



Handbook for tutors

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Who We Are

We are Regional Victorians of Colour. We are a collective of people of colour living in regional Victoria who are building stronger communities and having fun while doing it! Our vision is that people of colour belong, are valued and can contribute to regional communities. Through our initiatives, we advocate for inclusion and social cohesion, centring the aspirations of newly arrived communities in regional and rural Victoria.

At the core of our work is self-determination, advocacy and placemaking: the shaping of meaningful grassroots communities where newly arrived community members can gather, celebrate, and fully express their identities.

In Bendigo, [The Old Church on the Hill](#) is home to Regional Victorians of Colour.

Get in Touch

If you have questions or concerns regarding the program, please contact:

Linto Thomas

Director of Community Engagement & Program Coordinator
0401 397 129

Rosette Ndinduruvugo

Harambee Club Facilitator
0469 362 211

To find out more about Regional Victorians of Colour find us at:

Website

www.regionalcolour.org.au

Facebook

www.facebook.com/regionalcolour

Email

hello@regionalcolour.org.au

What is literacy?

Literacy is the ability to understand and use written and spoken language to communicate, learn, and participate in society.

Literacy has four components:

- Speaking
- Listening
- Writing
- Reading & Viewing

Who are EAL Learners?

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Learners are students whose first language is not English. In some schools EAL is referred to as ESOL or English to Speakers of Other Languages. It differs from EFL in that English as a Foreign Language is taught in a country where English is not the dominant language.

When working with newly arrived students who are EAL learners, it is important to remember they:

- May have no formal schooling in their first language
- May have low levels of literacy in English or in their first language
- Might be suffering the after effects of trauma
- May have had disrupted schooling due to movement within and between countries
- May find the interaction of home culture and school/peer culture challenging
- May have parents who don't speak or read English or read in their mother tongue, need to focus on immediate settlement needs, work long hours or have their own mental or physical health problems

Language acquisition takes time:

- It generally takes 2-3 years for an EAL learner to develop conversational English
- And at least 5 years for these students to operate on a par with their English speaking peers
- Students who have experienced disrupted or limited prior schooling, take an average of seven to ten years

Our approach to learning

At Harambee Club we use a trauma-informed and strength-based approach to learning. We know that all children, but especially those who've experienced trauma or other life disadvantages, learn best when:

- They're safe and comfortable and their physical, emotional and cultural needs are being met
- They have positive relationships with adults and other children around them
- They have multiple, regular opportunities to experience success
- They have confidence in themselves as learners
- They have a language-rich environment
- They can learn through play

This means that as tutor, it's more important that you're supporting children to feel comfortable, get to know you and others around them and have fun, even if it feels that the child you're working with hasn't "learned" anything that day. Additionally, spending time speaking to you in English, hearing books read aloud or having a positive experience of learning are all immensely valuable.

Practical steps you can take to support young people at Harambee club include:

- Smile!
- Take an interest in the children who are participating and their culture by asking questions or learning some words in their mother tongue

- Until you know what level a child’s literacy is at (speaking, listening, reading and writing), pick simpler books/tasks. This will give an opportunity for success
- Encourage and give praise
- Build relationships with children and between children
- Make things into a game, read books with exaggeration or silly voices
- Give children choice over activities or how activities will be undertaken
- Never “force” a child to do anything

What is the phonics method?

At Harambee Club we support children to learn to read and write using a phonics method. Phonics methods of teaching reading and writing have been proven to be more successful, especially for those with additional challenges, such as having English as an Additional Language or a learning disability.

Learning to read is essentially learning a code. The letters we use are simply symbols or written code for the speech sounds of English. Learning about the relationship between the letters of the alphabet and the speech sounds they represent allows us to “crack the code” and learn to both read (decode) and spell (encode).

With phonics methods, students are explicitly taught to link individual speech sounds (phonemes) to written symbols (graphemes). Depending on the phonics method, there are around 70 graphemes that are taught to children, which correspond to the 44 phonemes (sounds) in English. Graphemes can be made up of one, two, three or four letters, and can correspond to one or more phonemes.

Essentially, when a child learns to read using a phonics method, they learn to link letters to speech sounds and then blend these sounds together to read words. They also learn to separate (segment) words into their constituent sounds and link these sounds to letters in order to spell them.

Some students will already be learning using a phonics program at their school, while others won’t. However, research shows that any increase in phonetic knowledge will improve reading and writing. Therefore, we won’t be providing structured lessons around phonics, but will instead expect tutors to have good phonetic awareness and be using this as a tool to support students with their literacy.

How to use a phonetic approach when reading with a child:

- Have the Harambee Club “Grapheme Card” with you to refer to
- Be guided by the child’s interest, confidence and attention span. If they’re getting bored etc, it’s OK to tell the child the words they don’t know, e.g. “that says butterfly”.

BUT, ideally, if a child mispronounces a word or can’t pronounce a word:

- Ask them to “sound it out”
- Praise the child for the parts of the word they’re getting right

- Focus on the letters/graphemes they're getting wrong, and ask questions about them, e.g. "do you remember what sounds "T and "H" can make when they're working together?"
- If they still don't know, tell them, using the grapheme card, e.g. "'T" and "H" together can say "th" like in "thumb" or "th" like in "mother", here it's saying "the" like in "thumb"
- Ask the child to put the sounds together again/sound it out again, with their new knowledge of the grapheme/s they didn't know before
- Praise again!
- Ask them if they know what the word means and explain if they don't know

Below is a chart of 70 graphemes that we refer to at Harambee Club and the English phonemes they correspond to, within common English words. These are on the Grapheme Cards for easy reference.

a dance table basket	c coconut rice	g goat giraffe	o orange mango do	s snake music	e egg me	u sun cushion ruby	i sit silent	y yellow baby butterfly	b bee
d dog	f fish	h hat	j jam	k koala	l lizard	m mat	n in	p pot	r rabbit
t bat	q quiet	v van	w win	x box	z zoo	ng sang	th thumb mother	wr write	ch chicken school moustache
ee teeth	ea weave bread break	ow flower rainbow	ou mouse soup cousins	oo food cook	ar scarf	ay play	ai rain	oi point	oy boy
wh when	er her	ir first	ur fur	wor work	ear early	aw paw	au sauce	or for	ci social
ck neck	sh shell	ed landed loved picked	ew grew new	ui fruit nuisance	oa boat	gu guess	ph phone	ough through through rough cough thought drought	oe toe
ey they key	igh light	kn knot	gn gnome sign	ie friend pie parties	dge bridge	ei either reindeer forfeit	eigh eight	ti nation	si social

What will Harambee sessions look like?

The below timetable will give you an idea of what to expect at each session. It is important to remember that a child's attention span can vary depending on factors such as age, personal circumstances, and the nature of the task or activity. This schedule takes these factors into consideration.

We encourage tutors to be mindful of individual needs – e.g. if a student is showing disinterest in reading there may be a number of reasons why. Consider distractions around the room, whether the book is of interest, take more frequent movement breaks, or make the task easier or harder depending on capability, e.g. asking a child to read a few words on each page but reading the rest of the book to the child, or switching to a different activity.

At each session, our Homework Club Facilitator will be present to welcome you, and direct you to a particular task or child to work with. In most sessions, we will have more children than tutors, so while some tutors may work one-on-one, others might play games with a group of children, or read aloud to a group of children.

Harambee Club timetable:

- 3pm: Rosette and two volunteers arrive, organise activities, prepare afternoon tea.
- 3.30-3.40pm: tutors arrive
- 3.35-4.50pm: students arrive
- 3.35-3.40pm: Afternoon tea served, name tags, tutors engage with students
- 3.50-4pm: Ice-beaker activity (students and tutors participate together)
- 4-4.30pm: Students partnered with individual tutors. Tutors and students choose activities to do together, ideally including some reading time. (
- 4.30-4.40: break for smoothies!
- 4.40-5.10pm: Students and tutors continue working together. Some swapping so that those who haven't had any one-on-one time ideally get some now
- 5.10-5.15-pm: Group comes together, wrap-up and goodbyes
- 5.15-5.45pm: pack up, do dishes, clean kitchen. Concurrently, driving volunteers take children home

Types of activities to choose from:

Homework

Some students (particularly older students) might bring their own homework or readers to complete. Check with your student if they have any homework or books from school/home they would like to complete during the session.

Reading

We have lots of books/readers of all different levels for students to choose from. Some students may actively choose a book that interests them, while others may need a bit of help choosing one that is right for them.

Literacy games

We have a selection of games for students to play either 1:1 with tutors or in small groups with peers and a tutor. These include grapheme cards, naughts and crosses, snakes and

ladders, and more. Note: each of these games has been tailored to feature a literacy component.

Group activities

Group activities are a great way for students to practice speaking and listening skills. Some students will love this interactive style of learning, while others might find group work quite challenging. E.g. it might be hard for some students to think on the spot, or they might feel shy/intimidated to speak in front of others. If a student gets stuck on their turn, let them know they can have a think about it and circle back to them – be mindful not to forget their turn as you want all students to have a go. Below are some examples of group activities:

What's in the bag?	Place an item in a dark bag/pillow case so that it is hidden from sight. Students get to come up and feel the item but are not allowed to look inside the bag. Once everyone has felt what's in the bag, students take turns asking questions about the item. E.g. "is it something you can play with?", "is it something you eat", "is it something you find in the kitchen?" until someone guesses what the item is.
Finish the story	Sitting in a circle, the group creates a story (which usually turns out to be quite funny) by constructing a string of sentences. Students can say anything they like but can only say one sentence before moving onto the next person in the group. E.g. "I woke up this morning with a dog in my bed", "the dog was licking my face", "I asked my mum if I could take the dog to school", "I realised the dog was invisible as my mum couldn't see him!" etc.
Inquiry and elimination games	An interactive game that encourages active listening. Standing in a circle, students a series of questions accompanied by a command. E.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit down if... you ate a piece of fruit today • Stand on one leg if... you have the letter 'E' in your first name • Touch your right ear if... you didn't make your bed this morning etc.
Draw a story, tell us about it	As mentioned, some students might find group work challenging if they find it hard to think of answers on the spot - this is a great activity for those students. Give everyone 5-10 minutes to draw a picture and let them know they will present it to the group (show & tell style). This gives students time to think about what they might say, while the drawing gives them something to focus on while they speak.

Tips for tutors:

Tips for supporting listening

- Speak clearly but naturally
- Avoid speaking too fast or too loudly
- Use simple vocabulary to introduce new concepts
- Use gestures, visuals or objects
- Repeat when necessary
- Provide clear, common, and consistent instructions. Repeat if needed

- Try not use too many instructions & reinforce instructions with visual aids & gestures (e.g. instead of asking a student “take out your exercise book, draw a margin and write the date in the top corner”, use simple language and demonstrate the instructions while you are saying them.
- Model how sounds are made
- Plain English - avoid colloquialisms and idioms

AND

Remember that listening in a new language can be quite difficult and can make learners anxious. So...

- Encourage students to take their time
- To breathe deeply, especially when they are feeling stressed or anxious about not understanding something. After all there is no time limit on listening.

How to use plain language:

- Plain language means structuring sentences in a way that ensures you are understood as quickly, easily, and completely as possible.
- It avoids verbose, convoluted language, idioms and jargon. "Clear, straightforward expression, using only as many words as are necessary. It is language that avoids obscurity, inflated vocabulary and convoluted construction. It is not baby talk, nor is it a simplified version of ... language." (Dr Robert Eagleson).

Tips for supporting speaking

- Provide opportunities to practice conversational English
- Value and accept all attempts to communicate by not over correcting the student
- Respond to the content, not the form/grammar (e.g. if you ask a student what they did today, and they reply “I go’ed to school”, instead of correcting their grammar, reply to the content: “Oh you went to school! What classes did you have today?” – this way you are role-modelling the correct grammar)
- Provide positive and encouraging feedback
- Allow thinking time
- Introduce vocabulary – introducing new words is important for children or adults learning English to develop their literacy skills and confidence (images, drawing, objects, storytelling, listing synonyms)

Tips for supporting reading

As well as following the phonetics approach described above, the following tips are useful when supporting reading with EAL students.

When reading with a student the goal is to:

- Prepare students for what they are going to read
- Stimulate interest in what they’re reading
- Introduce key words
- Model and support students to develop reading skills including comprehension and fluency
- Encourage memory development

Before starting a new book, support the reader build connection to the story by engaging with the book's front cover. Ask questions that encourage connection:

- Predicting- Look at the front cover, what could this book be about? Why?
- Establish prior knowledge- 'What do you know about this topic?' Context for what the story is about will support engagement and confidence as they read
- Talk about the text type- genre-is it a story book or information book?
- Start with what they know- build confidence, identify any known words in the title
- Identify any unknown words

Helpful questions to ask while reading together:

1. Look at the front cover. What could the book be about?
2. Who is the author?
3. What is an illustrator? What do they do?
4. Does this look like a story book or an information book? Why?
5. What does that word mean? Look at the pictures and read the words around it to help you figure it out (context).
6. How can you read an unfamiliar word? Can you use the first sounds? Can you sound-out then blend?
7. Who are the main characters?
8. What do you think will happen next?
9. How do you think that character feels? Why? How would you feel in that situation?
10. Can you predict how the book will end?
11. Who is your favourite character? Why?
12. Is there a special message in the story? What is it?
13. Can you retell the story in your own words?
14. Do you like how the story ended? Can you think of another way the book could have ended?

Child Safety

Regional Victorians of Colour is committed to upholding child safety throughout all our activities. We are committed to the safety, wellbeing, participation and empowerment of all children and young people.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures. We also adhere to legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety.

Regional Victorians of Colour is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks. Regional Victorians of Colour has robust human resources and recruitment practices to reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing board members, staff and volunteers. We regularly train and educate our board members, staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all children and are committed to:

- The cultural safety of Aboriginal children and their families
- The cultural safety of children and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds,

- Providing a safe environment for children and families with a disability
- Providing a safe environment for children and families who are same-sex attracted, intersex, non-binary and gender diverse.

We have specific policies and procedures in place that support our board members, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you have a concern about a child's safety, please contact Linto Thomas, Director of Community Engagement at 040 139 7129 or linto@regionalcolour.org.au or Andrea Wolf, Chair, at 0401 091 922 or andrea@regionalcolour.org.au

You can also get in touch with Linto if you'd like a copy of our Child Safety Policy or our Feedback and Complaints Policy.

**To read more about our Child Safety Policies and Procedures visit our website:
www.regionalcolour.org.au/policies-and-procedures**