Learning to Read in the Early Years Professional Support Overview

Who is this resource for?

All educators who support children and young people to learn to read, in particular those working in Primary Schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings.

What is the purpose of this resource?

This Professional Support Overview has been created alongside educators across Scotland to provide professional support, specifically in the area of teaching young children how to read. Drawing upon a range of international research and guidance, it supports staff to interpret Scotland's curriculum guidance and make research-informed decisions for learning and teaching. It is the first part of a broader suite of professional learning resources to be published in the coming months.

Building a literacy rich environment through interactions, experiences and spaces

Building independent and engaged readers

Developing skills for reading

Engaging with this Professional Support Overview enables educators to:

Put learners at the centre of early reading experiences

The Professional Support overview outlines the range of ways that educators build a holistic knowledge of each child as a reader in order to effectively support their reading journey. This is done through:

- Valuing and responding to the child's background and interests
- Working in partnership with families and communities to support developing readers
- Continual monitoring and support of developing skills and knowledge across all five components of reading

Develop and consolidate professional knowledge

Educators need to be able to apply a broad professional knowledge of early reading, which draws upon different research perspectives, in order to meet the needs of all children. In primary schools, the effective implementation of explicit and systematic teaching of phonics will be a key part of the overall approach to teaching reading.

Access professional support and professional learning

The Professional Support Overview can be used flexibly by educators in the following ways, as

- An at-a-glance guide
- A tool for self-evaluation of professional knowledge
- Part of the overall suite of resources, to engage in in-depth professional learning to develop and consolidate professional knowledge

Building a literacy rich environment through interactions, experiences and spaces	Developing skills for reading	Building independent and engaged readers
Supporting children to develop a love of reading: Reading for pleasure has a significant positive impact on all outcomes. • Value and respond to the interests of the child to develop meaningful engagement with reading. • Work together with families to nurture a love of reading. • Develop a love of reading through consideration of the interactions, experiences and spaces on offer. **The importance of oral language for reading:** The development of listening and talking underpins early reading progress. • The ongoing impact of children living in poverty and long-term effects of Covid on oral language development should be taken into account. • Home language experiences should be valued and supported. • Provide a physical and social environment to model, support and promote early listening and talking skills **Developing phonological awareness:** Phonological awareness is a key component of early reading development. • Provide opportunities to hear, explore and play with the sounds and patterns of language • Support children as they begin to make connections between sounds they hear and print in their environment. **Building concepts of print:** Developing awareness of print is an important step in learning to read and write. • Support children to understand how and why print is used • Create print-rich environments which help children explore and make connections with print	**Considering the 5 components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency):** Early reading success is built upon the 5 components of reading. • The 5 components of reading should all be explicitly modelled, based upon the child's current level of skill. • Continually monitor progress across all five components in order to support learners to make meaning from texts. **Developing phonemic awareness:** Phonemic awareness is key to reading development. • Phonemic awareness supports the learner to decode by hearing and identifying the individual sounds in words. • Phonemic awareness should be developed through noticing, thinking about and playing with the individual sounds in spoken words and print. **Implementation of phonic approaches:** Phonics involves the skills of hearing, identifying and using the patterns of sounds to read. • The explicit and systematic teaching of phonics should develop understanding of the sounds (phonemes) and corresponding letter/s (graphemes) which represent them. • Phonics instruction should provide opportunities to blend, segment and manipulate sounds using children's current level of skill. • Successful implementation of a phonics programme relies on a number of factors. • The approach taken to teaching phonics should have a strong evidence base. **Developing tools for reading:** Professional knowledge and expertise based on current research should be used to develop tools for reading. • Teaching sight vocabulary/common words should be linked to the sounds and letter patterns of words. • Context is crucial to support reading for understanding however for most children decoding should be the first approach to word recognition. • Schools should ensure use of reading schemes and resources are matched to children's needs and complement their approach to teaching reading.	**Building knowledge of the child as a reader:** Knowledge of the child, their interests, context and range of skills should be used to identify strengths and potential barriers to reading and engagement. • Work in partnership with children, families and colleagues to explore, understand and identify interests, strengths, needs, barriers and wider experiences. • Build knowledge of the child as a reader in relation to their language development and the five components, considering how they might impact each other. • Strengthen the child's identity as a reader, valuing their motivations and choices. **Responsive planning of universal approaches:** Learning and teaching should be planned in response to the identified strengths and barriers of all learners. • Use what you know about the learners to identify the pedagogical approaches needed to support progress. • Adapt practice to ensure that children experience success as a reader, building on their strengths in order to overcome barriers. **Considering interventions** The rationale for chosen interventions should be based upon the context and needs of the child. • Through dialogue with others, establish a clear understanding of specific needs/barriers before considering an intervention. • Ensure decisions around chosen interventions are informed by research or evidence and appropriate to your school context. • Understand the purpose of a chosen intervention, how to implement it effectively and evaluate its impact. **Shared and guided experience of reading:** A range of planned approaches should be used by educators to develop reading skills whilst nurturing a love of reading. • Lead interactive and shared experiences with texts to support reading for pleasure and develop skills in authentic contexts. • Use a range of guided reading approaches to support an individual or group of learners to read a text independently. • Ensure research-informed guided and shared reading methods support the progress of the learner.

Education Scotland
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Supporting children to develop a love of reading:

Reading for pleasure has a significant positive impact on all outcomes.

- Value and respond to the interests of the child to develop meaningful engagement with reading.
- Work together with families to nurture a love of reading.
- Develop a love of reading through consideration of the interactions, experiences and spaces on offer.

The importance of oral language for reading:

The development of listening and talking underpins early reading progress.

- The ongoing impact of children living in poverty and long-term effects of Covid on oral language development should be taken into account.
- Home language experiences should be valued and supported.
- Provide a physical and social environment to model, support and promote early listening and talking skills

Developing phonological awareness:

Phonological awareness is a key component of early reading development.

- Provide opportunities to hear, explore and play with the sounds and patterns of language
- Support children as they begin to make connections between sounds they hear and print in their environment.

Building concepts of print:

Developing awareness of print is an important step in learning to read and write.

- Support children to understand how and why print is used
- Create print-rich environments which help children explore and make connections with print

Developing skills for reading

Considering the 5 components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency):

Early reading success is built upon the 5 components of reading.
- The 5 components of reading should all be explicitly modelled, based upon the child's current level of skill.
- Continually monitor progress across all five components in order to support learners to make meaning from texts.

Developing phonemic awareness:

Phonemic awareness is key to reading development.
- Phonemic awareness supports the learner to decode by hearing and identifying the individual sounds in words.
- Phonemic awareness should be developed through noticing, thinking about and playing with the individual sounds in spoken words and print.

Implementation of phonic approaches:

Phonics involves the skills of hearing, identifying and using the patterns of sounds to read.
- The explicit and systematic teaching of phonics should develop understanding of the sounds (phonemes) and corresponding letter/s (graphemes) which represent them.
- Phonics instruction should provide opportunities to blend, segment and manipulate sounds using children's current level of skill.
- Successful implementation of a phonics programme relies on a number of factors.
- The approach taken to teaching phonics should have a strong evidence base.

Developing tools for reading:

Professional knowledge and expertise based on current research should be used to develop tools for reading.
- Teaching sight vocabulary/common words should be linked to the sounds and letter patterns of words.
- Context is crucial to support reading for understanding however for most children decoding should be the first approach to word recognition.
- Schools should ensure use of reading schemes and resources are matched to children's needs and complement their approach to teaching reading.

Building knowledge of the child as a reader:

Knowledge of the child, their interests, context and range of skills should be used to identify strengths and potential barriers to reading and engagement.

- Work in partnership with children, families and colleagues to explore, understand and identify interests, strengths, needs, barriers and wider experiences.
- Build knowledge of the child as a reader in relation to their language development and the five components, considering how they might impact each other.
- Strengthen the child's identity as a reader, valuing their motivations and choices.

Responsive planning of universal approaches:

Learning and teaching should be planned in response to the identified strengths and barriers of all learners.

- Use what you know about the learners to identify the pedagogical approaches needed to support progress.
- Adapt practice to ensure that children experience success as a reader, building on their strengths in order to overcome barriers.

Considering interventions

The rationale for chosen interventions should be based upon the context and needs of the child.

- Through dialogue with others, establish a clear understanding of specific needs/barriers before considering an intervention.
- Ensure decisions around chosen interventions are informed by research or evidence and appropriate to your school context.
- Understand the purpose of a chosen intervention, how to implement it effectively and evaluate its impact.

Shared and guided experience of reading:

A range of planned approaches should be used by educators to develop reading skills whilst nurturing a love of reading.

- Lead interactive and shared experiences with texts to support reading for pleasure and develop skills in authentic contexts.
- Use a range of guided reading approaches to support an individual or group of learners to read a text independently.
- Ensure research-informed guided and shared reading methods support the progress of the learner.