Engaging and motivating parents to improve children's literacy: new approaches and priorities for working with troubled and hard-to-reach families

Contents

Seminar report................................................................. 2

Appendix A: Presentation slides........................................ 6
  Stephen Tall, Education Endowment Foundation.................. 6
  Honor Rhodes, Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships..... 11
  Mark Coates, Double Club, The Connaught School............. 14
  Adrienne Burgess, The Fatherhood Institute...................... 17

Appendix B: Resilience measures.................................... 21

Appendix C: Project examples from LiteracyActionNet.......... 22

Appendix D: Online resources......................................... 23
Lemos&Crane, working with the JJ Charitable Trust, produced a seminar held on 8 May 2013, entitled *Engaging and motivating parents to improve children's literacy: New approaches and priorities for working with troubled and hard-to-reach families*. Gerard Lemos, the chair of the seminar, started by posing the question ‘Who is literacy for?’ and suggested that the answer would depend on who is being asked. So, when making the case for investment in parenting or literacy projects, different reasons why to engage parents must be presented based on a variety of motivations. The day started with a presentation by Stephen Tall from the Education Endowment Foundation about the organisation and funding process. Honor Rhodes, from The Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships, shared findings as to how a holistic approach to family well-being can lead to improvements in children’s literacy, and why it is important to engage with parents as early as possible. Mark Coates presented the work of the Double Club, an award-winning project to improve literacy based on the shared interests of parents and children, and Adrienne Burgess from the Fatherhood Institute talked about the importance of involving fathers in their children’s literacy and described how fathers are excluded from their children’s education and how to avoid this happening. All presentations from the seminar can be found at Appendix A.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is a grant-making charity set up to ‘break the link between family income and educational achievement’. The EEF is keen to receive good-quality, evidence-based applications for projects engaging parents in improving their children’s literacy to increase knowledge in this important area. Stephen Tall explained the EEF’s funding criteria which are in part based on The Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit, an online resource that compiles findings from EEF-funded projects and other research to deliver a league table of sorts for educational interventions. These are evaluated on *Average Impact, Cost and Evidence*, which is based on improved educational attainment. From this research, parental involvement has been shown to have a moderate impact for moderate cost, coming half-way down the league table of effective educational interventions. The research shows parental involvement is consistently associated with pupils’ success at school, but there is surprisingly little robust evidence of the impact of programmes which have tried to increase involvement to improve learning. Delegates responded by questioning whether it was correct to use educational attainment as the only measure of improved literacy, as resilience, the ability to persist in attempting difficult goals, is as important as the ability to do something easily. Details of resilience measures used or suggested by delegates are listed at Appendix B.

When it comes to working out how to engage parents, it helps to identify particular groups and what the needs are for parents and children. There were a number of projects mentioned that targeted the needs of parents at a particular stage in their child’s development, or that took into account needs of a cultural group that weren’t being met elsewhere. Wiltshire Council Family Learning Team has worked with the Early Years Team to create a literacy pack for nurseries to distribute to all parents called *Top Tips for Talking* aimed at increasing the vocabulary of pre-school children. The National Literacy Trust’s *Literacy Champions* programme trains community volunteers to support the home learning environment, working together with families with children aged two-five years.

Families with English as a second language have an additional barrier to engaging with schools and literacy, but they also have common histories and cultures and can be engaged with projects developed with their needs in mind. The Hannah More Primary School in Bristol is making a film with a group of
Somali dads. The project stemmed from an awareness that some parents struggle to share books confidently with children. They also plan to use multicultural ‘conversation groups’ to collect stories from different cultures, to inform the literacy curriculum and help to value different communities in school.

Parents of children with special educational needs require additional help and can be brought together to support each other and share knowledge. Dyslexia Action, the BDA, Springboard for Children and the Arkell Centre developed a Parent Champion programme which trains volunteers to help parents and carers of children with dyslexia and specific learning difficulties in their local community. Greg Brooks from The University of Sheffield produced a report examining the effectiveness of intervention schemes for young people with literacy difficulties, *What Works for Children with Literacy Difficulties? The effectiveness of intervention schemes*. (This and other online resources are listed at Appendix D) The success of many of the schemes evaluated depends on parental involvement. Springboard for Children supports pupils in primary and secondary schools who are in danger of being left behind in the education system. They staff literacy centres with Spld qualified tutors and highly trained community volunteers. Parents and carers are invited into the centres to observe teaching and learning. They are encouraged to use the same support strategies at home. Springboard are keen to develop an extension to this work by setting up ‘literacy resource lending libraries’ where parents can borrow resource packs, games etc to support literacy at home, and would like these lending libraries to be staffed by community volunteers who will work alongside the parents in getting the best impact from the resources.

That leaves the even harder to reach parents, those who may be reluctant to engage due to past experiences of education or may be illiterate themselves. The Wiltshire Council Family Learning Team and Early Years Team train nursery practitioners in Wiltshire to engage with parents more effectively and in particular to identify and signpost parents with poor literacy skills. Derbyshire Council are implementing the *Read it!* programme, partnering with midwives and health visitors to identify parents ‘very likely’ to need support, and to help parents develop skills and a culture of enthusiasm around literacy to encourage their children to become good uses of language skills and learners in general. School-Home Support’s *Unlocking Potential* project worked with targeted children and families to put in place a range of interventions to address parenting skills, parental engagement with children’s learning, parent’s own skills and support needs and children’s social development. The *Family Time* project at HMP Lewes was an 8 week course making personalised books for children with writing and pictures.

Once parents have been identified and engaged, how do we keep them motivated? Mark Coates from the The Connaught School spoke about using shared interests to motivate parents to stay engaged with the school. The *Double Club* is a collaboration between The Connaught secondary school, Connaught Leisure, Aldershot Town FC and Aldershot’s Wado Dojo karate club to support primary schools and engage year 6 pupils and their parents in an hour of literacy and an hour of sport every week for 6 weeks. The literacy programme includes ‘King Fu Punctuation’, parents working with their children on descriptive writing, a sports hall letter-grab run-around for spelling practice, a study of presentational devices particularly in newspapers, extended writing tasks to work on at home, and in the final session a celebration of their achievements, reports on the extended writing tasks, and the awarding of certificates presented by Aldershot Town FC players. The project has also been adapted for local Nepalese parents’ interests. The pupils teach their parents history, geography, music and design...
technology and the parents relax over coffee or a game of Bagh-Chal, with teachers on hand to answer questions about utilities or other concerns.

Mark reported that he had been disappointed in the numbers of fathers who had attended, as his sports-based programme had been specifically designed to reach them. Adrienne Burgess from the Fatherhood Institute said that it was not enough to invite ‘parents’ in and expect fathers to come. Invitations needed to be specifically directed to fathers. Generally, too, letters home should be addressed ‘Dear mum and dad’ rather than ‘Dear Parents’. The word ‘parent’ is frequently heard as ‘mother’ and used synonymously with it. Fathers are likely to engage, and mothers likely to encourage them, when both parents are clear why fathers need to step up. For parents to be clear, school staff need to be clear, otherwise they will not invite the fathers in with conviction. The benefits to children need to be emphasised and schools need systematically to record fathers details and regularly contact them directly. Very often schools only contact one parent, usually the mother.

Other activities or projects put forward by delegates to motivate mums and dads and children together include:

- The Mind the Gap project run by the Campaign for Learning has practitioners running 10 hours of workshops for the parents of year 4 and year 7 pupils, in which pupils and parents work together on learning a new skill, in this case, creating an animated film.
- In Hertfordshire, they have used Story Shields sessions in which whole classes at primary schools work together with their parents to produce a Story Shield which tells a story based on an object they have chosen from a selection introduced by them by a representative from a local museum.
- To engage parents, especially fathers, in their child’s literacy, the King Edmund School in Essex held an event where the adult and child worked together to build a tower. The child has to follow the instructions but the aims were to build the highest and strongest tower whilst developing communication skills.
- Stick at it in Derbyshire was a project designed to equip foster carers with skills to encourage reading for pleasure and to develop reading for pleasure behaviours that could be used with parents. There was 5 hours of training for foster carers which helped them to think about their role as reading enthusiast and set out the plan for 10 weeks of activities. The programme included 5 library visits to borrow 7 books each time and three fifteen minute carer and child sessions each week.
- KAE has begun a partnership with Make Believe Arts using the Helicopter Technique with families: The teacher or workshop leader sits down with the child, listens to his / her story, and writes it down word for word. At the end of the story, the child decides which character he / she wants to play and the teacher moves on to the next child on the list. Towards the end of the session, the whole class gathers to act out the stories of their peers.
- There are plans at the Farnborough School Technology College to invite parents into the school with their younger children so their older children can read to them for a baby and toddler session. Parents can come for a tea/coffee and biscuit and the whole family can engage in a story session.

Appendix C lists more examples of projects engaging and motivating parents from LiteracyActionNet.
Effective communication with parents is essential to maintain engagement and motivation. A number of delegates mentioned that frequent informal emails worked well to keep in touch with parents. Adrienne Burgess from the Fatherhood Institute stressed the importance of sending emails to both mums and dads. Here are more ideas and suggestions for communicating with parents submitted by delegates:

- Emailing parents – immediate, fast communication
- Good news postcards
- Taking the time to explain what you are doing with the parent and child
- Use non-jargonistic language
- Extended consultations evenings with translators
- Open evenings
- Whole family to draw up support plan
  - Building relationships; listening, trust
  - Up to two years funding – long term

And there were many ideas for ways to motivate parents to become more involved with their children’s literacy - several suggested developing networks of parents:

- Boys Reading Club for Pleasure, inviting parents in
- Share and play, group for pre-nursery children
- Sports days
- Class assemblies
- *Reading parent buddies* – peer (parent-parent) mentors. Starts with training volunteers to buddy another parent
- Bringing parents together for a Dyslexia Awareness day when parents can meet one another and perhaps form a Dyslexia Parents Support Network
- Quick fix to a specific family problem
- Not expecting pupils to do homework limit anxiety and tension between child and parents
- Befriending groups

Parents may be reluctant to get involved with the school because of their own negative experiences or a general lack of confidence. The Royal Greenwich Learning Together Team (RGLTT) tried a number of interventions for parents designed to deliver impact for children’s learning. A school based children’s centre in Greenwich has recognised the emotional challenge for adults. School starts at 9.00 with a parenting course starting at 9.30 meaning parents who are not doing the school run have time to get there. Those who are on the school run come in with the outreach worker and have toast and coffee breakfast together, making the learners relaxed and giving them confidence. RGLTT also have a project for under 5’s, taking families out to the local park and museums to help with speaking, listening, reading and e-writing, giving parents confidence to try new things.

It was agreed the answer to the original question is ‘Literacy is for everyone’, but there was much debate about the most important reasons for improving literacy and how progress should be measured. The discussions and resources shared on the day will hopefully help in engaging and motivating more parents to work actively to improve their children’s literacy.
Appendix A: Presentation slides

Stephen Tall, Education Endowment Foundation

The Evidence Base for parental involvement in raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils

Stephen Tall

What the EEF is

• The EEF is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement.
• We were founded in 2011 by lead charity The Sutton Trust, in partnership with Impetus Trust, with a £125m grant from the Department for Education.

Our aims

• Building the evidence of what works to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in schools.
• Sharing the evidence with schools by providing independent and accessible information.
• Promoting the use of evidence-informed practice through our projects, events and resources.

The English context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attainment of FSM students at GCSE</th>
<th>Attainment of non-FSM students at GCSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% achieving 5 A*-C

Stephen Tall, @EducEndowFoundn
The attainment gap over time

School readiness at age 5
- Gap 18%

Attainment at age 11
- Gap 20%

Attainment at age 16
- Gap 27%

0% 10% 20% 30%

School readiness at age 5
Attainment at age 11
Attainment at age 16

Evidence can help

- If used in the right way, internal and external evidence can help us capture the maximum possible benefit from effort and spending.

Useful external evidence:
1. Summarises all available studies
2. Doesn’t rely on anecdote
3. Includes an estimate of cost
4. Includes an estimate of confidence

The Sutton Trust-EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit

- The Toolkit offers accessible, teacher-friendly summaries of educational research around the world.
- Practice focused: giving schools the information they need to make informed decisions and narrow the gap.
- Based on meta-analyses provided by Durham University.

Scenario: Spending the Pupil Premium

- Large secondary school in the North West receives £580,000 from the Pupil Premium in 2012-13.
- How should the school decide to use this money?
- Would you rather spend your Pupil Premium on professional development to improve the quality of feedback pupils receive, or small group tuition, or parental involvement? (WHAT? WHY? HOW?)

What the Toolkit says about the impact of parenting

Parental involvement

- Moderate impact for moderate cost, based on moderate evidence.

The Toolkit doesn’t tell schools what to do, but we hope that it will help them make a more informed decision.
Supporting Parents on Kids’ Education in Schools (SPOKES): Plymouth Parent Partnership

£1m grant to test the impact of the SPOKES literacy programme in primary schools in Plymouth and Cornwall.

Mind the Gap: Campaign for Learning

£516k to work with 50 schools giving parents the skills to effectively support their child’s learning and helping schools to embed this approach.

现有的证据影响我们的资助

- 自2011年以来，我们资助了56个项目，与1,800所学校和300,000多名学生合作，建立在工具箱中的5,500项研究。

- 合并证据
- 制作资助
- 评估项目

Teaching assistants

- 教学助理无疑有助于管理有效的学校和组织的学校，但由于平均原因，似乎不会增加孩子们和他们支持的班级的学习。
- 为教师和TAs提供支持和培训，以便他们能够有效地工作，例如通过讨论来说明问题并在上课前和后进行讨论。
- 确保教师不减少他们在TAs的支持下学生的学习，而是专注于学习，而不是仅仅确保学生完成他们的工作。

Nuffield Early Language Intervention (I CAN and University College London)

£738,112 grant to fund a large-scale trial of an evidence-based intervention designed to improve young children’s oral language skills.
Peer tutoring

• Benefits are apparent for both tutor and tutee (particularly in cross-age tutoring).
• The approach should be used to supplement or enhance normal teaching, rather than to replace it.
• Some evidence that children from disadvantaged backgrounds and low attaining pupils make the biggest gains.
• Planning the organisation of tutoring to address the logistical challenges and then training the tutors is a key step. At least a day’s professional development for staff is recommended.
• Reviewing challenges and successes with tutors will improve their skills and learning.
• Relatively short but intensive periods of tutoring over 4-10 weeks are likely to be more effective than for a longer period with more routine sessions.

Shared Maths (Durham University)

£750,000 grant to a team based at Durham University to develop and implement a Shared Maths programme in which older primary school pupils tutor younger ones in mathematics.

Grant-making: what we fund

The EEF assesses proposed projects by assessing:
1. The extent to which there is existing evidence which suggests that the approach will improve academic attainment (taking the Toolkit as a starting point);
2. Whether the project has the potential to be scaled up cost effectively if proven to be effective (normally within the envelope of the Pupil Premium).

We are looking for disciplined innovation: innovation that builds on what we already know.

Grant-making: reasons for rejection

The most common reasons for applications being rejected are:
1. Not distinctive enough (we won’t learn anything new that’s not known already);
2. Not targeted sufficiently at disadvantaged pupils;
3. Lack evidence (no control group data and/or lack supporting external evidence);
4. Not scalable (if they work, too dependent on voluntary funding or developer input).

Approach to evaluation

All projects are robustly and independently evaluated, both quantitatively and qualitatively:
• Independent evaluation
  All projects evaluated by a member of our 16-strong panel of evaluation experts
• Common outcome metrics
  Effect on attainment and cost—so we can compare and contrast between projects
• Focus on longitudinal impact
  All pupils will be tracked using the National Pupil Database

An evidence informed decision making process

Step 1: What do you want to achieve?
Identify school priorities using internal data and professional judgement.

Step 2: How can you get there?
External evidence summarised in the Toolkit can be used to inform decision-making.

Step 3: Did it work?
Evaluate the impact of your decisions and identify potential improvements for the future.
The EEF by numbers

- 1,800 schools participating in projects
- 56 projects funded to date
- 300,000 pupils involved in EEF projects
- £200m estimated spend over 15-year lifetime of the EEF
- 16 independent evaluation teams
- 3,000 heads presented to since launch
Engaging and motivating parents to improve children’s literacy

Promising prospects in our work with troubled and hard to reach families

Honor Rhodes
Director of Strategy,
Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships

honor.rhodes@tccr.org.uk

What is the current policy landscape for working with ‘troubled families’? What are the Government’s objectives for this work? Is it connected? Does literacy have a place?

Economic wellbeing

Communities and staying safe

Most Excluded Families

Health and family structures

Poverty and debt

Worklessness

Education and skills

Crime and ASB

Alcohol and drugs

Poor housing and homelessness

Domestic violence

Relationship conflict

Mental and physical health

We will always need to concentrate our efforts on the most vulnerable, and often the hardest to help/engage/find…and sometimes the people we like least...

Families we find hard to work with, what do we know are some of the underlying issues when there are any problems in family? Research tells us to look for...

‘It was an outreach worker who noticed that Jane was unusually quiet…and he didn’t let up.’

Adela, Children’s Centre Manager

Complex relationships with helping agencies

Adult mental health problems

Parents with learning difficulties

Long standing physical illness

Domestic violence

Substance misuse

Lack of regulation, time, resources and energy

Lack of connection to the world around them

Fractured family and community Relationships

Early poor parenting across at least two generations, often more

And who are these families anyway?

• “Your ‘hard to reach’ families are those who don’t come to anything you want or need them to come to. They are also the ones who come at just the wrong time and want to fight me. I am at my wit’s end.”
  Sandy, Head Teacher

• “Your hard to reach families, well, they’ll be the children of the hard to teach I was struggling with in the 1980’s. Nothing changes much.”
  Niall, ex-Head Teacher

• Perhaps it can…
Getting it right for parents to do well is going to take
some organising.....successful parenting, the bedrock
of learning.......

- White
- Affluent
- Healthy
- With healthy children born after uneventful pregnancies and births
- Partnered/married
- Well housed
- A graduate
- Doing an interesting job with a high
degree of professional autonomy
- Well parented yourself
- Connected to family, kin and
community
- And not at all smug........

What helps children learn = what do parents
need to enable? (an incomplete list…)

Secure attachments (love)
Emotional security
Intelligence and brain function
Consistency of approach
Reliability
Friendships
Good physical health
Healthy family relationships
Respect and attention
Experiences, both good and bad, mediated by
thoughtful adults
Breakfast
Being/feeling similar to others
Freedom from anxiety
Knowing what might happen next
That the adults with care of them can really help

What do parents, even the hard to reach, find
helpful?

- Local trusted sources of help,
more people ask a friend than a
Health Visitor about parenting
issues
- More people would try to read a
childcare magazine to seek help
than ask a professional....so just
imagine how desperate they are
when they do
- Flexible responses
- Non-stigmatic sources of help
- Brokerage/signposting
- Sophisticated recognition of
issues
- Ability to tolerate distress
- Touchingly, usually something is
better than nothing

What are the principles of best practice in reaching
and engaging troubled families? What works?

Research suggests that we would do well to…

- Start in the home, don’t summons to an
office
- Solve an early problem that the family
want help with,
- Understand who else/what other agencies
are involved (or not), bring them in
- Use contracts – they are very effective,
and don’t flinch from naming the difficult
- Review, reward and sanction immediately
- Underline change and make it very hard
to retreat back to how things were

What else works?

- Horses for courses...
- For those in need of support then
generalist whole family support
works well
- Intervention as early as possible,
with best sustained outcomes
- Whole system working
- Longer periods of intervention +
booster sessions
- Services delivered by trained,
skilled professionals
- Home based working for at least
a part of the intervention
- Let’s make literacy everybody’s
business

And just as importantly, what does not work?

- “You should…” get alongside first, get parents to
want your help
- Letters or any written communications : Hidden or
manifest illiteracy, letter hoarding, other ways of
communicating work better (photobooks, video,
pictorial representations of shopping lists, rules,
what should go where, rotas for basic cleaning)
- Short term interventions: families are expert at
defeating workers, prepare for the long haul
- Sanction only interventions: carrots v. sticks
- Loss of energy/enthusiasm for change: we all are
reluctant to change, workers need energy to sustain
the whole system
How can efforts to improve literacy be integrated into the ‘harder edge’ of family intervention? Obstacles and blocks and how to overcome (or go round them)

• A workforce training issue and a confidence one too.
• Confrontation can be unhelpful
• Obstacles are usually there for a reason, what is it in this case?
• Dynamite is not often helpful
• Lightness of touch is important, playing a game can help, “If I were queen for a day I’d…”
• But ignoring a parental literacy is worst

What do we mean by parent engagement? Can we put it at the heart of family intervention?

• Supported confident parenting - the broader context in which children thrive and learn and includes, for example, warm and responsive parent-child relationships and being involved in child-centred activities that are related to positive learning outcomes in early childhood.
• Confident relationships between education settings and home e.g. parent-teacher conferences; participating in extended visits; being aware of the learning curriculum; and helping with activities. Parental involvement in the child’s early years setting is linked to positive outcomes for children (Marcon, R, 1999).
• A better joint sense of responsibility for learning outcomes - the aspect of parenting that emphasises educational activities that promote later school success, such as reading with young children at home; teaching them to write the letters of the alphabet; and doing crafts and painting.

Help?

• We know a lot about what good practice can look like when it is working well.
• Have you looked at the Early Home Learning website? http://www.familyandparenting.org/our_work/All-Other-Subjects/Early-Home-Learning-Matters/
• Materials for practitioners, policy makers AND parents too.
Identification. Intervention. Inspiration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Literacy Session</th>
<th>Sports Sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 29th September</td>
<td>Writing a media article How the professionals do it...</td>
<td>Football in the Sports Hall with Aldershot FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 6th October</td>
<td>Writing to describe Create your own word images - use the five senses in a messy, fun activity</td>
<td>Karate in the School Hall with Barry Wilkinson (Aldershot Dojo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demonstration

As our Mandrakes are only seedlings their cries won’t kill yet she said calmly as though she’d just done nothing more exciting than water a begonia however they will knock you out for several hours and as I’m sure none of you want to miss your first day back make sure your earmuffs are securely in place while you work I will attract your attention when it is time to pack four to a tray there is a large supply of pots here compost in the sacks over there and be careful of the Venomous Tentacula it’s teething.
### Task 1:
- Working in pairs, form as many homophones as you can, side by side.
- 1 point for a pair of homophones
- 2 points for a trio of homophones
- You will have 30 seconds to plan, then 3 minutes ‘on the run!’

### Rules
- Collect the letters you need from the piles around the sports hall.
- You may not carry more than two letters (one in each hand) at any time.
- You may steal other pairs’ letters unless they’ve already been used to form a complete word.

On your marks... get set...

Great session! Really good fun - wish I’d worn my sports bra though!

(Feedback form Sept. 2011)

### Descriptive Writing
Squelch! The jelly wiggled like an eel as Jamie fondled it lovingly, its watery texture slipping through his grubby hands; he dribbled down his shirt in anticipation of its fruity taste. Its intense, citrus zing left a lasting tang in his mouth as he supped greedily on the slimy, shiny, sickly desert.

### Hyperboles
- Aldershot’s earlier loss to Northampton Town was devastating.
- However, Aldershot played like lions for most of the Bradford match.
- Bradford’s fans were deathly quiet for most of the game.
- Ben Herd is the finest captain in professional football.

The structure of a newspaper
Presentation Evening

http://www.dadzclub.com/articles/learning/using-sport-to-improve-literacy-skills.ashx

Developing Double Club to reach target families

- 28% of our pupil body are Nepalese EAL learners.
- Many parents do not engage with the school as their levels of literacy are poor and they lack confidence.

Pupils teaching parents...

History    Geography    Music

Design Technology

The second hour:

Parents relax over coffee and a game of Bagh-Chal...

...or seek 1-to-1 help with teachers regarding utilities

The final session: A day trip to London!
Adrienne Burgess, The Fatherhood Institute

LiteracyActionNet

the difference a dad makes

Adrienne Burgess
THE FATHERHOOD INSTITUTE
May 2013

Fatherhood Institute VISION . . .

. . . a society that gives all children a strong and positive relationship with their father and any father-figures; supports both mothers and fathers as earners and carers; and prepares boys and girls for a future shared role in caring for children . . .

Fatherhood Institute interventions: literacy

• Dads in Demand
• Fathers’ Story Week
• Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED)
• The ‘Dad Factor’

Topics for today

• Changing times
• Fathers’ impact
• Case studies (interventions)
• Top Tips
Motherhood & fatherhood are changing

- Between 1964 and 2004 domestic work by British men rose from 90 minutes to 148 minutes per day; while women’s dropped from 369 minutes to 280 minutes (Kan et al, 2009).
- Almost 3:4 mothers in two-parent families are employed (and most of the rest are women with low qualifications who can’t get jobs)
- British fathers now do 25% of the childcare related activities on weekdays and 33% at weekends - more when both parents work full-time (EOC, 2003)

From the month following birth . . .

- High quality (sensitive/supportive) and substantial father involvement is connected with a range of positive outcomes in babies and toddlers including better language development and higher IQs at 12 months and 3 years (Yogman et al, 1995; Magill-Evans & Harrison, 1999)
- WHATEVER the father’s education level his interest and participation pay off for his children (McBride, 2004)

Fathers and early literacy

- Frequency of fathers’ reading to 1-2 year olds is linked with their greater interest in books later (Lyytinen et al, 1998)
- Time spent by fathers in reading to very young children is the strategy most consistently associated with their emergent literacy outcomes (Clark, 2009)
- Fathers use different and longer words than mothers with young children (Pancsofar & Vernon-Feagans, 2006); more abstract words (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004); and more causal explanatory language, which predicts children’s theory of mind (LaBounty et al, 2008).

Fathers’ story week

- Now in its third year, a nationwide celebration of the power of dads’ reading with their children, taking place in schools, nurseries, libraries, prisons . . .
- Endorsed by children’s authors (and others) including two Children’s Laureates – Julia Donaldson & Michael Rosen
- Free resources now available for download at www.fathersstoryweek.org include activity plans, template letters and a research summary for professionals; and for dads, top tips on how to read with your child; how to get your child into reading; and what to do if your child is a reluctant reader.

The ‘Dad Factor’

- Systematic approach to engaging fathers
- Commitment ‘from the top’
- Whole nursery/school approach: all staff trained to understand fathers’ importance and feel confident in engaging with them
- Environment, letters to parents, registration forms, home visit protocols etc. all reviewed
OUTCOME: very many more fathers known to staff and engaged in the setting and in home visits – and engaged with their children at home

Dads in Demand

- Primary school animation project
- 5 primary schools in Harrow
- focus on black and ethnic minority fathers
- 10 x hour-long sessions
- outreach to fathers who had little contact with the school environment
What the dads and children did

• Learned techniques of ‘stop’ animation
• Used a range of media to make a short animated film
• Each family unit learned to communicate, share tasks and develop new skills in tandem

Outcomes

• 73% of the children achieved National Curriculum expected progress, compared to just 15% in the previous year
• 54% exceeded National Curriculum expected progress, compared to just 10% in the previous year
• 23% made two years’ worth of progress in the single academic year of the Dads in Demand project.

FRED

• 4 week intervention from USA
• 7 primary schools in Lambeth and 3 schools in Salford
• Funded by SHINE, Walcott foundation and JJ Charitable Trust
• Now being rolled out in 4 new UK locations (DfE funded)

What the fathers and children do

• Fathers recruited through ‘pester power’ invitation letters, 1:1 approaches, a launch party, and ‘Dad Factor’ school systems that actively seek to include fathers
• FRED fathers spend 15 minutes a day for two weeks, reading with their children – then 30 minutes a day for a second two weeks.
• Each father documents time spent reading to his children and the number of books read.
• A ‘closure’ party/event celebrate all the great work the dads and children have been doing.

FRED outcomes (USA)

• Greater overall involvement by fathers with their children
• Fathers’ improved satisfaction with parenting
• Improved father-child relationship quality
• Children’s improved reading accuracy, comprehension and rate of reading
• Better writing
• Better maths attainment
• Better behaviour
• A great ‘way in’ to establishing wider engagement with fathers in the nursery/school.

Future FRED (UK)

• DfE rollout of ‘Dad Factor + FRED: free offer of both courses to nurseries/early years settings in Lambeth, Southwark, Leicester, York
• ‘FRED training (staff and volunteers) £297 + VAT per setting
• ‘Dad Factor’ ‘whole school’ training: (£997 +VAT one-day course, up to 15 participants)
• Sign up for Fathers’ Story Week (free)

CONTACT: c.rice@fatherhoodinstitute.org
## Top Tips

1. Register fathers’ details and always address communications to ‘Fathers’ and ‘Mothers’
2. Specifically invite fathers in – and not just for ‘father only’ activities
3. Communicate with both parents via email/text, whether or not they live together (don’t just send emails to mums)
4. Get the team on side and train them in ‘father- inclusive practice’ (the ‘Dad Factor)
5. Talk with dads at drop off and collection – welcome them into the school/setting.
6. Ensure that dads know how important they are to their children and how their involvement with the nursery/school will help their child’s achievement
7. Make the most of ‘pester power’: personalised invitations FROM THEIR CHILD
Appendix B: Resilience measures

- **Boxall Profile** - Developed in the 1970’s, the Boxall profile is an observational tool that focuses on identifying children’s developmental skills and the level of skills they possess to access learning. It encourages staff observation skills and a greater understanding learning difficulties. [http://www.nurturegroups.org/publications.php?page=3](http://www.nurturegroups.org/publications.php?page=3)

- **Goodman's SDQ (Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire)** - A behaviour screening test for children aged 3 -16 years. It gives information on emotional health, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer relationship problems and pro social behaviour. There are several different versions of the questionnaire which allows for a wider usage. [http://www.sdqinfo.com/a0.html](http://www.sdqinfo.com/a0.html)

- **Subjective Happiness Scale** - Devised by Sonja Lyubomirsky Ph.D. A four item scale which measures global subjective happiness [http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/subjectivehappinessscale.pdf](http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/subjectivehappinessscale.pdf)

- **Outcome Stars** - ‘A unique suite of tools for supporting and measuring change...’ There are 15 versions of the Outcomes Star carefully adapted for different client groups and services, including older people, mental health, families, work and more [http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/)

- **MALS (Myself as a Learner Scale) By Robert Burden** - A short, effective measure of pupils’ perceptions of their abilities and approaches to learning. In its evaluation of pupils’ concepts of themselves as thinkers and learners, it identifies areas where individuals need more help. The scale is a 20-question test. The pack contains a user guide, a photocopiable questionnaire and a scoring overlay. [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Myself-Learner-Scale-Robert-Burden/dp/1904806503](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Myself-Learner-Scale-Robert-Burden/dp/1904806503)

Appendix C: Project examples from LiteracyActionNet

Visit [www.literacyactionnet.org.uk](http://www.literacyactionnet.org.uk) for more project details and examples.
Appendix D: Online resources

Online literacy tools for children and parents together

- **Historypin**: A global community collaborating around history [http://www.historypin.com/](http://www.historypin.com/)
- **Ziggies** is a proven programme that engages parents in children's reading and love of stories, through interactive storytelling and creative activities. Run by parents themselves, Ziggies comes with a full training and support package [http://www.ziggies.org/](http://www.ziggies.org/)

Online literacy tools/games for children

- **100 word challenge** children collaborate together to get ideas for their 100 word challenge piece based on an online prompt. [http://livewriting.net/tag/100-word-challenge/](http://livewriting.net/tag/100-word-challenge/)
- **Teach your Monster to Read**: First Steps is a new, free game to practise the first steps of reading. Combining top quality games design with essential learning, the game is built on the principles of synthetic phonics and follows the teaching sequence of the Letters and Sounds programme [http://www.teachyourmonstertoread.com/](http://www.teachyourmonstertoread.com/)
- **Versu** is created by Linden Labs, the outfit behind virtual world Second Life, the free app enables users to actively engage stories. “Readers” assume various characters and determine the course of the narrative through a menu of choices. The story is further directed by the interaction between characters, which, through artificial intelligence, are endowed with unique motivations and emotional reactions as you interact with them. [http://www.versu.com/](http://www.versu.com/)
- **Write Path** is an ongoing project which was started in 2008 and hopes to encourage schools to share activities across the globe. Our first event was a collaborative story writing project on October 6th 2008 which included pupils from 15 global schools and five established childrens authors working together to complete 5 very diverse stories. You can find more out on the website from that year. [http://writepath.ning.com/](http://writepath.ning.com/)

Sites for parent engagement tools/projects

- **Dad Factor one-day course for school staff**: Involving Fathers in schools and children’s learning – developing a systematic approach. The Fatherhood Institute [https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/DadFactorCourseOutline2.pdf](https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/DadFactorCourseOutline2.pdf)
- **Fathers’ Story Week**: now in its third year, this is a nationwide celebration of the power of dads’ reading with their children. Developed by the Fatherhood Institute, it takes place in schools, nurseries, libraries, prisons – wherever dads can be supported to help their children’s learning. [http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2013/sign-up-for-fathers-story-week-2013-and-fathers-reading-every-day/](http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2013/sign-up-for-fathers-story-week-2013-and-fathers-reading-every-day/)
- **F.R.E.D. (Fathers Reading Every Day)**: is a well-evaluated supported reading programme imported by the Fatherhood Institute from the US, now running in primary schools and early years settings, sometimes in conjunction with Fathers’ Story

- 'Mind the Gap’ aims to give parents the skills they need to support their child’s learning effectively. The programme has been developed over a number of years and is currently being delivered to over 1,500 pupils, mostly 8-9 year-olds (Year 4, primary) within the UK http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/Projects/mind_the_gap_project_and_programme.asp

- School-Home Support has developed the SHS Parental Engagement Toolkit for staff responsible for professional development within schools. It provides interactive training materials to support and encourage parents to engage effectively with their child’s learning within their school community. http://www.schoolhomesupport.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=348&Itemid=311

- Plymouth Parent and Family Forum facilitates an effective information exchange between parents, service providers and commissioners across the city. The SPOKES project will enable us to help the parents of 360 pupils aged five to six in 45 schools in Plymouth and across Cornwall to develop their reading skills by fostering a love of books and reading at home http://www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk/

- Wiltshire Council's Top Tips for Talking cards distil the key messages from the Every Child a Talker initiative into a parent friendly format. The cards have either been given out as a set to parents in children’s centres, pre-schools etc or given out one at a time to support the key teaching theme of the week/month. https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/lemosandcrane/resources/TopTipsforTalkingFlashcards.pdf


Other engagement sites/information

Kaizen Partnership Engagement Action Research
How widespread, and large is the gap between intended and actual results across funded projects? What are the current beliefs, approaches and experiences of engagement amongst funders and community sector organisations? To what extent can the provision of targeted engagement training and support to organisations deliver an improvement in results? If so, what is the return on investment? http://www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/Engagement%20Action%20Reasearch%20Project%20Overview.pdf

We Are What We Do is a not-for-profit behaviour change company that creates ways for millions of people to do more small, good things. http://wearewhatwe.do/portfolio/
SEN resources

**Load2learn**: Learning resources in downloadable, accessible formats for students who have difficulty reading standard printed books [http://load2learn.org.uk/](http://load2learn.org.uk/)

The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust is launching an exciting initiative to recruit a team of **Parent Champions** across the UK. We are looking for volunteers who are passionate about helping parents and carers of children with dyslexia and specific learning difficulties – and can give an hour a month to help families in their local community [http://www.parentchampions.org.uk/](http://www.parentchampions.org.uk/)