



THE SHINE
LITERACY HOUR
HANDBOOK

THE SHINE LITERACY HOUR



The Shine Literacy Hour was conceived by Maurita Weissenberg in 2000.

Since then many people have played a role in the development of its content, methodology and materials. Thanks and acknowledgment are due to Rebecca Hickman for this most recent resource, as well as to Elizabeth Nadler-Nir and Kathryn Torres for their input in earlier versions.

The Shine Literacy Ethos is based on Nancy Kline's 'The Thinking Environment'.

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AN OVERVIEW

Language is the key that unlocks literacy, and literacy opens up possibilities for all kinds of new learning. Without sound language and literacy skills, children are likely to struggle throughout their school careers. On the other hand, when children become good readers and writers, their confidence and self-esteem grow, along with their appetite for learning. Put simply, children who read better, learn better!

The Shine Literacy Hour gives extra support with reading, writing and speaking to children in Grades Two and Three. Trained volunteers, known as Learning Partners, work with one or two children at a time, providing a level of attention that is not always possible in the classroom.

The Shine Literacy Hour always follows the same basic format. It is divided into four parts – paired reading, shared reading, have-a-go writing, and word play and games. This balanced approach combines the importance of reading for pleasure and developing spoken language, with the practice of specific skills such as letter knowledge, awareness of sounds in words, and writing.

- During **paired reading**, the Learning Partner and the child initially read aloud together. As the child becomes more confident, the Learning Partner withdraws, allowing the child to read aloud alone. Discussion about the book helps the child to make meaning of what they have read.
- During **shared reading**, children select a storybook for their Learning Partner to read to them. The focus is on simply enjoying a well-read story. As with paired reading, discussion and comments are used to engage children and to help strengthen vocabulary, comprehension and thinking skills.
- During **word play and games**, graded activities help children to master the range of skills required to read and write. Using fun games, children are encouraged to recognise letters, to sound out words, to read common sight words, to build vocabulary and grammar, and to write words and sentences.
- During **have-a-go writing**, the Learning Partner supports children to think of one or more sentences to write. The children then use their letter-sound knowledge to write the sentences. The emphasis is on the overall sense of the writing, rather than on being correct.

The Shine Literacy Hour is underpinned by the belief that learning should be a positive and enriching experience. Teaching methods that recognise that each child is unique, that appreciate effort, and that create a fun and relaxed learning environment, all help to achieve this.

THE SHINE LITERACY ETHOS DESCRIBES HOW WE WOULD LIKE TO RELATE TO AND INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER. THERE ARE FIVE PRINCIPLES:

- Each individual matters.
- Listen with respect and without interruption.
- Treat each other as thinking peers.
- Ease creates, urgency destroys.
- Practise the art of appreciation.

THE **FOUR PARTS** OF THE SHINE LITERACY HOUR



Learning Partners spend about 15 minutes on each part. There is no set order but it is important that, during the hour, all four parts are covered.

SOME IMPORTANT TERMS

Comprehension

Being able to understand and interpret what is being read or heard. This is sometimes called reading for meaning and involves several skills at once — knowledge of vocabulary and language structure, thinking skills, and making links with what you already know.

Phonological awareness

Being able to hear, recognise and manipulate the different sounds in words.

Phonics

Recognising what letters look like and associating each letter of the alphabet (and blends of letters) with the correct sound.

Decoding

Using letter-sound knowledge to accurately read a word.

Thinking skills

Being able to infer, abstract, reason, predict and retrieve facts or information.

Print concepts

Understanding how written language (such as word spacing and paragraphs) works, and that writing is read from left to right, top to bottom.

Fluency

Being able to read smoothly, accurately and with appropriate intonation.

Narrative concepts

Being familiar with the elements of good story-telling, such as sequencing, characters, descriptions, use of humour/suspense/resolution, and direct speech.

Expressive language skills

Using language knowledge to make sentences, to express ideas, to tell and to describe.

Segmenting

Breaking a word down into the separate sounds that make it, and then using letter-sound knowledge to write the word.

Letter formation

Forming letters in the correct way, in terms of shape, pencil direction and spacing.

Sight words

Words that a child should be able to recognise on sight without needing to sound them out. Knowing sight words helps a child read more fluently.



Set Up

It is useful for Learning Partners to arrive about 15 minutes before the session starts, in order to set up their desks and to select appropriate books. A typical desk set-up includes:

- Rainbow Pack (rainbow and vowel cards)
- Have-a-go writing book and sharpened pencil and sharpener
- Three readers for paired reading (children choose one)
- Three storybooks for shared reading (children choose one)
- Whiteboard, marker and cloth
- One game
- Praise note paper



PAIRED READING

What is paired reading?

During paired reading, a child reads a book aloud with his or her Learning Partner. The Learning Partner initially reads along with the child but withdraws as he or she gains confidence, allowing the child to read aloud alone. If the child starts to struggle, the Learning Partner joins in again until the child is ready to read alone again.

(If a Learning Partner is working with two children, paired reading should be done with one child at a time, while the other child listens.)

Why do paired reading?

Reading alone can be intimidating for children in the early stages. By reading aloud with their Learning Partner, the children feel closely supported and this gives them the confidence to read independently.

During paired reading, children learn and practise all kinds of important skills. They decode words using their letter-sound knowledge and become familiar with sight words. They also learn how writing works and about concepts such as sentences, paragraphs and punctuation.

Paired reading also deepens comprehension and encourages children to use key thinking skills, such as inferring and predicting. These types of skills can be applied to all kinds of learning.

A note on... *sight words*

Sight words are words that children can recognise automatically without needing to sound them out. Children who can recognise the main sight words are able to read more fluently, which in turn helps with comprehension.

Some sight words are difficult to sound out and therefore children need to be able to recognise them by sight — for example, 'said', 'all', 'what' and 'your'. Other sight words are capable of being sounded out, but because they are high frequency words it is better if children are able to recognise them immediately.

How to do paired reading

The most important thing is that children enjoy paired reading and feel safe and comfortable. Remember, the idea is to provide support by reading together at first, but to encourage the child to take control. This might not happen immediately and you will need to give lots of encouragement and praise to help them stay motivated. Following these steps will help to ensure a successful paired reading time together:

1. Select three reading books that are appropriate for the child's reading ability and ask him or her to choose one. (Readers should be graded using colour-coded stickers on the front cover.)
2. Ensure that the book is squarely in front of the child. Agree the signal that the child will use to indicate that they want to read alone (for instance, tapping on the page).
3. Before reading, do a 'picture walk'. Look through the book and talk about what the story might be about. Use this time to explain new or unusual words.
4. Start reading the book aloud with the child. Use your finger to follow each word as you read together, and be sensitive to the pace of the child.
5. When the child gives the agreed signal, stop reading and allow the child to read aloud alone. Offer lots of encouragement.
6. If the child makes a mistake, allow a few seconds for him or her to correct it. You may want to use the picture as a prompt. Say the word if the child still cannot read it.
7. If the child is struggling, read together again until he or she gives you the signal to read alone. You may repeat this process several times while you are reading the book.
8. At the end, encourage the child to reflect on the story by making observations and asking open-ended questions (*see suggestions on page 8*).

A FEW OTHER PAIRED READING TIPS

- It is better for children to read a simple book first to boost their confidence. Try to read most of the books in one level before moving on to the next.
- Children enjoy repetition. By reading the same book several times, they will become more familiar with sight words and will develop fluency, expression and confidence. However, it is also important that children do not become bored. Confident readers may enjoy being given a book slightly above their current reading level.
- Paired reading should not be a mechanical decoding exercise and children should be helped to engage with the meaning of the words and story. At the same time, to help maintain flow, it might be better to save discussion until the end.
- Do not let children struggle for a long time over a word or insist that the word is sounded out. By supplying the word you will help to keep their confidence high.
- Give plenty of encouragement throughout. Watch the children's body language to gauge their level of anxiety or enjoyment and respond accordingly.

SHARED READING

What is shared reading?

During shared reading, the Learning Partner reads a storybook to the children. The purpose is for the children to be able to listen and enjoy, a well-read story. Lots of conversation about the book helps to bring the story alive and increases enjoyment and understanding.

Why do shared reading?

Shared reading helps children to discover a love for books and reading. Children who are read to regularly associate reading with enjoyment, which will help them to become life-long readers.

Storybooks open doors to other worlds. They introduce children to new ideas and information and stimulate their imagination. They also help children understand how stories and narratives are constructed and told.

Shared reading also fosters important language skills. By extending children's vocabulary and by exposing them to different forms of language, shared reading deepens comprehension, which is an essential building block of early literacy. Shared reading provides another opportunity for children to develop thinking skills — such as predicting, reasoning and inferring.

A note on... *open-ended questions*

Remember, open-ended questions do not have a right or wrong answer, but encourage children to think and to express their ideas. It is important that children do not feel they are being tested. Here are some examples of open-ended questions for before, during and after reading:

- Have you ever...?
- What do you think will happen next?
- How do you think she is feeling?
- Why do you think ... happened?
- What would you have done if you were...?
- How would you like the story to end?
- What did you like best about the story?

How to do shared reading

Shared reading is first and foremost about enjoying the story. By following these steps, Learning Partners can create a successful shared reading time:

1. Give the children a choice of storybooks, and let them choose the one they would like to listen to. In the initial selection, include some books that are slightly beyond their reading level to help extend their language.
2. If possible, sit next to the children, and always ensure that the pages of the book are clearly visible to them as you read.
3. Before reading, use the title page and pictures in the book to discuss what the story might be about. Encourage the children to make initial links with their own experiences and knowledge.
4. Start reading the book. Model the correct way to read by reading at an even pace and using intonation to indicate where sentences start and end. Use inflection, pauses and emphasis to bring the story alive.
5. Where necessary, help the children to understand the story by explaining unfamiliar words and concepts. You can also help children to infer meaning by using contextual clues, such as illustrations.
6. During reading, use one or two comments or open-ended questions to help the children to engage with the story. However, try not to interrupt the flow too much as children may become impatient or lose interest.
7. After reading, encourage the children to reflect on the story, by making observations and asking open-ended questions (*see opposite*).

A FEW OTHER SHARED READING TIPS

- Any book is suitable for shared reading but consider the children's interests and general level of understanding.
- Look for opportunities to relate the book to the children's own life and to help them make links with what they already know.
- Welcome the children's comments and listen carefully and respectfully to their ideas.
- Keep an eye on the children's mood. If they become restless, they might be struggling to understand, or the story is being read with too many interruptions.
- Children often enjoy hearing the same book repeatedly. This is fine and can help them to build confidence, but encourage children to explore new books too. Later, when they are ready, introduce some non-fiction.

WORD PLAY AND GAMES

What are word play and games?

Our graded games and activities have been specially developed to support the development of key literacy skills. The games include snap, lotto, bingo and board games, and incorporate some Wordworks games too.

Why play games?

Games make learning fun. They also provide a relaxed way of practising specific skills that children need to work on, free of urgency or anxiety.

The games cover all the technical skills that children need to learn to read and write successfully. They encourage children to recognise letters, sound out words, read sight words, write words and sentences, and build vocabulary and comprehension.

Playing the games also helps children to develop self-regulation in areas such as impulse control, taking turns, following rules and paying attention. Self-regulation is important for all areas of learning.

A note on... *rhymes*

Rhymes can be used as an additional learning aid in any of the four sections. Rhyme is a playful way of helping children to hear and segment sounds in word.

Learning Partners can help their children to read and memorise rhymes using repetition, choral reading and actions. By pointing at each word in the rhyme, children should also be encouraged to identify how the rhyming end sounds are written.

Ask the children if they know any rhymes they can share with you. Later on, support the children to make up their own rhymes as part of have-a-go writing.

How to play the games

The games are graded and should be played in sequence. Some games might need to be repeated from week to week, until children have mastered the skill. On the other hand, where a game repeats a skill already mastered, Learning Partners may decide to skip to the next game and come back to it at a later date.

Following these steps will help to ensure a successful games session:

1. Before the Shine Literacy Hour starts, check the children's games record at the back of their have-a-go writing book to see which game they should play next. If it is their first session, start with the first game.
2. Make sure that you are familiar with how to play the game before the session starts by reading the information sheet in each game pack.
3. Start by carefully explaining the rules of the game. Some children may not have played games before so, if necessary, explain concepts like taking turns or throwing dice.
4. Start playing the game. Try to make it fun and give lots of encouragement.
5. If the children find a particular game too easy, introduce an additional challenge. For instance, ask the children to make a sentence out of all the words on their lotto card, ask them to give you the beginning sound as well as the end sound of the word (or vice-versa), or ask a different comprehension question.
6. At the end of the game, focus on the progress that the children have made during the game and on what they did well, rather than on who won.
7. Record the game on the children's games record and note the level of proficiency achieved as a reminder for future sessions.

A FEW OTHER WORD PLAY AND GAMES TIPS

- Be patient and try not to rush children for answers — create a sense of ease.
- Give specific feedback on some of the self-regulation skills that the children are practising – for instance, 'I see you're really concentrating', 'Well done for waiting your turn' or 'You've remembered the rules really well'.
- Don't be tempted to move through the games too quickly. It is better that children repeat games so that they have achieved real mastery, rather than move on with a shaky grasp of the skill. It is particularly useful to repeat the Speedy Reading games, as they help to reinforce sight words.

HAVE-A-GO WRITING

What is have-a-go writing?

During have-a-go writing, children use their letter-sound knowledge to ‘have a go’ at writing down words and sentences. As far as possible, the writing should be relevant or purposeful – for example, it could relate to topics that have already been discussed during the session. At these early stages, it is normal for letters to be missing or not properly formed and the focus should remain firmly on children’s attempts to make meaning.

Why do have-a-go writing?

Children need to be able to write for most school subjects and so lack of confidence in this area can create a barrier to learning. However, writing is a tricky skill. Children have to do a lot of things at once – hold a pencil correctly, segment words into letter-sounds, form different letters, and use correct English.



Children may feel scared of trying to write – or of ‘doing it wrong’. Have-a-go writing creates an opportunity to discover a natural level of emergent writing, free of expectation. The emphasis is on appreciating the overall sense of the writing, rather than correcting spelling or handwriting. Copying letters or words is avoided.

Have-a-go writing is also a chance to develop expressive language skills – in other words, to learn how to use words and sentences to convey what you want to say. An important part of the have-a-go methodology is having a conversation with the children about what they write before doing any writing.

How to do have-a-go writing

It is important that have-a-go-writing is contextual or purposeful for children. In other words, it should either relate to themes that have already been introduced during the session or be relevant for another reason (for example, writing a message for someone’s birthday).

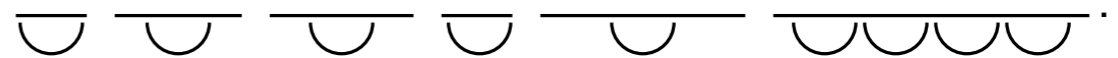
The method follows three stages – **say, prepare, write.**

1. Suggest a general theme for the writing, based on something that has been discussed in the session or another relevant topic. If the children cannot come up with their own idea for a sentence then propose the first few words – for example, ‘In the yard I...’, ‘My mom likes to...’, ‘Tomorrow I will...’.
2. If it is necessary, when the children have each come up with a sentence, gently model the correct English, and ask them to repeat it.
3. If you think the children are capable of extending the sentence, ask them a question that offers ideas (for example, ‘Who do you play football with?’ or ‘Does your mom prefer watching soapies or sport?’).
4. Ask the children to draw a line in their have-a-go writing book to represent each word in the sentence (if necessary, remind them to put a full-stop at the end).

For example, ‘*My mom likes to watch television*’ would be:



5. Clap out the syllables in the words, to help the children hear the different sounds in each word. Draw a scoop for each clap under the line - e.g. one scoop for ‘watch’, four scoops for ‘television’.



6. Ask the children to have a go at writing the word on each line. All attempts to represent the words should be accepted and praised. You may want to use gentle prompts to help the children hear the sounds in the words.
7. Do not immediately correct wrong spellings, particularly with children who are still at a very early stage of writing. With more confident writers, consider modelling the correct spellings of one or two words. Discourage using erasers.
8. Read the children’s sentence back to them. This will help them to realise that writing is meant to be read and understood by someone else. Then read the sentence together.

A FEW OTHER HAVE-A-GO WRITING TIPS

- Sometimes it might help younger children to draw something relating to their sentence before they start writing.
- Use the letter formation sheet in the Rainbow Pack to help children form letters correctly. Ask them to use their finger to trace how a letter is written.
- As the children become more confident, help them to experiment with different types of sentences and to use different tenses. Also assist them to use appropriate punctuation, and pay particular attention to capital letters and full-stops.
- When the children can confidently write two or three consecutive sentences, move on to paragraph writing. At this stage it is no longer necessary to draw a line for each word. Remember to try to keep the writing contextual and to offer themes and beginning words to help get children's creative juices flowing.
- If more advanced writers want to write personal narratives or stories, this is a great opportunity to help them with sequencing and structuring ideas. Ask them to tell you the story first, and then repeat it back to them before they start writing.



PRAISE NOTES

Everyone likes to feel that their efforts and achievements are recognised — and children are no different. By showing appreciation of the positive things that the children have learned and done, Learning Partners will help children to grow in confidence and to stay motivated.

In the Shine Literacy Hour, we use Praise Notes to give positive feedback at the end of each session. The Learning Partner writes a simple and meaningful praise sentence or two on a piece of paper for each child to take away with them. The feedback is as specific as possible, so that it positively reinforces an area of progress or a good learning habit.

Here are some ideas:

“You waited your turn during the games. Well Done Vuyo!”

“It was great to see how hard you concentrated today. Keep it up!”

“I could see you were tired today, but you still tried really hard. Well Done for not giving up, Anja!”

“You have made brilliant progress with sounding out words, Anelisa.”

“I loved all your great thinking about today's story, Jaco.”

“You remembered how to write the b sound, Sipho. I'm so proud of you.”

“Your writing is getting better and better, Mpho. Well Done!”

“You've finished all the pink books, Lesedi. Great reading!”



ETHOS

EACH INDIVIDUAL MATTERS

Shine Literacy creates an environment which affirms a child's importance.

LISTEN WITH RESPECT AND WITHOUT INTERRUPTION

The quality of our attention profoundly affects the quality of other people's thinking.

TREAT EACH OTHER AS THINKING PEERS

We learn from one another, regardless of age or qualification.

EASE CREATES, URGENCY DESTROYS

An environment that encourages children to work at their own pace facilitates learning.

PRACTISE THE ART OF APPRECIATION

Be generous and genuine with praise and words of encouragement.



