New Zealand’s Public Libraries and Early Literacy

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Reading for pleasure

- Helps us grow
- Promotes critical and analytical thinking
- “helps to shape the personality, refine the sensibility, sharpen the critical intelligence; … it is a powerful instrument for empathy and a medium through which children can acquire their values” (Beard, 1998)
Developing a love of books

- The provision of a diverse stock
- Space targeted at the needs of young children and their caregivers
- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff
- Delivery of a variety of activities and programmes
Why we read to children

- Fun
- Bonding
- Literate culture
- Nature of narrative
- Cognitive skills
- Literacy skills
- Creativity
- Communication skills
- Social skills
- Exploration of world of stories and books
- Experience variety of cultures and emotions
- Promotion of library use
Six early literacy skills

1. Print motivation
2. Vocabulary
3. Print awareness
4. Letter knowledge
5. Narrative skills
6. Phonological awareness
Data gathering

• 4 library services
  ◦ 12 observations
    • Librarians’ approach
    • Childrens’ behaviour
    • Caregivers
  ◦ 11 semi-structured interviews
    • Background
    • Sessions
    • Materials
    • Aims
Print motivation

- “Children’s experiences with literature need to begin with enjoyment” (Jalongo, 2004)

- “A love of reading, because everything else comes from that”
Print motivation - strategies

• Welcome and convey excitement
  ◦ Welcome song

• Read with enthusiasm
  ◦ Character
  ◦ Pacing
  ◦ “motherese”
  ◦ Rhythm
  ◦ Rhyme

• Paired reading
The Three Bears

SORT OF

Written by Yvonne Morrison
Illustrated by Donovan Bixley

Scholastic
Print motivation - strategies

- Book choice
  - Books the librarians enjoyed
    “Everything I choose I choose that I like, because I have to have that passion to pass through whatever I deliver and if I don’t like it I can’t work with it.”
  - Rhythm and rhyme
  - Visuals
Print motivation - strategies

- **Book choice**
  - Books the children enjoy
    - Age appropriate
      - “You just judge the group of children and their interest or if their concentration is stretched I don’t read the three stories I will just read two. I might read more, sometimes I have more stories to read”
    - Range of genres
    - Well-known books
    - Interactive books
Dear Zoo
A Pop-up Book

Rod Campbell
Print motivation - strategies

- Variety
  - Stories, songs, rhymes, activities
  - “I have tried just doing stories, one after another without any rhymes or songs and after two stories they get a bit fidgety, even if the stories are quite engaging, I think they like to have a break.”
Print motivation - strategies

- Participation
  - Asking the children to join in
  - Using props
Vocabulary

- How many words the children understand
- Facilitates meaning
- Books are a structured way of introducing rich vocabulary
- Words outside children’s lived experiences
- Written language is different
Vocabulary - strategies

- Book choice – complexity of language
  - “I will choose [a book] based on its language and its uses so there may be a particular word in there that is interesting to me, it sounds interesting so I might use it, particularly, just for that word”

- Explaining unfamiliar words
  - “I think I had A mammoth in the fridge. ‘What’s a mammoth?’ ‘It’s like a big fluffy elephant. So we know what a mammoth is now?’ If I think there is going to be a word there they just have no idea what I’m saying then I will sort of pre-empt that before the story possibly.”
Print awareness

- The understanding that print carries meaning
- Mechanical elements of reading, print conventions
Print awareness - strategies

- Books as unique objects
- Pointing at words as reading
- Book handling and terminology
Letter knowledge

- Understanding that letters are different from one another
- Early skill in letter knowledge is a strong predictor of later reading success
Letter awareness - strategies

- I-Spy – something beginning with….
- “an opportunity to use alphabet if it presents itself in a format that I like, I don’t go out and search for that, because I don’t want to um… I don’t think it’s necessary”
- “My main thing is they’re coming in the library and seeing it as a fun place to be. I’m not there to teach”
Narrative skills

- Awareness that stories are structured in a particular way
- Ability to describe things and events
- Ability to follow a story
Narrative awareness - strategies

- Predictions
- Descriptions
- Open-ended questions
- Acting out the story
- Retelling the story
- Craft activities
- Links with the children’s experiences
Phonological awareness

- Realisation that works are made of smaller sounds – phonemes, syllables
- Rhyming
- Alliteration
Phonological awareness - strategies

- Reading rhyming books
- Action rhymes
- Singing songs
Conclusion

- Focus on print motivation
  - Inspiring children to read for pleasure
- Promotion of the library
- Vary the types of materials used
  - Digital media
- Some resistance to developing letter knowledge
- Potential to link with Te Whāriki