Families and Schools Partnering for Children’s Literacy Success
Family Track Facilitator’s Guide: Discuss Literacy Instruction and Intervention
For more information: https://improvingliteracy.org/kit/

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Note: Greet participants and begin workshop with introductions as needed. Follow the facilitation procedure notes appropriate for the workshop session.

For the traditional blended and virtual dissemination models, activate the tutorial link and start with the introduction slide and then continue to the next slide.

For the flipped blended dissemination model, ask participants in they have any questions about the purpose of NCIL’s tutorial on Families and Schools Partnering for Children’s Literacy Success.

Overview of The National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL)
The NCIL’s mission is to increase access to, and use of, evidence-based approaches to screen, identify, and teach pre-K to grade 12 students with literacy-related disabilities, including dyslexia.
**Note:** This slide explains why the topic is important/the session big ideas.

You and the school can talk about how to partner to help your child and others get high quality and effective literacy instruction.
Learning Objectives

- To learn how families and schools can partner to help children get evidence-based literacy instruction and intervention
- To learn what to talk about when discussing literacy instruction and intervention

Note: Participant learning objectives to display and communicate when the workshop begins.
You and school staff can begin by talking about the grade-level literacy standards, how the literacy curriculum and instruction helps your child meet the standards, and your child’s current literacy data and what it means. It is then important for each of you to continue to discuss the specific literacy goals for your child, as they usually change over time. Also, your goals may differ from the school’s goals. Tell school staff if you need help in goal setting so they can guide you. The information shared helps inform your child’s literacy profile so services and support are best matched to your child’s needs.

It is important for school staff to share key instructional materials, concepts, projects, and assessments to help you understand how your child is learning literacy skills or content. The school should use different ways to convey literacy information to you, like developing a visual display at open houses and back-to-school nights; inviting your reactions to the information during school gatherings; and posting information on its web site and through other virtual means; and emailing, texting, or using communication apps.

You can also talk about activities related to your child’s specific literacy goals. Have school staff discuss strategies and tips that you can use with your child at home to practice skills. Start by asking for one easy to do activity. Ask for a demonstration or example if you need more information. Your child’s school may have literacy learning kits to lend to you for home use. If so, these kits should contain clear directions for use and be tied to key literacy skills or content your child is learning. You can let school staff know how the activity went and where you or your child need extra support. You and other families may
be invited to participate in literacy activities at school events throughout the year where you and staff can learn from each another. The activities should be connected to classroom literacy instruction and include an explanation of why they are important. Click Try It Out for how to support your early reader at home.

**Note:** Click Try It Out to see Supporting Your Child’s Reading at Home. Show the website to participants, selecting one grade level to highlight. Review the four recommendations in the left side introduction column and select one as an example. Click one of the “videos and examples” for participants to see. Encourage participants to further review the website on their own for activities to do with their child.
There are a few key topics to raise when you and your child’s teacher are discussing literacy instruction and intervention. First, find out if the literacy approach, strategy, or program being used with your child is evidence-based. Evidence-based instruction is a teaching strategy or program that research shows there is reasonable evidence that the teaching strategy or program will result in academic gains. Click the infographic for information on what evidence-based means: https://improvingliteracy.org/sites/improvingliteracy2.uoregon.edu/files/briefs/what-do-we-mean-by-evidence-based.pdf

Knowing what scientific research says about how kids learn to read can help you determine if the literacy approach, strategy, or program being used with your child is evidence-based. What does science say about how kids learn to read? Click Watch Video to learn more. For more information on how children learn to read, see NCIL’s Learning About Your Child’s Reading Development tutorial.

**Video:** Play Watch Video Education Week (3.55)
For over a century, researchers have argued about how do children learn to read? But for the last few decades, the research has actually been pretty clear. Written language is a code. Certain combinations of letters predictably represent certain sounds. Teaching young children how to crack the code is the most reliable way to make sure that they learn how to read words. This kind of instruction is called systematic phonics. Connecting printed letters on a page to written sounds isn’t intuitive. While some young children may make those connections on their own, most don’t. The research shows that explicit phonics instruction benefits early readers but particularly those who
struggle to read. That’s because small strengthens or deficits at the start of reading compound over time. Of course, there is more to reading than seeing the words on a page and pronouncing it out loud. Children need to make meaning out of the words they read. That means they need deep background and vocabulary knowledge and eventually, they need to be able to recognize most words automatically and read connected text fluently. But knowing how to decode is an essential step in becoming a reader. If children can’t decipher the precise words on a page, they’ll never become fluent readers. In a systematic phonics program, teachers don’t just address the letter-sound connections that students stumble over. They teach all of them in a sequence and teachers explicitly tell students which sounds correspond to which letter patterns rather than ask students to figure it out. Two decades ago, the U.S. government brought together a panel to evaluate reading research. The panel’s report found that among students in kindergarten and first grade, phonics instruction led to improvements in decoding ability and reading comprehension across the board. Children at risk of developing future reading problems, children with disabilities, and children from all socioeconomic backgrounds all benefited. Neuroscience research has since confirmed that explicitly teaching these skills helps people learn how to read new languages more quickly. Of course, phonics instruction, like all teaching, can and should be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students. Once a student knows or learns a phonics skill, he should move on. Many early reading classrooms teach students strategies to identify a word by guessing using context clues and pictures. Neuroscience studies have found that guessing is a much less efficient way to identify a new word. It’s what struggling readers do, not proficient ones. Phonics is essential, but understanding the alphabetic code doesn’t automatically make students good readers. There are five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. A framework called the simple view of reading explains how comprehension works. It says that reading comprehension is the product of decoding ability and language comprehension. A student needs both good decoding and good language skills to understand what’s on the page. If either one of those is low, then comprehension will be low as well. Many people point out that research show that children who read more are better readers. That’s true, but it’s important to remember that those studies are correlational. It’s unclear if students become better readers because they read more or whether good readers are just more likely to pick up books.

**Guiding question to check for understanding:** What did you learn about the process of learning to read? What kind of instruction works best?

**Note:** Click Learn More to show the landing page for NCIL’s Learning About Your Child’s Reading Development Toolkit for more information on how children learn to read.
Second, it is important to identify if the evidence-based literacy practices are appropriate for your child’s grade-level or if any key practices are missing. To better understand what children need to know and be able to do to be successful readers in elementary school – and the evidence-based practices that can help them get there - click 10 Key Reading Practices – K-5. For middle and high school, click 10 Key Reading Practices – 6-12. To better understand what children need to know and be able to do to be successful writers at all levels – and the evidence-based practices that can help them get there - Click 10 Key Writing policies and practices for K-12.

Use these materials as conversation starters with your child’s teacher to discuss the ways in which the school’s literacy curriculum addresses these practices and the progress your child is making in these grade-level skills. If you prefer, you can click Learn More instead for tips for talking about reading with your child’s teacher.

Know that you are not expected to take the place of teachers, especially when learning remotely. Instead, help your child practice learned skills and using them in new ways.

**Resource:** Distribute, review, and discuss the three documents with participants. Tell participants they can use the documents to reflect on the ways in which their child’s school literacy curriculum addresses these practices and how they would use this resource with school staff. If time permits, see activity below.
**Activity:** Provide time for participants to select one of the documents to reflect on the ways in which their child’s school’s literacy curriculum addresses these practices, noting any gaps. Encourage participants to discuss how they would use this resource with school staff and what they would say (see resource below to use with this activity). Encourage participants to use it to engage others in the community.

**Resource:** **Distribute, review, and discuss** Conversation Starters to Use with Your Child’s Teacher with participants. Tell participants they can use the document to prepare for conversations with school staff.
Third, it is important to find out if the literacy approach, strategy, or program being used with your child is designed and delivered effectively. Effective literacy instruction should be explicit and systematic. Explicit means teaching that is direct and step-by-step, including explaining and showing how to do something and systematic means teaching that has a carefully planned sequence, including building from easier to more difficult tasks and breaking down harder skills into smaller parts. Click Watch Video to hear what effective literacy instruction should look like. Click the infographic for more information about the characteristics of effective instruction.

Use these materials as conversation starters with school staff to discuss the ways in which the key reading and writing practices are taught in the school. You can also use them to see if home literacy tips, activities, and homework from the school reflect effective, evidence-based literacy instruction. Click Learn More for information on how to judge if activities or strategies sent home from school are appropriate.

Remote learning can be especially challenging for everyone. Your school may find it difficult to create and deliver lessons and assignments to reach all children. Your school may also have difficulty communicating information to you about the lessons. See if your child’s school offers different ways to get educational materials, such as through a learning management system, public television, printed materials, video conferencing, or digital recordings of lessons. Share if you or your child needs more flexibility in how and when assignments are completed. If you need more information to access and understand the
materials, tell the school. See if further explanation and support are available to address your issues and if there are ways for you to give and receive feedback.

**Video: Play Watch Video** NCIL (4:14)

Effective instruction for students who struggle with reading should be systematic. It should be systematic in that it follows a scope and sequence that builds in level of difficulty and complexity while also building in time for review for students to practice skills they have already learned. It should also be explicit. Explicit instruction that is teacher directed has been proven to be more effective through research than less teacher directed, less explicit instruction. Explicit instruction involves several components. The first is the teacher explanation. The teacher explanation should be short and concise. It should provide an objective or a target area of learning for that part of the lesson, and the quicker the teacher explanation is, the more time there is for students to respond to instruction. So, quick and concise is key with a teacher explanation. The next component of explicit instruction is a teacher model. The teacher model should show students exactly what is expected for a response. Once students know what is expected the model can be dropped to provide additional practice opportunities for students within the lesson. The signal is an important part of explicit instruction as well. The signal includes four parts. It's the focus, the cue, think time, and then a signal for response. A focus shows students exactly what they are working on in the task at hand. A cue is a quick reminder of what they are being asked to do, such as "sound" if they're working on sounds practice. Think time is a crucial component of the signal. The think time allows all students to think about and formulate their response before students give the response in unison as a group. And then the signal to respond shows that all students are ready to respond and all students take part in the practice opportunity. Another component of explicit instruction is multiple opportunities to respond. Which the signal that we just mentioned helps with that. Multiple opportunities to respond could be through the use of whiteboards, or response cards for students. You could also have students work in small groups or work with pairs in a think-pair-share model, where students think about their answers, share them with a partner, before sharing out as a whole group. The big part with multiple opportunities to respond are that all students are practicing and all students are engaged in the lesson. Choral responding is another way that you could have students engage, where all students are responding to the response, in a quick and concise way when answers are the same and short. The pacing of your lesson should be quick and perky to allow all students the opportunity to respond to your instruction and it keeps them engaged as your lesson moves along. One part of your pacing is to remember to add in that think time for each component students are working on. So, embed that into your pacing for all students to have time to think and practice as part of your lesson. Another component of explicit instruction is immediate error correction. Errors should be corrected immediately, in a non-punitive tone, and it consists of two parts for your error correction. The first part is the actual error correction. The teacher models the correct answer and students practice that correct answer. The second component of error correction is part firming. So, students move on from the item that they missed and then loop back later in instruction to make sure that the efficient error correction was effective. Checks for understanding should be frequently embedded throughout your explicit instruction lesson. Frequent checks for understanding can be used to ensure that students are mastering the content that you are teaching or it can identify areas where students need additional practice throughout the lesson. Two to three individual turns is sufficient for each component of your lesson. If all students are given individual turns for each component of the lesson it takes away from student practice opportunities for everyone as you're teaching. Through systematic explicit instruction students are given multiple opportunities to practice and they are given the supports they need to promote literacy development.

**Guiding question to check for understanding:** What makes instruction systematic and explicit?
Resource: Distribute, review, and discuss Evidence-based Teaching Practices with participants. Tell participants they can use the infographic and information in the video to discuss the ways in which the key reading and writing practices are taught in their child’s school and to request home literacy tips, activities, and homework matched to effective, evidence-based literacy instruction.

Resource: Distribute, review, and discuss Route to Reading: Avoid a Lemon to participants. Tell participants they can use the infographic to determine if homework, assignments, and activities are based on effective practices and what to request if they’re not.
When discussing literacy instruction, you can also talk about literacy assessments and data. School staff should share key assessment tools, rubrics, grading criteria, or strategies to help you determine together if your child is successful in learning literacy content, skills, or completing an assignment. It is important for schools to understand your reasons for wanting data on your child’s literacy learning so they can decide the range of data to share and what to prioritize. When you share information about your child - like interests, behaviors, and challenges - it helps the school to support your child’s learning by making curriculum and instruction more relatable, motivating, and targeted to your child. Assessment results and data should also be accurate and timely and presented to you in accessible and meaningful ways. There are many paths available for sharing data but also challenges to communicating data well.

When discussing intensive intervention, know that children with or at risk for reading difficulties usually gain certain reading skills and knowledge more slowly than typical readers. That is why they need much more intensive instruction to keep typical growth patterns in reading. Intensive intervention is an ongoing process that often requires school teams to make a number of changes before your child’s performance improves. Intervention may look different over time for children. Your child’s school should engage you in the process right from the start. When appropriate, conversations about literacy instruction, intervention, and assessment should also include your child. If your child receives intervention, he or she is likely to be more invested when the what and why of intervention is understood and he or she may be less likely to feel embarrassed or confused.
when participating. It is important for you and the school to imprint early that reading difficulties are nothing to be ashamed of. Click Learn More for an overview of intensive interventions.

**Resource:** Distribute, review, and discuss Intensive Intervention: An Overview for Parents and Families with participants. Tell participant they can use the infographic to learn more about intensive interventions.
The instruction in intensive intervention is usually more explicit, comprehensive, and supportive than what is provided to most children and targets the specific types of skills and knowledge that are interfering with your child’s reading growth. Click Watch Video to hear more about what effective reading interventions should look like.

When finished, think about the ways in which the instruction in the video may be the same or different from the instruction your child is receiving in intervention. If you’re unsure or have questions, discuss what you saw in the video with your child’s school. If your child is receiving intensive intervention, click Learn More for tips on how you can support him or her. Click Try It Out for questions to ask your child’s school about intensive intervention.

**Video: Play Watch Video** Understood (1.52)
90-second overview. A reading intervention is a very focused, intentional, instructional period of time. Where some data has pointed to the fact that a child, or in this case, a group of children, are struggling with some aspect of reading and so we want to go deeper with what those aspects are and we want to really teach explicitly those pieces of reading that they might struggle with. Reading intervention is different than getting a little extra help from the teacher because it will follow certain steps routinely so the student knows what those steps are. It’s a building-block process where it might start with a sound, and build to a single syllable word, and then it might build to a word that has more than one syllable, then maybe to a phrase or sentence next. It’s this whole idea of sequenced, systematic, explicit instruction that is targeting specific skills. There’s a lot of progress
monitoring built in. We’re checking in all of the time to make sure the pacing is right, to make sure that the students are where we hope they will be, and taking into account what they will need in terms of engagement and motivation, and then in terms of practice. How much practice do they need to be fluent and automatic in these skills?

**Guiding question to check for understanding:** What makes a reading intervention different than regular classroom instruction?

**Resource:** Distribute, review, and discuss How Can You Support Intensive Intervention? Tips for Families with participants. Tell participants the infographic provides some tips for how to support your child. If time permits, see activity below.

**Activity:** Provide time for participants to use the infographic to reflect on the tips and discuss them in groups. Encourage participants to share other tips too.

**Resource:** Distribute, review, and discuss Intensive Interventions: Family Questions with participants. Have participants share how they would use this resource with families and what they would say. Questions families can ask when talking to school staff about intensive intervention.
To start discussing literacy instruction and intervention with your child’s school, ask:

- How is reading taught in the school and by whom? What reading skills do you focus on?
- When does literacy instruction and intervention happen and for how long?
- How many other children join?
- How does the instruction/intervention align with my child’s specific language and literacy needs?
- What school materials or trainings about literacy are available to me?

Responses should build common understanding and promote joint action between home and school.
To start discussing literacy assessments and data with your child’s school, ask:
What screening practices for language and literacy does the school use and when?
What information does the school collect on my child’s language and literacy progress?
How is the information used to make decisions about my child’s language and literacy needs?
How are you monitoring my child’s language and literacy progress?
How are children with reading difficulties identified?

Responses should build common understanding and promote joint action between home and school.

**Resource:** Distribute, review, and discuss the two Route to Reading: Inspect the Manual (Instruction & Intervention, Screening & Assessment) with participants. Tell participants they can use the infographics back to prepare for conversations with school staff.
Summarize the big ideas for participants:

- Knowing what scientific research says about how kids learn to read can help you determine if the literacy approach, strategy, or program being used with your child is evidence-based.
- It is important to identify if the evidence-based literacy practices are appropriate for your child's grade-level or if any key practices are missing.
- Discussing literacy instruction and intervention can help you determine if the literacy approach, strategy, or program being used with your child is designed and delivered effectively.

You have now completed the section on discussing literacy instruction and intervention. Click on the bar to continue.

**Note:** This completes Session 2: Discuss Literacy Instruction and Intervention.
Questions?

Slide to use for soliciting questions from participants and discussing answers on session content and related information at the end of the workshop. Review the big ideas from all three sessions and clarify as needed.
Thank You!
• [insert contact information]