



LET'S READ Newsletter

December 2007



Welcome

The last few months have been very busy for the Let's Read. In this edition we bring you news of new staff, new projects, and new communities.

New National Trainer

Hello Let's Readers!

I am the new trainer for the Let's Read national team. I come to this position from a background in parenting, teaching, training, children's literature, and most importantly, from coordinating Let's Read delivery in an early years project in Doveton, Victoria. I will be responsible for running Let's Read training in all states except Tasmania, as they will have their own trainer from early 2008.

I'm really enjoying meeting all the wonderful people who work closely with parents and young children. With each training session I learn more about the unique challenges facing each community, and the amazing, creative approaches being implemented to improve the life chances of Australia's young children. As we travel around the country, Michelle and I are keen to share your wonderful ideas with other Let's Read communities, so if you have any materials that can be easily laminated and transported, please send them in to the Collingwood office so that we can pass on your great ideas to others.

When I'm not travelling around the country, I can be reached at the Melbourne office of The Smith Family in Collingwood, where I sit next to Michelle. My contact details are:

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I look forward to meeting with you soon.
Happy reading!
Jeanette

Ps: Training booking forms can now be emailed to me rather than to Michelle.

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New National Program Manager

Sonja Pase joined the Let's Read team in October this year as National Program Manager. She came to us from the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs where she worked in the administration of various early childhood programs including Child Care, Communities for Children and Playgroups. Sonja has a varied work background having taught the Diploma and Certificate III in Children's Services and worked in early childhood services including kindergarten, child care and as an educational play therapist at the Royal Children's Hospital.

Sonja is excited about taking on this challenging role. Over the coming year she will be; guiding the implementation of our new large scale projects in Queensland and Tasmania, facilitating the expansion of Let's Read by insuring that processes are as efficient as possible, and supporting the evaluation of Let's Read delivery so that we can learn from each other and share our achievements.

Let's Read Launch in Wynyard



Let's Read got off to a fantastic start in the Wynyard community with our launch on November 1st, 2007.

With the help of our local council we set up a huge marquee in the middle of town, it was a great eye catcher enticing people to come and join us. The event was advertised through local newspapers, our school newsletter, posters on shop windows and invitations sent to the local child care centre.



The marquee was set up with interactive literacy related activities such as puppets, felt story boards, and necklace making. There was a story telling spot where children enjoyed stories read by the local mayor, a councillor, a Principal and teachers. Staff from the State Library entertained with their Rock and Rhyme sessions and there were loads of books for children to access.

At one time the space inside the marquee was so full of young children and carers we could not see a speck of carpet on the floor!

Parents were given a free book and invited to register for the Let's Read Program.



Six weeks later we already have 120 children registered for the program. Parents can opt to attend a session at the school or a home visit. Many have been able to attend group sessions at school that have been delivered by Kathryn Anderson our Early Years Coordinator as we work our way through the data base of names.

Once we have distributed the initial packs and DVD we will focus on ways to keep the momentum and interest alive. That won't be difficult as parents have been so enthusiastic about Let's Read.

Exciting New Contracts

The Queensland Government recently announced four years of funding for the 'Reading to Children Initiative'; an evidence based universal early literacy program with Let's Read as its core component. As well as implementing Let's Read in eight geographic locations across Queensland, the 'Reading to Children Initiative' will focus on involvement of grandparents and older volunteers in community activities. The aim is to enhance and extend opportunities for children to be involved in reading aloud activities as well as promote intergenerational experiences for young children. A fulltime community facilitator and several project staff will join the Let's Read team in early 2008 to support this exciting initiative.

Much further south, we are also pleased to report the recent announcement of the 'Read For Life' literacy strategy for Tasmania by the Minister for Education. The early childhood component of this strategy is Let's Read, which will be undertaken over a three year period and will target all children under five years of age using the four key delivery points – 4, 12, 18 months and 3½ years. Additional resources and books will be made available over the three years to support local community based activities. A full time Let's Read Community Facilitator and a part time Trainer have been employed in Tasmania to provide support to the communities and will join the team in January 2008.

Both the Queensland and Tasmanian models will be based around all three components of Let's Read, including training 'trusted' community based people who work with parents, providing high quality resources for parents and of course an emphasis on a community approach.

Updated Recommended books Lists

The Let's Read booklists have been updated. We have kept the same look and feel of the booklists but we have been very mindful that some books on the list are no longer available, and there are many new books being released all the time, so it was definitely time for an update.

Updating the booklists is quite a complex process as we have to take into account the following factors:

- Inclusion of rhyme, rhythm and repetition in the book – as we are trying to develop emergent literacy skills
- Suitability for the age group and gender



- Culturally inclusive and sensitive
- Australian content and supporting Australia authors, illustrators and publishers
- Availability for purchase – as many children's books become available and then seem to disappear again
- Price range
- Keeping the books from the Let's Read DVD.

When you place orders for booklists from now on, you will be provided with the new versions.

I hope you will continue to find this a supportive resource, and I am always happy to hear from you about books that you have discovered and think that we should know about.

- Sharon Foster

Feedback

Have you had a wonderful idea? Developed a great new resource? Overcome a challenge? We'd love to hear about. Help other Let's Read communities to thrive by sending us stories and photos to share in our next newsletter due out in March. Contact us on 03 9473 4366.

From the whole Let's Read National Team...

We wish you a safe and restful festive season and New Year, and we look forward to working with you in the 2008.



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