



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 Information Pack





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# School Information

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



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

- Year 2 students receive one on one time, approx 20 mins, with an accredited Dog Team, the dog handler and the dog.;
- 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 space nearby;
- A new and exciting spin on reading for your students and;
- A FREE unique reading support program.

### **How the Program fits into your school:-**

- Reading sessions take place in a quiet area of the school grounds, such as the library or the verandah outside the classroom..
- A reading session is approximately 20 minutes long, where each child is one-on-one with the dog team.
- The Dog Team will visit on the same day at the same time each week, seeing the same 4 – 6 Target Students.
- Books are chosen to suit the child's reading level. Story Dogs does supply books and books can also be from the classroom or library.
- 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!

 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: 32 603 311 388 



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## Steps required to start the program in your school:-

1. The Principal must sign the attached Program Agreement to allow the program to begin.
2. Classroom teachers choose a total of 4 – 6 Target Students to be part of the program. These students are usually from Year 2 or higher classes and are the students who will benefit the most from a one-on-one reading program.
3. A school orientation meeting will be organised. This meeting will be between the classroom teacher/s involved, the Story Dogs Coordinator and the Dog Team (volunteer and their dog). This meeting will 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.
4. Parent consent forms (see attached) must be sent and received for all students involved.
5. The Classroom teacher is to fill out the Target Student Information Form (see attached) for each student chosen for the program. This is given to the volunteer so they have an understanding as to why a particular student was chosen.
6. Mark on the school calendar, **Story Dogs Day – first Friday in May**. This is a day that you can hold a free dress day, or other fundraiser where all the funds are donated to Story Dogs.

If Story Dogs does not have any suitable volunteer Dog Teams for your school the next step is to put an ad in your School Newsletter seeking suitable dogs and their owners. They can contact Story Dogs and we can take over the accreditation and training process. Please see the web site, under the schools tab for a downloadable ad.

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## Choosing the Target Students for the program

Story Dogs relies on the classroom teacher and or the Learning Support person for the school to choose the children who will benefit most from our program. From experience we have a few tips on which children benefit most and also which children our volunteers are trained and skilled to help the most.

Tips on who to choose:-



**Students in Year 2 or beyond.** Story Dogs aims to catch the students who are not picking up reading as quickly or as successfully as their peers. We do not take students in Prep/Kindy. We only take Year 1 students if no Year 2 students need help.

**No other help.** Many pupils who benefit from the program are children who do not get reading practice at home. We usually take children who do not benefit from extra one-on-one reading at school either, and are therefore perfect for the program.

**Students without significant Special Needs.** Since our volunteers are not trained in Special Needs we recommend choosing students who do not have significant learning difficulties.

**Students in Year 5 and 6.** We realise how crucial it is that students don't go to high school with poor reading skills, and we are happy to have these children in the program.

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## How we manage the risks

Story Dogs is very aware of the potential risks to children who participate in our program. As such we have gone to extensive lengths to minimise these risks. In the event that an injury does happen we have current Public Liability Insurance to \$20 million dollars. The following is a summary of the risk minimisation strategies we have embedded into our recruiting, training and placement procedures for our volunteer dog teams:

- No restricted dog breeds are used
- A person must have owned or be closely associated with the dog for at least 12 months
- The dog must be older than 12 months
- Dog teams must pass a 10 point Dog Team Accreditation Test
- We use only experienced dog trainers, who are external to Story Dogs, to accredit the Dog Teams
- Multiple dog accreditors assess dogs if necessary
- Volunteers are trained to look for the signs of their dog becoming stressed, a possible precursor for a dog bite
- It is Story Dogs Policy that volunteers are not in the playground during break times. Volunteers are directed to enter and exit the school in times when children are in class and not in the playground where the dog can become stressed due to large amounts of noise and attention.
- Volunteers never leave their dog unattended at school
- The dog is on a lead at all times when at school
- Volunteers use a Weekly Dog Interaction Review Sheet. This is a monitoring tool to determine whether the dog is getting stressed at school.
- Volunteers are trained in the Story Dogs Emergency Procedure if any incident happens at school.
- Parental consent is required before a child can participate in the program. It is assumed that a child who is strongly afraid of dogs or who has behaviours which may be detrimental to dogs is not given permission.

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# School Expression of Interest Form

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If your school has NOT been contacted by Story Dogs but you would like the program to start in your school please fill out this form and send back to us.

This will not guarantee a Dog Team will be available for your school however it will start the process. A Story Dogs Coordinator closest to you will be in contact.

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

School Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

School Email \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person Name \_\_\_\_\_

Role of Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Best way of contacting you – please circle: phone / text / email

Best time to contact you \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_



Other comments you would like to add

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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.....

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# Target Student Information Sheet

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:	

## **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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PTO

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# Target Student Information Sheet

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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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# Program Agreement

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## **This is an agreement between the School Principal and the Story Dogs Coordinator.**

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:-

- Ensure all visiting Dog Teams are Story Dog members, have appropriate accreditation and insurance;
- Ensure that all Story Dogs volunteers have a current Working With Children Check as per the current State legislation;
- Ensure that all animals are clean, well groomed with up to date vaccinations and worming;
- Ensure that our volunteers always pick up after their dogs toileting;
- Comply with all school policies and procedures and undergo volunteer orientation if required;
- Ensure that our volunteers are skilled in supporting a child's efforts to improve his/her reading;
- Ensure 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 and;
- 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;
- 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 include indentifying 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;

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# Program Agreement

- Provide feedback regarding the program and or individual student’s progress/behaviour;
- 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 Story Dogs coordinator know of any issues with volunteer Dog Teams (person or animal) and;
- Hold a Story Dogs fundraising day **each year** the program is running in your school

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.

School Name: .....

School Address: .....

School email: .....

School Phone: ..... School newsletter cycle: weekly or fortnightly

Teachers involved in the program (if known):

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

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

**Agreed:** Date:.....

Principal Name  
(printed).....



Principal  
signature .....

Story Dogs

Name  
(printed).....

Signature .....

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