

FAMILY'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AT HOME



Without thinking too hard, you can probably list many ways that you show up to help children in your life become great readers, writers, and communicators. The everyday tasks you do most likely look different from what your neighbors, friends, and colleagues do for their children. That's because there are different ways to help a child learn at home! Even though our actions might look different, they all probably align with adults playing one of these six roles: **supporters, encouragers, modelers, monitors, advocates, and co-creators.**

These diverse roles that families play to support learning at home come from a research-based framework for Family-School Partnerships called the **Dual Capacity Framework**. On the following pages, you'll find concrete ways to play each of the six roles at home to help children - from Kindergarten to High School - develop strong reading, writing, and communication skills.

Before you read about each role, spend a few minutes becoming familiar with Colorado's Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, and Communicating. These guides outline what students should be able to do in literacy by the end of each grade:

Kindergarten | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | High School

Familiarity with these standards will help you have a stronger partnership with your child's literacy teachers. But remember, all kids don't follow the same learning path! As you look at the standards and the rest of this guide, you might find it helpful to read standards for the grades above and/or below your child's so that you understand how children progress in their literacy development.

Finally, remember that learning to read, write, and effectively communicate is a lifelong pursuit. Even as adults, we still learn new vocabulary, practice before public speaking, and edit our own writing on a daily basis. To help understand why learning to read and write can be challenging, check out this **Science of Reading** video from the Colorado Department of Education.

There is no one way to play any of these roles, and we know that there are things you already do that are not in this guide. As you read the tips and recommendations on the following pages, we hope you are inspired to try something new at home to help your child become confident and skilled readers, writers, and communicators.

FAMILIES AS SUPPORTERS: PARTNERING FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Maybe more than any other role, the way you show up as a **supporter** changes as your child grows! But at its core, the supporter makes sure a child has the time, space, and help at home to build their reading, writing and communication skills.

ALL GRADES

- Provide space and time at home for homework. Establish daily routines in your family so that everyone knows when it is time to focus. A comfortable and quiet work area can make a huge difference!
- If your child is very active, make sure they get brain breaks to exercise when completing difficult literacy tasks.



- Talk to your child regularly, using rich vocabulary to help expand their language skills, which are foundational for literacy development.
- Be available to assist with literacy assignments, editing essays, or brainstorming writing ideas when your child feels stuck. Try to offer guidance without taking over!

GRADES K-5

- Ask children questions about what they are reading that require more than yes/no answers. For example:



Consider asking about character, plot, theme, and setting.

What do you think will happen next?

Why do you think the character did that?

- Read together every day! Bedtime stories, especially when you take turns reading aloud, create opportunities for bonding and expose children to new vocabulary, sentence structures, and ideas.



GRADES 6-8

- Create a schedule to help your child get to bed a little earlier with a book! Even the most reluctant middle schoolers really appreciate the downtime and might find they like it. They also need plenty of rest for their brains to keep growing.
- Help your child make connections between their reading and real life by discussing how stories relate to their experiences or current events. Middle school students love talking about themselves!



GRADES 9-12



- Read books your child is reading at school and talk about them at dinner or find interesting news articles related to their units of study to read and discuss together.
- Help your student access practice tests and study guides for literacy-based standardized tests (e.g., SAT, ACT) to improve reading comprehension and writing skills.
- Help your child with organization and time management of larger literacy projects. For example, if your child is responsible for writing a literary analysis of a novel, help them plan out a calendar when they will read the book, create a first draft, edit, and turn in a final copy.



SUPPORTING LITERACY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

As children grow, your role as a **supporter** evolves, but the core goal remains the same: providing time, space, and encouragement to strengthen their literacy skills. In the early grades, this may involve reading together, sounding out words, and exploring stories, while in high school, it could mean guiding organization, study habits, and managing complex assignments. Your ongoing support is crucial at every stage, fostering a love of reading and writing that builds a strong foundation for lifelong learning, academic achievement, and personal growth.

FAMILIES AS ENCOURAGERS: PARTNERING FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Think about the ways your friends and family **encourage** you! Sometimes, this might be words of affirmation, and other times it might be a push to persevere through difficult tasks. As the **Science of Reading** tells us, literacy development is no easy feat! Becoming a skilled reader, writer, and communicator takes effort and time. Your encouragement goes a long way, and it can look different at different ages. Patience and positive reinforcement are key to helping them succeed.

ALL GRADES

- Be your child's #1 fan and celebrate literacy achievements, no matter how small! Positive reinforcement boosts confidence and motivation.
- Encourage daily reading by setting aside time for reading at home, whether during a family quiet hour or before bed.



GRADES K-5

- Nurture their curiosity by providing a wide range of reading materials. This can include magazines, picture books, chapter books, anthologies, comic books, and more!
- Tell stories of your life! Kids love hearing stories about their families, especially when they were young.

Include a clear beginning, middle, and end, which helps kids understand the plot and narration.



- Have paper and pencil at the ready! Kids will surprise you and sit down to write silly stories, lists, and notes when they are "bored." Don't fret about spelling during fun writing time.

GRADES 6-8

- Provide time for your child to write creatively at home, such as by keeping a journal, writing letters, or composing poems or short stories. Encourage them to share what they write with friends and teachers.
- Show interest in what your child is learning at school. If the school is focusing on a particular topic, find documentaries, magazines, articles, and other books to have around for them to read or watch with you.



GRADES 9-12



- Praise effort, especially when students tackle difficult texts or writing assignments, emphasizing that growth comes from persistence.
- Suggest journaling, blogging, or writing short stories outside of school assignments to foster a personal connection to writing. Ask your child to share their writing with you and give them positive feedback.
- Encourage your child to use apps that support reading and writing skills, such as Grammarly or e-reader apps like Kindle. Suggest audiobooks to build comprehension and vocabulary in an accessible format.



ENCOURAGING LITERACY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Your **encouragement** is essential in helping children navigate the challenges of literacy development. Whether through celebrating small wins, fostering a love of reading and writing, or providing patience and support, your positive reinforcement builds their confidence and perseverance. As they grow, your role as an encourager evolves, but the power of your belief in their abilities remains constant, helping them become skilled and confident readers, writers, and communicators.



FAMILIES AS MODELERS: PARTNERING FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

As a caregiver, you are a **model** for your child—more so than any other adult in their life! Your child likely watches what you do and what you say, and imitates your behaviors. This means that you have the opportunity to set an example at home that will support your child’s literacy development. When you model positive reading, writing and communication behaviors, you inspire and guide your child to build strong literacy skills. Modeling the importance of literacy helps to create a cohesive and supportive environment at home that supports what your child is learning in school.

ALL GRADES

- Let your child see you reading for pleasure so they understand that reading is enjoyable and important. Parents can read books, newspapers, or even digital content, showing that reading is a lifelong habit.
- By participating in school literacy nights, author visits, or family literacy programs, families show their support for the importance of reading and writing in their child’s life. This also shows the child that adults take literacy seriously.



GRADES K-5

- Include your child in writing-related tasks at home, like making grocery lists, drafting thank-you notes, or creating a family newsletter. This demonstrates the real-life application of writing skills.
- Kids have vivid imaginations and love storytelling. Help them become articulate communicators by taking turns adding to a made-up story. Model how you make up stories to be funny, spooky, sad, or shocking to get kids to think about different plots, settings, tones, and actions.
- Use a rich vocabulary in conversations with your child. Explain new words, use them in context, and encourage your child to use them as well.



GRADES 6-8



- Demonstrate how you use literacy skills every day! Let them see you writing emails, reading books, researching home improvements, etc. Share with them when you learn new things from reading.
- Share insights about the books or articles you're reading. Discuss interesting points or ask questions about the content. This shows your child that reading is an active, engaging process.
- Show kids how you tackle new words. If you come across a new word or one you don't know the meaning of, say aloud, *"I wonder what this word means..."* Then, grab a dictionary or look up the meaning online together.



GRADES 9-12



- Take up new learning challenges (like reading about a new topic or skill) and share that journey with your child. Show them that being a reader and writer makes life more interesting.
- Start a family book club! Pick a book you and your child will read and discuss together.

MODELING LITERACY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

As a **model** for your child, you play a crucial role in shaping their literacy habits. By demonstrating positive reading, writing, and communication behaviors, you create a supportive environment that encourages your child to value literacy.

Whether it's reading for pleasure, discussing books, or using rich vocabulary in everyday tasks, your actions inspire them to build strong literacy skills that will benefit them throughout their life. Your involvement shows that literacy is not only essential for school success but also a lifelong pursuit that enriches daily living.



FAMILIES AS MONITORS: PARTNERING FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

It is easy to miss information in today's fast-paced world, especially one with so many apps! Playing the role of **monitor** in your child's literacy development means you know what your child should know and can do as they grow as a reader. Monitoring your child's growth in literacy also means that you know how to access online grade books at home, ask their teachers the right questions, and interpret the information the school shares with you about your child's literacy skills. When you play the role of monitor, you can ensure that your child is on track with their literacy development and, when they are not, help them access support and interventions.

ALL GRADES

- Ask your child's teacher(s) questions about their literacy development to ensure you have all the information you need to support their growth at home. **Consider asking:**

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What reading level should my child be on at their grade level?

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What is my child's current reading level?

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What should my child know and be able to do when it comes to reading, writing and communicating?



If your child is **behind**, ask what you can do to help catch them up?



If your child is **at or above** their targeted reading level, ask what you can do to make sure they remain engaged and continue to grow.



- Read the Colorado Department of Education’s **testing resource for educators and parents** and ask your child’s teacher which tests will be administered and how you will receive the results.



GRADES K-5



- Before parent-teacher conferences, email your child's teacher asking for copies of any literacy testing data that will be discussed at the meeting. By having that data early, you will be prepared to ask the right questions, when you have face time with the teacher.
- Check if your child is sounding out hard words or skipping over them when they read. When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have them re-read that sentence. Often, kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they've just read!

GRADES 6-8

- Observe reading habits at home. Check if your child is reading regularly and discuss books with them. Ask the teacher for recommendations on age-appropriate books and reading strategies.
- Ask your child’s English teacher for assessment results and progress reports. Teachers can provide insights into these assessments and what they indicate about your child's literacy skills.



GRADES 9-12

- Set a daily or weekly time for reviewing reading and writing assignments with your child to ensure they are completed on time and with good effort.
- Regularly check the school’s online grade book or portal for updates on assignments, grades, and literacy-focused tasks, ensuring your child stays on track. Even better if your child learns how to check their grades, too!

MONITORING LITERACY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

As a **monitor** of your child's literacy, you stay informed about their progress and access support when needed. Asking the right questions and engaging with school data helps ensure they stay on track.

FAMILIES AS ADVOCATES: PARTNERING FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Families who show up as **advocates** for their children when it comes to literacy development ensure that their child has the necessary support, resources, and opportunities to build strong reading and writing skills.

As a family, you can instill in your children that literacy is not just about reading and writing but also about understanding the world, advocating for oneself, and participating in society. Let your child see you advocate for better literacy resources and programs in your school and community.

ALL GRADES

- In multilingual households, advocate for reading and writing in both languages; there is immense value in being literate in multiple languages.
- Ask your child's school what additional resources or interventions, such as tutoring, specialized reading programs, or assessments for learning differences like dyslexia, are available



through the school. See specific questions to ask teachers so you know what to advocate for on the Family as Monitor page.



- Advocate for literacy by participating in community-wide efforts, such as promoting reading initiatives at local libraries, volunteering in literacy programs, or starting neighborhood reading clubs or book drives.

GRADES K-5

- Share observations with the teacher because you know your child best! If your child is struggling with something or showing particular interest in certain aspects of literacy, communicate this with the teacher so they can tailor support and inspire growth.



- Ask your child's teacher to allow for some individual reading preferences by allowing kids to select books that interest them, even if they are not traditional or academic. This can include graphic novels, comics, or non-fiction books. Advocate to build a culture that loves reading!



GRADES 6-8



- Push for the availability of after-school reading and writing clubs, book fairs, or literacy tutoring programs to ensure that children have continued support and inspiration outside regular school hours.
- Become familiar with the books that your child has access to. Ask for inclusive and diverse books to be included in your child's school curriculum to ensure

that students are exposed to a wide range of perspectives, cultures, and experiences through literature.

GRADES 9-12

- Ask for access to digital literacy programs through your school or district. Access to e-books, educational apps, and online resources that enhance reading and writing skills can introduce children to a whole new way to enjoy and improve literacy.
- If your child is struggling, advocate for tailored interventions like one-on-one tutoring, access to a reading specialist, or placement in a literacy support class. Don't assume that a child still struggling with literacy skills in high school will get the help they need — be proactive!



ADVOCATING LITERACY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Families who **advocate** for their child's literacy provide essential support for reading and writing success. By encouraging a love for literacy, collaborating with schools, and engaging in community efforts, they help children develop the skills to navigate the world and participate fully in society. Consistent advocacy ensures children have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

FAMILIES AS CO-CREATORS: PARTNERING FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

When families are **co-creators** in their child's literacy journey, they work collaboratively with educators to improve reading, writing, and communication programs and practices. The role of a co-creator goes beyond that of a volunteer. As co-creators, families show up as true partners to help solve problems, make decisions, and share ideas that make literacy programs stronger.

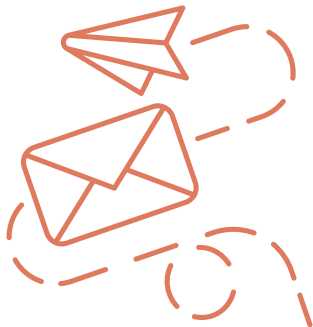


Every family engages in literacy-rich activities, often connected to their cultural background at home. Imagine the possibilities if educators fully understood what your child learns at home and connected those experiences to the lessons in school. When these connections are made, children's literacy development is more relevant and authentic.

Unlike the other roles that parents play to support literacy development, the suggestions below are intended to create connections between families' strengths and cultural knowledge and what students learn in school, and are appropriate for any grade.

CO-CREATE FAMILY-EDUCATOR MEETINGS TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

- Collaborate with literacy teachers to set specific, achievable literacy goals for your child. Work together to create a plan to reach these goals and track progress over time.



- Before parent-teacher conferences, email your child's teacher with any concerns or questions you have about your child's reading and writing. Conferences are short, but this strategy will help you drive the conversation.



CO-CREATE INCLUSIVE CONTENT AND COMMUNICATION

- Ask your child's teacher about the books they will be reading and the topics they will be learning in school. If you notice that your family's culture or background is not represented in the content, suggest culturally relevant books and topics to the teacher. Work with teachers to create diverse reading lists that reflect the cultures and interests of all students and encourage other families to get involved in this effort.



- If communication from the school only comes in the dominant language, help the school think through translation by first making them aware of the issue.

- Ask that all caring adults for your child are receiving the same messages from school. For example, it is often the mom who receives notes and calls from teachers. If this happens, kindly ask the teachers to include dad, or other members of the family, who support your child's literacy development in all communication.



- Find an educator in your community and co-host a book club for families and students. This allows for true partnership — you bring a wealth of cultural knowledge and the educator brings the skill of being a teacher.



- Encourage your child's school to expand their definition of literacy. For example, if your family has strong oral traditions encourage a unit on storytelling to give your child a chance to show off their communication skills!

CO-CREATING LITERACY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

When families **co-create** their child's literacy journey, they partner with educators to enhance reading, writing, and communication programs, making learning more meaningful and relevant. By sharing cultural experiences and offering ideas, families help build inclusive literacy programs that reflect diverse perspectives. This collaboration strengthens the connection between home and school, ensuring that literacy development is supported in ways that are engaging, authentic, and beneficial for every student's growth.