

National early language and literacy initiatives

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Bookstart, the world's first national baby book-gifting programme, works through health visitors to provide every baby in the UK with a free Bookstart pack of books and guidance materials that encourage use of the local library. In July 2005 the scheme was expanded to offer three separate gifts of books to under-fours across the country.

Visit www.bookstart.org.uk for general information about Bookstart.

Early Reading Connects is a DCSF-funded National Literacy Trust project which aims to help early years settings develop a reading culture. Early Reading Connects is building on the success of Reading Connects which helps primary and secondary schools to build communities which read.

Visit www.earlyreadingconnects.org.uk to find out more.

Early Start is a Basic Skills Agency programme aimed at parents and carers with no or few qualifications. It provides at least 30 hours of support for each learner, focusing on helping children be healthy, self-aware, skilful communicators and confident learners. Read more about Early Start by visiting www.basic-skills.co.uk.

Every Child a Talker is a £40 million government programme to provide training and support to those working with young children on early years language development. The programme aims to improve practitioners' knowledge and understanding, enable them to support the development of children's speaking and listening skills and spot any children with problems at an early age. Read the DCSF press release at www.dfes.gov.uk or view guidance on the National Strategies site at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a framework produced by the DCSF and sets the standards for learning and development of children from birth to five. The EYFS brings together the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (2000), the Birth to Three Matters (2002) framework which was established to support staff working with children under three and the National Standards for Under 8s Daycare and Childminding (2003). The EYFS is based around four themes, a Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments and Learning and Development, the last of which covers Communication, Language and Literacy. All registered early years providers and schools were required to use the EYFS from September 2008.

Talk To Your Baby's focus on communication skills of children from birth to three fits in coherently with the EYFS Learning and Development theme on Communication, Language and Literacy. However as the EYFS states, "None of these areas of Learning and Development can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are

equally important and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to child development. All the areas must be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities" (EYFS, 2.5). Therefore, communication is a vital tool that underpins being able to tackle all other areas of learning and development.

For more information and to download EYFS materials visit:

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eyfs/site/index.htm

A media pack is available on the EYFS providing full information, case studies and early learning goals. To download the pack visit www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/eyfs/

Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) programme is being piloted in 10 PCTs in England from April 2007 and is part of the health-led parenting support. The project works with young, vulnerable mothers and provides intensive support and regular home visiting from the early stages of pregnancy until the child is two. It is based on the Nurse Family Partnership scheme, which has been running for over 25 years in the US with proven positive short and long-term results including better preparation for school and improved health. Each PCT will identify 100-150 families with each practitioner taking on a caseload of around 25 mothers. Training will be provided to practitioners, who will all be health visitors, nurses, or midwives, to deliver a programme in the scheduled visits. The programme is designed to be flexible so it can be adapted to meet the needs of each individual family taking part. The pilot project will link in with children's centres to integrate with the local services provided. The project is being funded by the DCSF and is being evaluated by Birkbeck College, London. There are now 50 FNP sites up and running.

For more information visit www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/parents/healthledsupport/.

Parents as Partners in Early Learning

A report in *Nursery World* focused on the Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PPEL) project. This is a government initiative to engage parents in their children's learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) highlights the issue in the section *Positive Relationships: Effective Practice: Parents as Partners*. More than 70 per cent of a child's time is spent outside the early years setting, therefore the EYFS emphasises the importance of parents and community in a child's learning.

The project was funded by the DfES with a £9million investment for local authorities, who develop initiatives to increase parental involvement. The funding also provides training and support for early years practitioners working with disadvantaged families.

In Birmingham, they plan to focus on five wards where the outcomes for communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and education could be improved. Families in temporary accommodation will also be targeted. The 'Tuning into Babies' programme will be extended to reach older children to promote the value of communicating to parents. They also plan to use best practice from some of the city's childminders, in working with parents.

Derbyshire is planning a play project, targeting children age birth to three based in parent and toddler groups. The aim is to encourage parents to play with their child at home, to boost confidence and understand more about their child's development.

Training for all children's centre staff on the importance of early language is to take place in Nottinghamshire; universal preventative work and the work of SLTs will be

emphasised. Health visitors, involved in Bookstart and children's centre staff will also work together inviting parents into children's centres for a child support worker to assess needs and a health visitor to check language development.

In Tower Hamlets, boys will be targeted, and parents shown the importance of active and outdoor learning in language and emotional development.

For more information on PPEL visit

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/features/foundation_stage/parents_partners/.

(Extracted from Nursery World, 21.06.07)

Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) supports parents and carers in their role as children's first and most important teachers, offering ideas and activities to support children's learning in everyday situations. Visit www.peep.org.uk
The **Birth to School Study: A Longitudinal Evaluation of the Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) 1998-2005** was published in August 2005.

Storysacks is a popular, non-threatening way of encouraging parents and carers to start sharing stories with their children, especially those parents with little positive experience of books. Read more about Storysacks by visiting www.storysack.com.