

READING TOGETHER – PARENT GROUPS

Session 1: Setting the Scene & the Role of Parents

Preparation

1. Welcoming room with suitable number of chairs for presenters, parents and children.
2. Name badges (parents, children and presenters).
3. Arabic scripts (Appendices 2,3,4).
4. Pie chart – Relative influence of home and school (Appendix 5).
5. Suitable book for Role Play A: “Getting the setting right” - how not to do it (reading book, TV or radio, newspaper etc.).
6. Suitable book for Role Play B: “Getting the setting right” - how to do it (reading book).
7. Selection of books grouped broadly into reading levels (usually three groups of books).
8. Sheet for recording book selection for each child (Appendix 5).
9. Tea and coffee.

READING TOGETHER – PARENT GROUPS**Procedure:****1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Welcome. Name labels (also ask parents to make one out for their child).
- 1.2** Introduction of course presenters, where necessary. Also invite the parents to introduce themselves and say who their child is.
- 1.3** Reassurance that invitation to participate in the workshops was extended to parent of all children in the class (no hidden selection procedure).

2. Overview

- 2.1** The main purpose of the Reading Together groups is to look at things that parents can do which have been demonstrated to improve both how well their children can read and their children's confidence with the printed word.
- 2.2** We will look at a range of factors, for example:
- Getting the setting right for hearing your child read at home.
 - How to choose a book at precisely the right level of reading.
 - The need for regular praise when hearing your child reading and how best this can be done.
 - How to deal with reading when your child gets stuck with a word or makes a mistake.
- 2.3** It may be natural for parents to help with reading during their children's early schooling, but there is a natural tendency for this to tail off as children gets older. After these sessions, we would hope that parents would be encouraged to continue with this activity.

So how are we going to go about this?

3. What We Are *Not* Going To Do

- 3.1** What we are not going to do is to teach you to be mini teachers.
- 3.2** As adult readers, there are presumptions that we make about reading that we take for granted – but which young children have to actively learn when acquiring basic reading skills. It is the recognition of these new learning experiences, and the methods and the approaches to teach them effectively, for which teachers are especially trained.
- 3.3** Let's illustrate this with some Arabic text. When children first encounter print, it may seem a bit like this (Appendix 2). Think how you might feel when faced with this! You just have 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 – 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.

- 3.4** There are a number of basic points that can be made, for example:

- Where do we start reading? In English, we arbitrarily start at the top left hand corner but not all other languages follow this convention.
- In what direction do we read – we read from left to right, then scan back and drop a line.

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- There are some symbols which look different but which make the same sound (e.g. “c” and “k”, “f” and “ph”); whilst there are others letters which can make different sounds (eg “g” or “j”).
- Two or more letters can make a single sound eg “ch”, “th”, “ee”.
- Punctuation marks – commas, full stops, speech marks etc.

4. The Importance of Parents

4.1 As a parent, you have a unique relationship with, and understanding of, your child. Because of this, you have a critical contribution to make towards your child’s reading which can complement what the teacher provides.

4.2 So how important are parents in their children’s learning?

- About 80% of connections in the brain are established by the time the child is 3 years old. Parents are the main influence in these developments.
- Invite parents to guess the relative influence of home and school on a child’s learning. Many studies have taken place exploring the influence of home on a child’s learning. Consistently, as this chart indicates, it has been found that around 15% of a child’s learning comes from school whilst a massive 85% comes from home. Show pie chart (Appendix 5). Discuss.
- When you think about it, a child spends about 1,000 hours in school each year, the class teacher having to divide her attention between 30 or so pupils. A child spends over 7½ thousand hours outside school in a year.

So, as parents, the importance of your role cannot be underestimated.

5. So What Are We Going To Do?

5.1 Research into reading suggests that one of the biggest factors associated with “success” is whether the child’s reading is heard at home. Children whose parents hear them reading regularly tend to be much better readers than those whose parents do not. Parents are willing helpers but sometimes are not sure what exactly to do. The topics which we cover during these sessions can help parents to become “able” and “effective” helpers.

5.2 The way a parent responds to their child when hearing reading has been shown to play a key part in both how well the child reads and how confident the child is with the printed word.

5.3 So what should parents do to ensure that hearing reading is a happy, joint experience which brings about such an improvement?

Role Play A: Getting the setting right – how not to do it

Using any suitable book, the two presenter’s role play “parent” and “child”. The background distractions may include a television or radio; the adult’s interest may be interfered with by some external source

such as ironing, newspaper etc; there may be some distance between adult and child and the adult does not respond to successful reading.

Invite discussion about issues raised by role play from group.

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- 5.4** Hearing your child reading gives an ideal opportunity for creating a “special time” for you and your child. Organising things so that you have a quiet time and place where you can be close to your child without distraction may not be easy, but the benefits are well worth it.

5.5 Role Play B: Getting the setting right – how to do it

In light of above discussion, adult switches television or radio off; sitting closely to the child, adult shows active interest in the child’s reading – asking questions about picture or text, praising correct reading etc. Child reads the same text as in role play A.

Encourage discussion from the group about ways in which they have found it best to get the setting right – time at which reading together may be best done, how to manage other children etc.

- 5.5** Correct reading can often be a one way process with the adult silent during the exercise. The importance of, and practise in, ongoing praise and encouragement while your child is reading will be a major focus of next session.
- 5.6** But what do you do when your child makes a mistake? Do you provide the word, do you encourage your child to try again, or to sound out, or to read on then return to the mistake? Later on, we will be looking at ways to deal with incorrect reading in a consistent way.
- 5.7** In order to work on all these areas, your children will be invited to take part in the group. They will choose a book from the selection available and, each week, will read a section of the book so that we can practice what has been discussed.

6. Book Choosing

- 6.1** Reorganise the seating so that there is an empty chair beside each adult for their child whilst the children are being fetched from class (ensure that the class are not undertaking a favourite activity during this time!).
- 6.2** Introduce the idea of the Reading Together 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 parent(s) will hear them read from this book at home for about five to ten minutes, four or five times per week.
- 6.3** The children will join the group each week and will read a short section from their chosen book aloud with their parent.
- 6.4** Explain to the children that they can choose a new book each 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.
- 6.5** The children and parents are then directed to choose a book from the appropriate group (teacher judgement) with the parent hearing the child read a short passage to check that the text is appropriate.
- 6.6** The title of the book which each child has chosen is noted (Appendix 5).
- 6.7** Children are returned to class.
- 6.8** Parents are encouraged to create a “special time” for reading at home, separate from any other reading activities such as reading homework, bedtime story etc.
- 6.9** Informal discussion about any issues arising over tea/coffee.