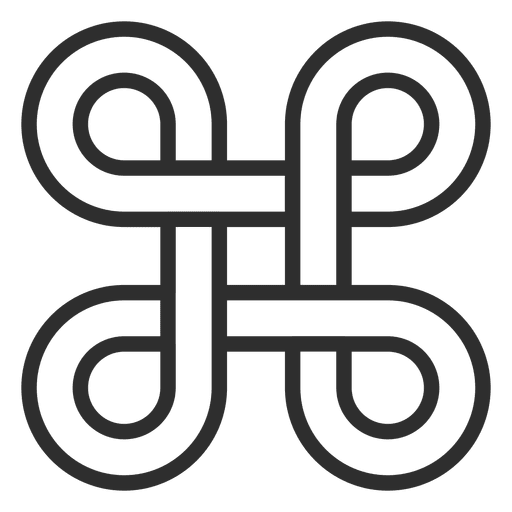


Partnerships for Literacy

Facilitators Guide:

Four Focused Discussions

(Draft 7.31.18)



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# **Overview of Partnerships for Literacy**

Partnerships for Literacy provides a systematic approach to family and community engagement that is sustained over time, goal oriented, and develops the capacity of both educators and family members. Teams of parents/caregivers and school personnel will create continuity from school to home for students and families, develop relationships with community partners to support early literacy, and systematically embed effective family and community engagement in the OIP within the school. Ohio’s regional specialists will help to facilitate and provide schools with coaching support to implement family and community engagement practices with a focus on language and literacy. Focused attention will be given to developing knowledge, skills and attitudes supporting meaningful and effective partnership between teachers and families of students with disabilities, ELs, and families living in poverty. The intended result is improved home and school supports and resources for language and literacy development for young students through:

* the implementation of a locally-developed plan, aligned with the school’s focused plan and linking to community resources,
* a sustainable, representative, family-teacher team that is linked to the school’s building leadership team and focuses on the needs of all families through family and community engagement practices, and
* teachers who practice more effective family engagement.

## **Partnerships for Literacy Connects the Dots**

The Partnerships for Literacy process and tools have been created to align with other important Ohio education initiatives. It is not another program to add on to others in the school, but is a way for schools to implement Title I family engagement, expand and strengthen shared leadership to include families, and inform the assessment of school-level supports for literacy instruction.

* **Partnerships for Literacy Aligns with:**

**Ohio Improvement Process:**

* + Shared leadership that includes families
  + Two-way communication with internal and external stakeholders.
  + A focused plan with adult implementation indicators, strategies, and action steps.
  + BLT and TBTs share their work and provide feedback with other teams in the school. They share data and information to communicate across teams and to parents.

**Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory:**

* + 1.27 – school leadership provides status report or presentation on student reading performance to stakeholders, including families.
  + 2.6 – school notifies families about intervention plans for their child.
  + 3.7 – school invites families to collaborate on intervention plans for their child.

**Ohio Teacher Evaluation System: Standard 6:**

* + Clear and effective communication
  + Shared responsibility with parents/caregivers to support student learning
* **Partnerships for Literacy Helps Schools Meet ESEA Title I Family Engagement Expectations:**
* Regular, two-way, meaningful communication in language families understand.
* Collect parental feedback on your parent and family engagement. Evaluate family engagement plan annually with a team including family representation.
* Document parent and family engagement activities.
* Offer a flexible number of activities at convenient times for families.
* Family engagement PD for school personnel.
* Programs that reach families at home, school or in community, including family members with disabilities, non-English speaking, & migrant families.
* Disseminate best practices on family engagement, especially for disadvantaged families. Integrate other federal, state and local programs.
* Collaborate with employers/ community organizations to increase family eng.
* Involve parents in planning, review, and improvement of the school-wide program
* Assist parents with how to monitor a child’s progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children.
* Provide materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve their children’s achievement, such as literacy training.
* Develop with parents a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement.

## **Purpose and Objectives of Four Focused Discussions**

The purpose of Four Focused Discussions is to provide school leadership teams with the opportunity to have facilitated discussions about their school-wide family engagement practices and to prepare for the Partnerships for Literacy team and planning process. It is intended to be a “pre-thinking” time for school teams - setting aside some time to think about family engagement and literacy - about what is and what is possible. It is not meant to be an overly formal process, but rather a time to pause and think together before jumping in. The number of discussions (four) is not set in stone. School teams should use the resources in this guide, the facilitation support of their Family Engagement Lead, and their time in the way that suits their needs in order to complete all of the pre-thinking discussions.

# **Getting Ready to Start the Discussion**

The Family Engagement Lead can begin the process of Partnerships for Literacy by meeting with the school’s leader to describe Partnerships for Literacy and the Family Engagement Lead’s role in supporting the leader and process. School leaders should determine:

1. What current or new leadership team in the school will meet to have four, facilitated discussions to do pre-thinking this fall?
2. How many meetings will the group have *(four or combined discussions in fewer meetings)*? When will the group meet?
3. How will the group communicate with the principal and BLT?

# **#1: Getting Started**

The purpose of the first discussion is to provide an orientation to the school team of Partnerships for Literacy and make the connection to the school’s current school-wide Title I family engagement activities.

**Objectives:**

1. Provide an orientation to Partnerships for Literacy team and process.
2. Explain the connection of Partnerships for Literacy with :
   * + Title I
     + Ohio Improvement Process
     + Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory
     + Current family engagement practices in the school

**The Discussion:**

* + *Welcome everyone and do introductions if needed. Explain the purpose of the meeting.*
  + *This a whole group discussion.*
  + *You’ll need:*
    - *Partnerships for Literacy Overview handout*
    - *Partnerships for Literacy Crosswalk with Title I handout*
* The **purpose of having Four Focused Discussions** is to provide school leadership teams with the opportunity to have facilitated, focused discussions about the school’s school-wide family engagement practices and to prepare for the Partnerships for Literacy team and planning process.
* It is intended to be a **“pre-thinking” time** for school teams. Setting aside time to think about family engagement and literacy - about what is and what is possible. It is not meant to be an overly formal process, but rather a time to pause and think together before jumping in. *The number of discussions, four, is not set in stone. School teams should use the resources in this guide, the facilitation support of their Family Engagement Lead, and their time in the way that suits their needs in order to complete the pre-thinking discussions*
  + The **purpose of this first discussion** is to
    - have an orientation to Partnerships for Literacy process
    - to connect Partnerships for Literacy with the school’s Title I, BLT, TBTs, the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory
  + There are **four focused discussions** including today. The other discussions:
    - Review the school’s current family engagement activities for supporting literacy,
    - Examine strengths and areas to grow family engagement and barriers that limit some families from participating, and
    - Prepare for recruiting a team of parents and school personnel to form a Partnerships for Literacy team, complete an inventory of current activities and opportunities, and develop and implement action steps (activities) for strengthening and expanding family engagement AND community partnerships for early literacy.
  + ***Describe Partnerships for Literacy.*** 
    - ***Handout: What steps are involved with the Partnerships for Literacy process?***
  + The **goal of Partnerships for Literacy** is to help schools integrate and strengthen family engagement to support early language and literacy. To build effective home-school supports.
  + We will start by having four, focused discussions to get ready by doing some “pre-thinking.”
  + Then, our school will **recruit families and staff** to come together for regular meetings.
  + The school will invite families and staff to come together for regular meetings as a Partnerships for Literacy Team.
  + At the meetings, team members will talk about what the school is currently doing to support literacy with families, and together they’ll **complete an “inventory”** of the school’s current family engagement for literacy practices.
  + This inventory helps guide the team’s selection **of 2-3 priority areas to create action steps** (activities) to strengthen home and community supports for literacy. The activities can be included in the school’s focused plan.
  + School staff, families, and community partners **implement the plan**. The team continues meeting to see how the new ideas are working for the school, students, and for families. Then they will fill out the inventory again to see what progress has been made by the end of the year – and to develop a new plan for the next year.
  + **What questions do you have so far?**
  + The **Partnerships for Literacy Process aligns** with other work your school is doing:
    - **Ohio Improvement Process:**
      * Shared leadership that includes families
      * Two-way communication with internal and external stakeholders.
      * A focused plan with adult implementation indicators, strategies, and action steps.
    - BLT and TBTs share their work and provide feedback with other teams in the school. They share data and information to communicate across teams and to parents.
    - **Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory:**
      * 1.27 – school leadership provides status report or presentation on student reading performance to stakeholders, including families.
      * 2.6 – school notifies families about intervention plans for their child.
      * 3.7 – school invites families to collaborate on intervention plans for their child.
    - **ESEA Title I Family Engagement: *Handout: Crosswalk***
    - Looking down this list of Title I family engagement activities, which one or two do you think this school is doing well? How do you know?
    - Which one or two activities are the most challenging, or need to improve the most? How do you know?
  + The Partnerships for Literacy process aligns with your school’s Title I family engagement. When you “do” the Partnerships for Learning process - form a team, complete the inventory, and create a plan – you are completing many Title I requirements.
  1. This is a good place to start our discussions, and to stop for this meeting.
  2. **Are there any questions before we end?**
  3. *Close with setting the date and time for the next meeting.*

**Handouts and Materials:**

* Partnerships for Literacy Overview handout
* Partnerships for Literacy Crosswalk with Title I handout

# **#2: Taking Stock**

The purpose of the second discussion is for the school team to do an overall assessment of family engagement activities of the school and then examine those practices through the lens of four factors of effective family engagement.

**Objectives:**

* 1. Build a common understanding of all of the current activities of the school to support family engagement with a focus on activities supporting family engagement in supporting children’s language and literacy.
  2. Find opportunities within the current school family engagement activities that support home-school communication, and language and literacy at home or in the community.

**The Discussion:**

**Directions**

* + *This can be done as one group, or in small groups and then reported out.*
  + *You’ll need: chart paper and markers, white board, or other place for groups to write a list where all can see. The lists and labels the group creates at this meeting will be used at the next focused discussion.*

**Talking Points**

* Let’s take a look at all of the **family engagement activities we are already doing** in this school. We’ll start with brainstorming everything we can think of and write them down. Think about as many things as you can and list them. Think about school-wide activities, individual grade levels, classrooms. Be as thorough as you can. *If you have two groups, have each group report out and create one big list.*
* Now that we have our list, what do you think about it? What are commonalities or categories that you see?
* Let’s take some time to look for **four factors of effective family engagement** activities. The four factors we will consider are two-way communication between home and school, goal-oriented activities linked to student literacy, collaborating with community resources, and sustaining practices school-wide in all grades in the school. *If the group thinks of more activities they had not listed before, they may add them throughout this discussion.*
  + First, look for activities that directly promote **two-way communication** between home and school (*you may want to have a short discussion about what “two-way communication” means to the group*);
    - Place a “**C**” next to these activities.
  + Next, look for activities that **directly help families support their children’s developing language and literacy** skills ( *you may want to have a short discussion about what “directly” means to the group*);
    - Place a “**LL**” next to these activities.
  + Next, activities that are a collaboration between the school and a **community partner**;
    - Place a “**P**” next to these activities.
  + And finally, look for activities that are implemented **school wide**;
    - Place a “**SW**” next to these activities
* *Wrap up your discussion by talking about what the group notices in their list of activities and labels of factors of effective practice*.
  + Are there activities that are in none of these categories? If so, what is their purpose?
  + Are there communication, or language and literacy activities that are not practiced school-wide?
  + How many activities directly support literacy AND are practiced school wide?
  + How many activities directly support two-way communication AND are practiced school wide?
  + *What else do you notice?*
* This is a good place to start our discussions, and to stop for this meeting. We’ll use our lists of activities for the next focused discussion.
* What are our biggest take-aways from today?
* Are there any questions before we end?

**Handouts and Materials**

* Markers
* Chart paper or some other way to record group’s ideas and save for the next meeting

# **#3: Looking Deeper**

The purpose of the third focused discussion is for the school team to examine one of the school’s family engagement activities for which the goal is improved literacy skills for students and consider how the activity could be expanded to reach all families.

**Objectives:**

* 1. Examine the current school’s current resources or practices of family engagement to support language and literacy and identify strengths to build on, and challenges or weaknesses to address.
  2. Consider one family engagement activity intended to impact student language and literacy and examine aspects of the activity that may present barriers that limit some families from accessing this opportunity.
  3. Practice redesigning the activity to allow all or more families to have access to this opportunity for supporting their children’s learning.

**The Discussion:**

**Directions**

This discussion can be done as one group.

You’ll need: Lists of current family engagement activities from focused discussion #2, and Redesign handout (one per participant or projected for all to see).

**Talking Points**

* Looking at our list of family engagement practices that we created the last time we met, what is going well? **What are the most impactful family engagement activities** the school is doing for student language and literacy development?
  + *List strengths and activities*
* What is (are) areas where there is room to grow? Where is the school not having the impact we intend? **What are the least impactful family engagement activities** we are doing in this school for student language and literacy development?
  + *List opportunities for growth identified by the group.*
* Let’s **pick one activity to look at closely**. Think about what barriers there are for some families to access this opportunity and possible changes we could make to reach more families.
* *Help the group quickly select one activity to focus on such as a literacy night for families, parent-teacher conferences, books and activities sent home, etc.*
* Family engagement is not one-size-fits-all. The more choices, supports and flexibility we can provide, the more families will be able to access and partner in supporting their child’s learning.
* As we work through this re-design, we’ll keep in mind that more families will access opportunities to support their children’s learning if we are:
  + encouraging and motivating
  + present information in multiple ways
  + flexible, giving families different options for supporting their children’s learning
* *Using the handout, talk with the group as they answer each question on the handout. Help the group to keep moving through the activity so they touch on each question. If the group is having a rich, important discussion, finishing the handout is not the priority. Ask the group if they want to keep moving to consider each question, or if they want to forgo answering all questions to give more time to their current discussion.*
* What is the goal for the student? What is the goal for the family?
* Who would not have access? What barriers exist? What are some ways we could eliminate the barriers for families?
* What would motivate families to fully and gladly engage in this activity?
* Thinking creatively, how can we revive this activity for engaging the families of all students?
* What are some other ways we can communicate with families, or other opportunities we can provide to get to the same goal?
* What incentives, hooks, or attractive options can we build in to motivate families to support their child’s education and meet the intended goal?
* What options or choices do families have to act for their child's education to meet this goal?
* This is a good place to wrap up. What are our biggest take-aways from today?
* Are there any questions before we end?

**Handouts and Materials**

* Re-Design handout (one per participant or projected for all to see)
* Lists of current family engagement activities from focused discussion #2.

# **# 4: Ready to Go**

The purpose of the fourth focused discussion is for the school team to begin preparing for the Partnerships for Literacy team and process and to consider how this new or repurposed team of parents and teachers will be integrated into the current structures for shared leadership (i.e. Building Leadership Team and Teacher Based Teams).

**Objectives:**

* 1. Diagram how a Partnerships for Literacy team of parents and teachers will interface with other leadership groups in the school (BLT, TBT, PTO, Care Team, PBIS, etc.).
  2. List student data and other data that can be shared with the Partnerships for Literacy team for their planning.
  3. Consider how data will be made user-friendly and understandable to parents on the Partnerships for Literacy team.
  4. Consider how the school’s focus plan and strategies will be shared in an understandable way for parents and school personnel on the Partnerships for Literacy team.
  5. Describe what a representative team of parents and school personnel would look like in general terms.
  6. Begin brainstorming who could be recruited for the P4L team.

**The Discussion:**

**Directions**

* + *This is a whole group discussion.*
  + *You’ll need: Markers, chart paper (or some other way to record group’s ideas on the wall so all can see), Handout: Building your school’s Partnerships for Literacy Team guide, “Members” page*

**Talking Points**

* Research in the field of family engagement shows that when families and school personnel form teams and develop goal-linked, family engagement plans, and implement those plans, more families become actively engaged – even those families not previously involved.
* Our **next step as a school is to form a team of parents and teachers** – a Partnerships for Literacy team *(the school may choose a different name that fits with their school and community).*
* This is an opportunity for your school to include families in your school’s shared leadership, to meet Title I requirements for family engagement – and most importantly – improve your school’s family engagement practices.
* The team provides a place for families to share their expertise and experiences, and to have a voice and ownership in decision-making and planning.
* With your Partnerships for Literacy team, your team will create a local plan to help families support early literacy and learning outside of school.
* To get ready for this team, let’s consider:
  + **How the team will connect** with, and communicate with other leadership groups in the school, and
  + **What data will be important to share** with this group and how we will share it to it is easily understood
* Let’s draw all of the current leadership groups in this school.
  + *As the group lists the teams in the building, have one recorder draw and label a circle/square for each team in the school on a poster paper, white board, etc.*
* Now let’s show in the diagram how the different teams connect through shared members and communication feedback loops.
  + *Draw lines (different types of lines if needed) to show the connections.*
* Now let’s add the Partnerships for Literacy team to the diagram. Do we already have a team that fills this need? How should the Partnerships for Literacy team connect and communicate with other teams?
* **The school’s Partnerships for Literacy team should be balanced.** 
  + A balanced number of teachers and parents/caregivers
  + A group of teachers and parents who are representative of important perspectives, such as Special Education, English Language Learners, men and women, grandparents, general education, Title I Intervention, etc..
* Using the handout with the list of possible team members, **list out the perspectives** that you feel would be important to have on a balanced team of parents and school personnel from your school. Rather than listing names, just write roles. For example, “parent of a child receiving Title I reading intervention, parent of EL student, Title I reading teacher, Special Education teacher, first and second grade parents, member of PTO.”
* If you have time, your team can start brainstorming people they can recruit for their Partnerships for Literacy Team.
* *Close*: The focused discussions we have had gave us some time to pre-think about what we are currently doing to partner with families, and what we can do in the future. The next step is bringing together a team of parents and school personnel to roll up their sleeves and get to work.
* This is a good place to wrap up. What are our biggest take-aways from today?
* Are there any questions before we end?

**Handouts and Materials**

* Markers, chart paper (or some other way to record group’s ideas on the wall so all can see)
* Handout: ***Building your school’s Partnerships for Literacy Team*** guide, “Members” page