

Summary of the “Reading Together” program

This program is based on underlying research which identifies that beginning reading preparedness relies on:

- Regularly reading aloud
- Learning letters of the alphabet
- Learning how print and words work on the page of a book
- The development of phonemic awareness through rhymes, song and repetition

How the sessions run.

- Weekly session of up to 2 hours duration conducted over 3 school terms
- All sessions follow a formula which can be adapted to suit the composition of the group (attachment a)
- Sessions conducted using the alphabet as the context
- Inviting open space created, preferably in the library, for sessions to be held
- Boxes of specially selected books available for children and parents to use and borrow
- Big Easel with the current letter of the alphabet displayed prominently as well as the letter from the previous week
- Singing and nursery rhymes integrated into each session
- A parent hint suggesting strategies for supporting their child to become a reader provided each week
- Each child has folder in which they keep all their work
- Name cards pinned to each child
- Good modelling provided by the teacher for parents
- “Oxford Sound Starters” used as the book focusing on the letter for the week
- Session always contains a hands on playgroup style of activity to reinforce the letter

5 key factors which will assist with the success of the program include:

- the importance of relating to the children and parents on their level;
- ensuring that a high quality personal relationship is built between the presenter and the participants;
- the use of a consistent formula and routine each week, and
- the continuity of the program.
- The development of high quality relationships between all stakeholders in the program

Does Reading Together fit into the “culture” of libraries? What “cultural” differences need to be acknowledged?

Reading Together is a significant departure from the way in which the State Library of Tasmania conducts programs. It is run by professional teachers many of whom have adult literacy experience and aims to engage those parents with preschool age children who would not normally see their local library as somewhere they would choose to spend their time.

There is a major focus on learning for both parents and children and connecting parents with additional support for their literacy needs should they decide to take this up.

Libraries are staffed by people who tend not see themselves as having an educative role to play in the community. The award under which they are employed is a major barrier to this occurring.

What conditions lead to sustainable collaboration between literacy groups and libraries?

The quality of the relationships initiated and developed by the Reading Together manager and teachers with the library staff and community partners, is a key factor in the success or otherwise of the program. The enthusiasm for and recognition of literacy as a strategic focus for the Library staff is also a major factor in the sustainability of the program.

How does each partner benefit from such collaborations?

The short term benefit for the State Library is the capacity of the Reading Together program to generate new library enrolments and in the long term to be seen as a major contributor to the capacity of the community to support the literacy needs of all its members.

Currently the benefits for the literacy providers are limited as the program creates an increased workload without adequate funding.

The community partners involved have another avenue for their clients and customers and the community as whole benefits through the potential the program has for community capacity building.

The participants benefit from an increased level of literacy for both parents and their preschool aged children

Can libraries contribute to or support the continued existence of a literacy infrastructure?

This depends on the political will, to support through appropriate funding, the development of the State Library as a major player in the areas of adult and family literacy.

How does your own or your local library perceive its role re literacy: Promoting awareness, advocating, providing space, offering services, developing collections, etc.?

This is new area for the State Library and although management support the program in principle, the funding is a critical factor in the sustainability and growth of the program.

What balance should be struck between serving children and serving adults through such collaborations?

Children eventually become adults who will use the services of their local library, It is my view that there should be far more resources spent on engaging children in their formative years both through their parents and by targeting their innate curiosity and interest in learning.

Reading Together Session Planner date.....

<u>Letter of the week and resources required</u>
<u>Welcome</u>
<u>Main Story</u>
<u>Activities/ Nursery rhymes, songs, finger rhymes, video- audio song</u>
<u>Alphabet / letter book</u>
<u>Children and parents book sharing. Hint for the week for parents.</u>
<u>Goodbye song</u>
<u>Borrowing time</u>

Would you like help with this form?

Please ask me *teachers name*

1. How do your children feel about coming to Reading Together?

2. What parts of the session do you think they enjoy most?

3. Since they began attending Reading Together what changes have you noticed in regard to the following areas?

<i>Books and Stories</i>	<i>Nursery Rhymes</i>	<i>Alphabet</i>

4. How do you feel about the Reading Together Sessions?

5. What parts do you feel are most valuable?

6. Other Comments.