

# Learning Ally Literacy Mosaic

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## Introduction

The Learning Ally Literacy Mosaic provides a research-informed blueprint to ensure that students with reading differences, such as dyslexia, have everything they need on their journey toward literacy and life success. Developed through decades of classroom partnerships, neuroscience research, and continuous educator and family feedback, this Literacy Mosaic centers on the language-based foundations of reading and promotes resilience through intentional collaboration with educators, families, caregivers, and school systems.

Reading is not an organic process. It must be explicitly taught, particularly for students who face language processing challenges such as dyslexia or language delays. These students require structured instruction, access to language development, robust social-emotional support systems, and high-quality, explicit literacy instruction. This Literacy Mosaic uses research on effective literacy and language instruction, as well as the knowledge and expertise gained through Learning Ally's more than 75 years of direct service to learners with print disabilities, to empower schools, districts, and families to meet these needs through a unified, competency-driven approach.

We call this framework a 'Literacy Mosaic' because literacy development is not built from a single skill or solution, but from many interconnected pieces—language, decoding, resilience, instruction, access, and collaboration. We partner with school systems to understand how we can be their ally in building support for students with dyslexia and other reading differences into the programs and strategies they are already using to ensure literacy success for all. Like a mosaic, each piece is essential on its own, but only together do they form a complete and coherent picture of literacy success.

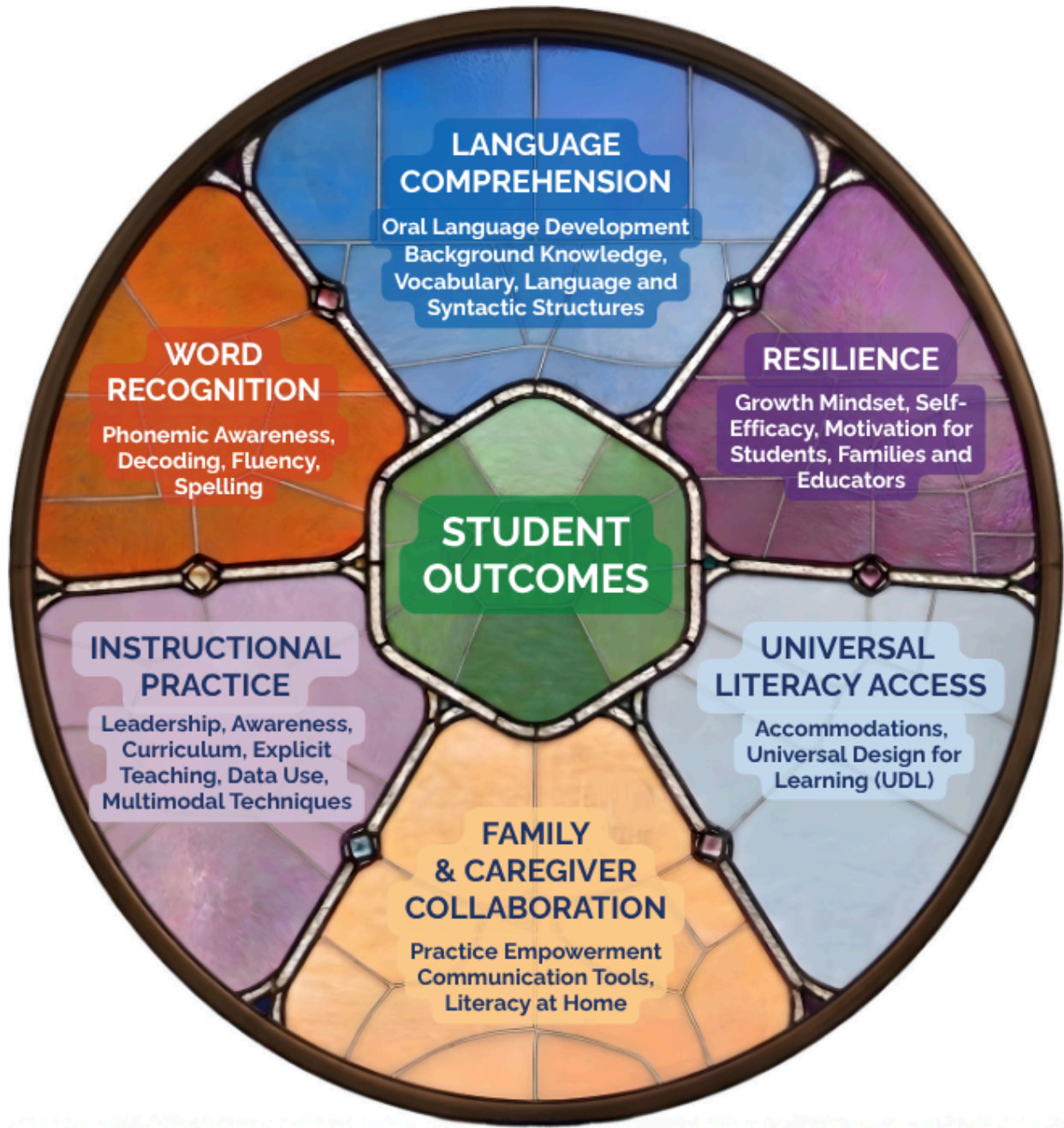
The Literacy Mosaic supports:

- The foundational development of oral language and further explicit instruction in word recognition, as well as language comprehension, aligned with the strands of Scarborough's Reading Rope.
- Resilience-building for students with dyslexia, their families, and educators, rooted in empathy and supported with intentional strategies to build student self-efficacy, educator knowledge, and family/caregiver engagement.
- Educator learning that fosters instructional fidelity, inclusivity, and data-driven decision-making.

- Family and caregiver empowerment and allyship to support resilience and joy in learning.
- Universal access to literacy for all, including tools and resources that ensure access to high-quality curriculum and instruction to accommodate the needs of those who learn differently.

The Literacy Mosaic is founded on the research of Catts and Petscher, Gough and Turner, Hulme and Snowling, and Hollis Scarborough. It is further supported by a wealth of research on structured literacy and dyslexia. A full bibliography is included.

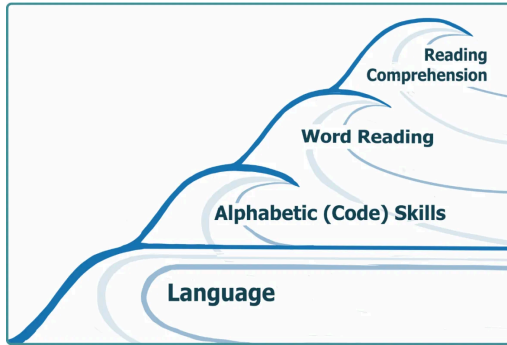
The Literacy Mosaic is composed of six core 'tiles' or competencies. Each represents a critical piece of literacy development; together in collaboration with each school system partner, they create a complete and integrated system of support. The six core competencies ensure students with dyslexia and other reading differences can achieve outcomes on par with their non-dyslexic peers:



## Methodology and Research Base

The Learning Ally Literacy Mosaic is grounded in:

- Snowling & Hulme's Reading is Language Model: Emphasizing oral language acquisition as a foundation for reading



- Gough and Tunmer's Simple View of Reading: Confirms that reading comprehension is the product of decoding and language comprehension

### A Simple View of Reading

A formula introduced by Gough & Tunmer (1986)



**Decoding**  
The ability to transform print into spoken language

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**Language Comprehension**  
The ability to understand spoken language

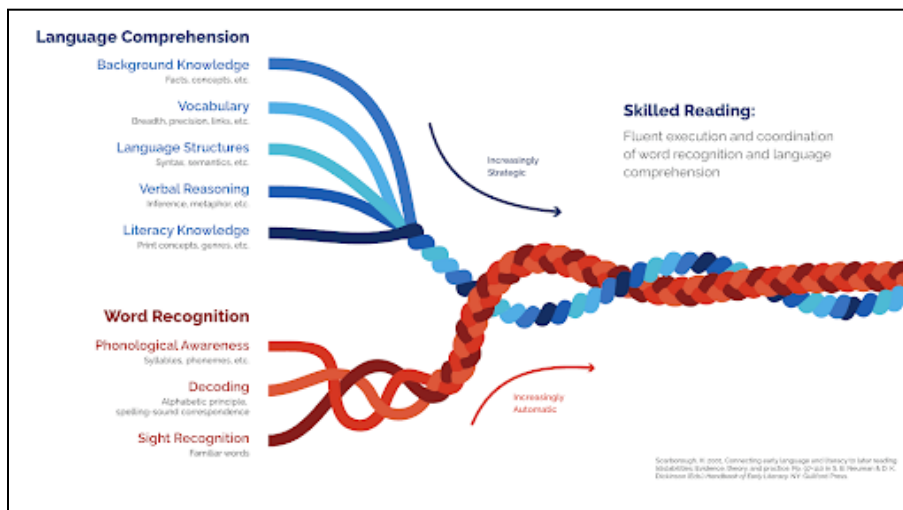
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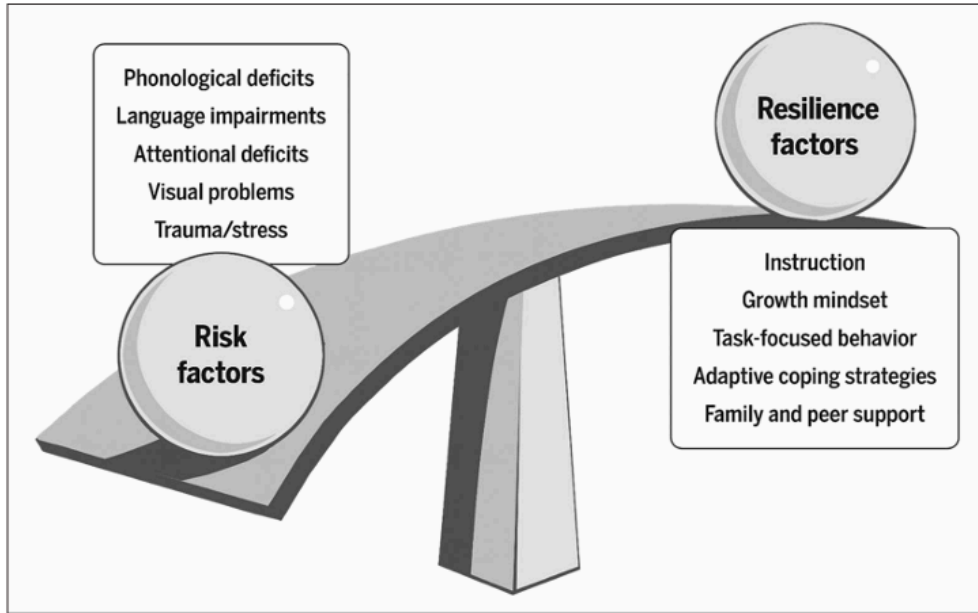
**Reading Comprehension**  
Extracting and constructing meaning through language

Source: Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MIBLSI)

- Scarborough's Reading Rope: Language comprehension components including background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge and built on the foundation of oral language.



- Catts & Petscher's Risk and Resilience Model: Understanding the key factors that impact students with reading disabilities



- Learning Ally's Efficacy Studies: Demonstrating impact on engagement, confidence, and academic progress

## Defining Dyslexia and Multilingual Learners

Even with the vast body of research supporting our understanding of dyslexia and other reading differences, it can be difficult for students, educators, families, and caregivers to understand, let alone support, the experience of learners with dyslexia. The International Dyslexia Association has provided the first significant update to the definition of dyslexia in more than twenty years, informed by researchers, educators, clinicians, advocates, and individuals with dyslexia from around the world:

*"Dyslexia is a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed, or both and vary depending on the orthography. These difficulties occur along a continuum of severity and persist even with instruction that is effective for the individual's peers. The causes of dyslexia are complex and involve interactions among genetic, neurobiological, and environmental influences throughout development. Underlying difficulties with phonological and morphological processing are common but not universal, and early oral language weaknesses often foreshadow literacy challenges. Secondary consequences include reading comprehension problems and reduced reading and writing experience that can impede growth in language, knowledge, written expression, and overall academic achievement. Psychological well-being and employment opportunities also may be affected. Although identification and targeted instruction are important at any age, language and literacy support before and during the early years of education is particularly effective."*

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11881-026-00363-4>

This definition is a useful starting point for anyone seeking to understand how to navigate learning with dyslexia or other language-based learning differences, yet it also raises many questions. How do we know if a learner is demonstrating persistent difficulties with reading or spelling despite effective instruction? How can we determine whether a student has underlying difficulties with phonological and morphological processing, particularly if a learner is learning more than one language? It is essential to confront these questions as early as possible because we know that early support and intervention for students with dyslexia and other reading differences is most effective.

As more than 37 states are passing laws to improve literacy outcomes, it is heartening to see that states are making significant efforts to early-identify students with dyslexia. Increasingly, these processes are helping students, families, and educators navigate the complex relationship between natural language development and potential reading disabilities for all students, including multilingual learners. It is essential for students, educators, and families to know that screening can provide valuable information to supplement readily available data from other sources, such as classroom observations, interviews, informational assessments, home language surveys, parent-teacher meetings, and student work samples. Working together, students, educators and families must use all available data to ensure that all early learners, especially those who may demonstrate struggles in word reading or spelling in any language, receive screening in their home language, explicit literacy instruction and robust access to oral language development through meaningful dialogue and reading aloud as a part of evaluating whether they have a language-based reading difference like dyslexia.

The competencies and practices outlined below were informed by Learning Ally's work with more than 22,000 schools and aligned with the broad, interdisciplinary research base that constitutes the science of reading, the IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards, and the IES Practice Guides. Each of these competencies can be screened for and measured ongoingly by school staff, specialists, and psychologists. Ongoing assessment and monitoring of key data points are essential to ensure that students with dyslexia or other reading differences are sufficiently supported to make progress in reading and build resilience.

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## Mosaic Competencies and How they Fit Together

<b>Mosaic Competency</b>	<b>Focus Areas</b>
<b>Language Comprehension</b>	Oral Language Development, Background Knowledge, Vocabulary, Language Structures, Verbal Reasoning,

	Literacy Knowledge, and Supports for Multi-Language Learners
<b>Word Recognition</b>	Phonemic Awareness, Decoding, Fluency
<b>Resilience</b>	Growth Mindset, Self-Efficacy, Empathy, Stamina for Students, Families, and Educators
<b>Instructional Practice</b>	Leadership, Awareness, Explicit Teaching, Curriculum, Data Use, Multimodal Strategies
<b>Family and Caregiver Collaboration</b>	Empowerment, Communication Tools, Literacy at Home
<b>Universal Literacy Access</b>	Accommodations, Assistive Tech, Universal Design for Learning in Alignment with 508 and WCAG Requirements

Each competency includes grade-level aligned objectives, sample instructional practices, and assessment strategies. No single component of the Literacy Mosaic is sufficient on its own. Just as a mosaic's meaning emerges only when its pieces are viewed together, progress in reading emerges from the interaction of these elements as well as the environment and other tools school systems are using to teach literacy for all.

## How Students, Educators and Families Contribute to the Mosaic

Our goal is to ensure that students with reading differences, such as dyslexia, have everything they need in order to succeed in literacy and life. Students, educators and families each play a crucial role in building these competencies. The following section describes how each individual can grow toward these competencies and empower successful student outcomes. Each contributor shapes the Mosaic.

### Student Journey

The student journey is central to the Learning Ally Literacy Mosaic. It recognizes that students with reading differences such as dyslexia bring diverse linguistic, cognitive, and

emotional experiences to their learning environments. As students grow and develop their identities as readers, they should take increasingly active roles in their literacy development. This journey outlines key developmental actions students are expected to take with support from educators and caregivers. As students progress, they engage with and strengthen different pieces of the Literacy Mosaic, gradually building a more complete and personalized literacy profile.

### **Early Learners (Grades PreK–2)**

- Listen actively to stories and participate in conversations to build vocabulary.
- Practice phonemic awareness and emergent sound/symbol correspondence by blending and segmenting sounds and words (identifying initial, medial and final sounds within a word).
- Engage in read-alouds by listening and responding to questions about the stories being read aloud.
- Begin developing and practicing making letters and noticing printed words (Pre-K).
- Writing letters and words at grade level expectations.
- Explore texts independently and express curiosity about reading, words, and language.
- Use language and connections with stories to build children's connection to their identity.
- Practice resilience by praising effort sustained through challenging tasks and setbacks

### **Elementary (Grades 3–5)**

- Apply sounding out strategies (sound/symbol correspondence, identifying morphemes, and syllabication) to learn to decode grade-level texts with increasing independence.
- Read across genres and content areas to build background knowledge and vocabulary.
- Ask and answer questions to demonstrate comprehension.
- Use audiobooks or reading supports to access complex content.
- Read for enjoyment and begin setting simple reading goals.

- Use language and connections with stories to build children's connection to their identity.
- Identify the feelings that are inspired by reading; both challenging and positive with emphasis on the value of perseverance and empathy gained.

### **Middle School (Grades 6–8)**

- Read across genres and content areas to build background knowledge and vocabulary.
- Use accommodations (like audiobooks or graphic organizers) independently when appropriate.
- Reflect on reading progress and emotional responses to literacy tasks.
- Demonstrate persistence and a growth mindset when facing reading challenges.
- Use language and connections with stories to build children's connection to their identity.
- Develop awareness of learning needs and practice advocating for accommodations.

### **High School (Grades 9–12)**

- Know about rights and responsibilities as a learner. Advocate for learning needs and select tools (e.g., assistive tech) that support reading success.
- Engage in self-directed reading for academic, career, or personal goals.
- Analyze complex texts and contribute to academic discussions.
- Use language and connections with stories to build children's connection to their identity.
- Demonstrate resilience by sustaining effort through challenging tasks and setbacks.

For students with dyslexia or other reading differences, this Literacy Mosaic ensures repeated access to structured literacy practices while embedding protective supports that promote academic and emotional growth.

## **Effective Educator Roles and Practices**

The success of students with reading challenges depends on high-quality instruction, leadership, awareness and empathy from skilled educators. Educators help design, align, and reinforce the pieces of each student's Literacy Mosaic in alignment with the curriculum and other instructional tools already in place within their school systems.

### **K–2 Classroom Educators**

- Deliver explicit instruction in word recognition and language comprehension.
- Use diagnostic data to identify students at risk for reading difficulty.
- Align content area instruction with the Science of Reading and structured literacy principles.
- Use instructional practices that promote resilience.
- Promote independent exploration of stories and books that enable students to connect to their identity.
- Demonstrate resilience by maintaining high expectations for student engagement and intervening early with supportive intervention strategies when needed.

### **Intervention Educators, Literacy Specialists**

- Deliver explicit instruction in word recognition and language comprehension.
- Use diagnostic data to inform small-group and Tier II/III instruction.
- Align instruction with the Science of Reading and structured literacy principles.
- Read aloud and provide multiple opportunities for listening and interacting with stories and language.
- Demonstrate resilience by ensuring interventions that engage student strengths and are communicated effectively with families and caregivers.

### **Accommodation Educators (e.g., Special Education Teachers)**

- Implement access tools such as audiobooks, speech-to-text, writing tools, appropriate assistive devices, and graphic organizers.
- Advocate for and apply IEP/504 accommodations consistently.

- Collaborate with general educators to support inclusive literacy access.
- Promote independent reading.
- Demonstrate resilience by supporting students and families to gain mastery of accommodation use, and ensure they are equipped to advocate for their accommodations.
- Look for opportunities to connect students to literature that enables them to feel seen and heard.

### **Supplemental Curriculum Educators (General Ed and English Language Development Teachers)**

- Ensure access to grade-level text and content.
- Foster language development in all content areas.
- Integrate strategies that build background knowledge and vocabulary.
- Use reading comprehension scaffolds in classroom texts and assignments.
- Promote independent reading.
- Demonstrate resilience by maintaining high expectations for student engagement and ensuring students receive the right level of accommodation support for their language needs as well as reading differences like dyslexia.

### **Leaders and Coaches**

- Build literacy-aligned school cultures with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.
- Support fidelity of implementation through observation, data analysis, and feedback.
- Facilitate Professional Learning and Communities of Practice for continuous learning, including resilience training for students, educators, and families.
- Promote independent reading that connects students to each other and enables them to learn more about themselves.

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## **Family and Caregivers Shape the Literacy Mosaic**

Families and caregivers are essential partners in supporting students' literacy development, especially for those with dyslexia. They contribute essential pieces to the Literacy Mosaic by

extending language, identity, and literacy experiences beyond the classroom This Literacy Mosaic offers specific guidance to help families engage meaningfully:

### **All Ages**

- Build a language-rich environment at home with regular conversations, questions, and storytelling.
- Celebrate reading milestones and foster a positive reading identity.
- Model reading /read together.
- Develop effective communication with teachers to advocate for your child's needs and ensure understanding of their skills and support needs.
- Demonstrate resilience by recognizing when you or your child is experiencing a challenge and looking for opportunities to praise and reinforce student (and your own) strengths.

### **Early Grades (PreK–5)**

- Choose books that align with children's interests and that are on or above students' independent decoding level. Continue to include increasingly complex texts as students build vocabulary and background knowledge.
- Read aloud regularly in all languages spoken at home; use audiobooks either as voice-only or as follow-along with print or ebook versions to provide access for students learning English, especially for parents who may not read English fluently.
- Support phonemic awareness with rhymes and word games.
- Reinforce school routines like daily reading logs or phonics practice.
- Work with your school's parent/teacher association and/or attend school board meetings to advocate for the usage of a research-based reading foundations program designed for all students.
- Use stories to help your children see themselves and connect with their identity.
- Advocate for student evaluation and services to ensure students with reading differences are identified and supported.

### **Middle Grades (6–8)**

- Encourage deeper discussions about texts and topics.
- Support emotional safety and a growth mindset during literacy challenges.
- Use stories to help your children see themselves and connect with their identity.
- Advocate for consistent use of accommodations when needed.

## High School (9–12)

- Promote student self-advocacy and independent learning.
- Discuss goals related to college, career, and reading independence.
- Use stories to help your children see themselves and connect with their identity.
- Support access to assistive technology and extended learning resources, including access to audiobooks, enlarged text, note-taking tools, and behavioral supports.

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## Each Stakeholder Contributes to the Mosaic

This table outlines the key actions students, educators, and families/caregivers should take to build each of the six competencies in the Learning Ally Literacy Mosaic.

Competency	Student	Educator	Family/Caregiver
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<b>Language Comprehension</b>	Engage with audiobooks and class discussions; ask questions to build vocabulary and understanding.	Facilitate listening comprehension, scaffold vocabulary, and background knowledge using audiobooks.	Talk about stories and words with your child; encourage discussion and shared listening at home.
<b>Word Recognition Support</b>	Practice decoding with support tools; use read-along/read-aloud tools to build fluency.	Integrate decoding instruction with audiobook support; monitor progress and model fluency.	Support phonics routines at home; help your child notice sounds in words and encourage rhyming and sound play.
<b>Resilience Factors</b>	Set reading goals, track progress, and celebrate personal reading milestones.	Coach growth mindset; reinforce effort and progress with affirming feedback.	Celebrate your child's achievements; provide emotional support and encouragement.
<b>Instructional Practice</b>	Use audiobooks and other multi-modal practices as part of classroom routines; participate in guided activities.	Embed multi-modal teaching techniques in lessons aligned with curriculum; use data to inform grouping and support.	Connect with teachers to support school routines at home; help students build regular reading habits.
<b>Family and Caregiver Collaboration</b>	Share reading experiences with caregivers; listen to audiobooks at home and on the go.	Engage families with data and home-based routines; offer support with	Learn about your child's unique learning needs and advocate for them with their teachers.

		access to complex texts.	
<b><i>Inclusive Literacy Access</i></b>	Know the accommodations you require and advocate for the tools you need.	Implement audiobooks as part of IEPs or UDL strategies; support access.	Ensure your child has access to the tools they need at home; help students use accommodations to build independence.

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## **Outcomes and Assessment of the Literacy Mosaic Competencies**

The Literacy Mosaic measures both academic and emotional-literacy growth. These measures help educators assess the strength and balance of each student's Literacy Mosaic, identifying which pieces are well-developed and which require additional support.

### Academic Metrics:

- Decoding and fluency benchmarks (e.g., DIBELS, MAP Fluency)
- Dyslexia screening
- Comprehension performance (e.g., Lexile growth, classroom performance)
- School-based vocabulary acquisition and language comprehension assessments
- "Volume of Reading" metrics, such as pages or minutes read, are useful inputs that help teachers and families monitor students as they develop reading habits and track the time they spend on increasingly complex texts. Students building stamina and increasing exposure to academic vocabulary and complex sentence structure are associated with improved academic outcomes. Students with dyslexia or other reading differences may require audiobook support to build this habit.

## **Resilience and Engagement Metrics:**

- Student surveys on reading confidence and self-efficacy
- Reading stamina
- Surveys of student reading interest and attitudes
- Measurable family/caregiver engagement strategies
- Educator fidelity and implementation scores

## **Fidelity and Impact Tools:**

- Implementation rubrics
- Educator reflection journals
- Student work samples and usage analytics
- Leaders creating literacy environments, including:
  - Explicit expectations for reading instruction are monitored and supported with effective training for educators
  - Explicit family engagement in reading strategies to support reading at home
  - Schoolwide literacy activities that are inclusive of all readers and promote joy and growth in reading

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## **Conclusion**

Literacy opens the door to opportunity, agency, and lifelong learning. This Literacy Mosaic ensures that students who face reading challenges are not left behind but are met with compassion, evidence-based instruction, and supportive systems. Learning Ally is committed to working alongside educators, researchers, and families to make this vision a reality for every learner. The Learning Ally Literacy Mosaic brings together the many pieces required for literacy success—academic, linguistic, and human. When these elements are intentionally aligned, they form a complete picture in which every learner can see themselves as a capable and confident reader.

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