

Supporting Literacy at Home

Introduction

Significance of Family Involvement

The evidence about the benefits of parents being involved in their children's education in general, and their children's literacy activities in particular, is unequivocal. For example, research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's performance at school, both in primary and secondary school.

The impact is the same regardless of ethnic background, family income, maternal level of education, or child's gender.

The Home Environment

Literacy is one of the areas where parents have the facilities (a book or other reading materials) to become involved and to make a difference. Indeed, of all school subjects, reading has been found to be most sensitive to parental influences. In turn, success in reading is a gateway to success in other academic areas as well.

Simple interactions, such as being read to, and exposure to books, magazines, newspapers and environmental print, impact children's progress in learning to read.

There is also ample evidence that parents who promote reading as a valuable and worthwhile activity have children who are motivated to read for pleasure. Involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills, but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom.

(Adapted from "Why Families Matter to Literacy", available from The National Literacy Trust)

The aim of this is to give parents and carers some ideas for how they can support their child's literacy development. It is divided into the three key areas for literacy: reading, writing and speaking & listening. There is also a list of helpful websites on the back of the leaflet, but this is by no means comprehensive.

We hope that you will find this interesting and useful.

READING

You can help your child enjoy reading by helping him or her find interesting things to read. If your child enjoys reading, he or she is likely to read a lot and become a proficient reader. Here are some suggestions for encouraging your child to read:

- Read with your child. Talk about what you are reading together – for example, compare characters in the story with people you both know.
- Make sure that you have books, magazines, and other reading materials on hand for long car rides or train trips.
- Browse together in libraries and book shops. Look at interactive CD-ROMs and the Internet as well as books.
- Encourage your child to look at the graphic features in reading materials, such as photos, illustrations, and charts. Help your child understand how they are used and what their purposes are.
- Access the Internet together and talk about the things you find.
- Consider getting a subscription to a children's magazine on nature, sports, science, or another area that interests your child.

Many children like to read such materials as these:

- Stories that reflect their image of themselves
- Song lyrics or scripts that appeal to their musical and artistic tastes
- Materials that are amusing, such as jokes or funny stories
- Fiction that focuses on action or plot
- Books in a series that allow the reader to connect with the characters
- Science fiction or fantasy
- Newspapers and magazines
- Materials with both print and pictures, such as comic books
- Things that they can read with others – such as jokes, game scores, or brain teasers
- Non-fiction books or articles

Reading and the National Curriculum

At school, students will learn to:

- Develop their appreciation of reading by:
 - Reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction from a range of genres, historical periods, forms and authors;
 - Choosing and reading books independently for challenge, interest and enjoyment
- Understand increasingly challenging texts by:
 - Learning new vocabulary and using dictionaries;
 - Making inferences and referring to evidence in the text;
 - Knowing the purpose, audience and context of writing and using this information to aid comprehension;
- Read critically by:
 - Knowing how language, grammar, presentation and organisation affect meaning;
 - Recognising poetic conventions and how they're used;
 - Studying setting, plot and characters
 - Understanding how and why drama is effective
 - Comparing texts

WRITING

Your child needs plenty of practice in writing for a variety of purposes. Here are some things you can do to encourage your child to write on a regular basis:

- Make sure that your child sees you reading and writing – for example, re-reading a letter as you write, preparing a grocery list
- Look for opportunities for purposeful writing at home, and encourage your child to read and write letters, lists, messages, postcards, thank-you notes, and so on.
- Encourage your child to keep a scrapbook of family holidays and to write captions or brief descriptions underneath the photographs.
- Provide interesting stationery, pens, and stickers to encourage writing.
- Encourage your child to enter writing contests in local newspapers or to write “letters to the editor” on issues he or she feels strongly about.
- Encourage your child to write letters to obtain free materials that are linked to his or her interests.
- Make writing an enjoyable, positive experience for your child.
- Suggest that your child writes a diary or blog.
- Ask to see your child’s exercise books for all subjects—ask them about their writing—why have they chosen certain words? Are they happy with the layout?
- Ask your child to read their work to you—can they spot any errors before they hand it in to the teacher?
- Encourage your child to proof read their work.
- Encourage your child to use the Literacy sections in their planner.

Writing and the National Curriculum

Students will be learning the following writing skills:

- Writing accurately, fluently, effectively and at length by:
 - Writing for a wide range of audiences and purposes, including formal essays, stories, scripts, letters and poetry;
 - Summarising and organising material;
 - Applying their knowledge of vocabulary grammar and text;
 - Using rhetorical devices
- Planning, drafting, editing and proof reading by:
 - Considering how their writing suits their audience and purpose;
 - Amending their grammar to improve its effectiveness;
 - Being attentive to the accuracy of their spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Using accurate grammar and vocabulary by:
 - Studying the impact and effectiveness of the grammatical features of the texts they read;
 - Drawing on new vocabulary and grammatical constructions that they encounter as they read;
 - Knowing the differences between spoken and written language, including the differences between formal and informal registers and the use of Standard English;
 - Using linguistic and literary terminology

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- Talk about the purpose of a book/article/TV programme etc and the author's/producer's reasons for creating it.
- Help your child understand that materials in print or other media convey a particular viewpoint or perspective.
- Share your point of view about a story, article or programme.
- Discuss ways in which language is used for persuasion. For example, discuss the powerful effects of language in advertising and in methods used to persuade viewers to watch a television show.
- Explore different interpretations of an event that are expressed by other readers – for example, in letters to the editor of a newspaper.
- Watch TV together and talk about the things that you see.
- Ask your child questions about books/websites/magazines/TV programmes that they see, for example:
 - What is this about? Why are you interested in it?
 - What does the author of this book/website/TV programme want us to know or think? Does he or she want us to believe something?
 - What does the book/website/TV programme say about children, teenagers, and parents?
 - Are all people like this?
 - How has the book/website/TV programme used words and images to communicate its message?
 - Are the opinions in this book/website/TV programme fair?
 - How do you feel about this book/website/TV programme?
 - What do you think the person who wrote this book/website/TV programme is like?

Speaking & Listening and the National Curriculum

Students will be learning the following speaking & listening skills:

- Using Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts, including classroom discussions;
- Giving short speeches and presentations, expressing their own views;
- Participating in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and building on what has been said;
- Rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to discuss language use and meaning, using intonation, tone, volume and action to add impact.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.literacytrust.org.uk/

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks3bitesize/english/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/secondary/english>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/studentlife/bookclub/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/studentlife/debate/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/pinball/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blast/writing/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/int/eng/lilies/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english/>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/english_literature/

<http://www.channel4learning.com/sites/waywithwords/index.html>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/hardspell/starspell_game.shtml

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/>

<http://www.brightknowledge.org/brightknowledge-scheme/resources/knowledge-bank/study-support/homework-and-study-skills/improve-your-reading-skills>

<http://www.brightknowledge.org/brightside/knowledge-bank>