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## **Research on family literacy in England**

## **Familienorientierte Schriftsprachförderungsforschung in England**

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Research on parental involvement in reading from 1970s

Two-generation model imported from USA

Research on family literacy **programmes** began 1994

Several programmes devised by Basic Skills Agency, which also commissioned evaluations:

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Family literacy demonstration programmes, 1994-95, with follow-up in 1997	Brooks <i>et al.</i> (1996, 1997); Gorman and Brooks (1996)
Small grants for local programmes, 1994-95	Poulson <i>et al.</i> (1997)
Family literacy for new groups, 1997-98	Brooks <i>et al.</i> (1999)
Family literacy and numeracy in prisons, c.1998-99	Basic Skills Agency (undated)
Keeping Up with the Children, 2001-02	Brooks <i>et al.</i> (2002)
Early Start, 2001-03	Brooks <i>et al.</i> (2004)
Skills for Families, 2003-04	Heathcote and Brooks (2005)
Involving Grandparents, 2006-07	(watch this space)

Some other key initiatives were devised elsewhere and also evaluated:

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Bookstart, 1992-97	Booktrust (2003); Moore and Wade (2003); National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (2001); Wade and Moore (1996, 1998a, b; 2000)
PEEP (Peers Early Education Partnership), 1998-2005	Evangelou <i>et al.</i> (2005); Evangelou and Sylva (2003)
REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy), 1995-99	Nutbrown <i>et al.</i> (2005)
Sure Start, 1998-	Weinberger <i>et al.</i> (2005)
The Big Book Share (family literacy in prisons), 2001-02	The Reading Agency (2003)

Some (mostly) common features:

- Both parents and children involved (except Keeping Up with the Children – parents only)
- Children mostly aged 3-6 (except Family literacy for new groups)
- Delivered in community venues (except REAL and prisons programmes)
- Jointly staffed by early years and adult basic skills specialists (except REAL)
- Separate sessions for parents and children, plus a joint session
- Intensive

Some key differences:

- REAL delivered through home visits, and extended
- Bookstart was (originally) a one-off contact
- Early Start also had 'home time', activities specifically intended for parents to use with their children at home

Therefore variety of models

Research designs:

- Randomised controlled trial with follow-up: REAL
- Matched groups, pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental study: PEEP
- Matched groups, post-test only: Bookstart
- One group, pre-test/post-test study with follow-ups (including comparison group at final follow-up): Family literacy demonstration programmes
- One group, pre-test/post-test studies: all the other Basic Skills Agency evaluations

Research methods and materials used in the evaluation of Family literacy demonstration programmes:

- Parents: reading and writing tests, interviews, home literacy-related activities questionnaire
- Children: vocabulary, reading and writing tests
- Teachers: interviews, observations

Major findings:

- Limited quantitative evidence of benefit to parents' literacy
- Better evidence of boosting parents' ability to help their children
- Good evidence of benefit to children's language and literacy

Limitations:

- Not enough fathers (Goldman, 2004)
- Middle-class?
- Monocultural?

- Not enough controlled comparative research, so a lot of rhetoric

**But very promising, so worthwhile to develop**

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