Reading in the Early Years

A Settlers Primary School Guide for Parents and Carers
Learning to read and write starts long before your child commences school. Taking part in meaningful pre-reading and writing activities plays an important role in the development of early Literacy skills. At Settlers Primary School we are committed to developing students into confident and proficient readers. An essential part of this is a close partnership with parents and caregivers. The purpose of this booklet is to inform you about our school’s approach to Home Reading and to provide you with useful information and tips on how to support your child.

Children develop a disposition to read as stories and books are read to them. They also discuss how texts are structured, how to use book language and learn about the rhythm and expression needed for reading aloud. They should see the reader as a role model of reading behaviour. When young children play at reading they imitate what they have seen – turning the pages, looking at the pictures, reading the words in that special ‘tone’. As a parent you can help to build on this so that children develop a love of books and early reading skills.

The Early Years

The development of communication skills is a pre-requisite to the development of good Literacy skills: the ability to read and write. Children with poor communication skills often perform poorly, find it difficult to express themselves and struggle with Reading. It is therefore of no surprise that communication is an essential process featured heavily throughout the Early Years Learning Framework and new Australian Curriculum. The next few pages incorporate ideas and references as to how you can best support your child in their Literacy.
Pre-Reading Skills

Whilst all children develop speech at an individual rate, research shows that there is a general pattern to a child’s sound development.

**Birth to three years:**
- lip sounds: p, b, m, w
- tongue tip sounds: t, d, n
- back of the mouth sounds k, g

**By four and a half years:**
- tongue tip sounds: s, z
- middle of the mouth sounds: sh, ch
- other sounds: l, j, f

By the time they are 8½ years of age, children should be able to say all sounds clearly.

It is also important to understand that bilingual children may take longer to learn the sounds as pronunciation can vary between languages. For more detailed information about speech development visit [www.speechpathology/australia.org.au](http://www.speechpathology/australia.org.au), or contact your local health practice.
The Importance of

Children can begin to read and write at any age, however, their development needs to involve much more than learning letters and sounds. Before they can begin to decode words they need to be able to break the words into sounds. This recognition is called **phonological awareness** and is an important pre-requisite for successful early readers. Phonological awareness progresses from the larger unit of the syllable to the smaller unit of the phoneme. To complement your child’s learning at school you can help them with: Syllable Play, Rhyming and Phoneme recognition.

**Syllable Play**

- For every syllable we say the jaw normally drops slightly. This is often called ‘chin bumps’ and is a great way to help your child learn. Place the back of your hand just under your chin and say ‘walking’, your chin should drop twice.
- Clap the syllables or beats in a word, for example, giraffe
- Who can think of the word with the most syllables?

**Rhyme Play**

- Nursery rhymes are a great way to practise rhyming and can also incorporate counting skills.
- Use chalk to draw hopscotch on the floor and write a short 3 or 4 letter word or place a picture in each square, for example, cat, dog, bed, sun. Your child throws a beanbag onto a square, hops to it and says the word or what is in the picture. You say another word (sometimes a rhyming word, sometimes not) and ask the child if it rhymes or not. If they answer correctly, they get another turn.
- Play ‘odd one out’. Say three words (two of which rhyme) and your child has to identify the one that doesn’t rhyme.
- Play ‘I spy something rhyming with …’
Pre-Reading Skills

Letter Play

Have magnetic letters on your fridge.

Put some sand on a tray and allow your child to practise drawing letters. Remember though, always talk in terms of the sound that the letter makes and the difference between this and the letter name. For example, the letter /ef/ makes a /ffffffff/ sound.

There are also lots of great activities at: www.kidsparkz.com/52lettersgames.html

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the King's horses and all the King's men,
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree,
Merry, merry king of the bush is he.
Laugh, kookaburra; laugh, kookaburra!
Gay your life must be.
Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree,
Eating all the gumdrops he can see.
Stop, kookaburra; stop, kookaburra!

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.
Up Jack got, and home did trot
As fast as he could caper
He went to bed and bound his head
With vinegar and brown paper.

Leave some there for me.
Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree,
Count all the monkeys he can see.
Stop, kookaburra; stop, kookaburra!
That's not a monkey, that's me.
Reading Strategies

There are many different strategies that we use when we are reading. The following are those most relevant to your child during the early years of their reading development.

**De-encoding Skills**

**Sounding Out**
I use my knowledge of letters and sounds to take a word apart and then blend it back together.

**Reading on**
I may skip a word I don’t know and keep reading to see if there are clues further on in the text that may help me to understand it.

**Chunking**
I separate the word into meaningful sections and then put them together to read the word, for example, in-to

**Adjusting the Reading Rate**
Sometimes I may have to slow down so that I can understand new information and clarify the meaning.

**Re-Reading**
I may re-read a sentence to help me really understand what is happening.

**Creating Images**
As I read I create a picture in my head about what I am reading. I may find this hard if I can not relate to the text.

**Predicting**
I can use prediction before I read by thinking about what I may already know. I can also make predictions during my reading.

**Comprehension Skills**
Reading for Pre-Schoolers

The most important thing you can do to help your child is to read with them, often. The sooner you can expose your child to books, the better and this includes babies too.

Babies and Infants

- Make reading aloud to your child an enjoyable part of your daily routine. If they get tired or restless, stop reading.
- At first, read for no more than a few minutes at a time, several times a day.
- Don’t be discouraged if you have to skip a day or don’t always keep to your schedule.
- Infants and toddlers love books where they can lift flaps, feel textures and turn the pages themselves. As they do this, encourage them to talk about the book.
- Your child may pretend to read the book, or say nonsense words as they turn the pages. This is perfectly acceptable as it shows they are beginning to engage with the text.

Toddlers

- Try to read aloud to your child every day.
- Read books that are ‘predictable’ so that your child can have fun guessing what happens next.
- Use your ‘magic finger’ to point to the words and pictures as you read. This helps your child begin to understand that stories are made up by words and that each letter has its own sound.
- Point to pictures that your child can relate to, for example, “Look at what they’re eating for their picnic. Do you remember when we had a picnic like…?”
- If your child has a favourite book, don’t be afraid of reading and re-reading it. You may become tired of the same story but your child will enjoying being read to and learning at the same time.
- Read with enthusiasm; alter your voice for the characters, use facial expressions and add sound effects.
- Children love fun repetition. If the book has repetitive words or phrases, point to them and encourage your child to join in.
- Support your child’s development by making sure that your child has access to pencils, crayons and paper.
It takes a lot of time and effort to learn to read and children need to know that their hard work is being recognised. With lots of practice and support from parents and teachers, students can begin to gain confidence in their skills. Be patient and flexible with your child’s efforts.
Glossary

Some words or terms you may hear your child’s teacher use when they are talking about reading:

**Text** - any form of communication from which meaning is gained, e.g. books, videos, websites.

**Guided Reading** - when small groups of students work with the teacher to learn new reading strategies to help them make meaning of the text, learn new vocabulary and improve their fluency. In Guided Reading students use a book at their Instructional reading level.

**Home Reading** - the reading students do at home to practise their reading skills. For Home Reading students use a book at their Easy reading level.

**Instructional Reading level** - the level of text that is best to use for teaching a student new decoding and comprehension strategies. This is the level of text that will be used in Guided Reading lessons in class. At the Instructional level students will make some errors and their fluency will be a bit stilted.

**Easy Reading Level** - the level of text that is best for students to practise their fluency and comprehension skills. The book should be easy for them to read, meaning they know most of the words, and they read smoothly.

**Reading Strategies** - the methods students use to help them:
1) understand what the text was about
2) work out tricky words
For example: using the pictures, sounding out, re-reading, etc
Making the Most of

At Settlers Primary School, the class teacher listens to students reading on a regular basis. This allows them to determine your child’s fluency rate (how smoothly they can read) and also their level of comprehension (how much they understand). The teacher can then use this information to work out the child’s **Instructional** reading level. This is the level of text that is best suited for the child to learn new strategies, develop vocabulary and build comprehension. For Home Reading, children are given a book that is at an **Easy** Reading level. We do this to ensure that Home Reading is enjoyable and allows them to practise the skills they are developing in class.

For more information about Home Reading in Kindy, Pre-Primary and Year 1, please refer to the Settlers Home Reading Policy (available from your teacher).

**Supporting Your Child with Home Reading**

When reading books is a regular part of family life, you send your child a message that books are important, enjoyable and full of new things to learn. Make a special time for reading. Before bed is the ideal time but make sure it is away from the TV!

**Before Reading**

- Have a look through the book first so that you can identify different characters and any good places to stop and ask a few questions, e.g. what do you think the dog will do next?
- Prediction is a reading skill and is a great way to start the book. Ask your child to use clues from the front cover, illustrations and title to predict what the book might be about.
- Discuss the author and illustrator; have you read any more of their books?
Home Reading

During Reading
- With Home Reading, there are no rules that say you cannot read the book to your child first. Children learn by example so remember to use expression, laugh, look sad, etc.
- Remember to use your ‘magic finger’ to point at the words as you read and encourage your child to do the same.
- Never miss bits out or change parts as children have an uncanny way of knowing this.
- If you are reading the book first, pretend you can’t read a word and see if they can help you.
- Allow your child to hold the book themselves and to gently turn the page.
- Prompt your child to talk about the pictures as they are reading, for example, why do you think the wolf is sitting in the tree?

What happens if your child find some of the words difficult?
If your child is struggling to pronounce a word, try some of the following ideas. Don’t try all of them as this detracts from the enjoyment of reading. Ask your child to:

- Skip over the word and read-on to the end of the sentence. This way they can use clues within the sentence to try and figure out the meaning of the word.
- Look at the first and last letter of the word.
- Sound out each letter to build the word before blending the sounds back together.
- Look at the pictures for clues.
- Look at patterns in the words, for example, words ending in ‘ed’ or ‘ing’.

If a word or sentence is too tricky, leave it and re-visit it later if your child seems happy to do so.

Remember that the aim is to enjoy and understand the story rather than read every single word correctly.
The Importance of

Home Reading continued...

After Reading

*Re-tell* is an important skill to develop as it helps children pick out the parts they think are important. Try the following activities:

- Encourage your child to re-tell the story to another family member whether it be a brother, sister or grandparents over the phone.
- Make a simple hand puppet with an old (clean!) sock. Your child can then pretend the puppet is re-telling the story.
- Ask your child to make a little book, with words if possible, to re-tell the story in a few pictures.

Ask lots of questions:

- Did you enjoy the book?
- What was your favourite part?
- How did you feel when…?
- If you could change the ending what would it be?

**Signs that children are reading effectively:**

They read the words fluently and stop for punctuation. They don’t need to sound out the words. They change their voice to suit the different characters. They can answer questions about what they have just read.

**Developing the skills of comprehension**

We often make the assumption that because children can read the words in a text, they understand it. However, reading is not purely about ‘decoding’ the text. Successful readers use a process of active enquiry and use questioning before, during and after their reading. The development of comprehension skills therefore forms an essential part of development in reading. If you want to support your child’s development, there are three types of questioning you should use.
Good Comprehension

**Literal**
This is the easiest type of question as the answer is right there in the text. Often the question will start with; Who, Why, What, When, Where?

*For example:*
How many ducks are in the pond?
Where did Goldilocks fall asleep?

**Inferential**
This is slightly harder as the information is not directly stated in the text and you have to piece together clues. Question starters can be: What do you think would happen if…? Why do you think…?

*For example:*
How do you think Baby Bear felt when he returned from his walk?
Why do you think the little girl is crying?

**Evaluative**
This is the hardest type of questioning for young children because the answer is not in the text and the child has to find an answer in their head. These types of questions have varied openers but can often include: Should…? Would…? Why…?

*For example:*
Do you think that Goldilocks should have entered the house? Why?
What would you do if you were the kangaroo in the story?
Making the Most

With so many books to choose from, it can sometimes be difficult to know which ones are the most appropriate for your child. Libraries are a fantastic place to start and your friendly librarian will be able to help you pick the right books.

A trip to the library can create memorable experiences for you and your child and demonstrates that reading is fun. Help each other to choose a book and then have some quiet time to look at it before you borrow. Showing a positive attitude towards reading and writing can have a tremendous impact on your child’s development in Literacy. Don’t worry if you find reading difficult yourself, your local library also has information about adult reading programs. As well as the school library, our local libraries are Safety Bay, Warnbro and Rockingham.

Create your own library

Working together to create a special place for your child’s books demonstrates the importance of reading and it doesn’t have to be expensive. There are lots of op-shops and second-hand book shops where you can buy reading material for your child.

１ Choose a special place to keep the books so your child knows where to look for them.

２ Don’t worry if you don’t have a bookcase, or spare shelf. Instead, create your own using cardboard boxes and have fun decorating them with your child.

３ Decide on an order to store the books. You could do this in order of favourite books, by series, books about animals, etc.

４ If you don’t have time ask an older brother or sister to help out.

“Children are like seeds for beautiful flowers. They are pre-programmed to grow but need all the right conditions to flourish to their full potential.”
The School Library

Each class visits the school library once a week and students in Kindy, Pre-Primary and Year 1 are able to borrow one book. If your child finishes their book before it needs to be returned, the library is always open for half-an hour before and after school to change it. If you’re not familiar with how our library works, follow these simple guidelines.

- Every book has its place on the shelves. The tubs of books in the Junior section of the library are also in order. Please consider others by replacing the books in the correct order.
- Pre-Primary to Year 7 students use a browser with an allocated number. Make sure the browser is placed in the shelf (or tub) where you remove the book from. That way, if you decide not to borrow that book you can easily return it to its correct home.
- Take care of your book and remember, no eating or drinking whilst you read it.
- If your book becomes damaged, please let the librarian know as she has the correct equipment to repair it.

Remember: it’s natural to want to compare your child’s reading abilities with those of other children of the same age, but not all children develop reading skills at the same pace. What’s important is that you are aware of your child’s reading abilities so that you can choose books and activities that will help him or her improve.

“It is not who parents are but what they do that makes a difference to their children’s learning”

(De Sylva, 2004)
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