



Early Reading Movement through Read Aloud Training for Parents: A Community Development Project

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Abstract: *The National Literacy Movement is widely echoed in the school environment. On the other hand, literacy can also be developed at home for young children by parents. Reading together between parents and children is proven to be able to develop children's literacy. Herein, the Community Service activity which focuses on the initial read aloud training for parents is pivotal. The initial read aloud training aimed to train parents in a village in West Bandung Regency, West Java, to read storybooks to children. This activity was carried out in October 2018, involving 18 parents (mothers) with young children. Through this training, the involved parents showed an awareness, among mothers, of the importance of reading stories at home, selecting story books for children, and reading stories to and/or with children. Through this activity, it is hoped that parents can increase awareness of the importance of supporting literacy from an early age in children and practicing it at home. In addition, it is expected that there will be follow-up trainings such as reading assistance to parents.*

Introduction

The national literacy movement is an effort to strengthen the synergy among all interested and relevant parties by working together and expanding community involvement in developing and cultivating literacy in Indonesia. This movement should start with the family, followed by schools and all levels of society. However, in reality, the movement has not been well-developed in the family domain. Many parents do not understand how they can apply this literacy movement at home.

Indonesia is a country with a low interest in reading. Research conducted by Central Connecticut State University in 2016 reported that Indonesia was ranked 60th out of 61 countries in terms of literacy rate, and this finding was supported by UNESCO data citing the country's reading interest to be very concerning¹. UNESCO has unequivocally

¹ Sri Sudiasih, "Gerakan Literasi Sekolah Meliterasikan Masyarakat," *Bernas.Id*, last modified 2017, <https://m.bernas.id/51438-gerakan-literasi-sekolah-meliterasikan-masyarakat.html>.



declared that literacy is a human right.² Therefore, it is the duty of the state and government to ensure all its citizens to be literate.

In this regard, the Indonesian government has launched various programs to ensure that its citizens acquire good literacy skills. The programs range from compulsory elementary school programs to the School Literacy Movement as a manifestation of the National Literacy Movement as well as an attempt to strengthen the character of the younger generation, as mandated by the Regulation of the Ministry of National Education (MoE) No. 23 of 2015.³

Literacy is globally recognized as a social achievement, which has given rise to the term 'literate citizen'. This term also implies the expanding notion of literacy in terms of media, in which it no longer only includes writing in print but all types of media currently available, including social media. A literate citizen, according to Sawyer (2007), must "be able to write and speak and create texts in a variety of media confidently and competently – and to respond to the texts of others in the same way – before their uses of those texts can become 'powerful'".⁴ Sawyer's statement clearly suggests that literacy also includes the ability to speak and create texts in various types of media relevant to the times. Importantly, a literate citizen is able to respond to texts around them confidently and competently.

The national literacy movement can be started at home by parents and children. The children referred to here are not only those who have entered school, but also young children under six years of age. According to a report by the World Bank, Indonesian children in this age group are at various stages of development such as physical, linguistic, cognitive, general knowledge, social and emotional development, and self-regulation.⁵ Therefore, home literacy has an important role in children's growth and development.⁶ It is defined as a joint reading activity between parents and children to develop children's reading and writing skills.⁷ Activities carried out in home literacy include reading books, playing word games, and other activities involving texts available around them (reading signs and labels, using sound books, using picture dictionaries, etc.).

Children whose parents introduce them to home literacy are at a great advantage in their literacy development. The advantages include increased language development.⁸

² Elizabeth B Keefe and Susan R Copeland, "What Is Literacy? The Power of a Definition," *Research and practice for persons with severe disabilities* 36, no. 3–4 (2011): 92–99.

³ Kemendikbud REPUBLIK INDONESIA, *PERATURAN MENTERI PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN REPUBLIK INDONESIA NOMOR 23 TAHUN 2015 TENTANG PENUMBUHAN BUDI PEKERTI*, Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan, 2015.

⁴ Wayne Sawyer, "The Powerfully Literate Citizen," *English in Australia* 42, no. 2 (2007): 44–47.

⁵ Amer Hasan, Marilou Hyson, and Mae Chu Chang, *Early Childhood Education and Development in Poor Villages of Indonesia: Strong Foundations, Later Success* (World Bank Publications, 2013).

⁶ Susan Grieshaber et al., "Family Literacy Practices and Home Literacy Resources: An Australian Pilot Study," *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 12, no. 2 (2012): 113–138.

⁷ Peter Gavora, "Preschool Children in Book-Reading Situations with Parents: The Perspective of Personal Agency Theory" (2016).

⁸ R Levy et al., "Examining the Links between Parents' Relationships with Reading and Shared Reading



Other advantages are increased interest in reading, development of positive behavior towards written language, raised awareness of the relationship between letters and sounds, and exposure to technical vocabulary.⁹ In addition, parents who carry out literacy activities at home will have children who are better at reading, good at mathematics, and who have social emotional balance at school.¹⁰ A study conducted by Bano, Jabeen, and Qutoshi (2018) shows that parents have an important role in developing children's reading interest through home literacy so that children's critical thinking and analytical skills develop rapidly when they enter school.¹¹

Departed from these considerations, conducting community service addressing the literacy movement program is important to familiarize every family with this movement. The community service reported in this article implemented the read-aloud technique. Even though the basic idea is to have children listen to parents' reading stories to them, it does not mean that children have a passive role. Pentimonti and Justice (2010) mention that read alouds are interactive activities between parents and children because they allow conversation or discussion between the two parties, ranging from concrete to abstract topics.¹² The study of Mendelsohn et al. (2020) suggests that parents have an important role in literacy development through read aloud at home.¹³

Read aloud by parents at home has been proven to be beneficial. The benefits, among others, as revealed by Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman (2008) include: Children can learn the meaning of new words during reading activities with parents. Children can develop complex vocabulary. Children can also develop verbal skills during the interaction between children and parents during reading.¹⁴ In addition, in terms of story content, children are taught about moral values either directly or indirectly.¹⁵ What is taught directly can be seen from the contents of the story book. Meanwhile, indirectly, children learn to listen to other people as they speak.¹⁶

Despite having a number of advantages, reading stories aloud to children is not

with Their Pre-School Children," *hipatiapress.com* 7, no. 2 (n.d.): 123–150, accessed February 4, 2022, <https://hipatiapress.com/hpjournals/index.php/ijep/article/view/3480>.

⁹ Inouk E Boerma, Suzanne E Mol, and Jelle Jolles, "Parents Adjust the Quality of Their Home Literacy Environment to the Reading Interest of Their Third to Sixth Graders," *Parenting* 18, no. 4 (2018): 243–261.

¹⁰ Gavora, "Preschool Children in Book-Reading Situations with Parents: The Perspective of Personal Agency Theory."

¹¹ Jamila Bano, Zahra Jabeen, and Sadruddin Bahadur Qutoshi, "Perceptions of Teachers about the Role of Parents in Developing Reading Habits of Children to Improve Their Academic Performance in Schools," *Journal of Education and Educational Development* 5, no. 1 (2018).

¹² Jill M Pentimonti and Laura M Justice, "Teachers' Use of Scaffolding Strategies during Read Alouds in the Preschool Classroom," *Early childhood education journal* 37, no. 4 (2010): 241–248.

¹³ Alan L Mendelsohn et al., "RCT of a Reading Aloud Intervention in Brazil: Do Impacts Differ Depending on Parent Literacy?," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 53 (2020): 601–611.

¹⁴ Elisabeth Duursma, Marilyn Augustyn, and Barry Zuckerman, "Reading Aloud to Children: The Evidence," *Archives of disease in childhood* 93, no. 7 (2008): 554–557.

¹⁵ Holly B Lane and Tyran L Wright, "Maximizing the Effectiveness of Reading Aloud," *The Reading Teacher* 60, no. 7 (2007): 668–675.

¹⁶ Ibid.



easy, especially for parents who are not used to doing it. Some of the challenges include regulating intonation when reading and parents having some doubt whether children can understand what they are read to them.¹⁷ The selection of story books and the technique of reading aloud are also part of the key considerations in this read aloud training for parents.

The community service was carried out in a village located in West Bandung Regency, West Java, which is a division of Bandung Regency. This village is growing rapidly in development due to the construction of housing complexes. However, many native villagers have consequently become increasingly marginalized by the elite housing complexes. The economic and educational gaps between the native villagers and those who reside in the housing complexes are quite striking. This village is also surrounded by several well-known public and private higher education institutions in West Java. As part of the higher education community in the vicinity of the village that really cares about the growth and development of early childhood literacy, we feel it is important to carry out this service so that the surrounding community understands the importance of reading stories to and/or with children.

Method

The community service was carried out with a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach. CBPR is an approach that focuses on collaboration between community members and academics. Both parties demonstrate their respective capacities, and the research is based on the needs of community members.¹⁸ CBPR is initiated with the needs of the community to make social change.¹⁹ Using this approach, the community service started with communication and observation of some members of the community in an area where one of the authors live. The communication and observation revealed that many school children have difficulty in reading even though they have entered elementary school. Based on our professional background and personal experience as educators at a public university in Bandung, West Java, we identified that the difficulty of children reading at school was due to the lack of exposure to literacy activities at home. One of the ways children can improve their home literacy is by reading story books to and/or with children, and this can be started from an early age.

Based on the result of observation, we formed a community service team consisting of the three authors and assisted by some students of one of the higher

¹⁷ Kit Lawson, "The Real Power of Parental Reading Aloud: Exploring the Affective and Attentional Dimensions," *Australian Journal of Education* 56, no. 3 (2012): 257–272.

¹⁸ Farrah Jacquez, Lisa M Vaughn, and Erin Wagner, "Youth as Partners, Participants or Passive Recipients: A Review of Children and Adolescents in Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)," *American journal of community psychology* 51, no. 1 (2013): 176–189.

¹⁹ Melissa DeJonckheere et al., "Intersection of Mixed Methods and Community-Based Participatory Research: A Methodological Review," *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 13, no. 4 (2019): 481–502.



education institutions in Bandung, West Java, where we work. The team is henceforth referred to as the service team. The community service we conducted focused on training parents to read story books to and/or with their children. This service is an early stage aimed to provide an understanding of the importance of developing literacy from an early age from the home environment.

This service involved 18 mothers who were housewives with young children. Although we would like both parents to be involved in the home literacy movement, we also acknowledge the cultural and social conditions of the target communities, in which most male parents are the breadwinners and female parents take the responsibility of all household tasks and chores, including educating children at home. At an initial stage, the service was focused on taking an individual approach to be able to reach the target community without involving other community parties. This means that this service was carried out directly by the service team towards the target community, in this case parents with young children, by coordinating with the head of the local area.

As the first step of the early childhood literacy program, the service was carried out through several stages which can be seen in the following chart (Figure 1).

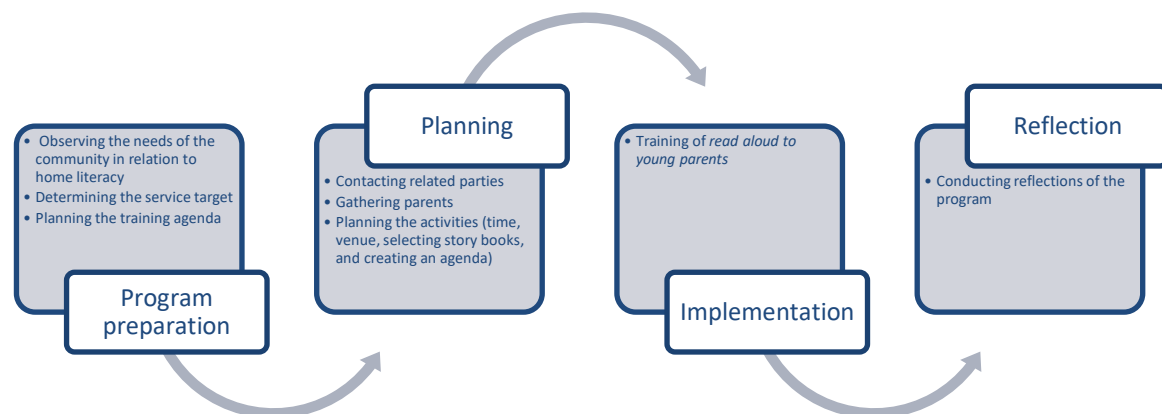


Figure 1. The stages of the community service

The first stage is to identify the needs of the community according to the capacity of the service team as educators at a university with a great concern for home literacy. We believe it is important to share with the community the motivations to conduct community service with them that depart from our professional and personal experience. The service team includes the three authors who are lecturers of language and literature education along with their students. As parents we also practice read aloud to our young children (aged below 6 and not attending school yet). Next, at this first stage, we prepared an agenda for the activities by searching for information from various sources and meeting the community members that would be involved in the training.

The second stage is program planning. The service team planned the program by consulting the community members involved. In addition to the training agenda, the training site was also a part of the service team's attention. We attempted to find a venue



that would not only be accessible but also convenient and motivating for the participants

The third stage is implementation. This stage is the core of the entire series of community service. It was carried out for the target community involved in the service. This stage is adjusted to the agenda prepared based on the results of the identification of needs in the first stage. Rewards were given when the training ended to parents who were involved in this service.

The last stage is reflection on activities. Our reflections were focused on the advantages and disadvantages of implementing the community service with a focus of read aloud training for parents. This reflection is important for evaluation and follow up on the program that has been implemented.

Results

This part discusses the whole community service activities that we conducted in a village in Bandung Barat Regency, Jawa Barat Province. The results are divided into the stages of program preparation, planning, implementation, and reflection.

Program Preparation

At the early stage, we took into consideration several important characteristics of the target community (parents with young children) who will be involved in this service activity, the location of the target community, and the agenda of activities to be carried out. The determination of service targets was based on the observations of one of the service team members (who is also one of the authors) who live in a housing cluster in a village in West Bandung Regency, West Java Province. She observed that around the housing cluster where she lives, there were many elementary school children who still had difficulty in reading. Meanwhile, there were also toddlers who were being cared for by their parents, especially mothers, at home. They lived in an alley outside the residential cluster area. Initial talks with the parents revealed that they did not really read to their children at home and did not see it as necessary, arguing that literacy education is the school's responsibility. Another commonly cited reason is because their children were more interested in engaging or learning through smartphones, such as Youtube videos than reading or being read to. Based on these experiences and observations, the research team determined a service program on the topic of reading aloud training for mothers.

Several activities to be carried out during the training were also prepared. The agenda comprised a discussion on the importance of literacy at home by parents to young children, how to choose story books for young children, and how to read together. In addition, a survey was also prepared to get input from participants involved in community service. The ultimate aim was to help children in developing their literacy skills when they enter school age. The habit of reading stories from an early age will train



children's verbal skills, increase imagination, and cultivate cultural roots from an early age.



Planning

The second stage is planning. The planning consisted of approaching related parties, that is by contacting the head of the local community unit to obtain information related to the recruitment of parents to participate in the service program. The head of the community unit informed that the recruitment could be done by approaching parents during their attendance to the *posyandu* (Indonesian for integrated service post), a service targeting families with young children by providing education on health and general health checks for children and pregnant women, including vaccination and vitamin distribution. The head of the community unit also helped disseminate invitation to the community members to take part in the read aloud training. We also gathered that, considering various cultural and economical factors, it would be appropriate to approach female parents or mothers. In addition, we learned that the parents interested in the training could not attend it for a long duration because they have household activities that cannot be left behind, such as taking care of the house, children, and husband.

Some of the team members also visited the community members at their houses to invite them to participate in the training. The recruitment was also done through WhatsApp social media groups, such as a group created by parents whose children attend a childhood program in the area, by distributing posters to attract potential participants. Based on information and input from the head of the community unit, the community service team arranged the activities in such a way that they did not interfere with the daily activities of the participating parents. The team were able to recruit 18 parents—all females—who were mainly regular members of the integrated service post (*posyandu*) program.

The team decided, with the approval of the head of the community, that the training was to be conducted at the house of one of the service team members with several considerations. First, the house was close to the target audience. Second, conducting the training at home could give a homy atmosphere so that participants would feel comfortable. Third, the house also served as an example to show how parents can support home literacy, such as by having bookshelves displaying various children's story books to motivate and attract children to read.

Implementation

In the implementation stage of the training, there were 18 parents as participants, consisting of ten from the *posyandu* group and eight who were members of the early childhood school parent group. Prior to the training, the participants filled out a survey to obtain some information related to their demographic characteristics and responses to home literacy. For mothers who had difficulty accessing the survey, the service team and student volunteers assisted in filling out the survey. The survey results were processed based on the themes that emerged during the analysis, including the



demographics of mothers (age and education level), number of books owned, children's preferences for story books reading, and people reading story books at home.

The demographic characteristics of the participants are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Data

Age		Education level		Number of children		Number of young children (below 6)	
24	2	Elementary school	3	1	2	1	10
29	4	Junior high school	4	2	9	2	5
31	4	Senior high school	5	3	3	3	0
33	2	Bachelor's	5	4	3	>3	3
37	3	Master's	1	>4	1		
39	2						
42	1						

Table 1 shows that the age range of the participants was 24-42 years with the highest distribution being 29 years old and 31 years old (4 people), and the lowest 42 years old. In terms of education level, it varied from elementary school to master level. Most of the participants had high school and undergraduate education levels. On average, the participants had two children. A small proportion of them had one child and more than four children (two participants and one participant, respectively) and some others had more than two children, such as three and four children, respectively. Among them, most of them had one young child at home (10 participants). Others had two young children (five participants) and more than three young children (three participants). None of the participants had three young children.

In addition to demographic information, this initial survey was also conducted to determine the training participants' habit of reading stories at home. The results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Reading at home habits

Number of books at home		Whether children love reading/being read to		The adult reading stories (for young children)	
0	3	Yes	18	Father	5
1-5	5	No	0	Mother	15
6-10	3			Older brother/sister	7
>10	7			Other	0



Table 2 provides information about the number of storybooks participating parents had in their home. More than 7 people had a collection of more than ten books. However, there were also those who did not have a storybook at home, namely 3 participants. The participants' responses also revealed that all their children preferred storybooks to be read to them, and commonly it is family members at home such as father, mother, and brother who do the reading. For this question, participants were allowed to choose more than one answer. Participants' answers indicated that the closest people living in the house had a role in reading story books to children.

An initial survey was also conducted to see the participants' perceptions regarding reading story books to early childhood.

Table 3. Participants' perceptions of the benefits of reading books to children

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
Reading storybooks to children is important for developing children's vocabulary and language skills	9	9			
Reading storybooks to children is important to sharpen children's imagination	9	9			
Reading storybooks to children is important to get lessons from inspirational characters	9	9			
Reading storybooks to children is important to succeed in school	5	13			
Reading storybooks to children is important to help children discover new things that have never been experienced firsthand	10	8			
Reading storybooks to children is important to make children interested in reading	10	8			
Reading storybooks to children is important for learning to solve problems	5	11		2	
Reading storybooks to children is important to fill in spare time	6	10		2	
Reading storybooks to children is important to distract children from gadgets (devices)	8	10			
Reading storybooks to children is important to entertain them	7	11			

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly disagree

The survey results show that almost all of the participants agreed with the benefits of reading story books to children. For example, all participants (18 people) agreed that reading story books to children can help develop children's vocabulary and language skills. Likewise, all participants agreed that this form of literacy can hone children's



imagination and help them learn some lessons from inspirational figures. In addition, the survey also shows that all participants concurred that reading story books to children is important to distract children from gadgets and to entertain children.

Out of all the statements in the survey, only those concerning the benefits of being able to solve problems and to fill in spare time received disagreement from two participants. However in general, participants agreed that reading story books to children has various benefits for children's development, especially in terms of language.



Figure 2. A student volunteer helping a participant fill out the survey
(source: documentation)

After filling out the initial survey, participants began the training activity. They were first introduced to the family literacy program and how home literacy can support the national literacy movement launched by the government. This was followed by introducing the participants to read aloud of storybooks. The participants were informed about the importance of supporting the government's national literacy movement that was home-based, not school-based, as had been widely advertised. They were also introduced to the importance of home literacy where the role of parents, especially parents, is very important for the success of the national literacy program.

In addition, we did a home tour by showing the bookshelves in the house. This part of the activity was expected to increase awareness of the importance of reading storybooks to children at home. Exposure to story books at home can increase children's interest in reading because they are accustomed to seeing books and other printed forms around the house.

In the training, we also taught participants about book selection. It is important for parents to select storybooks that suit their child's age so that the child can comfortably follow the story read to them. Stephens (2008) outlines at least five components that must be considered when choosing a book for children, including the cover, content, illustrations/pictures, book organization, and font size and type.²⁰ All these components

²⁰ Kathy E Stephens, "A Quick Guide to Selecting Great Informational Books for Young Children," *The*



must be considered based on children's preferences and suitability. In terms of the language used in story books for children, Saracho and Spodek (2010) state that story books for children must contain repetitive language and include illustrations of objects that are familiar and make sense to children, in line with the storyline.²¹



Figure 3. Presentation about home literacy
(source: documentation)

Next was the most important part of the training, where participants were trained in reading aloud. The activity was carried out by the service team who took turns guiding participants in reading story books aloud. The story book used in this training was titled *Rusa Suka Berteman (The Deer Loves Having Friends)* by Benny Rhamdani published by Pelangi Mizan in 2018. The book raises the theme of friendship, a theme that is close to children's lives. The book uses repetition of simple language with illustrations of various types of animals and the playground environment familiar to children. While reading the storybook, participants could see the pages of the book being read. The read aloud was done from the cover to the last page. The steps of reading aloud are explained as follows.

First, to familiarize the participants with the contents of the storybook, one of the service team members read the whole story to the participants. The goal was to show how to read with clear pronunciation and differentiated intonation while reading the storybook. Then, the participants were asked to read each sentence in turn. Some of them had difficulty in pronunciation, intonation, and pauses. For example, some parents did not pay attention to the full stop at the end of the sentence and moved on to the next sentence or performed hanging intonation as if they were going to continue reading the sentence even though they were already at the end of the sentence. The service team provided input to make the participating parents aware that pronunciation, intonation, and pauses play an important role in revealing the meaning of the storybook content.

Reading Teacher 61, no. 6 (2008): 488–490.

²¹ Olivia N Saracho and Bernard Spodek, "Families' Selection of Children's Literature Books," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 37, no. 5 (2010): 401–409.



The second part of the training was concerned with interactive read-aloud technique. The read-aloud technique applied in this training was adapted from Cole et al. (1998) as cited in Lane and Wright (2007).²² This read-aloud technique is called C.A.R., which stands for Comment and wait, Ask questions and wait, and Respond by adding a little more. "Comment and wait" is when parents comment on what the child is focusing on in the storybook and give the child time to think before responding or asking questions. "Ask questions and wait" is giving questions to the child, and the child is given more time to think before answering. "Respond by adding a little more" involves repeating the child's response by adding one or more new words. This method is an interactive way of reading story books to children. The technique allows a dialogue between parents and children while reading story books so that reading storybooks to children is not boring or monotonous.

The following excerpts were taken from the read aloud example provided by one of the service team members.

Excerpt 1

Service Team Member 2: ... What is the color of this deer?

Participant: Brown.

Service Team Member 2: Yes. What is the color of its nose?

Participant: Black and white.

Service Team Member 2: Good. What about the color of its horn?

Excerpt 2

Service Team Member 2: Can you point to the deer's eyes?

Participant: That one. (pointing towards the deer's eyes)

Service Team Member 2: Can you point to your own eyes, little ones?

Participant: Here. (pointing towards their own eyes)

Excerpt 3

Service Team Member 1: "Do you have a friend, my dear?" We can ask that, right, to our child? "What is your friend's name?" "Can you tell me the names of your friends?" we can ask our child those questions, right? Okay, What else can we explore here?

Participant's child: Yes, I have friends. (parents helped children mention their children's names)

Subsequently, the participants practiced together with their children in groups. They were divided into four groups. Each group was supervised by members of the service team. In their respective groups, the participants first read the whole book by themselves. Then they took turns doing interactive reading aloud using the C.A.R. method

²² Lane and Wright, "Maximizing the Effectiveness of Reading Aloud."



to their children. They practiced not only reading stories but also interacting by asking children questions about what is shown in the book. The question-and-answer session was done by observing images and linking them to the child's experience.

To add to the parents' reading collection at home, all participants received a children's storybook for them to take home and read together at home along with a drawing book and pencil. A variety of children's story books can provide more choices for children and parents in their reading activity. Before the training ended, participants were invited to read the new storybook to their children at the training site.



Figure 4. Participants reading books to their children
(source: documentation)

Reflection

The reflection stage is the evaluation stage of the implementation of the community service. The training is an effort to support the national literacy movement which was aimed to encourage parents to carry out literacy movements from home. The reflection was intended to find about parts of the program that were effective and parts that would need improvement for the follow-up programs.

Our reflections suggest that some of the effective parts of the training include the recruitment approach that directly targeted the related parties, namely through the integrated service post (*posyandu*). This community-based program is routinely held every month, allowing the service team to recruit participants immediately. Recruitment was also carried out by distributing posters that succeeded in attracting participants from the early childhood school parent groups. In addition, the recruitment approach was carried out by visiting some of the prospective participants homes to invite them to take part in the training, which was culturally appropriate and effective to build trust and rapport.



Another effective part of the implementation of this service was the time and place of the training. The training was conducted on the day the participants attended their *posyandu* program, so after attending the program the participants proceeded to go to the training. The place where the *posyandu* program was held was also close to one of the service team members' house where the training was conducted, allowing the participants to go to the training site immediately after attending the *posyandu* program. The training itself did not take much time, considering the responsibilities of the participants as housewives who had to take care of their respective households. The training site was created to evoke a "homey" ambience for the convenience of the participants. The location of the training was also decided to be at the residence of one of the service teams that was easily accessible by participants and had a family room that supported home literacy with exposure to bookshelves full of storybooks and children's books.

The next part that we found to be effective is the training process itself. The participating parents showed their enthusiasm in participating in the training, as shown by their eagerness to practice reading aloud to their children. Each instruction was responded well by the participants. They were also open to getting input in reading storybooks to children.

The significant impact of the training is related to changes in the participants' behaviors in reading storybooks. We could observe a change in the way they read storybooks to their children. At first, they read storybooks in an awkward or clumsy way. Most of them did not pay attention to punctuation and intonation when reading. There were also those who were not clear in pronouncing words in storybooks, which might have suggested that they rarely read storybooks to their early childhood. After being provided with several opportunities to practice reading, they began to pay attention to pronunciation, punctuation, and pauses.

Throughout the training, they seemed to be more comfortable reading storybooks to their children. As almost all participants attended with their children, they could practice the read aloud directly with their children. After training, they received a new storybook that they could read to their children at home. The rewards were given as a sign of appreciation for their willingness to participate in the program and to carry out the training agenda.

Our reflection also shows that to improve the quality of this program we need to employ a different and more intensive recruitment strategy and pre-training surveys. Although for the initial stage of the service the recruitment was considered fairly effective, we believe that we could employ a more intensive approach to recruit more participants. We should strive harder to gain trust and build rapport with prospective participants so that they will be willing to take part in the training. Some prospective participants had to be picked up from their homes to come to the training venue, and there were also those who refused to attend even though they had been invited.



In addition, although we did survey the participants with regard to their habit of reading storybooks at home, the initial survey did not provide a comprehensive and in-depth information about the topic. There could be some missing and/or inconsistent information from the participants' responses, for example, regarding the number of young children they have. Some participants claimed to have more than three young children at home. This information could have been verified by further investigating whether the three were born in a short interval. Related to reading habits, some participants admitted that they did not read story books to their children, but they mentioned that their children liked to be read to by their parents. The inconsistencies in participants' responses could be caused by several factors, including the way they did the surveys. As mentioned earlier, some participants were assisted by members of the service team and hence they might not clearly understand the questions. The survey technique is something that needs improvement.

Discussion

This service program employed a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, which focuses on the needs of the community and the establishment of collaboration between the community and the academic community.²³ What is unique about this approach is the contributions and input which come not only from academics, but also community members.²⁴ The approach was selected because of the concern shared among the service team for early childhood literacy at home. This service team would like to directly interact with the target community involved in the service to share experiences of early childhood care related to home literacy. It is important to note that the kind of community service program to be carried out was determined after we observed and had some communication with the target community (parents) to identify their needs and how we could help based on our expertise.

During the training, participants were invited to practice reading with acceptable pronunciation, intonation and pauses in Indonesian. Some were not used to reading storybooks, but then with practice they began to show some enjoyment in reading storybooks. This enjoyment probably was helped by the simple and easy to read language used in the book. Participants were also invited to practice asking questions while reading storybooks. Reading storybooks does not only focus on the writing and language shown in the storybooks.²⁵ The ability to interact through questions that parents make during reading needs attention, as it can build interaction between parents and

²³ Jacquez, Vaughn, and Wagner, "Youth as Partners, Participants or Passive Recipients: A Review of Children and Adolescents in Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)."

²⁴ DeJonckheere et al., "Intersection of Mixed Methods and Community-Based Participatory Research: A Methodological Review."

²⁵ Lane and Wright, "Maximizing the Effectiveness of Reading Aloud."



children.²⁶

From the results of the training, it appears that the participants began to feel comfortable with the training activities, especially in reading storybooks. The awkwardness and stiffness in reading began to melt away and they began to pay attention to important things in reading storybooks for young children, especially in terms of pauses, intonation, punctuation, and pronunciation. Comfort and clarity in reading are important because they can affect the meaning of reading. Children are very concerned about the meanings of things in their surrounding.²⁷ Therefore, these aspects play an important role in reading children's story books.²⁸

The read aloud technique in this training is intended to foster interactive reading with young children. This means that reading storybooks is not just reading word by word, sentence by sentence. However, it involves interaction between parents and children.²⁹ Parents provide feedback by asking questions and giving children time to observe and think to be able to respond to their questions. Parents also do not only focus on what is written but also pay attention to pictures/illustrations and other parts presented in storybooks that can attract children's attention, as suggested by Lane and Wright (2007). This technique can help children develop their vocabulary,³⁰ and language skills such as listening and speaking skills³¹ and reading and writing skills.³² In fact, critical thinking can be developed through reading storybooks to children because of this interaction.³³ In addition, as supported by Meller, Richardson, and Hatch (2009), read aloud can help develop imagination and teach various characters.³⁴

With the advantages of this technique, it is important for parents to carefully choose a good reading book to be read to their children. It is necessary to pay attention to the selection of storybooks that are appropriate for the development of the children's age. As exemplified by the storybooks selected for this training, books which which

²⁶ Mendelsohn et al., "RCT of a Reading Aloud Intervention in Brazil: Do Impacts Differ Depending on Parent Literacy?"

²⁷ Arthur M Glenberg et al., "What Brains Are for: Action, Meaning, and Reading Comprehension," *Reading comprehension strategies: Theories, interventions, and technologies* 2 (2007).

²⁸ Lane and Wright, "Maximizing the Effectiveness of Reading Aloud."

²⁹ Pentimonti and Justice, "Teachers' Use of Scaffolding Strategies during Read Alouds in the Preschool Classroom."

³⁰ Levy et al., "Examining the Links between Parents' Relationships with Reading and Shared Reading with Their Pre-School Children."; Boerma, Mol, and Jolles, "Parents Adjust the Quality of Their Home Literacy Environment to the Reading Interest of Their Third to Sixth Graders."; Duursma, Augustyn, and Zuckerman, "Reading Aloud to Children: The Evidence.";

³¹ Vanessa Morrison and Lisa Wlodarczyk, "Revisiting Read-aloud: Instructional Strategies That Encourage Students' Engagement with Texts," *The Reading Teacher* 63, no. 2 (2009): 110–118.

³² Gavora, "Preschool Children in Book-Reading Situations with Parents: The Perspective of Personal Agency Theory."

³³ Bano, Jabeen, and Qutoshi, "Perceptions of Teachers about the Role of Parents in Developing Reading Habits of Children to Improve Their Academic Performance in Schools."

³⁴ Wendy B Meller, Danielle Richardson, and J Amos Hatch, "Using Read-Alouds with Critical Literacy Literature in K–3 Classrooms," 2009.



contain repetition and illustration of objects that are familiar to the child's environment, as well as moral messages will be appropriate. Parents should pay attention to book covers, illustrations/pictures, story content, and type and size of letters.³⁵ In terms of content, children's storybooks must raise themes close to children's daily lives, contain repetitive language, and include illustrations of objects that are familiar to children.³⁶

Conclusions

The community service program, which involves community members—particularly parents and their toddlers, has gone through a challenging process but has given us optimism to carry out similar programs in the future. One of the challenges is that the process of recruiting participants is not as easy as imagined and expected. Various approaches were taken to attract participants and convince them that this service program was beneficial for them, either directly or indirectly. Indirectly, children are trained on the alphabet and words and context. In the future when children are ready to go to formal school, it is expected that it will not be difficult for them to follow the lessons given at school. However, convincing participants of these advantages requires more effort, for example, by contacting the head of the community unit and approaching *posyandu* cadres who can be trusted by potential participants. This approach was quite effective because it succeeded in gathering participants from local residents. In addition, the approach to the association of early childhood school parents was also carried out by this service team. By distributing posters containing an invitation to get many benefits through their participation in this program, the service team was able to gather participants.

The results obtained from this training activity were quite satisfactory based on the enthusiasm of the participants during this training. Changes in reading behavior were seen during the training process. At first, the parents and their young children seemed awkward in reading; they did not pay attention to the elements of reading aloud such as pauses, intonation, and pronunciation. However, during reading practice activities, reading comfort and clarity emerged. Optimism arose among the service team towards increasing awareness of reading story books for young children, especially if it is done consistently by every family member. By regularly reading stories or good books to children, children can develop their cognition and critical thinking. In the future, we also hope that not only female parents or mothers but both parents can be invited to similar programs to support home literacy and promote gender equity.

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³⁵ Stephens, "A Quick Guide to Selecting Great Informational Books for Young Children."

³⁶ Saracho and Spodek, "Families' Selection of Children's Literature Books."



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