THE WRITE BOOK; To Build a Nation of Readers, Not Simply a Nation of People Who Can Read

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Research has shown that one of the reasons fewer children are reading every year, is that they cannot find books that interest them in their school library. Books are more than tools for literacy development they are places where children go to make sense of their world. In the field of children’s literature, the adult chooses the books that are published marketed, reviewed, and decides which books win awards and which books are purchased for libraries and their children. The aim was to give the children in the researcher’s school a voice in what they would like to read. A questionnaire was completed by 25 children to answer the questions; what are the books three to five-year-old boys and girls choose to read in the school library? Why do they choose them and what other type of books would they like to have in their library? It was found that the children liked to read sequenced fiction stories (a series). Gender appears to play a role in children’s choices. The cover, pictures, people and the story, in that order, were the reasons the children gave for choosing books. This research culminated in providing valuable information on how to begin the process of connecting children with books and how to nurture a love of books. The study delivered a needs analysis tool for parents, and public/school libraries that has the potential to provide a method of selecting books for children based on actual needs and not assumptions.

Just Dance

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This project provided swing dancing lessons for parents/guardians in an informal and fun manner, and subsequently had a positive influence on the Home Learning Environment (HLE) and benefited children. This project was undertaken in an early years’, child and family support service for at risk and vulnerable children. It briefly explains some of the benefits of working with families of preschool children, for services, staff, children, families and society. Benefits include establishing and maintaining relationships between parents/guardians and services, social support for families and the development of what is considered by many to be the most influential area in a child’s development, the HLE. As play is considered to be the main medium by which children learn, adults reconnecting with their playful side is necessary to facilitate children learning through play and to enable families playing together. The style of dance taught was a very playful dance and it allowed the participants reconnect and explore their own playfulness. Dance lessons were organised with the support of all staff in the service and with the help of volunteers. The project was a success and the participation by parents/guardians and grandparents was believed to be one of the highest turnouts for a parent’s group. Parents formed new friendships and social supports with each other, a positive atmosphere was observed amongst parents/guardians and grandparents and they also spoke about physical fitness benefits of practising dancing at home with other parents. The facilitator/researcher developed personally and professionally during this project. Organisational and facilitation skills improved and a greater understanding of the importance of working with families and how to establish and develop these relationships has been enhanced. The importance of having a strong team within a well-structured organisation has also been highlighted.