



Advocacy Toolkit for Children Struggling to Read 9.0

Goal: Reading success for all children.

Learning to read is a human right. This toolkit, now in its 9th edition, has been developed to inform and motivate parents, physicians, educators, and other professionals to speak up for evidence based literacy instruction. The Ontario Human Rights Commission released a [Two Year Right To Read Status Report](#) in the fall of 2024 showing the progress (and lack thereof in some areas) in Ontario in implementing the recommendations from the 2022 inquiry report. There has been prompt engagement from the Ontario Ministry of Education with significant changes made to the Language Curriculum. Challenges remain in teacher training, accommodations and professional assessments. There is still a need for this toolkit to help with understanding of the issues related to evidence based reading instruction and how best to support students who are struggling.

In other news, Paediatricians now have guidance from the Canadian Paediatric Society on how to address the needs of children struggling to read, including recommendations for office screening of literacy skills and advocacy strategies in a recently released [position statement](#).

Reading is a complex skill that most children learn from good teaching. Children are not born knowing how to read, and there is no reading centre in the brain. A language rich environment, including exposure to the sophisticated vocabulary and grammar in books, helps children acquire the oral language and knowledge to support reading. But this is not enough for children to become readers themselves.

Years of scientific research (aka the Science of Reading) show the most effective teaching approach for reading involves direct instruction, delivered systematically, using phonemic awareness and phonics, and starting early. Other components include building oral language, vocabulary, morphology, spelling and comprehension. Regular screening is required to ensure those who aren't learning at the expected pace have access to a more intensive program immediately. With this approach, 95% of students can learn to read well.

Please use this toolkit in a spirit of collaboration. Building relationships between stakeholders in education will help optimize student achievement and well-being. We are better together.

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1. **New** – Two-Year Update Right to Read Inquiry Report
<https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/two-year-update-right-read-inquiry-report#Right%20to%20Read%20Status%20Report>
2. **The Right to Read Inquiry – Ontario Human Rights Commission**
The report <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report>
3. **The Simple View of Reading** <https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/learning-read-simple-view-reading>
4. **Summaries of research on the Science of Reading**
 - a. The Rose Report: Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Reading Difficulties
<https://www.idaontario.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Rose-2009-Identifying-and-teaching-children-and-young-people-with-dyslexia-and-literacy-difficulties.pdf>
 - b. Teaching Reading is Rocket Science by Louisa C. Moats
<https://www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/teaching-reading-is-rocket-science-2020.pdf>
 - c. Neitzel, A. J., Lake, C., Pellegrini, M., & Slavin, R. E. (2021). A Synthesis of Quantitative Research on Programs for Struggling Readers in Elementary Schools. *Reading Research Quarterly*.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.379>

5. Tier 1 Reading Instruction

- a. <https://ufli.education.ufl.edu/foundations/>

6. Evidence Based Programs for Reading Intervention

Key elements of effective programs include explicit, sequential instruction based on phonics and phonemic awareness skills. Children should be screened starting in Kindergarten, with struggling readers offered a more intensive program immediately. Reading comprehension is the ultimate goal, but children who struggle with decoding do not develop the fluency needed for good reading comprehension. There is no one size fits all here.

- a. SRA reading mastery
<https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/aphd/UserFiles/File/Reading%20Mastery.doc>
- b. Empower <http://www.sickkids.ca/empower/index.html>
- c. Lexia Core 5 Reading <https://www.lexialearning.com/core5>
- d. National Institute for Direct Instruction <https://www.nifdi.org>
- e. Rave-O
<http://www.voyagersopris.com/curriculum/subject/literacy/rave-o/research-results>
- f. What Works Clearing House, Institute for Education Sciences in US
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/21#tab-summary>
- g. What are the essential components of an evidence based reading program?
<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/12-components-research-based-reading-programs>
- h. List of validated reading programs in the UK
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/choosing-a-phonics-teaching-programme/list-of-phonics-teaching-programmes>

7. What physicians can do to help their patients with reading difficulties

- a. Educate yourself about literacy issues
 - i. **NEW** Read the 2024 position statement - Literacy in school-aged children: A paediatric approach to advocacy and assessment

<https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/literacy-in-school-aged-children>

- ii. Be aware of your local school board and provincial resources and procedures
- b. Connect with organizations that already advocate for change to reading instruction
 - i. PONDA
 - ii. Pediatricians Alliance of Ontario (OMA)
 - iii. Canadian Pediatric Society
- c. Promote literacy with your patients: CPS Statement
<https://www.cps.ca/documents/position/read-speak-sing-promoting-literacy>
- d. Identify young children at risk of reading struggles
 - i. Family history of dyslexia
 - ii. Impairment in speech and language development
 - iii. English not spoken in the home
 - iv. Disadvantaged socioeconomically
 - v. **Screen** children in your office using quick and free [acadiance tools](#)
- e. Include dyslexia in the differential diagnosis of school age children struggling with low self-esteem, anxiety, inattention, depression, and disruptive behaviours
- f. Consider referral of a child at risk of dyslexia to an SLP trained in early literacy, given the high prevalence of comorbid speech and language difficulties
- g. Request evidence based interventions in your consultation reports and letters to schools to support your patients with learning disabilities
- h. Request a meeting with the teacher/principal at your patient's school
 - i. Billing with code K704 (Ontario) can be used if 2 school personnel and a parent are present, 10 minute intervals \$31.25, includes telephone conferencing
- i. Develop a positive working relationship with your local school board
 - i. Invite school psychologists, special ed teachers, speech language pathologists to relevant lectures, symposiums, workshops in your area

- ii. Develop a working group with school representatives to share information and develop pathways to help students with complex learning, behavioural and mental health needs
- iii. Attend school case conferences for your most hard to serve patients/students to help find solutions together
- iv. Have a policy of welcoming school staff to call you or attend office visits to help serve the needs of complex and hard to serve patients/students
- v. Meet with the superintendent of special education at your local school board(s) to discuss their approach to reading education
- j. Use social media to get your message out: many teachers are on X (Previously Twitter)
- k. Consider speaking to the media or writing an opinion piece for a newspaper
- l. Motivate parents and students to speak up: they are the ultimate stakeholders

8. Resources for families:

The role of parents/guardians as their child's first teachers is a critical one, and there are countless ways parents can encourage literacy in the home starting from birth. Daily dialogic reading is important but not sufficient in helping children with significant reading challenges. Tutoring using evidence based strategies is often helpful, but expensive and hard to find in some parts of the province/country. Advocating for your child at school starts with speaking to their classroom teacher, special education teacher and/or principal. For help in obtaining appropriate intervention and accommodations in school, you may need to get help from professional advocates. Physicians now have [guidance](#) from the Canadian Paediatric Society on how to support children with literacy challenges, including how to screen in the office and to address associated behavioural and mental health challenges.

- a. Promoting literacy from birth
http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/read_speak_sing_to_you_r_baby

- b. Promoting literacy in school aged children
http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/promoting_reading_in_school_aged_children
- c. OHRC policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-accessible-education-students-disabilities>
- d. Making a Human Rights claim to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal If your child is not receiving the required intervention/accommodations in school <https://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/how-guides-and-faqs/human-rights-ontario#HRT0>
 - i. Arch Disability Law Centre
<https://archdisabilitylaw.ca/services/legal-services/>
 - ii. Justice for Children and Youth <https://jfcy.org/en/>
 - iii. Human Rights Legal Support Centre Toll Free: 1-866-625-5179
- e. International Dyslexia Association, Ontario branch – lots of great resources, videos, meetings
<https://www.idaontario.com/supporting-your-child-at-home/>
- f. LDAO website provides education, knowledge and resources to families <http://www.ldathome.ca>
- g. Mobile app with preK to Grade 1 activities that targets literacy and numeracy <http://more.starfall.com/info/about.php>
- h. Guide to helping your child to read at home.
<http://www.fivefromfive.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/homereading.pdf>
- i. Free online books to help you teach your child to read
www.parkerphonics.com
- j. **Integra** is a children's mental health agency providing evidence-informed, therapeutic programs and services to children, youth and their families who are dealing with mental health issues complicated

by learning disabilities (LDMH).

<http://www.childdevelop.ca/programs/integra-program>

- k. Reading rockets has lots of helpful information

<http://www.readingrockets.org>

- l. TD Summer Reading Club: available at a library near you!

- m. Neuropsychologist who researches the brain basis of learning and memory. Website has many useful articles and resources.

<http://www.danielwillingham.com/articles.html>

9. Resources for educators

- a. **New** Foundations for Literacy An Evidence Based Toolkit for the Effective Reading and Writing Teacher

<https://www.ldatschool.ca/learning-modules/supporting-early-literacy/overview/>

- b. **New** Supporting Early Literacy in Alignment with the Right to Read Report

<https://www.ldatschool.ca/learning-modules/supporting-early-literacy/overview/>

- c. **New** Structured Literacy

<https://www.idaontario.com/effective-reading-instruction/>

- d. **New** – Professional Learning

<https://www.idaontario.com/professional-learning/>

- e. Empowering teachers with knowledge supporting best practices.

<https://www.literacyhow.org/>

- f. Free validated **screening tests** (print only) using Curriculum Based Measures for identification and monitoring students K-Gr6

<https://acadiancelearning.org/acadiance-reading/k-grade6/>

- g. YouTube presentation on **how to use screening tools** to drive literacy instruction

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fm8JYyE4otY>

- h. www.raz-kids.com

- i. 2020 report to the American Federation of Teachers by Louisa C.

Moats <https://www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/teaching-reading-is-rocket-science-2020.pdf>

- j. Free evidence based resources for reading instruction

www.parkerphonics.com

10. Resources for physicians

Physicians have an important role to play in promoting literacy in their practices. Students are also frequently referred to paediatricians to help sort out why they are struggling in school.

- a. **New** - Literacy in school-aged children: A paediatric approach to advocacy and assessment
<https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/literacy-in-school-aged-children>
- b. **New** - Evaluating and caring for children with a suspected learning disorder in community practice
<https://cps.ca/en/documents/position/learning-disorder>
- c. Literacy Resources for physicians <https://www.cps.ca/en/tools-ouits/literacy-resources-for-physicians>
- d. Promoting Early Literacy: a CPS Strategic Priority
<https://cps.ca/en/literacy>
- e. Children with School Problems – A physician’s manual
<https://www.cps.ca/en/issues-questions/children-with-school-problems>
- f. Jacob G, et al. Literacy Promotion by Health Care Professionals: A Comprehensive Biomedical and Psychosocial Approach. Paediatr Child Health, 2017;Vol XX, p 1-6.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321227359_Literacy_promotion_by_health_care_professionals_A_Comprehensive_biomedical_and_psychosocial_approach

11. Resources for Psychologists

- a. Consensus statement on guidelines for assessment and diagnosis of children, adolescents and adults with Learning Disability
[http://www.psych.on.ca/getattachment/37646d71-1469-4731-a3c6-55a458a8238f/OPA-Guidelines-for-Diagnosis-and-Assessment-of-Learning-Disabilities-Sept-7-2018-\(1\)-1.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](http://www.psych.on.ca/getattachment/37646d71-1469-4731-a3c6-55a458a8238f/OPA-Guidelines-for-Diagnosis-and-Assessment-of-Learning-Disabilities-Sept-7-2018-(1)-1.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf)

12. Other Advocacy Groups

- a. Dyslexia Canada <http://www.dyslexiacanada.org/>

- b. International Dyslexia Association Ontario
<https://www.idaontario.com>
- c. Decoding Dyslexia Ontario
https://www.facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaOntario/?ref=page_internal
- d. Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation <https://childrensliteracy.ca/>
- e. International Foundation for Effective Reading Intervention
<http://www.iferi.org/iferi-inform-factsheets/>

13. Resources for other learning/behaviour issues

- a. **NEW** Writing and spelling difficulties often accompany reading challenges
 - i. **Practicing Writing Skills at Home:**
 - [Printing like a Pro](#)
 - [Reading Universe: Handwriting and Letter Formation Skill Explainer](#)
 - [K-5 Learning: Grammar and Writing](#)
 - [K-5 Learning: Spelling](#)
 - ii. **Further information:**
 - [Reading Rockets: Writing Disabilities](#)
 - [Reading Rockets: Teaching Handwriting](#)
 - [Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario: Writing and LDs](#)
 - [Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario: Dysgraphia](#)
- b. Free Teacher resources for math instruction
www.knowledgehook.com
- c. Many individuals with learning difficulties also struggle with:
 - i. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder www.caddra.ca
 - ii. Tourette's Syndrome www.tourette.ca
 - iii. Developmental Coordination Disorder www.canchild.ca
 - iv. Language Disorder
 - v. Autism Spectrum Disorder www.autismontario.com
 - vi. Mental health conditions
<http://www.childdevelop.ca/sites/default/files/files/Sept%202%20Integra%20LDMH%20Handbook%202016.pdf>

Glossary of terms

<https://www.teachspiced.ca/glossary-old>

<https://www.ldatschool.ca/learn-about-lds/glossary-terms/>