Families and Schools Partnering for Children’s Literacy Success
School Track Facilitator’s Guide: Discuss Literacy Instruction and Intervention

For more information: https://improvingliteracy.org/kit/

The research reported here is funded by a grant to the National Center on Improving Literacy from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, in partnership with the Office of Special Education Programs (Award #: S283D160003). The opinions or policies expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of OESE, OSEP, or the U.S. Department of Education. You should not assume endorsement by the Federal government. Copyright © 2020 National Center on Improving Literacy.

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 families can talk about how to partner to help children 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 can begin by talking with families about the grade-level literacy standards, how the literacy curriculum and instruction helps children meet the standards, and children’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 children, as they usually change over time. Also, they may differ between home and school. The information shared helps inform children’s literacy profile so you can best match services and support to children’s needs.

It is important to share key instructional materials, concepts, projects, and assessments with families to help them understand how children are learning literacy skills or content, including sharing material in families’ preferred language. Think about the different ways you can convey literacy information to families, like developing a visual display at open houses and back-to-school nights; inviting families’ reactions to the information during school gatherings; posting information on your web site and through other virtual means; and emailing, texting, or using communication apps.

Also, talk about activities related to children’s specific literacy goals. Discuss strategies and tips that families can use with children at home to practice skills. Start by focusing on one, well-understood activity. Provide a demonstration or example. Consider creating literacy learning kits to lend to families for home use. These kits should contain clear directions for use and be tied to key literacy skills or content children are learning. Ask families to let you know how the activity went and where they or their children need extra support. Invite families to participate in literacy activities at events throughout the year where you and
families 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 Kindergarten for A Kindergarten Teacher’s Guide to Supporting Family Involvement in Foundational Reading Skills. Click Try it Out 1st grade for A First Grade Teacher’s Guide to Supporting Family Involvement in Foundational Reading Skills.

**Note:** Click each Try It Out to show participants the guides, reviewing the main table of contents areas, and recommend that they review it back at school with the appropriate grade level team. Tell participants that second and third grade versions of the guides are available too.
There are a few key topics to raise when you and families are discussing literacy instruction and intervention. First, share if the literacy approach, strategy, or program being used with children 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 image for more information on what we mean by evidence-based.

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 children is evidence-based. What does science say about how kids learn to read? Click Watch Video to learn more.

**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.

Note: Click Learn More to show the landing page for NCIL’s Learning About Your Child’s Reading Development Toolkit for more information to share with families on how children learn to read.
Second, it is important to identify if the evidence-based literacy practices are appropriate for children’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 families to discuss the ways in which your school’s literacy curriculum addresses these practices and the progress children are making in these grade-level skills. Overall, it is key to reassure families that they are not expected to take the place of teachers, especially when learning remotely. Focus on supporting families in helping their children practice previously taught skills and applying them to new contexts.

**Resource:** Distribute, review, and discuss the three documents with participants. Tell participants they can use the documents back at their school to reflect on the ways in which their school’s literacy curriculum addresses these practices and how they would use this resource with families. 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 school’s literacy curriculum addresses these practices, noting any gaps. Encourage participants to discuss how they would use this resource with families and what they would say. Encourage participants from the same setting to use it to engage others back at school.
Third, it is important to share if the literacy approach, strategy, or program being used with children 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. 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 for more information.

Click the infographic for more information about the characteristics of effective instruction that should be considered when designing instruction.

Use these materials as conversation starters with families to discuss the ways in which the key reading and writing practices are taught in your school and to suggest home literacy tips, activities, and homework matched to effective, evidence-based literacy instruction.

Remote learning can be challenging for everyone. It may be difficult for you to create and deliver lessons and assignments to reach all children and communicate them well to families. It can help to consider integrating different modes of delivering instruction, such as through a learning management system, public television, printed materials, video conferencing, and digital recordings of lessons. Also, think about flexibility for families in how and when assignments are completed. This is key to addressing inequities among families and the multiple demands on their time. Then, imagine what information families need to access and understand the materials so they can facilitate their children’s literacy learning. Be sure to incorporate explicit yet simple and easy to follow explanations and scaffolds in materials to address differing needs and provide ongoing methods for families to give and receive feedback. Click Learn More Remote for strategies for
bridging the digital divide during remote learning.

**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 your school and to suggest home literacy tips, activities, and homework matched to effective, evidence-based literacy instruction.
When discussing literacy instruction, you can also share information about literacy assessments and data. Sharing key assessment tools, rubrics, grading criteria, or strategies can help families determine if their children are successful in learning literacy content, skills, or completing an assignment. It is important to understand families’ reasons for wanting data on their children’s literacy learning so you can decide the range of data to share and what to prioritize. When families share information about their children - like interests, behaviors, and challenges - it helps you to support children’s learning by making curriculum and instruction more relatable, motivating, and targeted to children. Ensure that assessment results and data are accurate and timely and presented to families in accessible and meaningful ways. There are many paths available for sharing data but also challenges to communicating data well. Click Learn More for how to engage families in data conversations.

When discussing intensive intervention, convey 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 children’s performance improves. Intervention may look different over time for children. Try to engage families in the process right from the start. When appropriate, conversations about literacy instruction, intervention, and assessment should also include children. Children who receive intervention are likely to be more invested when they understand the what and why of intervention and may be less
likely to feel embarrassed or confused when participating. It is important to imprint early that reading difficulties are nothing to be ashamed of. Click Try it Out for how to communicate about and engage families in intensive intervention.

**Note:** Click each Learn More and Try It Out to show participants the toolkit and guide and recommend that they review them back at school with their leadership team to inform decision-making.
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 children’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 is the same or different from the instruction children might be getting in intervention. Discuss what you saw in the video with your colleagues. Engage and communicate with families about intensive intervention so they understand the expectations, outcomes, and the families’ and school’s role. Click Learn More for an overview of intensive interventions to share with families.

**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 Intensive Intervention: An Overview for Parents and Families with participants. Have participants share how they would use this resource with families and what they would say.
To start discussing literacy instruction and intervention with families, think about and prepare responses to these questions:

- What reading skills are taught, how, and by whom?
- When does literacy instruction and intervention happen and for how long?
- How many other children join?
- How does the instruction/intervention align with children’s specific language and literacy needs?
- What materials or trainings about language and literacy are available to families?

Responses should build common understanding and promote joint action between home and school.
To start discussing literacy assessments and data with families, think about and prepare responses to these questions:
What screening practices for language and literacy does your school use and when?
What information does your school collect on children’s language and literacy progress?
How is the information used to make decisions about children’s language and literacy needs?
How are you monitoring children’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 Route to Reading: Inspect the Manual with participants. Tell participants they can use the infographic back at their school to think about and prepare responses to the questions. If time permits, see activity below.

**Activity:** Provide time for participants to use the infographic to think about and prepare responses to the questions. Encourage participants from the same setting to discuss and record their responses and use them to confer and reach consensus with others back at school.
Summarize the big ideas for participants:
• Knowing what scientific research says about how kids learn to read can help you determine if your literacy approach, strategy, or program is evidence-based.
• It is important to identify if the evidence-based literacy practices are appropriate for children’s grade-level or if any key practices are missing.
• Discussing literacy instruction and intervention can help you determine if you’re designing and delivering the literacy approach, strategy, or program 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.

**Activity:** Distribute to participants the Families & Schools Partnering for Children’s Literacy Success Checklist and have them reflect on the item statements related to the session learning objectives, including identifying a next step they will take after the workshop to further action on the item.
Thank You!
  • [insert contact information]