

FAMILY LITERACY NIGHT:

A Comprehensive Guide

This guide is for anyone who wants to organize and host a family literacy night. They can be organized by principals, other school leaders, grade-level teams, or even the PTA.



What Is a Literacy Night?

A literacy night is a schoolwide event to engage families in supporting their children's literacy development. The goal is to foster a strong home-to-school connection around literacy by providing families with practical strategies, resources, and activities they can use at home. These events typically include interactive stations and opportunities for students to showcase their learning. Hosting a literacy night helps build a culture of literacy across the school community and reinforces the importance of family involvement in academic success.



What Resources Are Available to Develop a Literacy Night?

This guide features a few activities related to reading comprehension for third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders. These activities can be included in a broader literacy night program. We provide several resources you can use in the Handouts and Materials section of this guide. Otherwise, the *Community Math Night Facilitator Guide* (<https://bit.ly/3HR5BHZ>) focuses on math. However, it also provides quality tools for organizing the event that we think are worth reviewing.



How Can a Literacy Night Help My Students?

Reading and comprehending informational text is not easy for all students. Research shows that informational text is harder to understand and remember than stories, and teachers have reported that 44% of their students “always or nearly always” have trouble reading instructional materials (Mar et al., 2021; Shapiro et al., 2024).

Additionally, research shows that high-quality partnerships between families and schools can bring enormous benefits to the development, learning, and wellbeing of children (Ma et al., 2024). Research also demonstrates the potential impact on students' reading comprehension outcomes when literacy interventions are delivered at home (Dahl-Leonard et al., 2025).

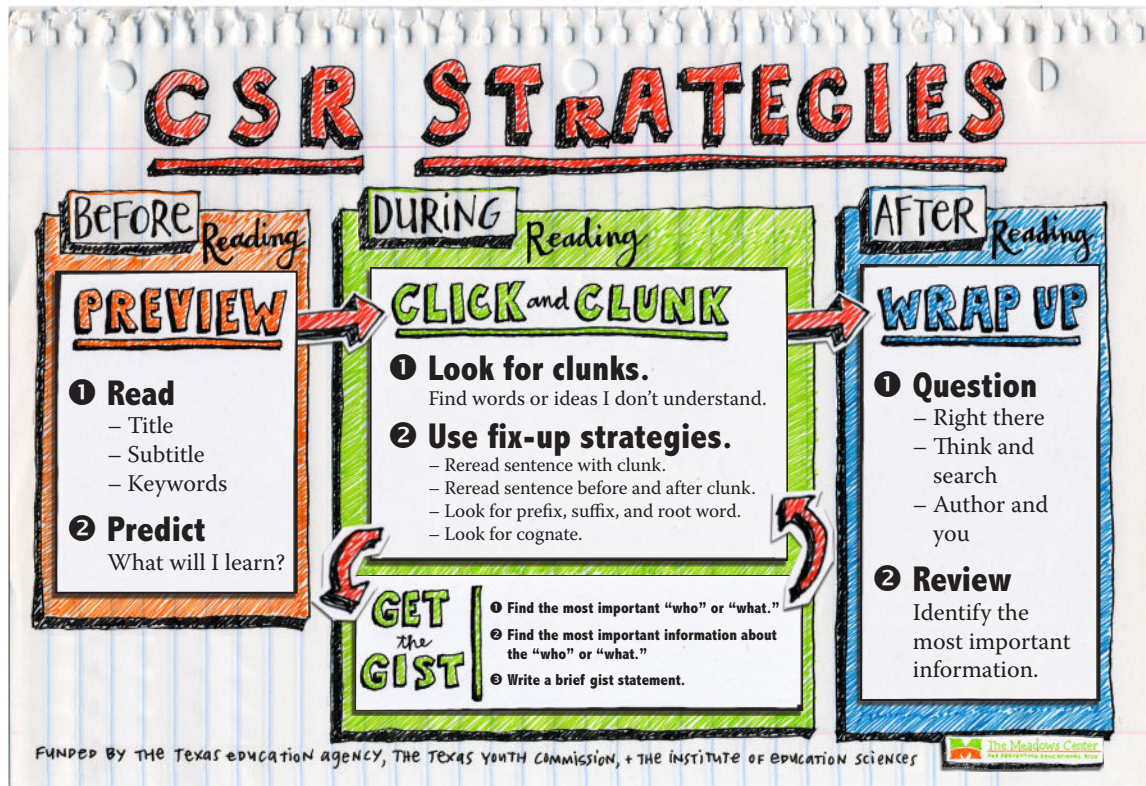
Hosting a literacy night can address both important points! During the event, families can learn more about

- the difficulty students face understanding complicated text,
- instruction at school to support reading comprehension, and
- how they can support reading comprehension with their child at home.

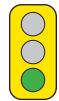


What Is CA-CSR?

Computer-Assisted Collaborative Strategic Reading (CA-CSR) is an evidence-based and user-friendly website tool developed by The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk at The University of Texas at Austin. The program supports educators in providing high-quality instruction and teaches students a set of comprehension strategies that are applied cooperatively. There are both teacher-facilitated and student-facilitated components. Check out the strategy poster on the next page!



For more information, visit our project webpage (<https://meadowscenter.org/project/computer-assisted-collaborative-strategic-reading>).



Let's Get Started!

Begin the literacy night by welcoming all families in a warm way. Introduce yourself and others who organized the event. Orient families to how the evening will operate by giving clear instructions. Then, release families for the fun! Post volunteers in the hallways to assist families in finding locations within the school.

You may choose to have two strands of activities—one for kindergarten to grade 2 and one for grades 3 to 5. The stations described in this guide are designed for a grades 3 to 5 family audience.



CA-CSR Stations

Begin the literacy night with the CA-CSR video (see the Handouts and Materials section of this guide). It has versions in English and Spanish, and it serves as a great starting point for the event.

Below are three stations that parents and students may rotate through. Each station should run between 15 and 20 minutes.

Station 1. Student Showcase (Student Facilitated)

In this station, families and students sit together at a table. They use a one-page instruction sheet (see the Handouts and Materials section) to complete the activity. Families ask questions that prompt their children to “show off” their classroom tools and skills for understanding complex informational text.

Preparation

- Arrange desks and chairs in a group.
- Place charged devices (laptops, computers, iPads, Chromebooks, etc.) out for families to use—whatever your school usually uses!
- Have extra chargers on hand.
- Print the one-page instructions and place a few at the center of each group (see the Handouts and Materials section).
- Have CA-CSR student books handy for students.

Introduction

Say:

Welcome to Station 1!

This is where your child gets to be the expert. Tonight, you'll see how they use tools from our classroom to make sense of challenging texts. Students will open a passage to read. Your role is to ask them questions from the handout and let them show you the strategies they've been practicing. Think of it as a chance to peek into their school day and watch them shine.

Feel free to encourage them, ask more questions, and celebrate their thinking!

Implementation

- Seat children with their parents/guardians.
- Have students log in to a device and navigate to <https://ut-text.com>.
- Have parents use the one-page directions to guide conversation and read a new passage with their child.

Station 2. The Importance of Reading Nonfiction (Teacher or Librarian Facilitated)

Research shows that students read more frequently when parents and teachers help students choose an interesting book that is not too hard for them to read and then make time for them to read at home (Merga, 2017). This station will highlight interesting books. Hopefully, families will see how engaged their children are in reading and learning!

Preparation

- Arrange several desks and chairs near the board or projector.
- Download and review the presentation about the importance of reading nonfiction (see the Handouts and Materials section of this guide).
- Lay out an array of popular nonfiction books. Here are some popular collections:
 - Who HQ books
 - *National Geographic* readers
 - *I Survived* book series
 - *Fly Guy Presents* book series

Introduction

Say:

Station 2 is all about nonfiction. Research tells us that kids benefit when they read more informational texts, especially when they can choose topics that interest them.

Tonight, I'll share a short presentation, and then you and your child will browse some nonfiction books together. Notice what topics spark their curiosity—animals, history, space, famous people—there's something for everyone.

The idea is to see how exciting nonfiction can be and how it builds knowledge they'll carry into other schoolwork.

After browsing, you'll sit and read together for a few minutes. This shows your child that reading nonfiction is not only valuable, but enjoyable, too.

Implementation

- Seat children with their parents/guardians across a few tables.
- Show the downloaded presentation. Tip: Make time for discussion, questions, and answers throughout.
- Direct students and parents to the array of books. Have students browse the books and select one that interests them.
- Have students and parents spend the remaining time reading together.

Station 3. Take-Home Resources (Student Facilitated)

In this station, families practice using take-home resources to support reading comprehension at home.

Preparation

- Arrange desks and chairs in a group.
- Place charged devices (laptops, computers, iPads, Chromebooks, etc.) out for families to use—whatever your school usually uses!
- Have extra chargers on hand.
- Print the one-page instructions and place a few at the center of each group (see the Handouts and Materials section of this guide).
- Place copies of the Conversation Starters magnet and CSR Strategies bookmark on each desk (see the Handouts and Materials section).

Introduction

Say:

Station 3 is all about giving you tools to support reading at home.

You'll see the same resources your child uses in class, like the CSR Strategies bookmark. These are quick reminders you can use to ask questions while your child is reading, without it feeling like homework.

At this station, you'll visit the UT Text website together, choose a passage, and then try out some of the questions from the handout.

The goal is to practice in a way that feels natural and fun—something you can carry home and use anytime your child is reading.

Implementation

- Seat children with their parents/guardians.
- Have students log in to a device and navigate to <https://ut-text.com>.
- Have parents use the one-page directions to guide the conversation and review a passage that their child has already read and enjoyed.

We Wish You Success!

As your school community works to engage families in meaningful ways, we hope this literacy night guide is helpful. We welcome you to visit our project webpage (<https://meadowscenter.org/project/computer-assisted-collaborative-strategic-reading>) for more information about CA-CSR and how it can support students' reading comprehension. Also, be sure to visit the Family Literacy Night Toolkit webpage (<https://meadowscenter.org/resource/family-literacy-night-toolkit>) to download helpful resources.

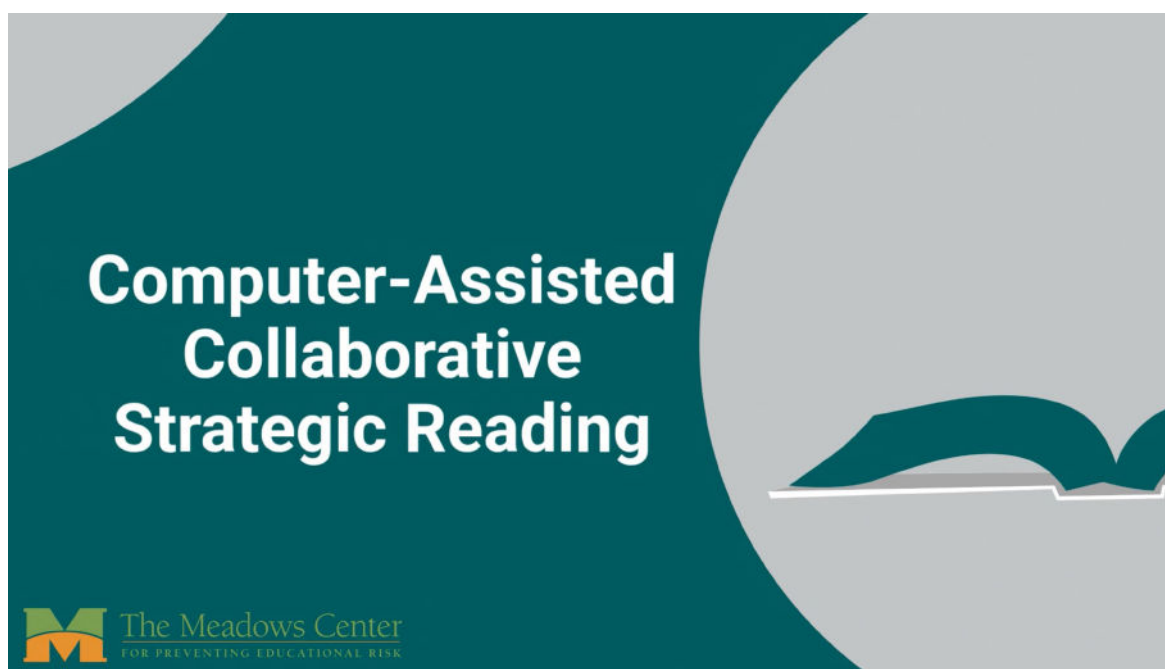


Handouts and Materials

All of the resources in this section can be shown, downloaded, and/or printed from the Family Literacy Night Toolkit webpage (<https://meadowscenter.org/resource/family-literacy-night-toolkit>).

CA-CSR Video

The video, provided in English and Spanish, provides a 1-minute overview of what CA-CSR is and why it is helpful to students.



Literacy Night Station 1: Directions

Welcome, families! Today, your child will show you all about the UT Text website and what they've been reading about in class. Use this as a guide while exploring!

Ask your child about a topic they haven't read yet that interests them.

Before reading:

- Preview the text together. Look at the title, subtitles, and any keywords.
- Ask your child what they predict they will learn from reading this text.

During reading:

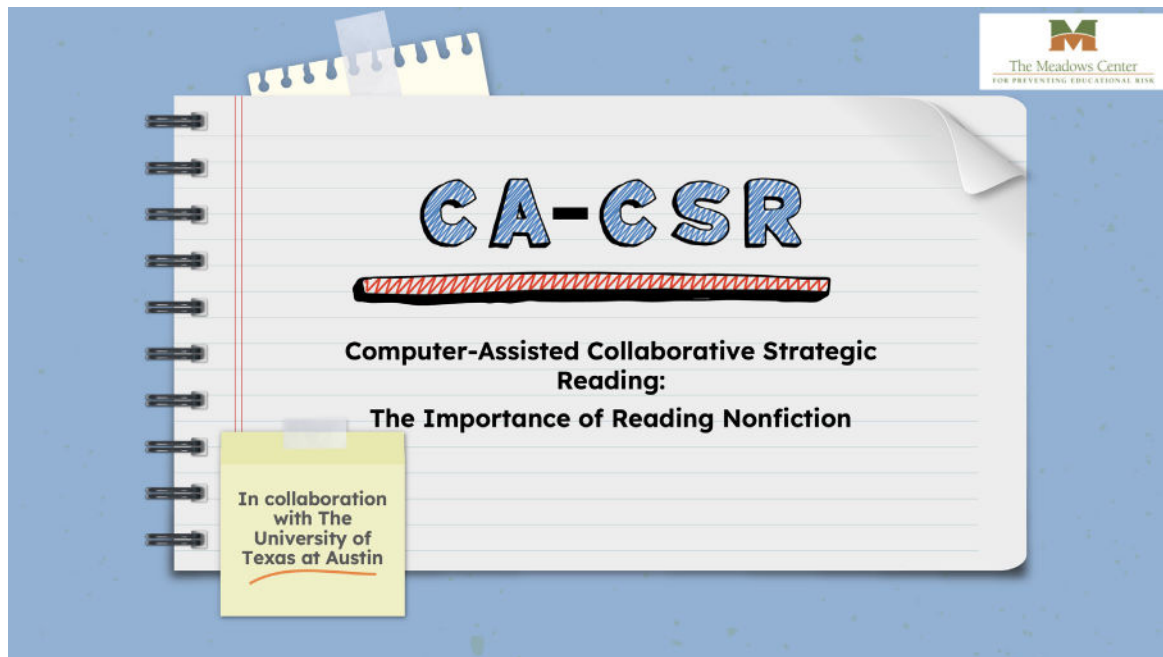
- If your child struggles with a word, ask them about their “fix-up strategies” to figure out “clunks.”
- After each section, ask your child, “What's the gist of that section?”

After reading:

- Discuss with your child what they learned.
- Ask your child, “What do you think is the most important information about what you read?” and whether they'd like to learn anything else about the selected topic.
- Offer praise and encouragement!

Literacy Night Station 2: The Importance of Reading Nonfiction

This presentation explains why reading nonfiction is both important and fun!



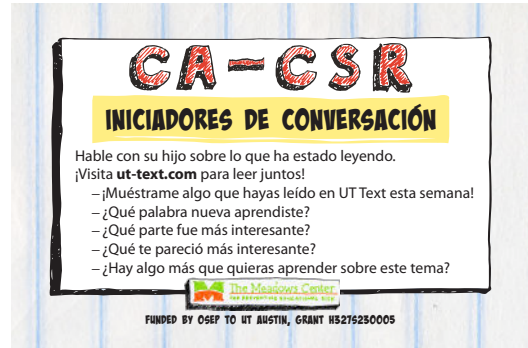
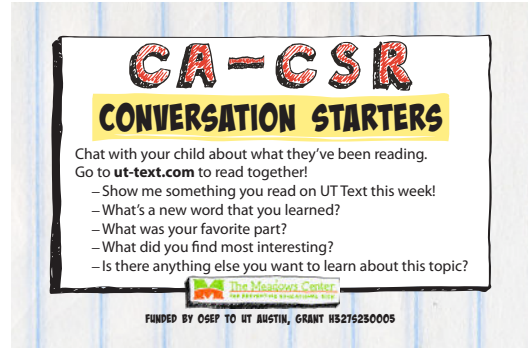
Literacy Night Station 3: Directions

Welcome, families! Today, your child will show you all about the UT Text website and what they've been reading about in class. Use this as a guide while exploring!

- Ask your child, "Show me something you read on UT Text this week!"
- Navigate to UT Text (<https://ut-text.com>) and select a passage.
- Ask your child the following:
 - "What's a new word that you learned?"
 - "What was your favorite part?"
 - "What did you find most interesting?"
 - "Is there anything else you want to learn about this topic?"

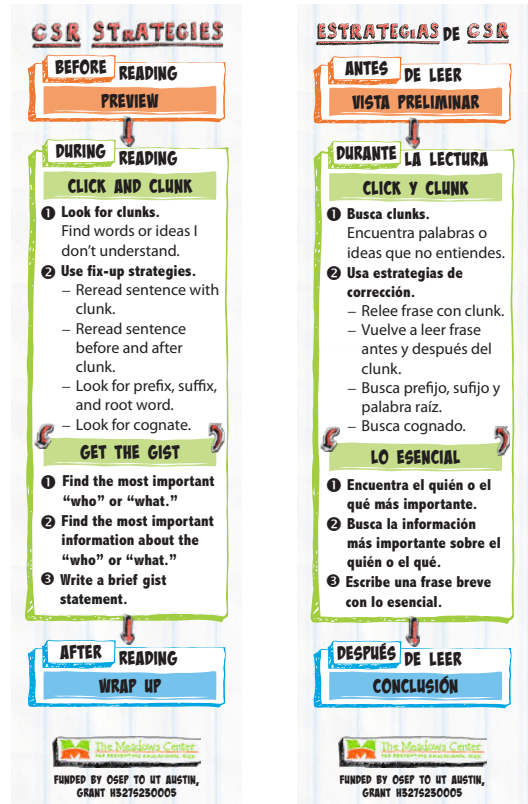
Conversation Starter Magnets

Students practice CA-CSR strategies in class. This magnet, provided in English and Spanish, provides questions that parents/guardians may use to spark conversations at home about CA-CSR and nonfiction text reading. It's a wonderful way that families can engage students in extra practice when their child is reading nonfiction text at home. It may also spark conversations around topics interesting to their child. Shared interests are fun!



CSR Strategies Bookmark

Students use these bookmarks, which have English on one side and Spanish on the other, to remind them of CSR strategies as they read books or other texts. Students can use the bookmark at home while they read or complete homework. Additionally, if a younger sibling or cousin is curious about the bookmark, it could be an opportunity for a child to teach a younger individual about comprehension strategies.



References

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