



Research Snapshot

Background

Reading with children aged 0 to 5 years is probably the single-most important activity parents can undertake to enhance their child's future ability to read and write.

Evidence shows that the best way to deliver better language and literacy outcomes is for children to share books, stories, songs and nursery rhymes with the important people in their lives.

The early literacy promoting environment is a crucial part of children's later academic and literacy success.

Shared reading

An important aspect of the early home learning environment is shared reading (ie parents reading aloud with children).

Shared reading:

- has a significant and positive impact on vocabulary development (receptive and expressive), listening comprehension and understanding of the conventions of print
- helps to develop phonological awareness (ie awareness of sound structure in words) – a predictor of reading success in normally developing children
- exposes children to conventional reading and writing. This exposure has a clear and consistently strong relationship with later literacy skills.

By using finger pointing and interactive questioning, parents further enhance the benefits of shared reading and promote a number of important literacy prerequisites.

When parents choose books that offer rhyme, rhythm and repetition they provide children with opportunities to engage in the activity of shared reading, as well as learning to identify words and developing awareness of how letters map onto sounds.

... the best way to deliver better language and literacy outcomes is for all children to share books, stories, songs and nursery rhymes every day ...

Helping young children to develop literacy skills promotes vocabulary and cognitive growth, and serves as a protective factor against future learning difficulties. Intervening in the early years ensures that children meet basic literacy requirements before they start school.

Let's Read National Early Literacy Campaign

In July 2012 the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) funded the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute to implement a new 12-month Let's Read National Early Years Literacy Campaign. Building on existing evidence-based programs and leveraging off the 2012 National Year of Reading, the Let's Read Campaign engages families, professionals and communities to promote high quality early literacy environments for children aged 0 to 5 years.

In partnership with The Smith Family, Let's Read provides assistance for families to understand language and emergent literacy development and provides resources to help families to stimulate their child's learning.

The Let's Read Campaign will generate national and integrated early years literacy promotion. The Campaign will target early years professionals and families and communities through broad-based multimedia messages, information and resources with the aim of supporting literacy-rich home environments.

Let's Read research

A Let's Read Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) was conducted to determine whether a population-based primary care literacy promotion intervention during the first two years of life improves literacy by age four.

The Let's Read RCT was delivered by maternal and child health nurses at scheduled well-child visits at maternal and child health centres. It was a low intensity program, with four visits in total, one visit each between 4-8 weeks, at 12 months, at 18 months and at 3.5 years.

Nurses delivered:

- promotional messages, modelled shared reading and discussed the program
- a Let's Read pack that included a picture book, booklist and guidance on the best ways to go about shared reading.

Implications

The results of the RCT provided key lessons for the future delivery of early literacy intervention programs, particularly:

- Broad intensity – the RCT suggests that a higher and broader intensity delivery method may prove more beneficial for families building their child's literacy. There is an opportunity for the early years sector to provide higher quality and higher intensity emergent literacy activities in a way that engages families and opens up a conversation with parents about their role in promoting language and literacy development in the home.
- Low-literacy families – lessons from the RCT and established international programs suggest that literacy interventions are most beneficial with low-literacy families.

Let's Read National Early Literacy Campaign

Aim

The Let's Read Campaign aims to develop and generate national, integrated early years literacy promotion and support activities so that all children

gain the foundation skills for subsequent language, literacy and learning success.

Objectives

The Let's Read Campaign has four main objectives:

1. Conduct a broad dissemination campaign for parents and carers about the importance of early literacy and develop a range of resources to support the campaign.
2. Develop a training and endorsement process for professionals to support the emergent literacy of children and promote early literacy to parents and carers
3. Decrease the costs to new and existing disadvantaged Let's Read communities by making resources widely available
4. Develop ongoing sustainability for early literacy promotion in Australia.

Outcomes

A multi-tiered and ecological approach will be implemented to engage families, professionals and communities with a range of messages that are relevant to the developmental phases of children aged 0 to 5 years:



Sign up to the Let's Read mailing list to stay in touch with the campaign. Visit www.letsread.com.au to subscribe now!

References for this Research Snapshot can be found at www.letsread.com.au

Our vision is for all Australian children to share books, stories, songs and nursery rhymes every day through their relationships with the important people in their lives.

The Australian Government is working in partnership with the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and The Smith Family to deliver Let's Read.

Project partners:



Affiliated with:

