

GABRIELE RABKIN

FAMILY LITERACY: ENJOYING LANGUAGE TOGETHER

*Practical materials for parents with preschool children*

*With 48 working sheets*

The designations employed and the presentation of materials throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO or the State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development.

© 2008 Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung, Hamburg  
(State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development)

[www.li-hamburg.de](http://www.li-hamburg.de)

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg. All rights reserved.

[www.unesco.org/uil](http://www.unesco.org/uil)

Title of original edition in German: Gemeinsam in der Sprache baden: Family Literacy. Materialheft. Klett, 2007.

Editorial assistance: Magdalena Köhn

Translators: Peter Sutton (introduction), Elbie Picker (working sheets)

Consultant: Pauline Else, Senior Lecturer, Family Learning Division, LLU+ London South Bank University

Graphic design: Sabine Siegfried (cover, text), Hamburg

Smadar Raveh-Klemke (working sheets), Hamburg

ISBN 978-92-820-1155-3

The Landesinstitut (LI), founded in April 2003, belongs to the Department for Education and Sport in Hamburg. The LI's central tasks are to train teachers, conduct state examinations, maintain standards and develop quality education in schools, as well as to look after prevention, intervention and counselling. The Hamburg teachers' library, the media library and the development of teaching materials are also parts of its services.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) is a non-profit, policy-driven, international research, training, information, documentation and publishing centre of UNESCO. One of six educational institutes of UNESCO, UIL promotes lifelong learning policies and practices with a focus on literacy, adult education and learning and non-formal education.

---

# CONTENTS

---

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PART 1</b>	
<b>1. Family Literacy – a model with three key elements</b>	
1.1. Active involvement of parents in teaching (with children)	4
1.1.1. Parent taster sessions	
1.1.2. Opening ritual	
1.1.3. Learning from others	
1.2. Work with parents (without children) in parallel to the teaching	
1.2.1. family literacy folders	
1.3. Joint out-of-school activities	
<b>2. Family Literacy: organisational framework</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1. Introductory parents' evening	
2.2. Regular planning conferences for the staff involved	
2.3. Compulsory advance registration of parents	
2.4. Certificates of attendance	
2.5. Summary	
<b>3. Using the working sheets</b>	<b>7</b>
Explanation of how to plan working sheets	
Language help for parents to carry out tasks	
3.1. Reading (aloud)	
3.1.1. Martin Waddell/Patrick Benson: „I Want my Mummy!”	
3.1.2. Maurice Sendak: „Where the Wild Things Are”	
3.1.3. Story-telling-bags	
3.1.4. Reading diary	
3.2. Story-telling and writing down the stories	
3.2.1. Information for parents	
3.2.2. Parents writing down for their children what the children say	
3.2.3. Parents writing personal stories about family photos for their children	
3.2.4. Encouragement of basic written culture	
<b>4. Looking at the structure of language: Phonological awareness</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1. Why is it important to promote phonological awareness?	
4.2. Initial sounds	
4.3. Rhymes	
4.4. Syllables	
<b>5. Miscellaneous</b>	<b>12</b>
5.1. Language development pack for parents	
5.2. Evaluation	
5.3. Participation	
<b>PART 2 Appendix</b>	
<b>PART 3 Working sheets (1-48)</b>	

This book of Family Literacy materials contains forty-eight copies of working sheets that have been tested in practice in the areas of reading aloud, writing, talking/storytelling, suggestions for encouraging phonological awareness, self-evaluation of work done, and so on.

These were created through the Family Literacy project, a cooperative project between the Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. The project forms part of the model programme „Promotion of Children and Young People from Migrant Backgrounds” (FörMig) run by the Federal-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and the Promotion of Research (BLK).

The introductory section (Part 1) contains an explanation of the work with parents and children, using the working sheets and descriptions of projects and types of family literacy based on related topics, with further tips drawn from practice. Part 3 is made up of the working sheets themselves. The working sheets should be regarded as examples of the individual fields. Appropriate support materials are recommended or can be added by the teachers themselves.

In the theory volume available separately, „Enjoying Language Together: International Family Literacy Ideas for Family-Oriented Written Language Promotion”, the conceptual foundations, current prospects for expansion and implications for support are discussed more fully. The project is also examined in the international context in that volume (including descriptions of projects in England, Turkey, Israel and South Africa). Teachers starting work on family literacy or who would like an introduction to the topic as a whole are advised to read that volume.

I should like to thank first of all my partner at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Maren Elfert, with whom I have had many fruitful discussions on all matters associated with Family Literacy, and all those who have been working on and helping to shape this innovative concept, which is new in Germany, especially my colleagues on the current Family Literacy one-year course.

I am particularly grateful to Smadar Raveh-Klemke for the attractive graphic design of the working sheets and to my colleague in Israel, Tami Alon, for the many invaluable suggestions drawing on the HIPPY project and her contributions to the content of the working sheets.

I am grateful to the academic project advisers, Dr. Peter May and Andrea Eickmeyer, for making available copies of some of their evaluation questionnaires. And without my assistants Bettina Nordhoff-Henatsch and Magdalena Köhn, the manuscript would never have been finished on time.

My special thanks go to Pauline Else, Senior Lecturer, Family Learning Division, LLU+ London South Bank University, who consulted the English edition.

Hamburg, April 2007, Gabriele Rabkin

## PART 1

The target group for both volumes is preschool teachers, educational social workers and educators in children's day centres, grade 1 teachers, language development teachers, course tutors in adult education and other parents' classes, and experts concerned with Family Literacy work with parents. The age group of children addressed is preschool (i.e. before the start of school literacy teaching) and those children needing special help with literacy where the parents will be actively involved in providing support.

### 1. Family Literacy – a model with three key elements

One of the peculiarities of the Family Literacy concept is that the two core sources of support (the parental home and (pre)school or day centres) are closely integrated so that the child can receive the benefit of the full potential impact of the support.

The work with parents takes place in preschool/day centres and is based essentially on three key elements:

1. Active involvement of parents in teaching (with children)
2. Work with parents (without children) in parallel to the teaching
3. Joint out-of-school activities.

Afternoon or evening Family Literacy groups are particularly important in cases where many of the parents are in work (especially children's day centres).

#### ***1.1. Active involvement of parents in teaching***

This kind of work with parents assumes that the parents remain in the class with their children.

##### ***1.1.1. Parent taster sessions***

It has proved helpful to start off this kind of work with an introductory parents' evening. Parents may then remain in class over a number of weeks, on a particular day of the week for example, after bringing their children to preschool. The term „parents' taster session" removes anxieties and allows parents to decide whether to take part in Family Literacy after a familiarisation stage following the introductory parents' evening.

### **1.1.2. Opening ritual**

It has also proved beneficial to have a simple ritual for this open first stage: books are put out on a number of tables, and may be selected by parents together with their children. They then look at the book chosen with their child and talk about it, and other children may of course join in. In this way, small groups of book-readers are formed around the room, and these attract other parents who arrive with their children. This ritual is often maintained as the Family Literacy course progresses. The selection of books is complemented by simple games (e.g. initial sounds memory game, initial sounds dominoes). This enables the parents to become familiar with the contents of the „Language development pack for parents".

### **1.1.3. Learning from others**

The children sit on chairs in a circle with the teachers. The parents sit behind purely as observers. After some communal singing, a particular topic is introduced, which is then taken up by the parents in the classroom, with the children in very small groups of 2 or 3. It is of course natural that the parents will chiefly be interested in working with their own children. It is equally obvious that they will adopt children whose parents cannot be present. Following the work in small groups, there is usually a short discussion or presentation of results, and sometimes the parents and children are given appropriate material to carry on the work at home.

## **1.2. Work with parents (without children) in parallel to the teaching**

Parents generally go to another room for this with the language development teacher (i.e., double staffing is needed, see below).

In this kind of work with parents, materials are produced by the parents which they can use for FLY work with their children at home or in class (see 1).

On many occasions, they are given information on particular topics by the language development teacher herself or by experts (e.g. a road safety officer). Special projects are also planned and prepared (joint celebrations, excursions and „parent and child activities"). Problems of bringing up children can also be addressed through guided discussion. Language difficulties that may occur are overcome with the help of other parents who can translate.

### **1.2.1. Family Literacy folders**

One topic suitable for the initial stage is making a folder in which, rather like the portfolio idea, information, materials and the results of FLY activities can be kept together.

At the first session, for example, parents may make the cover for their folder. The leader of the parents' session will have prepared the necessary materials (A4 folders, pens, plastic covers, etc.). In the preceding parent and child sessions she may have taken photographs of the mothers and their children at (pre)school, which can now be stuck on to the folders. Parents write the name of their child in large letters and decorate the folder according to their own taste.

It is important to create a symbolic personal relationship from the outset between the family and the school, and to challenge the creativity of the parents.

The folders are regularly brought to the FLY sessions, and the teachers check that they are complete.

### **1.3. Joint out-of-school activities**

This form of involvement of parents only occurs a few times in each parents' course. These activities are often the highlights, such as excursions (to a museum or the library) or smaller outings such as „collecting letters of the alphabet" locally or a trip to a vegetable shop or weekly market near the school or in the vicinity. Joint celebrations also belong in this area, even if they take place on school premises.



## 2. Family Literacy: Organisational framework

### 2.1. *Introductory parents' evening*

Before it begins, information about the Family Literacy project is provided at a parents' evening.

All parents are written to and invited. The parents' evening is held a few weeks after the start of the school year and is specifically concerned with the topic of family literacy. This arrangement has proved effective and now involves more than one class, so that all the parents of classes taking part in Family Literacy are invited.

It has also proved effective to hold a combined information session for all the parents present before the teachers go to their own classrooms with „their” parents to begin the joint programme planning and answer further questions. The parents who already have a year's experience of Family Literacy from preschool can be actively involved in the first part, by recounting their experiences, for example.

One particularly suitable topic for the introductory part is to make plain how important reading aloud in the family is. The parents may be shown a small exhibition of a selection of suitable picture books, perhaps in a range of languages.

It is important to emphasise the regularity of reading aloud and the introduction of family reading rituals (e.g. reading aloud for ten minutes every evening before bed). The information that such family rituals contributes to the development of a home culture of the written word can have a crucial influence on later success at school is new for many parents. Reference to major academic investigations (e.g. PISA) makes this argument even more convincing.

Parents from a migrant background are often uncertain in what language they should read to their children.

The advice that they should read in the language (or languages) usually used at home, and that the most important thing of all is to read regularly in order to create an emotional bond with the three-way relationship between parents, child and book, is important for a basic understanding by the parents of the concept of Family Literacy.

It also appears important to recommend that parents should then spend some time talking to their children about the content of the book, encourage them to ask questions, etc.

Practical experience of the first two years of the project also indicates that it needs to be borne in mind that some parents cannot read for some reason or other in their learning histories. The general observation should therefore be made that it is equally valuable to talk about the pictures in books.

The introductory parents' evening may end with a party, in which the children are also involved. Parents are welcome to contribute to the party in a wide variety of ways: food for a buffet, musical entertainment, children's games from their own culture, communal dancing in the school yard, etc.

### 2.2. *Regular planning conferences for the staff involved*

Planning conferences (around every two to three months) are useful, allowing all FLY staff to exchange ideas. Joint projects involving more than one class can be planned, learning content agreed, work materials exchanged and any problems that have arisen discussed.

### 2.3. *Compulsory advance registration of parents*

The first two years of the project show that it is wise to insist on registering parents for each attendance. Compulsory registration increases the value of participation for parents (in the same way as an appointment with the doctor or the head teacher) and allows teachers to plan securely, which they need to do if their FLY work is to be professional. This includes keeping attendance lists, in which the parents themselves may record their presence at each session (**Sheet 48**).

It may be necessary to have smaller siblings looked after separately during FLY sessions (e.g. by a trainee teacher or a mother).

### 2.4. *Certificates of attendance*

Regular participation in a Family Literacy course is certificated for parents at the end of the course. The number of times the mother/father in question has taken part in Family Literacy is noted in the certificate. This should be signed by the teacher(s) and the head of the school or centre. If possible, it should include the official logo or letterhead of the institution (**Sheet 46**).

Registration and certification should help to ensure that the parents' involvement is valued, which will increase their commitment and continuity, thereby motivating them to cooperate fully over the longer term.

## 2.5. Summary

### What needs to be done before and during a Family Literacy (FLY) course?

#### Before the FLY course:

- Introductory parents' evening on the theme of Family Literacy for all interested parents
- Planning conference (with all staff involved) to decide the number of sessions planned and the rough outline of the proposed content

#### During the course:

- At the beginning: opening evaluation (see Sheets 43–45)
- Note taken of parents' particular language needs (arrange translation help if necessary)
- Collate additional information and help with work for parents: language development pack, library, work with cultural presenters and committed parents, either on a voluntary or a paid basis
- Periodically: coordination meetings with all staff involved

#### At the end:

- Closing event, certification

## 3. Using the working sheets

### Explanation of how to plan working sheets

So that the activities carried out with the parents can then be taken up and continued by the parents at home with their children, they should consistently meet three general criteria:

- They should be simple and clearly structured.
- They should be action-oriented.
- They should where possible have a point of personal contact.

Some of the sheets are intended to provide information materials for parents on special literacy topics (Sheets 1–3, 16–18).

Most of the working sheets are designed as games to promote literacy through joint action involving parents and children. The cards are jointly prepared for the children in the parents' group (cut out, coloured, possibly laminated and kept in one envelope per game); they may be tried out together with the children under the leadership of the teacher or educational social worker, and then taken home to be played with again.

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1) Reading (aloud)                            | 3) Phonological awareness |
| 2) Story-telling and writing down the stories | 4) Miscellaneous          |

The sequence of sheets is arranged according to the following broad topics:

However, this is by no means a sequence that is prescribed for the course, so that all the sheets are „ticked off” in order. Rather, they act as models and may be added to, varied or used in a different order as desired.

In the instructions for using the sheets, practical additions worked out by colleagues actively working on the Family Literacy project are put in under the heading „*Practical tips*”.

### Language help for parents to carry out tasks

- Where possible, all nouns are added to the pictures so that parents who speak a different first language can avoid uncertainties
- Parents who speak a different first language should also be encouraged to buy and regularly use a dictionary
- The parents should be given help with individual tasks so that they can frame supplementary questions about the subject-matter proposed (instructions with each sheet). They should where possible encourage their own children to ask questions.
- In some schools it is now possible to involve teachers of languages of origin.

*Overall, it is extremely important to create a trusting, open atmosphere in the parents' group which enables very reticent mothers in particular to open up.*

### 3.1. Reading (aloud)

#### Information for parents · Sheets 1–3

It has already been said in the introduction how important it is to tell parents to read to their children regularly at preschool age and to talk to them about what they have read. This aspect is a key focus of the Family Literacy concept and recurs frequently throughout the course.

**Sheets 1–3** are intended to provide the basis for discussion of this topic in parents' groups, or at an introductory parents' evening.

The arguments put should be discussed jointly point for point (e.g. using an overhead projector slide). It is important to encourage parents to talk about the individual points.

The books are read in the children's group, and more in-depth work may then be done on individual books in the parents-and-children group and in the parents' group.

**Sheets 4–12** show, using the example of two picture books, how action-oriented work can also be done at home to explore the books more deeply. The examples of the books were deliberately selected so that two books at very different levels are used.

The further work on the books may cover widely differing fields (e.g. acting, asking supplementary and answering them together) and may be a topic of discussion in the parents' groups and in the parents-and-children groups, and is ultimately also suitable for out-of-school activities.

#### 3.1.1. „Owl Babies” (M. Waddell) · Sheets 4–8

**Sheet 4** shows ways of doing further work using a simply structured picture book. The parents are encouraged in small steps to arrange an interactive role play (using stick puppets) with their children (for models of the stick puppets and word cards, see **Sheet 5**). Questions about „anxiety” are also suggested for discussion („anxiety” is one of the basic themes of the book). These questions encourage the parents and children to talk to each other. The results of the discussion are then recorded in pictures and words.

**Sheets 6–7** show a series of questions about what parents know, with small subsidiary exercises (particularly hearing), and questions focusing on the opinions of the child.

**Sheet 8** contains further activities on the theme of „owls” suitable for small follow-up projects with parents and children outside school (e.g. a walk in the woods, a visit to the zoo, further „research” on the topic in the library).

#### Action-oriented reading exercises · Sheets 13–15

**Sheets 13 and 14** are the front and back of animal puzzle cards. They are read out by the parents, and then the animal pictures are looked at together and discussed. At the end, the individual animals can be imitated using the whole body (**Sheet 15**).

#### 3.1.2. „Where the Wild Things Are” (M. Sendak) · Sheets 9–11

Maurice Sendak's „Where the Wild Things Are” is a challenging book that can be interpreted at many levels. It is recommended that this book is not worked on with the parents until towards the end of the course.

**Sheet 9** contains very precisely structured suggestions as to how parents may work on the content of the book with their children. Particular attention is given to raising awareness of different feelings (e.g. being sad, angry, happy). The feelings are matched to different forms of expression (crying, shouting, laughing etc.) (**Sheet 10**).

It is suggested that parents alternate between reading/looking at the book, thinking about the content at particular places in the book, with the help of word cards (**Sheets 10**) and further creative work. This sequence should be discussed with the parents beforehand. Sheets 9 and 10 should be tried out first in the parents' group itself.

**Sheet 11** is intended for use in the parents' group. It focuses on dealing with „disturbances”. A number of problematic behaviours by children are mentioned, and parental reactions to these are collected first (using „If...then...” sentences), before being exchanged and discussed within the group. (*Idea: Tami Alon*)

#### 3.1.3. Story-telling-bags

Another method of exploring picture books more fully that was first developed in the Anglo-American context is the „story-telling-bag”.

The essence of this is further action-oriented, creative work on picture books.

The main characters and objects in a picture book are manufactured or assembled using toys, etc. These are kept in a „bag”. Once the picture book has been read (or during the first reading), the objects that are important in the book are taken out of the bag and shown. They may be touched by the children, be used interactively (in role play).

The objects also can be explored using the senses (smell, taste, listening).

All the items are of course named, and the work on vocabulary may also be complemented using word cards and a small list of questions that can be drawn up about the book (cf. the suggestions for „Owl Babies” above).

The parents experience this comprehensive appreciation of a book using all the senses together with the children in the parents-and-children group and are then encouraged to put together a story-telling-bag for their child in the parents’ group for a book of their choice. Since many mothers have good handicraft skills, there should be no limits to their creativity.

### 3.1.4. Reading diary (Sheet 12)

One further exercise to promote action-oriented access to the world of books is keeping a reading diary. After each book that they have looked at with the child, the parents record what the child particularly liked about the book, and what was less liked (giving reasons). The child may then draw a picture about the book. One especially important sentence from the book is quoted. The child sees the parents writing, and even putting the child’s thoughts on paper!

The parents are given enough copies of the sheets, so that they can build up a collection of the books read in „diary form”.

## 3.2. Story-telling and writing down the stories

This chapter is concerned with (at least) two main topics.

One is how to support children’s language learning by talking to one another as much as possible – in any language – and building on this by showing the child a kind of model of how to put down what is said in writing. This kind of elementary „experience of writing” is of huge benefit in the period leading up to literacy learning at school.

### 3.2.1. Information for parents · Sheets 16–18

To begin with, a number of aspects are listed which are often talked about by parents themselves, especially parents from a multilingual background (Sheet 16, 18). They can be used as the basis for discussion at a parents’ evening or for further individual counselling. Specific examples are listed of everyday conversation (Sheet 17).

### 3.2.2. Parents writing down for their children what the children say – Picture stories · Sheets 19–28

In Sheets 19–25, suggestions are offered of how to motivate parents and children to start talking to one another about small prescribed topics. This is done through pictures that are used to tell stories.

Afterwards, the children see their parents writing things down: they dictate what they want to say about the pictures, and the parents record their words in a little home-made book (which may well be multilingual), after which what has been written is read out, the pictures are coloured in by the children, etc.

First, two small action sequences are shown in pictures („The balloon” and „In the bath tub”), and these are followed by two short stories, each with four pictures („The package” and „The magic tree”). Accompanying word lists and a few supplementary questions about all the picture stories are intended to help the parents to work with their children. Sheet 23, which is concerned with the topic of *Getting post*, is a suitable follow-up to the picture story „The package”. Parents can then also explain to their children all the things that can be written on a postcard, and can make a postcard with the child and send it off together.

The following description of Sheet 24/25 („The magic tree”) by Tami Alon shows a possible sequence of steps for parents and children working together on the picture story, which could be applied to all picture stories:

#### Practical tips

##### Tami Alon Working with picture stories

1. Child and parents make a book together, folding it as instructed (Sheet 26)
2. They agree on the title of the book and the design of the title page
3. They cut out the pictures given and stick them in the book in the right order.
4. The child now tells the story, picture by picture (Sheet 24), and the parents write what is said in the lower half of each relevant picture. This may be in German, in the language of origin, or in both. The words given (in German) may be used in support (Sheet 25).
5. The pictures are coloured in.
6. On the last page, the child may draw another picture about the story.  
Possible topics: What does the child like to eat most from the tree?  
What really grows on trees? Etc.

**What is happening here? · Sheets 27–28**

The same kind of thing can be done with a „busy picture”. This contains a variety of everyday scenes to be described (Sheet 27). The aim of the picture is principally to describe a range of activities (using verbs). The nouns are also given in the plural (Sheet 28).

Particular care should be given that the parents ask their children follow-up questions and encourage them to ask questions themselves about what is depicted. A few sample questions are given.

**My favourite food · Sheet 29**

The mothers in particular should be encouraged to involve their children through play in their various kitchen activities. Many opportunities arise for discussing how they and their children they can have fun together with everyday cooking, and the ideas can be put into practice straight away („Please pass me the sieve...now you can stir the mixture, break the egg, lick the spoon...”).

Sheet 29 can be used to find out what is the child’s favourite food, and to write down the ingredients needed and the recipe. The child should think about this too (e.g.: *What are all the things I want on my pizza?*)

**Quick-change dolls · Sheets 30–32**

There are six pictures of children (Sheets 30/31) which can be rearranged to look funny by cutting out the cards. Describing the items of clothing (preferably in different ways) offers many opportunities for expanding vocabulary. Word cards (Sheet 32) will help the parents to do this. The parents can colour the figures, thereby expanding the range of descriptions their children can give by using the appropriate adjectives (*the red high-heel shoes, the blue and white striped trousers...*).



**3.2.3. Parents writing personal stories about family photos for their children**

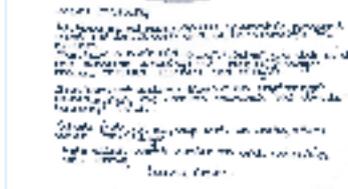
Family photographs provide many different opportunities for presenting individual situations of personal significance. Little stories and comments added by the mothers give the child significant background biographical details and a context, and the child sees the parents writing – not only to the child, but about the child, who is at the centre of the (written) happenings. The parents again write the stories in the language of the country they live in, either in their mother language or in both. Some fathers in particular like to become involved by putting the stories on computer. Ideas for an individual creative design are a matter for the parents, while materials are supplied by the school (stiff card, coloured for the title page, clear plastic covers, binding strips to hold the pages together, coloured pens, glue, scissors, etc.). The first page of the book shows a „family tree” (cf. Sheet 33), in which the parents stick small photos of the child, the parents and grandparents.



More or less incidentally, the parents are made aware at the same time of the great importance of their children writing freely during their first years at school. By doing it themselves, they discover that it is not that easy to express something personal in writing. The books thus produced – with loving care – are given to the children to take for their first day at primary school, as a kind of basis for learning to read. Some of the stories have been read out by the mothers themselves at multi-class celebrations.

**3.2.4. Encouragement of basic written culture**

Some additional practical suggestions are given below for the broad theme of „elementary written culture”, which have already proved helpful in working with parents. There are no working sheets for these, but they can often complement individual sheets (e.g. the „theme of the post” with Sheet 23).



**Understanding symbols**

Children and parents cut logos, words and numbers out of advertisements and stick them on a sheet of paper. The parents read out the result, comment on it and explain it. Children „write” with the help of their parents **their own telephone directories** so that they can make their own arrangements with friends and family members.

### Basic experience of writing processes in the neighbourhood

Theme of the **post**: reading and writing letters, and stamping them (making letter boxes, writing letters, visiting the post office)

„Collecting letters of the alphabet” Copy down written symbols in the immediate surroundings, e.g. in the classroom, in the school corridor, and outside school in the immediate neighbourhood (street names, advertising signs, hoardings, etc.). They include **car registrations** in the street. Parents help their children to find them and write them down.

### Your own name

Mothers make a name memory game for their children (using the child's own name and the names of family members, friends, etc.)

Create your own name in several different ways, e.g. children make a potato print of the first letter of their name and mark their school things with it.

### Capturing the shapes of letters

Make a **collage of letters** with children and mothers (using letters cut out of advertisements and magazines)

Be aware of letters **using all the senses**: alphabet biscuits, alphabet soup, bake the letters of your name, use wooden letters to make your name and words that have personal significance (mummy, daddy, brothers and sisters), make letters out of dough, write letters in sand, print or stamp letters, etc.

### 3.3. Looking at the structure of language:

## 4. Phonological awareness

### 4.1. Why is it important to promote phonological awareness?

For the purpose of learning to write later it is important, unlike in everyday conversation, for children to look not only at the situation, the intention and the content of what is said, but also at the structure and form of the language, at language as an object in itself. Before they go to school, children already use the sounds of language, e.g. in songs, rhymes and counting rhymes. In doing so, they play spontaneously with language, become aware of basic structures (whether by picking out the initial sounds and rhymes or by breaking down words into syllables) and they can usefully build on this later when learning written language.

The support sheets provided are intended to be of help in using play to deal with these areas at home. The parents are introduced to the topic in the parents' group, where they prepare working materials to use at home. Before doing so, they try out the materials in the parents-and-children group under the direction of the teacher.

### 4.2. Initial sounds (Sheets 34–37)

The same nouns and pictures were used in all the sheets relating to the work with initial sounds.

In selecting these, care was taken to include key words with initial sounds that had an emotional significance for the children (*dog, king, etc.*).

Since the target group is principally children of preschool age, diphthongs were omitted. This was also why picking out sounds was restricted to initial sounds (not end sounds or sounds in the middle of words), while care was taken to avoid using words containing vowel or consonant diagraphs („ai“ or „pr“). The current trend in England is to use lower case letters when introducing the alphabet.

**Sheets 34–35** are also suitable both for displaying in the classroom or the child's bedroom as a table of initial sounds (preferably blown up to size A3), and for use as playing cards for a memory game (double the number of cards and cut them out). **Sheet 36** shows another, smaller version of the table of initial sounds. The individual strips are stuck together by the



parents, folded and kept in a matchbox individually decorated. They are a small present for the child and are meant to be accessible to the child at all times (e.g. in a coat pocket).

**Sheet 37** varies the idea of arranging sounds and pictures using the same pictures and letters via a game of dominoes (the right picture has to be placed next to the initial letter of the appropriate sound).



#### 4.3. Rhymes (Sheets 38–39)

To make it easier for the parents to start using rhyming words, the rhyming pairs are arranged next to each other and provided with the nouns (including the article) belonging to them. The picture/word cards are cut out, mixed up and then arranged in pairs. They can be used afterwards in a number of different games, e.g. as a memory game or bingo. Bilingual parents should be encouraged to rhyme words in their own language.

#### 4.4. Syllables (Sheets 40–41)

The focus should be on motor experience of the speech rhythm throughout the whole body. Two sheets about „Syllables” help parents to continue the work at home. In the selection of the words, the emphasis is on one- and two-syllable words since the children find it relatively easy to see the structure of these, but there may be a few „threesomes” as well. The cards are cut out, the words explained, and then they are placed by the parents with the syllable sheets („words with one, two and three syllables”). We avoided using compound words (like „teapot”) as this is not strictly syllabic.

### 5. Miscellaneous (Sheets 42–47)

#### 5.1. Language support case on loan (Sheet 42)

The idea behind the „language support case on loan” is that a collection of materials is put together for parents, e.g. in a suitcase, and can be borrowed. The parents can then try out the language development materials at home with the family for a certain period (e.g. a week or between FLY sessions), with the emphasis on play.



#### Content

- Language development materials (such as simple language games)
- Children’s books (in several languages)
- Language cassettes and CDs (fairy stories, songs, rhymes)

Suggestions and ideas can be found in the appendix under „Children’s books and games”.

The pack is made available to as many parents as possible over time. A loan form may be used, which will make the borrowing procedure as straightforward and time-saving as possible for the teacher (**Sheet 42**). On the form, the items borrowed from the pack simply need to be ticked, with the dates of borrowing and return. The form can be used for about 10 borrowings per parent.

The loan system can be managed by trained people or individual parents. Given the plethora of material, it is sensible only to loan out part of the pack to avoid overexcitement at home. The pack can thus be of benefit to many of the parents involved in Family Literacy at the school from the outset.



#### 5.2. Evaluation (Sheets 43–45)

The three-part evaluation questionnaire for parents makes it easier for the teacher to capture initial data in order to assess the outcomes of the course. In this way it is possible to meet the specific needs of the parents more exactly. For example, questions are asked about the languages used and the family circumstances (Part A), while Part B focuses on assessing the importance given to reading and writing in the family in question. Part C of the questionnaire aims to capture what parents particularly want from the parents’ course.



### 5.3. Participation (Sheets 46–48)

The last sheets are intended to record parents' ongoing participation in courses. **Sheet 46** is designed as a final certificate and shows the number of sessions in which parents have taken part. This is based on the registration for parents in advance (**Sheet 48**) and on the attendance list kept during the course (**Sheet 47**). The certificate should be designed to look as „official” as possible (with the signatures of the school head and the class teacher or group leader). The logo of the school or centre may be printed in the empty space at the top right. The certificate is folded over in the middle, so that the inside pages can be decorated individually, e.g. with photos taken during the course and with little pictures that the child in question has drawn.

#### **Practise guidance for for the Early Years Foundation Stage Department of Education and Skills, London**

**16-26 months:** Listen to and enjoy rhythmic patterns in rhymes and stories

**22-36 months:** Distinguish one sound from another: show interest in play with sounds, songs and rhymes; repeat words or phrases from familiar stories.

**30-50 months:** Enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities; show awareness of rhyme and alliteration; recognise rhythm in spoken words.

**50-60+ months:** Continue a rhyming string; hear and say initial sounds in words and know which letter represents some of the sounds; hear and say words in the order in which they occur; link sound to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet; use their phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words.

## PART 2: APPENDIX

- “Simply the Best”: books for children (0 -7 years, 7 -11 years): two collections of books for parents and children to read, each book provides specific guidance on each stage of reading; there is helpful advice in the introductions about how to encourage reading. Available from CLPE, <http://www.clpe.co.uk/publications/public05.html>
- The Core Booklist: collections from Nursery /Reception, years 1 and 2, Key Stage 2 (years 3 and 4, years 5 and 6). Available from CLPE, <http://www.clpe.co.uk/publications/public05.html>
- Carlisle, R., Wendon, L. “Letterland ABC”, Collins, 2001 (ISBN 0-00-715636-7)
- “Storysack 2007. Reading, speaking and Listening resources at their best!”. Available: [www.storysack.com](http://www.storysack.com)
- “At Home with Family Learning”, National Adult Literacy Agency, 2005. [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)
- Rees, S., Savitzky, F., Malik, A. “On the Road. Journeys in Family Learning”, London Language & Literacy Unit, 2003. Available: [avantiord@aol.com](mailto:avantiord@aol.com)
- “Read and write together”, The Basic Skills Agency, 1996. Available: [www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk)
- Rees, S., Savitzky, F. “Helping my child with Reading and Writing”, London Language & Literacy Unit, 2001 (ISBN 1 872972 74 8)
- Rabkin, G. “Children`s Fantasies from around the World”, Klett, 2001 (ISBN 3-12-554723-7)
- Waddell, M., Benson, P. “Owl Babies”, Walker Books, 1992
- Sendak, M. “Where the Wild Things Are”, Harper Collins, 1991

PART 3: 48 SHEETS