



# ABECEDARIAN APPROACH BENEFITS FOR LIFE

**A**n innovative, evidence-based early learning program at Mareeba Library in Queensland has stirred excitement among the users. **WENDY RUTHERFORD** reports.

The word ‘abecedarian’ is derived from the Middle English ‘abecedary’, meaning ‘one learning the rudiments of something’, as in the alphabet. It’s also the name given to a groundbreaking early childhood learning program that was developed by Professor Joe Sparling of the University of North Carolina in the early 1970s. Mareeba Shire Library Services are excited to introduce a new borrowable resource – LearningGames® Kits, which are an essential part of the Abecedarian Approach technique. Known as ‘3a’ in Australia – Abecedarian Approach Australia – this set of teaching and learning strategies can be used by anyone to support the language development of children from 0 to 5 years. It’s being used with great success in remote Aboriginal communities.

The Abecedarian Approach emphasises simple and purposeful use of language. There are three elements of the 3a technique: Conversational Reading; Enriched Caregiving; and LearningGames®.

Mareeba Shire libraries are incorporating 3a into their First 5 Forever family literacy initiative, which has been funded by the State Library of Queensland. We are utilising some of the concepts from Conversational Reading and Enriched Caregiving into our story-time sessions. However, it is the Learning Games® that could be developed as a tangible tool to support caregivers of children aged 0–5 years. The LearningGames® consist of a five-book set, and each book is dedicated to 12 months of a child’s life. We have selected 10 games from each age group and produced the game as a borrowable item. These books of 50 games have become our LearningGames® Kit.

Each kit contains the game, the tools needed to play the game and the recommended book. Each kit comes in an easy-to-use library bag, with a drawstring that can be used as a shoulder strap. We will include the games in our parenting collection so that customers can borrow the game, take it home, play with their child and return it and select a new one. There are four libraries in our library service – all of them will have a selection of the games.

This is an exciting new resource for us, and we hope that other libraries will also produce these kits for their customers to borrow. 🌟

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