Families and Schools Partnering for Children’s Literacy Success
Family Track Facilitator’s Guide: Talk and Interact Often

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.

Learning to read can be joyful and fun, but it can also be upsetting and hard for your child and you. Your child may need extra help learning the skills needed to read and write well. This is common. Learning to read is complicated. It is also normal for your child to experience frustration and self-doubt when learning to read. You and your child’s school can work together to support your child’s academic and emotional well being to help him or her thrive. It begins with forming a good relationship.

Trust is the primary ingredient for strong home-school relationships. If you and your child’s school haven’t developed trust, you probably don’t communicate openly with one another. If you don’t communicate openly with one another, then it’s difficult to partner well. It can take time to build trust. A good start is for everyone – including your child - to be heard, acknowledged, and understood. Building trust over time can help break down assumptions and misunderstandings among you, your child, and the school and result in better relationships.
Learning Objectives

• To learn the characteristics of family engagement and the conditions that support effective home-school partnerships for literacy
• To learn what family engagement may look like in a system of literacy support and services, like a Multi-tiered System of Support for Reading (MTSS-R)

Note: Participant learning objectives to display and communicate when the workshop begins.
The first step in partnering with your child’s school is for you and school staff to have common agreement on what family engagement means. This shared understanding sets the stage for the type of partnership that will support your child’s literacy learning.

What is family engagement? First, family engagement is a shared responsibility among families, schools, and communities for student learning and achievement. Shared responsibility relies on open communication and joint learning and decision-making among families, schools, and communities. When schools pair their knowledge of a child with that of families, children’s learning improves. Second, family engagement is continuous from birth to young adulthood. It is not just something that happens when children are very young. Third, family engagement occurs across multiple settings -like school, home, and your community - where children learn.

If your child’s school does not view family engagement as a shared responsibility, you may want to discuss with staff the many benefits of engaging with families. When families are involved at home and school, children do better in school and the schools get better. Click Learn More for the benefits to partnering with families that may help you prepare for this conversation with school staff.

**Resource:** Distribute, review, and discuss Family Engagement and Student Success: What the Research Says with participants. Have participants share how they would use this resource in preparation for a conversation with school staff and what they would say.
Since family engagement is a shared responsibility across multiple settings, then you have an important role in a system of literacy services and support for your child’s literacy learning. A system of literacy services and support is the combination of activities that happen during and outside school. These responsibilities are shared equally across both sides, especially in a remote learning situation. This system builds on the strengths of both school and home to help your child succeed. When the focus is only on what happens in or out of school, instead of across the two, your child may miss important learning opportunities. Click Learn More Family Engagement for information on why family engagement matters for school success.

A system of literacy services and support works best when in and out of school activities are coordinated and aligned. For example, schools can provide you with home activities to do with your child that reinforce literacy skills he or she previously learned or provide extra practice opportunities for skills your child is currently learning. To do this, there must be regular occasions for you to communicate and interact with staff in your child’s school. This involves your child too when appropriate. Regular and positive communication and interaction between you and school staff makes partnering to support your child’s literacy learning possible. This is especially important in remote learning, which may not resemble a traditional school day. Click Learn More Online Learning for tips for literacy.

Resource: Distribute, review, and discuss Why Family Engagement Matters for School Success with participants, focusing on the 5 Ways Families, Teachers, Schools and
Communities Can Work Together to Support Children’s Learning and School Success with participants. Tell participants they can use the document later to reflect on what they are doing now and what they might do in the future to promote student success in partnership for literacy with their child’s school. If time permits, see activity below.

**Activity:** Provide time for participants to use the document to reflect on what they are doing now and what they might do in the future to promote student success in partnership for literacy with their child’s school. Encourage participants to discuss and record their reflections on the document and use it to engage others in their community.

**Resource:** Distribute, review, and discuss Tap, Click, Read: What Parents Can Do with participants. Tell participants these are ideas for using technology and media well during literacy learning with their child. Have participants share a) other ideas for using technology or media successfully to promote reading and writing; or b) if they’ve tried one of these ideas with their child and how it went.
How can regular and positive communication and interactions between home and school be strengthened? By focusing on four A’s:

Approach. Approach is the way you and your child’s school structure home-school interactions and relationships, like expectations for involvement and recognizing what each of you know about your child. For example, has a shared goal for children’s literacy success been set across home and school?

Attitudes. Attitudes are the values and views you and your child’s school hold about home-school relationships and the commitment to family engagement as a key way to improve literacy learning. For example, is there a willingness to share views of your child’s literacy performance across home and school?

Atmosphere. Atmosphere is the climate for the interactions between home and school. Is it welcoming and respectful? Are there ways to communicate about your child’s literacy learning? Is your and the school’s input used to shape your child’s literacy learning?

Action. Action is the joint activities you and your child’s school take part in to support literacy learning and the strategies for building shared responsibility for your child’s literacy progress and success. For example, are ways to partner with you to help your child succeed in literacy provided schoolwide?
The approach, attitudes, and atmosphere usually need to be addressed first before taking action. This is so the home-school relationships can work smoothly to support your child’s literacy development, especially if he or she is having difficulty reading. In remote learning, it is likely that the school may change its approach and actions between home and school since remote learning looks different than when your child goes to school. Be sure to ask questions if the approach or actions are unclear. Click Watch Video to hear Dr. Karen Mapp share tips on partnering with schools.

Resource: Distribute, review, and discuss Route to Reading: Check the Road Conditions with participants. Have participants share their perspectives on the approach, attitudes, atmosphere, and actions of their child's school as it related to families.

Video: Play Watch Video Scholastic (2:09)
So my tips for families are first of all, to understand how important you are to your child's growth and development. And that is from starting right when they're born right up until they go to college and for some of you they may even hang around for longer after that. But you are very important to your child’s growth and development and their learning. So that’s my first thing that I want you to know that you are an essential part of your child’s learning even when they’re in school. Teachers can’t do it alone, they really need you. The second thing is that when you’re working with the schools, let them know that you want to be involved in your child’s education and that they contact you at any time. Make sure they always have your up-to-date contact information so they can get in touch with you if they need to because a lot of times your teachers are going to want to tell you good news about what your child is doing. And then third, make sure to ask them what your child should know and be able to do at different phases and stages in their life and how you can be helpful. That’s important. Sometimes I know parent-teacher conferences can be stressful and you may leave that meeting and say I don’t know much more about what my child should be learning. I maybe know a little bit more about where they are now but what should they be learning, what should they know and are there any tips or tools that the teacher could share with me about how to support their learning. So I think all three are very important but I think the one I want to emphasize is that you are so important to your child’s education and to your child’s growth. You are your child’s first teacher. And so consequently, in order for the educators to be really good teachers to your children, they need you as their partner.
Guiding question to check for understanding: What tip resonates most with you and why?
During the school day, the system of services and support for your child’s literacy development is often called a multi-tiered systems of support for reading or MTSS-R. MTSS-R is a school-wide framework for instruction and intervention so all children meet essential literacy goals. Intervention is a team-based process that uses student data to help teachers figure out when and how to change instruction to help students be more successful. In MTSS—R, multiple tiers of instruction and intervention are linked together and get increasingly more intensive so all children get the knowledge and skills they need to reach grade-level literacy goals. Assessments and data are used at all tiers to track progress and guide decisions about children's response to instruction and intervention.

In MTSS-R, schools first identify what children need to know and do to succeed in each grade. Then, schools often screen all children to identify who may be at risk for reading difficulties. Screening is an assessment process that helps teachers identify students who are at risk for not meeting grade-level learning goals. Next, schools teach and assess children so they meet literacy goals. Tier one is high-quality classroom literacy instruction for all children in each grade. Children who need only this support read and write well and are on track to meet grade level literacy goals. Tier two is additional small group instruction for some children in each grade. These children need a boost with extra instruction in targeted skills to be on track to meet grade level literacy goals. Tier three is specialized small group instruction for fewer children in each grade. These children need intensive, individualized instruction or intervention to be on track to meet grade level literacy goals. Click Learn More for information on assessment and screening. Click Watch
Video to hear about how data is used to inform instruction.

**Resource: Distribute, review, and discuss** Understanding Screening: Overall Screening and Assessment with participants. Have participants share if they know whether their child’s school does universal screening. If so, do they know what screening tool the school uses? Do they get the results and do they make sense?

**Video: Play Watch Video** The 74 (1:32)
Teachers talk a lot about data and using data to inform instruction. But what does that mean exactly? Standardized test scores, sometimes called “summative assessments”, measure how students are doing but they don’t help teachers know in real time how students are progressing. That’s where formative assessments come in; think “to inform.” Formative assessment are what teachers observe day to day in students’ educational performance and writing and reading skills. Here’s my process for using data to inform instruction. First, I collect test scores or reading and writing observations of each student. When I take notes and ask questions, have individual student conferences, when I listen while students read, or if I administer a more formal assessment, I’m gathering data. Second, I look at the data and analyze it for patterns. I identify the strengthens and needs of each student, or small groups of students, and of the entire class. Third, I make informed decisions around how to address student needs. Creating an instructional plan for individual students, often by reteaching in small groups, and thus moving the whole class forward. Data is constantly changing and growing, just like students. So collecting and using data is always an ongoing process.

**Guiding question to check for understanding:** What are some types of formative assessments and how are they used?
(Formative assessments: Taking notes, asking questions in individual conferences, listening to students read, administering a more formal assessment)
(How they’re used: look at data and analyze patterns, identify strengthens and needs, make informed decisions to address needs, creating an instructional plan)
You may want to ask your child’s school how you can learn about its MTSS–R, why it is being used, and how your child is being supported within the system. Ask questions if something is unclear. You are important to the MTSS–R problem-solving process. Together with the school, you can review your child’s data and make data-based decisions for your child’s literacy learning. Your child’s school may use the term “progress monitoring”. If screening showed your child was at risk for reading difficulties, progress monitoring is often used to see if your child has made expected growth in literacy skills and is benefiting from the instruction. If the school does not appear to have a MTSS-R, then ask what its process is to identify and provide support for children off-track for meeting grade-level literacy goals.

There are many ways that you can participate in MTSS-R to support your child in all tiers. The key is to find the way that is comfortable for you. For example, you can help the school understand your family’s background, culture, and goals for your child. You can also provide the school with information to address the needs and interests of other families like yours. Perhaps you’re seeking information or training offered by the school on specific literacy topics or want to know how to best support your child’s literacy development at home. Or, maybe you’re interested in volunteering at the school or organizing help and support from other families. You may want to help make school literacy decisions that benefit all children by participating on school improvement teams, committees, or in other groups. Or, perhaps you want help develop home literacy lending kits, afterschool literacy programs, or link families to community resources to support literacy learning. If the opportunities
offered by the school to participate do not match your interests or needs, share it with the school and others.

You are a key decision-maker in your child’s literacy learning. Look for ways in the school to provide feedback on your child’s literacy goals, instruction, and support. Click Try It Out for questions to ask your child’s school about Response to Intervention (RTI) and MTSS-R. Click Learn More for information on talking with your child’s teacher.

**Resource:** Distribute, review, and discuss Questions to Ask Your Child’s School About RTI with participants. Have participants identify which questions they know the answers to and which ones they may need to ask or have clarified. **Display** Talk With Your Child’s Teacher link and review and discuss for families of English language learners, as needed.
What might family engagement look like in each tier of MTSS-R? It will likely depend on the setting within your child’s school and the needs of families. Since each tier involves a greater level of services and support for children, a greater level of communication and collaboration is also needed between families and schools. For example,

In tier 1, you may receive information, materials, and announcements about events that focus on the school’s approach to literacy teaching and learning, literacy curricula, literacy goals, screening data, and ways that you can support your child’s literacy development at home. For instance, family literacy nights, group literacy discussions, and guest speakers on family requested literacy topics.

In tier 2, you may receive information, materials, progress monitoring data, and announcements about events matched to the literacy needs of your child and that of others with similar needs, along with ways to support your child’s literacy needs at home. Engagement at this tier is meant to prevent further literacy difficulties by coordinating and aligning activities between home and school.

In tier 3, you may receive information, materials, progressing monitoring data, and training matched to the individual literacy needs of your child, including ways to deepen support of your child’s literacy needs at home. The school should help you learn intervention strategies and activities that you can do and practice at home that are linked to your child’s literacy goals.
To start talking and interacting often with families, think about and prepare responses to these questions:
What are your language and literacy goals for children and families?
What are the ways families can share information with you about their children’s language and literacy learning?
How do you partner with families when developing language and literacy goals for students?
How can families support children’s language and literacy goals?
How do families learn about what children need to know and be able to do in language and literacy?
To start talking and interacting often with your child’s school, think about what your literacy goals might be for your child. If you’re unsure, Click Learn More for typical milestones in reading. Then ask the school:
What are your language and literacy goals for my child and family?
How is my child doing in language and literacy development?
What are the ways I can share information with you about my child’s language and literacy learning?
How can I partner with you to develop language and literacy goals for children?
How can I support my child’s language and literacy goals?
What does my child need to know and be able to do?

The idea is to build common understanding and promote joint action between home and
school.

**Resource: Distribute, review, and discuss** Reading Milestones with participants. Tell participants they can use the milestones to think about their child’s literacy development and prepare for goal-setting conversations.

**Resource: Distribute, review, and discuss** Route to Reading: Schedule Regular Maintenance with participants. Tell participants they can use the infographic to prepare for conversations with school staff.
Summarize the big ideas from this section for participants:

- Family engagement for children’s literacy learning and achievement is a shared responsibility among families, schools, and communities.
- Trust is the primary ingredient for strong home-school relationships for children’s literacy learning and achievement. Strong home-school relationships rely on open, two-way communication.
- An effective system of support and services for children’s literacy learning involves home and school partnering together.

You have now completed the section on talking and interacting often. Click on the bar to continue.

Note: This completes Session 1: Talk and Interact Often.
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]

Slide for inserting contact information so participants can communicate with you after the workshop.