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Talking To Your Child's School About Reading

A Parent Advocacy Toolkit

You know your child best. If you're worried about their reading, you're not overreacting. Reading is the foundation for everything else at school, and the right help, early, can make a big difference.

This guide gives you simple, specific language for raising it with their teacher or school, plus a plan for what to bring, what to ask, and how to follow up.

You're on the same team

Most teachers and schools are doing their best in an increasingly tough environment, with lots of priorities and limited resources. They want what's best for your child, too. These scripts are meant to open a collaborative conversation, not win an argument.

Know Before You Go

- **Lead with questions.** Asking what the school is already seeing and doing helps you understand the picture, and it invites the teacher in as a partner.
- **Many schools use a tiered approach.** Tier 1 is classroom teaching for everyone; Tier 2 is small-group help; Tier 3 is intensive, often one-on-one, help. Knowing the terms helps you ask for the right level.
- **Specific questions are fair questions.** Which program? How often? In what size group? How is progress measured? Asking is your right as a parent, and most teachers welcome it.

Preparing for the Conversation

Ask for a meeting rather than a hallway chat, and bring specifics. Concrete examples get the most traction.

- Request a meeting with the classroom teacher, and invite the special education or resource teacher to join.
- Gather recent report cards, teacher notes, schoolwork feedback, and any reading screening notes.
- Bring any outside assessments (psychologist, SLP, pediatrician, literacy tests). Don't have any? Halifax Learning can help with this.
- Write down 3–4 examples of what you see at home (guesses at words from the first letter, avoids reading aloud, reads slowly and loses meaning, spelling is far behind).
- Note how long you've been concerned and anything you've already tried.
- Bring a notebook, or ask if you may take notes.
- Decide your one main ask before you go: "I'd like my child to receive an evidence-based reading intervention."

The Script, Part 1: Share Your Concerns and Ask What's Happening Now

Use these as a starting point and put them in your own words. If your child has shared something they like about their teacher or school, mention it, too. It's a good way to start on a positive note.

Opening the conversation

- *Thank you for meeting with me. [Child] has told me how much they enjoy [something specific about the class or teacher]. I really appreciate that.*
- *I'm here today because I want to work with you on my child's reading. I'm seeing some things at home that worry me, and I'd like to understand what you're seeing at school and what supports are available.*

Describing your concerns

- *Here's what I notice at home: [example 1], [example 2], [example 3]. This has been going on since about [time]. We've tried [what you've tried], but it hasn't closed the gap.*
- *Is this similar to what you see in class?*

Asking about a screening or assessment: if conducted by the school

- *Has my child had a reading screening or assessment this year? Could you walk me through the results?*
- *Which specific skills are hardest for my child: sounding out words, recognizing sounds in words, reading speed, or spelling?*
- *How does my child compare to where they're expected to be at this point in the year?*

If you're bringing in an outside assessment

- *I had [Child]'s reading assessed [on date / by whom], and I'd like to share the results with you. Could we go through them together?*
- *Here's what it found: [key finding]. Does that match what you're seeing in class? Does this line up with your own assessments?*

- *May I leave a copy with you for [Child]'s file?*

Asking about current supports

- *What support is my child getting right now for reading? How often, for how long, and in what size group?*
- *What program or approach is being used? Is it an evidence-based program?*
- *How are you measuring whether it's working?*

A vague answer ("extra help when there's time," "levelled books," "we're keeping an eye on it") is a signal to move to Part 2.

The Script, Part 2: Ask for a Reading Intervention

This is the heart of the meeting. Be warm, specific, and clear about **what you're asking for:** a proven reading intervention, because that's what works best for struggling readers. The most effective programs are evidence-based, systematic and explicit.

- **Evidence-based:** research has shown the approach works, rather than it simply being popular or traditional.
- **Systematic:** skills are taught in a planned order, and each step builds on the last.
- **Explicit:** children are taught directly how sounds, letters, and words work, rather than being left to guess from pictures or context.

Making the request

- *Based on what we've discussed, I'd like [child] to receive a structured, evidence-based reading intervention, at the Tier 2 or Tier 3 level, delivered regularly with progress checks.*

If the school has a program that fits

- *That's great. Can my child be placed in it? When would it start, how many sessions a week, and how will I hear about progress?*

If the school doesn't have one yet

- *Who decides which reading programs the school or board brings in? Could you share my request with them, or tell me who I should contact?*
- *I'm happy to share information about programs I've come across, if that would help.*

If the Conversation Stalls

Most hesitation is about time, staffing, or uncertainty, not refusal. Assume good intentions, stay calm and curious, and use each reply below to move toward a concrete next step.

If You Hear...	You Can Say...
"Let's wait and see; some kids just need more time."	"I appreciate that. Research shows early intervention works best, and the gap tends to widen. What would we need to see, and by when, before we act?"
"Your child is getting extra help already."	"Thank you. Can you tell me which program it is, how often it happens, and how progress is measured? I'd like to make sure it's an evidence-based program."
"We don't have the budget for that."	"I understand budgets are tight. Are there any options we could start with now, and who should I talk to about what else might be possible?"
"That's a board decision, not a school one."	"That makes sense. Who at the board should I speak with, and could you help me connect with them?"
"We need a formal diagnosis first."	"Is a diagnosis required for reading intervention? Can we start support while we look at assessment?"
"We use our own approach."	"Could you tell me about it? Is it systematic and explicit? Does it directly teach phonemic awareness (hearing the sounds in words), phonics (connecting sounds to letters), and fluency (reading smoothly)?"

For Ontario Parents: Bringing the Learning Resources Fund into the Conversation

As of 2026–27, Ontario's **Learning Resources Fund (LRF)** includes a "Reading Intervention Licences and Supports" component under the newly created "Targeted Learning Allocation". It pays for evidence-based, systematic and explicit reading programs, the licences to run them, and training for the staff who deliver them, for students who are struggling with reading, including students with learning disabilities that affect reading.

The Ministry publishes a list of approved reading programs. "SpellRead (Halifax Learning)", for Grades 1–12, Tier 2–3 intervention, is on that list.

SpellRead = STRIDE

Halifax Learning's program appears on Ontario's Ministry-approved list (May 2026) as "SpellRead"—but we've recently had a name update! Our program and its materials now go by "**STRIDE**". Same Halifax Learning team of reading experts, same commitment to results.

Three Things to Know

- **The money goes to school boards, not to families.** You're asking whether your school can bring in an approved program for your child, not asking for a cheque.
- **Boards decide how it's used.** It isn't an automatic entitlement, and it isn't something families apply for directly. Your school may need to check with the board, so a first conversation may not give you an answer right away.
- **You're allowed to ask by name.** Asking whether the school uses SpellRead / STRIDE from Halifax Learning or another program on the Ministry's approved list is a fair, specific question.

Raising the funding

- *I understand that this year the Learning Resources Fund includes money specifically for reading programs, licences, and staff training for students who are struggling. Is our board using that funding, and could it support my child?*
- *The Ministry's list of approved programs includes SpellRead (Halifax Learning), for Grades 1 to 12 at the Tier 2 and 3 level. That program now goes by "STRIDE". Does our board or school have access to this or another program on that list?*

If the school doesn't have an approved program yet

- *Who at the board decides which reading programs are purchased with this funding? Could you share my request with them?*
- *Would the school consider bringing in an approved program like SpellRead / STRIDE (Halifax Learning) for students like my child? I'm happy to share information about it.*

Asking about other LRF supports

- *Does the board offer tutoring or a summer learning program for reading that my child could join?*

Two Ontario-specific replies

- *If You Hear… "We don't have the budget for that."*

  You Can Say… "I understand budgets are tight. My understanding is the Learning Resources Fund has money set aside for reading programs this year. Could you check with the board about it?"

- *If You Hear… "We need a formal diagnosis first."*

  You Can Say… "Is a diagnosis required for reading intervention? My understanding is the funding is for students who are struggling with reading. Can we start support while we look at assessment?"

This section describes potential alignment with Ministry of Education funding priorities. It does not represent Ministry endorsement, pre-approval, or a guarantee of funding eligibility. Funding decisions are made by school boards, who determine whether a program fits their applicable funding, procurement, and expenditure requirements, and whether to bring one in at all.

Closing the Meeting and Following Up

End every meeting with an agreed next step, a name, and a date. Then put it in writing the same day.

Closing the meeting

- *Thank you, this was really helpful. So I'm clear: the next step is [action], [name] will follow up, and we'll check in again by [date]. Is that right?*
- *I'll send a short email summarizing what we discussed so we're on the same page.*

Follow-up email template

Subject: Follow-up: [Child]'s reading support

Dear [Teacher/Principal],

Thank you for meeting with me on [date] about [Child]'s reading.

To summarize what we discussed:

My concerns: [brief summary]

Current support: [what the school described]

My request: that [Child] receive a structured, evidence-based reading intervention.

Agreed next steps: [action] by [name], by [date]

Please let me know if I've missed anything. I appreciate your time and look forward to working together.

Thank you, [Your name] • [Phone / email]

Ontario parents: you may want to add to your request: "... such as SpellRead / STRIDE (Halifax Learning) or another program on the Ministry's approved list, which may be supported through the Learning Resources Fund's Reading Licences and Supports component."

If nothing happens by the agreed date, follow up politely in writing, then ask to meet with the principal. If you still need help, you can contact the board's special education or literacy lead directly.

Want a hand from a Canadian reading expert?

With 25 years of experience working with school boards, classroom teachers, and parents, we know reading struggles inside and out, what works for kids, and how the right tools can make all the difference.

Let's take a first step together: Halifax Learning offers a free reading assessment to help you understand where your child is starting from and what specific skills need more attention.

Reach us anytime at information@halifaxlearning.com.

This resource is meant to start a conversation, not promise an outcome.

Parent Advocacy Toolkit for Struggling Readers: Quick Reference

1. **Share concerns and factual observations:** "At home I notice [examples]. It's been going on since [time]. Is this what you see in class?"
2. **Ask what's happening now:** "What support is my child getting, how often, and in what group size? Which program is it, and how are you measuring progress?"
3. **Make the request:** "I'd like my child to receive a structured, evidence-based reading intervention with regular progress checks."
4. **If there's no program yet:** "Who decides which programs the school or board brings in? Could you pass my request along?"
5. **Ontario parents:** "Is our board using the Learning Resources Fund reading funding? Does the school have SpellRead / STRIDE (Halifax Learning) or another program on the approved list?"

If You Hear...	You Can Say...
"Let's wait and see."	"Early intervention works best. What would we need to see, and by when, before we act?"
"There's no budget."	"I understand. Are there options we could start with now, and who can I talk to about what else is possible? (Ontario: The Learning Resources Fund has money set aside for reading programs this year. Could you check with the board?)"
"That's a board decision."	"Who at the board should I speak with?"
"We need a diagnosis first."	"Can we start support while we look at assessment?"
"We use our own approach."	"Is it systematic and explicit, teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency directly?"

Leave with a next step, a name, and a date: "So the next step is [action], [name] will follow up, and we'll check in by [date]?" Email a short summary the same day. If nothing happens by that date, follow up in writing, then ask to meet the principal or the board's special education lead.

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