Improving Literacy Brief

REMOTE LITERACY LEARNING

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WHAT IS REMOTE LITERACY LEARNING?

Remote literacy learning includes a mixture of literacy learning experiences that are teacher-led, family-led, and student-led. It is a collaboration among you, families, and students. It will likely be different than the traditional school day. Typically, the remote schedule is more flexible than the in-person school one. It often combines online and offline literacy learning opportunities too. Online literacy learning usually relies on learning management systems to deliver virtual lessons or assignments to students. It also may include live video chats, recorded videos, apps, virtual literacy games, and e-books. Offline learning usually involves print literacy materials and high-quality educational television that promotes the development of literacy skills, like vocabulary knowledge.

WHAT IS MY ROLE?

You will likely provide families and students with information and materials for remote literacy learning in-line with your local literacy curricula and continuity of learning plan. It is vital to include information on how families can access and use technology, like the learning management system, apps, online games, or technology-assisted programs, to support their children's literacy learning. It is key to use these technologies to enhance, not replace, what you are already doing instructionally. If students receive literacy intervention, it should continue during remote learning, but it may not look the same as it did in person. It is important to talk with families and students early about anticipated changes to provide the interventions remotely.

Schools providing literacy instruction remotely must make the instruction accessible to students with disabilities and follow the goals and supports identified on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Seeking input from families and students will help you to know what is working and what can be improved. You can lay the foundation for strong home-school partnerships for remote learning by focusing on strengthening communication; helping students build social, emotional, and behavioral skills; shared decision-making; and strategies to build relationships with families.

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WHAT IS THE ROLE OF FAMILIES?

Families can coach their children's literacy learning at home. This means guiding their children's literacy learning, so they grow and succeed. While it's important for students to focus on school lessons and assignments at home, literacy learning can happen anywhere, anytime. Therefore, it is key to convey to families that everyday experiences can be turned into literacy learning opportunities. And, suggest resources and activities so they may do so. Importantly, families should not feel that they need to take the place of teachers. Remote learning will look different for every family.

Families say the most helpful resources for learning at home are personal technology, personal guidance for how to best support their child, regular access to their child's teacher, and options for remote one-on-one time/tutoring with a teacher.

GET READY

Plan remote literacy learning carefully.

Take time to establish processes and procedures for remote literacy learning and practice common routines with staff. Survey staff and families about needs and capabilities and use the results to inform the design and delivery of literacy curricular, instructional, and programmatic decisions. Collaborate among staff to ensure that specially designed literacy instruction that meets the unique needs of students with disabilities is provided as outlined in IEPs. Discuss with staff the ways that technologies can support explicit and systematic literacy instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, to all students.

Communicate about literacy learning often and in various ways.

Continue to build positive relationships with students and families. Communicate regularly with families and students using consistent methods. This helps families to become comfortable with your communication method. Consider matching different modes of communication to family preferences, such as learning management systems, video chats, email, text messaging, or phone calls. Likewise, be sensitive to families' availability. Early morning, lunchtime, or evening communication options may be necessary. Setting regular office hours can make it easier for both of you to schedule communication. Families find text messages and phone calls to be the most effective communication channels with schools. Using text messages to give literacy tips and reminders to families is a powerful strategy for promoting children's literacy development at home. Try including a picture or video clip with your message so it's memorable and actionable. You can use social media and email for this purpose too. Keeping an active classroom and

school website with literacy-related information and resources is another way to keep families engaged and informed.

When communicating with families, consider each families' home language and culture as well as the strengths and needs of their children. Call on resources at your disposal to help reduce language barriers. Avoid using education jargon when speaking with families. If you need to use a term that may not be familiar to them, explain it to ensure you are both on the same page. Usually, the better the communication, the higher the engagement. Start by helping families understand any processes, procedures, and routines for remote literacy learning that affect them and their children. Then, speak with families about your expectations for their children and show how they can help to support their children's literacy learning at home. Listen to families wishes and concerns too. Finally, offer families suggestions for how they can support the whole child, including connecting them with services and social and emotional supports available to them in the school and community as needed.

Prepare others to use technologies for literacy learning.

Begin by carefully reviewing and vetting all digital literacy resources that you are considering using. Try to select the right technologies given the purpose and then stick with them. Look for technology tools with built-in accessibility features. Then, prepare staff, families, and students to use the technologies you'll be using for remote literacy learning. For staff, invest in professional development on technologies for them to learn together and provide them clear expectations for technology use. Factors that literacy teachers believe would contribute effectively to their professional development for integrating technology into literacy instruction are:

a) time to explore, practice, and prepare for technology-integrated literacy instruction;
b) access to equipment during and after professional development;
c) access to higher level knowledge, knowledgeable presenters, and relevant background knowledge; and
d) ongoing, follow-up, and small group support.

Introduce and show families and students how to navigate the learning management system, video-conferencing software, digital literacy tools, technology-assisted literacy programs, and assistive technologies. This is especially important before students are expected to complete and be graded on literacy lessons or assignments. Note that many families do not feel confident with technologies or have the support to find high-quality literacy content to use with their children on their own. Training families on how to use technologies and high-quality educational television with their children can help improve adult-child interactions during book reading.

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Consider the processing practices needed for reading and researching online.

It is important to think about how online reading may differ from offline reading for students. When students read and research online, they use typical and new reading comprehension skills and strategies to make sense of information. Students likely need at least five processing practices when reading and researching online; the ability to:

1) identify important questions;
2) locate information;
3) evaluate information critically;
4) synthesize information; and
5) communicate information.

Reading online may also require greater amounts of metacognitive processing than reading offline. Consider this when designing online literacy instruction and provide students with the appropriate scaffolds and supports in literacy lessons and assignments when they are asked to read online articles, websites, Wikis, blogs, and other online material.

GET SET

Design equitable literacy learning opportunities.

90% of families say their child is using materials or resources provided by the school to learn at home compared to resources families found on their own. Therefore, it is critical to provide all families and students with equitable remote literacy learning opportunities. This means giving students the necessary materials and resources to successfully complete lessons and assignments and giving families the necessary materials and resources to adequately support their children's literacy learning at home. If possible, integrate both virtual and traditional experiences so that all families and students can participate.

Also, plan for more than just the ways you'll deliver literacy content to families and students. Equitable opportunities include attending to all students' literacy needs by differentiating, modifying, and/or accommodating, lessons, and assignments as appropriate. Ensure that literacy instruction, lessons, and tasks reflect evidence-based practices. Use universal design for learning (UDL) principles when designing remote literacy learning opportunities so all students can participate meaningfully in them. It may help to ask yourself, "Is the literacy instruction tailored to meet the needs of our most vulnerable populations?" "How will we promote academic rigor in literacy for all students?" You probably will not be able to replicate the school environment; instead, consider other means to connect with all students to gauge their understanding and literacy needs.

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Integrate content area learning into literacy instruction.

You can use [nonfiction reading material](#) in literacy lessons and assignments to help students build their background knowledge and learn about important topics and ideas in science, social studies, and other content areas. It is a good idea to vary text type and formats, since traditional reading materials appear to have an advantage over digital reading materials on children's reading comprehension. Articles, magazines, to-do lists, manuals, e-books, blogs, and other online information make good reading material too. Use online reading experiences to develop students' critical thinking. Teaching students how to [search effectively online](#) can promote their online researching skills and reading comprehension. You can also help students be [careful consumers](#) of what is read online by teaching them how to check the source of information for credibility.

Set literacy learning goals.

Work with families to set and check learning goals for home literacy activities. But, make them realistic given what can be accomplished in a remote learning situation. For example, you can determine together the number of books to read with their child per week and [jointly track progress](#). Goal setting combined with daily text reminders more than doubled the amount of time that low-income parents spent reading to their children. Also, help families get a better understanding of what students must know and be able to do in literacy at each grade level and where their child is academically. Share with families your literacy goals for their children and ask families to share their goals with you. Talking together helps you better target instruction and tasks to student literacy goals. It also helps families to track their children's progress and provide feedback to you on literacy learning efforts at home.

GO

Deliver literacy learning opportunities in various ways.

Deliver literacy learning opportunities - including lessons, assignments, and resources - in various ways to all families and students. Consider a variety of methods for delivering instruction, such as printed materials, telephone or video conferencing, and digital recordings of lessons. The most successful online learning experiences include providing support services to students and another promising strategy includes giving additional resources to them.

When delivering remote instruction, it is also key to clearly identify and convey the literacy learning objectives to families and students. Check student understanding regularly through questioning, chats, comments on collaborative workspaces, surveys, and other online features with families and students. Be clear about expectations for student participation to keep them motivated and engaged. The most successful online learning experiences include giving

immediate feedback and providing tutoring, while other promising strategies include interactive instruction and encouraging student choice.

Break literacy learning into smaller parts and provide instructional scaffolding as needed. Also, consider building in some independent and project-based learning experiences. For students with disabilities, three strategies appear key for supporting online course accessibility for their literacy learning: 1) clearly articulating learning objectives, 2) promoting personalized and contextualized learning, and 3) planning for visual and audio representation of concepts. To make text comprehensible for students with disabilities in online courses, assess and address the degree to which words can be made concrete and whether the connections within text support inference-making.

Make literacy instruction interactive.

There are benefits to interacting with children during remote learning. When you talk and interact with children as they use digital media, you promote their language development, background and world knowledge, and comprehension. But just having students watch educational videos or participate in courses delivered entirely online - without interaction - is not likely to help them retain information. Ideally, you and families should monitor and reward students' growth during computer-assisted learning together.

Suggest simple and flexible literacy activities.

When families are involved during literacy activities, their children's reading achievement improves. Suggest to families literacy activities that are evidence-based. Examples of evidence-based literacy practices include retelling, dialogic reading, phonological awareness activities, asking and answering questions, and identifying the main idea. Activities should be easy to do and appropriately matched to the literacy skills children have been taught or are working on in school. To promote family implementation of the activities, select those that require minimal materials or those typically found in homes. If possible, provide the materials for families. Note that families may use e-books and print books differently at home and use them for different purposes with their children. Ensure that the directions accompany the activities and materials and are simple and easy to follow. Flexibility within activities is also important so families can adjust them to their situation, comfort level, or need.

Provide structured guidance for literacy learning.

When suggesting home literacy activities for families to do with their children, clearly tell the learning goals and provide simple instructions and examples or visuals. Recognize that many families may have difficulty reading long, complex directions. Effective activities also tend to have simple scaffolds for families to incorporate if needed to support their children's literacy learning. For example, a combination of traditional and digital early learning activities with

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[discussion tips](#) helped families of children who spoke little to no English improve their children's literacy skills. If more support is necessary, encourage families to join their children's online learning lessons to better understand and extend literacy learning at home.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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Remote Literacy Learning

For Teachers

Get Ready,

- Plan remote literacy learning carefully.
- Communicate with families and students about literacy learning often and in various ways.
- Prepare staff, families, and students to use technologies for literacy learning.
- Consider the processing practices students need for reading and researching online.

Get Set,

- Design equitable literacy learning opportunities.
- Integrate content area learning into literacy instruction.
- Set literacy learning goals.

Go!

- Deliver literacy learning opportunities in various ways.
- Make literacy instruction interactive.
- Suggest simple and flexible literacy activities.
- Provide structured guidance for literacy learning.

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