



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

## Teacher Welcome Kit





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# Welcome

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Dear classroom teacher,

Thank you for becoming involved in the Story Dogs program. We are very excited to have your class participate in the program, and look forward to a long and productive partnership.

From experience, we would like to highlight the following:

- Story Dogs targets students with reading difficulties. These students may also have additional needs. As such, we are not a reading program for all students.
- The **same** four or five target students will read to the Story Dog Team each week.
- A Story Dogs reading session is approx. 20 minutes per target student, and thus in a morning block, the Story Dog team normally sees **four or five targeted students**.
- If a targeted student is away, you may select another student with reading difficulties to fill that slot.
- It may be possible, if time permits, to have one 10 minute reward group session for no more than 2 students.
- Ideally, the same four target students will stay with the Story Dogs program until the end of the year — or until they reach an acceptable reading level of their age and school year.

**We cannot stress enough, the benefits to all when the teacher and volunteer can briefly touch base with each other, each week.** This communication enables any minor concerns to be addressed promptly, and for the volunteer to give an update on students and receive your input. The volunteer appreciates you are busy and will not seek to interrupt your class. This contact with you makes the volunteer feel welcome and valued, a very important thing!

Please feel free to give your contact details to the Story Dogs volunteer.

Included in this pack are:

- Parent consent form
- Student tracking sheet – please fill out for each target student
- School fundraiser information

Thank you for participating in the Story Dogs program and we look forward to your students finding a love of books through reading with a four legged “mate”.

 Phone: 0411 536 355     Email: [info@storydogs.org.au](mailto:info@storydogs.org.au)    

 Address: PO Box 5075, South Murwillumbah NSW 2484    

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



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# 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 students who are struggling with reading and literacy skills. It is also great for students who have plateaued in their reading and need motivation to continue literacy development.

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

- Students receive one-on-one time with our trained dogs – approx 20 minutes per session
- 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 your 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 by the school.

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

- All visiting Dog Teams are Story Dog members, have appropriate accreditation and insurance.
- All dogs will be clean, well-groomed, and 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 they have to cancel due to illness or emergency
- Volunteers will give regular feedback to the teacher 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, one school fundraising day

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

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

## The handler

The handler of the dog is generally the dog's owner who is trained in basic literacy education. Our volunteers do not attempt to teach reading in a structured, formal sense. Instead, they provide a fun reading session and engage with the child through their dog. This ensures the volunteer will not judge the child and will be able to help in ways that best improve the child's chances of finding enjoyment in reading. Dog Teams are fully insured and handlers have submitted a working with children background check as per State legislation.

## 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 soars!

## 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

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 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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# Target Student Information

Dear Teacher,

In order for the Story Dogs volunteer to best help each student it greatly assists the volunteer if they know the reason(s) why the student was chosen. We understand that due to confidentiality issues you may not be able to give all reasons.

**Please complete both sides of this form and pass it on to your Story Dogs volunteer.**

Date:	School:	
Classroom Teacher:		
Story Dogs Team	Person Name:	Dog Name:

## **Student One**

Name (first only) \_\_\_\_\_ Year Level \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Level at start of program \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Level at end of year \_\_\_\_\_

Reason why student was chosen for Story Dogs program	
Any likes or dislikes the student may have. Any special needs, eg dislikes eye contact	

## **Student Two**

Name (first only) \_\_\_\_\_ Year Level \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Level at start of program \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Level at end of year \_\_\_\_\_

Reason why student was chosen for Story Dogs program	
Any likes or dislikes the student may have. Any special needs, eg dislikes eye contact	

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# Target Student Information

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## **Student Three**

Name (first only) \_\_\_\_\_ Year Level \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Level at start of program \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Level at end of year \_\_\_\_\_

Reason why student was chosen for Story Dogs program	
Any likes or dislikes the student may have. Any special needs, eg dislikes eye contact	

## **Student Four**

Name (first only) \_\_\_\_\_ Year Level \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Level at start of program \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Level at end of year \_\_\_\_\_

Reason why student was chosen for Story Dogs program	
Any likes or dislikes the student may have. Any special needs, eg dislikes eye contact	

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# School Fundraiser

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Story Dogs asks all schools involved in the program to organise one fundraising day in their school year. One idea is to hold a free dress day with students allowed to wear orange or dress up as a dog. Of course other fundraising ideas which are appropriate to the school are most welcome.

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.



Example of poster

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