



Enabling literacy for every learner.

**FEA's Collective Action Group on Literacy
position to inform Government policy**

January 2022

What does literacy mean to us?

Our collective work and a well evidenced body of research shows that literacy skills are so much more than the tools of decoding and transcribing. These are important, but they do not, by themselves, enable children to take advantage of these skills to enhance their knowledge, prosperity and cultural capital. To achieve this, a more holistic approach is needed.

Every child has the right to literacy.

What are our ideas?

To ensure that we are delivering a fair education for all we are calling for long term, sustained funding for resources, interventions and experiences for all children and young people, accompanied by a coherent national strategy, helping them to build the key literacy and comprehension skills to thrive in school and throughout their lives.

Developing the whole child

All children and young people need to have access to the broadest English curriculum, embedding reading and writing for pleasure in their lives. This includes access to a range of texts and rich cultural experiences.

Schools and teachers should be given the necessary funding, support and guidance to embed this into their curriculum to ensure they have a systematic whole school approach to improving literacy.

Supporting Teachers and leaders serving disadvantaged communities

Children and young people most at risk need access to effective teaching and enrichment. There needs to be increased investment in professional development for teachers, teaching assistants and leaders to ensure they are equipped to meet the needs of all pupils.

Engaging Parents and Communities

Parental and community engagement is key to effective practice and development of literacy skills. Young people need consistent 1-1 support to develop their literacy skills: mobilising wider society, businesses and communities to support this is critical.

Enabling young people with the knowledge, skills and awareness they need to access post-16 destinations and thrive later in life.

There needs to be a national effort that spans beyond learning in school to boost young people's practice and enjoyment of reading and writing.

What changes are we recommending?

Developing whole child:

The aim of literacy for child development should be to ensure every child can comprehend their world, exercise agency and grow cultural capital. To do this we must:

Enable Early Years settings should be supported to provide a language-rich environment, with access to high quality texts and materials for stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems.

Rich literary knowledge comes from a range of experiences and cultural opportunities. Studying the work of and working directly with the creators of our literary heritage and reading for pleasure cannot be underestimated. Schools must be supported and incentivised to enable these experiences to be available to all children.

Ringfence funding for all schools (including EYFS settings) that supports inclusion and improves the timely identification and support for children who may have additional requirements.

Supporting Teachers and leaders serving disadvantaged communities:

Adapt the Early Career Framework so that teachers in every subject and across all phases are secure in literacy approaches that include, but also go beyond phonics.

Teaching literacy across all key stages should be broad, creative, and inclusive.

Teachers should be encouraged to include good quality texts and cultural experiences and able to deploy a range of approaches based on pupils' starting points. Teachers also need CPD and resources that help them make the most of talk, books, experiences, culture, and local organisations.

Engaging Parents and Communities:

Resource school libraries and librarians as both places and strategies for improving literacy. Libraries are central places to provide high quality texts and materials for use by the whole school and their faculties.

Librarians can provide expertise on appropriate texts across key stages, alternative and accessible forms of literature and techniques to engage children beyond academic texts.

Support schools to think creatively about ways parents and the wider community, including businesses, can support children's reading and engagement in literacy activities.

Enabling young people with the knowledge, skills and awareness they need to access post-16 destinations and thrive later in life.

Wider skills of literacy enable self-expression and self-efficacy in young people to continue their educational journey. We know that language skills, the propensity to read for pleasure and developing cultural capital all have significant impacts on future life chances, whether that is in work or health and wellbeing.

What impact do we hope these ideas will achieve?

The appointment of a new Secretary of State for Education, with a stated aim of tackling illiteracy, is a key opportunity to realise a vision where every child has the literacy skills they need.

A coherent national strategy which prioritises long term, sustained funding for resources, interventions and experiences for all children and young people, is the best way to ensure every actor in the system embraces national expectations and standards.

A national strategy and co-production between schools, parents, communities and civil society that would improve the quality of education, the accessibility of meaningful experiences and reduce the conflation low levels of literacy has with language, wellbeing and lower life chances.

Signalling a renewed national commitment to literacy would energise local partners across different agencies to embrace and embed practices across schools, teaching bodies, training providers and cultural organisations.

The expansion of literacy hubs, in partnership with civil society organisations, would also provide improved accessibility and availability to schools who most need support to improve literacy.

We believe a new government strategy for literacy could be the catalyst for significant change and we hope any subsequent reforms will take account of our recommendations.