

Case Study - Reading Together - Interactive Storytelling with Childminders

Louise Griffiths is Assistant Headteacher at one of the Thames Valley Hub partner schools, Victoria Park Nursery School in Newbury. On behalf of West Berkshire she leads the “Every Child a Talker” programme and is currently running an EEF research pilot in Thames Valley Hub which support staff to develop the communication skills of children with severe communication delays.

Context/Challenge

Could Thames Valley Early Years Stronger Practice Hub develop a training model to reach childminders during their busy working days?

Starting Point

Reading Together is a series of 3 short workshops that was first developed with our local library service to encourage parents to read with their children and join the library. Over several years, the workshops had been run at Family Hubs, in local schools and during the pandemic, online via zoom!

Our Hub partners were looking at identifying effective ways to provide in-person training that would fit in with the commitments of our local childminders. We knew the strength of evidence behind interactive storytelling (see <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/literacy-early-years>) and by amending the content slightly, Reading Together for Childminders was developed.

Workshop Content

The main change was to create sessions where the children would be the audience! With Hub consultants running the sessions, the childminders could watch a range of techniques being modelled, including some creative activities connected with stories and rhymes.

The sessions were kept short - just one hour long - and were held in a local library to make them as accessible as possible. There were 3 separate workshops and childminders were encouraged to attend all 3:

- Chatterboxes and Supporting Early Language - building chatterboxes around children’s interests is nothing new, but we were looking at how the contents of a box could be related to storytelling, either of a known story or something completely new.
- The Three Bears - reading this famous story was just the starting point and with a set of puppets and associated activities, the children were encouraged to retell the story using words and actions and the use of IT in this context was also explored.
- Rhymes and Songs - as well as singing a core group of songs, we shared a set of simple instruments and the children were able to make their own shakers and other noise-makers.

Each childminder was provided with a pack of resources including story books, musical instruments and craft materials to make puppets and other resources connected with the stories and songs.

Impact

Feedback was very positive, with the childminders who attended being clear that they could take what they have learned about interactive storytelling into their homes immediately. They appreciated the opportunity to watch other educators model activities and to pick up ideas from colleagues. The resources provided were much appreciated, as were ideas about making musical instruments using junk modelling. What was very clear was that the childminders appreciated contact with other early years professionals without needing to give up an evening or weekend.

The positive feedback from the initial workshops means that similar sessions are now going to be provided in other areas of the Thames Valley Hub in 2025. The pilot workshops were run in association with consultants from West Berks LA. As we extend them across the Hub reach area, we are calling on staff from Hub partners to support the training, which is a good CPD opportunity for practitioners to be involved in peer to peer training.