

Advocating for Your Child's Literacy Needs

[insert - Presenter Name]
[insert - Presenter Title]

If you have questions after the presentation, please contact: [insert contact name and email]

or

[Contact | National Center on Improving Literacy at nciliteracy@gmail.com](mailto:nciliteracy@gmail.com)



The National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL) is a partnership among literacy experts, university researchers, and technical assistance providers, with funding from the United States Department of Education.

Our mission is to increase access to, and use of, evidence-based approaches to screen, identify, and teach students with literacy-related disabilities, including dyslexia.

Learn How to Support Your Elementary Child's Literacy Development

This workshop is part of a series on the key roles families play in supporting children's literacy success. It is designed for parents and caregivers of students in elementary grades who want to better understand how reading develops and advocate for their child's literacy needs. Families will learn basic literacy background knowledge and the essential skills they need to become confident, capable advocates for their child's success.

The research reported here is funded by a grant to NCIL from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, in partnership with the Office of Special Education Programs (Award #: S283D160005). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views or policies of OESE, OSEP, or the U.S. Department of Education. You should not assume endorsement by the Federal government.



Learning Objectives

During this session, participants will:

- ✗ Acquire background knowledge in literacy development, instruction, and identifying struggling readers to foster confidence to advocate for your child
- ✗ Explore common questions about literacy advocacy and actions to effectively advocate for your child's literacy needs
- ✗ Become familiar with what to do when advocating for your child's literacy needs is difficult



Agenda

- ✗ Literacy Knowledge
 - ✗ Literacy Development
 - ✗ Instruction
 - ✗ Identifying Reading Difficulties
- ✗ Advocating for Your Child's Literacy Needs
 - ✗ Common Questions
 - ✗ Actions to Effectively Advocate
- ✗ When Advocacy Becomes Difficult





Workshop Materials

- X The Science of Reading
- X Understanding Dyslexia: Myth vs. Facts
- X How Families Can Partner with Schools on Literacy Development
- X Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy
- X Advocating for My Child's Literacy Needs
- X How Do I Know What Questions To Ask?
- X Eligibility for Special Education Under a Specific Learning Disability
Classification: Joint Principles
- X Sample Virtual IEP Meeting Agenda
- X IEP Tip Sheet for Parents – An Overview of the IEP



1

BUILDING LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Literacy Development, Instruction, and
Identifying Struggling Readers





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Literacy Development

- Understanding Your Child's Reading Development
- How Reading Skills Develop Over Time

Instruction

- Science of Reading
- Explicit Instruction
- Evidence-Based Practices

Identifying Struggling Readers

- Screeners and Assessments
- Diagnosis and Classification
- Intervention and Supports
- Dyslexia





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE



How Reading Skills Develop Over Time

**Emergent
Readers**

**Early
Readers**

**Transitional
Readers**

**Fluent
Readers**

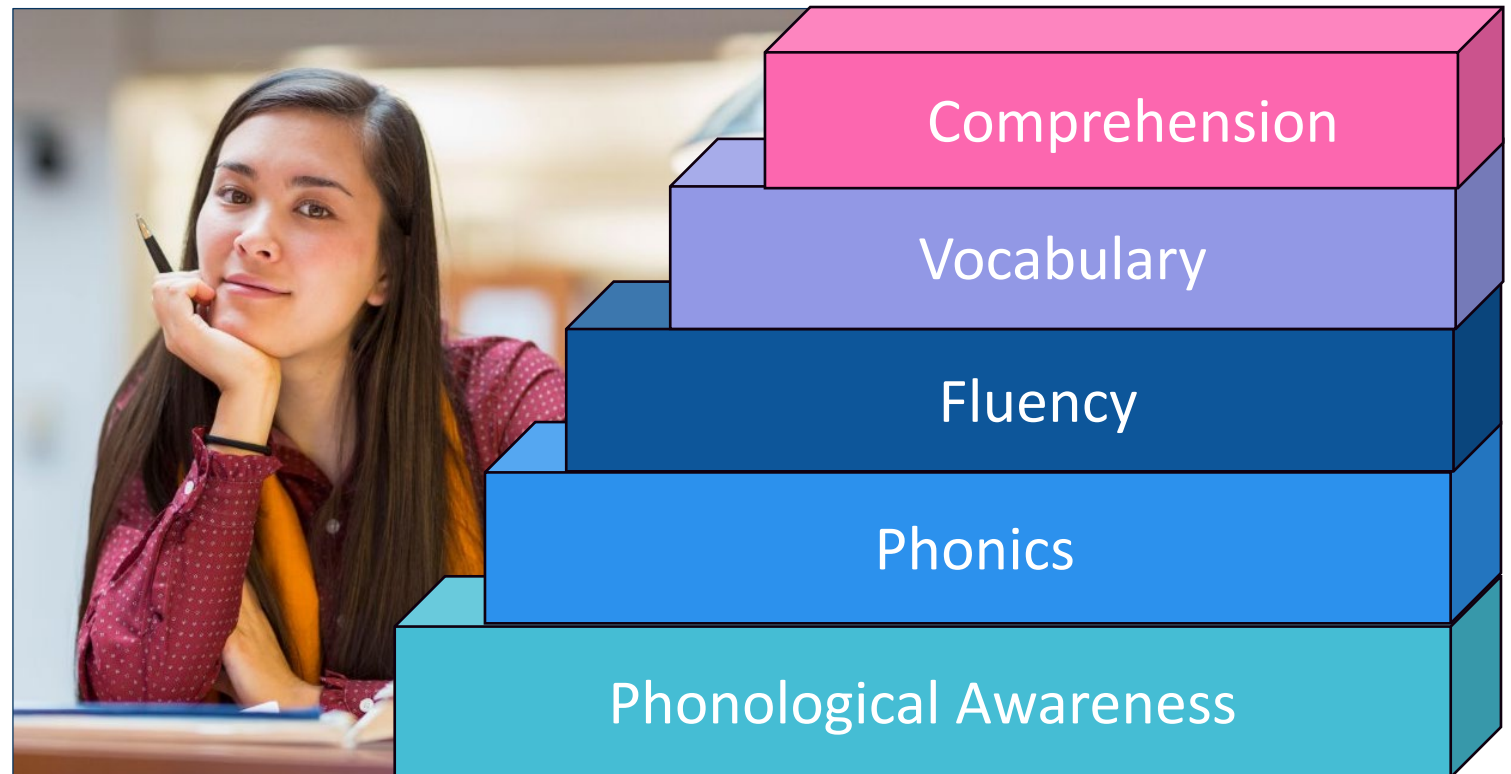
Learn More - A Path to Fluent Reading: A Developmental Timeline





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

The process of learning to read is difficult, complex, and requires explicit and systematic instruction in various reading skills.



LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

The Science of Reading: What It *Is* and What It *Isn't*

What It *Is*

- ✗ Grounded in 50+ years of research on how children learn to read
- ✗ Built on the 5 Big Ideas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension
- ✗ Continually evolving as communities, populations, and instructional methods change

What It *Isn't*

- ✗ Not a specific program, intervention, or product you can purchase
- ✗ Not only about phonics – phonics is just one of the 5 Big Ideas
- ✗ Not "finished"; like any science, it continues to grow as researchers, educators, and families contribute

AN OVERVIEW

THE SCIENCE OF READING



The Science of Reading is an interdisciplinary body of research about reading that helps explain why some people have difficulty, how to most effectively assess and teach reading, and how to improve.

WHAT IS IT?



It *is* based on 50+ years of scientifically based research with a preponderance of evidence proving — and disproving — theories about how children best learn to read.



It *is* an approach to teaching reading that centers around 5 Big Ideas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.



It *is* ever-evolving, with new research and evidence all the time. As populations, communities, and approaches evolve, so should practices and methods of teaching.

WHAT ISN'T IT?



The Science of Reading is *not* a specific program, intervention, or product you can buy.



It's *not* only about phonics. While important, phonics is only one of the 5 Big Ideas of the Science of Reading.

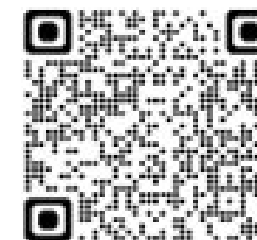


It is *not* considered done." As with any science, there is always more to learn. Researchers, teachers, and families can work together to bring the best research into classrooms.

For more information, visit improvingliteracy.org.



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LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Learning to Read: The Simple View of Reading

WHAT IS THE SIMPLE VIEW OF READING?



The Simple View of Reading was developed in 1986 as a way to understand what makes for a good reader, and breaks reading down into two main skills: 1) reading each word in texts *accurately* and *fluently*, and 2) understanding language.

**Word
Recognition**



**Language
Comprehension**

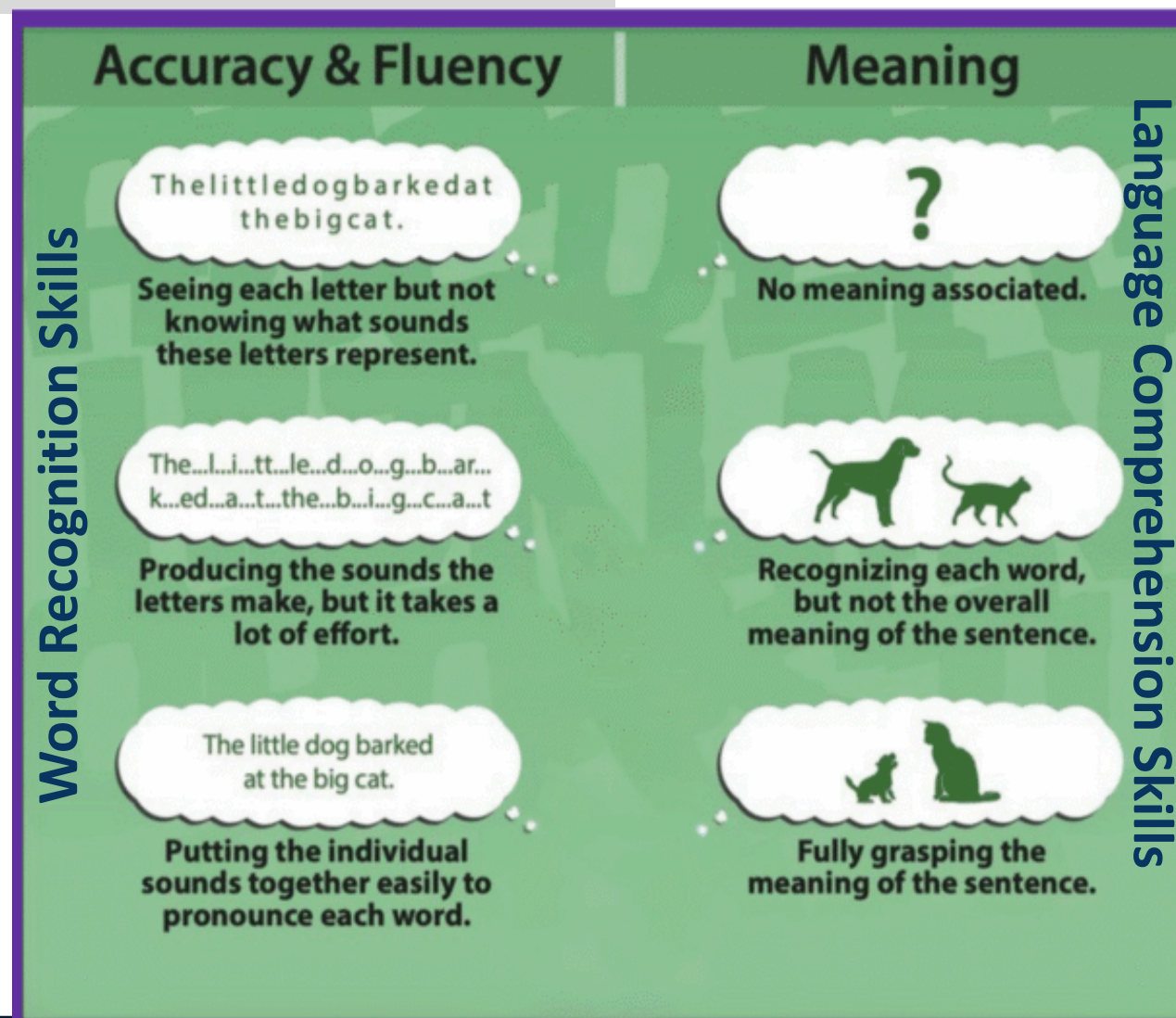


**Reading
Comprehension**



LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

**Working
Together... Word
Reading and
Understanding**





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Literacy Approaches and Practices



Effective reading instruction
should be:

Explicit



Systematic

Evidence-Based



LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Identifying Evidence-Based Practices

How do I know if my child is getting evidence-based instruction?

Evidence-based means that research has shown that the practice effectively improves student outcomes based on four levels of evidence.

- **Strong evidence** — At least one well-designed, well-implemented **experimental study**.
- **Moderate evidence** — At least one well-designed, well-implemented **quasi-experimental study**.
- **Promising evidence** — At least one well-designed, well-implemented **correlational study**.
- **Demonstrates a rationale** — A clear **logic model** informed by research, with a study of the intervention **planned or underway**.





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Identifying Evidence-Based Practices

What are some evidence-based literacy practices I should advocate for?

Examples:

- Explicit instruction
- Review of previously learned skills
- Opportunities to practice
- Frequent feedback

Watch
Video

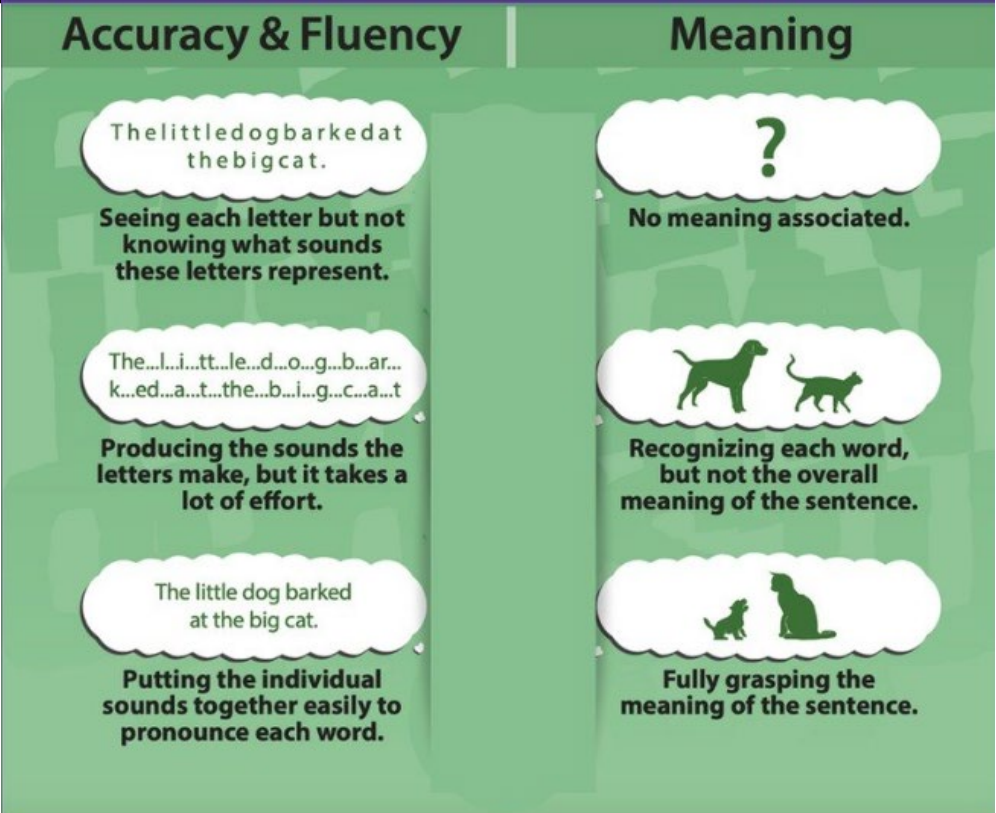
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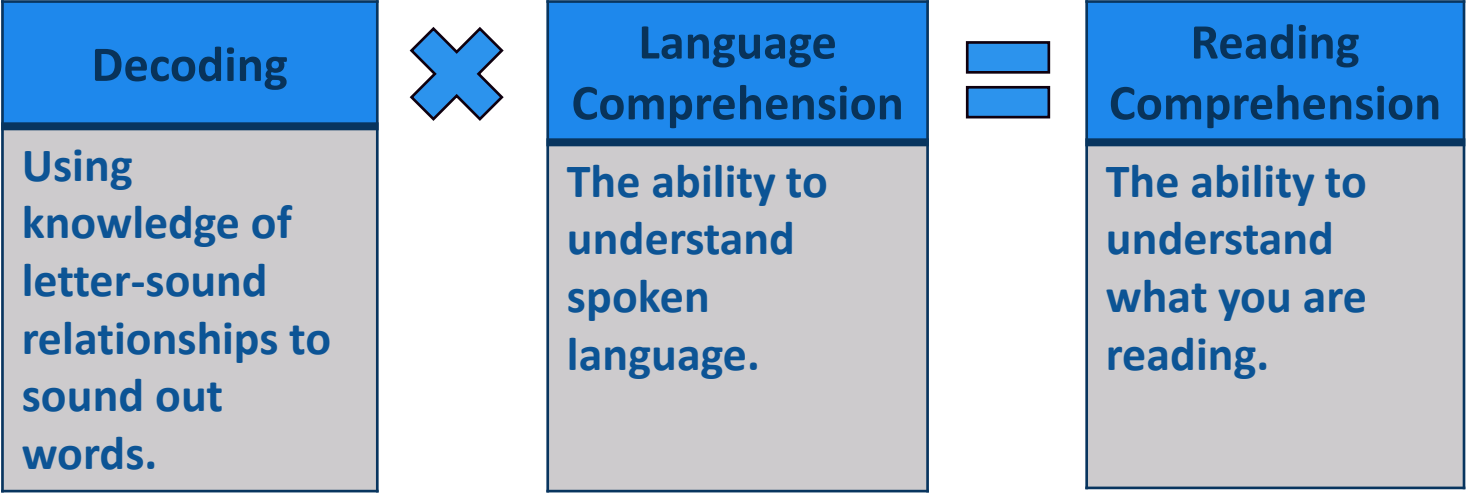


LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

The Simple View of Reading



Reading Difficulties



LITERACY KNOWLEDGE



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You watch your child struggle through a simple reading assignment. They guess at words, lose their place, and quickly become frustrated. You want to help, but you aren't sure what to do. **Is this normal, or a sign of something more?**

You email the teacher asking for guidance. However, the response you get refers to screening data and you feel overwhelmed. **What does all this information mean?**

Up next, understanding how schools identify students who may have reading difficulties, including dyslexia.





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Understanding How Reading Difficulties are Identified

Why Identifying Reading Difficulties Matters

- Learning to read is one of the most important goals in school
- Strong reading skills help students learn across all subjects and build confidence
- Reading difficulties, including dyslexia, can affect many parts of a child's school experience

How Schools Identify Reading Difficulties

- Schools now use a more complete approach, including:
 - **Data-driven decision making**
 - **Progress monitoring**
 - **Evidence-based reading instruction**
- These tools help teachers understand both what a student knows *and* how they respond to instruction over time

But where do schools begin?





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Screening and Assessing

What Is Screening?

- Quick check to identify students at risk for reading difficulties
- Works like a health screening or eye exam
- All students are screened; only students showing risk get extra support
- Results guide next instructional steps

What Is Assessment?

- Assessment = collecting information about how a child is learning
- Happens through class questions, report cards, conferences
- Helps teachers adjust instruction and helps families understand progress

What is My Role in Screening

- Learn what the screening measures and what scores mean
- Ask teachers questions and stay in regular communication
- Early, ongoing conversations help support your child's reading success

What if My Child has Low Results?

- Lower scores mean a child may benefit from extra instruction
- Teachers, families, and specialists may discuss results and next steps
- Screening catches concerns early so support can begin right away





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Diagnosis and Classification

Clinical Diagnosis



Determined by a medical professional
Disability or impairment that may or may not have a negative effect on education performance
May lead to medical/therapeutic treatment and services

Special Education Eligibility



Determined by a team of education professionals and parent(s)/guardians(s)
Disability or impairment must have an adverse effect on education performance
Entitles students to supports and services to access their education environment





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Intervention

Intensive Intervention

A process of providing students with more instruction, practice, and feedback to help students be more successful.

- Targets specific skills and areas
 - Typically, in small groups
- Push-in (*within classroom*) or pull-out (*outside of classroom*)



[Learn More](#)





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Instructional Supports



Changes to what your child is expected to learn.

Accommodations



Changes to the learning environment that support your child's access to the same learning activities as his or her peers.

Modifications



Technology tools that help your child complete tasks by working around reading challenges.

Assistive
Technology





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Identifying Struggling Readers

What is Dyslexia?

FACTS ABOUT DYSLEXIA



Dyslexia is defined as a **brain-based learning disability** that specifically impairs a person's ability to read.

Individuals with dyslexia do **not** necessarily see and write letters or words backwards.

Dyslexia can be **inherited**.

Dyslexia is related to **reading difficulties**, not difficulties that arise from intellectual functioning.

Dyslexia is associated with brain-based phonological impairments, **not visual problems**.

People with dyslexia can learn to read with **evidence-based explicit instruction**.

Dyslexia affects about **1 in every 5 people**, making it the most commonly diagnosed learning disability.

Learn
More



Dyslexia Myths vs. Facts

MYTH



FACT



All students with dyslexia demonstrate the same problems with reading.



Dyslexia exists on a continuum, and students with dyslexia demonstrate different levels of difficulty learning to read.



Dyslexia is a reading disorder that is based in vision problems, which causes people to read backward or mix up b and d.



Dyslexia is a brain-based disorder associated with impairments in the brain regions associated with manipulation of sounds, not vision.



People with dyslexia cannot learn to read.



Reading may require significantly more effort and academic support for someone with dyslexia, but these students can learn to read!



Intelligent people cannot have dyslexia.



Dyslexia impacts individuals with a range of cognitive skills, and with average to above average intelligence. Some individuals with dyslexia have well above average abilities in problem-solving creativity. However, these above average skills do not exist *because* an individual has dyslexia.

Learn
More



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Understanding Dyslexia: What Families Should Know (IDA Definition 2025)

- ✗ **What it means:** Dyslexia is a *learning difference* that makes reading and spelling harder.
- ✗ **It looks different for every child:** Challenges can vary depending on the **language** and **writing system**.
- ✗ **It's not about effort:** Dyslexia happens because of a mix of **brain, genetic, and environmental factors**.
- ✗ **Common signs:** Trouble with **sounds in words** (phonological) or **word parts** (morphological)
- ✗ **Possible effects:** Reading may be slow or tiring, and this can affect **confidence** and **school success**.
- ✗ **The good news:** With the right **support and instruction**, children with dyslexia can become strong, joyful readers at any age.

[Watch Video](#)

Video provided by:





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

The Family - School Partnership for Successful Literacy Development

Communicate and Interact Often

- Families should ask the school how best to communicate and should feel comfortable asking questions if more information is needed.

Discuss Literacy Instruction and Intervention

- Families should know what literacy standards their child is working on, review whether those expectations are appropriate, and ask whether the instruction and interventions are evidence-based and focused on the skills their child needs most.

Practice Literacy Skills at Home

- Families should talk with the school about home literacy activities that match the child's skill level.

Address Concerns Together

- Families should discuss with the school which activities or tasks the child has trouble with at home, and how you helped. Learn about the school's system of learning support.





LITERACY KNOWLEDGE

Looking at the Full Picture

- Reading difficulties can sometimes be linked to limited instruction or lack of opportunity
- Schools consider all factors to make fair, informed decisions
- The goal is to understand each child's learning needs—not just label a problem

The Role of Families

- Families are essential partners in understanding and supporting reading development
- Clear communication about progress and instruction helps families support learning at home
- Strong school–family partnerships create consistent support for the child

The Goal

- Identifying reading difficulties is about understanding how a student learns
- Schools focus on how students respond to instruction and what supports help them grow
- With strong systems and the right support, every child can build the skills needed for reading success

How can I help my child?



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EVIDENCE-BASED?

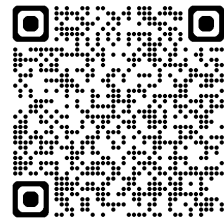
Strong evidence. To be supported by *strong evidence*, there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study on the intervention.

Moderate evidence. To be supported by *moderate evidence*, there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study on the intervention.

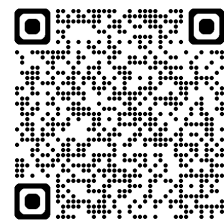
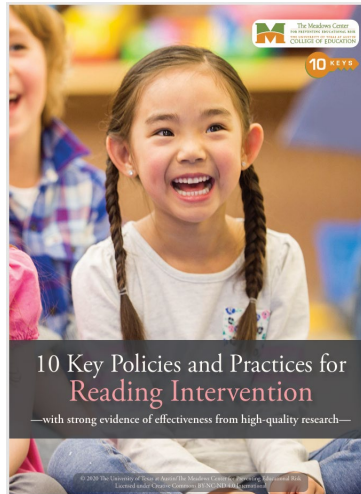
Promising evidence. To be supported by *promising evidence*, there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study on the intervention.

Evidence that demonstrates a rationale. To demonstrate a rationale, the intervention should include a well-specified logic model that is informed by research or an evaluation that suggests how the intervention is likely to improve relevant outcomes. An effort to study the effects of the intervention must be planned or underway.

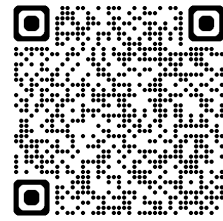
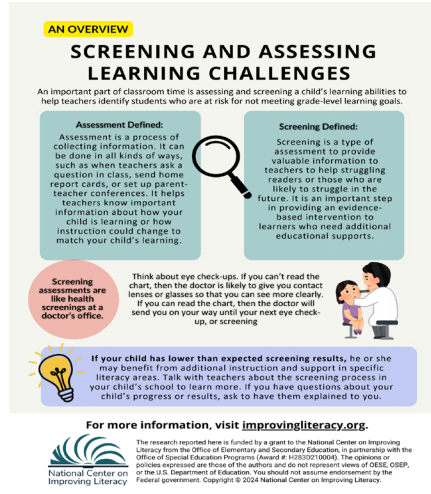
These criteria were established in section 8101(21)(A) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.



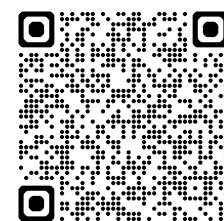
What Do We Mean by Evidence-Based Literacy Resources?



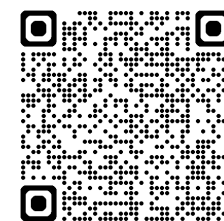
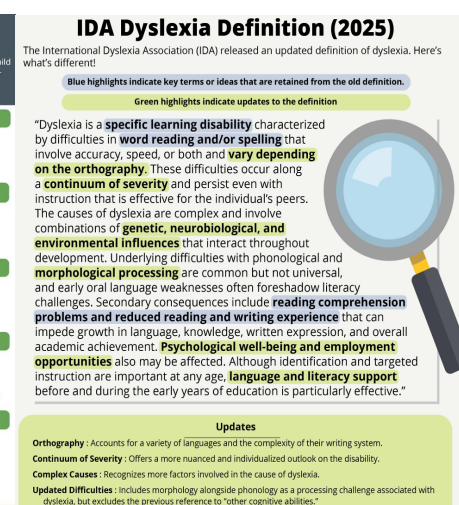
10 Key Policies and Practices for Reading Intervention



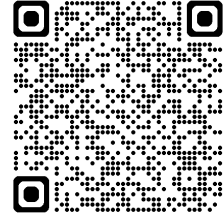
Screening and Assessing Learning Challenges



Intensive Intervention: An Overview for Parents & Families



Understanding the New IDA Dyslexia Definition



How Families Can Partner with Schools on Literacy Development



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2

ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS





ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

What would you do...

You continue to watch your child struggle through reading assignments. They are still guessing at words, losing their place, and becoming more frustrated anytime they have to read. After your initial email to the teacher, you felt overwhelmed—the teacher mentioned screening data, but didn't explain what it meant or offer any follow-up.

Several weeks pass, and nothing has improved. Your child is still struggling, and you're becoming more concerned. You decide to reach out to the teacher again, this time asking for specific guidance. But the response you receive is vague, with a general suggestion to "read more at home."

You're sensing that your child may have a reading difficulty, but you're not sure what steps to take next—or how to get clearer answers from the school.

Discuss with your group:

What would you do next if you were this parent?

What information would you want the school to explain more clearly?

What would help you feel like a true partner in your child's reading progress?





ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

What would you do – Share Out

You continue to watch your child struggle through reading assignments. They are still guessing at words, losing their place, and becoming more frustrated anytime they have to read. After your initial email to the teacher, you felt overwhelmed—the teacher mentioned screening data, but didn't explain what it meant or offer any follow-up.

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ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

Common Literacy Advocacy Questions...

- × What is a literacy advocate?
- × Why is advocacy important?
- × What skills make you a natural literacy advocate?
- × How do you embrace your role as a literacy advocate?
- × What should you advocate for in reading and writing?
- × How can you work collaboratively with the school to advocate for your child's literacy needs?



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

What is a literacy advocate?

Someone who supports or speaks out for someone else's needs or rights in the areas of reading, writing, and/or language.



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

Why is advocacy important?

When families and schools work together, children make stronger progress. By sharing what each of you sees, you can create a plan that truly meets your child's literacy needs.



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ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

What skills make you a natural literacy advocate?

Every child learns to read in their own way, and families have a unique understanding of their child's strengths and needs.



What knowledge do I hold that makes me a **strong advocate** for my child's reading development?



Getting involved in your child's education is among the most important things you can do to make sure that your child gets the support he or she needs throughout their school career.

- Your child has the right to a free and appropriate public school education.
- You have a right to be a part of every decision regarding your child's education, including the process of finding out if your child needs special services.
- You should familiarize yourself with your child's rights. These rights are federally mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- You know your child best, and your input should be considered at every opportunity.

Tips for Good Communication at a Meeting

- Focus on your goal
- Show respect and expect it from others
- Manage your emotions
- Ask questions
- Rephrase for clarification
- Say "thank you"

When you Disagree

- Disagree without being disagreeable
- Apologize if needed
- Separate the person from the problem
- Realize NO ONE has all the answers
- Make sure your facts are correct
- Choose your battles

Tips for Written Communication

- Letters should:
 - Be sent to the person who can make a change
 - Be dated and signed
 - Focus on one or two issues
 - Be no longer than one page
 - Set a deadline if a reply is requested
 - Give your contact information
- *Remember to keep a copy for yourself

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www.parentnetwork.org

PARENT
NETWORK
OF THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

! DID YOU KNOW?

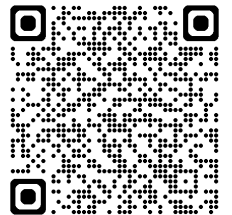
The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.

What is an Advocate?
Advocates speak up for themselves or others to make things better.

Parents can bring someone else with them to most meetings. All participants are working together to help the child.

Remember the student in the meeting when appropriate is a great message for them to see. Parents and professionals working together for their benefit.

Children need as much practice in self-advocacy as possible before they...



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ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

How do you embrace your role as a literacy advocate?

- Recognize that you are your child's strongest and most consistent supporter.
- Advocacy begins with confidence, curiosity, and collaboration.
- Partner with teachers, specialists, and other families to work toward shared goals.



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ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

What should you advocate for in reading and writing?

Learn about evidence-based practices by asking your child's school questions such as:

- What screening practices for literacy does the school use and when?
- How are children with reading difficulties identified?
- What evidence-based literacy instruction and interventions are used?
- What information does the school collect on my child's literacy progress?
- How is the information used to make decisions about my child's literacy needs?
- What types of support are offered to my child if he or she is struggling to read or write?
- What accommodations does the school provide to help my child read or write?



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

How to work collaboratively with the school to advocate for your child's literacy needs?

Communicate and Interact Often

- Find out how you will receive communication from the school and ask questions if you need more information.

Practice Literacy Skills at Home

- Talk about what home literacy activities match your child's skill level.

Discuss Literacy Instruction and Intervention

- Talk about how you and the school can partner to help your child and others get high-quality and effective literacy instruction.

Address Concerns Together

- Discuss what your child has learned and what skills they are still working on. Share your understanding of your child's learning needs.



3

ACTIONS TO EFFECTIVELY ADVOCATE



ACTIONS TO ADVOCATE EFFECTIVELY

Ways to Advocate:

- ✗ Review
- ✗ Record
- ✗ Request
- ✗ Refer

REVIEW

Learn about the school's system of support for literacy and where your child fits within that system.



RECORD

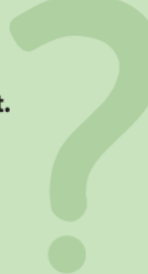
Keep a notebook and folder of information and communications about your child's reading and writing development.



When families and schools work together toward common goals, children make better progress. As a family member, you know your child best. Embrace your role as a literacy advocate and act upon it positively with others.

REQUEST

Talk with other parents and families who have similar experiences. Find out about your district's special education support.



REFER

Ask the school about opportunities to provide input on literacy approaches and practices and help make decisions.



For more information and resources on these topics,



The research reported here is funded by a grant to the National Center on Improving Literacy and Secondary Education, in partnership with the Office of Special Education. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views or policies of the Department of Education. You should not assume endorsement by the Federal government. <https://improvingliteracy.org> | facebook.com/improvingliteracy



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

REVIEW

Learn about the school's **system of support for literacy** and where your child fits within that system.



Learn about your school's **system of support for literacy** and how your child fits within that system.

- If your child receives special education services:
 - Request a copy of school records.
 - Learn your educational rights and responsibilities.



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

Learn More about topics that will enable you to advocate effectively and to better understand the school's system of literacy support and services.

- **Understanding My Child's Reading Development:** Prepare to advocate for your child's learning needs.
- **Diagnosis and Classification:** If you suspect your child has a reading disability or may be eligible for special education.
- **Intervention and Supports:** For resources that explain supports and services your child may be receiving.



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

RECORD

Keep a notebook and folder of information and communications about your child's reading and writing development.

Record and keep information from:

- Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Special Education Evaluations
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meetings
- Literacy Data



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

Tips for recording include:

- Keep a notebook and folder for all information about your child's reading and writing.
- Document:
 - Phone calls and meetings with teachers.
 - Dates, times, topics discussed.
 - Decisions made and next steps.
- Organized records help you track progress and advocate effectively.



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS



Parent-Teacher Conference

Special Education Evaluation

Individualized Education
Program (IEP) Meetings

Literacy Data

How can I communicate effectively with my child's teacher and education team?



Know what
questions to ask

[Learn More](#)



Tips for communicating
with teachers

[Learn More
Strategies](#)



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ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS



Parent-Teacher Conference



Special Education Evaluation

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meetings

Literacy Data

What do I need to know about my child's special education evaluation? How can I advocate during this process?



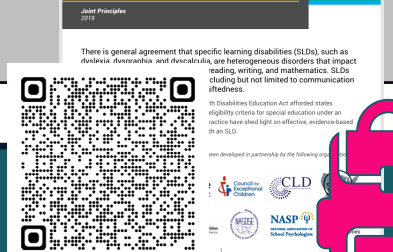
Your legal rights in a special education evaluation.

[Learn More](#)



What it means to be evaluated for a Specific Learning Disability.

[Learn More SLD](#)



National Center on Improving Literacy



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

✓ Parent-Teacher Conference

✓ Special Education Evaluation

✓ Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meetings

Literacy Data

What do I need to know about my child's special education evaluation? How can I advocate during this process?



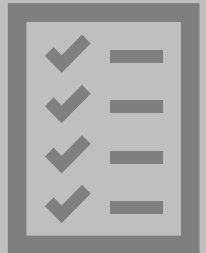
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Sample Virtual IEP Meeting Agenda (60 Minutes Sample Protocol)			
MEETING ROLES		STEPS	Who Time
FACILITATOR Explains the purpose of the meeting and assigns the participants on task.	TIMEKEEPER Times each section of the meeting and helps the team adhere to the allotted time.		
SCRIBE Takes informal notes.	NOTETAKER Takes formal notes for documentation in IEP formative.	1. Make introductions and review meeting norms and agenda.	Facilitator 5 min.
MEETING NORMS Meet accessible technology for everyone. Avoid multitasking or doing other work. Use video, if available. Keep focused on the student's needs. Encourage team member participation.		2. Review student's Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP or PLOP).	Team 10 min.
		3. Identify measurable annual goals for the student that address all areas of identified needs and how progress will be measured.	Team 15 min.
		4. State the special education and related services the student will receive along with needed supplementary aids and services, and program modifications or supports for school personnel.	Team 20 min.
		5. Address other IEP sections.	Team 5 min.
		6. Wrap-up and next steps.	Facilitator 5 min.

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ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS



Parent-Teacher Conference



Special Education Evaluation



Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meetings



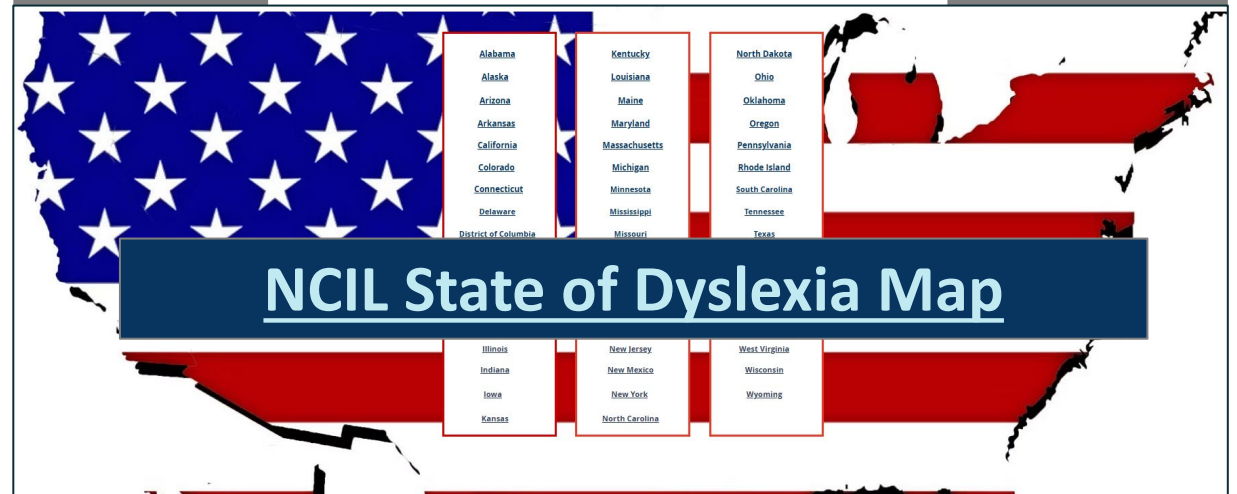
Literacy Data

Data Collection

- Helps measure literacy skills
- Done regularly throughout the year
- Helps identify students at risk for reading difficulties
- Helps to better understand how students are performing

[Learn More](#)

[Learn More](#)



[NCIL State of Dyslexia Map](#)



National Center on Improving Literacy

ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

REQUEST

Talk with other parents and families who have similar experiences. Find out about your district's special education support.



Request information and support from others to help you advocate for your child's literacy needs.

Request information about what your district has in place to support your child and family such as:

- Special education support
- Special education advisory committees

Attend and participate in community groups to learn about opportunities to connect with others such as:

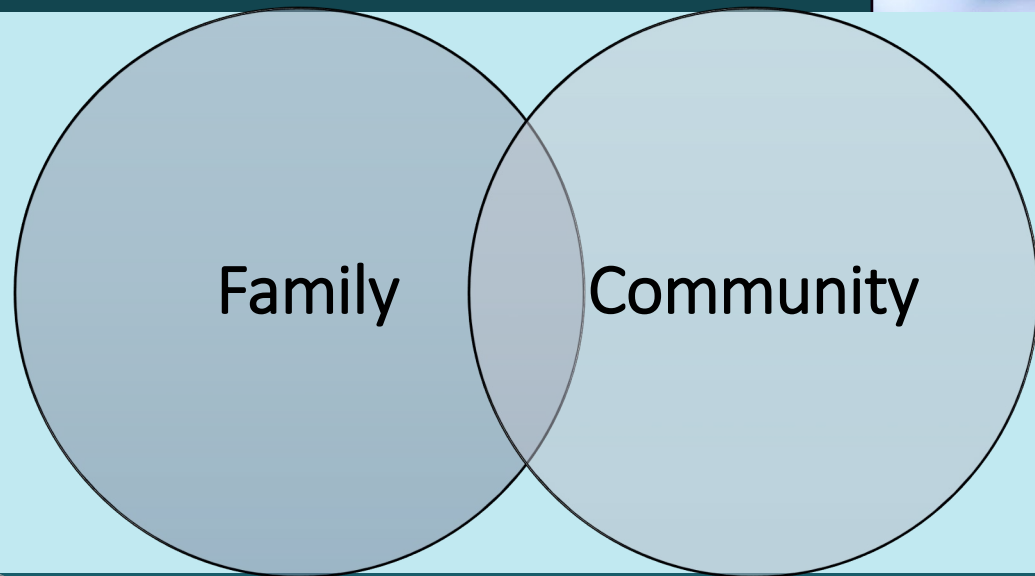
- PTA meetings
- Family support groups



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

What supports are there to help my child with reading?

Share your experiences to learn from one another.



Encourage the school to make changes to literacy instruction, assessment, and intervention to benefit all children.



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

Finding a Community

What can I learn by talking with other families with similar experiences?

You're not alone

Real-life strategies

Advocacy tips

Hope and encouragement

Community and belonging



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

Participating in the Community

How do I find and join special education support committees and groups?



International
DYSLEXIA
Association®



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

REFER

Ask the school about opportunities to provide input on literacy approaches and practices and help make decisions.



- Ask your school about opportunities to provide **input on literacy approaches and practices**.
- Participate in decision-making when possible.
- Request workshops or engagement activities that bring families, schools, and communities together.
- Shared learning strengthens literacy outcomes.



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

Summary

REVIEW

Learn about the school's system of support for literacy and where your child fits within that system.



RECORD

Keep a notebook and folder of information and communications about your child's reading and writing development.



When families and schools work together toward common goals, children make better progress. As a family member, you know your child best. Embrace your role as a literacy advocate and act upon it positively with others.

REQUEST

Talk with other parents and families who have similar experiences. Find out about your district's special education support.



REFER

Ask the school about opportunities to provide input on literacy approaches and practices and help make decisions.



For more information and resources on these topics, see improvingliteracy.org



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 #: 5283D160003). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views or policies of OESE, OSEP, or the U.S. Department of Education. You should not assume endorsement by the Federal government. © National Center on Improving Literacy. <https://improvingliteracy.org> | facebook.com/improvingliteracy

- **Review:** Learn about the school's system of support for literacy and learn where your child fits within that system. If your child is receiving special education services, ask for a copy of their school records and know your educational rights and responsibilities.
- **Record:** Keep a notebook and folder of information and communications about your child's reading and writing. Note what was discussed during calls and meetings with the teacher or school. Write down dates, times, topics, decisions, and next steps.
- **Request:** Talk with other parents and families who have similar experiences. Find out about your district's special education support, like special education advisory committees, and attend PTA meetings to learn about opportunities to connect with others.
- **Refer:** Ask the school about opportunities to provide input on literacy approaches and practices and help make decisions. Request workshops and engagement activities that bring the school, home, and community together to learn about reading and writing instruction.



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

Let's return to our scenario...

Several weeks have passed, and your child is still struggling with reading assignments. They continue guessing at words and losing their place. At this point, anytime they have to read, they just shut down. However, over the past few weeks, the teacher has shared more guidance and suggestions because they also see that your child is struggling. Additionally, the teacher has sent home additional information for you to help your child.

While you appreciate how supportive the teacher has become, you're still sensing that your child may have a reading difficulty and want more help from the school. What can you do to work collaboratively with the school to get answers?

Using the knowledge and advocacy methods you just learned, discuss with your group:

- The steps would you take next if you were this parent
- The information would you want the school to clarify or explain in more detail
- The questions could you ask to better understand your child's reading needs
- The actions the school and you could take to help you feel like a true partner in your child's reading progress



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY NEEDS

Share Out

Several weeks have passed, and your child is still struggling with reading assignments. They continue guessing at words and losing their place. At this point, anytime they have to read, they just shut down. However, over the past few weeks, the teacher has shared more guidance and suggestions because they also see that your child is struggling. Additionally, the teacher has sent home additional information for you to help your child.

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What happens if your child is not getting the support they need?





4

WHEN ADVOCACY BECOMES DIFFICULT



WHEN ADVOCACY IS DIFFICULT

Collaborating with the School: What Families Need to Know

- ✗ Conflict is a natural part of any collaborative effort or ongoing relationship
- ✗ Advocating for your child is essential
- ✗ “Wait and see” is not supported by research
- ✗ Parents’ persistence often leads to earlier support and better outcomes
- ✗ Confusion about labels should not delay identifying why a child struggles



[Watch Video](#)

Video provided by:



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WHEN ADVOCACY IS DIFFICULT



Rely on Each Other

Disagreements are a natural part of working together.

[Learn More](#)

**Try it Out
Activity**

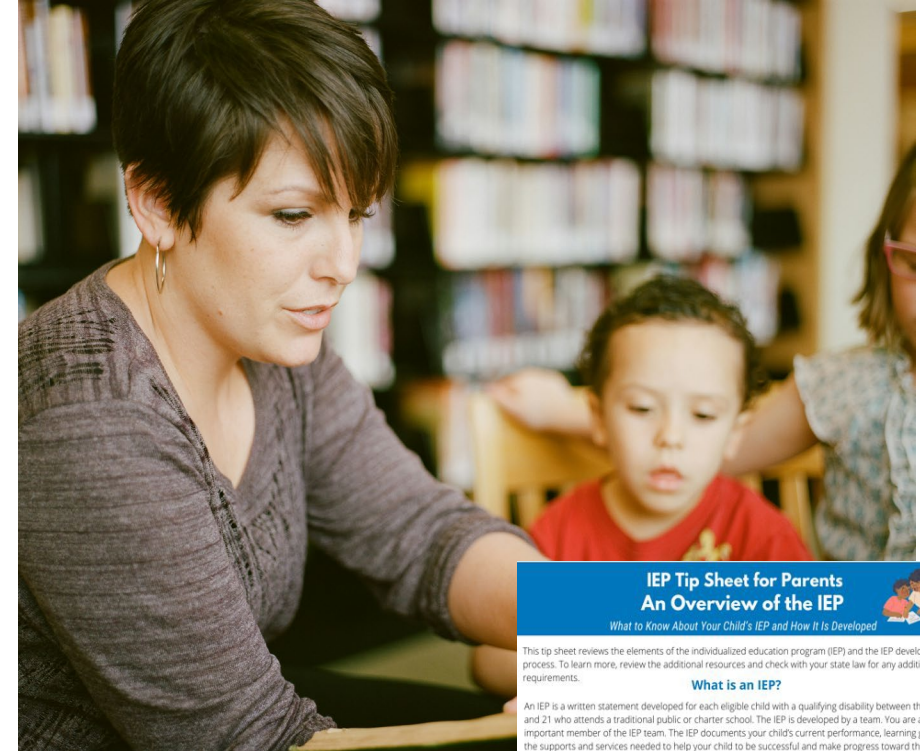


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WHEN ADVOCACY IS DIFFICULT

Know Your Rights

- Request an **IEP Team Meeting** at any time
- IEP goals must be **closely monitored** by the school
- If your child is not making adequate progress toward his or her goals, the IEP Team must **revise the IEP** to address your child's needs.



IEP Tip Sheet for Parents An Overview of the IEP

What to Know About Your Child's IEP and How It Is Developed

This tip sheet reviews the elements of the individualized education program (IEP) and the IEP development process. To learn more, review the additional resources and check with your state law for any additional requirements.

What is an IEP?

An IEP is a written statement developed for each eligible child with a qualifying disability between the ages of 3 and 21 who attends a traditional public or charter school. The IEP is developed by a team. You are an important member of the IEP team. The IEP documents your child's current performance, learning goals, and the supports and services needed to help your child to be successful and make progress toward their goals.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) section 300.320 outlines seven requirements that must be part of the IEP as well as additional requirements once your child reaches transition age.

Element	What does it mean?	Where can I learn more?
 Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAP) or Present Level	This statement describes your child's current performance, strengths, and needs. The statement includes information about academic areas (reading, writing, and mathematics) and functional areas (social skills, behavioral skills, dressing, eating, mobility, and more).	IEP Tip Sheet: PLAAPs IDEA Regulations Section 300.320(a)(1)
 This is the...	This statement also includes how the disability impacts your child's involvement and progress in general education.	IEP Tip Sheet: Measurable Annual Goals IEP team at act as
		



WHEN ADVOCACY IS DIFFICULT

The School and You are Not on the Same Page...Now What?

If you're having trouble understanding school information or processes, or you feel your questions aren't being answered, it may help to:

- Seek support and guidance from outside the school. You can contact:
 - Your state's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI),
 - A Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC), or a
 - Protection and Advocacy (P&A) organization
- Consult a professional who can offer advice and help you navigate next steps
- Consider bringing a trusted friend to meetings to take notes and help you represent your child's needs



WHEN ADVOCACY IS DIFFICULT

Summary

- Advocating for your child's literacy needs can be empowering but also challenging, especially when disagreements arise. Staying focused on shared goals helps families and schools resolve issues early.
- Families have important rights, including being fully informed about progress and requesting an IEP meeting at any time. If a child isn't making expected progress on literacy goals, the IEP team must adjust the plan.
- Ongoing progress monitoring helps families and schools identify barriers, revise supports, and ensure literacy goals are meaningful.
- If school processes feel unclear or your questions aren't being answered, you can seek help from your state's PTI, a CPRC, a P&A organization, or bring a trusted friend to meetings for support.





CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Meet Tony. His fifth-grade son is struggling with reading. Think about what you've learned about advocating for your child's literacy needs to help Tony. He wants to ensure that his son's school is using **evidence-based literacy practices** and that supports and services are best matched to his son's literacy needs. What can Tony do to advocate for his son?

- ☐ **Review:** Learn about the school's system of support for literacy and learn where his child fits within that system.
- ☐ **Record:** Keep a notebook
- ☐ **Request:** Talk with other parents and families who have similar experiences
- ☐ **Refer:** Ask the school about opportunities to provide input on literacy approaches and practices and help make decisions
- ☒ **All of the above**



THANK YOU



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<https://improvingliteracy.org/resource/advocating-for-my-child-s-literacy-needs/>

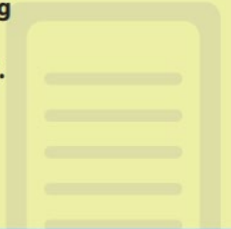
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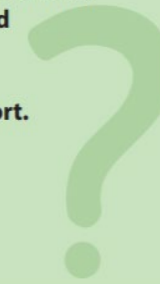
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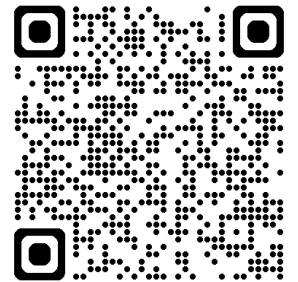
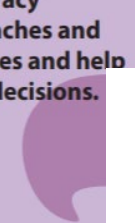
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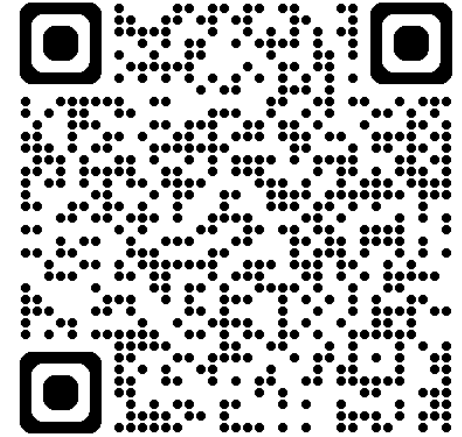


For more information and resources on these topics, s



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HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?



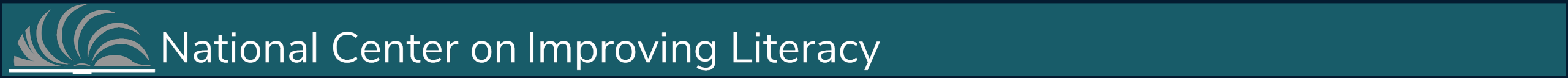
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Thank You!

- [insert contact information]

