Guiding Principle
All classroom literacy and intervention initiatives involve children in active, constructive learning during the process of reading and writing continuous texts. (See the Guide, pages 19–20.)

The emphasis in this toolkit is on teaching and learning and is specifically designed for classroom teachers, interventionists, and all other professionals involved in literacy instruction. Administrators will gain a better understanding of teaching practices that strengthen a comprehensive plan that promises literacy for every child.

The number of sessions needed for this toolkit will depend on the current understandings and interests of staff members. For all sessions, a crucial component will be opportunities for participants to apply what they learn in their own settings and then to share experiences with others in the professional learning community.

Reading Recovery-trained teachers will be a valuable resource for ways to support and promote high-quality literacy instruction for all children. As appropriate, they may take a role in structuring the learning while involving participants to explore ideas together. The Reading Recovery teacher leader may be a resource as well.

BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

Classroom Teachers
• Read page 3 in the Guide to consider how the principles and assumptions underlying Reading Recovery match your theory of literacy learning.
• Read pages 33–34 to examine characteristics of effective classroom literacy instruction.
• Evaluate your literacy practices using the self-assessment on pages 35–37.

Interventionists
• Read page 3 in the Guide to consider how the principles and assumptions underlying Reading Recovery match your theory of literacy learning.
• Read pages 42–43 to examine characteristics of effective literacy interventions.
• Evaluate your literacy practices using the self-assessment on pages 44–46.

Intended Participants

Classroom Teachers
Good first teaching is an essential component of a comprehensive literacy system. Students in every classroom should receive expert instruction every day. (See the Guide, page 3 and pages 33–37.)

Interventionists
Even with good classroom programs, some students will require more intensive, extra instruction. (See the Guide, pages 42–46.)

Administrators
This toolkit offers general information about literacy teaching and learning. The activities would be appropriate for school administrators, coaches, and literacy teams to get an overview prior to Professional Learning Toolkits that address specific literacy topics.
PLANNING YOUR SESSIONS

Session One — Making It Easy to Learn

1. Participants share their ideas about how the principles and assumptions underlying Reading Recovery match their theory of literacy learning. (See page 3 in the Guide.)

2. Participants can work in job-alike groups of 3–5 to promote discussion (e.g., first-grade teachers, special education teachers, etc.).

   Classroom Teachers
   • Discuss the status of effective literacy instruction in your school and/or grade level. Use the list of characteristics listed on pages 33–34 in the Guide to focus the discussion.
   • Use the self-assessment on pages 35–37 to continue the discussion of characteristics of effective classroom literacy instruction.
   • Choose two or three characteristics that you or your team would like to explore further.

   Interventionists
   • Discuss the status of effective literacy interventions in your school. Use the list of characteristics listed on pages 42–43 in the Guide to focus the discussion.
   • Use the self-assessment on pages 44–46 to continue the discussion of characteristics of effective instruction for children who struggle with literacy activities.
   • Choose two or three characteristics that you or your team would like to explore further.

3. Share the ideas from each discussion group with the whole group. Consider similarities and differences.

4. Introduce a short video, “Making It Easy to Learn,” demonstrating one of the characteristics of effective literacy instruction. It is important to build on a child’s strengths to set up situations in which the child is in control and will experience success while enjoying challenges within reach. Use the reference guide that accompanies the video for further discussion. Both are available at no charge on the RRCNA website. (See RRCNA Resources: Videos and Reference Guides.)

5. Share experiences related to this topic as time permits. Encourage the group to take note of things they do over the next few days to make it easy for children to learn.

6. End with an emphasis on this general principle that applies to all teaching and learning. Encourage the group to think about how making it easy for children to learn relates to the principle of active, constructive learning.

7. Tell participants that at the next session, the emphasis for teaching and learning is going to be “Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity.” Participants could choose some articles to read and give a brief summary at the next meeting. Possibilities include these two articles from The Reading Teacher:


Session Two — Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity

The child must learn to take the initiative, make some links, and work at a difficulty by checking on himself or self-monitoring, checking one source of information against another, searching for information of any kind (e.g., meaning, structure/grammar, visual information, sounds), making a decision, and evaluating the response. Analyzing a child’s errors and self-correction behaviors on running records of text reading gives teachers a glimpse of the child’s use of strategic activities (Clay, 2005, pp. 107–113).

1. Invite the Reading Recovery teacher or the Reading Recovery teacher leader to start the session, sharing her own understandings of strategic activities and her thoughts about the suggested readings.

2. Participants may share their own thoughts about the readings or the definitions in the sidebar on the right to explore the question “What does strategic activity mean?”

3. Introduce a short video, “Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity,” demonstrating another characteristics of effective literacy instruction. Participants should discuss the notion of strategic activity (within the child as a learner). Use the reference guide that accompanies the video for further discussion. Both are available at no charge on the RRCNA website. (See RRCNA Resources: Videos and Reference Guides.)

4. Share experiences related to this topic as time permits. Encourage the group to take note over the next few days of ways they teach for strategies so that children can take control of their learning.

5. End with an emphasis on this general principle that applies to all teaching and learning. Encourage the group to think about how teaching for strategic activity relates to the principle of active, constructive learning.

6. Encourage participants to read more about strategic activity. Possibilities include two articles from The Journal of Reading Recovery. (See RRCNA Resources: Journal Articles)

   Askew, B. J., & Doyle, M. A. (2008). Reflecting, refreshing, and resolving. [The article focuses on selected principles learned from Reading Recovery that can be translated to other teaching contexts.]


The Early Literacy Learning page on the RRCNA website is also helpful. (See RRCNA Resources: RRCNA Website.)
Session Three — Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity

1. Begin with a discussion of experiences in which participants have had opportunities to promote strategic activity.

2. Introduce the webcast, “Teaching for Tomorrow: Creating Strategic Learners Through Challenging Work,” presented by Linda Dorn, available at the RRCNA Store. The accompanying handout should be printed before the session. The webcast lasts 1 hour and 16 minutes, but time should be allowed for discussion. (See RRCNA Resources: On-Demand Webcasts.)

3. Choose articles at the end of this toolkit to supplement this topic.

Ongoing Sessions

Select from the RRCNA resources at the end of this toolkit to extend conversations about literacy teaching and learning. Possible ideas for using resources include the following:

1. Sessions may involve whole-group interaction with webcasts or discussion of selected articles. Plan ways to actively use the information in teaching and schedule a time to return to share experiences with the group.

2. A jigsaw arrangement allows individuals or small groups to select different resources and bring information back to share with the larger group. Journal articles are a good resource to share with the jigsaw approach.

All activities should be followed with active learning experiences, applying the knowledge to teaching. Participants’ experiences may be shared with the greater professional learning community in the school.

Final Session

Participants will return to the Guide, *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System*. Classroom teachers may use pages 33–37 to consider current thinking about classroom literacy teaching and student learning in the school. Literacy interventionists may use pages 42–46 to think about current interventions and their impact on literacy teaching and learning in the school. What changes have been made? What changes need further exploration? What is next? What else do we need?

The professional learning community will likely explore many other aspects of teaching and learning beyond those listed here. Ongoing study of effective first teaching and high-quality interventions will strengthen the possibilities for meeting the needs of all children.
RRCNA RESOURCES FOR USE IN PLANNING SESSIONS

On-Demand Webcasts ($45 RRCNA member; $75 non-member unless noted; click links for detail)

Webcasts are available from RRCNA and most include PDF files for participants to print in advance.
NOTE: Webcasts by Leslie McBane, Nancy Anderson, and Sue Duncan focus on two sources of information children use when reading — meaning and structure. These webcasts will also be appropriate for use with the Text Reading and Comprehension Professional Learning Toolkit. Webcasts with an asterisk indicate preferences; others could be optional according to interests and needs. The time listed for each webcast should be extended to allow for participant discussion and involvement.

*Teaching for Tomorrow: Creating Strategic Learners Through Challenging Work
Linda Dorn
Discover how children develop decision-making efficiency during meaningful and authentic learning experiences. This webcast includes downloadable slides and transcripts of videos of teaching and learning interactions to illustrate these principles.

*Activating Strategic Action in Guided Reading
Leslie McBane
What do your students do at difficulty during guided reading instruction? Using student work samples and videos, learn to teach children to take strategic action while maintaining meaning.

*Making the Invisible Visible: The Role of Meaning in Effective Literacy Processing
Nancy Anderson
Meaning is the most important source of information for literacy learners; however, it may be hard to value ‘invisible’ information over ‘visible’ letters on the page. Understand the critical role of meaning as the guiding force of strategic activity and explore how reading and writing weave together to support effective comprehension instruction that engages learners. This webcast includes downloadable PowerPoint presentation and a bibliography.

*Structure is an Important Source of Information That Can Be Hard for Both Children and Teachers to Work With
Sue Duncan
Structure or syntax is an important source of information for readers as they read texts. It assists children to solve words in reading, and it gives them a feed-forward and feedback mechanism as they read. A child who does not have control of the oral language patterns of English or has little experience with book language is probably less able to predict and use the language structures in books.

How Understanding the Learner's Brain Can Improve Our Teaching
Janet Bufalino and Elaine Stine
Learn about how the brain operates and how teachers can best help children learn. Many facets of learning are addressed, with specific attention to literacy processing and knowledge.

FREE — Negotiating the Literacy Lives of Boys Through Building a Literacy Community
David Booth
An expert in this field, David Booth helps educators understand issues involved in boys’ literacy learning and then provides proven methods to engage them as readers and writers. This webcast includes downloadable handouts.

FREE — Closing the Achievement Gap for English Language Learners
Yvonne and David Freeman
The presenters first describe three types of English learners and then explain four research-based keys that lead to academic success for limited formal schooling and long-term English learners. For each key, they share strategies, culturally relevant materials, and teacher stories.
Videos and Reference Guides (see Introduction document for Technical Note)

Making it Easy to Learn (link to focus information) 8 Minutes FREE
This video focuses on building on a child's strengths to set up situations in which the child is in control and will experience success while enjoying challenges within reach. A 2-page PDF reference guide accompanies this video and includes definitions and other important information, key points for teachers, and resources.

Direct link to video option (download takes several minutes)
Direct link to PDF option

Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity (link to focus information) 8 Minutes FREE
This video explores strategic activities initiated by children and actions teachers can take to encourage those behaviors. A 2-page PDF reference guide accompanies this video and includes definitions and other important information, key points for teachers, and resources.

Direct link to video option (download takes several minutes)
Direct link to PDF option

Journal Articles (click titles to open/download)


Vellutino, F. (Fall 2010). Learning to be learning disabled: Marie Clay’s seminal contribution to the response to intervention approach to identifying specific reading disability. The Journal of Reading Recovery, 10(1), 5–23.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


