



Primary school reading culture review

Reading for pleasure

The benefits of reading for pleasure are wide ranging and extend beyond increased educational outcomes to improved wellbeing, health, and connections with others. According to the OECD,

‘On average, students who read daily for enjoyment score the equivalent of one-and-a-half years of schooling better than those who do not.’ [PISA in Focus: Do students today read for pleasure?](#)

In 2015, The UK Department for Education wrote in their report ‘Reading: The Next Steps’:

The best way to promote development (in reading) is by instilling in children a passion for reading. Children who love reading will read more and, over time, choose literature which is more demanding and suitably stretching. It creates a virtuous circle: as the amount a child reads increases, their reading attainment improves, which in turn encourages them to read more. All reading makes a difference, but evidence suggests that reading for pleasure makes the most.

A school-wide reading culture

A reading culture provides children and young people the support, encouragement, role-models, resources and opportunity to read for pleasure. School leaders prioritise the development of the will to read, not just the skill, among students of all ages. They foster collaboration among staff, helping to weave reading for pleasure into every class, across the curriculum and into the daily life of the students.

Ideas for using the review tool

This tool has been created to help you review your current reading for pleasure practice in your school — areas of strength and areas you would like to develop and enhance. Using the tool at the start of the term or year, and again later in the year will help you measure your journey.

You may wish to look at all areas outlined or, focus on one at a time. Some aspects may not be relevant or applicable to your school or situation, for example, your school might not have a school librarian or might only be at the initial exploring stage for some areas. What suits one school, class or student may not suit another. Ideally, the tool will help start a conversation with school staff and generate reflection, thoughts and ideas. It will take trial and measurement, time, support, encouragement, and plenty of discussion (and reading!) to share the vision and create a thriving reading community.

Aspects to consider:

Vision and leadership

The school library

Teachers as readers / reading role models

Reading aloud

Access to resources

Reading environment — places and spaces

Independent reading

Student voice

Book chat and book talk

Home school reading partnerships

Library collaboration and connection

Celebrating reading

Further reading

Four stages of development

Exploring — learning about the concept but early stages or not strong practice, general desire to build understanding and do things differently.

Starting — some shared vision / understanding, happening in some classrooms, or some of the time, getting underway but not necessarily whole-school / all of the time, the need for development is acknowledged or under-resourced / lacking confidence.

Doing — widely shared understanding, regular practice, some areas of strength, staff are actively implementing reading engagement strategies, shared understanding and approaches, processes in place, but further room for improvement.

Enhancing — excellent practice throughout school, ready to build on strengths, processes in place for continuous review and improvement.

We have to be committed, ingenious, flexible and experimental in coming up with ways of making literature come alive for every single child — no exceptions allowed.

— Michael Rosen, author, poet, literacy advocate and UK Children's Laureate (2007–2009)

Vision and leadership

Vision and leadership	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
<p>Principal and school management are reading advocates, who support and endorse a school-wide approach to reading for pleasure. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know the research about why reading for pleasure is important and how it makes a difference • share their vision for the school’s reading culture are explicit about their expectations that all students are readers • are visible reading role models • provide the financial and logistical resources for a flourishing reading culture — staff expertise, reading resources, time and place • are explicit about expectations that all students are readers • enable staff — ‘give permission’ to do what is needed to build the reading culture. 				
<p>Reading for pleasure strategies are included in school policy and planning documents.</p>				
<p>Reading for pleasure happens at all levels and is visible throughout the school and online.</p>				
<p>Reading for pleasure practice, initiatives and attitudes are implemented, measured and reviewed.</p>				

The school library

The school library	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
The school library is valued and school leaders, teachers and the Board of Trustees have a shared understanding of the impact a well-resourced and appropriately staffed school library can have on reading engagement.				
School library policies and procedures (e.g. borrowing limits, opening hours and collection policies) enable and encourage students to read for pleasure.				
Regular class visits to the library are prioritised and purposeful.				
Teachers and school library staff plan and work together regularly to engage students as readers.				
School library staff are involved in school literacy and reading planning meetings.				
School library staff are knowledgeable about children's / YA literature and have opportunities to share that expertise with staff.				
Student librarians provide input into the collection, actively promote resources to their peers, and are ambassadors for the library and reading in the school community.				

Teachers as readers / reading role models

Teachers as readers / reading role models	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
All teachers understand why reading role models matter, about their responsibility to be a reading role model and know ways to do this.				
Teachers read, know, and can recommend children’s and YA literature — they have strategies to find out about and share new books. There are processes in place at school to help teachers keep up to date with children’s literature.				
Teachers know their students’ reading enthusiasms, struggles and needs.				
Teachers are seen to be reading independently, often, with pleasure, from choice.				
Teachers know and implement strategies to engage students with reading, e.g. how to choose what to read, book chat and book talking.				
Teachers reflect on their own reading identity and share about books and being a reader with their students.				

Reading aloud

Reading aloud	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
There is school-wide understanding of the literacy and well-being benefits of reading aloud, which also enables students to enjoy stories they may not otherwise experience.				
All teachers, at every level, read aloud frequently and regularly from the best of children's and YA literature.				
Reading aloud is prioritised and visible as an important practice throughout the school, shared through signs, conversations, recommendations and routines.				
Reading aloud time is a priority and protected.				
The reading aloud is focused on reading for pleasure, along with the opportunity to make curriculum links and expand understanding.				
Teachers read with expression and emotional connection from well-chosen books.				

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.

— 'Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading', Anderson et al, 1985.

Access to resources

Access to resources	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Students have access to a wide range of up-to-date, diverse, and appealing fiction and non-fiction, print and digital books in school and classroom libraries				
Students visit the school library frequently and take books home to read for pleasure. Students have opportunities to choose what to read for pleasure. There are generous and forgiving borrowing policies.				
The library is welcoming and accessible for ALL students in terms of resources, cultural responsiveness, accessibility, signs, displays, opening hours and user-friendly policies.				
There is active liaison with public library and NLNZ Services to Schools to maximise access to resources at home and at school.				

Ensuring that books are available to any child at any time of the year will be a good first step in enhancing the reading achievement of low income students and an absolutely necessary step in closing the reading achievement gap.

— Anne McGill Franzen and Richard Allington, 2009.

Reading environment — places and spaces

Reading environment — places and spaces	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Evidence of a reading culture is visible throughout the school from the staff room and classroom to the library, playground and online — website and social media. Consider a 'reading walk-through' of your school. What would you see / like to see?				
Students have a variety of comfortable and relaxing places to read at school and are encouraged to find the same at home.				

Student voice

Student voice	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Students have opportunities to be involved in building the reading culture e.g. reading resource selection, being trained as student librarians, and in reading promotion planning and activities.				
A diverse range of student voice is considered in decision making about building the school's reading culture.				

Independent reading — e.g. Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

Independent reading	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Regular time is prioritised for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> independent reading students to browse and choose from a range of reading material students to settle into the experience and build stamina over time. 				
Students can choose from a range of reading material to avoid excuse of books forgotten at home and there is no expectation of any work attached to the reading.				
Teachers role model reading and share and chat about their reading in all classes.				
There are comfortable places for students to read in the classroom or library during independent reading time.				

Book chat and book talk

Book chat and book talk	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Teachers understand the importance of book chat to create a reading community.				
Teachers know how to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> share and chat about books with students strategies and approaches to encourage students to share about books with each other. 				
Students have frequent and regular opportunities to talk about books, stories and reading with each other and staff.				
There are regular, planned opportunities for staff to share about children's / YA literature with each other.				

Home school reading partnerships

Home school reading partnerships	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Staff understand the importance of family and whānau support for students reading at home.				
The school provides practical support with encouragement, guidance and reading resources. Individual staff have active strategies in place to support families in encouraging their children to read at home.				
Reading for pleasure is a regular part of general school / family and whānau interactions and events.				

Library collaboration and connection

Library collaboration and connection	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
School library staff and teachers regularly liaise with the public library and librarian/s.				
Schools actively promote the public library, its resources, services, programmes and membership to students and their families.				
Public library staff are invited to visit the school to promote their services and programmes.				
The school maximises access to resources, services and reading related professional development via the National Library and other organisations.				

Celebrating reading

Celebrating reading	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
There is a strategic and inclusive approach — planned and documented — to raising the profile of reading for pleasure through the school and community. There are promotional events, which generate inspiration and enthusiasm for reading pleasure.				
The library is at the heart of reading promotion and developing a reading culture in the school.				
School library staff and teachers collaborate to promote reading through events and activities.				
The principal promotes books and reading.				

Other reading-related practice /activities in your school

Other reading related practice/activities	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing

Further reading

To create a reading culture, you may find it useful to explore and share the growing body of research into the benefits of reading for pleasure and wellbeing. The National Library Services to Schools has information including:

- [Reading for pleasure — a door to success](#)
- [Reading for wellbeing \(hauora\)](#)
- [Examining the Effects of a School-Wide Reading Culture on the Engagement of Middle School Students](#)

Find out more about creating a reading culture:

- [Reading promotion](#)
- [Developing a reading culture](#)
- [Watch a video about creating a reading culture](#)
- [Libraries supporting readers](#)
- [School staff as readers](#)
- [Reading aloud](#)
- [National Library Services to Schools lending service](#)
- [Student librarians](#)
- [Strategies to engage students as readers](#)
- [Home-school reading partnerships](#)
- [Collaborating with public libraries](#)

Review information

Keeping track of review dates and people consulted can help when you return to the review later in the year to see how you've progressed.

School name: _____

Who completed/was consulted: _____

Date completed _____