Making a Difference: The report on the evaluation of the Better Beginnings family literacy program 2007-2010

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Acknowledgements

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The evaluation of the Better Beginnings program

How we conducted the research

Summary of Findings 2009

How effective is the Better Beginnings program from the participants’ perspectives?

What are the key factors in the implementation of the Better Beginnings program?

Summary of Findings: Case Study Participants

Summary of Findings: Community Child Health Nurses

Summary of Findings: Librarians

Summary of Findings: Program Coordinator
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The research underpinning the evaluation of Better Beginnings was made possible by the generous support of the Better Beginnings Project Coordinator, staff from the State Library of Western Australia, the librarians from the Local Government libraries, Community Child Health Nurses and parents in four communities.

The Project Coordinator gave a great deal of her time to describe and explain the Better Beginnings program from its conception to eventual development and implementation. But more than this, she was always available to answer unexpected questions or elaborate on particular aspects of Better Beginnings to ensure clarity and depth of understanding.

The librarians and the Community Child Health Nurses (CCHN) gave a wealth of information, both spoken and written in individual and focus group interviews. Their enthusiasm and openness enabled us to identify factors that had an impact on the successful implementation of Better Beginnings.

The parents, who are at the centre of the Better Beginnings program, completed three surveys and took the time to write comments about the Better Beginnings program even though their time was limited. This gave us significant insight into their view of Better Beginnings, the value and use of the Better Beginnings toolkit, library membership and activities and future directions.

Finally, eleven families welcomed a researcher into their home in order to discuss Better Beginnings in more depth, providing us with a wealth of information about the impact of Better Beginnings on individual families and insight into book-sharing practices and library membership and use. We thank them all for their interest and commitment, and acknowledge that the evaluation could not have been undertaken without their generous support and enthusiasm.

We would also like to thank all the parents who gave us permission to reproduce their photographs to use on the cover and as part of the text of the report.

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The evaluation of the Better Beginnings program

This interim report is based on the third year of the evaluation of the Better Beginnings program in four diverse communities across Western Australia. The research builds on the evaluation of the Better Beginnings pilot program undertaken in 2004 (Barratt-Pugh, Rohl, Oakley & Elderfield, 2005).

Building on the findings from the pilot program evaluation, a team from Edith Cowan University is conducting an evaluation of the Better Beginnings program over a period of four years (2007-2010). The evaluation is jointly funded by Edith Cowan University and the State Library of Western Australia.

The research is based on the following questions:

1. How effective is the Better Beginnings program from the participants’ perspectives?
2. What factors help or hinder the implementation of the Better Beginnings program?

How we conducted the research

In four diverse communities, parents/carers of new babies were surveyed before and after receiving the Better Beginnings toolkit and information.

- The first survey (Pre-Program Survey, 2007) was designed to elicit information about demographics, library membership and use, literacy practices and early reading attitudes, confidence and practices.
- The second survey (Post-Program Survey, 2008) was designed to elicit information about program delivery and content, library membership and use, early reading attitudes, confidence and practices.
- The third survey (Post-Program Survey 2, 2009) was designed to elicit information about the sustainability and continuing influence of the Better Beginnings program.

Case study parents took part in post-program interviews in 2008 and 2009 about the impact of the Better Beginnings program on their literacy perceptions and practices, and the impact on their toddler and wider family literacy practices.

The coordinator of Better Beginnings, librarians and community child health nurses (CCHN) involved in distributing and promoting Better Beginnings in the four communities, were interviewed either individually or in focus groups in 2008 and 2009.

This interim report is based on the 2009 data, the third year of the evaluation of the Better Beginnings program.
Summary of Findings 2009

How effective is the Better Beginnings program from the participants’ perspectives?

Summary of Findings:
Parent/Carer perspective (survey data)
In total, 300 participants completed the Pre-Program Survey before receiving the Better Beginnings toolkit and information (2007). Out of these 300, a total of 177 (59%) participants completed the Post-Program Survey after receiving the Better Beginnings toolkit and information (2008). Out of these 177, a total of 103 (58%) participants completed the Post-Program Survey approximately two years after receiving the Better Beginnings toolkit (2009).

The term ‘toddler’ is used, where appropriate, to indicate the growing maturity of the baby. The following findings are based on the Post-Program Survey data (2009).

Receiving the Better Beginnings program
100% of respondents indicated they remembered receiving the Better Beginnings toolkit. 34% of participants had a new baby since receiving the Better Beginnings toolkit. They indicated that the Better Beginnings toolkit received for their first child influenced:

- their communication with their new baby (84%);
- their sharing of books with their new baby (82%); and
- their book choices through the book suggestion pamphlet 58%.

The Better Beginnings toolkit content
94% of respondents indicated they still have the gift book and 64% remember the name of the book. 74% of participants indicated that they still read this book to their toddler, and over half (56%) of these reported that they read it ‘often’. In addition, 64% reported that their toddler had chosen the Better Beginnings book.

50% indicated they still have the nursery rhyme chart and 44% reported that they still used it. Of these, 58% indicated they used the nursery rhyme chart ‘often’. On the whole, the participants reported placing the nursery rhyme chart where it could be seen, e.g. bedroom wall, back of bedroom door, wardrobe door.

76% of participants indicated they still had the Let’s Read or Rhyme Time DVD and 50% watched it with their toddler, 28% reporting that they watched it ‘often’.

Almost a third of participants still had the parent information pamphlet (28%) and the book suggestions pamphlet (31%).

The Better Beginnings program
Participants were asked if specific aspects of their literacy practices had changed since the last survey (2008).

Has anything changed since the last survey?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often you read to your toddler?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often your toddler asks for a book to be read?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often you communicate with your toddler?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More, talk more less TV more talk?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often other people read with your toddler?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often you read with your other children? (26% N/A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 84% of participants indicated that, since the last survey, they now read to their toddler more often.
- 92% of participants indicated that, since the last survey, their toddler now asks for a book to be read.
- 88% of participants indicated that, since the last survey, they now communicated more with their toddler.
- 80% of participants indicated that, since the last survey, other people read with their toddler more often.

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52% of participants indicated that, since the last survey, they now read more often with their other children.

Library membership and involvement in Better Beginnings activities

Since the last survey, 30% of participants indicated they had taken out library membership, and 38% reported they were already members of the local library. From the participants who indicated they had joined a local library since the last survey, 68% reported that they had borrowed books for their toddler. Of the participants who reported that they became a member since the last survey, 48% indicated that they went to the local library ‘once a month’, 24% ‘once every two weeks’, 14% ‘once a week’, 10% ‘never’ and 4% indicated that they did so ‘more than once a week’.

30% of participants indicated that since the last survey they had taken out library membership for their toddler. 20% indicated that they were already a member of the library.

Of the participants who took out library membership for their toddler since receiving the last survey, 80% indicated that their toddler borrowed library items on their own card whereas 20% indicated their toddler did not.

Of the participants who reported that they (and their toddlers) were already members of the library at the last survey, 42% indicated that they went to the library ‘about the same’ as before, 30% ‘more often’ and 28% ‘less often’. Furthermore, 50% indicated that their toddler borrowed ‘about the same number of items’, 26% ‘less items’ and 24% ‘more items’.

Participants were also asked about library sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby Rhymetime</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytime</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent workshops</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84% of participants indicated that they had found the activities ‘useful’ (48%) or ‘extremely useful’ (36%). The remaining 16% of participants found the activities ‘not very useful’.

Some of the comments made by participants who attended the library session activities are noted below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbatim Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better Beginnings workshop, person who wrote Baby Ways attended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookworms in community “absolutely fantastic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytime - fabulous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the next Rhymetime - have been away and missed when the sessions started.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids really enjoy it. Library really well set up for the kids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady has improved. The one that is a mother is so much better than the other one, but she is getting better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked singing with group of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of activities for toddlers. Don’t mind lots of noise. Great kids section for kids to rummage through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mum now works Fridays so no longer attends Storytime sessions, but do try to go along to other sessions being held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanna has taken him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only have storytime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really good service, great it was free, surprised how good it was.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really good sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really good, great session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She wasn’t sitting and listening to the story before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to another library instead of local as it fitted in better with our schedule.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your toddler is a member, how often does your toddler go to the local library?

![Bar Chart]

[Image of a bar chart showing the frequency of how often toddlers go to the library by their parents.]

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The participants were asked about their contact with the librarians:

When visiting the library did the librarian do any of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage you to take out library membership for your toddler?</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show you where age appropriate books were?</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show you the library facilities?</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the Better Beginnings library activities?</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Influence of Better Beginnings on attitudes to early literacy.

54% of participants indicated that since the last survey their confidence in sharing books with their toddler had ‘increased’, while 46% noted that it had ‘stayed the same’. 86% indicated that since the last survey, they were ‘very confident’ in sharing books with their toddler, while 14% noted that they were ‘quite confident’.

98% of participants indicated that since the last survey they felt it was ‘very important’ to share books with their toddler, while 2% noted that they felt it was ‘fairly important’.

In addition, 98% of participants indicated that since the last survey their toddler’s interests in books ‘has changed’. Of these, 91% reported that since the last survey their toddler was ‘very interested’ in books, while 9% noted that their toddler was ‘quite interested’. Furthermore, 83% reported that their toddler enjoyed being read ‘all of the book’, 16% about ‘half of the book’ and 1% only ‘the first page’.

Participants were asked if their opinion had changed since the last survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Already thought that</th>
<th>Changed opinion</th>
<th>Not changed opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toddlers can enjoy and benefit from books</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddlers can enjoy and benefit from rhymes and songs</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddlers can join the library</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were then asked if their opinion had changed in any other ways. Their responses have been divided into the following categories:

Reading at an early age

- How early you can read. Keeps you focused.
- How young you could start reading with your child. I always thought I would wait until he could choose to read.

Literacy practices

- I am a new mum and learning something new all of the time. Better Beginnings helped me know what to do.
- Read more often.
- It gets you started.
- I read more than I did with the older one.
- I always knew that in theory before but this year it has been put in practice.
- Since being involved it has accentuated the importance of nursery rhymes and songs.
- Starting as soon as they come out, or even before.
- Have to make sure I manage to make the time to read to the kids during the day.
Information in the toolkit

- I really liked the book suggestion list, it has broadened my ideas.
- Opened my eyes up that they do enjoy books. Used the pamphlets to go find some of the books.
- Helped me identify age appropriate books.
- Understand better the importance of using expression while reading.
- What books they will enjoy.
- Reinforced the benefits of reading.
- Good guide, good starting point.

Encouragement and awareness

- I appreciate the encouragement and the guidance.
- I think that everyone should receive it to encourage them with the importance of reading to their children.
- Very beneficial to bring it to your attention to read to your kids from an early age.
- It is definitely something you should do. Made more aware of Better Beginnings.
- It was good that you got the DVD showing you different ways to read to your child.
- Nice to know that people care that you are reading to your kids.

Impact

- His speech has come along now he is interested in the books.
- Helped me know what was important for my son.
- I watched the DVD a few months ago - it was excellent.

I passed it on to a friend, but she hasn’t returned it yet.

- Reminds parents to read to child and to go to library.
- Always thought girls enjoyed it more than boys.

Influence of Better Beginnings on early literacy practices

The average number of books at home that were read to toddlers was 86 (range 5 - 600).

Almost three quarters (74%) of participants indicated they read to their toddler seven days a week, 8% three days, 6% six days, 5% five days, 4% four days, and 3% two days. In addition, almost 50% of participants reported that their toddler was read to by other family members/baby sitter between two and six days a week.

Participants reported that in the past week, they or someone in their family had:

- Shared a book with their toddler: 98%
- Talked about the story or pictures with their toddler: 98%
- Told a story, not from a book with their toddler: 55%
- Used a language other than English when reading to their toddler: 16%

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Since the last survey, participants reported that they:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chose a comfortable place and the right time to share a book.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held the book within the child’s visual range and turned pages slowly</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let their child hold and play with board books.</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose books with bright pictures and a small amount of print.</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They moved their finger under the words, from left to right, as they read to their toddler.</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read stories aloud with expression.</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chose stories with a lot of rhyme and repetition.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While reading to their child, they pointed to pictures and named them or described them</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While reading to their child, they asked questions about the pictures.</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged their child to predict what will happen next in the story.</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and re-read favourite stories.</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the last survey, participants who shared books with their child reported that he/she:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has a favourite book.</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointed to the pictures.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked about the pictures.</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turned the pages by himself/herself</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined in with the reading.</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked questions about the story</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretended to read.</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said what will happen next.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointed to words on the page.</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Has Better Beginnings influenced you in any other ways?**

A majority of the participants took the time to comment on how they felt Better Beginnings had influenced them.

**Reinforced beliefs about reading**

- Always knew reading to my child was important but it has been helpful in doing this.
- Big gap between toddler and older kids, so receiving the pack was a great reminder, although reading is something the whole family believes is valuable. Toddler gets read to mainly by elder sister.
- Outside influence reminding me how important it is to keep reading to my children.
- Not influenced just reinforced and gave us some great tools to work with.

**Encouraged and supported reading and sharing of books**

- Encouraged me more to sit down and read. Didn’t do it with the older child until he was about 3 or 4 years old.
- Encouraged me to read and engage with Charli.
- Encouraged me to read to her more often.
- Encouraged us to start reading and gave us the tools to do so.
- Encourages me to read more and reminded me the importance of reading to my girls. Encouraged me especially the Better Beginning packs that I get from the library. Prefers to choose books with photographs instead of cartoons.
- Reminded about importance of reading. DVD and book suggestions helped.
- Just encouraged me to read to him from an early age.
**Awareness of the importance of reading**

- Being more aware of the importance of reading to my children.
- More aware of the importance of sharing books.
- Got me thinking about reading and made me more aware.
- Increased my awareness in the importance of other people, not just myself, reading to my children.
- Influenced me and increased my awareness.
- Made me think about reading more, especially in the first year of his life.
- Made me think about reading to my children.
- Made me think about ways of sharing books with my toddler that I would have only have done with older children.
- Probably brought a more conscious awareness of reading to my children.
- It helped me understand that reading to my children was something good to do and there are better things than the television. Reading is good for them and they enjoy it.
- It made me feel bad at first because my child would not sit still and read books, so it made me aware of what she was lacking.
- Recommend it to anyone. Anyone who doesn’t receive it is really missing out. It really emphasised to me how much enjoyment children get from reading, even more than they get from watching the television.

**Gave confidence and assurance about reading**

- Encouraging to know that it is something that people think is important, reading to your children. Then I know I am doing the right thing, making sure my children are read to.
- Great starting point. It gives you a good starting point and the confidence to start reading to your children.
- Makes me more confident and encouraged me.

**Usage of information presented in the toolkit**

- Book choice. Suggestions helpful in choosing books.
- The book suggestion list was really useful as well.
- Book suggestion list has helped. I have chosen more picture books, especially ones with photos than I would have previously thought of getting.
- Still refer to the book suggestion list.

**Encouraged library membership and activities**

- Encouraged me in the beginning to go to the library and attend Storytime and from there I learnt different ways of reading to my child, to hold his interest.
- Get books regularly from the library.
- I go to the library a lot because of it.

**Extended literacy practices**

- I am going to ask more questions when reading a story with my toddler.
- Making sure I make the time to read to my children.
- More often (parent reads more often than would have).
- Reading a lot more, reading different books and really making an effort to make the time to read with her.
- Started earlier with books with stories rather than pictures/word combinations, so it amazes me how long he will sit and listen to a story for.
- Try to push reading a lot more, especially amongst friends who don’t read with their children.
- How to read to child, how to get her involved in reading.
- It has made me want to pass on the information to other parents with young children, encouraging them it is never too early to start reading to their children.
To make sure that I do read books to him. When reading, toddler chooses time and place. Loves books with trains in them.

The Babyways book was great. We pointed and named things in it for her and it helped her learn.

**Overall influence**

- A really helpful tool, especially being so remote.
- Don’t know how it can influence me anymore. I read to him almost every day, we even have books in the car.
- We have benefited a lot from this.
- Occasionally it has made me feel a little guilty. You are telling me what I already know, but I have a lot of experience behind me. For young mums who have no experience behind you, this program is excellent.
- I have always been a huge believer in books, but think it is a really excellent thing that you are doing.
- Would have done the same without the programme but believe it is a very important programme for those with a different language background.
- Not really - just it is a very good program.
- Not since last surveyed. Daughter will now sit and listen to chapter books being read.

One participant who worked with a remote Community Council doing consultation with Communities for Children (C4C) project and the wider community, individuals and service providers, commented that there is a high need within the community for availability and access to early literacy programs. She commented that she had not been aware of this until she had become involved in Better Beginnings.

**Summary of Findings:**

**Case Study Participants**

**Better Beginnings Toolkit**

The majority of case study participants indicated that the Better Beginnings toolkit was still influencing their literacy practices. Many were still enjoying and sharing the gift book with their child and/or other children. The information pamphlets and DVD were still being used by some participants, to inform and support literacy practices. The DVD was a source of information about ways of sharing books and participants reported increased interaction around book sharing, with the child taking an active role in reading and talking about the book.

- All case study participants received the Better Beginnings Pack.
- On occasions most children still enjoy the book they received in the Better Beginnings toolkit, though the book is not read as often as the children are now older and have outgrown the book. One participant commented that her child now reads “Baby Ways” to her younger sibling (one of the babies in the book is their cousin). Only one participant indicated that she did not recall the book nor reads it to her child.
- Participants reported that the child mostly sits on their lap, next to them or they lie in bed and read books together. They point to and discuss pictures, use expression, and some point to words while they read. One participant indicated, however, that when she points to the words she covers the pictures and her child gets frustrated.
- Children participated in the reading process by turning pages, pointing to pictures and words, making animal sounds and counting. One participant indicated that her child makes connections between the picture and her experiences (e.g. relates picture of a dog to her own dog). One participant indicated that her child asks questions while reading the book, usually about the pictures. Two participants commented that their child reads them a book – one child reads ‘Brown Bear Brown Bear’ to her mother and the other reads books with one word on each page that correlate with the picture.
Only one participant indicated that she did not recall the information sheets in the Better Beginning packs. Six participants indicated that the pamphlets were useful in reminding them to have a quiet place to read, turn TV off, and as a guide to which books were suitable for what ages. The nursery rhyme chart was used by one participant near the baby’s change table and referred to regularly, especially by her partner who did not know any nursery rhymes, or what to do when reading to their baby.

Six participants made use of the DVD. Children watched it on their own or with their parents. Three of those participants felt that the DVD contributed to their own confidence in reading to children by giving them ideas about where to read (outdoors, in the park) and how to read (use of tone). Of the other five participants, two received the DVD but did not watch it, two did not receive the DVD nor go to the library to collect it, and one does not own a TV.

Attitudes, practices and knowledge of early literacy learning

Since the last interview, participants reported that Better Beginnings had influenced several aspects of their literacy practices. Better Beginnings had encouraged them to read to their baby from an early age and this had increased their confidence as the baby grew. For some participants, reading with their baby had increased their own level of literacy. Although the amount of reading had either stayed the same or decreased, participants reported that other members of the family read to their child and they involved their child in a range of literacy activities. Participants found information about appropriate books very helpful especially as the child became more independent. Involvement in Better Beginnings appeared to have increased enjoyment and understanding of early literacy. Participants identified aspects of reading they most valued and described how reading influenced their child’s literacy development.

Four participants indicated that because of Better Beginnings they started to read to their baby at a much younger age than they would have otherwise done: “Probably made me read to her more at a younger age because I didn’t realise you should read to them when they are really young.” Two participants indicated that receiving the pack made no difference as they would have read to their babies anyway. The remaining participants felt that the pack helped in some way, either with their confidence, or enjoying the quality time together. One participant commented that the Better Beginnings gift book was the first book that her baby showed an interest in: “Baby Ways book as she loved that book it was the first book she connected with, maybe it was because she could see her reflection.”

Seven participants indicated that Better Beginnings has influenced the type of books they have bought or borrowed from the library. One participant found that the suggested books were of great interest to her son: “[He] enjoys rhyming books, especially Mr McGee and the Biting Flea. He also enjoys nursery rhymes and songs.” Another participant who has a special needs child was surprised at how well from an early age he treated books: “[He] doesn’t rip books, he respects them. He has a box of books that he knows are his books. he might rip up the TV guide or the Foxtel magazine, but he would never rip his books.”

Some participants indicated that Better Beginnings has influenced the type of books they read to children now that they are older: “Occasionally I try to get simpler ones to get him to recognise that there is a word and a picture.” Others indicated that they now choose longer story books or concept books.

Most participants indicated that the amount of reading has either remained the same or decreased (due to returning to work). One participant indicated that his child now has a book read to him at bedtime: “We have introduced a short bedtime story, before [his mother] just sung him to sleep, he brings us books now to be
read which is great.” One participant reported that she reads to her daughter during the day if “she’s a bit grumpy.”

- In all except one family, other family members read to the child: fathers, grandparents, older siblings and Day Care staff. One participant indicated that the child’s father is not confident about reading to their child, but the grandparent reads regularly. Another participant indicated that the older sibling is the main person who reads to the child.

- All participants indicated that they involve their children in other literacy related activities such as singing, dancing, viewing DVD’s, and general talking. “Singing, nursery rhymes, chatting, we are always chatting to him, really trying to encourage his speech along”. One participant takes her child to Kinder Music to help with his speech as he has a slight speech problem. Two participants indicated that they point to environmental print.

- All participants indicated that they enjoy reading to their child. For some they enjoy it more now that their children are older and they get more response from them: “Yes because you get a lot more back from them, and I can see them get more interactive as I read the book more often.”

- Participants were able to identify what they valued most about reading to their child:
  - Developing a love of books.
  - Bonding with their child, positive interaction, a relaxing time: “Definitely the bonding aspect, of sitting quietly with each other at the end of a long day, having close contact.”
  - Opportunity to learn concepts – numbers, colours, shapes.
  - Learning nursery rhymes.
  - Increased concentration.
  - Visual stimulation.
  - Remembering book from one reading to the next.
  - Opportunity to see different way of life: “… because I am from a farm I like to get books that have got animals and stuff like that in it so they know what animals do and where they come from, what sounds they make. Even when looking at newspapers and the internet, she will point to a picture of a cat and say meow”
  - Helps brain development: “I think it is doing something you know is good for them, as well as something they enjoy, that you enjoy, it’s great, keeps your brain active.”
  - Increases vocabulary: “Help their vocabulary along. I can see how it could encourage and help them to learn to read.”
  - School readiness, e.g. child wanting to write words, attention span, listening to stories at school.

- Some participants indicated they are now more aware of how reading to children can help with their development:
  - Development of book concepts: “He has excellent print concepts for his age – page turning, holding correctly, picture/word identification.”
  - Using books to develop other concepts, e.g. maths, and science: “You can get heaps of books that are related to life skills and certain topics. She is developing life skills through reading.”
  - Vocabulary development: “I can see his language developing every day, and hear words he has picked up from something we have been reading.” “He was late to start to talk but now is a more accomplished talker than his friends, using plurals and tenses correctly. I was telling him to share and I said you give one people to your friend and you keep one people and he just looked at me and said, ‘Mum it’s one person not one people’.”
  - Making connections: “Yes, like when he starts pointing and naming things in the shed, or out in the garden that he has read about in a book.”
Some participants also indicated they are now more aware of how reading to children can help with their interactions with their child:

- Child shows more interest in books: “She is becoming more involved in reading more able to talk about pictures. She loves it. She will pull out about ten books to read and we have to limit it to four books because she will just want to keep on going.”

- Child makes more connections with own experiences: “She can relate books to things that she does now. We went out on the boat the other day with her uncle... and she will talk about a book she has read about fishing and fish to her Uncle. In her everyday life she is relating it to books she reads as well.”

- More talk about the pictures: “I probably talk about the pictures more now, before there was not much to say about one picture one word, type books we were reading.”

Some participants also indicated they are now more aware of how reading to their children can help with preparing their child to read:

- School readiness: “I want him to learn to read so now it’s more focused on every word and the syllables. I actually don’t think he’s that far away from spotting a couple of words and knowing what they are. He wants to write his name and recognises his name, I think.”

- “Her skills have improved and she is developing the necessary skills for school. Sounding out and recognising things like ‘snakes’.”

**Library use**

Library membership was seen as important by all the case study participants. All but one participant indicated that they had visited the library and borrowed a range of items for their child and made use of other resources and activities. Participants indicated that they encouraged their child to choose their own books because resources were easily accessible and well displayed. The majority of participants found the librarians to be very helpful and over half of the participants still attend Rhymetime and/or Storytime.

Participants found the library activities to be very well organised and presented, they increased literacy practices and knowledge, and also encouraged a sense of collegiality. Librarians on the whole were helpful and informative.

- All eleven participants are members of their local library.
- Six participants indicated that their child was a member of the library. Only one participant felt that her child was too young and another indicated that she thought children needed to be of a certain age before they could become members of the library.
- Three participants attend the library weekly, four participants attend once every 2-6 weeks, three rarely attend, and only one never attends as she prefers to buy books.
- Those who do attend the library borrow mostly books, some CDs, DVDs, videos and puzzles. Mostly these items are borrowed for their children. One participant indicated that she borrows books for herself.
- One participant revealed that she would like a timetable of activities at the library as that would make her go more often. Another indicated that she would go to the library if she needed to use the internet. One participant commented that if she had more time she would go to the library.
- Participants also made use of computers, organised activities (story time, holiday crafts, after school activities) and games.
- Five participants said that staff offered assistance and were helpful. Two didn’t need assistance when going to the library and only one indicated that staff members were not helpful.
- Members of the library will mostly allow children to choose their own books from the boxes or displays at children’s level or choose books according to their child’s interest, author, fiction/non-fiction, paperback/board books.
“They have the board books up against the wall where you can easily look through them, then I look by author, titles of what I like and know that [he] will like.”

“All of the boxes are on the ground at his level so he just goes through them pulling them all out, [his sister] goes behind him, putting them all back in. Board books are separate but we don’t just stick to them anymore.”

“I go to the section and let the kids pick their own books. If I pick them out they are not interested. They pick a book, I read it to them and then they put it back.”

“I don’t always show her just the toddler books, I like to show her realistic books... We look at books for older kids as well. We look at picture books and encyclopaedias, children’s encyclopaedias and also books related to things we have been talking about like trucks etc.”

Six participants attended (or still attend) Rhymetime and/or Storytime sessions. Of those who do not attend the main reasons are that they don’t know when they are on, the library doesn’t offer the sessions, they don’t have time, their child is too active and won’t sit still or they clash with the child’s sleep time.

Participants who attended these sessions indicated that they were well prepared and included songs, the reading of a story and a relevant craft activity. One participant was pleased that the librarian took time to get to know the mothers and their child and included time for socialising at the end of the session. Another participant indicated that attending Rhymetime helped her to learn nursery rhymes.

Only one participant indicated that she had attended a parent workshop. Some were not aware that they were being offered. Another participant would like parent workshops (in general) to be more open-ended and based around discussion and problem solving.

Three participants indicated that a librarian attended their Mother’s Group and conducted a Rhymetime session.

Other literacy related activities
- Some participants belong to local playgroups, but feel that the focus is generally socialising and not literacy, although they do have a story sharing time.
- Some participants indicated that they would like more information on how to prepare their child for school, like sounding out words, flashcards, and guides for choosing suitable books for older children.

Concluding comments from case study participants about the influence of Better Beginnings
- “Better Beginnings made [me] understand that babies do realise when they are being read to and know what is happening.”
- “Just made me more aware of reading to them at a young age and reading all the time.”
- “It has influenced us on reading a lot more and I don’t know, I’m not sure whether I think I would have done this anyway. It has encouraged me to continue doing it and it has pointed out the importance of why we should do it and I’ve got the rewards by just looking at my child the way she has benefited from it.”
- “It has definitely changed it, not just at home but at work. My confidence and what it teaches you.”
- “Reiterated the importance of reading from an early age.”
- “The Better Beginnings kit encouraged [me] to read to him earlier than [I] would have considered.”
- “...because we have read quite a lot of books for the different age groups I have seen her change mentally over that last couple of years, and with the books it’s really good now she’s at this age - she’s good at predicting what’s on the next page. Before she used to just look at the books, now she likes to search and find books.”
- “It is something everyone should be doing, so I am glad there are people out there promoting that it is the right thing to do.”
Summary of Findings: Community Child Health Nurses

Six Community Child Health Nurses (CCHN) were interviewed: one each from Marni and Killarney, and two each from Bayview and Kangru. All had been interviewed previously and have been with the program for at least two years. They all displayed positive enthusiasm for the program:

“I still believe it is pretty important. It is a very positive program.”
“I think it is really important and I love it.”
“Just that it’s a great program and it’s got lots of interesting information in it and parents love it.”
“I think it is a fantastic lead into early reading early literacy. Quite often you can’t just demonstrate the book. To have the babies look at it is quite good for the mums and dads to see. I think it is a very important part of early learning development.”

Involvement in Better Beginnings

All the CCHNs liaise with their local library as they have done since the program started. There were no perceived problems with this liaison other than an issue of time in one community with part-time librarians being unable to contribute to the First Mothers’ group sessions.

All the CCHNs distribute the Better Beginnings packs to parents at either the 6 week check or the 3-4 month check. They all focus on the importance of reading and talking with babies:

“Better Beginnings has reinforced the importance of raising awareness to early reading with baby”
“Even if a parent has low literacy levels themselves the parent can still be involved.”
“We do tend to encourage more reading and more language and early communication.”
“I think another thing is we are catching them quite early on in the postnatal group about the importance of literacy and early communication.”

The CCHNs also talk to parents about the links to the local library and encourage them to take out membership and go along to the Better Beginnings library activities. They see the library as an important resource for parents and children:

“(We tell them) that it’s from the library and about Rhymetime and the benefits of it. We encourage them to go along to Rhymetime because it’s free and you can get lots of information and books and DVDs.”

Four of the CCHNs commented on using Better Beginnings with Indigenous mothers/carers and mothers from different ethnic backgrounds. Commenting that for some families the Better Beginnings ‘gift book’ appeared to be the only book they have, while others really appeared to enjoy sharing the book:

“I find that it’s a really good tool for some of our Indigenous clients because it’s a very nice thing to be able to give them. Some of those children we go and see don’t have any toys or any books.”

“I’ve been able to take them to a couple of the Aboriginal families that I visit and they seem to be really quite keen on a book, and they like the book and have a laugh at it and enjoy looking at the babies looking at the book.”

One CCHN commented that books representing the local community and culture were very important as families could make connections with the illustrations and context:

“...there are these ones and they are fantastic ‘Yarning together’ they are beautiful books. They are a free book and the other one is called ‘Talking together, a book to share with your baby’. They have good pictures of toys as well and have both Caucasian and Indigenous people in the story. I have given this to a few African families. It is nice for babies to see their own skin colour as well. They are really good books. We give these out wherever as we haven’t had any real direct instructions on when to give them out.”

In another community, the CCHN noted that the Aboriginal Health team was handing out the Better Beginnings toolkit that appeared to be a new initiative.
Training
Apart from the initial introductory Better Beginnings session provided when the program began, the CCHNs had not received further training and they did not feel the need for it, stating that early literacy is part of their overall training.

Logistics of Better Beginnings
There have been no changes in the compilation of the Better Beginnings packs, which is done by the library in each community. The only extra material added is the Health Department brochure, Talking Together. In some communities where there are links to other early literacy programs, CCHNs felt this reinforced the importance of early literacy and sustained the importance of sharing books over time. One CCHN clearly described the process operating in her community:

“We give the yellow bag at 6 weeks and then the next visit we give them the ‘Yarning together’ book and at the following visit we give them the green bag (Let’s read) and this reinforces the importance of literacy. The green bags were just handed to us because the program had ended. Giving them something at each visit also makes them more willing to come back.”

The CCHN maintain contact with the parents via the 6 weeks, 4 months and 8 months visits:

“We maintain contact with the families after we have given these things. Like I said often I am reinforcing with another one and we ask ‘are you reading to baby because we hand them out at the 6-week check and then at 3 months we are again talking about development, reading and eye hand coordination.”

No details of who receives the bags are recorded and it is left to the mothers to complete the form in the pack and take it to the library. Some CCHNs had started completing forms but no longer do it, and some were either unaware of the forms or had never filled them out.

“No, we have to respect client confidentiality. They would need to set up a consent form, maybe then we could encourage it.”

All CCHNs liaise with the library. One commented that her current liaison was less successful than with another library in the community, where more emphasis is placed on Rhymetime sessions. The only other liaisons were with speech pathologists and an Early Years Group, made up of representatives from various interest groups connected with health and general care in Early Childhood.

First Mothers’ groups are linked to Better Beginnings at the library through having the librarian address one of the sessions or through explaining the program when giving out the pack. One community offers a morning tea at the library for the group. One CCHN commented that because her local library only offered one Storytime per month, parents/carers tend to forget about them.

One CCHN identified another benefit of the library sessions:

“It’s often brought up as something they can do for time out. For someone with a high Edinburgh (the scale they do for post natal depression) we encourage them to go as a place for them to participate and relax. It is something they can do together that is enjoyable and it’s an outing especially if they are getting a bit housebound. It’s probably not the way it’s meant to be promoted but it’s a benefit for those mums.”

Perceptions of Better Beginnings
All the CCHNs felt that Better Beginnings was being sustained in their communities in various ways. They commented that sustainability was maintained because of the strength of the liaison between the CCHN and the librarian, and the regularity and continuity of distribution of the packs. One noted the popularity of the program with parents: “They look forward to getting their bags.”

Another felt that more people were reading to their babies. One CCHN commented on the transient nature of the community, which makes continuity difficult, but her partner pointed out that Better Beginnings is a state-wide program.

One CCHN raised the issue of some parents being reluctant to join the library because they worry their children will damage the books.

Another CCHN commented that sustainment was helped by a better range of books and a better DVD:

“The DVD on nursery rhymes is much better, I have had feedback from the Mums how much they like that one.”
Two CCHNs commented that the program seems to be achieving success with non-English speaking parents. The CCHNs also mentioned the importance of links with other early literacy programs as a key feature of sustainability. One clinic is involved in other literacy programs run by Ngala and three of the Better Beginnings communities are involved in the Let’s Read program, though it is now discontinued in one of these. The CCHNs see the links between the programs as collaborative, reinforcing and supportive:

"Let’s Read supports the Better Beginnings message. Being given to the parents at a later time (it) encourages the parents again, maybe at a time when they are a little bit more relaxed."

The CCHNs offered a variety of comments about how to sustain or improve the Better Beginnings program. Two, from the same community but in different clinics, commented on the library component of Better Beginnings; one suggested a larger library to enable more parents to attend sessions; and the other felt an increase in the number of sessions offered in her area would be really beneficial. One felt there should be an invitation to Rhymetime put in the Better Beginnings toolkit given to parents/carers.

Several CCHNs would like to see a greater variety of books available in the toolkits, to enable mothers having a second or third child to receive different books for each one. Others wanted more books to hand out as children grow.

"We give one out early and it would be nice to give more at later checks. I would love to give one at every check. An 8 month book would be great because they are starting to pay more attention to reading and language."

Another CCHN felt the program should continue as it is definitely becoming part of public awareness and new mothers are very aware, through relatives or friends, that they will receive a book. She also feels it is well publicised through activities within the library. She did suggest further publicity could be gained by having an article about Better Beginnings in the Health Department’s magazine, Welcome to your New Baby. She also suggested developing resources that represent a diverse range of communities.

Finally, one of the CCHNs felt that the program was so beneficial it should be nation-wide and fully funded for ongoing implementation.

### Summary of Findings: Librarians

#### Training

Of the four librarians interviewed in 2009 only one had been interviewed in 2008, as the original personnel were on leave, acting in another capacity or had transferred to another library. The one person who did both interviews was no longer running the actual Better Beginnings program as a new staff member had been employed specifically for this.

All the librarians had completed some form of Better Beginnings training with the Better Beginnings team from the State Library, which, they agreed was helpful in understanding and implementing the program.

#### Changes in the logistics of the Better Beginnings program

Each community is still involved in the Better Beginnings program and the process of delivery has remained the same within each community. The Better Beginnings toolkits are packed by library staff and delivered to CCHNs to give to parents. Each library packs the books and pamphlets from the State Library and adds local library material. Each library has toolkits available to give to parents with new babies, who have not received a toolkit. These are handed out at Storytime and/or Rhymetime. The DVDs are now in the kits.

#### Changing Involvement in Better Beginnings

Each librarian had either changed their role within the Better Beginnings program or had just begun working with the program. Three of the libraries now employed a person specifically for the Better Beginnings program.

Liaison with CCHNs since the implementation of Better Beginnings is continuing and is seen as vitally important to the success of the program. This liaison has not changed in the time the program has been running.

Two libraries have strong community links through an Early Years group or a local government committee. All libraries liaise with the State Library, though one does this through a regional link rather than in person.
Continuing and new activities associated with Better Beginnings

There is some variation in the way the program is implemented, with one library offering a weekly Rhymetime and Storytime session; another offering two Storytimes but no designated Rhymetime; one offering regular Storytimes but only monthly Rhymetime; and the other just offering Rhymetime monthly.

Group sizes range from 13 to 25 with more attending Storytime, though one library had to cap its monthly Rhymetime at 20.

One library has established a new literacy centre for programs such as Better Beginnings. Another has moved the Rhymetime sessions to a more ‘baby and mother friendly’ area. Another has seen a 70% increase in picture and board book loans since taking them off the shelves and placing them in easily accessible boxes.

The librarians commented on the needs of families from Indigenous and multi-ethnic backgrounds. In one community where there are a high percentage of multi-ethnic families, the librarian is exploring ways to assist the new parents. Another library is looking at re-invigorating a Baby Beats program that targets special needs groups.

Each library has an Outreach toolbox. This is generally used in Rhymetime and Storytime sessions. Two of the libraries have split them into smaller packs and lend these to parents or early childhood community groups. The response is very positive and the librarians reported that they felt well resourced and supported in implementing the Better Beginnings program.

Perceptions of Better Beginnings

All librarians had very positive perceptions of the Better Beginnings program. They identified the toolkits and the free book, parental education and community involvement as the most valuable aspects of the program. The toolkit remains unchanged, other than that the DVDs are now included. One librarian had become much more positive about Better Beginnings as her role within the program has grown.

All librarians felt the Better Beginnings program is being sustained, but commented that the step of actually getting people into the library after receiving the pack, now needs strengthening. Three of the librarians in communities with Indigenous and multi-ethnic families felt that sustaining the program was somewhat difficult and that sustainment was not as strong. One librarian expressed a concern that internet use and DVD borrowing were often the attraction for the library members and saw Better Beginnings as a way of promoting book awareness and print literacy.

However, all the librarians reported that changes within the library environment are helping sustainment and attracting greater attendance, as are the more regular Better Beginnings sessions. The continuing liaison with the CCHNs and securing regular local government support are major factors in sustainment. Libraries are also promoting the program on websites, by emailing members and advertising in local papers. Two libraries have community links through an Early Years group and two librarians commented that links with other early literacy programs help to sustain the importance of early literacy.

There was a strong feeling that attending Better Beginnings library sessions would lead to improved literacy outcomes for children and increase the use of libraries as parents/carers become comfortable in the environment. Two librarians expressed concerns about funding and hoped State Government funding would ensure the continuation of what the community already perceives to be a successful program.

One librarian commented:

“The people who have the money don’t always get down to community level, they have to go through channels such as federal, state then local government. They can provide the program but don’t experience the community expectation when that program is then taken away.”

One librarian saw the difficulty of getting people into the library to attend sessions as a factor that may hinder the Better Beginnings distribution and message. Interestingly, this library had stopped offering Better Beginnings sessions for a while and has only recently begun offering Rhymetime, but only monthly.

All the librarians cited the State Library coordination and support and the liaison with the CCHNs as major factors in
the success of *Better Beginnings*. Community links and inter-library support were also seen as important factors.

When asked about ways in which *Better Beginnings* could be more effective they identified:

- Funding continuity at both local and State government level;
- The need to devote funding to dedicated Better Beginnings staff, enabling specific staff to manage and promote the program;
- Strategies to help librarians to encourage parents/carers to attend library sessions;
- Giving a different gift book to second time parents;
- Providing multi-lingual pamphlets; and
- Providing storytellers in other languages.

Finally, all the librarians commented that as *Better Beginnings* was such an important and successful program, a follow-on program for older children would enhance and sustain early literacy learning.

### Summary of Findings: Program coordinator

#### The role of the program coordinator

The Coordinator’s role continues to be focused on sustainability of the program and securing ongoing funding. The role is about consolidation and locking-in funding for the program. The *Better Beginnings* team is now also collaborating with a wide range of other agencies including not-for-profit ones such as Gowrie WA Community Services. The four year seeding fund from Rio Tinto for the initial roll-out of the program ended in June 2009 and the team has secured State Library funding for 2009/2010. There are plans for a budget bid for sustained funding for continuing the program.

#### The development of Better Beginnings

The program has been embraced by the majority of the libraries in Western Australia. The participation rate by local government is 81% (100% metropolitan and 76% of country local government authorities). The program is also being delivered in a couple of remote communities. The program format is unchanged with resources delivered to the libraries based on birth rate projections. Local government contributes to the cost of the gift books in the toolkit, and the local public libraries and the community child health centres deliver the packs.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of Rhymetime sessions offered by both large metropolitan public libraries and those in large country centres in comparison to the previous year with more than 2,500 parents and children in attendance.

The gift book is still predominantly Baby Ways and also Let’s Go Baby, but books have also been purchased from large publishers. There has been a noted increase in the number of books, particularly board books, being produced for this age range. The selection of books allows availability of a range of titles for packs, to cater for those parents receiving a second or third one, and is in response to a perceived need.

#### Training development

Training is now more on demand for new library staff. The training sessions provide an overview of how to run the
program within the participants’ libraries. While training is not offered to the CCHNs, links are being made through professional development sessions offered by Community Health. Excellent links have been made with Child and Adolescent Health.

**Increased number of communities involved in Better Beginnings**

There are only a few small local government groups, in regional areas, which are not involved in the program. At the moment 96% of births in the state are covered by the program.

Several remote Indigenous remote communities including Wingellina and Tjuntjuntjara are involved through liaisons established by community child health nurses or school teachers. The program is also being consolidated at Biddyadanga remote community through the recently established library and in conjunction with the community’s school. The program is delivered in quite a different way from places where there is a library. These groups receive the bag, book, perhaps the nursery rhyme frieze and DVD and booklet and ‘pre-loved books’.

“We've had positive feedback from community health nurses about the rhyme DVD and booklet as well as the books.”

**Issues related to the implementation process**

Overall the process is running smoothly. The only issue the coordinator could see was:

“There could have been some gaps in the delivery of the packs through Community Health due to staff changes - which results in the links between the library and Community Health being broken and it takes a while to re-establish contact.”

The Better Beginnings team would like to see the agreement regarding the delivery of packs through Community Health ratified at state government departmental level as part of the delivery of services by the CCHNs.

**Keeping in touch with the progress of Better Beginnings**

The State Library is still collecting qualitative and quantitative data from the public libraries. These are collected quarterly, but in some cases may only be done at the end of the financial year. The statistics include:

- library membership of 0-4 year olds;
- the number of picture book loans;
- the number of packs delivered to families;
- the number of Rhymetime sessions; and,
- attendance at the sessions.

While increases cannot be totally directly attributable to the Better Beginnings program, there has been a substantial increase in the number of memberships in the target audience age group and corresponding increase in loans of picture books and parenting books. In comparison to 2007/08, loans of Storytime (Outreach) boxes - which many libraries are breaking down into smaller packs for loans to families – have increased five-fold in comparison to 2007/08. This is seen as a positive and viable way to have the library resources moved into the community.

**Sustaining Better Beginnings**

The program is being sustained through the consistent approach maintained by the Better Beginnings team. Links with other agencies that work with Indigenous and CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) families are continuing to be established and developed.

The Coordinator is part of a national working party developing a New Arrivals Literacy Pack for refugee families with young children. This working party includes representatives from other State Libraries and the Little Big Book Club, with development funding provided by Kraft/Vegemite and the Australia Council. The pack will include a book for a child under 5 (possibly in a number of community languages).

The Better Beginnings team hopes to trial the pack through agencies such as Gowrie and has already established links with the Adult Migrant Education Program at Central TAFE.
providing tutors with Better Beginnings packs and also pre­
loved children’s books to use with families being interviewed.

Links with other early literacy programs

Better Beginnings has worked with Playgroup WA in the
Literacy Links program which delivers Let’s Read resources
to families in an inner city region. In 2009 Ngala has taken
on the administration and delivery of this program and a
meeting has been scheduled with the newly appointed
coordinator.

As the Better Beginnings program has been running for
four years, groups and agencies are more aware of it and
relationships are being established. It is clear from the range
and variety of contacts that the Better Beginnings program is
now firmly established and recognised in the community.

- The Better Beginnings team has worked closely with
Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service and State Child
Development Centre to produce Yarning Together, a
booklet about the importance of communicating with
babies, which will be given, by child health nurses, to
Indigenous families.

- Adult Migrant Education Program, Central TAFE, is
delivering some Better Beginnings resources to students
with young children.

- The Better Beginnings team has been working with
Playgroup WA and participating in their Family Days.
Packs have been provided to Indigenous families through
the association’s Supported Playgroups Program.

- Visiting Teachers of the Deaf (South-West) have
approached the team to use Better Beginnings bags
when working with families with 18 months old children
identified as having a hearing impairment.

- SIDE also approached the team to use Better Beginnings
bags with teenage mothers. They were also given pre­
loved books by the library.

- A social worker from Rangeview Remand Centre has
asked for Better Beginnings bags to use with young
mothers in the centre.

The future of Better Beginnings

The Better Beginnings team has successfully approached
Rio Tinto and WA Future Fund with a proposal to trial an
extended program for 4 and 5 year olds, as this is the age
which is recognised as a stage when many parents seek
support to assist their children’s literacy development.
The Department of Education’s Office of Early Childhood
Development and Learning is partnering with Better
Beginnings in the development and delivery of the extended
program.
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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