



***The necessity of
language and
reading promotion
in early childhood:
experiences in
public libraries in
Germany***

RAISING A NATION OF
READERS

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Structure

1. The necessity of language and reading promotion in early childhood
2. Peculiarities of language promotion among small and preschool age children
3. Selected campaigns and projects in Germany since PISA 2000 (OECD's Programme for international student assessment)

1. The necessity of language and reading promotion in early childhood



No one is a born reader!

- Reading skills always need to be promoted, especially nowadays in the media age.
- The foundations for acquiring reading skills are laid in early childhood.
- Language promotion and acquisition are therefore basic prerequisites.

Mental-physiological findings

- Best “biological” periods of development
- ... for the development of the language: 8 to 10 years
- ... for the acquisition of reading skills: 13 to 15 years

Libraries' tasks concerning language and reading promotion in early childhood

- to strengthen from the very beginning the role of parents as principal promoters of reading skills
- to support children, especially those who come from families not connected to reading or books
- early childhood education despite the social environment

2. Peculiarities of language promotion among small and preschool age children



Language is not just the spoken word...

Language promotion needs:

- verbal communication through speaking, reading aloud, glancing through picture books, dealing with rhymes and songs, etc.
- nonverbal communication through body language (posture, gestures and facial expressions, etc.)

How do children learn language?

- Relation matters are the key to motivation.
- Children “talk” through their body, learn with all senses, deducing autonomously a language’s inner structure and logic.
- The first language is the “operating system” for the second language.

3. Campaigns and projects in Germany since PISA 2000



Specific situation in Germany

- effective measures to promote reading skills in early childhood were just introduced after the negative results of PISA 2000
- federal system
- decisions about cultural matters are taken by the 16 Laender and local authorities

National campaign „Wir lesen vor“ (i.e. “We read aloud”)

- Starting position: 42% of all parents with children between 0 and 10 years only read a little or don't read aloud.
- Idea: annual National read aloud day (since 2003)
- Celebrities and other volunteers read aloud in primary schools, libraries or bookshops.
- Organizers: “Stiftung Lesen” (German Reading Foundation), weekly newspaper “DIE ZEIT”

Success of the campaign

- 7.800 readers took part in 2008
- the campaign made people more sensitive to the meaning of reading aloud
- the initiative won many reading godparents



Bookstart initiatives organized by German libraries since 2005



- e.g. projects like “Briloner Bücherbabys” (i.e. Reading babies of Brilon city) or “Buchstart” (i.e. Bookstart) in Hamburg
- Goal: inform parents about their role as reading promoters shortly after childbirth

National campaign “Lesestart” (i.e. “Start reading/Bookstart”) since may 2008

- Project like “Bookstart” organized by the German Reading Foundation to promote language and reading skills
- Cooperation with paediatricians and libraries



„Lesestart” - equipments

- reading adviser
- Picture book
- Book recommendations for children between 0 and 4 years
- Lesestart-diary
- Posters, stickers, linen bag



New library initiatives to promote language and reading skills



“Leselatte” (i.e. reading rod) of the library in Brilon

- Reading rod from early childhood up to 10 years
- Suggesting and advising parents and carers on how to deal with books



Children discover the world of signs and writings at Bremen's public library

- Cooperation between the library and kindergartens
- Promoting language with all senses
- Using mime, gestures and facial expressions



Ich bau' dir eine Lesebrücke (i.e. I build you a bridge to reading), Stuttgart's Children's Library

- Idea: winning multilingual reading godparents
- Esteeming the mother tongue of migrant families



Other library projects

- Medienkoffer (i.e. media case) to promote language and reading skills, Nuremberg
- Suggestions from the initiative “Nati per leggere” (i.e. Born to read), Unna near Dortmund
- “Wortstark” (i.e. Powerful with words): modular language promotion, Berlin



Compilation of best-practice-examples

- 16 best-practice-examples from Germany in this compendium about children and young adults libraries, published 2009



Thank you for your attention!