

Adding Family-Friendly Content to your School's RIMP Communications

Ohio Districts are now [required](#) to include in their Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan (RIMP) letters/communications to families specific aspects of literacy that the school will be focusing on with their child, based on the school's assessments. In the table below, we share 5 key early literacy concepts based on the Simple View of Reading, how to talk about these concepts with families, and activities families can try at home together to support their child's early literacy skill development, which can be added to a RIMP letter. We encourage you to consult our [guide for writing a family-friendly RIMP letter](#) as you continue to improve upon your school's communications for families.

What schools do to Support Early Literacy (EMIS Guide from ODE)	How to Talk about this Literacy Skill in Communications with Families	Family-Centered Activities to Add to your Communications with Families	Links to More Family Resources
Explicit instruction in Fluency	An important reading skill for children is to read like they speak in everyday conversations.	Things to try at home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask your child to read something out loud to you ● Read books more than once together ● Ask your child to read something at the same time as you (choral reading) 	5 Fluency-building Activities for families from Reading Rockets for all ages
Explicit instruction in Vocabulary	Part of learning to read is knowing all the words to say what you want to say.	Things to try at home: <p>“Kids need to hear new words many times to learn them well. We work on learning new words in school, and at home you help with this skill by having conversations with your child every day. Kids learn more words from conversations at mealtimes than they do from reading with you! For example, you can ask your child about what they enjoyed most about their school day, and what they enjoyed least. You can tell them about when you were in school, or talk about your favorite place to visit. We can't wait to learn more about your family and the conversations you're having as the school year goes on.”</p>	9 tips for families to build vocabulary from Iowa Reading Research Center. All ages Supporting Young English Learners at Home - 9 family activities from Institute of Educational Sciences Book Flix: Online Books to Develop Vocabulary Skills

<p>Explicit instruction in Phonological Awareness</p>	<p>“Part of learning to read involves knowing the names of letters and the sounds they make. For example, “This is the letter A. It makes lots of different sounds, like ay and ah.”</p>	<p>Things to try at home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make letter shapes in ketchup and talk about the different sounds they make. <p>“We work on this skill at school. You can help your child with letter names and sounds every day as well! Add pictures of letters around the house (on the refrigerator, in their room, on a placemat at the kitchen table) and talk about the letters and sounds they make. Tell them they are doing a great job when they say the correct letter and sound. If you have questions about what to try at home, let us know.”</p>	<p>Help families have fun learning letters</p> <p>1st Grade Family Guide for Phonological and Phonemic Awareness from Reading Rockets</p> <p>Books such as Doodling Dragons</p>
<p>Explicit instruction in Comprehension</p>	<p>It’s really important, when kids are learning to read, for them to understand how words work together to tell a story or explain something.</p>	<p>Things to try at home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gently correct your child if they read a word incorrectly in a way that changes the meaning of a sentence. Encourage them to slow down and sound out the word. ● When you misread a word, show your child how you go back and read it again so that the sentence makes sense. Everyone makes mistakes! 	<p>Video with Older Brother Helping with Kindergarten Reading Comprehension</p> <p>Video of Mother Encouraging Kindergarten Child’s Comprehension</p> <p>3rd grade: Character Consideration Activity video (and accompanying worksheet: Comprehension Worksheets for families)</p>
<p>Explicit instruction in Phonemic Awareness</p>	<p>Young children don’t hear the sounds within words. They hear “dog” but not “duh”-“aw”-“guh”. To become readers, they have to learn to hear these sounds.</p>	<p>Things to try at home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Practice the sounds in the alphabet. ● Use a mirror to look and talk about the way your mouth, tongue, and face look when you make certain sounds. 	<p>YouTube Video with Fun Family Games to Learn Sounds</p> <p>1st Grade Reading Rockets Family Guide</p>

<p>Activities and Videos Supporting All Areas of Early Literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PreK-1st, Daily Literacy Calendar of Ideas for Families ● Dolly Parton Imagination Library: Free Books Delivered Home, PK-5 yrs ● Florida Center of Reading Research Family Videos (Brown Bag Phonics, Rime House/PA, Front or Back/Phonics, and Contraction BingoVocabulary) ● Family Mealtime Conversation Starters ● Audiobooks to Enjoy as a Family from Noodle ● Worksheets and other activities, K-1st grade
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Keep this chart growing! Other potential early literacy skills you could add to your school's chart: Explicit instruction in Decoding, Explicit instruction in Sight Recognition, Explicit instruction in Writing, Communicative Language, Multi Model, Small Group Complex Text

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Build Trust with Families Through the Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan (RIMP) Letter

Every elementary school in Ohio sends letters home to families every year. One such letter received by thousands of families lets a family know their child's reading skills have been assessed and the child's skills are not on track for their grade level. It is a letter about a Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan (RIMP). The letter describes the school's plan to provide the instruction and supports the child will need to improve their reading skills. This letter, mandated in Ohio's education policy Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.608(B)(2)(a), presents an opportunity to schools for setting a foundation for a partnership with families.

While there are mandated points that the school must communicate in the letter, schools may communicate this information to families in a way that opens the door to a partnership and a trusting relationship between home and school.

There are only three key points that schools must communicate in writing to families according to the Revised Code:

1. Notification that the student has been identified as having a substantial deficiency in reading;
2. A description of the current services that are provided to the student; and
3. A description of the proposed supplemental instructional services and supports that will be provided to the student that are designed to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency.

While these three ingredients are required, using the exact wording from the Revised Code is not. It is not hard to imagine the fear, confusion, hurt, and/or anger a family may experience receiving a letter that uses terms such as "substantial deficiency" and "remediation." The same school's letter may also include technical literacy terms and assessment scores that are difficult for anyone except a literacy specialist to understand.

Schools can improve the RIMP letter to families and make it a more effective, student-focused, family engagement tool. This can be done by using ordinary terms and language that is accessible to the family. The words of the letter can help families understand, feel supported, have a sense of hope and certainty that the school is committed to their child. It is an opportunity to build trust between home and school.

The Role of Trust in Family Engagement

Schools, families, and the community all play unique and interconnected roles in partnership to support a child's learning. Essential to this partnership is trust. What builds trust between the home and the school? Beliefs, actions, and feelings all contribute to trust. First, when schools and families collaborate in support of a child, when they are actively engaged in this partnership, and when they direct their efforts to support the child's academic outcomes, collective trust grows. When families and school personnel both feel valued for their

expertise, when the focus is on solutions and when efforts seem to lead to results, collective trust grows. When families feel included, positive, and committed, collective trust grows. As a result of strong collective trust, families and school personnel each feel more effective in their separate roles - they each feel more confident in setting a high expectation for their children and students, they are resilient when they encounter difficulties, and seek and use feedback. In this way, trust is a keystone for partnerships between the school and the home, and ultimately the fuel that launches student success.

Communicating to Build Trust

Use the tool below to reflect on how well your current RIMP letters to families contribute to building trust with families. For each trust-building trait, reflect on the words of the current RIMP letter and determine if it is a strength or an area for improvement. When you are finished, revise your current RIMP letters to align with the policy requirements outlined above and to also serve as a powerful opportunity for building trust with families.

Trust-building traits	Keepers: What does the letter do well?	Polishers: What could be improved?
Is the tone collaborative, professional, and engaged?		
Is the focus oriented to academics?		
Does it value families' expertise?		
Is the message proactive, solutions-focused, and strategic?		
Is the mood inclusive, positive, and committed?		