



'OPENING DOORS, OPENING BOOKS'

Bookstart Superbox Conference 2015

Sarah Wiggin, our Engagement Worker for South West Wales, recently attended the Bookstart Conference in Bridgend. Here she explains how the Bookstart message has been embedded into our Learning through Play programme and how it can be enjoyed at home.

I love children's picture books even now as a so-called grown-up. They hold such a wealth of possibilities and new ideas. Beautiful illustrations, stories that engage a range of emotions and the imagination, surprises to discover and so many different ways of engaging children's interest. A recent report from Booktrust shows that many parents don't feel like this about children's books and don't read with their children. The survey found that "nearly four in ten parents do not read with their babies" (Booktrust, 2015).

The idea of Bookstart is to inspire families to share books and the enjoyment of early literacy, language and communication with babies and children. The message from the Bookstart Superbox Conference was that opening books and enjoying them with your family creates many possible doorways for children (and the adults sharing these stories). Helen Wales, National Development Manager, Book Trust Cymru, described these doorways in terms of the "healthy development of speech, language and literacy; the possibilities

of quiet moments for bonding; the increased enjoyment of school and the development of imagination, empathy and curiosity" (Superbox Conference, 2015).

The organisers of the conference brought this message to life through practical workshops and a carousel of ideas for different ways of sharing the enjoyment of books with families. Bookstart projects show that family involvement increases children's confidence in using books, allows parents to think about child development and discover how much children learn through enjoyable play.

The question is how can we start inspiring parents and carers to share books with their children and how can we share with them the messages of Bookstart? In our team we have developed activity boxes that we use in parent and toddler groups. The idea is to involve families in creating play opportunities with the stories in the books. That way parents do not have to be confident readers to start joining in.



Developing your child's early literacy, language and communication skills will have a positive effect on their enjoyment of school.



The 'Mww, Mww' story box utilises everyday materials, such as cardboard boxes and wooden spoons to make animal puppets and a farm. Adding a bit of Shredded Wheat or Weetabix for hay completes the play set. Making a set of wooden spoon animals can be made as simple as drawing a face on the spoon with a non-toxic marker pen. These are especially suitable for babies and children who are likely to put them in their mouths.

The 'Ben a Betsan' story box for preschool aged children involves using two of the key playthings from the story, a balloon and bubbles, to make a bubble print balloon with a paper plate.

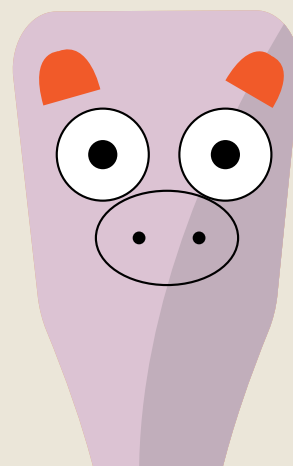
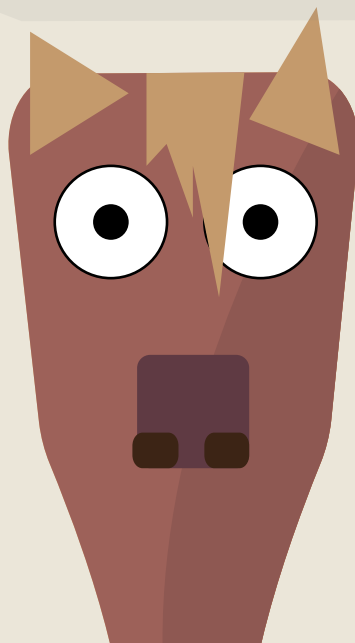
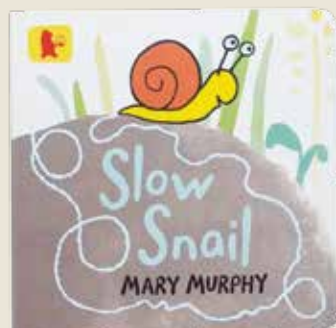
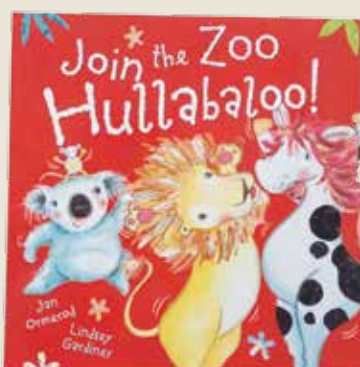
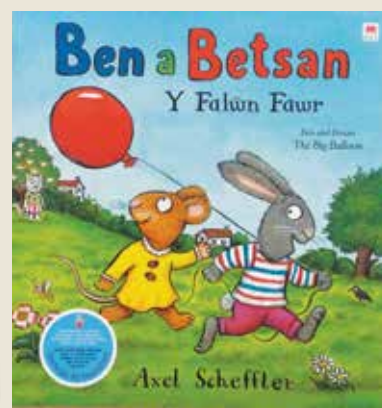
Ingredients:

- Paint
- Washing up liquid
- 1/2 cup of water
- A drinking straw
- A shallow bowl

The 'Join the Zoo Hullabaloo' story activity box again uses paper plates and old wrapping paper to make jelly fish that can be swished around as you dance with the animals in the story. For babies the activity box could also include a tissue box full of squares of materials. The materials can be grasped, pulled out, pushed in and the textures explored. Families with babies can use some of the soft and floaty materials instead of the jellyfish paper plate in the Hullabaloo dance.

Smaller versions of the activity boxes or bags could be made to give out to families to use at home with the Bookstart books or other stories from the setting. Remember, when you collect any resources to use in your story activity boxes, to make sure that they are safe to be used with young children. Be particularly careful if children are likely to put resources into their mouths. Also it's a good idea to add a note or talk with families about making sure that they supervise their children.

To give families ownership of this project you could hold a story box activity session and get families to create their own boxes.



Further information

Visit the Dechrau Da/Bookstart in Wales website www.bookstart.org.uk/about/wales which has information and downloads from the Superbox conference www.bookstart.org.uk/professionals/get-involved/super-box/2015.

The National Literacy Trust has a number of online resources for supporting family literacy www.wordsforlife.org.uk

Sheffield University also has a project to support family literacy called 'Making it REAL' (Raising Early Attainment in Literacy)' www.ncb.org.uk/ecu/making-it-real