

Evaluating Superbox – What we've learnt

In 2016, the School of Early Childhood at the University of Wales Trinity St. David's undertook a qualitative evaluation of the Superbox programme.

Here is a brief summary of some of the main findings.

1. Children enjoyed using multiple copies of books in a Superbox Storytime

Feedback confirmed that there are real benefits to the Superbox Storytime approach of giving every parent/ carer a copy of the book to read with their child whilst the group leader guides the shared reading. Importantly, parents/ carers and children enjoyed this approach: 'The children were thrilled to have a copy each and loved following the trail [Slow Snail]'

2. The bonding and emotional benefits of sharing books can be supported and enhanced by Superbox Storytimes

The evaluation suggested that the benefits of shared reading in terms of quality time spent together, connecting being safe with reading and building a relationship through sharing a book can be enhanced by using multiple copies of the same book.

In the words of one practitioner, a Storytime with multiple copies of the book means that 'There is the intimacy of one to one but security of a group. Mum and child snuggled with a book but at same time [the] security of someone else running [the] story time.'

3. Superbox Storytimes and using the Superbox resources can raise parents' awareness and confidence about using books with their children

'Superbox shows it is not scary'.

Another said that 'Parents have been happy to take part – they like having a copy of the book to look at and to follow the story. A number say that they now feel more confident about reading with their children at home.' In addition, 'Parents seem to enjoy the sociable nature of these sessions. Some say that they read more with their children at home now as well'.

Superbox Tip: Remind parents that looking at books isn't about reading every word – looking at and talking about the pictures is beneficial, too.

4. Using Superbox ideas can support a child's holistic development

Parents in the evaluation noted that the sessions had supported their child's language, communication and motor skills development.

Practitioners also noted the value of the multisensory nature of some Superbox sessions and how the books can be used to support numeracy, communication skills and vocabulary development. One practitioner also noted how children developed incidental language about getting books and putting them away, as well as social skills and ideas about sharing and taking turns.

Superbox Tip: Make the Superbox books accessible to children in settings – some practitioners found that children were choosing to read those books themselves to look at them independently when they'd been read as a group.

5. Activities are useful when developing engagement with books

Many practitioners used Superbox resources as part of sessions with other activities, including baby massage, dancing, singing nursery rhymes and craft.

Activities enhanced experiences of sharing books and provided a 'way in' to books for less confident parents. One practitioner summed this up as the importance of 'Doing things together. Crafts activities helped bring more to books than just the reading of words. We tend to build on the content of the books rather than always reading the content.'

The social element of these sessions was also noted: 'Parents also like getting together and doing activities based on the books.'

6. The bilingual Superbox books can support families to engage with Welsh

Many participants in the Evaluation commented on the quality of the bilingual resources. Practitioners said that families enjoyed using the bilingual books.

Superbox Tip: Remember that there are audio recordings of the Welsh books on the Bookstart website – www.bookstart.org.uk/about/wales/english/listen/

7. Superbox can help to raise awareness of Bookstart and reading at home

Many families will already have copies of the Superbox books via their Bookstart packs. Some practitioners made the link with these packs to encourage families to read the books at home. One practitioner noted that 'Parents commented on how lovely the resources were and how they could re-create the ideas at home. Some said they would re-look at their books at home.'

Superbox Tip: Make links to the books parents might have at home – especially if they have the Superbox books from their Bookstart packs.

And finally...Enjoy it! The Evaluators saw that the enthusiasm of practitioners for the books was quickly passed on to parents and children.

