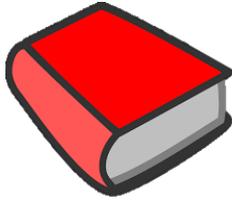




Ohio Statewide

Family Engagement Center

—at The Ohio State University



Partnerships for Literacy

A Research-Based Family Engagement Strategy for Schools

In doing Partnerships for Literacy, schools select a core team of parents/caregivers and school personnel, who together 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 within the school.

Tools in the series are provided for an external coach to facilitate and provide support to schools to implement family and community engagement practices, however, a school or district could select an internal coach to facilitate the process as well.

Attention is given to developing knowledge, skills and attitudes supporting meaningful and effective partnership between teachers and families of students with disabilities, English Learners, 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 reading plan and linking to community resources,
- a sustainable, representative, family-teacher team that is linked to the school's building leadership team and focused on the needs of all families through family and community engagement practices, and
- teachers who practice more effective family engagement.

The Content: Three Areas of Family Engagement for Early Language and Literacy

Partnerships for Literacy focuses on improvements in (1) Communication with Families about Literacy, (2) Supporting Language and Literacy Learning at Home, and (3) Community Partnerships for Literacy. Researchers at The Ohio State University developed Partnerships for Literacy after reviewing current research on how to partner well with families and community partners to support language and literacy for children.

Partnerships for Literacy Connects the Dots

The Partnerships for Literacy process and tools have been created to align with other important education initiatives. It is not another program to add on to others in the school. Instead, it is a systematic process for schools to implement family engagement consistent with Federal/Title I expectations. Partnerships for Literacy expands and strengthens shared leadership to include families. It also helps schools dig deep to evaluate their school-level supports for literacy instruction.

❖ Partnerships for Literacy Aligns with:

School Improvement Processes:

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

Best Practices for Reading Skill Development and Reading Interventions:

- School leadership provides updates on student reading performance to stakeholders, including families.
- School notifies families about intervention plans for their child.
- School invites families to collaborate on intervention plans for their child.

The School's Expectations of Teachers:

- Clear and effective communication with families
- Shared responsibility with parents/caregivers to support student learning

❖ **Partnerships for Literacy Helps Schools Meet Federal Family Engagement Expectations:**

- For example, Regular, two-way, meaningful communication in language families understand.
- Document family engagement activities. Collect feedback from families on engagement strategies. Involve families in planning, review, and improvement of the school-wide program. Disseminate best practices on family engagement, especially for disadvantaged families. Evaluate family engagement plan annually with a team including family representation.
- Offer family engagement professional development for school personnel.
- Programs that reach families at home, school or in community, including family members with disabilities, non-English speaking, & migrant families.
- Integrate other federal, state and local programs. Collaborate with employers/community organizations to increase family engagement.
- Assist parents/caregivers with how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children. Offer a flexible number of activities at convenient times for families.
- Provide materials and training to help parents/caregivers work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training.
- Develop with parents a school-parent compact that outlines how families, school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement.

Roadmap for Schools

The following is a suggested timeline of activities to implement Partnerships for Literacy for two+ years. The timeline can be shortened or lengthened as needed.

Step 1: August – December of Year 1 of Implementation

- Schools begin by identifying a skilled coach that is familiar with the Partnerships for Literacy process.
- Coach meets with the school leadership team to review the whole Partnerships for Literacy timeline and steps, and determine if the school is prepared to implement Partnerships for Literacy this school year.
- Once the school's leadership team has committed to the process, the coach arranges to meet to discuss all of the *Step 1* conversations between August – December. It is recommended that there are 4 conversations, but some schools have combined the conversations into 2 or 3 meetings instead of 4.

Step 2: January – February of Year 1 of Implementation

- Coaches guide the school's leadership through *Building a Team* (using the guide provided).
- The school arranges a time for the newly formed team to meet, sends out personal invitations, and ensures that any barriers to participation are removed/reduced for families and school staff.

Step 3: March – April of Year 1 of Implementation

- The Partnerships for Literacy Team meets, gets to know each other, and spends anywhere from 1-4 meetings to fully complete the *Family & Community Engagement for Early Literacy Inventory*. This becomes the school's baseline, and each year this process is completed, the school can compare to the prior year's inventory results.
- In some schools, the coach plays a very active role in guiding the team through these early meetings. In other schools, the school leaders or another appointed team member will take on more of a facilitator's role, leaving the coach to do more observing and reflecting for the team.

Step 4: April - June of Year 1 of Implementation

- The Partnerships for Literacy Team meets to create their *Action Steps* (using the guide provided). The team decides when to begin implementation of their steps. As a team, be sure to celebrate your progress. As a school and community, you now have a team with family voice making decisions that will support literacy!
- The coach and the school leader complete the provided *Coaching Service Delivery Plan*.

Step 5: June of Year 1 of Implementation – December of Year 2 of Implementation

- The Partnerships for Literacy team agrees on a regular meeting schedule. It is recommended that teams meet monthly or every other month. The team's role shifts to one that oversees and reviews information about how implementation is going at the school. For some teams or members on the team, they will also be directly responsible for implementing the action steps. It depends on what the action steps are.
- The coach ensures that the team stays focused on their priorities, and on track for the year. This may involve additional meetings with the school leader and/or teachers/staff to understand and reduce barriers to progress.
- The Partnerships for Literacy team may have lost members, in which case new members should be invited to be on the team.

Step 6: January - June of Year 2 of Implementation

- The team reviews their current action steps, assembles data on what is working and what is not working well.
- The team completes the *Family & Community Engagement for Early Literacy Inventory* for the second time, and discusses successes, challenges, and changes from Year 1, and assigns a new set of priorities for the coming school year.
- At this point, it is a great idea to celebrate the successes of the year with anyone involved with developing or implementing the action steps. Be sure to include families in the celebration. Share the hopes for the coming year!
- If the school has an external coach, the coach and school leader now determine a long-term strategy for the school's coaching needs. They may be able to meet less often or not at all.

This process can be sustained for many years to come at little to no cost to the school. In fact, with strong family and community partners, there are cost *savings* for schools!



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