

A Literacy Action Plan
from Birth to Six



Reading for Our Lives

Maya Payne Smart

Journal Prompts

Journal the Journey

Power and influence aren't the terms most frequently associated with parenthood or early literacy. But I think they should be because parents are difference makers in seeding critical reading skills from day one and we have a range of levers at our disposal to do that.

To fulfill your potential as your child's first teacher and best advocate, it helps to do something that teachers and advocates do—designate time and space to think and plan. Start a for-your-eyes-only journal to take note of what you've learned, what you're doing well and should continue, what needs tweaking or eliminating, and what else you'd like to investigate or try.

On the following pages, you'll find prompts that point you toward things to reflect on, note, or observe along your family reading journey. If you're reading this before your child is born or while they are in infancy, just skip questions that don't apply. You can print this out as often as you like and revisit the questions as your child grows.

Keep the journal on your nightstand or another visible location as a reminder to write out your thoughts, ideas, discoveries, and questions. This cumulative notetaking and reflection will be invaluable for helping you discover your strengths as a conversation partner, reader, teacher, advocate, and more. When you know where you excel, you can more consciously bring those strengths to supporting your child's development.

- MAYA Smart

Date:

What role do you want to play in nurturing and teaching your child to read?

What strengths and experiences do you bring to the role?

Date:

Do you have questions or concerns about your knowledge or ability to support reading development?

What can you do today to nurture reading skills? What can you do today to nurture reading love? What overlap do you see between reading skills and reading love?

What new or funny things is your little one trying or doing?

What are you focused on nurturing or teaching now?

What might you focus on or teach next?

Date:

What people or resources can support you in raising your reader?

What cues can you employ to speak well, praise process, and make lessons personal? Make a list of actions you'll try, such as turning your phone ringer off at dinnertime to reduce distraction or taking a breath before responding when your child asks a question to reply thoughtfully and helpfully. Then circle the item on your list that you'll try first.

How can you set up your physical environment to remind you to nurture literacy bit by bit day by day? Brainstorm your own list of things to try, such as putting magnetic letters on the fridge, hanging a nursery rhyme mobile over the changing table, or posting an alphabet chart on the wall.

What's likely to stand in the way of you doing these things consistently?
Can you imagine, plan for, and overcome the obstacles?

Which of the six interrelated instructional areas (oral language, sound awareness, print awareness, letter knowledge, phonics, and spelling) do you feel most confident to teach? Why?

Date:

Which instructional areas will you need the greatest support in teaching?

Chapter 4

How will your engagement in preliteracy and literacy skills make your child's life better?

Date:

What are the risks of not proactively nurturing your child's skills?

Describe the current language environment in your home. Who talks directly to your little one (e.g., parents, siblings, babysitters)? When does most of the talk happen? How much of the talk is directive (giving an order or instructions; e.g., sit down), descriptive (labeling objects or events in a book or the environment; e.g., It's a puppy), or inquisitive (asking them a question; e.g., Where is the ball)?

Which of the reasons to talk with your child from day one resonate with you most?

What interferes with your ability to carry on more conversations with your little one (e.g., fatigue, distraction, stress, reticence, lack of interest)?

What will you do differently as a result of what you've learned about back-and-forth conversation with kids?

What are some habits you can establish to support more back-and-forth conversation with your child?

What daily occurrences (e.g., mealtimes, bath times, naptimes, etc.) can you use to help you establish those habits?

What actions will you take now to support those habits, such as placing books or talking points in prominent locations at home?

Date:

What did you learn in this chapter about how the sounds within words relate to kids' reading development?

Date:

What will your go-to sound games be?

What reminders will you use to cue wordplay?

Chapter 8

**Which uppercase and lowercase letters
can your child name if they see them?**

What print do you have in your home and neighborhood that you can call attention to (e.g., magnetic letters, monogrammed items, books, and magazines)? Where could you add more print to your home, such as framed letter art or favorite quotes?

When writing on their own, does your child use letters at all? If so, which letters do they write? Does their writing reflect the knowledge that letters represent sounds?

What did you learn about spelling that you want to act on with your child?

What strategies will you use to encourage your child to write every day, from lists and letters to stories and poems?

Date:

Where will you make a note of words that your child is struggling to spell?

Date:

How will you provide opportunities to analyze the correct spellings?

What will your go-to sources for information on raising a reader be? Do some research and then list the specific websites, newsletters, or publications you intend to follow, including those listed in the book that resonated with you.

How can you find early childhood and literacy organizations in your state or local community? What are the key criteria you will use to assess the quality of news and information about reading that you find in your chosen sources?

How will you keep all of the resources and organizations you discover top of mind? List specific actions like bookmarking their websites, subscribing to their newsletters, following their social media feeds, and so on.

Chapter 1:

- What role do you want to play in nurturing and teaching your child to read?
 - What strengths and experiences do you bring to the role?
 - Do you have questions or concerns about your knowledge or ability to support reading development?
 - What can you do today to nurture reading skills? What can you do today to nurture reading love?
- What overlap do you see between reading skills and reading love?

Chapter 2:

- What new or funny things is your little one trying or doing?
- What are you focused on nurturing or teaching now?
- What might you focus on or teach next?
- What people or resources can support you in raising your reader?

Chapter 3:

- What cues can you employ to speak well, praise process, and make lessons personal? Make a list of actions you'll try, such as turning your phone ringer off at dinnertime to reduce distraction or taking a breath before responding when your child asks a question to reply thoughtfully and helpfully. Then circle the item on your list that you'll try first.
- How can you set up your physical environment to remind you to nurture literacy bit by bit day by day? Brainstorm your own list of things to try, such as putting magnetic letters on the fridge, hanging a nursery rhyme mobile over the changing table, or posting an alphabet chart on the wall.
- What's likely to stand in the way of you doing these things consistently? Can you imagine, plan for, and overcome the obstacles?

Chapter 4:

- Which of the six interrelated instructional areas (oral language, sound awareness, print awareness, letter knowledge, phonics, and spelling) do you feel most confident to teach? Why?
- Which instructional areas will you need the greatest support in teaching?
- How will your engagement in preliteracy and literacy skills make your child's life better?
- What are the risks of not proactively nurturing your child's skills?

Chapter 5:

- Describe the current language environment in your home. Who talks directly to your little one (e.g., parents, siblings, babysitters)? When does most of the talk happen? How much of the talk is directive (giving an order or instructions; e.g., sit down), descriptive (labeling objects or events in a book or the environment; e.g., It's a puppy), or inquisitive (asking them a question; e.g., Where is the ball)?
- Which of the reasons to talk with your child from day one resonate with you most?
- What interferes with your ability to carry on more conversations with your little one (e.g., fatigue, distraction, stress, reticence, lack of interest)?
- What will you do differently as a result of what you've learned about back-and-forth conversation with kids?

Chapter 6:

- What are some habits you can establish to support more back-and-forth conversation with your child?
- What daily occurrences (e.g., mealtimes, bath times, naptimes, etc.) can you use to help you establish those habits?
- What actions will you take now to support those habits, such as placing books or talking points in prominent locations at home?

Chapter 7:

- What did you learn in this chapter about how the sounds within words relate to kids' reading development?
- What will your go-to sound games be?
- What reminders will you use to cue wordplay?

Chapter 8:

- What does your child know about letters? Can they tell a letter apart from drawings or numbers? When writing on their own, do they use letters at all? If so, do they reflect the knowledge that letters represent sounds?
- Which uppercase and lowercase letters can your child name if they see them?
- What print do you have in your home and neighborhood that you can call attention to (e.g., magnetic letters, monogrammed items, books, and magazines)? Where could you add more print to your home, such as framed letter art or favorite quotes?
- When writing on their own, does your child use letters at all? If so, which letters do they write? Does their writing reflect the knowledge that letters represent sounds?

Chapter 9:

- What did you learn about spelling that you want to act on with your child?
- What strategies will you use to encourage your child to write every day, from lists and letters to stories and poems?
- Where will you make a note of words that your child is struggling to spell?
- How will you provide opportunities to analyze the correct spellings?

Chapter 10:

- What will your go-to sources for information on raising a reader be? Do some research and then list the specific websites, newsletters, or publications you intend to follow, including those listed in the book that resonated with you.
- How can you find early childhood and literacy organizations in your state or local community? What are the key criteria you will use to assess the quality of news and information about reading that you find in your chosen sources?
- How will you keep all of the resources and organizations you discover top of mind? List specific actions like bookmarking their websites, subscribing to their newsletters, following their social media feeds, and so on.

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