

# Improving Literacy Brief for Parents and Families

## HOW FAMILIES CAN PARTNER WITH SCHOOLS ON LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

### WHAT?

Literacy is the ability to read and write well. You and the school share responsibility for your child's language and literacy learning. Collaborate with your school to make decisions about your child's literacy education right from the start.

### WHY?

Your child benefits when you and the school work together to support her literacy development. Working together promotes faster development and catches trouble spots early.

### HOW?

#### 1. COMMUNICATE AND INTERACT OFTEN

Ask the school how you can communicate with each other. Find out how you will receive communication from the school and ask questions if you need more information.

Ways to share your experiences and thoughts with the school:

- Help in the classroom
- Go to meetings (school/teacher orientation, parent-teacher conferences)
- Join school groups (Parent-Teacher Association or Organization, Family Advisory Council)
- Ask, "What are the school's literacy goals for children and families?"
- Ask, "How does the school partner with families when developing its language and literacy goals for students?"
- Ask, "How can I support my child's language and literacy goals?"

#### 2. DISCUSS LITERACY INSTRUCTION AND INTERVENTION

Understand the literacy standards your child is working on at school. Talk about how you and the school can partner to help your child and others get high quality and

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effective literacy instruction. Review the literacy expectations set for your child and make sure they are appropriate for your child. Ask if the literacy instruction and intervention is evidence-based. Check if the instruction and intervention target the skills she needs most. Ask:

- “What does my child need to know and be able to do?”
- “How is reading taught and by whom?”
- “When does literacy instruction and intervention happen and for how long?”
- “How many other children join?”
- “What school materials or trainings about literacy are available to families?”

Tools to help your child read and write may be available. Tools for reading include audio books, screen readers, speed control tape recorders, and devices that can scan printed material to be read aloud. Tools for writing include special keyboards, speech recognition software, proofreading software, and pens that record someone speaking.

## 3. PRACTICE LITERACY SKILLS AT HOME

Talk with schools about what home literacy activities match your child’s skill level. Ask:

- “What activities will help her practice the skills learned at school?”
- “What strategies should I use to help my child read or write?”
- “What tools are available to help my child practice these skills?”

Try out different activities and tools and share with the school what worked well and what did not. Explain your role in the activity. Let the school know if you or your child need more information or support. Discuss other ways your child can practice the skills learned at school, such as at the library or through literacy services in your community.

## 4. ADDRESS CONCERNS TOGETHER

Discuss what your child has learned and what skills she is still working on. Share your understanding of your child’s learning needs. Tell the school what activities or tasks are giving her trouble at home and how you helped. Learn about the school’s system of learning support. Ask:

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- “How is my child’s language and literacy learning being supported in this system?”
- “How are you monitoring my child’s language and literacy progress?”
- “What might happen next if my child continues to struggle?”

Take time to understand the school’s position and openly communicate your view. Work together to find a solution to address your child’s learning needs that you both can support. If you and the school disagree, get advice from others on next steps.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

National Center on Improving Literacy. (2017). *How Families Can Partner With Schools on Literacy Development*. <https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/how-families-can-partner-with-schools-on-literacy-development>

## REFERENCES

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## HOW-TO

# THINGS PARENTS SHOULD ASK SCHOOLS ABOUT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT



Parents should never be afraid to talk to the school about their child's literacy development. Your child benefits when you and the school work together to support literacy development. Questions to ask include:

### HOW TO BE INVOLVED

- What are the school's literacy goals for children and families?
- How does the school partner with families when developing its language and literacy goals for students?
- How can I support my child's language and literacy goals?

### SPECIFICS ABOUT LITERACY INSTRUCTION

- What does my child need to know and be able to do?
- How is reading taught and by whom?
- When does literacy instruction and intervention happen and for how long?
- What materials or trainings are available to families?

### HOW TO PRACTICE AT HOME

- What activities will help my child practice the skills learned at school?
- What strategies should I use to help my child read or write?
- What tools are available to help my child practice these skills?

### EXPRESS CONCERNS DIRECTLY

- How is my child's language and literacy learning being supported in this system?
- How are you monitoring my child's language and literacy progress?
- What might happen next if my child continues to struggle?

For more information, visit [improvingliteracy.org](https://improvingliteracy.org).