



Supporting Family  
Engagement To  
Promote Literacy

Leadership

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Sarah Sayko, Ed.D.

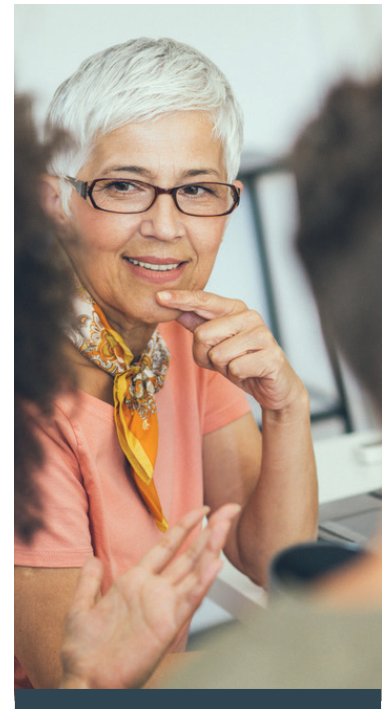
# Leadership Strategy 3

Allocate Resources for School Staff and Families To Increase  
Children's Literacy Achievement



# Introduction

When families and schools partner to support children’s literacy achievement, children have more opportunities to learn and practice essential literacy skills and grow as readers and writers. A dedicated school leader can initiate the collaboration needed to establish and maintain an effective literacy partnership between families and schools (or family-school literacy partnership).<sup>1</sup> Recognizing the importance of family-school partnerships, many state and federal educational initiatives require schools to include family engagement as part of school improvement plans. In Michigan, family engagement is a priority component for Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) school improvement plans, as well as a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).<sup>2</sup> This priority, as well as guidance from *MiFamily: Michigan’s Family Engagement Framework*<sup>3</sup> and the Michigan Department of Education’s endorsement of *Literacy Leadership: Essential School-Wide and Center-Wide Practices in Literacy*,<sup>4</sup> demonstrate the state’s commitment to family-school literacy partnerships. Leaders should allocate resources appropriately—including human, fiscal, time, technology, and material resources—to support family-school literacy partnerships. The fourth principle of Michigan’s Family Engagement Framework states that “Family engagement efforts are tailored to address all families so all learners are successful, including seeking barriers and removing them.” Therefore, this third leadership strategy brief focuses on how school leaders can allocate resources for school staff and families in ways that address barriers to increasing children’s literacy achievement. The evidence supporting these practices is informed by rigorous research conducted in schools.



# Resource Allocation

How can school leaders allocate resources for school staff and families to increase children’s literacy achievement?

School leaders who foster a culture of family-school partnership—and support a team of leaders in sharing this responsibility—are successful at getting more school staff to actively engage with families.<sup>5</sup> School leaders can help school staff strengthen family-school literacy partnerships by providing opportunities for staff members to refine their partnering skills with families. When school leaders allocate human, fiscal, time, technology, and material resources appropriately to school staff and families for this purpose, they will be more likely to actualize family-school literacy partnerships. To allocate these resources, consider the following strategies.

**Use Multiple Sources of Data To Make Decisions:** Knowledge is power; therefore, it is essential that families have information and data about their children’s literacy instruction, expectations, and progress. The type and amount of data that schools share, and the manner in which they share it, determine whether families have the information they need to be effective literacy partners. Information and data should be clear, accurate, and timely. When families understand this information and have opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback, they can encourage and reinforce their children’s school literacy learning at home. To support the use of multiple data sources to make decisions between school staff and families:

- Critically review how the school collectively works with families and develops goals for family-school literacy partnerships.
- Directly align family-school literacy partnership activities with children’s literacy achievement goals.
- Use multiple sources of data, such as demographic data, student achievement data, and implementation data on schoolwide and classroom-level family-school literacy partnership efforts, to make resource allocation decisions and plan and monitor your progress toward defined goals.<sup>6</sup> For example, data may reveal a human resource need for a community liaison, a fiscal resource need for staff professional development on communicating well with families, or a material resource need for a lending library for families.



- Provide families with the data and other information they need to be productive partners for children’s literacy learning. Survey families, host family focus groups, or talk to individual families to learn what information they need. Ask, “What data are most meaningful to families and most important for helping them support children’s literacy learning?”<sup>7</sup>

**Target Areas That Intensify Inequities:** Once the initial needs are identified, school leaders and staff should have ongoing conversations with families about what would help them support their children’s literacy learning. School leaders will likely need to target issues to use resources effectively and avoid widening gaps.<sup>8</sup> To target areas that intensify inequities in literacy learning:

- Identify and reach out to families and the community to share the school’s literacy vision, mission, and goals and seek their input and support. To ensure that all families are being reached, school leaders can ask themselves, “Who lives in this neighborhood?”; “What stake do they have in the literacy success of our students?”; and “How can we engage them in supporting our literacy efforts and help students achieve positive literacy outcomes”?
- Provide time and resources for school staff to differentiate strategies and materials for families to support literacy learning at home. For example, determine which families need practical tips and activities for supporting their children’s oral language, vocabulary, writing, phonological awareness, or understanding of letter-sound relationships. Or, determine who might need tips, support, and resources to make home literacy activities with their child more effective, like creating regular routines and habits, helping with self-regulation, or learning how to have more frequent interactions during literacy learning.<sup>9</sup>



# Resources

The following resources offer additional information and guidance to help principals provide effective literacy leadership in their schools, including allocating resources for school staff and families to support family-school literacy partnerships:

- The Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, General Education Leadership Network, Michigan Early Literacy Task Force developed [\*Literacy Leadership: Essential School-Wide and Center-Wide Practices in Literacy\*](#). It is an excellent resource for school leaders as they develop effective organizational practices in literacy leadership.
- REL-Pacific’s [\*Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education Part 4: Engaging All in Data Conversations\*](#) helps educators determine which student data are important to share with families and community members and how to share such data in a meaningful way.
- This [\*family engagement information brief\*](#) from The Ohio State University provides pre-K through grade 3 teachers with information to improve their strategies for partnering with families for children’s language and literacy development.
- From the *Handbook on Family and Community Engagement*, read about “[\*Making Data Matter in Family Engagement\*](#).”
- From the Global Family Research Project, read about [\*Professional Development in Family Engagement: A Few Often-Overlooked Strategies for Success\*](#).



# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Auerbach, S. (2011). Conceptualizing leadership for authentic partnerships: A continuum to inspire practice. In S. Auerbach (Ed.), *School leadership for authentic family and community partnerships: Research perspectives for transforming practice* (pp. 29–52). Routledge.
- <sup>2</sup> Michigan Department of Education. (2020). *Michigan Department of Education (MDE) multi-tiered system of supports practice profile*. [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MDE\\_MTSS\\_Practice\\_Profile\\_5.0July2020\\_ADA\\_700696\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MDE_MTSS_Practice_Profile_5.0July2020_ADA_700696_7.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Michigan Department of Education. (2019). *MiFamily: Michigan's family engagement framework*. <https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-5233---,00.html>
- <sup>4</sup> Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, General Education Leadership Network Early Literacy Task Force. (2016). *Literacy leadership: Essential school-wide and center-wide practices in literacy*. <https://literacyessentials.org/downloads/getdocs/schoolandcenterlevelessentials.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> Jung, S. B., & Sheldon, S. (2020). Connecting dimensions of school leadership for partnerships with school and teacher practices of family engagement. *School Community Journal*, 30(1), 9–32.
- <sup>6</sup> Education Endowment Foundation. (2019). *Working with parents to support children's learning: Guidance report*. [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/ParentalEngagement/EEF\\_Parental\\_Engagement\\_Guidance\\_Report.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/ParentalEngagement/EEF_Parental_Engagement_Guidance_Report.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> Garcia, M. E., Frunzi, K., Dean, C. B., Flores, N., & Miller, K. B. (2016). *Toolkit of resources for engaging families and the community as partners in education: Part 4: Engaging all in data conversations* (REL 2016–152). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED569113>

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Sheila Brookes, Ph.D., is a subject matter expert for the Region 8 Comprehensive Center and a research analyst for AEM Corporation. Dr. Brookes has an extensive background in early childhood education, with experience as a preschool teacher, university lab school director, and university professor.

Kerry Hoffman, Ph.D., is the Indiana Co-Coordinator for the Region 8 Comprehensive Center. Dr. Hoffman's diverse professional background in the field of education includes roles as a classroom teacher, assistant professor, school and district administrator, state assessment consultant, and university center director prior to joining ICF as a senior consultant.

Sarah Sayko, Ed.D., (lead author) is a technical assistance specialist for the Region 8 Comprehensive Center, a deputy director of the National Center on Improving Literacy and a senior research associate at RMC Research Corporation. She has previously served as a literacy content specialist with the Center on Instruction, a technical assistance provider with the National Reading Technical Assistance Center, an elementary reading coach, and a literacy specialist.

Amy B. Colton, Ph.D. is the MI Co-Coordinator for Region 8 Comprehensive Center. Dr. Colton's background in the field of education includes roles as a classroom teacher for students with special needs, a professional learning consultant at the district and international level, a teacher-in-residence for the National Board for Professional Learning, and an author.

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