



Reading for pleasure

Ideas to inspire parents and carers of young children



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'The National Year of Reading gives us a great opportunity to work together to promote reading for pleasure to adults who are improving their skills.'

*David Lammy MP, Minister for Skills,
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills*

'If you read, the world has never been more accessible and more exciting. If you don't, the door on opportunity has never been more firmly shut. By starting with what people love – be it sport, music, film, family history, magazines or adventure gaming – the National Year of Reading is a perfect opportunity to weave a rich variety of reading into all your work with learners.'

Honor Wilson-Fletcher, Project Director, National Year of Reading

'I can underestimate learners' understanding until they tell me about a book they have read.' *Adult literacy tutor*

Start with what you love. This is the message of the National Year of Reading. And this is the message for adult learners as much as for any other audience.

The Vital Link libraries and adult literacy programme, together with the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), have created this series of ideas packs for practitioners working with adults in a range of different settings. **This pack contains ideas to inspire parents and carers to share books with children and to enjoy reading themselves. There is a full list of all the packs available on page 9.**

The aim is to support you in introducing learners to reading in all its forms – books, magazines, websites, lyrics – not just this year, but every year. We need to widen people's concept of reading so that they can think of themselves as 'readers' whatever kind of reading they enjoy. We know that learners can get the reading bug if they are encouraged to choose what they read and can share their experience of reading with others. Reading needs to fit into their busy lives, be relevant to their interests and concerns but also to surprise them with new ideas and ways of looking at the world.

Research tells us that reading for pleasure 'helps to increase enjoyment, self-confidence, motivation and the acquisition of functional literacy skills'. Libraries are ideally placed to support learners as they discover an enjoyment of reading of all kinds. But other organisations also have expertise and resources to offer, which can help to engage people in a love of reading. Local authorities, colleges, prisons, trade unions, businesses and voluntary organisations have all made a commitment to use the National Year of Reading to create new readers.

Please make good use of these ideas while the profile for reading is high and help us to make 2008 an exciting point in their reading journey for adult learners across the country.

Genevieve Clarke, The Vital Link and **Jenny Cobley**, NIACE

See www.yearofreading.org.uk for more information about the National Year of Reading.

Introduction

Helping children with their reading can often be a catalyst for parents, grandparents, step-parents and carers to return to reading or to start reading for the first time. One of the Quick Reads titles published in 2008, *The Hardest Test*, tells how this was true for the international rugby star Scott Quinnell. Some of the short stories in another Quick Reads title, *RaW Voices: True Stories of Hardship and Hope*, will also resonate for such parents.

Families are children's first and most important educators. Many adults need reassurance that talking and listening to children is of far more importance than buying the latest games and gimmicks. For instance, research shows that those children who enter school knowing nursery rhymes pick up reading more quickly than those who don't.

Parents using languages other than English may need advice on how their skills can contribute to supporting their children's reading. They often like access to dual language books but don't know what is available or where to get it (see Resources section).

Try to encourage parents with whom you already have a relationship to act as ambassadors in recruiting others. You could also work with libraries and early years settings to reach parents who have received Bookstart packs for their babies or toddlers.

Activities with parents of young children work better if you can offer childcare. If you are working in a SureStart or family centre, can parents use the crèche? If you are a family learning group in a school, can you employ a teaching assistant or playtime supervisor with the necessary skills and CRB clearance to look after the smallest children? If you are in a library, can you work with the librarian to run parallel reading sessions for parents and story sessions for children?

Top ten ideas

- 1.** Set up a session to explore the fun of sharing books with babies and toddlers. Explain that there are ways of using stories even if someone isn't very confident about reading by talking about the pictures or coming up with a story themselves.
- 2.** Include a library element in all your work with families, for example you could arrange a visit or invite the children's librarian to your group. Parents can see or hear for themselves what the library has to offer and the librarian can demonstrate reading a story to children. Most libraries run regular baby bounce and rhyme times and story sessions.
- 3.** If you are making storybags, don't just use story books. Try taking numbers as a theme, with counting games, rhymes, friezes; or a non-fiction topic such as weather, with a reference book and some weather recording activities and 'experiments'. The Storybag company now sells a Dance-in-a-bag pack (see Resources section).
- 4.** Survey parents' own reading preferences. Remind them that children too have a wide variety of things that interest them. Make a quiz that they could do with their children to find out what books they like. Or ask them to choose two books that they think their child will like and take them home. At the next session ask them to report back on how their children reacted to the books.
- 5.** Parents are powerful role models for reading behaviour. They may have little time for reading themselves, and have lost the reading habit. Books such as the Quick Reads can rekindle that interest. If you can't incorporate them into your sessions, can you make them available for parents to borrow and take home?
- 6.** Children need to see the point of reading and writing. Encourage parents to involve children in everyday activities such as making shopping lists, reading and sending cards and emails, reading TV listings, road signs and directions, bus timetables and indicator boards, food packaging, instructions, menus. Organise a reading trail around the room where you meet. Parents can make a trail for the children to follow.
- 7.** Help parents to make books with their children, using personal photos or children's drawings and the children's own words as captions.
- 8.** Talk about the role of rhyme and repetition in early reading. Take a book with a strong repeating structure such as Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and enable parents to make their own version (perhaps use collage techniques, as Eric Carle does).
- 9.** Emphasise the value of oral storytelling with children. Parents may want to contribute traditional stories from other cultures, for example Anansi from the Caribbean or The Gingerbread Man retold as The Runaway Chapatti. Mantra Publishing specialises in dual language books (see Resources section).
- 10.** Provide a bag of mystery objects. Pull out one object at a time and ask the parents to say something about each one, building up a story as they go. They can then try this with their children or make their own to try with others.

Case study 1:

Making a family learning magazine

I worked with a school in Tamworth, Staffordshire on a course in family literacy and numeracy. This was run in three-hour sessions across three terms, supported by myself (a family learning tutor from the local college) and a teacher from the school. The group was diverse. Out of a dozen participants, one mother had learning difficulties in reading, writing and numeracy; one was literate in her mother tongue but had only limited English; one was a graduate nurse engaged in a post-graduate course for professional development; and another ran her own franchise business. But thanks largely to the school's sensitive approach, a great atmosphere of mutual support and respect was built up.

We decided to base the programme around festivals from various cultures celebrated throughout the year. The parents used their own reading skills to research the cultures and the customs associated with them. They made posters displaying the information they had found and worked with their children on games, songs, greetings cards, decorations and special food. This involved much reading and writing, factual, expressive and instructional, as well as counting, measuring and shape work.

The school had a computer suite that the group was able to use occasionally. The parents requested intensive training sessions on using basic programs from the teacher with IT responsibility. They decided to produce their own magazine about family learning, describing the various activities in which they had engaged, using photos they took with the digital camera and incorporating comments from their children, themselves and other members of their families.

The parents arranged a celebration event and sent invitations to the local authority and the local press. Their magazine was used as an encouragement for other parents to become involved with family learning. The magazine was available in the Reception area and supported by a wall display. Some of these parents went on to further courses, and to use their new IT skills in work contexts.

Case study 2:

Blind Date with a book

Stockport Library and Information Service participated in a pilot programme using the Vital Link's family reading collection, 'Got kids? Get reading!' to support family literacy in children's centres. Each project had to include a library visit and a reader development activity. The visit took place in the second week of the programme. Several activities were arranged, including a game based on the TV show, *Blind Date* (see below). The aim was to introduce participants to new books and authors they wouldn't normally choose in a light-hearted way, involving everyone and encouraging comments about the choice. The People's Network computers were promoted and there was a game to explore the library finding information books and authors. A hand and nail pampering session was included, which proved to be very popular.

The 'Blind Date' game involved preparing a Valentine card for each book with a brief, intriguing and entertaining description of the book's content, for example 'Meet Joe, who opens his eyes on his wedding morning to find himself not only in torn tights, etc.... '

Everyone sat in a circle and a 'victim' or 'volunteer' was chosen to sit in the middle. They picked three 'date' cards at random from the pack of Valentines. The facilitator then read out the three descriptions and with the help of the audience passed comments on the potential 'dates'. The volunteer then picked their date and the audience were encouraged to say if they agreed. Each Valentine card had a number, which matched the book, and this was given to the volunteer. The volunteer could change their mind if they wanted to. The next 'victim' sat in the hot seat and the process was repeated. With the children, the process was changed slightly – after picking three cards, the books were held up for the children to choose from. It was a popular game with everyone borrowing their 'date'.

Resources

Reading *Developing adult teaching and learning: Practitioner guides* has a great deal of useful advice about organising reading with new readers, combining findings from research about what is effective and examples of different ways to organise reading drawn from good practice. It is published by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) and distributed by www.niace.org.uk/publications

The Basic Skills Agency has produced several resources to support work with parents, carers and grandparents - see the Resources section of archived Basic Skills Agency website at www.niace.org.uk

The **Skills for Families** website at www.skillsforfamilies.co.uk has downloadable materials from the parent information packs produced by the Alliance for Lifelong Learning (BSA, NIACE and Tribal) to support families in helping 5 and 11 year olds with their reading. These resources complement the Government's 'Booktime' and 'Booked Up' offer of free books for all 5 and 11 year olds. Most of the content is also downloadable in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu.

For **storysack** materials, including material for English as an Additional Language, see www.storysack.com

Mantra Lingua is a publisher specialising in dual language books for children, plus games, toys, posters and CDs. www.mantralingua.com

The BBC's Read and Write campaign **RaW** has had a special focus on families. The website at www.bbc.co.uk/raw contains tips on sharing stories with children from Gail Porter and Tony Robinson and a RaW Family Reader which allows you to listen to and read extracts from nine famous children's books. BBC RaW has published three 'comics' for less confident readers (*My Story*, *Moving On* and *Tips for Storytelling*) all of which are very relevant for young parents.

All the **Quick Reads** books are listed on www.niace.org.uk/quickreads. More books selected for easier reading, including children's books with accessible text, are listed on www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk.

A DVD of the **Vital Link with Parents** project which linked libraries with children's centres and family learning can be seen at www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/gotkidspilot.html or ordered free from DIUS Publications – ring 0845 6022260 or email dius@prolog.uk.com (quote ref VLPDVD). Two publications based on the earlier Get on with Got kids? Get reading! pilot project are also available: a booklet for professionals (ref GOWGK) and a leaflet for parents (ref GKGR/P).

Gatehouse Media publishes Gatehouse Books – adult beginner reader books and resources for use in adult Literacy and ESOL, and also audio-cassettes, interactive CD-ROMs and educational resources. Some of their ESOL titles are for beginner readers and are in dual language editions. www.gatehousebooks.co.uk/beginner

Resources cont...

Bookstart aims to provide free packs for every baby and toddler in the UK via health visitors, early years settings, local libraries and schools. These are designed to inspire, stimulate and create a love of reading that will give children a flying start in life. Their website provides parents and carers with information on receiving the packs, activities to do with children, and a range of other resources. www.bookstart.co.uk

Booktrust provides online information about children's books for parents, teachers and librarians. This includes information on Children's Book Week, its Best Books Guide and how to organise author visits. www.booktrust.org.uk

The Family Reading Campaign encourages literacy in the home. Its website includes case studies of activities in different settings and many resources, including stationery, to help promote individual initiatives, links to free magazines with ideas and a toolkit for schools and family centres. www.literacytrust.org.uk/familyreading/index.html

www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk is a comprehensive training and support site for library and other staff who are working to develop reading with children, young people and families.

Scottish Government's home reading initiative, **Read Together!**, was launched to encourage parents and carers to share books with their children from an early age. The website at the heart of the campaign www.readtogether.co.uk offers a range of information and guidance on reading with children, a selection of practical *Bright Ideas* for ways in which to incorporate the enjoyment of books into family life, and an age-ranged choice of recommended reading.

Please also see the resources listed in the pack for dads and male carers of young children.

Full list of *Ideas to inspire packs*

New readers 1 (up to Adult Literacy Entry Level 2)

New readers 2 (Adult Literacy Entry Level 3 – Level 2)

Parents and carers of young children

Dads and male carers of young children

ESOL learners

People in prisons and young offender institutions

People in the workplace

FE college students

HE students

Readers with additional needs

These packs are available to download as individual PDF files from www.vitallink.org.uk
or www.niace.org.uk

Ideas to inspire parents and carers of young children

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Case study 2 contributed by Linda Paton

Photographs of braille reading and flower-seller reading novel by Sim Canetty-Clarke

We welcome all feedback on these ideas and on how you are promoting reading to your learners. Please contact genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk



The Vital Link libraries and adult literacy programme is run by The Reading Agency in partnership with the National Literacy Trust. See www.vitallink.org.uk



NIACE is a non-governmental organisation working for more and different learners. See www.niace.org.uk