

Parents

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Engagement, listening and attention
- Social conventions and awareness of others
- Sentence structure and grammar
- Sentence structure and grammar
- Comprehension
- Requests and questions, categorisation, retelling and elaborating
- Playful and creative use of language
- Information giving, explanation and justification
- Description, prediction and reflection
- Motivation and choice
- Conventions of print
- Phonological and phonemic awareness
- Phonics and word recognition
- Vocabulary for reading and writing
- Purpose, genre and voice
- Sequencing and summarising
- Comprehension, fluency and self-correction

Phonological Awareness

There is an emphasis in the early years at school on phonological awareness. Phonological awareness involves **language development, awareness of rhyme, syllables and sounds in words**. These skills are prerequisites to reading and writing. The development of language and literacy skills are vital for learning. Speak to your child frequently to support his/her learning. Read and practice poems in Irish, in English and/ or in your own choice of language. You could practice the rhymes he/she is learning in school and read books that are written in rhyme. Rhyme as a concept is important, and can be experienced in Irish, in English or in any language. Emphasise rhythm or syllables while reading with your child and play games with your child. It is not always necessary to conduct a formal lesson. You can support your child at the shops, out walking or while doing other things.

Ensure that these activities are enjoyable. Try these examples and others;

- Which one does not rhyme?
méar/béar/cat or **cat/hat/dog**
- What word rhymes with...?
- Count the syllables in words -
úll (x1), **plu-ma** (x2), **ba-na-na** (x3),
grape (x1), **app-le** (x2), **ba-na-a** (x3)
- Initial sounds -
Itheann Dónall Damhán Alla...
duilleoga, dathanna agus rudaí
donna or **Sammy Snake eats...**
sandwiches, sausages and snails.

There is evidence to say that children are more successful in education if they are supported at home.

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Talking and Listening

Language and literacy development is extremely important for children in the world of learning. Language is used to communicate, to discuss feelings, to gain information and to understand and develop ideas. Children begin school with some prior knowledge of language from home, both spoken and written. These skills are the starting point for school.



Have conversations regularly with your child to extend his/her vocabulary and language experience. This can be done in Irish or in the home language. All language experiences will assist with literacy development. If a child has a wide vocabulary in speech he/she will have a wide vocabulary for reading and writing. Do not be concerned if your child does not speak Irish initially if Irish is not the home language. There are stages in language development in an immersion setting. Initially the child speaks the home language and the teacher speaks the target language. Then, the child begins to use the target language in rhymes and songs and in familiar phrases and then, gradually, begins to use the target language on a wider basis. This is a long process and depends on the individual child and the support and language experience in school and at home.

Irish

Often Irish is the only language spoken to the children in a Gaelscoil or in a Scoil Ghaeltachta no matter what language is spoken at home. This means the child is immersed in the target language of the school, Irish. Parents are encouraged to attend Irish classes or to follow a learning programme to support children at home if they are not confident with their own Irish competencies. There is evidence to support the view that children who are supported at home have better success in education. Speak to the class teacher about ways to support your child's learning at home. Search for books, television programmes, computer programmes, clubs, etc. in Irish to extend your child's experience of Irish outside the classroom.

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Irish and English

Children do not need to have Irish at home to develop in this language acquisition process. The emphasis is on the concept and on literacy skills. Parents can support literacy development in Irish or the home language and this will be of general benefit in language development. Children in Irish-medium schools and in Gaeltacht schools develop the same literacy skills in Irish and in English in the primary school. Skills are often transferable and if a skill is developed in one language it often transpires in both languages.

Read with your child as often as you can in your choice of language. There are skills in reading that transpire in all language experience.

Reading with your Child

Children often have books from school to read at home and parents can support the development of reading skills. The school will offer direction regarding effective methods of support and teachers will have specific suggestions. These books will contain sight words that your child will see often. You should encourage that these words be read fluently. Then there are a variety of strategies to read new words, picture clues, textual clues, familiar phrases, meaning of the text, an initial or end sound, syllables or sounds in a word. Help your child to try these different strategies. Have regular stops in the reading to discuss meaning. Play word games with your child, the teacher will have suggestions. Read other texts as often as you can in your choice of language. There are skills in reading that transcend all languages.

Practise the strategies suggested by the school for consolidation. Read stories, information books, poems, directions, time-tables, magazines, etc. Show your child that you enjoy reading.

Writing with your Child

Encourage your child to write as often as possible, cards, notes, shopping lists, etc. Do not be concerned if this is not legible or correct, the attempt is more important. When you write yourself pronounce each word and sound it out while your child is listening. Let your child see that you enjoy writing.

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Supporting your Child

Children are best being taught skills and strategies that will render them independent in learning. We all have different ways of learning. Help your child discover his/her own method of learning and remembering information. It is important that children learn through investigation. Encourage your child when he/she makes attempts. Help your child to make connections in the things that he/she is learning. Enjoy supporting your child.



References

A Guide to the Irish Education System: *An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna*. (2014) <http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/A-Guide-to-the-Irish-Education-System.pdf>

Parental Involvement and Literacy Achievement, The research evidence and the way forward: Dr. Robin Close. (2001). National Literacy Trust

The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education. Department for Children, Schools and Families. (2013) http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-Parental_Involvement.pdf

Supporting Literacy Development at Home



'It is widely recognised that if pupils are to maximise their potential from schooling they will need the full support of their parents.'

(Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003 p. 7)

The most important thing that you as a parent can do is to build your child's confidence in speaking, reading and writing, and to promote positive attitudes and habits for life.

You are the person best placed to be a positive role model. Let your child see you reading and writing every day. Your child should realise the enjoyment that reading and writing give you, and how they are useful and necessary tools to be used on a daily basis.

It is a good idea to establish a strong predictable routine. Find a quiet comfortable spot to enjoy a book together. This can be a special time to build relationships and literacy skills simultaneously. It is a great way to spend some quality time with your child.

Key to this is selecting the right book for your child.

Literacy is the key to the rest of the curriculum.

Supporting Literacy Development at Home

The right book to read with your child will have

- high-quality illustrations
- a strong plot with interesting characters
- rich vocabulary.

Books should match your child's interests.

It is important to introduce children to a wide variety of reading material so that they may discover a personal preference.

Talk to your child about what they are interested in.

Is your child attracted more to fiction or fact books?

For fiction, think about funny books, scary books, historical fiction, fantasy, science-fiction, adventure, mystery, graphic novels and picture books

For non-fiction books, think about biographies, autobiographies, books about places, animals, the environment, how-to books (draw, paint, cook...)

What matters is that they are enjoying what they are reading.

Sourcing books for reading with your child

This should be a book that is more challenging than your child can read alone. This is a great opportunity to introduce children to more complex language, characters, and storylines which will build their vocabulary and ideas for their own writing.

Join the local library and ask the librarian for suggestions.

Look out for award-winning books, which usually have a sticker on the front.

Some Irish awards include:

- Literacy Association of Ireland Biennial Award
- Bisto Awards/Bord Gáis Energy Irish book award

International awards given for outstanding illustrations and writing include:

- Kate Greenaway Medal
- Charlotte Huck
- Caldecott Medal
- Hans Christian Anderson
- Young Reader's Choice

Supporting Literacy Development at Home



Helping children choose a 'just right' book to read independently

The 5 Finger Rule

A 'just-right' book is one in which your child can read almost all words in the text easily and one which is also interesting to them.


Use the five finger rule:

If there are more than five words on a given page that your child struggles within the book, it may be too difficult at this point in time.

It would be best to choose an easier one. It is about finding the right book for the right child.

5 Finger Rule:
Open a book to any page and start reading.
Hold up a finger for each unknown word:

0-1 = too easy
2-3 = just right
4 = OK to try
5 = too hard



Sharing a book with your child.

Talking to your child about the book as you read is as important as the act of reading itself.

On the **first** reading of a book, follow these handy steps:

Before Reading

The aim is get the child thinking about what they will read.

Discuss the cover: Front, and blurb on the back. Share your own ideas and thoughts and make predictions using clues from the cover: the title, illustrations, etc.

Make connections between the text and real life, other books read, e.g., I'm thinking this book will I be about...I think-----will happen because...This reminds me of...

During Reading

Read the text aloud with your child.

Take time to pause and discuss the pictures, the characters, the unfolding story line; make predictions... ask questions, wonder aloud.

BUT, don't slow the story down too much.

Read with expression: use different voices for the various characters...loudly, softly children are experiencing fluent reading).

Supporting Literacy Development at Home

After Reading

This is the ideal time to have a chat about the story.

Ask your child if they enjoyed the story, if it reminded them of any other books or events in their lives.

Think about the characters...their feelings, why they might have acted the way they did...and any changes they would make to the story.

See if your child can retell the main events or important parts of the story in sequence.

Conversation starters

- I remember when...
- This reminds me of...
 - I wonder if...
- My favourite part was when...
 - I wish that ...



Vocabulary

On a **second** or subsequent reading, notice the rich vocabulary and the way the author uses words to evoke emotion.

This is also a great time to reinforce common words that your child may be learning to read, write and spell in school, e.g., the, said, he, she, friend, because (dolch/fry words).

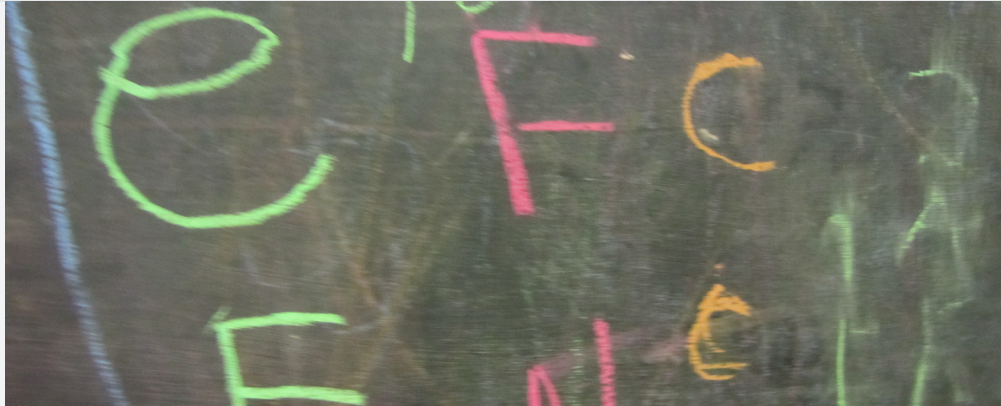
The best way to develop automaticity in sight vocabulary is through games that build familiarity, e.g., word snap, word/letter sound bingo, x's and o's.

Sight words should not be sounded out as they usually follow irregular phonetic patterns, e.g., *said* cannot be sounded out letter by letter.



Did you know that when your child can read the first 100 sight words, they can read half of any text put in front of them! It's important your child can read, write and spell these words effortlessly.

Supporting Literacy Development at Home



Writing

At home, writing should be meaningful, i.e., have a specific purpose such as writing birthday cards, shopping lists, phone messages.

Helping children notice words and word patterns supports their writing.

Approximate spelling is acceptable, e.g., 'bcoz' for 'because', and shows that your child is using letters and sounds they have learned.

Playing games like *I spy* helps children to link words and spelling.

All attempts should be praised.

Provide opportunities for your child to experiment with writing, such as a writing box.

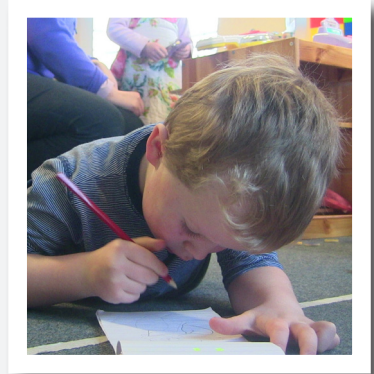
Drawing is often the first entry point into writing. Encourage your child to draw and tell you about the drawing.

Encourage your child to tell you about their writing and to read it to you.

At home, writing should not be an extension of school work, but should be fun and informal.

A writing box could include:

- Paper that is different colours, shapes and sizes
- Lined and un-lined paper
- Pens, pencils and markers
- Eraser, sharpener and ruler
- A folder to store their writing



Finally

Supporting literacy development at home is about building good attitudes and habits for life. It's an opportunity to discover ideas, opinions and preferences together.

It's a chance to spend quality time with your child, have fun, and develop their literacy skills.