



ARMADALE COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN

Communication Capers –
improving oral language and
literacy in Armadale

COMMUNICARE INC

Communicare is a dynamic not for profit group which helps more than 100,000 Western Australians every year. Since 1977, the organisation has grown rapidly establishing a reputation for innovation, leadership and professional excellence in Children's Services, Family Services and Employment and Training assistance for employers and job seekers.



THERAPY FOCUS

Therapy Focus is a community service organisation that provides therapy and professional services in home, school and community settings.



UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA CENTRE FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

The Centre for Vulnerable Children and Families draws together and co-ordinates research and consultancy activities, relating to children's welfare and strengthening families.

The Centre and Maria Harries are our local evaluators.



WHY COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN IN ARMADALE

- Armadale has low population growth with anticipated high growth
- Is identified as an area of high poverty
- Lacks basic infrastructure
- City of Armadale has low and limited income to improve and upgrade services
- Very few community services located in Armadale
- Families are isolated and transport system is poor, homelessness, drug and alcohol problems and domestic violence are common
- Poor AEDI results
- Armadale has the second highest rate of child removal in the metropolitan area



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY DOMAIN

Domain	% developmentally vulnerable	% performing well
Physical health and wellbeing domain: (Child is healthy, independent, ready each day)	11.2	29.2
Social competence and wellbeing domain: (Child plays, gets along with others and shares, is self confident)	14.6	21.1
Emotional maturity domain: (Child is able to concentrate, help others, is patient, not aggressive or angry)	10.9	15.2
Language and cognitive skills domain: (Child is interested in reading and writing, can count and recognise numbers, shapes)	20	4.5
Communication skills and general knowledge domain: (Child can tell a story, communicate with adults and children)	10.7	30

COMMUNICATION CAPERS -WHAT THE PROJECT DOES

All children in the kindergarten /pre-primary (4 and 5 year olds) are profiled using a tool developed by Therapy Focus. 8 schools are participating.

The screener produces a profile on the following areas

- Conversational skills
- Development of words and concepts
- Storytelling skills
- Understanding of language
- Articulation of sounds (not a focus of the project)



THE RESULTS OF SCREENING ARE USED

- To provide qualitative data on areas of need for individual children in order to plan group based interventions and provide feed back to parents
- Referral recommendations are made to teachers who discuss with parents
- Teachers receive a class profile of oral language difficulties in the class
- Parents receive a parent consultation (where feasible) and information on their child's difficulties and strategies for working with their child
- To develop oral language programs for the classes

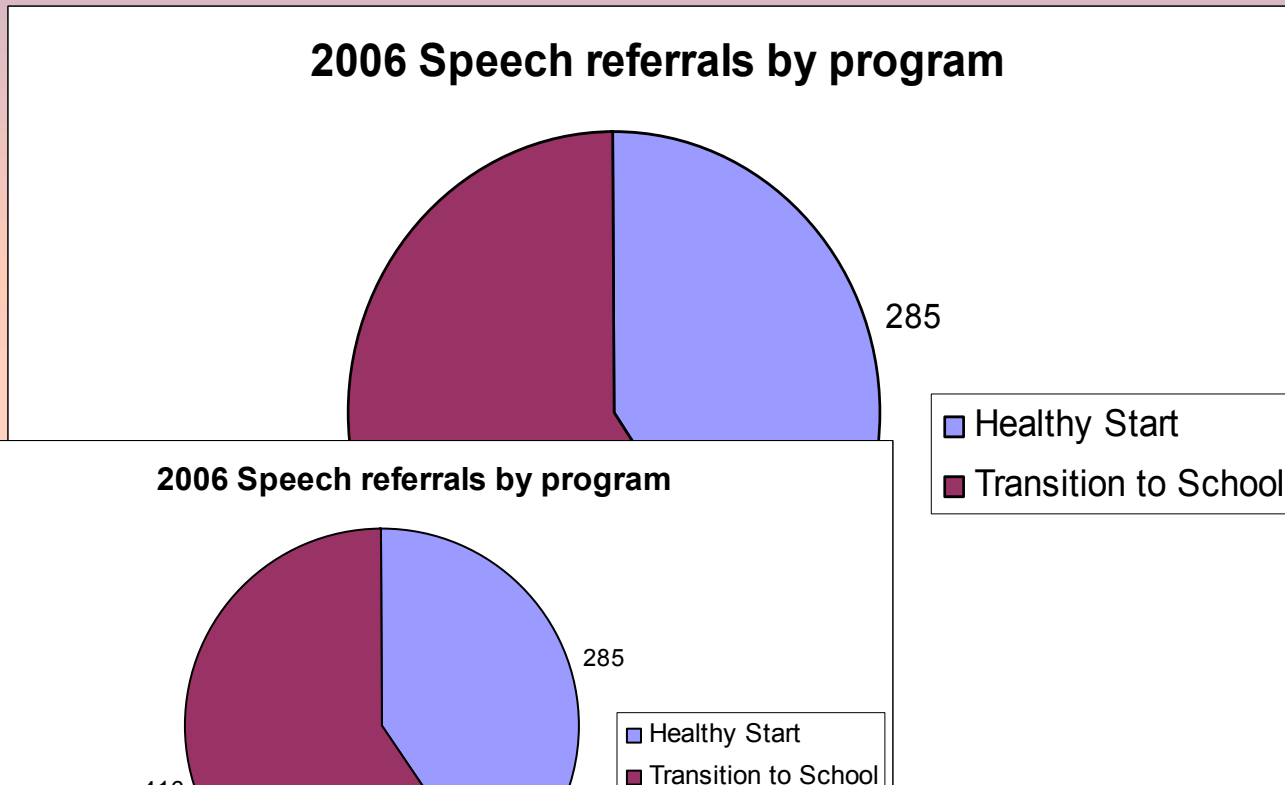


WORKING WITH THE SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

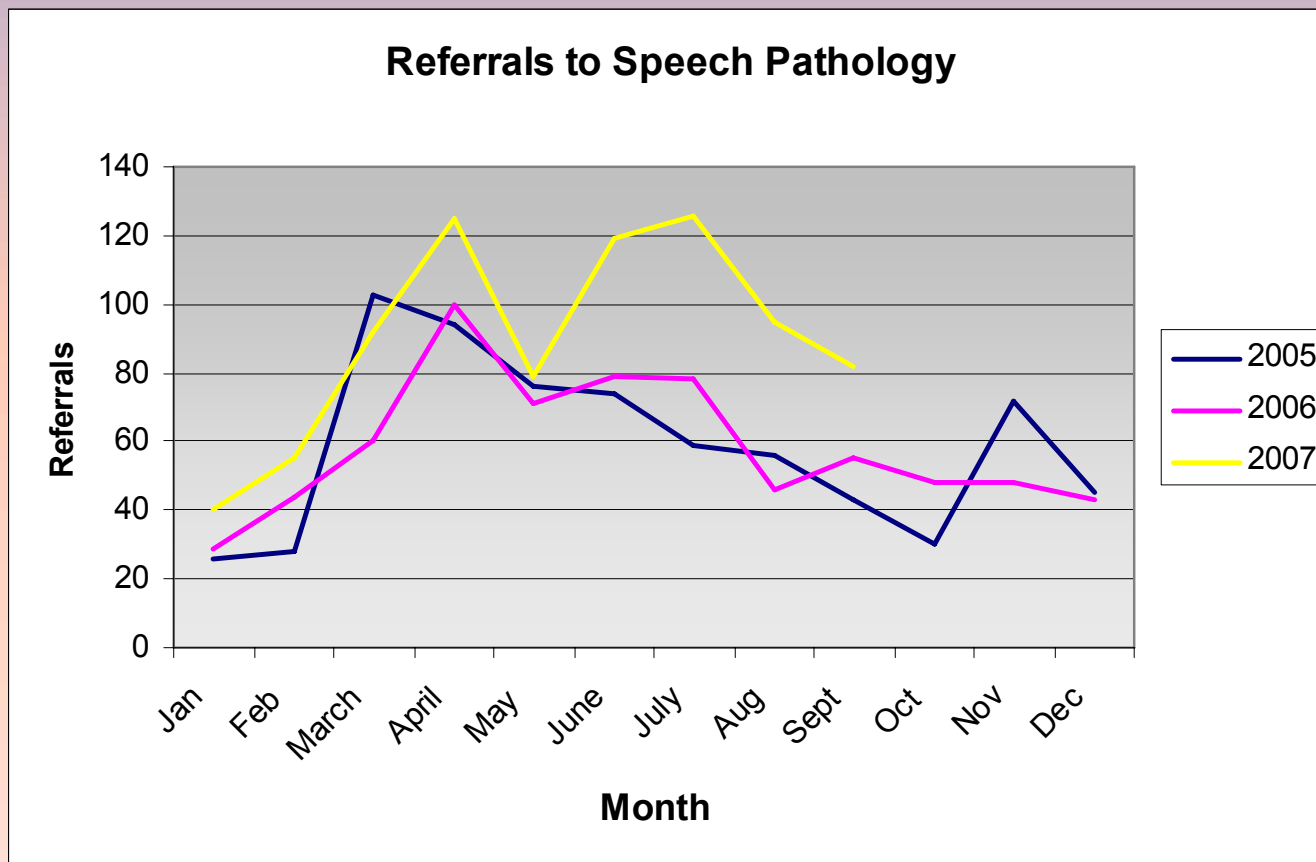
- Teachers receive training and resources to work with small groups and whole class activities for improving oral language skills.
- Parents are offered workshops and an individual consultations on their child and strategies for working with their child. Some workshops have had up to 20 parents attending.
- Parents have really become engaged as the project has progressed and the referral rate to Community Health has increased significantly.



PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN BY AGE CATEGORY



REFERRALS BY AGE CATEORY



POST TESTING

- A sample screening was conducted at the end of year 2 with the participants having received varying levels of intervention depending on their time in the project, however all schools recorded increases in oral language scores.



PROJECT STATISTICS

The following table shows the estimated population of children participating in the *Communication Capers* project from January 2007 – June 2007

	Jan 2007 – July 2007
Total	
Children	620
Male	312
Female	308



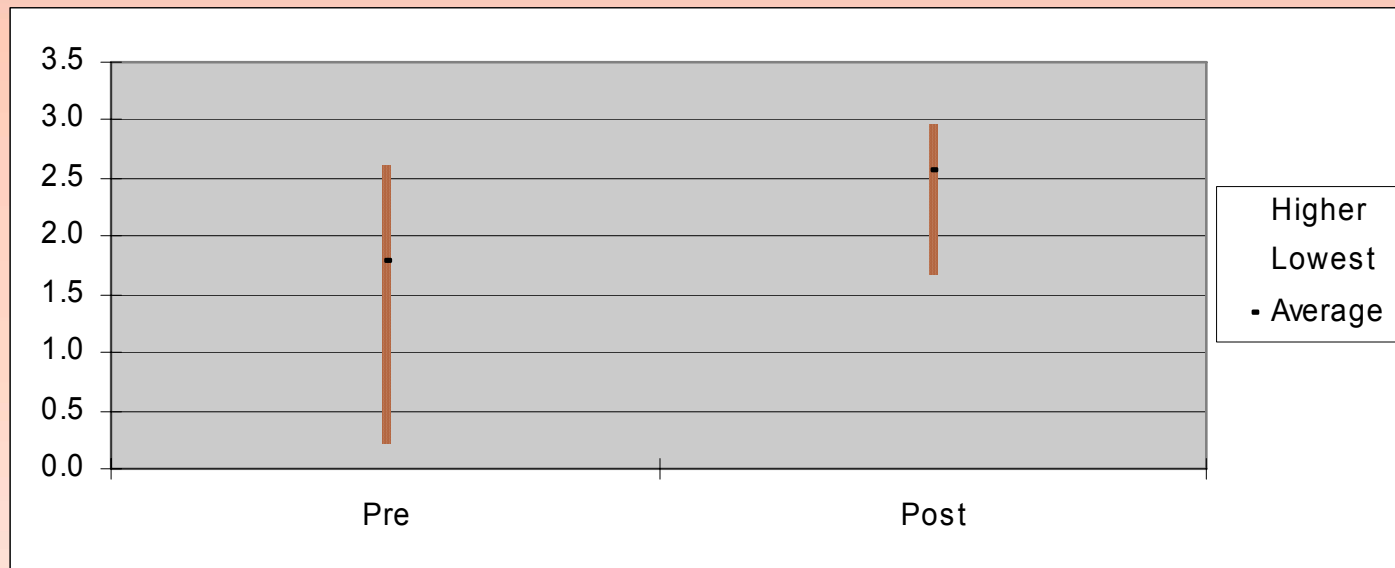
TEACHERS AND PARENTS

- 81 teachers and other staff have received training and support
- Over 1,000 language activity packs have been prepared and distributed to families in Armadale



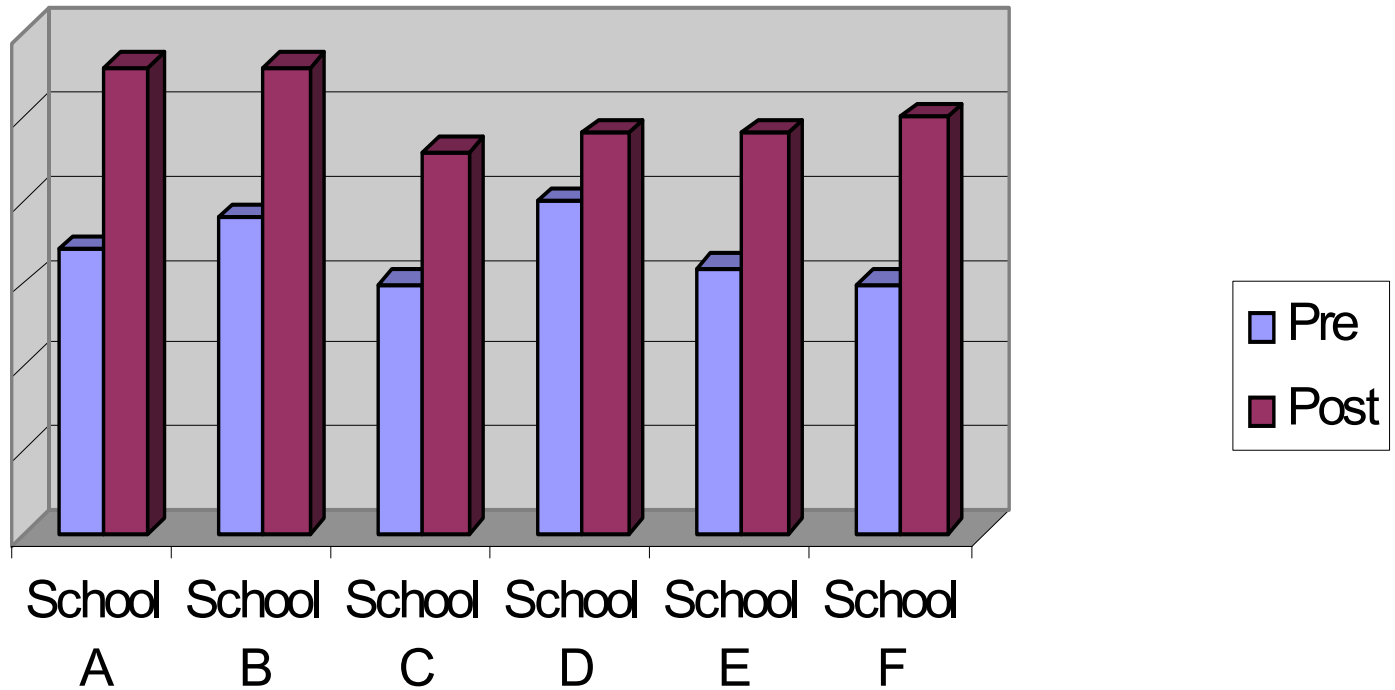
RESULTS OF THE AVERAGE OF PRE AND POST TESTING

The following chart demonstrates the improvements in the sample students' screening scores from pre-intervention screening to post-intervention screening. It also demonstrates the range of scores obtained in for each screening, and marks the average score.



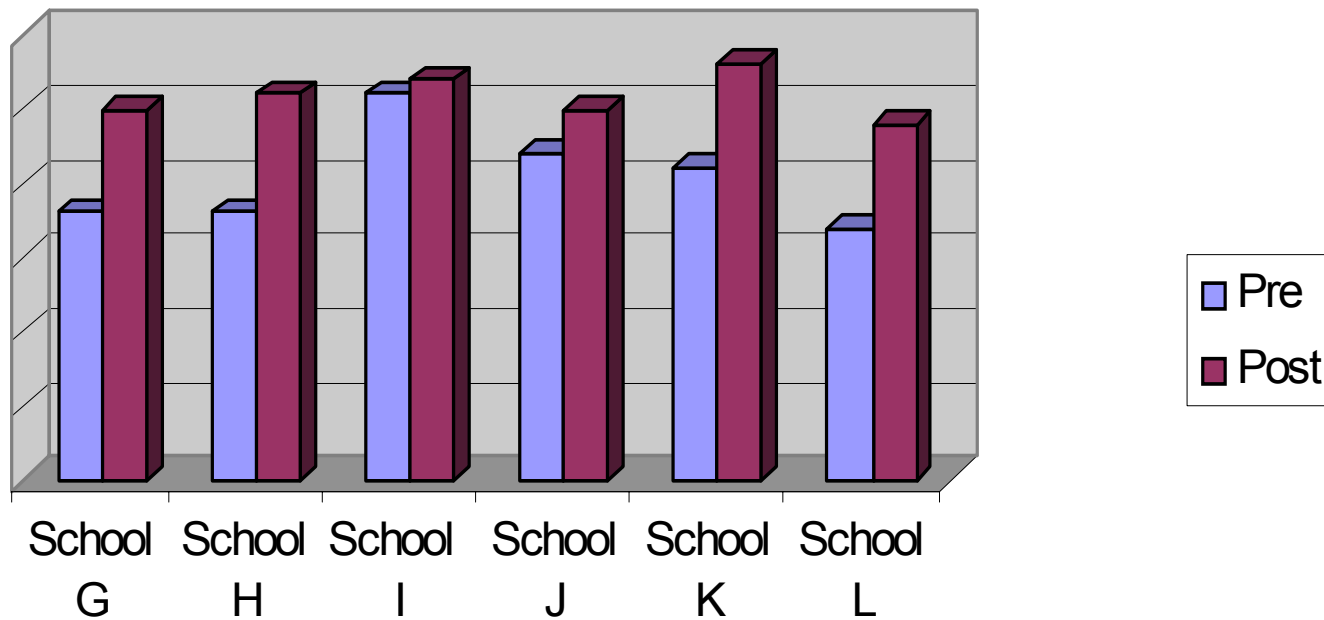
KINDERGARTEN RESULTS

Language Screeners - Kindergarten



PRE-PRIMARY RESULTS

Language Screeners - Pre-Primary



OUTCOMES

- There is evidence to suggest, through ongoing action research, that the following outcomes are being achieved:
 - Teachers are incorporating the given language strategies in their planning of oral language programs and class activities.
 - Teachers are demonstrating improvement in modelling language in class.
 - Teachers indicate improved confidence in targeting specific language skills required by their students.
 - Teachers indicate increased awareness in the range of resources available to target oral language.
 - Parents are accessing resources and working with their children



COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Community Health Speech Therapy Services have worked with Communities for Children and Therapy Focus and the following has been achieved

- We now have shorter waiting lists and 0-3yr olds receive priority
- Referral process has been simplified and workshops are being held for Childcare Centres to increase confidence in referring
- Through the Kindergarten/Pre-primary Network meetings (another CfC project) support is offered to non-participating schools



COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUSTAINABILITY CONT'D

- Therapy Focus is working with schools and Government departments on strategies and future directions and grant applications
- Schools are now interested in 0-3 and there are now 10 playgroups operating at schools in the Armadale area
- New Parenting Party plan (facilitating partner project) will have a language module developed by Therapy Focus



COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUSTAINABILITY CONT'D

- Early Years Network is applying for a grant to introduce Let's Read
- Language activities are provided at all major community events through Parent show bags
- New service Rhyme Time is currently setting up in Armadale
- Parent satisfaction increases the uptake of services and awareness of the importance of language in the early years

