

Take your partner

Men's Group at Richmond
Children's Centre



Case study template

Max: 500 words

Case Study Title: Reading Project – Take Your Partner

Pilot LA/provider: Oldham Lifelong Learning / Family Learning
Family Language course – Men’s Group at Richmond Children’s Centre

Contact name and job title: Janet McDowell, Programme Leader

Contact details: 07753 714543 janet.mcdowell@oldham.gov.uk

Introduction:

The objectives of the project are:

- To test the attitudes to, and experience of, reading amongst groups of emergent adult readers and gather good practice showing successful approaches to encouraging and maintaining reading, especially amongst those with lower literacy levels.
- To provide opportunities for adult readers to access formal literacy programmes/courses where appropriate.

Key data – attendance, retention, achievements, How learners were recruited

The course has not closed yet; more learners are expected to join this week; 17 learners initially enrolled on the course. All those attending will receive an Internal Certificate and all have ILPs mapped to the ESOL curriculum and should have met their targets.

Outline programme of work

1. Induction, enrolment, initial assessments, read *Funnybones*
2. Plan and prepare the conference speech. Initial assessments.
Conference presentation
3. Discussion on interests with a view to purchasing books for the class.
Review the conference
4. Visit by Janet Harrison from Bookstart, Oldham Library, group reading
Join the library, listen to stories read aloud by Janet
5. Complete a questionnaire on book choices for the book selection.
Read *Pirates Ahoy*.
6. Identify parts of a book. Read *Harry the Dinosaur goes to school*

7. Drama session with Oldham Coliseum
8. Visit to Oldham Coliseum to watch Aladdin – the pantomime
9. One Read Event – Group reading and more drama games
10. Christmas party. Christmas arts and crafts
11. Look at a selection of the new books – explore, read and talk about them
12. Interview by visitors from NIACE – explore another selection of new books
13. Meet the new Surestart development worker. Read books together
14. Evaluate the course. Complete ILPs. Plan progression routes. Certificate presentation. Discuss NIACE nomination for the Adult Learner Awards

Learner recruitment

- Flyers and posters in local schools and the children’s centre
- The Imam on the course brings new learners to the class.
- Learners on the “Fun with Reading” course were contacted to re-join the course by telephone calls and letters.
- The men’s development worker from Surestart recruits learners.
- Parents collecting children from school and nursery were invited to join the class by the tutor on a one-to-one basis.

Group profile

The group is made up of 14 men, ages ranging from 23 to 70. All Bangla-speaking and married with children.

All are parents or grandparents of nursery and primary school-aged children.

The eldest is a grandfather who has lived in England for 35 years and this is his first class in England. Another grandfather is a local Imam from the mosque who attends classes at a local college. All the other learners work in shops or restaurants and take-away outlets in Greater Manchester. Some have been educated in Bangladesh but attended school for only a few years. Others are illiterate in their own language and in English. None have attended school in England. Several attend ESOL classes with Oldham Lifelong Learning or Oldham College and had progressed to these classes from the men’s family learning class last year.

Their levels of English range from emerging E1 to E3, with most at the lower level. In particular, reading and writing skills are low.

Immediate and longer term impact

Achievements and outcomes for parents/carers:

- Regular and punctual attendance on the course.
- Reluctant to leave at the end of the lesson.
- (Parents who are limited for time as they collect their children from school after the lesson and then go directly to work.)
- Learners learned that even if they can't read in their own language or in English, they can still share and enjoy books with children ie illustrations, making up a story, using their imaginations and chatting about the books.
- Spending time reading with children is important.
- Using drama, funny voices, toys as props can be used when sharing a book.
- Books can be pop-up, colourful, have sounds and textures and even DVDs to make them more exciting.
- Visit the theatre to spend time together.
- Understand parts of a book and the vocabulary to use with children.
- The difference between fiction and non-fiction.
- Confidence to read aloud in a group – whatever the reader's ability.
- To listen when someone is reading.
- Most learners joined the library when Janet Harrison from Bookstart visited the class and now they use the local libraries. Some take their children on Saturdays.
- Have more confidence to share school reading books with children.

The long-term impact of the course for parents and carers is an understanding of how books can be used to develop a child's and their own vocabulary in children's and adult's books.

Also, that the excitement and fun experienced in the lesson can be shared with families when reading and experiencing books together.

Impact on children

Families are spending more time together, with dads and granddads being involved when sharing books.

More family visits to the library.

More time talking to each other when sharing books.

As dads become more confident to read aloud in English with their children, some have commented that their children and wives laugh at them when they try. The group has discussed this issue and has given support and encouragement to each other to continue to read at home. As such, children's

attitudes towards their dad's attempts to learn have encouraged them to help each other.

Impact on practitioners

Although it is not seen as “good practice” to read children’s books with adult ESOL learners, this group has developed in such a way that they are confident within the group to experience the joy of reading and the fun that goes with it. Practitioners do not need to be afraid of using children’s books if they are used as a tool for developing a love of reading and confidence to read with children.

Use the Bookstart book bags, big books and resources with learners ie *Funnybones* and *Dinosaurs*.

The books used on the project can be used in many classes to stimulate an interest in reading and in books.

Impact on the setting

The course is held in Richmond Children’s Centre in an area of deprivation and low income in Oldham. The children’s centre is well-used and the women-only family learning classes are over-subscribed. The men’s group had started as a computer class the previous year and then a “Fund with Reading” course as part of the National Year of Reading. The group was awarded an Adult Learners’ Award by Oldham Lifelong Learning. However, a follow-on course started late in the autumn term so that Ramadan and Eid would be respected and learners would have time to start classes from October. Over the course of the term, the group was invited to speak at the Oldham Council Study Skills Conference and more learners joined the group. The popularity of the group within the centre and the school increased as they became more well-known and their Award and photographs were placed in a display stand in the centre’s reception area.

How the group has been encouraged to become more active readers

The group has been encouraged to become more active readers by several methods:

- By being given the opportunity to read aloud and not to worry if they make mistakes.
- Reading together with people who are experiencing the same circumstances of learning to read in English.
- Feeling safe within the group.
- A language support worker gives assistance and encouragement to learners.

- Reading fiction and non-fiction books in the classroom.
- The learning environment is conducive to learning; learners give encouragement to each other and are highly motivated.
- Towards the end of the lesson, learners evaluate their learning in their learner logs; they take part in a group discussion and decide what they will do at home with their families. This involves reading.
- The tutor gives written and verbal feedback at to each learner on their progress in the lesson.

The difference this has made

Dads and grandads have become more confident to read all types of books: adults', children's, fiction and non-fiction. They no longer view reading as something that is unattainable because they don't have the skills to read in English. They can use their imaginations; make up stories from illustrations, use props, body language and different voices to make reading and storytelling fun and interesting for their children.

Key factors for success

- Recruitment strategy is effective.
- Enthusiastic tutor and language support worker.
- Effective partnerships between;
- Lifelong Learning, Surestart/Children's Centre workers.
- Lifelong Learning and Bookstart (Oldham Library)
- Lifelong Learning and Oldham Coliseum Outreach team
- Lifelong Learning and Richmond Primary school

The group was involved in choosing topics for the book purchase by discussions and questionnaires; these were based on their own interests.

The course was set up to take into account the religious calendar of the learners and the time they have available as they are shift-workers.

All learners have a Family Learning/ ESOL initial assessment at the start of the course; each has an ILP and learner log.

All take part in the induction process and establishing group rules.

The lessons are enjoyable, fun and varied.

All tutors and learners are give encouragement to each other to read aloud.

All learners are given an equal chance to read aloud, whatever their ability.

Children's books can be used effectively in lessons.

Use partners to use their expertise in lessons ie librarians and drama teachers.

The learners' interest in performing has been developed in the form of drama.

Learners realising themselves that being able to read a book to a child is an essential and wonderful part of parenting.

The group's achievements have been recognised as follows:

- Oldham Lifelong Learning Adult Learners Award
- Speaking at the Oldham Study Skills Conference
- Wikireadia and National Year of Reading write-up on the group (Sept 08)
- Article in the *Oldham Parenting Magazine* – Spring 2009
- Photographic display in Richmond Children's Centre reception area
- Nomination for the NIACE Adult Learner's Award 2009
- Internal Certificates from Oldham Lifelong learning

Next steps

Links with Oldham Coliseum have been strengthened:

A drama course is now planned with the group to improve confidence and speaking and listening skills.

A group visit to a local theatre with the dads and their children is planned.

Visiting the Oldham Lifelong Learning centre to explore the library, the art gallery and the education facilities.

Investigate the introduction of Literacy accreditation (external) in speaking and listening.

Links with the "Shakespeare Schools Festival" for scripts.

Develop curriculum planning to adapt teaching and learning methods with the Primary Literacy/Numeracy strategy .

For example, using a variety of questions when reading text.

Using pictures and photographs to describe the picture and create a story.

Creative writing to be developed.

Continue to explore the new books in lessons.

Use magazines, newspapers and the internet to develop reading skills.

The Children's centre has employed a male development worker who will work with the group and develop more interests and courses for them.

Wider dissemination of the course

It is planned to set up another men's reading group in the Werneth area.

A Family Literacy class with a group of Polish parents and their children.

A Family Literacy class with Year 7 boys and their parents in a secondary school (the boys have been identified as needing additional help with reading).

A Family Literacy class with year 3 children and their parents.

A Family Literacy class with reception children and their parents.
A "Computers Don't Byte" Class with mothers and daughters in a local secondary school.

How the course has been promoted locally

See "How learners were recruited" in "outline of activity" above

Key challenges

Recruiting and retaining a hard-to-reach group.

Learners arriving and leaving lessons on time.

Ensuring that learners are motivated to attend classes in order to improve their reading skills with a view to sharing books with their children rather than as an ESOL/Citizenship class.

Introducing a variety of learning styles in the lesson to learners who are more familiar with rote learning in their own countries.

Taking into account the religious considerations of learners i.e. Ramadan and Eid.

Bad weather conditions (the planned theatre trip was cancelled)

Family members who are fluent in English and dads can feel silly practicing their English skills at home.

Other additional information

The group used their reading skills at the Study Skills Conference by reading the script that was based on their own learning journey.

The partnership with Bookstart has meant that specialist input could be given and resources used with parents that are exciting for parents.

The drama lesson and partnership with Oldham Coliseum has meant that learners can now experience drama and have the opportunity to visit the pantomime and local plays with their children.

The books purchased on the project have been very successful.
(See attached list)

Quotes from parents

"I read *Harry the Dinosaur goes to school*. I learned how to use my imagination with children, about fiction and non-fiction with my family. I will read storybooks and the names for parts of books."

NZ

“We learned about distances from London to India by a pop-up book. At home with my family, we will share books together and read newspapers.”

Mr M

“Today I described a book. Now I’m going to find out what my children like. I learned how to read a story to a child. I read *Goodnight Busy Bat*.”

AH

“Today we used adjective names, I will try reading at home with my family and use the new words I learned today.”

AH

Practitioners – Janet McDowell – Tutor on the course/Family Learning Programme Leader

Take Your Partner reading project has enabled this group of learners to explore books which they have never seen before. As the books are based on their own interests, they became actively involved in handling and reading the books at once. For example, *The Jungle* pop-up book is colourful and makes animal and bird noises. The drama session had included imitating animals and both could be adapted. The pop-up *Wonderful World Book* provided an impromptu quiz on distances from London to India by foot, car and even snail. The football books have DVDs with them that show matches that are written about in the books, laptops were used with these.

My Grandpa is Amazing was read by a granddad and led to endless amusement in the group.

The books have provided a buzz and excitement in the lesson – when the learners open books, its like opening magic boxes. The dads can’t wait to go home to read with their children.

The visits by Bookstart and Oldham Coliseum has enabled learners to have the confidence to use their bodies, voices and props when reading to children.

All lessons are mapped to the ESOL curriculum with ILPs and initial assessments.

Book list

This is a selection of the books that have been purchased on the course:

Frankenstein Human Body Book
Do Not Open
Egyptology
Monserology
Spyology

Cars, Planes, Boats and Trains
Sharks and Other Creatures
Sounds of the Wild Jungle
Jolly Postman
The Wonder Why Book of Knowledge
The Usborne Book of Knowledge
The Wonderful World Book
The Orchard Book of Shakespeare Stories
Peter Pan
Winter Wonderland
Space Station
Doctor Who
Gordon Ramsay Healthy Appetite
BBC Match of the Day 2009
Manchester United Annual 2009
The DVD book of Manchester United
The DVD book of Manchester City
The DVD book of the Olympics
Phillips World Atlas
The Skills of Cricket
Road Bike Maintenance
The Great Outdoor Adventure – Bear Grylls
Bollywood Cookbook
Jamie Oliver’s Ministry of Food
My Captain’s book – Steve Gerrard
New Kid on the Block – Lewis Hamilton
Guinness Book of Records

Comments from learners when asked by the visitor what difference reading had made to them and their families

“This has improved my English and helped in my work in the restaurant. Also reading with my children and I ask her questions about the story and the pictures”

“Much improved reading since joining the class and I have just joined Oldham College for ESOL”

“Improved understanding and listening by reading in the group”

“Improve English Language as I listen and follow the books”

“Happy. Learn how to read with my children in English”

“Speaking and listening. I like fiction and books about football.”

“My listening and speaking in English have improved because I attend this class and we read out loud too.”

“I loved the books about journeys, *Journey Time*, as it was like my own journey to England.”

“I enjoy reading because it helps with speaking more confidently.”

“The reading is best when it is out loud so that we say the words right. I would like a CD of the words at home so that I could follow some of the stories – the words and sounds easily.”

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