

Early Literacy Learning Is the Foundation of School Success: Are Your Teachers Prepared for the Challenge?

By Lindy Harmon

Both **Early Literacy** and **Professional Learning** are once again in the top 5 list of this year's "What's Hot in Literacy" report, published by the International Literacy Association. Without early literacy instruction that adheres to these key principles, many students fall behind and stay behind, making it more difficult to reach grade-level benchmarks. Are your teachers providing Early Literacy instruction that supports this foundation? If not, do you know where to find resources to support their Professional Learning?

Does Early Literacy instruction in your school reflect these key principles?

- **Reading and writing are complex problem-solving processes.** As children read and write, they pick up and use information from a variety of sources, work on it, make a decision, and evaluate the response in a continuous cycle of learning.
- **Reading and writing are reciprocal and interrelated processes.** They provide concurrent sources of learning and contribute to each other in early literacy learning.
- **Literacy learning involves reading and writing continuous text.** It requires the integration of many behaviors essential for meaningful communication — not just letters, sounds, or words in isolation.
- **Children come to literacy learning with varying knowledge.** What children can do when entering school is closely related to their prior opportunities to learn; instruction must start there.
- **Building on strengths makes it easy for children to learn.** Teachers must know a child's strengths in order to work with existing competencies and make maximum use of each child's current literacy repertoire to support accelerated learning.

How can you support integrating these key principles into the Professional Learning of your teachers?

The Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) has developed these early literacy resources for professional learning.

RRCNA Effective Literacy Practices Video Library offers free web-based resources to help educators strengthen early literacy outcomes for K-3 students. Extensive examples develop a deeper understanding of effective literacy practices for K-3 classroom teachers, Reading Recovery teachers, specialist teachers, literacy coaches, and school administrators.

TOPICS: Making It Easy to Learn, Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity, Selecting Texts That Are Just Right, Phrasing in Fluent Reading, Assessing Through Close Observation, Learning About Phonology and Orthography

RRCNA Professional Learning Toolkits help educators learn together while creating a shared vision and goals for literacy learning. The free web-based toolkits organize resources by topic areas and are designed as an extension of *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System*. Authored by Billie J. Askew, Gay Su Pinnell, and Patricia L. Scharer, the guide connects self-evaluation tools with your staff's current strengths and the essential components of a comprehensive literacy approach to promote high-quality literacy instruction for all children in your school.

TOPICS: Assessing and Monitoring Children's Literacy Behavior, Literacy Teaching and Learning, Text Reading and Comprehension, Writing, Oral Language



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Lindy Harmon is president of the Reading Recovery Council of North America, a not-for-profit association that provides professional development opportunities and resources to Reading Recovery and early literacy professionals. A former first-grade classroom teacher and elementary science teacher, Dr. Harmon is a professor at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, where she is a Reading Recovery trainer at the Reading Recovery Center and a Comprehensive Intervention Model trainer at the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development.