

# Dimensions of Dyslexia

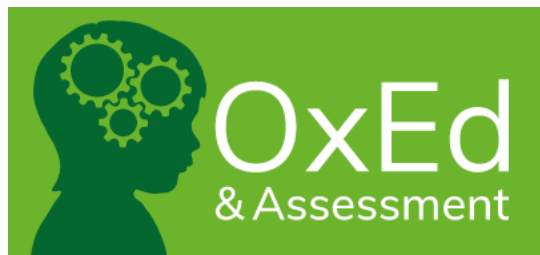
Evidence and Practice

International Conference 2024

British  
Dyslexia  
Association



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## Title:

Fostering reading motivation  
and engagement: Love to Read

## Presenter:

Sarah McGeown,  
University of Edinburgh

# Current context

## Issue

- Children's reading attitudes and engagement are at an all time low (Clark et al., 2023).
- DfE Reading Framework (2023) includes the importance of reading for pleasure



**“Just 2 in 5 (43.4%) 8- to 18-year-olds told us in early 2023 that they enjoyed reading in their free time. This is the lowest level of reading enjoyment we have recorded since 2005.”**

Based on n = 64,066, aged 8-18

# Children with reading difficulties

- Often have poor perceptions of themselves as readers and are more likely to suffer from reading anxiety (Francis et al., 2019; Francis & McArthur, 2020; McArthur, 2022).
- This can have consequences for their emotional health (McArthur et al., 2021).

# Love to Read: Programme designed to increase children's reading motivation and engagement

**Motivation:** 'The drive to read resulting from an individual's beliefs about, attitudes toward, and goals for reading' (Conradi, 2014)

**Engagement:** Behavioural, cognitive, affective and social dimensions (Lee et al., 2021; McGeown & Conradi-Smith, 2024)



# Love to Read: Development and Evaluation



Phase 1:

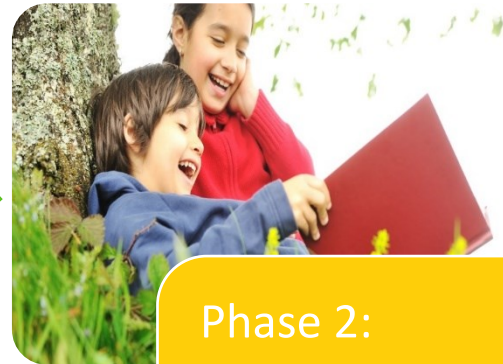
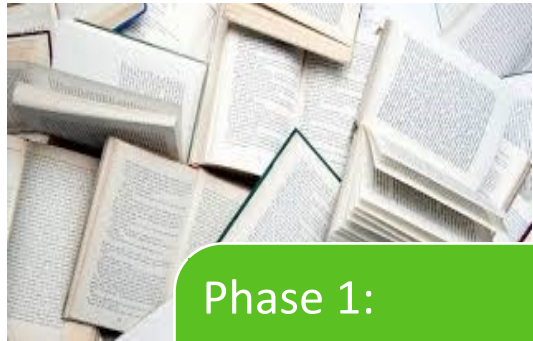
Research input

Literature review:

- Relevant theory/research from different disciplinary perspectives
- Links with curricula

SIX PRINCIPLES

# Love to Read: Development and Evaluation



## Phase 1:

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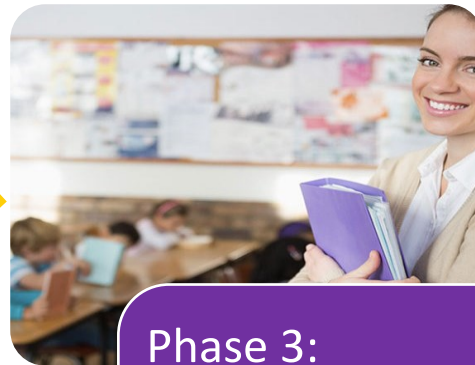
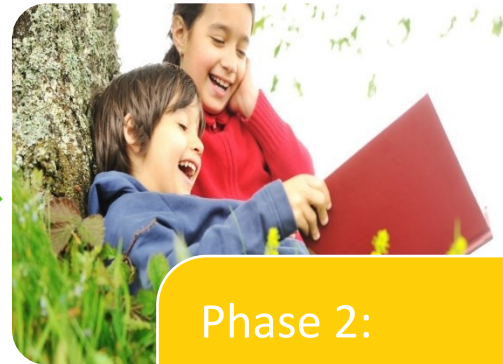
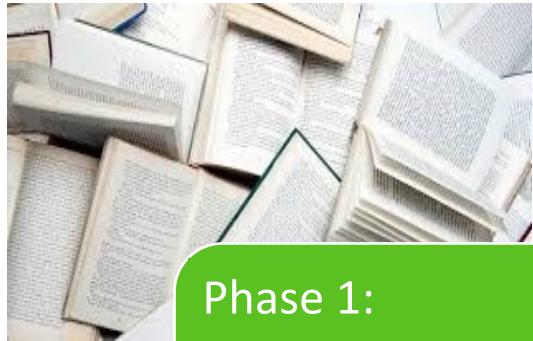
SIX PRINCIPLES

## Phase 2:

### Child input

Individual and group interviews (n = 59, 4 UK schools) to seek children's perspectives and experiences.

# Love to Read: Development and Evaluation



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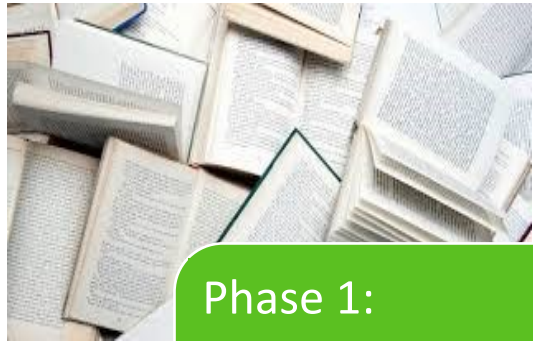
Preregistration: <https://osf.io/5ztjk>

## Phase 3: Teacher/expert input

- Recruitment of 6 teachers
- Co-design online
- Practice partner input
- PROGRAMME DEVELOPED

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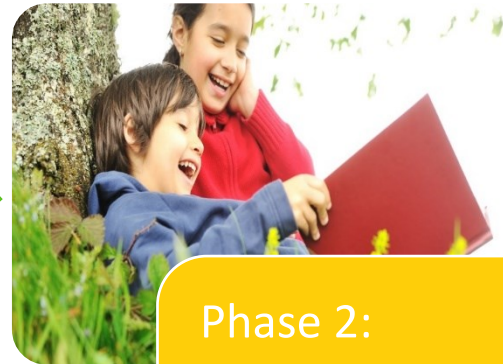


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**Phase 4:**  
Evaluation

- 6 week feasibility study, 4 schools, 425 pupils
- Mixed methods
- Implementation and effectiveness

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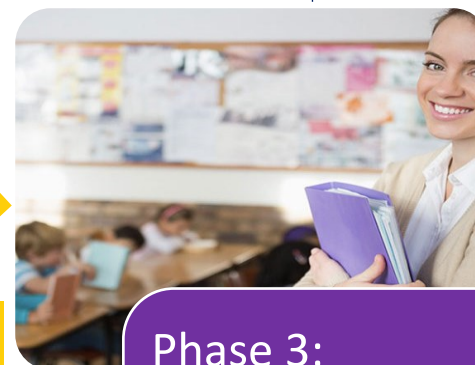
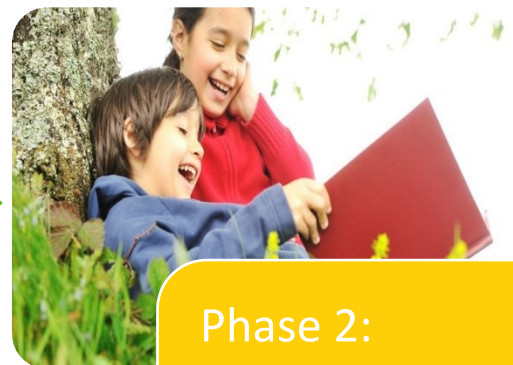
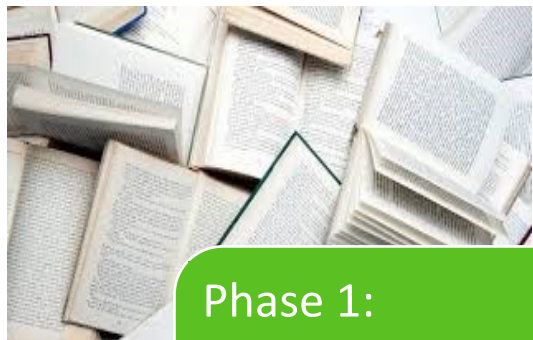
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# Love to Read: Development and Evaluation

## Development

## Evaluation



### Phase 1: Research input

- Literature review:
    - Relevant theory/research from different disciplinary perspectives
    - Links with curricula
- SIX PRINCIPLES

### Phase 2: Child input

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- 6 week feasibility study, 4 schools, 425 pupils
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# Love to Read principles

- Access
- Choice
- Time
- Connection
- Social
- Success



# Access

**Children need to have regular and easy access to books at school which reflect their interests, preferences, abilities, lives and experiences.**

Aligns with research highlighting the importance of quality book provision (Gambrell, 2011; Mahasneh et al., 2020; McGeown & Wilkinson, 2021).



# School-based practices

- Look at access from the perspectives of all children and pay particular attention to children who do not have good access to books (e.g., with reading difficulties).
- Involve children in new book purchases to ensure books reflect children's interests, lives, preferences and abilities.
- Read aloud to increase children's access to books.
- Make connections with local library.



# Love to Read: Perspectives and experiences

***"children loved being able to sort and re-design own class library. It highlighted gaps in genre we have"***

***"this term we started to go to the library, and the library books I really enjoyed them"***

***"Organising the class library by genre was incredible. Suddenly my reluctant readers were reading blurbs to try and categorise them!"***

***"I liked the Love to Read project because the teacher let us pick stuff for the library"***

***"Emptying the class library was one of the best things we ever did... now half the size but reflects much more what they want to read"***



# Choice

**Children need choice over their reading and reading activities. Schools need the structure, and children need the skills, to ensure 'good' reading choices.**

Giving children control of their independent reading activities through choice is central to supporting reading motivation and engagement (Guthrie et al., 2004; 2007; McGeown & Wilkinson, 2021).



# School based practices

- Explicitly support children's skills to choose books aligned with interests and abilities.
- Organise books/text types to facilitate good reading choices.
- Develop knowledge of children's literature to help students make choices that align with their interests and abilities.



# Love to Read: Perspectives and experiences

*"I liked that we could discover new things what we liked. I found out that I quite like the diary kind of books, which I didn't know I liked before"*

*"they weren't necessarily understanding how to choose books... you now see them take much longer to select their books" [and know when to change]*

*"This was the most useful lesson, the class really didn't have the skills to choose a book and I found children who disengage with reading quickly were finding books they found interesting and reading consistently"*

*"highlighted that many children did not have strategies on how to select a book.. the weaker children in particular began to make better choice of reading material"*

*"I used to just like pick up a book and look at the front cover and be like, 'Oh, that's interesting'. But now when I pick up book I look at the front cover... I think about what story could be about..."*

*"I used to not read books, and I've started to like books more and more ... because I've found books that I like!"*





# Time

**Children need to have regular quality time to read books they enjoy at school and at home.**

Time spent reading books predicts growth in reading skills (Guthrie et al., 1999; Mol & Bus, 2011; Torppa et al., 2019, van Bergen et al., 2020). Depth of reading engagement is also important (Miyamoto et al., 2019).



# School based practices

- Ensure quality time is set aside for reading in school, and that children have a book they enjoy reading during this time.
- Encourage out of school reading (independent and shared) and support families' understanding of the importance of reading for enjoyment throughout school.
- Ensure children have opportunities to swap a book if they are not enjoying it.



# Love to Read: Perspectives and experiences

*"I used to like never read, I would just like play with like toys before I went to bed and now that I've like, started reading I read books every night when I go to bed"*

*"We read a chapter of our class novel as a whole class everyday. I think the class enjoy that protected time, in which there's guaranteed 'calm' and there's always a really nice feeling of togetherness"*

*"Teachers and TAs say they are feeling more relaxed because they have time to read within their day as well"*

*"Made us stop and take time to enjoy books – teachers and TA's too... down time was not just for reading but also to de-stress and slow down"*

*"From the Love to Read now I have a different opinion, now I keep reading books before I go to bed, even though I've never done that"*

*"I go to the library every Friday now after swimming and get lots of books out"*



# Connection

**Children need to have access to, and be able to choose books, which feel personally relevant, and relevant to their reading goals.**

Characters and stories which feel personally relevant lead to enhanced engagement with the text (Kuzmičová and Cremin, 2021; Webber et al., 2024).

Children are more engaged if the books they read, and the reading activities they participate in, align with their reading goals (Guthrie et al., 2007; McGeown et al., 2020; 2021).



# School based practices

- Ensure book provision reflects children's interests, lives, experiences and abilities.
- Encourage children to explore personally meaningful content when they read (reflective reading).
- Encourage children to find books that connect with the type of reading experience they are seeking (e.g., something to make them laugh, relax, go on an adventure).



# Love to Read: Perspectives and experiences

*"a child, he said that the music today didn't match what I was reading today, which I thought was really interesting. He said that's too slow, I'm reading a chase scene and that's too slow. And I thought, that's fascinating. He was really reflective after that"*

*"I feel like you almost like connect more to the characters"*

*"for me reading isn't just a thing you do anymore, it's sort of like another life"*

*"Before I just thought that reading was like, you read a book and then you finish the book, but now I feel that you can like think a lot more about the book and like relate yourself to the characters and the storyline and stuff"*

*"I gave the class the task of finding a book that they connect with and to share it with someone who they think would connect with too. The class really enjoyed this as many children were able to connect and read with people other than their friends"*

*"I think I'm a lot more into the world of the book, and like the characters, so I think that's probably one thing it's helped me with, cause when I used to read, I never really got into the books"*



# Social

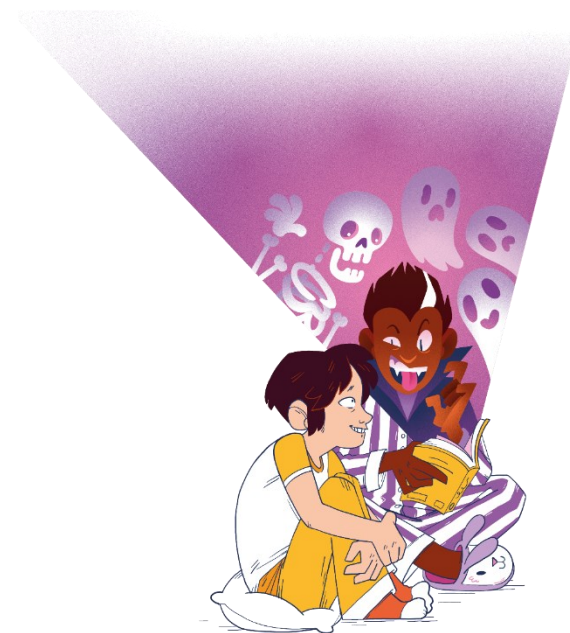
**Children need the time, skills and confidence to share and discuss books with others.**

Social reading activities should be inclusive, meaningful and enjoyable. It will include sharing thoughts about books in different ways, and with different people (Cremin et al., 2014; Gambrell, 2011).



# School based practices

- Ensure social reading activities are inclusive and allow different ways for children to share their thoughts about books.
- Book-talk can take different forms (e.g., whole class, small group, child-child, teacher-child); however don't assume children have the skills and confidence to do this well. Support and guidance is important.
- Support social reading activities beyond the classroom.





# Love to Read: Perspectives and experiences

*"I like how the Love to Read project made me more like encouraged to talk about reading, because I used to think it was a bit weird to like reading [...] but now, after Love to Read project, it's encouraged me to actually just like, encourage others to read as well"*

*"I think it made me more confident reading out loud to like my friends and the teacher"*

*"I felt more confident discussing it with other people, because me and my friend used to talk more about different things than books, but now we talk about what we read"*

*"Pupils really enjoyed organising the class library, making category signs, and had super conversations about what books they have read and whether they'd recommend"*

*"I like reading with my friends, and it's helped me find the right book for me"*



# Success

**Children need to have a range of rich and diverse positive reading experiences and recognise their growing success as readers.**

Perceptions of success are central to theories of reading motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Reading skill has been widely cited as important for reading motivation and engagement (Toste et al., 2020, van Bergen et al., 2020).

However, a broad conceptualisation of success is also important (McGeown & Wilkinson, 2021).



# School based practices

- Success is a broad concept. Ensure this idea is embedded in the classroom.
- Ensure all children have access to high-quality books which align with their reading skills, as well as their reading interests.
- Encourage and support children to set meaningful and achievable reading goals for themselves, recognising the different ways in which they can develop as readers.



# Love to Read: Perspectives and experiences

*"The 'what makes a successful reader discussion really hit home for some children. It's not just the kids who read the massive Harry Potter books that are good readers!!"*

*"What is a successful reader? This activity worked well on post it notes and allowed for anonymity and lots of discussion"*

*"I think that the love to read just like showed us the better sides of reading not just that you had to do it for your homework, you could actually do it as a like hobby and stuff"*

*"Probably cause I've now like experienced what reading, and how fun reading can be, and it's yeah. It's just been a lot more fun ever since"*

*"for our SEN child to really be like I love reading now, I will sit and read, is amazing"*

*"I used to just think that I wasn't that good at reading and I could only read short stories. But when I started reading bigger books, I realized that you achieve it if you put your mind to it"*



# Love to Read Programme (NOTE: STILL NEEDS FULL EVALUATION)

**LOVE TO READ**  
A Programme to Inspire and Sustain a Love of Reading

The graphic features six panels of diverse children reading and playing. At the bottom, logos for the **Nuffield Foundation**, **THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH**, and **LOVE TO READ** are displayed.

## Unit 3. Access

### Teacher definition:

Children have regular and easy access to books at school which reflect their interests, preferences, abilities, lives and experiences

### Child definition:

I can access books I enjoy

### Research insights:

Children are more motivated to read when they have access to a wide range of reading materials (Gambrell, 2011), but specifically reading materials which reflect their lives, interests, preferences and abilities (McGeown & Wilkinson, 2021). However, inequalities in access to books persist. For example, in the UK, a quarter of disadvantaged primary schools in England do not have a library and 40% of primary schools reported having no dedicated school library budget (Tyler Todd, 2021). Furthermore, inequalities in access to books are reflected in children's homes; children from higher income families are more likely to have books at home (Clark et al., 2021) than children from lower income families. In addition inequalities are reflected across different communities (Neuman & Celano, 2001) as are the use and availability of public libraries to support children's reading practices. Therefore, good knowledge of resources to freely increase access to books is important (see Access classroom activities section and McGeown & Wilkinson, 2021, for suggestions).

Reading aloud to children is one way to increase their access to a wide range of reading materials (Gambrell, 2011), exposing children to more diverse books and authors than they would naturally encounter. Furthermore, reading aloud allows children to access more challenging books; books that they may not be able to read independently with the level of fluency required for deep engagement (Cremin et al., 2014). In addition, creating links with the public libraries can facilitate greater access to books for children.

### Insights from children:

Seeking children's opinions and experiences is essential to understand each of the Love to Read principles from their perspectives. In the development of the Love to Read



Firstly, children found it easy to access books in school that they enjoy when the school has a **variety of genres** and there is good **availability** of books. They also said that **experience of reading** can enhance access but that **restrictions** in what was available to them and time to **choose** made it difficult for children to access books they would enjoy. Children suggested teachers can improve access to books by using **pupil voice** to ask children about their reading preferences and purchase new books to reflect this.



### Activity A.2. Ask Us Our Opinion

- "Ask Us Our Opinion". Take a class survey on your students' favourite genres, books and authors. This could be extended to a class discussion about the quality and access of books in your class/school and how to work collectively to improve provision. See resource Access2.

### Activity A.3. Library Audit

- Carry out a current library audit to evaluate whether school book provision reflects the interests, lives, preferences and abilities students in your school. Ask children to be involved in looking through your library collection, removing outdated books or those in poor condition - old, tattered books can put children off reading - unless they are favourite reads! The school provision of books should look as exciting and inviting as possible.

### Read aloud in class (Key Point 3)

Reading aloud a wide range of high-quality books gives children access to books they might not be able to read independently. Reading aloud also gives children access to more diverse books and authors than they would naturally read themselves.

### Activity A.4. Whole class read

- Introduce a class vote on the next 'whole class read'. The class teacher selects five books in advance (perhaps based on children's recommendations, but also ensuring diversity/representation) and reads an extract of each one, then the books are left in the classroom and children are encouraged to pick them up and read extracts before the final vote. Allow children to vote anonymously if they wish. Introducing this, alongside teacher favourite reads (i.e., books you know they'll love/think are important for them to access) ensures children also have a say in the whole class reads.

### Activity A.5. Online read alouds

- Draw upon external sources of support to access readily available read alouds (e.g., Authors Live, **cBeebies**). In addition, parents, teachers or people from the community (e.g., lollipop man/lady, local supermarket/shop) may also want to create their own recorded read aloud.

# Development and piloting: Article under review

## Development

- Provides theoretical and empirical background to the programme
- Co-design of programme

## Piloting

- Focuses on implementation (acceptability and feasibility) and effectiveness (mixed methods)



# Development and piloting: Article under review

Implementation: Acceptable and feasible (albeit with programme/delivery revisions).

Effectiveness: Qualitative: Insights were very positive, reported changes to attitudes, behaviours and skills to increase reading motivation and engagement.

Quantitative: No statistically significant changes to children's reading motivation or engagement for entire sample. Significant increase for those children with low reading engagement at pre-test ( $d = 0.8$ ).

Further evaluation needed with more sensitive measures, longer implementation duration, sufficient preparation time/professional development.



# Key messages

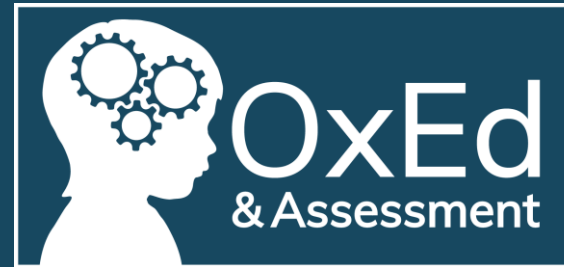


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- More attention needs to be paid to supporting the reading motivation and engagement of children with reading difficulties
- Consequences for children's educational experiences, outcomes, and wellbeing
- Synthesising research insights with teachers/other professionals' knowledge, expertise and experience is essential, as it centring children's perspectives and experiences.



Thank you for listening and  
thanks to our track sponsor:



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Websites: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/> and <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/>

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and children who contributed to the Love to Read project.

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