

Keeping a diary - Information Sheet

Writing a diary is more than just a way for your child to record their daily life; it can have impressive educational benefits, too.

In recent years, diary-style books such as the Wimpy Kid and Tom Gates series have repeatedly topped the children's bestsellers lists. But while kids are lapping up their favourite characters' journal entries, the number of children who keep a diary of their own has fallen.

Here are some reasons why keeping a diary could give your child's attainment a boost:

1. Keeping a diary improves children's writing

According to recent research, fewer children are writing for pleasure in their own time, to the detriment of their writing ability. Just five per cent of children who never write outside school are able to write at a higher level than is expected for their age, compared to over 30 per cent of those who do write in their own time.

Writing a diary is a great way to get children to write outside school, with a knock-on effect on their attainment: pupils who keep a diary are twice as likely to exceed age expectations in writing.

2. Children can choose what to write

Diary writing, gives children complete freedom. 'When you're writing for yourself, rather than writing something that has to be handed in, anything goes,' staff at the National Literacy Trust state. With the vast majority of children (82 per cent of girls, and 76 per cent of boys) saying that writing is more fun when they can choose what to write about, it's a brilliant opportunity for them to discover the pleasure they can get from writing.

3. It improves handwriting

With children spending so much time using computers and other technology, in and out of school, handwriting is becoming a lost art. Although there are lots of opportunities to keep a diary electronically, for example by writing a blog, most people who write a diary just for themselves do it by hand, it is good handwriting practice for your child.

4. It makes writing routine

Writing a diary helps children get into a writing habit, so that it's no longer something they dread, procrastinate about or feel afraid of.

5. They can try out genres

Being able to write in different genres and styles is an important skill. Students are expected to read stories, plays, poetry, non-fiction and textbooks, and apply the conventions they've learnt to their own writing. For example, your child might write a poem about the weather one day, and a report of a football match they went to the next.

6. It builds resilience

With mental health issues on the rise in children of primary school age, learning how to express emotions is a vital life skill, and one which keeping a diary can help them develop. Writing a diary is a great way for children to process their thoughts and express their feelings.

7. It's creative

As fans of Diary of a Wimpy Kid and the Tom Gates series will know, keeping a diary doesn't just have to be about words. Children can doodle and draw in their diaries, as well as writing, which is another good way for them to express themselves. Writing a diary isn't just about putting facts down on paper!

Top tips for encouraging your child to keep a diary

- Style your diary to your taste. It may sound obvious, but having a special diary of their own can motivate children to write for pleasure. If your child is a reluctant writer, a lovely notebook may be a better option than a diary with dates that could put them under pressure to write daily.
- Use books as a model. Series such as Tom Gates, Wimpy Kid, Dork Diaries and Tracy Beaker can provide inspiration for children to start keeping a diary. For older children try historical, factual diaries like The Diary of Anne Frank or comedic works like The Diary of Adrian Mole.
- Let them experiment. Provide a selection of stationery such as coloured pens, stamps and stickers so they can be creative with their diary entries.
- Try out different formats or presentation page styles.

Our Summertime Challenge for 2019-2020

You may remember that last year, we challenged students with Maths Games and other Maths related learning opportunities over the summer. The intention was to both engage students in Maths learning with their parents, and to maintain our fabulous improvements in Maths results across the targeted Year 1-10 age range.

This year - we are presenting a Writing Challenge.

So what is our writing challenge?



- Use either the book we've gifted to you, or another of your choice as a summertime journal
- Get creative
- Design a stunning cover
- Illustrate your entries
- Track your habits and hobbies
- Use scrapbooking techniques to bring your journal entries to life
- Incorporate any other creative ideas you may have
- Display your journal at our 2020 Welcome BBQ, prizes for the best entries

Why are we presenting this challenge?

- As adults, we know that there are students falling behind with writing skills at schools all over New Zealand and the world. These students are more likely to be of primary age and/or male.
- As educators, we know that levels of attainment can drop in any subject area over the summer months.
- At The Catlins Area School, we know that the barrier to higher levels of achievement for our students is often the 'Structure' component of the Literacy Learning Progressions. At school, we're working hard on a new system of learning for 'Structure' which we'll begin in 2020. Included in our challenge pack is an evaluation of your child's current level with the 'Structure' component of writing, and an indication of 'next steps'. You can use this as a guide to help your child to develop their writing as the summer progresses.



Challenge equipment

- Journal book
- Information sheet
- Next steps with 'Structure' document for your child

You can learn more about the NZ Literacy Learning Progressions by checking out this website: <https://literacyprogressions.tki.org.nz/>