



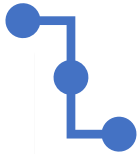
Fact sheet 9/2020

OVERVIEW – LITERACY FROM YEARS 3-6

In Years 3-6 children become more independent in their literacy learning. The depth and breadth of their knowledge and skills increases and they learn to use more complex literacy strategies. They also apply their literacy skills for learning in other school subjects and for exploring their interests outside of school.

In this fact sheet, we summarise guidance from the UK-based *Education Endowment Foundation* and the Australian *Evidence for Learning (E4L) Group*³. This guidance aligns well with the Australian Curriculum¹. We also provide some practical ways that parents and carers can help children in years 3-6 to further develop their literacy.

Key messages:



Literacy has different elements. They are separated in the guidance^{2,3} and in the text below, but they are linked in practice.



In upper primary school, children:

1. consolidate their literacy skills both for understanding and for composing their own texts
2. build their vocabulary, and
3. become more fluent, so they can focus more on the content of what they are hearing/speaking, reading/writing, or viewing/creating.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

- Oral language continues to be important for helping with reading and writing, vocabulary, and thinking and communication.
- Most children have learned how to 'decode' words but they need to keep building their vocabulary so that they also understand the meanings of the words they read.
- Children need to be explicitly taught new words and encouraged to discover and experiment with words in many different environments.

How you can help:



Talk with your child about everyday activities, such as shopping, cooking, gardening.
Ask specific questions about your child's day, such as 'What did you do at lunchtime today?'.
Discuss events together, asking questions such as 'Do you think this is fair?', 'What if...?'.
Listen to an audiobook with your child and then talk about it together.

READING

- The more fluent a child becomes in reading, the less they need to focus on recognising words, and the more they can focus on understanding the meaning.
- The more motivated a child is to read, the more they will read and more their reading fluency and confidence will develop.
- Children need regular and frequent practice to increase their self-confidence in reading.
- Learning to apply comprehension strategies is very useful for children in Years 3-6.

How you can help:



Continue reading aloud and reading together, even if your child can read independently.
If they like a particular author or topic, help your child find other books by the same author or about the same topic.

Encourage your child to use a dictionary to look up words they don't know.

Keep reading enjoyable: enable your child to choose what to read and show an interest.

Before and after reading a book, help your child's understanding by asking questions, such as:

- 'What is this story about?'
- 'What is your favourite part?'
- 'What has happened so far?'
- 'What do you think might happen?'

WRITING

- To support children with composing their own text it helps to show how writing can be broken down into a series of steps: planning, drafting, sharing, evaluating, revising, editing, and publishing.
- Learning to write also involves learning that there are different types ('genres') of writing that suit different audiences, for example to tell a story, provide information, or persuade people.
- Learning to spell correctly works best when spelling is related to topics children are learning about, both in school and at home.
- Children need lots of opportunities to practise their writing so they can develop their own voices as confident writers for real audiences.

How you can help:



Give your child different writing materials to make writing fun.

Help your child to edit their work for mistakes, giving support without being judgemental.

Show off your child's writing, for example putting it on the fridge.

Encourage everyday writing, such as shopping lists, birthday cards, keeping a diary, and messages (sms, emails) to family members.

Play word games together, including boardgames, crosswords, rhymes, making words from number plates, and using fun online spelling apps.

ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLING STUDENTS

→ As parents or carers you spend a lot of time with your children and know them well. If you are concerned that your child seems to be struggling with their literacy, it is important to talk with their teachers.

Teachers can:



Use their own professional knowledge as well as formal tests to check if your child is meeting their literacy milestones.

Discover if there is a specific aspect of literacy your child finds hard.

Adapt their teaching to match what your child needs help with.

Arrange for additional support if needed.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO AT HOME?



Be positive about school learning.

If you have time, become involved in school-community engagement initiatives.

Visit your local library and ask for books on topics your child is interested in.

Model literacy in many different ways (read a book, write a postcard, listen to a podcast, watch a documentary, look up a website, make a shopping list, read a map) and explain what you're reading / writing / hearing / seeing with your child.

Encourage your child to use their imagination, be creative and collaborate.

Make literacy activities fun and enjoyable, not a chore or a test.

Praise your child's efforts.

REFERENCES AND USEFUL LINKS

Sources

- ¹ ACARA (n.d.). Literacy. <https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/literacy/>
- ² Education Endowment Foundation (2017). *Improving literacy in Key Stage 2*. London: Education Endowment Foundation. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/literacy-ks-2/>
- ³ Evidence for Learning (2020). *Improving literacy in upper primary*. Sydney: Evidence for Learning. <https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/guidance-reports/improving-literacy-in-upper-primary/>

Useful links

Evidence for Learning (Australia):

<https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/assets/Webinars/2020/Webinar-Improving-Literacy-in-Primary-School-.pdf>
<https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/assets/Webinars/2020/Webinar-Home-Supported-Learning.pdf>

Other Australian sources:

<https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/parent-information/>
https://petaa.edu.au/imis_prod/w/Teaching_Resources/w/Teaching_Resources/Parents_guide.aspx
<https://theconversation.com/ereaders-arent-destroying-reading-theyre-just-changing-it-34664>
<https://theconversation.com/does-your-child-struggle-with-spelling-this-might-help-104410>
<https://theconversation.com/research-shows-the-importance-of-parents-reading-with-children-even-after-children-can-read-82756>
<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/school-learning>

Tasmanian sources:

<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents-carers/parent-fact-sheets/>
<https://libraries.tas.gov.au/Pages/Home.aspx>

UK sources:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/support-resources-for-schools/>
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/blog-supporting-parents-to-undertake-brilliant-book-talk/>
<http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/7-11>

USA sources:

<https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/remote-literacy-learning-coaching-steps-families>
<https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/supporting-your-childs-literacy-development-home>
<https://improvingliteracy.org/topic/dyslexia>
<https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/understanding-screening-overall-screening-and-assessment>
<https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/advocating-my-childs-literacy-needs>

This is fact sheet #9 (out of 11), produced as part of the
“Review of Literacy Teaching, Training, and Practice in Government Schools”
and is intended to align with the Department of Education Literacy Plan for Action 2019-2022.
<https://publicdocumentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/Documents/Literacy-Plan-for-Action-2019-2022.pdf>

For information about the review, other fact sheets and five detailed reports, see:

<https://www.utas.edu.au/underwood-centre/research/completed-projects>

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