

Helping Your Child With Reading and Writing

A Guide for Parents



Kindergarten to Grade 6

Ministry of Education

Minister

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Dear Parent:

When my children were in school, I became very involved in their education. This is because I believed then, and I believe now, that parents should play an active role in their child's learning. In fact, research supports the notion that involved parents make a real difference to their children's education.

You, more than anyone else, can make a difference to your child's education. More than that, you are community builders. You are the ones attending family literacy and math nights, helping out in the classroom, and getting your children ready for school. I want to thank you for all that you are doing, and I hope this guide helps you support your child's learning. It provides some practical strategies that can make learning fun. There are also some suggested resources that you may find interesting.

Education will never be static; there will always be new challenges. But we are making progress. Our goal is to reach every student, and by working with parents, teachers, principals, and other partners in education, we will realize this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kathleen Wynne'.

Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education

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A Word About Literacy and This Guide

You are an important partner in your child's education. As a parent,* you bring unique experiences that can help your child to learn. This guide contains tips that you can use to help your child with reading and writing. The tips for children in Junior Kindergarten through Grade 3 focus on helping them learn to read and write. The tips for children in Grade 4 through Grade 6 focus on helping them to read more complex material and improve their ability to write.

You don't need to do everything suggested in this guide! Many suggestions are provided to give a broad range of possible things to do. Read through them and choose the ones that you think would be most helpful for you and your child. You may also think of other activities that are enjoyable and interesting to do with your child.

If you are the parent of a child who has special needs, you are encouraged to adapt the activities described in this guide to suit the particular needs of your child.

Literacy is about far more than just reading words. It is about *understanding the meaning of language* that is found in many places – such as in books, in magazines, on websites, in manuals, on signs, in advertisements, in films, and even in conversations. Literacy is also about *being critical of* what you are reading or hearing. It also means *being able to communicate your thoughts* effectively to others through speaking, writing, and using various media.



* In this guide, the word "parent" is meant to include guardians, caregivers, and other family members who can help children learn to read and write.

Discussing ideas and sharing points of view are central aspects of literacy. Many families in Ontario come from diverse backgrounds and bring with them a rich history and a particular experience of literacy. Diverse experiences of reading, writing, and other ways of communicating can serve as meaningful discussion points within your child's classroom. Your child's teacher knows that acknowledging the unique experiences of students is just as important as acknowledging what students have in common. In recognizing diversity, more real sharing is possible. As a parent, you can reinforce these ideas with your child at home as you help him or her with reading and writing.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you read this guide:

- The meaning of the word "literacy" is constantly evolving:
 - Literacy is more than the ability to read materials in print.
 - Literacy is the ability to read and write, to listen and speak to others, and to view and to represent ideas and images in various media. It is also the ability to think critically while doing all of these.
 - Your child's teacher may refer to "critical literacy". This is a way of thinking critically with a focus on questions of fairness, equity, and social justice.



In addition to this guide, many resources are available to help you help your child develop literacy skills. You may wish to consult teachers, librarians, and the staff of community organizations that work with children. You may also want to obtain more information about the Ontario language curriculum for Grades 1 to 8 and the province-wide tests conducted by the Education Quality and Accountability Office. See page 24 of this guide for more information about these resources.

If English is not your child's first language, this guide can still be of help. It is important to read to your child in his or her first language. If your child knows his or her first language well, he or she will find it easier to learn English. As your child learns to read and write in English, you can use or adapt a variety of suggestions in this guide to help your child improve his or her proficiency in English.



Why Is Literacy Important?

People read and write for many different reasons:

- for pleasure and interest
- to keep in touch with family and friends
- to obtain and use information that will help them solve problems and make choices and decisions
- to learn about the world and to communicate their thoughts to others
- for work purposes

More broadly, literacy is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language, and culture. Literacy finds its place in our lives alongside other ways of communication. Those who use literacy may take it for granted – but those who cannot use it are excluded from much of the communication in today's world.

Knowing how to read and write paves the way to success in school that will build self-confidence and will motivate your child to set high expectations.

Kindergarten to Grade 3

How Will My Child Become Literate?

The best time for your child to start learning to read and write is when he or she is very young. This is when your child is best able to begin developing positive attitudes towards reading and writing as well as some fundamental reading and writing skills. As your child begins to read and write, discuss your child's ideas with him or her – rather than just talking about the techniques of reading and writing. Such discussion helps your child to understand what it really means to be able to read and write.

Learning to read and write does not happen all at once. It involves a number of stages that eventually lead to fluency and independence. The diagram that follows provides an overview of these stages in reading and writing.



Stages in Reading and Writing

1. Before he or she actually begins to read and write, the child:

- learns about words by playing with blocks that have letters on them, looking at picture books, playing with magnetic letters, and so on
- learns about words from songs, rhymes, traffic signs, and logos on packages of food
- learns how print works – for example, where a story starts and finishes and which way the print proceeds
- likes to look at books and to be read to
- begins to understand that his or her own thoughts can be put into print using pictures, symbols, and letters
- begins to behave like a reader – for example, holds a book and pretends to read
- begins to behave like a writer – for example, holds a pencil and pretends to write
- uses both pictures and memory to tell and retell a story

2. When he or she is first learning to read and write, the child:

- becomes aware that people often tell stories or relate information using written materials
- shows interest in suggestions for reading
- begins to match written words to spoken words and to see relationships between sounds and letters
- begins to experiment with reading, and is willing to try to say words out loud when reading
- finds the pictures helpful in understanding the words, and sees that the words convey a message consistent with the pictures
- begins to experiment with writing – for example, uses pictures, writes symbols that resemble letters, writes groups of random letters, writes words using some real letters and puts spaces between the words
- understands that illustrations and writing are different



3. As he or she learns to read and write some simple materials, the child:

- shows more confidence in using a variety of methods, such as visual cues, to identify words in reading materials
- is able to adapt his or her reading to different types of reading materials
- recognizes many words, knows how to make sense of the words, and is willing to try reading new things
- writes simple sentences, using real letters, proper space between words, and some punctuation – for example, periods and question marks
- enjoys writing and shows interest in writing in different ways – for example, writes grocery lists, short messages, greeting cards, and labels
- begins to plan, revise, and edit simple pieces of writing

4. As a fluent reader and writer, the child:

- uses a variety of methods to identify words and their meaning while reading
- connects ideas and experiences in books to his or her own knowledge and experience
- is able to predict events in a story and to read a variety of materials
- sees reading and writing as good things to do, and reads and writes on his or her own initiative and for specific purposes
- begins to use a variety of strategies to spell words correctly
- uses a variety of types of sentences when writing (for example, statements and questions), and begins to organize sentences into paragraphs
- uses a range of strategies for planning, revising, editing, and publishing his or her own written materials



How Can I Help My Child?

You are your child's first and most important teacher. When you help your child learn to read, write, and think critically, you are opening the door to the rich world of learning.

For your child, learning to read can begin with listening to you reading stories and newspaper articles aloud. Before long, your child will show interest in reading stories and other materials on his or her own. It is very important to talk about the ideas in a book or magazine, to ask questions that encourage your child to think, and to let your child talk to you about his or her responses to what has been read.

Your child can learn how to read and write more easily with your help. With regular practice, he or she will develop fluency in both reading and writing. At the same time, your child will also learn to think critically about the stories or informational materials that he or she reads.

Families can incorporate literacy activities anywhere – developing literacy is not just what children do while at school. It is important that you look for opportunities for your child to learn wherever you are and whenever you can. Literacy is part of every day in some way, no matter what you are doing or where you are. Literacy skills are used in all kinds of situations – for example, when reading food labels, when talking with other children on the soccer field, when discussing a movie with the family, or when writing lists to be posted on the refrigerator.

It's important for you to encourage your child and to show that you have confidence in him or her. Avoid comparing your child's performance with that of other children. Remember that learning to read and write does not take place all at once. Also, learning to read and write is not always easy, and children need to know that everyone learns at different rates. Children learn to read and write over time with lots of practice and with support from parents and teachers.



What Tips Can I Use?

Tip 1 | Talk With Your Child

Talking to your child and encouraging him or her to talk to you are extremely important. Listening and speaking are a child's introduction to language and literacy. Activities such as talking and singing will teach your child the sounds and structures of language, making it easier for him or her to learn to read and write.

Here are some things you can do to help your child build an appreciation for words and language:

- Tell family stories about yourself, your child's grandparents, and other relatives.
- Encourage your child to tell you about his or her day – about activities, sports, and games.
- Ask lots of questions so that your child knows you are interested in what he or she is thinking about.
- Talk with your child as much as possible about things you are doing and thinking.
- Encourage your child to tell you what he or she thinks or feels.
- Don't interrupt! Let your child find the words he or she wants to use.
- Sing songs, such as the alphabet song, and recite nursery rhymes, encouraging your child to join in.
- Play rhyming and riddle games.

Tip 2 | Make Reading and Writing Fun

Reading aloud to your child is the best way to get him or her interested in reading. Not only is it fun for the whole family, but it will also help your child to learn what reading is about. Encourage your child to write also. Here are some things you can do to help make reading and writing fun for your child:

- Read all kinds of materials – stories, poems, informational books, magazines, newspaper articles, and comics.
- Read stories aloud with drama and excitement! Use different voices for different characters in a story. Use your child's name instead of a character's name. Make puppets and use them to act out the story.
- Re-read your child's favourite stories as many times as your child wants to hear them, and choose books and authors that your child enjoys.



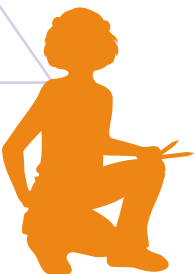
- Read stories that have repetitive parts, and encourage your child to join in.
- Point to the words as you read them. This will help your child make the connection between the spoken words and the words on the page.
- Discuss the themes of a story, and ask questions about the characters. Ask questions that make your child think about what might happen next or what he or she might do in the same situation.
- Discuss the main ideas in an informational piece, such as a newspaper article.
- Encourage relatives and friends to give your child books or other reading materials as gifts.
- Take your child to the local library. Look at CD-ROMs, videos, magazines, and the Internet, as well as books. Get a library card, which is free, so that he or she can borrow books.
- Subscribe to a magazine for your child. He or she will love receiving mail!
- Write notes to your child on paper or by e-mail.
- Encourage your child to write lists and to write cards or send e-mail messages to friends and relatives.
- Always remember to have fun. The more you enjoy yourself, the more your child will enjoy the experience.

Tip 3 | Read Every Day

Children respond well to routine, and reading is something that you and your child can look forward to every day. By taking the time to read and to talk with your child, you are showing that this is important and fun to do.

Try to read with your child as often as possible. It is the most important thing you can do to help him or her learn at school. It will also allow you to spend high-quality time together and to develop a strong and healthy relationship that is built on sharing of ideas. Here are some ideas:

- Start reading with your child when he or she is very young.
- Set aside a special time each day when you can give your full attention to reading with your child.
- Choose a comfortable spot to read, where you can be close to your child. Create a “reading area” there together.
- Choose many different books. If your child’s first language is not English, choose books both in English and in your child’s first language. A strong basis in a child’s first language makes it easier for him or her to learn a second or third language – in this case, English.



- Vary the length of reading time depending on your child's age, interests, and grade. For young children, several short sessions (of 10 minutes each) may be better than one long session (of 30 minutes).
- Read slowly so that your child can make a mental picture of what is happening in the story.
- Praise your child for talking about his or her ideas and asking questions.
- When you and your child are away from home, take along some books, magazines, and books-on-tape for your child to read and listen to.
- Even after your child has learned how to read, keep reading to him or her. By reading stories that will interest your child but are above his or her reading level, you can stretch your child's understanding and keep alive the magic of sharing books together.

Tip 4 | Talk About Books

Talking about the books you read is just as important as reading them! Talking with your child about a story or other book helps your child understand it and connect it to his or her own experience of life. It also helps enrich your child's vocabulary with new words and phrases. Encourage your child to read informational materials, such as children's science magazines or websites. Talk about the materials with your child and ask plenty of questions.

Here are some ways to help your child learn the skills needed for comprehension, reasoning, and critical thinking:

- Ask your child what he or she would like to read about.
- Read and talk about your own favourite books from childhood.
- Look at the cover and the title of a storybook with your child, and ask your child what he or she thinks might happen in the story.
- Encourage your child to ask questions and to make comments on the pictures and the story before, during, and after reading it.
- Encourage your child to think critically about all books. Does he or she agree or disagree with the author? Why? Is the information accurate or not?
- Think out loud about a book as you read, and encourage your child to do the same. For example, ask "Does this make sense? Why or why not?"
- Give your child time to think about the book, and then talk about it with him or her again a few days later.



Tip 5 | Listen to Your Child Read

As your child learns to read, it is very important to listen to him or her read aloud. Reading to you will give your child a chance to improve his or her reading skills with practice. By doing this, he or she will build confidence.

As you listen to your child, remember that your reactions are very important. Above all, listen without interrupting. Be enthusiastic and praise your child as often as you can. If possible, be specific with your praise so that your child will know what he or she is doing well. Finally, don't forget to encourage your child to read on his or her own. Here are some tips:

- Show your child that you are enjoying the book by showing interest and asking questions.
- Be patient. Allow your child time to figure out tricky words. Show your child how he or she can learn from mistakes.
- Pick a time for reading when there will not be any interruptions.
- Make sure that your child selects books that aren't too difficult. Don't worry if your child chooses books that are a little easier than the ones he or she reads at school. On the other hand, if your child chooses a book that is slightly above his or her grade level, praise your child for choosing it and be prepared to help where necessary. Your child will see that it is good to challenge oneself.
- Encourage your child to "listen" to his or her own reading. Listening will help him or her to hear mistakes and try to fix them.
- When your child is just beginning to read, you may want to "share" the reading. You can take turns, or try reading together.
- After reading, talk about the story to make sure that your child understood it.



Tip 6 | Set an Example for Your Child

As a parent, you are your child's most important role model. Here are some reading and writing activities that you can do with your child:

- Read recipes, food labels, schedules, maps, instructions, advertisements, flyers, and brochures.
- Read traffic, store, and restaurant signs.
- Read novels, newspapers, and/or magazines for enjoyment.
- Look up information in phone books, cookbooks, manuals, atlases, and dictionaries.
- Write shopping lists, telephone messages, reminder notes, and labels.
- Write the date and time of appointments and activities on a family calendar.
- Read and write greeting cards, letters, and e-mail messages.

Take the time to show your child that reading and writing are used in many ways every day. Make sure your child sees you reading and writing for your own purposes. Also, as you do reading and writing activities with your child, introduce new words and phrases to him or her.



Grade 4 to Grade 6

Grades 4 to 6 are often referred to as the junior grades. Literacy instruction in the junior grades focuses on helping students develop into critical, responsible, and effective communicators.

Students who enter the junior grades are often at different stages of development in literacy. Some students are just beginning to read or write fluently, while others may have a lot of experience in both reading and writing. As children proceed through the junior grades, they will continue to change physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. The challenge is to recognize how these significant changes influence literacy learning.

The chart that follows outlines some characteristics of the junior learner, as well as some things that teachers focus on to support children's development in the junior grades.

- Your child will bring to the classroom his or her unique abilities, needs, and experiences, as well as cultural influences and values, all of which influence how he or she will learn.
- Throughout the junior grades, your child will experience significant changes physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially.
- To engage children in literacy learning, educators need to affirm and acknowledge the personal and cultural identity of each child. All children should be guided into a growing awareness of the powerful influence of language and literacy.
- In the junior grades, it becomes increasingly important to consider how gender differences may influence the texts, topics, and instructional approaches that engage both boys and girls.

Adapted from: *Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario* (Toronto: Ministry of Education, 2004), page 15.



How Can I Help My Child?

As a parent, you can support your child's learning both at home and at school in many ways. Here are some things you can do with your child:

- Continue to build a good relationship with your child's teacher, seeking advice and suggestions for learning.
- Establish with your child a consistent routine for completing homework, including a regular study time and location, and encourage your child to maintain the routine.
- Discuss school work, successes, concerns, and interests with your child.
- Encourage your child to "exercise" his or her mind by doing crossword puzzles, brain teasers, and word searches.
- Involve relatives and family friends to help support your child's learning.
- Talk to staff members of community organizations, such as parent-child drop-in centres, who are familiar with community resources.
- Continue to offer praise as your child attempts new learning, and offer help and support when it is needed.

Keep in mind that children who read well usually come from homes where parents:

- show an interest in reading;
- read to their children;
- talk with their children about what they are reading, thinking, and doing.


What Tips Can I Use?

Tip 1 | Help Your Child Understand What He or She Reads

It is important that your child not only read the words in a text but also *understand the meaning* of what he or she is reading. You can help your child read with understanding by giving him or her assistance in using various comprehension strategies, such as these:

- making connections to things he or she already knows
- creating mental pictures of what is happening in a story
- asking questions while reading
- determining important points
- reading "between the lines"
- synthesizing or summarizing information
- using strategies for figuring out difficult words





Here are suggestions for using some of these strategies with your child.

Asking questions. Ask questions such as “Why is this happening?” “What might happen next?” or “Does this make sense?” Such questions help children make connections among various parts of a story.

Reading “between the lines.” Your child needs to learn to use information in the story, and from his or her own knowledge and experience, in order to make inferences – that is, to discover meaning that is not stated outright. This strategy of reading “between the lines” involves gathering clues and using them to “create” meaning.

Synthesizing and summarizing. Your child needs to learn to take all the information from his or her reading, summarize the important points, and then put it all together like the pieces of a puzzle.

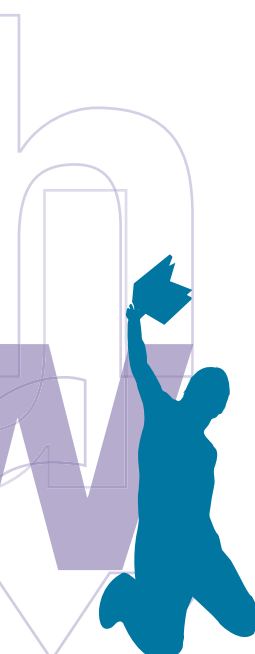
Using strategies for figuring out difficult words. There are various strategies that your child can use to figure out a word he or she doesn’t know or a difficult word. If sounding out the word doesn’t work, encourage your child to:

- divide the word into smaller parts;
- reread the words before and after the difficult word;
- skip over the word for the moment and read on farther;
- talk about what he or she has read so far to check understanding.

If a mistake doesn’t affect the meaning, let it go. Allow your child time to figure out what a word might be or to recognize a mistake.

Tip 2 | Talk With Your Child

Research shows that listening and speaking to others are the foundation for developing reading and writing skills. Children often need to talk about their ideas before they can put them down on paper effectively. Here are some ways of encouraging your child to talk with you:

- Talk with your child frequently about what he or she is reading and writing.
 - Have your child retell the main parts of the text. Ask questions to encourage him or her to provide detail and help organize thoughts.
 - Talk with your child about such things as movies, television programs, songs, and plays. Encourage him or her to express and justify opinions.
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- Have your child tell stories at special family events such as celebrations or holidays.
- Take turns sharing humorous family stories with your child.
- Be positive and encourage your child to share his or her opinions and feelings.
- Show interest in what your child is saying by being a good listener.

Tip 3 | Make Reading Enjoyable

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 stores. 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 free resources on the Internet, such as Brand New Planet (at www.thestar.com/bnp).
- 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



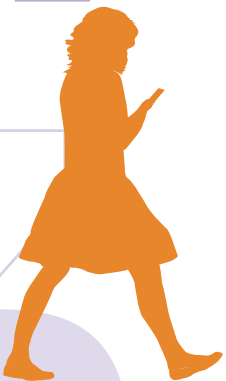
- materials with both print and pictures, such as comic books or baseball cards
- things that they can read with others – such as jokes, game scores, or brain teasers
- books or articles that contain positive or powerful ideas about our world

Children also like to view visual materials, such as cartoons and multimedia interactive CD-ROMs or Internet sites. See page 24 for some Internet sites for young people.

Tip 4 | Encourage Your Child to Write

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, rereading a letter as you write, preparing a grocery list, or keeping a journal while travelling.
- 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, journals, pens, and stickers to encourage writing.
- Play various word games.
- 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.



Tip 5 | Bring Literacy to Life Through the Arts

Research studies in arts education point to important links between learning in the arts and language development. Drama, dance, music, and visual arts experiences can motivate and engage students since they allow for self-expression and imagination. People from all walks of life use the arts to explore and convey ideas and to enhance understanding.

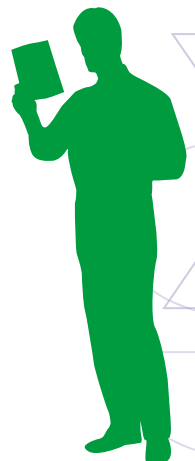
Here are some ideas for helping your child experience the arts:

- Be creative yourself – for example, take photographs or model with clay.
- Encourage your child to create his or her own games using the arts (music, drama, drawing).
- Develop your child’s ability to visualize stories by encouraging him or her to draw or paint characters and scenarios. Discuss the idea that every picture tells a story.
- Listen to music that your child listens to, and ask him or her to describe what he or she likes or doesn’t like about a song or a group.
- Explore interactive websites together that are devoted to the arts.
- Encourage your child to try out ideas through drawing or drama before writing them down.
- Encourage your child to dramatize stories, or ask your child to write and dramatize his or her own plays.
- Explore the arts with your child – for example, visit visual art exhibits, attend musical and drama performances, or go to meet local artists when they are showing their work.

Tip 6 | Be a Positive Role Model

As their children’s first teachers and role models, parents strive to provide consistent, positive examples for their children. Your involvement and support as a parent can influence your child’s attitudes and his or her interest and achievement in reading and writing. Here are some suggestions of ways in which you can actively demonstrate your own interest in reading and writing:

- Talk regularly with your child about things you have read in newspapers, magazines, and books. Ask your child what he or she has been reading.



- Show that you read for a variety of purposes. Read newspaper articles to keep informed about world issues. Read advertisements to compare different brands. Check movie listings to decide on the weekend's entertainment. Look at hockey standings to track the performance of your favourite teams. Read comics for enjoyment.
- Show that you use writing for a variety of purposes. Write grocery lists with your child. Write notes with your child when comparing items in different stores – for example, notes on measurements and colours of bicycles. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper on a topic you feel strongly about, or a letter of complaint to a manufacturer whose product is unsatisfactory.

Tip 7 | Bring “Critical Literacy” Into Your Home

Changes in society are occurring so rapidly that we need to take time to think about whether they will have positive or negative effects upon our way of living. Critical literacy is the practice of examining and discussing the *underlying messages* in print or in other media in order to better understand the world in which we live. It shows us ways of looking at written, visual, spoken, and multi-media materials to understand, question, and challenge the attitudes, values, and beliefs that lie beneath the surface.

Here are some ways you can help your child develop his or her capability in critical literacy:

- Talk about the purpose of a book or article and the author's reasons for writing it.
- Help your child understand that materials in print or other media convey a particular viewpoint or perspective.
- Check for social and cultural fairness, and look for any misleading effects of missing information.
- Share your point of view about a story or an article.
- 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.
- Respect your child's ideas, opinions, and feelings.



Here are some questions that you could ask your child in order to encourage him or her to read critically:

- What is this book about? Why are you interested in reading it?
- What does the author of this book want us to know or think? Does he or she want us to believe something?
- What does the author say about children, teenagers, and parents in this book?
- Are all children like this?
- How has the author used words and images to communicate his or her message?
- Are the opinions in this book fair?
- How do you feel about this book?
- What do you think the person who wrote this book is like?



Where Can I Get Help?

Remember that you are not alone in helping your child learn to read and write! There are many people you can ask for help – for example, your child’s teacher, family members, friends, and others in the community.

Your Child’s Teacher

The first person you should go to for information about helping your child with reading and writing is his or her teacher. When children see their parents working together with their teachers, they feel more secure and confident. Taking an interest in your child’s education will help your child do better in school. The school principal, as well as school and board support staff, can be helpful resources as well. Here are some things you could ask your child’s teacher:

- What are the goals for reading and writing? How can I best help my child in working towards these goals?
- What is my child’s current achievement in reading and writing?
- What books can my child read easily? What books does he or she find more difficult?
- What books or authors might my child enjoy?
- Does my child seem interested in reading? Does he or she choose to read for enjoyment?
- What reading strategies is my child using in school?
- What books or guides can help me help my child to read and write?

Your child’s teacher can suggest various strategies for your child to use to learn how to read, and especially to get through difficult passages. For example, if your child gets stuck on a word, the teacher might suggest that you encourage him or her to:

- think about what word would make sense in the story or sentence;
- sound the word out using phonics;
- think of a word that looks and sounds similar;
- look for parts of the word that are familiar;
- think about what would *sound right* in the sentence;
- check the pictures and the punctuation marks for clues;
- go back and read the passage again;
- ask for help with the word.

Others in the Community

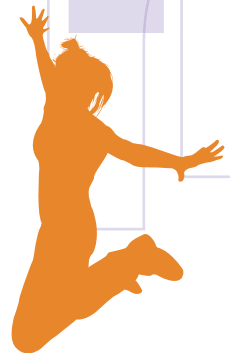
In addition to your child's teacher, you can talk to various other people in your community. Here are some suggestions that you may find helpful:

- Consider involving other people – such as grandparents, older siblings, and friends – to help motivate your child and to give support.
- Go to your local library and look for books that might be interesting to your child, such as books with interactive features. Ask the librarian for assistance.
- Talk to staff members of community organizations, such as parent-child drop-in centres. They are likely to be familiar with resources in the community that could be helpful.
- If your child has trouble reading, take your child to your family doctor to have his or her hearing and vision checked. It may be that a medical condition is contributing to his or her reading difficulties.

Government Resources

You may wish to refer to the Ministry of Education's curriculum documents entitled *The Kindergarten Program, 2006* (revised) and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, 2006* (revised). These documents are available on the ministry's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca. To obtain copies, call Publications Ontario toll-free, at 1-800-668-9938, or order online, at www.publications.serviceontario.ca.

For information about the Grade 3 and Grade 6 tests administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), visit the EQAO website, at www.eqao.com.



Some Internet Resources for Young People

The following website addresses are active at the time of publication. We suggest that you preview sites to determine whether the content is suitable for your child. Browsing sites with your child will increase his or her enjoyment and will also help your child develop the confidence to access websites independently later.

Ask for Kids – www.askforkids.com

Brand New Planet – www.thestar.com/bnp

Canadian Wildlife Federation – www.cwf-fcf.org

CBC Kids – www.cbc.ca/kids

Discovery Channel School – school.discovery.com

Funology – www.funology.com

Hockey Hall of Fame (official websites) – www.hhof.com/index.htm

How Stuff Works – www.howstuffworks.com

Kids Click! – www.kidsclick.org

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) –
www.nasa.gov/audience/for_kids/home/index.html

National Geographic Kids –
kids.nationalgeographic.com/portal/site/Kids/menuitem/

Ontario Science Centre online – www.ontariosciencecentre.ca

PBS Kids – pbskids.org/findit/

Sports Illustrated for Kids – www.sikids.com/

United Nations Cyber School Bus – www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus

Virtual Museum of Canada – www.virtualmuseum.ca







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