

Supporting students with literacy at home



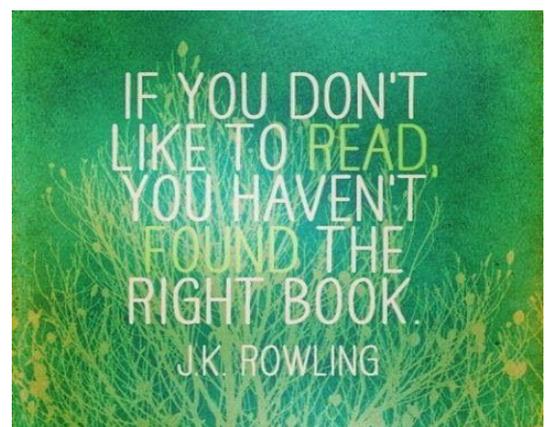
Reading

"Few children learn to love books by themselves. Someone has to lure them into the wonderful world of the written word: someone has to show them the way." (Orville Prescott)

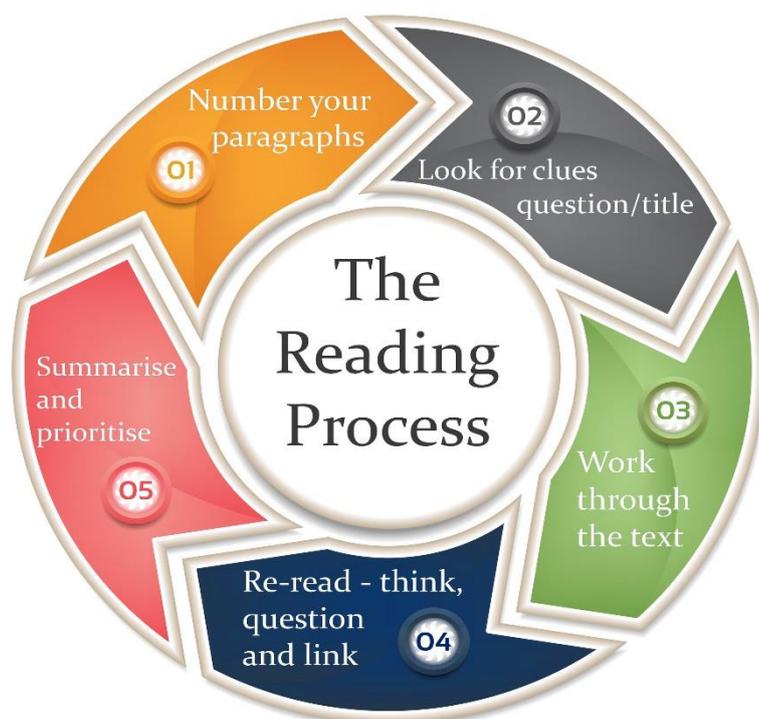
Reading really is the key to success. The most recent National Literacy Trust research highlights the link between enjoyment of reading and attainment and shows that the longer children are able to keep an enjoyment of reading going, the greater the benefits in the classroom. 12-year-olds who enjoy reading have a reading age 2.1 years higher than their peers who don't enjoy reading and this rises to a gap of 3.3 years for 14 year-olds. The home and school partnership is necessary in ensuring students read at home as well as at school.

Here are some suggestions about what you can do to support your child's reading at home.

- **Make time to read.** Set a regular time to read together during the day. Little and often works best. Reading for just 10 minutes a day can make a huge difference.
- Let your child **choose what to read.** Join your local library for free and your child can pick from a wide selection of books that suit his/her interests.
- Take **regular trips to the library** with your child. Explore what is available in the children's section or young adult section together or ask the librarian to recommend suitable books. Often, students think they don't enjoy reading but, in many instances, this is because they have not found the right book. Asking for advice from librarians and teachers is important. There's a book out there for everyone!
- If your child is a reluctant reader of fiction, encourage reading through **different reading materials and formats.** As well as fiction, there is a world of comics, magazines, e-books, read-along audio books and non-fiction for your child to discover.



- If your child is struggling to read, **share strategies with them about what they can do to breakdown the text.** Talk to your child's English teacher so you can build on the strategies they are using to break down the text. Common strategies include: asking questions; breaking down sentences into units of meaning and using different strategies to work out the meaning of new words. All students in Year 7 and 8 have access to Lexia and SAM learning. Encourage your child to complete these activities carefully and ask them about how it will help them to read for understanding in all subjects. All students at DCA are aware of the reading process and this structure supports students in becoming better readers.



- **Be positive.** Praise your child for trying hard at their reading and let them know it is okay to make mistakes. This will encourage them to show determination and continue reading for pleasure.
- **Talk to your child about what they are reading so reading becomes a social and shared experience for them.** Ask questions before they read, whilst they are reading and after they have read the book. This will bring the book to life for them and make reading more enjoyable. It will also support your child in reading well because questions will encourage them to reflect and evaluate what they read and make inferences. This will encourage your child to read for pleasure which increases their chance of becoming lifelong readers.

Questions to ask before your child has started reading the book

- Why have you chosen this book?
- Have you read any books by this author before?
- Will this book challenge you?
- Have you asked the librarian to recommend any other books by your favourite author?

A lot of students read books from the same series and may not choose other books. For example, a lot of students read *Horrid Henry*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and books by Jacqueline Wilson. It is important to read more challenging books i.e. books from

different authors and books written before 1960. This will develop students' reading skills so they read well.

Question to ask whilst your child is reading the book

- What has happened so far?
- What do you predict will happen? Why?
- Who is your favourite character so far? Why?

Questions to ask after your child has read the book

- What happened in the book? Did it surprise you? Why?
- Who is your favourite character and why?
- Would you recommend this book to other students? Why?
- What did you think about the author's style of writing? Did it interest you as a reader? Why?

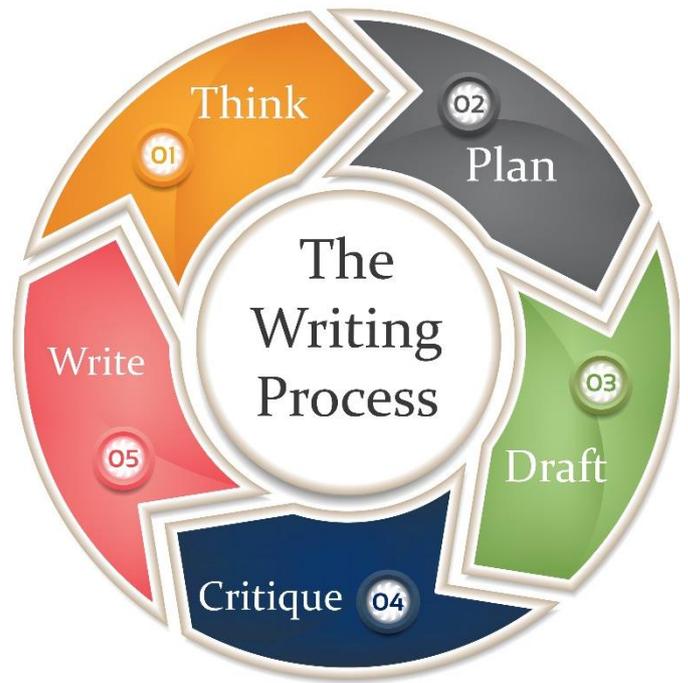
- All students at DCA have access to **Reading Cloud**. This enables students to reserve books, select books that they might like to read based on book recommendations and write books reviews. All students can **submit a book review** so encourage your child to write a book review and submit it. If you have access to an iPhone, iPad, iPod touch or Android phone, you can download an App called 'iMLS' to access the library from these devices. The app is available from the App Store and Android Market.
- Give **books as treats and presents** so children value reading and have a more positive attitude towards it.
- Ensure your child **sees you reading for pleasure**. Talk to them about books you are enjoying or news articles that you have found interesting. Be a reading role model and if your child sees you enjoying and valuing books, they can be greatly inspired to read too.



Writing

Here are some suggestions about what you can do to further develop your child's writing skills at home.

- **Let your child see you write** i.e. writing cards for special occasions, responses to letters/emails, reviews etc. Children need to realise that writing is something that takes place at home and not just at school.
- **Be alert to occasions when your child can be involved in writing** e.g. sending special occasions cards, taking down telephone messages, writing notes to friends etc. Writing for real purposes is rewarding and the daily activities of families present many opportunities for purposeful writing. This strategy is particularly effective in encouraging boys to write.
- You may find it beneficial to sometimes **read aloud what you have written and ask your children for their opinion of what you have written.** Making changes in what you write confirms for the child that revision is a natural part of writing and this is an essential part of the DCA writing process.
- Be as helpful as you can in helping your child to write. **Talk through their ideas with them to help them to discover what they want to say so they have the confidence to start writing.** Often, students struggle with knowing what to write and with starting written responses.
- **Support your child with proofreading work.** With every piece of home learning they complete, no matter what subject, ask them to check their work for spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes. Praise your child when they notice mistakes and correct them so they do not develop the mind-set that they cannot spell or use punctuation well. Emphasise your child's successes and praise your child a lot especially if writing is something they find challenging.
- **Be primarily interested in the content** and not overly interested in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Sometimes teachers will mark only a few technical accuracy



errors and leave others for another time. It takes time to develop skills in technical accuracy and lots of practice.

- **Provide a suitable place for children to write.** A quiet part of a room is best. If this is not possible, encourage your child to use the library at school to complete home learning.
- Give your child **gifts associated with writing** e.g. pens, pencils, notebooks, a diary etc.
- At DCA, there are a range of initiatives in place to get students writing and to support them in developing more positive attitudes to writing. Encourage them to take part in **literacy events and writing competitions** and see the Academy website for upcoming events.
- **Build a climate of words at home.** The basis of good writing is good talk and children, and younger children especially, have a greater control of language when parents/carers talk to their child about shared experiences.

Oracy

Oracy (clear, fluent and effective spoken communication) is an essential life skill.

At DCA, we are placing an increasingly greater emphasis on oracy in all lessons. The speaking process and speaking and listening expectations are shared with students so that they are aware of what it means to have great oracy. Students are given the opportunities in all lessons to develop their speaking and listening skills so that they develop confidence, performance and presentation skills and are able to clearly articulate their own lines of thought through exploratory talk. Oracy enhances all forms of communication, including written work.

Here are some suggestions about what you can do to support your child's oracy at home.

- **Make time to talk to your child** about their learning, what they have been doing and topical issues. Encourage your child to speak in **full sentences** and ask prompt questions so that they are able to fully explain their ideas. Look at DCA's speaking and listening expectations to see what we demand of students in our lessons.



Listening expectations

Listen actively - 100% focus, quality audience.

Build on others' comments.

Take relevant notes and jot down appropriate questions.

Reflect upon and respond to what you hear.

Speaking expectations

Think through your point.

Always use Standard English.

Choose the right words – key words, subject terminology, ambitious vocabulary.

Speak in full sentences.

Engage your listener .

Stand proud, speak out!

- To support your child with developing a **wide vocabulary**, ask them to suggest another word they can use instead of a slang word and praise them once they use it in their talk. It is important for children to understand when they need to speak in Standard English and when they can use Non-Standard English – context is key!
- **Encourage your child to take part in activities that involve speaking to an audience** i.e. it might be speaking at a place of worship, giving a speech at a family event or talking to people in a more professional setting such as during work experience, voluntary work or participation in extracurricular activities outside of school.

Please contact Ms Raheem if you would like further strategies on how to support your child with literacy at home. Your support is important to us and with a strong home and school partnership, we can have a much stronger impact on your child's literacy skills so they achieve well at school and succeed in the world of work.

Useful websites

- ✓ <http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/howtohelpenglish>
- ✓ <https://www.readingcloud.net/>
- ✓ <http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/>
- ✓ <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/>
- ✓ <http://www.readingrockets.org/>