

Egmont Eager Readers Project

Dear Booksellers,

As you might know from last year's BA Conference, Egmont Publishing researches children's reading for pleasure and has valuable insights into how to address the barriers to reading and book buying. Egmont has shared this inspiring research with booksellers and the BA at events and seminars, so that members can draw upon the insights and apply them in store. This is important to the BA and booksellers because children's reading for pleasure is in decline, which means fewer children are learning the joy of books, and long term, our market is under threat. We need to counter that threat and bring more children to reading for pleasure.

There are many reasons for this decline: not being read to, screen time dominating, having homework from a young age, attending after school clubs, and the school curriculum making children feel reading is a subject to learn rather than something to do for enjoyment. However, research shows that reading to children with no agenda other than pure enjoyment has an enormously positive impact on their desire to read independently.

Here are two stark facts: first, only half of 3-4 year olds are read to daily or nearly every day and this is in steep decline. Secondly, as children become able to read, most parents cease to read to them, so that fewer than a quarter of 8-10 year olds are read to daily or nearly every day.¹

We need to do all we can to encourage children's reading. Running your own reading project is a great way to both make a difference and publicise your business, and we really hope you will sign up for our Pilot Project Egmont Eager Readers. See below for how the Pilot Project is going to work.

Meryl Halls, BA Managing Director

**PRINT
MATTERS
MORE** ●●●●

EGMONT
Publishing

Egmont has shared with the BA the findings of their research study 'Print Matters More', where they worked with 15 children age 7-9 and their parents. The study found that **being read to** and having **free choice** of reading material were pivotal in encouraging children to read independently.

The research involved setting up an intervention with children who were reluctant to read. Each child was given a £10 book token each week for six weeks and invited to choose any book they liked. The parents were given a £10 coffee shop voucher to enable the family to make an outing of the visit. In return, the parents committed to reading to their children every day for 20 minutes, for six weeks. At the end of the six weeks, the families were given a 'thank you' voucher.

¹ Nielsen's 'Understanding the Children's Book Consumer, 2017

The project was enormously successful. The families experienced the pleasures of a great bookshop and the joy of spending quality time together reading. Children loved having free choice of reading materials and found it very motivating. As one child said, *'If I've chosen it, I know it's going to be a good book'*. Those six weeks transformed the children's attitudes to reading for pleasure and the parents' attitudes to reading to their child.

The families were followed over the following year, when they had no financial incentives to continue, and the change in their reading behaviour was enduring. Children continued to read for pleasure. Parents carried on reading to their child and going into bookshops, partly because they had enjoyed the experience themselves and partly because they saw the transformational effect that being read to and having free choice had on their child's enthusiasm and independent reading.

- Click [here](#) to see a film of 3 of the families talking about their experience.
- Click [here](#) to read the findings of the study in full.

Run your own reading project

Given the positive and energetic reaction of booksellers to the Egmont projects, the BA has decided to work with Egmont on a bespoke version for booksellers to run themselves, called **Egmont Eager Readers**.

By running a project through your bookshop in your own local community you will be able to encourage reluctant children to read, help parents understand the importance of reading to their children, raise awareness of your bookshop and to drive up footfall to your shop and the local high street.

Egmont and the BA are therefore jointly funding the Pilot Project, so that for the first eight bookshops to sign up, there will be no cost to getting it off the ground.

For the successful applicants, we will recommend that you actively use the project to secure publicity locally. This will provide an incentive for the parents to stick with it, since they will be interviewed about the experience by the local press. This will also help increase awareness of your bookshop and of the importance of reading for pleasure

Without sponsorship, the cost of the six-week project would be as follows:

- £120 per family: £60 per child (one £10 book token per week); £60 per parent (£10 coffee shop voucher per week). There may be opportunities to collaborate to spread the cost—for instance we recommend you liaise with local cafes to see if they would donate the café voucher, on the basis that it drives PR and footfall, , if you don't have your own in-store cafe.
- A final incentive for completing the project, preferably a Book Token.

'Egmont Eager Readers' Methodology

Recruiting the families

In order to run this project, you will need to sign up local families with a child between the ages of 7 and 11, who is reluctant to read and with parents who find it difficult to make time to read to their child.

As it is a six-week project, a good time to run it is over the school summer holidays. It can be positioned as giving families something to do while the children are off school.

To find the families, we suggest collaborating with your local primary school(s). They could advise and recommend suitable families who might take part. The school would need to approach the families on your behalf and explain what a great opportunity this is.

Once families have decided to participate, they and you should sign an Agreement. We have included a proposed Form of Agreement on page 4.

Publicity plan

Before the project begins, ensure you have contacted local press, print and radio to share what you are going to do. Ensure the agreement covers PR. The Press will be assured of a story because the families you sign up will have agreed to being interviewed. Give the Press the sheet explaining the importance of reading for pleasure.

Managing the families

We suggest inviting all the families into your shop on the same day to mark the start, so that they get a chance to meet each other. When they come in each week, greet them personally and be available for advice. It's important to reinforce to parents that the child should choose whatever book they like.

At the end of the project, arrange for the families to come into the store to be interviewed by local media. The outcomes of your project and family feedback should be shared with Egmont, and this should also be covered in the Agreement.

Form of Agreement

XYZ Bookshop: XYZ Bookshop of [address]

You: [parent name and address]

Concerning the **Egmont Eager Readers project** (“Readers Project”) taking place over a six week period beginning [start date] and ending [finish date] (“Term”).

XYZ Bookshop agrees to give you the following:

- One £10 book token for each week of the project;
- One £10 coffee shop voucher for each week of the project;
- *[The final ‘thank you’ gesture – whatever has been chosen].*

In return for the above, you agree to the following:

- To take part in the Readers Project for the duration of the Term;
- To bring my child in to XYZ Bookshop once a week for the duration of the Term;
- To allow my child to select a book of their choosing (“Chosen Book”);
- To read to my child from the Chosen Book or any other book for a minimum of 20 minutes every day for the duration of the Term;
- To give consent to being photographed and interviewed about the Readers Project in XYZ Bookshop with my child after the Term has finished for the purposes of local news reporting (including without limitation for the local newspaper or the local radio station);
- To give consent for XYZ Bookshop to share my experience/feedback with Egmont UK Limited for research purposes only.

Signed and agreed:

_____ [parent name]

_____ For and on behalf of XYZ Bookshop

Any personal data provided by you in this Form of Agreement will be kept confidential and will not be given out to third parties other than Egmont UK Limited as provided above.