

Calne Story Jam Evaluation report

A BOOK PROJECT FOR PRESCHOOLERS
AND THEIR PARENTS



How it ran

The project was held at Calne Children's Centre and ran over six sessions. Each session was based around an aspect of the picture book *Whatever Next* by Jill Murphy. This book was chosen because of the scope for activities it offered and for the simple text and the storyline - which was all about imaginative play.

The sessions were interactive and used games, arts and crafts, other books, songs and even food to enhance the enjoyment of the story and to highlight key words and letters for both children and parents. The group created a 'story-sack' over the weeks – this was something to take away at the end. The story sack contained objects and props from the book to bring the story to life and encourage creative play based on the story.

Aims and objectives

- Encourage and foster a love of books/reading in young children.
- Increase parents confidence in reading/sharing a book with their children.
- Provide books to households who may not have them and help establish the concept of a regular shared reading.
- Provide a fun and meaningful shared experience based around a story – for both the parents and the children.
- Promote literacy for both parents and children [NB not 'teaching people to read' but increasing confidence around story reading, letters etc. Laying foundations.]
- Encourage play/bonding between children and parents.
- Showing how easy it is to have creative fun with your children and how it needn't cost much.
- Provide a social activity for the parents and children

A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Story Jam has funded by Calne Community Area Board and GreenSquare, working in partnership with Calne Community Area Partnership and Barnardo's Children's Centre.

The project was designed and facilitated by Pageturners Project, a locally based book project for children.

What we did

In total, eight parents and nine children (plus three babies) were part of the six week Story Jam project that was held in Calne's Children Centre. The project was designed and co-ordinated by Lesley Taylor from Pageturners and run with support from Kelly Bate, a Play Worker at the centre. Places on the project were prioritised for Greensquare residents and children with speech and language difficulties to make sure we reached our target participants.

Every week, the sessions were structured to promote literacy and language development, encourage a love of books and create a story sack around the book we focussed on. The craft activities each week were linked to something in the book and on the letter/word of the week. The sessions also included games at the start which introduced the letter or word in a fun way. We ended each session with additional stories that linked to our theme or were requested by the children. Some of the things we did included:

- A bear and letter hunt (b for bear, and a picture of a bear) for items to go in their story sacks
- A memory game involving items for a picnic. They had a selection of food to choose from (laminated pictures). Everything on the list began with P. Some of the children even remembered their items a week later!
- A game involving a huge letter M as a bridge to go over and under in different ways (as a mouse etc).
- Making their own rockets from cardboard boxes (like the bear in the book).
- Moon paintings with sponges on black paper.
- A play dough picnic for their bears (the bear on the book had a picnic on the moon)
- Making rocket shaped rainmakers and decorating them with a rain theme (in the book it rained as the bear came home from the moon). They shook these while it rained in the story.
- They made owl puppets from paper bags, the owl had O eyes. They used their owl puppets for a song all about owls afterwards.
- Going on a Bear Hunt and Owl Babies were other popular books that we read as they linked with our activities.
- We also had colouring in sheets available for anyone who finished an activity early - with the letter of the week to colour.
- The children had a snack and drink after their arts activity - during the P for picnic week their snacks began with P too.
- We either read, retold or asked questions about Whatever Next each week so the story stayed in their minds and they could make the links the activities.

Story Sacks

Each week the families on the project created an item for their Whatever Next story sacks. At the very end everyone got to take the story sacks home. They all contained a copy of the book, a bear, an owl finger puppet and letter sheets along with all of the items they made each week. The story sack is to inspire children to re-enact the book at home and remember key words/letters.

What next?

As part of the funding from this project Lesley Taylor from Pagturners is producing a toolkit so that a similar Story Time project could be run again in the future. The toolkit is being designed for use by volunteers, or play workers, community development workers etc. As this project was a success, it is envisaged that the Children's Centre will be able to run the project again and use the toolkit to help.



Making owl puppets from brown paper bags - an owl was one of the main characters in the story. We read other owl stories too.



Each week focused on a different letter and object/animal from the story. One week we played games with a giant M bridge.



The children went on an owl hunt in one of the sessions and were delighted with these finger puppets for their story sacks.



Feedback and outcomes

Parents filled in evaluation forms at the end of the last session to tell us how much they/their children enjoyed the Story Jam project and what the outcomes and benefits were for them. Five parents filled in the forms.

1. How much did your child enjoy Story Jam?

(5 is very much and 1 not at all).

All five gave it 5.

1b. How much did you enjoy attending with your child?

Four people said 5 and one said 4.

How confident do you feel to share books with your child?

All five said very confident (5).

2 Which parts of the project did your child most benefit from?

- Listening to stories with other children x 2
- The craft activities x 5
- The games x 2
- Making a story sack x 4

3. How will you use your story sack at home (tick all that apply).

- To retell the story x 5
- For your child to play with after listening to the story x 5
- To use as inspiration to make another one for a favourite book x 4
- Might do similar activities in future x 3
- To help bring the story to life x 3

4. Have you noticed any changes in your child's interest in reading since they started Story Jam?

YES Maybe x 2 No x 3

Please give an example if you ticked yes or maybe:

"He has always loved them." (someone who ticked no)

"X has always been enthusiastic about books so it hasn't necessarily changed his interest but has been beneficial & he enjoyed it greatly." (A maybe).

"Has always enjoyed reading books." (Someone who ticked no).

"Has started to look at books on his own." (Someone who ticked maybe).

"They already loved books and reading." (Another no).

5. What ways has your child benefitted from Story Jam (tick all that apply)

- Increased enthusiasm for books
- Shows more willingness to listen to stories being read x 1
- Shown a 'can do' attitude in art activities x 5
- Kept focus on an activity x 5
- Had their own ideas for arts x 3
- Increased confidence with other children x 1
- The sessions helped with letter sounds/recognition x 4
- Doing an activity together x 3

Please tell us how you've benefitted from the sessions:

"Enjoyed time to do something different."

"Given me ideas to use at home in the future."

"Enjoyed quality time as this doesn't happen too often with work etc."

"Really nice to do art activities together."

Did we meet our aims?

I feel the project was successful in meeting the expected outcomes of fostering a love of books, helping with literacy, providing a meaningful shared experienced based around books, providing a social activity and showing how easy it is to have creative fun with children that needn't cost much. It is significant that all but one of the parents who filled in a form felt that the sessions helped with letter sounds and recognition - a key feature of the project was laying down some of those foundations in a fun way. Many of the parents felt their children already enjoyed reading, and this is one of the reasons they didn't think the project helped with this - as they were already enthusiastic. Anecdotal feedback suggests the project built a growing enthusiasm each week as children looked forward to coming and talked about what stories we might read. It was noticeable that they began to look forward to the story time at the end more each week.

Feedback from sessions

We collected parents views on post-it notes at the end of several sessions throughout the project:

"X really enjoyed making the owl. Looking forward to next week."

"X's really enjoyed making things and spending time with me and other children. He would love to do some painting."

"We have really enjoyed the craft activities and listening to the stories."

"I enjoyed the fact the children could make things and how relaxed it was."

"Enjoyed making the moon picture and colouring the M in."

"Free painting the 'M' and making the moon (enjoyed all)."

"X really enjoyed painting and using the scissors."

"Really enjoyed the painting and the 'M'. Kids all happy makes for happy parents. Can't think of improvements for today."

"X enjoyed the painting."

"Love the stories, and creativity. Also doing the bear hunt."

"My favourite part was the bear hunt."

"X loved the stories this week."

"We enjoyed everything!"