

Open the door for reading

Guidance for practitioners working with young families



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The Open the Door for Reading project raises the importance of reading and telling stories amongst practitioners working with families across a wide range of contexts. The manual is a product of the Erasmus Plus 'Open the Door to Reading' project, involving 5 European cities and the transnational exchange of best practice. For further information visit the project website at www.göteborg.se/openthedoorforreading

This manual is a tool to be used by practitioners and volunteers to promote storytelling and reading among families, specifically families who might be facing multiple challenges. It gives you as a practitioner, ideas and inspiration for identifying and using opportunities presented in your daily work, to promote and develop reading.



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1. Introduction

The Open the Door for Reading project has designed this manual to support practitioners in settings as diverse as family centres and schools as well as volunteers who work directly with families and children from birth to six. The aim of the manual is to support you in your daily work providing you with some tried and tested ideas and strategies developed across the 5 European cities, to support families in their engagement with reading.

It can be used in a variety of ways as a starting point for training; an audit tool to support evaluation of current practice and a reference point for ideas and strategies or as a tool to reflect on case studies from other contexts. This is useful when embarking on any kind of training with practitioners and/or volunteers working with families and children.

All the elements of the manual were selected by the 5 countries as having had a significant impact on families and their reading habits. It has been designed in such a way as to enable users to either work through the whole manual or dip in to find key messages and ideas.



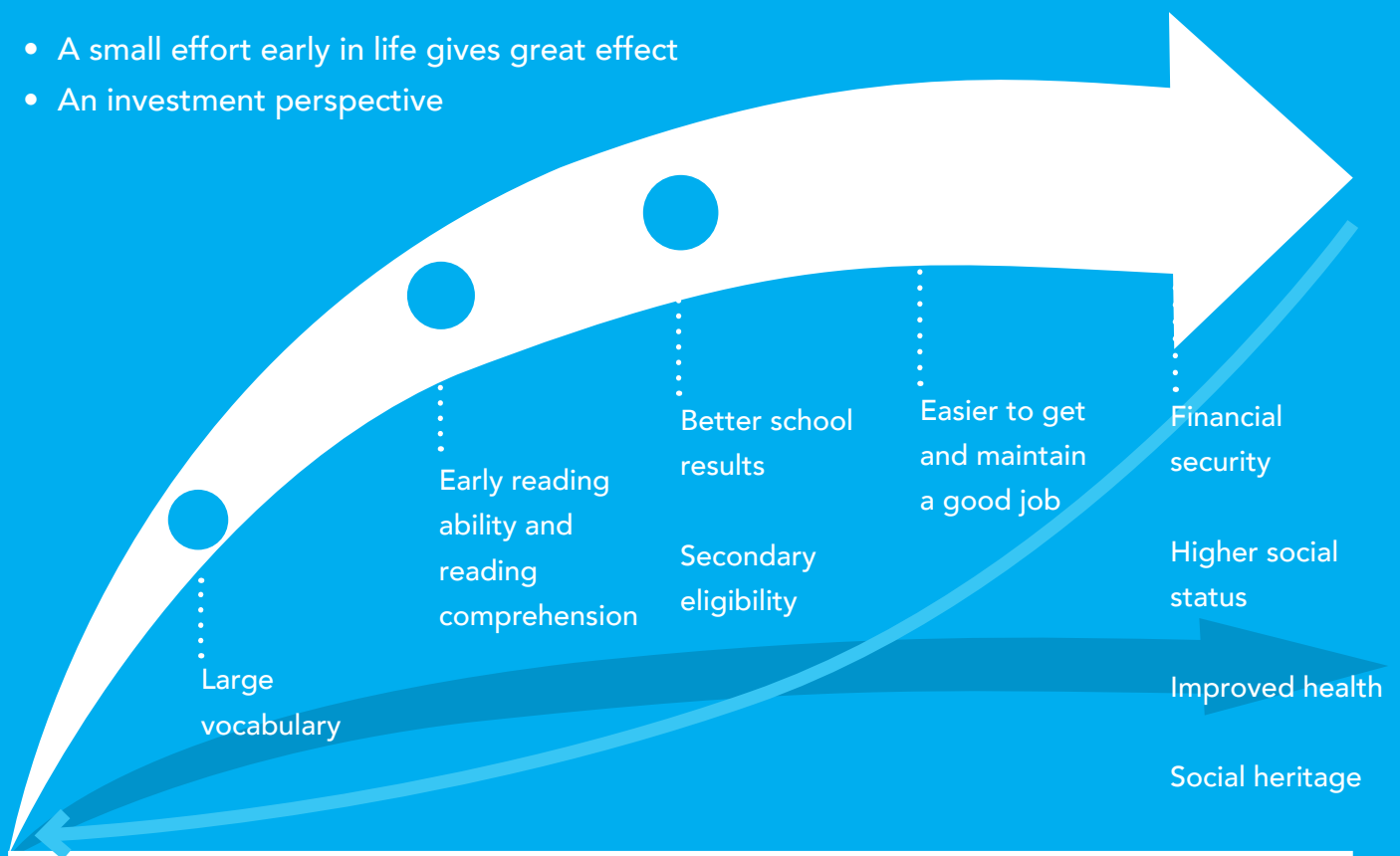
2. Why reading is important

We know from the vast amount of research available that reading is the most significant factor in children's life chances. Where a child enjoys and takes pleasure in reading there are additional benefits (Shahaeian,A., Wang, C., Tucker-Drob,E., Geiger,V. Bus,A. & Harrison,L. (2018) Early shared Reading, Socio Economic Status and Children Cognitive and Schools Competencies: 6 years of Longitudinal Evidence, Scientific Studies of Reading. Vol 22 (6) pp485-502)

This include their academic and school achievements but goes beyond this into their well-being and future economic success. The child's caregivers, carers and family are the most valuable resource in a child's development as a reader. Giving every child a good start in life is therefore essential to reduce inequalities in health and living conditions and language development. Talking, singing, rhyming and reading and the love for books needs to start as early as possible.

How does reading contribute to equality?

- A small effort early in life gives great effect
- An investment perspective



Source: Gothenburg

3. Principles and core messages

When working with families there are some wrap around core principles: to recognize that each family and each child is unique and that despite the many challenges that many families face, there is always a way forward with reading. These ideas are at the heart of the **"You are unique"** and **"Positive outlook and aspirations"** principles.



You are unique

Every child and family is different and so the approach taken to support the child and family must reflect this. The family needs to be at the heart of the approach and so the practitioner needs to spend time getting to know the strengths of the family's current practices.

Positive outlook and aspirations

When we have high expectations of a family's success then success will follow.

Core Messages

At the heart of working alongside families are their interests and needs. Each of the Core Messages guide the practitioner in the different approaches they can take recognizing the important elements of the reading process.



The importance of home language and culture should not be underestimated. Developing the home language is a springboard to developing the thinking, skills and knowledge that will in turn support the development of the new language and in time, reading....

Your voice is the most wonderful gift you can give to your child

Talking and communicating is the foundation of everything. Interaction is the most significant factor in a child's development and what is great is that it is free!

Reading moments - the best moments

Spending time with a child sharing stories and books is both a special time for both the caregiver/carer and child is also the start of the lifelong love of reading. This time can be spent talking about the pictures, enjoying turning the pages, becoming curious about the marks on the page and even reading the story!

Opening the door to books opens the door to the world

Sharing books, or in fact any texts: newspapers; comics; on screen text; audio books, enables children to learn and become curious as citizens of the world. Reading is the foundation for life.

share your stories

Every day there are opportunities to interact with children e.g. walking to school and talking about what can be seen; sharing what has been happening that day; singing a rhyme, telling the stories of childhood. There are all ways to lay the foundations for reading. Listen to children, encourage them to talk and share. Try to catch the ideas from the child and continue them.

Every day, everywhere –

4. Strategies You Can Use

In this section you will find a range of strategies for each core message. They have been divided into those strategies that are most simple to implement: 'First steps are a great beginning' and additional approaches that can build on these first steps: 'Continuing the good work'.

The following strategies provide you with a menu of ideas from which you can select and plan for your work with families.

- A bullet point indicates suggestions for the families.
- ✓ A tick indicates advice for practitioners involvement with families.

1. Your voice is the most wonderful gift you can give to your child

Talking and communicating is the foundation of everything. Interaction is the most significant factor in a child's development and what is great is that it is free!

First steps are a great beginning

- Sing and rhyme with children and babies at every opportunity throughout the day eg when walking to the shops, clearing away after a meal.
- Local libraries have free opportunities to meet and sing/rhyme for caregivers with young children.
- If caregivers are not confident encourage them to just sing their favorite song or tell the child what they see, hear or smell
- Advise caregivers to ask questions in conversation with their children.

- ✓ As a practitioner ask questions about and show interest in the home language and in particular songs and rhymes. E.g. 'How do you say toy in your home language?'

Continuing the good work

- Support caregivers to extend the time they spend singing and talking with their children (from a few moments to longer periods).
- Model sharing a book with children and encourage caregivers to spend 5 mins a day reading to their child (this can increase their confidence).
- To encourage the importance of talking and developing language, show how caregivers can use wordless books www.booktrust.org.uk/booklists/w/wordless-picture-books-for-children/
- Support caregivers to develop routines that include the sharing of a text e.g. Book, Bath, Bed or Book, Lunch, Nap.
- Advise caregivers to think about new vocabulary that might come up, then use words over the next few weeks in order to embed new language.

2. Choose the language of your heart

The importance of home language is underestimated. Developing the home language is a springboard to developing the thinking, skills and knowledge that will in turn support the development of the new language and in time, reading....

First steps are a great beginning

- Ask caregivers explicitly what language they speak at home and encourage them to continue to do this.
- Highlight the importance of wordless books as an opportunity to speak in and develop the home language.
- Recommend a variety of books (your local library will support you in recommending: dual language books, wordless books, books written in the home language, audio books, sensory books, culturally diverse books).

Continuing the good work

- Work with caregivers to make family story books full of positive visual memories of children's early years.
- Encourage caregivers who speak the same language to come together so they can support one another.
- Build on existing networks, use local trusted community leaders to encourage caregivers (linguistic/cultural mediators)
- ✓ Develop multilingual communication leaflets e.g. bookstart@booktrust.org.uk

- ✓ Consider the possibility of developing community reading ambassadors that speak the home languages of caregivers (see Gothenburg case study).

3. Every day, everywhere – share your stories

Every day there are opportunities to interact with children e.g. walking to school and talking about what can be seen; sharing what has been happening that day; singing a rhyme; telling the stories of childhood. These are all ways to lay the foundations for reading. Listen to children, encourage them to talk and share. Try to catch the ideas from the child and continue them.

First steps are a great beginning

- Relay the message that any reading is great. You can start with anything that you have at home e.g. recipes, newspapers, leaflets, etc.
- Encourage caregivers to take opportunities through the day to chat e.g. go shopping with your child and name items etc.
- Model for caregivers how they can introduce reading and storytelling in their daily routine.

Continuing the good work

- Develop a story-sack with the family
www.literacytrust.org.uk/resources/how-make-and-use-story-sack

- Encourage caregivers to create family story books full of positive visual memories of children's early years
- ✓ Use the library as a venue for caregiver meetings of any kind
- ✓ Consider developing a cloakroom (see Gothenburg case study)
- ✓ Lead families on a story walk, bringing stories to life and into the local environment
- ✓ Create partnerships with other services where you share a core purpose of promoting reading.

4. Reading moments - the best moments

Spending time with your child sharing stories and books is a special time for both the caregiver and child and is also the start of the lifelong love of reading. This time can be spent talking about the pictures, enjoying turning the pages, becoming curious about the marks on the page and even reading the story!

First steps are a great beginning

- Encourage caregivers to take opportunities to read e.g. walking to nursery or school, street names. There are many opportunities; graffiti, drawings, picture signs.
- Reassure parents that it is ok for children to explore books in different ways e.g. playing with the book.
- Recommend good books for particular ages www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk

- Work together to highlight young children's ability to grasp, understand and memorize words. Their brain is constantly making new connections to understand the world.
- Create opportunities for caregivers to make links with the library so that it becomes part of their routine.
- Visit the library together with the caregivers.
- Caregivers can be great role models for other caregivers. Ask them to share their daily practices and experiences with each other.

Continuing the good work

- ✓ Build on existing networks, use local trusted community leaders to encourage caregivers.
- ✓ Think outside the box when it comes to partner organisations: the doctor or dentist, health centers, sports centers. When people come across the same messages in those different areas of life, the message will get stronger. Hearing the same message from many different professions and different voices gives credibility. Share the message of reading!
- ✓ Check on what provision your city has for providing books to new caregivers and their children.

www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/bookstart/families

5. Opening the door to books opens the door to the world

Sharing books, or in fact any texts: newspapers; comics; on screen text; audio books, enables children to both learn about their world, become curious about the world and engage, as citizens, with the world. Reading is the foundation for life.

First steps are a great beginning

- Consider your professional setting and make children's books visible and available in different creative ways in all areas of the setting.
- Encourage caregivers to understand the importance of reading in learning for life including reading for pleasure having access to information and as a shared family activity.

Continuing the good work

- ✓ Liaise with libraries in order to hold meetings with caregivers in the library e.g. clinic; health visitors meeting.
- ✓ Liaise with libraries to understand what they have on offer for their communities and other professionals.

5. Evaluation Audit

This part of the manual is designed to support your professional practices. It is a way of auditing your current practice and will help you in thinking about which of the strategies you may need to focus on. This tool has been adapted from the English National Literacy Trusts audit document. Self-evaluation is a helpful element in the process of improvement planning, it provides a clear starting point.

- In one colour highlight activities that you are already doing
- In another colour highlight activities you would like to develop next
- Use your findings to develop an action plan.

***NB** Not all headings are relevant for all practitioners; select the ones most appropriate for your setting. What are you doing now in encouraging families (mums, dads, carers, grandcaregivers) in encouraging them to love reading?

Area of focus	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Positive, adaptable, professional approach towards caregivers			
Whole-setting strategy	Promoting a love of words, stories and reading is included in the settings learning and development plan	Promoting a love of words, stories and reading is an important part of the setting's learning and development plan	Promoting a love of words, stories and reading is central to the settings learning and development plan
Practitioner understanding	Practitioners understand the importance of the developing a love of language and stories and recognize that speaking and listening is key to development	Practitioners work together to develop a setting ethos that promotes the importance of developing a love of stories and language and recognize that language development needs to be integrated into everyday activities	The importance of developing a love of language and stories is a key tool for learning and development and embedded within day to day activities. Practitioners model how this can be done in the home
Cultural diversity	Practitioners label objects in English and other key languages used by children's families	Practitioners provide dual language books and select stores that reflect children's backgrounds and interests	Practitioners run book sharing sessions for families of children learning English and those who they consider may have additional needs
Supporting dads and male carers	Practitioners know dads may need extra encouragement to come into the setting to share rhymes, song and stories with their children and curiosity	Practitioners ensure their setting is father friendly and encourages dads to share rhymes, song and stories with their children	Practitioners provide outreach support for dads demonstrating activities that encourage them to share rhymes, story, songs with their children
Adult basic skills provision	Practitioners understand some mums and dads have difficulties with their basic skills and remember this when communicating with them	Practitioners know where mums and dads can get support with their reading and writing if needed	Practitioners are confident to link mums and dads to the local network of adult basic skills providers and family learning services if appropriate

Area of focus	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Creating reading friendly environment			
Child development	Practitioners are learning which stories, rhymes, songs and books are suited to a child's age and needs	Practitioners know where mums and dads can get support with their reading and writing if needed	Practitioners are confident to link mums and dads to the local network of adult basic skills providers and family learning services if appropriate
Childrens interests	Practitioners consider babies and children's interests when buying and sharing books	Practitioners are confident when matching books to children's and babies interests	Practitioners run reading activities and events that are based on children's interests
Supporting families	Families feel welcome to come and share a book or a story with their child	Families are supported in how to share stories and use every day print.	
Reading/ storytelling area	There is a comfortable story/reading area for children to use	There is a comfortable story/reading area with interesting features and staff to actively encourage children to use it	There is a comfortable and regularly updated story/reading area/s which families are encouraged to use
Promoting reading	Some books that interest the children are displayed and there are reading opportunities for the children both inside and outside the setting.	There is a good range of imaginatively displayed books that interest the children, as well as stimulating environmental print.	There is a wide range of reading materials and story sacks displayed invitingly. Some are routinely taken outdoors and lent out to families.

Area of focus	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Events/Projects/Activities			
Reading activity	Practitioners talk about reading and books in daily interactions with babies and children.	Practitioners are involved in interactive book sharing and storytelling with babies and children on a daily basis.	Practitioners actively involve children in making books inspired by their own experiences, families are encouraged to make similar books at home
Transition	Your setting has links with local primary schools and has some understanding of their reading for pleasure strategies	Your setting has effective links with local primary schools and a good understanding of their reading for pleasure strategies. The transition process is eased for example, by sharing information.	Your setting has incorporated elements of the local primary schools' reading for pleasure strategies into its learning and development work. At transition you share information about the child's development and caregiver involvement.
Local / External Partnerships			
Community links	Practitioners are aware of local facilities and how they could support children's development	There are good links with the local library. The children's librarian supports practitioners in selecting books	The setting arranges visits to local library events and activities for children and their families where they can join the library.

6. Overcoming barriers

You may find that particular families present very specific issues and so barriers to engagement with reading. The grid below has been designed by practitioners and experts from the 5 European cities, that are part of the Open the Door for

Reading Project, to present the strategies in the manual in a format that enables the practitioner to identify strategies from across the core messages that will be most appropriate to overcome specific issues.

Trouble shooting

Potential Barrier	Possible Strategies
Language	
Caregivers don't speak the language of instruction	<p>Demonstrate and model how to read out loud to children in a practical way</p> <p>Model reading to the child</p> <p>Reading at home project (Brussels - case study)</p> <p>Offer book-making projects with caregivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● bring caregivers who speak the same language together so they can support one another ● use multi-modal reading materials ● provide a linguistic/cultural mediator
Not enough dual language books Lack of books at home (could be related to income)	<p>Recommend good books for particular ages</p> <p>Provide books in waiting rooms</p> <p>Offer book gifts</p> <p>Use Bookstart</p> <p>Establish cloakroom libraries (Gothenburg - case study)</p> <p>Provide book bags with toys to support stories and story telling</p> <p>Use audio/multilingual books</p>

Potential Barrier	Possible Strategies
Caregivers	
Caregivers may not believe it is their job to help their child to read	<p>Work with small informal groups initially</p> <p>Hold bed time story book event for families in schools (talk to caregivers afterwards)</p> <p>Offer stay and play in nurseries for care givers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● target caregivers as early as possible – with individual oral invitations ● think about how you advertise meetings or workshops – call them ‘sitting together’ sharing a cup of tea ● Work with small informal groups ● build relationships with caregivers – appreciate efforts, praise small steps, listen to their issues ● talk to caregivers at caregivers evenings ● combine ‘meetings’ with caregivers with event they will attend at school e.g.. children’s performances ● use family support workers to communicate with caregivers ● provide books in waiting rooms, cloakrooms ● offer storytelling on the tram (for several children) ● talk to care givers about routines: bath, book, bed. Make a habit of the reading time. ● take caregivers to the library
Caregivers struggle with behaviour management strategies at home when reading with their child; reading can become a battleground	<p>Give advice on behaviour management at home – rewards and incentives for children</p>

Potential Barrier	Possible Strategies
Caregivers <i>continued</i>	
Caregivers overworked, stressed and not able to make the time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Suggest involving siblings/grandcaregivers ● Let caregivers know 5 minutes a day is a good start ● As a professional try to take into account the time schedule of a family: provide short, stimulating activities
Lack of aspiration, motivation, self-confidence	<p>Provide reading surgeries for caregivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● demonstrate and model how to read out loud to children in a practical way ● model reading to their child; caregivers like to observe you working with their child ● build relationships that enable you to find out the interests and talents of the caregiver. Make it clear to the caregiver the value of their talents. ● model approaches using everyday household objects e.g. talking about and reading food packets ● establish reading at home project, homevisits: modelling ● make short videos for caregivers to demonstrate one to one reading ● use role models ● showing affection while reading - laughing, cuddling and smiling ● give caregivers the feeling they are competent ● offer caregivers the same vocabulary that children learn at school, and model ways they could practise these with their children
Afraid to ask for help	Be aware of caregivers who do not engage or ask for help and deliberately target these families to build relationships
On-screen time on tablets and computer games not controlled at home	<p>Reinforce the importance of routines e.g. bath, book, bed</p> <p>Suggest 5 mins a day for caregivers to read to their child</p>

Potential Barrier	Possible Strategies
Caregivers <i>continued</i>	
Lack of books at home (could be related to income)	<p>Recommend good books for particular ages and show these books from a library and how to join the library</p> <p>Provide books in waiting rooms</p> <p>Offer book gifts</p> <p>Use Bookstart</p> <p>Establish cloakroom libraries (Gothenburg - case study)</p> <p>Provide book bags with toys to support story telling</p> <p>Offer audio/multilingual books</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● it doesn't have to be books, it can be leaflets, pictures, photo's, ... ● consider how we make the library known to families? ● offer home visits where books are shared
Culture and value of reading	
Lack of reading culture at home – seen as a 'dull' activity	<p>Suggest 5 minutes a day is a good start</p> <p>Make reading part of a bedtime routine</p>
Lack of role models or ambassadors within the community	<p>Provide short videos for caregivers to demonstrate one to one reading</p> <p>Use older children as ambassadors (they can go to library with pre-school to choose books) as part of school and pre-school projects)</p>

Potential Barrier	Possible Strategies
Culture and value of reading <i>continued</i>	
Books don't have status anymore	<p>Raise the profile of reading: take books when children go on visits</p> <p>Invite celebrities and authors to promote reading</p>
Lack of universal reading policy at strategic leads	Draw together interested practitioners to create a policy. Use existing policies as a guide.

Libraries	
Perceived as 'educational' establishments – preconceptions of caregivers (Practical, social and cultural obstacles to enter library)	<p>Use library as an arena for caregiver meetings for pre-schools</p> <p>Establish pop-up libraries in unexpected places</p> <p>Visit the library together with caregivers</p> <p>Provide basic information for caregivers – nearest library, how to use it.</p>
Unable to reach caregivers who don't come to library as it is a free choice	<p>Offer special events;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● use library as arena for caregiver meetings for pre-school ● outreach from libraries to early years settings and schools <p>Working in networks: collaboration with education, social welfare, health services and cultural partners is crucial. Agree core messages across services.</p>

Potential Barrier	Possible Strategies
Practitioners	
Knowing the best way of communicating to build trust and not to intimidate	<p>Have a designated person to be responsible for developing the ongoing relationship with targeted caregivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● bed-time story book event for families in schools (talk to caregivers afterwards) ● don't set expectations too high, 5 minutes a day reading is enough to start with ● provide book-making projects with caregivers ● invite celebrities and authors to promote reading ● offer reading surgeries for caregivers where they can ask questions ● offer book/reading club after school with caregivers and children ● offer singing and rhyming together with caregivers
Only reach caregivers already interested	<p>Provide videos of caregivers from different backgrounds reading with their children at different stages aged 0-6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● develop incentives for caregivers to attend 'drop-in' sessions ● create relaxing environments for reading that caregivers feel comfortable to use

Potential Barrier	Possible Strategies
Practitioners <i>continued</i>	
Appreciating caregivers prior negative experiences of education	<p>Targeting low literate caregivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● offer interventions to improve family literacy: caregivers are the single most important ‘reading-educator’ ● family literacy programmes (interventions where caregivers read to their children, interventions where caregivers are trained to listen to how their child reads and interventions where caregivers are trained in teaching their child in literacy skills) ● model importance of interactive book sharing where the words in a book do not need to be read ● homevisits that are adapted to single individual situations: tailored to family needs ● building on what caregivers are already doing in the daily practices ● tune into the cultural and linguistic background of the caregivers: the characteristics of the messenger seem to be more important than the material he/she brings along ● use cultural responsive material: close to own cultural background, books with similar family situations or religions ● urging caregivers to invent stories or tell their experiences, urge them to use the words they see around them in signs, publicity, in the streets ● model how to share stories ● use digital material

Potential Barrier	Possible Strategies
Practitioners <i>continued</i>	
Judgemental approach to families which limit expectations	Avoid judging, value whatever the family offers and can do with their child
Strategic level	
Communication between institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● build on existing networks ● highlight the importance of reading to all services involved/ those who work with children ● many different organisations might be interested in reading including medical health centres, NGO's working with babies and children, cultural partners,..
Lack of joined-up working between services	<p>Lack of explicit reading policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● develop a shared reading policy and so ensure every professional is conveying consistent messages ● establish a reading coach (Milan - case study) ● make links with teacher education institutions

7. Case Studies

Gothenburg



City of Gothenburg

The City Where We Read to Our Children

In line with the WHO report Closing the Gap, the City of Gothenburg conducted a study of inequalities in living conditions and health in 2013. The results indicate that Gothenburg is a good city to live in, but that the city is segregated and the differences are increasing. Reducing the gap and striving for greater equality in living standards to create a more socially sustainable city is therefore a focus area for the whole city, politicians and officials alike.

As Gothenburg grows, there are increasing demands for a long-term dialogue with residents to create a shared idea of how the city will develop. Collaboration with for example the business sector and other actors is also crucial. All of us who live and work in Gothenburg have a shared responsibility to contribute to a fairer, more sustainable city and world – economically, socially and environmentally.

The issue of creating equal preconditions is formulated as the most important challenge for the city of Gothenburg. The focal point for the work is that all children should have a good start in life and good preconditions throughout the school years.

A strategy within Equal Gothenburg is to identify and highlight specific mobilizations issues. **"The City Where We Read to Our Children"** is one of the mobilization issues with clear links to the city's aim of being an equitable city. The overarching purpose with this mobilization issue is to make the complex work with Equitable Gothenburg visible to citizens and employees within the city. This means using the mobilization issue to demonstrate how we work in a tangible and concrete way with an essential and complex social issue.

The purpose of **The City Where We Read to Our Children** is to encourage reading WITH and TO children early in life. The implementation of the issue consists of three parts; skills development, activities and information efforts. The activities and learning are directed at professionals working with parents/guardians of young children. The primary target group is children between 0-6 years and their parents/guardians.

Early language development and reading is a fundamental aspect of this complex challenge. Efforts made early on in life have effect throughout life, and positive factors tend to accumulate over time. There is a correlation between a well-developed vocabulary, a desire to read at an early age and improved reading ability on the one hand; and how well the school years and results develop on the other. There is also a correlation between introduction to the labour market and future career prospects.

The most important resource to benefit children's reading is the parents/guardians. It is the parents/guardians own reading and their reading to and with their children that has the most influence on children's desire to read and on their reading habits. It is the single most important factor to develop children's language, increase their vocabulary and reading ability, their ability to express themselves and to create a love of reading among children.

Milan



Comune di
Milano

LETTURA E SALUTE (READING & WELLBEING) For children aged 0-6

A project carried out by ATS Milano (Territorial Healthcare Department), Comune di Milano - Libraries Dept. and Early childhood education Dept., Library systems of the Municipalities of Cinisello Balsamo and Sesto San Giovanni, AIB, Nati per Leggere Lombardia Association, UNICEF e SiMPeF together for the promotion of health and well-being of children and their families

The wider context

The project Lettura & Salute is to be read in the wider context of the Milan Pact for reading, an instrument that the City of Milan has adopted to make reading a widespread social habit, recognizing the right to read as fundamental for all citizens.

In the last years Italian book readers decreased compared to the previous decade, confirming a negative trend started in 2010. Following a slow but progressive increase in the number of readers registered since

2000, which reached its peak in 2010 (46.8 % of readers among the population of six years and over), in recent years there has been an inversion of the trend: the share of people who declare that they have read at least one book for non-school or professional reasons during the previous 12 months fell to 41.4% (from 46% in 2012 and 43% in 2013). The drop in reading rate is even more alarming if analyzed by age group. In fact, the downturn has affected the younger ones in particular.

The percentage of readers decreased from 49.3% in 2013 to 44.6% in 2014 for children between 6 and 10 years, from 57.2% to 53.5% for those between 11 and 14 years and from 49.8% to 45.6% for young people between 20 and 24 years old. The strong readers remain substantially stable (-0.2%), casual readers collapse. Between 2010 and 2014 2.6 million readers were lost (10%).

This negative outlook made it necessary to build a social alliance - starting from public institutions - for the promotion of reading in the wider societal context. Indeed, the Milan

Pact, officially ratified in 2015 is an agreement between all the subjects that identify reading as a strategic resource and is open to the participation of those entities and individuals who share the idea that reading is a value to invest in for the growth of our city.

LETTURA & SALUTE's Strategy

Alliances and synergies to guarantee the health of the children

Local institutional and private stakeholders, all focused on the needs and protection of children, built an alliance and integrated their skills to promote the health of children and their families through the dissemination of good practices, such as reading aloud and the promotion of healthy behaviours.

The main objectives of the project are:

- Promote the health of children and their families through the dissemination of good practices such as reading aloud in the family and other healthy behaviours suggested by the national "Parents campaign" (campaign promoted by Territorial Healthcare Department in its health programs)
- Enhance the roles and competences of the family centres and library operators in the promotion of better lifestyles and reading aloud techniques among families.
- Gather library users and professionals working in family centres, to make libraries known to families attending the centres and vice versa.
- Reach out to the most disadvantaged families and work towards the integration of foreign families.

Why we do it?

In 2013 the Lettura & Salute project was created, starting from the idea that reading a book to a child is a simple and pleasant gesture, an intimate moment between parent and child, which will help the child in every phase of his/her growth. Reading aloud from an early age is very important because it improves the ability of attention, security and self-esteem of the child, favors the readiness to read, the approach to the written word and to the school.

Who does it?

The project/agreement is signed by a ATS Milano (Territorial Healthcare Department), Comune di Milano - Libraries Dept. and Early childhood education Dept., Library systems of the Municipalities of Cinisello Balsamo and Sesto San Giovanni, AIB, Nati per Leggere Lombardia Association, UNICEF e SiMPeF. This partnership covers a wide range of institutions and third sector organisations who work with and for parents and children aged 0-6.

The project group proposed the idea that through "Reading and health" the various operators involved could follow the child in all phases of its development from the first months of life up to the sixth year interacting with each other, as they belong to the different structures sanitary and educational-scholastic, for the diffusion of reading aloud. The route starts from the consultors and the nests and then goes to the nursery and primary schools in constant synergy with the library that offers its service at all stages of the journey.

What do we do?

The project involves the implementation of a series of meetings between parents, health care professionals, educators and librarians residing and operating in the area covered by ATS Milano (which is wider than the Municipality Area and covers other surrounding municipalities). The meetings and reading sessions, focussed on promoting a correct approach to books and reading aloud, are aimed at children aged 0-6 years old and their families.

There are different kinds of meetings:

- **In family centres:** reading support for mothers with children from four to six months, an age in which important changes occur in psychophysical development of children and parents (eg possible return to work, introduction of new foods in the child's diet, entrance of the child in daycare centres, child's ability to manipulate and prove interest in a book). Meetings are conducted by a librarian and a social-health worker able to manage both the relationship with children and their carers, in order to promote an approach to books and reading.
- **In daycare centres and kindergartens:** reading aloud sessions for children who attend the centres and their parents. These sessions are conducted by an educator of the centre with the support of a librarian, in order to promote an approach to books and reading.

- **In libraries:** meetings on psycho-pedagogical and health-related subjects on topics of interest for families (eg, whims, sleep, feeding, etc ...), addressed to parents of children from zero to three years, and conducted by an expert (psychologist, doctor, psychopedagogue, nutritionist) and socio-health professionals in order to give feedback and answers on the psycho-relational and/or health needs of the parents.

There has been an effort in encouraging the participation of family pediatricians, who are professionals playing a key role for the dissemination of the project. Families trust them and take their advice seriously. Parents consider the suggestion made by a doctor to practice reading aloud as a method that has positive consequences for their children's health. In fact, the presence of pediatricians during the meetings in the library and/or in the family centres have always worked effectively for the success of the meetings.

The librarians of the Municipality of Milan, have started contacting pediatricians to start with them an interaction and a collaboration (eg. guided loan of books suitable for children from zero to six). Some paediatricians are suggesting their patients to go to the libraries, explaining to them that, in those places, they will be able to find professionals who can advise them on suitable books even for very young children.

The project team has worked on a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the various partners that is being defined and it was validated in December 2018.

Where we go from here?

Within the project **Lettura e Salute, Comune di Milano** (Early childhood education dept. and Libraries dept.) aims at developing the following:

1. a structured joint training of early childhood educators, librarians and family centre operators to create synergies and exchange knowledge and best practices to carry on the project.
2. a systematized library service (eg. developing a system to catalogue adequately early childhood books, keeping only books that have proved to be valid, and make sense of what is missing) and a constant update of children's literature catalogue (synergy between Librarians and Educators)
3. a common engagement on the practice of reading: how to improve it, how to disseminate its educational and pedagogical value, also in terms of preventing disadvantage
4. a better educational alliance with families in terms of promoting of reading for the 0/6 age



Bristol - Hannah More Primary School



**Hannah More
Primary School**

BRISTOL
LEARNING CITY

Developing a reading community Building Bridges - Building Readers

School Context

Hannah More Primary is a two form entry primary school in Lawrence Hill ward, central Bristol. This is the most deprived ward in the city. At Hannah More 88% of pupils are from BME backgrounds, and more children than average are learning English as an additional language. The number of children who join school at times other than the start of the year is well above average. The proportion of children eligible for FSM is well above the national average. We have a significant number of families from the Somali community in Bristol.

Hannah More Primary's Strategy

A strategy for improving family involvement in reading was developed by the school's Senior Leadership Team in 2013. Although the school has very good relations with parents and carers, we are all too aware that many families lack the skills, confidence and resources to support children with reading.

After 2013 we continued to refine our community strategy. Now we work more carefully in five key areas:

1. Opening the school earlier and later in the day so parents can work with trained reading teachers and to can access to our library, the 'Hub'
2. Parent led Reading Training
3. A focus on reading in the first year in school: Foundation Stage
4. Reading Workshops which pre-empt community misconceptions about fluency and literacy
5. Involving the wider community; giving our children as much opportunity to read as possible
6. Community outreach teams work with families in need of further support

Why we do it?

Why do we do it? Why does the school invest in this? Because we know that children who attain the best are those who have good support outside of school – usually at home.

Because we know that school is just the tip of the iceberg of children's learning – in the UK, between birth and school leaving age children spend less than 15 percent of their waking time in school.

As you will probably know, there is some evidence to suggest that parental involvement in children's learning can be more important for educational achievement than school itself.

Supporting parents as children's first and most enduring educators does a huge amount to raise educational achievement. Involving parents at a school like Hannah More is particular important. Some parents are communicating with school in their second or third language. Many people have no experience of the UK education system and need support to understand it. Other parents did not enjoy their time at school at all and there are huge barriers to getting involved – even getting through the door is daunting for some.

Who does it?

We need a team of people who have the time and the flexibility to work with the wider community:

- **A Community Development Co-ordinator**
 - Works in our school leadership team and develops our community strategy
- **A Family Worker**
 - Working with disadvantaged families to help them access the support available in the school community

- **A Somali Outreach Worker**

- Working to support English as an Additional Language EAL families

- **A literacy specialist not tied to classroom work**

- A Reading Recovery teacher given time to work with the community

- **A teaching team who can come out of class when needed**

- We can call on reading, writing and phonic teachers
- Teachers from Foundation Stage [the first year of school] can visit homes
- Teaching teams from across the school have 'open days' and also come along to some community training events

What do we do?

1. Early Morning Reading:

This strategy supports children and parents with reading. The Reading Recovery [RR] teacher identifies English as an Additional Language children in need of support with language. These children range from Year 1 to year 4 [Aged 5 to 9]. Foundation Stage [aged 4 to 5], our youngest children, are offered a place in the last term of school. Children read with an LSA. The LSAs are Better Reading @ Primary [BR@P] trained and have received further training from the RR teacher in developing comprehension. Parents are encouraged to attend alongside, to listen to the teaching of reading. This helps parents understand how to help at home.

2. Parent-led reading initiatives:

We worked with a group of Somali families to create the film 'Reading with Your Child'.

After 3 workshops (with the RR teacher and a storyteller), the families worked alongside a filmmaker to create a DVD focussing on how to read with children. Parents provided voice-overs in Somali and English. 60 copies were printed and a link was put on the school website: (www.hannahmore.org.uk/our-learning/how-we-teach-reading).

We ran a Dad's group where fathers can ask for specific support with areas of understanding and comprehension when reading.

We have a 'Community Voice' meeting regularly throughout the year where families can invite along members of the school staff. The parents steer the meeting and ask for the information they want from the school regarding reading.

3. Foundation reading strategies for the first year of a child's school life:

Our first class, Foundation Stage, begins when the children are aged between 4 and 5. The RR teacher, the Family Learning mentor, class teachers and volunteers, meet termly to decide which support families should be offered. It could be:

- Introductory training explaining how we as a school work with children to develop reading.
- A more detailed training session explaining how to start the reading journey. This has three sessions. We encourage parents with a good level of English [ESOL Tier 1: Do Something *] to attend.
- Reading surgeries (1-1 meetings, where parents work alongside the RR teacher supporting their child with reading)
- *Running Bristol's 'Reception Literacy Project', staffed by trained LSA's. RLP is for children who need a little more support getting going on the reading journey.*
- BR@P reading sessions, individual early morning reading in the summer term.

This provision covers all families in Foundation and is mapped and updated in terms 2, 4 and 6. The provision map generally progresses according to the following grid:

Reading in Foundation Stage – Overview of Community Support

Term 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phonic workshop for parents ● Train Foundation stage volunteers. ● Add to our parent's workshop: How to care for reading books, how they are returned.
Term 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue whole class teaching of phonic Phase 2 sounds – incorporate elements of Reception Literacy Project ● Foundation Stage Reading Volunteers are settled in now.
Term 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reception Literacy Project phase 2 started ● Volunteer readers continuing ● Further Volunteer training: Fluency with Understanding
Term 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue with Reception Literacy Project phase 3 ● Volunteers move onto next group of readers coming up to red band. ● Check reading ability for all 1:1 readers
Term 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finish all RLP cycles for the booster children ● SEN to continue RLP ● All children moving off RLP will become 1:1 readers ● Begin to work with individual families who have not accessed any workshops so far
Term 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gifted & Talented children to begin Guided Reading sessions ● 1:1 readers continue ● Use BR@P teachers in Foundation Stage if needed ● Check reading ability for all 1:1 readers ● Continue to work with individual families ● CELEBRATE and THANK volunteers

4. Offering Reading workshops which pre-empt misconceptions

We have refined our reading workshops over the years, addressing the main misconceptions we have about learning to read. We recognise teaching teams as well as parents may have misconceptions about the child's reading journey. We don't know until we have the dialogue.

We then help families to help themselves and to give something back to the school. These 'misconception' courses run every year.

- Developing Book Talk
- Linking Book Talk with first sight words
- Linking Book Talk with beginning letters and sounds
- Linking fast, expressive reading with understanding

It's useful to use the phrase 'lightbulb' rather than 'you misunderstand'. It's positive and, after all, we are just looking for the best method of communication. We just want bring light to the reading journey. Some sample 'Lightbulb Moments' in and amongst developing a reading community:



Lightbulb moment for Families:

Wow... a good conversation switches the brain on!
They won't understand formal reading without it!

Example number 1 –

Picture Books and Talk:

Teachers have always talked about the value of sharing a good picture book in and amongst learning to read. But what we didn't do is make it explicit why this is so useful to the reading journey. We discussed the well-known quote: 'Reading and Writing Float on a Sea of Talk' [James Britton 1970; slightly paraphrased]. We talked about language development in the early years before school. Crucially, we explained how picture books build a simple bridge between talk and reading.

Our Somali community has a rich heritage in oral storytelling and formal education. They delighted in seeing the link between talking for enjoyment and the readiness of their child for the reading journey

Resources:



Communications Trust information and fabulous books!

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Example number 2 – Picture Books – First Words linked to First Reading Book:

Very simple training. Some printed key words can be recognised in picture books and in flashcard games and then in their first reading book. This is conservation of reading: 'the' is 'the' in the picture book and in the game and in the reading book. All the while still having a good talk about what the book is about.

The picture books and first reading books were linked by this word work and book talk. The children do not see them as two separate things.

Help for parents:

First talk about : people in a family

Then flick through the pictures and check they can point to the photos and say: **dad, boy, girl, mum, baby, gran**

Sight words known well : **I**

Sight words to learn: **am a**

Letters through words to blend: **d-a-d m-u-m**

Marks to notice: **full stops**

What to watch for:

- voice matching using a pointing finger and some blending of letters.
- Fast reading and page turning
- Happy to talk with you about the book

27: Pw 551: Word Count: 23

18/17

Joining Talking and Reading

Picture Books,

Talking

First Words

to	the
no	go
I	into

the

Building towards...

...a first reading book:

Family

I am a dad



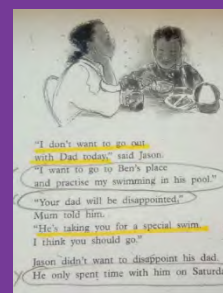
Second Lightbulb moment for Families:

Book Talk and those first words in the reading book do not seem like totally different things anymore, in the kids eyes.

Example number 3 – Reading Fluency and Reading for Understanding:

Sometimes our families have misunderstood the importance of fluent understanding whilst reading. Parents can get very competitive with each other and want their children to progress to harder texts. Their children read fluently. The problem was, the child was fluent, even sounded expressive but they didn't retain much information about the story. However the parents did not understand why the teachers were not moving their children on.

We ran a workshop, at the parent's request, on fluency and understanding. In pairs we read a fairly simple passage for a seven year old child. We then asked the pairs of parents to listen to each other recall the text and to highlight the parts of the text that were recalled. The parents really saw that, even as adults, we have trouble banking information as we read. They saw the need for children to follow the gist of a story, banking some vocabulary, phrases and events as they



Third Lightbulb moment for Families:

Wow! My child's reading sounded like they understood but now I see they need to pick up the information as they go. Book Talk is important at every age.



5. Involving the wider community to give our children as much reading experience as possible

At Hannah More we are very proud of our links with local businesses and recognise the wealth of learning opportunities, support and expertise these partnerships offer to our school. A dedicated group of 'Reading Buddies' come to school every week throughout the year, to read and explore ideas with children. These volunteers come from Deloitte and Revenue and Customs. Some of our buddies have been reading with children for over a decade! We also have reading helpers and lunchtime volunteers from 'Royal Bank of Scotland' RBS. We are also very grateful to Deloitte for their sponsorship of school trips. These have included trips to the Bloodhound Project, to No. 1 Royal Crescent and an annual summer trip focussing on literacy, for children and buddies.

Deloitte support us further by funding 'New Arrivals' books in our library, 'The Hub'.

The following advice works for us:

We use community groups already established in Bristol, there is lots available that you can set up in your school – for free:

WEA and LCT courses

PST

Bristol Sport

Conversation Clubs run by trained volunteers

Money sense courses run by RBS

ACTA community theatre

We also use our school's resources – staff run workshops on spelling, phonics, reading etc. We run Open Mornings where parents can come and see teaching and learning in action - for many parents this is a revelation; they have only seen the beginning and end of school day before this, so to see a class

settled and learning, managed skilfully by their teacher, is eye-opening.

We Invite people in - health people, local dentists, advice and guidance people, S&L teams, library staff, debt advisors, job centre advisors, mums from other schools, learning mentors

We have successfully applied for extra funding. This means we can run exactly what we want and target who we want. Some recent examples at Hannah More include Cultural Competence where parents attended training which has enabled them to run cultural awareness training for other schools / organisations; family swim sessions, mindfulness for parents, ladies' fitness, trips and visits.

We know that conversation is more meaningful than a termly newsletter.

We find out about families and their background. It may be that they speak several languages, have travelled extensively and have qualifications from other countries. It may be that people are living in very challenging circumstances, or in temporary housing, or have experienced DV, or have issues with drugs and alcohol.

We have the conversations.

We ask parents - how we can communicate better with you? How can we support you to help your children?

Having diverse opportunities for parents is important – both formal and informal sessions, short workshops and longer courses, sessions which involve children and some that do not, dads-only groups.

We understand the importance of knowing your community and understanding the barriers. This applies to timing of courses as well as what's offered. Something as simple as a class clashing with someone's laundry time makes the difference between them attending or not.

Offer tea, coffee, crèche and freebies and other incentives (trips!)

Use classes to looking at the key messages from school about reading

Use all methods for promotion – flyers, letters home, postcards from children, texts, parent representatives.

We try to make sure there are development opportunities for parents who do get involved – they can move on to volunteering, vocational training, or work in school

We make sure all staff in school know what's on for parents and can respond to enquirers. It's particularly important to tell the school office this. At Hannah More it's a real nuisance having a daily stream of visitors coming in to school (this week there'll be around 75 parents attending a course or activity or performance, plus about 40 volunteers coming throughout the week, but it helps to ensure the front office know not just who's coming but where they're going (and perhaps most importantly what the whole point is!).

We use our induction system to gain as much information as possible about the family, e.g. languages spoken, previous jobs, aspirations etc. Audit parents' skills.

We develop a 'whole learning community' ethos, where there is an expectation that parents will get involved in school and in learning that supports their children. We start with reception parents – so we run workshops in the very first few days when children start school.

We aim high. My target this year is that 90% of parents will access at least one course or activity.

As well as parents coming to things we have masses of Volunteers. It is useful but it does need to be thought through.

We know volunteering arrangements need to be realistic, personally negotiated and mutually beneficial. There needs to be a volunteering agreement which spell out expectations. There needs to be induction and training, with a probationary period and a review date. At Hannah More we have a minimum qualification requirement for parents working in the classroom (Tier 1: Do Something English). We also ask that people can volunteer for at least a term. For those parents that don't meet this requirement we offer other opportunities: helping at breakfast club, or on trips.

We remember to thank our volunteers.

Volunteer assemblies, thank you cards, mugs etc. Provide them with lanyards. Keep them updated. Send them the newsletter. Remember who they are.

We also build partnerships with local organisations and businesses. We have found that most businesses are delighted to be a part of their community. It's not something they can do, without our help. Without our invitation they can't be a part of our community, which is so very different to theirs.

We go out into our neighbourhood and look for opportunities.

6. Community Outreach teams

Not all families can be reached by workshops, visits and an open school. We also need people to work with disadvantaged families and families who do not yet have a good level of English. We employ a Family Worker who works with disadvantaged families to help them access the support available in the school community. We will try to set up a mentoring relationship, a buddy system if we can.

We employ a Somali Outreach Worker working to support Somali families who need to access the school resources using the Somali language.

We know where we can buy in extra translators as needed.

Where we go from here?

We will carry on. We'll do what works.

We will carry on listening to our community.

We will carry on improving our practice.

We will know where everyone else in England is aiming towards. We'll aspire to get our children up there with everyone else. We'll stick with it. The children need us to.

Brussels



brussel

“Reading to children: the next level “:
An interactive exhibition as part of a reading policy

Brussels, the capital of Belgium is an extraordinary diverse city. The cultural, socio-economic and linguistic diversity bears testimony to that. In Brussels, a significant number of children (23%) grow up in a disadvantaged situation or in a family without income from labour. Brussels has a high amount of young children and schoolchildren. Birth rates are increasing precisely in those districts facing socio-economic deprivation.

Linguistically, Brussels is officially bilingual French-Dutch. Parents can choose between schools that use either French or Dutch as the language of instruction, although a large amount of children don't use the language of instruction at home.

Kind en Gezin is a Flemish government agency that works in the 'Public Health, Welfare and Family' policy area. They focus on preventive treatment and guidance of young children and their parents. Kind en Gezin is responsible for registration of high quality child care, optimal support for parents-to-be and parents with young children and for the criteria that adoption agencies have to meet.

Partners for child support

Huis van het Kind

Parents can bank on the support of the Dutch-speaking services for families with young children. In 2014, **Kind en Gezin** (Child and Family) enacted the 'Huizen van het Kind' (Houses of the Child) decree. These family centres must offer services tailored to the needs of vulnerable families such as preventive medical examinations, meeting place, group work and accessible personal support. They must also organise a reception and information centre. The Huizen van het Kind are a network of infant welfare clinics and other partners that play a role in the life of families with children.

Libraries

In Brussels there are 20 Dutch-speaking libraries. It is a small network in a big city. However, the libraries have extensive partnerships, with schools, preschool support, community centres, cultural centres, adult education and so on. One of the partners for the libraries are the above mentioned Huizen van het Kind, because of a shared interest in early literacy and the wish to reach out to the youngest children, especially those children in vulnerable families. And that is exactly where the goals but also the challenges of the libraries and the family centres meet: how can we improve our approaches to work even better with and for families facing multiple challenges...

Early Literacy

Early literacy is one of the themes that a local Huis van het Kind is elaborating. In 2017 a working group with members from child care centres, infant welfare clinics, schools, libraries and adult education particularly focused on how to reach all parents to foster their children's early literacy development.

Various practices already exist, such as Bookstart, Book Squad at Home (high school students reading books to children at their homes), Bookshelves in the waiting room of infant welfare clinics, multilingual reading aloud sessions etc. And yet, in many families there are no bedtime reading routines, no visits to the library, no books around. So this working group Early Literacy developed a solid common reading policy that all members of the Huis van het Kind subscribe to.

If the same message and attitude is spread amongst all the partners, than it must in one way or another reach those families as well.

In this context the idea emerged to do an extensive literature study of the learning process of reading by young children and, at the same time, to look for existing family routines that connect with this learning process. During training sessions with mums facing multiple challenges, it became clear that telling stories from the Koran at bedtime is an actual routine in certain families, without them realising that this qualifies as bedtime story telling. The members of the working group realised that it was crucial to take into account the family perspectives and to work with the family's daily routines, which can be seen as the source of important interactions and many stories. Early literacy means helping children develop the skills they will need to become eager and successful readers. This doesn't necessary mean 'reading aloud from a book'.

Concept of an interactive exhibition

How can you visualise literary practices in which the notion of 'reading aloud' is expanded? How can you promote early literacy in such a way that parents would recognise their own contribution and abilities and be inspired to do even more? If we focus on the many small steps that lead to reading, the whole world can be looked upon as a book. You can read everything, whenever and wherever you may be. You can read faces, photos, statues in town... as well as reciting nursery rhymes, telling stories and unpacking the groceries together.

By taking children on a journey to explore the lovely images and tantalizing stories at home and in our town, we can help them develop a lifelong love of stories and books.

A travelling and interactive exhibition was conceived.



The exhibition 'Reading to Children: the Next Level' is created for both parents with young children as for those working with children in a professional capacity, such as child care workers and nursery school teachers. They provide the foundations on which natural learning processes can develop: a loving environment and spending quality time with the children. Quality time with warm and loving interactions is one of the two guiding principles that run through the exhibition. Informal or 'natural' learning is the second

principle: Young children learn from everything they do. They are naturally curious; they want to explore and discover. As regards language, children are equipped with an inborn capacity and drive to acquire language. In the course of this process, a child learns to crack an important code: words are symbols and refer to reality. The same is true of pictures and of the written word.

The exhibition showcases two types of 'literature': 'oral' literature and 'pictorial' literature.

'Oral' literature encompasses contingent linguistic back and forth interactions. Spoken language provides a treasury of words and concepts from which a (beginning) reader can draw in order to decode written words. Furthermore, knowledge of the spoken language builds phonological awareness. This skill allows children to recognize and work with the sounds of spoken language. Letters in written language also refer to these sounds.

'Pictorial' literature is the world in pictures, the depicted world. You can 'read' pictures. Babies begin to grasp the referential meaning by the age of 9 months. Cracking this code is yet another step into the direction of reading. Also, by examining (the use of) printed materials children can discover some basic print knowledge: how to hold a book, how to turn the pages, how printed texts are a visual representation of spoken texts, where to start reading and in which direction.

Each type of literature is then visualised in 5 'instant' reading methods:

'Oral' literature

1. Faces: A first 'reading exercise' for babies is to read faces and understand the emotions being expressed. Babies also learn to interact.
2. Peek a booh and hide and seek: ? A baby wants to discover the world and to be able to predict what will happen. In the game of peek-a-boo you can see his or her delight and satisfaction when that prediction comes true.
3. Lullabies, nursery rhymes and tickling games or action verses: They contain all the ingredients for warm and loving back and forth interaction. The roots of these interactions are elements as smiles, looks, eye to eye contact, mutual engagement and sharing of joy. And they are miniature stories, mostly with a exiting ending.
4. Playing together: 'open-ended toys' are inviting for children to play and experiment with. And 'animate' them. Playing along as an adult, you can make up dramatic stories together.
5. Wheel of fortune: a dog, a chair, a cardboard box, a neon sign.... Any ordinary thing might be extremely interesting for a child. When you follow their gaze and share their wonder, you will have uncovered an excellent topic of conversation

'Pictorial' literature

1. Shadows: Playing with shadows does not cost anything and you can do it anywhere and anytime. You can use a lamp, as well as the sun, as a source of light
2. Lights: Babies are often fascinated by intangible and incomprehensible sources of light. Adults who recognize this fascination and share this wonderment give an enormous boost to a child's development.
3. Pictures at home1: household and kitchen reading. The home can be a store room of many images: family photos, pictures from magazine, food packages, clothing with prints.
4. Pictures at home2: gaining knowledge about 'books' by handling advertising flyers, magazines, newspapers, or homemade books from photos, magazine scraps
5. Pictures outside: There are all kinds of images to be found on the streets: traffic signs, graffiti, advertising panels, comic strip murals, etc. These, too, can serve as interesting reading material.

Experiences so far

The exhibition travels in day care centres, family centres and libraries all over Brussels. Organisations often work together to promote the exhibition and provide people to guide the public around. A guide's handbook was written, and training provided for future guides. The guides are trained to make the visit as interactive as possible, asking visitors to sing their lullabies or to talk about their own experiences e.g. Certain objects in the exhibition can be handled by the visitor, such as the shadow puppet in the picture on the left (watch the baby claps his hands!).

Highlights and room for improvement

Generally we think we have achieved our goal to create more awareness about early literacy and the many ways it can be fostered at home or in a professional setting. Many visitors felt empowered and valued because they recognised practices from their own home or professional setting.

Furthermore, the exhibition seems to revive childhood memories that had been forgotten, e.g. nursery rhymes, playing with shadows, peek a booh etc. This reminds people of their cultural heritage, thus enabling them to pass it on to their children. And by reliving these memories, people also get a deeper understanding of early literacy. We are proud that we were able to visualise an intricate learning process in a manner that everybody can understand and that brings joy to both visitors and guides.

We intend to develop the exhibition further on the basis of feedback and of our own observations. We also intend to combine ODR explicitly with our exhibition and reap the fruits of this collaboration.

Networking

Presently, the exhibition travels among the Brussels public libraries for at least one year (2019-2020).

With a double objective:

- a) Familiarize professionals from various sectors (preschool, school, adult education, family centers, community centers, sport clubs... and of course the libraries themselves) with the innovative approach of "reading".
- b) Spread the messages of the exhibition directly to young parents visiting the library, either individually or in group. This is of course an important test case for the staff members of the library: how can they convey persuasively the messages of the exhibition, especially to parents with no or little experience in this field...?

The exhibition fulfills in this way a most important role in the creation of a local cross-sectoral network in which professionals all spread the same reading message to young parents. The exhibition "Reading to children" is a concretisation of a common reading policy. And that is a giant step forward.



Turku University



StoRe (Stories make readers) - project creating communities of readers Aerila, Juli-Anna, Kauppinen, Merja & Moisio, Katri

The StoRe-project

Stories make readers (StoRe) – projects is a project concentrating on supporting educators in creating positive reading climate with the children in their groups. Additionally, the educators are encouraged to share their pedagogical innovations and test new pedagogical approaches with the support of other educators and experts. The StoRe-project was initially a one-year (academic year 2017-2018) project with several sub-studies promoting literature reading. This piloting project was implemented in a network of 10 class teachers in Finland.

The Store-project strives for its goals with the following principals:

The StoRe-project

1. promotes educators' and adults' consciousness of their readership.
2. supports educators' agency as a literature instructor.
3. creates a positive culture of reading in their groups which enable the society of readers.



The background of the StoRe-project

The literacy skills as well as the interest and pleasure in reading has been reducing over the last decade. However, the importance of literature and literacy skills in the development of a child is undeniable whether we think of academic skills, emotional development or coping with the life in general. As multiple research results promote, there is a link between motivation, literacy, readership, child's self-esteem, and general school achievement. This means that by adding positive reading experiences and improving literacy, we can prevent the exclusion of young people and promote the general wellbeing of children.

Making children read and enjoy reading more is not complicated. Creating a **positive environment for reading** develops through the teacher's will and values and is promoted in a educators' peer groups through active collaboration. The best ways to inspire children to read in an educational context is an educator, who makes her/his readership visible. This means sharing reading experiences with children, discussing reading and being interested in children's reading experiences and views on books.

For an educator to create **communities of readers** she/he must be encouraged to develop and share individual preferences and enthusiasms, to acknowledge family, community and cultural influences on reading, and to consider the pleasures of reading for enjoyment. All this means that educator's **agency as literature instructor** improves and the educator has an

understanding about a text world of fiction, is getting more aware of children's literature and pedagogical approaches as well as is creating opportunities for peer discussions. Children's readership is based on the models of adults and peers, and the attachment to positive images of readers. Educators are important role models in reading, but so are the parents. However, the parental support during emergent literacy varies a lot. For example, 28 % of Finnish parents reports not reading regularly to their children (PIRLS 2016). Supporting parents in their readership is important, since the meaning of parental support is highlighted in international literacy assessments: there is a strong relationship between reading attitudes at home and reading commitment of a child.

Adults often promote reading in their discourses and verbally encourage their children to read, but reading and literature is not present in daily activities. However, children mirror their reading in adults' reading and make conclusions about reading and the importance of reading often in concrete ways. This means having a bookshelf, reading books, talking about books and telling about experiences connected to reading. The children love listening to adult reading and value the moments of presence of parents in the reading session at home.

Pedagogical innovations of StoRe-project

The educators in StoRe-project came up with several pedagogical innovations, which promoted reading in their groups. The following innovations show that making reading more enjoyable does not require a lot of money or special arrangements.

The bedtime story shelf

(For parental support)

A bedtime story shelf is a collection of about 25 different picture books. The books must be so short that they can be read during one evening and at best, they are bedtime stories. The books are on a special shelf or a box and the children can loan the books for one night. It is important that they can choose the book from the shelf themselves. The books are taken home and they are read at home together with an adult. One of the reasons for the success of these books is the fact that they must be returned to school the next day. This means the books must be read during the same day.

While asking the educators, children and the parents about these bedtime story shelves, they have given only positive feedback: The possibility to make own choices in reading materials is important for children. Many parents find finding suitable reading materials difficult and they are sometimes too busy to go to libraries. One of the children in StoRe-project said that his/her parents have never time to go to library. Therefore, the bedtime story shelves make the reading at home easy.

Having 25 books on the shelf means reading material for almost a month. During that time both children and the parents felt that they were able to create a positive reading climate and routine at home. Additionally, the families were surprised how the children still like the closeness and reading aloud moments with parents and other family members.



The bedtime story shelf



Book Exchange Market

(For peer support)

The book exchange market was organized with four children's groups in StoRe-project. The educators in the project wanted to help children discuss about their reading experiences and illustrate how reading is enjoyable and meaningful for many children and educators outside their group.

The book exchange market is easy to organize: The educators asked the children to bring to their class or kindergarten group a book from home, which they are willing to give to somebody. For those children, who reported not having such books at home, the educators had books. Before the market, all the children dictated some positive thing about the book and added some recommendations to others. These texts were attached to their books.

On the day of the market, almost 100 children gathered to one of the schools. They placed their books on tables and part of the children started looking for something to read and the others recommended their books to others. There was live conversation on books and reading. After one hour, all the children had checked the books and has something to read. It was a bit funny, that some children recommended their books so convincingly that they decided to read their own books. The book exchange marked ended in peaceful reading with a friend or alone. The book exchange market was a success: it was easy to organize, enhanced the participation of children and it was fun!

Picnic Reading

(For peer support)

The reading picnic was organized with two StoRe-groups located in different schools. The teachers arranged the meeting. The main idea was to share reading experiences in a nice reading climate. The reading picnic began by getting to know each other: they played some outdoor games and presented their names. The place for the reading picnic was a park in the center of the city.

The teachers had some blankets and small lunches with them and the children has some books. The children were divided into mixed groups of 3 – 4. They were asked to share a blanket and read. They were allowed to read aloud in pairs or read individually in silence. After a while, the teachers asked them to share their reading experiences (present the book they were reading, tell about the part they had read and share their opinions as well as thoughts on a book).

The reading picnic ended in voluntary performances based on the reading. Some blanket groups presented drama, some puppetry and some just read their books in roles.

During the reading picnic, the children have to know many books, shared their reading experiences and had a positive experience on reading together. Some children repeated this activity at home with their families.

Going to movies together

For many years, the most popular activity after reading a book is watching a movie based on a book. This is also apparent in our research. Therefore, we organized a movie event in one of the lecture halls of the university. Altogether, four classes from different parts of the city read the same children's book and came to watch it. To make the experience resemble movies the children were allowed to have some sweets.

The children really enjoyed themselves and eagerly compared the book and the movie. After the movie, the children went back to their schools and while walking to schools some of the children were shouting: We are readers!

Encouragement posts to other children

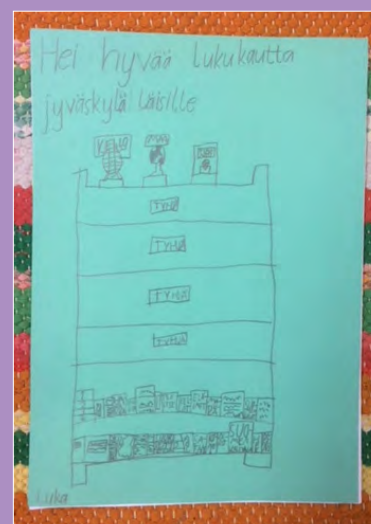
The children send traditional postcards to StoRe-class members in another town and with those postcards encouraged the other children to read. The old-fashioned post cards were really expected among children and contained very original messages on reading to other children, which inspired the receivers.



Book exchange market



Going to the movies together



An encouragement letter from a child to another saying "Have a nice reading season!"

Reflecting the pedagogical Innovations

These innovations are in accordance to the prior research: helping children to create positive attitudes to reading and enhancing, the motivation to reading does not require money or any special resources. In reading the positive reading climate, time and a good company are the most valuable resources.

In Store-project, the possibilities to meet children from other groups and schools seem to be effective from the perspective of communities of readers and the positive readership. The activities implemented (the pedagogical innovations) during the StoRe-project made the educator's, other children and their families readership visible to the children and increased the amount of reading in all groups. After the project almost 80 % of the children felt that, the educator encouraged them to read and almost 90 % felt that some adult in their home environment encouraged them in reading. They also felt quite sure that the educators liked reading and only 20 % of the children were unsure. The change in comparison to the children's starting point was remarkable.

Children's answers on what convinced them on the fact that the educator values and likes reading may also serve as inspiration for reading activities in groups. According to children, they know that the educator is a reader because she reads to them aloud, she likes to read long books, she never says that the children are not allowed or do not have time to read, she knows a lot of fairy tales and good books for me to read.

Read more

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Finland

Literature and stories are meaningful - Making connections between positive learning experiences, personal interpretations and children's literature in a NaCra-project

Juli-Anna Aerila, Katri Moisio & Marja-Leena Rönkkö

What has this case study of NaCra (meaning Narratives and Craft) to offer to the reading in early childhood education?

The case study aims at highlighting the following perspectives to reading:

1. According to the latest PISA-results, one of the key features in good readers is an extensive vocabulary. Reading comprehension is sometimes defined as a sum of the knowledge acquired from the text and the prior knowledge (meaning the vocabulary). The less the reader knows about the area of the text, the more information the reader must acquire from the text. This makes reading demanding. In this case study, children's reading is supported by activities and environment, which helps them to gain vocabulary and knowledge of the text.
2. Every reader interprets literature differently: the more the readers reading skills, experiences (in reading and in general), worldview and overall knowledge vary, the more the interpretations differ from each other. It is vital to find ways to help children illustrate their interpretations to themselves, others and to the adults. This enhances the understanding of the meaning of reading literature: it is an individual process and the literature means different things to different readers.
3. Sometimes children's literature is used ineffectively in education: One can say that the whole life is a story. Children's literature helps children understand and indulge in different situations and times of their own. With their own stories, they describe their own world and make their voices heard. By creating holistic learning experiences and having literature as a starting point, the holistic learning could be effective and child-centered.
4. Art-based learning environments support the child's experiences and imaginative self-realization. In addition, these things learned through these functional and art-based methods are tangibly linked to the child's own world of experiences and thus enhance learning. Therefore, connecting arts-based activities will visualize children's thoughts on different matters including the interpretation of literature.

NaCra-project aims at holistic learning and making literature the center of all learning

NaCra is an acronym for narratives and crafts, and NaCra-project develops an integrative pedagogy of pre-primary and early education. The aim of all the teaching experiments in NaCra-project is, that the child can use his / her own creativity freely to describe their own experience in different arts-based assignments.

This case study serves as an example of a project, which aims at holistic learning experiences in early childhood education. In the center of the holistic learning process is children's literature and they both (the holistic learning and children's literature) are beneficial to each other. The focus of this project is on choosing a story that supports the learning contents of the learning process. The case study presented in this booklet centers to learning about the history of children's hometown. The environment is one of historical home museums of their hometown and the picture book is telling a story of that specific house. The reading

of the children's book is supported by arts-based activities: making a craft product and an ISE that means individual story ending. However, any book and any theme is possible.

Practical example of a holistic learning process in accordance to the NaCra-framework and centering literature In Finland, children are acquainted with several home museum during their ECE. In the city of Rauma, the children visit Kirsti Seaman's Home Museum. The interior of the museum presents life at different times, and the museum houses living rooms from the 1800-1900s, from the 1940s to the 1970s. Mainly, the museum describes the residence of the owner and tenant families of the house in the 20th century.

Children's author, Annastiina Mäkitalo, has published a children's book called Kirsti of Old Rauma (2015). It is a story of a small girl living in the house of Kirsti at the beginning of the 20th century. Her family owns the



The cover of Annastiina Mäkitalo's picture book and the museum environment the book is about.

house and they have tenants in the house. His father is a seaman and the family is waiting for him. Since there is no news of the father, the family's money becomes scarce and Kirsti is forced to sell flowers she had made out of lace. It is not necessary to find this kind of a picture book that specifically describes a subject, but the story can be written by any subject or the story can be a real historical story of the venue or even any object there. (More about the book also in English: <http://kiinnoste.blogspot.com/2012/12/vanhan-rauman-kirsti-kirsti-of-old-rauma.html>)

During their visit at the home museum, the children get familiar with the home museum environment and listen to an adult reading the picture book about the museum (Kirsti of Old Rauma). Reading aloud is connected to two activities:

Individual Story Ending (ISE)

The first activity, individual story ending (ISE), is aimed at illustrating children's understanding of Mäkitalo's story and the museum environment. Individual story ending (ISE) refers to creating an individual ending to a beginning of a story heard or read. Individual story ending can be implemented with any arts-based activity such as writing, multiplying, acting or drawing. If the children do not have writing skills, the stories can be created by dictating the story to an adult. Additionally, it is possible to invent a personal story ending in a group or individually. When creating the ISE, the child uses material from the original text and from his or her own experiences.

This means all the ISEs are different and they contain information from various perspectives: reading skills, knowledge and understanding as well as personal attitudes and values regarding the content of the original text.

The ISEs are recommended both by children and by educators. The children like inventing personal story endings since they are easier than inventing a story of their own. The reason for this lies in the fact that they get a lot of material from the original text: they can use the plot of the original text, they will have the protagonist and other persons, the venue, and other details from the original text. Simultaneously, the children learn about different features of a story. Additionally, the children love listening to ISEs and comparing them with each other and the ending of the original text. The teacher on the other hand can use ISEs to make the conversation around literature more child-centered and increase the participation of all the children. As being said, based on the ISEs the teacher will also know how the children have understood the story and what details they have paid attention to.

Making a soft toy with craft techniques

The second activity, **making a soft toy with craft techniques**, helps the children to recall the experiences from the museum environment and the picture book of Annastiina Mäkitalo. In NaCra-learning processes, stories (the story of the picture book and ISEs) serve as inspiration for designing products, which are carried out as a holistic craft process. The holistic craft process is an application of a creative problem-solving process, in which the children are encouraged to design and implement a personal product. For the smallest children the personal process can be supported by providing support for ideas, design and production by limiting the starting points, manufacturing materials and technology of the product being implemented. The goal, however, is that everyone produces a product of their own, in which, for example, the colors, shape and details of the product are children's own ideas.

The aim of this activity is to connect all the senses to the learning process and create a concrete product to help memorize both the picture book and the learning experience.

As the ISEs, the craft products are popular among children and educators. The children get many ideas for their soft toys from the stories and may still connect their personal interests and thoughts to the soft toy. This kind of making can be called a craft expression. Creating a soft toy activates all the senses and the process involves different activities. Additionally, the soft toy is concrete and children often feel much attached to their own soft toy. NaCra-processes have shown that a self-made product, which combines both the experience of visiting and the child's own life, helps children remember stories and details about the visit. In addition, the product tells the personal meaning of the visit, both to its creator and to others.



Making the soft toy with felting

The results of the NaCra-activities based on a picture book

The individual story endings produced during the museum home visit and based on Mäkitalo's picture book contain plenty of material on both the children's own world of living, the home museum environment and the picture book. The stories are a mixture of children's beliefs and knowledge of past and life in general. For the ISEs the original story was interrupted to a place where Kirsti (the main character) missed his father. Additionally, the mother told Kirsti that they have no money (since the father is not at home) and they will have to sell the lace flowers Kirsti has made.

It is apparent the main character of the story (who is the same age as the children) helps the children to empathize with the story. All the children created happy endings to their stories: the father came back. In most stories, the father never left (at least not without his family) sailing again. The children were also able to solve the problem of selling the flowers: in some stories, the flowers were sold with a big amount of money, in some stories Kirsti made a lot more flowers and in some stories, the family gained money in some other way. From the perspective of the historical knowledge, the ISEs are revealing: for children being a sailor means mostly fighting against pirates. Additionally, the stories contain many details incorrect from the perspective of a historical perspective. For example, the family spends their evening watching TV.

Here are some examples of the dictated ISEs and illustrations:

The father came home with a big sack of money. They had a party. Kirsti did not have to sell her lace flowers. They did not remember to turn the porcelain dogs and they still looked out from the window.



Story told by a child and his illustration to it

The starting point for the soft toy a historical detail in a picture book related to the porcelain dog found in the seamen's homes: the porcelain dogs symbolize the family's longing for a seaman who is absent and tell the by passers about whether the father of the family is at sea or at home. During the visit, the children were given the task of designing a soft toy that would have a similar function in their lives. The soft toy was done by felting. All children's soft toys were different and they portrayed meaningful things to the children, such as a toy cat at a child's father's home, or a favorite toy.

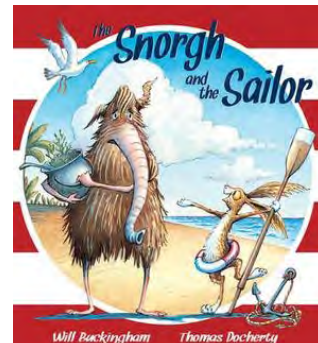
The illustration based on storytelling, a design for the soft toy and ready-made soft toy



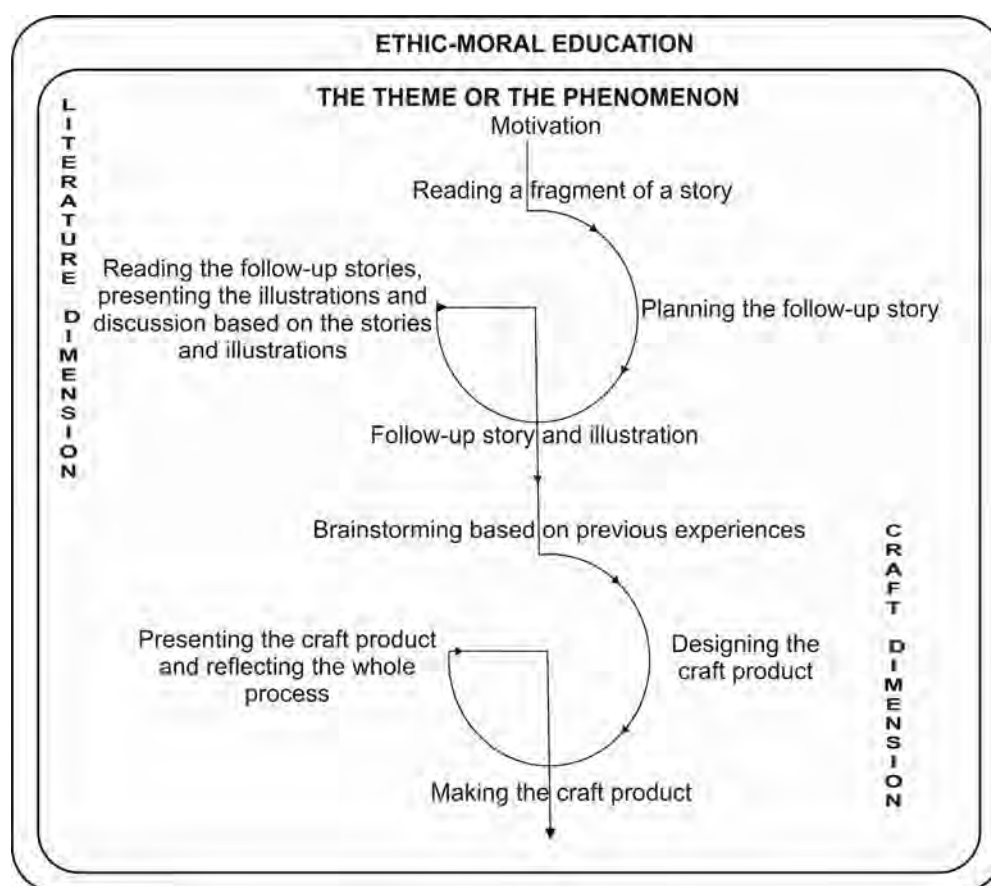
Some final thoughts

At the museum visit, the children learn the contents and meaning of reading and writing, crafts and cultural education by familiarizing themselves with the history of their own neighborhood. The NaCra-process utilize children's literature and children's creative activities. Children's literature helps children understand and indulge in different situations and times of their own. With their own activities, they describe their own world and make their voices heard. This makes them feel the literature meaningful and helps the educator to connect the literature to the thoughts and experiences of children.

Picture books we have used in the NaCra-project

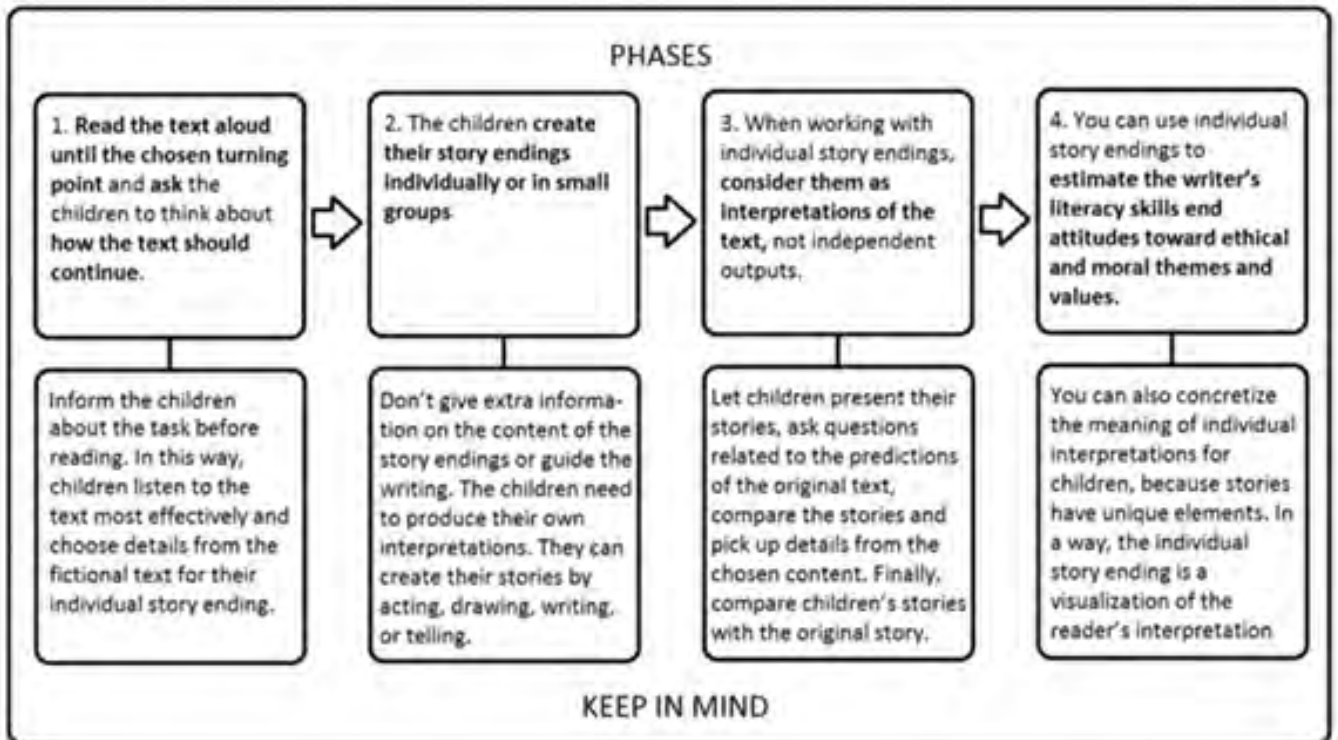


The process in NaCra (LCE-model)

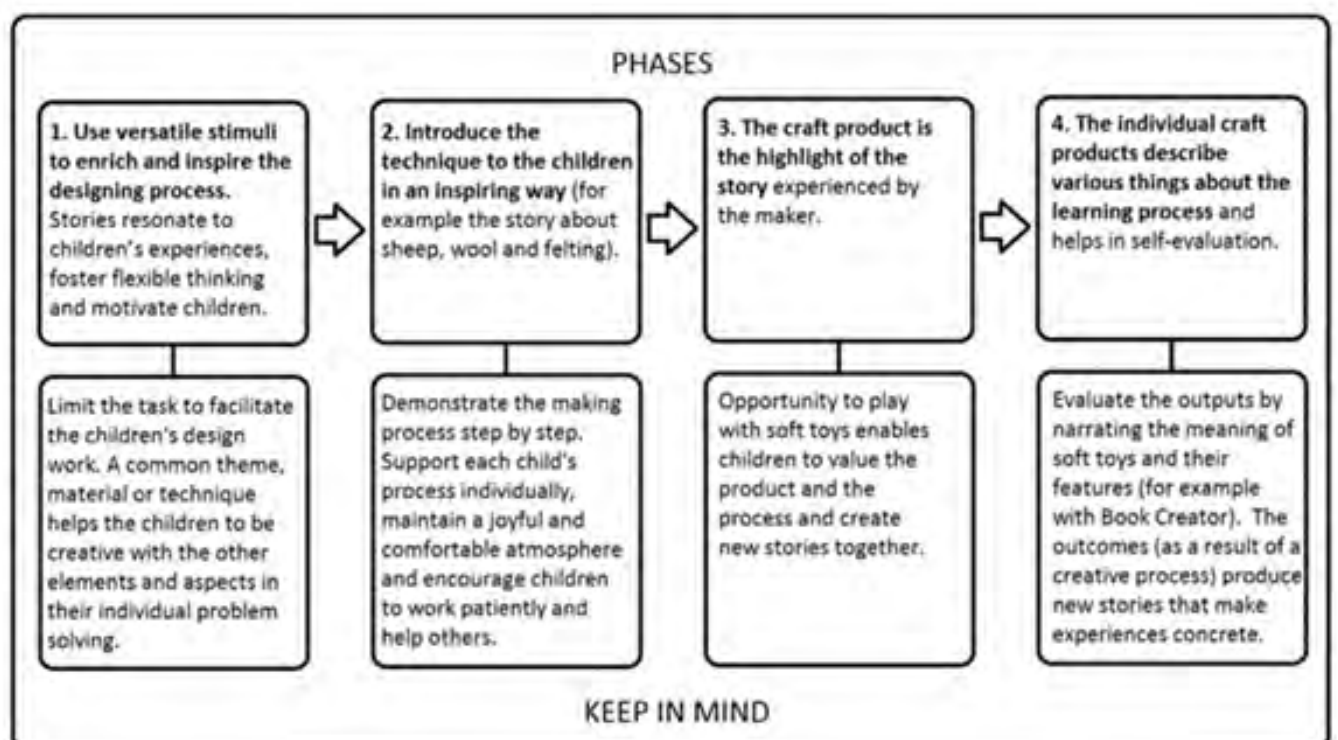


Summary for educators of the activities

Implementing the Individual Story Ending



Implementing a Craft Product



More about this project

In Finnish

[http://www.kulttuuriymparistomme.fi/fi-FI/Ajankohtaista/Artikkelit/Opi_ja_innosta/Kirstin_matkassa__Esiopetuksen_eheyttava\(46069\)](http://www.kulttuuriymparistomme.fi/fi-FI/Ajankohtaista/Artikkelit/Opi_ja_innosta/Kirstin_matkassa__Esiopetuksen_eheyttava(46069))

In Swedish

[http://www.kulttuuriymparistomme.fi/sv-FI/Aktuellt/Artiklar/Lar_dig_och_inspirera/Pa_resa_med_Kirsti__Forskoleundervisning\(46309\)](http://www.kulttuuriymparistomme.fi/sv-FI/Aktuellt/Artiklar/Lar_dig_och_inspirera/Pa_resa_med_Kirsti__Forskoleundervisning(46309))

More about NaCra-projects

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