

Dialogic book-sharing is one of the most beneficial activities that families and pre-schools can engage in to support their children's cognitive development between the ages of 1 and 6 years old.

The Mikhulu Trust has developed a set of book-sharing programmes that teach families and pre-school teachers specific techniques for stimulating their children's development through focused engagement with picture books.

We work with organisations and governments to integrate these programmes into the services they offer families and pre-schools. This guide will explain how our programmes for parents and pre-school teachers are structured and how you can be trained to deliver them.

Introduction

- What is book-sharing?
- What programmes do we offer?

Book-Sharing for Parents

- Programme for parents
- Facilitator training course

Book-Sharing for Pre-School

- Programme for pre-school teachers
- Facilitator training course

Adapted Programmes

- When do we adapt our programmes?
- Case studies

Working with us

- Partnership process
- Master Trainer accreditation
- Contact us



Introduction



What is book-sharing?

'Dialogic' book-sharing is a special kind of interaction between an adult and a young child using a picture book. It is not simply 'reading' to a child who listens passively – instead, it is an active exchange, led by the child, and supported by an adult who is attentive to their interest and communication.

This enjoyable and simple activity has been proven to improve children's language and cognitive development, and help children understand and get along with other people better. Following more than three decades of research on the impact of dialogic reading in high-income countries, we have been at the forefront of research on book-sharing in low- and middle-income countries.

Our programme has been adopted by the World Health Organisation's Parenting for Lifelong Health Initiative, a suite of evidence-based programmes for parents designed for developing countries

What programmes are available?

We have two suites of programmes teaching the essential book-sharing techniques – one for parents and one for pre-school teachers. We offer facilitator training courses in both of these programmes.

For large organisations and government departments, we also assist with the adaptation of our programmes so that they can be integrated into mainstream service delivery.

Book-Sharing for Parents

Programme for parents

The book-sharing programme for parents consists of 8 weekly workshops of 90 minutes each. In each workshop, the facilitator prompts discussion about new techniques which are illustrated through brief video clips. At the end of each workshop, parents practise what they have learned with their children while being mentored by the facilitator.

Each workshop focuses on a different technique and uses a particular wordless picture book. The curriculum for the programme is:

Session 1: Building language

Session 2: Making links

Session 3: Numbers and counting

Session 4: Talking about feelings

Session 5: Talking about intentions

Session 6: Talking about perspectives

Session 7: Talking about relationships

Session 8: Revision

There are different programmes for parents of children between 1 – 3 years old and 4 – 6 years old.

We do not recommend more than 8 parents in a programme.

Resources required by the facilitator

- Laptop ~R5000
- Facilitator Book Pack ~R4500
(i.e. one copy of each of the seven children's book per parent which can be borrowed and returned each week)
- Catering for workshops delivered by your organisation is highly recommended

Facilitator training course

We train groups of up to 8 facilitators in a 5-day course, which can be held over 1- or 2-weeks. Facilitators are taught how to use book-sharing themselves, facilitate the programme for parents, and conduct simple evaluations.

We continue to mentor facilitators after their initial training, and we ask that our partners report back to us their evaluation data on a quarterly basis.

After a facilitator is certified, the Mikhulu Trust is not responsible for their delivery of the book-sharing programme. It will be up to facilitators, supported by their organisations, to plan, deliver, and fundraise for the services they offer to families.

Who can apply?

We have successfully trained facilitators with a wide range of experience; from parents with a Grade 9 certificate to PhD graduates.

We require that facilitators be literate, have basic computer skills (such as using powerpoint), and – most importantly – that they are committed to delivering the programme as soon after their course as possible.

Costs

5-day facilitator training course ~R4000 per person

We are able to offer courses for free to the participants when donor funding is available. Courses outside of South Africa entail different costs.



Book-Sharing for Pre-School

Programme for parents

The book-sharing programme for pre-school teachers and early childhood development (ECD) practitioners is 4 weekly workshops of 60 minutes each. In each workshop, a facilitator supports participants to watch and discuss an 8-minute video showing the core techniques of book-sharing with groups of children. At the end of each workshop, participants practise what they have learned with a group of children while being mentored by the facilitator.

The curriculum for the programme is:

Session 1: Introduction to book-sharing with groups of children

Session 2: Asking questions and engaging children in the story

Session 3: Talking about emotions in the story

Session 4: Talking about characters' intentions and perspectives

We do not recommend having more than 8 practitioners in a programme.

Resources required by the facilitator

- Laptop ~R5000
- Speakers ~R500
- Facilitator Book Pack ~R3200
(i.e. one copy of each of the four children's book per participation which can be borrowed and returned each week)
- Catering for workshops delivered by your organisation is highly recommended

ECD Facilitator training course

We train groups of up to 8 facilitators in a 5-day course, which can be held over 1- or 2-weeks. Facilitators will be taught how to use book-sharing with groups of children themselves, facilitate the programme for pre-school teachers and ECD practitioners, and conducting simple evaluations.

We will continue to mentor facilitators after their initial training, and we ask that our partners report back their evaluation data on a quarterly basis.

After a facilitator is certified, the Mikhulu Trust is not responsible for the delivery of the book-sharing programme to pre-school teachers and ECD practitioners. It will be up to facilitators, supported by their organisations, to plan, deliver, and fundraise for the services they offer to centres.

Who can apply?

We have successfully trained facilitators with a wide range of experience; from practitioners with a Grade 9 certificate to tertiary education.

We require that facilitators be literate, have basic computer skills (such as using powerpoint), and – most importantly – that they are committed to delivering the programme as soon after their course as possible. It is highly recommended that practitioners also have experience working with groups of young children.

Costs

5-day facilitator training course ~R4000 per person

We are able to offer the courses at no cost to the participants when funding is available. Courses outside of South Africa entail different costs.



Adapted Programmes

When do we adapt?

The most effective way of supporting families and pre-schools in large numbers is through partnerships. We work with large organisations and government departments to adapt our programme to fit into their existing channels for service delivery. To do so, we work closely with our academic team to ensure that our programmes remain effective and evidence-based. We undertake adaptations only under exceptional circumstances.

Case studies

The Western Cape Health Department in South Africa has integrated book-sharing into the support offered to new families in clinics. Families receive information about book-sharing and sensitive parenting during their routine visits to the clinic when their children is 3-, 6-, and 9-months old. Then, during the visit when the child is at 12-months, parents are given a copy of one of our wordless picture books, a more detailed introduction to book-sharing, and information about where they can receive further training in book-sharing.

The City of Cape Town Libraries in South Africa have included book-sharing in the summer programmes of all of the 100+ libraries in the city. We provided children's librarians with an introduction to the programme, self-study materials, and peer mentoring resources. Book-sharing was also integral to each child's 'summer passport', which included a checklist and journey of activities to complete.

The University of Göttingen adapted our book-sharing programme for parents to be delivered via home-visitors in an academic study in rural villages in Bihar, India. The programme was delivered one-on-one with each family, using locally sourced books and tablet devices.

Working with us

Partnership process

Our partnership process begins with a meeting and an implementation readiness exercise. This will help you think through your implementation plan, and will cover your plans for recruiting participants, sourcing equipment, books, and a venue, providing support to facilitators delivering the programme, and whether book-sharing fits into your organisation's strategy and goals.

Our materials are free to use. Our partners make 3 commitments:

1. The book-sharing programmes are provided at no additional cost to families and pre-school teachers;
2. The programme materials are not altered without consultation and permission from the Mikhulu Trust;
3. The programmes are delivered only by facilitators certified by the Mikhulu Trust..

The materials and guidance documents, as well as the facilitator training, will be provided by the Mikhulu Trust. We will also provide ongoing support and mentorship to your facilitators as required. Our partners are fully responsible for planning, resourcing, and managing the workshops they deliver to parents and pre-school teachers.

We ask that our partners provide us with monitoring, evaluation, and learning data each quarter. This includes the number of families, pre-schools, and children reached, as well as simple evaluations of the effectiveness of the programme.

Master Trainer accreditation

An organisation is eligible for 'Master Trainer' accreditation once they have delivered the book-sharing programme to a sufficiently high-standard for some time. This will enable them to train facilitators to deliver the programmes to parents and pre-school teachers.

There are two tiers of Master Trainer accreditation: internal and external. Internal Master Trainers are certified to train facilitators within their own organisations, while External Master Trainers are able to train facilitators in other organisations too.

Master Trainer Accreditation entails collaboratively planning a facilitator training course with our team, delivering this course with our supervision, and participating in ongoing mentorship.

Contact us

For more information on the research underpinning our programme and on our partners, please visit www.mikhulutrust.org.

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