

DGBS Approach to Literacy

The Deep Green Bush-School follows an evolutionary approach to all learning. Humans are genetically predisposed to learning what they observe around them as culturally important and meaningful. Humans evolved over the last three million years to learn through the freedom to play, the freedom to observe and the freedom to imitate. This means that, in terms of literacy, the DGBS is a place where:

- books are readily available
- the DGBS library contains many books related to bushcraft, ecology, animals and other subjects of interest to our students – and at a wide range of reading levels
- the DGBS is constantly acquiring new books that support our curriculum
- students are encouraged to read
- students are encouraged to request new books
- books are frequently read by DGBS staff
- staff regularly talk about books they've read, or knowledge they've gained
- staff regularly write
- staff read stories to children

Key to our approach is that we trust youth and are patient. We understand that given time, they will see that reading and writing are important and be drawn to it. There is no coercion to learn to read and write. We understand that force creates resistance. Forcing youth to read or write leads to negative emotions attached to reading and writing. Furthermore, children all develop at different rates and are not all psychologically and developmentally ready to learn to read or write at the same age. Since humans are not robots, we are not all exactly the same. The imposition of reading and writing on youth who are not ready will interfere with their natural development and cause long-term damage – often in the form of a “learning disability” such as dyslexia. Finally, the age at which a child learns to read and write has no reflection of the child's intelligence. A child who learns to read and write on their own at twelve years old may, in fact, become a better reader and writer than a child who was forced to read and write at five years old.

In summary, for children who do not yet know how to read or write, the DGBS:

- trusts that children will naturally be drawn to reading and writing when they see it around them
- are patient to wait for children to be ready, whether at five years old or twelve years old
- make no judgements about a child's intelligence regarding the age at which they learn to read and write

Once a child expresses interest in reading and writing, the DGBS staff are there to support them. We do this by:

- assisting them with the alphabet and phonetics
- responding to questions
- making writing and reading materials readily available
- gently scaffolding their awareness of words, spelling, and syntax
- not hurrying them or pressuring them
- continuing to read to them and encourage them
- sharing advice and guidance when they are receptive
- patiently nurturing them to become life-long readers and critical readers

New Students. Students who join the DGBS may also go through a period of time in which they do not want to engage in any reading or writing. This is the result of having been forced to read and write at their previous schools and/or at home. The length of this 'detoxification' period varies among students, and can range from a matter of weeks to several months or more. Keep in mind that nearly all students will eventually show an interest in reading and writing.

Learning to read and write is a *shared responsibility* between both parents and the Deep Green Bush-School and we encourage parents to create a home environment which nurtures youth who will be drawn to reading and writing. This will happen by:

- Severely restricting screen-time: computers, television, video games and tablets, etc.
- Restricting consumerist activities: filling a house with 'toys', excursions to shopping malls, amusement parks, etc.
- Parents modelling reading and writing
- Parents who talk about books they've read
- Houses where books are readily available
- Frequent trips to the library
- Not forcing children/teens to read and write

One of the greatest inhibitors of learning to read and write is screen time. Computers, television, movies, cartoons, cell phones and video games are addictive and alter the development of the brain, leading to youth with:

- little ability to focus or concentrate
- decreased ability to read and write
- weakened and shortened memory
- severely weakened thinking ability
- social alienation
- decreased social and emotional skills
- increased chance of depression and mental illness
- decreased interest in physical activity and the outdoors
- numerous ailments as a result of wireless radiation
- ecological apathy and ignorance
- a consumerist mindset which is directly responsible for the rapidly accelerating destruction of the many life-sustaining processes across the planet

Simply put, in order for the DGBS to deliver its curriculum and be most effective, a home life must nurture young readers and writers – and thinkers.

The DGBS approach, together with a nurturing home environment, will create the healthiest foundation for all learning, whether social, emotional, intellectual, academic, spiritual or ecological. All learning, at root, is based – first and foremost - upon social and emotional intelligence, in addition to patience and trust.

Library Books

The DGBS maintains a thoughtful and deliberate approach to acquiring new books for the school library. We look to acquire books that support the DGBS philosophy and curriculum.

Books we look to acquire:

- ecology, nature and wildlife
- survival and bushcraft skills

- organic gardening and permaculture
- natural and alternative health
- practical life skills
- books to build literacy and numeracy
- reference books for science (generally from an ecological perspective)
- history and social sciences (from a perspective of justice)
- fiction:
 - set in nature
 - reflecting indigenous culture
 - about survival
 - strong, independent female character(s)
 - about resistance to oppression or injustice
 - about environmental issues and responses

Books we generally *do not* acquire:

- fiction that features inappropriate levels of violence, drugs, sex and vulgar language
- books that reinforce pop culture
- books that glorify science, technology or a techno-utopian view of the world
- books reflecting religious beliefs
- science fiction and fantasy (with some exceptions)
 - science fiction often celebrates technology and science and sends the message that science and technology will solve all of our problems (which, based on looking out at the world, clearly isn't true)
 - fantasy encourages a disconnect with the real world, with the natural world, and often instills a good-vs-evil, black-and-white perspective on the world, as well as reinforcing hierarchical and patriarchal social arrangements

Keep in mind that while we may not acquire certain books for the DGBS library, we will assist students in acquiring from the public library books that they wish to read.