

Home Reading Program

Beginning October 2, 2017

We have spent a lot of time thinking about and discussing this year's home reading program. Our program for this year is inspired by research and supported by the pedagogy explicitly outlined and discussed in [The Kindergarten Program Document](#). Here are two excerpts from [The Kindergarten Program Document](#) in addition to some links of articles that discuss the value in self-selected texts and important considerations for levelled books.

To help maintain reciprocal relationships between home and school, educators can encourage parents and other family members to continue to engage their children in literacy opportunities at home, and to share those experiences with the educators. Educators can communicate with children's families in various ways (for example, through telephone calls or e-mail, or through translators) about the importance of support from adults or siblings who listen and respond to what young children say, who read to them frequently, who have discussions with them, and who model reading and writing in any language. Listening to someone reading stories and other kinds of texts enables children to learn new words; to become familiar with the patterns, rhythms, and structures of a language; and to extend their experiences.

 **READ:** Ontario Ministry of Education, *Reading and Writing with Your Child, Kindergarten to Grade 6: A Parent Guide* (undated)

In the earliest stages of literacy development, children:

- ask simple "what" and "where" questions;
- mimic the reading process;
- begin to understand what reading is and how it works;
- learn that what they say can be written down;
- use simple vocabulary to describe things;
- engage in pretend play that includes language;
- listen to stories.

As they assimilate this understanding, children:

- learn to pay attention to the way print and books work;
- learn that printed letters and words represent the sounds and words of oral language;
- listen to each other with attention and engage in give-and-take conversations (turn taking);
- become aware that some words rhyme or start or end in the same way, and thus begin to develop phonological awareness;
- begin to share their ideas and responses to texts in a variety of ways;
- learn that writing can communicate a message;
- begin to explore different purposes for writing;
- represent their thinking graphically by drawing, painting, dramatizing, sculpting, building, and gesturing;
- express their thoughts and ideas with increasingly extensive and specialized vocabulary;
- ask and respond to questions that demonstrate and require predicting, making inferences, connecting, and critiquing.

<http://edublog.scholastic.com/post/what-research-says-reading-self-selected-books-fun#>

<http://blog.fountasandpinnell.com/post/a-level-is-a-teacher-s-tool-not-a-child-s-label>

With all of this in mind, we've made a decision not to make the Home Reading Program about levelled books. There is a wonderful resource for [Reading And Writing With Your Child](#), put out by the Ministry of Education. The resource discusses many purposeful ways to read and write at home, and how you can help make the link between reading and writing. Not only will the suggestions in this resource help your child develop his/her decoding (reading) and comprehension skills, but also make your child a more confident reader that is not focused on levels, but on individual success and growth.

We have TONS of books in the classroom -- *from small readers to storybooks* -- and we want children to choose books that they'll enjoy and that you can enjoy together at home. The small readers, which have been levelled in the past, will be available for your child to choose from, but in baskets without the levels marked on them. Then students can feel free to pick the books that they want, and even if they see numbers on the books, not be influenced by those numbers, but instead, by the content of the text. **We'll be re-organizing the baskets of books prior to the start of book exchange, so that levels are not the focal point. Children will help us with this organization.**

Here are some things that you can do at home to support reading skills with these child-selected texts.

1) Give your child the book to hold, and encourage him/her to look at the pictures and tell the story based on the pictures. Picture walks are great ways to increase oral language skills, introduce new vocabulary in the book (you can even give your child these vocabulary words when he/she is doing this picture walk), make links between the pictures in the book and the words on the page, develop comprehension skills, and increase interest in reading. Many beginning readers do not see themselves as readers. If we focus on just levelled texts, we inadvertently support this message, by telling students that they can only read books with a certain letter or number on them. Instead, we need to teach students how to access all texts, and **pictures** are a great way to do this! **Flipping pages and even letting your child pretend to point to words as he/she "reads," are great ways to support literacy skills in young readers.** Even **more fluent readers benefit from these picture walks**, as they help with comprehension before, during, and after reading: linking the story that the child heard to the one that he/she made up based on the picture cues.

2) After reading, talk about what happened in the book. See if your child can go back and retell the story without the use of picture cues. What about with the help of the pictures? Can your child remember the names of the characters and the different events (or content) in order? Can your child recall specific vocabulary used in the book? How might you use this same vocabulary in everyday conversations to help add it to your child's lexicon?

3) Make some links to letters and sounds. Books provide a meaningful context for learning letter-names and sounds, and even sounding out some small words together. Depending on where your child is at in terms of letter-sound knowledge, here are some activities that you can try.

- Have your child look through the book for specific letters and sounds.
- Get your child to write a list of the words that contain these letters and sounds.
- Read these words together. What other words can you add to the list?
- Have your child look for words in the book that have specific numbers of letters. Encourage your child to make a list of these words. Read them together, and even search through other books for more words to add to the list. *When reading, really emphasize the blending of sounds to help your child do the same.*
- Write down some words from the book (we'd recommend two- to five-letter words) for those children that already know most or all letter-sounds. Encourage your child to read these words by sounding them out and blending the sounds together. You can even extend this more by encouraging your child to use these words in sentences OR you can write some sentences that your child can try to read.
- Vowel sounds can be challenging for even students that know most letter-sounds. Pick a specific vowel (a, e, i, o, or u), and search for words that contain these vowels in the book. Really emphasize the vowel sound, and see if your child can read some of the words with these vowels, and even write some more words to add to these vowel lists. Phonetic spelling would be great for this kind of writing activity. This article talks about the value of this phonetic spelling - <https://www.parent.co/sight-words-are-so-2016-new-study-finds-the-real-key-to-early-literacy/>.

4) Make links to phonemic awareness skills. Rhyming, syllable counting, and even hearing sounds at the beginning, middle, and end of words are all so important for early readers. Here are some phonemic awareness activities that you can do with these home reading books.

- Have your child find rhyming words in the books.
- Have your child make up his/her own rhyming words based on different words in the books. Even try writing these words down, and emphasizing the spelling patterns that happen with rhyming words (e.g., CAT and BAT both end with AT).
- Have your child count the syllables in different words from the book.
- Have your child write a list of words that have various numbers of syllables. Use the vocabulary in the book for this list.
- Leave out the sound at the beginning of a word, and see if your child can figure out the missing sound to make the word correct (e.g., I opened the door to the ___ouse (instead of house).).
- Leave out the sound at the end of a word, and see if your child can figure out the missing sound to make the word correct (e.g., I go to sleep in my b___ (instead of bed).).

5) Encourage your child to respond to texts using the 100 Languages of Children. Here is a wonderful video that shows these "100 languages," and really emphasizes the importance of them: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO5uj1_xE98. When children respond to texts in different ways (from putting on a play about them to drawing a picture showing what happened in them), they also show their understanding of the book. Reading comprehension skills are incredibly important, and we really encourage these kinds of responses to texts in the classroom.

In Terms Of Book Exchange ...

There are many ideas here, and we do not expect that you and your child will read and respond to a book in one night. **Repeated readings of texts are so important.** We would suggest that you **read and discuss the same book for at least three days**, and possibly just **exchange a book once a week**. **A Speech Pathologist mentioned to us before that while adults often get tired of hearing the same story again and again, children love it, and will dig deeper into the text if they hear it multiple times.** We will continue to read with the children in the classroom within the context of play and linked to other literacy behaviours (such as writing).

Feel free to email us photographs or videos of what you do at home with the different books. We'll post these on the class blog under **Family Contributions**, and they may inspire how other children respond to books.

Thanks for your support of our program, and developing a real love of reading, problem solving, and risk taking in your child! This will make a difference not only now but in the years to come.

Aviva and Paula