

## PARENT INFORMATION SESSION: READING

May 2012

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### Reading as Social Practice

Think, *what have you read this past week?* Think also – *why you were you reading that particular text?*

Today, *we understand reading as a social practice*: that is, reading is always a part of some life activity. Reading is not an end in itself

In a supermarket our eyes read the labels of the different brands of coffee so we can select the one we prefer or the one which best fits our budget. We read the TV guide to check the available programs. We read a travel guide to prepare ourselves for a trip overseas. We curl up in an armchair with a magazine, to relax and unwind at the end of a busy day or to learn how to improve our golf swing, or to find new and interesting recipes. Thus, reading always involves the construction of meaning.

Sadly, all too often,

‘In school, literacy is treated as a neutral object to be studied and mastered.

Literacy itself is treated as an autonomous object, one that has a life-world of its own, unconnected to the ways in which it is actually used by people in their lives. The children’s role is to learn it rather than to use it.’

Nigel hall, ‘Real Literacy in a School Setting: Five Year Olds Take on the World,’ in *The Reading Teacher*, Vol 52 No 1, Sep ’98.

Because of this belief that reading is social practice, **classroom texts should be authentic**, (be they class made or commercially published ) that is they are real, they serve purposes important to the children. If children are to be life-long readers, they read texts for life purposes, not because they have been placed on some supposed level of idfficulty.

### Reading Begins at Birth.

Reading begins at birth. *What does this mean?*

Depending on family values and practices, it is possible for young children to learn much about reading and writing, before ever they enter school, Whether or not there are books in the children’s homes; whether or not they are read to from birth, these practices will affect a child’s progress in literacy.

Five year old children entering the one Prep Class will be at different points along the learning- to-read continuum. One standardised curriculum cannot possibly be right for each individual child. Knowledgeable teachers evaluate what each young learner knows and plan for further learning for each child.

### The Reading Process

If the aim of reading is to make meaning, *how does a reader do this, or, what is the reading process?*

- **Read the following text and insert the missing language**

**Police Dog Prinz Finds an Intruder** by Lorraine Wilson

1. It is cold and dark. Rain hits the windscreen .....the police van and .....
2. driving difficult. Senior Constable ..... and his police dog ....., are on
3. duty in ..... inner-city area.
4. The radio ..... There’s a report of ..... break-in at an old ..... down
5. by the docks. .... at the scene ..... the help of ..... dog squad. Dogs
- 6 ..... search in the ....., much better than .....
7. Senior Constable McPherson ..... the van in ..... direction of the .....
8. There is ..... street lighting, ..... it is ..... to see.
9. .... later through ..... heavy rain, ..... spots the ..... blue light ..... a

10. police ....., and pulls ..... next to .....

## 2. Which strategies did you use to insert words, to make sense?

The reading process involves a reader taking a visual sample of text and predicting ahead, drawing upon graph-phonics (letters and sounds), semantic (meaning) and syntactic (grammatical) knowledge. Reading accurately, or getting all words right is no measure of reading for understanding. Getting words right is not the same as being a good reader.

In the process of constructing meaning, a reader, may pause, or re-read, and sometimes make changes to the text.

Thus, *early reading materials must make possible the use of all cue systems.*

### Reading as Four Practices (Freebody,P. & Luke,A)

Reader as **code breaker** – getting inside a text.

Reader as **text participant** – engaging with the ideas of the author and making meaning

Reader as **text user** – making use of a text for a life purpose

Reader as **text analyst** – analysing how the author has represented groups within our society; identifying the missing voices; learning about the relationship between language and power.

This model shows the scope of a reading program. – *phonics is one small part of it.*

### Why Not Phonic Readers, Controlled Vocabulary Readers, Levelled Readers

**Phonic reader:** sound/letter relationships are of prime importance. Meaning is not important. Child cannot use semantic and syntactic information to predict meaning.

**Controlled vocabulary reader:** visual recognition of whole words is of prime importance. Meaning is not important. Child cannot use semantic and syntactic information to predict meaning. Directional knowledge of written English is not always important.

**Levelled reader:** child's capacity to be a text user is limited, for he has to read on a level.

Generally these readers are levelled according to word 'difficulty' or amount of language. The difficulty of the syntax and semantics are not considered. Levelled readers assume that all children on the one level have the same interests, knowledge and reading needs. They deny children being able to read about their interests. Much research shows a strong link between pre-existing knowledge and success in understanding a text.

Books children read should be authentic books; they are written in real world text types and genres, use real world language and be about a wide range of topics. Importantly these books should invite early readers back.

### Helping with Reading in the Classrooms

1. Parent reading to a small group or individual child.

emotional warmth

reading is enjoyable

focus on meaning (What might happen next? What was that about? Has that ever happened to you? Tell me about it. Was that a fair thing to happen? What would you have done? Why did the author write this story?)

talk, laugh, cry together about the story

2. Parent listening to individual children read.

a. If the reading becomes too arduous for the child, you, the adult, take over and read to the child.

b. If the book is relatively short and the child cannot read it, try repeated readings.

adult reads aloud

adult reads aloud leaving out occasional predictable words

both reads aloud together  
adult reads aloud  
child reads by him/herself

c. Efficient readers use three main cue systems

grapho-phonetic  
semantic (meaning)  
syntactic (grammatical)

When listening to a child read aloud, and the child comes to an unknown word, say  
'Put in a word that makes sense.'

or

'Start the sentence again. Put in a word that makes sense.'

sometimes, refer to pictorial information

If the word is a proper noun (Adelaide, Ferrugia) and the child cannot read it, tell the child the word. These words cannot be predicted.

Do not say, 'Sound out the word.'

**Where a child miscues and the miscue makes sense, do not stop the child. This interrupts the flow of meaning making.**

Occasionally, letter/sound knowledge may be used as a confirming strategy

eg. A child reads 'river' for 'creek'.

When the child has finished the page or the paragraph, you might say, pointing to the word, 'creek',  
'You read 'river' here. It made good sense. This word begins with 'c'. Do you know what this word is?'

Do not do this with every miscue (oral reading error)

**Where a child makes reading miscues (oral reading errors) which do not make sense, and does not self correct, interrupt the child and say,  
'Did that make sense? Read that again and get it to make sense.'**

3. Help individual children find take-home books around their interests; books they want to read.  
(Young children may not be able to read these self chosen books)

**We aim to develop life long readers. Reading should not be arduous for children.**

**PHONICS ( for parent information)**

What do these terms mean?

Phonics – the set of relationships between letters and sounds of a language

Phonetics – study of all human speech sounds

Phonemic awareness – the ability to hear and identify each individual sound in a word.

**Phonic Principles**

Letters only represent sounds in the context of words.

A letter by itself has no sound value.

In written English, one letter can represent different sounds.

In written English, one sound may be made by different letters and different letter combinations.

Different speakers of English have different phonics.

There is no one specific teaching sequence of sound/letter relationships which is right for every child.

Consider how each child's name is different. The first word a child comes to recognise is usually his/her name.

**How many single sounds are there in the following words?**

cat eight hand was eye story

Which letters represent the single sounds of the above words?

**Which sound is represented by letter 'a' in the following words?**

that has was what apron land sat salt bag want

**Which sound is represented by letter ‘o’ in the following words?**

dog only won women woman to

**Sounds represented by the one letter in the same word can vary.**

Note how the ‘a’ in ‘can’ represents two different sounds.

‘Can I help?’

‘Yes you can.’

Note the importance of context in determining phonics, or sound/letter relationships.

**It is therefore important that letters in isolation are not given sound values. Refer to any letter in isolation by its letter name. Any discussion of sound/letter relationships must occur in the context of known words, that is, of words the child can read and pronounce. Sometimes the context needs to be a full sentence.** (eg. ‘wind’ Please wind down the window.’ ‘The wind blew the fruit from the tree.’)

Much learning of phonics occurs as the children are writing. In fact, phonics is of much greater significance in learning to write than it is in learning to read. The children’s invented spellings, in their writing, inform of us of their current phonic understandings.

**Look at the following spelling**

speshal (special) cking (king) stopt (stopped)

Are these young writers hearing the sounds in these words? (phonemic awareness)

Which phonic generalisations (sound/symbol relationships) do they know?

**Reading At Home**

- Let your children see you reading and writing (books, magazines, TV guide etc)
- If possible join a local library and visit regularly
- Try to read to your young children every night
- Try to read to your children’s interests
- Discuss environmental print (eg STOP sign)
- If a child brings a ‘Take Home’ book from school, which he cannot read, you the adult, read it to him. You might try repeated readings.
- Give books as gifts.
- Develop some shared family literacy activities eg putting photos in album, and adding captions, or adding speech balloons; surprise notes under pillows; leave messages on fridge door; writing emails together; keep travel diaries.
- Sing an alphabet song
- Have a dictionary (or two) in your home, and be seen using it

**References**

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