

HINTS AND TIPS FOR *SHARED READING* PRACTITIONERS:
Shared Reading with pre- school children and their families



Thanks for all those words that sing
Thanks for words are everything
From *For Word* by Benjamin Zephaniah

What do I need to be aware of when reading in this setting?

- Choose a suitable space: a safe, clean area for babies to crawl and for their grown ups to sit comfortably on the floor too; allocated buggy parking area; easy access; nearby changing facilities.
- Keep the session short between 45 – 60 minutes and ensure the session time fits in with the daily routine of the families.
- Establish a good relationship with the “host” staff of your venue as they will be crucial in helping you recruit to the group and connecting you with the community.
- Consider offering refreshments for the grown ups before the group starts – this is a great time to get to know your group members and for them to get to know each other. Learn their names as soon as possible!

How can I best make a session happen?

- Have a loose structure for each session so that families know what to expect.
- Start with a warm welcome; a few songs with actions; read a book to the group – slowly and with pauses for wondering questions; time for families to share books together; craft time (optional – depending on time and facilities available) end with another story and or nursery rhymes.
- Be prepared to be really flexible and adapt your sessions according to need, concentration spans will vary and there will be lots of unexpected interruptions – try to turn these into opportunities to connect further with the story and with the children and their grown ups.

How can I engage the parents/carers in the sessions?

We need to model our profound belief in *Shared Reading* with families in everything we do and say in the session. In practical terms that means:

- Learn everyone’s names adults and children; notice the first time a shy dad joins in singing Humpty Dumpty and thank him; encourage adults as well as children to turn the pages of the book; model slow expressive reading aloud; invite adults to read a page when they feel comfortable; direct wondering questions about the pictures to the adults as well as to their children; listen to and value everyone’s contribution equally. This will be key to earning the respect of the adults and to your being listened to in return.
- Consider putting together a simple song bag and obtain a few finger puppets – ask the adults, as well as their children, to choose from the bag and use the puppets.

Patience and resilience are important. It may take time for the adults to adapt to a model of *Shared Reading* which is much slower and asks open questions about feelings and motivations of characters in picture books.

Get in touch and be part of the story:

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