

## Developing Strong Foundational Literacy Skills in Children – It Takes All of Us!

Developing strong foundational literacy skills in the primary grades is crucial to children’s success as readers and writers. These skills include understanding that print represents speech, building oral language and academic vocabulary, connecting sounds with letters, sounding out words and spelling them, knowing what those words mean, reading fluently, and making meaning from text. Achieving high levels of literacy among young learners continues to be a challenge, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted learning nationwide. Only 33 percent of grade 4 students scored at proficient or above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2022. Student scores were lower than all previous assessment years since 2005 and not significantly different compared to 1992 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

It is important that teachers, educational leaders, families, and community members all work together to help children develop the literacy skills needed to be successful in school and beyond. These stakeholders must work to ensure that all children have access to the instruction and support they need to develop these critical skills.

Resources included in this framework were developed by the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) across the country as well as other offices of the U.S. Department of Education, and support stakeholders who play a role in children’s development of foundational literacy skills.

Click on each icon to access resources.



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### Communities

Communities are critical to children’s development and can be a valuable resource to support the development of their foundational literacy skills. Partnerships between community members, leaders, and businesses can provide opportunities for student learning that extend beyond time spent in school. Whether the community is rural or urban, there are resources that communities can provide through libraries, volunteer organizations, and partnerships to support children develop literacy skills. The support of the community is particularly important in areas where schools serve large populations of at-risk students and where children may not have access to resources at home. Community members and leaders as well as businesses have a vested interest in the education of their children that will someday be active citizens.



#### [Working Together to Support Early Childhood Literacy](#)

This documentary, produced by REL Midwest in partnership with Chicago public broadcasting station WTTW, depicts how community organizations can support the development of children’s early literacy skills. A viewing guide provides background, discussion questions, and links to additional related resources.



#### [It Takes a Village to Support Early Literacy](#)

A complement to the Working Together to Support Early Childhood Literacy documentary, this blog by REL Midwest provides insight into a literacy initiative planned in collaboration with principals, community leaders, and neighborhood residents.



#### [What Community Groups Can Do to Help All Children Read](#)

This article by the U.S. Department of Education on the Reading Rockets website lists steps that community groups can take to help more children learn to read.

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### State & District Leaders

States and school districts play a vital role in supporting the development of foundational literacy skills in the students they serve. States and school districts should establish a data infrastructure that provides them with the information they need to differentiate the allocation of resources and support to ensure students have equitable access to high-quality instruction. It is also important that states and school districts implement policies and practices that are grounded in evidence, and that they select and implement curriculum and tools that are helpful to teachers in delivering instruction to students.



#### [Rubric for Selecting Grades K-5 Reading Instructional Materials](#)

Evidence-based instructional materials support educators in effectively teaching foundational literacy skills to students. REL Southeast created this rubric for evaluating reading/language arts instructional materials for kindergarten to grade 5 to help educators assess how consistent instructional materials (including core reading programs and reading intervention programs) are with the scientific research on reading instruction. This document suggests procedures for using the rubric to review instructional materials and inform decisions at the state, district, and school level.



#### [Guide to Selecting Early Literacy Assessments](#)

This slide deck was produced by REL Midwest to help districts and schools review and select research-based literacy assessments. The presentation outlines the essential properties to consider when determining whether an assessment is appropriate for students.



#### [Intensifying Literacy Instruction](#)

This document, produced by the U.S. Department of Education, was designed to increase the capacity of educational leaders and practitioners to support a broad range of learners who need more literacy supports to become skilled readers.



#### [Supporting Michigan Learners Toward Excellence in Reading](#)

This documentary, produced by REL Midwest in partnership with Detroit Public Television, explores strategies used by two Michigan districts to accelerate reading growth for young learners. In the program, educators and leaders from Detroit Public Schools Community District and Chippewa Hills School District share their journeys of how they support. A video guide provides background, discussion questions, and links to other resources.

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### Teachers & School Leaders

The instruction that our school leaders support, and that our teachers deliver to students, should be grounded in evidence if students are to develop the foundational literacy skills they need to succeed. Teachers should have access to professional learning opportunities and tools to ensure their instruction is strong for all students.



#### [Phonological Awareness: The Sounds of Reading](#)

One of the first foundational reading skills to develop is phonological awareness, which is the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken words. REL Appalachia produced this blog to summarize the importance of phonological awareness and how to teach it. You will also find links to additional resources.



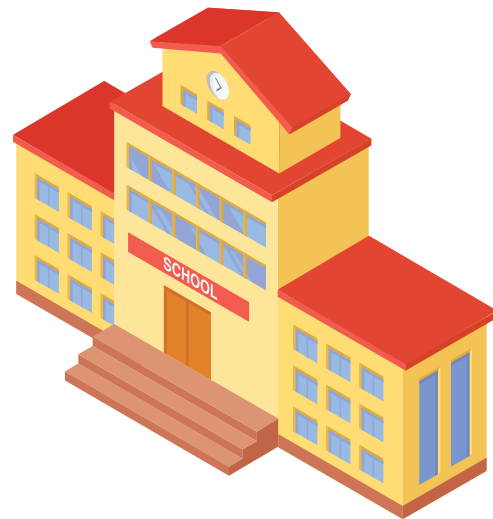
#### [Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade](#)

This What Works Clearinghouse practice guide, published by the Institute of Education Sciences, contains evidence-based recommendations for practitioners on providing instruction in foundational reading skills. The recommendations are followed “how-to steps” for implementing the recommendation and by sample activities.



#### [Professional Learning Community for the Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade practice guide](#)

REL Southeast developed a Professional Learning Community (PLC) Facilitators and Participants Guide to support educators in the implementation of recommendations from the *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade practice guide*. The PLC includes explicit instructions for facilitators, activities for participants, and videos that demonstrate the recommendations from the practice guide in action.



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### Families & Caregivers

Families/caregivers are valuable partners in supporting the instruction in foundational literacy skills that students receive at school. Providing families and caregivers with resources to work with their children at home, particularly those that are free and easy to use, is an investment that may result in children building their foundational literacy skills and developing a love for literacy. In addition, classroom teachers may be able to point families/caregivers to community resources and events related to literacy that may also be helpful.



#### [Leveraging Evidence-Based Practices at School and at Home: Making up for Lost Time in Early Literacy](#)

This blog, released by REL Appalachia highlights early literacy resources for use in the classroom and at home. These resources can be valuable as we continue to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.



#### [Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home](#)

REL Southeast developed this website as a resource for parent and caregivers of children in grades Kindergarten through 3rd grade. Based on the *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade* practice guide, the website uses family-friendly language and contains no-cost activities to promote literacy at home.



#### [Supporting Young English Learners at Home](#)

These family and caregiver activities (FCAs) produced by REL West are designed to provide simple, fun activities families and caregivers can use with young English learner children. They can be used to leverage cultural and linguistic assets and knowledge to strengthen language development in either the home language or English. The resources are based on the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School* and are available in multiple languages.