

Take your partner

Mothers and toddlers cooking
in Kirklees



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Length of course: Six weeks

Number of learners: Varied week to week but generally around 10 adults and 12 children.

Nature of group: A parent and toddler group

Partnership Working

Partnership working included a link with the Nursery Nurse/Teacher from the school. The school wanted to strengthen the link between the Toddler group and Nursery in order that some of the difficulties they experience at the beginning of the Nursery year could be addressed. In this regard, the Nursery Nurse “dropped in” to the group at drink/snack time to have a chat. The group was able to use the Nursery on an afternoon as there is no session timetabled. Prior to this the group used a community room which doubles up as a classroom and was very cramped and not toddler friendly. A Play and Learning Worker from Sure Start also attended as did a Family Support Worker who encouraged a “hard to reach” parent to attend. I also linked with the Libraries – see “Sustainability”.

Sustainability

Sure Start are going to continue attending the group and hope to run a “Babies Into Books” session to carry on the literacy theme. They will help the Toddler Group leader to run it on a more “professional” level. The Nursery Nurse will also carry on attending and has made the Nursery library available to the group. I have linked with the Libraries Service and have arranged for Bookstart to attend and deliver a session. The Mobile Library is also going to park in the school grounds one afternoon and arrange for the parents and children to have a “tour”. I have met with one of the Community Librarians at Mirfield Library and the group plans to do a “toddle” to the Library at one of their sessions in order to have a storytime session there as well as a tea party.

What worked well?

The use of the Nursery and the equipment therein meant that the project was able to be facilitated without too much disruption. Linking with the Sure Start workers meant that I could focus on the aim of the session rather than having to do all the “crowd control” that comes with a toddler group. The involvement of the Toddler group leader (who now has no children in the group) was a bit of a coup. She was feeling a bit redundant in the group and I was able to involve her and highlight the fantastic catalyst she is. She made the comment that “she wouldn’t be able to do anything around reading with the group” but she understands now that reading doesn’t just have to be a book! She now has her CRB check and is becoming a volunteer helper in school.

Did anything surprise you?

The attitude of the parents that they weren't able to do something. A word in a recipe which they didn't understand was enough for them not to even attempt it, whereas someone else would probably just look in a dictionary. When I actually started really looking at some very simple recipes, I saw them through new eyes and realised how language can really deter someone lacking in literary confidence.

What did you learn?

Always be prepared for a different session to the one you planned! When the "hard to reach" parent attended the first time, there was hostility from the rest of the group stemming from events outside of the school. I had to rely on my experience of other situations and work differently to what was planned that day.

The Reading for Pleasure suite of materials:

- CPD modules: Reading for pleasure in a number of contexts
- Storytelling: CPD unit with lesson ideas
- Families, Learning and Storytelling: Using archives for community cohesion
- Take Your Partner: Engaging emergent adult readers
- Technology and Reading: How to use blogs, wikis, iPods and e-books to promote reading
- Putting two and 2 together: Creating a bridge between literacy and numeracy learning
- Resources for libraries: Guidance on how to engage families to read for pleasure