

READING TOGETHER – PARENT GROUPS**Session 2: Choosing a Book at the Right Level & the Importance of Praise****Preparation:**

1. Organise seating for parents, children and presenters, as before.
2. Ensure that books are arranged in groups.
3. Suitable book for Role Play A : “Listening to reading without praise” and Role Play B: “Praising reading”.
4. Copies of script, “Mr Creep’s Plan” for Role Play C (Appendix 7).
5. Tally sheet to note the number of praise responses for each parent/child (Appendix 8).
6. Handout 1: “Reading at Home”.
7. Tea etc., as before.

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

- 1.1** Welcome (including name tags).
- 1.2** Encourage discussion on ways in which the parents organised things in practice to make hearing their child reading a special time. Any challenges? Parents may have found ways round some of the issues raised. Factors may include:
- What time?
 - What about the other children?
 - Where?
 - How do you sit together?
 - Who holds the book?
 - Separate from schoolwork?
- 1.3** Any initial feedback from the children about the idea of reading to parent(s) on a regular basis?
- 1.4** Indicate to the group that today's session will focus on two key issues – namely, how to choose a book at the right level and the importance of praise. After that, we will bring the children in and they will read a short section of the book chosen last week. Parents may need reassurance that the children are quite used to reading aloud in front of their peers in school (any anxieties are more likely to be those of the parents rather than the children!).

2. Choosing a Book at the Right Level

- 2.1** When the children have the opportunity to choose books at the end of each session, it is important that the stories are not only interesting for the children but that they are pitched at the right level.
- 2.2** If reading is too difficult, the child will get stuck or make too many mistakes and will not be able to make sense of what has been read. This can lead to frustration and may even put the child off reading.
- 2.3** If your child is really interested in a book that is too difficult this book should be read to, and discussed with, your child.
- 2.4** On the other hand, if the book is read fluently and without error, this is reading for pleasure and should be encouraged. However, this level of reading provides no challenges in terms of the reading itself and, therefore, does not provide the basis from which learning new skills can take place.
- 2.5** Reading for pleasure, or independent reading, is the basis on which the joy of reading and the understanding of text, is established.
- 2.6** In order to encourage active learning during the reading process, the level of text should be somewhere in between frustrational and independent reading
- 2.7** It has been found that this is provided when 90% -95% of the text is read correctly. This gives enough correct reading to provide fluency and understanding, and there is not the level of difficulty to interfere with making sense of what is being read. Therefore, frustration is reduced. It is this level of reading that we are aiming at when hearing our child read during the Reading Together process.

In practice, this means that when choosing a book with your child, you can check out that the book is at the right level by selecting a short paragraph of, say, approximately 50 words and

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asking your child to read it. If there are between 2 and 5 mistakes, this is about the right level. If your child makes more errors than this, or fewer errors than this, encourage your child to choose another interesting book and try again until the right level is reached.

- 2.7** You will find that through practice, you will gradually tune in better to the books that are at the right instructional reading level for your child.

3. The Importance of Praise

- 3.1** Probably the single most important message about reading together is the value of ongoing adult praise when the child is reading correctly. All too often we, as adults, just accept things and take things for granted when things are going well and only start to intervene when things are going wrong! Let's illustrate this with a couple of role plays.

- 3.2** Role Play A : Listening to Reading without Praise
Choosing a suitable book, "child" reads the page(s) fluently and with expression. "Adult", sitting closely, listens with interest – perhaps even smiling and nodding – but utters absolutely no words of approval, not even when the child finishes the allotted text. The child may give a big sigh at the end!

- 3.3** Role Play B : Praising Reading
Using the same text as in Role Play A, the child again reads fluently and with expression. This time the adult, again sitting closely and listening with interest, praises audibly at the end of each sentence using a range of verbalisations indicating approval (yes, well done, good etc).

- 3.4** Invite discussion from the group about the differences between each role play. Highlight that, if praising at the end of each sentence has not been done before, it may seem a bit uncomfortable at first for both adult and child. However, the child soon gets used to it and, indeed, may come to expect it!

- 3.5** Role Play C : Script - "Mr Creep's Plan" (Appendix 7).
Following the scripted page, "Mr Creep's Plan", adult extends praise to include prompts and self-corrections. It may be worthwhile providing a copy for each of the participants to reinforce the key areas for praise.

- 3.6** If the child remains stuck at a word after a prompt, provide the word after 2 or 3 seconds – any extended delay may result in loss of fluency. The ability to self-correct while reading has been shown to be one of the strongest indicators of success in reading, hence the emphasis on this area as a focus of praise.

4. Reading Round the Group

- 4.1** Reassure the group that, when we bring in the children to read, we recognise that it is an artificial situation and that it will not mirror what is happening at home.

- 4.1** However, it does give us the opportunity to learn from others and to examine our own ways of responding. Try to introduce praise at the end of each sentence as a starting point.

- 4.2** Remember, the purpose of the exercise is not to consider how good the children's reading is, but to concentrate on how the adults are reacting and responding whilst hearing the children reading.

- 4.4** Arrange seating, as before, for parent/child pair as children are fetched from the class.

- 4.5** Invite each child to read a short passage from their chosen book to their parent.

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4.6 Note discreetly the number of words of approval, or praises, which the parents make and quickly total on the tally sheet (Appendix 8).

4.7 Praise children's performance.

5. Book Choosing

5.1 At the end of reading round the group, invite those children who wish to change books to do so, using the procedure for checking out reading levels as described.

5.2 Note book selection for each child.

5.2 Again, remind the children that they are free to exchange books during the week if they wish to do so.

5.3 Return the children to the class.

6. Discussion

6.1 Feedback to the parents the number of praises recorded in the relatively short time of hearing reading. Highlight that it is unlikely that there is another occasion when you have the opportunity to respond like this with your child. And we all know how happy and positive children are when they are receiving praise.

6.2 Pick up on, and generalise, any issues rising from observation of group, e.g.:

- parent holding book
- parent pointing word by word, thus dictating pace of child's reading.
- use of marker, where appropriate.
- smiling/nodding rather than verbal reinforcement.

6.3 Emphasise the importance of not making reading a sterile, mechanical task, but that it must be taken in context of pre-discussion and post-discussion of the story, talking about the pictures in the book etc.

6.4 Encourage the parents to continue practising – praising is the key feature:

- Praise after every sentence
- Praise after a prompt
- Praise after every self-correction

6.5 Distribute Handout 1 : "Reading at Home", indicating that this gives an overview of the main points of the sessions.

6.6 Continue discussion over tea and biscuits.