staff and children under the age of three dealing with books in one way or another. The article investigates how and to what extent the staff seizes the opportunities for literature dissemination and use of books in interaction with the toddlers, and furthermore, how the employees take responsibility as cultural and literature communicators, both in planned and spontaneous reading situations. Only in six of the sequences a story time happens, where the book functions as a source for “joint attention.” Findings show that reading for the youngest children is not a priority in Norwegian kindergartens, which indicates that toddlers get few experiences with literature in kindergarten. The article argues for the necessity of an adult facilitator for story time to take place: Reading groups with the youngest children are not established without an effort.

The Norwegian *Framework Plan for Kindergartens* (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017), states that “children shall be introduced to different ways of conveying texts and stories as a source of aesthetic experiences, knowledge, reflection and encounters with language and culture” (p. 48). Based on this, we argue that reading and dissemination of picturebooks are central activities in kindergartens. In the framework plan (p. 23) the importance of positive interaction in the kindergarten is highlighted, as well as shared experiences. Reading for a group of children can create common attention about the book, and due to this, the article discusses the kindergarten’s literature work in the light of the concept of “joint attention” (Degotardi, 2017; Østrem, 2013; Tomasello et al., 2005; Tomasello & Farrar, 1986). A book can be used

to create “joint attention,” but it requires pedagogical staff members who facilitate reading communities. Reading aloud has a rich potential for interaction, where different modalities such as text, image, and the reader’s voice and bodily visualization can help strengthen children’s awareness of something shared.

**Keywords:** *children’s participation; joint attention; story time; toddlers*