



Autism-Friendly Story Time e- learning Program Webinar



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land, and pay respects to their ancestors who came before them. The location of State Library of Queensland, on Kurilpa Point, was historically a significant meeting, gathering and sharing place for Aboriginal people. We proudly continue that tradition here today.

Today's Webinar

Autism-Friendly Story Time e-learning Program

Presented by:

- Andrea Hurley, Coordinator First 5 Forever Library Program, Brisbane City Council
- A/Prof Marleen Westerveld (Speech Pathology), Griffith University
- Dr Jessica Paynter (Applied Psychology), Griffith University





Autism-Friendly Story Time e-learning Program

Presented by Ms Andrea Hurley, Dr Jessica Paynter, and A/Prof Marleen Westerveld



@Jess_Paynter

@MWSLP

The Team

- **A/Prof Marleen Westerveld:** Associate Professor, School of Allied Health Sciences, Griffith University
- **Andrea Hurley:** Coordinator First 5 Forever, Brisbane City Council
- **Dr Jessica Paynter:** Senior Lecturer School of Applied Psychology, Griffith University
- **Dr Kate Simpson:** Senior Lecturer, School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University
- **Kate O'Leary:** Certified Practising Speech Pathologist, School of Allied Health, Griffith University

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Dedicated to a better Brisbane



Autism and Literacy

- Pre-schoolers on the autism spectrum are at increased risk of literacy difficulties¹.
- Pre-school learning experiences in the home and community provide a valuable opportunity to promote early language and literacy skills².
- Parents with pre-schoolers with autism have concerns about the suitability of the library environment to meet the needs of their child³.

¹Westerveld, et al. (2018). ²Sénéchal & Young, (2008) ³Simpson et al (2020).

Librarians and Autism

Report needing more knowledge, training and experience to include children with disabilities (inc. autism) in Story Times^{1,2}

Report in their librarian training they had limited disability/early literacy training together rarely covered in degree programs

Keen to include children with disabilities including autism in Story Times but find they rarely attend¹

Willing to make adjustments and accommodations¹

Autism friendly evidence-based practices¹

Antecedent-Based Interventions: Environmental Audit

- Consideration to environmental arrangement to support engagement
- E.g., space for breaks, lighting, noise.

Visual Supports

- Visual schedule
- Visuals to support comprehension
- Visuals to display expectations

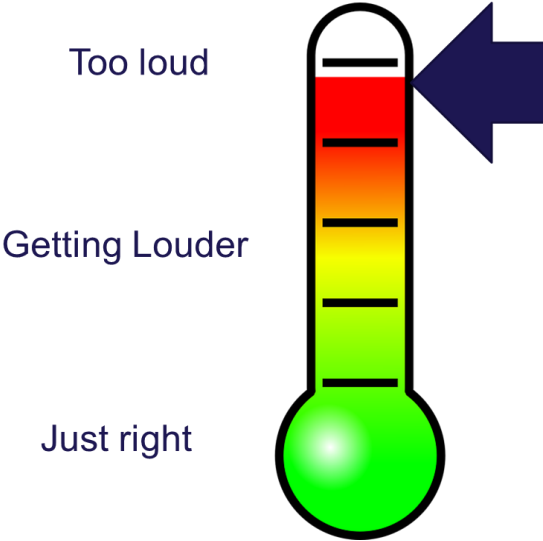
Social Stories

- Prepare children for new experience

¹NCAEP, 2020

Example Practices

Noise Thermometer



Going to the 



Project Outline



Phase 1:

- Face-to-face training of Brisbane City Council librarians (n=24)

Phase 2:

- 6 week pilot study of an Autism-Friendly Story Time program in 2 BCC libraries (n=6)

Phase 3:

- Translation to an online training program (n=22)

Phase 1 Survey Results

Librarians:

- increased their knowledge of autism and emergent literacy
- increased their knowledge of ways to make story time sessions more autism-friendly
- felt more confident in their ability to include children with autism in their story time sessions



Phase 2: Autism-friendly Story Time

- 6 librarians
- 6 weeks of Story Time sessions using specific reading strategies which were also shared with parents.
- Numbers fluctuated from week to week (2-6 children) with one family of a child on the autism spectrum attending every week



Session Plan Structure



- Each week for 6 weeks librarians introduced a new strategy and discussed with parents
- Librarians modelled the strategy in their own story time session
- Parents could borrow the book from the session and were provided with a complementary bookmark and parent handout.



Make it fun!

- **Follow children's lead**
- **Make fun noises**
- **Use silly voices**
- **Praise Praise Praise**
- Use **big gestures** and expressions.

Make it fun! Book Selection: Parent Feedback

- Goldilocks and the Three Bears
- The Gingerbread Man
- Room on the Broom (Julia Donaldson)
- The Terrible Plop (Andrew Joyner, Ursula Dubosarsky)
- The Gruffalo (Julia Donaldson)
- Hairy Maclary series (Lynley Dodd)
- The Little Engine that Could (Watty Piper)
- Where the Wild Things Are (Maurice Sendak)
- One Duck Stuck (Phyllis Root)
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt (Michael Rosen)
- My Daddy Ate an Apple (Craig Smith)
- Pig the Pug series (Aaron Blabey)
- Rainbow Fish (Marcus Pfister)





Words Words Words

1. **Point out** new words in the pictures and text, and provide simple definitions when necessary.
2. **Use facial expressions** or gestures to demonstrate the meaning of the word.
3. **Relate** the new word to common life experiences.
4. **Copy** what your child says so that he/she knows that you have understood.
5. **Repeat, repeat, repeat.** Try to the new word multiple times in the shared book reading session.

Characters

Who is the story about?



Setting

What happens at the start of the story?



Problem

What went wrong?



Action

What did they do?



Ending

How did it finish?



What's in the story?

- **Discuss the story** before you start reading by looking at the front cover, commenting on the pictures, and predicting what might happen.
- **Summarise the story** once you've finished reading.
- Help the children understand the **Characters, Setting, Problem, Actions, and Resolution** by commenting on them as you read.

Take-home messages for parents: Bookmarks

THE VERY HUNGRY BEAR

Week 3: Words Words Words

- **Point out new words:** melting, iceberg, yank, shrinking, allergic, igloo.
- **Provide word definitions:** *yank means to pull, shrinking means it's getting smaller and smaller.*
- **Use gestures and facial expressions** to demonstrate word meanings e.g. make a grumpy face, demonstrate *cranking* and *yanking*, pretend to sneeze.
- **Relate the word** to your child's life experiences e.g. *It's melting just like your ice-cream did! You like fishing with daddy!*
- **Copy** what your child says so that he/she knows that you understand.
- **Repeat** new words throughout the book so that your child hears them often.



Phase 2: Librarian Feedback

I've taken the techniques that I've used in the autism story time to my regular story time, and I think it really helps the kids understanding.

Before the autism story time I didn't do retells but now I do it religiously and I think it really helps.

It's not that one sided that we read it and that's it, it's actually that interaction and seeing that they enjoy the book.

I feel way more confident in my general storytelling

Phase 2: Caregiver Feedback

It's fabulous for the autistic kids and it's fabulous to get parents and grandparents involved.

I'm so grateful the program has been running, I really hope it continues.



The staff have worked with the children beautifully, enthusiastic, hard working, intelligent.

Phase 3: Online Training



- Designed to enable greater distribution of the learning modules to librarians across BCC.
- 20 librarians from 11 different BCC libraries completed the online training.
- Training modules reflected those included in the face to face training + video presentations and demonstrations, and additional resources.
- Participants also engaged in an online discussion forum to share their knowledge and experiences.

Phase 3: Online Training Content

- Pre- and post-training surveys
- Four training modules
- Video demonstrations of all strategies
- Video lectures
- Downloadable handouts of information provided
- Resources for planning sessions

Learning modules



[Introduction](#)



[Module 1: What is autism?](#)



[Module 2: Emergent literacy](#)



[Module 3: Strategies for including children with autism](#)



[Module 4: Shared book reading strategies](#)



[Last task](#)

Phase 3 Survey Results

- Librarians increased their knowledge of autism and emergent literacy and ways to make Story Time sessions more autism-friendly
- Confidence in their ability to include pre-schoolers on the spectrum into Story Time sessions increased.
- Most participants (86%) felt that the training was socially valid.
- Participants provided suggestions for improvements to the online training, these typically included further examples on specific areas of difficulty (e.g., handling challenging behaviours).



How to access


- Register your details to receive access to the online training modules
- <https://www.marleenwesterveld.com/e-learning/story-time/>
- Scan the QR code:





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Resources

- **Autism Friendly Story Time Online Module:**
 - (to be inserted)
- **Development of an Online Training Program for Public Library Staff to Deliver Autism Friendly Story Time Sessions:**
 - <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/24750158.2020.1836949>
- **Story Time Collaboration Video:**
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CqhS6WGYfA
- **Story Time Online Package Overview Video:**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytSZb2mqu0Y>
- **Literacy Resources:** www.marleenwesterveld.com

Questions?

Please let the team know if you have any questions, suggestions or requests.

