



Fun Reading 🐾 Reading for Life

Our mission is to make reading fun for children,  
so they become confident, lifelong readers.  
No child should be left behind in literacy.

“Education is not the filling of a bucket  
but the lighting of a fire”

William Butler Yeats

## School Starting Kit





Fun Reading  Reading for Life

# School Information

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## *A fun, unique and exciting reading program in your school*

Story Dogs is just that...fun and exciting for the students who are struggling with reading and literacy skills.

### **Benefits to your school and students:-**

- Students receive one on one time with our trained dogs – approx 20 mins
- A reading support program that gets results – see web site for more details.
- Minimal class disruption – the dog does not go into the classroom unless invited by the classroom teacher. All reading sessions are outside of the classroom in a quiet spot nearby.
- A new and exciting spin on reading for your students
- A new reward system for all students – eg earn 5 ticks and get a session with a Story Dog
- A FREE unique reading support program

### **Before the program starts:-**

- Potential classroom teachers involved will meet with the dog team(s) and decide where the reading sessions will take place, what day and time of day suits all parties involved and how many students will be able to participate.
- Parent consent forms must be sent and received for all students involved
- Targeted students to have had a reading assessment performed before they start the Story Dog program and at the end. This may have been already done at the start of the year, which is OK

### **What the school should expect from Story Dogs:-**

- All visiting Dog Teams are Story Dog members, have appropriate accreditation and insurance.
- All animals will be clean, well groomed with up to date vaccinations and worming.
- Volunteers will always pick up after their dogs toileting.
- Volunteers will contact the school as soon as they know if they have to cancel due to illness or emergency
- Volunteers will give regular feedback regarding any aspects of the program, student progress or concerns

### **What Story Dogs expects from the school:-**

- Regular feedback regarding any aspects of the program, student progress or concerns
- Reading levels for students involved in the program, see attached Student Tracking Sheet
- To be involved in and promote our fundraising day- Story Dogs Mufti Day, last week of Term 2

Story Dogs looks forward to working with your students, making reading FUN for all!

 Phone: 02 6672 1223  Email: [info@storydogs.org.au](mailto:info@storydogs.org.au) 

 Address: 51 Ewing St, Murwillumbah NSW 2484 

 [www.storydogs.org.au](http://www.storydogs.org.au)  ABN: 36 851 573 534 



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# Program Information

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Story Dogs Inc is based on the successful American literacy program Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.). The R.E.A.D program was launched in 1999 in Utah USA, as the first comprehensive literacy program built around the appealing idea of children and young adolescents reading to dogs. Story Dogs Inc improves children's reading and communication skills by employing a powerful method - reading to a dog. But not just any dog. Story Dogs are accredited companion animals who volunteer with their owner/handler as a team, going to schools and libraries.

## Why dogs?

Learning to read is often less about intellectual limitation than about overcoming fears.

"Fear can destroy intelligence," says educator William Ayers. Animals are ideal reading companions because they help increase relaxation and lower blood pressure, listen attentively, do not judge, laugh or criticise, allow children to proceed at their own pace, and are less intimidating than peers or adults. (source: [www.therapyanimals.org/read/](http://www.therapyanimals.org/read/))

## Which dogs?

All breeds can be used except for restricted dog breeds. The dog's temperament, obedience, willingness and other training is of utmost importance. Dogs must pass a certification test carried out by a certified Dogs NSW trainer, as well as being immaculately groomed with regular vet checks.

## The handler

The handler of the dog is a volunteer trained in basic literacy education, primarily focused on the Reading Recovery model. This ensures the handler will not judge the child and will be able to help in ways that will best improve the child's chances of better reading. Dog Teams are fully insured and handlers have submitted a Prohibited Employment Declaration.

## Children

The children are usually from Stage 1, primarily Year 2. Students are chosen by the school. Story Dogs does not assess the children in any way as the sessions are designed to be as non-threatening as possible. We rely on assessment results taken throughout the year by the school. Parental consent is required before a child can participate in the program.

## A Story Dog reading session


Reading sessions take place in a quiet area of the school grounds, such as the library or the verandah outside the classroom. A large part of the first session with the dog team is introductions so the child gets to know the dog and handler and vice versa. A reading session is approximately 20 minutes long, where each child is one-on-one with the dog team. Books are chosen to suit the child's reading level. During the session the handler often speaks through the dog, such as; "Lassie doesn't quite understand what is happening on this page could you help him out?" The child becomes the teacher; confidence climbs!

## The magic

The non-judgmental, loving nature of dogs gives this program its magic. Children relax, open up, try harder and **have fun** reading with a dog. Also see [www.therapyanimals.org/read](http://www.therapyanimals.org/read) and [www.sitstayread.com](http://www.sitstayread.com)

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# Parent Consent Form

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Story Dogs is a fun and unique reading support program that improves children's reading and communication skills by children reading to a trained companion dog and its handler.

The Story Dog program is primarily designed for students who have reading challenges, however students may be chosen by the Classroom Teacher to participate in the program as a reward or as an alternative reading activity.

Students will spend approximately 20 minutes with the Story Dog Team once or twice per week reading books which are appropriate to their reading level. During the session, the dog will be on its lead at all times and the handler will be with the dog and student at all times. Although the dog is immaculately groomed, fully wormed with flea protection, children with allergies are recommended not to be involved with the program.

The program is free to all students.

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## Story Dogs Permission Slip

I (print your name)..... do / do not give permission  
for my child (their name).....of class.....  
to be part of the Story Dog program.

I give permission for photographs to be taken of my child participating in the program and am aware that these photographs may be used for promotional purposes including appearing on the internet on the Story Dogs web site ([www.storydogs.org.au](http://www.storydogs.org.au))

Yes       No

I give permission for my child to participate in any research activities relevant to the Story Dogs program.     Yes       No

My child **does not** have any known allergies that will be triggered by contact with a dog.

My child **does** have known allergies that that will be triggered by contact with a dog.

**Signature of Parent/Carer**.....**Date**.....

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# Program Agreement

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Story Dogs is excited at the prospect of providing reading support for your students. In order for this program to function smoothly in your school a clear understanding of expectations and requirements between Story Dogs and the School is essential.

Story Dogs will:-

- Assure all visiting Dog Teams are Story Dog members, have appropriate accreditation and insurance.
- Assure that all animals will be clean, well groomed with up to date vaccinations and worming.
- Always pick up after their dogs toileting.
- Comply with all school policies and procedures and undergo volunteer orientation if required.
- Assure that our volunteers are competent readers and skilled in supporting a child's efforts to improve his/her reading.
- Assure that our volunteers understand the importance of student confidentiality and comply with school/Department policy.
- Contact the school as soon as we know if we have to cancel due to illness or emergency.
- Not visit if an animal is showing signs of illness, skin lesions or undue stress.
- Always seek permission before taking photographs of students.
- Always report in at the office prior to visiting the classroom or students, and out at the end of sessions.
- Provide feedback to the classroom teacher and or Principal regarding the program and or individual student's progress/behaviour.
- Report any incident to your Staff and follow any required procedures.

Your School & Staff will:-

- Give permission for Story Dogs to bring dogs on to the school grounds for educational purposes, as a Category 2 Activity described in the second edition of *Animals in Schools: Animal welfare guidelines for teachers*.
- Provide the Story Dogs Teams with appropriate orientation, not only for general school policies and procedures but also for incident procedures to follow. Orientation will also include indentifying appropriate spaces to conduct reading sessions and for the dogs to relieve themselves.
- Provide briefing about each student's reading goals, short and long term. Information about any challenges or circumstances which may affect a students' ability to participate effectively in a reading session would also be beneficial.
- Provide feedback regarding the program and or individual student's progress/behaviour.

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- Agree to provide us with test scores of students at both the beginning and end of the program to help us collect data to refine and fund our program.
- Contact us ASAP if there is a need to cancel any sessions.
- Notify us of any illness among your students that may be communicable and or threaten the health of the handler and animal (e.g. lice, chicken pox, measles, mumps etc).
- Let the Story Dogs coordinator know of any issues with any volunteer Dog Teams (person or animal).
- Be involved in and promote Story Dogs Mufti Day, last week of Term 2- our only fundraising day in schools.

Our programs are most successful when there is a strong and healthy collaboration between our teams and your staff, with lots of feedback going both ways.

We look forward to working with your school, bringing the perfect non judgmental reading partners to your students.

School Name.....

School Address.....

School email..... School Phone.....

Teachers involved in the program (if known):

Name.....email address .....

Name.....email address .....

School newsletter cycle      weekly      fortnightly

**Agreed:**      Date:.....

Principal Name  
(printed).....

Principal  
signature .....

Story Dogs

Name  
(printed).....

Signature .....

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# Mufti Day - Fundraiser

The major fundraiser for Story Dogs is a school mufti day with gold coin donations. The mufti day may be organised any time during the **last week of Term 2**, you may want to coincide the day to the day that one of the Story Dogs volunteers usually comes. We encourage all students to be involved by wearing orange or dressing up as a dog.

Story Dogs will provide posters (see example below) to be put up around the school, newsletter reminders and support on the day.

We thank you in advance for your support of this fun event.



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