LitRAG

Literacy Rotarian Action Group Newsletter

February 2018

The Impact of Myopia on Reading

Also known as short-sightedness and nearsighted-ness, myopia affects about 30 per cent of the world's population[1].

A recent study by the National Eye Institute shows that nearly 40 per cent of the U.S. population has myopia and it's only expected to grow. In a 2014 study in Australia, approximately 43 per cent of school children aged 12 were found to be myopic[2].Research in mid-2016 predicted by that 2050, 50 per cent of the world's population will be short-sighted[1].

Myopia typically begins in childhood. If both biological parents are short sighted, as opposed to one or neither, a child is more at risk of developing myopia[3]. Environmental factors have also been shown to play a role in the determining the likelihood of a child developing myopia.

Nearsighted people typically will have difficulty reading road signs and seeing distant objects clearly, but will be able to see well for close-up tasks such as reading and computer use. Other signs and symptoms of myopia include squinting, eye strain and headaches. Feeling fatigued when driving or playing sports also can be a symptom of uncorrected nearsightedness.

Myopia is far more than a blurry inconvenience and has been associated with vision-threatening diseases such as glaucoma, cataract and retinal detachment.

Common misconceptions about myopia

Myth 1: Reading in the dark causes short-sightedness
There is no link between reading in dim lighting and permanent damage to vision. However, like excessive time spent on digital screens, reading a book in poor lighting can contribute to headaches and eye strain. This can be remedied by taking a break from reading or improving the lighting conditions. Although the eye works harder in poor light, it suffers no long-lasting damage.

Myth 2: Increased screen time will ruin your eyes
No relationship has been found between the amount of time spent looking at a digital device and short-sightedness in children. However, too much screen time can cause digital eye strain – symptoms of which include blurriness of vision, headaches or dry and irritated eyes.

What can you do to reduce or slow the rate of myopia?

Spend time outdoors. It's recommended that children have at least two hours of time outside per day (while wearing a hat). Multiple studies have found that spending time outdoors is linked to a significant reduction in both the frequency and progression of myopia.



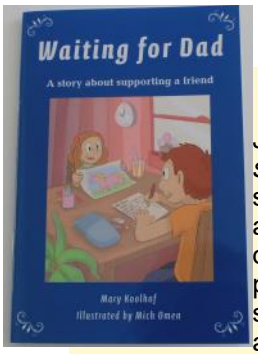
Regular testing for optimal eye health

Each child should have their eyes tested before they reach the age of five and at least every two years after that, especially for children with myopic parents. Eye tests can help to catch and address refractive error and visual dysfunctions early, before they interfere with learning.

In most cases, nearsightedness stabilizes in early adulthood but sometimes it continues to progress with age. Adults with short-sightedness are also advised to make regular optometry appointments due to the increased risk of associated eye disease. Nearsighted-ness can be corrected with glasses, contact lenses or refractive surgery. Depending on the degree of myopia, a person may need to wear glasses or contact lenses all the time or only when they need very clear distance vision, like when driving, seeing a board in the classroom or watching a sports game.

1. Holden BA, Fricke TR, Wilson DA, Jong M, Naidoo KS, Sankaridurg P, Wong TY, Naduvilath TJ, Resnikoff S. 'Global Prevalence of Myopia and High Myopia and Temporal Trends from 2000 through 2050', *Ophthalmology*, May 2016, 123(5):1036–1042.
2. Foster PJ, Jiang Y. 'Epidemiology of Myopia', *Eye*, Feb 2014, 28(2):202–208.
3. Mutti DO, Mitchell GL, Moeschberger ML, Jones LA, Zadnik K. 'Parental myopia, near work, school achievement, and children's refractive error', *Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science,* 2002;43 (12:3633–3640).

Website: www.litrag.org
Facebook: facebook.com/reading.rotary
Contact John Thorne or Carolyn Johnson:
info@litrag.org



Book Launch: *Waiting for Dad*

Just released, *Waiting for Dad: A story about supporting a friend* is the sixth book in a series written for children by Mary Koolhof and illustrated by Mich Owen. This story depicts a lad whose father has gone to prison and he has to manage the social stigma surrounding this situation and rise above it.

In an interview, Koolhof remarked that, "For many of us, life can take unexpected twists and turns. When that happens, we all appreciate some support, maybe from a grandparent, a trusted friend or a sports coach."

Waiting for Dad was road-tested by many individuals and groups, even some prisoners. Their reviews of the content and the language choice strengthened the text to make it readily accessible and meaningful to young people.

Funded by The Australian Government, The Salvation Army's Communities for Children program aims to improve the health, development and well-being of children through intervention programs.

The Communities for Children program and its many community partners target the safety and aspirations of children. They are endeavouring to assist children in difficulty in our community, such as children who have a family member in prison; who might have lost contact with a parent; who have physical or mental health issues or instability and occasionally homelessness.



Above: Author Mary Koolhof is congratulated by RI LitRAG Chair John Thorne on her significant achievement in writing the series of six children's books.

The Salvation Army tries to help children to understand their situation, build resilience and seek support. By progressively publishing books designed for children and not adults, The Salvation Army is building valuable resources for those assisting children in coping with challenging personal and social issues.

We can fill our life with 'shoulds' or we can go out and 'do'. The Communities for Children program has done that by developing its innovative book series.

Each book costs only $AUD2. For more information about The Salvation Army's Communities for Children program and the six books in the series, visit: www.cfctas.org.au

National Literacy and Numeracy Week

The National Literacy and Numeracy Week project is an Australian Government initiative which aims to:

- highlight the importance of literacy and numeracy skills for all children and young people, with a focus on school-aged children
- give schools the opportunity to be involved in a range of literacy and numeracy activities
- recognise locally the achievements of students and the work of teachers, parents and members of the community who support young people to develop stronger literacy and numeracy skills
- raise community awareness of the importance of developing students' effective literacy and numeracy skills
- build on national initiatives to improve literacy and numeracy standards among young Australians nationwide.

The project in the Australian state of New South Wales created a website in which there is a wide range of resources for parents, teachers and children that are accessible to the public worldwide.

For teachers, there is a good range of 25 short, literacy professional learning videos for teachers presented by experts in the field. Examples are:

- *Teaching reading – Differentiating for gifted learners* by Lynda Lovett
- *Organising for literacy teaching* in Kindergarten by a state-wide literacy consultant, Robyn Wild
- *Literacy across the school curriculum* by Professor Peter Freebody
- *Science and literacy* presented by Professor P. David Pearson from the University of California, Berkeley, USA, a world-wide guru about comprehension
- *Literacy learning and technology* by Dr Kaye Lowe
- *The benefits of whole-school literacy plans* by Professor Alan Luke
- *Insights into literacy in the secondary classroom* by Professor Peter Freebody
- *Teaching narrative writing* by children's book author Christopher Chen.

For parents, there is literacy and numeracy support in the form of some short, informative videos and some age-appropriate booklets with ideas and suggestions.

In addition, there is a valuable range of 19 short videos about developing numeracy and mathematical skills. *Everyday numeracy K-4* is intended for parents and demonstrates simple techniques to try at home to nurture growing numeracy awareness.



Global Grants



Rotary Foundation Global Grants

Rotary Foundation global grants will soon require community assessments. For all grant applications from any source a community assessment would enhance the application and increase the chance of success.

Starting 1 July 2018, any club or district that applies for a global grant to support a humanitarian project or a vocational training team will be required to include community assessment results in their application. Whether or not you apply for a Foundation grant, a community assessment will guide the planning and implementation of any project, small or large, to make sure it succeeds and makes the maximum impact. Take advantage of the Rotary assets below to help with assessments:

A Rotary Community Corps (RCC) can enhance community engagement and ensure project sustainability by empowering local leaders to pioneer change. RCCs are teams of non-Rotarian community members – for example, farmers, teachers, shop owners, or retirees – who work in partnership with Rotary clubs to improve their communities. They're committed to their communities' long-term development, and they bring enthusiasm and creativity to the projects they design and carry out.

Talk with your district international service chair. He or she can refer you to local experts through the District Resource Network to help develop projects and global grants that have greater impact and sustainability.

Collaborate with subject matter experts from a Rotarian Action Group. RAG members help clubs and districts plan and implement high-impact projects within their respective area of expertise. Check the group directory or view a list of action groups and contact a group to get started.



Inspiring Literacy Projects

Everyone has the right to learn to read, write and enjoy the power, pleasure and independence of being literate. Basic education and literacy are one of Rotary's six areas of focus.

Rotary club literacy initiatives can lead the way to promoting prosperity through knowledge.

Below are some ideas to stimulate a literacy project in your club or resources for your club to promote awareness. What can you do to foster literacy? How creative can you be? What can you do to get a literacy project started?

Host a **Read Aloud Day**:

- Have children practice reading a book and read it to a younger child who needs help learning how to read; or to a senior citizen who will benefit from companionship; or a child in a special needs classroom in your local school who is learning to read.
- Record the reading of a book to donate a local daycare center or for hospital patients.
- Have teenagers read books that will teach them how to do something to help others and then do it! Examples: building a birdhouse, making toys for animals at the animal shelter, or planting a garden pot.
- Read a newspaper to an elderly person who can no longer read the small print.



Internet Archive is a non-profit library of millions of free books, movies, software, music, websites, other documents and more available online. For the tech-savvy and/or busy individual, this makes an ideal resource when encouraging children and adults to find interesting and convenient reading material and resources.

Braille literacy: Due to the availability of more assistive technologies than ever before, one imagines that there is a decline in the need for braille materials. However, particularly in situations where audio isn't working or available, National Braille Press publishes books for adults and children with the hopes of keeping the system perpetually available and ensuring it survives to serve the visually impaired for generations to come. It provides access to information that empowers blind people to actively engage in work, family and community affairs.

Inspiring parents: Use the sheets attached to this pdf (- see pp. 5–9) and visit your local school to organise a parent information event which could encourage or even educate local parents about literacy and how they can nurture their child's literacy so that their child is advantaged before starting school or during the early schooling years.

Sponsor professional learning: Sponsor teachers at your local school/s to be relieved from the classroom and spend a day viewing literacy videos (see the range on page 2 above) and having discussion workshops about developing ideas for literacy

programs in their classrooms or across the whole school.



Investigate an object: Take a group of children to an art gallery or museum and foster literacy and creative writing by using objects from the gallery or museum's collections. They could write a story about how the object came to be made or about the character depicted. They could write a song or poem and perform it. They could read about the object and research it and its creator. They could create a board-game which uses different objects from the museum as tokens or as features in the game to either avoid or 'capture' by landing on them.

Agricultural entrepreneurship: Developing literacy can provide opportunities for citizens to pursue their own sustainable business dealings. Organize mentoring or partnerships between club members and some adults in need of professional and literacy guidance.

Organize a **Literacy Day:** Develop a network of literacy teachers and professionals to meet and exchange ideas regarding the furthering of necessary writing, reading and speaking and listening abilities. Multiple initiatives should stem directly from these meetings and could include grants from your club and professional development opportunities.

Featuring a Literacy Website

Research has proven that a child's success as a reader begins much earlier than the first day of school. Reading and a love for reading begin at home and the support that parents can give is most significant.

As well as the wonderful benefits of mothers reading to their child, research from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (in Australia) has highlighted the impact that fathers have on early childhood development. Led by Dr Jon Quach, researchers have found that children's language development increased as they grew older, if their father read to them when they were young children.

The study analyzed data from the 'Let's Read' study, funded by the Australian Research Council and involving 405 two-parent families. From the data, researchers concluded that children who were read to by their fathers at age two achieved better language development at age four.

These findings remained even when researchers took into account the reading practices of the mother, as well as other variables including parent income, employment and education levels.

Reading Rockets is an American national multimedia literacy initiative offering information and resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help.

The Reading Rockets website provides downloadable one-page parent tips in multiple (11) languages that offer easy ways for parents to help their child become a successful or more effective reader.

The tips have been divided by age for ease of use for parents or caregivers, but many of them can be used with children at various ages and stages. So parents are encouraged to select the ones that work best for their child.

Two new sets of tips recently created by Reading Rockets are:

Tips for Parents of Babies

Tips for Parents of Toddlers

These tips affirm the research from the Murdoch Institute referred to above. Also these tips for parents of babies are also available in pdf form as a one-page handout to download and print:

Reading tips in English

Reading tips in Spanish

So there is another possible Literacy Project idea that your club might consider taking up and work with local expectant parents, child care centres and even medical specialists.



LitRAG Office-Bearers

LitRAG Executive Committee:

- Chair: John Thorne, PRID (Australia)
- Vice-Chair: Carolyn Johnson, PDG (USA)
- Secretary: (position vacant)
- Treasurer: Harvey Baxter, Rotarian (USA)

LitRAG Directors:

- Rodolfo Bianchi, PDG (Guatemala)
- Sylvia Byers, PDG (Australia)
- Chebab Elawar, PDG (USA)
- David Fowler, Past President RIBI (England)
- Shekhar Mehta, PRID (India)

LitRAG Advisors to the Board:

- Bill Boyd, Past RI President (New Zealand)
- Noraseth Pathmanand, PRID (Thailand)
- William Stumbaugh, Rotarian (Ecuador)

A handout for parents, teachers, caregivers & guardians of young children to aid their literacy and numeracy development – prepared for Rotary International.

Reading for life

Why is Literacy Important?

A Guide for Parents, Guardians and Caregivers of Young Children

Literacy is a broad term that includes how we learn and communicate in our society. It's about relationships and social practices, about knowledge, skills, language and culture.

We use literacy to acquire, understand, analyse and evaluate information. We use it to make meaning, to express thoughts and emotions, to convey ideas and opinions and to interact with others.

Those who are literate might take it for granted – but those who cannot use it are excluded from much of the communication in today's rapidly-developing world.



We read, listen, talk, view and write for various reasons, such as:

- for work purposes
- for pleasure and interest
- to obtain and use information
- to keep in touch with family and friends
- to learn about the world
- to communicate ideas and information to other people.

Knowing how to read, talk and write well is necessary for success in school. It will help build self-confidence and will motivate a child to set high expectations.

By supporting the child in your care to develop his/her literacy, you are advancing the child and developing attitudes and behaviors to become a better learner. In time, the child should:

- develop his/her own learning (including listening, viewing, reading, writing, speaking and creating)
- work harmoniously with others
- be open to new ideas, opinions from and about diverse cultures
- develop resilience and persist with tasks to improve and enhance their work
- recognise that it is good to think about, question and discuss the meanings and assumptions in written material.



Helping Your Child to Talk, Listen, Read and Write

Learning to talk, read and write does not happen all at once. It involves various stages that eventually lead to fluency and independence. Remember that your child will be good at some aspects of literacy before others. Every child is different, so be patient and keep trying to help.

The best time for your child to start learning to talk, read and write is when he or she is very young. Your support, encouragement and nurturing is vitally important. When your child is at school, the teacher will build on the skills and knowledge that your child has developed under your care.

Understanding the First Stages in Reading and Writing



Stage 1:

- A very young child learns about words by playing with blocks that have letters and numbers on them and looking at picture books. Children learn about words and numbers from listening and talking, from songs, rhymes, signs in the shops, traffic signs and logos on packages of food.
- A child will learn how a book works, that is, where a story starts and finishes and which way the print is read from left to right.
- A child will start to understand his or her own thoughts about a book by talking about it.
- A young child will begin to behave like a reader and open a book and then hold a book and pretend to read.
- He or she will also start to behave like a writer and hold a pencil and try to write.
- Children use both pictures and memory to tell and retell a story.
- He or she will begin to understand counting and how numbers have meaning.
- A child will start to find patterns (in the home, while shopping, in the environment).
- He or she will develop an understanding of the different size of things (*large, small*) or qualities (*soft, tough, quiet, gentle, careful, hot, warm, cool, heavy, light)* and the meaning of time.

Stage 2:

When first learning to read and write, a child:

- becomes aware that people convey information using different forms of written and visual materials
- shows interest in suggestions of books to read
- begins to see relationships between sounds and letters and numbers and then to match written words to spoken words
- begins to experiment with reading and says words aloud when reading
- finds illustrations and pictures helpful in understanding the words and sees that the words convey information that relates to the pictures
- begins to experiment with writing, e.g., draws pictures, writes trying to create letters, writes correct letters, writes groups of random letters, writes whole words and puts spaces between the words
- understands that illustrations and writing are different
- understands 'position' words (such as, *behind, beside, beneath, on top of*, etc.)
- develops his/her ability to count and use numbers to add and subtract.



Stage 3:

As he or she learns to read some simple written materials and to write, the child:

- develops increasing confidence in using a variety of methods, such as visual clues, to identify words and numbers in reading materials
- adapts his/her reading to different types of reading materials (including electronic devices)
- recognizes many words, knows how to make sense of the words and is willing to try reading new things
- writes simple sentences, using real letters, proper spacing between words, and some basic punctuation, e.g., full stops and question marks
- enjoys writing and shows interest in writing in different ways, e.g., writes labels, lists, short messages, greeting cards, a note, simple stories
- begins to plan, revise and edit simple pieces of writing
- understands pattern and can make repeating patterns of five or more things (e.g., beads, pegs)
- counts in order quickly
- is able to add, subtract, divide and multiply numbers (and later learns tables, rules and formulas)
- understands relationships with numbers (such as, *is greater than, less than, equal to*, etc.).

A handout for parents, teachers, caregivers & guardians of 5–7-year-old children to aid their literacy and numeracy development – prepared for Rotary International.

Reading for life

Tips for helping your pre-school to seven-year-old child enjoy developing his/her literacy and numeracy skills



Here are some ideas to use while shopping:

- On the way to the shops, play memory games. You can play games like 'I Spy' or take turns making up a pretend shopping list.

  You say: *I'm going shopping. I want to buy something starting with a /'ke'/ sound as in the word 'color'. Today I'm going to buy corn.*

  Your child says: *Today I'm going to buy corn and a cake.*

  You say: *Today I'm going to buy corn, a cake and a cap…* and so on.
- Ask you child to find certain fruit, vegetables or groceries, for example, rice in the grain section.
- See how many foods or groceries he/she can find that begins with a particular letter. Perhaps begin with the letter 'b' (baked beans, bananas, bread, butter, bacon, broccoli, etc.).
- Point out colors, numbers, signs and labels and read them aloud. Explain what the signs and labels mean.
- Ask your child to count out vegetables or fruit. For example, you ask for three bananas, five green apples, one melon and two oranges. Say the name of the fruit in your home language as well as in English.
- Show your child the contents of a pack by pointing to the weight or amount on it.
- Talk about the position of a container when putting it somewhere. "This can is next to the fruit." "Let's put the bread on top of the cans so that it doesn't get squashed." "Put this box of cereal beside the bottle."
- Count how many steps it takes to go from the trolley to the fruit section. Can your child make up a song or a rhyme while counting?
- Play a guessing game for a rhyming word. Begin with easy clues and gradually make these more challenging. Say: *What animal am I? I eat grass all day and I rhyme with 'sleep'.* Or *I chew grass all day and I make milk.* Or *I lay eggs and I cluck, but I'm not a duck.*

Here are some ideas to use around the home:

- Ask your child to count the number of glasses, plates and cutlery as he/she sets the dinner table.
- Write a sentence about something familiar to your child using four to six words onto blank paper. (Start with four words at first and gradually increase the number of words.) Read it with your child and then cut it up into separate words. Ask your child to rearrange the words correctly and then write the sentence out.
- Count with your child the number of buttons as you do up a shirt. Also count forwards and backwards (e.g., one to five and then five down to one).
- Play board games, dominoes, card games and using two dice and encourage your child to add the two numbers rolled. (Note: Dice games teach social skills



such as taking turns and winning and losing gracefully.) Directions for play for the game *Beat That!:* Each player takes a turn rolling the dice and placing them in order to make the highest number possible. For example, if a player throws a three and a four, they have 34 or 43. A player who throws a six and a four would win the round as they have the higher number (46 or 64). After each throw, a player challenges the next player to "Beat that!" Also keep a couple in your purse for when you are out or waiting and you can keep your child amused.

- Make words on the refrigerator using magnetic letters (in lower case) with your child. Your child then copies the letters out and draws a picture of the word (e.g. cat, cow, truck).
- Encourage your child to count the number of pegs used on the washing. Maybe ask then to count how many yellow pegs, how many blue, etc.
- Give your child different-sized plastic cups and a large container to play with in the bath. Your child should guess how many cups it will take to fill the container.
- Look for objects inside or outside the home that are shaped like a circle, triangle, square or rectangle. For example, floor tiles, patterns on fabric, traffic signs. Look for different-sized shapes or shapes in different positions (e.g. a square can become a diamond). Is the shape repeated or alternating or maybe using different colors?
- What about making your own jigsaw from a picture in a magazine? Cut the pieces into specific shapes (e.g., squares, rectangles, triangles). Maybe make one all triangles and another all squares. Count the pieces and discuss the pictures and colors once the jigsaw is completed.
- Using junk mail or old magazines create a collage (that is, many pictures placed together to make one big picture) with a specific focus. Say: *Let's make a picture of things beginning with the sound 'b'.* Your child cuts out pictures of things beginning with 'b' (e.g., boy, balloon, beach) and pastes them onto a sheet of paper. This can be adjusted according to the age of your child. For younger children, it could be yellow objects.

Here are some ideas about reading:

- Read a book using ***To, With, By*** procedure. Read part of the story **to** your child. Read it again **with** your child. Then your child reads it **by** him/herself.
- Try to read to your child daily. Show that you enjoy reading and that your use of reading for information is also important. It is valuable to read in your home language as well as in English.
- Tell a story that you know or make one up together. Pretending and making up stories with your child stimulates creativity. It's good fun.
- Provide interesting sound effects by using voices and sounds that fit in with the story. Try saying words like *whispered* or *slept* very softly or words like *banged* or *clapped* loudly.
- When your child is first beginning to read, try reading aloud together. Encourage your child to 'listen' to his/her own reading. Listening will help your child hear mistakes and then he/she can try to fix them.
- Here are some ideas to use now and then, but remember most reading at this age should be for pleasure:
    - ◊ talk about the cover of the book and the title
    - ◊ talk about the story as you read and ask your child to guess what might happen next
    - ◊ after reading a story, talk about the story and ask plenty of questions about the characters and the events that occurred
    - ◊ remember to talk about any pictures that go with the story.



A handout for parents, teachers, caregivers & guardians with advice about nurturing children's social skills to aid literacy development, prepared by Rotary International.



Reading for life

Learning Social Skills to Support Literacy Development

Developing strong social skills in children as they learn to read and write can dramatically improve their literacy levels.

In the home, we constantly do things like washing, ironing, weeding, supermarketing, dusting, mowing, taking out the trash to help our lives move along. But not everything in the home or classroom has to be exciting and stimulating. Brushing and flossing our teeth twice a day is not enthralling (although things like electric toothbrushes do add different sensations), but regular attention to this task is necessary for good dental health. Try explaining to children that not everything we do in life is going to be fun or entertaining.

So when a child says something confronting like, "This is hard. I can't do it!" or "I won't do it!", they are seeing a reading or writing task as something that they can give up on whenever it becomes challenging. Many children don't automatically have good social skills or a sense of determination or strong emotional traits and so they opt out rather than persisting to do something.

Many children will not arrive at school with the skills they need to learn. If a child has had a literature-rich home environment in which people have been reading to them, listening to music, discussing ideas, current news, moral values, and so on, then their literacy skills are going to be better than a child who has limited support at home.

If students are encouraged to **develop positive attitudes and behaviors that will maximize their learning**, then they will be advantaged. Social traits and skills such as confidence in your work, persistence, resilience, working in teams, helping others to learn and getting along with others can all benefit learning. Other skills are showing empathy, negotiating, communicating with others and problem solving. Try saying to the child such things as, "Please give it another go." or "Try thinking about different ways to do this." to encourage him/her to develop his/her attitude.

Teaching social skills can incorporate a range of techniques, including learning from peers, direct instruction, setting rules, prevention of problem behaviors and using children's books, films or TV programs as examples of attitude and behavior.

Teachers can structure the classroom for better social interaction and social communication by arranging the furniture in small groups. Many learning materials can encourage cooperative play rather than being competitive. These include puppets, pretend cars and trucks, blocks, imaginary food and cooking items.

By using children's literature, children can gain insights about and learn healthy ways to face common difficulties in social situations and in their learning. Such literature offers children perspectives and options for their thoughts, feelings and behaviors in the home, school and community.

Further informative and detailed reading for teachers and parents:

Social skills and school by Cathy Lawson

