

# The BoekStart Coach



## Reading support at child healthcare center



BoekStart

de Bibliotheek



**BoekStart's reading advancement programme for babies is now a permanent feature in Dutch libraries. Library partners including municipalities and child healthcare centers also see BoekStart as a relevant reading advancement programme to increase enjoyment of being read to and of reading, and prevent delayed language development.**

The BoekStart case containing two baby books reaches some 65,000 babies every year. Research shows that BoekStart results in parents starting to read to their children earlier.

A child's first 1,000 days are crucial to the rest of their development. Research has shown that children who are read to as babies are more likely to pick up a book themselves and enjoy reading more. They are more literate, understand texts better and are more successful at school. Books trigger natural interaction between parent and child, but many parents don't realise how useful it is to read to babies. There are so many reasons to encourage parents to read to babies from the very start.

Reading to babies makes a huge difference. Only 30% of children who are not read to have sufficient vocabulary for a good start at school.

### **The BoekStart Coach**

Some parents find visiting a library daunting but almost all families with young children visit the child healthcare center. The BoekStart Coach is an expert librarian who forms a link between child healthcare centers and libraries. BoekStart Coaches work at child healthcare centers, have a collection of books for children and babies and can support paediatricians and nurses by talking to parents. BoekStart Coaches also listen to parents and boost their confidence, as well as providing a link to the Language House (Taalhuis).

BoekStart Coaches go the extra mile and tailor their services to help all parents establish a reading routine for their child as early as babyhood. The aim is to stimulate very young children's observation and reading habits, reduce illiteracy and promote enjoyment of reading.



*'It's so much fun. Going there is almost like a day out!'*

*'It makes all those waiting times so much more enjoyable.'*

### **Experiences**

Even though they consider it important, paediatricians and nurses generally do not have time to focus on reading, and that's where the BoekStart Coach comes in. Coaches are available at child healthcare centers for around three hours every week on various days so they can speak to as many parents as possible. The coaches bring a lot of vibrancy to a place that's usually rather formal and parents enjoy talking to the BoekStart Coach. The collection of baby books acts like a magnet for children. And parents see that too. As well as appreciating what they do, child healthcare professionals see coaches as enriching their work and they share a lot of knowledge. Coaches increase the numbers of children visiting libraries and more BoekStart cases are collected, which is evidenced by BoekStart's positive evaluation results.

*'As BoekStart Coach, you have personal contact with all kinds of parents at child health centers. Parents visit child healthcare centers on various occasions, so we also meet them several times and can really build a relationship. Talking to people more often enables you to find out whether they have a habit of reading to their child or not. You also start to recognise those families that don't manage to read books to their children.'*

## E-learning for paediatricians and nurses

As the BoekStart Coach isn't present every day, we have developed an e-learning on language stimulation through reading aloud. This helps paediatricians and nurses deepen their knowledge about reading to children and about young children's language development. The free module is available from the NCJ JGZ academy: [jgzacademie.nl](http://jgzacademie.nl).

The e-learning:

- helps child healthcare professionals talk to parents about the importance of reading to children
- refreshes their knowledge and enhances their expertise
- offers ample reference material linked directly to practice
- contains a reader with more in-depth material
- concludes with a test and accreditation

## About BoekStart

BoekStart is an effective reading advancement programme developed by Stichting Lezen in cooperation with Koninklijke Bibliotheek. The programme is delivered by local libraries. BoekStart is part of Kunst van Lezen, a preventive family approach that is anchored in the Tel mee met Taal (Make Language Count) action programme (established by various Dutch Ministries including OCW, VWS, SZW and BZK) and runs until 2024. The programme aims to prevent and combat low literacy.

To prevent low literacy, within the BoekStart programme BoekStart Coaches focus on families with poor language skills. All 226 child healthcare centers work with a BoekStart Coach. These coaches provide information to families with poor language skills on the importance of talking to, singing with and reading to children when they are at the important emergent literacy stage.

## More information

If you are considering including a BoekStart Coach in your services, you can obtain advice and more information about incentive grants from your library or from BoekStart via [info@boekstartpro.nl](mailto:info@boekstartpro.nl).