

The REAL project and the EYPP



To find out more about the REAL project, visit:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/research/impact/stories/fcs/22>

Why is the REAL project a useful way to use your EYPP money?

- The REAL project promotes the development of *literacy levels* among pre-school children.
- Importantly, the findings indicated that *children who are classed as the most vulnerable educationally seemed to benefit most, showing that this could be an effective way for settings to close the gap.*
- The REAL project focuses on *engaging parents*, a child's first educators, in their children's learning using day to day opportunities.
- The REAL project has a *proven impact* on children and parents which has been shown through a randomised controlled trial on a large scale and over a long period of time.

What is the REAL project?

Taken from <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/research/impact/stories/fcs/22>

Official government statistics show that one in five 11-year-olds leaving primary school is unable to read to the minimum standard for that age group. To provide young children with a good beginning in literacy and thus strengthen their chances of success in school, Professors Peter Hannon and Cathy Nutbrown developed a programme which gave early childhood educators a way of thinking about the role of parents in children's early literacy development.

The team set out to develop a programme to encourage and enable parents of children aged between 3 and 5 years to support the early literacy development of their children. Through home visits, provision of literacy resources, postal communication with families, and special events the programme teachers worked with parents to use every day situations to promote literacy with their children.

The study employed a unique framework developed by the team known as 'ORIM', as Professor Nutbrown explains: **"Before children go to school they learn so much from their family. Importantly, our project focuses on parents doing four things: providing *opportunities* to engage in literacy; showing *recognition* of their young children's literacy achievements; making time to *interact* with their children over literacy; and being a *model* themselves of literacy users (letting children see them reading and writing)".**

The project focussed on key strands of literacy: using books, early writing, environmental print, and oral language. The ORIM framework allows you to look closely at opportunities, recognition, interaction and modelling for each of these strands.

		Strands of Early Literacy Development			
		Environmental Print	Books	Early Writing	Oral Language
Parents can Provide	Opportunities				
	Recognition				
	Interaction				
	Model				

The literacy levels of children in the programme and in a control group were tested at the beginning and end of the study. The team found improvements in the literacy of children in the programme, though the extent varied. Of particular interest was that children whose mothers had the lowest school achievement (no educational qualifications of any kind) benefited most. **"We found that children who are sometimes classed as the most vulnerable educationally seemed to benefit most. Importantly, the families who took part said that they greatly enjoyed the process, as did the teachers."**

The National Children's Bureau, impressed by these findings, approached Professor Nutbrown to roll out the programme in two urban areas of the UK. Their initiative, 'Making it REAL: Raising Early Achievement in Literacy', has secured Big Lottery funding to enable 16 teachers and practitioners to develop and deliver the programme over three years with some 320 families.

Professor Nutbrown again: **"The key lesson is that parents can do a great deal to help their children in the early years as they begin to develop as readers and writers. Another lesson is that, contrary to what much of the literature suggests, fathers in our study were involved in sharing literacy with their children. We also found that teachers and parents both enjoyed the opportunity to work in partnership and share their knowledge. By breaking down some of the formal barriers between home and school, we were able to foster a spirit of working together for the benefit of the children"**.

Where to find more information and resources to begin using the REAL project to support children at your setting:

This video includes Cathy Nutbrown and a practitioner talking about the REAL project , after the project won an award for outstanding impact in society:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=tRXD5G8eU_w

A large amount of resources are available at <http://www.real-online.group.shef.ac.uk/index.html> .

These are relevant to the 4 strands-

- Environmental print
- Books
- Writing
- Oral language

On the REAL online site, you can navigate using the bars at the top, or click on the grid to find resources and information about a particular area.

The resources include:

- Case studies
- Information about how to use the REAL project and the ORIM framework
- Resources to use with parents and children- these are really useful as they can be printed off and used quickly and easily.

There is also information about other ways of using the ORIM framework to support children and parents to develop the home learning environment and accelerate learning.

Please explore the REAL online site and make good use of the materials, some of which you will have seen on the REAL stand at the EYPP marketplace event.