

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN READING

About the Pack

This pack was originally developed by Highland Council Psychological Service in 2008. Full acknowledgement is given to **Ken Crossan, Shiona Alexander, Neil Brown and Christine Bunker**. The pack has been updated in response to recent national and local developments in literacy, specifically the Scottish Government's Literacy Action Plan (2010) and the Highland Council Literacy Strategy (2013).

The benefits of the active involvement of parents in the reading process are self-evident. Much research has taken place over the years supporting the value of collaborative approaches to reading – from shared and paired reading to peer tutoring.. Although parents are keen to help their children with reading, they often lack the skills and the confidence to know how best to go about this. This pack provides information to help parents support their children effectively, particularly at the early stages of acquiring reading skills.

The pack outlined the current educational context highlighting the relevance and importance of involving parents in their children's learning. It provides information leaflets on reading together with baby and toddler, on reading together at the pre-school/nursery stage (Shared Reading), on entry to Primary School, (Reading Together 1st Steps) and when the child has acquired basic reading skills, usually around P3 (Reading Together). Evaluation of the Shared Reading, Reading Together 1st Steps and Reading Together processes is provided and results indicate that parents and children enjoy the sessions and that children's skills and confidence with the printed word are enhanced.

The main thrust of improving literacy in this pack is through the development of parent groups, where parents have the opportunity to share experiences, give moral support and learn from each other. Detailed presenter's notes with associated support materials (appendices and handouts) are provided for each of the three stages. Although they can work effectively as stand alone materials, they can, of course, be modified and adapted to meet the needs of presenters and/or parent groups.

We hope that this pack provides a mechanism to support active parent-school collaboration from the earliest stages, gives parents the skills and confidence to become involved with their children's learning on a long-term basis and, most of all, instils in children the joy of reading from their earliest years.

Peta Barber
Ken Crossan
Louise McClatchey
Neil Brown
James McTaggart
Kirstie McClatchey

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN READING

Overview

Parent Group Sessions

The group sessions which follow are run by schools, and show how parents and children can work together on learning to read.

The main principles underpinning the sessions have been well researched and documented over many years:

- Parents are prime educators of their children and have a unique contribution to make, irrespective of their own educational experiences or standards.
- Group dynamics contribute to and extend the ability of parents to become positively involved in the reading process. They learn by doing the activity themselves, by observing other parents in action, and by receiving feedback on the outcomes of the activity.
- Effective learning takes place when the activity is matched precisely to the child's current operating level.
- Participation in the groups can have positive spin-offs in other areas of the child's learning and behaviour, primarily because the parent and child are involved in positive interactions together – enhancing the parent/child relationship.

These particular sessions have been developed and evaluated in schools by the Highland Council Psychological Service over a number of years, and now focus on the development of literacy skills at 3 key stages:

- Pre-School **Shared Reading**
- Primary 1 **Reading Together 1st Steps**
- Primary 3 **Reading Together**

Each programme has 4 or 5 sessions lasting approximately 1 hour – including a cup of tea/coffee! Two presenters from the school meet weekly in the school with a group of 6-10 parents and look at aspects of reading together. Their children are also involved during part of each session. The groups learn through demonstration, discussion and practice.

Evaluation of past Shared Reading and Reading Together groups indicated that there was a significant rise in reading attainment following their programme, and parental comments noted that they had found that their involvement in the programme had a positive impact on various aspects of their child's learning and on their relationship with their child.

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Overview of the parent programmes

The content and materials of the programme demonstrate how parents can become involved in their child's reading from the earliest days through to the time when they leave the infant stages of school and move into P4.

Reading Together with your baby and toddler

For the years before the pre-school stage, there is a leaflet for parents that emphasises the benefits of reading to their child from the very early days, and engaging them in communicating and conversing from the start of their lives. This leaflet could be given out to parents attending the school sessions, as they may also have very young children.

The 3 group sessions

Ideally the school would have a rolling programme of parent groups every year for pre-school, P1 and P3. Parents could then take part in each stage of the programme as their child grows. However, parents can opt in at any stage.

Shared Reading

This is for parents at the pre-school stage. This programme consists of 5 sessions and looks at sharing a book with your child; building vocabulary; rhyme; rhythm; environmental print and the initial sounds of words.

Reading Together 1st Steps

This level is intended for parents who have children in P1. There are 4 sessions focusing on choosing the right book; getting the setting right; the importance of praise; supported reading; simultaneous and independent reading.

Reading Together

This is for parents whose children are in P3. There are 5 sessions which look at getting the setting right for hearing children read; choosing books at the right level; how to praise and deal with errors; independent reading for pleasure.

For each programme there are presenters' scripts and notes; handouts and worksheets. The school would need to provide suitable books for each child to read at home, and refreshments for the group sessions.



SHARED READING: EVALUATION**Shared Reading: Evaluation****1. The Parent Groups**

- 1.1 The Shared Reading parent groups are targeted at the parents of children who are attending pre-school provision and are 3 or 4 years old.
- 1.2 The Shared Reading initiative is offered to the parents of all children at that stage. The optimum group size is around 8 parents – if the parent group is less than 6, the group dynamics are lost; if the parent group is greater than 10, management of the group begins to become unwieldy.
- 1.3 The Shared Reading groups comprise 5 one-hour sessions, delivered on a weekly basis.
- 1.4 The activities focused on during the sessions are practised by parents and children at home during the week with feedback provided at the start of the following session. A range of fun games are modelled and books from which the children can choose are provided by the nursery for follow-up activities.
- 1.5 The main themes of the Shared Reading sessions are:
 - Getting the Setting Right
 - Ways of Sharing a Book
 - Vocabulary Building
 - Rhyme
 - Rhythm
 - Environmental Print and Initial Sounds
- 1.6 An overview of the content of the Shared Reading workshops is detailed in Appendix A.

2. Evaluation

- 2.1 The Shared Reading groups have been delivered over many years and, during that time, evaluation has been carried out through:
 - Rating scales.
 - Parents' comments, written and verbal.

- 2.2 The evaluation data are based on information provided by around 150 parents.

2.3 *Rating Scales*

- 2.4 Rating scales are employed to provide an overview of how the groups are received.

Course participants (parents and nursery staff) complete a 1 to 5 point rating scale for:

- presentation (1 = poorly presented; 5 = well presented)
- usefulness (1 = not useful; 5 = very useful)
- pace (1 = poorly paced; 5 = well paced)
- recommendation (1 = would not recommend this course to other parents; 5 = would strongly recommend)

- 2.5 Of the 150 or so respondents, there was near unanimity in rating both presentation and usefulness as 5, that is, the workshops were found to be well presented and very useful, well paced and would be recommended to other parents.

2.6 *Parents' Comments*

- 2.7 Parents' comments reinforced the view that the sessions not only supported the development of early literacy skills in the children, but provided parents with the confidence to interact with their children in a way that impacted on other aspects of their development.

- 2.8 A selection of comments provides a flavour of some of the more common issues raised.

- *"These sessions must be part of every child's nursery year in the future."*
- *"It has been very helpful knowing how to read a book and ask open questions instead of closed questions all the time. Also, for making me as a parent understand the importance of rhyme and rhythm. How important it is for my son to learn these. I would not have known about these things if I had not gone to the workshops."*

- *“My child chooses the book and holds it, turns the pages and feels in control. Sometimes she will choose the story book in the afternoon and sets this by her bed in preparation for bedtime.”*
- *“Because their friends have also been to the classes, they walk down the street or in the park together, clapping everything that they see.”*
- *“My older child now reads sometimes with my younger child. He feels proud of what he can do and she wants to be able to read like him.”*
- *“I now feel more confident that there are things that I can do to help my child.”*
- *“My child’s attention and concentration seem to have increased.”*
- *“Thoroughly enjoyed the course. Found it very interesting and fun. The children all looked forward to it and enjoyed it very much. Good relaxed atmosphere. Sorry when it ended.”*
- *“The group was very relaxed and fun. Why should the children have all the fun!”*
- *“I didn’t realise that I could influence my child’s learning to such an extent. I thought this should be left to the teachers.”*
- *“I find that I am praising my children more, not just when we are reading or doing homework.”*
- *“My child now turns the television off because she enjoys sharing the quiet time.”*
- *“The rhyming has helped to build his confidence.”*
- *“Really good to have time to meet other parents.”*
- *“Raised my awareness of the difference between reading a story to my child, and sharing a book with her.”*

APPENDIX A

CONTENTS

Session 1: Setting the Scene

- Overview
- What we are **not** going to do
- What we are going to do
- Getting the Setting Right

Session 2: Ways of Sharing A Book/Vocabulary Building

- Choosing the Right Book
- Ways to Share a Book
- Vocabulary Building - Open and Closed Questions
- Concepts about Print
- Children's Book Choosing
- Discussion

Session 3: Rhyme

- Introduction
- Rhyme
- Demonstration of Games
- Games Practice
- Children's Book Choosing
- Discussion

Session 4: Rhythm

- Introduction
- Rhythm
- Demonstration of Games
- Games Practice
- Children's Book Choosing
- Discussion

Session 5: Environmental Print, Initial Sounds, Evaluation

- Environmental Print – explanation and activities
- Initial Sounds Games
- Discussion
- Evaluation

Reading Together 1st Step: Evaluation

1. The Parent Groups

- 1.1 The Reading Together 1st Steps parent groups are targeted at the parents of those children who have just started school, around 5 years old. The sessions are best carried out as soon after the children have settled into school as possible (the start of the second term at the latest).
- 1.2 The Reading Together 1st Steps initiative is offered to the parents of all primary one children. The optimum group size is around 8 parents – if the parent group is less than 6, the group dynamics are lost; if the parent group is greater than 10, management of the group begins to become unwieldy.
- 1.3 The Reading Together 1st Steps groups comprise 4 one-hour sessions, delivered on a weekly basis.
- 1.4 The activities focused on during the sessions are practised by parents and children at home during the week with feedback provided at the start of the following session. A range of books from which the children can choose are provided for this purpose by the school.
- 1.5 The main themes of the Reading Together 1st Steps sessions are:
 - Setting the Scene
 - Choosing the Right Book
 - Getting the Setting Right
 - Ways to Share a Book
 - Supported Reading
- 1.6 An overview of the content of the Reading Together 1st Steps parent groups is detailed in Appendix A.

2. Evaluation

- 2.1 Unlike the well-established Shared Reading and Reading Together groups, the Reading Together 1st Steps parent groups have been developed recently. The groups have been piloted with primary one children and their parents in three schools. Evaluation is based on responses from 19 parents.

READING TOGETHER 1st STEPS: EVALUATION

- 2.2 In line with this recent development, the evaluation form has been revised. The 5 point rating scale has been extended to include not only ratings for presentation and usefulness, but also whether the sessions were poorly paced/well paced and whether the groups would not be recommended/definitely recommended to a friend.
- 2.3 In addition to providing the opportunity for open-ended written comment, the evaluation form now also targets three key questions, namely:
- What did you find most useful?
 - What did you find least useful?
 - What changes have you seen already in your child?

Results from evaluation are described below:

Rating Scales

Poorly presented/well presented	Mean score = 4.7
Poorly paced/well paced	Mean score = 4.7
Not useful/very useful	Mean score = 4.8
Not recommend/recommend	Mean score = 4.8

Parents' Comments:

What did you find most useful?

- Child's perspective on learning to read
- Tips on how to encourage
- Turning the TV off; less distractions
- Understanding the difference between bedtime books and the 2 way interacting with books
- Now being able to understand where our children are starting from
- Made me realise how difficult it can be for a child to learn to read when it comes so naturally to us as adults
- Learning the correct way to start reading with your child
- Remembering how important the sounds and expressions are
- Talking with other parents
- The different ways in which you can include reading in your everyday life has given me the confidence that I can help with the reading process

What did you find least useful?

- 8 respondents left this blank
- 9 noted that basically this question did not apply
- 1 mention of Role Play
- 'It might have been better to have the sessions in the first term to get parents thinking about reading, before books are 'homework.'

What changes have you seen already in your child?

- *"More enjoyable reading sessions; more participation."*
- *"I praise him more, and he responds better whilst reading."*
- *"Growing confidence for books and reading."*
- *"Excited about new books and choosing them."*
- *"He appreciated my time coming in, and showing an interest in his school work so he put more effort in to concentrate on it."*
- *"Greater interest in choosing books, a greater interest in reading together."*
- *"More enthusiasm and confidence in approaching his books."*
- *"Loves joining in with the story especially rhyme. Feels especially proud when he can recognise letters and sounds."*
- *"Asking for more books of a different genre."*
- *"More attention given when reading."*
- *"Joining in with me, not just listening, not so distracted now."*

Other comments

- *"Very enjoyable fun sessions."*
- *"Very interesting seeing things through your child's eyes."*
- *"It really helped to understand how a child learns to read."*
- *"Pity just 4 weeks."*
- *"I think all parents should have access to this scheme."*
- *"It has really given me an interest in doing a good job for her sake, to give her a good basis for the future."*
- *"All parents should be offered this before P1."*
- *"Cemented a good relationship with school and my son's teacher."*
- *"Glad I came; took me back to my childhood and how things have changed."*
- *"Very helpful and inspiring."*
- *"Nice relaxed atmosphere, the group was enjoyable which helped me take in more information. Thank you."*
- *"Having time to choose and share books together is a special time which I appreciate more now."*
- *"Just wish there was a way to get more parents to come along."*
- *"A reading group for the mums and children to keep the momentum going would be great."*

APPENDIX A

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Session 1	Setting the Scene & Choosing the Right Book Introduction Overview Choosing the right book Discussion
Session 2	Getting the Setting Right, Ways to Share a Book & the Importance of Praise Introduction Getting the setting right Ways to share a book The importance of praise and keeping it fun Discussion
Session 3	Getting Started-Beginning Reading : Introduction to Supported Reading Introduction Getting started – the beginning of independent reading Introduction to Supported Reading Discussion
Session 4	Supported Reading & Evaluation Introduction Supported reading Discussion Evaluation

Reading Together: Evaluation

1. The Parent Groups

- 1.1 The Reading Together parent groups are targeted at the parents of those children who have acquired some basic reading skills, usually around primary 3.
- 1.2 The Reading Together initiative is offered to the parents of all children at that stage. The optimum group size is around 8 parents – if the parent group is less than 6, the group dynamics are lost; if the parent group is greater than 10, management of the group begins to become unwieldy.
- 1.3 The Reading Together groups comprise 5 one-hour sessions, delivered on a weekly basis.
- 1.4 The activities focused on during the sessions are practised by parents and children at home during the week with feedback provided at the start of the following session. A range of books from which the children can choose are provided for this purpose by the school.
- 1.5 The main themes of the Reading Together sessions are:
 - Getting the Right Setting
 - Choosing a Book at the Right Level
 - The Importance of Praise
 - Handling Errors
- 1.6 An overview of the content of the Reading Together groups is detailed in Appendix A.

2. Evaluation

- 2.1 The Reading Together groups have been delivered over many years and, during that time, evaluation has been carried out in three ways:
 - Rating scales.
 - Formal pre and post test evaluation.
 - Parents' comments, written and verbal.

2.2 The evaluation data are based on information provided by around 200 parents.

2.3 *Rating Scales*

2.4 Rating scales are employed to provide an overview of how the groups are received. Course participants (parents and school staff) complete a 1 to 5 point rating scale for:

- presentation (1 = poorly presented; 5 = well presented) and
- usefulness (1 = not useful; 5 = very useful)

2.5 Of the 200 or so respondents, there was near unanimity in rating both presentation and usefulness as 5, that is, the groups were found to be well presented and very useful.

2.6 *Formal Pre- and Post-Test Evaluation*

2.7 In some schools, permission was gained from the parents to administer the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability which provides scores both for Reading Accuracy and Reading Comprehension. This test was administered immediately prior to the Reading Together groups in order to gain baseline assessment and a parallel form administered after completion of the workshops in order to gauge any gains in Reading Accuracy and Reading Comprehension.

2.8 There was a high level of consistency in pre- and post-test results in the 20 or so schools in which formal evaluation took place. Gains were evidenced by children on average as follows:

- Gain in Reading Accuracy: 4 - 6 months.
- Gain in Reading Comprehension: 12 - 15 months.

2.9 Longer-term follow-up assessment of some children whose parents continued to hear reading at home indicated that these gains had been maintained.

2.10 There is, therefore, a substantial rise in the standard of literacy skills in those children participating in the Reading Together groups.

2.11 Test results from a school group of eight 8 year olds are illustrated in Appendix B.

2.12 Parents' Comments

- *"I noticed a huge difference in my child's confidence and willingness to read. The positive praise aspect and choosing the correct level of reading book has been the biggest help following this workshop. Reading is a joy now in our house!!!"*
- *"I have really enjoyed this meeting. It has opened our eyes to encouraging reading. Also the teacher was easy to understand and very nice – the children also liked him. I am definitely going to carry on with what I have learned."*
- *"I didn't realise how much I could do to make a difference. I'm getting much more satisfaction out of hearing my child reading."*
- *"Extremely well presented. Very useful insight into selection of correct level. Really did encourage good habits – parent and child! We both enjoyed the process."*
- *"It gave me confidence to build on things I was doing already. It's made reading together even more enjoyable. The information and practical application will help with my other children also. Very good. Keep it going."*
- *"Praise is spilling over to other areas of family life – like behaviour, maths, etc."*
- *"He is more confident and is more interested in reading and wants to read. He's reading everything in sight."*
- *"I enjoyed my child's enjoyment of the sessions. I could see massive improvements between sessions 1-6. Felt the 'praising' was maybe over-the-top at first – but proved myself wrong. The more the child is praised, the more enthusiastic the response from them."*
- *"I felt the group encouraged my child to treat reading as good fun and not just homework."*
- *"I can't sit silent anymore. There's a lot more input from me."*
- *"It's changed completely round. I used to only give corrections, but now I am praising."*

- *“At first I was very uncomfortable with coming as I thought it was because there was something wrong with my child’s reading. But I found it was the exact opposite. I feel that my child has come on so much by coming to this group. I also do the same with an older child that has been needing some extra help. It has given them both more confidence. I enjoyed the group too.”*
- *“Initially I was very concerned that the methods subscribed to would seem overly patronising to my son. However, having followed the process of praise and encouragement, I was taken aback and absolutely delighted with the immediate improvement in fluency, enthusiasm and confidence that he displayed. Right from the very first week the improvement was obvious. Creating an environment for him to read with me at a set time seemed difficult to schedule, but I was soon put in place by my son if I dared say ‘a little later’. His enthusiasm for his reading time became infectious and we both would be delighted to see it introduced formally.”*
- *“I found this workshop very useful, not only for the understanding of reading skills, but for everyday practices in dealing with my child. Appreciating praise can go a long way to promote better behaviour both from parent and child.”*
- *“I thought it was a good idea for both myself and my child. I have found her reading more than just her reading books, even labels on packets etc. and I think she feels more confident reading to other people even if she gets it wrong.”*

APPENDIX A

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Session 1	Setting the Scene & the Role of Parents Introduction Overview What we are <i>not</i> going to do The importance of parents So what are we going to do? Book choosing Discussion
Session 2	Choosing a Book at the Right Level & the Importance of Praise Introduction Choosing a book at the right level The importance of praise Reading round the group Book choosing Discussion
Session 3	Handling Errors Introduction Reading round the group Book choosing Handling errors Discussion
Session 4	Practising Praise & Handling Errors Introduction Reading round the group Book choosing Discussion
Session 5	Practising Praise, Handling Errors & Evaluation Introduction Reading round the group Book choosing Evaluation

APPENDIX B**PAIRED READING TOGETHER EVALUATION****PRIMARY SCHOOL****NEALE ANALYSIS OF READING ABILITY**

		PRE-TEST		POST-TEST		DIFFERENCE	
CHILD	C.A.	READING ACCURACY	READING COMPREHENSION	READING ACCURACY	READING COMPREHENSION	READING ACCURACY	READING COMPREHENSION
Child A	8 y 1 m	8 y 6 m	8 y 2 m	9 y 10 m	9 y 1 m	+ 16 m	+ 11 m
Child B	8 y 3 m	9 y 9 m	7 y 5 m	11 y 5 m	9 y 11 m	+ 20 m	+ 30 m
Child C	8 y 8 m	8 y 4 m	6 y 9 m	8 y 9 m	7 y 0 m	+ 5 m	+ 3 m
Child D	8 y 5 m	7 y 9 m	6 y 11 m	8 y 6 m	9 y 1 m	+ 9 m	+ 26 m
Child E	8 y 10 m	7 y 10 m	7 y 8 m	8 y 8 m	9 y 5 m	+ 10 m	+ 21 m
Child F	8 y 5 m	7 y 7 m	7 y 11 m	7 y 10 m	9 y 11 m	+ 3 m	+ 24 m
Child G	8 y 10 m	8 y 1 m	6 y 9 m	8 y 4 m	7 y 9 m	+ 3 m	+ 12 m
Child H	8 y 6 m	6 y 9 m	7 y 5 m	7 y 8 m	8 y 0 m	+ 11 m	+ 7 m

Average Gain in **READING ACCURACY** = **9.6 MONTHS** (Range + 3m to + 20m)Average Gain in **READING COMPREHENSION** = **16.75 MONTHS** (Range + 3m to + 30m)