3 Community analysis for early literacy sessions

Community analysis for early literacy sessions

To most effectively support their community and each other as professionals, library staff are encouraged to source and reflect on information about the community that their library serves. The Library Community Analysis template presented in Table 2 is designed for this purpose. The children's services team should conduct this analysis annually. This process involves both collecting and updating data about the local community and considering how these data can inform a library's early literacy initiatives.

The first step is to decide on the appropriate level of analysis and scope for data collection. While each local government area (LGA) typically has its own library service, there are also regions where a single library service covers several LGAs. In large or densely populated LGAs, a library service may have several branches. When these branches operate in very different communities, a site-by-site analysis may be more helpful than one that covers the entire LGA. For example, some parts of an LGA may have intergenerational literacy challenges or include many single-parent families, while others do not.

After relevant data have been collected, library staff need to consider implications for their early literacy initiatives. For example, information about local transport options (e.g. bus and train timetables) should be considered when designing the schedule of storytime sessions. And, if a community has one or two dominant languages other than English (LOTE), there may be greater demand for storytime in those languages. Learning more about the local schools or early childcare and education settings can help the team organise visits to the library by Kindergarten teachers and classes, so they become familiar with and appreciate the local library as a resource.

Library staff can use the community analysis when planning early literacy sessions (See Section 5). They may also find the analysis useful in considering what objectives for children's learning and corresponding educator strategies are most suitable for their community (See Section 4).

TABLE 2. LIBRARY COMMUNITY ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Name of Library Service: _____

PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY FEATURES	DESCRIPTION / DATA	IMPLICATIONS FOR EARLY LITERACY INITIATIVES
Location – and relevance to children's use of the library *(ease of access, parking, public transport, shops/ competition/other attractions/bookshops)*		
Population size of the area the library serves *(i.e. the catchment for the library)*		
Patronage size *(# library users)*		
Number of children aged 0-5 years in the area the library serves		
Estimated number of parents with children aged 0-5 among patrons		
Dominant LOTE in the community		
Main languages of people learning English as an additional language in the community *(to understand whether materials advertising storytime and advice on early language and literacy need to be translated)*		
Key cultures and religious groups		
Customs/holidays/traditions important for members of the community		
Socio-Economic and Educational Status		

PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY FEATURES	DESCRIPTION / DATA	IMPLICATIONS FOR EARLY LITERACY INITIATIVES
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings in the area: to consider partnerships with early childhood centres		
Primary schools in the community (information from myschool.edu.au on Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA), Language Background other than English (LBOTE), school focus areas/programs, key issues identified in Best Start assessments)		
Library facilities for children and their families *(e.g. café, playground, spaces/areas, layout and safety)*		
Existing children's services at the library • Sessions for children aged birth-5 and attendance patterns (who do children usually attend with; how many children do most caregivers usually bring; size of sessions) • Other programs • Resources • Borrowing patterns (popularity of particular sections/books, etc.)		
Other relevant information		