

Kentucky administrator guidance on

READ-AT-HOME PLANS:

For use in implementing the SB 9: Read-to-Succeed Family Component

Just as launching astronauts into space requires a team of scientists, engineers, mathematicians and technicians all contributing their own expertise and working together to achieve a common goal, so too does setting children on a pathway to success. It takes their families, teachers, principals, afterschool programs and others working together to support each child in distinct ways.

The following recommendations were compiled by the partners from the Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools. They all relate to reading at home best practices and are organized by two key objectives for ensuring high-impact, research-based family engagement best practices: **Relationship Building** and **Two-Way Communications**.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND COMMUNICATION QUICK TIPS:

- Dedicate professional learning communities or other in-school time for teachers to make contacts and get to know families. Adding more to teachers' workload without dedicated time will not sustain strong relationship-building long-term.
- To build new teacher skills, ask expert teachers to share their strategies for building relationships with families with the goal of supporting successful student outcomes.
- Set expectations for responding to parents' messages and emails within 24 hours during the work week.
- Families, like teachers, are very busy. The shorter and clearer your communications are, the better.
- Parents prefer receiving short communications via text message from teachers. Using communication apps for education helps protect teacher privacy and time while allowing for the convenience of texting. Apps also save message chains if needed for future use. Check which apps are approved by your district. Use positive language on apps and wait to share delicate information at in-person meetings.
- Use inclusive language in your communication, so that all families – such as kinship guardians – know they are wanted and included.
- School-to-home communications should provide ways for families to respond and should give them an action to take to support student learning.

DIFFERENT ROLES FOR FAMILIES, EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

Different Roles:	<i>Building Relationships through Reading at Home</i>
Families	<p>Encourage families to have fun when reading with their child.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use classroom newsletters to share ideas that parents can use at home to build nurturing relationships with their child. Ask families for ideas too. True engagement is listening, not just telling.• Provide families with information about the importance of student choice of books to build a life-long reading habit.• Remind families that all reading is valuable. Connect families with your library so they have access to the popular books and books formats that children love, such as graphic novels and audiobooks.• Remind families that re-reading the same books children are drawn to is still reading! Families might find these to be “too easy;” however, children attach positive feelings to particular books, which is a great way to build positive feelings around reading time.• Encourage families to think about all the ways they read with their young child, including reading road signs or directions for a recipe.• Parents can help build reading skills at home with lots of hands-on guidance from teachers. Skill-building should not come at the cost of the parent-child relationship. Reading together at home should not be a chore for a child or parent. Focus on one or two skills per grade so families don’t feel overwhelmed.
Educators	<p>Use parents’ knowledge and experience to enrich classroom discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before starting a new unit, ask 1-2 families to help enrich the subject through writing a note to their child, telling a story to the class or visiting as a class reader. Inviting 1-2 families at a time keeps the workload manageable.• When families feel invited to share their experience, they are more connected to the classroom and more likely to participate.• Teachers should offer support and information to families in small doses on how students learn to read and why some students struggle.• Many high-quality instructional resources come with prepackaged family activities. Some families might need to see a teacher-demonstration of these materials to use them successfully.
Administrators	<p>Systems should carefully guard teacher in-school time so that family interactions are focused on relationships and are linked to student learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At schoolwide events, have stations where families can learn about reading at home and ways they can support learning at home.• Consider ways to provide books for home libraries so that children always have access to books in the home.• Dedicate time for teachers to connect and learn about the creative ways families extend learning at home.• Create a climate that uplifts teachers who creatively foster relationships with families.



DIFFERENT ROLES FOR FAMILIES, EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

<i>Different Roles:</i>	<i>Building Two-Way Communication through Reading at Home</i>
Families	<p>Give families information about how to talk with their child about their reading.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training opportunities on dialogic reading. Parents are not teachers, and they may need assistance asking questions while reading. • Use classroom messaging platforms (that are district approved and in compliance with the district’s acceptable use policy) to send a text with a question families can ask their child about a book every week. • Encourage families to help children make connections between the stories they read and their own lives.
Educators	<p>Draw on parent expertise about a child’s reading at home to enhance instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use classroom messaging platforms to ask weekly questions about reading at home to provide a pulse check on a child’s progress. Some potential questions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ What have you and your child enjoyed about reading together at home? ◦ What have you noticed that frustrates your child when they are reading? ◦ Have you noticed improvement in your child’s reading over the last month? ◦ What worries or concerns do you have about your child’s reading? ◦ How do you help your child push past frustrations? ◦ Does your child enjoy reading fiction, biographies, or fact-based books?
Administrators	<p>Reading-at-home systems and policies should prioritize two-way communication between families and teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly review your practices schoolwide to ensure a focus on two-way communication about reading. • Make sure that reading-at-home materials and supports are available in all home languages of your school community and that supports are accessible to parents with limited literacy.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES LINKED TO LITERACY

Relationship Building: Staff utilize literacy practices to build productive, meaningful relationships with students and families to build trust, confidence and authentic partnerships.

Welcoming Environment	Provide a literacy-rich environment in welcome areas and community gathering spaces throughout your building. Post welcoming print materials that are written in the home languages of your students' families on your walls. Offer a variety of reading materials for students and adults that provide information about your school and community.
Culturally Responsive	Ensure that all classrooms and school libraries have texts written by authors who represent your students' cultures and are published in families' home languages. Maintain and update these collections so students and families have opportunities to borrow materials throughout the school year.
Families as Co-Creators	Discuss with students' families the literacy strengths and needs of their children. Use data as a foundation for your conversations, while providing opportunities for families to share stories about the child's literacy experiences. Incorporate what you learn from these conversations into your reading plans for individual students. Share updates with families throughout the year in order to discuss ongoing literacy development in school and outside of school. Set reading goals jointly with families.
Relational: Built on Trust	Trust that parents want their children to be successful readers. Share strategies that support individual readers with families through written and non-written texts. Communicate consistently and follow-up with the families in order to provide clarification or support when needed.
Asset Based	Listen to families discuss literacy practices in their homes. Recognize opportunities to support families through resources, at-home strategies and recognition that reading at home occurs in a variety of formal and informal ways. Cooking with recipes, watching television with subtitles, using technical manuals to build something all serve as literacy practices that support the child's view of reading as a valued skill in their homes.



CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES LINKED TO LITERACY

Communication: A variety of constructive, two-way communication flows regularly between staff, students and families about literacy achievement and individual student literacy needs.

Interactive	Provide methods for families to easily contact classroom teachers and school staff to discuss student progress and needs. Use classroom messaging platforms to ask weekly questions about reading at home to provide a pulse check on a child's progress.
Family and Student Conferences	Give students the opportunity to reflect on their own literacy practices and to communicate what they have learned about themselves as readers and writers to their families. Publish student writing during Author Nights and invite families to hear the work of their children. Spend less time talking about the student and spend more time listening to the student.
Families and Students Engage in Diverse Roles	Give families the opportunity to participate in literacy-based classroom activities and to recommend reading materials for teacher use with the class. Communicate upcoming classroom themes so families can share what they know and how they might be able to support classroom activities.
Linked to Learning	Incorporate a literacy focus in all school events. Provide take-home reading materials that relate to event themes. Give students and their families the opportunity to add their voice to blogs or vlogs as they reflect on their experiences.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND COMMUNICATIONS:

- [Kentucky Department of Education Standards Family Guides](#)
- [Family Guides for Families Birth to 4 years](#)
- [Let's Learn Kentucky](#) and [Learn at Home](#) Resources from KET
- [Edutopia blogs](#) on reading logs, early literacy inclusion strategies and more.
- [Kentucky Family Friendly Tools, modules and school assessment](#)
- [Cultivating Readers Family Guide: Tips to grow reading skills from birth to age 8](#) ([English](#), [Spanish](#))

References: US Department of Education Dual Capacity-Building Framework (dualcapacity.org), Beyond the Bake Sale (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, Davies 2007), Powerful Partnerships (Mapp, Carver, Lander 2017), Everyone Wins (Mapp, Henderson, Cuevas 2022), with feedback Kentucky educators, families and community partners through the KY Collaborative for Families and Schools 2022 Advisory Council.



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