

A COMET AUCKLAND INITIATIVE SEED FUNDED BY THE NEXT FOUNDATION



Kia Ora!

Our last network meeting was awesome. Here is a summary of we did. There was plenty to learn from our presenters, you'll be interested in the resources they suggested to get conversation going - see the base of these notes. Send us any more talk ideas and feedback, and have a look at our new website [here](#).



Introduction, by Alison Sutton

Talking Matters' first phase of networking has been sustained success and is now propelling us forward into community action to promote more talking and reading. The next phase will bring a level of practical experience from our community as they research and test ways to scaffold language skills.

Group discussion:

Some really powerful ways to talk with families:

- Being intentional about conversation- creating opportunities to talk with families
- Talking is ordinary Everyone can contribute. You do not need to be a qualified teacher or a trained psychologist., it's something that everybody does.
- Creating the awareness about how early talking and interaction needs to start
- Talk about everyday things, and everyday actions helps the child associate objects and events with words. i.e “Can you find three carrots?”
- Empowering positive parenting - parents as first teachers, brain builders and coaches
- Include Dads in the conversation. Find a way in with Dads, so they have a clear idea of how they can engage meaningful conversation with their children
- Emphasise the value of home languages.
- Understand diverse linguistic environments that a child has access to.
- We need to find out which messages resonate in each community; making sure that the tools that we have match the situation and the different approaches to talk for each family



Presentations



Library story-time: Not just about books

Dave Tucker - Point Chevalier Library

Dave outlined the changing role of libraries and challenged our assumptions that everyone comes to the library to read books and that story-time is based on books. The library has so many different roles now,

and learning may not be the initial focus. Libraries are social meeting places with the use of free wi-fi connections, some come for entertainment or to reach out to other families in the community. There is also an assumption that everyone knows how to use a computer – librarians offer training and advice alongside with books.



The First 1000 days project

Linda Biggs - Storytime foundation

Storytime promotes books and reading as a way to enhance the bond between parent and babies.

Books for Babies is a programme to encourage attachment using books, talking and singing as ways for parents and whānau to bond with their babies. For families with babies from from 6 weeks of age to 15 months in the deprivation 8-10 index. Books are also delivered through midwives and other agents, aimed especially for the children's first stage. As children grow up, the books can be returned in exchange of others for the next stage. Reach out to other families who are not connected to any of these initiatives via street play, mobile bus, taking activities to the streets.

Books for toddlers (being developed now) resources are being shared with families with toddlers around offering opportunities for talk such as: Jungle book, Placemats and Reward cards.

How can we reach out to families who are not connected to any of these initiatives?

Multi-pronged approach: street play, mobile busses, taking activities to the streets, thinking outside the box.

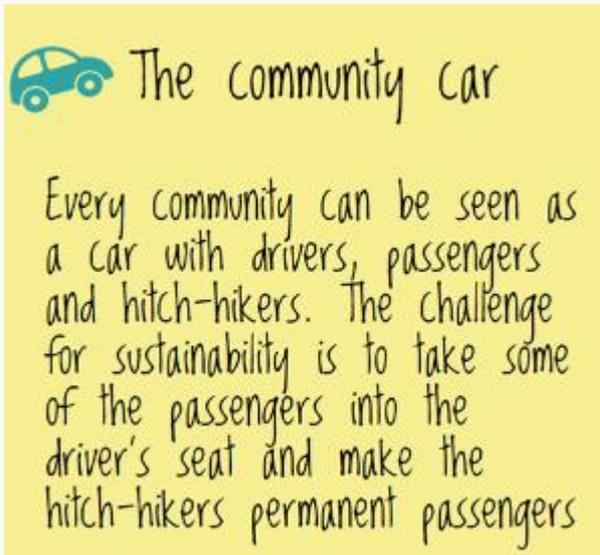
Literacy action in the Community

In her local community, Bream Bay in Northland, Linda has been promoting local initiatives to support families and learning.

1. **Pukapuka party:** Free literacy event involving schools, ECEs, Marae, Libraries, churches, retirement village members, police, first aiders. Children received a literacy passport when they arrived. All providers setup activities giving children stamps on their passports, when the passport was full, a bag of books, pens, colour pencils, paper, etc.
2. **Swap a book initiative:** A swap a book table is set up in a central location of the community for children and families to bring books that they have finished and swap. If they review the book they want to swap, they claim a reward [currently 15 reviews per day being collected]
3. **The Bream Bay Angels:** Volunteers to visit schools a couple of mornings each week and work with children that are struggling with reading. Helps build connections across the community. They have expanded their actions to other areas like music, gardening, etc.
4. **The Bream Bay Learning community:** Action has grown! This summer there are going to be 21 activities. Children can pick up a learning passport from the library, supermarket, café, etc. and join the activities, including:
 - Attend the mobile library beach day
 - Make a Pukapuka Pete out of recycled material
 - Visit and interview the oldest person you know and write about what their life was like when they were your age, and more.

When activities are completed, the passport is stamped and the children's work displayed.

Linda talked about community action being like a car.



The integration of talking, reading and writing as part of the communication process

Prof. Jan Gaffney

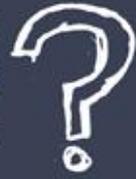
Jan described how important it is to think about it as an artificial separation to think about talking reading and writing as separate processes. They are all part of communication.

- Importance of writing in front of children.
- Scribbling is trialing communication, as an inventive process.
- Writing can be more accessible to the child and a pathway to reading. Most education providers tend to see it the other way around.
- It is important not to anticipate or assume what children are trying to say. Let them tell you.
- Parents don't need to be in teacher mode. They can do their own things, date paintings, and scribbling of their children.

Drawing can be an indicator of struggling children's capacity to read and write. Bring families and children together. Afterwards, an awareness can be created about the importance of scribbling and having contact with written text. Spaces that are already created [libraries, ECEs etc.] can be used to this end.

Jan has created a short resource for parents, to explain why talking and writing are connected and important that you can download [here](#)

In a computer-based world where virtually everything is typed instead of handwritten, why is it so important to teach children how to write



by Prof. Jan Gaffney



Holding a pen and writing letters helps children acquiring fine motor skills

The experience of shaping letters and getting a closer approximation to them helps children in the process of learning how to read

Resources



The blank story box

Having a discussion around a story with a blank object gives us a canvas for creativity. Children can use their voice, open and close the box, or hide something inside to interactively tell the story. They can draw characters and events in the sides of the box. It can be used to re-tell the story afterwards. Use found white cardboard boxes (or reuse food packaging and urn inside-out).

Shared by David Tucker, Pt. Chevalier Library



Placemats

Meal time can be a good opportunity for families to come together and talk, and placemats can be an inspiration for it. Story time has some local versions that make images relevant to families. Any images that can be good conversation starters are good ideas, not limited to letters and numbers. They can also be hung on the wall or used during playtime.

Shared by Linda Biggs, Storytime Foundation



Reward cards

If families want to give their children a special treat, they can use the cards as a reward system, and the child can choose the activity to enjoy together. Examples: Go to the beach, tell me a story about when you were a child, visit the library, make a recipe. Blank cards for children can draw their own.

Shared by Linda Biggs, Storytime Foundation