



Every Child a Talker

Planning a 'Rhyme Day' for parents

Why rhymes?

Helping children to understand and enjoy rhyming is one of the most important gifts we can give them. Most cultures and languages have rhymes for children, usually starting from birth with lullabies and simple finger rhymes, like "Round and round the garden like a teddy bear..." We do this because it is fun for the child, and we get pleasure from it too.

But we are also laying down the foundations for listening skills, developing speech sounds, and later for reading and spelling. Involving children in rhyme activities, including singing, helps children make the link between spoken sounds and how they make up words. This is known as 'phonological awareness'. Children need to have good phonological awareness for speech development, and later to help them learn to read and spell. This is especially true in English, as it is probably the most difficult language to read and spell. I often say, "A rhyming child is a reading child."

Planning a Rhyme Day can be great fun for children and adults, and to help parents appreciate why we spend so much of our time sharing rhyming books, singing rhyming songs, and teaching children nursery rhymes (even though a lot of them seem to be a load of nonsense!)

Preparation

Spend time sharing songs and rhymes with children, so they know several rhymes (with actions) off by heart. Find out what the children's favourite rhymes and songs are, and make a display. Make up a rhyme bag, containing objects that remind the children of the rhymes (a spider, a fish, a star, a bobbin etc), and share these individually with children and at group time.

All children enjoy rhymes, and if you are in a day care setting, make sure that children of all ages are involved.

You might want to add an international dimension by learning songs in languages other than English (even if all the children are English.) If your setting has children from several cultures, find out what rhymes and songs the children might know in their mother tongue. Staff in one setting asked a parent from Lithuania to help them learn 'Heads, shoulders knees and toes' in Lithuanian, and performed this for the children and parents on the day.

Give parents plenty of warning about your day, with posters, flyers and individual invitations.

The Book Trust has produced a fabulous 'Rhyme Challenge' pack, full of ideas for Rhyme events. It includes ideas, posters and certificates.

Visit www.bookstart.org.uk

Planning the day

Plan for children and parents to be busy, so have lots of craft activities. Some settings ask each practitioner to plan an activity to represent a rhyme or song. This will include trying out the activity for yourself, resourcing it, and staying with the activity throughout the morning or afternoon. The simplest ideas are the best. Make sure that you include activities that create something to eat, and have plenty of refreshments.

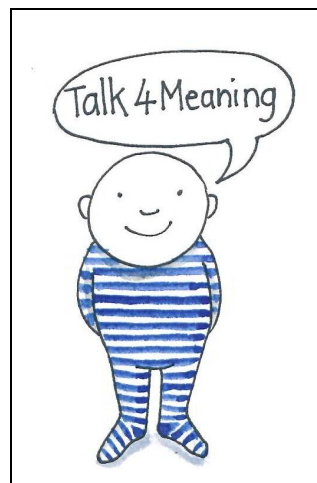
- Ask the parents to send their children in fancy dress. This will be particularly important as a way of involving parents who can't attend.
- Make sure that little brothers and sisters are included, as parents may need to bring them. Plan a separate activity for the little ones; e.g. on a mat with cuddly toys or playing finger rhymes. Make sure there is a space for buggies too.
- Let your local school know about your event, and invite the Head Teacher along.
- Invite the local newspaper and local Council press officer, as well as any local organisations like the Children's Centre, and supporters such as advisory teachers and link advisors.
- Involve parents in a competition. My favourite involves finding out what the parents' favourite nursery rhyme or song was when they were children. Make a special box with a slot in the lid. Prepare questionnaire sheets such as the one attached. Have a member of staff stationed at the entrance to 'meet and greet' the parents as they come in. Ask each parent to tell you their favourite rhyme or song when they were a child, and ask them to fill in the form (or fill it in for them). At the end of the session you can choose a few forms from the box, and the winners can have a present for their child.

Useful contacts

- *The Book Trust* has produced a fabulous 'Rhyme Challenge' pack, full of ideas for Rhyme events. It includes ideas, posters and certificates. Visit www.bookstart.org.uk
- Visit www.talk4meaning on the ECaT page, and find descriptions of successful rhyme days
- The Literacy Trust's Talk to Your baby website has lots of ideas for communication with young children at www.talktoyourbaby.co.uk
- Puppets by Post have produced a great Nursery Rhyme Finger Puppet set. Visit www.puppetsbypost.com for details

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Your setting logo here...

RHYMES FROM AROUND THE WORLD!!

Singing with young children and teaching them rhymes are some of the most important things you can do to help your children learn... and they are great fun too!! We want to learn as many rhymes as possible from all over the world, to share with our children here at *your setting name*.

What is the favourite rhyme or rhyming song you learnt as a child?

Do you share it with your children now?

Write it down here (or record it for us) and we will share it with the children.

Country

Language

Your child's name

Here is the rhyme

Meaning in English

