

# Secondary school reading culture review tool

## A school-wide reading culture

A reading culture provides children and young people with support, encouragement, role models, resources and opportunities to read for pleasure. School leaders prioritise developing the skill and the will to read among students of all ages. They encourage staff to collaborate and weave reading for pleasure into every class, across the curriculum and into the daily lives of the students.

Creating a reading team that includes literacy leads, library staff, students and other champions of reading helps build and ensure a sustainable reading culture.

[Developing a reading culture](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/a-school-wide-reading-culture) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/a-school-wide-reading-culture]

[Watch a video about creating a reading culture](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/our-work/schools-videos/creating-a-school-wide-reading-culture) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/our-work/schools-videos/creating-a-school-wide-reading-culture]

## Reading for pleasure

The benefits of reading for pleasure are wide-ranging. They extend beyond improving literacy and educational outcomes to enhanced wellbeing, health and relationships. According to the OECD:

‘On average, students who read daily for enjoyment score the equivalent of one-and-a-half years of schooling better than those who do not.’

— [PISA in Focus: Do students today read for pleasure?](#)

However, research, including Scholastic’s ‘Kids & Family Reading Report’, shows children’s enjoyment of reading declines from around the age of 8. It is particularly noticeable from about ages 12 to 14 years. This coincides with a steady decline in the amount of support and encouragement students get to read for pleasure at home and school. According to Dr. Margaret Merga, this decline may be due to ‘orphaned responsibility’ and ‘expired expectations’.

[Kids & Family Reading Report](https://scholastic.com/readingreport/navigate-the-world.html) [scholastic.com/readingreport/navigate-the-world.html]

[How to encourage teens to read](https://theeducationhub.org.nz/how-to-encourage-teens-to-read) [theeducationhub.org.nz/how-to-encourage-teens-to-read]

[Reading for pleasure — a door to success](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/understanding-reading-engagement/reading-for-pleasure-a-door-to-success) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/understanding-reading-engagement/reading-for-pleasure-a-door-to-success]

[Reading for wellbeing \(hauora\)](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/understanding-reading-engagement/reading-for-wellbeing-hauora) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/understanding-reading-engagement/reading-for-wellbeing-hauora]

# Using the review tool

This tool helps you review current reading for pleasure practice in your school. Use it at the start of the term or year and again later in the year to help you measure your journey. Discover areas of strength, gaps and areas you would like to develop or enhance.

Look at all aspects outlined or focus on one at a time. Some aspects may not be relevant or applicable to your school or situation. For example, your school might not have a school librarian. Or you might be at the initial exploring stage for some areas.







What suits one school, class or student may not suit another. Ideally, the tool will help:

- start a conversation with school staff, and
- generate reflection, thoughts and ideas.

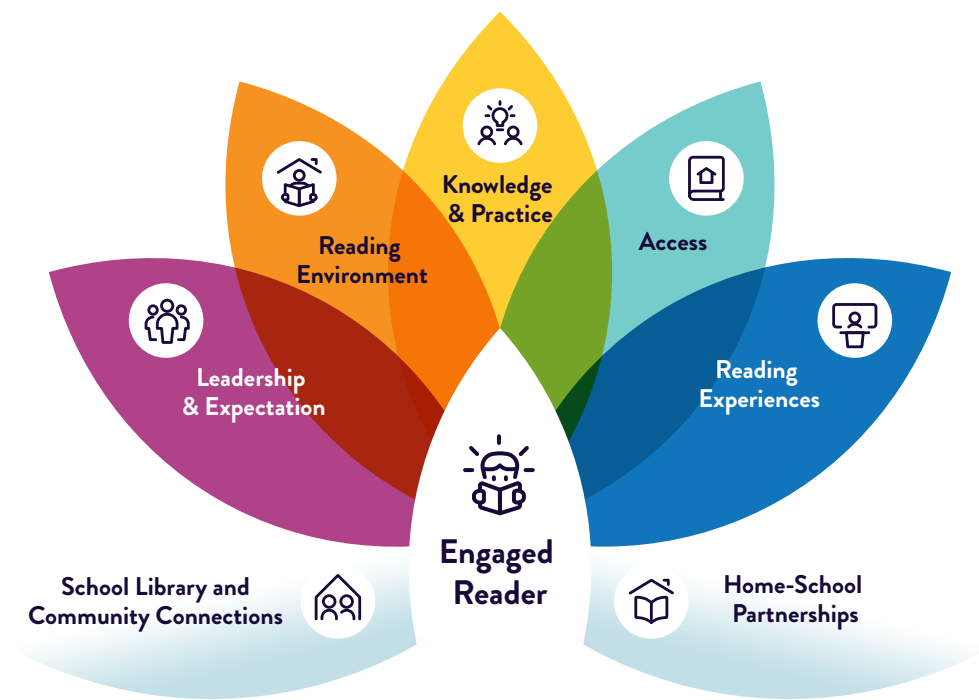
It will take trial and measurement. It will also take time, support, encouragement and plenty of discussion (and reading!) to share the vision and create a thriving reading community.

## Aspects to consider

The tool helps you consider 12 aspects of your school's reading culture. Each aspect also relates to 1 of the 7 petals in the [Reading Community Framework](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/a-school-reading-community/) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/a-school-reading-community]:

-  **Leadership and expectation** — the school has a reading vision and leadership.
-  **Knowledge and practice** — it has a valued school library. Teachers are readers and reading role models. Reading aloud is practised.
-  **Access** — students have ready access to a wide range of resources. The school makes dedicated time for independent reading.
-  **Reading environment** — the school has places and spaces for reading. It offers opportunities for student voice, book chat and book talk.
-  **Home-school reading partnerships** — the school works with families/whānau to encourage students to read at home for pleasure.
-  **School library and community connections** — the school collaborates with the public library, the National Library and other organisations.
-  **Reading experiences** — the school promotes and celebrates reading across the school. Students have access to events and opportunities.





Reading Community Framework

## 4 stages of reading culture development

Assess each aspect of your school's reading culture using the 4 stages of reading culture development below.

**Exploring** — learning about the concept, but in the early stages, or practice isn't strong. A general desire to build understanding and do things differently.

**Starting** — some shared vision/understanding. Practice is happening in some classrooms or some of the time or is getting underway. The school acknowledges the need for development. But it may be under-resourced or lack confidence.

**Doing** — widely shared understanding and regular practice with some areas of strength. Staff are actively implementing reading engagement strategies, shared understanding and approaches. Processes are in place, but there's further room for improvement.

**Enhancing** — excellent practice throughout the school and ready to build on strengths. Has processes in place for continuous review and improvement.

'We have to be committed, ingenious, flexible and experimental in coming up with ways of making literature come alive for every single child — no exceptions allowed.'

— [Michael Rosen](#), author, poet, literacy advocate and UK Children's Laureate (2007–2009)



Vision, leadership and expectation	Exploring			
	Starting			
	Doing			
	Enhancing			
Principal and school management are reading advocates who support and endorse a school-wide approach to reading for pleasure.				
They know the research about why reading for pleasure is important and how it makes a difference.				
They share their vision for the school's reading culture.				
They are visible reading role models.				
They provide the financial and logistical resources for a flourishing reading culture — staff expertise, reading resources, time and place.				
They are explicit about expectations that all students are readers.				
Reading for pleasure strategies are included in school policy and planning documents. For example, the school has processes in place to help teachers keep up to date with children's and young adult literature.				
Reading for pleasure happens at all levels. It's visible throughout the school and online.				
Reading for pleasure practice, initiatives and attitudes are supported, implemented, measured and reviewed.				

[Watch a video about creating a school reading community](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/our-work/schools-videos/creating-a-school-reading-community) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/our-work/schools-videos/creating-a-school-reading-community]



The school library				
	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
The school values its library. School leaders, teachers and the Board of Trustees all understand how a well-resourced and staffed school library can benefit reading engagement.				
School library policies and procedures enable and encourage students to read for pleasure. Examples include borrowing limits, opening hours and collection policies.				
Regular class visits to the library are prioritised and purposeful.				
Teachers and school library staff plan and work together regularly to engage students as readers. This is true of all subject learning areas, not just English.				
School library staff are involved in school literacy, reading and cross-curricular planning meetings.				
School library staff are knowledgeable about young adult (YA) literature. They have opportunities to develop and share expertise with staff.				
Student librarians provide input into the collection. They actively promote resources to their peers. They are ambassadors for the library and reading in the school community.				

[Libraries supporting readers](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/libraries-supporting-readers) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/libraries-supporting-readers]

[Student librarians](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/school-libraries/leading-and-managing/managing-your-school-library-staff/student-librarians) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/school-libraries/leading-and-managing/managing-your-school-library-staff/student-librarians]



## Teachers as readers / reading role models

Teachers from all subject learning areas, not just English, adopt these practices.

	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
They understand why reading role models matter. They know about their responsibility to be a reading role model and ways to do this.				
Teachers read, know, and can recommend YA fiction and non-fiction. They have strategies to find out about and share new books.				
They know their students' reading enthusiasms, struggles, strengths, and needs.				
They are seen to be reading independently, often, with pleasure, from choice.				
Teachers know and use strategies to engage students with reading. Examples include how to choose what to read, reading aloud for pleasure, book chat and book talking.				
Teachers reflect on their own reading identity. They share about books and being a reader with their students.				

[School staff as readers](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/teachers-as-readers/school-staff-as-readers) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/teachers-as-readers/school-staff-as-readers]

[Strategies to engage students as readers](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/strategies-to-engage-students-as-readers) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/strategies-to-engage-students-as-readers]



Reading aloud	Exploring			
	Starting		Doing	
There is school-wide understanding of the literacy and wellbeing benefits of reading aloud to young people of all ages. Reading aloud also enables students to enjoy stories they may not otherwise experience.				
All teachers, at every level, read aloud frequently and regularly from the best of YA and other literature.				
Reading aloud is prioritised and focused on reading for pleasure — no work attached. It also provides a way to make curriculum links and expand understanding.				
Teachers read with expression and emotional connection from well-chosen books.				

[Reading aloud](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/strategies-to-engage-students-as-readers/reading-aloud) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/strategies-to-engage-students-as-readers/reading-aloud]

‘While some educators may view reading aloud as a step backward pedagogically, or not the most productive use of class time, reading aloud can advance teens’ listening and literacy skills by piquing their interest in new and/or rigorous material. It also builds what Trelease calls the ‘pleasure connection’ between the young person and the book and the person reading aloud.’  
— Jess deCourcy Hinds, [A curriculum staple: Reading aloud to teens](#)



Access to resources	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Students have access to a wide range of reading resources in school and classroom libraries. Resources are up-to-date, diverse, and appealing. They include fiction and non-fiction, print and digital books.				
Students visit the school library often and take books home to read for pleasure. Students have opportunities to choose what to read.				
The library is welcoming and accessible for <b>all</b> students. Its resources, practices and policies are inclusive and user-friendly. It has books in languages that reflect the school community and generous and forgiving borrowing policies. Opening hours suit students and their families.				
The school maximises access to resources at home and at school by working with their local public library and the National Library.				

[Reader-friendly policies](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/libraries-supporting-readers/reader-friendly-policies) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/libraries-supporting-readers/reader-friendly-policies]

[National Library's school lending service](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/lending-service) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/lending-service]

'McQuillan and Au (2001) investigated secondary school students and found that access to reading material through classroom libraries led to more frequent reading and improved motivation across all levels of reading ability.'

— Margaret Merga, [Access to books in the home and adolescent engagement in recreational book reading: Considerations for secondary school educators](#)





## Independent reading

Examples include Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) and Sustained Silent Reading (SSR).

	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
The school prioritises regular time for independent reading.				
The school prioritises regular time for students to browse and choose from a range of reading material.				
The school prioritises regular time for students to settle into the experience and build stamina over time.				
Students can choose from a range of material to keep reading if they leave books at home. There's no expectation of any work attached to the reading.				
Teachers role-model reading and share and chat about their reading in all classes.				

[Independent reading](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/strategies-to-engage-students-as-readers/independent-reading) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/strategies-to-engage-students-as-readers/independent-reading]

## Reading environment

	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Evidence of a reading culture is visible throughout the school. This extends from the staff room and classroom to the library, playground and online (website and social media). Consider a 'reading walk-through' of your school. What would you see or like to see?				
Students have a variety of comfortable and relaxing places to read at school. They're encouraged to find the same at home.				

[Reader-friendly environments](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/libraries-supporting-readers/reader-friendly-environments) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/libraries-supporting-readers/reader-friendly-environments]



Student voice				
	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Students have opportunities to help build the reading culture. For example, they may select reading resources, train as student librarians or help promote reading.				
Decisions about building a reading culture consider a diverse range of student voice.				

Book chat and book talk				
	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Teachers understand that book chat and book talk are important for creating a reading community.				
Teachers know how to share and chat about books with students.				
Teachers know strategies and approaches to encourage students to share about books with each other.				
Students have frequent and regular opportunities to talk about books, stories and reading with each other and staff.				
Staff have frequent and regular opportunities to share about YA literature and other reading with each other.				



Home school reading partnerships	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
Staff understand how important it is for family and whānau to support student reading at home.				
The school provides practical support with encouragement, guidance and reading resources. Staff are using strategies to help families encourage their children to read at home.				
Reading for pleasure is a regular part of general school and family/whānau interactions, communications and events.				

[Home-school reading partnerships](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/home-school-reading-partnerships) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/home-school-reading-partnerships]

School library and community connections	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
School library staff and teachers regularly liaise with the public library and library staff.				
The school actively promotes the public library, its resources, services, programmes and membership to students and their families.				
The school invites public library staff to visit and promote their services and programmes.				
The school maximises access to resources, services and reading-related professional development by using the National Library and other organisations.				

[Collaborating with public libraries](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/collaborating-with-public-libraries) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/collaborating-with-public-libraries]



Reading experiences	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing
The school uses a strategic and inclusive approach to raise the profile of reading for pleasure through the school and community. They plan and document their approach. The school uses promotional events to inspire their community to read for pleasure.				
The library is at the heart of reading promotion and developing a reading culture in the school.				
School library staff and teachers collaborate to promote reading through events and activities.				
The principal promotes books and reading.				
Students can join activities and events that celebrate and acknowledge readers and reading. Examples include engaging with authors and illustrators, festivals, reading challenges and other events.				

[Reading promotion](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/reading-promotion) [natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement/creating-a-reading-community/reading-promotion]

Other reading-related practice or activities in your school	Exploring	Starting	Doing	Enhancing

## Review information and further reading

Note the date of this review and the people you consulted so you can compare progress later in the year.

School name: \_\_\_\_\_

Who completed this review or was consulted: \_\_\_\_\_

Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Further reading

[Examining the effects of a school-wide reading culture on the engagement of middle school students](https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2011.11462085) [tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19404476.2011.11462085]

## Reading engagement

Visit our website to find out more about building a school-wide reading culture and community:

[natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement](https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/reading-engagement)

