

Media Release

Jenny Mikakos MLC

Minister for Families & Children
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PREMIERS' EARLY YEARS READING CHALLENGE LAUNCH: ONE FOR THE BOOKS

The Andrews Labor Government is encouraging parents of young children to take part in the Premiers' Reading Challenge for Early Years and read to their kids to set them up for success in later life.

Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, and Catherine Andrews today launched the Premiers' Reading Challenge for Early Years at the State Library of Victoria.

Joining the library's Chief Storyteller and some of Victoria's littlest bookworms, Ms Mikakos and Mrs Andrews said that reading gives young children a leg up in life, improving school outcomes, instilling a lifelong love of reading and sparking imagination.

Recently released findings of the Early Language in Victoria Study, a joint research project involving the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and a number of Australian universities, shows that reading to children from a young age results in higher rates of literacy, and better spelling and cognitive skills during the first years of school.

This builds on existing evidence that shows how often a child is read to has a direct link to their success at school, regardless of their family background or home environment.

The Early Years challenge aims to draw attention to the added benefits of reading to kids from the day they're brought home from the hospital.

This year the Labor Government has introduced a new competition to encourage more pre-schoolers to enter the competition. Parents, grandparents, carers, childcare centres and kindergartens can sign up to take the challenge for an opportunity to win one of two visits from Jimmy Giggle from ABC KIDS' *Giggle and Hoot*.

To join the challenge or to find out more visit www.education.vic.gov.au/prc

Quotes attributable to Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos

"When families read with their children, it not only fosters strong relationships with the most important people in their lives, but also a love of reading that we know has long-term benefits."

Quotes attributable to Catherine Andrews, Premiers' Early Years Reading Challenge Ambassador

"Books can open our children's eyes to the world and to themselves. Reading sparks our children's imaginations, teaches them empathy, and broadens their vocabularies."

Quote attributable to Patricia Eadie, Associate Professor, Early Childhood Education, University of Melbourne

"The findings from the Early Language in Victoria Study tell us that what parents do matters enormously for development of their children's language skills, early literacy skills, such as knowledge about letters/alphabet, and eventual reading and spelling skills."

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Early childhood reading facts

- Children who are read to regularly and who have lots of books in their homes do better in their first years of school.
- Children who have good letter knowledge also do better in their first years of school, particularly with spelling.
- Reading to children 3-5 days a week has the same effect on a child's reading skills at age 4-5 as being six months older.
- Reading to them 6-7 days a week has the same effect as being almost 12 months older.
- Children read to more frequently at age 4-5 achieve higher scores on NAPLAN tests for both Reading and Numeracy in Year 3.