

Advocating for the Literacy Needs of Children



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



The National Center on Improving Literacy

Advocating for the Literacy Needs of Children

Facilitator's Guide

Introduction

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. This workshop is part of a series on key roles that families can play in supporting adolescents' literacy success. Each of the workshops expands upon information in NCIL's literacy briefs and infographics on these key roles:

- *Supporting Your Child's Literacy Development at Home*
- *Learning About Your Child's Reading Development*
- *Partnering with Your Child's School*
- *Advocating for My Child's Literacy Needs*

Purpose of and Intended Audience for the Workshop

The purpose of the workshop is to provide participants with the literacy knowledge needed to successfully advocate for their child. It is intended for families and caregivers of children in preschool through grade 12. During the workshop, participants will learn:

- Evidenced-based information about children's reading development.
- Their role as an advocate, four ways to advocate, and strategies to use when advocating is difficult, all in an interactive online experience. The workshop includes a table of contents that can be used to tailor information to participants in a shorter, more targeted experience if needed. The intended audience for the workshop is parents and caregivers of children in preschool through grade twelve. The online workshop is available as a self-study, on demand resource on the NCIL website.

Overview of the Workshop Series

The *Advocating for the Literacy Needs of Children* workshop series is divided into three workshop sessions: 1) building literacy knowledge; 2) advocating for your child's needs; and 3) what to do when advocacy is difficult. Each workshop session lasts approximately 30-60 minutes.

*For subsequent workshop agendas, consider incorporating a "share-out" after the welcome and introduction. Allow participants to talk about the strategies, tips, and activities they tried after the previous workshop and what happened.

This session design is only a **suggestion**. Please adjust the number of sessions, content presentation, and/or session length based on your needs and those of participants. For example, the strands can be broken down into shorter sessions or sessions can be combined. Also, content may need to be modified or scaffolds added to support participants' access to and understanding of the material.

Facilitator Roles and Responsibilities

The facilitator plays a key role in successfully disseminating the workshop. He or she should be able to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator, understand adult learning principles, and have a good rapport with parents and caregivers. The facilitator may participate in person or virtually. If virtually, an on-site host is recommended to handle logistics and greet participants.

Before the workshops, the facilitator:

- Reviews the facilitator guide and workshop content, including handouts, videos, and resources.
- Decides what information to share, customizing as needed.
- Checks that all links to videos and resources are working.
- Reads the session information in the facilitator guide.
- Prepares for the session by addressing information in the facilitator guide, including printing the PowerPoint slides in notes format for use during the workshop.
- Follows your organization's participant communication and registration processes, including drafting and sending an agenda (see examples in Appendix).

During the workshops, the facilitator:

- Presents the information on each slide using the script or directions in the notes as a guide.
- Facilitates any activities and discussions and poses guiding questions for reflection on content at specified times during the workshop.
- Plays the workshop section videos, reviews the resources, and conducts the activities.
- Answers questions and provides clarification as needed.
- Contextualizes and personalizes content, including what the information means for students with disabilities.

After the workshops, the facilitator:

- Notes participant questions and comments that need to be addressed and plans to follow up.
- Distributes and collects workshop evaluation forms, and then reviews and uses evaluation feedback to inform the design, content, and/or delivery of future workshops.

Purpose and Organization of the Facilitator Guide

The purpose of the facilitator guide is to provide information and materials to effectively facilitate the workshop in person as a workshop series and enable participants to achieve the learning objectives. The facilitator guide is organized by the workshop sessions. Each workshop session includes the intended learning objectives, needed materials and equipment, big ideas, and suggested facilitation procedure. Accompanying this guide is a PowerPoint file with facilitator notes, including an optional script, resource and activity directions and guiding questions (where applicable) for facilitators to use when preparing for and delivering the workshop sessions. Facilitators are free to customize the slide deck, facilitator notes, and accompanying resources to meet the needs of the audience. For example, facilitators may decide to forgo sharing some resources, adjust activities, and/or add or omit information to enhance the audience experience. You may choose to use the narration that accompanies the online workshop or mute the narration and present the content yourself.

Organization of the PowerPoint Slides and Notes

The following formats are applied for all slide decks. Please familiarize yourself with these formatting conventions so you know how to easily navigate the PowerPoint notes.

- The pink backpack  on a slide indicates there are resources to be distributed. These resources can be reviewed during the workshop, or participants can review on their own. You can click on the icon directly from the slide to access the online version. The URL is included in the speaker notes. If the training is in person, you may choose to print some out and distribute as handouts.
- If there is a video, the link will be provided in the slide notes. The transcript for the video is provided so that you can decide if you want to show the video, or if you want to cover the topic through a discussion.
- Hidden slides are optional and may be used at the presenter's discretion based on the needs of the audience.
- **Yellow highlighted text** is for you to customize based on your state/grade for the presentation.
- **Bold text = Presenter script (what the presenter should say).**
- Regular text = Presenter notes (reminders or instructions).
- *Italic text = Ideas for activity or interaction.*
- Underlined text = specific contexts (e.g., Zoom vs. in-person).
 - Regular text with bullet = specific instruction.
- * Asterisks indicate hints or ideas for customization.
- CLICK = Directions for slide animations.

Session 1

Literacy Knowledge

Learning Objective

- Acquire background knowledge in literacy development, instruction, and identifying struggling readers to foster confidence to advocate for your child.

Materials and Equipment

- ☐ Laptop computer with audio speakers, projector, and display screen*
- ☐ Wireless internet connection*
- ☐ Workshop link
- ☐ Chart paper, sticky notes, pens and markers (as needed)
- ☐ One copy per participant (in presentation order):

Handout Title	Slide #	URL
The Science of Reading	11	https://improvingliteracy.org/resource/the-science-of-reading-an-overview/
Defining Dyslexia	24	https://improvingliteracy.org/resource/defining-dyslexia/
Understanding Dyslexia: Myth vs. Facts	24	https://improvingliteracy.org/resource/understanding-dyslexia-myth-vs-facts/
Partnering with Your Child's School	26	https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/how-families-can-partner-with-schools-on-literacy-development

Videos (in presentation order):

Topic	Slide #	Time <i>min:sec</i>	URL
Avoid a Lemon – Looking Under the Hood	16	9:32	https://youtu.be/L6SuCl0drRY?si=IJKeXT4g_SMtPZlc
What's New in the IDA's Definition of Dyslexia	25	0:56	https://youtu.be/dRq5-Bcg93A?si=M8j0h3fsbWASl Zot
		10:28	

Big Ideas

- Reading develops through predictable, teachable skills (sounds → decoding → fluency → vocabulary → comprehension).
- Effective instruction is explicit, systematic, and guided by data.
- Early signs of struggle—slow progress, guessing, difficulty with sounds—signal a need for support.
- Knowing how reading works helps families name concerns and ask targeted questions.
- Understanding available supports and rights builds confidence to partner with the school.

Procedure

- Refer to the session PowerPoint slides and speaker notes for facilitator guidance and instructions.

Next Steps

- Answer participant questions and provide time for comments.
- Distribute and collect an evaluation form from each participant.
- Provide participants with information about the next workshop or related resources if available.
- Encourage participants to try out strategies, tips, and activities learned during the workshop with their children.

Session 2

Advocating for Your Child's Literacy Needs

Learning Objective

- To explore common questions about being a literacy advocate and actions to effectively advocate for your child's literacy needs.

Materials and Equipment

- ☐ Laptop computer with audio speakers, projector, and display screen*
- ☐ Wireless internet connection*
- ☐ Chart paper, sticky notes, and pens and markers (as needed)
- ☐ One copy per participant (in presentation order):

Handout Title	Slide #	URL
Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy	35	https://parentnetworkwny.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Advocacy-PN_FactSheet32917.pdf
Advocating for My Child's Literacy Needs	40	https://improvingliteracy.org/resource/advocating-for-my-child-s-literacy-needs/
How Do I Know What Questions to Ask?	45	https://www.matrixparents.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/HELP-17-What-QUESTIONS-to-ask-Eng-Span.pdf
Eligibility for Special Education Under a Specific Learning Disability Classification	46	https://nclid.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Eligibility-for-Special-Education-under-a-Specific-Learning-Disability-Classification-Final.pdf
Sample Virtual IEP Meeting Agenda	47	https://www.parentcenterhub.org/wp-content/uploads/repo_items/sample-agenda.pdf

Videos (in presentation order):

Topic	Slide #	Time <i>min:sec</i>	URL
Emiliann's IEP Team	47	3:54	https://youtu.be/wTQvd_bKTOo?si=oZ2CzYYBTskmY99
10 Tips for a Better IEP Meeting	47	5:49	https://youtu.be/qmXUWVzBGD4?si=melspvQz7tRg9UZ7
		9:43	

Big Ideas

- A literacy advocate is someone who speaks out for someone else's needs or rights in reading, writing, and language.
- As a parent or family member, you know your child best and hold special knowledge about your child's reading development.
- By communicating often, discussing your child's reading instruction, practicing literacy skills at home, and addressing concerns with your child's education team, you can help develop a strong partnership with your child's school.
- An important first step is to learn more about topics that will enable you to advocate well (review).
- Keeping a record of information and communications with your child's school can help you track your child's reading development, progress, and services over time (record).
- You may gain confidence or insight by talking with families in your child's school or in the community who have similar experiences (request).

Procedure

- Refer to session PowerPoint slides and speaker notes for facilitator guidance and instructions.

Next Steps

- Answer participant questions and provide time for comments.
- Distribute and collect an evaluation form from participants.
- Provide participants with information about the next workshop or related information if available.
- Encourage participants to try out strategies, tips, and activities learned during the workshop with children.

Session 3

When Advocacy Becomes Difficult

Learning Objective

- Become familiar with what to do when advocating for your child's literacy needs is difficult.

Materials and Equipment

- ☐ Laptop computer with audio speakers, projector, and display screen*
- ☐ Wireless internet connection*
- ☐ Chart paper, sticky notes, and pens and markers (as needed)
- ☐ One copy per participant (in presentation order):

Handout Title	Slide #	URL
IEP Tip Sheet for Parents – An Overview of the IEP	60	https://promotingprogress.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/IEP-overview-parent.pdf

Videos (in presentation order):

Topic	Slide #	Time <i>min:sec</i>	URL
Ask an Expert - What is your advice to parents of struggling readers?	58	1:33	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sepbk_qnP3o
TOTAL		1:33	

Big Ideas

- Knowing what makes an instructional practice evidence-based can help you judge literacy practices used at your child's school and provide valuable input.
- While your advocacy efforts can be empowering and successful, they can also be frustrating and less successful.
- Disagreements are a natural part of working together.
- You and the school rely on each other to meet the literacy needs of your child.

Procedure

- Refer to session PowerPoint slides and speaker notes for facilitator guidance and instructions.

- Engage participants in completing the strand quiz at the end of the session.

Next Steps

- Answer participant questions and provide time for comments.
- Distribute and collect an evaluation form from participants.
- Provide participants with information about the next workshop or related information if available.
- Encourage participants to try out strategies, tips, and activities learned during the workshop with children.

Appendix

Traditional or Virtual Workshop Agenda Example*

[Title of Workshop]

[Date, time, location]

Welcome and Introduction

Learning Objectives

Evidence-based Strategies, Tips, and Activities for [topic]

Questions and Comments

Next Steps

