



Tinternvale Primary School

'Learning Together'

How We Teach Reading at Tinternvale Primary School



At Tinternvale Primary School, we are committed to delivering on the promise of education. Learning to read is such an essential skill to not only find success in school and to flourish in society but to also experience the delight that reading brings to life. We want every child to be successful in reading! We are learning more about what research says about how students learn to read, how to make sure every student learns to read and what to do when a student encounters difficulty in learning to read. The research that we're learning about and implementing is called the 'Science of Reading'.

When we know better we do better!

The reading scores of Australian students have remained somewhat stagnant for over 40 years. The research is telling us that while reading is more challenging for some students than others, with evidence-based reading instruction, nearly every student can become proficient by the end of Year 3. Decades of research have determined that reading occurs in a specific way in the brain in all people. It does not occur naturally the way that speech does. The process must be taught. It is a process of building neuro-pathways in the brain that link sounds of speech to written symbols or letters. The strings of letters are attached to meaning, and then those 'letter strings with meaning' are stored in the brain's 'letterbox' for later retrieval that is instantaneous and effortless. This process is called orthographic mapping and it is our goal to help our students develop their letterbox; that translates into fluent reading and subsequently, comprehension. Guessing at words based on context does not aid in orthographic mapping, phonic decoding does.

The Science of Reading

"The body of work referred to as the 'Science of Reading' is not an ideology, a philosophy, a political agenda, a one-size-fits-all approach, a program of instruction, nor a specific component of instruction. It is the emerging consensus from many related disciplines, based on literally thousands of studies, supported by hundreds of millions of research dollars, conducted across the world in many languages. These studies have revealed a great deal about how we learn to read, what goes wrong when students don't learn, and what kind of instruction is most likely to work the best for the most students." - Dr. Louisa Moats

The Simple View of Reading



(Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990)

A New Direction at Tinternvale Primary School

If your family has been a part of TPS for some time, you'll notice some changes in how we teach reading; if you're new to TPS, welcome, it's going to be a great journey! It's an exciting time to be in education as we align our instruction with the Science of Reading!

Listed below are some points of research that we will be addressing as we embark on a new school year at Tinternvale Primary School.

Code Emphasis in Primary Grades: This means that Years P-2 especially will focus on acquiring the skills to crack the code of our alphabet to the speech sounds in English. (There are 44 speech sounds in English and 150 ways to read and spell them!) Students must first learn to decode/sound-out words before they can understand the meaning of text, therefore we will emphasize instruction in 'cracking the code' in grades P-2.

Explicit and Systematic Phonics Instruction: We will have an order or sequence of phonics skills, progressing from simple to complex, which will be followed throughout the early years. Students will progress through the sequence as they master skills. In the intermediate years (3-4), word study will continue with a increased focus on grammar and morphology (learning about word parts such as Greek and Latin roots).

Early Intervention: If we see any signs that your child may be struggling with the foundational skills of reading, we will not take a 'wait and see' approach; we will immediately implement interventions and monitor their progress. The best solution to the problem of reading failure is early identification and intervention.

Phonemic Awareness: This is the ability to get to the individual sounds in words by listening and to identify and manipulate those sounds orally. While this skill will be emphasised in Years P-2, we will make sure all students at TPS have this necessary foundation. Students in the intermediate year levels may need to practise these skills until they have firmed up this foundation of reading. Don't be surprised if you have a 3rd - 5th grader who will be working on phonemic awareness. This is an area that the research has indicated is hugely important!

Decodable Readers: Our early readers will be working with decodable readers. These are books or passages that only include words that students can 'decode' (sound-out) according to the skills they have been taught thus far. Our students need practise with the phonics skills they are learning and these books and passages provide that practise. So be aware that at times, your child may bring home a sheet of paper with a passage for practise rather than a book.



Assessments: Your child will not be assigned a reading level, such as 5, or 15, or 25 (or any level 1-30), as in the past. Students will be assessed on the Oral Reading Fluency rate for their year level. These nationally normed one-minute assessments give us a accurate indication of how easy or difficult reading is for your child. From there, we will give diagnostic assessments in word reading and nonsense word reading to find out which areas in the continuum of phonics skills they need help with. They will also be assessed on Phonemic Awareness, so we can make sure they have crucial foundation skills. As students become proficient word readers, comprehension is a natural outcome. Comprehension will also be checked with three-minute assessments.

Levelled Readers: Your child will not be assigned a reading level that corresponds to a number. They will work with a variety of text. Some text may address specific phonics needs, some may be year level text to build knowledge that is pertinent to their year level, others may be interest-based, while some will be at a determined level for fluency practise but they will not be confined to a certain 'level.' Prep and Year One students will not bring home books with patterned sentences that are easily memorised.

Three-cueing system; This is the practice of teaching students to identify words by using strategies other than decoding. In the three-cueing system, students are taught that they can identify a word by deciding if it makes sense, if it would structurally/grammatically 'fit' in a sentence or if it looks right rather than closely examining the phonics patterns in the word and sounding it out. This is a practice that the research has indicated we must abandon. Your child will not be taught to check pictures to identify words or make guesses based on the first letter they see. We want our students to look at every letter in the words, apply phonics knowledge and sound words out!

Comprehension. The ultimate goal of all reading instruction is for students to understand what they read. The model of 'The Simple View of Reading' demonstrates that reading comprehension occurs only when students have both Decoding/Word Recognition Skills and Language Comprehension skills. Students need the essential skills to get the words off the page as well as knowledge, vocabulary and a sound understanding of how our language works in order to comprehend what they read. We must provide instruction that will enable students achieve these goals.

We now know a great deal about how the brain develops as we learn to read and what instructional practices are most effective for all students. We are committed to stop doing what doesn't work and be guided by scientific research to ensure we deliver on the promise of literacy for every TPS student. Again, it's an exciting time to be in education and we need our families as our partners!

