



Early Reading Connects

Spreading the word

Supporting early years settings throughout Harrow in using the Early Reading Connects materials has been at the forefront of the agenda for Harrow Early Years and Community Services. Carolyn Lee, a freelance early years consultant explains how she developed a project to promote the Early Reading Connects ethos and to be used as a cascade model with other settings.

Julie Trainor, Early Years Strategy Manager in Harrow, identified the potential in the Early Reading Connects materials in supporting and enhancing practice, but also felt that settings required an element of support to enable them to use them to the greatest benefit. So she asked me to develop a project based around Early Reading Connects that would achieve this.

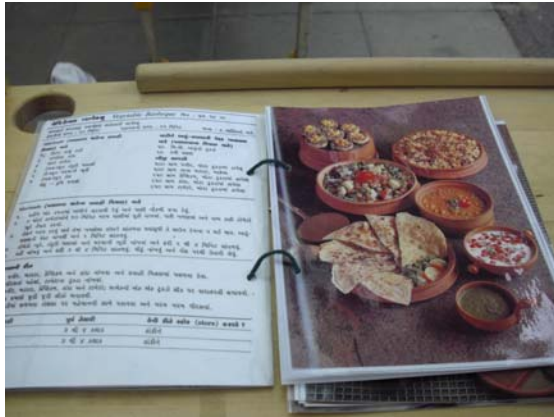
The initial aim was to circulate information about Early Reading Connects to six already good to outstanding (beacon) settings. This was carried out at a three hour introductory session, attended by two practitioners from each setting. These settings were asked to carry out some of the activity ideas from the Early Reading Connects materials that focused on promoting talking, early reading skills and engaging parents and also develop their own ideas and materials.



Reading area developed at Hillview Children's Centre

One of the main purposes of the project was to develop a range of visual materials to inspire practitioners in other settings in Harrow. The six beacon settings were asked to take photographs, collect useful materials, and record their successes over half a term. I also visited each of the settings to discuss how the project was working, take more photographs and document the project. There was a focus on evaluating the impact the materials had on the children and their parents.

Evaluation demonstrated that whilst the original six settings already had very good practice, the project supported them in identifying areas for development, which impacted on the quality of experiences accessed by the children. It also helped provide ideas on how to engage parents more in supporting the child's talking and early reading skills.



A multi-lingual recipe book created by parents and carers

The feedback from the early years settings involved has been great. One practitioner at Little Stars Preschool said, "We feel the Early Reading Connects project has been very beneficial to our setting and we have started to include literacy all around the setting in different ways. Children who weren't interested in mark making are now doing this in other ways". The Manager at Dragons Nursery said, "It was a great opportunity for us to revisit previous activities and ideas and try out new ones".

Leader at Green Lawns Montessori told us, "I am oozing with ideas after listening to you and other settings. Was in the supermarket yesterday and picked up a recipe card to include in the 'Children's Kitchen'; just one idea we have already implemented!"

It is now hoped that the materials can be used to share effective practice with other settings. A repeat project is currently taking place with another small group of settings, with the aim of developing their practice. This group of settings have been linked to one of the beacon settings to enable them to gain ideas and support from their peers. It is hoped that a further roll out programme will be developed in the future, where other settings can be inspired and be supported by the beacon settings.



Maps drawn as a result of adding maps, atlases and mark making materials to the brick corner at Dragon's nursery

One or more of the initial six settings may be able to host a workshop at their setting, with examples of reading resources and materials developed on display, as a further way of supporting practice. It has been such an exciting initiative and everyone is looking forward to seeing how the project develops over the next year.