

# MAPLE BEAR PROGRAMS

## LITERACY GUIDE FOR PARENTS

### LITERACY – OUR MOST FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE

Early literacy experiences are very important for developing children. We believe that:

- Children in a literate society begin learning to read and write very early in life.
- Reading aloud to children plays a special role in the literacy development of young children.
- Young children are actively involved in the process of their own literacy development. Social interaction with parents in activities involving reading and writing plays a key role in the process. Through independent exploration of written language and observations of the literate practices of others, young children develop an understanding of reading and writing.
- The young child's reading and writing abilities reinforce each other, developing concurrently and in inter-related fashion rather than sequentially.
- Learning to read and write is a developmental process for young children. Children pass through the stages of language development in a variety of ways and at different ages.

### BEST ADVICE FOR PARENTS WISHING TO HELP THEIR CHILD DEVELOP LITERACY SKILLS:

***PARENTS SHOULD READ TO THEIR CHILDREN***

***and***

***LISTEN TO THEIR CHILDREN READ***

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### HELPING CHILDREN AT HOME

***“I want to work with my child but I’m not sure how to go about it”***

*Language learning includes experiences in speaking and listening, writing and reading. Whatever the activity, the most important thing is that the parents and children **enjoy learning together.***

Many parents set aside special language learning times. You can make these times more productive and enjoyable if you:

- Let your child choose a quiet place that is away from family activity
- Set aside a specified time to work with your child on language activities
- Listen attentively and show enthusiasm
- Ask questions that show you are interested, not to “test” you child
- Provide encouragement
- Focus on the improvements and commendable efforts
- Let your child explain his or her ideas or understanding of things to you
- Avoid becoming annoyed over repeated mistakes
- Do something else if things become tense

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*“How can I help my child with his/her reading at home?”*

Children need many and varied opportunities to explore, read and enjoy books. The more experiences children have in reading, the more they gain in fluency and competence. Parents can play a large part in providing these experiences.

*The single most important thing parents can do is to read to their children, regardless of age.*

Children of all ages need to listen to stories for sheer enjoyment and to become aware of a variety of types of good literature. Children need to hear patterns of language in a wide variety of poems and stories. They need to be provided with reading models by having someone read to them.

*Parents also need to read with their children. Again, this is an important experience for children of all ages.*

As parents of very young children, you can:

- Let your child choose the book for you to read aloud
- Discuss the book and its pictures with your child as you go through it together
- Encourage your child when her or she echoes some of the words as they are read
- Pause at particular points and let your child predict what will happen next
- Point to the words and invite your child to join you on lines that are repeated over and over again in the story.
- Encourage your child to “read” or retell the story or parts of it if he or she shows an interest in doing this



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As your children become readers, you can read with them in other ways:

- You can encourage your child to read aloud to you or to someone else in the home. An enthusiastic and supportive listener can help your child improve in fluency and reading comprehension
- You can provide further help with fluency and comprehension by spending about 15 minutes, four or five times a week reading with your child in this way:
  - Let your child choose the material to be read
  - Sit side by side with your child and read aloud in unison. This requires practice on the part of parents. You must be able to match your reading speed and the volume of your voice with those of your child
  - Allow your child to read alone when he or she feels ready
  - If your child has difficulty, join in and continue reading together until your child signals that he or she is ready to read alone once more

This technique is also useful when children wish to read books that are too difficult for them to read on their own.

### ***“My child only wants to read one story over and over again”***

Frequently, young children have favourite books they come back to continually. They become familiar with the book and enter right into the story. They gain confidence with the words, pictures and patterns in the book.

Older students often want to read books on one topic, or read all of the books in a story series, or books by the same author. In doing this, children become very knowledgeable in their areas of interest. With series books, they come to identify with the characters and become real experts on the content of the series.

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*All of this is a natural part of children's growth as readers. It is important to let children explore their areas of interest. Avoid pushing them into reading books of your choice.*

*At some point, most children will decide they have spent enough time on one book or topic and want to move on to something else. Then parents can make suggestions of other books to read.*

### ***"How should I help my child choose books to read?"***

*Children need to learn to choose good books for themselves. Parents can provide children with frequent opportunities to look through books and choose ones that seem interesting and that can be read without too much difficulty. When children choose a book and read it for themselves, they have probably chosen the "right" book at the "right" level.*

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### Important Language Learning Principles

1. Children develop language skills as they make meaning from things they experience, and as they communicate that meaning to others.

*At a very young age a child may point to the moon and say “ball” because that is the round object with which he is familiar. Think of all the language the child learns from that early time to several years later when he presents an oral report to his class about the moon.*

2. Language is learned when children use it in real and important ways.
3. “Language skills” means that children do more than simply “learn the skills”. Children must apply and extend these skills in their learning throughout the day.

*Children may be able to underline the vowel sounds in a list of words on a work sheet. However, it is not until they use their knowledge of vowel sounds in figuring out words in their daily reading and writing that the skill becomes helpful.*

4. Language learning follows a developmental path. Children of the same age may be at different stages in their language learning, just as they are in their physical growth.
5. Children develop language skills more readily when the learning activities seem connected to a meaningful use of language.
6. Language develops through use.

*New skills are often not achieved perfectly on the first attempt – maybe not even on the tenth. Children learn and retain their language skills through practice and encouragement in a variety of situations at school and at home.*