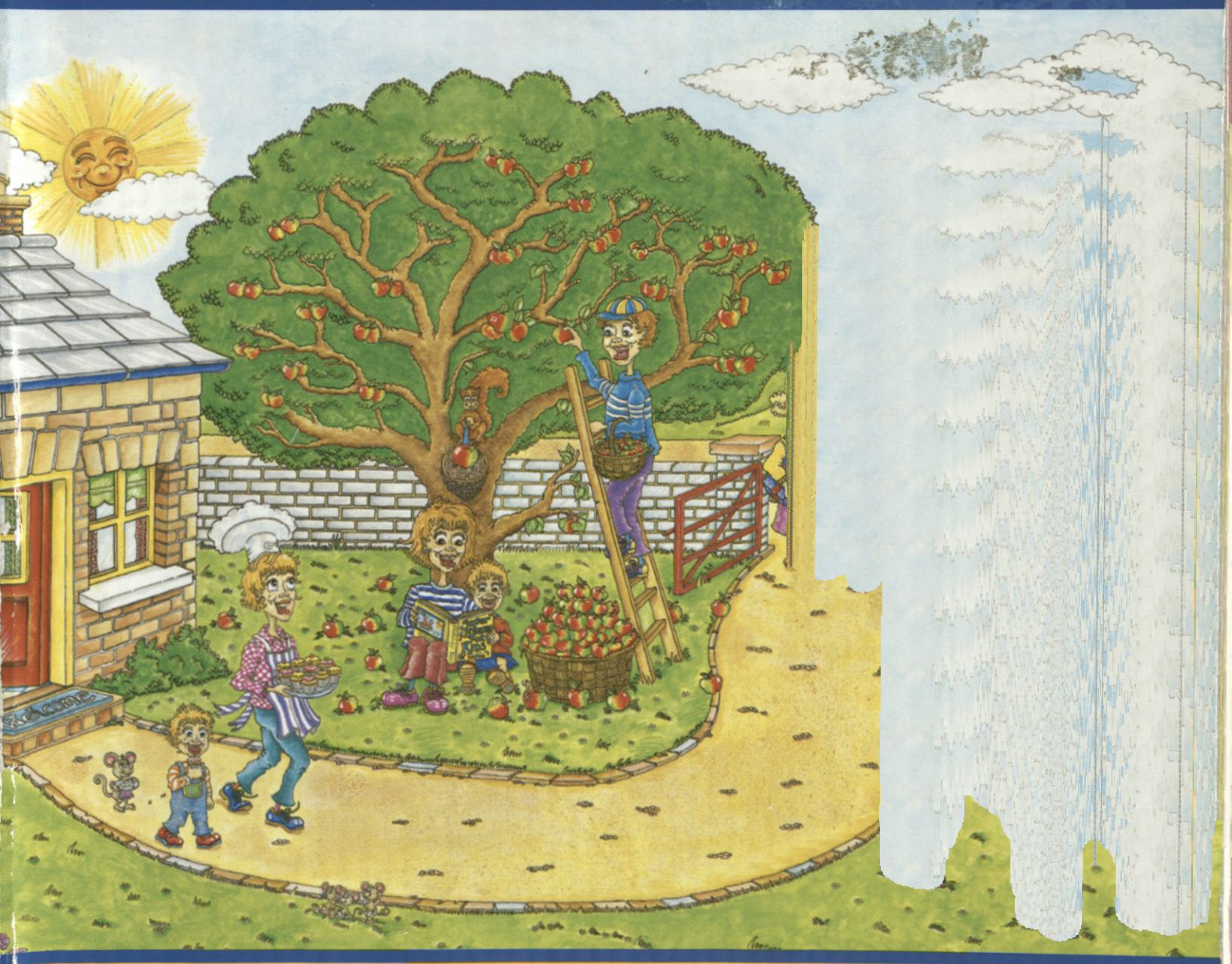
Family Learning Resource Guide



Clare Family Learning Project

Family Learning Resource Guide

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Foreword

It is a great pleasure to be associated with the production of the Family Learning Resource Pack. The Pack is the result of many years of field work and research by a devoted team of practitioners. From very humble and inauspicious beginnings in west Clare in 1994, through the Integra funded 'Clare Family Learning Project' (1996 - 1997), family learning in Ireland has, with this new publication, acquired a firmer foothold within the Adult Education field.

Co. Clare Vocational Education Committee and the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme developed an interest in family learning as a direct response to numerous requests from adult literacy learners for advice on supporting their own children's educational development. Five years on, it has become evident that the original insight accurately identified the inter-generational character of literacy and the potential of the parent's role.

Family learning initiatives, which work with both children and adults, seek to address the inter-generational effects of educational disadvantage. The approach is through the parent or carer to the child. The Family Learning Resource Pack is based on adult education principles and practices, combined with the experience of pre-school and primary school teachers, and the direct involvement of parents.

The publication of the Family Learning Resource Pack with its Resource Guide, parent workbooks, original Photopak, storybook, and poster will, I feel sure, enhance the work of your organisation in addressing the inter-generational issues now so apparent in basic education work.

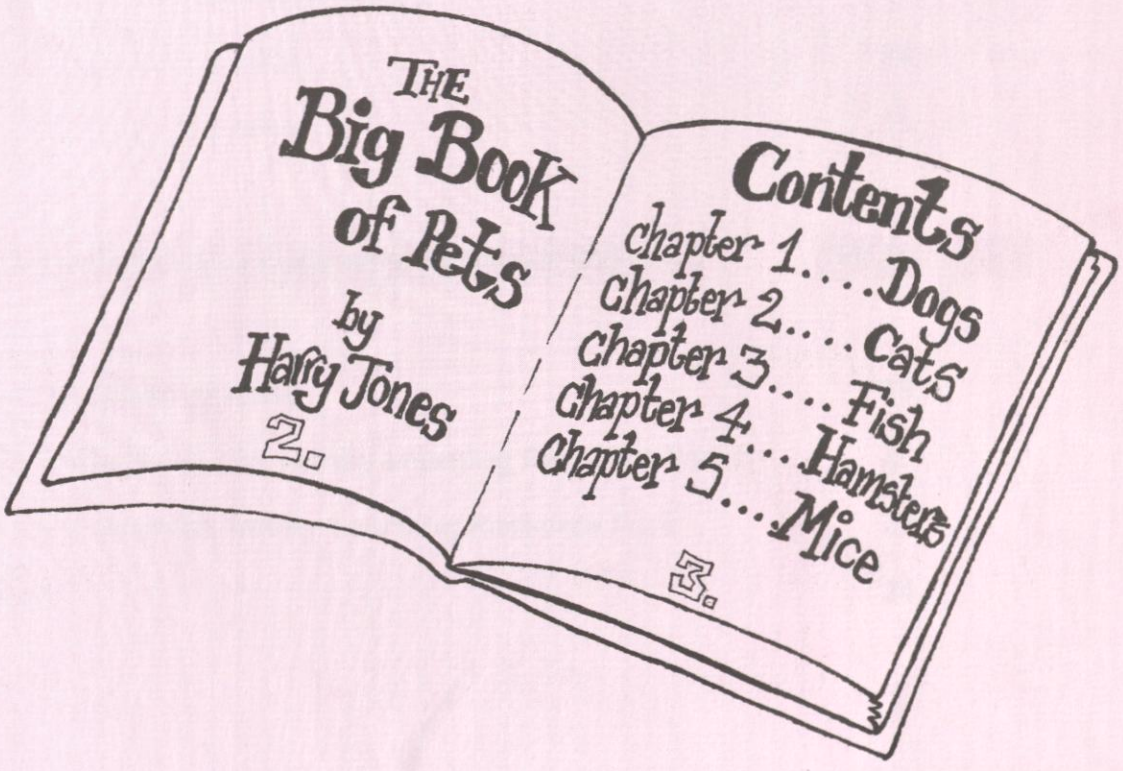
Sean Conlan

Dr. Sean Conlan
Adult Education Organiser
Co. Clare VEC

Table of contents

		Page
	Introduction	9-24
1	Getting started	27-39
2	Parents are natural teachers	43-57
3	Let's talk about...	61-78
4	Rhymes, songs and poems	81-96
5	Storytelling	99-117
6	Sharing books	121-137
7	Print is all around us	141-158
8	Ready to write	161-184
9	Everyday writing	187-200
10	Maths in action	203-218
11	Having fun with maths	221-237
12	Making a book	241-255
13	Putting it all together	259-270
14	Making connections	273-283
	Selected reading	287-323

Introduction



Contents

	Page
From family literacy to family learning	**10-18**
What is family literacy?	10
Investigating the roots of literacy	11
Models of family literacy	14
Family literacy in Ireland	15
Developing the Family Learning Resource Pack	**19-24**
Promoting good practice	19
What's included in the Family Learning Resource Pack?	20
Ideas for using the Family Learning Resource Pack	23
Symbols	24



From *family literacy* to *family learning*

What is family literacy?
In her book, **'Family Literacy: Young Children Learning to Read and Write',** Denny Taylor (1983) introduced the phrase *family literacy* as a way of describing the reading and writing practices she observed during a three year ethnographic study of six American families. In particular, Taylor's research highlighted ways in which young children engage in reading and writing as they explore and imitate everyday social activities. Taylor also provided evidence showing that school experiences of literacy are influenced by individual family practices.

Since then, *family literacy* has been used as an umbrella term to describe a wide variety of literacy intervention programmes that include an inter-generational focus in their design and delivery. While there is an adult-child dimension to these types of programmes, the adult participant might be a grandparent, an older child, or a teacher's helper as well as a parent. The focus of these programmes, for example *Read Aloud Parent Clubs* or *STaR (Story Telling and Retelling)* has been to increase opportunities for children to read books and talk about stories. (Dickinson, 1994)

In particular, the term *family literacy* has been used to describe a specific type of programme initiative, which attempts to break the inter-generational cycle of school failure and under-education by focusing on parents and children simultaneously, providing both adult basic skills training and early childhood education. These family literacy programmes emphasise that parents are their children's first and most important teachers, and that they should be encouraged and supported in this role. Central to the aims of a family literacy programme is the development of real partnerships between parents, children and teachers which will promote the learning potential of both the home and school environments.

A family literacy programme based on this model typically aims to:
- improve the skills and attitudes of educationally disadvantaged parents;
- enhance the quality of parent-child relationships;
- improve the developmental skills of young children;
- foster better relations between home and school;
- unite parents and children in a positive educational experience.

Laying the groundwork for family literacy
The theoretical groundwork for family literacy is based on:
- the lessons of earlier intervention strategies;
- a substantial body of research leading to the advancement of new theories and definitions of literacy;
- the work of cognitive psychologists in formulating socially oriented theories of language and learning.

Earlier intervention programmes recognised the role of family background and parental involvement in literacy and schooling, but were based largely on the assumption that 'targeted educational programmes could compensate for socio-economic disadvantage'. A well-known example of this programme model developed in the sixties is the United States' *Project Headstart,* where children from 'disadvantaged' families were given the opportunity to attend a pre-school enrichment programme emphasising reading readiness skills and language development. This programme did not involve parents directly in the learning process, but rather sought to make up for the presumed deficiencies in the home environment. (Wolfendale, 1996)

From *family literacy* to *family learning*

In the seventies and early eighties, programmes in the US, England, Australia and New Zealand were aimed more directly at involving parents in the development of their children's reading skills. These programmes included prescriptive methods for hearing children read, such as 'paired reading' (Glynn, 1996) and 'pause prompt praise' (Topping 1996). Other programmes aimed simply to ensure that children had more exposure to books before entering school. However, none of these initiatives took into account parents' own literacy levels, nor did they acknowledge the home environment itself as a source of literacy and numeracy experiences. (Wolfendale and Topping, 1996)

The experience and 'hindsight wisdom' of these programmes led educators and researchers to consider the broader dimensions of intervention measures such as:

- the effects of a home-school reading programme on other family members;
- how a programme might meet needs in addition to developing reading skills;
- the significance of recognising the home environment as a place of learning;
- the importance of building on children's previous experiences within the social context of the family. (Wolfendale, 1996)

Investigating the roots of literacy:
This shift in focus from what happens in the classroom to what happens before children arrive in the classroom was backed up by the work of a significant number of researchers carrying out investigations into how children learn to read. In his book, **'The Theory of Emergent Literacy'**, Nigel Hall (1987) consolidated the findings of a number of research studies to challenge conventional beliefs that literacy is a neutral, value free skill best taught in a systematic and sequential way. He presented, as an alternative, the view that literacy 'emerges' from the child's observation of and participation in meaningful literacy practices in the home and elsewhere. (See selected reading 1: 'The discovery of emergent literacy' by Nigel Hall.)

Among others, Hall cited the work of New Zealand researcher, Marie Clay. Contrary to the traditional 'blank slate' perception, Clay's studies into what young children know about print suggested that children learn important concepts about print before they start school. Through the repeated experience of having books read to them, children learn about what readers do, e.g. use their eyes to look at the page, use their hands to hold a book, have a purpose for reading, identify clues to give meaning. They also learn about how a text works, e.g. that print is made up of words and marks and spaces, that print is different from pictures, or that there are relationships between print and the spoken word. (Hall, 1987)

Yetta Goodman, another key figure in early literacy research, looked at the development of literacy as learned behaviour that occurs naturally through the child's experience of, and interaction with, print in familiar social contexts. She found that some of this learning can be almost haphazard, for instance, recognising a familiar food package or identifying a birthday card; while other learning takes place through repeated encounters, such as book reading. These developmental experiences help to establish what Yetta Goodman termed the 'roots' of literacy in a child. (discussed in Weinberger, 1996, pp. 3-4; Hall, 1987, pp. 7-9)

Goswami and Bryant (1990) explored how hearing and saying rhymes from an early age could contribute to children's literacy development. They found that children developed an awareness of sound patterns through their experiences with nursery rhymes, nonsense rhymes, advertising jingles and songs. Later, when learning to read, their

sensitivity to sound patterns helped them to make analogies between words that share the same beginning or ending sounds. This was a useful strategy for helping them to learn new words and also for learning to spell. (Weinberger, 1996)

In further studies focusing on the relationship between talk and reading, Carol Fox (1983) investigated the narrative features in the storytelling of a group of children aged three and a half to six years. She found that the children's experience of having stories read to them greatly enhanced their own storytelling abilities. Children readily and competently used narrative devices, for example, to provide an introduction to the story, to embellish the story with descriptive details, and to keep the audience interested and in suspense. Also evident was the rich use of 'book language' in children's own made up stories. Fox's study showed that children learn a great deal about complex narrative rules as a result of their experiences with books, and that their level of understanding is often above that of 'reading scheme' texts used in schools. (discussed in Hall, 1987, pp. 35-37)

Catherine Snow's research on children's early experience with books focused on the 'talk' that occurs during book reading activities. She found that 'book reading talk' was more complex than talk that took place during caretaking or play. Snow suggested that book reading, often thought of as an activity, can perhaps better be viewed as a 'micro-environment' within which certain events are likely to occur, for example:

- learning new words,
- asking 'what' questions and 'why' questions,
- acquiring factual information,
- seeing connections between one's own life and others' lives.

Snow went on to suggest that the benefits of parent-child book reading may have as much to do with how to think and how to talk as with how to read. (Snow, 1994)

Studies on literacy environments also featured Shirley Brice Heath's research (1983) into the literacy practices of three different communities in North and South Carolina, which she labelled, Maintown, Roadville and Trackton. Heath identified cultural differences in the ways children learn to use and make sense of print, and also differences in the ways they learn to use talking and writing to convey their knowledge of the world.

For example, the literacy practices associated with reading a book were quite different in each community. In Maintown, book reading was very similar to school book reading activities, with parents reading stories to their children while at the same time asking questions, encouraging imaginative and exploratory talk, and praising their children's efforts to retell a story from the pictures or from their imagination. Readers in the Roadville community, however, tended to see distinct roles for parents (as readers) and children (as listeners). The Trackton community provided a third approach to story reading with 'the book' serving as a starting point from where oral interpretation, laced with imagination and fictionalisation, took over. Heath suggested that children whose early experiences of literacy are different from the mainstream school expectations may be starting school with a disadvantage, not because of lack of exposure to literacy, but because of cultural differences in the home and school environments. Her research has played an important part in shifting interest within the field of literacy from a focus on skills to the recognition that literacy is always embedded in social practice. (discussed in Czerniewska, 1992, pp. 11-15)

(See selected reading 2: 'What is early literacy development?' by Jo Weinberger.)

From *family literacy* to *family learning*

Parents are natural teachers:
Interest in the home environment as the prime source of children's early literacy development inevitably focused attention on the parents' role in supporting their children. Prof. Peter Hannon, Ph.D. of Sheffield University, a noted researcher in the field of early literacy development, undertook a detailed observational study into how parents could be supported in helping their children to develop literacy skills. A significant finding of this research was that, contrary to the myth of the 'bad parent', virtually all parents, regardless of their own levels of literacy, were anxious to help their children. (Hannon, 1995) This finding was supported by the research of Sheffield colleague, Dr. Jo Weinberger, in her longitudinal study of literacy experiences, the role of parents, and children's literacy development. The Elmswood Study (Weinberger, 1996) describes how more than 40 parents from a variety of backgrounds contributed to their children's literacy development. Both these research findings are further backed up by the experience of adult literacy schemes, where being able to help their children has been a prime motivating factor for adults attending literacy classes.

In the *REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) Project*, the Sheffield research team developed and piloted a framework for parental involvement in literacy across four strands - environmental print, books, writing, and oral language skills. The framework emphasises the parents' role as natural teachers in providing:

- **Opportunities** for their children's learning;
- **Recognition** of their children's efforts;
- **Interaction** in support of these efforts;
- **Modelling** to encourage imitation of literacy skills. (Nutbrown & Hannon, 1996)

The ORIM framework has been incorporated into a number of projects in England and has significantly influenced the core structure for the *Clare Family Learning Project.*
(See selected reading 3: 'Understanding the case for involvement' by Peter Hannon.)

The role of social interaction:
If there is one common element evident across the range of family literacy initiatives, it is the desire to increase parent-child interaction. Indeed, the very concept of *'family literacy'* implicitly acknowledges the role of social interaction in literacy. It follows, too, that in building on the significance of social interaction, in any programme design, (whether it's about promoting storytelling, exploring environmental print, or talking about books) there must be a key emphasis on oral language development.

The focus on social interaction and the development of literacy is supported by the work of Jerome Bruner, a leading contemporary exponent of the view that language and learning develop in children through the processes of social interaction. Bruner, whose work is strongly influenced by the theories of Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, proposes that all babies are born with innate cognitive capacities which predispose them to learn language:

- the capacity to be goal oriented or to learn with a purpose;
- the capacity to communicate and be sociable;
- the capacity to recognise patterns, sequence, and order;
- the capacity to abstract and generalise their learning.

Right from birth, infants are goal oriented towards social communication (e.g. seeking a response from the mother or primary caretaker) and are facilitated to be communicative through their use of these innate 'cognitive endowments'. The development of language then follows as an outcome of an infant's desire to communicate. Once children begin to acquire language capabilities, the use of language itself further

activates their innate cognitive capacities by making possible more flexible thinking for planning, constructing, abstracting and generalising about their observations and experiences. Finally, since it is the desire for communication that stimulates the acquisition of language, the major form of assistance provided by adults for their children's language development is social interaction. (Bruner, 1994)

Bruner proposes that, from the beginning, babies and parents form a unique partnership, with babies seeking and parents responding, guiding and encouraging. Like Hannon, Bruner suggests that there are distinct parental behaviours built around social interactional frameworks, in the form of familiar and routinised work and play activities which facilitate learning. Through these highly predictable routines, such as peek-a-boo, reading books together, bath or meal times, the parents (already fine-tuned to the capabilities and capacities of their children) can steadily raise their expectations of their children's language and learning. Children learn not only new speech, but also:

- how to extend their speech into new contexts;
- how to meet the social pre-requisites of different communication tasks;
- how to maintain topics while taking turns;
- how to know what's worth talking about;

in other words, how to interact effectively using language. (discussed in Garton & Pratt, 1989, pp. 44 - 48)

Bruner's social interaction theories (and those of other exponents) extend to the development of reading, writing and number skills. As learning language is an outcome of the social and communicative intentions of children, if children are given opportunities to participate purposefully in reading and writing activities, and in using numbers to communicate information and ideas, they are likely to see the acquisition of these skills as an extension of their language development. That is, they will discover for themselves a purpose for learning.

Family literacy, then, has developed from the findings of a significant body of language and literacy research, coupled with the lessons of earlier initiatives, which focused on identifying and addressing the inter-generational effects of literacy problems. This emerging concept of 'family literacy' is the result of:

- a shift in attitude from seeing the home environment as a site of deprivation to seeing it as a site of learning opportunities;
- increased awareness that the best placed individuals to stimulate early language and literacy development are children's own family members, and most especially their parents;
- the realisation that, just as there is always a social context for speaking, there is always a social context for literacy;
- the recognition that the prime motivating factor in learning to talk also motivates a child to learn to read and write, that is, the desire to be socially communicative.

Models of family literacy

The *Parents and Child Education (PACE)* programmes piloted in Kentucky in 1986 are recognised as being the first *family literacy* programmes. The basic core of these programmes included:

- literacy education for parents,
- a quality pre-school programme,
- parent education and support group,
- regular parent and child interaction.

From *family literacy* to *family learning*

The original projects were all located in primary schools, and parents and children attended the project for three or four days each week throughout the school year. As an additional part of the programme, parents were encouraged to volunteer in various ways in the schools, gaining work experience, getting to know school personnel, and becoming more comfortable in the school setting. Programme results were reported to be positive: parents' expectations for their children's future education improved, parents' literacy levels improved, and children's learning skills improved. The *PACE* programme model evolved into the *Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project* and has since been replicated throughout the United States under the auspices of the *National Centre for Family Literacy*. The US Department of Education is also funding a national *Even Start* programme which provides services to families with children from birth to age seven. (Connors, 1996)

In 1993, the British government funded four pilot family literacy programmes, which were set up by the *Basic Skills Agency*. The programmes were based on the American model, but also combined elements of earlier English projects aimed at involving parents in their children's reading, such as the work of the Sheffield researchers already mentioned. The triple aims of the demonstration programmes were to boost: 'children's literacy, parents' ability to help their children, and parents' literacy.' (Brooks et al, 1996)

The executive summary of the evaluation report, produced by the *National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)*, noted that, overall, the aims of the demonstration projects were fulfiled. Children made significant gains in all three aspects of language development - reading, writing and oral skills. In relation to the parents' ability to help their children, there were 'substantial increases in literacy-related home activities' and in parent-child interaction. Parents reported that they felt more confident in their own abilities and were able to pass this confidence on to their children. Parents also demonstrated gains in literacy skills, with ninety five per cent of all the participants gaining partial or full accreditation of a level of *City & Guilds Wordpower*. Additionally, parents seemed to feel that 'a barrier between school practice and home activities had been crossed' and that they were now better able to communicate with their children's teachers. Moreover, the evaluation showed that the gains made during participation in the programme were sustained after the parents and children had finished the course. (Brooks et al, 1996)
(See selected reading 4: 'The effectiveness of family literacy' by Keith Topping.)

Family literacy in Ireland

The *Clare Family Learning Project* was developed in response to a need identified by the *Clare Reading & Writing Scheme* for a programme which would help parents with poor literacy and numeracy skills to help their own children with learning. In September 1994, our first initiative in family learning took place in an area of social disadvantage in Kilrush, a small town in west Clare, and was funded by a grant from the 'International Year of the Family Committee'. We ran a six week course that focused on enhancing parent-child interaction to support language development and awareness of environmental print. This short pilot course was then repeated in several other locations in Clare.

During the pilot courses, participating parents from different parts of Clare revealed similiar concerns regarding the educational needs of their children and their own circumstances. The parents were anxious to support their children, but they felt that their abilities to help their children with schoolwork were limited because of their own educational background and because they were unfamiliar with parts of the primary

school cirriculum and most of the secondary school curriculum. They were worried about their children leaving school before completing second cycle, as they knew from their own experience the limitations this would put on opportunities for employment. They also felt marginalised from the school culture. Some parents expressed a belief that the school system was not interested in their children, that they were labelled low achievers from 'day one'. It was evident that addressing these needs was beyond the scope of the short courses currently being offered.

In January 1996, through funding received under the *EU Human Resources Initiative, EMPLOYMENT-INTEGRA (formerly HORIZON)*, and with the support of the *Clare Vocational Education Committee*, the *Adult Education Board* and the *Clare Reading & Writing Scheme* established the first *'family literacy'* programme in Ireland.

The *Clare Family Learning Project* modelled their first programmes on the *Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project* and the English demonstration model operating in Norwich, *Learning Together*. Before setting up the project in Clare, the project organisers consulted with Prof. Peter Hannon in Sheffield and also with Andrea Mearing, Project Director in Norwich. Through discussions with Prof. Hannon, the project team decided to adopt the ORIM strategy as their core framework, but with the addition of a fifth strand - numeracy.

In Norwich, as the team observed the *Learning Together* programme in action, Director Andrea Mearing emphasised that actions aimed at building parents' confidence and creating positive links with schools were as important to the programme's success as the activities designed to improve parental skills and increase parent-child interaction. She also suggested that the term ***family learning*** rather than ***family literacy*** more accurately reflected the holistic approach to programme design.

Further reflections from the Norwich team (and consultations with participants in Ennis) identified parental concerns beyond the scope of the early years focus. The project team therefore decided to simultaneously develop programmes aimed at providing ongoing support for parents, particularly in the areas of homework help for primary school children and helping the older child make the adjustment to secondary school.

Programme models:
The *Clare Family Learning Project* developed and delivered three programme models at the *Adult & Community Education Centre* in Ennis:

Learning is Fun: a 60 hour programme in which both parents and children engaged in home-based learning activities designed to enhance the school performance of their children.

Homework Help: a 16 hour programme designed to build parental confidence and assist parents in helping their children with homework.

Moving On: a 12 hour programme which gave parents the opportunity to address some of the fears and concerns associated with their children's transition to secondary school.

Crèche facilities were available for those with very young children, as well as a pre-school room where children could learn alongside their parents. The children's room was designed to promote home-based learning activities. At various times during the

programme, parents and children worked together on learning activities which the parents had discussed and developed in their own sessions.

Particularly during the *Learning is Fun* programmes, the mothers were inclined to raise other issues relating to their own situations which the project team then attempted to address through developing sessions on topics such as money management, health and nutrition, and first aid. Parents were also encouraged to explore other opportunities offered by the Adult & Community Education Centre. The subsequent uptake by parents of additional adult education classes was seen as a significant programme benefit.

In all aspects of design and development, the project embraced a learner-centred philosophy. Programmes were planned in consultation with the participants and ongoing evaluation by the parents was very much a part of each course. The philosophy was 'start where the parents are at' by valuing existing parental competencies. While the programme planners did target parental gains in literacy competence, motivation and self-image, they recognised that parents - even in very disadvantaged circumstances - were already active in trying to help their children to learn, especially to learn to read.

Throughout the project there was a policy of close collaboration between the adult education service, the participating parents, and the local primary schools. This collaboration aimed to improve links between schools and parents who have felt marginalised from the educational system, and to promote a greater sense of partnership in education. Joint actions between the family learning course team and the staff of the local schools included: giving parents a better understanding of the schools' expectations, providing opportunities for parents to meet informally with members of staff from the local schools, and encouraging positive discussion on problem areas. All sides have at times identified key issues which were then addressed through the project's programmes. This open and responsive approach was crucial to the overall success of the project.

During interviews for the evaluation report, parents were very positive about the outcomes of their participation in the programme.

They reported that:

- their participation in the project enhanced their relationship with their children;
- their own literacy and numeracy skills improved;
- they read more to their children and felt more confident in choosing books;
- they felt more confident about making contact with schools;
- they considered increased self-confidence and a more positive attitude towards learning as the most significant gains from the programme.

In October 1997, the *Clare Family Learning Project* sponsored a national conference on family learning which was attended by more than 100 delegates. Prof. Peter Hannon, Sheffield University, and *Learning Together* project director, Andrea Mearing, were speakers at the conference. The then director of the Clare Family Learning Project, Mary Reid, gave an overview of the project's activities, and identified key issues for the further development of family learning in Ireland. The response to the conference was enthusiastic and heartening. It was clear that, while the model presented by the *Clare Family Learning Project* was new to Ireland, interest in a family-centred approach to educational problems has been here for some time.

Since then, a number of initiatives in *family literacy* have been started around the country. Similar to the situation in other countries where family learning programmes have been developed, a variety of approaches are being tried in response to different needs and interests, depending on the availability of funding and other supports. It will be important now in Ireland to share experiences and reflections as a range of initiatives are implemented, with a view to identifying models of good practice which can be promoted and replicated throughout the country.

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Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

Promoting good practice

Family learning is still a relatively new field. Much of the evidence for the success of family learning programmes is anecdotal and even where research evidence is provided, the timespan is often short. There is a need for more research and monitoring of what goes on in programmes identified as providing 'family learning'. However, though the picture for *family learning* is still incomplete, some key elements of a successful programme design are beginning to emerge. In writing this guide, we have tried to take into account the prevailing wisdom as to what constitutes best practice in family-centred approaches to learning.

Recommendations include:

- Recognise first that the parents in your target group are already playing an active role in supporting their children's learning. Affirm their efforts and aim to build from the positive.
- Tailor the programme to the needs of your local community, but start small. Programme organisation and content can be complex. It is easier to enlarge your programme and attract more participants with a record of success, than to be overly ambitious at the start.
- Co-operate with the relevant agencies and services in your local community. Inform them of your plans and invite their support. But be clear about the scope and focus of your programme and don't commit yourselves beyond these boundaries.
- Establish links between home and school. Consult regularly with local school staff. Invite some staff members in to talk to the parents on specific topics, for example, how reading is taught today. Arrange for the parents to make group visits to the school.
- Make provision for transportation and childcare and be prepared to deal with problems that will inevitably arise during the course. For example, make allowances for future participation if a parent needs to take 'time-out' from the course.
- Use staff with backgrounds in both adult and early childhood education. Build in joint staff training to encourage collaboration and to maintain a balance.
- Choose topics, activities and materials appropriate to the needs and interests of your target group. If necessary, design your own.
- Supplement the formal programme with take-home materials such as books, story puppets, home-made games, and writing kits.
- Provide opportunities for parents to learn for themselves as well as for their children. But be aware that many parents do not see their own learning as an issue in the beginning. Respect their choices and focus your sessions accordingly.
- Adhere to good adult education practice. Encourage parents to participate in the design and content of the course. Continue a policy of close collaboration throughout and 'evaluate' the course together at the end of the programme.

Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

The *Family Learning Resource Pack*
The project team and collaborators have produced the *Family Learning Resource Pack* to share their ideas about family learning with others. In order to make these materials accessible to a wide audience of schemes, organisations and agencies interested in setting up similiar programmes, the course described in the pack is designed to be:

Portable The *Family Learning Resource Pack* contains a *movable feast* of suggestions, ideas and activities for family learning programmes. All of the equipment and materials needed for the sessions can be easily transported from one centre to another in the boot of a car.

Affordable In the interests of keeping the course costs to a minimum, none of the activities described in these sessions require the use of computers or audio-visual equipment, though where these are available they can certainly be used. Most of the materials for these sessions can be gathered at home, or in your centre, or purchased inexpensively. Also, local organisations and suppliers may be willing to donate or loan some materials.

Adaptable In keeping with good adult education practice, the needs and interests of each family learning group should be taken into account when planning a course. The sessions are therefore designed to be flexible. For example, you might prefer to adapt some of the activities using methods you feel more appropriate for your group; or use some of the activities in a particular session, but not others; or incorporate some of the topic areas into another programme.

What's included in the *Family Learning Resource Pack*?
The *Family Learning Resource Pack* includes:
- the *Family Learning Resource Guide*,
- a *Photopak* containing pictures of everyday activities involving literacy and numeracy,
- accompanying *Parents' Packs* with activities to try out in the home,
- a children's story - *'Jason's Day'*,
- a family learning poster - *Once upon a time for learning...*,
- course certificates.

The *Family Learning Resource Guide* 14 x 2 hrs = 28 - 30 hr programme.
The fourteen sessions in the *Family Learning Resource Guide* contain the basic conceptual framework for a programme designed to help parents maximise the potential of the home learning environment for literacy and numeracy development. Each session emphasises group activity and hands-on learning and is planned to last approximately two hours. Facilitators are encouraged to organise sessions to include a ten to fifteen minute break, as well as time to explore any lending materials such as books, games, videos and audio-cassettes. The guide also includes relevant background readings and a list of suggested resources for further support in implementing a family learning programme.

Session 1 - Getting started explores the concept of family learning and discusses the parents' own aims and expectations regarding the course. This first session will provide a good opportunity to suggest topics in addition to the core programme which can then be incorporated into the overall programme. There is also a need in this first session to allow time for participants to become comfortable with one another and to be clear on the organisational ground rules.

Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

Session 2 - Parents are natural teachers begins with an exploration of the parents' role as their children's first teachers. Starting with a discussion on the many skills parents have already taught their children, the session develops into an examination of the roles of 'teacher' and 'learner', how children learn and why parents are ideally placed as supporters of that learning. The session also includes exploration into the three primary learning styles and introduces the concept of a multi-sensory approach to learning.

Session 3 - Let's talk about takes a close look at the importance of oral language development. Parents are encouraged to talk early and often with their children, and especially to take advantage of the many daily activities around which conversation skills can be built. Parents also consider the differences between talk in the classroom and talk in the home and discuss ways to prepare their children for classroom routines. In each of the sessions that follow, time is also spent on examining the vocabulary needed to participate in talk about reading, writing and maths activities.

Session 4 - Rhymes, songs and poems includes activities designed to help parents develop an awareness of basic phonological skills (sound patterns), particularly focusing on rhymes. The session explores many possibilities for fostering phonological awareness through everyday activities involving rhymes, songs and poems.

Session 5 - Storytelling is designed to show parents how familiarity and understanding of story structures, such as fairy tales, encourages the development of reading and writing skills from an early age. Parents are introduced to creative strategies for enhancing the enjoyment of telling stories such as simple puppetry, costumes, and games.

Session 6 - Sharing books looks at activities that are designed to promote parents' interaction with children around books. Parents spend time examining and analysing children's literature. They are encouraged to develop their own ideas about what constitutes a 'good book' for them and their children. The session also explores strategies for supporting children's early reading skills.

Session 7 - Print Is all around us examines the many opportunities for making the most of our daily experiences with the print that is 'all around us'. In this session, attention is focused on the community, as well as the home, as a valuable resource for learning.

Session 8 - Ready to write begins by asking parents to consider their attitudes toward writing. Parents will learn about the skills involved in learning to write, discuss the efforts children make to write before they start school, and examine ways that parents can further support their children's attempts to write.

Session 9 - Everyday writing explores the development of early writing skills through children's many play activities, their observations of writing events at home and in the wider community, and their own attempts at producing real writing for real purposes. As in the sessions on reading and oral skills, these sessions also attempt to look at some of the later classroom approaches for which early home activities lay a solid foundation.

Session 10 - Maths in action takes a look at the many ways children experience maths every day in the home. Parents are asked to explore some of the maths tools found in the home and to consider the many maths words we use to name and describe things, to communicate ideas and to solve problems. Parents are also asked to take a hands-on approach to solving some real life maths problems and to consider how they might involve their children in these activities.

Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

Session 11 - Having fun with maths focuses on the many practical and fun home activities which encourage an early understanding of basic number concepts. This is organised through 'learning centres' where parents are invited to experiment with maths activities and games in a hands-on situation. The session also explores the educational value of games and ends with a game-making activity.

Session 12 - Making a book is designed as a stand-alone session to show parents how simple home-made books can incorporate many aspects of learning. Facilitators may want to plan to have it follow the 'reading' and 'writing' sessions, as writing down stories is also a natural step to take after telling and reading stories. However, it may be used at any time throughout the programme. The bulk of the session is devoted to planning and creating a home-made book.

Session 13 - Putting it all together centres on activities which encourage the parents to review their experiences on the course and consolidate their learning. Particular emphasis is placed on recognising the links between all the learning strands, oral language, reading, writing, and maths. The story book, *Jason's Day* lays the groundwork for a final project, which is designed to appeal to all types of learners by providing several suggestions for project construction.

Session 14 - Making connections focuses on encouraging parents to explore their own educational needs and interests. Activities involve exploring community resources for further learning and family support. This session also includes a course evaluation and suggestions for final closing activities.

Parents' Pack

The *Parents' Pack* is a set of seven workbooks that have been designed to supplement the activities in each session. Each workbook contains the Home Activities, which are assigned at the end of each session, as well as practical information and ideas for helping parents to support learning in the home.

A - Getting started; Parents are natural teachers
B - Let's talk about; Rhymes, songs and poems; Storytelling.
C - Sharing books; Print is all around us.
D - Ready to write; Everyday writing.
E - Everyday maths; Having fun with maths.
F - Making a book; Putting it all together; Making connections.

Jason's Day: a story book for children which incorporates some of the elements of the family learning course.

Photopak

The *Photopak* is a set of fifty photographs of families participating in everyday activities at home and in the community. Each photograph contains a variety of family learning opportunities. The photopak is designed to be a supplementary resource for use with many of the session activities.

Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

Ideas for using the *Family Learning Resource Pack*
In designing a family learning programme, as with all good adult education practice, much of the emphasis of the course should be on a learner-centred approach. We recommend that before you finalise your course content, you consult with the parents interested in taking the course, get to know their needs and interests, and consider in what ways these are likely to be met through the course. Then plan and adapt your sessions accordingly, taking into consideration your own budgets and the time allocated for the course. You may choose to use all fourteen sessions or select only sample activities for inclusion in your programme. Here are some suggestions:

- **Offer a taster course to introduce the concept of family learning.**
  Use selected sessions to run a short 'taster course' focusing on one or two topics, for example, Books and Storytelling. This can be an easy and inexpensive way to stimulate interest in family learning.

- **Offer a 'parents only' programme.**
  Include all the sessions presented here, plus additional adult learning sessions, for a parents only programme model with parent-child activities taking place in the home. This is the next least expensive option for groups introducing family learning programmes.

- **Offer a 'parent and child' programme.**
  The sessions can be easily adapted to a parent and child model. Simply parallel the topic presented with appropriate activities for the children's sessions, and then use the Home Activities as parent and child activities within the course time. This is a more expensive and complex model which requires additional staff, a larger 'premises', and careful planning.

- **Use the sessions as part of an integrated programme.**
  Family learning courses can be included in the curriculum of another programme. For example, you could incorporate a number of the sessions into the curriculum of a course on parenting skills or childcare. You could also use some sessions in parallel with other courses, e.g. communications or personal development.

- **Expand the sessions to give an in-depth focus on one or two topics.**
  Each session provides a number of selected activities focused on young children. However, topics such as books and stories or writing skills could be discussed across the ages, from babies and pre-schoolers through the different school ages, to adulthood.

Once the course has started, continue to 'check-in' with the parents from time to time to see how they are getting along. You will find that, as parents become more comfortable, they are likely to look beyond their primary interest in the course (i.e. their children's learning) to their own interests in learning. You can facilitate this process by making suggestions for additional sessions, providing taster classes, establishing links with local adult education staff, offering follow-up sessions, offering an educational guidance service as part of your programme.

Good Luck!

Symbols


Parents' Pack activity, also included in the Resource Guide.


Activity for home, also included in the Parents' Pack.


Photopak is needed for this activity.


Facilitator will need to use a flipchart and markers in the activity.


Facilitator will need to gather and organise materials ahead of time.


Tutor tips for enhancing or extending activities and sessions.

Additional notes

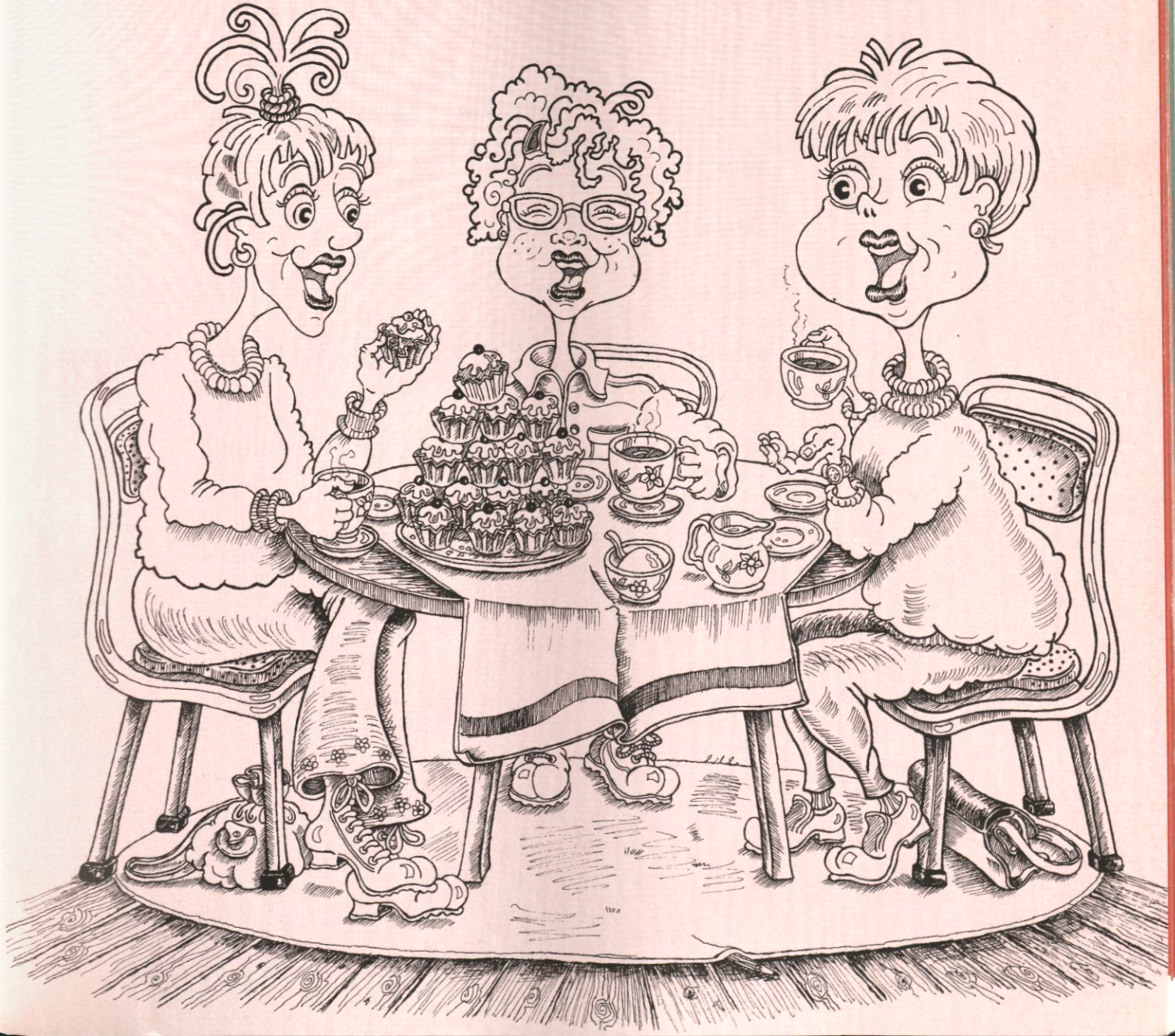
He/she, his/her
We have tried to address the issue of gender equity in the following way:
The pronoun 'she' is used in all odd numbered sessions.
The pronoun 'he' is used in all even numbered sessions.

'The parents'
We refer to the participants in the course as 'the parents'. This is meant to be a general reference for facilitators which implies an assumption about the participants' particular status as primary caretakers.

Session Notes
One page is left at the end of each session for your own notes on each session.
You should photocopy this page as needed.

1

Getting started





In this session parents will:

- become familiar with the concepts of family learning;
- discuss their own aims and expectations for the course;
- establish a level of comfort within the group;
- acquire information regarding dates, times, support available;
- develop an awareness of how the learning process differs in the home and school.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	28
What is a family learning programme?			29
Icebreaker	**1**	**10 mins.**	**30**
What's in a box?	**2**	**20 mins.**	**31**
Looking at learning	**3**	**20 mins.**	**32**
Looking at home and school learning	**4**	**20 mins.**	**33**
Home and school learning			34
Expectations and establishing ground rules	**5**	**20 mins.**	**35**
Core topics + Other possible topics			36
Session Summary		10 mins.	37
Home Activity 1 - Learning at home			37
Learning at home			38
Session Notes			39

1

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:



Before you begin each session, arrange the chairs informally in a circular or semi-circular style. If you plan to include any practical tasks, have tables available as well. Check that heating and lighting are adequate. Have your flipchart set up in advance.



Create a visual display of family learning activities for the parents to view. Use Photopak pictures, your own pictures, posters, etc.



You will be referring to **Parents' Pack A, p. 2 - What is a family learning programme?**

Write the key phrases on a flipchart.

What to do:

As the parents arrive, welcome them and invite them to look at the visual display while the group is assembling. When you are ready to begin, introduce yourself and explain a little bit about your group or organisation.

Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 2 - What is a family learning programme?** and discuss.



What is a family learning programme?

Family learning programmes recognise that parents are their children's first and most important teachers.

One of the goals of a family learning programme is to encourage and support you in your role as your child's first teacher.

Family learning programmes recognise that there are all kinds of opportunities for learning in the home.

A second goal of the programme is to explore activities that can help your child make the most of home learning.

Family learning programmes also recognise that parents are busy people who often find it hard to get a bit of time for themselves.

A third goal of the programme is to provide a little time and space for you to talk about your own interests in learning and, if you like, to take advantage of adult learning opportunities both during and after the programme.

Family learning programmes are about:

- building skills,
- building confidence,
- sharing ideas,
- having fun!



10 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

Icebreaker

If the parents in your group do not already know one another, you might like to begin with a short icebreaker.

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Explain to the parents that icebreakers are intended to help people relax and get comfortable within the group. Sometimes participants are unhappy in a course, not because the course is too long, or too difficult, but because they don't feel at ease with other participants. This icebreaker exercise will help the parents to get to know each other.

Ask the parents to sit beside someone they don't know and talk with each other for about five minutes, making sure to introduce themselves and find out a little about each other (names of children, course expectations, how they heard about the course). Tell them that, at the end of the five minutes, they will be asked to introduce their partners to the whole group.

While you are hearing from each member of the group, make a note on the flipchart of any comments made about course expectations. Once you have heard from everyone, thank them for their contributions and inform them that, at the end of this first session, you will give them a brief outline of your plans for the rest of the course. Tell them that, while you hope these plans will go some way towards meeting the group's expectations, the course can be adapted to suit their needs.







20 mins.

What's in a box?

To prepare:



You will need: a variety of boxes in different sizes, markers, Blu-Tack, paper, and a selection of household items which might stimulate ideas for this activity (e.g. shoes, toys, letters, pencils).

What to do:

Divide the parents into pairs and give each pair a box, marker and paper.

Tell the parents to describe their boxes and to brainstorm a list of ideas for using their boxes.

After ten minutes, ask each pair to talk about some of the uses they came up with for their box. They can stick their list onto the box for referral. After each pair has contributed something, write their ideas on the flipchart. When everyone has contributed, ask the parents to reflect on how they came up with the ideas for using their boxes.

For example, did they:

- use imagination?
- discuss ideas with partners?
- see what others were doing?
- estimate the size and shape of things to put in the box?
- compare the box to other things of similar size?
- think about the weight and durability of the box?
- think about changing the shape of the box, e.g. cutting it?
- think about changing the look by colouring it or putting paper on it?
- remember other boxes used in the past?
- test things left around that might fit into the box?
- think of different situations, e.g. storage, child's play?

Ask the parents to think about small children and their fondness for playing with boxes.

Do you think your child might be engaged in any of these activities when playing with a box?

20 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Looking at learning

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Write the word LEARNING on the middle of a flipchart page. Ask the parents to brainstorm a little about learning. Ask them to say everything they can think of when they hear the word 'learning'.

Write their comments around the word LEARNING on the flipchart. Add pages if necessary. When their ideas are exhausted, ask the parents to reflect on some of their ideas.

For example, did they:

Name

- places where learning takes place?
- people they associate with learning?
- activities connected with learning?
- materials for learning?
- methods for learning?

Talk about

- feelings and emotions associated with learning?
- reasons for learning?
- tests or assessments?
- learning successes or failures?
- intelligence, memory, or styles of learning?

Identify

- particular learning tasks?
- past learning experiences?
- specific skills or knowledge gained?
- key words or phrases they've often heard about learning?

Questions for discussion:

- *Do we associate certain kinds of learning with certain places?*
- *What do we associate with learning in the community or in the workplace?*
- *What sorts of things are learned at home?*

ACTIVITY 4

20 mins.

Looking at home and school learning

To prepare:

Choose one of the three options for this activity and prepare your materials.



Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 3 - Home and school learning.**

What to do:

Parents often underestimate both their role as their child's natural teacher and their home as a valuable learning environment. The purpose of this exercise is to highlight the many positive aspects of the home learning environment and to emphasise that home learning and school learning are two different types of learning. The discussion is not intended to devalue or 'put down' school learning, but rather to draw attention to the equal importance of home learning.

There are three ways you can go about this exercise. You are recommended to choose the best option for your group.

1 Brainstorm ideas about home and school learning. Give the parents prompts by asking them to name something they learned at home and something they learned at school. Invite them to compare the two by asking the following questions: Who taught you these tasks? Was it someone the same age as you or someone older? Were you ever tested to see if you learned to do this task correctly? Did you initiate the learning or did someone else initiate the learning?

2 Photocopy and then cut out each phrase on **Home and school learning.** Put a piece of flipchart paper on the floor with the words *Home learning* and *School learning* identifying the two categories. Spread the cut out phrases down on the floor and invite the group to gather around the page and decide into which category each phrase should go. Give the group tape or Blu-Tack to put the phrases onto the flipchart page.

3 Photocopy the page **Home and school learning** and then delete about half of the phrases. Ask the parents to consider each comment on learning and invite them to fill in the blank space on the opposing side. For example, you might ask: *If we say home learning is flexible, what might we say about school learning?*



Parents' Pack A, p. 3



Home and school learning

Adapted from **'Literacy Home and School'** by Peter Hannon, p. 39, The Falmer Press, 1995.

Home learning	School learning
• Children can choose what they want to learn.	• Teachers must follow a set curriculum.
• Learning seems fun and easy.	• Learning often seems like hard work.
• Children can engage in a learning activity at any time.	• Learning is timetabled.
• Children may not encounter concepts in the easiest order for learning.	• Children learn skills in a planned progression.
• There are many opportunities for adult attention.	• Adult attention is shared between many children.
• Adults act as models for learning different skills.	• Adults act as instructors for teaching different skills.
• Children's learning is not formally tested.	• Children's progress is continuously assessed.
• There are opportunities for extended conversations.	• There are limited opportunities for conversations.
• Learning can include children of different ages.	• Learning takes place with children of the same age.

ACTIVITY 5

20 mins.

Expectations and establishing ground rules

To prepare:



Write the key topics for discussion on ground rules onto a flipchart, leaving extra space for decision making.



Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 4 - Core topics + Other possible topics.**

What to do:

Establishing ground rules

For this section, explain the necessity of establishing ground rules - an agreement between group members, facilitator and sponsors as to how the group will operate for the duration of the course.

Start the discussion by informing the parents of any organisational policies (e.g. no smoking rules) and by outlining your expectations. Then, list key issues for group discussion and decision making.

At the end of the discussion, summarise what has been agreed and review the decisions made. Let the parents know that you will have a copy of these ground rules for everyone by the next session.

Expectations

Present an outline of the course you have planned so far. Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 4 - Core topics + Other possible topics.**

Remind the parents that the course is flexible, not every session is planned. You will be looking for feedback during the course so that you can revise and plan further sessions.

Encourage the parents to think about other topics that would interest them. Explain that, while they may be attending the course in order to help their children, they might like to take advantage of some opportunities for themselves, especially while crèche facilities and other supports are available.



Parents' Pack A, p. 4



Core topics + Other possible topics

1 Getting started - what is family learning?

2 Parents are natural teachers

3 Let's talk about...

4 Rhymes, songs and poems

5 Storytelling

6 Sharing books

7 Print is all around us

8 Ready to write

9 Everyday writing

10 Maths in action

11 Having fun with maths

12 Making a book

13 Putting it all together

14 Making connections

- Computers
- Arts and crafts
- First aid
- Family health
- Stress management
- Coping with children's behaviour
- Money management
- Helping older children with spelling
- Talking with your child's teacher
- Assertiveness
- Consumer awareness

Your suggestions:



Session Summary

Summarise the session by reviewing:

- the definition of a family learning programme,
- expectations and ground rules,
- dates, times, support available,
- questions.

Refer to the flipchart page on **Looking at learning - Activity 3** as well as the discussion in **Home and school learning - Activity 4.**

Explain to the parents that during the coming week, you would like them to reflect on their own ideas about how, where, when, and with whom learning takes place, particularly in their homes.



Home Activity 1 - Learning at home

The **Home Activity - Learning at home** is designed to encourage the parents to continue their thinking about what types of learning take place in the home and how this learning occurs.

Suggest that, during the next week, they could investigate learning in their homes.

Read the directions and questions on the worksheet and discuss them fully in order to ensure that all the parents are comfortable with the exercise.

Emphasise that it is not necessary for answers to be written.

The goal is that the parents will be able to discuss their observations when they return to class the following week.

Parents' Pack A, p. 5

Learning at home

During the next week, make a note of at least four times that you observe your child demonstrating a skill that has been learned at home.

Some examples might be:

 looking at a book

 skipping

 using the toilet

 painting a picture

Skills

1.

2.

3.

4.

Think about:

Did your child choose to learn these skills?

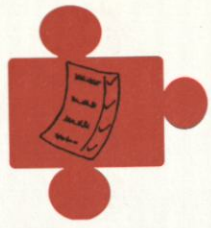
What family members were involved in helping your child to learn?

How much time did your child have for learning?

How did you know that your child learned these skills?

Did you and your child talk about her achievement?

What did you say?



Session Notes

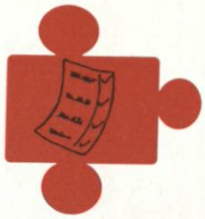
What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

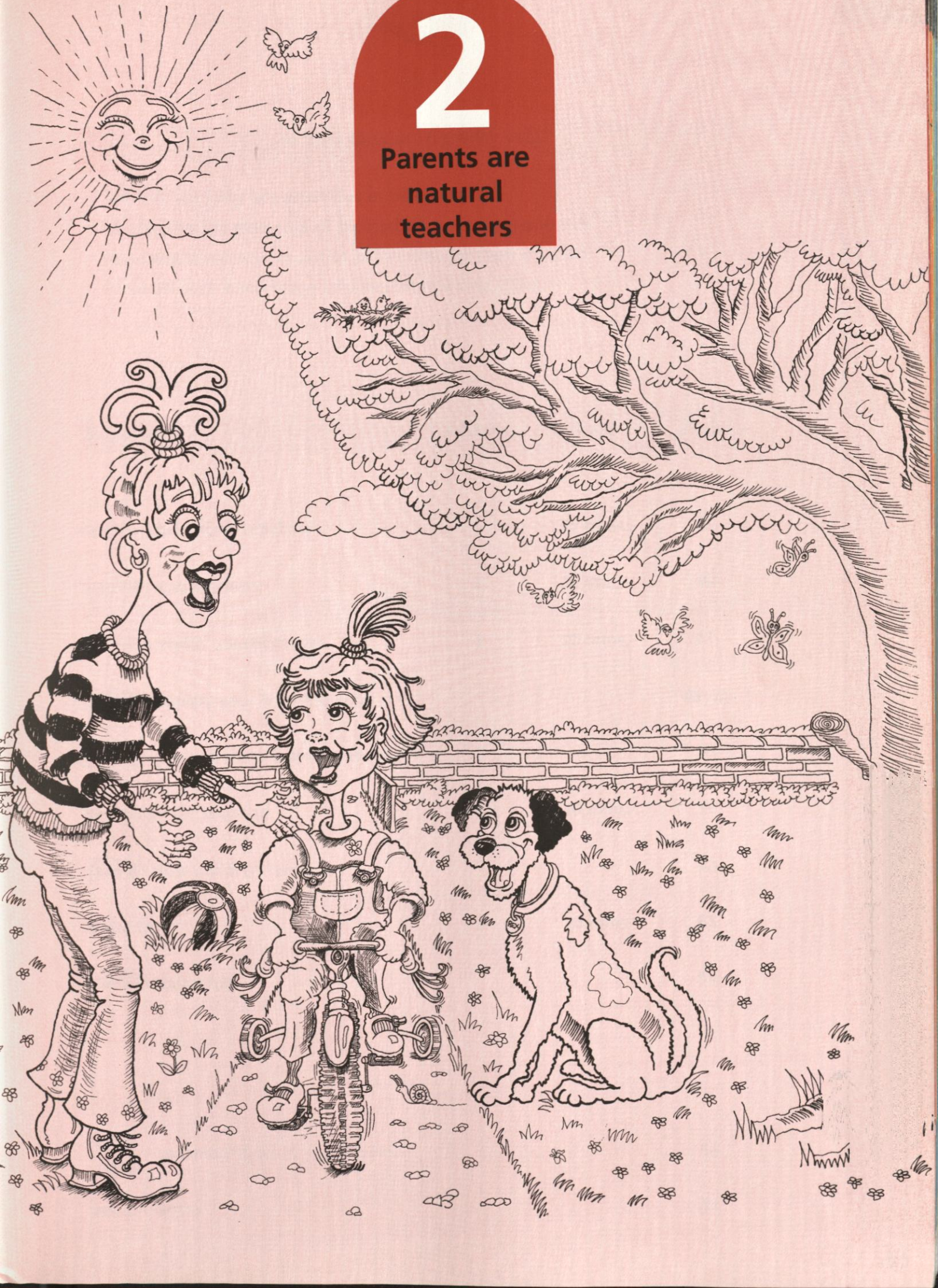
Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?



Session Notes

2

Parents are natural teachers





In this session parents will:

- identify learning opportunities in their homes;
- discuss the key elements of successful learning experiences;
- recognise their own qualities as teachers for their children;
- increase their knowledge of different learning styles.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	44
Parents are natural teachers	**1**	**20 mins.**	**45**
Teachers and learners	**2**	**30 mins.**	**46**
Learning styles questionnaire	**3**	**20 mins.**	**47**
Identify your learning style			48-49
Three primary learning styles			50
Discussion on learning	**4**	**20 mins.**	**51**
How children learn			52
Name fan	**5**	**20 mins.**	**53**
Name fan			54
Session Summary		10 mins.	55
Home Activity 2 - Learning styles in your home			55
Learning styles in your home			56
Session Notes			57

2

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Make a copy of the ground rules for each parent.

What to do:

Begin the session by revisiting the ground rules and reviewing **Home Activity 1 - Learning at home.**

Read through the questions and ask the parents to share their observations.

Did they enjoy the activity?

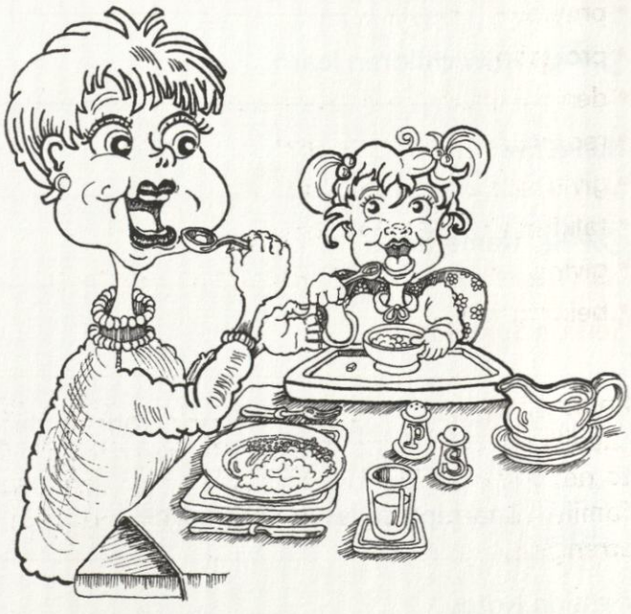
What did they discover about how learning happens in their homes?

Write their responses on the flipchart.

Explain that today's session will explore the learning process further.

Write on the flipchart:

- *Why are parents natural teachers?*
- *How do parents teach their children?*
- *How do children learn?*



ACTIVITY 1

Parents are natural teachers

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.

What to do:

The purpose of this exercise is to explore the parents' role as their children's teachers. Refer back to **Home Activity 1 - Learning at home** and ask the parents:

What other skills have you taught your children?

List their answers on the flipchart.

Some examples: learning to walk, to talk, to dress themselves, to pick up their toys, to use the toilet, to identify colours, to name things, to recognise dangers, to be friendly or polite, to throw or catch a ball, to clap hands, to sing a song.

Divide the parents into three or four groups. Give each group a flipchart page, a marker and Blu-Tack. Ask the parents to choose one of the learning tasks named and then list everything they can think of that might have helped their children to learn this task or skill.

After ten or fifteen minutes, reassemble the group and ask for feedback.

When each group has contributed, look over their responses and point out similarities.

For example:

- providing opportunities for practice
- providing materials
- providing support
- demonstrating how to do something
- recognising strengths and weaknesses
- giving help when needed
- talking about the activity
- giving words of praise and encouragement
- being patient

Point out that when parents are interacting with children at home, there are usually too many things happening at once for them to be able to take the time to notice how effective they are in their roles as teachers. The activities in the family learning programme will help parents to identify and develop these strengths.

10 30 mins.

ACTIVITY 2

Teachers and learners

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and index cards.

Write the **learning task questions** onto index cards.

Some suggestions for **learning task questions**:

- How do you play a simple card game such as SNAP?
- How do you fold a shirt/jumper?
- How do you set a table?
- How do you play noughts and crosses?
- How do you find something in the local newspaper, such as classified adverts or film times?

Provide the necessary props needed to 'teach' each task.

What to do:

The next exercise is designed to encourage further observations about the nature of the interaction between teachers and learners.

Divide the class into pairs. Ask each pair to designate one person as the learner and the other as the teacher. Ask the pairs to choose a **learning task question**. In a 'role play', the teacher should 'teach' the learner how to do the task. If time allows, give each pair an opportunity to choose another task and ask them to switch roles.

After ten or fifteen minutes, bring the parents back together and discuss the tasks.

Questions for learners:

- *How did it feel to be a learner?*
- *What did your teacher do that helped you to learn?*
- *What was difficult?*
- *What did you enjoy?*
- *Did this exercise give you any insight into your children's learning experiences?*

Questions for teachers:

- *How did it feel to be a teacher?*
- *What did you do that was helpful to your learner?*
- *What was difficult?*
- *What did you enjoy?*
- *Did this exercise add to your understanding of your role as a teacher?*

Finish this exercise by asking the parents to consider the ways in which teachers are also learners.

ACTIVITY 3

20 mins.

Learning styles questionnaire

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.



Refer to **Parents' Pack A, pp. 6-7 - Identify your learning style and p. 8 - Three primary learning styles.**

What to do:

Distribute the learning styles questionnaire. Read all questions aloud in order to ensure that adults with literacy difficulties can participate successfully . Allow ample time for the parents to fill in their answers. When they have finished, ask them to count up the number of times they answered with an a, b, or c.

Explain that the activity was a 'just for fun' look at learning styles. Emphasise that we all learn in a variety of ways - through sight, sound and physical movement. Some people have very strong preferences for the way they learn, others have no particular preferences for the way they learn. Invite comments.

- *What would be the value in knowing your own learning style?*
- *What would be the value in knowing your child's learning style?*

Ask the parents to reflect on some well-known teaching strategies in the classroom:

- writing information on the blackboard,
- undertaking practical activities,
- reciting the alphabet,
- using look and say for teaching words and letters.

Emphasise that in good classroom practice, teachers try to present material in a variety of ways to accommodate different learning styles.

Questions for discussion:

- *How might the learning style be determined by the learning task, e.g. learning to drive a car, trying out a new recipe, learning to use computers?*
- *How are learning experiences affected by the learning environment?*
- *What other issues might affect learning opportunities?*
- *What differences between home and school learning might affect individual learning styles?*



Parents' Pack A, p. 6



Identify your learning style

Adapted from the Learning Styles Questionnaire in *Learning In Practice* by Rosamund Philips, NALA 1996.

Choose ONE answer a, b, or c, for each question.

1. When you are going some place that you've never been before, do you

a) like to have written directions?

b) like to have someone tell you how to get there?

c) like to find it as you go because you have such a good sense of direction?

2. When you spell, do you

a) try to see the word?

b) try to sound out the word?

c) write the word down to see if it 'feels' right?

3. When you are angry, do you

a) clam up, give others the 'silent treatment'?

b) quickly let others know, shout, etc.?

c) storm off, clench your fists, grit your teeth?

4. When you have spare time, would you rather

a) watch TV, go to the cinema, play a video game?

b) listen to the radio or tapes/CDs, go to a concert or play an instrument?

c) do something physical, such as a sport, or go dancing?

5. When you have to discuss something important, do you

a) prefer a face-to-face meeting, or write a few notes about what you want to say?

b) use the telephone?

c) talk it out during another activity such as walking or having a meal?

6. When you are talking, do you

a) tend to speak quickly, particularly when you are excited?

b) enjoy listening, but also want to talk?

c) use a lot of hand and body movements?



Parents' Pack A, p. 7



Identify your learning style

7. **Can others tell how you feel from your**

a) facial expressions?

b) voice?

c) general body language?

8. **When someone pays you a compliment, do you**

a) like to have it in writing?

b) like spoken comments?

c) like physical action, such as a pat on the back or a hug?

9. **When you try to interpret someone's mood, do you**

a) look mostly at the person's face?

b) listen to the tone of voice?

c) watch for body movements?

10. **When you are bored, do you**

a) look around, doodle, watch something?

b) talk to yourself or other people?

c) fidget?

11. **When you are learning, do you**

a) like to see demonstrations, diagrams or posters?

b) like listening to instructions, talks and lectures?

c) prefer direct involvement such as activities or exercises?

12. **When someone tells you their telephone number, do you**

a) write it down as quickly as possible?

b) repeat it over and over again to yourself?

c) picture yourself dialling the number?



Parents' Pack A, p. 8

Three primary learning styles

Mostly a's

If your responses were mostly a's, then you are probably a visual learner. You rely on seeing as your first and most effective learning strategy.

People who are visual learners:

- like a map better than spoken directions;
- like to doodle;
- see words in their heads;
- remember what they have seen, rather than what they have heard;
- like to read information in instructions;
- are orderly and neat.

Mostly b's

If your responses were mostly b's, then you are probably an auditory learner. You learn best by listening and talking.

People who are auditory learners:

- talk to themselves;
- move their lips while reading;
- repeat information out loud in order to learn it;
- are talkative, love discussion;
- like to sound out words when learning to spell;
- remember what they have heard rather than what they have seen.

Mostly c's

If your responses were mostly c's, then you are probably a kinesthetic learner. You learn through touch and movement. You like to do the task to learn it most effectively.

People who are kinesthetic learners:

- find it hard to sit down;
- learn by manipulating and doing;
- think better when moving or walking;
- use action words;
- often use gestures;
- like to trace words and practise writing the words when learning to spell;
- remember best from doing;
- have their strongest learning channels in muscle movement.

ACTIVITY 4

20 mins.

Discussion on learning

To prepare:

You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.

Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 9 - How children learn.**

What to do:

Discuss **Parents' Pack A, p. 9 - How children learn.**

Help the parents to make the connection between things they explored in **Activities 1, 2 and 3,** and the points made about children's learning.

Ask them to reflect on their own children's learning styles.

Questions to ask:

Is your child:

- *a listener/questioner?*
- *a looker/observer?*
- *a doer/practicer?*
- *a combination of learning styles?*

Do you think learning styles might change with age and development?

Finish by pointing out that studies indicate that people learn best when they see, hear, say and do.



How children learn

Children learn best when they can have direct experiences with learning tasks. Activities that are most helpful for promoting children's learning provide:

- opportunities to see, feel, hear, touch, and taste;
- opportunities to explore, to experiment and to practise;
- familiar places to learn new things, such as the home and local community;
- interaction with parents, friends, brothers and sisters, and other relations;
- opportunities for conversation, for asking questions and for other types of language experiences;
- encouragement and praise;
- opportunities to choose and plan learning tasks;
- realistic expectations;
- opportunities to see that their achievements have value.



ACTIVITY 5

20 mins.

Name fan

To prepare:



Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 10 - Name fan.**

You will need A4 paper or craft paper, old magazines, scissors and glue.

Prepare a sample name fan.

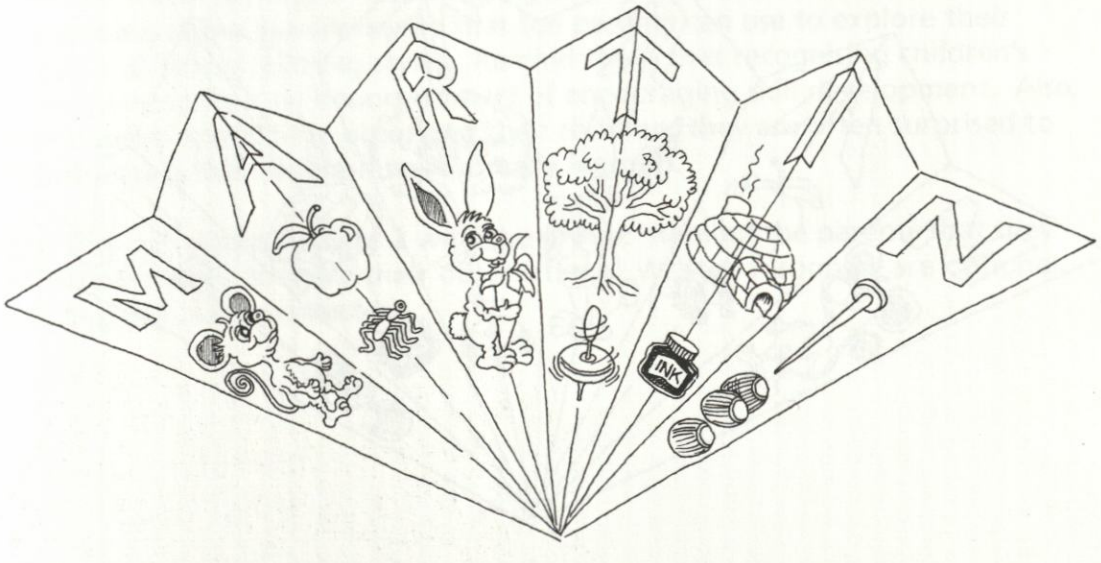
What to do:

Turn to **Parents' Pack A, p. 10 - Name fan** and demonstrate the prepared name fan.

Invite the parents to make name fans for their children using available magazines, scissors and glue.

Finish the activity by sharing name fans.

Discuss how the name fan could be used to help children learn to recognise their own names.



Parents' Pack A, p. 10

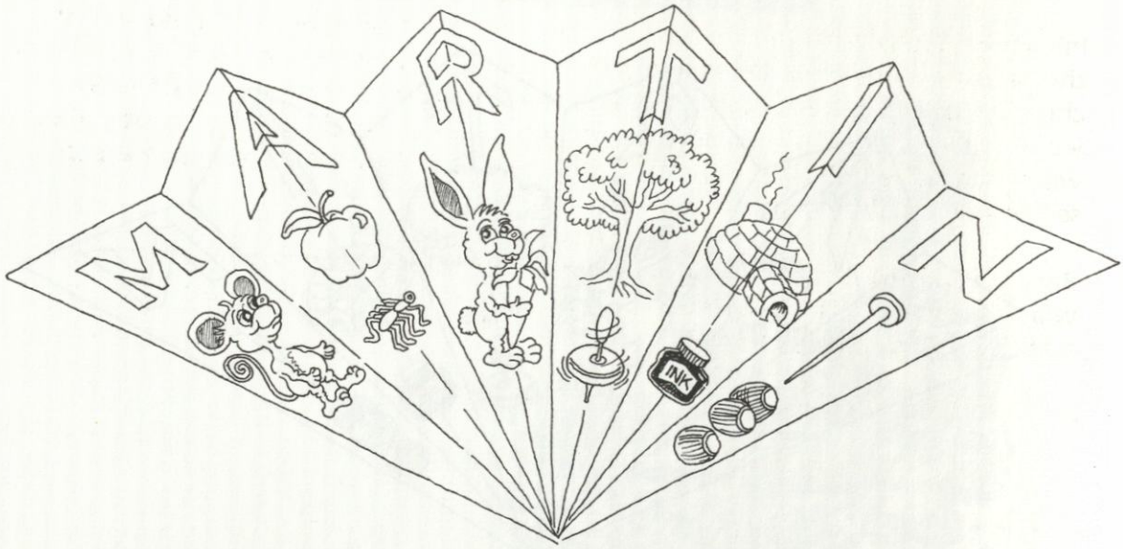
Name fan

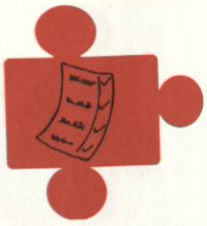
1 Count the number of letters in your child's name. Make the same number of folds in the paper (accordion style).

2 Write the letters of your child's name across the top of each fold.

3 Starting with the first letter of your child's name, cut out several pictures from a magazine that have the same beginning sound. Glue them down the fold underneath the first letter.

4 Continue in the same way for each letter in your child's name.





10 mins.

Session Summary

Review the important concepts in this session by asking:

- *How are parents natural teachers?*
- *What are the three primary learning styles?*
- *How do children learn?*

Introduce the **Home Activity** as a tool for observing their children's learning styles.



Home Activity 2 - Learning styles in your home

Introduce **Home Activity 2 - Learning styles in your home** which is a version of the **Learning styles questionnaire** that the parents can use to explore their children's different learning styles. Remind them that recognising children's learning strengths is an important part of encouraging skill development. Also, when parents spend time observing their children, they are often surprised to see how much their children have already learned.

Read through **Home Activity 2** with the group. Remind the parents that they will only be asked to share their observations. Written responses are optional, and they will not be collected.

Parents' Pack A, p. 11



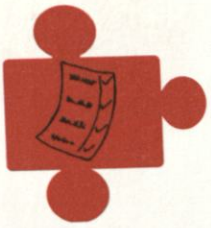
Learning styles in your home

Spend time looking at how your child learns.

Does your child:

	Yes	No
Remember things that you tell him to do?		
Enjoy taking part in conversations and listening to others?		
Like to listen to tapes and to watch videos?		
Like to look at books and magazines?		
Like to colour or draw?		
Like to watch other people do something before he tries it?		
Like 'hands on' activities such as playdough or water play?		
Like to build and make things?		
Enjoy sports, dancing and other movement activities?		

What else did you notice?



Session Notes

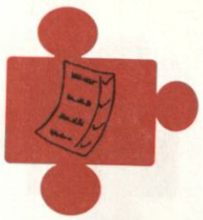
What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

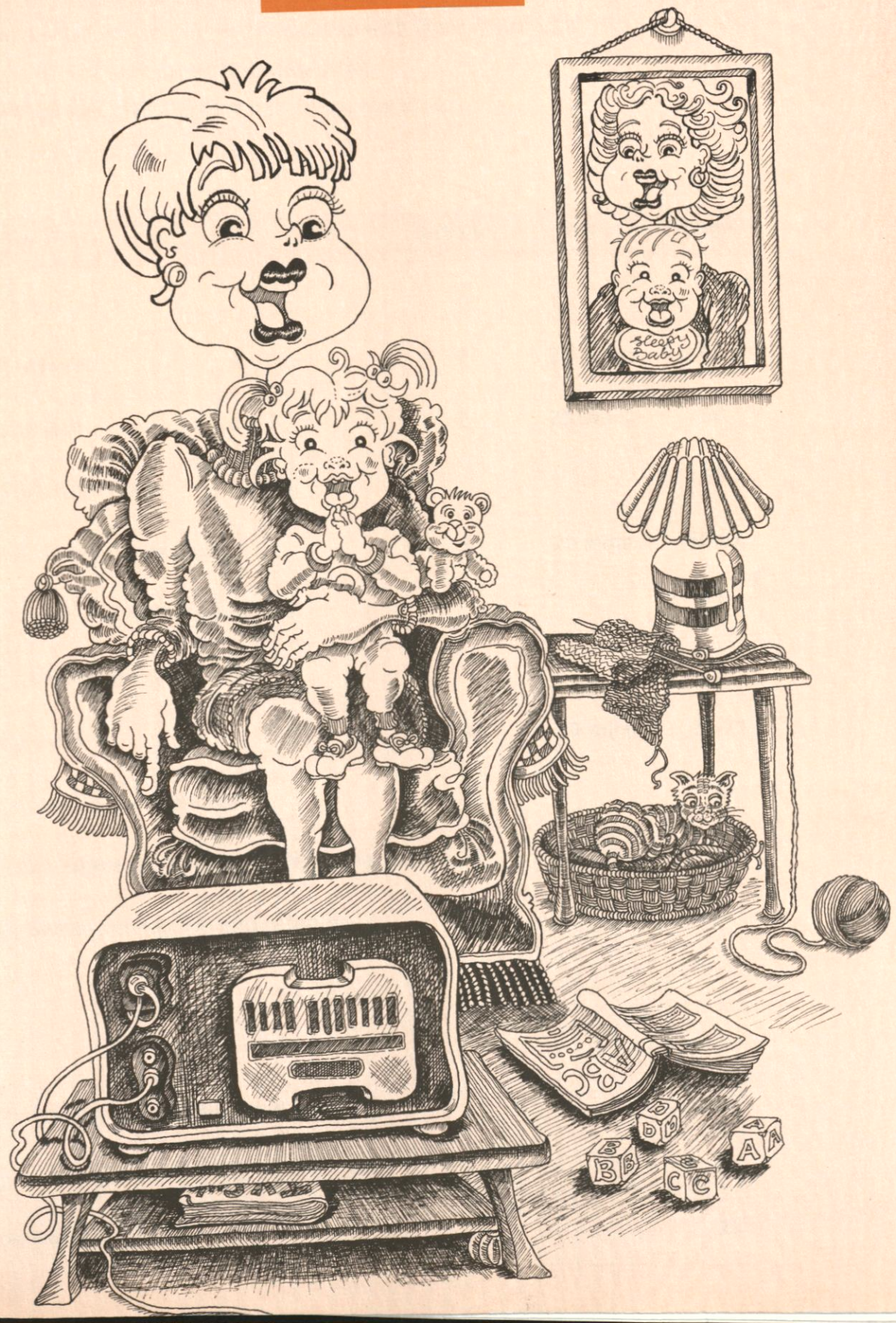
Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?



Session Notes

3

Let's talk about...





In this session parents will:

- discuss the importance of talk in learning;
- suggest good opportunities for talking with their children;
- practice identifying good listening skills;
- explore games that develop oral language skills.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	62
Social situations	**1**	**25 mins.**	**63**
Talk and school	**2**	**25 mins.**	**64**
Talk and school			65
Open and closed questions	**3**	**20 mins.**	**66-67**
Open and closed questions			68
Talking with your child			69
Listening skills	**4**	**20 mins.**	**70-71**
How about listening?			72
Games that promote talking and listening skills	**5**	**20 mins.**	**73**
Games for talking and listening			74
Session Summary		10 mins.	75
Home Activity 3 - Talking and listening to your child			75
Spotlight on talking and listening			76
Talking and listening to your child			77
Session Notes			78

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 2 - Learning styles in your home.**

Introduce this session by explaining that, for a long time, educators did not recognise the links between children's oral language development and learning to read. Spoken and written language were assumed to be distinct skills. Now it is recognised that there are important connections between learning to talk and learning to read and write. The development of children's oral skills is also important to their classroom participation.

Point out that, right from birth, parents and babies are powerfully motivated to communicate with each other.

Questions to ask:

Can you remember some of the first ways you communicated with your newborn baby?

Sample answers:

- eye contact
- facial expressions
- soothing voice
- talked to babies
- responded to babies' cooing, gurgling or crying
- touch

Can you remember how you taught your child to talk?

Sample answers:

- repeating words over and over
- encouraging any word-like sound
- talking to child while feeding and dressing her
- naming things as the child pointed
- playing games
- singing songs and saying rhymes

Explain that these actions are all part of the process of helping their children to become effective communicators.

25 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

Social situations

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.

Select Photopak cards depicting talking scenes, or cut out pictures from magazines depicting parents and children talking.



Stick the Photopak cards onto flipchart pages and draw a dialogue bubble for each character.

What to do:

Divide the parents into small groups and give each group a flipchart page with the pictures attached and dialogue boxes drawn above them. Ask the parents to discuss what's happening in the pictures and then to write into the dialogue box what they think the characters are saying.

After ten or fifteen minutes, reassemble everyone and let each group share their dialogue bubbles. Emphasise that each of the pictures represents a social situation in which children are interacting with parents. Suggest that the parents had little trouble in guessing what might be said in these pictures because the activities are very familiar. These social situations provide rich opportunities for parents to support their children's efforts to learn language skills. Routine social situations also provide children with a familiar context for learning.

In these situations, children are usually communicating with someone they know intimately (mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent) and the activity around the talk is very predictable (meal time, bath time, getting dressed, play activities).

Ask the parents to think about social situations in the home. In addition to teaching their children words and phrases, what else do parents teach their children about everyday conversation in the home?

Sample answers:

- taking turns
- polite phrases
- talking to convey emotions/feelings
- looking at someone when you speak
- accompanying talk with gestures
- asking and answering questions
- times for talking and not talking
- different purposes for talking
- changing the tone of your voice
- doing things as you are talking

Point out that, as children learn to speak, they learn not only words but also behaviours associated with social situations. Words and actions are linked in children's minds and together they become routines.

25 mins.

ACTIVITY 2

Talk and school

To prepare:

Select Photopak cards depicting talking scenes. If possible, try to find some magazine pictures of classroom scenes depicting teachers talking to children or children talking to children.

Write the headings: **Home talk** and **School talk** at the top of a flipchart page and prepare **Home talk** and **School talk** cards by writing each sentence on a separate index card.

Home talk:

Let's do this together. I'll help you.

Are you hungry; do you want something to eat?

Why don't you go outside and play?

Don't talk with your mouth full.

Time to get up, sleepyhead.

SSShh, the baby's sleeping.

Pick those things up off the floor.

Would you like to read a story?

School talk:

You have half an hour to do this.

It's time for Big Break.

It's break time, you have twenty minutes.

If you want to talk, raise your hand.

You're late, didn't you hear the bell?

No talking.

Time to tidy up before we go.

Take out your books.

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 2 - Talk and school.**

What to do:

Show the parents pictures of school situations and explain that school is a new **social situation** for children. In school, there are particular rules and conventions for communication. Ask the parents:

- *How are these different from home situations?*
- *What about the first days in a new classroom?*
- *How is this experience different from home?*

Divide the parents into small groups. Distribute the **Home talk** and **School talk** cards among the groups. Ask the parents to think about whether the language on the cards would be heard in the home or school. Ask each group to stick their cards under the **Home talk** or **School talk** headings on the flipchart. Can they think of other differences between **Home talk** and **School talk**?

Finish by discussing **Parents' Pack B, p. 2 - Talk and school.**

One of the Junior Infants teachers from your local primary school could be invited to talk about the routine of the first few days at school.



Parents' Pack B, p. 2

Talk and school

When your child begins school, it is important to help her to get to know the classroom routine and to feel confident in the social expectations of classroom talk.

Help your child to know the classroom environment.

Before your child starts school, play school with her.

An older sibling is often very willing to be a teacher to a younger one.

Once your child starts school let her be the teacher and you or an older sibling be the student.

This will give your child a chance to act out her impressions of the teacher's role and expectations.

You could ask your child to draw a picture of the classroom or draw it together.

Ask about places:

Where do you sit?

Where does your teacher sit?

Where is the toilet?

Where do you put your coat and school bag?

Ask about time:

When do you have breaks?

What do you do?

Ask about language:

What do you say if you want to go to the toilet?

What do you call your teacher?

Ask about events:

What do you do first in the morning?

Ask about likes and dislikes:

What did you like about the story that your teacher read today?

20 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Open and closed questions

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Prepare topics for exercises on open and closed questions, e.g. children, television programmes, shopping, films, food, etc.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 3 - Open and closed questions** and **p. 4 - Talking with your child.**

What to do:

Write these questions on the flipchart:

- *What do children like to talk about?*
- *Where does most of the conversation take place between parents and others in the home?*
- *When do most conversations happen?*
- *What types of conversations would children hear in the home?*

Spend a few minutes discussing these questions with the parents and then ask:

- *Could you answer any of these questions by simply saying 'yes' or 'no'?*
- *How would you word a question to get a 'yes' or 'no' response?*

Write their examples on the flipchart.

Explain to the parents that the questions you asked are called **open-ended questions**. The person responding to these questions is encouraged to elaborate on the answer, not just to say 'yes' or 'no'.

Elaborate further using **Parents' Pack B, p. 3 - Open and closed questions.**

Use one of your prepared topics to further demonstrate the difference between **open and closed questions**. When you feel the parents have the idea, ask them to break into pairs and hand out a different topic to each parent. Their task is to interview each other on their given topic by asking only **closed questions**. After five minutes, ask them to swap topics and ask only **open-ended questions**. Then, reassemble the group and get feedback.



ACTIVITY 3

Open and closed questions

Questions for discussion:

- Did you find you needed to concentrate harder to answer an **open-ended question**? Why?
- Did you find it harder to ask an **open-ended question**? Why?
- Did your own interest in the given topic make it easier or harder to ask or to answer questions? Why?

Point out that **open-ended questions** encourage children to think out ideas and organise their thoughts into speech. But add that, while asking **open-ended questions** is one way of stimulating conversation, no one asks **open-ended questions** all the time. Sometimes **closed questions** are more appropriate to the situation. Ask the parents if they can think of times when **closed questions** would be more appropriate. Encourage them to discuss what else might influence conversational styles.

Finish this activity by directing the parents to look at **Parents' Pack B, p. 4 - Talking with your child.**



Open and closed questions

A closed question requires a 'yes' or 'no' answer, or possibly a one word response:

'Did you have a good time in school today?'

'Would you like sausages for your tea?'

'Did you go to the shop?'

An open-ended question requires more information and encourages more thinking:

'What did you do at school today?'

'What would you like for dinner?'

'Where did we go today?'

'What can you tell me about your picture?'

When your child is asked an **open-ended question** she has to use more words to answer you. This also means that she has to organise her thoughts before speaking.





Parents' Pack B, p. 4

Talking with your child

Take time to talk with your child. Encouraging your child's oral language skills is the first step in developing her reading skills.

Give your child lots of opportunities to put thoughts into words. Be aware that everything you do - playing games, going shopping, making buns - is an opportunity for talking.

Ask your child to explain actions, describe things, express opinions or ideas. Begin questions with *who, what, when, where, why* and *how*.

Teach your child the names of things. Ask her to point things out and name them back. Encourage your child to look at similarities and differences between things.

Teach your child words about location and direction, time, size and shape.

Above all, show that you value your child's talk by praising and encouraging her.

Talking with your child builds:

- vocabulary skills,
- communication skills,
- self-esteem.

Finding good times to talk with your child is not always easy, and every family is different. Some parents have found that the best times are:

- meal time
- bath time
- in the car
- shopping
- bed time
- after homework
- going for a walk
- cooking

What are your best times?

20 mins.

ACTIVITY 4

Listening skills

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 5 - How about listening?**

What to do:

Refer back to your opening comments in the introduction to this session. Emphasise that learning to talk is about learning to communicate. Good listening skills are an important part of having meaningful conversations with others.

It is also important to teach children listening skills in preparation for school. In school, children spend a lot of time listening to their teacher explain things and give instructions. If children are to develop good auditory learning skills, they need to become good listeners.

The parents might like to try this listening exercise. Write a short message on a piece of paper. Whisper this message to the person nearest you and ask that person to whisper the message to the next person and so on until the message has been passed through everyone in the room. Ask the last person to repeat the message, then read the original message. The two versions are usually quite different! What do the parents think made it difficult to repeat the exact message?

Ask the parents to brainstorm:

What are good listening skills?

Write their ideas on the flipchart.

Sample answers:

- paying attention
- maintaining eye contact
- looking interested, not doing other things while listening
- making appropriate responses
- not interrupting
- asking questions
- being able to repeat information given orally

Give prompts if necessary.

ACTIVITY 4

3

20 mins.

Listening skills

Questions for discussion:

- *In the exercise on using **open and closed questions**, did **open-ended** or **closed questions** require the interviewer to pay more attention? Why?*
- *How can you tell when someone is not listening?*
- *How do you feel when you think someone is not listening to you?*

Suggest that one way to teach children good listening skills is to demonstrate these skills to children in everyday conversation.

Add, finally, that another way to help children develop good listening skills is through games and stories.

Finish by referring to **Parents' Pack B, p. 5 - How about listening?**

Discussion on listening skills can sometimes lead to a wider discussion on interpersonal skills. If this happens, you might suggest to the parents that you could provide a further session on communication skills for adults.





Parents' Pack B, p. 5

10 Mins.



How about listening?

Listening to your child is the best way to teach her good listening skills.

Here are some ideas:

- Maintain eye contact.
- Be patient.
- Give your child time to get her point across or to tell the story.
- Comment on what she has to say.
- Encourage your child to add details by asking **open-ended questions**.
- Ask your child to tell the story or to give the information to another family member.
- Encourage your child's curiosity.
- Ask for your child's opinions.
- Let her speak without interrupting.
- Praise your child when she waits her turn to speak.
- Thank your child for giving you some information.

Your ideas:

20 mins.

ACTIVITY 5

Games that promote talking and listening skills

To prepare:

You will need a flipchart and markers.

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 6 - Games for talking and listening.**

What to do:

Suggest to the parents that, in addition to taking advantage of opportunities to talk with their children, other excellent ways to stimulate talk are through games, stories, rhymes and songs. In this last section, you will look at a number of games that promote language development.

Ask the parents if they can think of any games that promote talking and listening.

Write their suggestions on the flipchart.

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 6 - Games for talking and listening.**

Are their suggestions already included?

Have they others to add?

Check to see if everyone is familiar with the games discussed.

Demonstrate one or two games if necessary.





Parents' Pack B, p. 6



Games for talking and listening

- I hear with my little ear
- I went to the shop to buy...
- I went to the zoo to see...
- Animal Alphabet
- Twenty Questions
- Go Fish
- Simon Says
- Giant Steps and Baby Steps
- Bingo
- Board Games

Your ideas:

10 mins.

Session Summary

Review the session by inviting the parents to reflect on the main ideas in today's session.

Questions to ask:

- *Why is learning to communicate well (talking and listening) an important skill?*
- *How will good talking and listening skills help your children in school?*
- *Did today's session give you any ideas to try at home with your children?*

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 7 - Spotlight on talking and listening**. Explain that this is the first of four **Spotlights** that are used throughout the course as tools for observing the skills that their children are developing. There are **Spotlights** for talking and listening, reading, writing, and maths.

The parents can record their children's progress by shading 'bubbles' when they notice their children demonstrating these skills. Read and discuss the skills in the **Spotlight**. Some of the bubbles are left blank because, as the parents observe their children, you will encourage them to discover and add other skills that are part of talking and listening.

Home Activity 3 - Talking and listening to your child

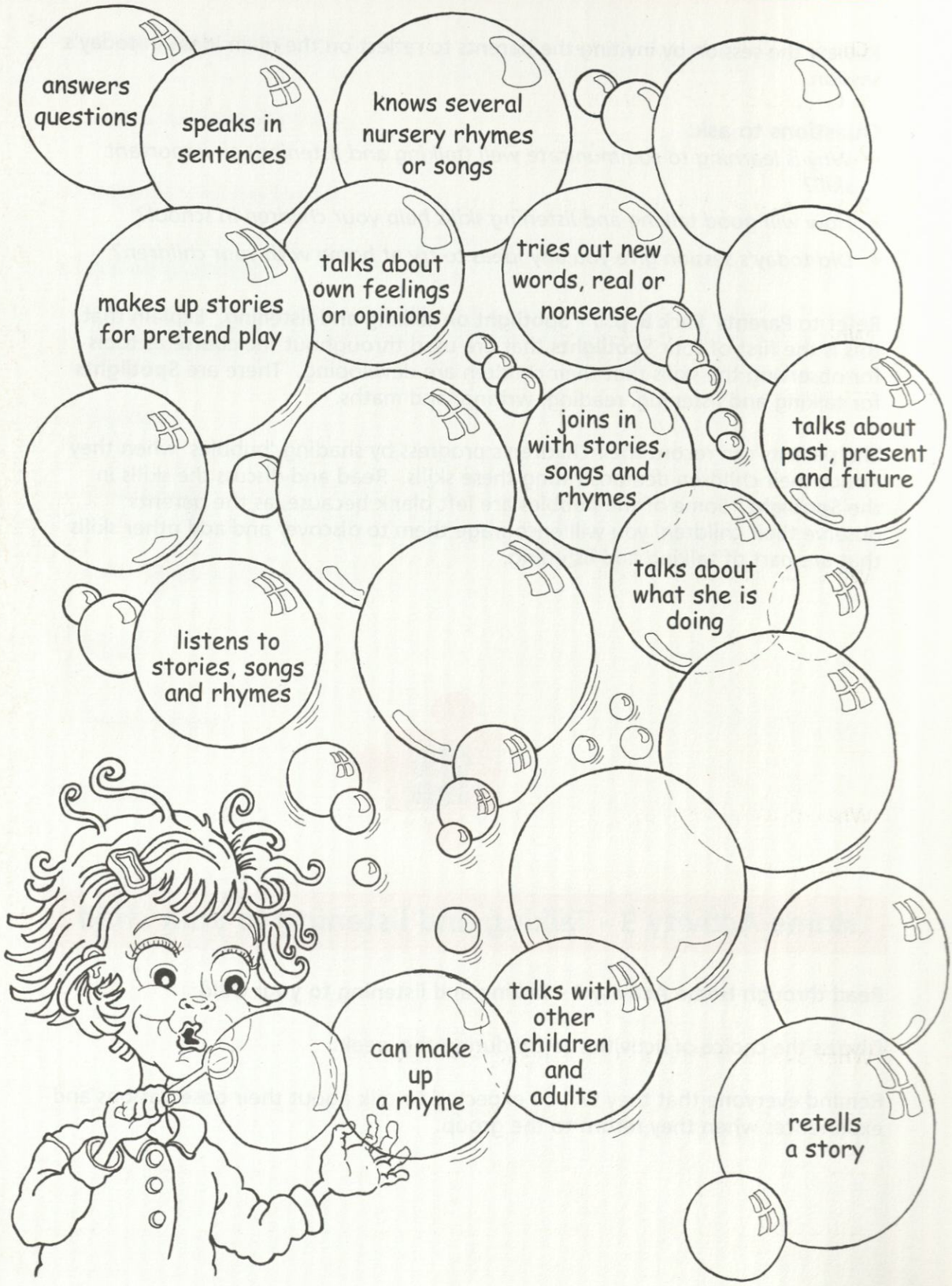
Read through **Home Activity 3 - Talking and listening to your child.**

Discuss the choice of activities to try during the week.

Remind everyone that they will be expected to talk about their observations and experiences when they return to the group.

Parents' Pack B, p. 7

Spotlight on talking and listening



Name _____

Age _____

Photocopy for each child as needed.



Parents' Pack B, p. 8



Talking and listening to your child

Choose one of these activities to try with your child during the week:

1. **Open and closed questions**
2. **One of the games for talking and listening**
3. **Spotlight on talking and listening**

Which activity did you choose?

When did you try this activity?

What did you learn about your child's talking and listening skills?

What did you and your child enjoy about the activity?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

4

Rhymes, songs and poems





In this session parents will:

- discuss reasons why teaching children rhymes, songs and poems is important to the development of reading skills;
- explore the connection between sound awareness and the development of reading and writing skills;
- suggest opportunities for increasing their children's experiences of rhymes, songs and poems.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	82
Remember that rhyme	**1**	**20 mins.**	**83**
Do you remember these rhymes?			84
Sound patterns	**2**	**30 mins.**	**85-86**
Hearing sound patterns			87
Just for fun - making rhymes	**3**	**10 mins.**	**88**
Action songs and rhymes	**4**	**15 mins.**	**89-90**
Action songs and rhymes			91
Everyday rhymes	**5**	**30 mins.**	**92-93**
Session Summary		10 mins.	94
Home Activity 4 - Have fun with rhymes			94
Have fun with rhymes			95
Session Notes			96

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:

Display a good selection of children's books with rhyme.

Display a good selection of children's listening tapes with nursery rhymes, songs and poems.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 3 - Talking and listening to your child.**

Ask for feedback on the **Spotlight on talking and listening.**

Did the **Spotlight on talking and listening** help the parents to observe their children's skills?

Did they notice any skills that were not mentioned in the **Spotlight on talking and listening**?

This session is all about rhymes. Many children enjoy hearing rhymes and repeating them. They also enjoy making up invented words that rhyme. In their daily lives, children are likely to come into contact with many nursery rhymes as well as other forms of rhyming in jingles, songs and slogans. Educators now believe that children's early experience with rhymes helps them to become more aware of sound patterns in words. This is very important for children when they are learning to read.

Invite the parents to look at the books and listen to the tapes on display.

Let them know if the books and tapes are available for borrowing.



ACTIVITY 1

20 mins.

Remember that rhyme

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 9 - Do you remember these rhymes?** and copy some of the rhymes onto the flipchart.

What to do:

Read the nursery rhymes on the flipchart aloud and ask:

- *Who remembers these rhymes?*
- *Would you know any others?*

Ask the parents to work in pairs to brainstorm more nursery rhymes, and then share their rhymes with another pair. Reassemble the group and list all the rhymes on the flipchart.

Questions for discussion:

- *When did you learn these rhymes?*
- *Why do you think you remember rhymes?*

Sample responses:

- I say them to my children.
- I've said them many times.
- They're very catchy.
- They have a rhythm.
- They get stuck in your head.
- Everyone knows them.

Turn to **Parents' Pack B, p. 9 - Do you remember these rhymes?** Read through the rhymes and discuss.

Questions to ask:

- *Can you spot the words that rhyme?*
- *Where are they?*
- *Do the spellings have to be the same for a word to rhyme?*
- *Are there examples where the words that rhyme are spelled differently?*
- *What is rhyme?*

Write their suggestions on the flipchart or suggest a definition of rhyme yourself:

- A rhyme occurs when a word has the same ending sound as another word.
- A rhyme is a verse or a poem.



Parents' Pack B, p. 9



Do you remember these rhymes?

Mary had a little lamb.
Its fleece was white as snow,
And everywhere that Mary went,
The lamb was sure to go.

...

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men,
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

...

Little Miss Muffet sat on her tuffet
Eating her curds and whey.
Along came a spider,
And sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

...

Hickory, dickory, dock
The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down,
Hickory, dickory, dock.

...

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,
Eating his Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum,
And said, 'What a good boy am I!'

...

Hey diddle, diddle
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon.
The little boy laughed
To see such fun,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

Great A, little a
Bouncing B
The Cat's in the cupboard
And can't see me.

...

One for sorrow
Two for joy
Three for a girl
Four for a boy
Five for silver
Six for gold
Seven for a secret
Never to be told.

...

Half a pound of tuppenny rice,
Half a pound of treacle
Mix it up and make it nice
Pop goes the weasel.

...

Star light, star bright,
First star I see tonight,
I wish I may
I wish I might,
Have the wish I wish tonight.

...

Jack be nimble,
Jack be quick,
Jack jump over the candlestick.

...

Little Boy Blue,
Come blow your horn,
The sheep's in the meadow,
The cow's in the corn.



30 mins.

Sound patterns

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Write out index cards of sample words that have the same beginning or ending sound patterns.

Sample beginning sounds: string, strike, stretch; tree, train, trouble; shoe, ship, shed.

Sample ending sounds: cat, hat, sat; sing, wing, thing; bake, cake, take.

Choose words that have identical sound/spelling patterns.

Make six to eight samples of each.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 10 - Hearing sound patterns**.

What to do:

Explain that an awareness of rhyme has been shown to have a link with learning to read and with the development of spelling skills. Educators now believe that children who are familiar with similarities in the beginning and ending sounds of words find it easier to recognise and remember the letter patterns that produce these sounds.

Divide the parents into small groups and distribute the index cards with identical ending sounds. Ask them to read each sample and see if they can identify the ending sound patterns. If they are having difficulty, suggest that they read the cards out loud to try and spot the ending sound pattern.

Questions to ask:

- *Do you recognise these sound patterns?*
- *Can you think of other words with this same spelling pattern?*
- *Can you suggest other groups of words that have the same ending sound patterns?*

Write these on the flipchart.

Next, focus the parents' attention on the sample cards with identical beginning sound patterns.

Questions to ask:

- *Do you recognise these sound patterns?*
- *What other words can you think of with this same spelling pattern?*
- *Can you suggest other word groups with the same beginning sound patterns?*

Write these on the flipchart.

30 mins.

ACTIVITY 2

Sound patterns

Questions to ask:

- *What strategies did you use to figure out beginning or ending sound patterns?*
- *Did you say the words in your heads and then visualise the spelling?*
- *Did you choose the words you were most familiar with?*

Again, emphasise that children who develop an awareness of these similar sound patterns in word beginnings and endings find it easier to make the connections between the sound patterns and the letter patterns that produce these sounds.

This understanding and awareness of sound patterns, especially at the beginnings and endings of words, has been described by educators as sound pattern awareness, or phonological awareness.

Questions for discussion:

- *How would **sound pattern awareness** be helpful in learning to read?*
- *How would **sound pattern awareness** be helpful for spelling?*
- *Do you think your children have an awareness of sound patterns already?*
- *How do you think they developed that awareness?*

The next activities will look at strategies for encouraging children's awareness of sound patterns.

Turn to **Parents' Pack B, p. 10 - Hearing sound patterns.**





Parents' Pack B, p. 10

Hearing sound patterns

When children learn to hear the sounds that letters make in words, they develop sound pattern awareness. When they recognise similar sound patterns, particularly beginning and ending sounds, it helps them to make the connection with letter patterns. This is an important skill for learning to read and spell.

Ideas for encouraging your child's sound pattern awareness:

- Help your child to learn and say rhymes.
- Point out beginning and ending sound patterns in words that your child sees and hears every day, for example, television or radio jingles.
- Read or tell nursery rhymes and poems often.
- Sing or listen to songs - 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star', 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat'.
- Encourage your child to rhyme his name and make up rhymes with real words or nonsense words.
- Use rhyming words in storytelling: 'Splish, splosh, splash,' went the duck in the water. 'Mish, mash, mush,' said the little pig in the mud.

Ideas for rhyming games:

- Say a word and ask your child to rhyme another word with it.
- Say or sing a rhyme leaving out a rhyming word and see if your child can fill it in, for example:

'Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow.
And everywhere that Mary went
The lamb was sure to ____.'

- Say the wrong word and see if your child can spot the mistake, for example:

'I'm a little a teapot
Short and stout
Here is my handle
Here is my bellybutton.'

- Play 'I Spy With My Little Eye, something that begins with or rhymes with...'

4

30 mins.

4

10 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Just for fun - making

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

This is a short fun activity to try before a break or i

- Begin by suggesting that parents produce a grou
- Put up some key words on the flipchart.

For example: gnome, poem, shoe, blue might bec

There once was a gnome
Who wrote a funny poem.
He tied it to his shoe
To read when he felt blue.

If the parents are enthusiastic, they can try to rhyme th family name and write a little poem. This activity can a giving the parents handouts containing rhymes that are asking them to fill in the missing rhyming words with w

Have a puppet-making session to demonstrate strategies nursery rhymes, songs and poetry.



ACTIVITY 4

Action songs and rhymes

To prepare:

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 11 - Action songs and rhymes.**

Organise **action song** listening tapes. You may want to make your own tape and additional handouts of action songs that you find most useful. The ones included in the **Parents' Pack** are easily available.

What to do:

Refer back to **Activity 2 - Sound patterns.**

Ask the parents to remember what strategies they used to figure out the sound patterns on each card.

You would expect to hear:

- read it out loud
- listened to the words

Remind the parents about the discussion in **Session 2** about the three learning styles:

- learning by seeing (visual)
- learning by listening (auditory)
- learning by touching (kinesthetic)

Discuss the fact that hearing and using sound patterns is an auditory activity. However, some children do not distinguish sounds easily and may need to be able to use some of their other senses in order to develop sound pattern awareness. Activities that involve all the senses are called **multi-sensory**. They involve all the learning styles and, therefore, are more likely to meet the needs of every type of learner.

Ask the parents to suggest ideas for rhyming activities that combine learning styles.



4

15 mins.

ACTIVITY 4

Action songs and rhymes

Someone may suggest adding gestures to rhymes. If not, suggest it yourself.

Play some tapes which include **action songs.**

Turn to **Parents' Pack B, p. 11 - Action songs and rhymes.**

Read or sing two or three of the songs with the gestures. (You can go through all the songs if the parents are enthusiastic.)

Questions for discussion:

What learning styles are involved in this activity?

Sample answers:

Hearing - Auditory

Hearing the song and rhyme

Seeing - Visual

Watching someone model the gestures to the words

Touching - Movement - Kinesthetic

Using movements with the words

Why do action songs and rhymes meet the needs of every type of learner?

Invite a musician who specialises in songs for children to come to a session.



Parents' Pack B, p. 11

Action songs and rhymes

The Wheels on the Bus

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
Round and round,
Round and round,
The wheels on the bus go round and round,
All through the town.

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish,
Swish, swish, swish,
Swish, swish, swish,
The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish,
All through the town.

Continue on with as many verses as you like:
The driver on the bus says, 'Move on back,'
The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep,
The baby on the bus goes, 'Wah, wah, wah.'

•••

I'm A Little Teapot

I'm a little teapot, short and stout,
Here is my handle,
Here is my spout,
When I start to boil you'll hear me shout,
'Tip me over and pour me out.'

•••

Incy Wincy Spider

The incy wincy spider went up the waterspout,
Down came the rain and washed the spider out,
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain,
And the incy wincy spider went up the spout again.

Here Is the Church

Here is the church,
Here is the steeple,
Open the doors,
And see all the people.

•••

If You're Happy And You Know It

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands,
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands,
If you're happy and you know it,
And you really want to show it,
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

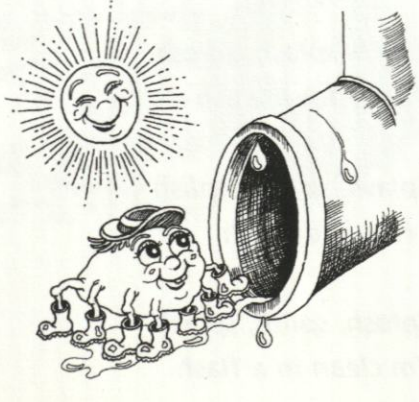
If you're cross and you know it, stamp your feet,
If you're cross and you know it, stamp your feet,
If you're cross and you know it,
And you really want to show it,
If you're cross and you know it, stamp your feet.

Other verses:
If you're sad and you know it, cry a lot.
If you're silly and you know it, laugh a lot.

•••

Pat-A-Cake

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake
Baker's man
Bake me a cake as fast as you can.
Roll it and prick it
And mark it with (first letter of child's name)
And throw it in the oven for (child's name) and me.



ACTIVITY 5

Everyday rhymes

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



You will also need some magazines, scissors, glue and A4 paper.

What to do:

Explain to the parents that this activity is designed to provide another strategy for developing children's sound pattern awareness. In **Session 2** and **Session 3**, the parents discussed how familiar tasks and routines in the home are excellent learning opportunities for children. When children are involved in activities that are based on real life experiences, it is easier for them to make the connections that will help them build and remember new skills.

Using the flipchart, ask the parents to brainstorm a list of everyday activities in the home that involve their children.

Sample answers:

- taking a bath
- getting dressed
- eating
- playing
- going to bed
- going for a walk or drive
- setting a table
- picking up toys
- playing with a pet

Choose one of the activities to demonstrate the rhyming possibilities, for example, taking a bath:

Splish, splash, splosh
Ready for a wash

Splash, splosh, splish
I feel like a fish

Splosh, splish, splash
I'm clean in a flash

ACTIVITY 5

30 mins.

Everyday rhymes

The second step of the activity, which helps give children a visual clue for remembering the rhyme, is to add a picture that illustrates the action. Draw the parents' attention to the magazines, glue, paper and scissors. Ask them to break into groups and choose one of the activities on the flipchart to make everyday rhymes for their children.

The purpose of working in a group is to encourage the parents to help each other and to share their ideas. However, each parent will finish the activity with an individual rhyme. Suggest that the parents modify the activity in any way that suits their needs.

For example:

Some parents may want to create the rhyme at home with their children.

Some parents may not want to write down their rhymes.

Some parents may create a whole series of rhymes.

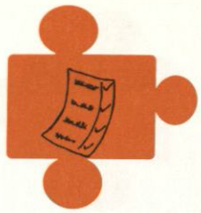
Leave time at the end of the activity for sharing.

Encourage the parents to try the everyday rhymes at home during the week.



4

10 mins.



Session Summary

Invite the parents to reflect on the key concepts of this session by reviewing the explanations of **rhyme** and **sound pattern awareness** that were discussed earlier.

Questions for discussion:

- *Why do children remember rhymes?*
- *How can sound pattern awareness help your children with reading?*
- *How can sound pattern awareness help your children with writing?*
- *Do you have any ideas about how you might use some of the rhyming activities with your children?*

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 7 - Spotlight on talking and listening**. Encourage the parents to continue with their observations of their children's talking and listening skills.



Home Activity 4 - Have fun with rhymes

Read through **Home Activity 4 - Have fun with rhymes** which asks the parents to try out one of the rhyming activities.

Remind the parents that, although they do not need to write answers to questions in the activity, they will be expected to share their observations at the next session.

Also ask the parents to look for examples of radio or TV jingles, posters, or any type of advertising that incorporates rhymes or beginning sound patterns.



Parents' Pack B, p. 12



Have fun with rhymes

Choose a rhyming activity from the page **Hearing sound patterns**.

Which activity did you choose?

What did your child enjoy about the activity?

What radio or TV jingles is your child familiar with?

Can you name some other examples of rhyme in your home?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

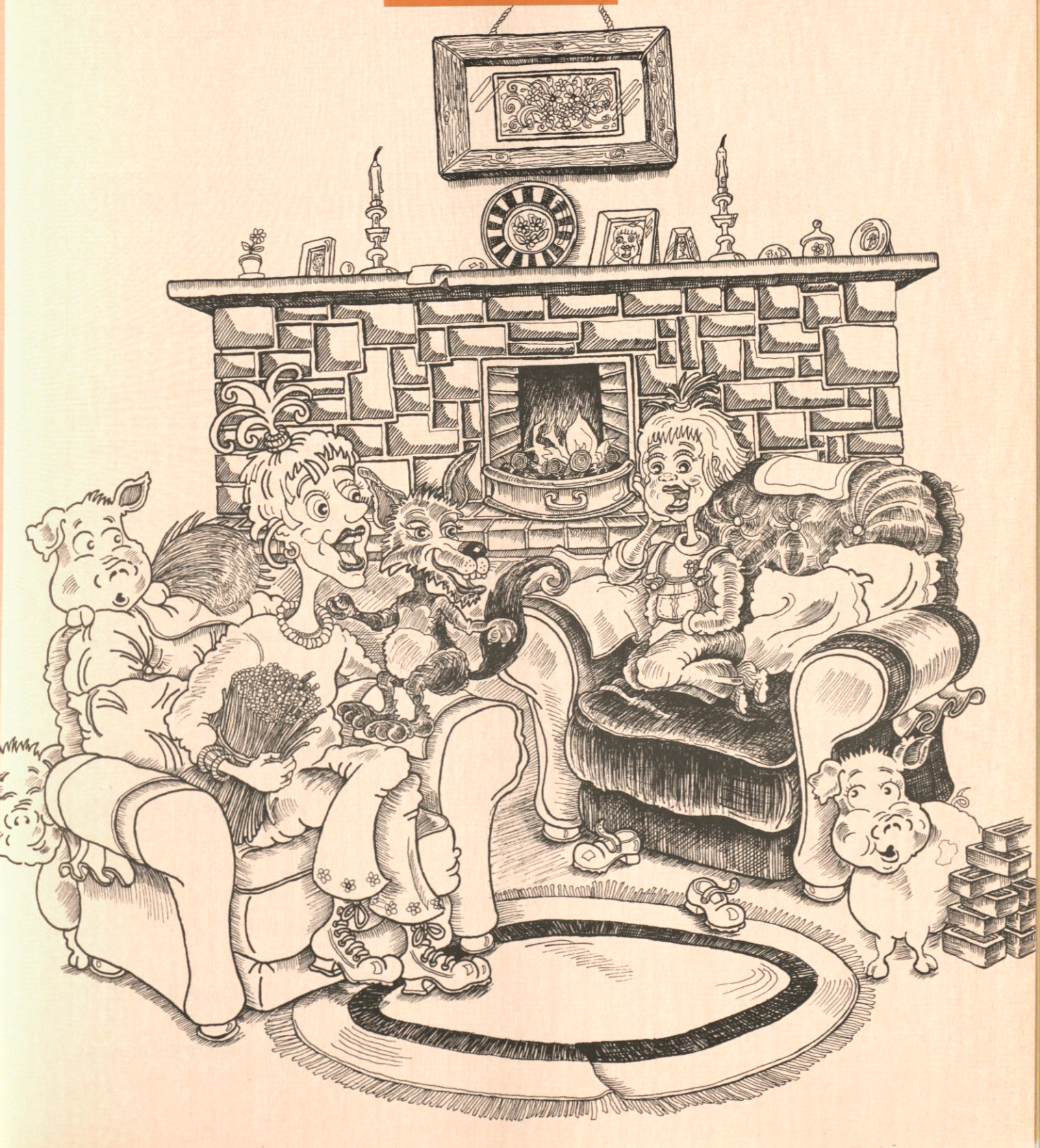
What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

5

Storytelling



4

3

15 r



In this session parents will:

- look at the underlying patterns in storytelling;
- discuss why stories and storytelling are important for the development of language skills;
- explore opportunities for storytelling in their homes.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	100
Looking at patterns in stories	**1**	**20 mins.**	**101-102**
Recipe for a story			103-104
Everyone has a story to tell	**2**	**20 mins.**	**105-106**
Story box			107
Children telling stories	**3**	**20 mins.**	**108-109**
Helping your child to retell a story			110
Fractured fairy tales	**4**	**60 mins.**	**111-112**
Fractured fairy tales			113
Making puppets			114
Session Summary		10 mins.	115
Home Activity 5 - Storytelling			115
Storytelling			116
Session Notes			117

5

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:

You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 4 - Have fun with rhymes.**

Today's session will continue work with oral language skills.

The parents will explore how experience with storytelling can make an important contribution to helping children learn to read and write.

Remind the parents about earlier discussions on why the home is a good place for learning. Children know who they are and where they are within the home and this 'sense of place' builds confidence.

Explain that in a similar way, returning to the same story over and over provides a familiar framework in which to explore language, ideas, emotions, life situations and other people's viewpoints.

Questions to ask:

- *Who tells stories in your home?*
- *What are the stories about?*
- *Do your children have favourite stories that they ask to hear over and over again?*
- *Do your children tell stories?*



ACTIVITY 1

20 mins.

Looking at patterns in stories

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Have on hand a few storybooks with versions of a favourite fairy tale, e.g. **'The Three Little Pigs'**.

Write onto the flipchart three rhymes from **Session 4 - Do you remember these Rhymes?** - 'Humpty Dumpty', 'Little Miss Muffet', 'Mary had a Little Lamb'.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, pp. 13-14 - Recipe for a story.**

What to do:

The purpose of this activity is to use stories that the parents are familiar with in order to stimulate a discussion on the underlying patterns that help us create, remember and retell stories. (**Please note:** if the suggestions here are not culturally appropriate to the parents, select alternatives, e.g. Bible stories, ballads, legends, myths.)

Show the parents your examples of storybooks about a favourite fairy tale.

Questions to ask:

- *Is anyone familiar with this story?*
- *What happens in this story?*
- *Could you retell this story out of your heads?*
- *What helps us to remember and retell the sequence of events in this story?*

Explain that all stories are built on a framework. Knowing the underlying pattern of storytelling helps us to remember and retell stories we have heard before, and guides us when we want to tell our own stories.

Reading, telling and sharing stories are some of the most important activities parents (and other family members) can do with their children, because the experience helps children to learn a number of key skills which they will later apply when learning to read and write:

- remembering the details of a story;
- relating those details in a particular order;
- using their knowledge of storytelling patterns to make predictions about what will happen in a story;
- following the framework for storytelling in order to tell and later to write their own stories.

5

20 mins.

15

ACTIVITY 1

Looking at patterns in stories

Point out the three rhymes on the flipchart page.

Ask the parents to look again at these rhymes.

Questions for discussion:

- *Each of these rhymes describes an event that happens. What is the event described in each rhyme?*
- *Does knowing the events that happen in each of these rhymes help us to remember the rhymes?*
- *Do these rhymes tell a story?*
- *How do you know what a story is?*
- *What would we have to add to these rhymes to turn them into stories?*

To give them an example, read **Parents' Pack B, pp. 13-14 - Recipe for a story.**

Questions to ask:

- *How does the writer turn the experience of cooking something into a framework for storytelling?*
- *What did the writer add to the 'Little Miss Muffet' rhyme in order to turn it into a story?*
- *Can the parents apply the recipe framework to another story, e.g.* ***'The Three Little Pigs'?***

Write the recipe directions on the flipchart and see if the parents can retell the story of **'The Three Little Pigs'** (or an example you have chosen) using the recipe format.





Parents' Pack B, p. 13

Recipe for a story

There are many recipes for storytelling. Here's one we'd like to share with you...

1. Start by telling your audience what's cooking.

(There are plenty of off the shelf story starters available... Once upon a time... Long, long, ago... There once was a... I remember when...)

Did you hear what happened to Matilda Muffet?

2. Blend together carefully selected amounts of who, what, when and where.

(We're using Miss Muffet doing spring-cleaning on a Saturday in her cottage. But feel free to experiment.)

You remember Miss Muffet, small, fussy woman always complaining about children running through her garden? She lives in that small cottage near Mother Goose's Cross. Well, last Saturday she was doing her spring-cleaning. House proud? There's no one as fussy as Matilda. She spent the whole day washing walls, scraping tiles, cleaning presses, dusting cobwebs, beating rugs, polishing furniture, wiping finger prints off the light switches. Every room in that house was under assault from Matilda's mops and cloths and sprays.

It was evening by the time she finished, and after all that hard work, Matilda decided to reward herself with a treat. Know what that was? Curds and whey. I know, I know. *Curds and whey?* But that was Matilda. She was going to sit down on her tuffet, turn on **'Coronation Street'** and enjoy a nice hot bowl of steaming curds and whey...

3. Cook up a bit of trouble and allow to simmer.

(Nothing goes smoothly in stories, that's what keeps us listening. So while Matilda looks forward to her evening off, we look forward to what's going to happen...)

It was half seven when she finally sat down on her tuffet to sample her favourite treat. She turned on **'Coronation Street'**. Deirdre was still whimpering about how she'd been betrayed by a cunning lover and ended up in prison. 'Tut tut,' Miss Muffet clucked, 'If that woman did half the work I do, it's far from love affairs and knaves of the heart she'd be.'

Just then Matilda became aware of a presence in the room. Something she couldn't put her hand on, but it made her nervous all the same... She sensed that she was being approached. Someone was drawing near...



Parents' Pack B, p. 14



Recipe for a story

In a minute a dark figure came into view looking menacingly, first at Miss Muffet, then at her curds and whey...

Then a voice said, 'So you think you've a mighty day's work done do you? Did you ever think that your day's work has just destroyed my entire family and left me homeless?'

4. Shake in a solution.

(We know, of course, that the dark stranger is a spider, but what do we want to happen? Do we want Miss Muffet to clout the spider and go back to ***'Coronation Street'****? Or do we think the spider has a point?)*

Miss Muffet stared numbly at the spider, hardly believing what she was seeing, let alone hearing. All of a sudden, she jumped up, toppling her bowl as she did, and bolted out the door.

5. Taste, and if necessary, adjust the solution.

(I think we'll just stick with tradition here...)

She didn't look back. She didn't see the curds and whey ooze out from under the broken bowl onto the just waxed floor.

6. Remove from flame and serve up a happy ending.

(For the spider anyway...)

But the spider did, and taking some degree of satisfaction from this small revenge, settled onto the tuffet to watch the end of **'Coronation Street'** in splendid comfort.

(Well, the spider turns this around. But don't be fooled. Miss Muffet's probably gone off to sign up for a karate course at her local adult education centre. She'll be back!)

The End

ACTIVITY 2

20 mins.

Everyone has a story to tell

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 15 - Story box.**
Copy the **Story box** onto a flipchart page.

What to do:

Ask the parents to think of the stories they tell their children.
Where do their ideas come from?

Sample answers:

- TV/radio
- films/news
- childhood memories
- rhymes/verses
- school events/happenings
- hearing others' stories
- pets
- family events
- toys/familiar objects
- own experience

Suggest that stories can be told about anything.

They can be historical (a retelling of real events) or fictional (an imaginative telling of events or experiences).

Sometimes, a story can be made up of a combination of real and fictitious events, for example, the film, **'Titanic'**.

All the storyteller needs to do is fit the characters and events into a basic storytelling structure. **Recipe for a story** in **Activity 1** provided one example of a storytelling framework. The **Story box** is another.

Turn to **Parents' Pack B, p. 15 - Story box.** Again, use the example of a familiar story such as **'The Three Little Pigs'** to illustrate the framework outlined here. Then invite the parents to invent their own stories.

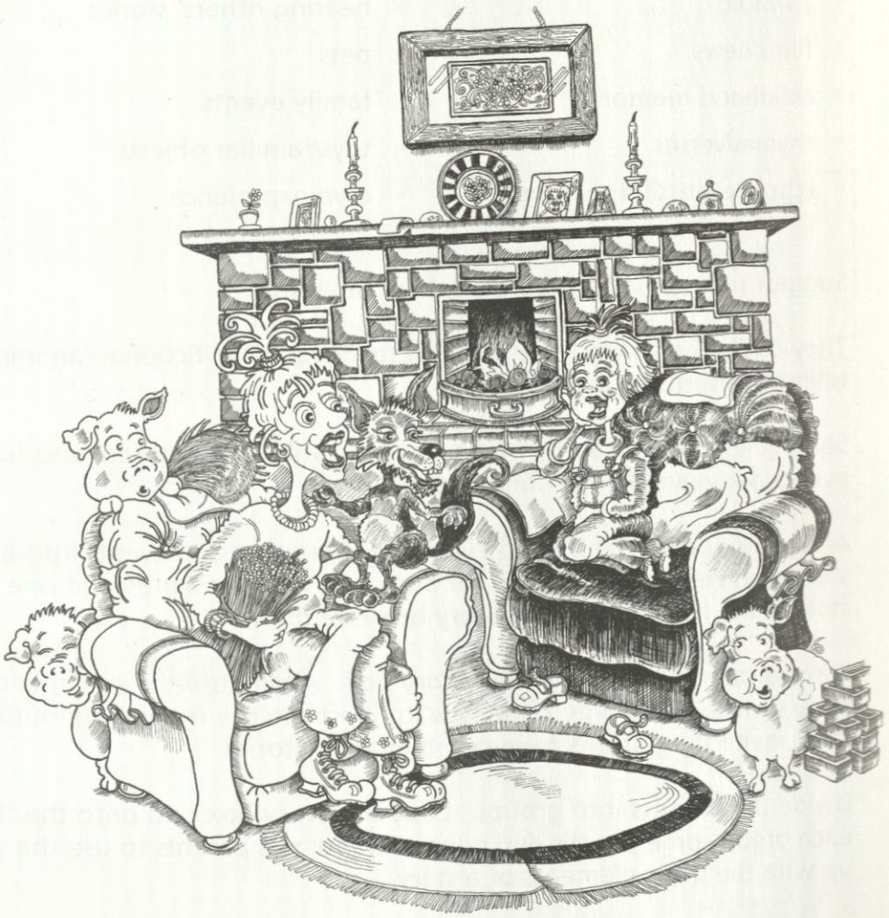
Divide the parents into groups. Copy the **Story box** grid onto the flipchart. Give each group some pencils and paper and ask the parents to use the grid to come up with the basic elements of a story.

ACTIVITY 2

Everyone has a story to tell

After a few minutes, ask for feedback. However, instead of asking one group to give all their details, ask one group for a *Character,* another for an *Opposing character*, another for *Time* and so on. This exercise usually produces some very funny story lines.

When you have filled in the **Story box** on the flipchart, take it to the next step by adding in storytelling phrases such as 'once upon a time' and 'they lived happily ever after', and turn it into a complete story.





Parents' Pack B, p. 15

Story box

CHARACTER	**Who** is the hero or heroine?
OPPOSING CHARACTER	**Who** else is in the story? **Who** is the 'bad guy'?
TIME	**When** does the story take place?
PLACE/SETTING	**Where** does the story take place?
MAIN ACTION	**What** is supposed to happen?
PROBLEM	**What** goes wrong?
RESOLUTION	**How** is this solved? Happy ending? Sad ending?

ACTIVITY 3

Children telling stories

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 16 - Helping your child to retell a story.**

What to do:

Ask the parents whether they have heard their children telling stories to them, to grandparents, to siblings, to family pets, to favourite toys.

What kind of stories do they tell?

Write their answers on the flipchart.

Explain that telling stories helps children to improve their language skills and to organise their thinking. Children's interest in telling stories is likely to develop naturally from hearing stories told to them. At the same time, there are several ways parents can stimulate their children's interest in storytelling and support their efforts.

One way is to encourage their imagination through play. Props like dolls, teddies, cardboard cut outs, or finger puppets can help to stimulate imagination.

Another way is to 'scaffold' a child through a retelling of a popular story. An example is provided in **Parents' Pack B, p. 16 - Helping your child to retell a story.**

A third way is to play a story game. **The recipe for a story** or the **Story box** could be turned into a game with the children calling out the ingredients of the story or filling in the answers in the **story box**. Another possibility is **The but story.**

Invite the parents to try **The but story.** One person starts a story with a sentence about a character and something he or she did or was trying to do. Each person in turn adds to the story by alternating lucky and unlucky events.

Example:

First person:	Once upon a time there was a little girl who wanted to go for a walk in the woods BUT
Second person:	She didn't have a very good sense of direction and she got lost and wandered around for hours and hours BUT
Third person:	She found a pretty little cottage covered with ivy in the middle of the trees BUT
Fourth person:	No one was there, so she couldn't get directions to find her way home BUT

ACTIVITY 3

20 mins.

Children telling stories

Fifth person: Luckily, the owners had left three bowls of porridge, and she was so hungry BUT

Continue the story for as long as you like.

Ask the parents to reflect on how using this story structure can help children to develop storytelling abilities.

Sample responses:

- The children have to pay attention.
- The story is already started, so it helps them to build ideas.
- It directs their attention to particular details.
- Children have a structure that helps them to organise their ideas.
- Parents can give prompts when children become confused.
- Parents can redirect the story when necessary.
- Parents have opportunities to give lots of praise and encouragement.



Parents' Pack B, p. 16

Helping your child to retell a story

Choose a story you both know well.	**'Can you tell me about Goldilocks and the Three Bears?'**
Start your child at the beginning.	**'Once upon a time there were three bears.'**
Direct her attention to particular details.	**'What was Goldilocks doing when she came to the three bears' cottage?'**
Ask questions to help her remember the story.	**'And what happened when she sat on Baby Bear's chair?'**
Give prompts when she gets confused.	**'The chair broke, didn't it? And then Goldilocks went upstairs to the bedrooms. Whose bed did she lie on first?'**
Redirect the story when necessary.	**'But the bears didn't come home right away, did they? What happened first?'**
Give lots of praise and encouragement.	**'That was a great story. Thank you for telling it to me.'**

ACTIVITY 4

Fractured fairy tales

To prepare:



Organise your materials:

for puppet making - old socks, cardboard tubes from toilet or kitchen rolls, buttons, coloured paper, wool, scissors, glue, markers.



for costume materials - hats, scarves, old jewellery.

for props - stuffed animals, miscellaneous toys, etc.

Make a sample sock puppet and a sample cardboard tube puppet.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B p. 17 - Fractured fairy tales** and **Parents' Pack B, p. 18 - Making puppets.**

Collect some examples of **fractured fairy tales.** Readily available titles include:

'Has Anyone Seen Jack?', by Tony Bradman (Frances Lincoln)
'Prince Cinders', by Babette Cole (Puffin)
'A Rugrats' Night Before Christmas', by David Lewman (Simon & Schuster)
'Rugrats Once Upon a Reptar', by Kitty Richards (Simon & Schuster)
'The True Story of The 3 Little Pigs', by Jon Scieszka (Puffin)
'The Stinky Cheese Man And Other Fairly Stupid Tales', by Jon Scieszka (Puffin)
'Jim and The Bean Stalk', by Raymond Briggs (Puffin)
'King Change-a-lot', by Babette Cole (Puffin)
'Beware of Boys', by Tony Blundell (Puffin)
'The Paper Bag Princess', by Robert Munsch (Scholastic)
'Little Lumpty', by Miko Imai (Walker)
'Princess Smarty Pants', by Babette Cole (Puffin)
'Nice Work, Little Wolf!', by Hilda Offen (Puffin)
'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?', by Tony Bradman (Mammoth)

What to do:

The **fractured fairy tale** is a two part activity that builds on the **Story Box** by exploring different possibilities for engaging in constructing and retelling stories with children. It also gives parents strategies for stimulating their children's own imagination and storytelling skills.

Start by reading and discussing **Fractured fairy tales - Parents' Pack B, p. 17.**

Questions to ask:

- *How would you use the **Story box** to fracture a fairy tale?*
- *Why would children enjoy these stories?*
- *What are some ideas for fracturing other fairy tales?*

60 mins.

ACTIVITY 4

Fractured fairy tales

Divide the parents into groups, not too small as fairy tales tend to have many characters. Assign each group a fairytale (or let them choose their own). Tell them to use the guidelines for fracturing the fairy tale to create a new story, which they will then present to the whole group.

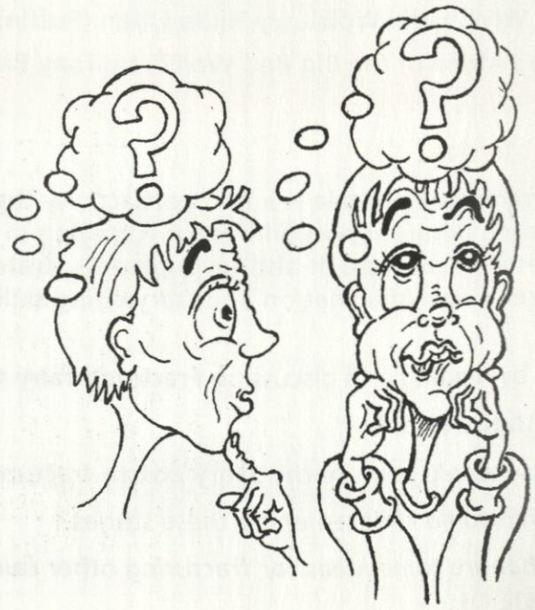
Before they begin, remind the parents about earlier activities that pointed out how children enjoy dressing up and adding props to support and enhance their storytelling. Display the sample puppets and puppet-making materials. Describe how to make the puppets by referring to **Parents' Pack B, p. 18 - Making puppets**. Also, point out additional props and costume-making materials.

Invite the groups to include puppets, costumes and props to experience the dramatic possibilities of storytelling. They have the option of using some or all of the materials on display. Encourage them to be as imaginative as possible.

Allow about twenty minutes for preparation and twenty minutes for performances.

Discuss possibilities for further storytelling sessions. These could include:

- making story kits,
- inviting a professional storyteller,
- looking at stories for older children.



Parents' Pack B, p. 17

Fractured fairy tales

Children love the humour and playful quality of this type of storytelling. To 'fracture' a fairy tale, you simply take a familiar fairy tale and change it around to suit your purpose.

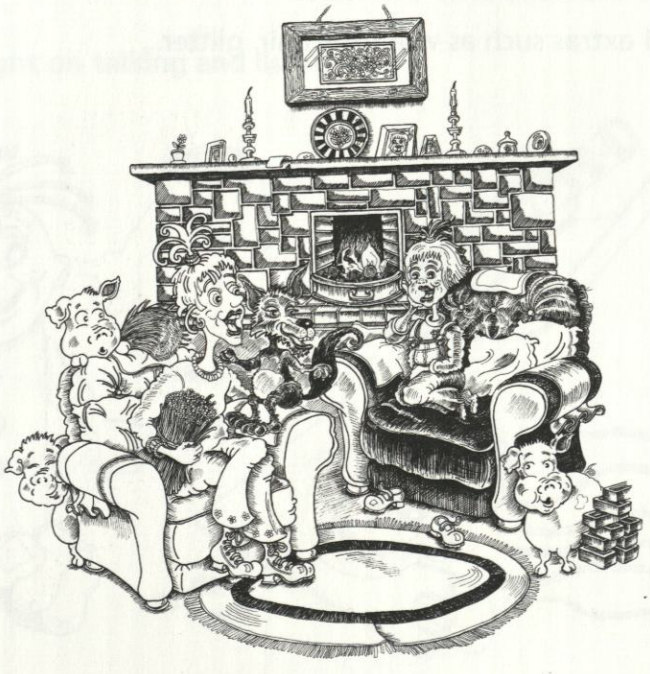
- Characters might become animals, space aliens, or people in your family.
- New characters can be added.
- The plot can be twisted in various directions.
- The setting can be completely altered.
- The story can be told from another perspective.

For example:

'The Three Little Pigs' could take place under the sea. The *three little pigs* could be the *three little codfish,* or how about *merpigs*? The *big bad wolf* could be the *awesome awful octopus.* They could try to build houses out of seaweed, shells, or timber from a sunken ship...

'The Frog Prince' could become the *'The Spider Prince'* or the *'The Martian Prince'.* Instead of the princess kissing him, and turning him into a prince, turn it around, the frog kisses her and she turns into a frog.

'Sleeping Beauty' could be changed to *'Sneezing Beauty'* or *'Snoring Beauty'.*

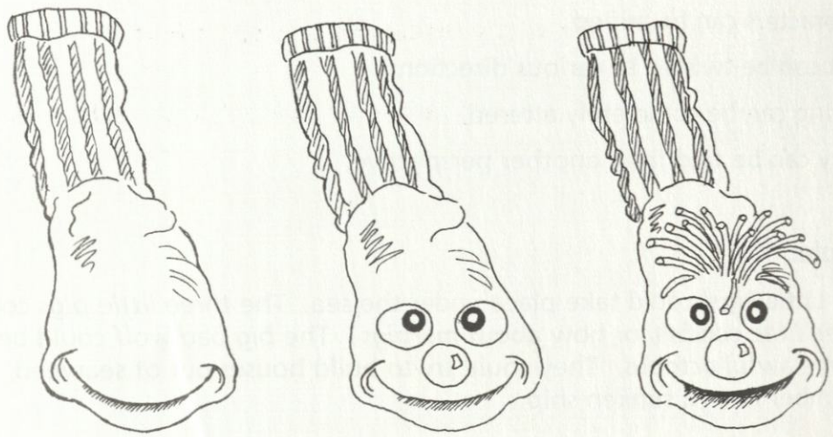


Parents' Pack B, p. 18

Making puppets

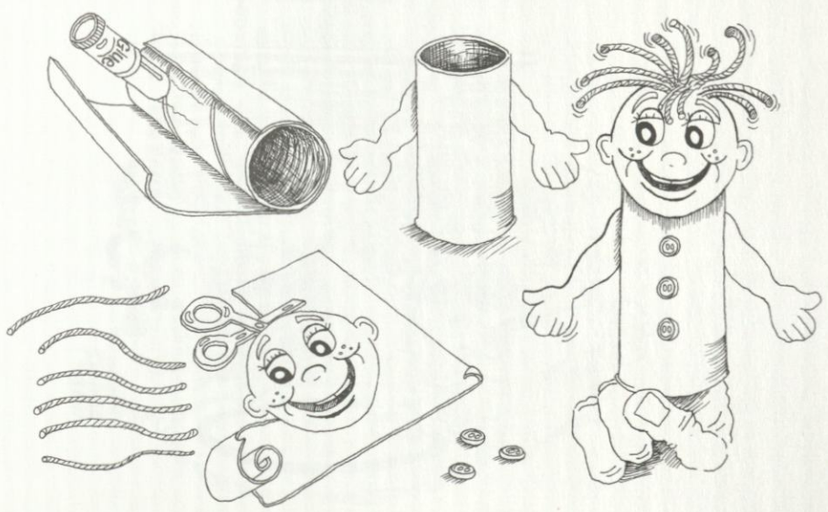
Sock puppet:

1. For eyes and nose, glue buttons or small circles of coloured paper onto a sock.
2. Cut out a tongue or mouth out of paper.
3. Glue on some wool for hair or fur.



Cardboard tube puppet:

1. Use cellotape or glue to cover the toilet roll with coloured paper for a body.
2. Draw or cut and paste details as desired.
3. Using paper, cut out a large circle for a head and draw on a face.
4. Glue the head onto the tube.
5. Add extras such as wool for hair, glitter...





10 mins.

Session Summary

Review the session by inviting the parents to give feedback about the storytelling activities.

Questions to ask:

- *Which activities were most enjoyable?*
- *How have the activities in this session helped to give you a better understanding of story structure?*
- *How can experiences with storytelling help your children to develop their reading and writing skills?*



Home Activity 5 - Storytelling

Read through **Home Activity 5 - Storytelling,** which gives the parents a choice of storytelling activities to try out at home. Remind them that they will be invited to talk about their experiences when they return next week.

Refer again to the **Spotlight on talking and listening.**

Parents' Pack B, p. 19



Storytelling

During the week, try to make time to share a storytelling activity with your child. You could experiment with telling a story such as a fractured fairy tale or **The but story**.

What stories do you like telling to your child?

What are your child's favourite stories?

Does your child ever join in with the storytelling?

Is your child able to retell the story?

Who are your child's favourite characters?

Can your child talk about the beginning, middle and end of the story?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

Session Notes

6

Sharing books





In this session parents will:

- become familiar with how literacy skills are developed through reading and through talking about books;
- identify the features of a good book for their children;
- discuss ideas for increasing their children's awareness of and interest in books.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	122
What makes a good book?	**1**	**30 mins.**	**123-124**
Early print concepts	**2**	**15 mins.**	**125**
Talking about books	**3**	**20 mins.**	**126-127**
Words about reading			128
Talking about books			129
Materials for reading	**4**	**15 mins.**	**130**
Sharing books			131
Every picture tells a story	**5**	**30 mins.**	**132**
How to use your story picture			133
Session Summary		10 mins.	134
Home Activity 6 - Sharing books at home			134
Spotlight on reading			135
Sharing books at home			136
Session Notes			137

6

10 mins.

Introduction

This session will build on the discussions in **Session 5 - Storytelling**. It will assume that you have already explored the importance of narrative skills when children begin school.

To prepare:

Gather together a variety of books: picture books, alphabet books, board books, cloth books, 'lift the flap' books, home-made books, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, books in Irish, Irish stories and legends, books about popular TV characters, books about animals, books with story tapes attached, first school readers, Letterland books, and information books such as Usborne books.

Your local library may lend you books to display if you don't have the resources to buy a selection of books.

Display the books for the parents to view.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 5 - Storytelling.**

This session will concentrate on books. The parents will explore the importance of reading books, looking at books, talking about books, and encouraging their children to enjoy and value good books. The parents will also learn more about how home experiences of books are important to children's later success in school.

Questions to ask:

- *Why do you think your children enjoy being read to?*
- *What are your children's favourite books?*
- *Do your children choose books for themselves?*
- *What books might your children see you reading?*



ACTIVITY 1

30 mins.

What makes a good book?

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Use the book display prepared for the introduction.

What to do:

Ask the parents to brainstorm ideas about what makes a 'good' book for children. Write their ideas on the flipchart.

Sample responses:

- There are colourful illustrations.
- It holds their interest.
- The writing is simple, not too many words.
- The writing is predictable, or rhymes, so the children are encouraged to join in.
- The book is humorous; children love a funny book.
- The characters are lively and fun with 'goodies' and 'baddies'.
- The book is about animals doing human things.
- The story appeals to the imagination.
- Children learn something from the story.

What are the parents own likes/dislikes in children's books?

Questions for discussion:

- *Were you read to as a child?*
- *Did you have a favourite book?*
- *What kinds of books do you like reading to your children?*
- *What are good times and places for sharing books?*

Invite the parents to examine the selection of books spread out on the table. Ask them to use their ideas on what makes a good book to help them select some books they think their children would like. They should each choose one or two books to examine in more detail. Allow about ten or fifteen minutes for browsing and choosing.

When the parents have all chosen one or two books, ask them to work in pairs or small groups and talk about why they chose these particular books for their children.

After ten minutes, reassemble the group and refer back to the list of ideas about

30 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

What makes a good book?

After ten minutes, reassemble the group and refer back to the list of ideas about what makes a good book. Note any further comments on the flipchart, then sum up the main points about what makes a good book.

Finish this activity with a short discussion about how books are read to children. Remind the parents that reading a book together does not have to be a word for word activity. There are many ways to share books with children. For example, if some parents already read regularly with their children, ask them:

- *How do your children like to hear stories read?*
- *Do they like you to read straight through, or do they interrupt you to ask questions and add comments?*
- *Do they jump ahead of the story and try to guess what might happen next?*
- *Do they try to guess the story from the pictures?*
- *Do they ask you to re-read the same story over and over? Why?*
- *If they are already familiar with the story, do they 'tell the story' with you as you read?*
- *Have you ever tried to shorten a story only to be told (perhaps impatiently) that you have skipped bits?*

You may want to include books on tape. There are many books on tape available for adults and children. Your local library might have a selection.

If you have time, you might want to read a book to the parents to model reading aloud to children.





15 mins.

Early print concepts

To prepare:

Prepare one large picture book with the title and text covered over with paper, leaving only the pictures to view.

What to do:

This activity will focus attention on some of the things children learn about books before they start school.

- Turn a book upside down and backwards and hand it to a parent. Ask that parent to point out the title of the book.
- Hand the book to another parent. Ask that parent to turn to the first page of the story.
- Ask another parent to run a finger along the first three lines of print.
- Ask another parent to turn the page.
- Ask another parent to find the last page.

Explain that this part of the exercise demonstrates how the physical act of handling books teaches children many things about reading before they actually read and write.

Children become familiar with:

- holding books,
- opening at the beginning,
- turning the pages,
- starting at the top of the page,
- following text from left to right.

Next, take the large book that you prepared by covering up the print. Invite the parents to look at the pictures and to make up a story. Then uncover the print and compare. This may cause some amusement!

Talk about how children can enjoy looking at books and making up the story either from the memory of hearing the book read or simply from the pictures.

6

20 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Talking about books

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 2 - Words about reading** and **p. 3 - Talking about books.**

What to do:

For this exercise, ask the parents to turn to **Parents' Pack C, p. 2 - Words about reading.**

Divide the parents into pairs. Give each pair a book and ask them to find all the parts of the book listed in **Words about reading.**

Reassemble the group after five or ten minutes.

Ask the parents why it is important for children to be able to understand the language that teachers use when talking about books.

Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 3 - Talking about books.**

Explain that when children start to read in school, they will be expected to do more than just read words on a page for the teacher. They will need to demonstrate that they understand what they read. **Talking about books** outlines some of the skills important to reading comprehension. Even in Junior Infants, teachers will be asking the children questions about what they read and what has been read to them.

Using the flipchart, ask the parents to brainstorm questions that would encourage their children to develop **'book-talk'**. Referring to one particular book helps to focus the discussion.

Sample questions for 'The Three Little Pigs':

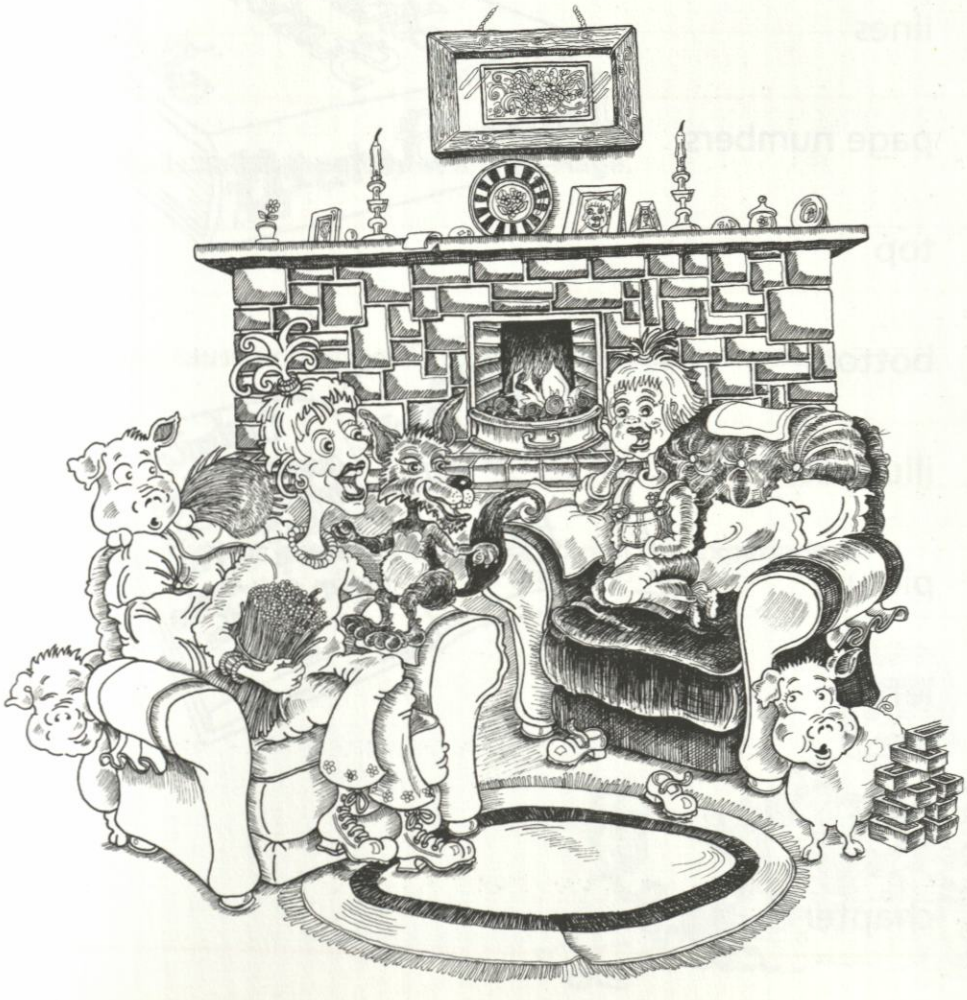
Predicting the story	'Look at the picture. What do you think this story is going to be about?' 'When the wolf blew down the little pig's house, he must have been very cross. What do you think he will do next?'
Sequencing the story	'What kind of house was built first? Second? Third?'
Summarising the story	'Now, what was that story about?'



20 mins.

Talking about books

Giving an opinion of the story	'Did you like that story? Why or why not?' 'What was your favourite part?' 'What did you think about the *big bad wolf*?'
Recalling events in the story	'Remember when we read that story about the *three little pigs?* What did the little pigs use to build their houses?
Explaining cause and effect	'Why did the third little pig build his house out of bricks?'
Relating the ideas or events to real life experiences	'The *big bad wolf* really got cross with those pigs, didn't he? Did you ever get really cross with anyone?'



Parents' Pack C, p. 2

Words about reading

Does your child know these words about books?

title

author

page

print

beginning

ending

lines

page numbers

top

bottom

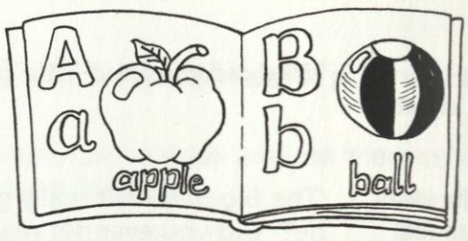
illustrator

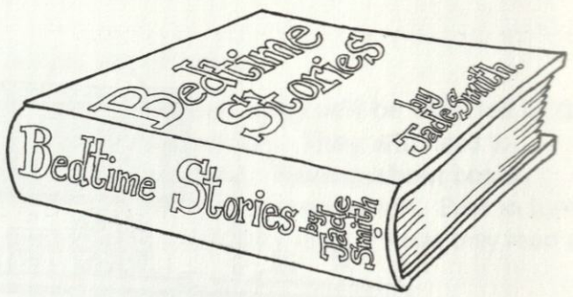
picture

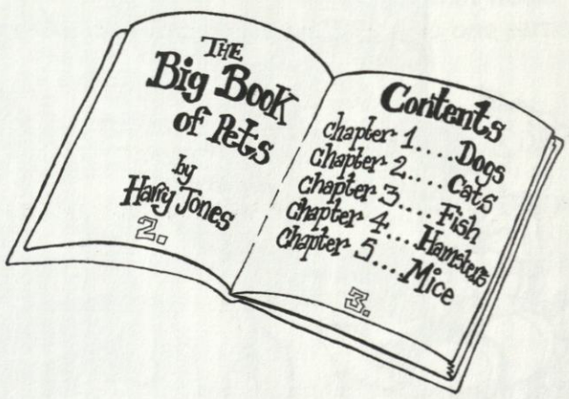
left

right

chapter









Parents' Pack C, p. 3



Talking about books

When your child is in school, in addition to reading, he is also expected to do the following things:

Predict the story from either a picture or a sentence.

Sequence or put things in order - what happened first, next, last, etc.

Summarise the story - tell a shorter version of the whole story.

Evaluate or give an opinion of the story.

Recall details about the story at a later stage.

Explain the cause and effect of events that occur in the story.

Relate the ideas or events in the story to real life experiences.



15 mins.

ACTIVITY 4

Materials for reading

To prepare:

You will need a flipchart and markers.

Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 4 - Sharing books.**

What to do:

Ask the parents to think about the reading materials that they might have in their homes. Remind them that a story book is one kind of reading material, but there are other materials as well.

If the parents have trouble thinking of other kinds of reading materials, you might suggest some of the following:

newspapers	school books	prayer books
magazines	recipe books	instruction manuals
catalogues	dictionaries	telephone/address books

List their ideas on the flipchart.

Questions for discussion:

- *Do your children see other people reading in your homes?*
- *What materials are read?*
- *How can you include your children in a variety of reading activities?*

This is also a good time to talk about the library.

- *Does anyone use the library?*
- *Do you have library cards?*
- *Do you know how to find the books that you want?*
- *Would anyone like to find out more about the library?*

Read and discuss **Sharing books - Parents' Pack C, p. 4.**

Most libraries will welcome the opportunity to explain how to use the library facilities. If the group is interested, contact your local librarian and organise a visit.

This can also be an excellent opportunity for talking about a wide variety of books, such as 'books for older children' and 'books in Irish'.



Parents' Pack C, p. 4

Sharing books

Children know a lot about reading and making sense of books well before they begin school. The things that they learn about books every day help them to understand what reading is all about when they eventually start to read.

What can you do to help?

- Let your child see you read.
- Have books and magazines to look at around the house.
- Find time to share books together.
- Let your child choose his own books and handle the books himself.
- Talk about the pictures.
- Point out familiar letters or words.
- Let him turn the pages.
- Read the book version of popular videos - **'The Jungle Book', 'Cinderella', 'Matilda', 'Postman Pat', 'Thomas the Tank Engine'.**
- Go to the library together.
- Buy books as gifts.
- Swap books with friends.



6

30 mins.

ACTIVITY 5

Every picture tells a story

To prepare:



You will need old magazines, postcards, posters, newspapers, stenc Clipart drawings, coloured paper, textural materials (such as cotton wool, ribbons, fabric), Post-it notes for making flaps, markers, bins scissors and glue.

You will also need one A3 size poster page for each parent.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 5 - How to use your story picture.**

What to do:

This activity is especially designed to include parents who (perhaps because of their own literacy difficulties) are not comfortable reading books to their children. The story picture provides an alternative way to develop children's language skills around talk about stories.

Invite the parents to make story pictures to bring home to their children. They don't need to have a story in mind. The parents should simply look through all the materials and create a lively, colourful picture that they think would appeal to their children.

Some suggestions:

- Include several characters (people, animals, cartoon drawings).
- Put characters in unusual places (a zebra on a farm, a monkey in a clothes shop).
- Create 'lift-the-flaps' using Post-it notes.
- Use famous people their children would recognise.
- Include pictures of food, toys, tools, etc. that their children would know.
- Add their children's own drawings or pictures of family members.
- Use family photographs.
- Add texture to the picture.

Encourage the parents to work in small groups, so they can share ideas and materials.

Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 5 - How to use your story picture** for discussion.



Parents' Pack C, p. 5



How to use your story picture

Use your **story picture** as a prop to develop your child's imagination and language skills.

Ask your child to tell the story of the picture:

How does the story begin?

Who is in the picture?

What's happening?

What will happen next?

Why will this happen?

How does the story end?

Ask your child to name and describe things in the picture:

What do you see in the picture?

Can you spot the _____?

How many _____ do you see?

What will we call this picture?

Ask your child to retell the story of the picture:

Can you tell Granny about your story picture?

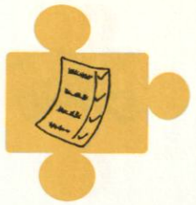
Relate the picture to his own life experiences:

Where else would you see a _____?

Will we add something more to the picture?

6

10 mins.



Session Summary

Spend about five minutes reviewing the key points of today's session by asking:

- *How does reading books and talking about books with your children help them to learn to read?*
- *What are some examples of questions that can encourage your children to talk about books?*
- *What makes a good book for children?*

Turn to **Parents' Pack C, p. 6 - Spotlight on reading.**

Remind the parents that the **Spotlight on reading** identifies some of the skills their children demonstrate as they develop reading abilities. When the parents share books with their children, they should take note of the skills their children demonstrate and then shade in the appropriate 'apples' in the **Spotlight on reading.**



Home Activity 6 - Sharing books at home

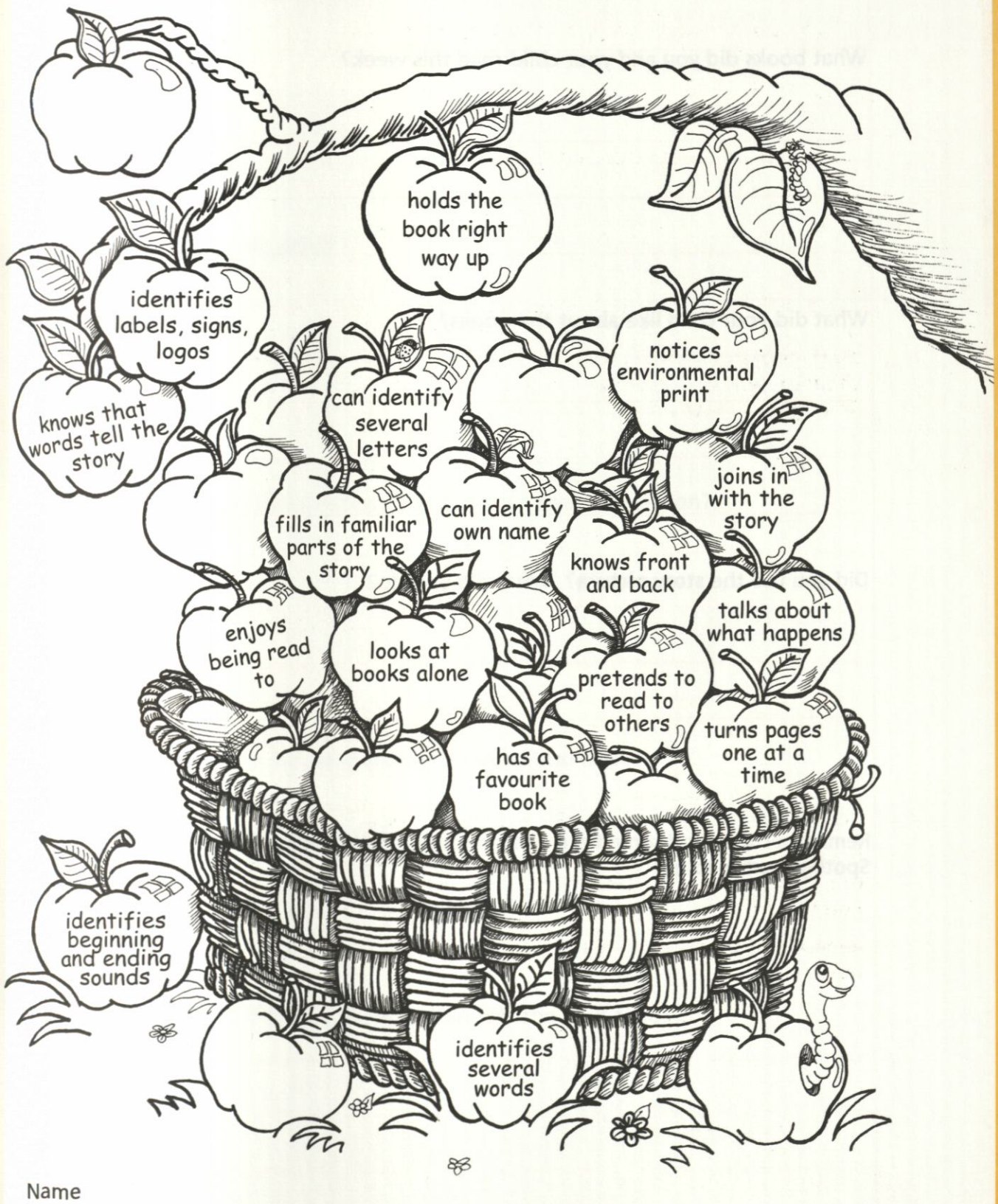
Read through **Home Activity 6 - Sharing books at home.**

In this activity, the parents are expected to spend time at home sharing books, or exploring the **story picture** with their children. If possible, let them bring home the books they chose at the beginning of the session.

Remind the parents that they will be invited to talk about their observations next week.

Parents' Pack C, p. 6

Spotlight on reading



Name _____

Age _____

Photocopy for each child as needed.

Parents' Pack C, p. 7



Sharing books at home

Take time this week to share books with your child, once a day if possible.

What books did you and your child read this week?

What did your child like about the books?

Did you use the **story picture**? What did you do?

Remember to spend some time observing your child's skills for reading using the **Spotlight on reading.**



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

6

Session Notes

7

Print is all around us





In this session parents will:

- explore how interacting with print in the environment encourages the development of reading and writing skills;
- identify their children's everyday purposes for using reading and writing;
- list a variety of opportunities for interacting with environmental print;
- discuss strategies for building visual discrimination skills through everyday activities in the home.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	142
What's in the post?	**1**	**20 mins.**	**143-144**
Environmental print	**2**	**35 mins.**	**145-146**
Words about environmental print			147
Seeing print every day			148-149
Looking at letters	**3**	**25 mins.**	**150-151**
Learning about letters			152
Looking at print games	**4**	**30 mins.**	**153**
Kitchen cupboard bingo			154
Name game			155
Session Summary		10 mins.	156
Home Activity 7 - Playing print games			156
Playing print games			157
Session Notes			158

7

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:

You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 6 - Sharing books at home.**

This session is all about environmental print.

'Environmental print' is a term used to describe the many different kinds of print people come into contact with in their homes and around the community - signs, posters, labels, newspapers, magazines, letters, advertisements, directions, packaging, forms, etc.

Sometimes even very young children surprise their parents by 'reading' labels off the shelves in the supermarkets, or by 'recognising' signs on the shop fronts.

This session will give the parents opportunities to examine what their children know about environmental print and to explore how their frequent contacts with environmental print can support reading development.

Write on the flipchart:

- *What do children notice about environmental print?*
- *What do children learn about reading from environmental print?*
- *What can parents do to help raise their children's awareness of environmental print?*



20 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

What's in the post?

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Organise sample post: an ESB bill, a colourful advertising flier, a hand-written personal letter.

What to do:

Tell the parents to picture themselves on a busy morning or afternoon. They are just about to go out the door when the postman delivers three letters. Display the sample post so that all the parents can see the three letters, but don't identify the post for them.

Ask the parents to take a minute to picture themselves looking at these letters. Then ask:

If you received these letters in the post what would you do with them?

The parents will likely identify the three pieces of post and give different answers as to how they would 'read' each letter. For example:

'I'd glance at the ESB bill, throw the flier in the bin, and save the letter for a good read later on.'

or

'I'd open the letter and read it straight away, put the ESB bill up on the shelf with the other bills, and dump the flier.'

Questions to ask:

Since you couldn't actually read the post from where you were sitting, what did you see that told you the post was an ESB bill, a flier, and a personal letter?

Sample answers:

- logo or picture on envelope
- size, shape or design of envelope
- window in envelope
- use of colour
- type of stamp used
- handwritten or typed address

7

20 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

What's in the post?

What did this information tell you?

Sample answers:

- a brown envelope with a window = a bill
- the logo and design = ESB
- familiar handwriting on the envelope = personal letter
- size, shape and colour = advertising flier

How do you know?

Sample answers:

- received letters like these before
- know what kinds of letters to expect in the post
- easy to identify different kinds of envelopes
- can guess the content from the envelope

Write their answers on the flipchart.

This simulation exercise highlights how **visual clues** (features of a text such as layout, pictures, logos, print styles), **background knowledge** and **familiarity with different kinds of texts** help readers to:

- identify what sort of text they are reading;
- determine the context in which the text is presented;
- be selective about what and how they read;
- take meaning from the text.

Explain that in **Session Six - Sharing books**, the parents discussed how the visual features of illustrated texts and story pictures help children to tell the story of the text. In looking at environmental print in this session, you will be paying particular attention to the visual features of environmental print. You will be focusing on how children use these visual clues, together with their knowledge of the different contexts in which the print is used, to get meaning from print.

ACTIVITY 2

35 mins.

Environmental print

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.



Select a number of Photopak cards where different kinds of environmental print are visible in the scenes.



Gather a variety of printed materials that children are likely to see in their homes and communities: e.g. signs, posters, labels, advertisements, packaging, forms, catalogues, brochures, leaflets, magazines, newspapers, cards, letters, menus, items of clothing.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 8 - Words about environmental print** and **pp. 9 - 10 - Seeing print every day**.

What to do:

Environmental print is everywhere but, because it is so familiar, it often goes unnoticed. This exercise is intended to heighten the parents' awareness of just how much environmental print their children come into contact with every day.

Divide the parents into two groups. Give each group a flipchart page and a selection of Photopak cards and print materials. Ask one group to brainstorm examples of print in the home that their children are likely to see and list these on their flipchart page. Ask the second group to brainstorm examples of print in the community and list these on their flipchart page. The Photopak cards and print samples should help stimulate their ideas.

After ten or fifteen minutes, bring the two groups back together and let them give each other feedback. Stick the two flipchart pages onto the wall so everyone can see them.

Questions to ask:

Have you ever noticed that your toddlers were able to:

- *choose their favourite sweets from a store counter?*
- *find a particular cereal in the shop or in the press at home?*
- *select the correct video to watch?*
- *call out the name of a shop as you passed?*
- *pick out the RTÉ Guide or the local paper at the newsagents?*
- *recognise a logo on a shopping bag?*

35 mins.

ACTIVITY 2

Environmental print

- *Have you ever tried to buy cheaper products for your toddlers (e.g. cola instead of Coke, a no name 'Barbie' doll, a cheaper version of Lego) only to find out that they couldn't be fooled?*
- *How do children know these things?*

Write the parents' comments on the flipchart.

Point out that children learn to use **visual clues** (as well as other sensory clues) to help them to discriminate between the known and the unknown, likes and dislikes, theirs and others. Even as babies, children quickly learn the necessary clues to help them to identify what's important to them.

Children also use **context clues** (their background knowledge of the situation and content of the print in question) to help them to recognise words and understand the meaning of print they see around them. These are two strategies that skilled readers use. For example, the parents used **visual clues** and **context clues** to help them in the previous exercise.

Ask the parents to name some examples of visual features in environmental print that might give children clues as to what a text says.

Sample answers:

- pictures
- familiar logos
- familiar faces
- fixed location
- shape
- colours
- size
- same context
- recognising some letters or numbers

Invite the parents to consider their daily routines with their children and to identify familiar situations that involve regular use of print (e.g. breakfast - choosing cereals, bread, jam, milk, orange juice).

Talk about the language of environmental print. Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 8 - Words about environmental print** for ideas.

Finish by turning to **Parents' Pack C, pp. 9 - 10 - Seeing print every day** to discuss what parents can do to promote their children's awareness of environmental print.



Parents' Pack C, p. 8



Words about environmental print

sign

newspaper

menu

poster

label

calendar

tag

brochure

guide

leaflet

letter

logo

newsletter

advertising

bulletin

catalogue

package

card

magazine

headlines

symbol

recipe

journal

directory

autograph

Parents' Pack C, p. 9

Seeing print every day

What do children learn from environmental print?

They learn that:

- print carries a message;
- print has many uses;
- print can be displayed many different ways;
- print is valued by all kinds of people;
- print plays a role in everyday activities and in special events.

Many children first become interested in learning to read through their awareness of environmental print.

You can encourage your child to become more aware of the print that is all around her. Here are some suggestions:

Point out signs, posters, names of shops.

What does that sign say?

Can you find the name of the shop?

Talk about the information given on labels.

Let's check the date to see if it's fresh.

Let's look at the labels to see if they have your size.

Talk about instructions on packages.

How long should we cook this pizza for?

Let's look at the directions for this game.

Include your child in activities involving everyday print.

Which one of these videos would you like?

Can you look in the press and get me the bag of sugar?

Explain what you are doing when using environmental print.

I'm looking in the *Golden Pages* for the phone number of the hospital.

I'll just check the calendar to see what day of the week the twelfth is.



Parents' Pack C p. 10



Seeing print every day

Encourage your child to point out familiar objects.

Can you find those sweets you like?

Can you spot the button for weighing the bananas?

Praise your child when she demonstrates that she recognises any print materials.

Yes, that's the RTÉ Guide. Well done. Now let's see what time that programme is on.

That's the cereal your brother likes. Thank you for finding it on the shelf.

Use pretend play (shop, post office, restaurant) or play print games involving familiar names of food, toys, TV shows, etc.

Make a print scrapbook of signs, names and labels that your child recognises.

Your ideas:

25 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Looking at letters

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.

Gather a variety of printed materials: magazines, newspapers, brochures, posters, different varieties of handwriting, newsletters, cards, advertisements, packaging, labels.



Have enough A3 pages, scissors, markers and glue for the parents to work in pairs.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 11 - Learning about letters.**

What to do:

Ask the parents to work in pairs. Give each pair a selection of print materials, an A3 page with a different letter of the alphabet written on each page, scissors, glue and markers. Their task is to look through the selection of printed materials, cut out samples of print containing their assigned letter, and then glue their sample words onto the page. Suggest that they try to include as many different print sizes and styles as they can find.

After ten or fifteen minutes, ask the parents to look over all the words they have glued onto the page. Tell them to draw a circle around any words that they think their children would recognise.

Reassemble the group and ask each pair to share their samples. Stick the pages onto the wall so everyone can view them.

Questions to ask:

What are some of the different ways letters and words are represented in the samples?

Sample answers:

- different styles of print
- handwritten or printed
- different sizes of print
- capital and small letters
- numbers mixed with letters
- reading in different directions
- letters written on pictures
- letters included in logos





25 mins.

Looking at letters

Look at the words circled on each sample. Why would this print be familiar to children?

Consider the context of these samples. What information would children use to help them identify this print?

Sample answers:

- location of print
- type of text
- accompanying pictures or logos
- knowledge of vocabulary

Consider the visual clues given by the letters/words themselves. What special features would help children to recognise this print?

Sample answers:

- size
- spacing between letters
- direction to be read
- handwriting styles
- shape of letters
- thickness of print
- big or small letters
- use of colour
- letters incorporated into a logo
- letter patterns

Explain that when children demonstrate that they can 'read' sweet wrappers, video covers, cereal boxes, birthday cards, etc., they are generally making use of their knowledge of the ***familiar context*** of the print and their ability to recognise ***visual clues*** that suggest what a particular word says. When these clues are removed, a child finds it much harder to recognise the word. For example, a child might recognise the word 'milk' on a milk carton but not be able to pick out the word 'milk' on the printed page. Learning to recognise letters in a variety of contexts and in many different styles is a gradual process.

Finish this activity by discussing the suggestions in **Parents' Pack C, p. 11 - Learning about letters.**

Parents' Pack C, p. 11

Learning about letters

Children know a lot about reading and making sense of printed things well before they reach school. The things that they learn about print every day help them to understand what reading is all about. Recognising letters is an important early reading skill.

Here are some ways to help your child learn about letters:

- Start with your child's own name.
- Make a name and picture book.
- Provide opportunities for tracing or copying the letters in her name.
- Point out letters from her own name in signs, posters, magazines, etc.
- Show her the name of your road and town on road signs.
- Talk about what the letters look like, e.g. 'S' looks like a snake.
- When you are out for a walk or a drive, see if your child can find some of the letters in the alphabet on signs and other environmental print.
- Make an alphabet picture book.
- Make an alphabet jigsaw puzzle.
- Encourage your child to play games that involve recognising letters and numbers.

Your ideas:

30 mins.

ACTIVITY 4

Looking at print games

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Gather together a selection of alphabet games available locally, e.g. cards, Letterland, fish, concentration, lotto, books, oral games, puzzles, magnetic letters.



Collect the materials needed to make **Kitchen cupboard bingo** and the **Name game**.

Prepare samples of each game.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 12 - Kitchen cupboard bingo** and **p. 13 - Name game**.

What to do:

Invite the group to look at samples of alphabet games.

Have a selection of games that are available commercially as well as samples of **Kitchen cupboard bingo** and the **Name game** that have been home-made.

Explain the game play as needed.

Ask the parents to break up into small groups and discuss the merits of one or two games.

What are the learning opportunities in the games? Encourage them to go beyond the simple game-playing activity to consider things like conversation skills, turn-taking, etc.

Focus their attention on the two home-made games. Display the materials for making these two games and invite the parents to make one of the games or, if time allows, they can make both games.

Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 12** and **p. 13.** Explain how to make **Kitchen cupboard bingo** and the **Name game**.

When the games are made, allow time for playing the games and for discussion.

Questions to ask:

- *What would be a good opportunity for playing these games at home?*
- *Who could play these games?*
- *Could an older brother or sister play these games?*
- *Would other people in the family benefit from playing these games? How?*
- *What skills would these games help to develop?*



Parents' Pack C, p. 12



Kitchen cupboard bingo

You will need:

- cereal boxes, biscuit wrappers/boxes, wrappers from tins, sweet wrappers, pizza boxes, crisp bags, bread wrappers, washing powder boxes - at least 2 of each
- cardboard (cereal boxes) or bingo boards and 'deck'
- glue
- scissors

Making the game:

1 Cut out pairs of words/logos from the selection of cereal boxes, wrappers, etc.

2 Glue one set of the words/logos onto a sheet of cardboard to make a bingo board.

3 Put the matching set of words/logos aside to be used in the 'deck'.

4 Rule the cardboard and cut into cards of equal size.

5 Glue the words/logos onto cards to make the 'deck'.

How to play:

This is a matching game.

- Each player gets a bingo board.
- Each player has a go by turning over one card from the deck and trying to get a match. If the card matches, the player puts it on top of the matching word on the bingo board.
- The winner is the first person to cover all the words on the board.

Other ideas for playing kitchen cupboard bingo:

- One person could be the 'bingo caller'.
- Players would have to read the word to get a match.
- A very young child could spread out the deck and try to find the matches.

Your ideas:

Parents' Pack C, p. 13

Name game

Special thanks to the parents of Norfolk's *'Learning Together'* programme for this suggestion.

You will need:

- several sheets of cardboard for placemats and playing cards
- scissors, ruler, and markers

Making the game:

1 Make a game board for each player. This is simply a sheet of cardboard with the player's name written on it.

2 Rule several more sheets of cardboard into rectangles of equal size to make a deck of letter cards. These will be used to match the letters in the players' names.

3 Cut out the cards and write individual letters on each card to make the deck.

How to play:

This game helps young children with letter recognition by asking them to match the letters in their own names.

- Players sit with their game boards in front of them.
- Place the deck of letter cards in the middle of the table.
- Players begin by drawing the number of cards from the deck equal to the number of letters in their names.
- Players put down cards on their game boards, which match letters in their names. They discard non-matching cards and pick an equal number of new cards from the deck.
- The first player to match all the letters in his or her name is the winner.



7

10 mins.



Session Summary

Summarise this session by revisiting the **Spotlight on reading - Parents' Pack C, p. 6.**

Questions to ask:

- *What are some of the reading skills that children develop from being exposed to everyday print in the environment?*
- *Which of these skills are mentioned in the **Spotlight**?*
- *What other skills relating to reading environmental print can be added to the **Spotlight**?*
- *What are some of the possibilities for encouraging reading skills in the home and in the community?*



Home Activity 7 - Playing print games

Read through **Home Activity 7 - Playing print games**, which asks the parents to play **Kitchen cupboard bingo** or the **Name game** with their families during the week and to make observations.

Remind the parents that they should be prepared to share their experiences at the next session.



Parents' Pack C, p. 14



Playing print games

Plan a time to play **Kitchen cupboard bingo** or the **Name game** with your child this week.

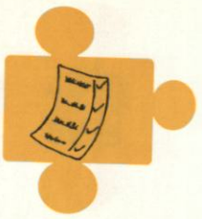
Which game did you play?

What did your child like about this game?

Did other family members join in?

Can you suggest ideas for adding to the game, or varying it, to keep it interesting?

Can you name other opportunities for talking with your child about the print in your home?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

8

Ready to write





In this session parents will:

- discuss feelings and attitudes towards writing;
- become familiar with the development of children's handwriting from colouring and drawing to early scribbles and letter formation;
- identify everyday tasks that will support the development of hand muscles, eye-hand co-ordination and visual discrimination skills;
- talk about the language of writing.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	162
What is writing?	**1**	**15 mins.**	**163**
How do we write?	**2**	**20 mins.**	**164-165**
Early writing activities			166
The progression of early writing	**3**	**30 mins.**	**167-168**
Early writing samples			169-175
Pencil power	**4**	**25 mins.**	**176**
Pencil power			177
Making a dot-to-dot			178
Words about writing	**5**	**20 mins.**	**179**
Words about writing			180
Session Summary		10 mins.	181
Home Activity 8 - Using the 'Spotlight on writing'			181
Spotlight on writing			182
Using the 'Spotlight on writing'			183
Session Notes			184

8

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 7 - Playing print games**.

In **Session 7 - Print is all around us,** a number of activities were suggested to encourage parent and child interaction with environmental print. Some of these activities involved copying, tracing and forming letters.

The next two sessions will focus on early letter formation and on some of the everyday activities that help develop writing skills. Parents will learn about the skills involved in learning to write, discuss the efforts children make to write before they start school, and examine ways that parents can further support their children's attempts to write.

Write on the flipchart:

- *What is writing?*
- *How do children get ready to write?*
- *What can parents do to help children develop writing skills?*





15 mins.

What is writing?

To prepare:

On two separate A4 pages, write the words 'YES' and 'NO' in large letters. Tape these to walls on opposite ends of the room.

Make a line down the middle of the room using masking tape or string. Move the chairs aside and ask the parents to stand in the middle of the room.

What to do:

Explain that you are going to read out some questions about writing. Point out the 'YES' and 'NO' signs and ask the parents to indicate their answers by moving to either the 'YES' or 'NO' side of the room. If they are not certain, they can move part of the way over to one side, or stand in the middle.

Below are some suggested questions, but you might like to add your own. After you read each question, encourage some discussion about how the parents respond, especially if there is disagreement.

Questions to ask:

- *Is writing something you have to learn in school?*
- *Do you need to spell in order to write?*
- *Is joined writing better than printing?*
- *Is good handwriting a sign of intelligence?*
- *Is drawing writing?*
- *Is typing writing?*
- *Are logos writing?*
- *Should children have opportunities to write on things other than paper?*
- *Have attitudes towards writing changed since you were in school?*

At the end of this exercise explain that people have 'official' views on what constitutes writing. Some of these views have been influenced by their own experiences in learning to write, and by the attitudes of their parents and teachers. But times change and styles of writing, attitudes to writing and purposes for writing change also.

The parents may find that policies and attitudes towards writing have changed from when they were in school. Most significant have been changes in school attitudes towards children's early attempts at writing. Educators now recognise that learning to write begins at home and that parents play a key role in encouraging their children to take part in writing activities and in helping them to develop the specific skills they need in order to write.

8

20 mins.

ACTIVITY 2

How do we write?

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers, chubby crayons, ballpoint pens, coloured pencils, fountain pens and bank deposit slips.



Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 2 - Early writing activities.**

What to do:

Give a handwriting implement and a bank deposit form to each of the parents. Ask them to fill in the deposit slips using the opposite hand to their usual writing hand. About every 30 seconds, ask them to swap writing implements among themselves and then continue to write.

After a few minutes, stop and ask the parents to reflect on the experience.

Explain that the purpose of this exercise is to help parents to remember what it feels like when learning to control a writing implement and learning to form letters.

Questions to ask:

- *Was it difficult to write with your opposite hand? What made it difficult?*
- *Was there anything that made the task easier?*
- *Can you identify some of the skills you used as you were writing?*

Sample answers:

- eye-hand co-ordination
- holding writing instrument
- leaning on paper
- up and down movement
- writing in lines
- punctuation
- fine motor skills
- writing posture
- left to right movement
- uniform size and spacing of letters
- shaping letters
- spelling

Ask the parents to reflect further on how they felt when they were trying to fill in the bank deposit form. Can they use their experience to identify some of the problems children may have in learning to write?



ACTIVITY 2

How do we write?

Sample answers:

- being nervous - palms sweaty, hands tense
- leaning too heavily on the table
- feeling under pressure because someone is watching
- poor co-ordination
- hand getting sore or tired
- experiencing learning difficulties/dyslexia
- being left-handed
- not understanding directional actions
- not remembering how to reproduce letters
- writing letters backwards
- having difficulty sequencing letters to spell correctly

Point out to the parents that long before children start school, indeed before they even make their first attempts at forming actual letters, it is important for children to participate in activities that help them to develop the hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination skills necessary for writing. Children also need visual discrimination skills in order to recognise, copy and reproduce letters.

Do the parents remember the discussion on visual discrimination skills that took place in **Session 7 - Print is all around us**?

Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 2 - Early writing activities** for suggestions of activities that support the development of hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination. Ask the parents to add a few more ideas themselves.





Early writing activities

Children develop an interest in writing by watching adults use writing every day. They learn that writing has many different purposes. Even as they make their first scribbles, children are aware that writing is a way of sharing ideas with others.

Your child needs to develop hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination skills to control a pencil for drawing and writing. You can help him to develop these skills gradually by encouraging him to participate in everyday activities.

You can help your child to develop hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination by letting him help you in the kitchen. He can:

- sift flour,
- beat eggs,
- stir batter with a big spoon,
- spread jam on bread.

You can also provide your child with sheets of paper and 'writing tools'. Chubby crayons, thick chalk, or thick paintbrushes are easier for a small child to grasp. Let him draw and scribble, trace and colour.

Dot-to-dot pictures, simple jigsaw puzzles and colouring books are other useful materials. Choose these carefully. Most puzzle books, jigsaws and similar activities indicate the appropriate age level on the box or cover.

Remember to praise your child's efforts, display his pictures, and talk about his drawings!

Here are a few more ideas:

- buttoning, unbuttoning clothes
- playing games of catch
- moulding and building with playdough
- playing with Lego and blocks
- finger painting
- tying shoelaces
- playing with sand
- using children's scissors
- playing with cards
- playing clapping games

30 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

The progression of early writing

To prepare:



Refer to **Parents' Pack D, pp. 3-9 - Early writing samples.**
Photocopy several copies of each of the writing samples, leaving out the descriptions and explanations at the bottom of the pages.

Encourage the parents to bring samples of their children's writing and drawing from home.

What to do:

Explain that children learn to write at different times and in different ways. There are many variations in the writing that is produced by young children. However, close observation of children's writing at different ages and stages has helped to reveal certain elements which are common to the development of writing skills. Learning how to recognise those elements can help parents notice and encourage their own children's writing development.

Divide the parents into small groups and hand out a selection of writing samples to each group.

Ask the parents to rank the samples as follows:

- *Which sample do you think was produced by the youngest child?*
- *Which was produced by the oldest?*
- *Can you match the child's age with the writing sample?*

Discuss the signs of letter formation apparent in the samples.

- *Can you identify lines, circles, semi-circles?*
- *Do you think the children are attempting to reproduce shapes they have seen, even if they don't know what they are?*
- *Where might they have seen these shapes?*

Discuss the reasons for these writings.

- *Do you think the children are merely imitating something they have seen, or is there a purpose in what they are doing?*
- *Can you guess what that purpose might be?*

Get feedback from each group.

Pare
Pack
p.

30 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

The progression of early writing

After the parents have given their impressions, look at the samples again. This time, read out the explanations given at the bottom of each writing section.

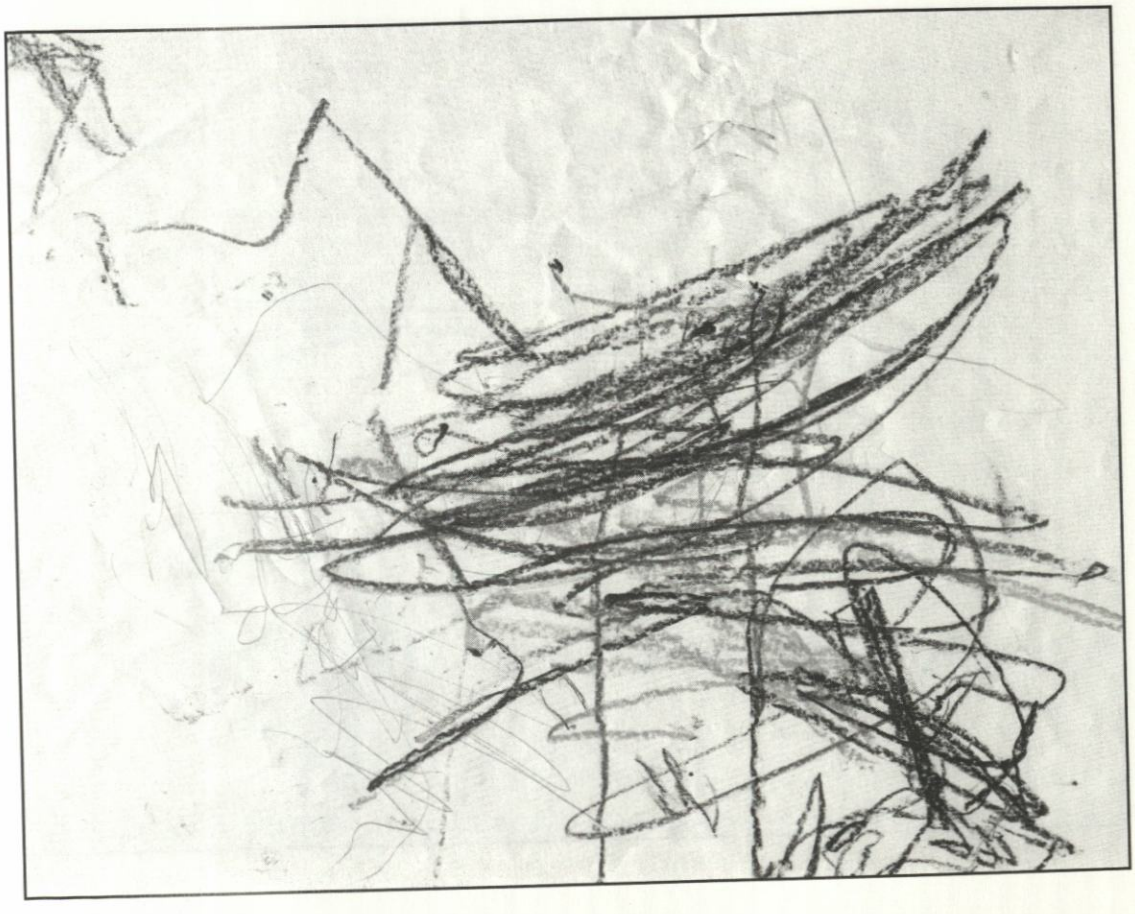
Point out that **the progression of early writing** is a way of looking at the recognisable patterns in children's writings and drawings. These patterns give us clues about how writing emerges. Children display a wide variation of writing skills at any given age. For example, one three year old may be drawing circles on the page, while another three year old is interested in copying the letters of his name.

Remind the parents that the samples are also reproduced in **Parents' Pack D, pp. 3-9,** for them to explore further in their own time.



Parents' Pack D, p. 3

Early writing samples

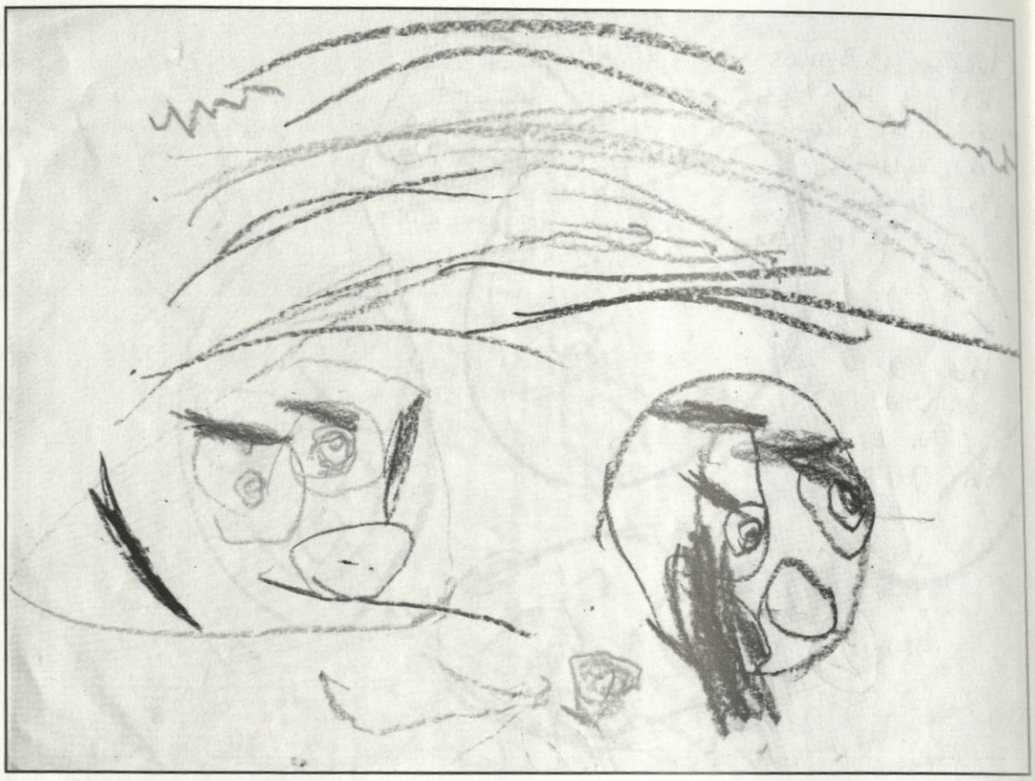


1. Children begin to develop writing skills by showing an interest in writing and drawing. They start by making marks on the page, lines and shapes, and learning how to hold a crayon or pencil.

   Jenny, 1 yr. 8 mos., *demonstrates her enthusiasm for early writing by eagerly picking up a crayon, which she handles with a practiced grasp while making determined lines on the paper.*

Parents' Pack D, p. 4

Early writing samples



2. Children show that they understand the difference between drawing and writing by making different types of marks for drawing and for letters/words. This may start as lines of scribbling, but gradually recognisable patterns, such as circles, begin to emerge.

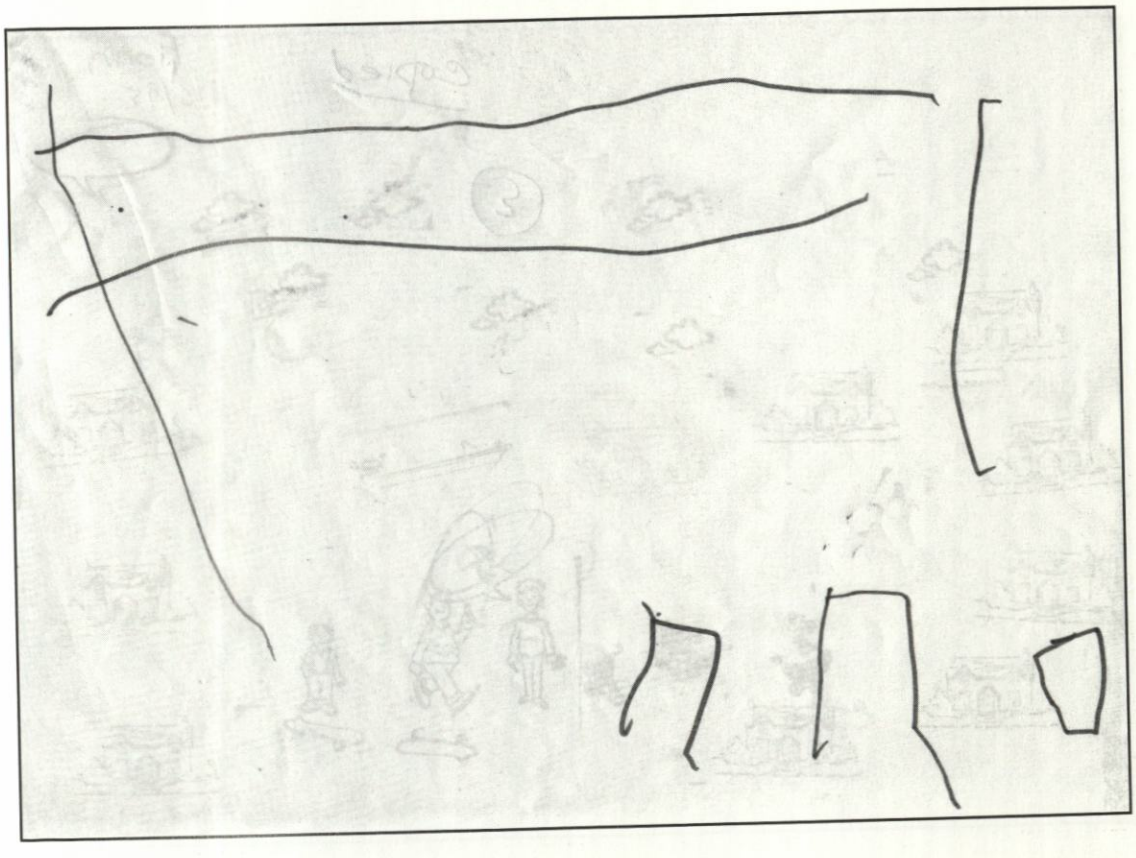
   Lucy, 2 yrs. 9 mos., *shows evidence of emerging patterns and purpose in her early writing. She draws a picture of her mother and father to which she adds many details, such as eyebrows, beard, nostrils. Above each figure, she writes 'Mammy' and 'Daddy' with a special scribble which follows a repetitive pattern.*



Parents' Pack D, p. 5



Early writing samples

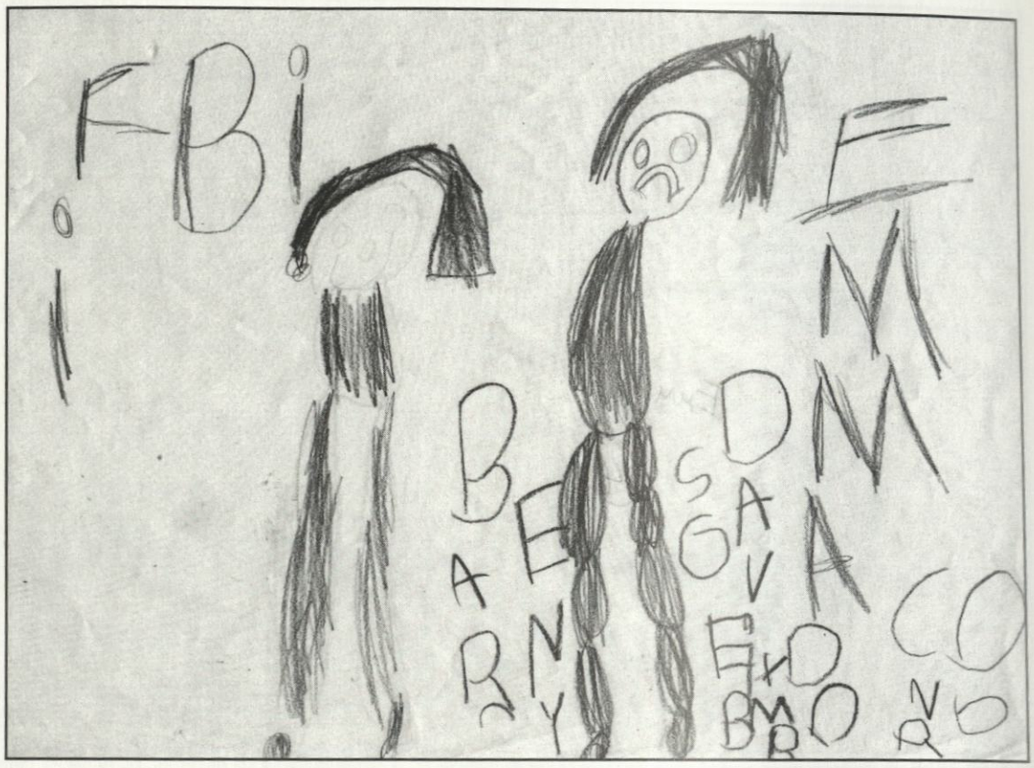


3. Children at this stage are able to form letters by copying or tracing dots. They may be interested in exploring different types of writing. For example, they may copy bits of signs and posters.

Fionn, 4 yrs. 4 mos., *focuses his interest on letter formation. He is interested in writing his name. He asks his teacher to write it out so he can copy the letters.*

Parents' Pack D, p. 6

Early writing samples

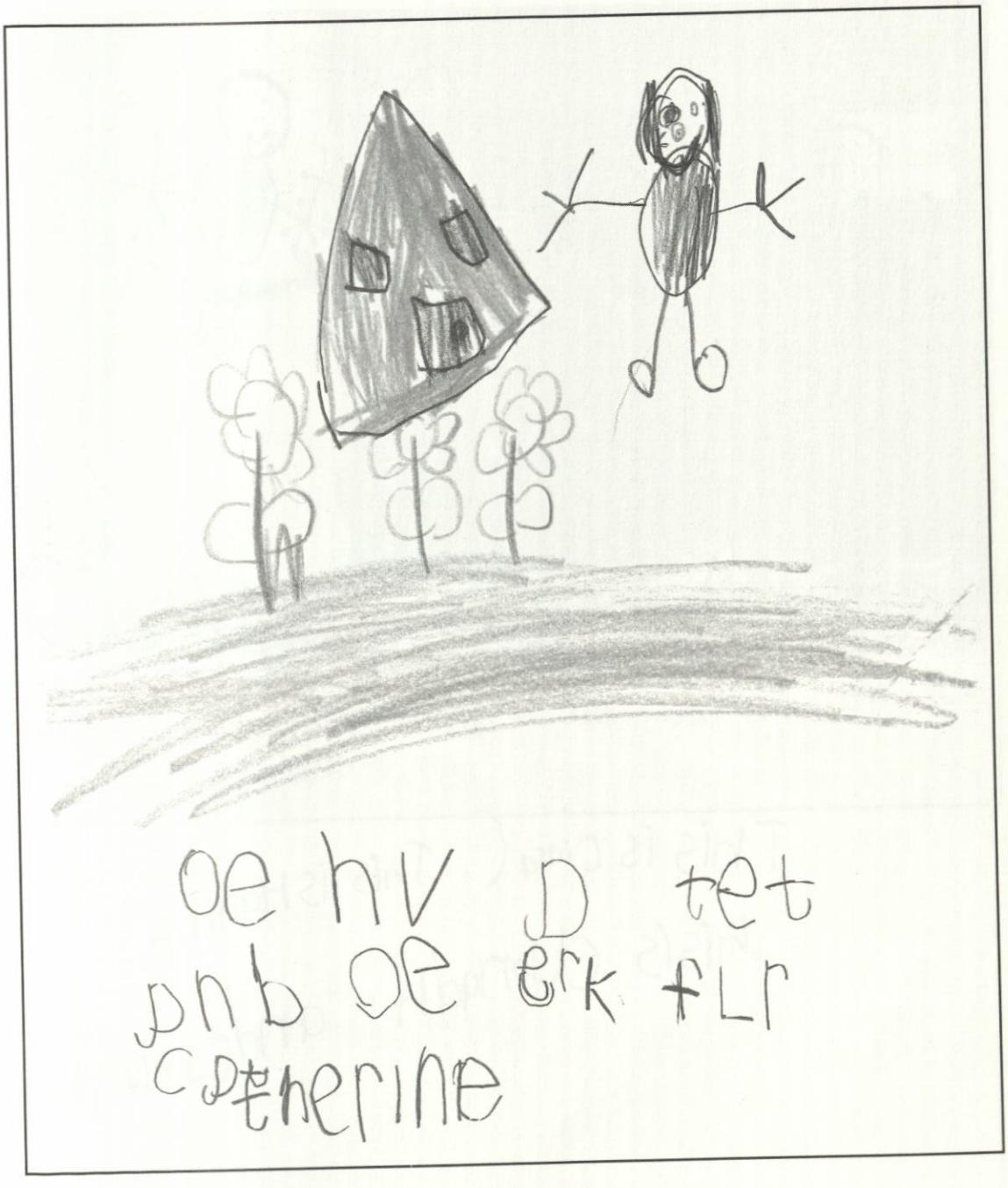


4. Children are able to manage some letter formation by themselves, such as their names or strings of letters. Children are still doing lots of exploring at this stage, and decoration may be an important feature of their work.

   Emma, 3 yrs. 6 mos., *is interested in demonstrating her ability to write words. Her picture is not as important to her as her message. She began with the words that she can write on her own. She starts with her name and then 'FBI', and progresses to copy the names of her family and her favourite television programme, 'Barney'.*

Parents' Pack D, p. 7

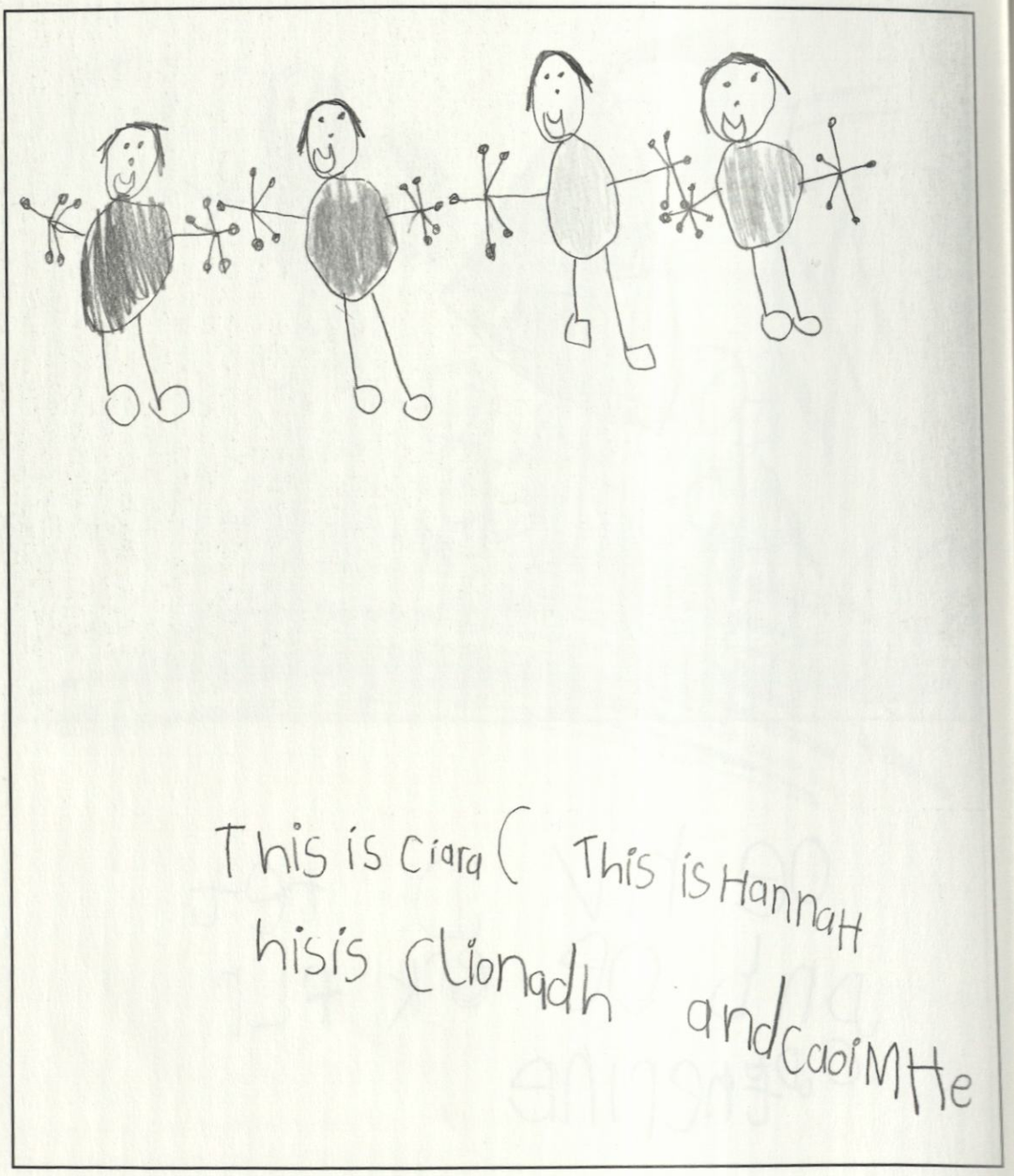
Early writing samples



5. Children understand that they must write words to communicate the meaning of their messages. Children at this stage will often ask adults to read their writing. They have very few spelling skills, but they know what they want to say.

Catherine, 5 yrs. 6 mos., *conveys a clear message describing her picture, 'I have a tent and I grow flowers.' She is at a beginning spelling stage, demonstrating knowledge of some consonant and vowel sounds. She also demonstrates that she has learned that writing goes from left to right with a return sweep for the next line.*

Early writing samples

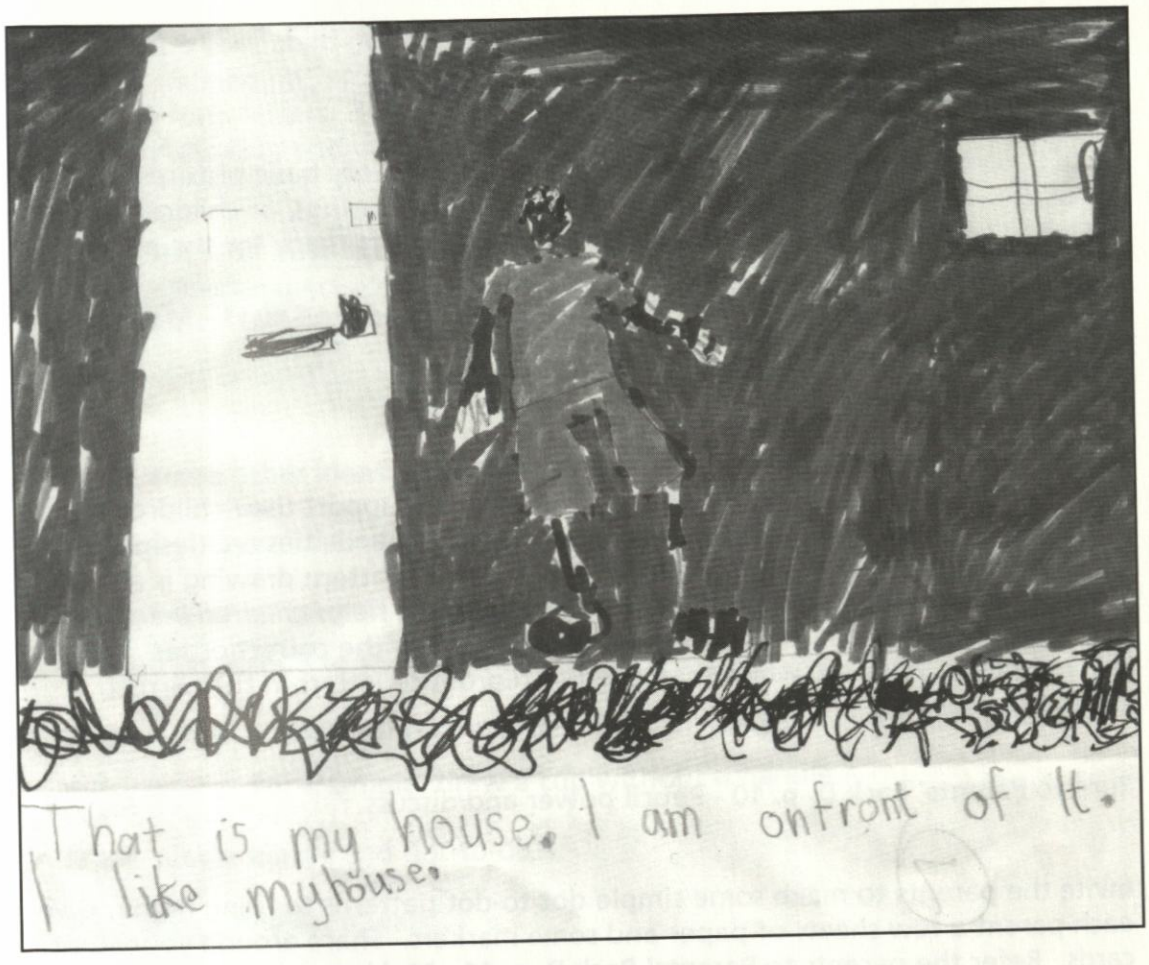


6. Children begin to write so that it can be more easily understood. They will spell with beginning and ending sounds, but probably not with vowels. They may have some simple spellings correct such as 'cat', 'I', 'the' to write in sentences. They may begin to leave spaces between words.

   Caiomhe, 6 yrs. 6 mos., *shows good evidence that she has quite a bit of knowledge about spelling, grammar, and punctuation. However, she confines her writing to the simple words that she is confident about spelling. She has written a clear string of sentences with capital letters at the beginning of each one.*

Parents' Pack D, p. 9

Early writing samples



7. Children at this stage are able to write 'text'. They are beginning to sequence a set of ideas that makes sense. They are beginning to use full stops or linking words such as 'and' and 'but' to help make their writing more structured. Although spelling is still not a major concern at this age, there is evidence that children are beginning to use spelling rules by sounding out words.

   Killian, 6 yrs. 7 mos., *is able to write 'text'. His writing contains complete sentences with full stops and capitals. His sentences are sequenced and make good sense. He demonstrates a good grasp of spelling skills.*

8

25 mins.

ACTIVITY 4

Pencil power

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Make simple dot-to-dot stencil cards using very basic pictures traced from a colouring book, enlarged Clipart drawings, or children's stencils. Have a supply of paper and markers ready for the parents.



Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 10 - Pencil power** and **p. 11 - Making a dot-to-dot.**

What to do:

This activity will look at some ways that parents can support their children's early writing activities. Explain that early handwriting activities are designed to give children practice at learning to control a pencil. Pattern drawing is an example of an early writing activity. Making patterns helps children learn to sequence. Children first learn to reproduce designs in the correct order. This will help them later on, when they need to reproduce letters in the correct order for spelling.

Turn to **Parents' Pack D, p. 10 - Pencil power** and discuss.

Invite the parents to make some simple dot-to-dot patterns to bring home. Give each parent a few sheets of paper and some markers. Share around your stencil cards. Refer the parents to **Parents' Pack D, p. 11 - Making a dot-to-dot** to demonstrate that there are several ways to make a dot-to-dot picture.



Some parents will be anxious about spelling. Stress that young children do not need to worry about spelling - they have enough to learn. However, parents might like some additional sessions on improving spelling for older children or for themselves.



Parents' Pack D, p. 10



Pencil power

You can help your child get ready to write letters by starting to copy and draw patterns. Making patterns helps to develop the eye-hand co-ordination skills needed to form letters. Joining lines from left to right will help him get used to the idea of reading and writing from left to right.

Draw patterns for your child to copy and let him draw patterns for you to copy in return. Don't expect your child to be able to copy your pattern accurately. He may just scribble at first. This is what beginning writers do.

Here are some other ideas for making patterns:

- Make a pattern frame around a picture.
- Play 'joining up' games. Draw two objects, for example, a cat and a mouse and ask your child to join them up.
- Draw a picture with a line or a circle left out. Ask your child to fill in the missing line. For example, draw a cup without a handle.
- Make simple mazes and dot-to-dots.
- Play 'take a line for a walk'.
- String beads.
- Make coloured paper chains.
- Draw patterns in the sand.
- Encourage all kinds of drawing and colouring.

Parents' Pack D, p. 11

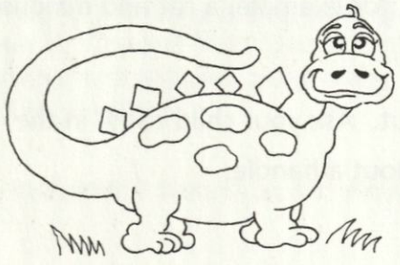
Making a dot-to-dot

You will need:

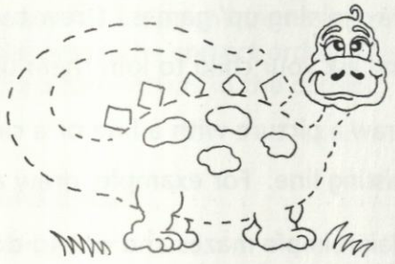
- a colouring book, cardboard (cereal box), scissors, markers and paper.

Copy or trace a simple drawing from a colouring book onto cardboard. Cut it out to make your stencil.

Place your stencil in the middle of a page. First fill in small details and background details to give your child a hint of the picture. Then create your dot-to-dot in one of three ways:



Trace the picture in broken lines for your child to connect.



1

Trace the picture in dots for your child to connect.



2

Trace a few lines to give an idea of the picture. Then, working left to right, make and number dots for your child to connect.



3

ACTIVITY 5

Words about writing

To prepare:

You will need a flipchart and markers.

Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 12 - Words about writing.**

What to do:

Refer back to previous discussions about the language used to talk about activities and skills. For example, in **Session 6 - Sharing books** you discussed words used to talk about books and in **Session 7 - Environmental print** you looked at words that you use when talking about environmental print.

Brainstorm words around writing. Ask the parents to think of some of the words used to talk about the tools of writing, materials for writing, the formation of letters, words and sentences, and reasons for writing. Write all their words on a flipchart.

Turn to **Parents' Pack D, p. 12 - Words about writing**. Compare the parents' list to these words. Encourage the parents to write in additional words in the spaces provided.

As in previous discussions, talk about the importance of familiarising children with the common words used to talk about writing. When children start school, they will be expected to use these words to describe the structure and process of writing. Even though they may already possess some writing skills, this new vocabulary may be unfamiliar to them.



Parents' Pack D, p. 12

Words about writing

Does your child know some of these words?

alphabet

copy

keep between the lines

big letters

pencil

write in the squares

lines

left to right

rubber

capitals

print

small letters

skip a space

full stop

question mark

skip a line

ruler

space

go on to the next line

margins



Session Summary

Summarise the session by revisiting the questions that you wrote on the flipchart in the introduction:

- *What is writing?*
- *How do children get ready to write?*
- *What can you do to help your children develop writing skills?*

Ask the parents to brainstorm answers by reflecting on the activities in this session.



Home Activity 8 - Using the 'Spotlight on writing'

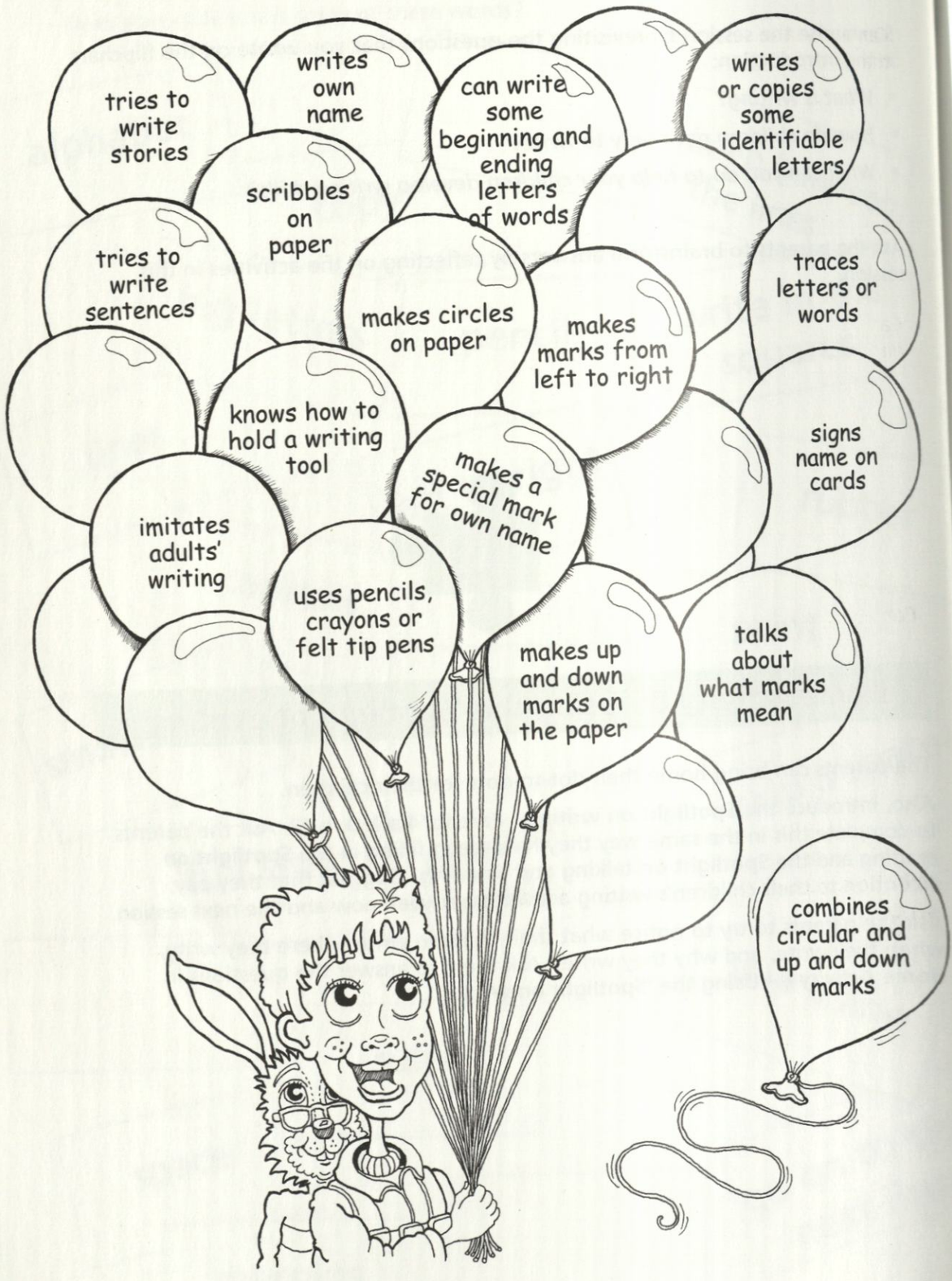
The parents can bring home their dot-to-dots for their children.

Also, introduce the **Spotlight on writing - Parents' Pack D, p.13**. Ask the parents to complete this in the same way they have been filling in the **Spotlight on reading** and the **Spotlight on talking and listening**. Suggest that they pay attention to their children's writing activities between now and the next session.

Ask the parents to try to notice what their children write, where they write, when they write, and why they write. Ask them to answer the questions in **Home Activity 8 - Using the 'Spotlight on writing'.**

Parents' Pack D, p. 13

Spotlight on writing



Name _____

Age _____

Photocopy for each child as nee



Parents' Pack D, p. 14



Using the 'Spotlight on writing'

Can you list some of the writing skills mentioned in the **Spotlight on writing** that your child has demonstrated?

Can you name some of the times and places you have observed your child engaged in writing activities?

Can you give some of the reasons your child was writing?

What else could you do to encourage your child to develop the skills needed to write?

Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?



9

Everyday writing





In this session parents will:

- explore purposes for writing in everyday life;
- talk about reasons why children are motivated to write;
- discuss the importance of modelling writing for their children;
- identify opportunities for their children to participate in writing activities.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	188
Writing for a purpose	**1**	**25 mins.**	**189-190**
Everyday writing	**2**	**25 mins.**	**191**
Everyday writing activities			192
Writing and play	**3**	**15 mins.**	**193**
Writing and play			194
More writing activities			195
Making a writer's toolkit	**4**	**45 mins.**	**196-197**
Session Summary		10 mins.	198
Home Activity 9 - Fun with writing			198
Fun with writing			199
Session Notes			200

9

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:

You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 8 - Using the 'Spotlight on writing'**. Ask the parents to share some of their observations regarding their children's writing activities. In particular, focus on the questions that ask where, when and for what reason do children write.

Remind the parents that much of last week's discussion focused on the skills involved in learning to write, and how a wide variety of activities can help children get ready to write. Today's session will focus on what motivates children to learn to write, and how parents provide many opportunities which encourage their children to become writers.

Write on the flipchart:

- *When and where do you write?*
- *What are some of the reasons why you write?*
- *What motivates children to write?*





ACTIVITY 1

Writing for a purpose

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Select a number of **Photopak** cards showing children either engaged in writing or in watching someone writing.



You will also be referring to the **Early writing samples** in **Parents' Pack D, pp. 3-9.**

What to do:

Divide the parents into groups. Hand out the selected Photopak cards. Ask the parents to examine the writing activities taking place in these photographs.

Write on the flipchart:

- *What types of writing activities are happening in the photographs?*
- *Which photographs involve children observing writing activities?*
- *Which photographs involve children participating in writing activities?*

Give the groups five or ten minutes to brainstorm, then ask for feedback.

Refer back to the **Early writing samples** in **Parents' Pack D, pp. 3-9.** Remind the parents that although learning to write is hard work, many children eagerly and industriously make attempts to write from a very young age.

Questions to ask:

- *What reasons for writing are evident in these samples?*
- *Have you ever noticed where and when your children have been engaged in writing activities?*
- *What do you think motivates children to write?*

Sample responses:

- Children like to write their own names.
- They see others writing.
- They want to write letters or cards.
- They want to write to Santa.
- They want words to go with their pictures.
- They like to make lists.
- They like to label things.
- They want to copy things.
- They like to 'make believe'.

9

25 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

Writing for a purpose

Explain that, just as children are 'socially motivated' to learn to talk, children are 'socially motivated' to learn to read and write. Parents (and other family members) play an important role in encouraging this motivation by acting as models for writing. Parents give their children lots of opportunities to observe writing activities in the home and encourage their children to 'join in' where appropriate.

Children's interest in writing grows from their social participation in writing activities. This is just as important to their writing development as any of the skill building excercises already discussed.





ACTIVITY 2

Everyday writing

To prepare:



Prepare information and instructions needed for the sample writing activities.

Sample writing activities:

- Choose items from a catalogue and fill in an order form.
- Sign a birthday card.
- Write a message to Mary telling her that John phoned and he'll be two hours late.
- Make out a shopping list for a child's birthday party.
- Write a note to a child's teacher.
- Copy an address and phone number from an ad in the newspaper.
- Copy a recipe a friend has shared.



Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 15 - Everyday writing activities.**

What to do:

Ask the parents to work in pairs. Give each pair a sample writing activity to complete. While they are working, write these questions on the flipchart:

- *Do you need to talk to anyone in order to complete this activity?*
- *Do you need to read information in order to complete this activity?*
- *Do you need to use numbers in order to complete this activity?*
- *Would you prefer to be doing this activity with others or on your own?*

After ten minutes, bring everyone back together and invite feedback. Point out that writing is sometimes thought of as a solitary activity performed by the 'writer', but actually most everyday writing activities involve other people and are part of a communication process involving talking, listening, reading and using numbers, as well as writing.

Everyday writing activities provide opportunities for children to:

- see their parents and other family members writing;
- participate in an 'adult' activity;
- talk about writing;
- experience writing as part of a communication process that also includes talking, reading and using numbers.

Ask the parents to discuss ways that young children could be included in some of the writing activities demonstrated.

Finish this activity by referring to **Parents' Pack D, p. 15 - Everyday writing activities.**



Parents' Pack D, p. 15



Everyday writing activities

Your child will become interested in learning how to write because she watches you and others in the home using writing for different purposes. Here are some ideas for including her in everyday writing activities in the home. Even if she is not ready to put pencil to paper, she will enjoy watching you and talking with you about these writing tasks.

Make lists	shopping list, 'to do' list, Christmas wish list, who to invite to my party list, things to take on a trip list, things to do when Granny visits.
Take messages	telephone messages, messages from people stopping by, cooking instructions.
Sign cards	Christmas cards, birthday cards, Valentine's Day cards, thank you cards.
Write letters	to family members, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends.
Design labels	for personal belongings such as books, toys, sports gear, and on doors and shelves.
Make out a menu	for a birthday or holiday meal.
Write on pictures	add a title, write some dialogue, sign the picture.

Your ideas:

15 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Writing and play

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 16 - Writing and play** and to **p. 17 - More writing activities.**

What to do:

Brainstorm ideas about play activities that provide writing opportunities.

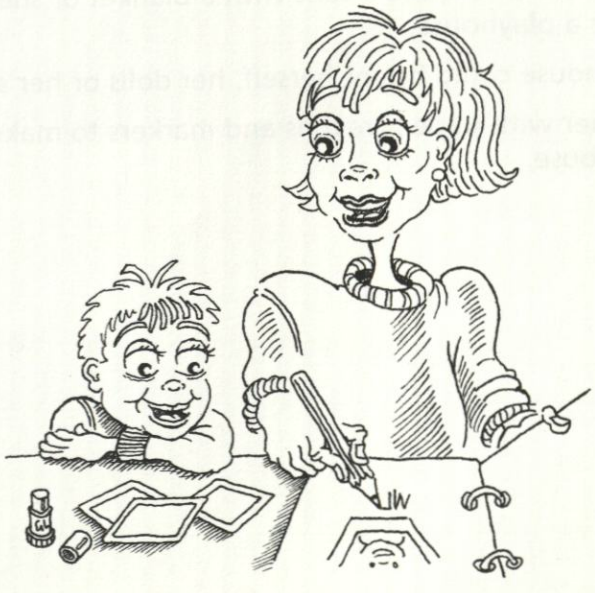
Questions for discussion:

- *Do your children engage in pretend play?*
- *What do they like to pretend?*
- *Do older children get involved?*
- *Can writing be added to, or developed around these play activities?*
- *What things could you ask your children to write as part of a pretend game?*
- *When and where could you let your children do pretend writing while you are engaged in a real writing activity?*

Write their answers on the flipchart.

Explain that pretend writing activities are another way to help children learn about the different purposes for writing.

Read and discuss **Parents' Pack D, p. 16 - Writing and play** and **p. 17 - More writing activities.**





Parents' Pack D, p. 16

Writing and play

Shop:

- Start by collecting empty food cartons such as cereal boxes, biscuit wrappers, egg cartons, or washing up bottles.
- Help your child to write price labels on the items.
- Use play money or make your own.
- Provide pencil and paper for writing a shopping list.
- Use a shoebox for a 'till'.
- Make a sign for the shop.

Restaurant:

- Allow your child to set the table.
- Do up a simple menu card with menu items and pictures to match.
- Have a note pad for taking orders.
- Use play money or make your own.
- Use a shoebox for a 'till'.

School:

- Provide a blackboard or a big piece of paper that can be tacked or taped to a wall.
- Collect some chalk, pencils, little notebooks or copies, and storybooks.
- Use large empty cardboard boxes for desks.
- Encourage your child to decorate her classroom with letters of the alphabet, numbers and pictures.

House:

- Help your child to make a tent with a blanket or sheet draped over several chairs for a playhouse.
- The playhouse could be for herself, her dolls or her stuffed animals.
- Provide her with paper, crayons and markers to make a colourful sign for the house.

Your ideas:



Parents' Pack D, p. 17



More writing activities

Start a scrapbook of your child's pictures, writing, cards.

Ask your child to draw pictures for a story and paste these into a scrapbook or other notebook. Then together you could write the text.

Give your child chalk to draw on the pavement. Teach her how to make a hopscotch board. It will wash away easily when it rains.

Providing your child with a wide variety of writing activities:

- helps to build her confidence around writing;
- prepares her for writing tasks in school;
- helps her to develop a sense of purpose about writing;
- helps her to feel included in the family and in the wider community.

Your ideas:

9

45 mins.

ACTIVITY 4

Making a writer's toolkit

With thanks to the Norfolk *'Learning Together'* team for this suggestion.

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Assemble materials for the writer's toolkit - paper (A4 pages, craft paper, ordinary lined and unlined paper, card, 'Post it' notes), markers, crayons, pencils, chalk, leftover Christmas cards, wrapping paper, old magazines, ribbons, cotton wool, scissors, paste or glue, plastic boxes or tool boxes. If you are on a limited budget, your local supermarket might be willing to give you a number of plastic tomato or mushroom boxes for the toolkits.

Prepare a sample toolkit. Include some home-made cards, labels, menus, notepaper, dot-to-dots, colouring pages, etc.

What to do:

Ask the parents to brainstorm how they can encourage their children's efforts by creating opportunities for writing and by making resources available.

Discuss what parents can provide in terms of:

- reasons for writing;
- materials to write with;
- a place to write;
- time and space to write.

Suggest non-conventional writing activities such as writing in the sand, making letters from string, writing on your back, writing on the pavement with chalk.

Display the sample writer's toolkit and its contents. Give each parent a toolkit filled with a few writing tools (as your budget allows).

Suggest that the parents 'customise' their children's toolkits by decorating the outside, putting their children's names on the toolkits, and filling the toolkits with writing materials that their children would enjoy.

For example, the parents could make:

- home-made cards using pictures from old cards or magazines, coloured pencils, cotton wool or other decorative additions;
- menus and shopping lists with pictures of their children's favourite foods;
- dot-to-dots;
- Clipart drawings enlarged and photocopied for colouring;

45 mins.

ACTIVITY 4

Making a writer's toolkit

- notelets with messages printed: 'thank you from Thomas', 'please come to Ciara's party';
- pictures of sports stars with spaces to write the stars' names.

Encourage the parents to share ideas, skills and information during this activity.

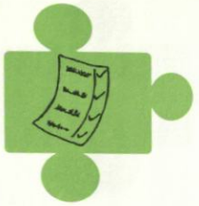
Parents could explore the local shops for best buys and report back to the group.

This is also a good activity to combine with some computer classes.



9

10 mins.



Session Summary

Invite the parents to review the session by reflecting on how they can encourage their children's writing skills in the home.

- *What are children's reasons for writing?*
- *How do children use writing?*
- *What can you do to model writing skills for your children?*

Refer to **Parent's Pack D, p. 13 – Spotlight on writing**. Remind the parents to continue their observations of their children's writing skills.



Home Activity 9 - Fun with writing

Read through the **Home Activity - Fun with writing,** which asks the parents to choose at least one of the activities from this session to try with their children at home.



Parents' Pack D, p. 18



Fun with writing

Choose one or more of the writing activities to try at home:

- Make something using the writer's toolkit.
- Include your child in an everyday writing activity.
- Play shop/school/restaurant/house.

Which activity did you choose?

Did this activity include talking and listening, reading or using numbers?

What did your child like about this activity?

Were other family members or friends part of the activity? What did they do?

What do you think your child learned from this activity?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

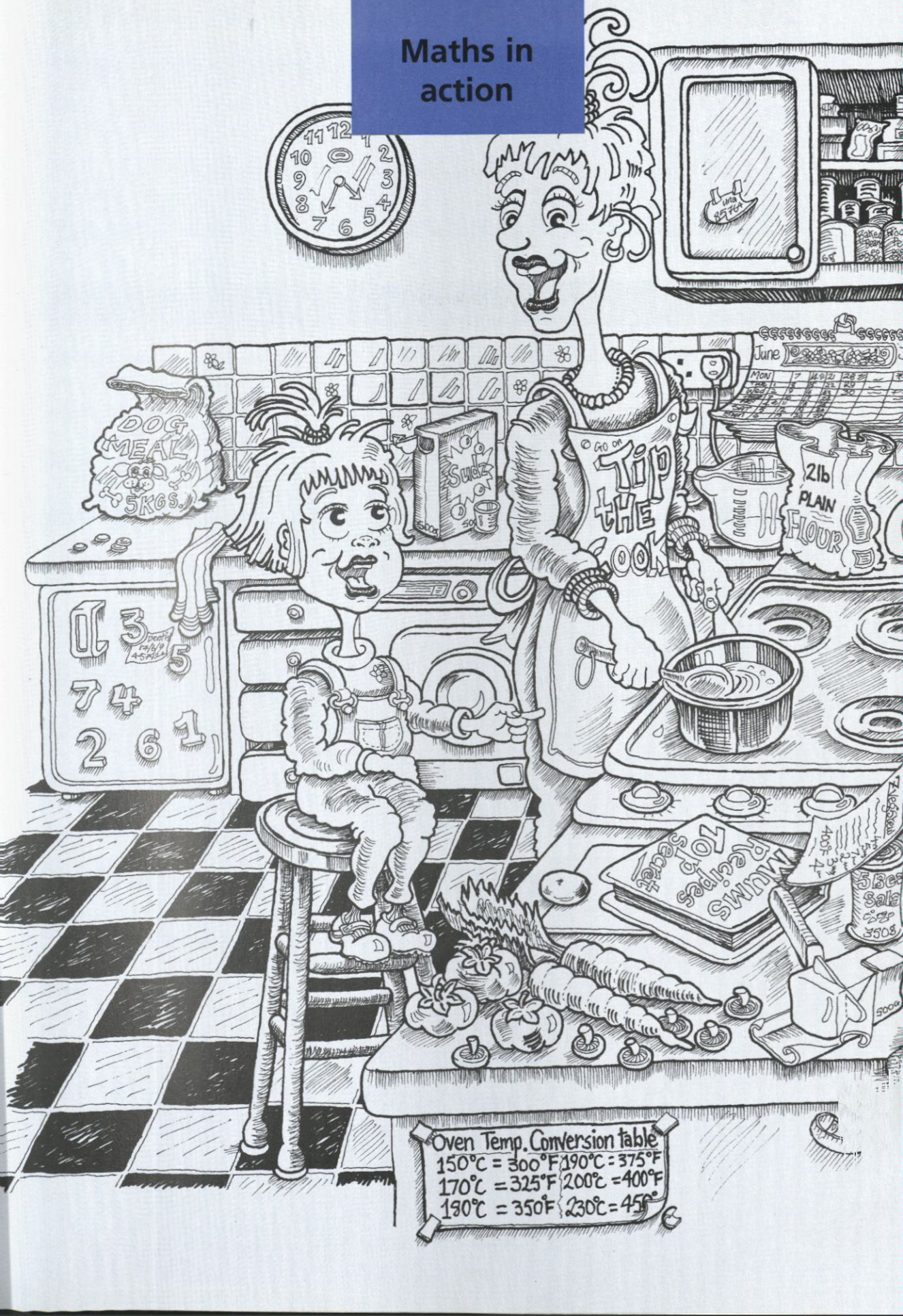
What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

10

Maths in action



9

10 min

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In this session parents will:

- examine the maths that they use in a wide variety of situations;
- recognise the value of their own maths experiences;
- explore the language of maths;
- discuss ways to develop their children's understanding of maths through everyday activities.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	204
Numbers are all around us	**1**	**15 mins.**	**205-206**
Maths tools	**2**	**20 mins.**	**207**
Words about maths	**3**	**45 mins.**	**208-209**
Talk about maths			210
Maths in action	**4**	**30 mins.**	**211**
Maths every day			212
Help your child with maths			213-214
Session Summary		10 mins.	215
Home Activity 10 - Maths at home			215
Spotlight on maths			216
Maths at home			217
Session Notes			218

Introduction

To prepare:

You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 9 - Fun with writing**.

Many people regard mathematics as a purely academic subject with limited applications to the real world. They may fail to recognise the extent to which maths are actually used in a family situation. As a consequence, parents may underestimate the contributions that they can make towards developing their children's mathematical understanding.

Begin today's session with a short discussion on parents' own feelings about mathematics. Guide this discussion so that it progresses from general comments about maths experiences, including parents' own school experiences, to how the parents see themselves using maths in their everyday lives.

Questions to ask:

- *What do you remember about maths when you were at school?*
- *What did you like about maths?*
- *What did you dislike about maths?*
- *How do adults use maths in daily activities?*





ACTIVITY 1

Numbers are all around us

To prepare:



Read over the monologue entitled, **Wake up call.**

What to do:

Tell the parents that you are going to read a short story about a mother talking to her three boys as they get up and get ready for school. The boys are Matt, age twelve, Paul, age seven, and Jason, age three. As we join the family, the mother has just woken up and realised that the alarm clock never went off. Ask the parents to imagine themselves as Jason, the sleepy-eyed little toddler, listening to all his mother has to say as the children get ready for school. Tell them to pay special attention to times when the mother mentions numbers in her conversation.

Read **Wake up call** in the character of an over-stressed mother fussing over her children being late for school.

After you have finished, allow a short time for the parents to make general comments and then ask:

- *How many times do you think numbers were mentioned?*
- *What were the numbers referring to?*
- *Do you think Jason understood what some of the numbers referred to?*
- *Which ones?*
- *Do you think that similar talk takes place in your home?*

Explain that just as children learn a lot about reading and writing before they go to school, they also learn about numbers:

- They see adults using numbers in many ways.
- They hear adults talking about numbers.
- They have opportunities to experience numbers in their daily routines.
- They quickly learn that numbers have meaning and purpose.

In this example, Jason is hearing talk about numbers; he is also seeing activities relating to talk about numbers; he even undertakes to try some of the activities himself!



ACTIVITY 1

Numbers are all around us

Wake up call

Matt, Paul, Jason, wake up! It's almost nine o'clock. The alarm never went off. Dad must have forgotten to reset it when he got up at six. Quick! Throw on your clothes, you'll be late for school. Paul, you help Jason get dressed. Here's his warm jumper and jeans. It's cold outside. Matt, when you're dressed, start making the sandwiches. I'll stick the kettle on and get the breakfast. There's a few slices of corned beef in the fridge. Use them. And there are bars in the cupboard, but just take one each. I want that pack to last the week.

Lads, what took you so long? We're really running behind this morning, and I told Niamh I'd collect Marie at the babysitter's and give her a lift to school. What's the babysitter's address again? Matt, you know the Kennedys on St. Martin's Terrace. Is it number fifteen? Do you know their phone number? Do us a favour and find it in the book. 43557? Write it down for me. I'll ring in a minute and tell them we'll be along shortly. Have you those sandwiches made yet?

Jason, why are you walking so funny? Paul, Jason's shoes are on the wrong feet! Didn't I ask you to help him get dressed? What? He insisted on dressing himself? I can see that now. His jumper is on inside out. Never mind. Eat your breakfast and I'll fix him up then. There's your cornflakes. Get three spoons out of the drawer. I'm making the toast. Will someone get the milk out of the fridge? Check the dates and take the oldest one. Don't just grab the first one you see. Has the kettle boiled? I'd love a cup of tea.

What do you mean, where's your jersey? You have a match today? No, Paul, you did not tell me you had a match on Tuesday. Look in the hot press. If your jersey's not there, it's still in the laundry basket. Matt, stop teasing your brother. The goalie's position **is** very important. Doesn't the goalie always wear number one? No, they will not lose by ten goals to no score. Don't mind him Paul. Matt, will you **please** stop teasing your brother. I don't care if he's always saying you're a useless forward. If I've told you once, I've told you a hundred times, two wrongs don't make a right. Oh, for heaven's sake, don't let Jason pour his own milk. I'm not buying litres of milk for them to end up on the floor.

What's that smell? Is it the toast burning? Blast it! Why is the toaster turned up to six? What? The bread was probably frozen so your father turned it up to six to defrost it?

Quarter past nine and I've no cup of tea drunk yet. Come here, Jason, till I fix your jumper and wash your face. You two bigger ones, have you done your jobs? Have you packed your lunches? Hurry on out to the car. Here, take your bags. They weigh a ton! All right, let's go. Oh no, where did I put the car keys?

ACTIVITY 2

Maths tools

To prepare:



Display a good selection of tools and utensils that are used in the home for activities involving maths: measuring cups and spoons, mixing bowls, biscuit cutters, jugs, saucepans, weighing scales, clocks, calendars, thermometers, rulers, measuring tape, level, buckets, phone, phone book, remote control, calculator, map, compass, pencil, paper, noticeboards, catalogues, RTÉ Guide, laundry basket, silverware separator, egg carton.

Make a collage of additional real life maths samples, such as ads from the paper; pictures of license plates and road signs; pictures of appliance timers and dials on washing machines, microwaves, cookers; different samples of phone numbers; weather charts; sports scores; products displaying best before dates; price tags; size tags; labels showing weight and volume.



Display the Photopak cards which show parents and children using numbers in everyday situations.

What to do:

The purpose of this exercise is to provide the parents with visible evidence of just how often maths concepts are used in the home. Invite the parents to examine the display of tools and other prompts. After a few minutes, divide them into pairs or small groups and give each group a few items to examine in more detail.

Questions for discussion:

- *Do you ever use any of these tools? Which ones? Are there items in the selection that surprise you?*
- *What tools do you use every day, several times a week, only once in a while?*
- *Can you name the maths activities these tools are used for?*
- *Would your children see you using tools?*
- *Do you ever talk about what you're doing?*
- *Would your children know how to use some of these tools?*

Ask each group to comment on the tools they are examining.

Some of the parents might like to learn more about the use of calculators or computers.

9 10

10 mi 45 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Words about maths

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Select items from your display of maths tools in **Activity 2** to stimulate talk about the language of maths.



Display the Photopak cards which show parents and children using numbers in everyday situations.

Display your collage of additional real life maths samples prepared for **Activity 2.**

Prepare topic cards by writing words such as 'time', 'weight', 'size', 'direction', 'distance', 'amount', 'order', on index cards.



Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 2 - Talk about maths.**

What to do:

Divide the parents into pairs or small groups. Give each group a topic card, flipchart page and marker. Tell them to brainstorm all the words and phrases they can think of that refer to the topic they were given. To help them in this exercise, suggest that they circulate around the room looking at the pictures on the wall, at the collage and at the maths tools.

You might find it helpful to give examples which include both precise and general terms, and some colloquial phrases.

Example: TIME

clock	watch	calendar
appointment	minute	hour
second	alarm	week
month	late	early
on time	yesterday	sell by date
year	last week	next week
millennium	century	running behind
two thirty	ahead of schedule	time stood still
how much time	anniversary	in a minute

45 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Words about maths

After about fifteen minutes, reassemble the group and let the parents present their lists of words. When everyone has contributed there should be quite an extensive vocabulary! Point out to the parents that children will hear many of these words first spoken in the home.

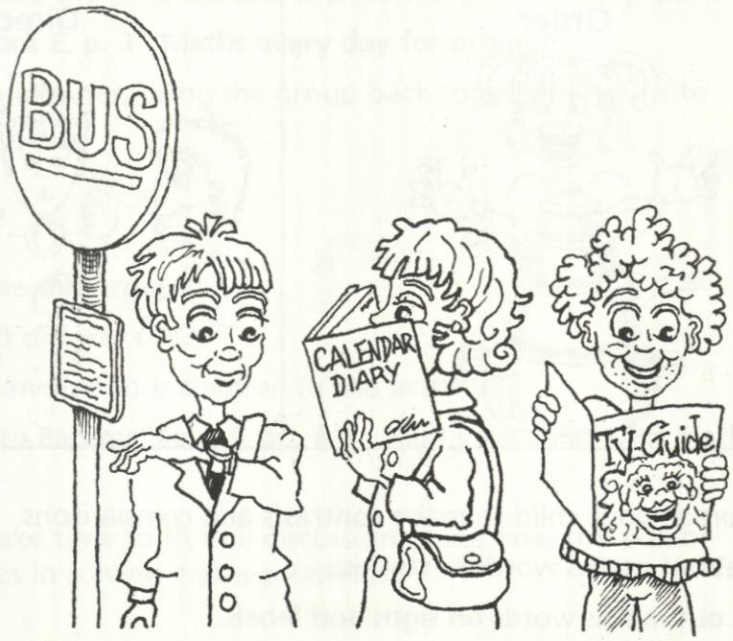
Now reread the story **Wake up call** from **Activity 1**. This time, ask the parents to listen for words that refer to the maths topics you have just discussed.

When you have finished, ask them to recall some examples.

Finish by discussing **Parents' Pack E, p. 2 - Talk about maths.**

All this 'talk about maths' might encourage some parents to think about their own maths needs. One popular topic is money management. Invite your local Money Advice and Budgeting Service for a session.

If you would like to extend the session further, you could invite the parents to work in groups to write their own maths stories about daily routines.

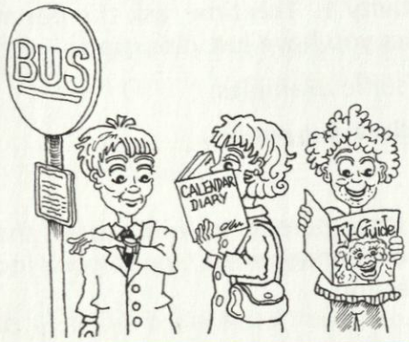


Parents' Pack E, p. 2

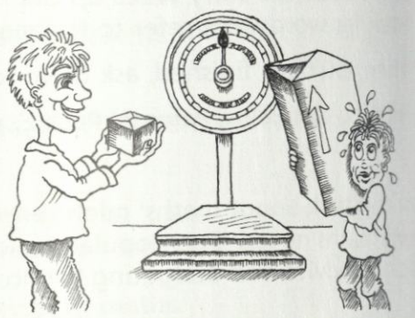
Talk about maths

You can teach your child many words about maths. Talk about:

Time



Weight



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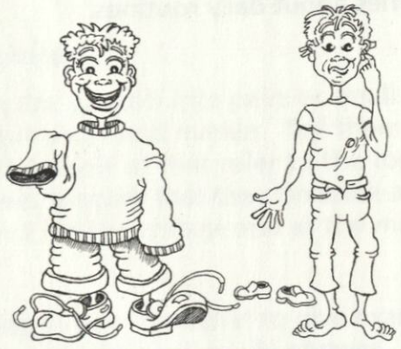


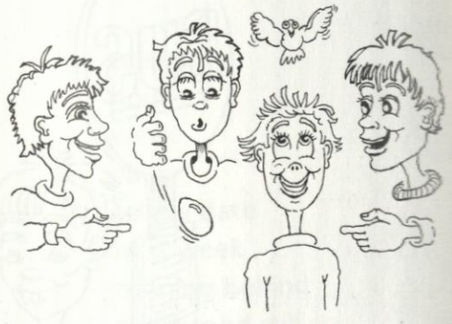
Amount



Order



Direction



- Encourage your child to make contrasts and comparisons.
- Talk about maths words in stories.
- Point out maths words on signs and labels.
- Help your child to learn the maths words he will need to use in school.





30 mins.

Maths in action

To prepare:



Prepare a number of real life maths problems for the parents to solve. Some suggestions are:

- Put a bag of flour, a bag of sugar, a bag of bread soda into three tins of different sizes.
- There are two dolls and two sets of clothes mixed up. Dress the dolls.
- Wrap three presents with one sheet of wrapping paper.
- Share a bowl of sweets.
- Tie a shoe.
- Match these socks.
- Organise each suit in this deck of cards from highest to lowest.
- Write a birthday card and address the envelope.
- Describe how to get from this room to the toilets.
- Measure the length of the room.



Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 3 - Maths every day.**

Refer to **Parents' Pack E, pp. 4-5 - Help your child with maths.**

What to do:

Ask the parents to work in pairs. Give each pair a different real life maths problem to solve.

Ask them to first solve the problem and then reflect on how they did it.

Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 3 - Maths every day** for prompts.

After ten to fifteen minutes, bring the group back together and invite feedback.

Questions to ask:

- *How did you solve this problem?*
- *What maths skills did you use?*
- *How would you involve your children in this activity?*

Finish by referring to **Parents' Pack E, pp. 4-5 - Help your child with maths.**

You may want to take time to fit in a discussion about how the skill of 'estimating' features in solving maths problems.



Maths every day

We use maths in all kinds of activities.

Think of some of the things you and your child do every day.
Which activities use maths?

Think about play activities.
What maths skills do you use in play?

Think about rhymes, songs and stories.
How do these activities use maths?

Think about a walk about town.
What examples of maths might you see?

Do you:

- use numbers?
- put things in order?
- sort items?
- put things in different categories?
- check weights?
- use direction?
- count things?
- compare objects?
- match things?
- use measurement?
- figure time?
- consider shapes?

These are all maths activities.



Parents' Pack E, p. 4

Help your child with maths

Just as children learn a lot about reading and writing before they go to school, they also learn a lot about maths. By seeing their parents use numbers, and by hearing them talk about numbers, children quickly learn that numbers have meaning and purpose.

Here are some suggestions for helping your child with maths:

Use numbers

He will need lots of practise with counting before he really develops a sense of numbers.

- Point out the numbers that are all around him: clocks, calendars, signs, etc.
- Count, count and count again: 'How many legos do you have?' 'How many sweets did you get?' 'Can you get me three apples?'
- Do simple adding: 'Let's see, I put one biscuit in your lunchbox and now I'm **giving** you another one. How many do you have now?'
- Do simple subtraction: 'There are three sausages in the fridge, but I'm going to **take** one for your tea. How many will be left?'

Look at patterns, matching, sorting

- Point out **patterns** to your child: 'The stripes on your shirt make a nice pattern - red, blue, green, red, blue, green'. Ask your child to continue the pattern.
- Put away the washing together. Let your child **match** the socks.
- Help him to **sort** the food shopping by putting it into the right press.

Explore space

- Give him big and small containers to play with in the bath.
- Provide simple jigsaw puzzles.
- Talk about left and right.



Help your child with maths

Talk about maths

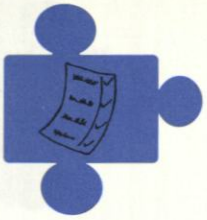
- Use words to compare things: 'Which tomato is bigger?' 'Which box of cereal is taller?'
- Sing songs that have numbers in them: 'Baa, Baa Black Sheep', 'This Old Man'.
- Say number rhymes: 'Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed', 'One,Two, Buckle My Shoe'.
- Read books that talk about numbers: **'The Three Little Pigs'**, **'The Hungry Caterpillar'**.

Talk about time

- Put up a calendar in a place where your child can easily see it. Use it to talk about days of the week. Mark time by crossing off days until birthdays and special days.
- Introduce your child to time by pointing out the numbers and time on the clock.
- Use the television guide to look up favourite programmes.

Use money

- Let your child see the prices of things when you shop.
- Talk about how much things cost. Make comparisons: 'The apples cost 25p a piece and the oranges are 15p. I think we should buy oranges.'
- Set up a play shop with your child. Collect some empty packets and tins and carrier bags. Make play money or use real money.



Session Summary

Review the main points of today's discussion by asking the parents:

- *Where and when do your children see and hear you using maths?*
- *What are some of the practical experiences of maths that you can share with your children?*
- *How can you help your children to become familiar with the language used to talk about maths?*



Home Activity 10 - Maths at home

Ask the parents to try at least one of the ideas suggested in **Help your child with maths.**

In addition, ask the parents to look at **Parents' Pack E, p. 6 - Spotlight on maths.**

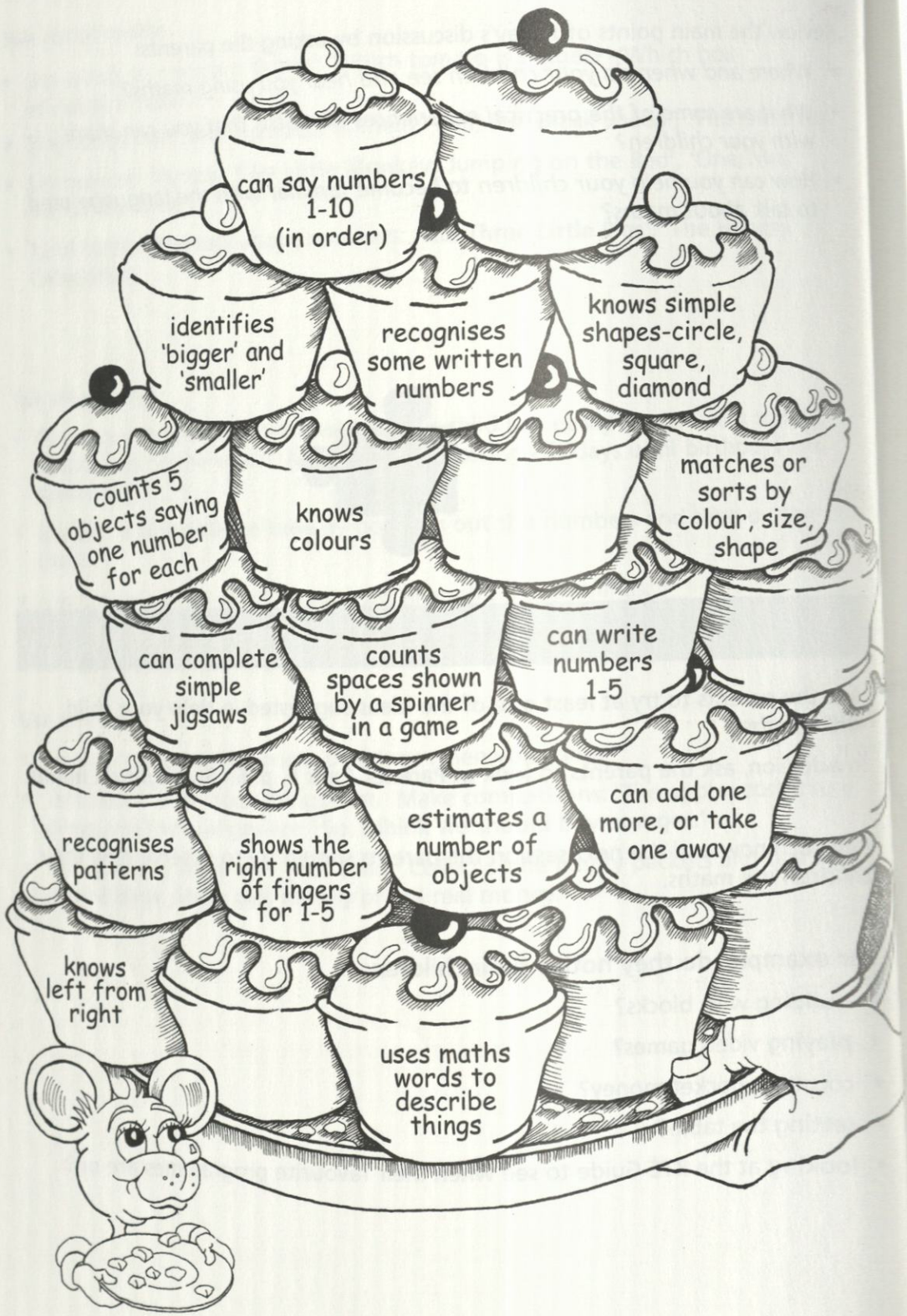
Between now and the next session the parents should try to observe how their children use maths.

For example, do they notice their children:

- building with blocks?
- playing video games?
- counting pocket money?
- setting the table?
- looking at the RTÉ Guide to see when their favourite programmes are on?

Parents' Pack E, p. 6

Spotlight on maths



Name _____

Age _____

Photocopy for each child a



Parents' Pack E, p. 7



Maths at home

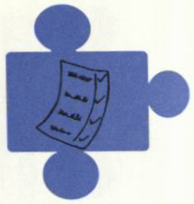
What maths activity did you try this week?

How did you and your child enjoy this time?

What other activities would you like to try?

What did you observe about your child's maths skills from using the **Spotlight on maths?**

Are there any skills that you would like to add to the **Spotlight on maths?**



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

11

Having fun with maths





In this session parents will:

- experience maths through a number of games and play activities;
- explore the use of maths concepts through rhymes, songs and storytelling;
- discuss ways to heighten children's experience of maths through stories and play;
- make a game for home use.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	222
Playing with maths	**1**	**45 mins.**	**223-224**
More play activities using maths			225
Stories and numbers	**2**	**30 mins.**	**226**
Making a game	**3**	**30 mins.**	**227-228**
Learning from games			229
Card games			230
Board games			231-233
Jigsaw puzzles			234
Session Summary		10 mins.	235
Home Activity 11 - Playing games			235
Playing games			236
Session Notes			237

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

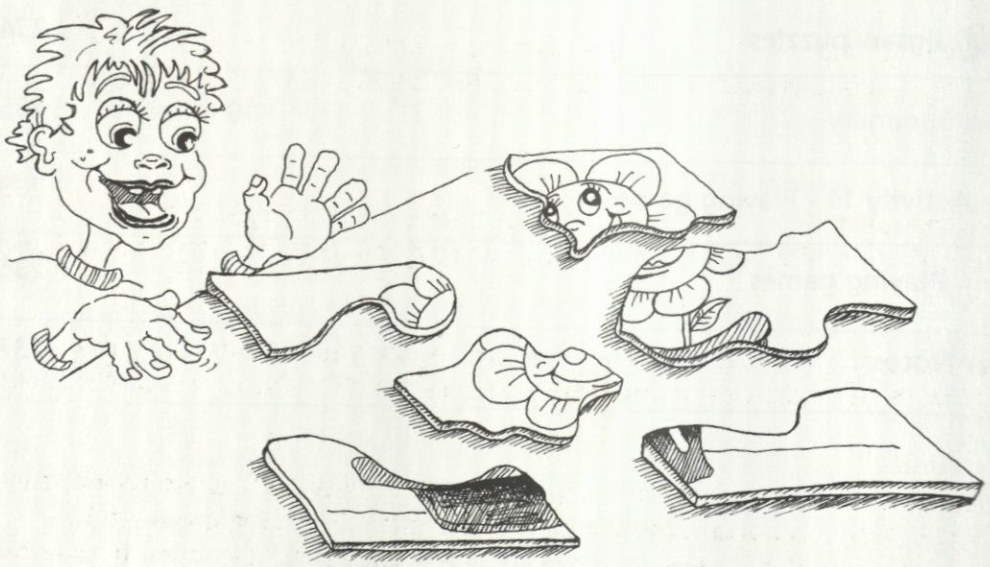
Ask the parents for feedback on **Home Activity 10 - Maths at home.**

Write their comments on the flipchart.

Questions to ask:

- *What maths activities did you try?*
- *Which maths skills from the **Spotlight on maths** did you notice your children using?*
- *Are there other maths skills that you would add to the **Spotlight on maths**?*

This week's session is designed to explore further the ideas that were introduced in **Session 10**. In this session, the parents will be looking at how common play activities, games, rhymes and stories provide an ideal format for encouraging maths skills in children.



45 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

Playing with maths

To prepare:



Organise a variety of games and play activities for the parents to sample. These activities should be spread around the room so the parents can circulate and try out a number of them. Where necessary, include simple instructions on how to play the game or activity.

Suggestions for play activities:

- Snakes and Ladders
- simple jigsaw puzzle
- card game
- game involving catching and throwing a ball
- bingo
- game with cars or trucks involving imaginary travel
- Lego or some other kind of building blocks
- Playdoh or another form of modelling clay
- paper and markers or crayons

It is not necessary to use all nine activities, but not less than five is recommended.



Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 3 - Maths every day.**

You will also be referring to **Parents' Pack E, p. 8. - More play activities using maths.**

What to do:

Refer back to **Session 10, Activity 4 - Maths in action** where the parents looked at daily routines and identified opportunities for children to explore maths concepts.

Remind the parents about some of the activities and concepts discussed, for example, that folding and putting away laundry involves sorting and matching.

Explain that, in this session, you will be looking at how games and other familiar play activities also provide many opportunities for children to learn about maths.

Direct the parents' attention to the prepared activities. Ask them to work in small groups or pairs and sample a number of activities over the next 30 minutes. Suggest that they spend about five minutes exploring each activity and then reflect on what they did.

45 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

Playing with maths

Can they identify the maths skills involved in these activities? Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 3 - Maths every day.**

Can they identify other skills involved in these play activities? Ask each pair to write down their comments on the pages provided.

Allow about 30 minutes for work at the centres. Then reassemble the group and look briefly at each activity. Invite the parents to report their observations.

Discuss more ideas in **Parents' Pack E, p. 8 - More play activities using maths.**





Parent Pack B p. 8

More play activities using maths

- Counting fingers and toes
- Playing with string and thread spools
- Playing shop
- Dressing teddies or dolls
- Playing hide and seek
- Making a playhouse or tent
- Playing with sand or water
- Playing hopscotch
- Sorting toys
- Keeping scrapbooks
- Making cards
- Playing guessing games

Your ideas:

ACTIVITY 2

Stories and numbers

To prepare:



Choose a selection of favourite children's stories, for example:

'The Three Little Pigs'

'Billy Goat's Gruff'

'Jack and the Beanstalk'

'The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids'

'The Enormous Turnip'

'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'

'Little Red Riding Hood'

'The Little Red Hen'

Also, have on hand examples of books that teach number skills: books about time, shape, counting, etc.

Organise samples of songs and rhymes that involve numbers: 'This Old Man'; 'One, Two, Buckle My Shoe'; 'Ten in the bed'.

What to do:

Refer back to discussions in **Sessions 4, 5 and 6** about rhymes, songs, stories and sharing books. Explain that you will look again at these activities and explore the maths that children experience through them.

Take a sample storybook. Tell the parents that, as you read, you want them to listen for references to numbers, counting, time, space, weight, size, direction, amount, value, order, patterns, sequencing. Have these listed on the flipchart for easy reference. Begin reading the story. Stop periodically and ask the parents for their comments or, if necessary, prompt them. When you feel they have the idea, invite the parents to explore the other books in pairs or small groups. Give each group one book to read together. After ten to fifteen minutes, ask each group to report their observations.

The parents will discover a wide use of maths concepts in stories. To further the discussion, ask why they think this is so. They might tell you that, just like in real life, storytellers find that maths is a useful way to name and describe things, to communicate ideas and information, and to solve problems.

Explain that just as daily routines provide a safe and familiar format for exploring and learning, so do stories.

Finish this activity by including references to songs and rhymes that use numbers.

Finally, discuss a number of books that focus on number skills more explicitly.



30 mins

Making a game

To prepare:



Prepare a display of sample games similar to those that the parents will have the option of making: board games, jigsaw puzzles, and card games.

Include both store-bought games and home-made games.

Gather together a number of game-making materials: cardboard (cereal boxes); paper; game templates for board, spinners and bingo; magazines; counters (pasta, beans, beads, etc.); scissors; glue; markers; stencils; Clipart pictures.



Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 9 - Learning from games** and **Parents' Pack E, p. 10 - Card games, p. 11 - Board games, p. 14 - Jigsaw puzzles.**

What to do:

Remind the parents that in this and other sessions, games have been recommended as a way of learning.

- Games are enjoyable.
- Games involve interaction with adults and other children.
- Games are multi-sensory: they involve seeing, hearing and doing.
- Games provide a familiar context in which to explore and practise new skills.
- Games provide a framework for putting different skills together.

Questions for discussion:

- *What games do your children play?*
- *Who plays with them?*
- *What are their favourites?*
- *What do you think children learn from playing games?*

Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 9 - Learning from games.**

Explain that, over the next 30 minutes, you would like them to choose and make a game for their children. All of the samples presented involve maths skills, but they also involve social skills and literacy skills.

30 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Making a game

Introduce the three prepared models of games. Explain that many games are built on these models. There are many, many different kinds of jigsaw puzzles, hundreds of different board games, countless card games. From these three models, the parents can devise many different games for their children to enjoy.

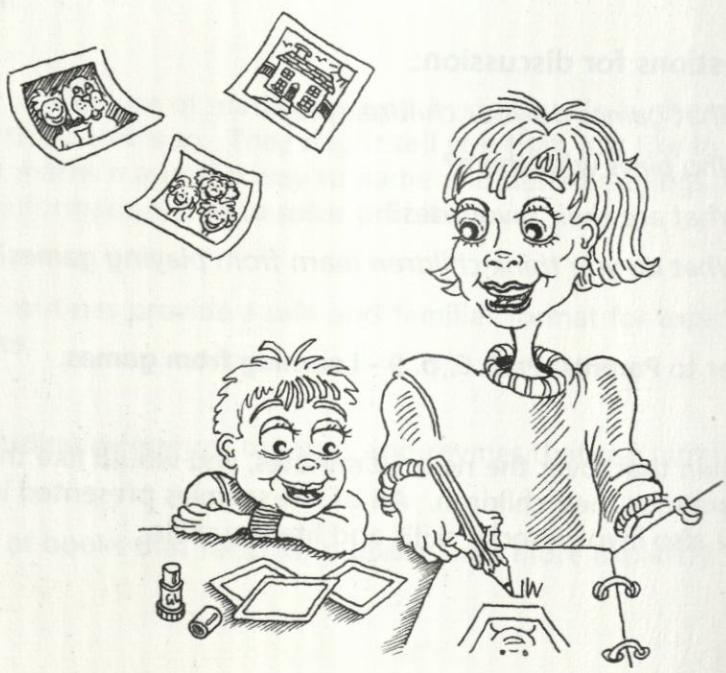
Ask the parents to take a few minutes to view the sample games, and then to think about what sort of game they would like to make for their children.

Parents should think about their children's ages, abilities and interests when deciding which game model they will make.

Once they have decided to go for a puzzle, card game or board game, they must next plan the topic.

- For a puzzle, this means choosing a picture.
- For the card game, it means deciding what to draw or trace onto the cards.
- For the board game, it means choosing a storyline or theme for the game.

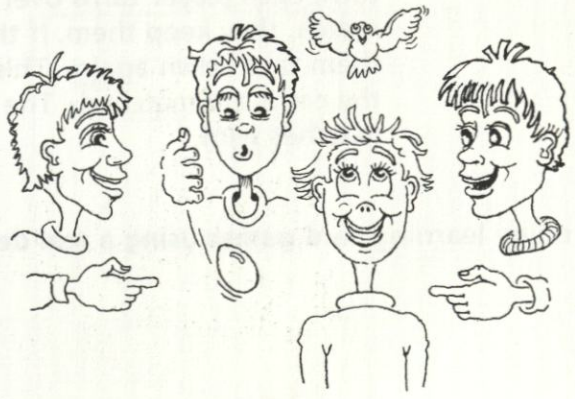
Instructions and examples for all the games are provided in **Parents' Pack E, pp. 10-14.**



Learning from games

What do children learn from games?

Social skills • following instructions • taking turns • patience • team work • talking and listening • being a good winner and a good loser • taking responsibility	**Thinking skills** • observation • concentration • memory skills • planning • developing a strategy • decision making • revising
Reading and writing skills • recognising letters and words • recognising shapes and symbols • hearing sounds and rhyming • putting things in order • using alphabetical order • making predictions	**Maths skills** • recognising numbers • recognising colours • counting • sorting and matching • using numerical order • estimating skills





Parents' Pack E, p. 10

Card games

Materials

You will need cardboard (cereal boxes), ruler, scissors, stencils or other pictures, markers.

Directions

Measure and then cut your cardboard into a number of cards of equal size.

Draw or trace or print one object on each card to make both pairs of items and sets of three.

Examples

Apples, oranges, bananas; carrots, potatoes, peas; shoes, wellies, runners; knives, forks, spoons; tractor, car, lorry.

How to play

At least three different games can be played from these cards:

Go fish

Each player gets three cards. The rest of the cards are scattered to form a pond. The object of the game is to be the one to make three matches. In turn, each player selects a card from the pond, which can then be matched in a pair, thrown back into the pond, or kept and another card discarded. Pairs are placed face up on the table so everyone can see the match. The first player to make three pairs wins.

1,2,3 Out

This game is similiar to **Go Fish** but in this game the object is to fish a set (apple, orange, banana) from the pond. The first player to make a set wins.

Matchers

Cards are laid out face down in a rectangular pattern (e.g. eight across and three down). In turn, each player turns over two cards. If they match, they keep them. If they don't, they turn them face down again. This continues until all the cards are matched. The one with the most matches wins.

Older children will enjoy learning card games using a real deck of cards.

Board games

Materials

Board game and spinner templates, cardboard (cereal boxes), counters.

Directions

Choose a theme for your game, then design your gameboard around this theme.

Examples

For a shopping game, fill in the empty picture spaces with pictures of different types of foods or pictures of shops and logos.

For a zoo game, fill in the empty picture spaces with pictures of commonly known zoo animals, such as elephants, monkeys, tigers, etc.

For a game about the town, fill in the picture spaces with pictures of places that would be found in the town, such as school, church, post office, etc.

How to play

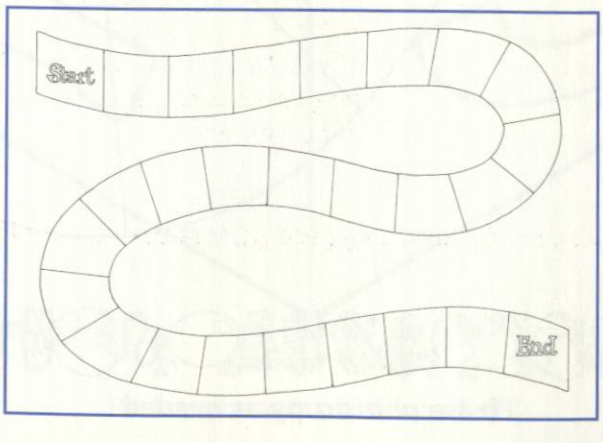
The game is played by spinning the spinner, and then moving the counter the correct number of spaces. When a player lands on a picture space, she must answer a question about the picture.

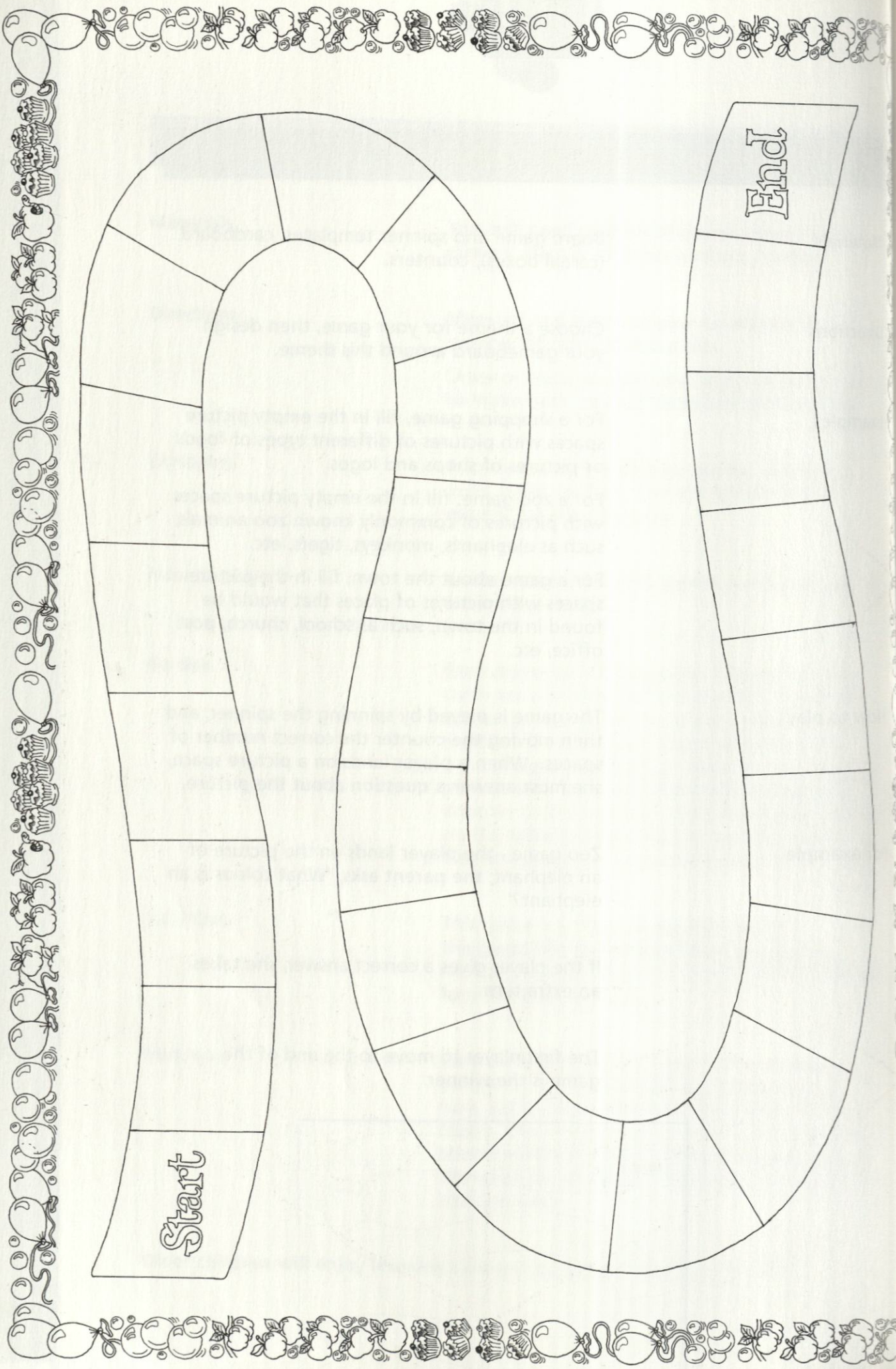
For example

Zoo game - the player lands on the picture of an elephant; the parent asks, 'What colour is an elephant?'

If the player gives a correct answer, she takes an extra turn.

The first player to move to the end of the game is the winner.





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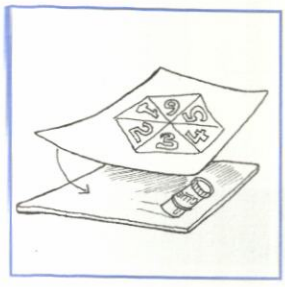
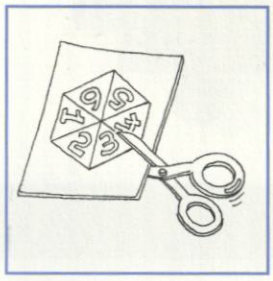

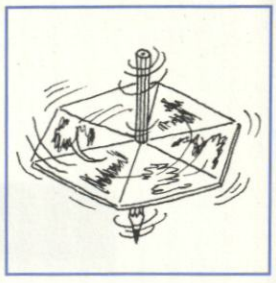

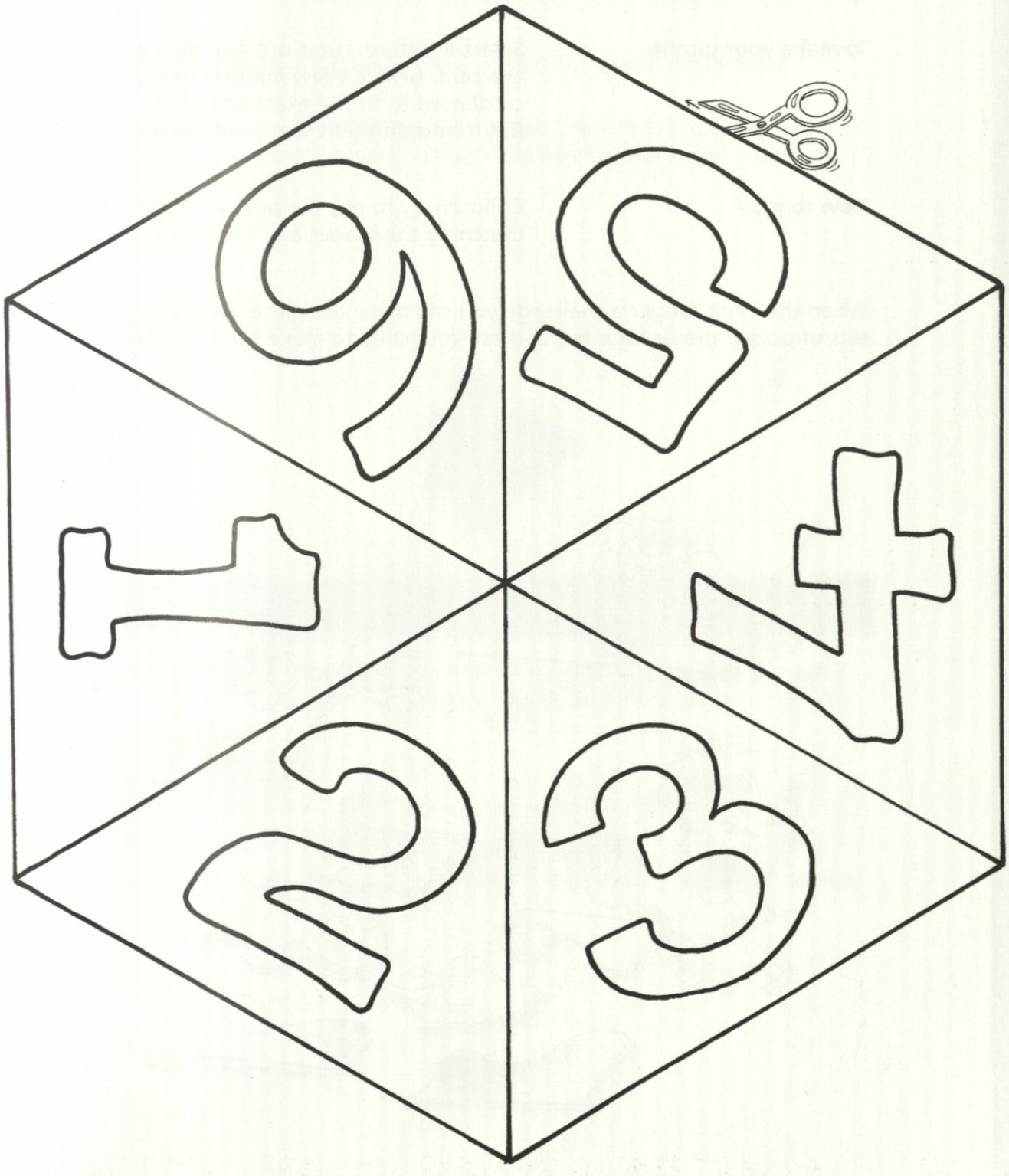

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Parents' Pack E, p. 14

Jigsaw puzzles

Materials

You will need cardboard (cereal boxes), pictures (enlarged and photocopied family photos, pictures from magazines, drawings, Clipart pictures), glue, scissors.

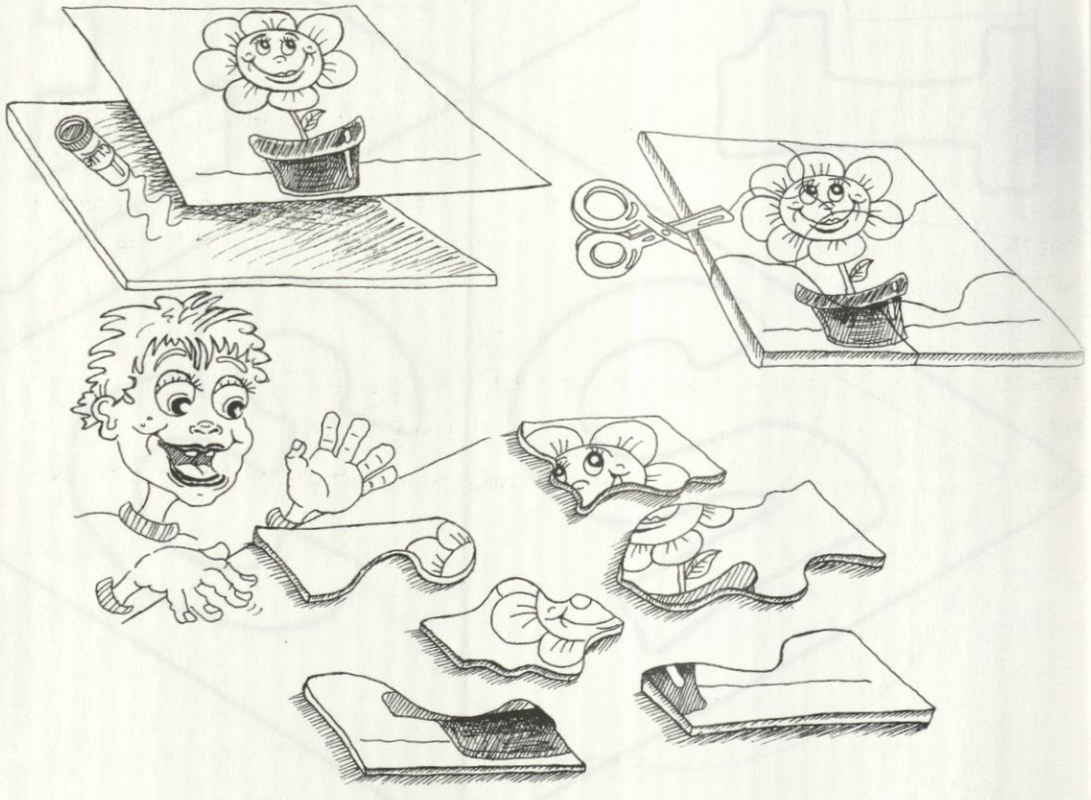
To make your puzzle

Select a picture, cut it out and then glue it onto the card. Give it a few minutes to dry. Trim the cardboard to fit the exact size of the picture. Cut it into different shapes of puzzle pieces.

How to play

Children try to put the puzzle together by matching the shapes and the pictures.

When this is no longer a challenge you can make the pieces smaller, or mix two sets of puzzle pieces together and ask your child to make both puzzles.





Session Summary

Ask the parents to reflect on the main points of today's session.

- *What are some of the play activities discussed in this session?*
- *How do these play activities provide opportunities for children to learn about maths?*
- *What can children learn about maths from stories, rhymes and songs?*

Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 6 - Spotlight on maths**. Which of these skills might children develop through play experiences? Are there other maths skills the parents would like to add?



Home Activity 11 - Playing games

Ask the parents to have fun with their children this week by playing the game that they made in today's session, or by playing one that they already have at home.

Remind the parents to observe their children as they play the game.

Refer to the questions in **Home Activity 11 - Playing games.**

The parents will be asked to comment on their observations in the next session.

Parents' Pack E, p. 15



Playing games

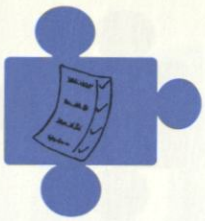
Which game did you play with your child?

Did other family members join in the game?

What maths skills did your child use during this game?

Were there parts of the game that your child needed help with? What did you do?

Does your child use maths in other games or play activities? Please give some examples.



Session Notes

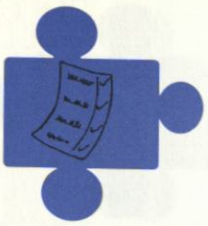
What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?



Session Notes

12

Making a book





In this session parents will:

- explore ideas for making books for their children;
- make a book to be shared at home;
- identify opportunities for interaction around a home-made book activity;
- discuss the intermingling of different learning strands in book making.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	242
Looking at making books with children	**1**	**30 mins.**	**243-244**
What about home-made books?			245
Making books			246
Theme or shape book			247
Scrapbook			248
'Lift the flap' book			249
Zigzag book			250
Making a book	**2**	**90 mins.**	**251-252**
Session Summary		10 mins.	253
Home Activity 12 - Home-made books			253
Home-made books			254
Session Notes			255

12

10 mins.



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Prepare a display of children's books. You will need a wide variety of children's books. Take care to include a number of 'fun' books, such as pop-up books, 'lift the flap' books, and textured books, as well as simple baby first books and number books.



You should also include some examples of home-made books. If you do not have any from a previous class, prepare a few yourself using **Making books, Parents' Pack F, p. 3.**

What to do:

Begin by reviewing the **Home Activity.** (Please note: the **Making books** session is a 'stand alone' session that may be scheduled at the facilitator's discretion. For this reason, a specific home activity is not designated.)

Invite the parents to spend a few minutes viewing the book display you have prepared.

Explain that today's session will be all about making home-made books.

Questions to ask:

- *Have you ever made books for your children?*
- *What kind of books did you make?*
- *Did your children help you?*
- *Have any older children made their own books in school?*



30 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

Looking at making books with children

To prepare:

You will need a flipchart and markers.

Use the display of children's books prepared for the introduction.



Refer to **Parents' Pack F, p. 2 - What about home-made books?** and **pp. 3-7, Making books.**

What to do:

Take one of the home-made books from the display and show it to the parents. Ask them to identify some of the activities that were involved in making this book.

Sample answers:

- deciding what type of book to make
- making up a story
- recalling events
- copying or tracing
- cutting and pasting
- drawing pictures
- looking for pictures in magazines
- writing text

Ask the parents to consider how making a book can be a valuable learning activity for children.

Sample responses:

- Children are interested in seeing their ideas written down.
- It could help them to learn about books.
- Making a book helps children get ready to read.
- They can 'read' their books to other family members.

Add to the discussion by referring to **Parents' Pack F, p. 2 - What about home-made books?**

Turn to **Parents' Pack F, pp. 3-7 - Making books**. Present examples of store-bought and home-made books of each of the types described and discuss how they were made.

12

30 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

Looking at making books with children

Invite the parents to examine the variety of materials that you have brought for book making. Do these give the parents ideas for making their own books?

Ask the parents to brainstorm ideas for books. Write all their suggestions on the flipchart. Refer to the suggestions in **Parents' Pack F, p. 2 - What about home-made books?** Add some of your own ideas.

When you have a good list of ideas, give the parents ten or fifteen minutes to think about the books they will make.





Parents' Pack F, p. 2

What about home-made books?

As children become familiar with the books and stories of others, they may want to start recording their own ideas and stories. Making a home-made book with them is a natural next step after storytelling and a delightful way to help children learn about books.

You can make a book for a child of any age.

You can make a book about things you know will interest your child, for example:

- a story about a family trip,
- a 'Me Book' with pictures and drawings about your child,
- a book about the family pet,
- a rhyming book,
- stories about other family members,
- holiday books - Christmas, Easter, Halloween,
- a birthday book,
- a book about going to playschool or school,
- a book about going to the doctor, or dentist.

Involving your child in making a book teaches him many things about how books 'work'. He will learn that:

- a book has a cover page with a title;
- the title tells you what this book is about;
- the book is communicating someone's thoughts and ideas to others;
- there is a beginning, a middle and an end to the book;
- the pages are read left to right.

Making home-made books also involves opportunities for learning about writing and numbers. You can encourage your child to:

- help you write the words;
- draw pictures to accompany the words;
- help cut out pictures for gluing onto the pages;
- help fit pictures and other objects onto a page;
- help cut out a design for the book;
- see that numbers are included in many text messages.

Most of all, seeing his own thoughts and experiences produced in book format will boost your child's confidence, especially if other family members give him lots of praise and encouragement!

Parents' Pack F, p. 3

Making books

Making home-made books is an excellent way to interest your child in reading and writing. You do not need special talents or a brilliant imagination. Just think about your child's own interests. You can make a book with your child, or for your child. Either way, your child will be thrilled to see that his words and everyday experiences are important enough to be published!

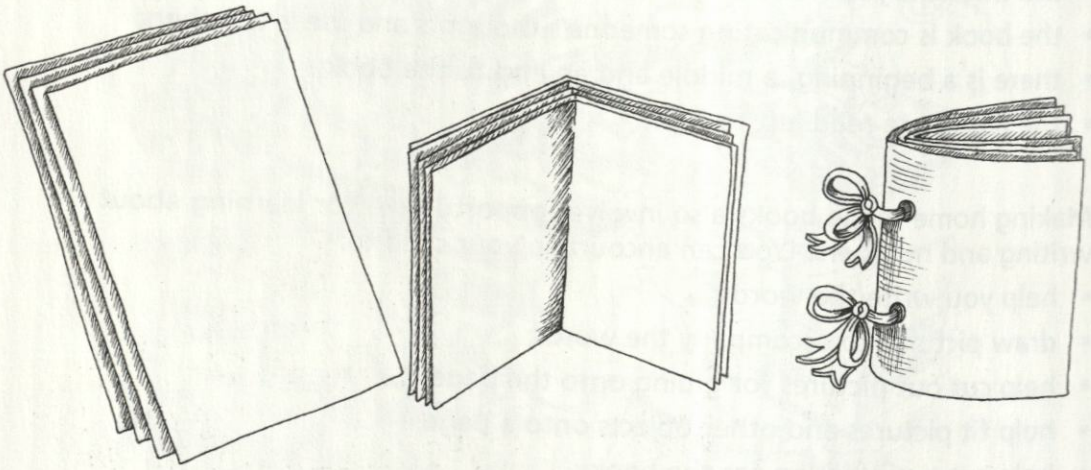
There are many ideas for making books. Here are some suggestions for:

- theme books
- shape books
- scrapbooks
- 'lift the flap' books
- zigzag books

To make the most of these books, you first start with a basic book shape.

Basic book shape

- Place several sheets of paper on top of each other.
- Fold these in half.
- Staple the folded side together or punch holes and thread with ribbon or wool to bind the book.



Parents Pack F p. 4

Theme or shape book

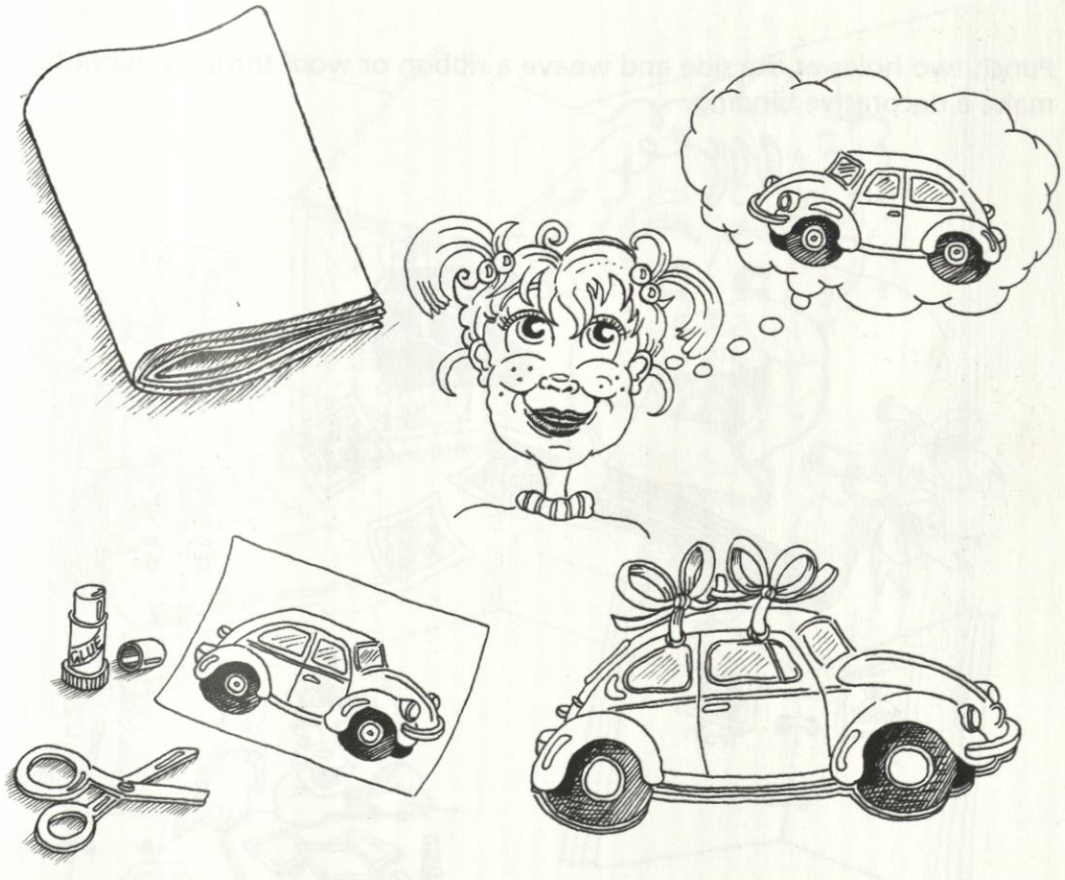
Start by making the **basic book shape.**

Next, decide what your book will be about.

Does your child like cars? Make a book about cars and cut it into the shape of a car.

Have you had a visit to the seaside recently? Make a book about your trip and cut it into the shape of a fish.

How about a book called, 'Our House'? You can cut the book into the shape of a house. Your child can help you make the book by filling in the windows and door with squares of coloured cloth. For the inside, cut out pictures from magazines of furniture, food, toys, etc.



Parents' Pack F, p. 5

Scrapbook

Start with the **basic book shape.**

Choose an idea for a topic, such as 'my favourite things', 'my family', 'where I live', 'animals', or 'toys'. The possibilities are endless.

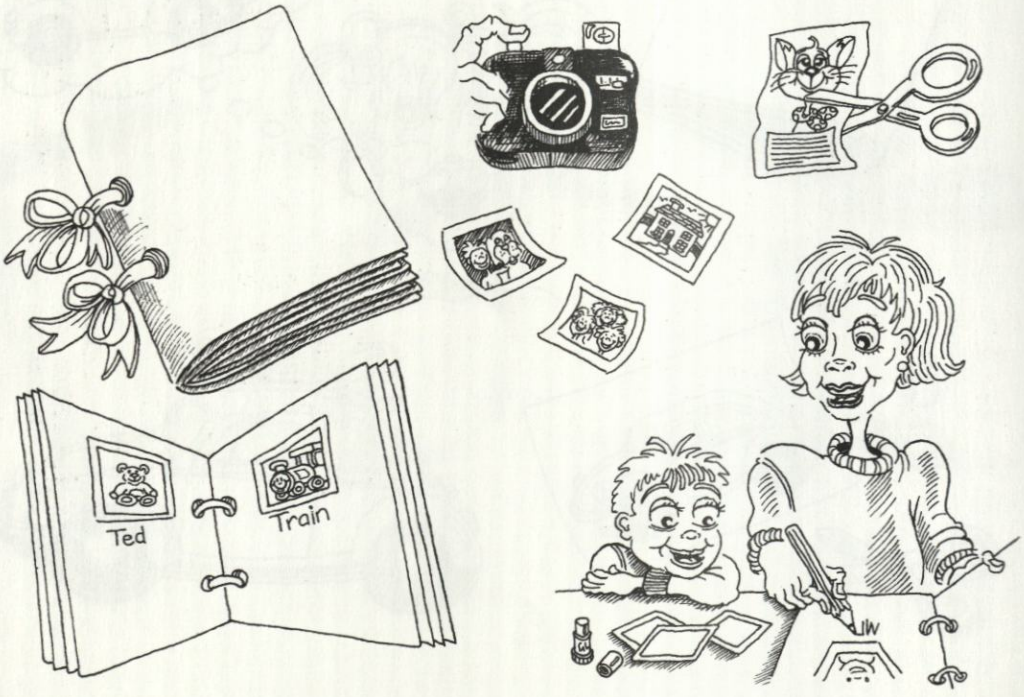
Cut out pictures from magazines or catalogues, or use photographs and stick them into the scrapbook to create the pictures.

If you are making the scrapbook with your child, you can let your child glue the pictures into the book. Talk about the pictures as he sticks them in.

When your child is finished, ask him what he would like you to write under each picture. Read his words or sentences back to him.

Decorate the cover with wallpaper or shiny coloured paper, or let your child draw a picture. Make the book eye-catching.

Punch two holes at the side and weave a ribbon or wool through the holes to make a decorative binding.





Parents' Pack F, p. 6

'Lift the flap' book

You can use any book shape to make a 'lift the flap' book.

You can use any idea to make a 'lift the flap' book.

You make a 'lift the flap' book by 'hiding' part of a picture or part of the text under a flap (a square of paper or cloth) that can be lifted.

You might make a book about your child's day and hide a picture of one of his favourite toys under a flap on each page.

You might cover up certain words with a small flap. Draw or glue a picture of the hidden word on the flap. Your child can tell what the word is from the picture and then 'lift the flap' to read the print.



Parents' Pack F, p. 7

Zigzag book

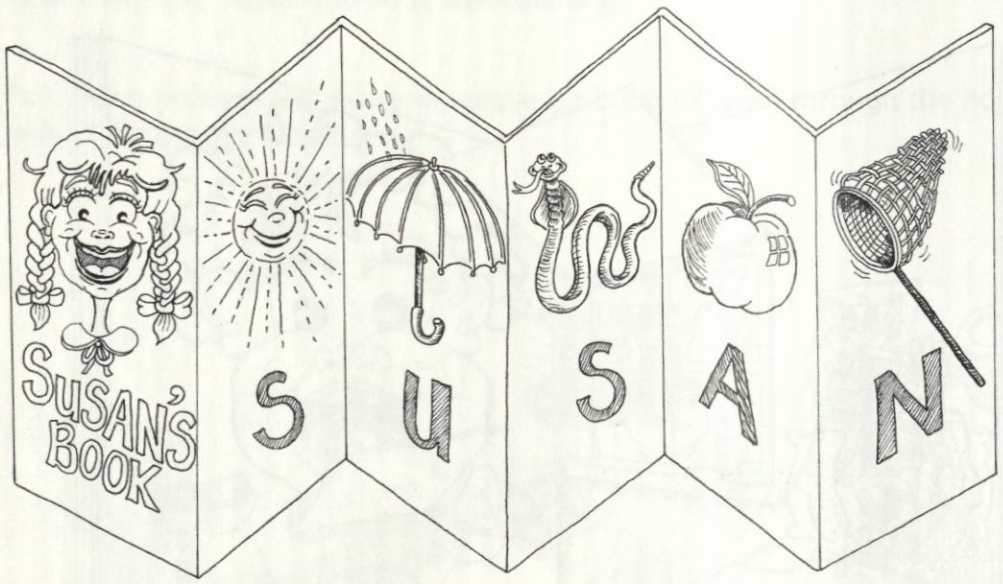
Start with a long strip of paper.

Fold the strip first one way and then the other (accordion style) until you get to the end of the strip.

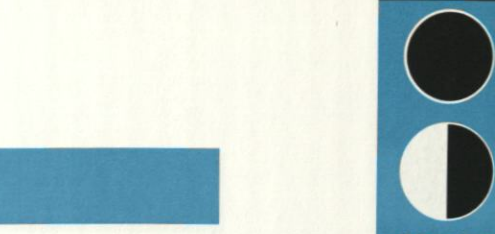
You can make your zigzag book very simple by putting one letter on each panel to spell out one word or your child's name.

You can also make your zigzag book into a storybook by writing a few sentences on each panel.

Illustrate your book by using magazine pictures or drawings on each panel.







90 mins.

Making a book

To prepare:



You will need:

- plain and coloured paper
- crayons/markers/pencils
- paints and paintbrushes
- a stapler
- a paper punch
- a scissors
- string
- glue



The following items are the added bits that will make the books creative and interesting. Collect as much as you can of these items:

- wallpaper scraps (various textures and designs)
- scraps of material
- knitting wool
- ribbon
- newspapers and magazines
- cotton wool
- aluminium foil
- dried leaves, flowers, straw
- buttons and sequins
- old birthday and Christmas cards
- dried lentils and pasta
- shells
- any other bits and pieces that will make the books as interesting and creative as possible.

What to do:

Using their ideas from **Activity 1**, ask the parents to plan their story lines for a few minutes, then collect their materials and make their books.

Encourage the parents to keep the story ideas and language as simple as possible for their first attempt. There are many examples of fun books with one word or one sentence on a page.

90 mins.

ACTIVITY 2

Making a book

Parents may want to practise **simple** handwriting styles. (If you have access to computers, parents may wish to print their texts, and then cut them out and paste them into their books.)

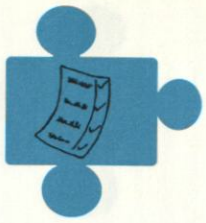
Circulate as the parents work and be available to help out if needed. In particular, some parents may ask for help with spelling.

When everyone has finished, invite the parents to share their books with the rest of the group as a closing activity.

You could ask for an informal oral book report from each parent.

- *What is the title of your book?*
- *What type of book is it (fiction, non-fiction, fairy tale, informational)?*
- *How did you decide on the particular layout and design that you used?*
- *Are you happy with your finished book? Why or why not?*
- *How do you think your child will respond to the book?*





10 mins.

Session Summary

End the session with a short discussion about home-made books. Remind the parents that making a book is an excellent activity for combining all the learning strands: talking and listening, reading, writing, and maths.

Summarise the key points of the discussion on the flipchart.

Ask the parents to think about how they will share their home-made books with their children.



Home Activity 12 - Home-made books

Encourage the parents to share their home-made books with their children during the week. Refer to the questions in **Home Activity 12 - Home-made books**, to help them think about the activity. Some of the parents may also like to try making a home-made book with their children and bring in their results to share with the group.



Parents' Pack F, p. 8



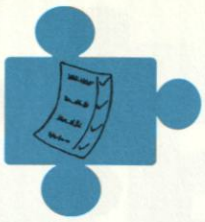
Home-made books

When and where did you share your book?

What did your child like about the book?

What comments did other family members make about the book?

What other types of books does your child like?



Session Notes

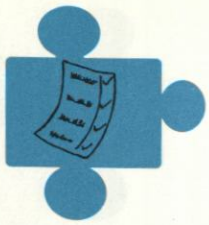
What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

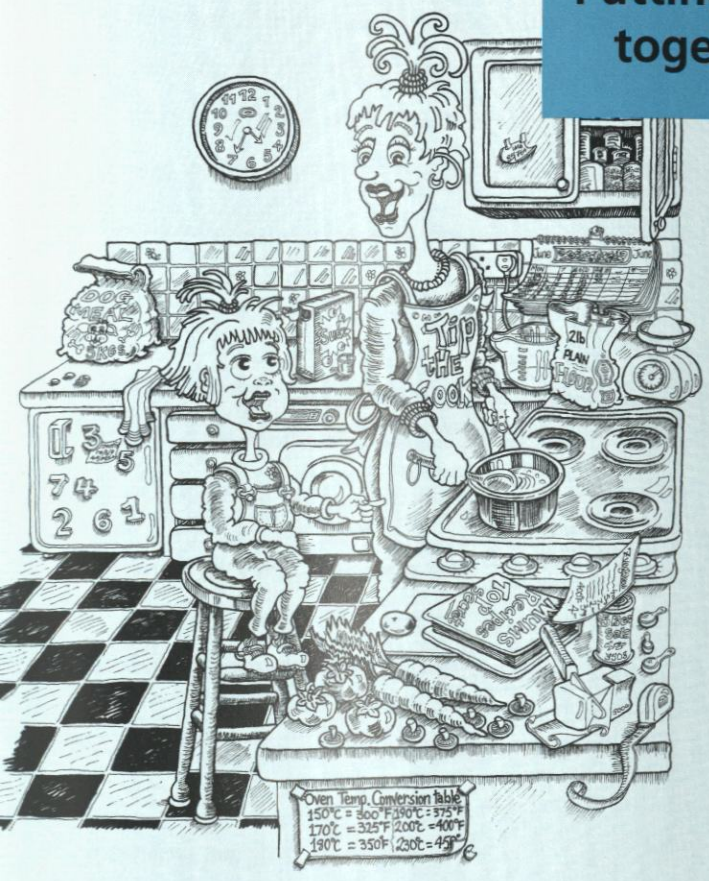
Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?



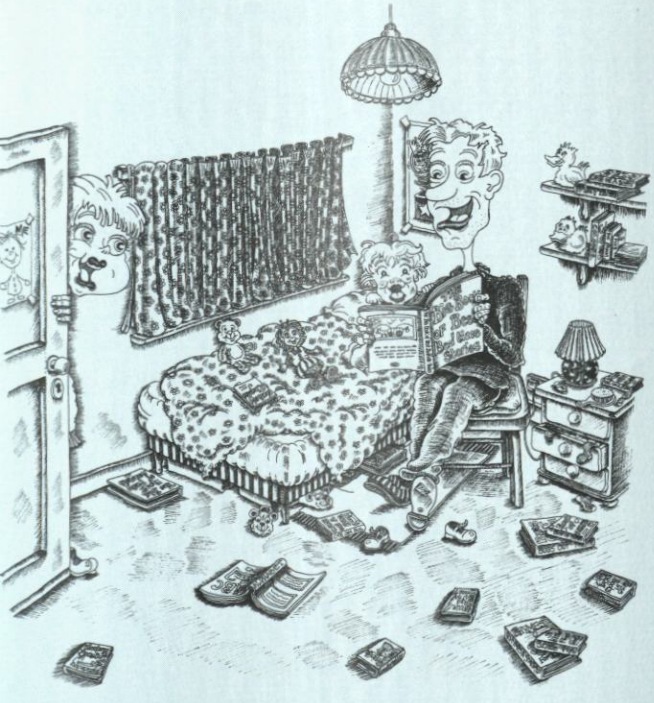
Session Notes

13

Putting it all together











In this session parents will:

- review their experiences on the course and consolidate their learning;
- reflect on the different learning situations presented during the course;
- explore the links between the different session topics;
- use a variety of media to demonstrate what they have learned.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	260
Frameworks for learning	**1**	**25 mins.**	**261-262**
 A good place to learn			263
Mini-shop	**2**	**30 mins.**	**264-265**
Learning begins at home	**3**	**60 mins.**	**266-267**
Session Summary		10 mins.	268
Home Activity 13 - Learning from play			268
 Learning from play			269
Session Notes			270

13

10 mins.



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Arrange a display of props as reminders of the content of the last twelve sessions.

For example:



Session 1: box from **What's in a box?**
Session 2: Photopak pictures depicting parents as teachers
Session 3: flipchart page with Photopak pictures and talk bubbles
Session 4: flipchart page with a group rhyme
Session 5: puppets
Session 6: storybooks
Session 7: **Kitchen cupboard bingo** game
Session 8: child's drawing
Session 9: writer's toolkit
Session 10: maths tools
Session 11: home-made maths game
Session 12: home-made book

What to do:

Review the **Home Activity.**

Display the props and give the parents about five minutes to look them over for a quick review. Leave the props on display for the rest of the session.

Explain that today's session is an opportunity to look back on all that has been discussed during the course and to consider the links between the different topics presented. In particular, you will be asking the parents to consider how the skills of talking and listening, reading, writing, and maths are interrelated.

Remind the parents of situations mentioned during the course where skills overlap, for example:

- talking and listening as part of learning to read;
- writing as a form of communication to be read;
- using maths to name and describe things in stories.

In school, these skills might appear to be taught as separate subjects, but in everyday living these skills are combined in all kinds of ways. It is also important to look at how these skills are interrelated because they support one another in the learning process.



25 mins

Frameworks for learning

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

There are two options for this activity. Please choose the one you think is most appropriate for your group:



What's happening? Make up four Photopak displays on separate flipchart pages by putting a selection of five or six photos under the topic headings:

- the daily routine
- activities in the local community
- games and play
- stories, songs and rhymes

Picture this... You will need cards from the Photopak.



Refer to **Parents' Pack F, p. 9 - A good place to learn.**

What to do:

What's happening?

Divide the parents into four groups. Give each group a marker and one of the prepared flipchart pages.

Ask the parents to look at the page and make a note of the reading, writing, maths, talking and listening activities happening in the photos. Encourage them to write their comments on the flipchart page around the photos.

After ten or fifteen minutes, bring everyone back together and let each group spend about five minutes sharing their observations with the others.

Picture this...

Give each parent one card from the Photopak. Make sure you include photos that depict examples of:

- the daily routine
- activities in the local community
- games and play
- stories, songs and rhymes



25 mins.

ACTIVITY 1

Frameworks for learning

Write these questions on a flipchart page.

- *What's happening in the picture?*
- *Does this activity involve:*
  talking and listening?
  reading?
  writing?
  maths?
- *What examples can you name?*

Ask the parents to think about these questions as they look at their cards for a few minutes and then invite them to share their observations. Give prompts, if necessary. Try to ensure that everyone participates, but don't force anyone.

Whether you have used **What's happening?** or **Picture this...**, after you have heard from everyone, sum up by explaining that each of the photos displayed depicts activities taking place in a learning environment that is familiar to children:

- the daily routine in the home,
- places in the local community,
- familiar games and play activities,
- familiar stories, songs and rhymes.

Remind the parents that in previous sessions you talked about how these environments provide many learning opportunities within a framework where the child feels secure. The observations and comments made by the parents in this activity have provided many examples of these learning opportunities. Ask the parents to give reasons why they think children would feel secure in these environments.

Sample responses:

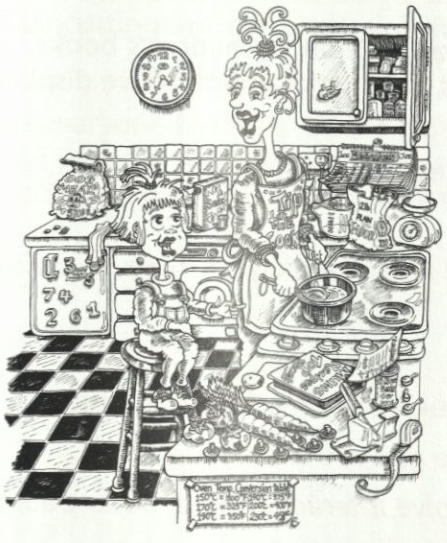
- They know the people.
- They know where they are.
- The task is very familiar.
- They know what is expected of them.
- They know help is at hand if they get stuck.

Finish by referring to **Parents' Pack F, p. 9 - A good place to learn.**

A good place to learn

When a child feels comfortable and secure in her environment, she is more confident about trying new things. A child feels relaxed and ready to learn when:

She knows where she is.



She knows the people with her.



She knows what's happening.



She knows what's expected of her.



30 mins.

ACTIVITY 2

Mini-shop

To prepare:

Preparation for this activity requires some financing and shopping beforehand.

Explore possibilities for donations from local shops to keep your costs to a minimum. However, if the **Mini-shop** is outside your budget, you can choose the alternative activity, **Catalogue shopping.**



For the **Mini-shop** you will need a selection of children's books, games, toys, art supplies, puzzles, etc. Make an attractive display for your selections.

You will also need a 'shopping bag' for each parent.

For **Catalogue shopping** you will need: catalogues, fliers, magazines, scissors, glue and paper.



Write the following discussion questions on a flipchart page:

- *Why would your child like the gift you chose?*
- *How could using this gift involve interaction with other people?*
- *Would your child be able to use this gift for a long time, or would she outgrow it quickly?*
- *What are some of the things your child would learn while playing with this gift?*

What to do:

Mini-shop

Tell the parents that this activity is a chance for them to apply what they have learned in the course in a practical way.

Focus the parents' attention on the **Mini-shop.** Give each parent a shopping bag and invite them to shop for an item that they will be taking home. Make the suggestion that the parents choose something that their children would enjoy.

When everyone has finished their shopping, bring the group back together and ask the parents to share their choices. Use the questions on the flipchart page to encourage discussion about why they made their choices.

ACTIVITY 2

Mini-shop

Catalogue shopping

Invite the parents to go on an imaginary shopping trip. Spread the catalogues, magazines, fliers, etc. out on a table. Give each parent a pair of scissors, cellotape or glue, and a blank page.

The parents can each spend £10-£20 on gifts for their children. They are to use the catalogues, magazines, etc. to shop for their gifts. They should select their gifts by cutting out the picture of the item and gluing it onto the page.

When everyone has finished their shopping, bring the group back together and ask the parents to share their choices. Use the questions on the flipchart page to encourage discussion about why they made their choices.



60 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Learning begins at home

To prepare:



You will need a copy of the story book, **'Jason's Day'**, for each parent.



You will need a variety of materials for the parents to use in making their exhibits:

- several different kinds of paper
- cardboard and poster board
- boxes
- ends of wallpaper
- scrapbooks
- old newspapers, magazines, pictures, postcards, etc.
- ribbons, cotton wool, scraps of cloth
- poster paints, pens, pencils, markers and crayons
- rulers, scissors, cellotape, Blu-Tack, and glue
- modelling clay or Playdoh

Make up a few sample displays to help the parents think of ideas, for example:

- a poster or collage or a painting about learning in the home;
- a box with different images of family learning on each panel;
- a wallpaper scroll depicting learning activities;
- a scrapbook of ideas about family learning;
- figures made of modelling clay in a scene about family learning.

What to do:

This activity is intended to give the parents an opportunity to individually reflect on their experiences and to describe these experiences through a visual presentation to the group.

To begin, give a copy of **'Jason's Day'** to each parent. Let them read the story or read it to them, then ask the parents for their opinions of the story.

ACTIVITY 3

Learning begins at home

ons to ask:

ou think your children would like this story? Why or why not?
t learning opportunities are depicted in these pictures?
could this book be used as a learning activity?

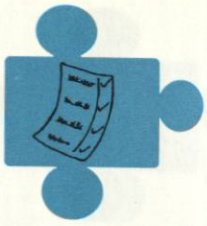
he parents to create their own versions of **'Jason's Day'** to demonstrate f the things they have learned on the course. Show them your samples k about how they were put together. Encourage them to suggest other lf you think it helpful, suggest a title for their exhibits, such as **'Learning at home'**.

ure the parents have space to work. Encourage discussion and sharing. and to give help if needed. Allow about 45 minutes for the project hen bring the parents back together and invite them to share their work e group.

of the parents haven't finished, encourage them to finish their projects e and bring them in for the last session. You may need to lend them ls to use at home.



10 mins.



Session Summary

Ask the parents to refer to the **Spotlights on talking and listening, reading, writing,** and **maths.**

- How have the **Spotlights** been helpful?
- What are the connections between the **Spotlights**?
- How can the **Spotlights** be useful to you in the future?

Some of the parents may need to finish their projects at home.

Give the parents copies of **'Jason's Day'** to take home to their children. Encourage them to use the book with their children and to talk about the story. Let them know you will look for feedback in the next session.



Home Activity 13 - Learning from play

Ask the parents to take a little time to observe and listen to their children playing pretend games. Read over the questions on the **Home Activity - Learning from play** and ask the parents to think about these as they observe their children playing.



Parents
Pack F
p. 10



Learning from play

Does your child like to play pretend games?

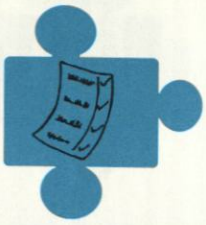
What are the pretend games about?

Does your child have a favourite game that she plays frequently?

Does she use props such as toys or does she dress up in costumes?

Are other children involved?

Do these games involve reading, writing or maths activities? Can you give some examples?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

14

Making connections





In this session parents will:

- acknowledge personal learning experiences on the course;
- identify interests and needs for further learning;
- explore community resources available for families;
- complete a course evaluation.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	274
Opening a door	**1**	**30 mins.**	**275**
What's out there?	**2**	**45 mins.**	**276**
What's out there?			277
Course evaluation	**3**	**15 mins.**	**278**
Course evaluation			279-280
Last but not least	**4**	**30 mins.**	**281**
Pack evaluation for facilitators			282-283

10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Gather and display information about local community resources, e.g. adult education classes, FÁS courses and other job training schemes, créche/child-minding services, family support services, legal aid services, money management advice and other financial services, community centres, support groups, housing and rent allowance schemes, Health Board and Social Welfare information. Also have on hand a few telephone directories and relevant local information guides.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 13 - Learning from play.**

Ask the parents to share feedback about **'Jason's Day'**.

If any of the parents worked on completing projects at home, allow time for them to display their work.

This last session is designed to provide facilitators with a strategy for finishing the course while at the same time opening the door for further learning opportunities.

Explain to the parents that, as this is the last session in the course, the main activity will be to congratulate them on their participation and achievements in the course. You will also be asking them to take some time now to evaluate how well the family learning course has met their expectations and to consider what additional needs and interests they may have for themselves as well as for their children. You will also be providing them with information and advice about where to access further services to meet their needs and interests.





30 mins

Opening a door

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, paper, markers and Blu-Tack.

Write the questions for discussion onto the flipchart.

What to do:

Explain to the parents that, while the primary focus of the course has been on how parents help their children to learn, this session is about 'making connections' between what the parents have learned, what they would like their next steps to be, and how they can proceed.

Ask the parents to work in pairs. Give each pair a flipchart page.

Draw their attention to the questions that you have prepared on the flipchart.

Ask the parents to discuss these questions with their partners and write down their responses on the flipchart page.

When everyone is finished, ask them to stick their pages to the wall. Invite the parents to walk around and read and discuss their responses with each other.

Take particular note of suggestions for further learning. Is there a way the family learning course team can facilitate additional courses? Can you advise the group where they can access additional adult education services?

Questions for discussion:

- *Before you started the course, what did you think it would be like?*
- *What do you think is the most important thing that you did on this course?*
- *What did you do on the course that made you feel proud of yourself?*
- *What benefits do you think this course has had for you, your children, your family?*
- *What would you like to learn more about?*
- *Is the place where you learn important to you?*
- *Is the size of the group important?*
- *Is there anything that you would need help with, in order to attend a class, e.g. childminding or transportation?*

You may want to invite someone from your local adult education services to come and speak to the group.

45 mins.

ACTIVITY 2

What's out there?

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Refer to the display of community services and adult education literature prepared for the introduction.



Refer to **Parents' Pack F, p. 11 - What's out there?**

What to do:

Most people are not aware of all the resources that their local community has to offer. This activity is designed to help the parents to become more familiar with community resources.

Divide the parents into small groups. Give each group a flipchart page and markers.

Draw the parents' attention to the prepared display.

Invite each group to see how many of the local services and resources listed on **Parents' Pack F, p. 11 - What's out there?** are available in their community.

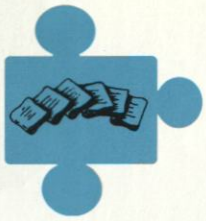
- Which ones can they locate?
- Which ones have they accessed?
- Which ones are new to them?
- Which ones do they think would be useful to them?
- Can they suggest additional services and resources not listed?

Invite the parents to create a map of the resources in their local community. They can use the location of your centre as a reference point. Can they mark in the approximate town centre? Suggest that they represent each of the services and resources as a picture or a symbol. Ask them to visualise how near or how far each is to your centre, to their homes, or to the town centre, and place them on the map accordingly.

When the groups have finished, ask them to stick their maps onto the wall along with posters from **Activity 1.** Let them spend a few minutes reviewing them.

Questions to ask:

- *Are there significant areas of strengths in your community?*
- *Are there areas of weakness in your community?*



Parents Pack F, p. 11

What's out there?

What are the resources in your community?

Where would you find:

Family support services

- créche facilities?
- child minding services?
- parent-toddler groups?
- preschool services?
- parenting courses?
- youth clubs?

Health Board services

- your local hospital?
- mental health services?
- health education courses, e.g. a stress management or first aid course?

Financial advice

- social welfare offices?
- Money Advice and Budgeting Service?
- your local credit union?

Legal advice

- free legal aid?
- family mediaton services?

Educational support and services

- a guidance counsellor?
- adult education classes?
- an educational psychologist?
- local primary schools?
- local secondary schools?

Employment services

- job clubs?
- the Unemployment Resource Centre?
- FÁS offices?
- Local Employment Services?
- trade union offices?

15 mins.

ACTIVITY 3

Course evaluation

To prepare:

Refer back to the aims and expectations discussed in **Session 1 - Getting started.**

Refer also to the course topics in **Parents' Pack A, p. 4 - Core topics + Other possible topics.**

Photocopy a course evaluation for each parent. The course evaluation is also contained in **Parents' Pack F, pp. 12-13,** but you will need to be able to collect a copy for your own evaluation.

What to do:

Briefly review with the parents the course aims and expectations and the topics discussed at the beginning of the programme. Then invite the parents to make their own evaluations of the course. Read each question and give them time to respond. When they are finished, collect their evaluations and thank them. Emphasise that their comments will be very helpful in planning future courses.





Course evaluation

Please photocopy for each parent

1. How did you find the programme overall?

   Very helpful _____

   Somewhat helpful _____

   Not helpful _____

2. Did the course help you meet your learning aims?

   Yes _____

   No _____

3. Have you learned things that helped you work with your child on reading, writing and maths?

   Yes _____

   No _____

4. Has the course helped any other children in the family with reading, writing and maths?

   Yes _____

   No _____

5. How did you find the organisation of the course?

   Excellent _____

   Very good _____

   Fair _____

   Poor _____

6. Was the venue for the course satisfactory?

   Yes _____

   No _____

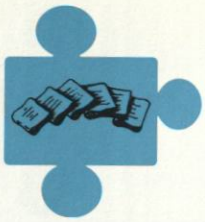
7. Was the timetable for the course satisfactory?

   Yes _____

   No _____



Parents' Pack F, p. 13



Course evaluation

8. Did the facilitators make you feel comfortable in the course?

   Yes _____

   No _____

9. Were the facilitators helpful?

   Yes _____

   No _____

10. Have you learned things from other parents in the group?

    Yes _____

    No _____

11. Would you recommend this course to other parents?

    Yes _____

    No _____

12. Any other comments?

ACTIVITY 4

Last but not least

To prepare:

Review the suggestions for last session activities and gather appropriate materials.

What to do:

During the period of time that the parents have spent together, they will have formed relationships, both with individuals and with the group as a whole. It is important to include an activity for acknowledging the significance of these relationships. Some of the activities could take place on a different day and should be planned by the whole group.

Here are some suggestions:

- Organise a special trip with the parents and their children or the parents alone: to the zoo, an open farm, horseback riding, a leisure centre.
- Have a Family Learning Project Evening for the parents and their families. Display the projects that the parents created in **Session 13**. You could also invite parents who may be thinking about coming onto a course.
- Put a big piece of paper on each parent's back with cellotape or Blu-Tack. Ask the parents to draw or write something positive on each other's back.
- Give each parent a book token as a parting gift.
- Leave time at the end for a party. Ask each parent to bring something.
- Present course certificates to the parents.



Pack evaluation for facilitators

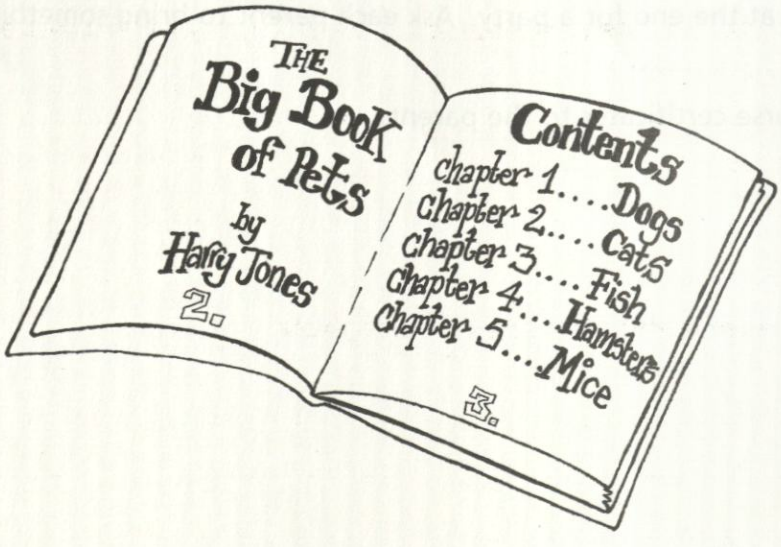
Dear Facilitator,

Thank you for using the Family Learning Resource Pack. We hope that you found it helpful in planning and implementing your work in family learning.

We would be interested in obtaining feedback about how you have used the pack. Please photocopy, then complete and return the **Family learning resource pack evaluation.**

Best wishes,

Jan Godfrey
Moira Greene





Family learning resource pack evaluation

Please photocopy as needed

1 How useful was the Family Learning Resource Pack in facilitating your family learning course?

very helpful ☐ helpful ☐ somewhat helpful ☐ not helpful ☐

2 Which sessions did you find most effective?

3 Did you have any difficulties using the pack?

4 Is there anything that would enhance your ability to use this pack in the future, e.g. further training, extra sessions, more audio-visual supports?

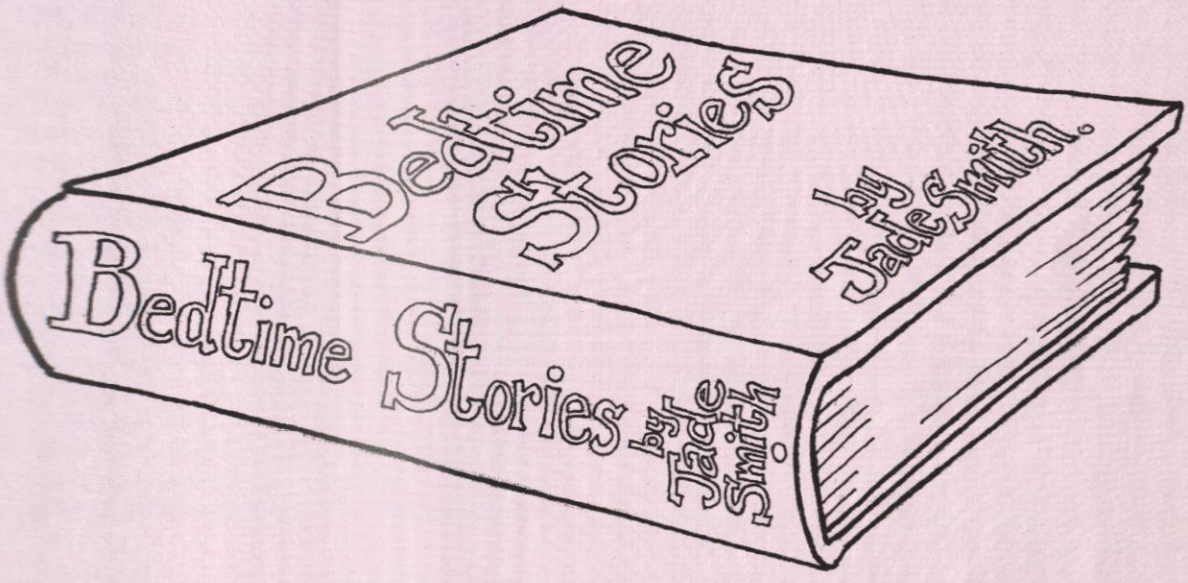
5 How do you feel the participants benefited from your family learning course/programme?

6 Do you have additional comments/feedback?



Session Notes

Selected reading



1. The discovery of emergent literacy - by Nigel Hall
2. What is early literacy development? - by Jo Weinberger
3. Understanding the case for involvement - by Peter Hannon
4. The effectiveness of family literacy - by Keith Topping

1. The discovery of emergent literacy - by Nigel Hall

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oduction

aim of this chapter is to discuss recent views about research on, the emergence of literacy. It would be rrect to give the impression that everyone agrees these views or to suggest that the evidence for se views is fully understood. It is, however, clear that he last ten years, and particularly during the last five rs, considerable effort has been put into stigating the competence of children as literacy ners, and redefining what it means for them to ome literate. Researchers from a variety of plines have been contributing knowledge which, n put together, provides a powerful image of the d as a competent enquirer into the nature and pose of literacy. Teachers have also played their part his revaluation and there are many across the world are creating classroom environments which reflect new knowledge. Much of this knowledge is not, of se, completely new - nothing ever is – and this ter will refer to some earlier thoughts which would uite acceptable to most recent researchers in this . However, there are many elements which were known or understood before the asking of certain s of questions became a legitimate activity. If the tion, 'When do children become literate?' is ered by the response, 'When they come to school', e is no clear incentive to look at what is happening ildren before they arrive at school. Fortunately e researchers have not been restricted by such ers and it is their findings which form the basis for book.

Western print environment is the most complex and nding ever experienced by the human race. All of o live in it cannot help but be substantially ed in it. The speedy advance of information nology, far from reducing the burden, has added to mplexity. The encroachment of television into our has increased the need to read in order for us to hat we wish to view; it has also led to the lopment of an audience for books related to the rammes. Children, from birth, are witnesses to the existence of print and the relationship een print and people. It would seem strange, the way that children involve themselves in all ts of their world, if anyone suggested that there ne part of that visible world about which children totally ignorant. Yet that is precisely the mption that underpins so much conventional ction. There has been an almost universal mption that either children are ignorant about the e and purpose of literacy unless they are 'taught' that what children know is of no importance oever in devising teaching strategies. The overall t of such views is that there has been a devaluation ildren's competence, and an emphasis on direct ctional practices. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1983) his problem into perspective: *'We have searched ccessfully in this literature for reference to children selves, thinking children who seek knowledge, children we have discovered through Piagetian theory. The children we know are learners who actively try to understand the world around them, to answer questions the world poses...it is absurd to imagine that four or five year old children growing up in an urban environment that displays print everywhere (on toys, on billboards and road signs, on their clothes, on TV) do not develop any ideas about this cultural object until they find themselves sitting in front of a teacher' (p.12).*

Conventional Assumptions

For most of this century the curriculum for the teaching of literacy skills in Britain and the USA has been based on a number of apparently fundamental assumptions. These are that:

- reading and writing are primarily visual - perceptual processes involving printed unit/sound relationships;
- children are not ready to learn to read and write until they are five or six years old;
- children have to be taught to be literate;
- the teaching of literacy must be systematic and sequential in operation;
- proficiency in the 'basic' skills has to be acquired before one can act in a literate way;
- teaching the 'basic' skills of literacy is a neutral, value-free activity.

These assumptions, albeit sometimes unspoken and implicit, controlled the way most educationalists dealt with literacy. The following quotation from Walcutt (in Goddard, 1974) effectively embodies most of them:

'Reading is first of all and essentially the mechanical skill of decoding, of turning the printed symbols into the sounds which are language. . We are intensely concerned that our children understand what they read, but the mechanical decoding skill must come first if we are to get them started properly. In the earliest stages of learning to read there is very little need for thinking and reasoning on the part of the child. What he needs is a little practice in mastering a decoding skill and the thinking will come along quite some time later.'

Such assumptions did not make the teaching of reading and writing any easier, nor did they resolve the problem of how to teach literacy. They did, however, provide some security; they marked the boundaries of the teacher's task, elevated the status of the teacher, and controlled perception of some of the associated phenomena.

Some of these assumptions clearly gave value to the role of the teacher. The view that children were not ready for literacy until they were five or six years old, and that they had to be taught to be literate, clearly elevates the status of the teacher. Instruction in literacy was a task for the specialist – not the parent.

The fact that reading and writing were perceived as

The discovery of emergent literacy - by Nigel Hall

visual/perceptual processes, and that they had to be taught in a systematic and sequential way, enabled the creation of an elaborate set of rules governing the order in which these relationships had to be taught. Once rules were clearly expressed, the teaching of these rules became an activity akin to a science, understood by most teachers to be a neutral, value-free activity. Thus, by applying the rules in a systematic way, children were inevitably supposed to become literate. As these rules became more and more complex and elaborate so the specialist nature of literacy teaching was confirmed. It was the teacher who had the skills and the knowledge – not the child or the parent. As few children were capable of coping with this myriad of specialist-created skills, so the belief in children's literacy incompetence was reinforced. The creation of a complex hierarchy of skills appeared to make it easier to locate and diagnose failure in literacy development. However, too often the failure was a result of the hierarchy. Stories abound of children who were reading conventionally before they arrived at school, but because they failed to identify some key words or recite their alphabet they were classed as non-readers.

Thus, whether the teaching was based on phonic, alphabetic, whole word, or sentence methods of reading instruction, certain elements remained unchanged. Control of the manner and rate of learning was in the hands of the teacher. It was the teacher's task to control the child's development from a state of illiteracy to becoming someone with a mastery of the skills involved in being literate; the child's role was to follow the teacher's route from beginning to end.

As a result of more recent understanding about, and awareness of, literacy, and the ways in which children develop a comprehension of literacy, it is possible to identify a number of features that are not reflected in the above assumptions.

- There was no consideration that becoming a reader and becoming a writer were closely related processes.
- There was no consideration that becoming literate might be a social process and be influenced by a search for meaning.
- There was no consideration that most pre- school children might actually have some knowledge of literacy.
- There was no consideration that becoming literate might be a continuous developmental process that begins very early in life.
- There was no consideration of the organisation and control that children might bring to becoming literate.
- There was no consideration that in order to become literate a child might need to engage in literate acts.
- There was little consideration of how language and stories might inform, in particular ways, children's understandings about literacy and text.
- There was no consideration that the knowledge that children have about literacy might be a legitimate element of their literacy development.

Although conventional assumptions may not reflect such ideas, there are perspectives on the development of literacy which do.

An historical alternative

This chapter is entitled 'The discovery of emergent literacy' but it would be more accurate, in some respects, to write about the 'rediscovery'. In 1898 Miss Harriet Iredell wrote an article which contained a number of thoughts that were diametrically opposed to the assumptions outlined above. Consider the following thoughts from Miss Iredell when reflecting on the development of written and oral language:

It would seem that not only are the processes alike by their own nature but that the child in all cases where he has access to books and writing materials starts to take to reading and writing as he took to hearing language and talking, his progress being according to conditions furnished, in exceptional cases reaching fruition in the full ability to read and write.

Consider also Miss Iredell's thoughts on certain points in oral language and written language development:

Scribbling is to writing what babbling is to talking, preceding it, holding the same office of forming the organ, giving practice in shaping the elements. As a babbling child thinks he talks so the scribbling child thinks he writes. One is as natural to him, as universal, as much a part of his growth as the other. He needs no urging to practise either.

And consider finally her views on instruction in literacy.

We never cease to wonder at the extent and amount of knowledge accumulated during the first three years of life nor at the rate of development of the little creature. We say 'Let this go on through the first years of school life and what may not be done'. But something bars the way. We are told 'He must learn to read and write'. As if he had not already taken the first steps, and of his own volition, his efforts unrecognised for what they are.

In that final sentence Miss Iredell neatly encapsulates a contemporary view of emergent literacy. During the last ten years researchers and teachers have identified many of these first steps and have demonstrated what it is that those steps really represent – actual literate behaviour.

The rediscovery and affirmation of emergent literacy was preceded by the recognition of schoolchildren's competence in learning to read. This recognition is attributable to a small number of researchers, namely Marie Clay in New Zealand, Kenneth Goodman in America, and Frank Smith in America and Canada. The

work of these researchers and writers does not support the 'rule-bound' and 'teacher-controlled' stance of such literacy education. Unlike many other attacks on the deficit model of literacy education, their views have been sustained and developed, and have, in turn, generated a substantial body of multi-disciplined research which supports their claims.

The work of Clay (collected in Clay, 1982) and Goodman (collected in Gollasch, 1982) demonstrated clearly that children were not allowing themselves to be processed into becoming readers. As Clay (1982, p. xii) says: children supplement the programme with their own efforts'. Both Clay and Goodman worked with children's errors and discovered that the common sense notion of an error being something that was simply wrong was not indicative of the reader's true response. They both found that these errors (which Goodman refers to as miscues) revealed the considerable efforts being made by children to make sense of the material they were reading. In other words children already had the competence in reading.

Smith (1971) and Goodman (see Gollasch, 1982) both defined reading as a natural language process involving the reader in linguistic, cognitive, and social strategies in order to process print directly for meaning. Smith has extended these principles to writing (Smith, 1982). Both Smith and Goodman have redefined literacy by moving away from definitions relating simply to perceptual processes to definitions based on cognitive activity in terms of making sense of print. That 'making sense of print' inevitably involves a social perspective. This conceptualisation of literacy as a meaning-based activity is itself novel (see Thorndike, 1917, on reading), but what is relatively new is that both Smith and Goodman have applied this belief not only to the way adults engage in literate behaviour but also to the way children approach learning to read and write. They suggest that children approach print in a manner essentially similar to that of adults; children expect print to make sense. They are: 'Seekers after meaning motivated by the need to comprehend' (Goodman and Goodman, 1979) and they claim that children bring to reading strategies which assume the usefulness of the system.

This shift in emphasis clearly has implications for the assumptions identified at the beginning of this chapter. If learning to read and write are 'natural language' processes then can it really be the case that children have to wait until the age of five before they can engage in literacy-based activities? If it is a 'natural language' process then can it be the case that children have to be taught to read and write? Smith (1979) and Goodman, Goodman and Burke (1978) deny categorically that children have to wait; indeed the whole of their claim, like that of Iredell cited earlier, is that children do not wait. As Goodman and Goodman (1979) put it: 'Children are aware of the functions of print and are adaptive to the characteristics of print'. For Goodman and Smith the view that literacy acquisition was a natural process generated an important question: When does that process begin? With this apparently simple question the investigation of emergent literacy was legitimised.

There were, inevitably, other reasons why researchers began to focus on literacy before schooling. One of these reasons derived from research into metacognitive aspects of learning to read (using thought to reflect on thinking), and another derived from studies of early readers. A whole set of investigations, which appear to begin with Reid (1959), apparently demonstrated that children beginning school have little idea of the purpose and processes of reading. Chapter 5 of this book will look again at some of this research and it is sufficient to say at this point that, whether those researchers were right or wrong, they did focus attention on the knowledge about reading that children brought to school.

Equally important were a number of investigations into 'early readers' as they raised interesting questions about the relationship between knowledge about literacy and pre-school experiences. To some extent studies of early readers are studies of competence. If one believes that most children know nothing about literacy when they arrive at school then those who do must have something of the status of freaks. Psychologists love nothing more than to study the 'abnormal' and consequently there have been many studies of such 'early readers'. However the number of studies and the number of children found who were competent, led Torrey, in a review of such studies (Torrey 1979), to suggest that such competence was more common than had appeared. It was clear from those studies that the early experiences children had with print played a significant role in the emergence of literacy.

The time for an alternative approach seemed right in the light of new conceptualisations of psycholinguistics, the puzzles of the metacognitive research and the insights obtained from studies of early readers. Many researchers and teachers were feeling that terms like 'pre-reading skills' or, presumably, 'pre-writing skills' or 'pre-literacy skills' were unhelpful in describing young children's print-related behaviours. As Holdaway (1979) said: 'When we apply a term like "pre-reading skills" to such behaviour we demean their real status as early literacy skills, for they actually display all the features of mature strategies already achieving sound and satisfying outcomes' (p.56).

A current alternative

I began this chapter by considering a number of assumptions contained in conventional literacy

instructional strategies. It will be useful to compare those assumptions with those of someone approaching the emergence of literacy from a rather different perspective; a perspective derived from the work of the Goodmans and Frank Smith.

Yetta Goodman has for many years been studying the emergence of literacy. Her specific interest began when some children she was studying failed reading readiness tests. 'Yet even these children were beyond beginning reading. They were doing things and had developed concepts that were part of the reading process of mature proficient readers' (Goodman, 1980, p.2). This is not unlike a comment made by Clark in her study of young fluent readers (Clark, 1976, p.32): 'It is possible for even young children to become very fluent readers in spite of an average or below average ability to reproduce, or even to remember in their correct orientation, isolated designs sufficiently clearly to identify them from a range of alternatives.' It also brings to mind the case of Larry Wilson who at the age of four 'Failed a reading readiness test but read material on the second or third grade level' (Krippner, 1963, p.108).

Yetta Goodman does not accept that reading and writing are primarily visual/perceptual skills involving mainly printed unit/sound relationships. She would not deny that these relationships exist but sees their use as only one, and often a very inefficient, strategy if used in isolation: *'Reading consists of optical, perceptual, syntactic and semantic cycles each melting into the next as readers try to get to meaning as efficiently as possible using minimal time and energy'* (Goodman and Goodman, 1979, p.149). She would reject the view that children cannot be literate until they are five or six years old. She claims that: *'The beginnings of reading development often go unnoticed in the young child ... this lack of sensitivity occurs because the reading process is misunderstood, because learning to read print and being taught to read it have been conceived as one-to-one correspondence, and because we have been led to believe that the most common-sense notions about learning to read suggest that it begins in a formalised school setting'* (Goodman, 1980, p.9).

She does not believe that children have to be taught to be literate: *'In an environment rich with written language experiences which have real purpose and function for the children, the concepts and oral language about written language develop over a period of time ... given time, children work out for themselves what items belong in what categories'* (Goodman, 1980, p.25). She would not expect the teaching of literacy to be systematic and sequential in operation. She argues: 'It helps educators in understanding the reading process to study what proficient readers do when they read. But it is a serious mistake to create curricula based on artificial skill sequences and hierarchies derived from such studies' (Goodman and Altwerger, 1980 p. 84).

Yetta Goodman would not consider that the basic skills have to be acquired before one can act in a literate way: *'The children we have studied and worked with have received no formal instruction yet they have begun to read. Reading may be its own readiness'* (Goodman and Altwerger, 1980, p.84). She does believe that literacy is anything but a neutral, value-free activity. She claims that it is : 'Impossible to consider literacy development without understanding the significance of literacy in the culture – in both the larger society in which a particular culture grows and develops and within the specific culture in which the child is nourished' (Goodman, 1980, p.4).

Most of the above responses are concerned with the reading process, but it is clear that Goodman accepts that those beliefs apply equally to writing. Her position is summed up when she says: 'My research has shown that literacy develops naturally in all children in our literate society' (Goodman, 1980, p.31). There would appear to be a number of fundamental assumptions behind the above statements which are rather different from those underpinning more conventional beliefs about literacy:

- Reading and writing are cognitive and social abilities involving a whole range of meaning-gaining strategies.
- Most children begin to read and write long before they arrive at school. They do not wait until they are 'taught'.
- Literacy emerges not in a systematic, sequential manner, but as a response to the printed language, and social environment experienced by the child.
- Children control and manipulate their literacy learning in much the same way as they control and manipulate all other aspects of their learning about the world.
- Literacy is a social phenomenon and as such is influenced by cultural factors. Therefore the cultural group in which children grow up will be a significant influence on the emergence of literacy.

In essence Goodman proposes a model of literacy development where the child is a competent cognitive and social learner who can develop, on his/her own, knowledge about, and abilities with, literacy. The child is seen as having competence to learn by living in a world where phenomena can have meaning assigned to them. This is, clearly, quite different from the assumptions embedded in conventional instruction, particularly with regard to very young children (see Walker, 1975).

Goodman has, on several occasions, used the word 'natural' to describe the way children become literate. It is a term which has been used by a number of other writers (Curtis, 1984; Forester, 1977; Hoskisson, 1979; Malicky and Norman, 1985; Schmidt and Yates, 1985; Stine, 1980; Teale, 1982 and 1984; and Torrey, 1979). It

The discovery of emergent literacy - by Nigel Hall

ever, rather an awkward word, for what counts
tural" may vary between people. For many, the
'natural' implies some kind of maturational
omenon; something that occurs almost inevitably
esult of biological programming. However, in
ng learning to read and write as natural processes,
er Smith nor the Goodmans are suggesting that
is some kind of biological mechanism operating;
re not suggesting an alternative literacy
sition device (LAD). They are claiming that literacy
nt in much the same way, and to some extent at
me time as, oral language. Both oral language
teracy development are dependent on an
priate context for the 'natural' development of
skills. People use language and literacy in the
t of their everyday lives. In other words, within
ontexts people engage in literacy and oracy in
that they may continue to experience the
ction of human needs.

en would not learn to talk if deprived of access to
seful oral language use. No child has ever learnt
by being locked in a room with an endless supply
e-recorded language. Children have to experience
ge being used by people in appropriate ways,
propriate ways are those which enable the
on of meanings and the sharing of meanings. In
me way, no child would ever learn to read if
into the British Library. Children must have
to people using print in appropriate ways. Thus
turalness' is a function of social experiences
literacy is a means to a variety of other ends.

re, within such environments all kinds of people
s, siblings, and friends – help children in their
g. However, this seldom takes place as a result of
atic and sequential instructional practices; it is a
uence of playing and living with children. The
fects can be found in literacy development
ach et al., 1985). It is the literacy development
these contexts that Goodman and others are
g 'natural'.

y a term has become current which is, perhaps,
eful and less ambiguous than the word 'natural'
ibing the way young children develop literacy
encies. It is, perhaps, more helpful to talk about
'emerging' within certain kinds of contexts.
(1985) has used the term 'emergent' to describe
aviour. She recognised that although children
he age of six are demonstrating literate
our it is, for the most part, not yet the same in its
as conventional reading and writing. However,
her begs the question of what can be described
entional' reading and writing. The term has
en used by Holdaway (1979) but like Sulzby he
e term within a stage theory of the development
acy. Holdaway has 'emergent reading' followed
anced emergent reading' and then by 'emergent
reading'. (It is interesting to note that although
ay's book is titled The Foundations of Literacy,
his stages are still labelled with the term 'reading'). The difficulty with stage theories of emergent literacy is that it is too easy to find children who appear to be at several stages at once.

The word 'emergent' is, however, useful on four counts. First, it implies that development takes place from within the child. Even though people may inform children about many aspects of literacy, responsibility for making sense of all the data rests with the child. Therefore instruction is not the only means of encouraging the emergence of literacy. Secondly, 'emergence' is a gradual process: it takes place over time. Thirdly, for something to emerge there has to be something there in the first place. Where emergent literacy is concerned this means the fundamental abilities children have, and use, to make sense of the world; abilities demanded by both Piagetians (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1983) and sociologists (Harste et al., 1984). Fourthly, things usually only emerge if the conditions are right. Where emergent literacy is concerned that means in contexts which support, facilitate enquiry, respect performance and provide opportunities for engagement in real literacy acts.

Thus in this book the word 'emergent' is preferred to the word 'natural', although the meaning is much the same as implied by Goodman's (1980) use of the latter term. The use of the term 'emergent' in this book does not imply the requirement of a cultually universal, systematic developmental sequence as Sulzby and Holdaway seem to be suggesting. Indeed they may not subscribe at all to my definition of 'emergence'. It is, however, the preferred definition of this book and the purpose of the following chapters is to consider how and when literacy emerges, and what form it takes.

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2. What is early literacy development? - by Jo Weinberger

© Jo Weinberger (1996), **Literacy goes to school,** Chapter 1, pp. 3 - 14
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chapter provides a theoretical overview of ren's early literacy development. It covers key ideas ation to environmental print, the contribution of ne and phonological awareness, reading and the act of stories, emergent writing, parents as models teracy and the concept of different literacies.

rgent literacy

the past decade there have been significant ges in ideas about how children become literate. y of those concerned with early literacy find that an rgent literacy perspective provides a useful ration of children's literacy development. This suggests that literacy development starts soon a child is born. Children learn to become literate eng surrounded by print, by observing people act with print in a social context, and by interacting print themselves. Children see images and logos ated on advertisements, on television, on packaging finds its way into the home. They may see parents er adults reading a newspaper or magazine or ading to a note or letter, and they may want to their name to a card or gift, or pick up a book or to look at.

ergent literacy perspective is concerned with hildren can do, and it deliberately builds upon derstanding and knowledge children build up, entally, about literacy. Literacy teachers can some knowledge of literacy as a starting point e contact with print is an almost inevitable uence of living in the developed world. In many both overt and subtle, it impinges on our day-to-s.

m 'emergent literacy' is a helpful description in includes children as agents in their own learning of the literacy learning emerges from a maturing tanding about language which originates within ld), and the fact that literacy learning emerges creased experience over time (Hall, 1987). Yetta an's (1980) research into young children's our with print led her to conclude that literacy g is a 'natural' response as children try to make f the world around them. She developed the or of different aspects of literacy as 'roots' which elop simultaneously, and which will feed the hich is literacy. The 'nutrient' for the roots is the environment.

learn to read and write effectively, children o develop increasing understanding about how erates. They need to understand, if not e, various attributes of the written word, ently that print represents meaning, through and words, and other aspects, such as that print ctionality. This is learned behaviour, some of an occur almost imperceptibly as children er print as part of their daily lives – for instance, ing a familiar food package or clothes label while out shopping, having a book read to them at home, or writing their name on a birthday card. Obviously the more encounters with print the children have, with experienced readers on hand to answer questions or point things out, the more likely is their understanding about print to develop.

Environmental print

In many parts of the world, children are surrounded by print from the time they are born. They see lettering on billboards, street and road signs, on food packaging, labels, advertisements on television ... they see it in their homes, on the street, in shops and clinics ... the list is endless. Much of this print is transient, and almost literally 'flows' through neighbourhoods and households. Think of the number of free newspapers and other forms of junk mail that find their way through your letterbox, packaging with print on that is temporarily in your possession, shopping lists and memos that have a short life. Do young children pay attention to this print, and if so, what meaning does it have for them? Various studies (for example, Taylor, 1983, Heath, 1983) indicate that preschool children notice this print and that for them it usually has meaning in relation to contexts which they understand and with which they are familiar. In the USA, numerous studies have looked at children's responses to environmental print. Hiebert (1978), for instance, found that children recognised print from its environmental context rather than recognising the words as such. Goodman (Goodman and Altwerger, 1981) also found that children could make appropriate responses to labels on household goods when the context was available, but this declined sharply if the context was removed. Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) found that when preschool children were asked what the printed words on a variety of packages said, they generalised and said what the item was used for rather than 'reading' the print. The children knew, for example, which packaging should contain toothpaste and which should contain mints. Their 'readings' in terms of the meaning of environmental print were far more accurate than their reading of their own written stories or of published children's books, probably because the environmental print they encountered was so familiar to them. What is most meaningful to children is what message the print is putting across, and this is often of more importance to them than the exact form the words take. The function of the print takes precedence over the form. Advertising is becoming increasingly sophisticated, often designed to be attractive to a board spectrum of the population, and children now absorb meaning, if not the exact content, from a wide variety of logos and other messages.

A recognition of children's response to environmental print contributes to an understanding of their literacy development. Environmental print is widely accessible, children do notice it and try to make sense of it, and for many children it may be their first meaningful

What is early literacy development? - by Jo Weinberger

encounter with print. Margaret Clark (1976), found that while some of the children she studied began reading through their interest in stories, many began through interacting with environmental print, such as signs and advertisements. This learning can occur unnoticed by adults, as young children are often able to absorb for themselves messages from print around them. Payton (1984), for instance, who wrote a very readable account of her own daughter's literacy learning, gives an example of her daughter recognising 'Co-Op' on a receipt whilst out shopping, without any recollection of her previously asking or being told about what the word said. It is beneficial if adults help children make these meanings by pointing out print and reinforcing the child's growing awareness; interactions with more skilled literacy users will help children to extend their literacy knowledge.

Rhyme and phonological awareness

Many children are fascinated by rhymes and enjoy using them, in both real and invented words. Like print, rhyme is prevalent in the social context of small children, in the form of nursery rhymes, jingles, songs and slogans. Recently, rhyme has been shown to have a direct link with some aspects of learning to read.

So that they can understand the different sounds made by symbols in our alphabetic system, children need to be able to distinguish separate sounds within the stream of language they hear when people talk and read aloud. Another way of describing this is to talk about children's phonological awareness. There is evidence to suggest that this is helped by a familiarity with nursery rhymes, and other rhymes and jingles, which play with sounds and reinforce rhythm patterns and rhyme. Some children, for whatever reason, seem to be more sensitive to rhyme than others. This facility links directly to the ease with which children learn to decipher print (Bradley and Bryant, 1983, 1985). The work of Goswami and Bryant (1990) has also shown that some aspects of rhyming are strong predictors of later reading ability. Later research explored the connection between children's awareness of rhyme and their knowledge of nursery rhymes (Maclean, Bryant and Bradley, 1987, Bryant et al., 1989) and found a strong relationship between the two. It is likely that the cultural influence of parents (and other significant people) repeating rhymes at home influences preschool children's familiarity with nursery rhymes, and that affects the ease with which children acquire literacy. Rhyme and phonological awareness needs to be fostered in children, as a way of introducing an important aspect of literacy.

Reading

Historically, reading has been seen a passive activity in which the reader decodes written symbols, and finally arrives at meaning. A psycholinguistic model which fits with an emergent literacy perspective suggests that readers actively make meaning and bring to print their prior knowledge of the way language works and some expectations of what a particular text is likely to contain (Goodman, 1973, and Smith, 1978). This model presupposes that learning to read is not a question of learning the prerequisite subskills, which once consolidated, can then be applied to actually reading, but that reading is a holistic process. The primary way to learn to read is by reading. The work of psycholinguists has sometimes been misinterpreted when it is assumed that, because children are seen as active meaning makers who can learn alongside effective literacy users, the 'teacher's' role is redundant. This is not so. It is very important for young children to have an experienced reader to guide and help them in their reading. They need experienced readers to explain their misconceptions and teach them, at appropriate times, about aspects of literacy they have not yet fully understood. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) have shown that children will try to make sense of written material presented to them, but they can misinterpret it. They may, for instance, think that the size of an object determines the size of the word that relates to it, so that the word for bear would be bigger than the word for duck. These misunderstandings, arrived at in a logical way, can be modified through help and lessons given by experienced readers, and further experience of the characteristics of the written word.

Part of being able to learn to read effectively is having an understanding of the conventions of book language. Understanding these conventions can only be arrived at through experience with written language. This particular aspect of literacy learning is learned socially and culturally, and is not a form of learning that arises developmentally from within the child. The language in which books are written is often not the same as the way we speak. The text is decontextualised, which is to say that it does not arise directly from the child's own experiences, but has its own logic and internal meanings. Children need to be able to make sense of it in their own right. Once children have had experience of a number of books, they may be able to guess what might happen next, using the context of what has gone before, and how the author might write about it, which helps them to make sense of new texts. Meek (1988) has applied the work of critical theorists to children's reading. She shows us that it is the reader who actively makes the text have meaning for them, through bringing their prior knowledge of life and the way other texts work to the words on the page. Picture book reading has its own special lessons. In the interrelationship of text and picture, children learn to understand the complexities of literary devices such as intertextualilty (the subtle references of style and vocabulary to other similar texts) and irony.[2]

[2]A particularly readable account of an author's awareness of the separate lessons of pictures and words, combining to make a complex tale, can be found in Jan Ormerod's account of her reworking of The Story of Chicken in After Alice (Styles et al. (eds.), 1992).

...we also need to bear in mind that narrative is ...only form of continuous text, and many ...especially boys, often respond more readily to ...(Barrs and Pigeon, 1993). Finding facts ...topics that interest them can absorb young ...and many publishers are now responding to ...accessible books which combine information ...appealing illustration. At home, children may ...a different range of resources from those ...in school. For example, in a study of preschool ...from low-income families more didactic ...and non-narratives were read at home than ...in the preschool setting (Dickinson et al., 1992).

...all children own books or are library ...most have at least some access to print with ...gain experience, however modest, of what it is ...reader. For example, Wells (1987) found that ...all the children in his study owned books ...many have had some access to magazines or ...catalogues which the children spent time ...

...influential form of transmitting culture, and ...used in early years education, as well as in ...own homes. Stories allow for the exploration ...ideas, emotions, life situations and other ...perspectives. The reading and writing of ...interconnected. As the Kingman Report ...suggested,

> ...read more ... they amass a store of images ...remembered poems, of lines from plays, of ...rhythms and ideas. Such a reception of ...allows the individual greater possibilities of ...of language.
> ...2.23)

...been research that has shown that young ...familiarity with story can enhance literacy ...ment at later stages (Wells, 1987, Wade, 1984).

...dren have encountered stories before they ...school. We need to remember that stories can ...orally, as well as through other media such ...videos, computer games, film, theatre and ...so that the act of reading, while a very ...way to engage with stories, is certainly not the ...

...may well be told stories by their parents and ...ficant people in their lives, they will probably ...stories if they have experience of watching ...and videos, and most children will have had ...rience of stories in books as well. Stories can ...powerful way of assimilating culture. Bruner ...ggests we have a predisposition to relate to ...d this may explain their pervasiveness,

> *Insofar as we account for our own actions and for the human events that occur around us principally in terms of narrative, story, drama, it is conceivable that our sensitivity to narrative provides the major link between our own sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us.*
> (Bruner, 1987, p. 94)

We often make sense of our experiences and tell others about ourselves through story, and often through story we learn new ways of looking at and responding to the world. Stories also show children what they might expect to encounter in the world. At first children do not separate fact and fantasy, but the power of stories is that they deal in universal truths that transcend these divisions,

> *it is these underlying patterns, not the witches and giants which give them their concrete form, which makes stories an important agent of socialisation.*
> (Applebee, 1978, pp. 52-3)

Stories are important because they describe different experiences from those children are familiar with, and will take them beyond what Wells (1987) has called the 'naming and rote recall' of other types of reading experiences. This is where children point to and label familiar pictures by name, like 'ball', 'cat', or by attribute such as the sound an animal makes, like 'woof woof', which is a common experience for many small children.

Children's access to story and the conventions surrounding their telling or reading is culturally determined. Heath's influential study of language and literacy learning in three different communities found that the style of story making differed markedly between the communities; the reading of stories was not universal, and featured more regularly within mainstream than non-mainstream culture (Heath, 1983).

Stories convey powerful messages about literacy and socialisation, and are important later for children's acquisition of school-based literacy.

Reading to children

One of the ways in which very young children learn about literacy is by parents reading to them (Baghban, 1984). Through this experience, children can acquire some understanding about literacy, which is an important part of their learning to read and write. Children can begin to see themselves as readers through memorising books, often having favourite texts (Sulzby, 1985). Children who are read to often act like readers themselves (see, for instance, Sulzby and Teale, 1987). There are social class and cultural differences in both how and indeed whether storybooks are read to children (Scollon and Scollon, 1981).

What is early literacy development? - by Jo Weinberger

In being read to from the continuous text of books, children have the chance to learn about the decontextualised nature of print. This is something that they cannot acquire from their encounters with environmental print. What the child learns from being read to can be generalised to other encounters with decontextualised text. They also learn about the 'sustained meaning-building organisation of written language and its characteristic rhythms and structures' (Wells, 1987, p. 151).

Book reading is an activity which is often routinised, with the speech used being more complex than that used in many other activities engaged in by parents and children (Snow, Nathan and Perlmann, 1985).

Children can learn a great deal about literacy from having books read to them, with adults providing a 'scaffold', where the adult supports the child's current abilities and provides help for them to move on to the next stage. Children who are read to more frequently at home from a young age show increased interest later, in listening to stories within a nursery or preschool setting (Morrow, 1983). Re-readings of a known text can be particularly fruitful as the child comes to memorise text and story, later being able to read the text for themselves, recreating the text while following the print and pictures on the correct pages. This repeating of favourite texts can give children

a feeling of mastery as well as a solid familiarity with linguistic forms and a growing understanding that texts can endure and yield more on a second or even third reading.
Dombey, 1992, p. 15)

Re-reading allows children to 'know the essence of storyness' (Goodman, 1980). When a child has a book read to them it

provides a child with exposure to more complex, more elaborate and more decontextualised language than almost any other kind of interaction, and the ability to understand and to produce decontextualised language may be the most difficult and most crucial prerequisite to literacy.
(Snow and Ninio, 1986, pp. 118-19)

Thus book reading is not an end in itself. What the child learns can be generalised to other encounters with decontextualised text.

Children who are read to by others can learn that print conveys meaning, that books are read from front to back and print from left to right, that print is made up of letters, words, punctuation marks and spaces, and there is a special language for books and print, for example, 'page', 'word', 'letter'. Children can also learn lessons from having experience of books with several layers of meaning, or 'polysemic texts' (Meek, 1988), so that they begin to be aware of the complexities of written language. It is these various aspects of written texts that children need in order to make sense of a good deal of their early formal schooling, and it is probably for this reason that experience of listening to stories and knowledge about books and print has shown a strong correlation with later reading achievement (Wells, 1985b).

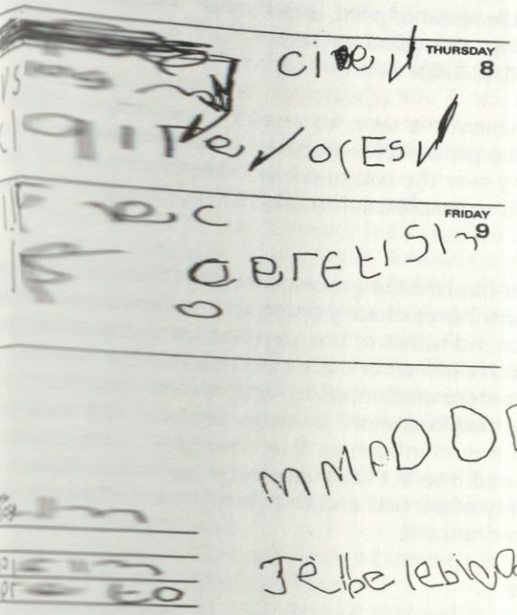
Writing

The emergent writing approach has helped to transform the way in which children's writing is viewed. From this perspective, writing is seen as significantly more than transcription, handwriting and orthographic skills. Researchers have observed the way young children make deliberate marks on paper, which then change with increased experience, and have seen how children behave as authors, actively making meaning. At first their marks may not even approximate conventional writing, but gradually and with encouragement, children move nearer to the written word as we recognise it. Even in the very early stages, children's writing often takes on visual similarities with the script the child is most familiar with. Harste, Burke and Woodward (1982) provide clear examples of differences between English and Arabic speakers in the overall form of young children's writing before conventional letters have been learnt. The children's letter-like marks look completely different from each other as they closely resemble in style those of the conventional adult form. This demonstrates the socio-cultural dimension of writing. For children, learning to write is not only about developing the necessary abstract skills, but also learning to use these skills appropriately, which is determined by the culture in which one lives.

In their writing development, children usually produce scribble initially, or a sequence of lines or circles or dots, or a combination of these.

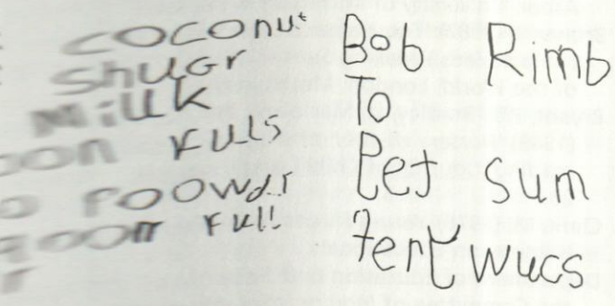
This is often followed by using letter-like shapes and some conventional letters that are familiar – often the letter that begins the child's own name. These are used in different combinations in order to mean different things (see Figure 1).

ple of children using letter-like shapes nventional letters.



begin to understand the relationship **unds and letters** they can use this knowledge **spelling for** themselves. Read (1971) pointed **ildren usually** spell in a systematic way. Some **because** while the sounds are often **accurately,** the conventions of how we **the word** have not yet been learned. **spelling** at this stage is to a large part **on their phonological** awareness (Goswami **1990).** To begin with, children often write **ather than** distinct phonemes, and also pay **consonants** rather than vowels. This **development** is not arbitrary, but is based on **ment of** children's thinking about writing, **rely logical** (see the examples in Figure 2).

mples of children's 'invented spelling'



What children need to extend their writing is experience, support and feedback. This gives children the opportunities to construct the rules of writing for themselves. We can see this development when individual children's writing is recorded over time (Bissex, 1980, Schickedanz, 1990). Conflict between the children's view of how things should be written, and writing produced by others, leads them on to further development (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982).

Most preschool children are keen to 'write', and if given materials and a context will readily do so. Nigel Hall (1987) showed that when introducing literacy resources into the homecorner at nursery, children were very keen to 'write' in a way appropriate to the setting, for instance, if a pad was placed near a toy telephone, they would use it to record a phone message.

Although children's writing develops at different rates, children may already know many significant features of writing when they first enter school. They may know that it is meaningful, and is to communicate messages, that written language is composed of separate marks, and that the writing has certain forms and structures (Hall, 1987). Writing does not just happen. This experience is gained through interacting with print which has already been produced, and learning from more experienced writers. If young preschool children are writing at home, then their family are probably involved in some way, since it is they who provide the child's context for learning.

Models of literacy users

Vygotsky's work (1962, 1978) has been influential in highlighting the important role of social and cultural context in extending children's learning. The role of the parent is central to the social context of the preschool child. Models of literacy are important for children's literacy development. Parents who read at home and act as a model of what it is to be a reader encourage their children's interest in reading (Nebor, 1986). Some studies of early readers have shown that their parents were often avid readers (Clark, 1976). Parents who enjoyed reading as a leisure activity were more likely to have children with a high interest in literature (Morrow, 1983). Wells (1987) found that the children who were the most accomplished writers by the age of nine and ten, had parents who wrote frequently, often 'lists, memos and notes', forms of writing which were both visible and recognisably purposeful. Another way in which adult models of literacy impact on children is through play. Literacy-related play arises from children's observations of the world around them, and pretend play gives children the chance to explore the social roles that they observe the adults in their world carry out. Since many children are involved in make-believe play with some literacy content before they go to school, this probably arises from experiences observed at home or

involving parents. Play which includes some aspect of reading or writing can extend the child's current level of understanding of literacy.

Different literacies

Literacy is not a product, made up of autonomous skills which we learn to become fully literate. It is rather a succession of on-going literacy practices and events which vary according to different situations (Barton, 1994). Literacy practices refer to culturally influenced patterns of using literacy; and literacy events are the occasions on which people actually interpret or create aspects of literacy. Brian Street, an anthropologist, has been influential in recognising and recording this new view of literacy. He talks about the contrast between an 'autonomous' model, and an 'ideological' model of literacy (Street, 1984). The autonomous model tends to be teacher centred, with a focus on specific books and tests, while the ideological model represents a learner-centred approach to literacy. Although the National Curriculum is very specific about the skills children need to acquire to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening, if we take a broader view of how children actually use literacy, the situation is actually much more complex. We can talk of literacies in the plural, rather than of one single ; 'literacy', and how these different literacies are associated with different social contexts (or domains) of life. The literacy practices of young children with their parents at home are often different from the literacy practices the children meet in nursery and at school. In school, literacy teaching and learning is largely overt and specific, whereas at home, it often occurs almost invisibly as an integral part of some everyday activities. Tizard and Hughes (1984) and Wells (1987) found that at home the most frequent and often the most fruitful context for literacy learning was in the course of day-to-day family activities. A central purpose of this book is to document these different literacies, to point out their similarities and differences, and to explore the connections between them.

To summarise, what I have described in this chapter is a general view of children's literacy development. Because the development occurs within a cultural and social context, children from different backgrounds will necessarily have different experiences. These experiences will inform the child's developing view of literacy, which usually starts shortly after birth, and certainly well before the child goes to school. Frank Smith (1978) contrasted a naturalistic, incremental view of reading (which for our purposes could equally well be applied to other forms of literacy) with a mechanistic view which makes a clear division between readers and non-readers:

The term 'learning to read' can be misleading, if there is an assumption that there is a magical day in every literate person's life, some kind of threshold, on which we become a reader but before which we are merely learning to read. We begin learning to read the first time we make sense of print, and we learn something about reading every time we read.
(Smith, 1978, p. 128)

If we supplement the term 'to read' with 'to be literate' we arrive at a picture of someone interacting with print, and learning over the course of a lifetime. Learning to be literate is a complex, culturally shaped process.

This chapter has laid the groundwork in mapping out the major attributes of early literacy development. It has given an indication of the understanding about literacy which children in the developed world are able to acquire before encountering formal schooling. In the next chapter we look more closely into the way in which home background influences the ways in which children encounter and interact with literacy practices, showing the centrality of parents and the home for children's literacy development.

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3. Understanding the case for involvement - by Peter Hannon

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Finding an appropriate form of parental involvement, and sustaining it, requires a clear understanding of why it is worthwhile. The case for involvement rests partly on there being no justification for exclusion but in this chapter I want to put forward more positive arguments. These are based on what is known about how children learn at home, particularly in the preschool years; how home factors influence literacy development; how parents already try to involve themselves; new thinking about the teaching of literacy; and the recognition that involvement is a good in itself. This leads on to a general theoretical framework for understanding work with parents.

The Myth of the 'Bad Parent'

Some teachers fear that if parents become involved they would do more harm than good and that it is safer, in the interests of children, to distance them from the teaching of literacy. If true, this would certainly justify exclusion but we are faced here with myth rather than reality.

What grounds are there for believing that large numbers of parents deal with their children so insensitively or hold such inappropriate views of literacy that, if involved, they would damage their children's development? The research evidence is non-existent. Myths, however, involve a grain of truth. Here is the fact that most teachers, at some point in their careers, do encounter *some* parents whose attempts to teach reading or writing have probably been counter-productive, but this is a poor reason for excluding *all* parents. A few difficult cases should not be allowed to determine a general policy. Also, when such cases are examined closely it can turn out that there are deeper problems than methods of literacy instruction or that, in the context of a child's family, what happens in relation to literacy may not be as disastrous as it first appears to an outsider.

Even where it is clear that parents have taught badly, with bad results, it should be remembered that they probably did so *without* being involved by the school. Their misdirected efforts may be the result of lack of advice or support - a consequence of exclusion. When one examines the myth of the 'bad parent' it turns out to be an argument for involvement, not exclusion. But the myth is pervasive and its power should not be underestimated for it can lead well-meaning teachers to treat perfectly able parents with suspicion. This can even happen revealingly, when the parents are themselves teachers. One teacher said at a professional gathering, 'Why is it that when I go to my daughter's school I'm treated like an idiot but when I get to the school where I work I'm the headteacher?'

For some parents a real difficulty in helping their children will be their own illiteracy. Generally that is no reason to exclude them for, even if they cannot read themselves, they may still be able to help by encouraging their children, talking about stories, responding to the sense of what children read, and providing opportunities for children's reading to develop. If they cannot write, they can still encourage their children to do so. This applies even if English is their second language. In practice, *total* illiteracy is rare in England and of course it is even rarer for *both* parents (and all other members of the household) to be totally illiterate. It is more common to find parents who have 'difficulties' with reading and writing. That means they have some literacy and may be able to help their children in the early stages of learning to read. In some cases parents may, on account of their own unhappy experiences, be highly motivated to help their children. Sometimes they are prompted to admit to their difficulties and seek tuition for themselves. Whether or not they do so, it is clear that the need is to support and advise them, rather than to exclude them.

Exclusion is not just a matter of teacher attitudes and behaviour. Parents have some responsibility too and can exclude themselves by not being sufficiently confident to take up or create opportunities for involvement or by communicating clumsily with teachers. Being professional, however, means taking a sympathetic view of parents and recognizing that some have anxieties, stemming from their own school days, which can make it difficult for them to communicate with teachers in a straightforward manner. It is professionals, by virtue of their institutional position, who have the greater power and responsibility for teacher-parent relations.

Learning in the Home

During their school years children learn a great deal but it is a great mistake to think that all of their learning occurs in school. Much learning, perhaps most, is at home. It is easy for teachers to underestimate the power of home learning and to overestimate the importance of in-school learning because that is what is most visible to them and that, traditionally, has been their professional concern.

Children learn a great deal before they even get to school. So they should, for the preschool period is a large part of a child's life (even for the oldest pupils in school the preschool years represent more than a quarter of a life time). Children's accomplishments in this period include learning to walk, to use and understand language, many vital social skills, and a store of information about their environment. Most of this learning takes place in and around the home, and their principal teachers are usually their parents. Even if preschool children attend a nursery or playgroup, such attendance usually only represents a very small proportion their waking hours.

Despite its importance, researchers have been slow to study home learning before school entry. This is partly because of methodological difficulties - it is much easier to observe preschool children out of the home, in

Understanding the case for involvement - by Peter Hannon

nurseries or in artificial experimental settings (or wait until the children start school). Consequently we know more about the 'what' of learning - the ages at which preschool children can or cannot do certain things - than we know about the 'how' of learning in the home. Nevertheless there have been some useful studies. In one British study, researchers visited the homes of 165 preschool children, aged 3 to 4 years, and noted the children's activities during six one hour periods spread over several days - a considerable undertaking (Davie et al, 1984). They succeeded in documenting many activities in which children engaged, some of which were related to literacy development. For example, out of some fifty activities identified by the researchers, looking at books was one of the most frequently observed. Nearly all children (94 per cent) did it at least some of the time, often with adult participation. It occupied, on average, about 3 per cent of the children's waking day - less than the time spent watching television (9 per cent) but equivalent perhaps to twenty minutes or so per day, and therefore of some significance. However, knowing the types and frequencies of preschool children's home activities is only a start in understanding how they learn at home.

A more penetrating study was carried out in London by Barbara Tizard, Martin Hughes, Helen Carmichael and Bill Pinkerton at the Thomas Coram Research Unit (Tizard and Hughes, 1984). Their technique was to attach radio transmitter microphones to children so that samples of their conversations at home could be recorded and analysed. Thirty children, all 4-year-old girls from both middle-class and working-class homes, were studied and their language experiences at home were compared with their experiences in the nursery schools or classes that they also attended. The focus was children's language but, since language is a vehicle for a great deal of learning, this study has contributed to our understanding of children's learning. It also reveals the importance of the home environment that Tizard and Hughes explain in this way:

As we started to study and analyse the transcripts, we became increasingly aware of how rich this environment was for all children. The conversations between the children and their mothers ranged freely over a variety of topics. The idea that children's interests were restricted to play and TV was clearly untenable. At home the children discussed topics like work, the family births, growing up, and death; they talked with their mothers about things they had done together in the past, and their plans for the future; they puzzled over such diverse topics as the shape of roofs and chairs, the nature of Father Christmas, and whether the Queen wears curlers in bed. Many of these conversations took place during recognisably educational contexts - such as during play or while reading books - but many did not. A large number of the more fruitful conversations simply cropped up as the children and their mothers went about their afternoon's business at home - having lunch, planning shopping expeditions, feeding the baby and so on. (Tizard and Hughes, 1984, p.8)

Tizard and Hughes describe learning episodes in the children's conversations at home, in which the children actively sought information or ideas from mothers to further their understanding. Without tape recordings of conversations and analysis of transcripts, the importance of these episodes may not be fully recognized for they are easily lost in the stream of daily life. When the children attended nursery schools or classes they were in the company of many more children and only one or two adults. As might be expected, in the school environment, adult-child conversations were much fewer, briefer, and probably less fruitful.

The richness, depth and variety which characterised the home conversations was missing. So too was the sense of intellectual struggle, and of the real attempts to communicate being made on both sides. (Tizard and Hughes, 1984, p.9)

It is not clear whether nursery teachers can find ways to overcome the disadvantages of the school environment in this respect. What is clear, however, is that the home is an immensely powerful learning environment for the preschool child, and since the preschool period represents a significant proportion of any child's life it follows that teachers have to acknowledge that their influence is limited in comparison to that of parents.

It might be argued that after a child starts school teachers become more influential. This is obviously true to some extent, especially in relation to specialized areas of the secondary curriculum (although it is interesting that even then schools often rely on homework for children to make progress). Even for school children, time spent in school represents little more than a quarter of their waking lives and a great deal of learning must take place outside school hours. However, establishing the foundations of literacy is a matter primarily for the early years at school when the influence of the preschool period still looms large.

Table 3.1: Possible characteristics of children's learning at home and in school

Home learning	School learning
Shaped by interest and need.	Shaped by curricular objectives.
Often seems effortless.	Often seems to require effort.
Rarely formally assessed.	Often formally assessed.
Often spontaneous.	Timetabled.
Flexible duration.	Fixed duration.
Extended conversations possible.	Limited opportunities for conversation.
Natural problems.	Contrived problems.
May not encounter concepts in the easiest order for learning.	Planned progression through subject matter.
Special resources not usually available.	Supported by special resources.
Use of TV and print media often extensive and uncontrolled.	Use of audio-visual and printed materials subordinated to teaching objectives.
High adult-child ratio.	Low adult-child ratio.
Close and continuous relationships with few adults.	Distant and discontinuous relationships with many adults.
Adults as models.	Adults as instructors.
Recognition of children's achievements reflects many values.	Recognition of children's achievements reflects school objectives.
Vertical age group likely.	Horizontal age group likely.
Child sometimes in teaching role with younger children.	Very few opportunities for child to act as a teacher.
Opportunities vary with home background.	Opportunities more equal.
Accounts for much of the variation in school attainment.	Accounts for only a fraction of the variation in school attainment.

Taking a more general view of the relation between home learning and school learning, Hannon (1993) has suggested some possible characteristics of each (Table 3.1). There are even greater methodological obstacles to studying home learning in the later years than in the preschool years. In the absence of systematic research, one therefore has to be careful about generalization but it does seem plausible that there are many ways in which home learning could be much more powerful than school learning. For example, the scope for children satisfying their needs and interests, the relationships with adults, and the comparative lack of time constraints seem to point to the superiority of the home as a learning environment. On the other hand, the possibilities of planned curricular progression and the availability of special resources would seem to favour the school.

Home Factors in Early Literacy Development

Research into the nature of early literacy development has shown the importance of experiences before school and has emphasized the continuities between reading and so-called pre-reading experiences. Yetta Goodman (1980) has drawn attention to what she has termed the 'roots of literacy' in children's development. These include becoming aware of print as part of the environment, becoming aware of written language on its own (in books, letters, newspapers), grasping the functions and forms of writing, talking about written language, and learning to analyse and explain it (metalinguistic awareness). It is clear that children's reading must grow from roots such as these and it is also clear that these roots are nourished mainly in the home environment. When Goodman points out the importance of print in young children's environment, she is, by implication, referring to their *home* environment: 'I believe that the development of knowledge about print embedded in environmental settings is the beginning of reading development, which in most cases goes unnoticed' (Goodman, Y., 1986, p.7).

The term 'emergent literacy' has been used to describe the theoretical perspective taken in some studies (Teale and Sulzby, 1986; Hall, 1987). For example, a study of low-income families in San Diego reported by William Teal (1986) showed that preschool children participate in or observe a range of literacy activities in the home related to daily living (shopping, working, getting welfare, paying bills, travelling, obtaining services), entertainment (reading novels, TV guides, viewing text as part of TV programmes, doing crosswords), school (letters home, playing school, homework), parents' work (reading manuals, processing receipts, checking job advertisements), religion (reading the Bible, guides, pamphlets), interpersonal communication (letters, cards) and reading to keep up with things (newspapers, sport magazines). In addition, Teale found there was some storybook reading and activities undertaken to help children learn to read and write.

Understanding the case for involvement - by Peter Hannon

Brice Heath (1983) has shown that *what* children at home about literacy can very enormously ording to the culture and values of their mmunities. She carried out a lengthy ethnographic dy in the southern United States of two small ghbouring communities ('Tackton', black working- s; 'Roadville', white working-class) and found that r uses for literacy differed significantly from each er (and also from that of the 'mainstream' town mmunity). For example, in Trackton children were re likely to be involved in literacy events with several ticipants; in Roadville, bedtime stories were more mon. Heath showed how these differences were ted deep in culture and in patterns of oral language . Despite their preschool literacy experiences, dren from both the working-class communities had ficulties with school literacy. The importance of this dy goes far beyond what it tells us about literacy in 1970s in two particular communities (which may no ger exist). It shows that children anywhere can learn ut literacy before school and out-of-school, but they not all learn the *same* literacy.

erall other studies point to the same conclusion elman et al., 1984; Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). en studies in the emergent literacy tradition which ncentrate on young children's in-school learning, wing attention to how much they know about racy (e.g. Harste et al., 1984), provide implicit dence about how much the home contributes.

other way to appreciate the importance of the home o reflect on the relationship between oral language d written language. It is clear that one is dependent on the other in the sense that the acquisition of itten language nearly always depends on the prior uisition of oral language. It is also clear (as Vygotsky d many others have pointed out) that there are found differences between the oral and written guage. However, what is of interest here is how ldren learn them, and the crucial role played by rents.

ildren's early attempts at speech are generally taken iously by parents who tolerate imprecision and errors d do their best to interpret what the child means - en at the babbling stage. Adults often structure uations to make it easy for children to understand d make themselves understood. Such assistance and couragement is probably just as valuable in the velopment of reading and writing, from the stages of rliest 'scribbling' stage and puzzling out the meaning texts. Children learn to understand speech by aking sense of meaningful communication of varying vels of complexity in natural contexts so that although dults sometimes simplify their speech for children's ke, they do not always do so. Children do not usually ave to undergo direct instruction in understanding peech. We do not have to expose them to utterances f graded complexity (by having a language programme f some kind) but it is often assumed that this is necessary for learning to read. One could characterize children's learning of spoken language as being 'on the job', in natural contexts, as required. It is reasonable to suppose that their learning to understand written language could be similarly facilitated in shared reading of books and other texts to achieve clearly understood and shared purposes such as the enjoyment of narrative. Margaret Meek has put it this way,

Reading is whole-task learning right from the start. From first to last the child should be invited to behave like a reader, and those who want to help him [sic] should assume that he can learn, and will learn, just as happened when he began to talk ... Learning to read in the early stages, like everything else a child has come to know, is an approximation of adult behaviour with genuine meaningful function.
(Meek, 1982, p.24)

In so far as there are significant similarities between the development of children's spoken and written language it means taking seriously the fact that children could learn from a range of uncontrolled encounters with written language (many outside the school context), that such encounters need to be as meaningful as possible, and that parents and others at home are bound to have a key role in mediating them.

However, there are also differences between written and spoken language. For example, a writer cannot take it for granted that his or her reader will share the same context in the way that a speaker can often assume that a hearer does (indeed written language is more likely to be used when the two are not in the same context). This means that the character of written language often differs significantly from spoken language in being less context-dependent —more explicit and self-contained - than much speech (and is therefore rarely 'speech written down'). Children who are unfamiliar with using oral language in this way may find this difficult to grasp. Most of the different cultural uses of written language discussed in Chapter 1 have other, genre-specific, characteristics which can be hard to grasp if the user does not understand the purpose of the writing.

Finally, it is clear that in the normal development of spoken language the ability to produce speech is intimately connected with the ability to understand it. It may be just as helpful to recognize the links between reading and writing but it often happens that these two are treated as separate processes. The concept of *literacy* unites them. It will be apparent later that far less attention has been devoted to parental involvement in the teaching of writing than to involvement in the teaching of reading. Nevertheless, it is still helpful to think of involvement in literacy as a whole.

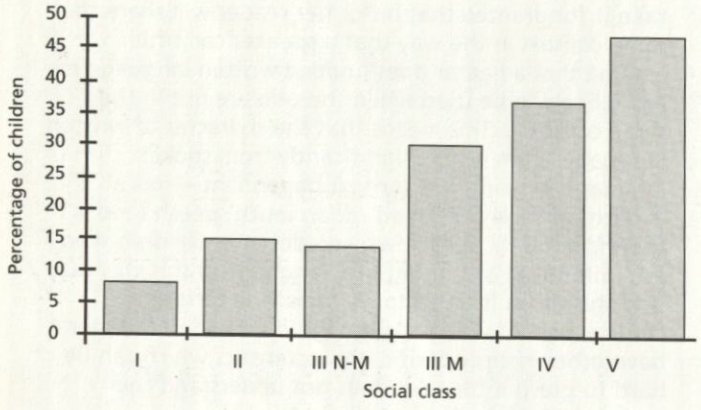
Home Factors in School Literacy Attainment

When we look more closely at children's literacy

development after school entry the influence of the home, and therefore the need to take account of the role of parents, becomes more obvious. One of the clearest pieces of evidence on this point comes from the National Child Development Study (Davie et al., 1972). In this research all the children born in one week in 1958 in Britain, numbering over 15,000, have been followed through from birth and studied at various ages. When the children were 7 years old, towards the end of their infant schooling, they were all tested on the Southgate Reading Test. Children who did relatively poorly on this test, the bottom 30 per cent, were studied more closely. It was found that the incidence of 'poor readers' according to this definition was related to a number of home factors, but none more so than social class. It can be seen from Figure 3.1 that children of fathers in social class IV (semi-skilled manual workers) were more than twice as likely to be poor readers than were those whose fathers were in class II (professional/technical jobs).

At the extremes of the social class distribution, between classes V and I, the discrepancy was much greater - a factor of six. If one considers *non*-readers rather than 'poor' readers the discrepancy was even more striking.

Figure 3.1 : Proportions of 7 year-olds with 'poor' reading test scores, by Social class.



Source: Davie et al., derived from Table A165, p.390

Children in social class V were fifteen times more likely not to have learnt to read by age 7 than were children in class 1.

These children were studied again at age 11. Wedge and Prosser (1973) looked at the children who came from particularly disadvantaged homes (coming from a large family, which also had low income and poor housing). About 6 per cent of children came into this category. In terms of reading test scores, they were an average of *three and a half years* behind other 11-year-olds.

The same kind of picture emerged from an earlier longitudinal study of 5000 children born in one week in 1946. Douglas (1964) found wide social class differences on an NFER reading test when the children were 8 years old. A later study in Nottingham by John and Elizabeth Newson found that 39 per cent of working-class 7-year-olds were said by parents of be non-readers - twice the proportion found in the middle class (Newson and Newson, 1977). In yet another study, Hannon and McNally (1986) compared the reading test scores of middle-class and working-class 7-year-olds and found a 27-point difference in mean scores - equivalent to more than two years' development.

Thus there is abundant evidence that children's reading attainment, at least as measured by reading tests, is strongly related to social class. Knowing a child's social class gives us only the crudest idea of his or her home background, however. It tells us something of the family's command of economic resources and the kinds of skills by which the parents, if they are employed, earn a living. It might suggest that the child is likely to have certain kinds of learning experiences or unlikely to have some other kinds, but it does not tell us anything about which learning experiences are critical, or why they should be critical.

It must be admitted that there are some methodological problems with research in this field. One, to be discussed more fully in Chapter 9, is that we must be careful about taking reading test scores at face value. It is likely that part of the social class differences in reading test performance might be due to test bias of one kind or another, and that more rigorous investigations of children's reading competence might reveal smaller differences (Hannon and McNally, 1986). This has happened in research into children's oral language where social class differences, once widely assumed, have tended to diminish as the quality of research has improved (Edwards, 1976; Wells, 1978; Tizard and Hughes, 1984). Therefore to some extent, it must be a question of different kinds of literacy between the classes as well as more or less literacy.

Variations between homes in children's literacy experiences are not well understood yet. Further understanding will depend on detailed ethnographic studies of families from different social classes such as the one reported by Lareau (1989) but with more of a focus on literacy. Factors such as family income obviously play a part, not just in determining the availability of literacy materials in the home but also in creating opportunities to use literacy in consumption (shopping, visits). The nature of parents' work, and the extent to which it requires literacy, must be important too. These factors probably go some way towards explaining social class differences in attainment but the need is for studies that combine an interest in social class with a fuller analysis of literacy.

Parents Already Try to Involve Themselves

Many parents try to help their children with literacy but

ent of this help is not always recognized by the . One research study, at the preschool level, ed parents and teachers' perspectives on early development (Hannon and James, 1990). Forty s, in a random sample drawn from ten nursery were interviewed at home and their children's rs were interviewed in school about their ive roles in relation to children's reading and g. Details of this study will be considered in the hapter on teaching literacy with parents of ool children but Hannon and James summarized indings thus:

> emerges from this study is that not only are ts interested in preschool literacy but that they to spend a great deal of time actually engaged in g and writing activities with their children ... It lso apparent that they encouraged their children e feeling that nursery teachers might disapprove. ns that they provide books, writing materials, and e range of other materials designed to encourage children's literacy development. It also seems that ildren themselves are extremely interested and t is often they who initiate reading and writing ns. (Hannon and James, 1990, p.268).

ondon study reported by Farquhar et al. (1985), ioned in the previous chapter, provided mation about children just after school entry. ugh interviews of over 200 parents of reception children it found considerable evidence of parents ving themselves in children's school learning, ding literacy but the children's teachers had low ctations of the parents' contribution.

> nts, on the other hand, whilst generally believing schools and teachers make the greatest ributions to children's educational progress, rtheless actively engage in many academic-related rities with their children, even before they start ool. (Farquhar et al., 1985, p.22).

er studies have shown parents involved in the acy learning of slightly older children. The Newsons nd parents of seven-year-olds from every social class ding children's reading and they commented on the lications for teachers.

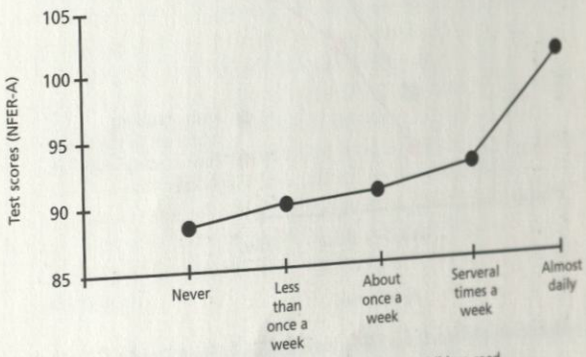
> t over 80 per cent of our sample claimed in fact to e given help with reading would suggest that, in ir varying ways, most parents see themselves as ving some part to play in this basic aspect of their ldren's education, and yet this willingness is too often schannelled for lack of advice, encouragement and preciation from those best qualified to give it. ewson and Newson, 1977, p.150)

en the Bullock Report, despite its anxieties about volving parents, recognized that the question was not hether to involve them in the teaching of reading but ow to do so: 'There is, then, no doubt whatever of the value of parents' involvement in the early stages of reading. What needs careful thought is the nature of that involvement' (DES, 1975, p.97).

A particularly revealing study of the extent and value of parental help was carried out by Jenny Hewison and Jack Tizard (1980). They concentrated on studying 7-year-old children, all from working-class families in Dagenham. It is easy to overlook the fact that many working-class children go against the trend described earlier in this chapter and become good readers. What is it about these children or their home backgrounds that makes them do well?

Hewison and Tizard looked at a number of factors such as parents' attitudes to children's play and discipline, whether there was much conversation with the child, whether stories were read to them, how the children spent their leisure time, what attitudes parents had towards school, and so on. They also looked at mothers' language behaviour and at children's IQ scores. Most of these factors did matter to some extent (i.e. there were modest positive correlations with reading test scores).

Figure 3.2: Relation between reading test attainment at age 7 and reported frequency of home reading for working-class children.



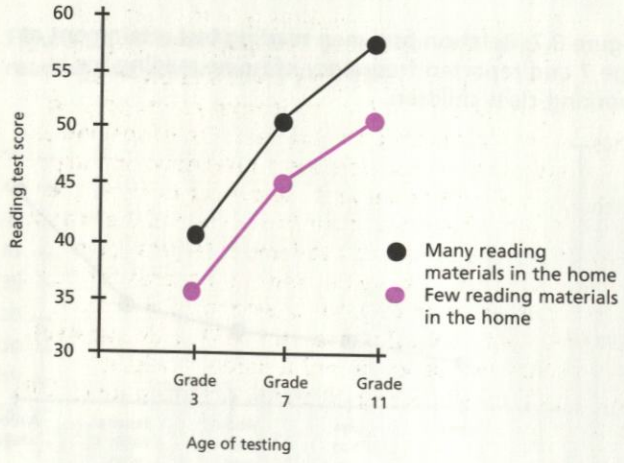
Source: Hannon, 1987, derived from Table 1, p.61

However one factor stood out above all others. It was whether or not mothers regularly heard their children read at home - not whether children had stories read to them, but whether they read to their mothers. About 90 per cent of children were said to have been heard to read at least occasionally in the early years of school but it was those being heard *regularly* at age 7 who appeared to have benefited most. About half the children were in this category and their reading test standardized scores were some fourteen points higher than those not heard regularly. Hewison and Tizard argued that this difference could not be adequately accounted for in terms of other factors such as parents' attitudes or child's IQ. These findings have been replicated elsewhere. Figure 3.2 shows clearly how in

another sample of working-class 7-year-olds the frequency of being heard to read at home was strongly related to reading-test performance (Hannon, 1987).

What about middle-class parents? There is some evidence that they may be readier to hear their children read, and from an earlier age. A study by Liz Whitehurst in 1983 found that virtually all middle-class parents heard their children read regularly, although by age 7 this tended to be mainly with the poorer readers. The reading test scores for this sample were extremely high. The same study also found that the middle-class homes were very well supplied with children's books-collections of over 100 per child were common. This was also reported by the Newsons who found what they described as a 'massive class difference in book ownership' (Newson and Newson, 1977). Middle-class children in their study also had more comics bought for them and were twice as likely to belong to a public library.

Figure 3.3: Relation between reading materials in the home and reading test attainment (findings from the US national assessment of educational progress)



Source: Applebee et d., 1988, derived from Table 5.5, p.51

The association between lack of books in the home and school attainment was highlighted in England in the 1960s by the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967). However, more recent findings from the United States reported by Applebee et al. (1988) show the link particularly clearly. In the National Assessment of Educational Progress a nationally representative sample of 36,000 school pupils from three year levels - ages 9, 13 and 17 (Grades 3,7, 11) - were tested for reading and placed on a single scale ranging from 0 to 100 with a sample mean of 50. Table 3.4 shows the mean scores of children at each age level according to how many reading materials they reported having at home. Those who had dictionaries, regular newspapers, encyclopedias, regular magazines and at least twenty-five books in the home were defined as having 'many' reading materials; those with three or less of these assets were defined as having 'few'.

Figure 3.3 not only shows that at each age level children with many resources had much higher reading test scores but also that 17-year-olds with 'few' resources were only at the same level as 13-year-olds with 'many' resources. There could be many factors (such as family income or parents' educational level) underlying the association but, on the surface at least, it suggests that home literacy resources might be worth several years of schooling.

These researches strengthen the case for involvement not just by showing that many parents are already involving themselves, and that their involvement is beneficial, but also by pointing to ways in which schools could improve children's opportunities. Parents already involved may need support and advice; the benefits enjoyed by some children whose parents involve themselves could be extended to all children; and schools may be able to do something to redress children's unequal access to books and other literacy materials.

Deprofessionalization of the Teaching of Literacy

The professionalization of the teaching of literacy was mentioned in Chapter 2 as a factor tending to exclude parents, but there is now a rethinking of what it means to be a good teacher in this field. There has always been some scepticism about the idea that only school teachers can teach. Twenty years ago Herbert Kohl argued,

There is no reading problem. There are problem teachers and problem schools. Most people who fail to read in our society are victims of a fiercely competitive system of training that requires failure. If talking and walking were taught in most schools we might end up with as many mutes and cripples as we now have non-readers. However, learning to read is no more difficult than learning to walk or talk. The skill can be acquired in a natural and informal manner and in a variety of settings ranging from school to home to streets ...

Anyone who reads with a certain degree of competency can help others who read less well. This is the case regardless of age or previous educational training. However, most people in this culture are not accustomed to thinking of themselves as teachers. (Kohl, 1974, pp.9, 12).

For many years Frank Smith has been a severe critic of some ways of teaching of reading. In a celebrated chapter in his book, *Psycholinguistics and Reading* (1973) he listed 'Twelve easy ways to make learning to read difficult'. They included aiming for early mastery of the rules of reading, insisting that phonic skills are learnt and used, teaching letters or words one at a time, discouraging guessing, and ensuring children understand the seriousness of failure. These can be seen as aspects of an overprofessionalized approach.

s may be changing however. New views about
acy development that emphasize parallels between
develop ment of spoken language and the
elopment of written language, the
connectedness of reading and writing, and the
e of what the child brings to the process of learning
ead as well as what the teacher brings, have been
dually gaining ground. In North America this tends
e called a 'whole language' approach (Goodman, K.,
); in Britain labels such as 'emergent literacy', 'real
ks' or the 'apprenticeship approach' (Waterland,
) have been used. The implications are similar.
ctured schemes that require children to proceed
ugh a series of stages, acquiring subskills in a fixed
er, are being abandoned, modified or used more
bly to make all reading and writing activities as
ningful as possible from the earliest stages.

means a new position for parents. No longer need
be excluded by reading schemes or basal reading
grams. Instead, teachers who wish to emphasize the
ningfulness of literacy activities have an extra
ntive to enlist parents' support for it is in the home
children can most easily see the meanings of
ten language and where they can more easily enjoy
o.

kind of learning presumed necessary by reading
ene proponents is very different from how children
most things (including oral language) at home.
characteristics of home learning posited in Table 3.1
gest that it does not consist of closely monitored and
trolled progression through a fixed sequence of
ning activities, carefully graded for difficulty. A
dvantage of the reading scheme approach is that
learning activities may not be as interesting and
ningful as those in the uncontrolled demands of
e life (it can certainly lead to some very contrived
tedious stories). The home-school mismatch may be
e disconcerting for children from some families than
ers depending on how close their home literacy
eriences have been to school literacy.

th (1988) has used the metaphor of 'joining the
acy club' to characterize the social nature of literacy
rning. He argues that children learn by joining a
mmunity of readers and writers who use literacy to
mplish real purposes. The established members of
club (including authors children encounter) draw
new members into their activities. They do not
ect children to learn everything at once so they help
m with things they cannot do in the confident
ectation that eventually they will be able to join in
club activities. He suggests that this is the only way
dren can learn effectively, there being 'no evidence
t any child ever learned to read by simply being
jected to a program of systematic instruction'. The
taphor is compelling but not all the educational
plications are followed through. Smith urges teachers 'to ensure that clubs exist and that no child is excluded from them' but suggests only that they do this by providing a wider range of *classroom* activities. What is missing is any consideration of what teachers could do to promote out-of-school club activities in favourable settings such as the home. Parents and others in families are in a very powerful position to initiate new members into the club but they may need support to do this confidently and effectively.

The National Curriculum

In England, the teaching of literacy is being affected by the national curriculum with its programmes of study and attainment targets in English (DES, 1989). All children now entering school are subject to these provisions from age 5 to 16. To an extent these reflect some of the new ideas about literacy development discussed in this chapter but revisions to the national curriculum are now being proposed that would give much more emphasis in the early years to the teaching of phonic skills, spelling and punctuation (DFE, 1993). Whatever happens, there are implications for parental involvement.

The definition of literacy enshrined in the national curriculum orders will have implications for parental involvement. For example, the emphases given to speaking 'standard English', to learning and applying phonic rules in reading, to early learning of spelling and punctuation, or to appreciating a prescribed 'literary heritage' could serve either to widen, or to close, the gap between the literacies of the home and the school. Pressures to reach certain attainment targets could mean that teachers have less time and energy for home-school collaboration (e.g. for promoting children's enjoyment of books that may not be directly assessed) or that they will be led to enlist parents' help in reaching the targets (e.g. by sending home phonic skills exercises).

Parents are going to know more than ever before about what schools are trying to achieve for their children, and at what ages. They will also know more about whether the schools are succeeding, for by the age of 7, if not before, they will all be told what level their child has reached. This may increase parents' interest in the teaching of reading and writing and their desire to be involved, especially if there is the slightest suggestion that their children are behind. They are increasingly likely to turn to teachers and ask, 'What can I do?' Schools too are increasingly likely to turn to parents for help because the school's success, or lack of it, in getting as many children as possible to the appropriate level is going to be more widely known than ever. It will be in schools' interests to have the best possible way of teaching literacy and the widest possible understanding what it is trying to achieve. Many will conclude that it is better to have parents as allies rather than as critics.

erials,

Parents' Concern for their Children

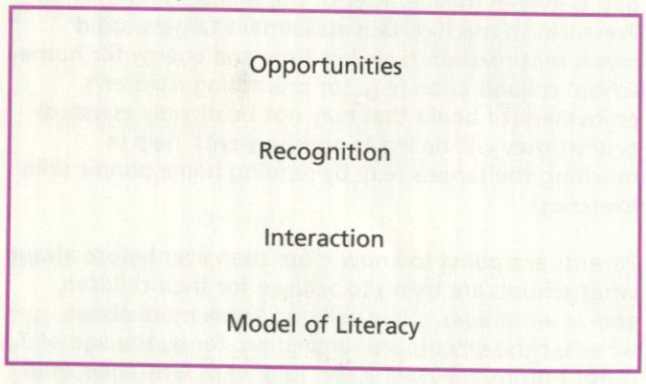
There is one further, simple argument for involving parents in the teaching of literacy. Most parents love their children. The word 'love' does not figure prominently in the vocabulary of educational researchers but it refers to something fundamental. Most parents find involvement in their child's development, whether in literacy or other areas, *intrinsically* rewarding and fulfilling. This, after all, is one reason why they became parents.

Two implications follow. First, parents are a highly motivated teaching force and schools should not allow their potential to be wasted. Second, one does not really need to justify parental involvement in any other terms. It is not just a means to an end; it is already an end - a good - in itself.

A Theoretical Framework

Any attempt to involve parents in the teaching of literacy should have some theory, however modest, to help understand what is important about the parent's role, what experiences are likely to assist children's literacy development, and, broadly, what ways of working with parents should be considered. The arguments reviewed so far not only point to the necessity of schools working with parents but also provide some pointers about how it could be done.

Figure 3.4: What parents can provide for their children's literacy development



The importance of the parent's role can be understood in terms of four things they can provide for developing readers and writers: *opportunities* for learning, *recognition* of the child's achievements, *interaction* around literacy activities, and *a model* of literacy (Figure 3.4). Some parents probably provide these more consciously, more meaningfully and more frequently than others.

In the early years, parents can provide vital learning *opportunities* by resourcing children's drawing or scribbling activities; by encouraging their sociodramatic play; by exposing them to, and helping them interpret, environmental print; by teaching nursery rhymes that aid speech segmentation and phonological awareness; by sharing storybooks and other written materials; and by enabling children to participate in visits, trips or holidays that provide further literacy demands and opportunities. Parents can provide unique encouragement for children in their *recognition* and valuing of children's early achievements in, for example, handling books, reading, understanding logos, and writing. They need to *interact* with children - supporting, explaining, and challenging them to move on from what they know about literacy to do more. An important way of doing this is to involve children in real literacy tasks in which they can make a meaningful contribution (e.g. adding their 'name' to a greetings card, turning the pages of a book) thereby enabling to do today with an adult what tomorrow they will be able to do independently. Some parents deliberately teach their children some aspects of literacy. The extent of such help is gradually being revealed by research (Farquhar et al., 1985; Hall et al., 1989; Hannon and James, 1990). Finally parents act as powerful *models* if and when children see them using literacy, for example, in reading newspapers for information or enjoyment; writing notes or shopping lists; using print to find things out, to follow instructions; or to earn a living, for example, by bringing work home.

In the later years, parents can provide the same things but possibly in different ways. Providing literacy *opportunities* may mean facilitating children's use of libraries or creating reading time for them (for example, by limiting TV viewing). It may mean providing resources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, books, writing material, or even computers. *Recognition* of achievement means appreciating children's reading and writing more difficult texts at home and in school. Appropriate *interaction* in the form of talking about books, newspaper articles or writing tasks may not be as intense as in the early years but may still be very significant. As in the early years, it could take the form of direct instruction. Providing a *model* of literacy goes beyond merely being seen to read and write to a clearer demonstration of how these activities are linked to a wide range of adult purposes in the home, community and workplace.

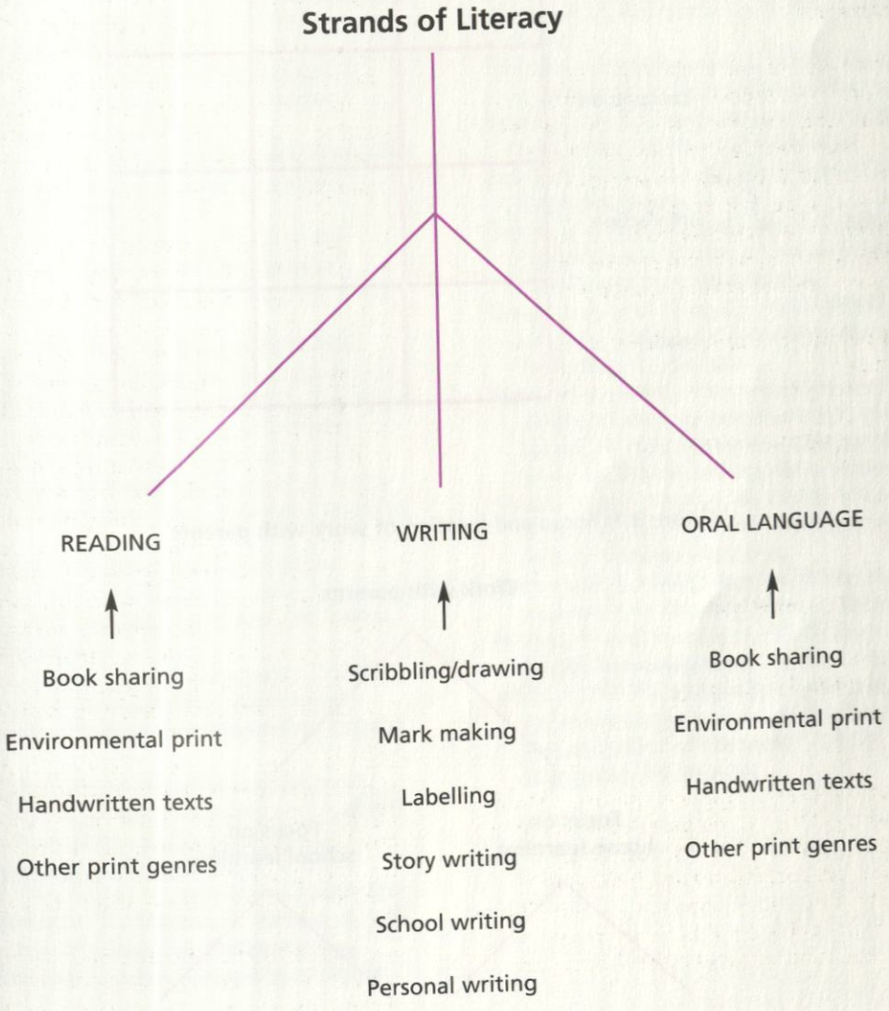
It is also helpful, for practical reasons, to distinguish the three strands of literacy development represented in Figure 3.5: children's experiences of *reading* (environmental print as well as books and other texts), of *writing*, and of *oral language* (to include storytelling, phonological awareness and decontextualized talk).

For each strand of literacy, parents have the potential to provide opportunities, recognition, interaction, and a model (see Figure 3.6). Each cell in this matrix refers to an aspect of parental support for preschool literacy (e.g. providing a reading model, appropriate interaction in writing). It can be used to describe how particular families support children's literacy development but it is more useful to teachers as a *map of intervention*

ilities. One can ask of each cell in the matrix,
can school do to support the parent's role here?'

it helps to draw a distinction between the focus
e location of work with parents (see Figure 3.7).
gh the focus may be on children's home learning,
rk with parents to influence it could be located
in schools (or centres) or in the parents' homes.
ranches in Figure 3.7 all represent possible forms
olvement in the teaching of literacy that need to
nsidered. It is important not to fall into the trap
nking that parental involvement means getting
ts into school to assist children's school learning -
s only one of four possibilities.

e 3.5: Three strands of literacy experiences



terials,

The framework of ORIM (Opportunities, recognition, interaction, model) in relation to different aspects of literacy development, and the concepts of focus and location, will be applied in the next chapter to work in the preschool period, and in subsequent chapters to a range of work in the school years.

Figure 3.6 A map of intervention possibilities

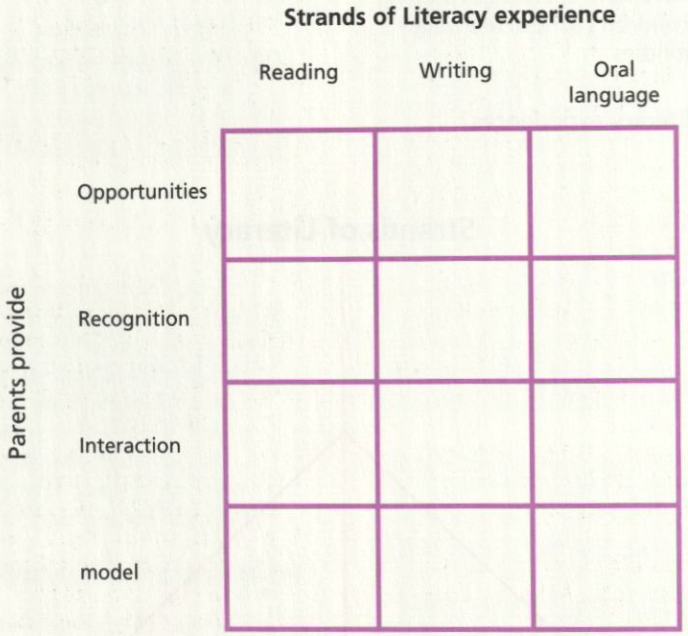
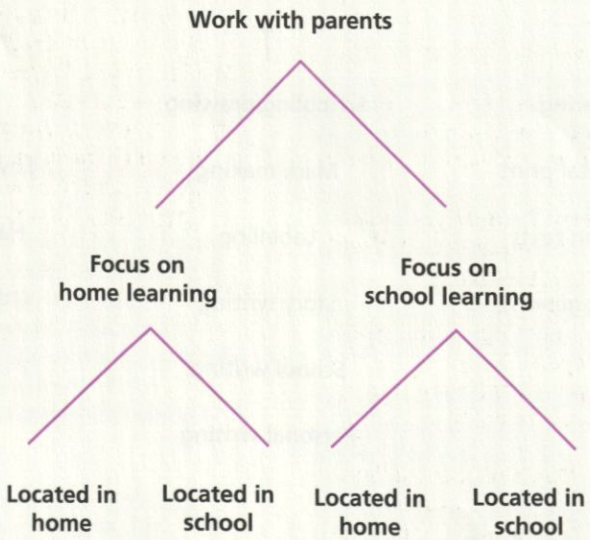


Figure 3.7: Focus and location of work with parents



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4. The effectiveness of family literacy - by Keith Topping

Family Involvement in Literacy: Chapter 12 'The Effectiveness of Family Literacy' by Keith Topping
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Defining 'family literacy' is difficult, and reviewing the effectiveness of family literacy programmes therefore even more difficult.

In this book, we have taken any small constellation of adult(s) and child(ren) committed to living closely together for an extended period to constitute a 'family'. We have taken 'literacy' to mean activities and competencies in oral language, reading, writing and spelling.

However, 'family literacy' cannot be defined merely by amalgamating these two sentences. Some of the additional identifying parameters of family literacy programmes are:

1. Family literacy targets gains in literacy competence, motivation and self-image for all participants - child and adult.
2. Family literacy seeks to enable family members to help each other to achieve such gains - both intergenerationally and intragenerationally - now and in the future.
3. Family literacy values the existing home culture and competencies of family members and builds on these.
4. Family literacy targets gains in literary competence in relation to the needs, uses, objectives and values of all participants, not just those of the school system. Family literacy seeks to link the needs and competencies of the home/community and school environments so far as possible.
5. Family literacy seeks to offer equal opportunities and access to all members of all families of all kinds.

It is clear that family literacy is about education, not schooling. It is not about the 'transmission of school practices' (Nash, 1987; Auerbach, 1989) from teacher to parent to child. Equally, family literacy is about empowerment, not remediation. It is not something that is done to families, to raise them to a fixed criterion of adequacy and increase their contribution to the engines of industry. It is done with families to give them greater adaptive control over their own future, as literacy demands are constantly increasing. Today's functionally literate adult might not be considered such in another decade.

Teachers and other professionals can be left wondering what they should do to serve their community best. Castigated in the early days of parental involvement for all too often speaking to parents in white middle-class vague generalities which many parents could not operationalize, those who moved to giving parents very specific structured training were sometimes accused of thereby disempowering those they sought to help - creating dependency and failing to value existing parental competencies. Establishing individually where each family was starting from and negotiating unique compromises seemed likely to prove highly consumptive of resources - with the result that only a few families could be helped and equal opportunity principles would be hopelessly compromised.

All of this is a quagmire for evaluators. Do we know what objectives have been or should be, set for family literacy programmes? Is it possible to measure whether these have been achieved? How can we tell if some kinds of programme work better (or only) with some kinds of schools and families? And how can relative cost-effectiveness be estimated? These questions will be addressed, though not resolved, in this chapter.

The chapter commences by proposing a simple common framework for the review of family literacy initiatives. This is then applied to the effectiveness data provided by each contributed chapter to this book. Other evidence on the effectiveness of parental involvement in reading and on family literacy programmes is then considered. Studies discussed in detail in contributed chapters are not revisited at length. The chapter concludes with a brief summary and an indication of directions for future research.

Discriminating 'parental involvement in reading' and 'family literacy' programmes is problematic. Some of the early parental involvement in reading programmes always had strong family literacy overtones, while others have developed these over the years. Conversely, some more recent programmes may call themselves 'family literacy' programmes (this being currently fashionable), when on closer inspection they are found to feature few of the identifying parameters. As with any other educational development, faulty labelling and dilution through imperfect dissemination and incorrect replication can cause confusion.

An evaluative framework

'Family literacy' includes a wide range of very varied practice, operating in very various contexts. Some specific interventions may only be effective in specific contexts. In other words, research must seek to identify interaction between treatment effect and aptitude to benefit from that treatment.

Evaluation is far from being an exact science, especially when applied to educational and community innovation in 'real life' settings. Family literacy initiatives are highly complex in the ways they produce their effects, even where the superficial organization is relatively simple. Furthermore, the hoped for effects are also subtle and complex, and extremely difficult to measure with adequate validity and reliability, even given an inexhaustible research budget.

2.1 **Planning family literacy initiatives**

points + *first considerations*

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Stage II

Planning

Objectives
Target children
Compatibility with existing provisions
Reading method
Materials
Personnel
Assessing, measuring, evaluating
Record-keeping
Training
Time-scale
Maintaining and monitoring

Stage IV

Maintaining and monitoring

Objectives
Checking on the practicalities
Monitoring progress: record keeping
Feedback
Meetings
Home visiting
Assessment

a situation, apparently similar evaluative
es can yield very disparate results in a highly
ictable manner. For instance, Topping (1995)
that in his research on Paired Reading, norm-
ced reading tests of very similar type and
ction produced very different results and test
howed no relationship with the likelihood of
e effects, the availability or otherwise of parallel
or the ability range relevance of the instrument.
reading tests did show greater variability than
ual reading tests, but the latter were much more
sive in time to administer. From these data it was
le to list the reading tests most and least likely to
good' results when evaluating family literacy
ammes.

It follows that if, unhappily, you do not demonstrate effectiveness in your family literacy programme, it may be because:

- the programme did not work;
- the programme did not work in you context, i.e. you chose a programme which could be effective elsewhere, but which is the wrong programme for you and your situation;
- the programme did work, but your measurements are too crude to capture the effects, i.e. you chose the wrong evaluative tool or methodology for the job;
- the programme was not made to work, i.e. the intended structure of the programme was fine for your context, but your organization of it was poor.

This last point is crucial. In reviewing evaluation research, it is not easy to be sure that like is being compared with like. Two programmes with the same name and structure operated at two sites offering identical contexts and populations may still yield very different outcome results on the same measures. Why? On one site the co-ordinator was always present, energetic, motivated and well-organized, while on the other... (A guide to the organizational elements of family literacy programmes is given in Table 12.1.)

This example highlights the dangers of making sweeping assertions or assumptions about particular programmes on the basis of evaluation data. Evaluations must themselves be carefully evaluated, although full information may not be available to the enquirer.

Additional problems arise when attempting to review studies which are overtly or covertly diverse, in an area of innovation. Many programmes in a rapidly expanding field are more concerned with the exigencies of survival than with the niceties of summative evaluation. If they have time for evaluation at all, it will be spent on formative evaluation, constantly fine-tuning the programme in response to ongoing informal (and often unsystematic) observation and feedback.

Thus, in a rapidly expanding innovative area, formal meta-analytic procedures are rarely usefully applicable, since they accept only data meeting traditional standards of scientific rectitude. Such data are often most available from student research theses, where much attention has been paid to 'proper' research design and often rather less to making sure that the programme actually worked to benefit its clients. Formal meta-analysis thus biases its outcomes by its selection processes, much as the published research literature is biased by submission and acceptance selectivities.

Given these caveats, formulating an overview of effectiveness in family literacy is obviously difficult. However, it is essential to make the attempt. A simple framework for appraising family literacy projects is offered in Table 12.2.

Where the meanings of the headings are not self-evident, they will be explored in the ensuing discussion of the contributed chapters. For those interested in evaluation, Auerbach (1990, pp. 204-5) offers a useful checklist for designing an evaluation of your own family literacy initiative - asking fundamental What? When? Who? How? questions.

Table 12.2

An evaluative framework for family literacy programmes

A.	**TARGETS AND METHODS**	
1.	Elements of literacy	(reading, writing, language)
2.	Lifespan	(of project, to date)
3.	Objectives	(cognitive, affective, social?)
4.	Method	(location, training, materials)
5.	Child age	(of primary target child)
6.	Child/parent ability	(? low literacy, special needs)
7.	Take-up	(total/proportional/dropout)
B.	**IDENTIFYING PARAMETERS**	
1.	Builds on home culture	
2.	Enables client purposes	
3.	Links home and school	
4.	Equal opportunities/access	
C.	**OUTCOMES**	
1.	Research design/type	
2.	Process data	(what happened during the project)
3.	Attainment gain	(for parent/child/teacher)
4.	Motivation/self-image	(parent/child/teacher)
5.	Subjective feedback	(on/by parent/child/teacher)
6.	Observations/behaviour	(of/by parent/child/teacher)
7.	Maintenance	(of gains at long-term follow-up)
8.	Generalization	(to other people, places, tasks)
9.	Spinoff	(unexpected/additional gains)
11.	Goal attainment	(see A.3)
10.	Cost-effectiveness	(known or estimated)

The effectiveness of family literacy - by Keith Topping

view of contributed chapters

he first four chapters concerned projects nominally sted under 'parental involvement in reading'. owever, features of the family literacy approach are onetheless evident.

oger Hancock and Sarah Gale reported on the PACT cheme, involving parents reading with their early primary (elementary) school children at home and ompleting a home-school reading diary card. The roject had operated for ten years, take-up had been igh and work had flowed into numeracy, with all its mplications for language development. The authors mphasized that wide dissemination brings great ariety, not all of it necessarily productive, and ommented that dissemination is itself another phase of esting. Nevertheless, the project was accessible to very any families on an equal opportunity basis.

mproved reading attainments were not considered the nly indicator of success and formative evaluation via ualitative impressionistic data was preferred. Children pent more time with more books, were more nterested in books, and library loans and family urchase of books increased substantially. There had een spinoff into other home-school activities, and hanges to classroom and whole-school practice. Other benefits might be diffuse or long term and difficult or impossible to measure. The need to renew nterest to cyclically revitalize the project was nderscored.

The authors emphasized that the project was successful n enabling parents to share skills, ideas and knowledge with each other. They warned against omitting close arental consultation and attention to organizational detail at the planning stage, in the rush to implement. amily literacy was embedded in the social processes nd cultural traditions of everyday life - family literacy as not schooled literacy. But the security of knowing here was no conflict between expectations at home nd those at school could provide powerful support for hildren.

eter Branston described the ten-year CAPER rogramme, involving parents in a variety of reading ctivities at home with their primary and secondary hildren via attendance at reading workshops and linics', supplemented with a reading advisory entre. In the first three years of the project, 113 hools were involved and take-up had undoubtedly een high.

More formal evaluation focused only on nursery kindergarten) children, not the main target group. One study comparing with a control group showed ignificant CAPER effectiveness on three norm-eferenced tests and a criterion-referenced test, but in a second and larger study the differences were not significant. However, the second study found that CAPER children requested, borrowed and spent more time with books and their parents than did controls. Parents reported that their children were more interested in books, that they themselves felt more confident and that they expected their children to benefit in the future. CAPER was successful in drawing in fathers, extended families and members of the wider community. Spinoff included parental involvement in other areas and the teachers learning a good deal about parents, children and the reading process.

PACT and CAPER mainly focused on reading benefits for children, rather than wider literacy benefits for the whole family including those with restricted literacy. The chapters on Pause Prompt Praise (Glynn) and Paired methods (Topping) showed how workers began to broaden the scope.

Ted Glynn reviewed 18 years' work with Pause Prompt Praise, a specific technique for more able readers to tutor weak readers of primary or lower secondary age at home or in other settings, specifically to raise their reading competence. The PPP work was characterized by excellent process data, indicating that the training given did alter tutor behaviour. Approaching a score of studies had found norm-referenced reading test gains of between 1.5 and 11 times 'normal' rates of gain. Substantial gains for tutors had been demonstrated, but so far only with peer tutors. Both longitudinal single case study and group comparison data were available - the former difficult to summarize. A longer term follow-up study was reported to be in progress.

Glynn emphasized that learning in one environment did not automatically generalize to another, and indeed children might learn behaviours in one which were incompatible with learning in another - methods should therefore be designed to avoid 'instructional dependence'. His work with Khmer and Maori families testified to this, and the work on empirically evaluating training procedures which start 'where the parent is at' merits wider replication in other programmes. There is clearly great potential here for sibling tutoring, possibly in dual languages. Considering that this programme targets weak and disabled readers (who may be tutors or tuttees) on the basis of structured but brief training, cost-effectiveness is likely to be comparatively high.

Some similarities with the Paired methods outlined in Keith Topping's chapter were evident, except that Paired Reading had developed into other literacy areas with Paired Writing and Cued Spelling. PR had been around since 1976, while Topping's own work with it spanned 14 years. All of these were structured methods in which participants were briefly trained, and which could be applied to any materials or task to hand and of interest, in any setting. They were effective with all

aterials,

children and should be offered on open access to all, irrespective of ability, although children with reading difficulties could be more persistently targeted, especially those of secondary age. When used at home, home-school diary cards sustained communication, and in a small minority of cases home visits might be added. The objective was to raise attainment, motivation and confidence.

Take-up of Paired Reading had been extensive, the published studies alone including almost 4000 subjects. However, dilution through dissemination had been a problem. PR had generated relatively little process data, what there was showing considerable variation in 'purity' of technique. Reading test gains had been large, certainly many times 'normal' rates, in controlled and baselined studies. Gains appeared to be sustained at short- and long-term follow-up. Cued Spelling had fared similarly well in eight small-scale studies, many of peer tutoring, while Paired Writing awaited further quantitative evaluation. Gains for tutors had been demonstrated for both PR and CS, but again only with peer tutors. For both, parents, teachers and children had given very positive structured subjective feedback, reporting improved motivation, interest and confidence in children.

Training in these methods was standardized, specific, structured and brief - the aim was to give all tutors a similar guaranteed experience of success, on which they could build their own individualized variations. Because the methods were materials- free, they were ideal for non-institutional operation for the client's own purposes, e.g. with adult literacy volunteers in the community. They could also be used in any written language - families for whom English was a second language participated using dual text books and tapes. Spinoff included developing confidence in both families and schools to proceed to Paired Maths and Paired Science. Longer-term generalization effects included many tutees becoming tutors.

Moving on to the chapters within the family literacy section proper, Hannon reported a recent pilot whole-literacy project emphasizing environmental print, narrative and story with preschool children aged 2 to 3 years, entailing six meetings at home and five at school. The project was open to all families within a geographical area, but the time costs of involvement were significant.

Interviews, work samples and field notes indicated that parents recognized their child's literacy activity, interacted with them and modelled more developed literacy related behaviour. Children experienced much greater contact with books than pre-project. Directions for further research were indicated. Hannon emphasized the need to build on and extend home literacy through tasks that were real and important to the child, rather than imposing school literacy.

A whole literacy approach was also taken by Kemp's Parents as Tutors Programme (PTP), developed over 20 years, which involved detailed training in 10 two-hour meetings for the parents of primary and secondary children with literacy difficulties. Catering for 120 families per year, it could be followed by the Individual Assistance Programme (IAP).

In two sample groups who completed both PTP and IAP, there was strong evidence of changed parental tutoring styles. Children improved from baseline on criterion-referenced measures of reading error rate and style, but it was unclear whether practice effects were controlled for by the distal comparison group, the more able of which showed less instructional dependence than the PTP group. In a mailed questionnaire survey with a 36 per cent response rate, the vast majority of parents felt their child was reading better. Process data were also kept on video by parents.

The programme commenced with individual parent consultative interviews, and this was followed through by an emphasis on parents helping each other. Spinoff included PTP parents becoming a resource for the whole class of school, as volunteers, trainers or monitors. Teachers in postgraduate study were involved in the programme delivery, a valuable learning experience for them. Although labour intensive, it should be remembered that the PTP targeted children with reading difficulty.

Gregory reported on a two-year programme targeted on bilingual families, using 'family literacy packs' on a structured home visiting basis, with the aim of raising reading attainment and teacher expectations of the 5- to 7-year-old children. Her chapter was an object lesson in building on the home culture, avoiding myths and false assumptions. She noted that parents and schools had very different objectives and expectations, and stressed the importance of fulfilling parents' own needs for their children.

The intensive programme operated with a small number of families, developing a deep individualized negotiated relationship with each. Gregory asserted strongly that equal treatment does not generate equal opportunity. Spinoff included a striking demonstration of how the education system could disempower children and *create* deficits. The cost-effectiveness of this intensive programme must be questioned, but compared to what? In comparison to Reading Recovery (Deford *et al.*, 1991), for instance, it may seem inexpensive.

Project SELF-HELP, reported by Connors, made a statement by its very name. This school-based programme targeted low-literacy parents and included adult education classes for parents (three hours two days per week), homework tasks, stimulatory day care for preschool children and a summer reading immersion aspect. Literacy, life and parenting skills were covered. Possible attendance was 62 sessions (total 186 hours),

erage attendance was 32 sessions. Twelve families ere served per year.

n norm-referenced tests, *parents* made very large ins in maths and lesser gains in reading and spelling. ntrol groups were not available, but such gains could t plausibly be attributed wholly to practice effects. e children showed improved concepts about print, nguage comprehension and letter recognition. bservational data were kept in the form of field notes d case study data were also given.

onnors noted the very large parental time mmitment, but access to the programme could be at y point. She commented that where educational jectives for each family were individualized, gains ould not readily be apparent on crude norm-ferenced tests of out-of-context skills - nevertheless r programme demonstrated such gains. Clearly, this ogramme was expensive and small in scale. Its cost-fectiveness must be considered in the light of the fact at it was one of the relatively few programmes to emonstrate substantial gains in parent literacy. Spinoff cluded more positive opinions of the school in the mmunity and consolidation of contact with 'hard-to-each' families.

milarly, Phillips reported a programme working with arents alone and parent and child together, targeting ains for both and concerned with a very wide range of teracy-related activities. Parent 'Action Groups' met in cal schools, continuing for periods as long as two ears. Accreditation for parental learning gains was built. The Parents' Centre had developed its work ver a 20-year period. The All About Us programme ocused on children aged 3 to 6 years, but other work ith primary and secondary aged children was ndertaken.

A major emphasis was improving the confidence of disadvantaged parents - 'parents helping parents help themselves' - who kept personal records of achievement which were matched with the observations of professional staff. Parents' gains were individualized nd not readily summarized, but a majority of parents eported helping their children in new ways at home. While the Centre was open to all families in the area he parental time commitment was heavy. However, chools were seen as increasingly accessible by families.

The 'Talk To A Literacy Learner' programme described by Cairney dealt with reading and writing through a participative workshop approach, with the main objective of improving parent and child *attitudes* to literacy. Improvement in the confidence of parents, children *and* teachers was seen as vital. The programme was embodied in a 125-page parent handbook, co-ordinator's manual, video and other materials. Over a 12-year period, more than 100 schools had participated.

Good quality process data were available, showing changes in parental behaviour. Outcome data included pre-post test results for children on comprehension, vocabulary, spelling and reading attitudes, in comparison to a randomly selected control group. Participants did better on all measures except spelling, although comprehension improvement was more evident in older children. Parents felt more confident at home with their children and in school, and their own aspirations for themselves rose. In group and individual interviews and on a questionnaire, parents gave positive feedback and reported changing their helping style with their children at home in favour of new strategies. Observational data included field notes, video records and reflective diaries.

Cairney noted 'schooling is a cultural practice' and asked for 'genuine reciprocity' between schools and parents, involving true Vygotskian 'inter-subjectivity'. Spinoff included greater parental understanding of and involvement in the operation of schools and a more positive view of parents by teachers. Families came to organize their time in a different way to enable more contact between parents and children.

The effectiveness of parental involvement in reading

This area was covered in detail in the precursor to the current volume (Topping and Wolfendale, 1985), and material in that book will not be revisited here. Substantial new data have become available.

Perhaps most notable are the long-term follow-up data from the Haringey project (see Hewison in Topping and Wolfendale, 1985). The Haringey Reading Project was a two-year intervention with children aged 6 to 8 years in a disadvantaged area. Parents were encouraged to 'hear their children read' at home. Supportive home visits were made. At the end of the project, participant children performed significantly better on a range of norm-referenced reading tests than the control group of non-participants and a comparison group who received extra small-group reading tuition in school. Hewison (1988) conducted a follow-up three years after the end of the project, by which time some of the children were in different schools. The test result differences between the three groups was still evident.

The Belfield project in northern England also involved parents 'hearing' their children read, in a disadvantaged area, but for three years and without home visits (see Hannon *et al.* in Topping and Wolfendale, 1985). Participant children's reading test scores were compared with those of similar children who had passed through the school before the project, and no significant differences found (Hannon, 1987). While it is possible that the absence of home visiting accounts for some of the difference in test results between Haringey and Belfield, Topping (1995) found in Paired Reading projects that although home visiting improved test outcomes, disadvantaged families still registered significant test gains without it. It is possible that the

Belfield test results were a case of research methods proving insufficiently sensitive, since by numerous other 'softer' process and outcome measures, the project was undoubtedly highly successful.

Significant reading achievement gains were recorded by Shuck *et al.* (1983) in their inner-city 'Parents Encourage Pupils' project. Webb *et al.* (1985) evaluated a project with 8-year-old children in an Armed Forces family school in Germany, a difficult transient population. Most families had just one home visit during the project. On reading tests, participant children gained twice as much as the control group. A comparison of parental involvement using reading books, reading games or a combination of these was reported by Loveday and Simmons (1988). The three matched experimental groups made similar gains on reading tests, but attitudes to reading improved most in the children who played reading games . There was also a suggestion that fathers might more readily involve themselves in games than books.

A more mixed picture emerged in a study of parental involvement in reading with 7- to 8-year-olds in a disadvantaged area reported by Ashton *et al.* (1986). No home visits were made. Subjective feedback was very positive and participant children read far more books than before. Three reading tests were used on a pre-post basis with a comparison group. Two of these showed no significant difference between participant and comparison children, but the third showed bigger gains for the project children, especially the weaker readers.

For younger children, there has been interest in the effects of encouraging parents to read to their offspring. Wade (1986) involved parents of 3- to 8-year-olds in telling and listening to stories, studying the children's ability to tell and retell stories on a pre-post basis over six months and at 18-month follow-up. At post-test participants significantly outperformed controls on both measures. At follow-up differences in subsequent gains were not significant, i.e. the experimental gains had not washed out.

France and Hager (1992) reported on a six-session read-aloud workshop for disadvantaged and minority parents and kindergarten children. Participants out-performed controls on two measures of listening comprehension over a 12-week period. Arnold and Whitehurst (1994) report similar work with disadvantaged 2- to 3 - year - olds, gains being sustained at six-month follow-up.

Swinson (1985) demonstrated improvement in the language skills of nursery children as a result of parents' reading to them. He then replicated this (Swinson and Ellis, 1988) with children aged 3 1/2 to 10 years with severe developmental delay, finding that participants made more than twice the progress in measured language skills than a comparison group.

Other projects have targeted children with special needs. Portsmouth *et al.* (1985) evaluated a parent 'hearing read' approach with moderately developmentally delayed children aged 8 to 15 who attended a special school. Substantial gains in reading accuracy for participants were claimed, compared to negligible gains for controls, although participants did not do better on reading comprehension or listening vocabulary tests and there are inconsistencies in the data presented. Special education students enrolled in an Intensive Learning Centre (learning disabled, emotionally disturbed and educable mentally retarded) were involved in a brief programme by Vinograd-Bausell *et al.* (1986). Students took home sight word flashcards with a sheet of instructions for parents, i.e. there was no direct professional/parent contact. After two weeks the participants significantly outperformed controls on a word recognition test. It is not stated what teaching the parents actually did, or whether the test gains endured or were generalized to meaningful reading.

A larger-scale approach to the question was taken by Rowe (1991), who gathered data on 5092 children aged 5 to 14 years in 100 Australian schools. Reading attitudes and activity levels were measured by pupil self-report and reading achievement by a reading comprehension test and teacher ratings. Family socio-economic status was found to account for a very small proportion of the variance in attitudes and achievement, while maternal educational level accounted for a good deal more. The amount of reading activity at home showed a substantial positive relationship to reading achievement (which increased with age), attitudes to reading and general attentiveness in school, regardless of gender.

The majority of the parental involvement in reading literature reporting 'objective' outcomes thus provides evidence of generally positive results. Subjective feedback from participants, gathered in various ways, is ubiquitously positive. Long-term follow-up data are very limited in quantity, but are positive. However, remembering the positive bias in published literature, the expectations of project leaders should remain realistic.

The effectiveness of family literacy

Programmes with applications and objectives wider than parental involvement in children's reading are correspondingly more complex to evaluate.

A fascinating multiple case study account of untrained reading tutoring of children by their elder siblings was reported by Norris and Stainthorp (1991).

Very substantial contributions to progress in knowledge have been made by Toomey (1989, 1993) and Toomey and Sloane (1991, 1994), based on the West Heidelberg Early Literacy Project in Australia. Noting that more traditional forms of opportunity for parental contact

The effectiveness of family literacy - by Keith Topping

involvement might only serve to further advantage already advantaged (Toomey, 1989), they operated preschool programme for disadvantaged families though home visits until the prohibitive cost led to vice delivery from local preschool day care facilities. though the main focus was parents' reading and ussing books with children, there was also some phasis on accessing environmental print, drawing writing.

sults on the Sulzby test of emergent literacy (Sulzby, 85) and other tests of literacy competence showed at although the comparison group was initially more petent than the experimental group, at post-test programme participant children were significantly erior. However, these gains did not significantly ry over into measures of school literacy. Of course, it not uncommon for interventions effective in raising tainment pre-school to fail to show significant easurable transfer effects to the school environment opping, 1986) - generalization is not automatic.

three-month British parent involvement project rgeted on 5-year-olds newly in school, involving all pects of literacy and other curriculum and home tivity areas, is reported by Dye (1989). Parents made eekly visits to the children's class and engaged in ggested activities with their child at home. rticipants and controls were pre- and post-tested in 44 eas of competency, including mathematics and eneral knowledge. Participants showed significant ains in 22 of these, controls showed gains in only ree. On norm-referenced tests of language and basic oncepts, participants significantly out-performed ontrols.

Much of the other research on the effectiveness of amily literacy comes from the USA, particularly the enan, Even Start and PACE models already referred to y Connors (see Chapter 9). Many other reports can be ound on programmes claiming to be successful, but as isk (1990) noted in his review of intergenerational teracy programmes, a great deal of this 'evidence' is necdotal. Franklin (1989) produced a useful survey of 5 intergenerational literacy projects, but some of these ocused on adult literacy with only peripheral child nvolvement, and the evaluation details given are imited.

The PACE family literacy programme has demonstrated increased parental and child literacy, raised parental acquisition of formal qualifications, and raised parental expectations for their children (Heberle, 1992).

The Kenan programme has demonstrated over 14 sites increases in observed and self-reported literacy related behaviours and self-expectations, the child participants subsequently doing well in school. Participant children entered Chapter 1 or special education at lower rates than otherwise expected (Darling and Hayes, 1989; Darling, 1992, 1993; Seaman, 1992).

The Even Start programme has involved children aged 0 to 7 years, encompassing 503 sites and 35 000 families (by 1994). Gains on norm-referenced tests of school readiness and language development (n = 1211) at above 'normal' rates have been reported for participant children, but without control group data. A positive relationship between degree of child gain and degree of parental programme involvement was found. Participant adults have shown small pre-post gains on measures of literacy competence (St Pierre *et al.*, 1991, 1993).

None of these have provided long-term follow-up data, and Connors characterized the current scene as one of 'small wins'.

Conclusion

It seems that although the evaluation research on parental involvement in reading is generally positive, the picture for family literacy is still incomplete. Evaluative evidence to date is very various in quality and quantity. This is unsurprising for an innovatory type of intervention, especially one aiming at more numerous and more difficult targets. Nevertheless, there is much which is encouraging.

For the future, issues of generalization and maintenance of gains, and of cost-effectiveness, will be especially important. Do child gains evident out of school generalize into 'schooled literacy'? If not, why not, and what should and can be done about it? Does increased parental competence as prime community educator of one child automatically generalize to application with other family members - and if not, how can this be ensured? Whatever the immediate gains are, how can we be sure they do not wash out in the longer run?

Some family literacy programmes are very costly to operate. Funds will never be available to replicate them on a scale large enough to serve all who are in need. How can we produce similar positive effects more cheaply, maximizing cost-effectiveness and thereby widening access and equal opportunities? The costs of involvement to the families themselves must be scrutinized. Some of the intensive workshop programmes consume a great deal of parental time, inevitably excluding some otherwise well-motivated parents. Centre-based meetings can mean cash expenditure for parents on travel and care for smaller children. Cost-effectiveness must not be seen purely in terms of costs to professionals.

These large questions will only be finally answered some way down the road. For the present, as emphasized by Sheila Wolfendale in the following chapter, it is important that those working in the field speak the same language and share the same definitions so far as possible. What is 'family literacy'? The evaluation of Even Start is the evaluation of myriad disparate programmes, not a homogeneous entity - this becomes

a problem if we and others are not aware of it and jump to faulty conclusions. Nickse (1990, 1993) has most helpfully offered the beginnings of a typology of programmes, objectives and methods of evaluation for family literacy.

We all need to be cultivating the host environment in government, schools and community - successful programmes do not spring up overnight. Better later and well than sooner and badly. We need to develop better methods of tutoring to propose to parents, which are widely acceptable and unlikely to clash with most home cultures. In concert, we need to develop inexpensive and more effective methods of recruiting, training and supporting parents and children.

To guide us on the way, we need more sensitive, more reliable and valid, less intrusive and threatening evaluation measures, particularly of adult literacy competence and child literacy competence out of school. We need better research designs, with meaningful but objective evaluation integrated into major programmes from the outset, especially to tease out aptitude x treatment interactions.

When linking home and school, we need to value and build upon the home culture and enable the clients' own purposes - beware pedagogical imperialism! Most of all, we need to offer wider access and more equal opportunities to all parents and children: irrespective of the age of the child(ren), socio-economic status, membership of ethnic, language or religious minorities, in rural and urban settings, whether with or without special educational needs.

As was noted by the Bernard van Leer Foundation (1986) from a truly international perspective:

Much depends on the political, social and economic circumstances in which programmes operate. However, in the current economic circumstances, governments are not necessarily predisposed to increase spending on social programmes. The classical routes to institutionalisation and dissemination are via evaluation, publication and influencing of policy with a view to gaining access to national resources. These strategies do not always work. In situations of gross deprivation it is essential to look to other avenues which might ensure long-term continuity. The greatest single resource which the community can contribute is its own time, effort and dedication. (p.12)

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Recommended resources and further reading

Finally, in developing the Family Learning Resource Pack we consulted and learned from many excellent resources, some of which are referred to in this publication. We recommend that, in designing your own programme, you should also explore a range of resources.

For background reading, we highly recommend the four books from which excerpts are printed in the selected readings:

Family Involvement in Literacy, by Sheila Wolfendale and Keith Topping (1996) London: Cassel. ISBN 0-304-33423-5.

Literacy Goes to School, by Jo Weinberger (1996) London: Paul Chapman Publishing. ISBN 1-85396-292-9.

Literacy, Home and School, by Peter Hannon (1995) London: Falmer Press. ISBN 0-7507-0360-1.

The Emergence of Literacy, by Nigel Hall (1987) London: Hodder & Stoughton. ISBN 0-340-40216-4.

Other very good background reading resources include:

Bridges to Literacy, by David K. Dickinson (1994) Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. ISBN1-55786-373-3.

Early Childhood Education, an I.N.T.O Publication (1995) Dublin: I.N.T.O.

Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading, by Yetta Goodman (1986) Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Family Literacy Works, by Greg Brooks, Tom Gorman, John Harman, Dougal Hutchison and Anne Wilkin (1996) London: The Basic Skills Agency. ISBN 1-85990-047-X.

Family Literacy: Practice in Local Programmes, by Louise Poulson, Flora Macleod, Neville Bennet and David Wray (1997) London: The Basic Skills Agency. ISBN 1-85990-064-X.

Family Literacy Lasts, by Greg Brooks, Tom Gorman, John Harman, Dougal Hutchison, Kay Kinder, Helen Moor and Anne Wilkin (1997) London: The Basic Skills Agency. ISBN 1-85990-0690.

How Texts Teach What Readers Learn, by Margaret Meek (1988) Exeter: The Thimble Press. ISBN 0 903355 23 X.

Learning About Writing, by Pam Czerniewska (1992) Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. ISBN 0-631-16963-6.

Learning to be Literate, by Alison Garton & Chris Pratt (1998) London: Blackwell.

Observing Young Readers, by Marie Clay (1982) London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Poverty and Educational Disadvantage, an I.N.T.O. Publication (1994) Dublin: I.N.T.O.

Phonological Skills and Learning to Read, by Usha Goswami and Peter Bryant (1994) Hove: LEA. ISBN 0-86377-151-3.

Reading, by Frank Smith (1978) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-31285-X.

Young Children Learning: Talking and Thinking at Home and in School, by B. Tizard and M. Hughes (1984) London: Fontana.

For resource materials for family learning we suggest:

Count and Figure it out Together, by Sheila Ebutt and Sue Gifford (1998) London: The Basic Skills Agency. ISBN 1-85990-084-4.

Helping Your Child With Reading, by Angela Redfern Reading: Early Learning Centre. ISBN 0-7049-0713-5.

Learning Together, by Wendy Cole and Sue Goodhand (1997) West Sussex: West Sussex County Council. ISBN 0-86260-413-3.

Preparing for Early Literacy Education with Parents, by Cathy Nutbrown and Peter Hannon (1997) Nottingham: NES Arnold. ISBN 0-946647-00-3.

(An excellent video is available with this pack. See address below.)

Read and Write Together, by Chris Buckton (1996) London: BBC Education. ISBN 1-859900-16-X.

Reading Begins at Home, by Dorothy Butler and Marie Clay (1979) Auckland: Heinemann Publishers. ISBN 0-86863-267-8.

Reading Together Parents Handbook, by Myra Barrs and Sue Ellis (1998) London: Walker Books. ISBN 0-7445-5708-9.

Sound Practice: Phonological Awareness in the Classroom by Lyn Layton, Karen Deeny and Graham Upton (1997) London: David Fulton Publishers ISBN 1-85346-456-2

Your Home is a Learning Place, by Pamela Weinberg (1993) New York: Signal Hill Publications. ISBN 0-88336-641-X.

Further details on these and other family learning publications are available from:

Julia Lewis
Sheffield University Television
5 Favell Road
Sheffield S3 7QX
United Kingdom
Tel: 0044-114-222-0400
Fax: 0044-114-276-2106
e-mail: j.r.lewis@sheffield.ac.uk

Recommended resources and further reading

Basic Skills Agency
Commonwealth House
1-19 New Oxford St.
London WC1A 1NU
Tel. 0044-171-405-4017
Fax: 0044-171-440-6626
e-mail: enquiries@basic-skills.co.uk
www.basic-skills.co.uk

Even Start and Family Literacy Programs
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-7240
Tel: 202-260-0991
Fax: 202-260-7764
Website: http://www.ed.gov/

National Centre for Family Literacy
325 W. Main Street
Suite 200
Louisville, KY 40202-4251
Tel. 502-584-1133
E-mail: ncfl@famlit.org

There are many very good adult learning materials available. These are some we find useful:

Form Filling at Work, by Suffolk County Council (1997) Suffolk: Suffolk Basic Skills.

Helping Adults To Spell, by Sue Abell (1994) London: The Basic Skills Agency. ISBN 1-870741-74-9

Job Applications From Start To Finish, by Moira Turner (1997) Oxford: Oxfordshire County Council.

Learning in Practice, by Rosamond Phillips (1996) Dublin: National Adult Literacy Agency.

Making Materials Work, edited by Pauline Hensey (1995) Dublin: City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee. ISBN 0-946791-10-4.

Sentence Sense, by Catherine Hilton and Margaret Hyder (1996) Worcestershire: MCH Publications. ISBN 1-898901-13-9.

The Starter Pack, by The Basic Skills Agency (1991) London: The Basic Skills Agency. ISBN 1-870741-22-6.

The Spelling Pack, by The Basic Skills Agency (1988) London: The Basic Skills Agency. ISBN 1-870741-01-3.

To Write?...Too Right!, by Pam Bossard, Jill Hollway, Jonquil Mackey (1997) Canberra: Australian National Training Authority.

For more information on adult learning materials, try these addresses:

National Adult Literacy Agency
76 Lower Gardiner St.
Dublin 1
Tel. 01-855-4332
Fax: 01-855-5475
e-mail nala@iol.ie
Website: http://www/iol.ie/~nala

Avanti Books
8 Parsons Green
Boulton Road
Stevenage
SG1 4QG
England
Tel. 0044-1438-350155.
Fax 0044-1438-741131

ARKS
Adult Returned Key Skills
http://www.ed.ac.uk/~calarks.indexe.html

Basic Skills Agency
(see address above)

Notes

Clare Family Learning Project

Clare Family Learning Project
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