

COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN: LANGUAGE AND LITERACY



Early Years Literacy and Language Development Strategy – 2015

Developed in consultation with over 15 organisations across Bendigo, including local government, early years, education and health service providers.

Our vision:

- Every child in Bendigo has rich, nurturing language opportunities
- Children’s language (development) is everyone’s business

The Early Years Literacy and Language Development Strategy aims to improve literacy and language development for 0-5 year olds across Bendigo from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

“A lack of strong early literacy and language skills in children has been linked to poor socio-economic wellbeing and health outcomes into adulthood”.

The issue of poor literacy levels and language skills amongst children in parts of Bendigo has been of great concern to the Communities for Children-Bendigo initiative. When children don’t develop strong literacy and language skills in their early years, the negative impacts on future educational attainment, employment outcomes, socio-economic wellbeing and health outcomes into adulthood are significant. This, consequently, impacts negatively on the social and economic strength of communities over the longer term.

The 2015 - Bendigo Early Years Literacy and Language Development Strategy has been developed as an action plan to address this early years issue. The Strategy targets community efforts in a coordinated and focused response to poor literacy and language levels in parts of Bendigo.

Key priorities to improve early literacy and language skills:

- Engagement of families in early literacy support and services
- Building parenting confidence and skills
- Increased community awareness and commitment to improving children’s literacy levels
- Stronger links and promotion of early years services and programs

Early Years Literacy and Language Development Strategy Document available at:

St Luke’s Anglicare www.stlukes.org.au

Goldfields Library <http://www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au/C4C-early-years-literacy>

Bendigo Health <http://www.bendigohealth.org.au/>





Our key early literacy message.

Read, sing, talk and play with your child everyday.

BENDIGO'S EARLY LITERACY DATA

The City of Greater Bendigo's -State of Bendigo's Children report (2013) reveals that Bendigo's children rate lower than the Victorian average on a number of developmental indicators including their language, cognitive skills, communication and general knowledge (by age 6).

Since the first report in 2011 there has also been a decrease in the reading standards of children in years 3 and 5. Within Greater Bendigo, there are certain suburbs (generally those with a higher level of socio-economic disadvantage) where children have literacy and language skills that are significantly lower than the Victorian or Greater Bendigo average.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ACTING EARLY?

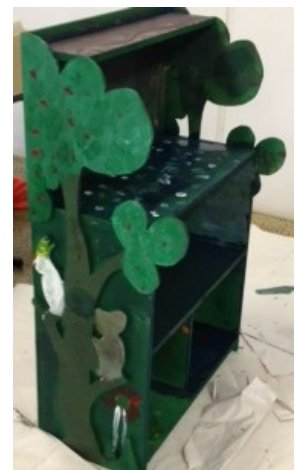
Literacy is a key skill for life.

*It assists communication across a range of modes -
print, digital and face-to-face.*

This includes talking, listening, viewing, reading and writing.

Benefits of enhancing early literacy and language development include:

- Establishing early habits for learning and assisting early brain development
- Increased self esteem for children
- Stronger attachments and relationships with families and carers
- Improved school readiness and performance
- Improved life opportunities- work, health and social
- Increased social and economic benefits to communities



*Bendigo Book Boxes-
Little Libraries Program*

WHAT DOES A 'WHOLE-OF-COMMUNITY RESPONSE' LOOK LIKE?



Community campaign and involvement to raise awareness of and celebrate early literacy.

Early Years Website - provision of information and resources to families, community members and professionals.

Education programs - through universal and targeted support for families, including HIPPIY, Mother Goose, Goldfields Library- Rhyme Time and Story Time, Talking Matters Speech Pathology drop in clinics and 'Let's Read' programs.

Increased access to books for children - through Imagination Library, Books for Babies, Book Boxes-Little Libraries, Book Cubby programs, etc.