

# **Tips for parents and carers to support the development of their child's writing through the primary years**

## **Time**

- Every child loves special time with the significant adults in their lives, so make a regular time in your family routine to talk, read and write with your child.
- Children get better at writing by writing. They need sustained periods of time to engage in the writing process. This is true for inside the classroom and at home. Having time to revisit a piece of writing is important so encouraging them to write and revisit their writing, sharing it with you will support their development in writing.

## **Purpose, Audience and Response**

- When children have a real purpose to write and an audience to write for their engagement and motivation to write increases. Talk to your child about who they are writing this piece for and once they know that, it supports them to know what needs to be written.
- Consider relatives and friends for whom a regular email can be exchanged.
- Have your child write invitations, letters or perhaps a family collection of jokes to share at family gatherings.
- All writers need a response to their writing so encourage family members to write back to your child or thank them for their message or list.

## **Choice**

- Choice promotes engagement. Let your child follow their interests and passions through books, magazines, comics, websites and what they want to write and how they want to write.
- Encourage your young child to write lists, messages, cards, signs, letters and emails.
- It is helpful to expose children to different text genres, authors and fiction and non-fiction as these can provide the models for writing when they need to write in that genre.

## **Vocabulary**

- Building your child's oral language and vocabulary is a cornerstone to their success as a literate young person equipped to manage the complex language landscape operating in their world today and tomorrow.
- Read books with rich literary language and talk about the words, have fun with the language and linger over the wonderful words, phrases or sentences writers have chosen. These are an 'author's gift' and worth collecting with your child.
- Perhaps your child could have a Writer's Notebook at home where they collect these 'author's gifts'.

## **Play**

- Puppets, drama, drawing, poetry and games are all ways to ignite a child's interest in wanting to write and to build their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of characters and stories. All members of the family can act out a story and you can make your own puppets too! All this playful use of language supports your child to express themselves orally which in turn supports them to express themselves in writing.
- Enjoy word play with your child as they experiment with words and sentences.

## **Space and Materials**

- Provide a writing desk/space with different things to write with. Allow children to decorate and organise this space to make it special. Put an alphabet chart in the space and for older children a dictionary.
- Provide materials like paper (lined and unlined), staplers, card, sticky notes, forms. Provide different pens, textas, pencils and calligraphy pens.
- Provide your child a journal or a diary.
- Teach your child to use the home computer and devices including some of the writing apps for tablets such as Book Creator, Story Buddy 2, OSnap!, Pages, Balloon Stickies. Check in with your child's teacher about apps used at school.

- Older children who use chromebooks at school and have that platform available at home can continue writing their in-class texts at home. Support them by also knowing how Google Apps for Education (GAPE) work. Talk with your child's teacher about this.

### **Model**

- Parents and carers are the most significant adults in a child's life. Model reading and writing and curiosity about language at every opportunity.
- Read aloud to your child well into their teens. Having a novel that is especially selected for shared parent/child reading can keep you connected to your teenager and be an ideal way to discuss themes and sophisticated vocabulary. They can then use these themes and vocabulary or structures in their writing. They might not tell their friends you read to them, but they will love it!
- Show your child the writing you do and explain how it can be complex and sometimes difficult for you too. Show them the steps you go through when writing.

### **Feedback, Editing and Proof reading**

- Focus on meaning first. Having your child read their writing aloud to themselves supports them to hear the meaning coming through and they can more easily locate where there may be text structure confusions. Encourage them to read it at a slow to medium pace, not rushing so they can focus on the meaning. Reading into a voice recorder type app is a useful way to do this and they can play it back while silently reading the text as they listen to their own voice reading it. This really supports them to add the appropriate punctuation (full stops, capital letters, question marks, commas) as well as checking for making sense and that the meaning is clear.
- Once your child is satisfied with the meaning of the text, that it makes sense and is now easy to read, some other editing and proof reading can be done.
- It is important not to overwhelm your child with too much to change or 'fix'. Having them work confidently on the correct spelling of 3-5 words can be more beneficial than attending to every error.
- Asking questions like:
  - *Do you think your message suits your audience? Does it suit the purpose?*
  - *Is there a part of your writing you want to bump up (improve)?*
  - *What could you do to bump it up? (e.g. word choice, sentence structure, moving parts of the text around, going into more depth with a description, adding a stronger or more interesting/appropriate beginning or ending etc.)*
- Other proof reading prompts could be:
  - *Can you see any words that might be misspelt? Underline them.* Discuss what makes them think the identified word is misspelt.
  - If your child is having difficulty locating the errors, use the prompt: *There is a mistake on that line. Can you find it?* Best not to cross out words. Write the correct spelling above or below the word.
  - *That's one way to write the word, but is there another way? (e.g. write/right)*
  - *How else can that sound be represented?*
  - *You've got the first part (last part) right.*
  - *How can you check the word?*
  - *Which letters do you think are missing?*
- Support your child with writing on computers and devices by understanding the various editing and proof reading functions so you can support them when they write at home.

### **Celebrate**

- Celebrate all writing and meaning making efforts from your child. Writing is a complex, life long process and it is an important way for your child to communicate their thinking. Work with your child at any age to make writing a positive experience. They will want to keep writing when their efforts are celebrated.

**Jo Padgham**  
**Principal Turner School**