Partnerships for Literacy

Building your school’s

Partnerships for Literacy Team (P4L)

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# **Purpose of a P4L Team**

This guide provides steps for establishing and growing a school team focused on family engagement. The P4L team gives teachers, families, and administrators a place to work together to support literacy. The team assesses what your school is already doing to support literacy at home and in the community, and develops a plan for improving these supports so all children will develop the skills they need.

The P4L team provides a meaningful and targeted opportunity for your school to include families in your school leadership, meeting ESSA Title I accountabilities for partnering with families to evaluate and develop a school plan for family engagement.

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.

The P4L team also provides a place for families of children with disabilities to provide feedback, and help to improve the school’s facilitation of parent involvement (IDEA, Part C and B). Families on the team bring perspectives and knowledge that will benefit programs for their children, and for other families in their community.

As your school develops tiers of support for learning and behavior, known as a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, families are critical partners.

With your P4L team you will have the experts you need; parents and caregivers, teachers and a school leader, to create a local plan to support early literacy and learning for young students.

# **Getting Started**

School leaders can begin by considering who in your school and community would make the best team. It will be helpful to invite a parent/ caregiver you already have a working relationship with to co-plan the who, what, when, where, and why of this team. Together you can identify individuals who currently have experience related to your primary goals. For example, P4L teams are focused on language and literacy goals, so parents/caregivers with children from a variety of literacy levels and backgrounds should be invited along with school staff and community partners with a literacy focus.



# **Your Team**

Your school’s P4L team should be balanced. There should be a balanced number of teachers and parents/caregivers, and a balance of diversity that represents the teachers and families of your school so that your team can create the best plan for your students. In Ohio, schools are required to conduct a language usage survey[[1]](#footnote-1) for every new student upon registration and to have a contact list of bilingual staff/ interpreters/ community liaisons that correspond to the language survey results. These individuals could encourage participation from families who might not otherwise step forward to participate because of language challenges.

# **Non-negotiables**

1. A balanced number of teachers and parents/caregivers
2. A group of teachers and parents who are representative of important roles, such as Special Education, English Language Learners, men and women, grandparents, general education, Title I Intervention, etc..
3. A meeting time and place that allows the highest level of access for participants.
4. A commitment from leadership to establishing a caring, respectful, motivated, productive team.

# **Members**

When identifying team members, the following list is recommended:

School Leadership (e.g., Principal)

Literacy coach

Literacy Intervention Specialist (Title I or other)

At least one parent of a child with a disability. Consider including a parent/caregiver of a child with an IFSP and one or more parents/caregivers of children with IEPs.

At least one other parent/caregiver of a child in the school

At least one parent/caregiver of a child who is an English Learner or who has a home language other than English (if applicable to your school)

A parent/caregiver of a child receiving a reading intervention

School-family liaison (if applicable)

A teacher(s) providing core instruction

A teacher(s) providing supplemental literacy instruction

A community partner representative (e.g., librarian, literacy-focused non-profit, university extension staff)

# **Contact List of Potential Team Members**

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| Name | Role on this Team (From list above) | Phone Number | Email |
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# **Next Steps**

After answering the planning questions below, use the template on the next page to draft your invitations or create talking points for conversations. Approach the initial meeting plans with some flexibility so that parents/caregivers and teachers can make suggestions.

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| --- | --- |
| Who will talk to potential members and/or send invitations and follow-up with them? |  |
| Who will find a family-friendly meeting space? |  |
| Who will ensure that all members have access to meeting materials and arrange for any translation and interpretation services needed? |  |
| What are some good meeting dates and times during the school year that do not conflict with other events? |  |

# **Tentative Plans**

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| --- | --- |
| # Meetings |  |
| Meeting Location(s)  |  |
| Meeting Dates  |  |

# **Inviting Team Members**

School leaders extend personal invitations via phone call, email, or face to face (depending on the existing relationship) to all parents/caregivers and teachers. In addition, leaders may also ask teachers or others who have a close relationship with a parent/caregiver or teacher to also invite them. The message in short is “Your perspective and experience with our school is important and we would like to have you as a member of the school’s Partnerships for Literacy team.” Leaders may offer to meet with parents/caregivers to set them at ease and clarify the importance of their perspectives and role on the team.

Offer to provide translation, allow a buddy to come, etc. so parents feel welcome and able to participate fully. If there is information that will be helpful for team members to understand to fully participate in the meetings and planning, take time to provide that information for team members to read (view on video, listen to recording, etc.) before the first working meeting. If there are parent/caregiver representatives who are still learning English, explain the ways the school will ensure that they will have full access to meeting materials (e.g., translation of documents and interpretation during the meetings).

# **Sample Invitation Letter/Conversation Starter/Email for Parents/Caregivers**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

 I am inviting you to join a new Partnerships for Literacy Team for our school. The purpose of the team is to improve our partnerships with parents/caregivers and our community to support children as they are learning to read. You were selected because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., your son’s classroom teacher/case manager/guidance counselor, etc.) thought you would bring a valuable perspective based on your experiences with the school. We want to hear what you think and to have your ideas for how we can improve. The team will meet for about one hour (on date and time). Following that, the team will meet together \_\_\_\_(#) times this year to share ideas, and make a plan for improving our school’s family engagement. We will be keeping the team going next year too.

Please RSVP to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or contact \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ if you have any questions.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# **Sample Follow-up Note for Parents/Caregivers**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for joining our school Partnerships for Literacy team. As \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ mentioned to you [when you spoke/on the telephone/in the email], there will be \_\_\_\_ (#) meetings on these dates and times:

Dates: Times: Locations:

We will have refreshments and promise to start and stop on time. Thank you for sharing your valuable time with us. If you have any questions, please call or email \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Language Usage Survey: http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/English-Learners/ELL-Guidelines/Guidelines-for-the-Identification-and-Assessment-o/Appendix-A-Language-Usage-Survey.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US [↑](#footnote-ref-1)