

READING TOGETHER 1ST STEPS - PARENT GROUPS**Session 1: Setting the Scene, and Choosing the Right Book****Preparation**

1. Welcoming room with suitable number of chairs for presenters, parents and children.
2. Name badges.
3. A short children's story that lasts no longer than 10 minutes in total.
4. Pie-chart re the relative influence of home and school (Appendix 1).
5. Arabic scripts (Appendix 2, 3, 4, 5).
6. Nonsense passage: Corandic.....(Appendix 6).
7. Remind the school representative about when to bring in the children.
8. Copy of the session's script to the school representatives.
9. Tea/coffee.
10. Selection of books for the children to choose with their parents, and sheet for recording book selection for each child (Appendix 7).
11. A selection of different book types (see section 3.2) comics, short books, pop-up and flap books, rhyming books.

READING TOGETHER 1ST STEPS - PARENT GROUPS**1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Welcome. Name labels (also ask parents to make one for their child).
- 1.2** Introduce course presenters, where necessary. Also invite the parents to introduce themselves, and say who their child is.
- 1.3** Reassure that invitation to participate in the workshops was extended to parents of all children in the class (no hidden selection procedure).
- 1.4** Few children learn to love books by themselves. Someone has to lure them into the wonderful world of the written word; someone has to show them the way.
- 1.5** *Activity:* Presenter to read part of a short children's story to the adults, and promise to read the rest at the end of the session. Try to stop at a 'cliff-hanging' part of the story. Ask if they enjoyed the story, using open-ended questions. Enquire as to whether they were read to as children. What do they remember about it?
- 1.6** Remember that you taught your child to talk and play; you can also help your child to read.
- 1.7** These groups are primarily about reading material that is not a school reading scheme book, though most of what is said in these sessions holds true for school reading schemes as well.
- 1.8** In the course of Primary 1, 2 and 3, your child will be able to increasingly take part, and indeed possibly lead in reading.
- 1.9** Indicate that whilst the presenter is working from a script, it is flexible, and that the really important thing about the workshops is participation and discussion.

2. Overview

- 2.1** The main purpose of the Reading Together 1st Steps groups is to look at things that parents can do which have been demonstrated to improve both how well their child can read and their child's confidence with the written word.

2.2 The main focus of the 4 workshops will be:

- i. to focus on developing a positive working partnership between you and your child which will stand you in good stead throughout your child's school career. Indeed, get it right now, and it will last for life.
- ii. to look at some ways to help your child to build a solid foundation of early reading skills through enjoying books together. This is separate to reading a story to your child at bedtime.
- iii. the main skills we will be concentrating on are:
 - Getting the setting right for hearing your child read at home
 - Choosing books.
 - Ways to share a book and vocabulary building.
 - Getting started in reading.
 - The importance of praise.

This first session though is very much about setting the scene with you.

Research into reading suggests that one of the biggest factors associated with “success” is whether the children's reading is heard at home. Children whose parents hear them reading regularly tend to be much better readers than whose parents do not. Most parents are willing helpers, but sometimes are not sure what exactly to do. The strategies we talk about at this and follow up sessions can help parents to become ‘able’ and ‘effective’ helpers.

Invite audience to guess relative influences of school and home factors.

School factors are thought to contribute 15% toward academic achievement while family factors contribute 85%. You as parents are therefore able to play a considerable part in raising your child's attainments in literacy.

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- 2.4 Show 'Pie Chart' (Appendix 1) :
"no pressure on you!" *Invite discussion.*
- 2.5 Teachers may begin teaching children to read spending perhaps 2 hours per day – approximately 360 hours per year with his/her attention divided between 20+ children. The greater the book experience that the primary school child has, the greater the likelihood of literacy success. You are able to help this process.
- 2.6 What we are not going to do is teach you to be mini teachers
- 2.7 As adult readers, there are presumptions that we make about reading, that we take for granted, but which young children have to learn when acquiring basic reading skills. It is the recognition of these new learning experiences, and the methods and the approaches to teach effectively, for which teachers are trained. Let's take you back to Primary One!!
- 2.8 When the child first encounters print, it may at best seem a bit like this!
Show Arabic script (Appendix 2) – think how you might feel when faced with this! You have just the picture to go on.

It becomes a bit easier if you know a few key words – using your skills to fill in the gaps - *illustrate with Arabic script with some words in English* (Appendix 3): *read together with parents, inviting them to join in where they can, and praise their efforts liberally!*

It becomes easier still when you read it a second time, and when you know some individual letter sounds: eg n, s, t, w. (Appendix 4).

Invite discussion (Appendix 5).

- 2.9 There are a number of assumptions we make when faced with a page of print:
- Which way up.
 - Where to start; in English we start at the top lhs, not all languages do.
 - What direction: we read from left to right, scan back and drop a line
 - Symbols make certain sounds; some look different and make the same sound eg 'c' and 'k'; 'f' and 'ph'; others look the same but sometimes make different sounds eg 'g' and 'j'; or 'a' as opposed to 'a' followed by a silent 'e'.

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- Shape and size of words. Space around a word identifies it as a word rather than a letter.
- Two or more letters making one sound: eg ch, th, ee .
- Punctuation marks: commas, full stop, speech marks.

2.10 *Activity: Hand-out the nonsense passage (Appendix 6) and invite discussion:*

- Suppose I were to ask you to read it, and answer some questions about it
- How would you feel? (*pause*) Would you hope I would not ask you?!
- If I did, how I treated your efforts might affect your willingness to have another go another time!
- This demonstrates well the importance of the vocabulary of the story largely being understood by the child
- Whilst you can read it, using phonic skills, the content is meaningless as the ‘words’ are not in your vocabulary. It becomes both boring and tiring.

You are probably wondering now how you ever learned to read, and it may help you understand how it is that some people find it very difficult.

2.11 As said earlier studies have shown that children who grow up in families where books are read to them and with them are at an advantage where reading is concerned. Since the ability to read affects all of the other subjects in school, these children remain at an advantage throughout their schooling.**2.12** Don’t stop reading to your child just because they are beginning to read in school. Children can enjoy being read to right up to into their teens, and also as adults (a radio programme : “A Book at Bedtime” has run for years, books are also on CD, and can be played in the car, on train journeys. Recent copies of the ‘Radio Times’ were selling Jane Austen novels). Increasingly staff in schools are putting reading material onto i-Pods.**3. Choosing the Right Book****3.1** Different children respond to different books in different ways. Choosing the right book for your child will help to hold your child’s attention to the end of the story.

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- Comics; magazines (*ask if any of their children take comics*).
- Short books for children who cannot sit long.
- Interactive books to help keep attention.
- Pop-up and flap books.
- Books with a repetitive line for the child to join in with.
- Books which are written in rhyme or contain nursery rhymes.

Illustrate this with a prepared selection of books.

3.3 Books on a child's favourite subjects are always likely to hold interest. It is always a good idea to encourage your child to help to choose the book. Look at the front cover; information on the back, as well as inside! Discuss the advantages of book tokens for adults as a gift (your choice), rather than being bought a book (which you might not like).

3.4 All young children enjoy hearing or reading some stories over and over again – it helps them to get to know the story, and they enjoy its familiarity although we as adults may soon tire of it!

3.5 *Activity:* Invite comments/discussion asking for recommended books from their experience. Any favourite books you'd like to share with us all next session.

3.6 *Activity:* Read the second half of the story you began the session with.

3.7 Parents to be told their children are coming through to join them, and to choose a book together that they will share in the week ahead from the selection the school has made available.
(Staff member to get the children).

3.8 Reorganise the seating so that there is an empty chair beside each adult whilst the children are being fetched from class (ensure that the class are not undertaking a favourite activity during this time!).

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- 3.9** Introduce the idea of the Reading Together 1st Steps project to the children by explaining that they are going to choose a book from the selection provided (not their class reader) and that their parents will read this book to them at home for about five to ten minutes, four or five times a week. Tell the children that they can join in as best they can, if they want to, by pointing out or reading aloud any words they know.
- 3.10** Explain to the children that they can choose a new book next week if they are finished, but they are free to select another book before then (through school arrangements) if they do not like the book, if it is too hard or too easy, or if they have finished before that time.
- 3.11** The title of the book which each child has chosen is noted on the Record Sheet (Appendix 7), and the children returned to class.
- 4. Tea/coffee**
Depending on the start time and school organisational factors, this may be something to provide at the start rather than the end.

This is also a time for informal discussion.