

## Listen and Look at Back-to-School Night

Most schools offer a Back-to-School Night for families a few weeks after school begins. The evening provides a chance for families to learn more about their child's school and classroom. Take this opportunity to listen and look for signs that your child is in a place where good reading instruction can take place.

### **As your child's teacher and principal are talking, listen for information about:**

- The classroom schedule. Effective classrooms offer a 90-120 minute uninterrupted block of time for language arts instruction.
- Assessments. Good teachers use the information they gather from assessments to plan instruction. As the teacher describes the assessments, it should be clear how that information is used to plan lessons just right for your child.
- Home-school communication. Teachers and families need to be in touch throughout the year. Whether it's through a folder, notebook or daily learning log, you should hear something about the system the teacher uses to keep in touch.

### **When you're in the classroom, look for:**

- A classroom library. Literacy-rich classrooms have lots of books for kids to read. Ideally, there would be books written on several different reading levels, and it would contain lots of different kinds of books.
- Evidence of kid writing. It's still early in the year, so there may not have been time to do much writing, but look for a journal, a writing folder, or something that provides practice putting letter-sound knowledge to work.
- A place for the teacher to work in small groups. Instruction about learning to read is targeted to small groups with similar needs. Most teachers try to work with groups of 3-5 students at a table somewhere in the room. While some instruction takes place with the whole group, other instruction should be delivered to small, skill-based groups.

Back-to-school night may be early for some of these things to be in place. If you don't hear or see these important pieces for literacy learning in your child's classroom, talk with your child's teacher.

**For more information, read "Find Good Schools and Good Teachers"  
[www.ReadingRockets.org/article/32374](http://www.ReadingRockets.org/article/32374)**

