



## Adult Literacy Ages 16 and up

*Adult life requires the use of literacy skills in many areas. In addition to completing everyday literacy tasks like filling out tax forms and reading messages from school, adults need powerful literacy skills to participate fully in their community. Family and community members can help by providing opportunities for adult learners to improve their literacy skills. The tips below can help these learners practice.*

### **Talking with others is an important skill to build, particularly for English learners. Support adult learners by encouraging conversation.**

- Organize social events in your community and reach out to adult learners. Pot lucks or game or movie nights can be low stress opportunities to build speaking and listening skills.
- Make reading a social activity. Start or join a book club with an adult learner, either in person or online.
- Provide opportunities for English learners to practice conversation. Talking about family is an easy way to start.

### **Provide adults with a wide range of opportunities to build reading skills**

- Any reading is good reading. Newspapers, blogs, graphic novels and magazines count. So do things adult learners will encounter in their daily lives like lease agreements, loan documents, and school newsletters or teacher notes.
- Short reading is very helpful. Recommend short articles or blog entries to adult learners on topics that interest them.
- Suggest that adult learners practice by reading aloud to a group of children.
- Encourage adults to pick up a longer book. Listening to audio books while reading along is an excellent way to learn.
- Support vocabulary building. Suggest games such as Scrabble, Boggle, Scattergories, and Free Rice ([www.freerice.com](http://www.freerice.com)). Better yet, play them and invite others to join you.
- Recommend places for adults to get more assistance if they need it. Literacy Volunteers of America is an excellent resource with groups throughout Maine.

### **Writing takes a great deal of practice. Assist adult learners by offering safe and comfortable ways for them to become better writers.**

- Encourage adults to write notes, cards, and emails to friends and family members to practice their writing skills.
- Exchange notes or short letters with an adult learner yourself. Ask to exchange written recipes.
- Use labels to identify familiar items and help English learners learn new words. Offer to help someone in your community create labels for things in their home.

### **Why is LITERACY FOR ME important?**

Making sure that all Mainers have the chance to develop high levels of literacy is a responsibility we all share. This effort is important to Maine for several reasons:

- 21st century communities require citizens and workers who are skilled readers, writers, speakers, listeners, and thinkers.
- Strong literacy skills can be the difference between living in poverty and being able to support oneself or one's family.
- Maine's future depends on our ability to raise capable, well-educated, and highly literate children.



## How to Get Involved

### **If you would like to get involved with LITERACY FOR ME there are some things you can do.**

- Share this brochure with your family and friends. Encourage them to support literacy as well.
- Visit the *LITERACY FOR ME* website to get information about community literacy planning. [www.maine.gov/doe/literacy-for-me](http://www.maine.gov/doe/literacy-for-me)
- Contact the Maine Department of Education for additional information.



[www.maine.gov/doe/literacy-for-me](http://www.maine.gov/doe/literacy-for-me)

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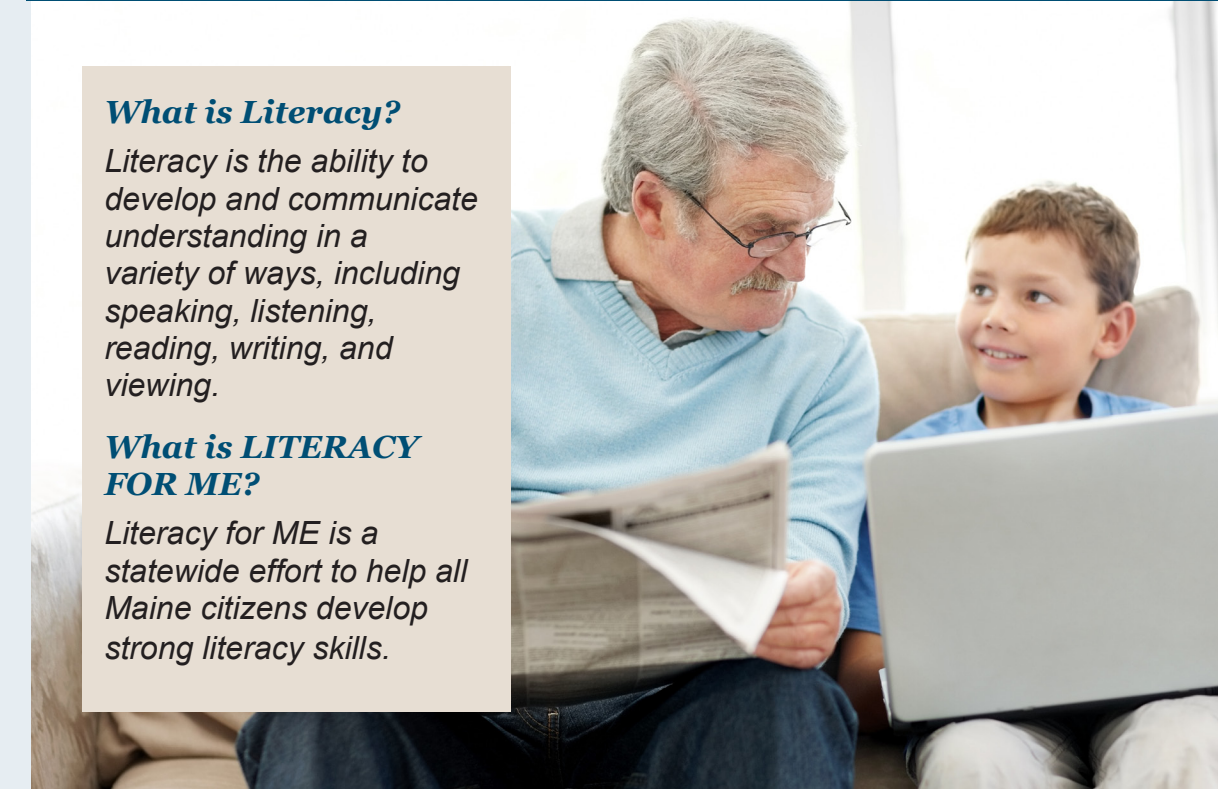
## Maine's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan

### **What is Literacy?**

*Literacy is the ability to develop and communicate understanding in a variety of ways, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing.*

### **What is LITERACY FOR ME?**

*Literacy for ME is a statewide effort to help all Maine citizens develop strong literacy skills.*



### **Supporting Literacy at Every Age**

Even though school is an important place for children to build literacy skills, families and community members have key roles to play. Here are a number of simple, but important, things parents and community members can do to support literacy at every age.



[www.maine.gov/doe/literacy-for-me](http://www.maine.gov/doe/literacy-for-me)

## Early Literacy Birth to Age 5

Families and communities are children's first teachers. At this age, children are learning about language and books, even before they actually "read" a word on a page or form letters or words. Parents, caregivers, and community members are role models from whom young children learn how to "be literate." The following tips support early literacy.



### **Talk with young children and encourage them to think about language.**

- Talk with children about what they are doing, seeing, and learning.
- Talk about what words mean. Play games like "I Spy" to encourage children to learn more words. Use words that teach them about conversation: "I'm listening to what you're saying," or "I like talking with you."
- Play with letters and words: Use rhymes, words that begin with the same letter or other games to highlight language use. Help children begin to recognize letters and the sounds they make. Start with the letters in their own name.

### **Children first learn about reading by listening to and watching adults. Help them learn to love literacy by reading aloud to and with them every day.**

- Use voices, read with expression and have fun.
- Read from a variety of materials. Children like to hear both fiction and nonfiction.
- Talk with children about the meaning of what you or they are reading.
- Point to pictures and say the names of the objects, colors or characters. Help children match words with ideas and objects. This is particularly helpful for English learners.
- The length of story time should match a child's attention span. Gradually increase reading time as children can pay attention for longer periods.
- Act out stories. Pretend to be the characters in a book and create your own adventures.
- When a child finds something interesting in a book, help them discover more about it. For instance, if a child likes the frog in a story, learn about frogs together.
- Visit your local library and participate in story time. Get your child her own library card.

### **Since young children often imitate what writing looks like before they make letters, encourage them to write and draw.**

- Have them make pictures or "write" their own stories. These can be make-believe or about something they did, saw, or heard.
- Ask them to tell you what they wrote. Point to individual scribbles and ask them to read their words.
- Encourage children to write cards or notes to friends or relatives. If the words are difficult to read, you can add a sentence explaining what the child meant.

## School Age Kindergarten to Grade 5



As children enter school, their literacy skills improve a great deal. Children learn by watching the important people in their lives. This means that family and community members can support the literacy instruction that happens in school and can help children see themselves as readers, writers, and communicators. The tips in this section can help encourage elementary age children.

### **Language skills develop rapidly during the elementary school years. Help children develop listening and speaking skills with tips, questions, and games.**

- Point out new and interesting words and help children learn what they mean. Ask them to think of other words that mean the same thing.
- Show children how parts of words can help them learn other words (tricycle, triangle, tripod).
- Play "turn taking" games in your conversations, so younger children can practice the "rules" for talking with others.
- Try asking specific questions about their interests as a way to begin a conversation about school.
- Talk about things you notice and ask children to tell you more.

### **Reading at this age is as much about building habits as it is about building skills. Find ways to be a reading role model and help children build good reading habits.**

- Read aloud each day. Even short reading sessions build interest in reading for young children. For English learners, point to pictures frequently or objects in the room to build vocabulary.
- Select a special place for reading. Encourage children to decorate a sign for that place.
- Ask questions about books to help children focus on meaning.
- Ask children to read aloud to you. Even if a child recites a book from memory, this is an important activity. Encourage and praise their efforts often.
- Encourage children to reread books they enjoy. Ask them to tell you something they discovered after rereading, including new words or ideas.
- Visit a library. Help children to select books by interest or at the right level.

### **Writing skills develop as children gain motor skills, confidence, and knowledge. Help children build their writing skills by modeling and sharing writing activities.**

- Create a book together. Creating books about events in your family can be a great way to help kids learn about how writing can be used to hold on to memories and share them with others.
- For English learners, encourage them to write using words in their own language and work with them to include a translation.
- Encourage thank you notes and let children see you writing them as well.
- Ask children to write reminders for the family, add events to calendars, and create "to do" lists.
- Help children understand that everything they read was written by someone. When you read together, ask questions about the writing of the story.

## Young Adults Grades 6 to 12

Keeping young adults motivated to continue developing strong literacy skills is crucial during adolescence. Many demands compete for their time and attention—friends, sports, technology. Although peer groups become increasingly important, family and community members still have important roles to play in helping learners build literacy skills. The following tips work to increase literacy engagement and enjoyment for young adults.

### **Young adults are learning how to speak with others the way adults do. Help them by talking with them and showing them how adults talk with one another.**

- Talk with them about books, movies, news, and other programs. Ask them to recommend titles...and read/watch them yourself. Talk to them about their suggestions.
- Engage young adults in discussion to share ideas about what is going on in your world, and ask for their opinions.
- It is not important to know everything about adolescent culture. Ask about their music and interests.
- Let them see you talking with others to solve problems or make requests.

### **Young adults are cementing the reading habits they will carry with them the rest of their lives. Help by creating a culture of reading in your home.**

- Read aloud! Young adults still enjoy hearing text read to them.
- Continue to be a role model. Young adults need to see you reading. If you value it, then they will too. Make trips to the library a regular household event.
- Look for book trailers on the internet and share them. These can spark interest in new books.
- Be a serial reader. Finding a good series will keep your reader hooked.
- English learners should continue to read things in their own language. Talk with students about what they read.

### **Support and encourage writing for a variety of different purposes.**

- Encourage keeping journals, writing poetry, blogging, and creating comic books. These types of writing often draw the interest of young adults.
- Model using writing for real purposes. Send thank you notes and emails, write letters, keep a journal, or write out directions for a task.
- If a student you know is an avid writer, ask to see a finished piece and talk about the things you liked.

