The Essential Characteristics of Interactive Literacy:

Simply defined, Interactive Literacy provides literacy activities that enable parents and children to share a positive interaction and to learn together. Each session is meant to build upon the parent’s and child’s knowledge, skills, and relationship - while modeling an effective learning approach.

1. Interactive Literacy sessions provide opportunities for parents to:

   Practice explicit skills to support children’s development of literacy skills. These skills include:
   - Balanced turn taking
   - Giving children an opportunity to respond
   - Following the child’s lead
   - Giving simple and clear directions
   - Praising often and decreasing negative verbal responses
   - Talking at the child’s level and make eye contact
   - Increasing vocabulary and the use of rare words
   - Expanding upon what children say

   Assume different roles in supporting children’s learning and engagement. These roles include:
   - Conversing: This is an ideal form of providing support, whereby the parent is an equal partner in the activity by initiating, responding and encouraging the child to take turns.
   - Entertaining: May be used to get child’s attention.
   - Observing: Parents can learn from their child’s actions and interests. This is also a good tactic when the parent is not quite sure how to join in.
   - Directing or leading: This role is used when we teach, demonstrate or instruct.

2. Engages parents and children in literacy-based activities that are culturally responsive and occur in meaningful settings and routines.

3. Introduces or previews interactive literacy skills and activities to parents.


5. Integrates components.
Interactive Literacy Checklist

☐ Our staff and families have a clear understanding of what Interactive Literacy is and why it is important. See “The Essential Characteristics of Interactive Literacy.”

☐ We have a defined goal (we know why we have chosen the activity) for each of our Interactive Literacy sessions. These activities are intentional and planned, to address the different learning levels of the participants.

☐ Our Interactive Literacy sessions are family-centered, meaning they address the culture, ages, interests, experiences and skills of both the parents and children.

☐ Parents are given the opportunity to preview the activity and to discuss the ways it will support their children’s language and literacy development. Sessions are designed to allow parents to “preview-do-review.”

☐ The activities extend learning and life experiences through a variety of engaging activities: choice, play, instruction, relationship building and reading, singing, telling stories, object manipulation, planning, etc.

☐ Our families are given the opportunity to reflect and share the results of their Interactive Literacy experience, in conversation, writing, and/or a related activity. They are also encouraged to share ways they have extended these experiences outside of the program.

☐ Parents are shown ways of transferring and incorporating quality interactions into their daily lives that extend to both in the home as well as outside of the home, through visits to the library and other community settings.

☐ Our Interactive Literacy sessions are regularly scheduled, and flexible enough to be sure that parents and children can be available.

☐ Our Interactive Literacy sessions integrate the Even Start components. The staff participates regularly in integrated curriculum planning, enabling Interactive Literacy sessions to connect to themes covered in other components.

☐ We keep records or document each session. This includes:
  1. The concept addressed and the focus of the activity.
  2. The ways parents participated and the skills practiced.
  3. The skills children acquired and the way they were practiced in the session.
PARAMETERS OF INTERACTIVE LITERACY

**Frequency:** Weekly for each family

**Duration:** A minimum of one hour across the week which would include:
- Previewing;
- Engaging in parent-child interactions; and
- Reflecting.

Previewing and reflecting can occur in ABE, Parenting Education or Early Childhood.

**Schedule:** Interactive Literacy sessions can be scheduled as:
- a whole group;
- small group; or
- one-to-one sessions.

Whole group sessions can be offered at different times or on different days. Small groups are particularly effective for accommodating multi-age groups or when everyone in a family participates.

**Location:** If not on-site, Interactive Literacy can occur in:
- K-Grade 3 classrooms(s) (whole group, one-to-one, clusters);
- Head Start; or
- in the home. Interactive Literacy that occurs in the home should not take the place of required monthly home visits.
- Field trips that meet criteria on the Interactive Literacy checklist

**Staff** To ensure connections across the components at least two staff should be involved in Interactive Literacy planning and implementation or to evaluate its effectiveness.
INTERACTIVE LITERACY
WHEN/WHERE/HOW

- Weekly

- Can be conducted in a variety of ways but must include essential elements

- Factors that determine different types of implementation:
  - schedule availability of families
  - ages of children
  - level and skill ability
  - space

- Integrated Approach allows different aspects of interactive literacy to take place during*:
  - Adult Education
    - Preview
    - Explore topic through discussion, reading, writing, mapping, etc.
    - Introduce vocabulary words
    - Reflect
  - Early Childhood Education
    - Children experiencing different aspects of the activity/topic
      - reading
      - playing/singing/manipulatives
  - Parenting
    - Preview (brief)
    - Learning/practicing skill, i.e., reading to child
    - Parents engage in activity by themselves to enjoy
    - Parents determining their focus, request for feedback
    - Reflect (debrief)
    - Ways to apply and incorporate into their daily lives outside of the program
  - Home Visits
    - Support in goals/focus to address parent’s expressed needs in working with their child
    - Support in incorporating activities in home and in daily life
    - Providing activities/kits to use during month

- Families with more than one child:
  - focus on “target” child
  - may do an activity where older siblings assist parent and younger sibling(s)
  - may provide separate activities conducted by other staff or volunteers; for example, a parent may bring other children in the family because of no day care at the time of interactive literacy; if older children, can provide supports for homework, age appropriate games/activities. Personnel may include high school students, aides, etc.

* These are examples and not an inclusive list.
Essential Ingredients of Interactive Literacy for Parents and Children

**Child**
Activity must be developmentally appropriate

**Parent**
Should buy into the activity and have a role in negotiating the skill they need to acquire. Practice the skill.

**Interaction**
Must think about what skills you are trying to develop to help parents with children.
Interactive Literacy Within the Program

Adult Education
- Preview
- Learn
- Discussion/Read/Vocabulary
- Reflect/Debrief
Interactive Literacy Activities

Parenting
- Preview Concepts
- Introduce Skills
- Learn about topic
- Reflect
- Ways to transfer & apply

Parent and Child Interactive Literacy

Home Visiting Transfer

Early Childhood
- Developmentally Appropriate Activities
- Previewing Interactive Literacy

Community
- Stores, library, museums, etc.
Planning for Interactive Literacy

Child Experiences/Skills to Support Literacy

Adult Interactions in Context of Family

Adult-Child Interaction

Adult-Child Interactions in Context of Family

Family to Family Interactions in Even Start