

Adolescent Literacy: A ^{brief} Guide for Parents

Key Messages for Parents

- Your son or daughter continues to develop literacy skills throughout adolescence.
- Literacy is about reading, writing, listening and speaking. It's also about how learners engage their prior experiences, self-confidence, identity, and motivation to develop their literacy skills and knowledge about relevant topics and issues.
- From mathematics to history to technology, your son or daughter uses literacy skills in all subject areas. Literacy helps with understanding and communicating ideas in all learning.
- Think. Express. Reflect. All good learners do these all the time. Strong literacy skills help learners do them well.
- Your son or daughter has a better chance of developing strong literacy skills when he or she is thinking about how those skills are developing. Learners need lots of support to be highly skilled in whatever they do. That includes literacy.

Did you know?

Students are using all kinds of materials in school to tap into their interests, develop their literacy skills, and help them be more knowledgeable. Whether it's on paper or on screen, you may see your son or daughter work with advertisements, audio recordings, blogs, charts, databases, emails, graphic novels, infographics, magazines, maps, newspapers, photographs, plays, reviews, scientific journals, short stories, technical manuals, textbooks, websites, and workplace documents.

Why Adolescent Literacy?

Your son or daughter has developed a lot of skills since you helped pronounce his or her first words and grasp a pencil to write his or her name.

In school, your son or daughter may have noticed a shift in how he or she uses and develops literacy skills. Although the skills learners developed in earlier grades will help them, that early literacy learning may only take them so far. Because they learn more about what it means to think, read, and talk like scientists, mathematicians, artist, technicians and environmentalist, they will learn vocabulary that is highly technical and abstract and read and write in forms that are more complex in subjects that are increasingly more specialized.

Also, adolescent literacy is different because they are different. As your son or daughter is growing into adulthood, he or she needs to express his or her identity, be more independent, and take on more complex challenges. So students' literacy skills are strengthened when the learning allows them to reflect who they are, make choices based on current requirements, their interests and their skills, and be thoughtful problem-solvers about issues that are relevant to them.

How you can support your son or daughter

Did you know?

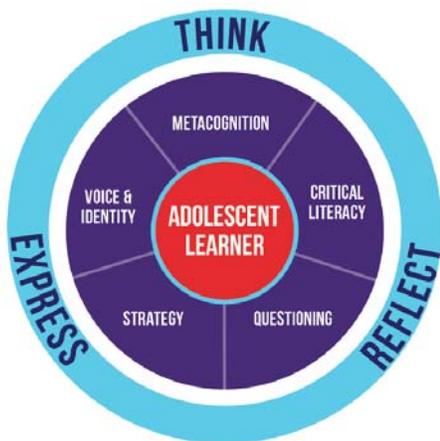
Your son or daughter's school recognizes that students are being bombarded by information from all kinds of sources. Some of those sources are reliable, and some are not. So there are a number of opportunities in all subjects for students to develop a 'critical eye' for what they read. That helps them develop as effective 'critical' consumers of information.

- Encourage all kinds of reading. Whether it is a good magazine, a textbook, a story, or a website, reading not only helps develop skills, it also builds knowledge about the world.
- Encourage writing, listening and speaking too! Your son or daughter needs good communication skills so that others understand clearly. So from emails to essays, conversations to interviews, your son or daughter develops these skills in school and outside of school.
- Be curious about what your son or daughter is learning. Ask about what he or she is reading and writing about. Encourage reading as not just reading novels, or writing as not just writing essays. Find out if he or she is having a difficult time with a particular area, and see how you and the school can help.
- Value all kinds of literacy skills. That includes texting. But sometimes the issue is that adolescents are so good at texting, they want to use texting for everything. (It might not be a good idea to 'text' a cover letter for a job application.) Your son or daughter's teachers help them know when texting is appropriate and when it's not. Encourage your son or daughter to think about how he or she can use literacy skills appropriately and effectively.

What's happening in schools?

In Grades 7-12, schools may be using the Adolescent Literacy Guide as a resource to support your son or daughter's literacy development. It goes beyond just helping them be more effective readers, writers and speakers. It outlines areas that help them be successful learners, regardless of the learning situation.

These areas are called the adolescent literacy components. Instruction that incorporates these components support students to think, express, and reflect. The components are:



Critical Literacy

Students knowing how to detect bias, fairness and reliability in the information they encounter, and be able to make decisions based on what they find.

Metacognition

Students knowing how they learn best, and if they need to build skills to be more effective learners in a variety of situations.

Questioning

Students knowing what questions need to be asked, and how to use questioning to get the information they need.

Strategy

Students knowing what they need to use and knowing what to do in order to understand and to communicate their understanding.

Voice and Identity

Students knowing how to make connections to what they know and value, and how their experience shapes how they understand the world around them.

Visit the Literacy section of www.edugains.ca for more about adolescent literacy.