

NYCPS District Literacy Hubs Newsletter



Volume 3, Issue 2

School Leaders Deepen Understanding of Intervention Fidelity at Principal Professional Learning Session

On January 7, 2026, the District Literacy Hubs kicked off the new year with the second of three Principal Professional Learning Sessions, convening approximately 160 school leaders, district and Central administrators, and job-embedded support providers (JESPs). The full-day session centered on a shared priority across the system: strengthening the implementation fidelity of reading interventions so that all students receive instruction as it was designed.

The session focused on building a common vision of high-quality implementation of Phonics for Reading, one of [Central's recommended reading interventions](#). Participants grounded their learning in the fundamentals of the program, revisiting [Scarborough's Reading Rope](#) and [Gough and Tunmer's Simple View of Reading](#) formula to examine how targeted interventions support students' literacy development. This shared vision set the stage for deeper analysis of what the effective delivery of this intervention looks like.

Instructional Insight: Rethinking "Perky Pace" in Reading Interventions

With this grounding, participants practiced using the [Phonics for Reading Program Look Fors](#) ("look fors"), a tool developed by Central to help leaders and educators learn how well the program is being implemented in schools. Guided by Jessica Seessel, Director of Literacy, participants analyzed a video of Phonics for Reading instruction and applied

the program look fors created by Central.

Throughout the session, Seessel emphasized the mindset that "Fidelity isn't about checking boxes." She explained, "It's about making sure students experience reading instruction the way it was designed to work." The framing sparked a discussion about what "perky pace" means and what teachers—and the school systems that surround them—need to do to deliver interventions at a perky pace. Leaders reflected that perky pace is not simply about speed but also finding an appropriate speed that gives students time to think and respond while maintaining their interest in the lesson.



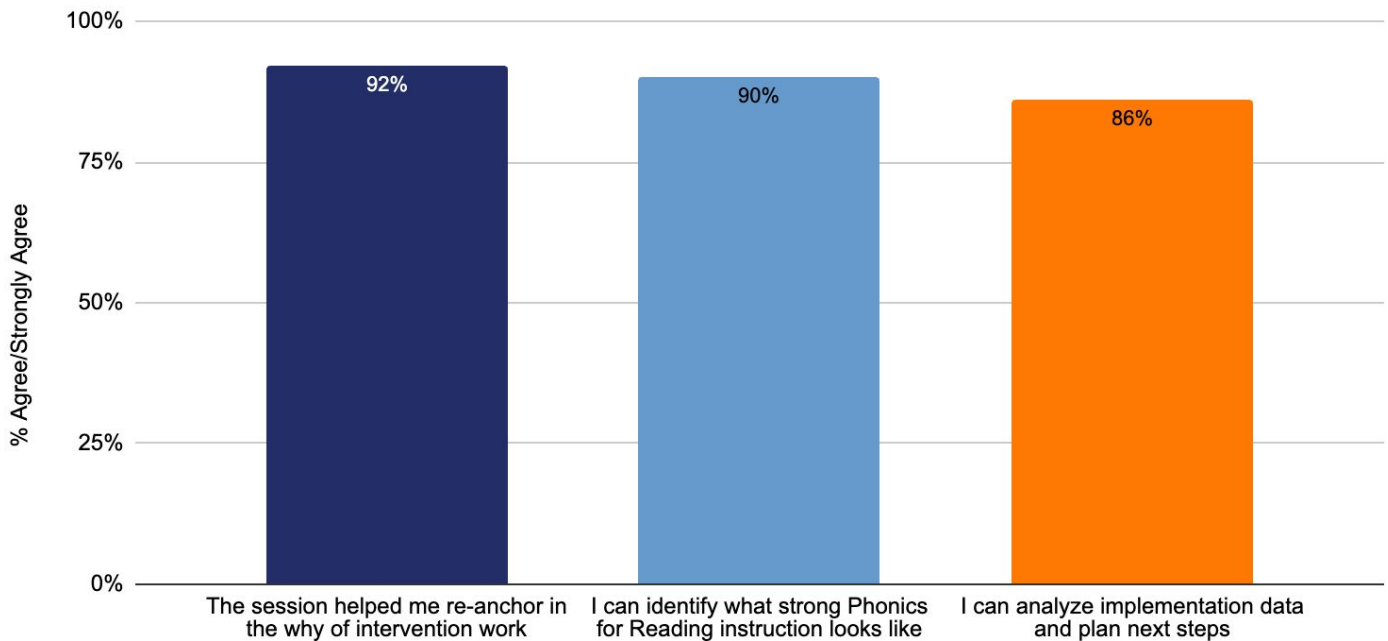
Principals and other participants at the January 7, 2026 Principal Professional Learning Session, using Phonics for Reading Look Fors Tool. Photo credit: Kimberly Austin

From Data to Action: Identifying Bright Spots in Implementation

In the afternoon, participants shifted their focus to implementation data, using school- and district-level reports to assess progress across six categories in the [Secondary Literacy MTSS implementation Look Fors](#).

January Principal Professional Learning Session (Continued)

Figure 1. Participant satisfaction with January Principal Professional Learning Session



Leaders examined key measures related to staffing, assessment, and intervention placements to better understand how school systems are supporting students who need literacy interventions.

In exploring the data, they noted inconsistencies in implementation, gaps between plans and practice, and opportunities to support more responsive intervention planning. Leaders also offered suggestions for strengthening the use of data, including examining trends by student group (such as multilingual learners) and intervention program.

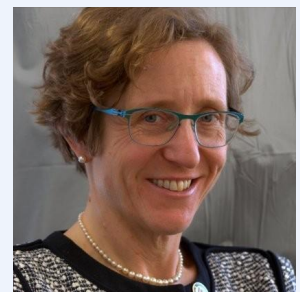
School Leader Takeaways

Feedback from leaders indicates that the January Principal Professional Learning Session supported meaningful learning. Of the 157 attendees, 76% completed the exit survey, with strong ratings across all three learning targets. Figure 1 presents these results.

The final Principal Professional Learning Session of SY 2025-26 will take place on Wednesday, May 6, 2026.

“Fidelity isn’t about checking boxes. It’s about making sure students experience reading instruction the way it was designed to work.”

-Jessica Seessel
Director of Literacy
NYC Reads



Making Reading Interventions Work in Secondary Schools

I.S. 285 Meyer Levin Middle School for the Performing Arts

In comparison with K-5 classrooms, effective implementation of reading interventions in secondary schools often requires greater coordination to ensure appropriate dosage, adherence, quality, and meaningful student and family engagement.

Meyer Levin Middle School for the Performing Arts (I.S. 285) in East Flatbush, Brooklyn illustrates both the possibility and promise of building schoolwide systems that support strong implementation of reading interventions in secondary classrooms. The school's ongoing journey of continuous learning and improvement underscores the importance of key components of the [MTSS framework in NYCPS](#) and the role of school communities in strengthening reading interventions.

Literacy Infrastructure: Building Professional Knowledge and Practice

“Our rollout was a true all-hands-on-deck effort,” Assistant Principal (AP) Jaclyn Reyes said. “We moved beyond simple testing logistics to ensure every staff member—from teachers to paraprofessionals—deeply understood the why behind our diagnostics and what the resulting scores actually signaled for student growth.”



We moved beyond simple testing logistics to ensure every staff member—from teachers to paraprofessionals—deeply understood the why behind our diagnostics and what the resulting scores actually signaled for student growth.

-Jaclyn Reyes
Assistant Principal, I.S. 285

Teachers and staff received training on the intervention programs themselves. However, these trainings were only a starting point. School leaders also allocated professional learning time to unpack



Assistant Principal Jaclyn Reyes
Source: I.S. 285 website

reading interventions and rehearse their delivery, including opportunities to role play situations in which students may feel frustrated. “This exercise was a turning point,” AP Reyes said, explaining “it built the empathy and urgency needed to fuel our MTSS work and opened a vital dialogue on how we support our struggling readers.”

School leaders also partnered with Catherine Jaworskyj, their Generation Ready job-embedded support provider (JESP), who provided “modeling and real-time guidance.”

From Fidelity to Integrity: Supporting Ongoing Implementation

While fidelity to program design is an important goal, Meyer Levin Middle School's leadership is also pursuing integrity. Rather than viewing intervention implementation as a checklist to be completed, the school treats it as an ongoing conversation that involves reflection, adjustment, and sustained investment.

To support this pursuit, the school identified a team dedicated to the implementation of MTSS. Team members help coordinate training staff, analyze data, and program interventions. According to AP Reyes, the team “supports that heavy lifting and helps clear the path” for interventions.

Making Reading Interventions Work in Secondary Schools: I.S. 285 (Continued)

The team’s monitoring efforts include the consistent use of program look fors. It also offered a “Thinking Group” professional learning session to develop a shared understanding of the indicators within the look fors. Jaworskyj noted that school leaders have strategically identified two model instructors for intervention—ELA teacher and intervention specialist Mr. James Passantino and paraprofessional Ms. Joleen James—as leaders who offer colleagues support, share practical strategies, and help build confidence across the staff.

Building Capacity: Advice for Other Schools

When asked what advice they would offer to schools building or strengthening reading interventions, AP Reyes first advises, “build your team.” She encouraged school leaders to identify the educators who know literacy well and invest in them to help others.

Second, she recommended trusting your coach and collaborating with them, explaining that reading interventions may appear straightforward but are deeply complex. This complexity, and ways to navigate it, surface when leaders and educators take time to reflect on the “actual needs of our students and teachers alike so that no one is left to struggle in isolation.” She added, “The answers are often right there in the room with you. You just have to create the space to find them.”

Thank you to Principal Hendrickson, AP Cummings, AP Reyes, Mr. Passantino, Ms. James, JESP Jaworskyj, and the entire teaching staff at Meyer Levin Middle School for sharing their school’s journey with implementing reading interventions.

I.S. 285 Meyer Levin Middle School

District: Community School District 18

Grades Served: 6-9

Reading Interventions

Meyer Levin Middle School for the Performing Arts (I.S. 285) currently provides three interventions:

- Phonics for Reading (Levels A-C)
- REWARDS Secondary
- STARI

For more on these programs and others, see the [Secondary Literacy: Ladder of Intervention](#).

About Implementation

Meyer Levin Middle School, a PROSE school, has programmed a WIN, or “What I Need,” period for all grades. During WIN, students placed in reading intervention receive additional support. Students performing above the 40th percentile on universal screeners receive enrichment programming.



Agendas to Support MTSS Implementation in Schools

Central set a goal for all NYC public schools to implement evidence-based literacy practices and a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) that improve student literacy outcomes and ensures all students become proficient, thriving readers and writers by 2028.

To support this goal, the DLH has published agendas for school leaders and School Literacy Points (SLPs) to use in existing meetings related to MTSS. The DLH designed them to help schools strengthen their comprehensive assessment system, reading intervention, and other MTSS components.

Central releases the customizable agendas at each H.S./Hubs LLS session. They should be turnkeyed by District Literacy Points and other district administrators with school leaders, SLPs, and other school staff.

Check out the agendas published this year.

- [Agenda Template to Support MTSS, Sept.-Oct. 2025](#)
- [Agenda Template to Support MTSS, Oct.-Nov. 2025](#)
- [Option 1: Agenda Template to Support MTSS, Nov.-Dec. 2025](#)
- [Option 2: Agenda Template to Support MTSS, Nov.-Dec. 2025](#)
- [Agenda Template to Support MTSS, Dec. 2025-Jan. 2026](#)
- [Agenda Template to Support MTSS, Jan.-Feb. 2026](#)
- [Agenda Template to Support MTSS, Feb.-Mar. 2026](#)

LITERACY RESOURCES

01 Phonics for Reading videos

Use the Phonics for Reading video library to support norming across districts and schools.

The library has two types of videos. Type 1 describes the components of literacy (e.g., phonemic awareness) and what student practice looks like. Type 2 illustrates what Phonics for Reading lessons look like, which are called “Activity in Action” videos.

02 REWARDS Secondary videos

Use the REWARDS Secondary videos to support norming across districts and schools.

03 Reading Intervention Program Look Fors

Lists key indicators to learn how well Phonics for Reading, REWARDS Secondary and REWARDS Plus, and STARI are implemented with fidelity. It also includes the MTSS look fors.

Looking Ahead

March 20: MOY Check In due. The form will be released on March 2. Contact your job-embedded support provider (JESP) and/or District Literacy Point (DLP) to access the form.

ASAP: Review Literacy Action Plan feedback and **OPTIONAL** submit revised EOY goals by emailing districtliteracyhubs@gmail.com with your (1) school name and (2) revised EOY goal(s). Contact your JESP and/or DLP to access the feedback.

Ongoing: Schedule, plan, and host intervisitations. These visits are opportunities to see MTSS in action, share promising practices, and strengthen collaboration across schools.