



Mum-of-two and social commentator Angela Mollard guides you through the thrills and spills of parenthood

**NEW
Kids**

WHY ARE OUR KIDS failing?

They used to be known as 'the 3 Rs'— reading, writing and arithmetic. They were the key skills you needed to learn before you left school. But with new figures showing writing skills have declined in the past six years, educators are concerned that students are going backwards.

This year's Naplan tests show a 2.04 per cent decline in writing skills across all years, but the worst results were for Year 3 students, aged around eight.

Global tests show Australian students are slipping behind their international peers in maths, science and reading. But now a new writing initiative is gaining teachers' attention. LittleScribe, an app that encourages kids to write and print their own books, has been adopted by more than 350 schools nationwide.

As well as encouraging kids to write their own stories, turn them into a digital version and print them, they are also invited to join a book club that allows them to read others' stories.

LittleScribe founder Jenny Atkinson says children, not just adults, should be seen as authors.

'What this is doing is not only allowing kids to develop the writing, illustration and literacy outcomes that we're looking for,

but they can also read other kids' books, meaning we're really playing with the concept of repetition – reading, writing, sharing, regrouping then creating another book and beginning that process all over again,' she says.

She believes kids need to develop courage to write, and that's best achieved by focusing on the purpose of writing and the audience, not the finished product.

Jenny adds: 'When did we decide perfection was the goal and writing was not a journey? We believe every word, page and book is progress in the learning journey and needs to be encouraged, not discouraged with rules and barriers.'

Ideas, imagination and a love of learning, rather than marks, are at the heart of the program. With the goal to get every primary child in Australia to write a book by 2018, Jenny says it's up to schools and governments to get on board.

As for the Naplan results, Jenny believes it's a national issue that needs a national response.

'We need an entire community engaged and committed to creating a new normal. We can no longer outsource, debate, discuss and talk. We need to write.'



CUDDLE POWER

The more you hug your kids the smarter they'll be, according to new research. A study into babies' responses found those who received more cuddles from parents or hospital staff showed a stronger brain response. Simple body contact or rocking your baby in your arms makes a huge difference to how their brains develop.

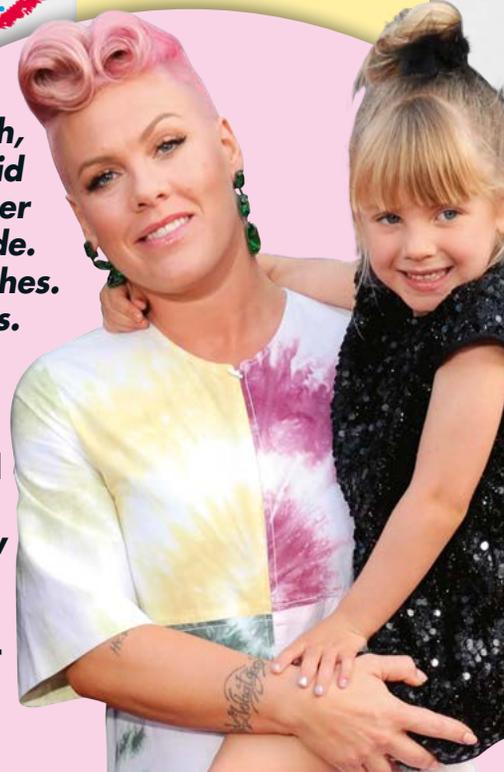


LATHER BLATHER

How pretty is this craft idea? Simply fill a glass container with water, then squirt shaving foam to create a cloud on top of the water. Get kids to drop food colouring into the 'cloud', then watch as it trickles into the water like rain.

Lather blather photo: onelittleproject.com

'Yeah, my kid rides her bike inside. Without clothes. And helmets. While I ignore her and look at my phone'
- Pink, singer and mother-of-two, on how she gets through the summer holidays



WHAT'S IT LIKE HAVING A TODDLER?

IMAGINE RAISING A HEAVILY CAFFEINATED CHIMPANZEE WHO IS ALLERGIC TO SLEEP

For more info about the app, visit littlescribe.com.

THE FLAWSOME MUM

Need a break? Take some time out and have a laugh by visiting The Flawsome Mum page at facebook.com/theflawsomemum.

