Books for baby and me...

an early literacy development program

Making a difference in cycles of disadvantage:
Enabling and fostering early literacy practices, for
parents and their very young children experiencing
vulnerable circumstances in the geographical area of
Western Metropolitan Melbourne.

Paula Kelly Paull, 2017
Research and development project

An evidence based model for training librarians to support parents of very young children as their child’s first teacher, in shared book reading for best early literacy outcomes.

- Training children's librarians and supported parent group educators
- Partnership approach to intervention programming
- Change in practice and a reflective practice opportunity
- Application of an evidenced approach with 40 years of research demonstrating outcomes especially with vulnerable families – Abecedarian Approach
The Abecedarian Approach
On Early Brain Stimulation

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSbX-dJMjmM

In Australia, it is called…

ABECEDARIAN APPROACH AUSTRALIA
Program of activity 2016-17

- Research and partnership formation March – May 2016
- Selection of participants and scheduling May – July 2016
- Books selected and acquired to be provided to families June – Aug 2016
- PD session 1 - Focus on the research and introduction to the Abecedarian Approach, introductory pre survey September 2016
- PD session 2 Focus on the Approach, program planning and practice Early October 2016
- Parent group sessions delivered throughout October and November – observations and diary dates confirmation (6 weeks)
- December & Jan 2017 – Survey and reflections/data analysis
- Research findings collated and recommendations for future Early 2017
- Future program development and further deployment March – May 2017
- Dissemination of results May 2017 onwards
- Final report June 2017
A pathway of opportunity

• Literacy and communication skills are vital
• Literacy is a human right
• Early childhood is the most important window
• Early introduction to literacy through songs rhymes and stories and rich language supports these skills
• Reading to babies and sharing books is one of the most effective ways of enhancing language development in the young child
Critical Links

The links between literacy, the ability to read and write the printed word, school performance, self esteem and adult life chances have been widely documented... poor literacy skills are associated with generally lower education, employment, health and social outcomes as well as being linked to high rates of welfare dependence and teenage parenting.

Centre for Community Child Health – Let’s Read Program Literature review
Why are we working on this?

- National Year of Reading 2012 - 46% Australians not at Level 3 Literacy standards (ABS Yearbook Australia, 2012)
- Hobsons Bay AEDI rankings
- More than ¼ parents not aware of the importance of sharing books and reading with young children (Hill, 2011)
Heckman (2008) Nobel Prize winning economist: Return on Investment in the first three years

Heckman equation “...investment in, and development of, and sustaining of early childhood nurturing interventions from birth to five ... (=) more capable productive and valuable workforce that pays dividends to society for years to come.”

(Heckman in Let’s Read Literature Review, 2013)
The power of literacy...

To be literate is to become liberated from the constraints of dependency.
To be literate is to gain a voice and to participate meaningfully and assertively in decisions that affect one's life.
To be literate is to gain self-confidence.
To be literate is to become self-assertive.
To be literate is to become politically conscious and critically aware, and to demystify social reality.
Literacy enables people to read their own world and to write their own history.

Image: The Letter, Elise Hurst, 2010
Literacy as a human right

• Basic education recognised as a basic right in 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights
• United Nation Convention Rights of the Child (1989) included key rights to
  – Education
  – Literacy and
  – Play
• Convention offers support in library policies and practice (Koren, 2003:1)
International Research has shown that brain development and receptivity is greater in the first three years of life than at any other time in human development.
Window of opportunity 0-3 years

• 50% language learned by three (Hamer, 2011)

• Window focus of 3 months to 3 years peaking at 9 months (Nelson, 2000 and Mendelson, 2009)

• Language modeling and development compromised in communities experiencing vulnerabilities (Hart & Risley, 1995)
Critical phases of brain development

Synapse Formation in the Development Brain

- Higher cognitive function
- Receptive language area/speech production
- Seeing/hearing

Conception - Birth - Age in Months - Age in Years

Source: Charles A. Nelson, From Neurons to Neighborhoods
The importance of the early years: research

• Children who began school with low achievement in literacy (concepts about print, phonemic awareness) - often living in high poverty areas

• Children with low levels of literacy prior to school had difficulty catching up without extensive parental/adult support

• Learning in the preschool years impacts on later learning

• The influence of the years before school for literacy development is clearly documented
• Unequal access to rich preschool learning opportunities exacerbates wider social and educational inequalities

• Early years education makes a difference to children's cognitive attainment and subsequent social outcomes

• Brain-based research articulates the importance of the early years of learning on brain development and later academic achievement

• Providing early years education is a better investment than paying for remediation programs later in life for problems rooted in poor early development.
Learning to read teaches our brains how to learn....
### Table 1: Australian Early Development Index Communities Profile figures for selected suburbs within Western Metropolitan Melbourne.

AEDI Results showing Percentage of children Developmentally Vulnerable in Language and Communication Domains, and those as Developmentally Vulnerable in One or more, or Two or more domains, expressed as percentage of children in local communities, (AEDI, Community Profiles, 2012).

*Percentages of children Developmentally vulnerable across Victoria noted as comparison data.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Vuln 1</th>
<th>Vuln 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of children Developmentally Vulnerable</td>
<td>Victoria 6.1%</td>
<td>Victoria 8%</td>
<td>Victoria 9.5%</td>
<td>Victoria 9.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobsons Bay</td>
<td>Altona North Brooklyn</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laverton</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreland</td>
<td>Fawkner</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glenroy</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gowanbrae</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maribyrnong</td>
<td>Braybrook</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Footscray</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melton</td>
<td>Melton</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melton West</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyndham</td>
<td>Werribee</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wyndhamvale</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hoppers Crossg</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Books Build Better Futures

Sharing a love of reading, rhyming, singing and talking with your baby is one of the best things you can do to give your baby a head start in life.

Research into early brain development shows that a child’s ability to learn and to develop pre-literacy skills is greater if they are read to from birth.

www.betterbeginnings.com.au
Family at the centre

- Bronfenbrenner’s social ecological perspective…
  Headstart USA (1979, 1989 in Brock & Rankin, 2016:3)
If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.

Rachel Carson
Relationships at the centre

Victorian Early Years Learning and development Framework:
- Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
- Partnerships

(Reading and Literacy for All, Early Years Professional Development for Victorian Public Libraries, 2016: 7-8)
Building social capital

- Attentive and responsive adults build the child's social interactions and reinforce and echo the child's own interactions (Halpern 2004: 295).

- US Head Start and UK Sure Start intended to help parents to support their children (Brock & Rankin, 2016: 8)
Parents involvement with Early Literacy and home environment

- Children with active involvement of parents in early literacy experiences positively impact future literacy achievement and educational success (Hannon and Nutbrown, 2001)
- Number of books available, frequency of visits to library, availability of toys, parents teaching a range of activities – important indicators of vocabulary at two years of age (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010)
- Family literacy programs that focus on both parents and children increase literate environments at home (European Commission, 2012)
- Earlier the onset of beginning to share books – positive effect (Dunst, Simkus & Handby, 2012)
- Shared reading also supports critical emotional connection between parent and child (Peifer and Perez, 2011, Bowlby, 1988).
Role of the Library

• IFLA – providing range of materials and activities to families, (Guidelines for Library Services to Babies and Toddlers, 2007)

• State of Victoria’s Literacy for All Framework (2015) has a focus on early literacy and the role of librarians in fostering early literacy practices that support the development of vulnerable children.

• Shared space, shared resources, celebrating diversity (Maynard, 2011).

• Librarians encourage parents to bring their children to the library and experience multimodal scaffolded learning experiences.
Early Language acquisition

• Quality language development is the key to literacy (Brock & Rankin, 2016: 34)

• Young children and carers interactions are critical

• Parents facilitate language acquisition, and scaffold children’s learning accommodating their language use to promote attentive listening, understanding and reproduction of sounds, words and sentences (Bruner, 1983)
Creating readers

TWO essential conditions:

1/ Print filled environments and adults reading these materials

2/ Caring adult to introduce child to the joy of reading and books (Brock and Rankin, 2016: 17)

BOOKS IN the home matter! Better language development, more enjoyment of reading (Kelly & McKerracher, ABS Yearbook Australia, 2012:26)
Developing skills for reading

- Shared closeness
- Modeling apprentices children into reading
- Talk about the text and pictures...
- Parentese and home language
- Providing a framework for action to support parents as first teacher...
Literacy value of baby bounce activities and rhyme, rhythm and repetition

• Love of books, spoken language, interaction
• Phonemic awareness: rhyme, alliteration words, syllable or beat.
• Vocabulary, more rare words than in everyday conversations
• The printed word has a message
• Babies are intellectually engaged
Free Books

- Book choice  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udRxyrDbWuQ&feature=player_detailpage
- Book handling
- Model turn taking
- Bookstart, Victorian Young Readers Program, Better Beginnings program
- Bookstart families 6 times more likely to be library members and parents felt more confident sharing books with their children (Wade & Moore, 1998)
- Better beginnings research – free books in the home, literacy support materials for parents positively affects reading habits (Barratt Pugh, 2010)
- Access to library materials and program provides a ‘little bookshelf’ of selected titles and rhyme time booklet.
**Research Design – overview diagram**

**Why?**  
- Abecedarian Approach  
- Vygotsky  
- Bronfenbrenner  
- Bowlby  
- Early Brain Development  
- Learning Theory

**How?**  
- Professional Training  
- Mediated Learning  
- Small group programs  
- Delivered in public library outreach

**Where?**  
- Western Metropolitan Melbourne, Victoria - Hobsons Bay

**Who/When?**  
- Children’s Librarians, Supported parent groups educators, Parents & children 0-3 years  
  (5 - 10 groups) 2016-17

**What?**  
- Conversational Reading Training Program  
  Implementation Small groups  
  Professional Practice Case Studies

**Public Libraries outreach**

**Training for Professionals – Children’s Librarians**

**Small group weekly Sessions**

**Learning - Conversational Reading**

**Parent & Child interaction**

**Dialogic Phenomenology**

**Brain Development**

**Observational analysis**

**Semistructured interviews**

**Abecedarian Approach**

**Bronfenbrenner Ecological Model**

**Conversational Reading Training Program**

**Implementation Small groups**

**Professional Practice Case Studies**
Elements of Language Priority

ABECEDARIAN APPROACH AUSTRALIA
Language Priority: 3N Strategy

Notice: “I notice you have picked up two green blocks.”

Nudge: “Can you see any other green blocks?”

Narrate: “You have found three other green blocks. Now you are lining them up in a row. It looks like
Conversational Reading 3 S’s

- It goes back-and-forth, like a conversation
- It goes up and down the scaffolded steps
Enriched Caregiving

Each routine or activity has a CARE component, an EMOTIONAL component, and an EDUCATIONAL component.
Learning Games — Front of the Page

What the adult might say (the “Talk”)

Picture showing appropriate position for adult and child

Ride a Horsie

Do a special action on the same one or two words in a rhyme and see if your baby notices.

Your baby will learn to look forward to certain words and their matching actions.

One sentence explaining the activity

1 sentence telling why it is
Australian Learning Games

What the adult might say (the “Talk”)

Pictures showing appropriate position for adult and child

Short sentence explaining the activity
Bonding ... and Reading Together
Noisy Day

Zoom! Zoom!

Tick tock!

Woof! Woof!
Session Plan #6

- Welcome and recap of program and techniques
- First Song: Hello, Second song Open shut them
- Introduce book Noisy Day
  and read, modelling 3A techniques. Remind parents about the 3S’s & 3N’s
- Sing The Wheels on the Bus
- Work with individual families to coach them in techniques
- Sing Row Row Row Your Boat
Session Plan #6 (cont.)

- Play learning game of Looking for Sounds.
  Learning through play. More opportunities for bonding and for the 3N’s and the 3R’s
- **Goodbye song**
- Remind them to practice conversational reading and enriched caregiving with their little ones at home
- **Individual coaching and Farewell.**
New practice for children’s librarians... supporting parents as first teacher in partnership

- Language Priority
- Enriched Caregiving
- Conversational Reading
- Learning Games
Key Performance Indicators

- Training development and program delivery
- A summary of evidence that demonstrates attitudinal change
- A model of training that is repeatable and grounded in research on how public libraries can best support early literacy outcomes for highly disadvantaged sectors of the community
- A written report
Key Outcomes of the Project:

• **Increased understanding** of best practice of children’s librarians in the early literacy space

• **Increased participation of communities at risk** in early literacy practices

• **Increased resourcing of families** who may not have had a book culture in the home

• **The development of an evidence based model** from which sponsorship opportunities can be sought and other libraries can springboard.
The Abecedarian Approach Australia

3a is a set of evidence-based teaching and learning strategies for early childhood educators and parents to use with children from birth to five.

Research has shown that [Deliver enhanced educational outcomes](https://3a.education.unimelb.edu.au/)
https://3a.education.unimelb.edu.au/3a-resources
Thank you!

- Library Board of Victoria, ACPL, State Library of Victorian and PLVN.
- Hobsons Bay City Council colleagues
- Christine Andell – Early literacy consultant
- Sarah Weisner – Hobsons Bay Libraries
- Program participants of Hobsons Bay

Paula Kelly Paull
Manager – Learning Communities
E: pkellypaull@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au