

## Story Time

Providing early literacy sessions in libraries to preschoolers on the autism spectrum and their parents



School Years



### Background

More than 160 early literacy sessions, sometimes referred to as Story Time sessions, are conducted in Brisbane City Council (BCC) libraries each week, with more than 300,000 adults and children attending annually.



### Aim

The overall aim of this project was to enable more inclusive participation of preschoolers on the autism spectrum in Story Time sessions delivered in BCC libraries.

We aimed to address this by:

1. Providing professional development training to build knowledge of
  - a. autism
  - b. emergent literacy development in preschoolers on the autism spectrum
  - c. strategies for working with children on the autism spectrum
2. Developing autism-friendly Story Times for parents of preschoolers on the autism spectrum, to be delivered by library staff
3. Embedding the autism-friendly Story Times into community practice through development of a multimedia professional development package for ongoing use.



### Who took part?

- 44** Library-staff completed the Story Time early literacy training.
- 8** Professionals with experience working with children on the autism spectrum, including psychologists, speech pathologists and early childhood educators.



### How we did the research

There were four phases:

**PHASE ONE**

**Face-to-face professional development**



**PHASE TWO**

**Implementation of a six-week Story Time program**



**PHASE THREE**

**Online professional development and implementation**



**PHASE FOUR**

**Broader stakeholder consultation with education and allied health professionals**

Storytime



What did we find?



Librarian participation in a face-to-face professional development presentation led to increased knowledge of autism, emergent literacy, and strategies to make Story Time sessions more autism friendly.



Most librarians contacted reported that they had changed their Story Time practice in response to the professional development.

**“I feel more confident in assisting parents of children on the autism spectrum with information and book choices”**



Implementation of the six-week Story Time program following online training was viable for librarians, without the need for external support from the researchers.



Allied health and educators viewed the online training components and training as useful and indicated suggestions for refinements to align more closely with their discipline needs.



Who did the research?



A/Prof. Marleen Westerveld, Dr. Jessica Paynter, Dr. Kate Simpson, Griffith University and Autism CRC; David McCartney, Autism Queensland; Andrea Hurley, First 5 Forever, Brisbane City Council; Kathryn O’Leary, Autism CRC.

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Find out more

Find the final report of this study and an executive summary at [autismcrc.com.au/reports/storytime](https://autismcrc.com.au/reports/storytime)

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