

# Science of Reading



## Questions to Ask Your School

Is your local school using good materials and teaching strategies to teach kids to read?



Here are some questions to ask about the [science of reading](#) at Open Houses, Parent Teacher Conferences, and other meetings with teachers to get the conversation started.

### General Questions

- **What approach** do you use to teach reading and writing? (Note to parents: It should be a structured literacy approach, not balanced literacy or whole language.)
- **What curriculums** or programs do you use? (Note to parents: There might be more than one, but the main materials used should be on the [state approved list](#).)
- **How much time** do you get to spend giving direct instruction using those materials each day? Each week? (Note to parents: It is not okay if they only spend a small percentage of the literacy learning time using state approved materials.)

### School isn't following the science of reading?

Your role as a parent is very important in Ohio, which is a "local control" state. Here are some steps to take if a teacher or school is not following the science of reading:

- **Talk to the teacher and building administrator** (Principal or Assistant Principal, for example) in an email or meeting to share your concerns. Share [state law](#) and the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's [Read Ohio](#) web pages that back-up your concerns.
- If you still have concerns: **Talk to a district leader** (Superintendent, or if your child goes to a Community School talk to the [school sponsor](#)).
- If you still have concerns: **Talk to your local school board** of education who have approved the policies and procedures of your child's school. Contact information for the school board is usually on the district website or student handbook.
- **Talk to other concerned parents** and send a message to the school as a group. [Other Ohio parents](#) have had success with this strategy.
- If you need help working with the school board or district: **Talk to your Area Coordinator**. There is a contact list on the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's website.

- If you have done all of these steps and your school is still not following the science of reading: Email [ombudsperson@education.ohio.gov](mailto:ombudsperson@education.ohio.gov), a person who investigates, reports on and helps settle complaints.
- If your child is receiving Special Education Services: [File a complaint](#) using the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's Dispute Resolution process.

## Specific Questions About Your Child's Reading and Writing

It's good to ask teachers specific questions about where your child is in their learning and if they are on-track to meet grade level goals.

### For Early Readers and Writers

- Is my child reading at, above or [below grade level](#)?
- What **letter sounds** does my child know?
- Can they **sound out** words and then blend the sounds to read them?
- Which specific **reading** skills has my child already learned, and which skills are they working on right now?  
For example:
  - short vowels(cat, pop)
  - blends - two or more consonants in a row (flag, jump)
  - digraphs – two letters that make one sound (ship, path)
  - silent or magic “e” (kite, mile)
  - vowel teams (rain, play) etc.
  - r-controlled words (for, car, her)
- Ask the teacher for copies of the **lists of skills (scope and sequence)** and ask where on the list your child is doing well and where they need practice.
- How is my child's **handwriting** or letter formation? (Is it automatic and smooth?)
- Can they break sounds apart in words to **spell** them?
- Which **hard-to-spell words** are they having trouble with? (Note to parents: These are sometimes called red words, high frequency, or sight words)
- Which specific types of words are they having trouble with?
- Is my child in **any small groups** for reading or writing? **What are they working on** in those groups? Which materials are being used in the small groups? How will the small group time help them with the specific skills they need to work on?
- What can I do at home?

## For Older/More Advanced Students

- Is my child reading at, above or below grade level?
- How does my child do with reading and spelling **larger words** OR are they struggling to read and spell smaller words?
- Which **syllable types** have they mastered? Are they having trouble with any?
- Which **roots, prefixes, and suffixes** have they learned? Any trouble with those?
- What **writing skills** are they working on? Are they having trouble with sentence structures or trouble writing longer papers?
- Do they seem to **understand** when they read grade-level material?
- Ask the teacher for copies of the **lists of skills (scope and sequence)** they are using so you can mark exactly where your child is doing well or needs more support.
- What can I do at home?

Every student deserves the best chance to succeed, and that happens when we're all working together for students. Teachers need your help with practicing reading and writing skills at home with your child, and they can answer your questions about how to make that happen.

For more resources for parents, visit the [Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center's website](#).

**Questions** about this information? You can email [ReadOhio@education.ohio.gov](mailto:ReadOhio@education.ohio.gov).