

## Resource reviews

By Angela Owens and Phillip Rowell

### Learning at home series - Learning to read



*Learning to read* is the second title published by Early Childhood Australia in the *Learning at home series*, which later became the *Everyday Learning Series*.

This book is aimed at parents and carers of young children and is written in clear, easy to read language. It focuses on ways to extend and build upon individual children's strengths by using everyday experiences and interactions. Because *Learning to read* has been primarily developed for use by families at home, many of the suggestions for literacy activities revolve around resources that are part of every day life, such as magazines, newspapers, street and shop signs and advertising catalogues. The resource explores ways that adults can use these to help children to learn about communication and how to make meaning from symbols and texts.

*Learning to read* promotes the value of meaningful adult interactions with children to support their reading development. It discusses ways that adults can use conversations, singing and games to facilitate children's understanding of their world. It includes sections on supporting reading and literacy development in babies, toddlers, preschoolers and early school age children.

While *Learning to read* is written principally for families, the ideas and activities can easily be adapted for use in early and middle childhood settings. Child care professionals may find this resource useful as a catalyst for reflecting upon and extending the strategies they already use to promote children's literacy in child care settings ■

Arthur, L. (2003). *Learning at home series, Learning to read (2)*. Canberra: Early Childhood Australia Inc..

### Round Fish Square Bowl

This children's book explores how language can sometimes unintentionally label individuals so that they feel different. The book's author helps the reader to understand the power of language by referring to common colloquial phrases, such as 'stubborn as a mule' and lessons from stories such as *The Tortoise and the Hare*, which are often used to describe someone's character.

Through popular fables and idioms, this book celebrates the concept of 'difference' and focuses on how differences can be positive traits which reward the individual for being unique. For example, the book asserts that while someone may be as 'poor as a church mouse' they can also be 'rich with family and friends', challenging the idea that wealth is only a measurement of money or material possessions.

This resource can be used in children's programs to open up discussions with children about perceptions and stereotypes relating to 'difference and similarity' in gender, culture and family lifestyles. Child care professionals can also use this book to support children to develop an appreciation and respect for their own and others' differences.

With the use of bright and simple illustrations, some of which are instantly recognisable from other stories such as *The Ugly Duckling* and *Alice*



in *Wonderland*, this book is suitable for children aged three and over ■

Skinner, T. (2007). *Round Fish Square Bowl*. Sydney: New Frontier Publishing.

