


Marshall Street





Turning the Page to Secondary Literacy

TESTED PRACTICES FOR SCHOOLS TO IDENTIFY GAPS AND IMPLEMENT INTERVENTIONS FOR SECONDARY READERS






A Collection of Research-to-Impact Practices Developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

Table of Contents

Preface.....iii

Acknowledgments iv

Collection Overview.....1.1

Literature Review.....2.1

CHAPTER 1

Guiding Literacy Interventions through Tiered Assessment.....3.1

CHAPTER 2

Repeated Reading: Building Oral Reading Fluency in Secondary Readers.....4.1

CHAPTER 3

Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills in Adolescent Readers.....5.1

CHAPTER 4

Strengthening Timely Interventions through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring.....6.1

CASE STUDY

Enhancing Educator Capacity to Implement Evidence-Based Reading Interventions for Secondary Readers.....7.1

HOW-TO

Assessment of Adolescent Readers.....8.1

Conclusion.....9.1

Preface

In *Turning the Page to Secondary Literacy: Tested practices for schools to identify gaps and implement interventions for secondary readers*, we share a set of best practices for improving learning outcomes in secondary students — particularly Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty — using evidence-based practices for reading intervention in the secondary setting. The Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC), a group of 10 public charter school networks serving more than 75,000 students nationwide, identified the best practices through their work between 2019 and 2023.

Led by **Marshall Street** at Summit Public Schools, in partnership with technical assistance providers NIRN, RTI International, SRI International, and SWIFT Education Center, the purpose of the three-year NIC was to systematically improve the way our education system serves Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty and share these solutions with school systems everywhere. This report is funded by the Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the Gates Foundation.

The NIC used continuous improvement to translate existing research for improving learning outcomes into best practices and to iterate the practices to ensure they worked in a variety of school contexts.

In ***Turning the Page to Secondary Literacy: Tested practices for schools to identify gaps and implement interventions for secondary readers***, we share the results of this vital work:

- A **literature review** summarizing the key research related to reading instruction and intervention for nonproficient secondary readers
- Four **best practices** that schools in the NIC used to plan, implement, and monitor the effectiveness of secondary reading interventions. Each best practice includes:
  - Case studies highlighting how schools in the NIC implemented the practices
  - Step-by-step implementation guidance
  - Key prerequisites and accelerants for successful implementation in any context
- One **case study** of a professional learning community designed to build the capacity of NIC educators to use data to plan, implement, and monitor the effectiveness of evidence-based practices for secondary reading intervention
- One **guidance document** for school and network leadership on high-level considerations for assessing adolescent readers

We share these best practices so that any school in the country can leverage the learning from the NIC to accelerate dramatic gains in learning outcomes for their students with disabilities. We hope that administrators and educators across the country can use the stories within this guide to build their school cultures of continuous improvement as well.

Acknowledgments

About Marshall Street

Marshall Street is a division of Summit Public Schools based in Redwood City, California. Marshall draws from more than 15 years of institutional knowledge and extensive experience in school improvement. Through our programs, we increase the capacity of our school partners to carry their work forward in the ways most meaningful to their communities.

Continuous Improvement is a set of principles and practices to help educators "get better at getting better." Marshall's Continuous Improvement team uses these tools to tackle intricate, systems-level problems in K–12 education. From 2019 to 2023, Marshall led a multi-year Networked Improvement Community (NIC) to make dramatic gains in the learning experiences, environments, and outcomes for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty.

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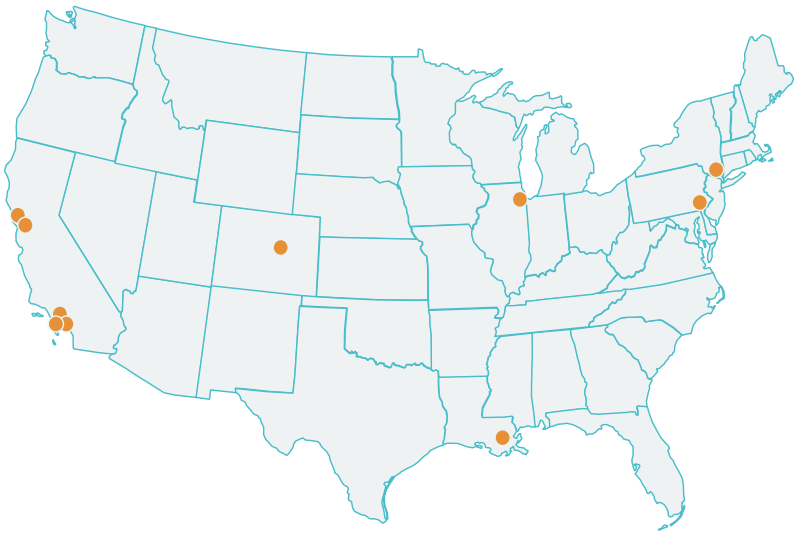
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Marshall Street

Overview

TURNING THE PAGE TO SECONDARY LITERACY

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Turning the Page to Secondary Literacy

Collection Introduction

The Challenge

Reading proficiency correlates strongly with educational attainment and broader life outcomes.

Proficient reading and writing skills contribute to a wide range of life outcomes, affecting an individual's academic achievement, career opportunities, earning potential, and physical and social-emotional well-being. While adequate literacy skills have far-reaching positive effects on individuals and society, low literacy rates have equally impactful consequences. Individuals with poor reading skills are more likely to drop out of school[1] and to be incarcerated.[2] They are less likely to obtain employment,[3] to earn an above-average salary, and to receive promotions at work.[4] They also have higher reported rates of depression and anxiety.[5]

Secondary students with disabilities are not developing the reading skills necessary to support college and career readiness.

On the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress assessment:

16%

of Black 8th grade students and

21%

of Hispanic 8th grade students scored within the proficient range in reading, compared to **38% of white students**

9%

of 8th grade students with disabilities scored within the proficient range in reading, compared to **34% of students without disabilities**

Because low reading skills are a barrier to accessing grade-level content and standards, this reality results in inequitable access to the rigorous academic content students need to engage with to be prepared for postsecondary success.

The diverse needs of nonproficient secondary readers pose unique challenges for schools.

Schools and districts seeking to improve reading outcomes of nonproficient secondary readers face several unique challenges:

SECONDARY READERS ARE A PARTICULARLY HETEROGENEOUS GROUP.

They can differ greatly, not only in the degree of their reading difficulties but also in the nature of those difficulties. They also tend to have difficulty with more than one aspect of reading.

THIS RANGE OF UNDERLYING CAUSES OF READING DIFFICULTIES NECESSITATES AN EQUALLY BROAD RANGE OF INTERVENTIONS.

However, reading intervention in middle and high school settings has often represented a "one-size-fits-all" approach, with one intervention available to all students reading below grade level, regardless of their individual reading profiles.

OUR TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS AREN'T DESIGNED TO ILLUMINATE THESE INDIVIDUAL READING PROFILES.

Commonly administered assessments at the secondary level often tell us which students are failing to meet grade-level reading benchmarks and standards. However, without a tiered approach that includes diagnostic assessment, we have little insight into why those students aren't reading proficiently.

SECONDARY STUDENTS WHO DON'T READ WELL HAVE HAD MANY YEARS TO DEVELOP SELF-CONCEPTS AS POOR READERS.

Reading is often effortful and laborious for them, and as a result, they read a significantly smaller volume of text than their peers who are reading proficiently. These factors contribute to an overall low motivation to read.

Why "Nonproficient Readers"?

Students with reading skills that fall below age- or grade-level expectations are often referred to as "struggling readers." This phrase represents deficit language that has the potential to perpetuate low expectations and reinforce biases. The authors of this collection have intentionally chosen to avoid this terminology and instead refer to students who are not yet reading at age- or grade-level expectations as "nonproficient readers." We hope this language will adequately describe the subgroup of students that is the focus of this collection while promoting respectful and inclusive dialogue.

A research-to-practice gap means that secondary educators are not equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to improve outcomes for nonproficient secondary readers.

The problem is not a paucity of research findings on reading intervention for older students. In fact, leading reading researchers stated in a 2006 report that "...enough is already known about adolescent reading — both the nature of the problems of struggling readers and the types of interventions and approaches needed to address these needs — in order to act immediately on a broad scale."[6]

The reality is that secondary teachers simply haven't been equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to implement evidence-based instruction for nonproficient readers. They consistently report that both teacher preparation programs and job-embedded professional development opportunities fail to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to address reading deficits for this population.[7]

> **"It is both fascinating and frustrating that, despite what can only be described as incredible advances in the broad and interdisciplinary field of reading and literacy research, coupled with progress in both education policy and practice...Black and Brown children have yet to benefit in sustainable, replicable, and transformative ways. Despite its promise, the science of reading is not benefiting Black and Brown children at scale."**
>
> **DR. NICOLE PATTON TERRY, PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR, FLORIDA CENTER FOR READING RESEARCH[8]**

Our Approach

Given the importance of reading proficiency to individuals' long-term outcomes, the reality of the current state of reading proficiency in our schools, and the complexity of teaching nonproficient secondary readers, the implementation of effective reading interventions is essential to the NIC's aim of systematically improving the way our education system serves Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. To close the research-to-practice gap, the NIC explored and developed a set of accessible and effective interventions for secondary readers. At the foundation of these interventions are the following guiding principles.

Effective secondary reading intervention is driven by data-informed decision-making.

Schools within the NIC understood that to design and implement effective reading interventions, they first needed to understand the needs of the nonproficient readers within their systems. Thus, our approach started with universal screening of reading proficiency. That is, NIC schools first administered assessments to all students to identify those who were not yet reading proficiently.

While universal screening of reading proficiency is a relatively common practice in secondary schools, it is often the only systematic assessment practice implemented in these settings. Because of the heterogeneity of nonproficient secondary readers, simply identifying students reading below grade-level expectations is insufficient for developing interventions that are likely to result in gap-closing growth. As such, our approach also included diagnostic assessment, or a process of administering additional, targeted reading measures to uncover the specific skill deficits contributing to low reading proficiency for students identified via the universal screening process. By identifying the specific needs of nonproficient readers, schools within the NIC could develop menus of reading interventions that targeted students' specific reading needs.

Exemplifying this commitment to data-informed decision-making, **Green Dot Public Schools** leveraged a computer-based, adaptive measure of reading proficiency to identify students reading below an established cut point. They then administered curriculum-based measurements of reading fluency to this group of students. Analyzing the data from this fluency assessment allowed them to subdivide the nonproficient students into three subgroups:

- Students who had not yet developed proficient word recognition skills
- Students who could recognize words but lacked the reading fluency necessary for reading comprehension
- Students with adequate reading fluency but low language comprehension skills

Equipped with this comprehensive picture of reader profiles, Green Dot was able to tailor interventions to individual student needs.

Effective secondary reading intervention is aligned with evidence-based practices.

While many secondary schools implement some level of reading intervention for nonproficient readers, these approaches often fall short because (1) they represent a "one-size-fits-all" approach in which all students receive the same intervention regardless of their individual reading profiles, (2) they tend to focus narrowly on procedural reading skills without consideration of the conceptual and knowledge-based skills necessary for comprehension of grade-level secondary texts, and (3) they are driven by the availability of commercial intervention programs rather than the evidence-based practices that the field of reading science has established with respect to secondary reading intervention.

The NIC understood that accelerating reading proficiency for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty would require the implementation of practices that align with what works and what doesn't for our target population. The specific intervention practices implemented by schools within the NIC aligned with evidence-based practices that researchers consistently cite as critical to understanding and supporting nonproficient secondary readers. These practices include **multisyllabic word reading, reading fluency, and motivation and engagement.** In response to the recommendation that reading interventions at the secondary level are most effective when they target multiple subcomponents of reading, schools within the NIC sought to provide interventions that would address a range of reading needs rather than narrowly focusing on interventions designed to address isolated skills.

At **Uncommon Charter High School**, educators redesigned an existing reading intervention structure targeting 9th grade students to more comprehensively integrate evidence-based practices for nonproficient secondary readers. Diagnostic data indicated that students participating in the reading intervention course had specific skill deficits in multisyllabic word reading and reading fluency. Using this data, the Uncommon team developed a daily instructional protocol that leveraged grade-level texts to provide specific word study instruction, opportunities for repeated reading practice to build oral reading fluency, and explicit vocabulary instruction in high-leverage, academically relevant words. They paired this instructional protocol with strategies to build motivation and engagement, including student conferencing and collaborative goal setting.

Effective secondary reading intervention enables meaningful participation in rigorous, grade-level academics.

At many secondary schools, reading intervention is isolated from the core academic program, creating a structure that lessens its effectiveness. For example, students may participate in a reading intervention "class" that leverages a commercially available reading intervention program unrelated to core course content and texts. This lack of alignment contributes to low levels of skill generalization across contexts and creates barriers to providing inclusive services within general education classrooms. It can also diminish motivation as students struggle to see the applicability of the reading practice completed in reading intervention outside of that particular context.

Throughout the work of the NIC, it became clear that **effective, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive** reading intervention needed to keep participation in rigorous grade-level content as the north star. With this goal in mind, schools endeavored to align reading intervention efforts with the core academic program. For example, **Noble Schools** designed an oral reading fluency intervention that was facilitated by a special education and general education co-teaching pair within the context of a general education World History class. This approach resulted in several benefits for students, including reduced stigma associated with pull-out special education services, increased access to reading intervention for students who did not receive special education services, and improved reading comprehension of relevant academic texts.

Effective secondary reading intervention requires consistent, quality professional learning opportunities for educators.

Research shows that effective professional development is both intensive and sustained — teachers will learn a new skill well enough to positively impact student learning after approximately 50 hours of professional development. However, professional development delivered in US schools does not consistently align with these recommendations. A survey of US teachers designed to assess the current status of professional development revealed that most professional development fails to explore topics deeply and that nearly half of teachers are dissatisfied with their professional development opportunities.[9]

Secondary teachers report that, even when they are provided with opportunities to learn strategies to teach nonproficient readers, they rarely receive ongoing support. It comes as no surprise then, that they also report feeling woefully underprepared to teach reading to this population of students.[10]

To build the capacity of educators to implement secondary reading interventions, the NIC established a responsive, ongoing professional learning structure that included regular content-driven learning opportunities and individualized coaching. The approach was designed to align with the elements of effective professional development:[11]

- **It's content-focused:** Professional learning for schools within the NIC working to implement secondary reading intervention focused on discrete content related to evidence-based practices (e.g., supporting motivation and engagement in secondary readers, word study interventions, and vocabulary development).
- **It incorporates active learning:** Every professional learning opportunity provided to educators within the NIC included structures to promote reflection, meaning-making, and application to practice.
- **It supports collaboration:** Professional learning was structured via a professional learning community (PLC), which facilitated collaboration and connection across schools within the NIC.
- **It uses models of effective practice:** Participants in the NIC professional learning community had regular opportunities to observe instruction that aligned with evidence-based practices.
- **It is of sustained duration:** The PLC met monthly over the course of a full school year, with individual coaching sessions provided between PLC meetings.

> **"Explicitly teaching and leveraging the science allows us to overcome our blind spots, assumptions, and biases which impact every aspect of instruction. In other words, the quest to fortify our society and its institutions begins with preparing our teachers to apply the science of reading and reach all students. That's the way to save us from ourselves and avoid a permanent underclass filling our correctional institutions as prisoners of the 'reading wars.'"**
>
> KAREEM WEAVER, EDUCATION COMMITTEE, NAACP

Enabling Conditions

Each of the aforementioned principles contributed to improved experiences and reading outcomes for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty within the NIC. The effective implementation of these practices was made possible because of three core enabling conditions that were in place in NIC members' schools: assessment systems and practices, adaptive and flexible service schedules, and responsive, strategic development opportunities for educators. Without these three conditions, the practices' impact is dramatically reduced.

Assessment Systems and Practices

Effective secondary reading intervention is implemented within the context of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), which includes universal screening practices to identify students in need of intervention support, diagnostic assessment to pinpoint specific reading skill deficits, and ongoing monitoring of the reading progress of students participating in interventions. In addition to the assessment systems themselves, effective secondary reading intervention can only be achieved when schools implement collaborative structures in which educators regularly review data collected through screening, diagnostic, and progress-monitoring practices and leverage it to inform intervention decisions for students.

Schools in the NIC implemented a range of screening measures to identify subsets of their student populations who would require reading intervention to meaningfully participate in grade-level instruction and curriculum. They conducted diagnostic assessment to further pinpoint specific skill deficits for individual students and designed decision-making criteria to guide teams. With the belief that students should only participate in interventions as long as they need them, schools monitored student progress so that they could ensure students exited from interventions as skill deficits were remediated, or that they were referred for increasingly intensive levels of support if needed.

Adaptive and Flexible Service Schedules

Scheduling is often cited as a primary challenge in the implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI) models in secondary settings.[12] Limiting reading intervention to a specific course offered within the context of students' schedules makes it difficult to return students to lower levels of support as skills are remediated. It also limits students' ability to engage in credit-bearing coursework, and it prevents educators from flexibly adjusting intervention dosage based on student need.

To address these challenges, schools within the NIC were flexible and adaptive in the design of reading intervention service schedules. For example, Green Dot Public Schools embedded an oral reading fluency intervention within an existing comprehensive reading course, while Noble Schools implemented a similar intervention within a co-taught general education World History course.

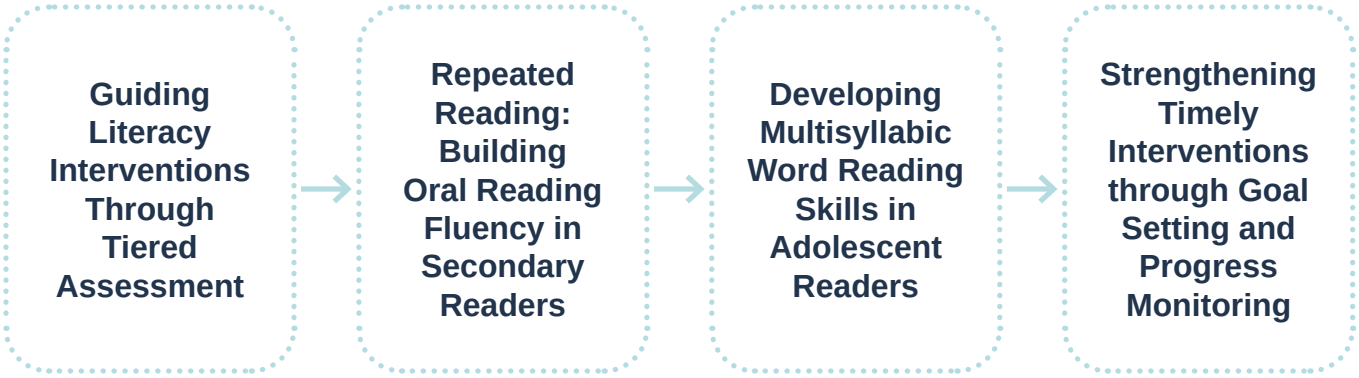
Responsive Development for Educators

Teacher knowledge of language and literacy constructs is associated with improved reading outcomes for students. Effective teachers of reading know the basics of reading development, understand language structure for both word recognition and language comprehension, apply evidence-based practices in their instruction, and use valid and reliable assessments to inform their teaching.[13] The majority of professional development experiences offered to educators fail to adequately develop this knowledge and these competencies, resulting in many secondary educators reporting feeling unprepared to address their students' needs as readers.

Eager to build their knowledge and skills related to language and literacy constructs and instruction, educators within the NIC participated in ongoing collaborative and responsive professional learning activities, including a regular professional learning community and individual coaching opportunities. These structures provided targeted, relevant content with immediate opportunities to apply learning, receive expert feedback, and revise approaches accordingly.

The Collection

This collection includes **four best practices** that schools in the NIC used to plan, implement, and monitor the effectiveness of secondary reading interventions, **one case study** of a professional learning community designed to build the capacity of NIC educators to use data to enhance these practices, and a **guidance document** for school and district leaders sharing considerations for the assessment of adolescent readers within an MTSS model.



Enabling Conditions:
Assessment Systems and Practices
Flexible Service Schedules
Responsive Development for Educators

The audience for this collection is educators, schools, and networks who believe that all students are capable of reaching reading proficiency levels that support meaningful participation in rigorous grade-level instruction, who fundamentally believe that it is the system's responsibility to ensure this is a reality for all students it serves, and who are looking for a roadmap to initiate or refine their approach to this work. While a great many research papers, reports, and technical assistance centers provide guidance in each of the areas described above, this collection is unique:

- It ties together the multiple elements critical to accelerating reading outcomes specifically for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty.
- Each chapter is grounded in both foundational and current research on the practice but emphasizes (1) detailed, real-world examples of the practice as implemented in secondary schools and classrooms within the NIC and (2) a step-by-step guide to implementation of the practice.

Chapter 1: Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment

Tiered assessment to guide literacy intervention planning refers to the practice of identifying secondary students who are at risk of not meeting grade-level ELA benchmarks or standards, pinpointing specific reading skill gaps for these students, and planning aligned evidence-based interventions to address the identified skill gaps. This chapter outlines the individual steps involved in this process — (1) universal screening of reading, (2) diagnostic assessment of reading, and (3) alignment of evidence-based interventions to student needs — and provides guidance on the selection of assessments, development of decision-making criteria, and protocols for collaborative data-driven decision-making.

Chapter 2: Repeated Reading: Oral Reading Fluency Intervention for Secondary Readers

Oral reading fluency is highly correlated with reading comprehension, and schools that use a tiered assessment approach to guide literacy interventions will likely encounter a subgroup of students who lack the reading fluency necessary for reading comprehension. This chapter describes the implementation of repeated reading, an evidence-based practice for building oral reading fluency, across several settings within the NIC.

Chapter 3: Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills for Secondary Readers

Weak word-analysis skills and inaccurate decoding of multisyllabic words are often key contributors to low reading fluency rates for nonproficient secondary readers. This chapter describes the implementation of a word study intervention designed to improve fluency and accuracy of multisyllabic word reading.

Chapter 4: Strengthening Timely Interventions through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring

Effective implementation of secondary reading intervention requires establishing clear student goals, implementing valid and reliable assessments to monitor student progress toward those goals, and engaging in regular analysis of progress-monitoring data to guide instruction and intervention planning decisions. This chapter provides guidance on the selection of progress-monitoring tools and outlines a process for collecting data, conferencing with students, and analyzing data to inform intervention decisions.

Case Study: Enhancing Educator Capacity to Implement Evidence-Based Reading Interventions

Teacher knowledge of language and literacy constructs, implementation of evidence-based practices, and proficiency with assessments and data-based decision-making are all associated with improved student outcomes. Building these competencies requires practitioner-focused professional development and aligned coaching for educators. This case study highlights the approach taken by the Marshall improvement team to build the capacity of educators across the NIC working to implement secondary reading intervention through a professional learning community and individual coaching structures.

Guidance Document: How-To: Assessment of Adolescent Readers

This brief resource describes components of assessment and decision-making for adolescent readers for school and district leader consideration within an MTSS framework.

How to Approach this Collection

Readers of the collection should begin with chapter 1, as this chapter provides the framework for (1) identifying students within the system who will require intervention to reach grade-level ELA benchmarks and standards and (2) pinpointing the specific reading needs of those identified students for the ultimate purpose of aligning interventions to student need.

After chapter 1, readers are encouraged to learn about the specific evidence-based interventions aligned with student needs identified via the tiered assessment process. This collection includes chapters that clearly outline the implementation of interventions aligned with two specific components of proficient adolescent reading: oral reading fluency and multisyllabic word reading. However, as highlighted above, secondary readers often also present with needs in vocabulary and reading comprehension strategy use. While these components are not explicitly addressed in this collection, readers are encouraged to leverage the following resources as practical, research-aligned implementation guides:

Vocabulary: **Bringing Words to Life**
by Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan

Comprehension: **The Reading Comprehension Blueprint** by Nancy E. Hennessy, M.Ed.

In addition, the following resources provide comprehensive summaries of the research on secondary reading interventions:

Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Practice Brief
by Center on Instruction

Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices,
an IES Practice Guide

Interventions for Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Meta-Analysis with Implications for Practice by Center on Instruction

Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9
by What Works Clearinghouse

After identifying students, pinpointing their specific skill gaps, and aligning interventions accordingly, readers are encouraged to leverage chapter 4 to create a plan for engaging students in progress monitoring and the case study to plan for building teacher capacity.

Appendix

Notes

1 McArthur and Castles, “Helping Children with Reading Difficulties”

2 Mulcahy et al., “The Relationship Between Reading Age, Education and Life Outcomes”

3 Caspi et al., “Early Failure in the Labor Market”

4 Mulcahy et al., “The Relationship Between Reading Age, Education and Life Outcomes”

5 Ibid.

6 Biancarosa and Snow, *Reading Next*

7 Kamil et al., *Improving Adolescent Literacy*; Boardman et al., *Effective Instruction*

8 Terry, “Delivering on the Promise”

9 Darling-Hammond et al., *Professional Learning*

10 James-Burdumy et al., *Effectiveness of Selected Supplemental Reading Comprehension Interventions*

11 Darling-Hammond et al., *Professional Learning*

12 Ehren, “Response to Intervention in Secondary Schools”

13 Moats, “Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science”

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Marshall Street

Literature Review

TURNING THE PAGE TO SECONDARY LITERACY

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

Literature Review

ABSTRACT

Proficient reading is a critical contributor to positive postsecondary outcomes, yet US schools fail to consistently and equitably equip students with the reading skills necessary to participate meaningfully in college and career opportunities. This literature review provides a synthesis of the existing research base of reading intervention for students in grades 4–12. We define secondary reading intervention, explain why it is important, summarize what is known about reading development generally, and synthesize the literature on evidence-based instructional practices for nonproficient readers. We provide a summary of the limited research findings specific to Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty and highlight relevant findings related to teacher professional development.

Introduction

In addition to the specific college and career-ready standards specified for each grade level, the authors of the **Common Core State Standards** have articulated the characteristics of literate individuals, including that they:

- demonstrate independence,
- build strong content knowledge,
- respond to varying text demands,
- comprehend as well as critique,
- value evidence,
- use technology capably, and
- come to understand other perspectives and cultures (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices 2010).

Achieving these characteristics requires secondary readers to flexibly and strategically employ a range of complex reading behaviors, including reading text fluently, deducing the meaning of unknown words, using strategies to support comprehension actively and flexibly, bringing background knowledge on a wide range of topics to the reading experience, reasoning and making inferences while reading, and maintaining motivation to read and engagement in the reading process (Torgesen et al. 2007). Indeed, the demands on secondary readers are significant, yet current and historical assessments of reading proficiency suggest that many middle and high school students do not demonstrate proficient reading skills (National Assessment of Educational Progress 2022).

This literature review was written for an audience of educators, schools, and districts seeking to change these outcomes for secondary students with a focus on Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive yet concise summary of recent research, literature reviews, and meta-analyses on this topic to aid our audience in understanding (1) which practices are most likely to improve reading proficiency for secondary readers and (2) under what conditions these practices should be applied. We begin with defining and clarifying the importance of secondary reading intervention and proceed to summarize the following subtopics:

- **UNDERSTANDING READING DEVELOPMENT**
- **UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENT READING**
- **INSTRUCTIONAL TARGETS FOR NONPROFICIENT SECONDARY READERS**
- **CROSS-CUTTING FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE SECONDARY READING INTERVENTIONS**
- **READING INTERVENTION FOR BLACK AND LATINX STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES EXPERIENCING POVERTY**
- **BUILDING EDUCATOR CAPACITY**

The review focuses on literature published in the last 20 years and includes older, seminal studies where relevant (e.g., Gough and Tunmer 1986). We focus on summarizing the findings of several comprehensive literature reviews and meta-analyses of reading interventions for older readers and include additional studies published in scholarly journals where applicable. Because the reading profiles and instructional needs of upper elementary students are often more similar to those of middle and high school students than students in the primary elementary grades, students in grades 4–12 are included in the research summarized in the review. While the literature review does include research specific to our target population, this population is also underrepresented in the literature, and thus we also summarize the research related to nonproficient secondary readers more broadly.

This literature review is part of a larger collection of improvement tools for districts. The Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC), a group of 10 public charter school networks serving more than 75,000 students nationwide, launched in 2019 to make dramatic gains in the learning experiences, environments, and outcomes for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. Led by Marshall Street at Summit Public Schools in partnership with technical assistance providers NIRN, RTI International, SRI International, and SWIFT Education Center, NIC participants used continuous improvement methods, supported by this literature review of leading research and a corresponding toolkit of best practices, to improve implementation in these areas with the potential to increase academic outcomes for students with disabilities: Collaboration, Literacy, Multi-tiered Systems of Support, Transitions, and Emotional and Behavioral Supports.

What is secondary reading intervention?

Secondary reading intervention refers most simply to interventions implemented by educators and school systems to improve reading outcomes for nonproficient secondary readers.

Lupo et al. (2024) offer a conceptual framework for literacy intervention at the secondary level which defines literacy intervention as "any instructional effort to support adolescents' reading, including foundational skills, cognitive processes, meaning-making, agency, and identity." The framework further differentiates within-classroom from supplemental supports and emphasizes the importance of professional learning that addresses critical content, supports a collaborative approach, and is aligned with broader school and district structures, vision, and goals.

Why is secondary reading intervention important?

Reading intervention in the secondary setting is important because reading proficiency is associated with myriad school-based factors, including achievement in content area classes and graduation rates (Kamil et al. 2008; Snow and Biancarosa 2003), as well as overall life outcomes such as employment, earnings, and physical and psychological well-being (Mulcahy et al. 2016). For students with disabilities, especially students with multiple disabilities, the ability to read and learn contributes to increased levels of independence in life skills (Kauffman 1996 in Almalki 2016). Additionally, reading is the primary vehicle for learning in the secondary grades (Vaughn and Fletcher 2012). However, based on the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress assessment, just 29% of 8th grade students attending public schools in the US are reading proficiently. When the results are disaggregated by the subgroups that represent the Networked Improvement Community's target population, the numbers are even more concerning; just 16% of Black 8th grade students and 21% of Hispanic 8th grade students are reading proficiently, compared to 38% of white students. Nine percent of 8th grade students with disabilities are reading proficiently compared with 34% of students without disabilities.

While preventing reading difficulties in the primary grades has historically received more attention than secondary reading intervention, this population has been increasingly studied in recent years. In fact, "Enough is already known about adolescent reading—both the nature of the problems of struggling readers and the types of interventions and approaches to address these needs—in order to act immediately on a broad scale" (Biancarosa and Snow 2006, 10). The focus of reading instruction at the

secondary level is unique from that focus on early prevention in the primary grades. Middle and high school students must be able to learn and make meaning from a diverse range of texts across content areas (Biancarosa and Snow 2006). Secondary educators, then, are tasked with ensuring that students move beyond basic word reading toward the more complex and challenging reading requirements of secondary texts. This is particularly challenging given that secondary nonproficient readers tend to demonstrate a broad and complex range of difficulties ranging from deficits in word reading to underdeveloped vocabulary and background knowledge.

Encouragingly, research indicates that adolescence is not too late to intervene and that nonproficient secondary readers can benefit from reading intervention when it is planned carefully, implemented consistently, and based on evidence-based instructional practices. The purpose of this literature review is to synthesize the current research on secondary reading interventions with a particular focus on the NIC's target population in the interest of providing schools and educators with a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and thereby informing the implementation of evidence-based practices.



Collegiate Academies

Understanding Reading Development

To effectively design and implement interventions for nonproficient secondary readers, it is important to first understand how reading develops. The phrase “Science of Reading ‘’ has become common vernacular for educators interested in improving student reading outcomes. The Reading League, a national nonprofit organization with a mission to advance the awareness, understanding, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction, defines the science of reading as follows:

> **“The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing.**
>
> **This research has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and it is derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages. The science of reading has culminated in a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some have difficulty; and how we can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties.”**
>
> THE READING LEAGUE, N.D., 6

For this literature review, three key frameworks proposed within the science of reading will lay the foundation for understanding how reading develops: the **Simple View of Reading**, **Scarborough’s Reading Rope**, and the **National Reading Panel Report**.

First, the Simple View of Reading (Gough and Tunmer 1986) offers a straightforward way of conceptualizing the factors that contribute to a process that is anything but simple. The Simple View of Reading emphasizes that reading comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of reading, is the product of two factors: word recognition and language comprehension. *Word recognition* refers to the understanding that graphemes (or letters and letter combinations) represent sounds (or phonemes), learning the relationship between phonemes and graphemes, and using this knowledge to read unknown words, while *language comprehension* refers to understanding the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, and passages. The Simple View of Reading illustrates the importance of these two factors as individual but equally influential elements of proficient reading.

The Simple View of Reading

Word Recognition
The ability to transform print into spoken language

X

Language Comprehension
The ability to understand spoken language

=

Reading Comprehension

Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough 2001) expands upon the Simple View of Reading in several important ways. First, the Reading Rope illustrates word recognition and language comprehension as two individual yet intertwined strands of a rope. Second, it identifies the specific subcomponents that comprise each strand, including:

- Word Recognition:
  - Phonological awareness (awareness of the sound structure of language)
  - Decoding (alphabetic principle, phoneme-grapheme knowledge, and phonic decoding)
  - Sight word recognition (ability to recognize words automatically)
- Language Comprehension:
  - Background knowledge (facts, concepts, etc.)
  - Vocabulary (breadth and depth of word knowledge, word learning strategies)
  - Language structures (syntax, semantics)
  - Verbal reasoning (inferences, metaphor, etc.)
  - Literacy knowledge (print concepts, genres, text features)



The Reading Rope illustrates the synergy between the two strands; as word recognition skills become increasingly automatic for developing readers, language comprehension skills become increasingly strategic, ultimately leading to skilled and proficient reading.

The National Reading Panel (NRP) was commissioned by Congress in the late 1990s to review the existing literature on different approaches to teaching reading and to produce a report summarizing the panel's conclusions. Based on their comprehensive review, the panel identified five essential components of reading to be addressed in reading instruction (National Reading Panel 2000):

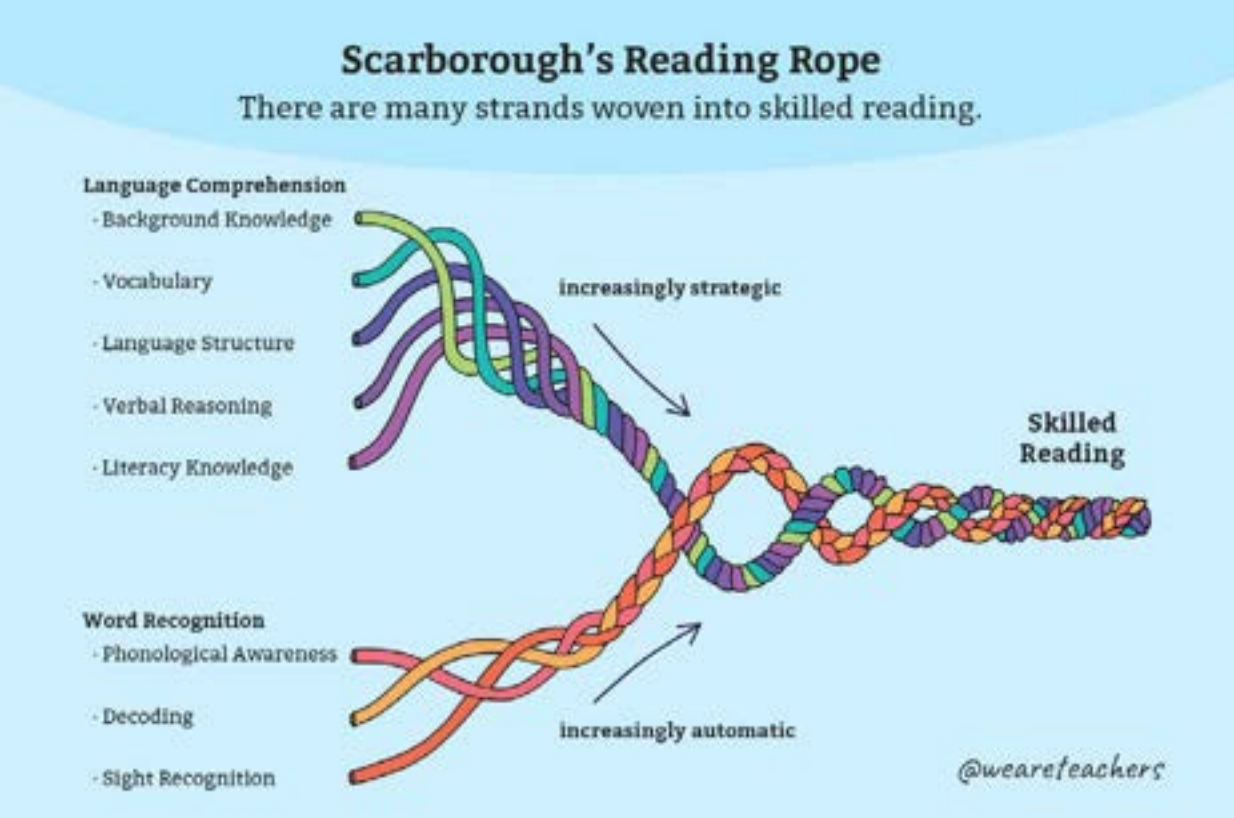


Image source: We Are Teachers, https://www.weareteachers.com/scarboroughs-rope/

Phonemic awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension
The ability to recognize and manipulate the individual phonemes, or sounds, within words	Knowledge of the relationship between graphemes (or letters) and phonemes and the application of these relationships to decoding words	Reading text with speed, accuracy, and prosody	Word knowledge and word learning strategies	Comprehension strategies, such as summarization, asking and answering questions, and monitoring comprehension while reading

The NRP report also provided recommendations for targeted and intensive interventions for at-risk readers and comprehensive professional development for teachers.

Understanding Adolescent Reading

While these three frameworks are helpful for understanding the components of proficient reading, much of the science of reading has focused on emerging and developing readers in the primary grades. For example, while the NRP report highlighted important findings from the field and is still frequently referenced today, it focused primarily on instruction and outcomes in the early elementary grades. Since that time, researchers have endeavored to better understand and communicate the science of teaching adolescent readers and, more specifically, adolescent readers who have not yet developed reading proficiency.

In a review of the impact of reading interventions on adolescent readers, Edmonds and colleagues (2009) note that proficient readers engage the following skills while reading: efficient decoding of unknown words, fluent and accurate reading of text, knowledge of word meanings, connecting new content to prior schema and knowledge, applying strategic reading comprehension strategies, and monitoring their understanding while they read. These skills represent the myriad ways in which the reading process can break down for nonproficient adolescent readers. In fact, the majority of nonproficient secondary readers will have deficits in more than one subcomponent of reading (Roberts et al. 2008; Clemens et al. 2017; Biancarosa and Snow 2006).

While research consistently suggests that early intervention is both more efficient and more effective than intervening in the later grades, there is also evidence that targeted interventions can benefit older nonproficient readers (Scammacca et al. 2007). The instructional targets for nonproficient secondary readers, however, will differ slightly from the focus on preventing reading failure in the primary grades.

Instructional Targets for Nonproficient Secondary Readers

Research on reading interventions for nonproficient secondary readers highlights instructional foci that differ only slightly from the recommendations of the National Reading Panel. The recommended instructional targets include multisyllabic word reading, reading fluency, reading comprehension strategies, vocabulary, and motivation and engagement (Boardman et al. 2008; Roberts et al. 2008; Vaughn et al. 2022). .

Multisyllabic Word Reading

Often, older students who are not yet reading grade-level text fluently and accurately can decode single-syllable words but have difficulty decoding multisyllabic words, or words comprised of more than one syllable (Archer et al. 2003; Vaughn et al. 2022). The majority of words that students will encounter in the middle and high school classroom are words of two or more syllables (Nagy and Anderson 1984), and the slow, effortful reading of these words represents a serious impediment to overall text comprehension.

Word study instruction, which focuses on teaching word analysis skills and building morphological awareness, has been shown to benefit older nonproficient readers (Boardman et al 2008; Scammaca et al. 2007). Fluency with multisyllabic word reading can improve overall reading fluency and comprehension, build students' confidence in reading grade-level texts, and improve motivation and engagement in reading (Vaughn et al. 2022).

Word analysis instruction typically consists of teaching students syllabication strategies, or strategies for breaking words into syllables (Honig et al. 2018; Vaughn et al. 2022), then reading the word by syllables and blending the segments to form a word that is in the student's oral working vocabulary (Bhattacharya and Ehri 2004). It is important to ensure that students have adequate monosyllabic word reading skills, such as mastery of phoneme-grapheme relationships and phonic decoding skills, before focusing on multisyllabic word reading instruction (Vaughn et al. 2022).

Instruction designed to build students' morphological awareness focuses on teaching the pronunciation, orthography, and meaning of morphemes, or the smallest unit of words that hold meanings, including prefixes, suffixes, and roots (Honig et al. 2018). Explicit instruction designed to build morphological awareness has been shown to be especially helpful for multilingual learners (Haager and Osipova 2017; Cárdenas-Hagan 2020) and secondary students with disabilities (Harris et al. 2011; Roberts et al. 2008).

Word study instruction should teach students to be flexible decoders who are able to apply word analysis and morphological awareness skills to reading of unknown words and who are also able to recognize irregular words that do not follow predictable phonological and/or orthographic patterns (Boardman et al. 2008). Embedding spelling instruction within word study and providing students with many opportunities to practice word analysis skills during independent reading can increase the impact of word study instruction (Vaughn et al. 2022).

Fluency

Reading fluency is defined as accurate reading of connected text, at a conversational rate and with adequate prosody (Hudson et al. 2008) and fluent older readers typically read texts at rates ranging from 120 to 170 correct words per minute (Hasbrouck and Tindal 2005). Fluent text reading is strongly correlated with reading comprehension (Torgesen and Hudson 2006). This is in part because fluent and automatic reading frees up cognitive resources, allowing the reader to devote attention to meaning-making rather than word reading (Honig et al. 2018). This is especially important for adolescent readers who are tasked with acquiring a significant amount of content area knowledge through reading (Boardman et al. 2008).

Nonproficient adolescent readers, including students with reading disabilities, often struggle to read grade-level text fluently and automatically (Boardman et al. 2008; Meyer and Felton 1999) and when reading is slow and effortful, working memory is taxed and reading comprehension is compromised (Perfetti and Lesgold 1977). There is some evidence that instruction targeting reading fluency can increase oral reading fluency rates, but the degree to which these increases generalize to non-practiced passages and overall comprehension for older nonproficient readers is mixed. Some researchers suggest that reading fluency instruction is more effective when it is paired with targeted word-learning instruction, such as the word study strategies described above (Roberts et al. 2008).

Instructional practices for building reading fluency that are supported by research included repeated reading (Honig et al. 2018; Therrien 2004; Stevens et al. 2017), partner reading (Honig et al. 2018), and goal-setting and progress-monitoring procedures that actively involve students (Boardman et al. 2008), with repeated reading cited as the most promising practice for building fluency. Repeated reading has been shown to increase both reading rate and reading accuracy for Black middle school students with disabilities (Paige 2006). Strategies to increase the effectiveness of repeated reading include establishing a clear purpose for the activity with the student, pre-teaching difficult words, explicitly teaching students to read with prosody, and checking for understanding after reading (Vaughn et al. 2022).

Comprehension Strategies

Reading comprehension is a complex, multidimensional endeavor, and proficient adolescent readers strategically link new learning to existing knowledge, monitor their understanding as they read, and deploy "fix-up" strategies when reading breaks down. Nonproficient readers, even those with adequate word reading and fluency skills, often fail to use these strategies (Roberts et al. 2008). Explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies can improve students' strategy use and overall reading comprehension (Scammacca et al. 2007; Edmonds et al. 2009; Swanson et al. 2017; Sohn et al. 2023). The following reading comprehension strategies are recommended for explicit instruction (Roberts et al. 2008; Kamil et al. 2008; Vaughn et al. 2022):

- **Activating prior knowledge:** As described previously, nonproficient secondary readers develop less background knowledge than their proficient peers and often fail to access the knowledge they have while reading. Explicitly teaching students to activate prior knowledge supports meaning-making by building connections between the known and the new. Educators can build and activate prior knowledge by providing brief introductions to the topic(s) prior to reading, sharing multimedia and asking students to notice specific elements of the information presented, and asking targeted questions.
- **Use of graphic organizers to categorize information:** Nonproficient secondary readers often fail to apply strategies to organize new information as they read. The use of graphic organizers can support students in activating prior knowledge, making connections between key ideas, and recording important information to support summarizing.
- **Comprehension monitoring:** Nonproficient secondary readers often fail to notice when comprehension breaks down while reading, so they are unable to apply "fix-up" strategies. Teaching students explicit techniques for monitoring comprehension, such as visualizing, asking questions while reading, pausing periodically to summarize, and re-reading can support overall comprehension.
- **Summarizing:** Nonproficient secondary readers often have difficulty synthesizing large amounts of information into main ideas. Modeling the steps to organizing a summary, teaching students to use text structures to support summarizing, using metacognitive "think alouds," and analyzing examples and non-examples of accurate summaries can support students in developing independence with summarization.

Research has suggested that, while comprehension strategy instruction must be explicit, direct instruction can be brief, and instructional routines can quickly shift to focus on both collaborative and independent application (Vaughn et al. 2022). In fact, some researchers argue that the specific strategies that are taught are less important than the active engagement of comprehension strategies generally (Kamil et al. 2008). Further recommendations include embedding comprehension strategy instruction within multiple content areas, direct and explicit teaching of strategies using a metacognitive approach, and modeling of strategies accompanied by guided practice opportunities (Swanson et al. 2017; Boardman 2008; Scammacca et al. 2007).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge is strongly correlated with reading comprehension across grade levels and reading abilities (Beck et al. 2013). This is particularly true for secondary readers who are tasked with learning through content-area texts in which specialized vocabulary represents much of the text's meaning (Kamil et al. 2008). While students do learn word meanings through direct instruction, the majority of new word learning in the middle and high school grades occurs through extensive reading practice across a range of genres (Roberts et al. 2008). Nonproficient adolescent readers tend to avoid reading and often lack the reading skills necessary for independent engagement with grade-level texts. This results in fewer opportunities to develop the depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge necessary for reading comprehension (Hirsch 2003).

Recommended instructional practices for developing vocabulary included strategic selection of words for direct instruction, providing student-friendly definitions of target words, multiple exposures to words over time, providing opportunities for students to actively engage with word meanings, and explicitly teaching word learning strategies (Boardman et al. 2008; Kamil et al. 2008; Swanson and Wexler 2017).

Beck and colleagues (2013) suggest that educators focus explicit word instruction on "Tier 2 words," or those words that students are likely to encounter frequently in text but are unlikely to implicitly learn via conversation. These words are typically drawn from content-area texts and represent those that students will encounter frequently in grade-level reading.

Researchers suggest that it can take up to 17 exposures for a student to learn a new word, and educators should plan for multiple exposures to target words both within a single lesson and over time (Kamil et al. 2008). Activities to encourage students to actively engage with word meanings include asking students to distinguish between and identify examples and non-examples of words, to describe how a target word is related to another known word, and to include target vocabulary words in their writing (Beck et al. 2013).

Word learning strategies include using context clues, leveraging morphological awareness, and accessing resources such as online dictionaries (Beck et al. 2013; Vaughn et al. 2013).

Similar to the findings related to fluency instruction, vocabulary instruction has mixed results in improving overall reading comprehension for nonproficient secondary readers (Scammacca et al. 2007). The most promising avenue to improved vocabulary instruction for older readers is likely to be "reading a lot, reading well, and reading widely" (Cunningham and Stanovich 1998 as cited in Roberts et al. 2008).

Motivation and Engagement

Making meaning from complex texts is an active, effortful process that requires the conscious application of strategies on the part of the reader. Motivated students "usually want to understand text content fully and therefore, process information deeply. As they read frequently with these cognitive purposes, motivated students gain in reading comprehension proficiency" (Guthrie et al. as cited in Roberts 2008, 67). Nonproficient adolescent readers often lack motivation to read (Boardman et al. 2008; Roberts et al. 2008), resulting in a lower volume of reading and fewer opportunities to practice strategy use and develop the vocabulary and background knowledge necessary to comprehend grade-level texts.

Evidence-based practices for fostering reading motivation and engagement among nonproficient adolescent readers include (Kamil et al. 2008; Boardman et al. 2008, Roberts et al. 2008; Biancarosa and Snow 2006):

- **Establishing concrete goals for reading and engaging students in monitoring progress toward those goals:** Studies show that, when educators establish performance goals, emphasize the learning process, and provide verbal praise based on effort, students are more likely to develop personal learning goals and are more likely to be motivated and engaged in reading.
- **Supporting student autonomy through choice:** Offering students choice in both reading materials and reading activities is associated with greater ownership of learning and overall engagement.
- **Leveraging texts that are aligned with student interests:** Students are more likely to persist in reading texts about topics they are interested in, and they are also more likely to remember information from these materials. In designing libraries of texts for independent reading, secondary educators should consider cultivating texts on topics about which students have background knowledge, texts that students perceive they will be successful at reading, and texts that are relevant to students' lived experiences.
- **Increasing social interactions related to reading:** Secondary students are motivated by opportunities to learn collaboratively, and social interaction during reading activities can increase both motivation and comprehension. Collaborative reading activities can be fostered by explicitly teaching and reinforcing collaboration and communication skills, strategically partnering students based on reading proficiency, and allowing students to read together and present their learning to peers.



Cross-Cutting Features of Effective Secondary Reading Interventions

In addition to a general consensus on the instructional priorities for secondary reading intervention, research has identified several cross-cutting features of effective approaches to improving reading outcomes for nonproficient secondary readers.

FIRST, NONPROFICIENT SECONDARY READERS OFTEN NEED SUPPORT IN DEVELOPING MORE THAN ONE OF THE SUBCOMPONENT SKILLS RELATED TO PROFICIENT READING.

It is not surprising, then, that interventions that target multiple components tend to be more effective than those that target a single component of reading (Edmonds et al. 2009). It is particularly important that educators focus secondary reading interventions on the ultimate goal of reading comprehension, and word-level or fluency interventions should also integrate reading comprehension instruction (Edmonds et al. 2009; Sohn et al. 2023).

SECOND, READING INTERVENTION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL SHOULD BE CONTENT-EMBEDDED.

This involves both direct teachers of reading (e.g., English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, reading intervention teachers) providing content-area texts for instruction and independent practice and content-area teachers reinforcing those reading skills that are most applicable to their subject areas during instruction (Biancarosa and Snow 2006). Embedding reading instruction within content-area texts supports generalization, increases student access to reading instruction across the day, and provides students with more opportunities to practice applying reading skills in a variety of texts.

THIRD, SECONDARY READING INTERVENTIONS ARE MOST EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED WITH A MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT (MTSS) (VAUGHN AND FLETCHER 2012).

Because secondary nonproficient readers have diverse and complex needs, it is important that interventions are aligned with students' identified areas of need (Scammacca et al. 2007; Kamil et al. 2008; Boardman et al. 2008). Categorizing students into subgroups by priority skills for development is a process that can be achieved via universal screening and follow-up diagnostic assessment for students identified as nonproficient readers. See the **Multi-tiered Systems of Support Literature Review** for a comprehensive review of the literature on MTSS.

FINALLY, ONE CONTRIBUTOR TO POOR READING SKILLS FOR SECONDARY READERS IS A LACK OF EXPOSURE.

Nonproficient readers tend to engage in a lower volume of reading than proficient readers, meaning they have fewer opportunities to practice strategies and build important vocabulary and background knowledge. Therefore, successful secondary reading interventions will include extended opportunities for readers to practice applying skills independently while reading connected text. Educators seeking to build libraries to support independent text reading should consider the following:

- Including “stretch texts,” or those texts that are at the higher end of students’ instructional levels and will expose students to rich vocabulary and complex syntax (Vaughn et al. 2022)
- Texts that are aligned with students’ interests and world experiences and texts in which students see themselves represented (Roberts et al. 2008; Biancarosa and Snow 2006)
- Texts that are high interest but at an a range of readability levels (Biancarosa and Snow 2006)

Reading Intervention for Black and Latinx Students with Disabilities Experiencing Poverty

Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty have significantly lower reading proficiency rates than white students, students without disabilities, and students who are ineligible for federal free and reduced lunch (Snow and Biancarosa 2003). Factors that explain the link between socioeconomic status (SES) and reading achievement include both home environmental factors, such as the home literacy environment, parental stress, and oral language exposure, and school-based factors, such as the percentage of students reading below grade level, the concentration of students from low SES backgrounds, and teacher perception, expectations, and knowledge of the language and literacy skills that contribute to reading development (Aikens and Barbarin 2008; Romeo et al. 2022).

While SES is a strong predictor of reading achievement, it is not predictive of responsiveness to evidence-based reading interventions, and studies have shown that students from low SES backgrounds respond at least as favorably to these interventions as students from average to high SES backgrounds (Morris et al. 2012).

> **“This we know: reading failure can be prevented in all but a small percentage of children with serious learning disorders. It is possible to teach most students how to read if we start early and follow the significant body of research showing which practices are most effective. Students living in poverty, students of color, and students who are eligible for remedial services can become competent readers — at any age. Persistent “gaps” between more advantaged and less advantaged students can be narrowed and even closed. Fundamentally, these gaps are the result of differences in students’ opportunities to learn — not their learning abilities”**
>
> **MOATS 2020, 4**

There has been long-standing concern in the field of special education that particular subgroups of students, including Black students, students who are multilingual learners, and students from households with a low socioeconomic status are disproportionately represented within special education (Morgan 2020) and that they experience poorer outcomes as a result (Bal and Trainor 2016). However, more recent analyses have found that Black and Hispanic children are significantly less likely than otherwise similar white children to receive special education services. Farkas and Morgan (2018) found that 74% of 4th grade white students with reading difficulties were receiving specialized reading services through special education, whereas only 44% of Black and 43% of Hispanic students with reading difficulties received such specialized services. Schools with majority white student populations have, on average, 3.5 specialists who have been trained in specialized instruction for students with reading disabilities, compared to schools with student populations that are less than 15% white who employ just one such specialist on average (Carr 2022). White students are also more likely than Black students to be diagnosed with dyslexia, resulting in Black students having less access to programs designed to support their academic success (Farkas and Morgan 2018). Even when students who are experiencing poverty and students living in households speaking languages other than English do receive specialized reading services in schools, this instruction tends to rely on the availability of commercial programs that focus on the procedural subskills that contribute to reading, such as word reading and reading fluency, at the exclusion of conceptual and knowledge-based skills, such as vocabulary knowledge and verbal reasoning skills (Lesaux 2012).

This literature review suggests that Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty are likely to experience reading difficulty due to myriad factors and that they are less likely than their white and higher-income peers to receive quality reading intervention in school. **Research suggests that this population of students does respond favorably when provided with evidence-based reading interventions and that it is not that the approach must be significantly different, but rather that the practices that have been shown to be effective for nonproficient secondary readers must be more consistently available to all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, racial background, or disability status.**



Summit Public Schools

Building Educator Capacity

These recommendations require specialized knowledge and expertise on the part of secondary educators. In a survey of professional development practices within US schools, Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2009) found that while most teachers participate in multiple professional development opportunities each year, nearly half are dissatisfied with these activities. It is not surprising, then, that secondary educators report feeling underprepared to meet the needs of nonproficient readers (Kamil et al. 2008; Boardman et al. 2008). Still, other secondary content-area teachers do not feel that teaching reading is their responsibility (Kamil et al. 2008). Even when educators do receive training in strategies to support nonproficient readers, they rarely receive ongoing support, resulting in low fidelity of implementation (James-Burdumy et al. 2009).

Because professional development delivered in a conducive environment has been associated with improved student outcomes (Wayne et al. 2008; Basma and Savage 2018), schools need to consider the features of effective professional development. Structurally, professional development activities should be:

- "intensive, connected to practice, and ongoing,
- directly connected to student learning goals and address the teaching of specific curriculum content,
- aligned with school improvement goals,
- designed to build strong, professional relationships among teachers, and
- designed to include active learning for teachers" (Kosanovich et al. 2010, 86).

At the secondary level, professional development should focus on building teacher understanding of the process of reading comprehension, instructional routines and approaches that support reading development, and how students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds impact their interactions with texts (Lupo et al. 2024). When applicable, professional development should also center the curricular resources teachers are using in their classrooms (Hayes-Jacobs and Johnson 2009). Finally, professional development that occurs through varied avenues, including coaching, analysis of student data to inform instruction, and communities of practice contributes to increased knowledge and implementation of evidence-based reading instruction (Connor et al. 2014).



Conclusion

In conclusion, reading proficiency is an essential component of college and career readiness, and learning demands in the secondary setting require a wide set of complex reading skills. While reading proficiency rates for secondary students, and in particular Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty, are disappointing, educators and schools interested in improving these outcomes can be encouraged by the finding that secondary students can benefit from appropriately designed and implemented reading interventions.

As district officials make program decisions on their approaches to reading intervention, the following key points from the research can serve as a north star:

- **The Simple View of Reading** and **Scarborough's Reading Rope** provide useful models for understanding how individuals learn to read. These models can be used to think strategically and tactically about the literacy programs and interventions needed to support students in becoming skilled readers.
- Recommended instructional targets for nonproficient secondary readers include multisyllabic word reading, reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension strategy use, and motivation and engagement.
- Nonproficient secondary readers tend to have deficits in more than one subcomponent of reading, and intervention for these students should target multiple components.
- Secondary reading intervention is most effective when implemented in the context of a multi-tiered system of support and, more specifically, when diagnostic assessment is used to identify students' specific areas of need and interventions are aligned accordingly.
- Secondary reading intervention is most impactful when it is embedded in content-area instruction and texts.
- Students need extensive opportunities to practice reading skills while independently reading connected texts, and educators should be mindful of providing both the time and the materials to support independent reading across the day.
- Secondary teachers feel unprepared to teach nonproficient secondary readers. Professional development should serve to build an understanding of the reading process, increase capacity to design and deliver evidence-based reading instruction, and develop an awareness of the ways in which students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds impact their interactions with text.



Appendix

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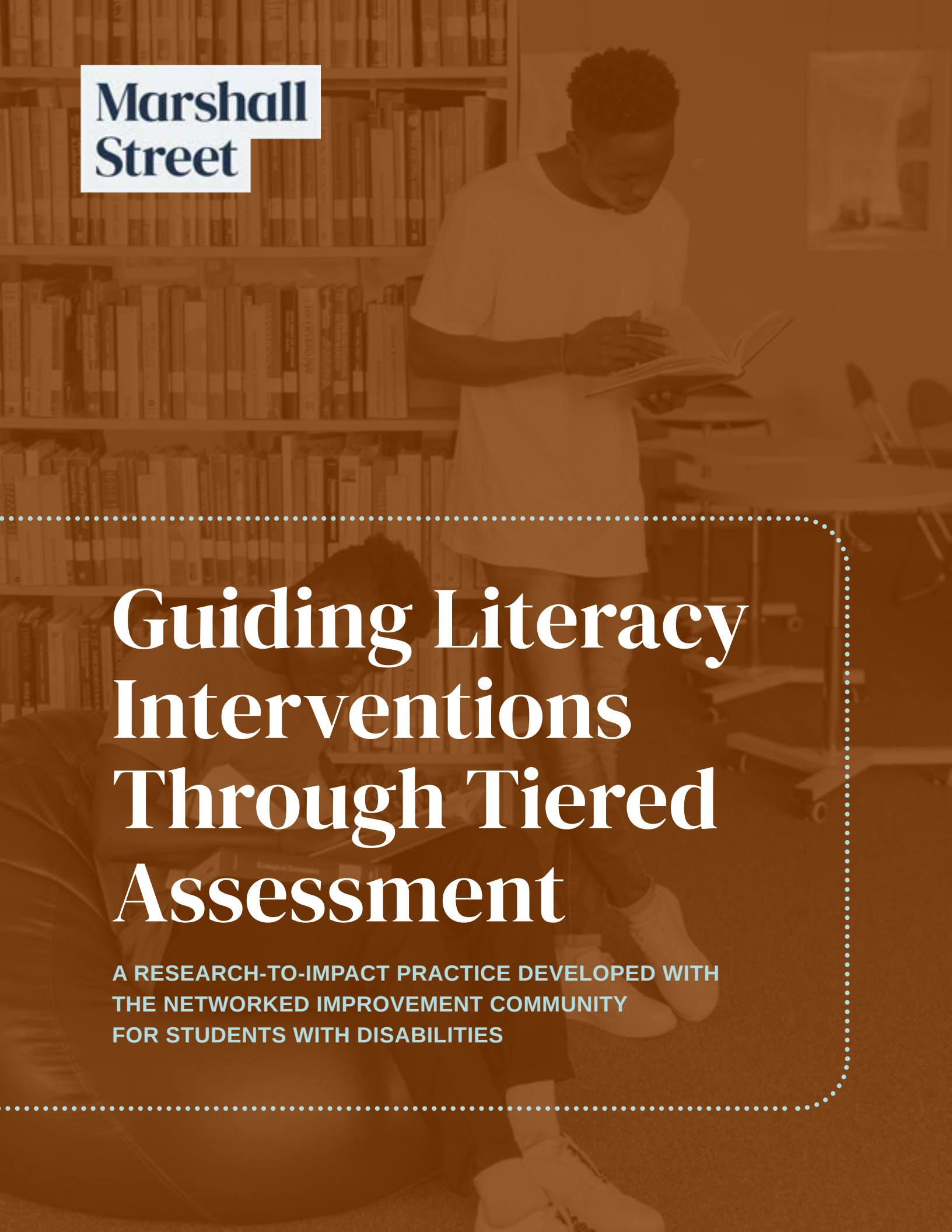
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Marshall Street

Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment

A RESEARCH-TO-IMPACT PRACTICE DEVELOPED WITH THE NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3.3..... Practice Overview

3.3 | What is the Practice?

3.4 | Why is Tiered Assessment Important?

3.5..... Bringing this Practice to Life

3.9..... Implementation at a Glance

3.9 | Enabling Conditions

3.11 | Steps to Implement

3.12..... How to Implement this Practice

3.12 | Phase I: Create an Assessment Plan

3.12 | Step 1: Vet and Select a Universal Screener and Diagnostic Assessment Tools

3.14 | Step 2: Create an Administration Plan

3.16 | Step 3: Plan Structures to Support Data-Based Decision-Making

3.17 | Phase II: Administer Assessments

17 | Step 1: Administer the Universal Screener

18 | Step 2: Administer the Diagnostic Assessments

3.19 | Phase III: Align Evidence-Based Interventions with Identified Skill Gaps

3.20 | Step 1: Gather Data and Complete Data Analysis

3.20 | Step 2: Review Universal Screening Data

3.21 | Step 3: Review Diagnostic Data and Group Students by Specific Skill Gaps

3.22 | Step 4: Match Each Student Identified as Reading Below Grade-Level Expectations with an Aligned Evidence-Based Intervention and Document Intervention Decisions

3.22 | Step 5: Make a Plan to Communicate Intervention Decisions with Teachers, Students, Families, and Other Stakeholders

3.23..... Summary

3.24..... Appendix

3.25 | How to Measure

3.27 | Notes

3.27 | Bibliography

Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment

Implementation Level

- [x] District/Central Office
- [x] School
- [ ] Program/Department
- [ ] Classroom

Who Implements

- [x] Teacher(s)
- [x] Instructional Coach
- [x] Principal
- [x] Central Office Leadership
- [x] Specialist

Practice Overview

What is the Practice?

Guiding literacy interventions through tiered assessment refers to the practice of identifying secondary students who are reading below grade-level expectations, pinpointing specific reading skill gaps for these students, and planning aligned evidence-based interventions to address the identified skill gaps.

The ultimate goal of this tiered assessment process is the delivery of evidence-based reading interventions aligned with student need to promote accelerated reading achievement for secondary students who are not yet proficient readers.

This process is accomplished through three steps:

STEP 1
Universal Screening of Reading

Administer a valid assessment of reading to all students at least once (but ideally three times) yearly for the purpose of identifying students not meeting grade level ELA benchmarks or standards.

STEP 2
Diagnostic Assessment of Reading

Administer valid diagnostic assessments (assessments designed to measure discrete reading skills such as fluency or vocabulary) to identified students for the purpose of identifying specific reading skill gaps.

STEP 3
Aligning Evidence-Based Interventions to Student Need

Match students with evidence-based reading interventions that target the skill gaps identified by diagnostic assessments.

Why is Tiered Assessment Important?

Many secondary students, particularly Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty, are not yet proficient readers of grade-level text.[1] For students with disabilities, a lack of participation in grade-level reading instruction contributes to the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their typically developing peers.[2]

Secondary readers have diverse reading profiles and the degree and nature of support can vary greatly among students; however, interventions at the secondary level have historically reflected a "one-size-fits-all approach" to limited success. Further, commonly administered assessments of reading at the secondary level fail to pinpoint specific skill gaps for individual readers.

Using tiered assessments that include both universal screening and diagnostic assessments allows educators to identify individual reading needs and deliver precisely planned reading interventions to accelerate reading progress.

Why it Works

Quality universal screening assessments allow schools to efficiently identify students who are not reading at grade-level expectations at least annually. While these assessments indicate *which* students need support, they generally don't provide information about *what* support is needed.

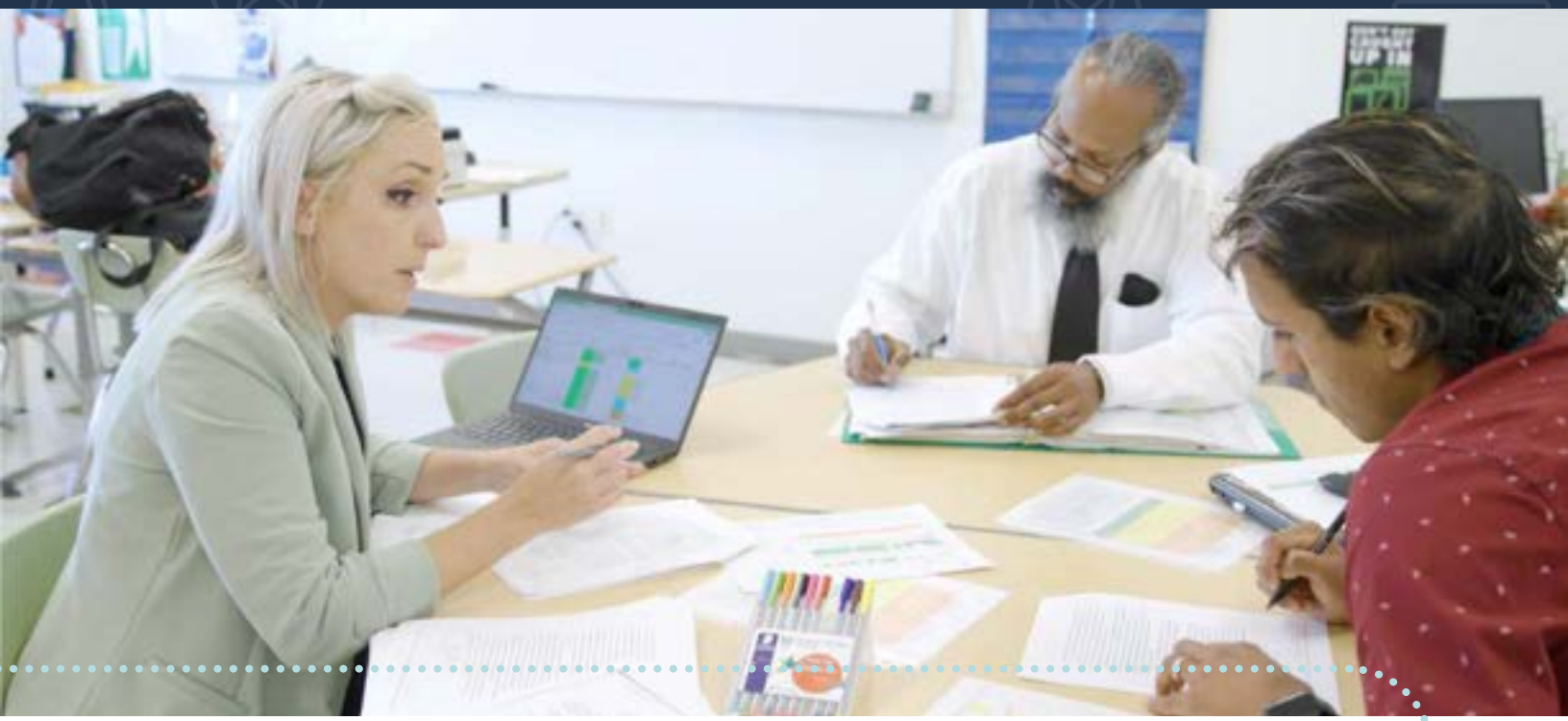
Diagnostic assessments administered to the students identified as reading below grade level provide information on the specific reading skills students need to develop in order to reach proficiency with grade-level reading benchmarks and standards (e.g., multisyllabic word reading or reading fluency).

Aligning evidence-based reading interventions with these identified skills ensures that students are getting the right support, which facilitates accelerated reading growth and supports engagement in rigorous grade-level ELA content and access to diverse and complex texts.



"Over the last three years, we have found ways to improve reading levels for our most impacted readers that are replicable and scalable, focusing on identifying specific gaps so intervention is highly targeted."

— Glynis Shulters, Improvement Lead, Green Dot Public Schools California



Bringing this Practice to Life

BUILDING A TIERED ASSESSMENT APPROACH AT GREEN DOT CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Green Dot Public Schools has a long history of providing reading intervention to students who enter their schools not yet reading at grade level. For many years, the network used one assessment, the Reading Inventory, to identify students to be programmed into just one intervention, Read 180. While Read 180 met the needs of many students, other students participated in Read 180 for multiple years and continued to read below grade-level benchmarks.

Green Dot did not have a clear way of understanding why these students weren't comprehending grade-level text, even after multiple years of receiving interventions targeted at reading comprehension. Was it because the students did not have the phonics skills to read the words on the page? Perhaps the students could read the individual words, but reading was effortful and slow, leaving reduced cognitive capacity to think about meaning? Or could it be that some students could read the words accurately and fluently, yet had language gaps that were impeding their ability to make meaning from the text? Green Dot needed a way to better understand these students' reading needs so that they could refine their reading intervention offerings with the goal of accelerating reading growth for all.

To address this, Green Dot decided to try using a tiered assessment approach. Their plan was to continue to use their universal screening, the Reading Inventory, to identify students reading below grade level and then complement that screening with additional diagnostics to better understand specific reading difficulties.

Identifying Students Reading Below Grade Level

All Green Dot students take the Reading Inventory assessment three times a year so that Green Dot can regularly identify any student reading below grade level. Rising sixth and ninth grade students take the Reading Inventory for the first time during summer programming prior to the start of the school year, and the remaining grade levels participate in the assessment during the first two weeks of the school year.

Reading Inventory is an adaptive, computer-based assessment that provides a Lexile score for each student. This Lexile score is a number representing both a reader's ability on the Lexile scale and the level of text a reader is likely to comprehend.[3]

The cut points were established with guidance from the assessment publisher; Reading Inventory recommends that students scoring below a Lexile 600L (approximately second-grade equivalent) participate in further diagnostic assessment of foundational reading skills.

After the fall administration of the Reading Inventory, the data is analyzed by reading intervention teachers, counselors, and the special education team. The team evaluates each student's score against decision-making criteria — cut points that are used to classify students by the degree of discrepancy with grade-level targets — to efficiently sort students and inform the next steps.

Green Dot's Universal Screening Decision-Making Criteria

Classification	Criteria	Instructional Plan
Within grade-level expectations	Lexile score at or above grade-level expectations	Core ELA class with no supplemental reading support
Slightly below grade-level expectations	Lexile score that is greater than 600L but a year or more below grade-level expectations	Core ELA class with an additional reading intervention (Read 180) class for one block period
Significantly below grade-level expectations	Lexile score below 600L	Additional diagnostic assessment to further pinpoint specific reading needs

Selecting, Administering, and Analyzing Diagnostic Assessments

To identify the reading needs of the students reading below grade-level expectations, Green Dot decided to use diagnostic assessments. Oral reading fluency curriculum-based measurements (ORF CBMs) were already being used by Green Dot's education specialists (their special education teachers) to develop student IEPs. Because their specialists were already familiar with the ORF CBMs, Green Dot decided to use the same tools for the administration, scoring, and interpretation of diagnostic assessments at the middle and high school levels.

What is a Curriculum-Based Measurement for Reading?

An Oral Reading Fluency Curriculum-Based Measurement (ORF CBM) is a one-minute timed assessment of the rate and accuracy of a student's oral reading fluency. ORF CBMs are administered in a 1:1 setting during which the student reads aloud for one minute from a leveled passage while an adult listens and scores, noting errors and the total number of words the student read in one minute. The administrator of the assessment calculates both accuracy (the percentage of the total words read that were read correctly) and rate (the total number of words read correctly, typically expressed as "correct words per minute," or CWPM). ORF CBMs are one of the strongest predictors of a student's overall reading performance[4] and are widely used as screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools. Common commercial publishers of ORF CBMs include **DIBELS**, **Acadience**, **AIMSweb**, and **FastBridge**.

As soon as Green Dot designed decision-making criteria to guide the analysis of universal screening data, they realized that it would be important to establish similar criteria to guide the analysis of the diagnostic ORF CBM data. The criteria could then be used efficiently either to organize students into specific interventions or, for the students with the most significant literacy needs, to conduct additional diagnostic assessments to pinpoint specific needs. After identifying reading needs in phonics and fluency via the diagnostic assessment, Green Dot added interventions targeting these two areas.

Green Dot's Diagnostic Reading Assessment Decision-Making Criteria

Criteria	Hypothesis	Intervention Plan
The student reads fewer than 50 correct words per minute (CWPM).	The student may have foundational phonics gaps.	Conduct additional diagnostic assessment to identify specific phonics needs as needed, or conduct further analysis of student assessment data. If phonics needs are confirmed, the student is programmed into evidence-based intervention targeting phonics.
The student reads 51–125 CWPM with <90% accuracy.	The student is reading slowly and inaccurately. They may have foundational phonics gaps.	
The student reads 51–125 CWPM with 90%+ accuracy.	The student is reading accurately but slowly. Low fluency may be impairing comprehension.	The student is placed into Read 180 class with a supplemental evidence-based intervention targeting reading fluency.

At a glance, Green Dot's approach to tiered assessment after one year of implementation looked like this: **Green Dot's Approach to Tiered Assessment to Guide Literacy Intervention Planning.**

While the heaviest data analysis and planning lift follows the beginning-of-year administration of the Reading Inventory, Green Dot leverages two subsequent assessments (midyear and end-of-year) to catch additional students who may not have been identified via previous screenings and to inform intervention regrouping.

There are several reasons students may not have been identified via previous screenings:

- A student transferred into the school after the start of the school year.
- A student was absent for the beginning-of-year screening and make-up assessments.
- A student was reading within grade-level expectations at the beginning of the year but did not make sufficient progress in reading during the first part of the year, and because norms or cut points increase at each benchmarking period, the student is now performing in the below-grade-level range.
- A student was identified as reading below grade level at the beginning of the year, received intervention, and is now performing within grade-level targets.

Tiered Assessment Delivered Dramatic Gains for Students

Thanks to the new tiered assessment approach, Green Dot students with disabilities now have access to a wider range of evidence-based interventions more closely aligned with their specific reading needs. In addition to Read 180, Green Dot now provides supplemental reading fluency intervention (see ***Repeated Reading: Building Oral Reading Fluency in Secondary Readers***) and phonics intervention (using the Wilson Reading System) to students identified with phonics and/or fluency needs.

Early results indicate that the tiered assessment approach is yielding strong results. **In 2022–23, 75% of students participating in Read 180 receiving additional reading interventions made progress in their oral reading fluency, with 50% of students increasing their oral reading fluency rates by over 30%.**



Green Dot Public Schools California

Implementation at a Glance

The information in this section provides a high-level view of what to consider when implementing this practice. **Enabling Conditions** describes the minimum conditions needed for successful implementation, including resources, mindsets, staffing, and time allocations. **Steps to Implement** presents a concise checklist of action items, which are explained in detail in the following section.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites

- Established universal screening and diagnostic assessment tools
- Clear roles and responsibilities for administering assessments and coordinating collaborative conversations for decision-making
- Shared belief that (1) all students are capable of reaching grade-level reading benchmarks and standards and (2) it is the school's responsibility to provide the supplemental support needed for this to be true for all students

Reocmmended Materials

- An **assessment schedule** that ensures the beginning-of-year assessments are administered in a timeframe that allows for interventions to start as early as possible within the school year
- A **platform or data tracker** for collecting data and generating reports, built into the assessment system and/or internally created
- A **protocol** for data-based decision-making for teams to evaluate both universal screening and diagnostic assessment data
- An **intervention calendar** that includes clearly delineated intervention cycles (approximately 8 weeks long), at the end of which collaborative data conversations occur and additional intervention programming is conducted
- **Master schedules** that both designate time for interventions to take place and allow for students to flexibly move between interventions and core content as they progress in reading
- **Funding** to purchase assessment systems; cost will vary by assessment and by the number of assessments purchased. The costs of some common 6–12 universal screeners of reading as of spring 2023 are as follows:
  - Achieve3000's LevelSet: $11/student
  - NWEA MAP: $15/student
  - iReady: $30/student
  - Lexia: $40/student

> Many diagnostic assessments are low cost or free. For example, DIBELS assessments can be downloaded for free via the **DIBELS website**, and purchasing the scoring and reporting platform (**Amplify**) costs $1/student/year. **Really Great Reading** is another source for free, science-of-reading aligned diagnostic tools.

Staff Commitment	▪ A team of educators focused on the implementation and analysis of tiered assessments. – Staffing will vary by school: The team is likely to include a literacy specialist or instructional leader and two or more supporting staff members. The team will need training or existing knowledge of universal and diagnostic reading assessments, as well as ongoing skill development for interpreting assessment results. ▪ To enhance the implementation: A data analyst responsible for data cleaning and report generation ▪ Teacher and school leader knowledge of universal and diagnostic reading assessments and skill in interpreting assessment results
Recommended Time Allocation	**CENTRAL AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP** ▪ Time to participate in training related to the assessment (2–3 hours) ▪ Leadership/coaching to oversee process and facilitate decision-making conversations (likely a school leader or instructional coach) (5–10 hours/screening period) – Time to generate and share reports (1–2 hours) **TEACHERS** ▪ Time to administer the assessment (approximately 60 minutes plus time for make-up assessments) ▪ Time to participate in training related to the assessment (ideally in summer or back-to-school professional development) (1–2 hours) ▪ Time to engage in data analysis and intervention planning (1–2 hours/intervention cycle)



The guidance document ***How-To: Assessment of Adolescent Readers*** provides school and district leaders with considerations for making data-driven decisions across assessment tiers within an MTSS framework.

Steps to Implement

The implementation of tiered assessment to guide literacy intervention planning unfolds over three phases:

PHASE I	PHASE II	PHASE III
Create an Assessment Plan	**Administer Assessments**	**Align Evidence-Based Interventions with Identified Skill Gaps**

PHASE I: CREATE AN ASSESSMENT PLAN

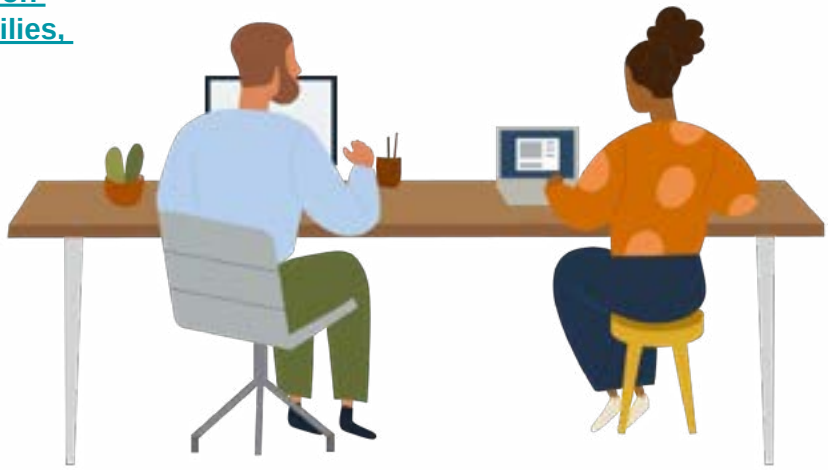
- [ ] Vet and select a universal screener and diagnostic assessment tools
- [ ] Create an administration plan
- [ ] Plan structures to support data-based decision-making

PHASE II: ADMINISTER ASSESSMENTS

- [ ] Administer the universal screener
- [ ] Administer the diagnostic assessments

PHASE III: ALIGN EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS WITH IDENTIFIED SKILL GAPS

- [ ] Gather data and complete data analysis
- [ ] Review universal screening data
- [ ] Review diagnostic data and group students by specific skill gaps
- [ ] Match each student identified as reading below grade-level expectations with an aligned evidence-based intervention and document intervention decisions
- [ ] Make a plan to communicate intervention decisions with teachers, students, families, and other stakeholders



How to Implement

Phase I: Create an Assessment Plan

To effectively create an assessment plan, preplanning work is needed, including:

- vetting and selecting assessment tools;
- creating an administration plan; and
- planning the structures to support data-based decision-making.

Step 1: Vet and Select a Universal Screener and Diagnostic Assessment Tools

The Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports recommends a three-step process for designing a screening assessment:

- Clarify the purpose of screening.
- Assess needs, priorities, and logistics.
- Select screening tools.[5]

See the Further Learning section of this chapter for a detailed guide with questions to direct conversations at each step of the screening design process.

The usefulness of universal screening data for the purpose of instructional planning is highly dependent on the validity and reliability of the assessment for the school population. When evaluating potential screeners, schools should consider factors related both to the quality of the assessment and to the school's specific context.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CAN BE USED TO CONSIDER AN ASSESSMENT'S QUALITY:

- **Classification accuracy:** Do scores on this assessment accurately identify students reading below grade level?
- **Validity:** Does this assessment measure what it is supposed to measure?
- **Reliability:** Are the scores on this assessment consistent with other measures of the same skills?
- **Statistical bias:** Is this assessment biased against any subgroups of students?
- **Sample representativeness:** Is the normative sample for this assessment representative of my school's target population?

See Further Learning for a resource from the National Center on Intensive Intervention that provides additional guidance for determining validity and reliability of screening assessments.

These questions examine specific school context considerations:

- Does the assessment provide the data needed to inform instruction and intervention planning and programming? If reports are provided, will the reports support efficient decision-making? For example, is it possible to easily sort students to quickly identify all students scoring below a particular cut score?
- What training is needed for staff to administer, score, and interpret the assessment accurately?
- What is the total per-student cost of the assessment? What costs might be associated with training? Is the assessment appropriate for the resources and materials we have?

The National Center on Intensive Intervention provides a chart of screening tools with ratings and additional information (e.g., cost, training needs, and administration logistics) for commonly used universal screening assessments. See Further Learning for more information.

School Spotlight

When **Noble Schools** in Chicago set out to select a universal screening assessment to be used across the network, the literacy leadership team engaged with partners at Marshall Street to **evaluate several assessment tools** against a set of criteria including cost, administration time, usability as a progress monitoring system, functionality of reports, and ability to recommend specific interventions. The team created lists of advantages and drawbacks for each tool and ultimately selected **Achieve3000 LevelSet** as the universal screening tool.

When selecting a diagnostic tool, first consider what information is needed to efficiently "sort" students for the purpose of intervention planning. While non-proficient secondary readers are a heterogenous group, they can generally be divided into two subgroups: students with average word recognition skills but low language comprehension skills (i.e., they can lift the words off the page but have difficulty understanding what they read) and students who have difficulty understanding what they read because they have difficulty with word recognition. Consider the following resources for diagnostic assessment tools:

Assessment	Description	Resources
Oral Reading Fluency—Curriculum-Based Measurements (ORF CBMs)	Students read a leveled passage for one minute. Rate and accuracy scores are calculated and can be compared to norms or benchmarks.	• DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) • aimswebPlus • Amplify • easyCBM
Phonics or Decoding Surveys	Students read isolated lists of words and pseudowords containing specific phonics patterns so that errors with specific patterns can be identified.	• Really Great Reading Advanced Decoding Survey • National Center on Intensive Intervention Phonics Inventory • Gallistel-Ellis Test of Decoding
Phonological Awareness Screener	Students are asked to complete phonological awareness tasks of increasing complexity.	• The Phonological Awareness Skills Test (PAST)

Step 2: Create an Administration Plan

IDENTIFY THE NECESSARY PERSONNEL AND INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCES.

Start by identifying a team or individual to coordinate the screening process at the district or network and school levels. Depending on expertise and capacity within the school or network, this might be a school leader, an instructional coach, a special education staff member, or a team of these individuals. Based on the selected screening tool, identify the resources and infrastructure needed to implement the tool. This includes hardware (e.g., student computers and headphones) and software needs (e.g., a system for creating, documenting, and communicating student and teacher logins).

School Spotlight

Identifying the infrastructure needed to implement the universal screening tool also requires consideration of the platform that will be used for data reporting. Most assessment tools include some sort of internal platform for creating data reports, but some schools elect to build universal screening reporting into existing data reporting tools. For example, when **Noble Schools** selected Achieve3000 LevelSet as their universal screening tool, they decided to create reporting systems within Tableau to align with the broader network approach to data collection and reporting.

IDENTIFY THE RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THE DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS.

For example, if using an ORF CBM as a diagnostic tool, consider whether it will be administered via paper/pencil or digitally. If the former, make a plan for providing physical resources to assessors, and if the latter, create a plan for providing the resources needed for digital administration.

Amplify, a digital platform for administering the DIBELS assessment, provides an option for educators to **administer the assessments digitally** via an iPad. This saves the step of entering data into a data reporting system.

IDENTIFY WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE UNIVERSAL SCREENER AND THE DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS.

The universal screener is often administered by classroom teachers, and diagnostic assessments are often administered by the educators who will be providing supplemental interventions, such as a reading intervention teacher or a special education teacher.

CREATE AN ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE.

Determine how much time will be needed for administration, and create a schedule for administering the universal screening, including a window for make-up assessments. The screener should be implemented at minimum one time yearly at or before the start of the school year. In order to ensure interventions begin as quickly as possible, aim for a short window (e.g., one week, including make-up assessments). Consider whether some or all students can participate in the assessment before the start of the school year. For example, if the school hosts a back-to-school day for students and families, consider setting up a room where the universal screener can be proctored to students on

a rolling basis. Best practices within an MTSS implementation recommend administration three times yearly — at the beginning, middle, and end of year.

For efficiency, consider scheduling diagnostics immediately following the universal screener. For example, if students take the universal screening assessment during summer enrollment, a staff member reviews their score and, if it falls below the set cut point, immediately administers the additional diagnostic assessment. If this schedule isn't feasible, create a separate schedule for diagnostic assessments.

Most diagnostic assessments are administered in a 1:1 setting and should be conducted in a quiet, distraction-free environment when possible to allow the examiner to clearly hear student responses. Consider these requirements when designing the assessment schedule.

BUILD RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENT INVESTMENT.

Create a resource to support communication about the universal screening assessment to students and families. This should include explicit explanations of what the universal screener is, what decisions are made based on the screening results, and how this process is designed to support students' development as readers. Shared resources (such as scripts and slide decks) can ensure students and families have access to consistent and accurate information regarding the screening process.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

Beginning of Year

- **Administer universal screening assessment** (during summer or within the first two weeks of school).
- **Administer make-up assessments** to students who were absent for the universal screener. (Set a one-week window for make-ups following the administration of the screener.)
- ***Decision Point: Identify students below cutoff.***
- **Administer diagnostic assessments** to students falling below cut points (ideally immediately after screener or at a minimum within one week).
- **Meet to review data and plan/document interventions** (as soon as diagnostic assessments are complete; ideally within 3–4 weeks of the first day of school).

Implement and Monitor Intervention Cycles

- **Launch first intervention cycle** (Monday following team meeting).
- **Communicate decisions with students and families** (within a week of team meeting).
- **Implement interventions and monitoring progress** (for a 6–8 week intervention cycle).
- **Meet to review data and make/document decisions** (see ***Strengthening Timely Interventions through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring***).

Middle of Year

- **Reassess students** with universal screener
- **Administer make-ups and diagnostics** based on cut-offs

Implement and Monitor Intervention Cycles

End of Year

- **Administer universal screener** (last 4–6 weeks of school)

Step 3: Plan Structures to Support Data-Based Decision-Making

BUILD THE TEAM.

Designate the team that will be involved in analyzing the screening and diagnostic data. The team should be composed of individuals who are familiar with both the data yielded by the assessments and the decision-making criteria (see Establish Decision-Making Criteria below), and who are responsible for implementing the instructional next steps following the screener. This might include special education leadership, school leaders, ELA instructional coaches, counselors, and/or reading intervention teachers. Schedule team data meetings to occur immediately following each screener administration (1–3 times yearly) and calendar the meetings on the school and/or district calendar.

TRAIN STAFF.

Provide training of staff members responsible for (1) administering the assessments and (2) analyzing the results to support intervention planning and programming decisions. Consider how to onboard staff members who miss the initial training. Many assessment platforms provide options for low-cost virtual training in the administration of the assessment and interpretation of results. Particularly for diagnostic assessments that are administered in a 1:1 format, providing opportunities for teachers to practice administering and scoring the assessments during the training can support implementation fidelity.

ESTABLISH DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA.

Establish the cut points or decision-making criteria that will be used to classify students as reading within grade-level expectations, slightly below grade-level expectations, and significantly below grade-level expectations. Plan the response for students in each group. Decision-making criteria should include:

- A score above which students are likely reading within grade-level expectations and below which students are likely reading below grade-level expectations. This score will represent the first “sort” of students into within-grade-level and below-grade-level groups.
- The next step for students scoring below this cut point. This will likely involve a specific intervention or further diagnostic assessment to pinpoint specific skill gaps.
- Criteria for sorting based on diagnostic results. See the case study for an example of decision-making criteria applied to ORF CBM diagnostic data and the **Further Learning** section of this chapter for a detailed guide to establishing decision rules published by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

School Spotlight

Establishing clear cut points or decision-making criteria is a critical component of an efficient universal screening process. Many assessment publishers provide recommended cut point scores to inform decision-making, and schools should leverage this guidance when it is available. **Green Dot California** utilized the suggested cut points provided by the Reading Inventory assessment publishers for both grade-level targets and the indicator of reading significantly below grade level. Additional resources to guide the establishment of cut points are local or national norms (e.g., students scoring below the 20th percentile when compared to a local or national normative sample) or criterion-referenced benchmark scores (e.g., students scoring below a specific benchmark).

Phase II: Administer Assessments

In Phase 2, school teams:

- administer the universal screening assessment, and
- administer the diagnostic assessment(s) to students identified as reading below grade level on the universal screener.

Step 1: Administer the Universal Screener

Administer the universal screener according to the defined assessment schedule.

For school teams to confidently use universal screening data to inform instruction and intervention planning and programming, the data yielded by the screener must be as accurate as possible. Therefore it is important to implement a system for monitoring the accuracy and fidelity of both assessment administration and data collection.

Many assessment systems provide alerts if a student's data may not be an accurate indication of their proficiency because they clicked quickly through test items. Another strategy for ensuring accurate data is to build buy-in with students by explicitly communicating the purpose of the assessment and how universal screening data will be used.

See **Further Learning** for more guidance on ensuring fidelity of assessment administration and data entry.

School Spotlight

To build student awareness of, and investment in, their Lexile scores, **Noble Schools** implemented a process of student Lexile conferences. The literacy leadership team developed resources for teachers, including a **script**, **slide deck**, and **goal-setting sheet**. Teachers met with students for 10-minute conferences to explain what a Lexile score is, review their Lexile scores from the universal screener, and collaboratively generate strategies for continuing their development as readers. Teachers reported students to be engaged and reflective in the conferencing process, with one student sharing, "This was the first time I tried my best," after taking the universal screener following a conference.



Val Dutta (Uncommon Schools) delivers literacy instruction with NIC Literacy Content Expert Genevieve Thomas

Step 2: Administer the Diagnostic Assessments

Administer the diagnostic assessments to all students identified as reading below grade level on the universal screener. Because this data is used to inform decisions about students' instructional plans, it is critical that assessments are administered and scored with fidelity. Consider providing teachers with brief "how to" documents with reminders of key administration points.

At right: Excerpt from DIBELS ORF CBM Fidelity Checklist. (The full checklist is available in the DIBELS Administration and Scoring Guide.)



Oral Reading Fluency Fidelity Checklist

Pass	Needs practice	
☐	☐	1. Holds clipboard and timer so student cannot see what is recorded.
☐	☐	2. Places student copy in front of the student.
☐	☐	3. Performs standardized directions verbatim.
☐	☐	4. Starts timer when the student says the first word.
☐	☐	5. Follows along and marks the scoring book as the student responds.
☐	☐	6. Administers acceptable prompts correctly, if appropriate.
☐	☐	7. Applies scoring rules consistently and correctly.

How do you analyze the diagnostic data to determine specific reading needs?

At **Uncommon Schools**, teachers participating in Marshall Street's Networked Improvement Community (NIC) are working to improve the use of tiered assessment data to plan effective interventions. In an early coaching conversation, Val, a high school literacy innovation specialist at Uncommon Schools, worked with Genevieve Thomas, a literacy content area expert, to collaboratively analyze the results of an oral reading fluency curriculum-based measurement that Val had administered to the students in her reading intervention class.

1. **Are students reading fluently and accurately?**

   Val and Genevieve first looked to see if there were students who were reading both fluently and accurately. Fluently meant reading an eighth-grade passage at a rate of at least 120 CWPM. Accurately meant with at least 95% accuracy.

   The data showed that no students met this criterion, yet some students were reading accurately (95%+) but slowly (fewer than 100 CWPM). Additionally, some students were reading both inaccurately and slowly.

2. **What do word reading errors indicate?**

   Val and Genevieve then reviewed the individual assessments of the students who were reading both slowly and inaccurately to determine what type of word reading errors the students were presenting. Together, Val and Genevieve determined that most students seemed to have basic word reading skills, but many struggled to read multisyllabic words fluently and automatically.

Based on this conclusion, Val and Genevieve focused on building word study activities for these students. (See ***Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills in Adolescent Readers***.)

Phase III: Align Evidence-Based Interventions with Identified Skill Gaps

In phase III, school teams analyze screening and diagnostic data in order to align evidence-based reading interventions with identified skill gaps for each student reading below grade level.

In preparation for phase III, school leadership will want to plan and prepare for the team review meetings at the start of the year or start of the process if beginning midyear. Early preparation will allow the team collaboration during data review and intervention planning to be timely and effective for team discussion and aligned action.

The following steps are not required when implementing phase II, yet they are considered highly beneficial to support the process:

- Develop the protocol or agenda for the data meeting, including the specific questions the team will need to answer when they meet. Create space in the meeting protocols for the team to clearly document instruction and intervention decisions for at least the students in the "some" and "significant" risk categories. Make this information accessible for key stakeholders (for example, stored in a shared Google Drive).
- Identify the reports that will facilitate efficient decision-making and allow the team to answer the questions of focus for the meeting. Most often, these will be pre-built reports in assessment platforms, but may include other spreadsheets, trackers, or data dashboards.
- Identify the team members who will convene for the meeting. This may be a new structure that requires scheduling and communication of purpose, or it may be situated in an existing meeting where the team has agreed on the use of the time for this purpose.
- Inventory evidence-based interventions currently available on campus and the number of students that can be served in each intervention slot or block. Consider how the team might plan for supplementing as needed for gaps in skills addressed or spaces available for students. The following resources may be helpful for researching evidence-based literacy interventions for secondary students:
  - Evidence for ESSA
  - The What Works Clearinghouse
  - The National Center on Intensive Intervention's Academic Intervention Tools Chart
- Align on roles, responsibilities, and timelines for data meeting preparation, collaboration, and action. This includes:
  - who will monitor assessment completion rates and follow up with make-up assessment needs,
  - who will gather and prepare the data for the team to review,
  - who will lead the meeting and prepare the agenda,
  - who will bring intervention knowledge and resources for student assignment,
  - who will develop or manage tracker tools to document student levels and assigned interventions, and
  - who will communicate decisions about interventions to stakeholders, including staff, students, and families.

Step 1: Gather Data and Complete Data Analysis

In preparation for data review meetings, a team or data leader gathers and audits assessment data to ensure it is ready for team review and action planning. This includes:

- confirming there are universal screening scores for students (i.e., most or all students have completed the screening, and make-ups have been attempted),
- following up on any errors or warnings on data quality, such as student scores that may not be valid due to quick completion times, and
- cleaning data in preparation for reports to be run (e.g., removing duplicate scores or removing students who have unenrolled).

Once the data is scrubbed as best as possible, assessment reports are generated using automated tools or custom-built resources. Often reports can be run via the universal screening platform (e.g., a report with student scores by grade level, sorted from high to low scores), while data from diagnostic assessments require team-created tools or resources (e.g., a spreadsheet with rate and accuracy scores from a curriculum-based measurement).

There are many ways to represent and prepare the data. A few helpful considerations include the following:

- Apply cut points to the data to identify students who scored below established targets.
- Sort data by grade level or classroom.
- Filter data by subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities, multilingual learners, students who are experiencing homelessness) to better understand performance strengths or gaps.

Step 2: Review Universal Screening Data

Literacy intervention planning begins by reviewing universal screening data. The focus of the team will depend on the goals and priorities of an individual school or network, but may serve to answer the following questions:

- Which students are reading below grade-level expectations?
- What percentage of our total student population does this represent?
- What implications do these numbers have for our tiers of support?

If administering the universal screening assessment multiple times yearly, use the screening data to evaluate student growth. Consider the following questions as guidance for middle- and end-of-year data meetings:

- What progress have students receiving supplemental interventions made, and how does that compare to the general population of students? Does it represent accelerated, “gap-closing” growth?
- What is the performance and progress of disaggregated subgroups of students, and how does this compare to the general population? For example, do students with disabilities grow at rates commensurate with the general student population?

Step 3: Review Diagnostic Data and Group Students by Specific Skill Gaps

After reviewing universal screening data, review the diagnostic data. Use the established decision-making criteria to group students by specific skill gaps. Examples of groups designated by specific skill gaps are provided in the table below:

Student Criteria	Hypothesized Skill Gaps
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener, **yet** are reading text fluently and accurately according to the ORF CBM	Comprehension Vocabulary
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener, below benchmark for rate, **yet** at or above benchmark for accuracy on the ORF CBM	Reading fluency
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener **and** below benchmark for both rate and accuracy on the ORF CBM	Polysyllabic word reading
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener **and** the ORF CBM, **and** who also demonstrate weak decoding skills on a phonics inventory	Phonic decoding

When reviewing data and grouping students, document which students fall into the at-risk range, as well as the next step for each student. Once groupings are completed and the team has a sense of the needs by skill area, compare student needs against interventions currently available on campus. Discuss adjustments that may be needed at the school, classroom, or intervention level based on student skill gaps and needs. The team may need to supplement intervention availability with additional time or staff support, or establish prioritization decision criteria based on available resources and student needs. If prioritizing students for available interventions, it is important to document prioritization decisions for review in future cycle meetings or as space becomes available for additional students to cycle into interventions.



Step 4: Match Each Student Identified as Reading Below Grade-Level Expectations with an Aligned Evidence-Based Intervention and Document Intervention Decisions

Intervention decisions should be documented in a centrally accessible location (e.g., within the student information system or in a spreadsheet within a shared drive).

The table below provides examples of aligned interventions, using the groups from the examples above:

Student Criteria	Hypothesized Skill Gaps	Evidence-Based Intervention
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener, **yet** are reading text fluently and accurately according to the ORF CBM	Comprehension Vocabulary	Read 180
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener, below benchmark for rate, **yet** at or above benchmark for accuracy on the ORF CBM	Reading fluency	Repeated reading intervention (see ***Repeated Reading: Building Oral Reading Fluency in Secondary Readers***)
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener **and** below benchmark for both rate and accuracy on the ORF CBM	Polysyllabic word reading	Word study intervention (see ***Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills in Adolescent Readers***)
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener **and** the ORF CBM, **and** who also demonstrate weak decoding skills on a phonics inventory	Phonic decoding	Wilson Reading System

Step 5: Make a Plan to Communicate Intervention Decisions with Teachers, Students, Families, and Other Stakeholders

As a final step in the data analysis process, create a plan to communicate results, decisions, and next steps to key stakeholders, including teachers, students, and families. When sharing assessment results with students and families, communicate the student's score, explain what the score means, and share what the score means for the student's plan.

Monitor progress for students participating in interventions at regular (6–8 week) intervals. Creating a schedule of progress monitoring meetings at the start of the year can ensure educators meet regularly throughout the school year to evaluate progress and make decisions about continuing, exiting, or intensifying interventions for students. See ***Strengthening Timely Interventions through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring*** for more guidance on this process.

Summary

As a result of historically ineffective reading instruction across US K–12 schools, an alarming number of secondary students are not proficient readers, and Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty are disproportionately represented within this population. Because low reading skills are a barrier to accessing grade-level content and standards, this reality results in inequitable access to the rigorous academic content students need to engage with in order to be prepared for postsecondary success.

Multiple root causes contribute to low literacy rates for this population, and while evidence does suggest that instruction can develop reading skills in older readers, reading interventions are most impactful when they are aligned with individual student needs. Universal screening of reading ability helps identify which students are reading below grade level. Additional diagnostic assessment is necessary to illuminate why these students are not yet reading proficiently. This tiered approach to reading assessment supports schools and networks to effectively and efficiently provide aligned and evidence-based reading interventions at the secondary level.

FURTHER LEARNING

"Guide to Designing the Screening Process"
THE CENTER ON MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS AT THE AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH

"Understanding Screening: What Do the Screening Standards Mean?"
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION AND NATIONAL CENTER FOR IMPROVING LITERACY

"Academic Screening Tools Chart"
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

"Ensuring Fidelity of Assessment and Data Entry Procedures"
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

"Data Decision Rules"
THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION MTSS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

"Diagnostic Data"
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

GUIDING LITERACY INTERVENTIONS THROUGH TIERED ASSESSMENT

Appendix

How to Measure

When implementing tiered assessment for reading intervention, team members can use a set of measures to understand how students are performing against grade-level expectations, identify needs for responsive intervention, and monitor the fidelity of the tiered assessment process to identify and match students with skill-based reading interventions. At minimum, these measures are most essential:

PRIMARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Outcome	Student performance score	What percentage of our students are reading within grade-level expectations, slightly below grade-level expectations, and significantly below grade-level expectations?	% of students scoring in each range	A reduction over time in the number of students reading below grade-level expectations	The data collection type will depend on the measure used, but examples are Lexile, RIT (Reading Inventory) score, percentile, etc.
Outcome	Assessment tracking systems	What percent of our student population requires additional supports beyond our core ELA program?	Percent of students referred to Tier 2 and Tier 3 reading intervention	Strive for 20% or less of the student population requiring supplemental interventions beyond the core	Most MTSS models suggest a target of no more than 20% of students requiring supplemental interventions as an indicator that the core instructional program is effective

Additional measures can guide a team to know whether tiered assessment to guide literacy intervention planning is leading to the desired improvements for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Observation	Is the assessment being administered (and scored, if applicable) accurately? Yes / No	% of observed assessments that are administered according to established procedures	100% of observed assessments are administered according to procedures outlined in the assessment manual(s)	
Process	Observation	Is assessment data being entered accurately? Yes / No	% of observed data entry processes are completed according to established procedures	100% of observed data entry processes are completed according to established procedures	
Process (utilization)	Student scores within assessment system	What percent of students have a valid score entered in the assessment platform?	% of students who have a score entered	100% of students participate in the screening assessment	Many assessment platforms have templates to generate reports for this purpose.

Notes

1 US Department of Education, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

2 Gilmour et al., “Are Students With Disabilities Accessing the Curriculum?”

3 MetaMetrics, “About Lexile® Measures for Reading”

4 Ardoin et al., “Examining the Incremental Benefits”

5 “Guide to Designing the Screening Process,” American Institutes for Research, Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, accessed August 2023, **https://mtss4success.org/resource/guide-designing-screening-process**

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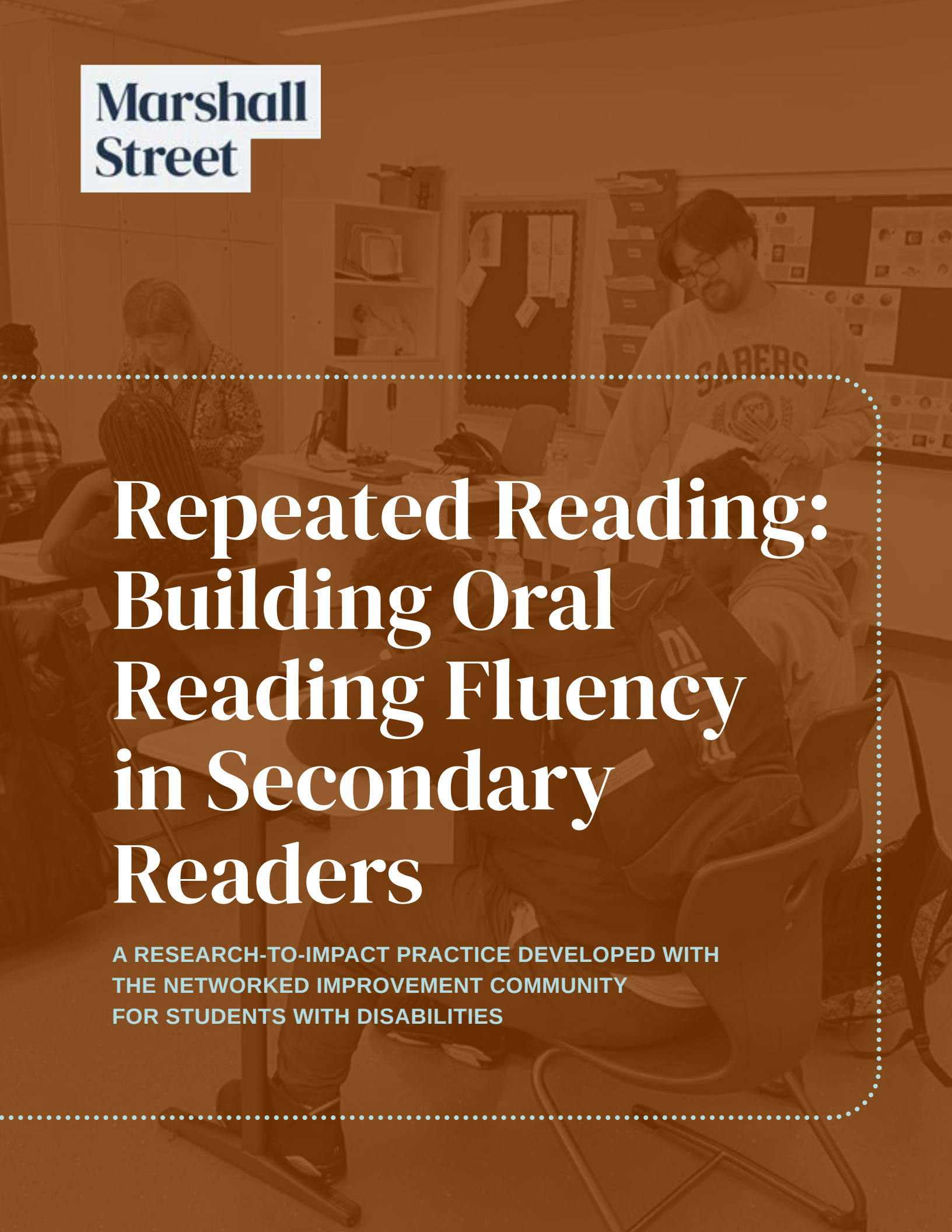
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Marshall Street



Repeated Reading: Building Oral Reading Fluency in Secondary Readers

A RESEARCH-TO-IMPACT PRACTICE DEVELOPED WITH THE NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4.3..... Practice Overview

4.3 | What is the Practice?

4.4 | Why is Repeated Reading Important?

4.5..... Bringing this Practice to Life

4.8..... Implementation at a Glance

4.8 | Enabling Conditions

4.9 | Steps to Implement

4.10..... How to Implement this Practice

4.10 | Lay the Groundwork for the Practice

4.10 | Step 1: Use Data to Identify Students Who Would Benefit from Repeated Reading

4.11 | Step 2: Choose a Repeated Reading Variation and Setting

4.12 | Step 3: Assign Partners (if Using Repeated Reading with a Peer Partner)

4.12 | Step 4: Choose Texts and Create Passages

4.13 | Step 5: Create a Plan to Explicitly Build Student Motivation and Engagement

4.13 | Put Repeated Reading into Practice

4.13 | Step 6: Introduce the Purpose and Routine for Repeated Reading

4.16 | Step 7: Train Students and Staff in Routines for Repeated Reading

4.18 | Step 8: Conduct Repeated Readings with Students

4.21 | Monitor the Effectiveness of the Intervention

4.21 | Step 9: Analyze Student Progress

4.22 | Practice Snapshot: Exploring Additional Settings for Repeated Reading

4.24..... Summary

4.25..... Appendix

4.26 | How to Measure

4.28 | PRACTICE TOOL: Repeated Reading Protocol

4.30 | Notes

4.30 | Bibliography

Building Oral Reading Fluency in Secondary Readers

Implementation Level

- [ ] District/Central Office
- [ ] School
- [x] Program/Department
- [x] Classroom

Who Implements

- [x] Teacher(s)
- [ ] Instructional Coach
- [ ] Principal
- [ ] Central Office Leadership
- [x] Specialist

Practice Overview

What is the Practice?

Brief, structured, repeated reading protocols, coupled with goal setting and progress monitoring, practiced at least three times per week to increase oral reading fluency in secondary readers.



What is reading fluency?

Reading fluency is generally defined as accurate reading of connected text at a conversational rate with adequate prosody.[1] Reading fluency is made up of three key elements: **accuracy** (reading the words correctly), **rate** (reading the words at a conversational rate), and **prosody** (reading the words with expression).

Why is Repeated Reading Important?

Repeated reading directly builds oral reading fluency skills, which has the potential to unlock access to grade level content for students. Fluent, accurate, and automatic word reading is strongly correlated with reading comprehension, or the ability to make meaning from text, which is the ultimate goal of reading.[2] This is in part because, when readers process connected text smoothly and automatically, cognitive resources such as working memory are freed up to devote attention to comprehension rather than to lifting the words off the page.[3] Conversely, the difficult work of slow, effortful decoding taxes a reader's working memory capacity, diminishing their ability to understand the content.[4]

Because of this, secondary students who are not yet reading text fluently and automatically often have difficulty engaging with the rigor required to meet secondary ELA standards. What's more, students with reading disabilities are more at risk for presenting with difficulties in reading fluency,[5] and the subsequent lack of participation in grade-level reading instruction can contribute to the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their typically developing peers.[6]

Repeated reading is one of the most studied and validated methods for increasing reading fluency and overall reading proficiency. The application of this practice to authentic, grade-level texts — whether through a partner reading protocol or a 1:1 teacher-directed protocol — has strong potential to increase access to and comprehension of grade-level texts for students with and without disabilities.

Why It Works

READING FLUENCY IS CORRELATED WITH READING COMPREHENSION.

Oral reading fluency has been consistently shown to correlate with students' ability to comprehend both simple and complex texts at all levels.[7]

READING FLUENCY CAN BE POSITIVELY INFLUENCED BY INSTRUCTION.

Encouragingly, reading fluency has consistently been proven to be responsive to explicit and targeted intervention, and repeated oral reading, partner reading, and goal setting with progress monitoring are all proven, effective instructional strategies for developing reading fluency in adolescent readers with disabilities.[8]

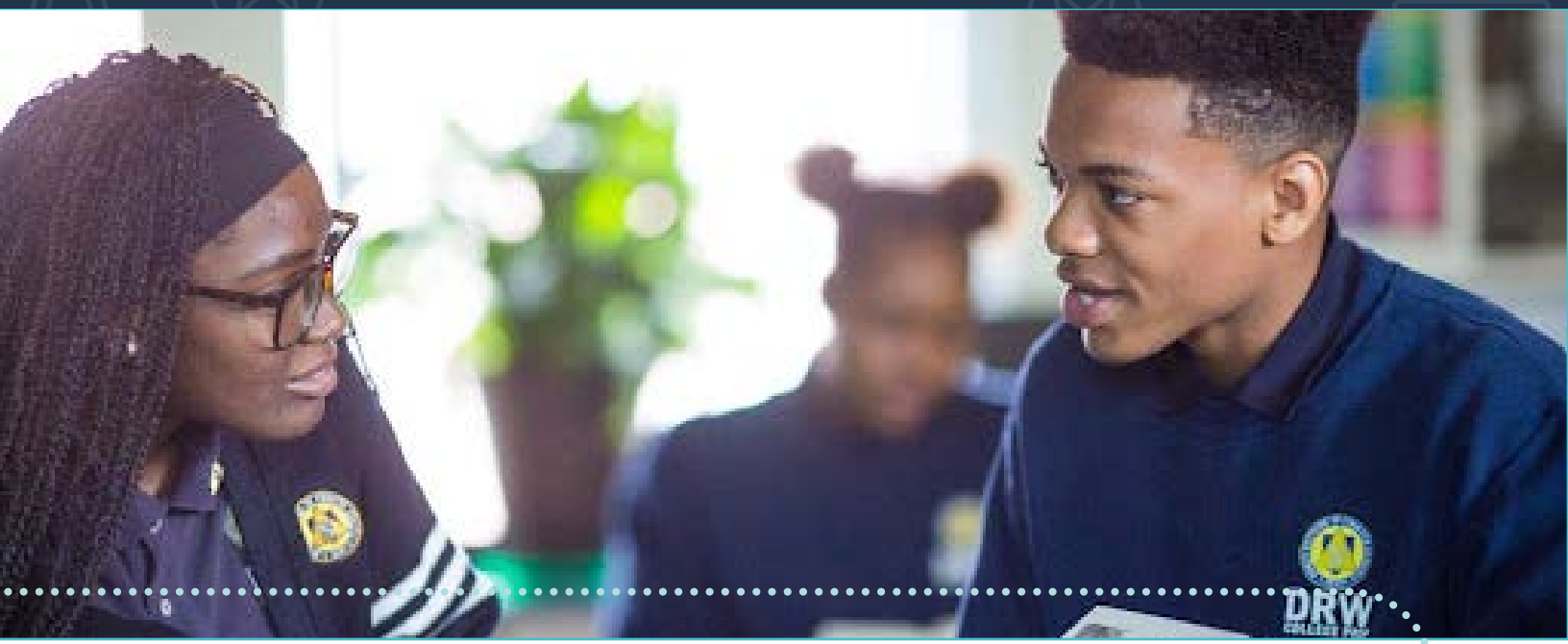
REPEATED ORAL READING IS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE.

Repeated reading interventions for students with learning disabilities are associated with improvements in reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension.[9] A recent review of the literature suggests that repeated reading is the most effective intervention for improving reading fluency in students with disabilities.[10]

This is not only true in the primary grades. While many studies of foundational reading instruction do focus on the primary grades, repeated reading has been shown to have a positive impact on oral reading fluency specifically with secondary students.[11]

Keep in mind...

Though reading fluency interventions have been proven to have a positive impact on oral reading fluency and, ultimately, on reading comprehension, they are insufficient to meet the myriad reading needs that secondary students with disabilities might present. This subgroup often includes students who may have needs in decoding, multisyllabic word reading, vocabulary, syntactic knowledge, and other literacy skills. See ***Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment*** for guidance on identifying specific reading needs for the purposes of instruction and intervention programming.



Bringing this Practice to Life

INTEGRATING REPEATED READING INTO CONTENT COURSES AT NOBLE SCHOOLS

Noble Schools, a public charter network in Chicago, IL, set out to dramatically improve student reading skills across their high school campuses. Noble teachers collaborated with the Networked Improvement Community (NIC) professional learning community to learn and apply evidence-based reading interventions in core classes to support students to learn skills to improve their reading while learning course content. The following case study highlights the efforts of one co-teaching pair at Chicago Bulls College Prep to embed the repeated reading practice in their World History course.

Each day at Chicago Bulls College Prep, a school within the Noble Schools network, Megan, a learning specialist, welcomes 10th grade students to their co-taught World History class. She previews the topic of the day's reading and reminds students of the protocol for repeated partner reading. She thanks several students by name for their attention and preparation, while Derek, a content area specialist, quickly reassigns students whose partners are absent.

Megan prompts the students who will read first to raise their hands, and a calm settles over the classroom. When she announces the starting commands — "Ready…Set…Go!" — a cacophony of reading voices fills the room. One hundred percent of student eyes are glued to the text, which is connected thematically to the current unit. Students are either reading the passage aloud or monitoring while their partners read. After one minute, students provide feedback to their partners (skipped or misread words, for example), calculate and record a rate and accuracy score, and switch roles. The entire procedure is wrapped up in eight minutes, after which Megan and Derek transition to the content-focused objectives for the day's lesson.

A Routine to Support All Learners

Megan and Derek implement this structured instructional protocol daily to build reading fluency in their co-taught course. As a former teacher of a self-contained special education classroom, Megan is well-versed in evidence-based practices for building secondary readers' foundational reading skills. In her role as a co-teacher of general education content area classes, she saw that both students with disabilities and their peers at times had difficulty independently reading grade-level texts. So, she proposed bringing the practices that had supported the diverse learners in her self-contained classroom into the general education environment. Derek understood that in order to reach the rigorous academic goals he had for his students, he would need to be not only a content area expert, but a teacher of reading as well. Thus, the idea to implement the reading fluency protocol was born.

To implement the fluency protocol, Megan and Derek first choose a passage that is related to the content in their current World History unit and written at a Lexile level accessible for the students in the class. They then utilize the **Oral Reading Fluency Passage Generator** from Intervention Central to translate the passage into a curriculum-based measurement that includes the total number of words per line at the end of each line. This supports students in calculating a total score ("correct words per minute" or CWPM) for their partners.

School Spotlight

Students in **Noble Schools** take a universal screening assessment at the beginning and end of the school year using one of several approved reading assessment platforms: SRI, Star Reading assessment, or Achieve3000 LevelSet. Students with disabilities also take a mid-year assessment. Noble campuses in the Networked Improvement Community used LevelSet as their universal screening tool, which provides a Lexile score for each student. This numeric score represents both a reader's ability on the Lexile scale and the level of text a reader is likely to comprehend.[14] Knowing students' Lexile levels helps Megan and Derek strategically choose texts that are likely to be challenging, yet accessible, for most students.



Curriculum Based Measurement: **Oral Reading Fluency Passage: Examiner Copy**

Assessment Date: ___/___/____ Student: _____ Examiner: _____

Words Read Correctly (WRC): ____ Errors: ____ Notes: _____

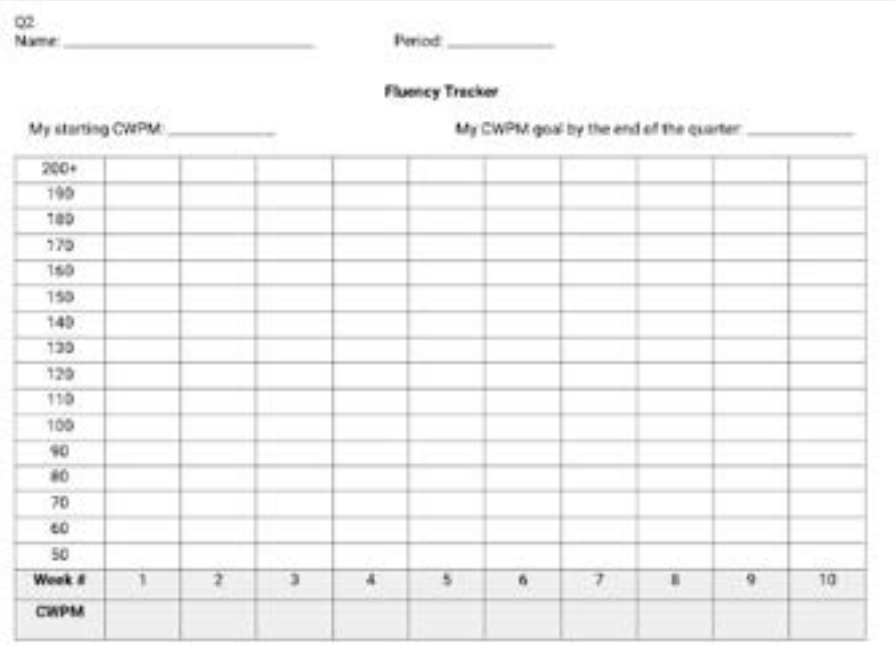
Opinion: Saudi Arabia isn't always this repressive. Now it's unbearable.

Jamal Khashoggi

When I speak of the fear, intimidation, arrests and public shaming of 12
intellectuals and religious leaders who dare to speak their minds, and then I tell 26
you that I'm from Saudi Arabia, are you surprised? 35

With young Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's rise to power, he 46
promised an embrace of social and economic reform. He spoke of making our 59
country more open and tolerant and promised that he would address the things 72
that hold back our progress, such as the ban on women driving. 84

Example passage used for partner reading in Megan and Derek's World History class. The original opinion article by Jamal Khashoggi was published in The Washington Post *on September 18, 2017.*



Q2
Name: _____ Period: _____

Fluency Tracker

My starting CWPM: _____ My CWPM goal by the end of the quarter: _____

200+										
190										
180										
170										
160										
150										
140										
130										
120										
110										
100										
90										
80										
70										
60										
50										
Week #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
CWPM										

Oral reading fluency goal and progress tracker used in Megan and Derek's World History class

During the instructional protocol, students take turns reading the passage in partners. While one partner reads, the other listens, provides feedback on the reader's errors, and calculates a CWPM score. Partners switch and repeat the process, and the protocol ends with students graphing their CWPM scores.

After the partner reading, the class works as a whole group through words that were challenging to decode. The protocol ends with the teacher or a student volunteer modeling a fluent reading of the full text. Hearing a model of fluent reading supports the development of reading fluency when partnered with repeated reading,[12] and reading the text aloud ensures that all students have equal access to the vocabulary and concepts from the text, regardless of their independent reading ability.[13]

Seeing Results of Reading Practice

While the fluency protocol took some time to roll-out to students, Megan and Derek have built proficiency with the routines so that it takes an average of six minutes to complete. The impact of this small investment of time has been to level the playing field between students with disabilities and their peers: **students with IEPs in Megan and Derek's co-taught World History class demonstrated beginning- to end-of-year Lexile growth commensurate with students without IEPs.** As a result of this success, Noble Schools has started to spread this practice through professional development designed and delivered by Megan and Derek. (See ***Enhancing Educator Capacity to Implement Evidence-Based Reading Interventions for Secondary Readers*** for more information on this professional development.)

Implementation at a Glance

The information in this section provides a high-level view of what to consider when implementing this practice. **Enabling Conditions** describes the minimum conditions needed for successful implementation, including resources, mindsets, staffing, and recommended time allocation. **Steps to Implement** presents a concise checklist of action items, which are explained in detail in the following section.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Assessment structures exist to identify students most likely to benefit from this protocol:
  - A universal screening assessment to identify students at risk of not meeting grade-level ELA benchmarks and/or standards
  - Diagnostic assessments that identify which students within that group have adequate word recognition skills, but low rates of reading fluency

CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE

- Teacher belief that supporting foundational reading skills is the teacher's role, and basic understanding of the relationship between reading fluency and overall reading proficiency
- Teacher agency to plan and implement reading interventions within existing classes/schedules; i.e., teachers have the autonomy to both plan for literacy interventions based on student need and to determine when and where in the instructional day those interventions are best scheduled.

Recommended Materials

- Passages from grade-level course content to be used for repeated reading practice or as curriculum-based measurements
- Timers
- Calculators (for calculating rate and accuracy)
- Progress monitoring graphs

In addition, a suite of evidence-based reading interventions may enhance the practice by addressing student needs across the components of reading.

Staff Commitment

- Dedicated staff members to enact repeated reading practice based on variation selected
- Instructional coach to provide ongoing coaching and implementation support for repeated reading
- Designated team to monitor effectiveness of the practice based on student data and make adjustments to intervention planning

Recommended Time Allocation

CENTRAL AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP (INCLUDING TEACHER LEADERS)

- Time to develop and implement training (1 hour initial training plus time for development)
- Time to support data-based instructional decision making. This includes identifying the students likely to benefit from this practice. If the practice is being implemented as a Tier 2 or 3 intervention, the student support team should monitor responsiveness to support ongoing intervention planning

TEACHERS

- Time to participate in training
- Time to implement the intervention with students, ideally 3 times/week, 5–10 minutes per reading
- Time to participate in data-based instructional decision making (i.e., review progress monitoring data, plan intervention adjustments based on student progress, and document decisions)

Steps to Implement

Throughout the year, school teams **complete the following steps** to implement an oral reading fluency intervention practice.

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

- [ ] Use data to identify students who would benefit from repeated reading
- [ ] Choose a repeated reading variation and setting
- [ ] Assign partners (if using repeated reading with a peer partner)
- [ ] Choose texts and create passages
- [ ] Create a plan to explicitly build student motivation and engagement

PUT REPEATED READING INTO PRACTICE

- [ ] Introduce the purpose and routine for repeated reading
- [ ] Train students and staff in routines for repeated reading
- [ ] Conduct repeated readings with students

MONITOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERVENTION

- [ ] Analyze student progress

How to Implement

There are two primary variations of this reading fluency practice:

1. repeated reading with a peer partner
2. repeated reading with a teacher

Both variations can be implemented across a variety of instructional settings, such as specialized small groups, 1:1 pull-outs, or general education settings taught by a single teacher or teaching team. (See the case study, **Practice Snapshot: Exploring Additional Settings for Repeated Reading**, at the end of this chapter for additional implementation ideas.) Implement the practice a minimum of three times per week, 5–10 minutes at a time.

Lay the Groundwork for the Practice

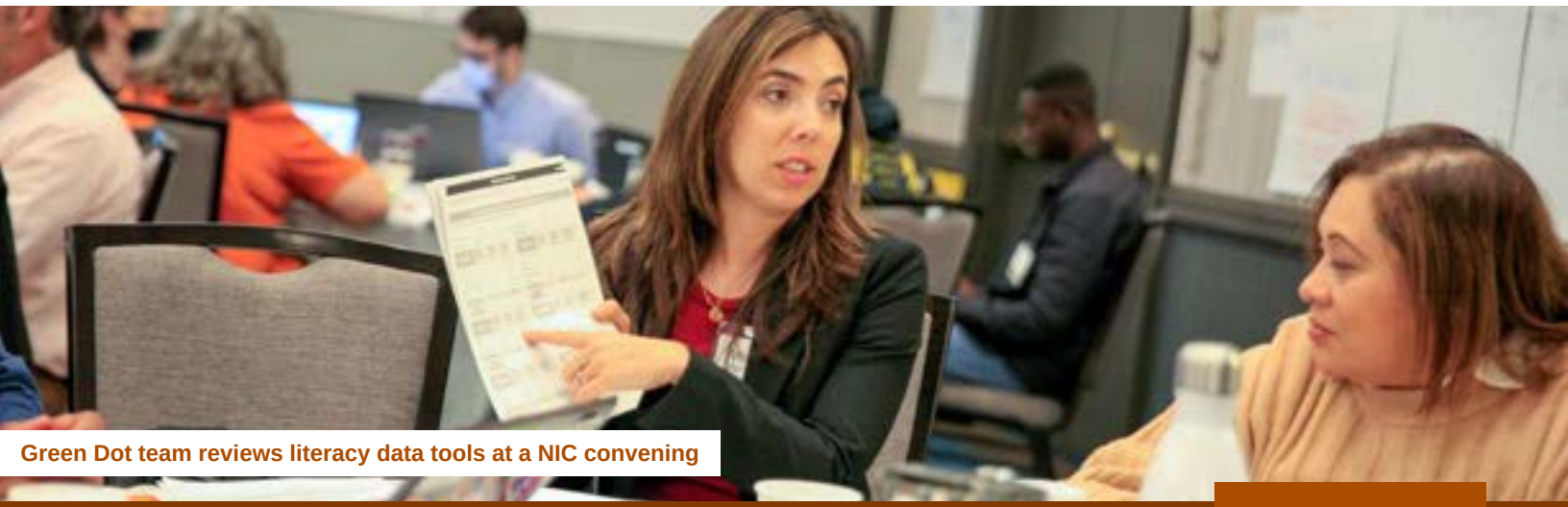
This practice requires several pre-implementation steps.

Step 1: Use Data to Identify Students Who Would Benefit from Repeated Reading

Use data from universal screening and diagnostic assessments to identify students who are likely to benefit from repeated reading (See ***Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment*** for more guidance.)

Identify students who display a combination of the following:

- poor performance on grade-level assessments of reading comprehension
- mastery of basic word-reading skills (i.e., students know the relationships between letters and sounds and are able to apply this knowledge to read isolated words)
- slow (fewer than 120 correct words per minute) and/or inaccurate (below an accuracy rate of 95%) reading of grade-level texts



Green Dot team reviews literacy data tools at a NIC convening

Step 2: Choose a Repeated Reading Variation and Setting

Choose a variation to implement using the following considerations to guide decision making:



Variation 1: Repeated Reading with a Peer Partner

BENEFITS

- Repeated reading with a peer partner allows students to practice reading in a socially supportive context.
- Partner reading can serve more students simultaneously, as one teacher can monitor multiple partners at the same time.

POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS

- Students may be less accurate than an adult in calculating rate and accuracy.
- Students may be less consistent than an adult in noticing errors and providing corrective feedback.



Variation 2: Repeated Reading with a Teacher

BENEFITS

- While research does support partner reading as an effective strategy for building fluency, reading to an adult has been shown to be more effective.

POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS

- Some students might find it stigmatizing to receive 1:1 instruction that is "different" from the core instruction.
- In 1:1 settings, students miss the benefits of cooperative learning structures offered in small and whole group settings.

Once the variation has been selected, determine the setting in which to implement the practice. Possible settings could include:

- **Co-taught content area classrooms**
  *See **Bringing this Practice to Life**, above*
- **Reading intervention class for students with IEPs**
  *See **Practice Snapshot: Exploring Additional Settings for Repeated Reading**, below, for an example from Uncommon Charter High School*
- **Reading intervention class for students with and without IEPs**
  *See **Practice Snapshot: Exploring Additional Settings for Repeated Reading**, below, for an example from Green Dot Public Schools*
- **As a pull-out from any class within a learning center or other space designated for pull-out specialized services**

Step 3: Assign Partners (if Using Repeated Reading with a Peer Partner)

When implementing repeated reading with a peer partner, first determine how students will be paired. Use data from a universal screener or diagnostic assessments to rank order students according to their reading levels. Divide the rank-ordered group in half, and pair students in the higher-performing half with students in the lower-performing half. For example, pair the student with the highest reading level with the student with the highest reading level in the lower half of the group. This strategy allows for the lower-performing readers to hear a higher-performing reader read the text first.

After assigning partners, designate the first reader (Student A) and the second reader (Student B) within each pair. Student A will always be the partner with the higher reading level. Reassign partnerships every 3–4 weeks.

Example of Student Pairing and Role Assignments Based on Reading Level

Student Pairs	Student A	Lexile	Student B	Lexile
Pair A	Miguel	1150L	Tran	880L
Pair B	James	1080L	Latasha	840L
Pair C	Danielle	1000L	Tiffany	820L
Pair D	Brittney	920L	Carl	800L

Step 4: Choose Texts and Create Passages

The purpose of developing reading fluency is to support students in reading and understanding grade-level texts. As such, the ideal texts for practice contain mostly words that students can read correctly, but also contain some challenging words that require practice in order to read fluently. These should be grade-level texts and can come from any content area (e.g., science, social studies, or a novel from the English Language Arts class). Passages should be between 200 and 350 words long, and should be changed regularly — weekly or after several uses. See the Further Learning section of this chapter for more guidance on text selection.

> **Intervention Central's Oral Reading Fluency Passage Generator** allows educators to copy and paste any text to create a curriculum-based measurement of that content. The CBM version will have a total word count at the end of each line of text, aiding the calculation of rate and accuracy for progress monitoring purposes.

Convert the selected passage to a curriculum-based measurement (or CBM, a passage that shows the word count at the end of each line of text) to facilitate the calculation of rate and accuracy scores.

Step 5: Create a Plan to Explicitly Build Student Motivation and Engagement

Secondary learners who are not yet reading proficiently have often established a self-concept of being incapable readers. This low sense of self-efficacy can manifest as reluctance to participate in instructional activities with which these students have not historically been successful. To proactively address this, educators can create a plan for sharing the purpose and process of the oral reading fluency intervention with students, along with the rationale for their assignment to the intervention. This can be done as a whole class, in small groups, or one-on-one with students.

When first introducing the intervention to students, leverage the theory of malleable intelligence to explain how practicing reading can build their reading brains and ultimately make reading a less effortful, more productive, and more enjoyable experience. As part of this process, ask students to set longer-term goals for themselves as readers, such as goals for the school year, for their educational career, or for life. This can help them visualize their long-term goals and connect the short-term intervention to their bigger picture.

Student conferencing during the intervention launch or during progress monitoring activities also helps build motivation and engagement and can involve students in goal-setting activities. Educators can use these 1:1 conferences to share baseline data with students to support them in developing goals for progress, and later to train students to reflect on their goals and progress over time. (See ***Strengthening Timely Interventions through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring*** for more guidance on student conferencing).

Put Repeated Reading into Practice

Research suggests that fluency protocols, whether conducted with an educator or with a peer partner, can positively impact student reading, even when delivered in short increments of 5–10 minutes. Protocols should be implemented at least three days per week. A printable protocol for repeated reading can be found in the **Appendix**.

Step 6: Introduce the Purpose and Routine for Repeated Reading

When launching the practice, whether as a partner-based reading activity or 1:1 with an adult, explicitly naming the purpose and providing an overview of the routine to students will directly support buy-in and investment. This step ensures students understand what the activity is and why they are doing it. Though the actions in this step differ by variation, both variations specifically address:

- what the repeated reading practice is;
- who is involved;
- when, where, and how the practice will happen; and
- why the students are doing repeated reading practice.



Variation 1: Repeated Reading with a Peer Partner

As a whole group, provide an introductory overview of the practice that shares what the practice is, as well as information about how it will happen. An introduction may sound like this:

> *"We're starting a new practice — repeated reading with a partner. This practice will include reading a passage from our World History textbook, practicing reading the passage several times, and timing ourselves both the first time we read the passage and again after we've practiced several times. We will practice repeated reading three times a week."*

Share the purpose and larger intention of the repeated reading practice with the group:

> *"The point of this activity is to help us become stronger readers and to help us better understand what we are reading. Often, the first time we read something, it can be difficult to read new words and big words that we haven't seen before. We spend a lot of our brain's energy trying to read those words, and we don't have much energy left over to think about what the words mean. I know that's true for me when I'm reading a new, complex text. When we practice reading something a few times, those words get easier, and we can think more about the meaning of the text.*
> *(Continued on following page)*



Variation 2: Repeated Reading with a Teacher

When first meeting with the student for repeated reading practice, **share what is happening and when and where it will occur.** An introduction may sound like this:

> *"I'm excited to be working with you three times a week for a reading skill routine. It will usually take about 10 minutes from the time we meet up in your classroom to the time we wrap and send you back into the room. Each day, we'll read a passage together several times and record how many words you read each time so we can keep track of your progress."*

Share with students why they are doing this intervention and answer questions that may arise:

> *"We wanted to offer this reading practice to you to strengthen your reading skills and build your confidence as a reader. We know that, often when we first read passages, it can be difficult to read new words and larger words we haven't seen before. We also saw from your reading tests that you have a lot of skill and strengths as a reader that we can unlock with some small, purposeful practice. Our plan is to try this reading practice together for the first quarter of our school year, and then look at your data to see what progress you are making. From there, we'll make a plan with you for what we do next."*

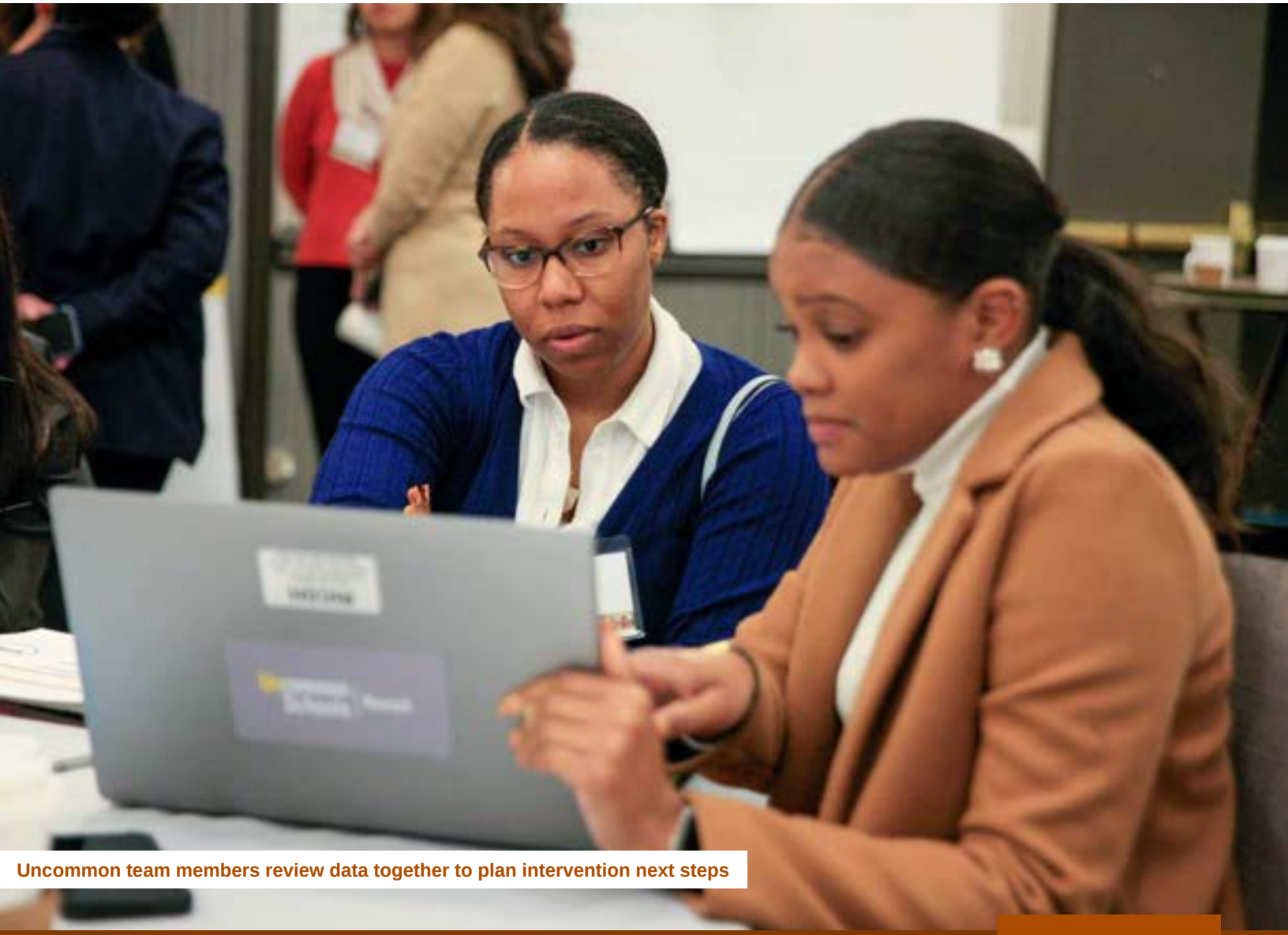
> *I think about this like learning to navigate a new city. When I first moved to Los Angeles, I hardly noticed my surroundings as I drove around. I was so focused on figuring out where to turn next, making sure I didn't miss my exit, etc. etc. But after I practiced driving the same routes over and over, it became (cont.) automatic. I didn't have to think about where to turn or exit anymore, and I could start paying attention to what was around me."*

After this introduction, teachers can consider goal setting activities for the practice, such as creating a class goal for progress, to create shared investment in reading growth.

Finally, talk with the student about setting one or more goals for the repeated reading practice that you will review together daily or weekly. Set an initial goal for the student's improvement in reading rate and accuracy from the cold read to the hot read. To begin, consider starting with a goal to increase by at least 30 CWPM. Write the student's goal on their progress monitoring graph.

If, after implementing the practice with 3–4 passages and practicing each passage 3–5 times, the student is not achieving the initial goal, talk with the student about adjusting the goal down.

If the student easily achieves the goal with only one practice, adjust the goal up.



Uncommon team members review data together to plan intervention next steps

Step 7: Train Students and Staff in Routines for Repeated Reading

CALCULATING RATE: COLD VS. HOT READS

A "cold read" is a student's first attempt at reading a particular passage. A "hot read" is their final reading, which comes after repeated practice readings.

Once the purpose of the practice has been established with students, take time to train them explicitly in the routines of repeated reading. If students are doing this practice with peers, there will be more training and practice needed to develop proficient partnerships in the practice. If working with students in a 1:1 setting, it is most important to make sure the staff leading the intervention, such as a teacher or paraeducator, are well trained in how to run the routines and how to guide students through them in ways that build students' confidence and independence as readers. When training students and staff in the repeated reading routine, use materials like step cards, written directions, and sentence stems to support students in each component of the routine they are learning.



Variation 1: Repeated Reading with a Peer Partner

If introducing repeated reading for the first time, or after a long break, train students in the following aspects of the practice:

- recording mistakes during the "cold" and "hot" reads
- providing feedback during practice reads
- calculating rate and accuracy
- graphing results
- transitioning to partner assignments

Recording mistakes during the cold and hot reads: Provide students with opportunities to practice recording mistakes. Read a passage aloud as students follow along with their own copy of the text. Make several errors as you read. At the end of one minute, give students an opportunity to add up the total words read and the total errors made. Discuss their responses.

Providing corrective feedback: Feedback on errors is an essential component of an effective repeated reading practice. You might tell students:



Variation 2: Repeated Reading with a Teacher

In a 1:1 setting, the staff member leading the intervention will need to understand:

- how to record mistakes during the "cold" and "hot" reads, and
- how to provide feedback during practice reads.

A professional development session in advance of the roll out is the best setting for this initial training, which should be paired with opportunities to observe and/or practice with colleagues or students for feedback.

The facilitating teacher or staff member will subsequently train the student in the steps of the practice, often in a way that increases student ownership and independence with the routine over time.

Students will need training on:

- calculating their own rate and accuracy, and
- graphing their results.

Recording mistakes during the cold and hot reads: Staff members will need to understand and practice how to record mistakes as they follow along with readers, as well as how to calculate the total words read and total errors made. It is often beneficial to mark the type of errors students make, such as a substitution

> *When you are reading aloud, you will likely make some mistakes. This might be reading a word incorrectly, skipping a word, or adding a word. Because we're practicing reading challenging texts, this will happen to all of us at some point in our practice. Your partner is responsible for listening and giving you feedback if they hear a mistake.*

Give students sample language for providing feedback on the specific types of errors that they might notice. To practice using the sample language, provide students with a copy of a passage. Read the passage aloud, intentionally making several errors. After each error, ask students to practice telling a partner which feedback they should provide. Finally, model going back to the start of the sentence after correcting each error.

Calculating rate and accuracy and graphing progress: Provide students with several opportunities to practice calculating rate (total words read minus total errors) and accuracy (words read correctly divided by total words read). Make calculators available to students. Provide opportunities for students to practice graphing both rate and accuracy on their progress monitoring graphs.

Transitioning to partner assignments: Using the peer partner assignments prepared before class, move students into their pairings. Communicate who will be the first reader (Student A) and the second reader (Student B). Student A will always be the partner with the higher reading level, but do not explain to students why they were assigned a particular role.

(e.g., *being* for *bring*), an omission (i.e., skipping the word), or skipping a line while reading. Training should include discussion of these errors and results, along with ways to teach students about the types of errors when regularly running the repeated reading intervention 1:1.

Providing corrective feedback: Feedback on errors is an essential component of an effective repeated reading practice. Staff will need to understand how to prompt and cue students through errors when reading, as well as how to introduce this type of feedback to students as part of the practice. When talking with students, staff might say:

> *When you are reading aloud, you will likely make some mistakes. This might be reading a word incorrectly, skipping a word, or adding a word. Because we're practicing reading challenging texts, this is something we expect to happen. It happens to all of us! I will be acting like your reading coach to listen to you read and give you feedback if I hear a mistake. When that happens, correct the mistake and keep reading. Over time, you'll get better and faster as a result.*

Calculating rate and accuracy and graphing progress: In the 1:1 setting, introduce the progress monitoring graph to students, showing them their goal on the graph, and guiding them through the steps for calculating rate (total words read minus total errors) and accuracy (words read correctly divided by total words read) each time they do a hot and cold read. Allow students to use a calculator to calculate their scores themselves, and then coach them through graphing their rate and accuracy on the progress monitoring graph.

Sentence Stems for Immediate Error Feedback

Error-specific sentence stems provide appropriate feedback to students. These can be used by peer partners or staff members working 1:1 with students. Examples include:

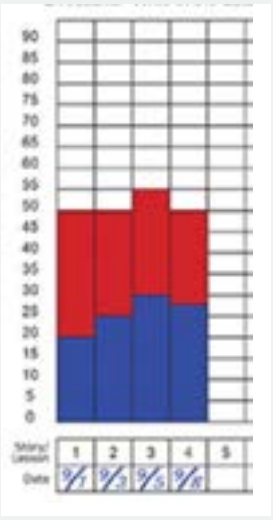
- The reader reads the word incorrectly: "That word is…"
- The reader skips a word or a part of a word: "You missed this word…"
- The reader adds a word: "You added a word."
- The reader hesitates (for 3+ seconds): "That word is…"

With each correction, the reader restarts the sentence to practice reading fluently and accurately.

Graphing Progress with Students

Involving students in monitoring their own progress through performance feedback and goal setting can increase motivation and lead to better academic outcomes.[15]

One way to make progress visible between the cold and hot reads is to have students graph their rates on a stacked bar graph — **the cold read in blue and the hot read in red** on the same bar of the graph. Accuracy graphing can be done the same way.



Step 8: Conduct Repeated Readings with Students

Once students understand the purpose and routine of repeated reading and have been trained in the steps for running the practice, it is time to conduct repeated readings. Keep in mind that, as with any new routine, initial practice will likely result in students making mistakes, asking clarifying questions, and needing coaching on aspects of the training items. It can be helpful to have students try the repeated reading multiple times and debrief questions or celebrations at the end of each practice session in order to build skill and buy-in.



Variation 1: Repeated Reading with a Peer Partner

Distribute a copy of the passage to each student. Have students write their name and their partner's name on the copy and designate which copy will be used for notes on each reader's progress.

Introduce the text and restate the objectives of the practice. Provide a brief preview of the text to the whole group. Remind students of their roles during the practice and to focus on reading the text accurately, smoothly, and with expression. This might sound like the following:



Variation 2: Repeated Reading with a Teacher

Provide the student with a copy of the passage. Typically in the 1:1 version, student passages do not have word counts, while staff versions have word counts.

Introduce the text and restate the objectives of the practice. Provide a brief preview of the text (a passage chosen from a content area text or selection) and remind the student to focus on reading the text accurately, smoothly, and with expression.

> *Remember, the reader will focus on reading accurately, quickly, and with good expression. The reader's partner will listen, record any errors on their copy of the text, and tell the reader their total number of words read and their total number of errors. The reader will then calculate their own rate and accuracy on their graph, and then the readers will switch.*
>
> *We're learning about the expansion of the Ottoman Empire this week. In this passage, you'll read about the conquest of the city of Constantinople. Get ready to read, and begin.*

Conduct cold reads.

1. In partners, student A reads the passage aloud. Student B listens and follows along on a separate copy of the passage, noting reader errors with a slash mark.
2. At the end of one minute, students stop reading. Use a one minute timer and/or teacher prompting to stop reading.
3. Student B tells Student A the total number of words read and the number of errors. Student A subtracts the number of errors from the total number of words read to calculate a rate score expressed as correct words per minute, or CWPM. Student A also divides the CWPM by the total number of words read to calculate an accuracy score, represented as a percentage. This is the student's cold read, or baseline.
4. Student A records the baseline rate and accuracy scores on the progress monitoring graph.
5. The students switch roles and repeat the process.

Practice reading the passage: Over the course of the three-day protocol, students practice reading the passage with the goal of getting faster and more accurate each time.

6. While Student A reads, Student B follows along and provides corrective feedback when needed, and vice versa.

Revisit goals for reading practice growth in skills or habits, as appropriate. For example, a teacher might say:

> *This week we're reading a passage about the conquest of the city of Constantinople from your English class. You're going to practice reading the text multiple times to build your fluency and accuracy as a reader. As you read, think about using the tools and strategies we have been practicing, like tracking with your pencil and using the first syllable to help you read the word. Start with the first word and read until I tell you to stop. Start when you are ready.*

Conduct cold reads.

1. The student reads the passage aloud. While the student reads, follow along and record student errors on a separate copy of the passage.
2. After one minute, tell the student to stop reading.
3. Mark the final word read, and share with the student the total number of words read as well as the total number of errors.
4. The student subtracts the number of errors from the total number of words read to calculate a rate score expressed as correct words per minute, or CWPM. The student also divides the CWPM by the total number of words read to calculate an accuracy score, represented as a percentage. Coach the student through this process, as needed.
5. The student records their baseline rate and accuracy scores on their chart and graphs this cold read on their progress monitoring graph.

Practice reading the passage: The student reads the same passage several times (typically 3–5) while the teacher listens and provides corrective feedback as needed. The teacher can decide, depending on the length of the passage and the time allocated for the practice, whether the repeated readings happen in one session or across 2–3 sessions.

Conduct hot reads and graph progress: At the end of the third day of the protocol, the partners repeat steps 1–3 and record their hot-read scores on their progress monitoring graphs. (See ***Strengthening Timely Interventions through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring*** for more details.)

Throughout the practice time, monitor and coach. While students are reading, circulate to listen in, remind students of their roles, provide additional feedback, and collect observational data on student reading. The teacher can also create a schedule to rotate in and partner with students as an assessment opportunity.

If the protocol is being used as a whole group, two adults (e.g., two teachers or one teacher and one paraprofessional) can be leveraged to facilitate, monitor, and support student practice.

Conduct hot reads and graph progress: When the student is ready for a hot read, prompt the student to read the same passage for one minute and count errors. The student recalculates their rate and accuracy scores and records the hot-read score on the progress monitoring graph.

If the new scores meet the pre-established goal, the teacher chooses a new passage for the next practice cycle. If not, the student continues to read the same passage until the rate and accuracy goal is met.

Throughout the practice, coach student reading habits. Provide positive reinforcement to encourage the use of strategies. Ask students to share their reflections on their reading practice and jot observational notes where useful for monitoring student progress.

Tips and Tools to Support Oral Reading Fluency with Students

Sometimes students need additional coaching, or tools, to support their reading tracking or self-monitoring while reading. There are many useful strategies and tools educators can use with students. A few common strategies include:

- **Coaching for visual tracking:** Prompt students to use a finger or pencil to point to the words and track the text as they read, or use a sticky note or index card to help them build skills for reading line over line.
- **Accommodating visual tracking:** Provide enlarged text and spacing as an accessibility accommodation for students with visual tracking difficulties.
- **Prompting to use strategies:** Secondary students often have habits and routines as readers they will need to learn or unlearn around reading. Teachers can remind and encourage students to use their resources (e.g., error correction prompts) and strategies (e.g., re-reading text after correcting errors) to build their reading habits and muscle.
- **Providing tools:** Calculators to compute reading rate and accuracy or timers for peer-partner coaching use are both valuable tools for developing student skill and engagement.

Monitor the Effectiveness of the Intervention

Step 9: Analyze Student Progress

The ultimate goal of repeated reading practice is to improve student fluency and automaticity to facilitate reading comprehension. Monitor the effectiveness and impact of the oral reading practice by regularly collecting rate and accuracy data, as well as information about student prosody. After 6–8 weeks of practice, gather the data for review by individual educators or teams. To understand the broader trends in progress and the impact of the practice on other metrics, teams can analyze student progress on global reading measures, such as ELA assessments or benchmark reading assessments, alongside students' fluency data. For additional perspective, consider collecting and reviewing student feedback, including student perception of the intervention's impact on their skill development and confidence as readers, so student insights and needs are part of the data discussion.

Use the data gathered to adjust the approach to implementation and to guide additional staff training aligned to student and educator needs. Ongoing professional development for teachers might focus on using student fluency data to inform additional instruction and intervention planning, working around barriers to implementation, and leveling up the practice as routines and procedures are internalized.

Oct GL Test Used (K-8)	Oct WPM	1st Trimester Grade Level Recommendations & Status	Oct Accuracy
6	106	Needs additional support	94%
		Not enough data.	
6	100	Needs additional support	99%
1	82	Reading sufficiently on level tested	91%
6	154	Reading sufficiently on level tested	96%
6	110	Needs additional support	93%
6	114	Needs additional support	98%
3	90	Reading sufficiently on level tested	95%
6	115	Needs additional support	98%
6	114	Needs additional support	96%
6	121	Needs additional support	97%
6	131	Reading sufficiently on level tested	98%

Example Google Sheets tracker of student oral reading fluency used by Uncommon Charter High School

Reading with **prosody** means reading with expression — in other words, reading with appropriate phrasing, pausing, stress, and intonation. While rate and accuracy can be calculated easily, measuring prosody requires more teacher discretion. A **fluency rubric** can be a helpful way to quantify prosodic reading.

Practice Snapshot

EXPLORING ADDITIONAL SETTINGS FOR REPEATED READING

While teachers at Noble Schools are successfully implementing a reading fluency protocol in a co-taught World History course, repeated reading interventions can be implemented in a variety of instructional settings.

Uncommon Charter High School

Val and Giovanni, teachers at Uncommon Charter High School in Brooklyn, New York, include a structured reading fluency protocol in their Academic Prep class, a reading intervention class for 9th grade students with reading disabilities. Academic Prep is designed to build the foundational reading skills necessary for meaningful engagement with grade-level content and texts.

To create a cohesive experience for the students in the class, Val and Gio use the same text for each of the instructional activities within their daily lesson structure. Students read the passage with partners several times, providing feedback, and calculating and graphing a reading rate. While partners engage in the protocol, Val and Gio circulate to listen in and help students as needed. In the context of the Academic Prep course, the fluency protocol serves both to build reading fluency, and to set students up to engage in additional reading work with the same passage, including **word study** and vocabulary.



As a result of the reading intervention, which includes the reading fluency protocol, four of the five students in the Academic Prep course identified as needing additional fluency support at the beginning of the year increased their reading fluency between October and May. The average increase in reading fluency rate for these four students was 20 CWPM.

Green Dot Public Schools

Green Dot Public Schools in Los Angeles, CA, embeds small group reading fluency support for students with disabilities into their Read 180 reading intervention class and other small group or 1:1 settings throughout the day. Within the Read 180 class, Green Dot identifies a subset of students who may benefit from explicit fluency support in addition to the interventions provided in Read 180. (See ***Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment*** for an in-depth description of Green Dot's identification process.)

The selected students work with an instructional aide for approximately 15 minutes of their Read 180 block three days per week. On the first day, the students are timed for a cold read of the passage selected for the week. Over the course of the three days, they read the passage several times and receive feedback on errors. At the end of the third day, they are timed on a hot read and their progress is graphed.

Early data indicates that this approach is yielding strong results. Of students participating in the supplemental fluency intervention (in addition to the Read 180 class) 75% made progress in their oral reading fluency over the course of the 2022–23 school year, with half of students increasing their oral reading fluency rates more than 30%. The team continues to monitor progress weekly, as well as on **6-week cycles**, to ensure that teachers can rapidly adapt their approaches and that students who have made sufficient progress are exited from the intervention.



Summary

English Language Arts standards for secondary students ask readers to engage in deep meaning-making work with complex texts. Still, many students enter our middle and high schools not having had the opportunity to develop the foundational reading skills necessary to engage in this work. This problem is particularly pronounced for Black and Latinx students, students experiencing poverty, and students with disabilities. Many of these readers are able to apply phonics decoding skills to sound out words, yet reading grade-level connected text is a slow, laborious process that commandeers much of their working memory capacity while reading, leaving little availability for meaning-making processes.

Encouragingly, decades of research suggest that explicit strategies to develop reading fluency — including repeated reading, partner reading, and goal setting with progress monitoring — positively impact reading fluency, which in turn leads to improved reading comprehension. These evidence-based practices are a critical component of a comprehensive plan for reading intervention in middle and high schools. Implementing a structured protocol for reading fluency has strong potential to improve student proficiency and automaticity in reading, ultimately providing greater and more equitable access to grade-level instruction and rich, complex texts for all students.

FURTHER LEARNING

"What Texts to Use to Teach Fluency?"

TIMOTHY SHANAHAN

2023 Plan

and

Accompanying Powerpoint Presentation

PLANNING MULTI-TIERED READING INTERVENTIONS AT GREEN DOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS



BUILDING ORAL READING FLUENCY IN SECONDARY READERS

Appendix

How to Measure

When implementing oral reading fluency interventions to support students in middle and high school, the following measures are most essential:

PRIMARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process (utilization)	Intervention schedule	Is the protocol taking place at least 3 days/ week? Yes / No	Number of days in a week that the protocol is implemented	Reading fluency intervention takes place at least 3 days/ week	
Outcome	Student tracker of “cold” and “hot” reads of a passage	Did the student’s reading rate increase after engaging in the fluency protocol? Yes / No	Increase in words read correctly in one minute on the passage used for the fluency protocol	Students increase by 30 correct words per minute or more after 3–5 readings	A “cold” read is the first time a student reads a passage, and a “hot” read is a timed reading after the student has practiced the passage several times.
Outcome	Correct words per minute on Oral Reading Fluency Curriculum-Based Measurement (ORF CBM)	Is the student reading rate and/or accuracy improving as a result of engaging in the fluency protocol?	Increase in words read correctly in one minute on a criterion referenced CBM passage	Students increase at a rate that is more accelerated than the norm	While a “cold” and “hot” read will indicate if a student increases their fluency on a passage after practicing that specific passage, an external ORF CBM will indicate whether they are transferring those skills to other texts.

Additional measures can guide a team to know whether the reading fluency protocol is leading to the desired improvements for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Outcome	ORF CBM and/ or Universal Screening Scores	What percentage of students in the intervention are making sufficient progress to discontinue the intervention?	Quarterly, some students demonstrate progress on assessment tools and no longer require intervention.	Student growth data is allowing students to exit the intervention after one or more intervention cycles.	Monitor the effectiveness of the intervention at both the individual student level and the cohort level to track student movement into and out of the intervention over time.
Process (useability)	Teacher perception data	Do teachers feel they have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement the protocol?	After training and coaching, teachers report confidence in their ability to implement the protocol as designed.	100% of teachers report feeling confident in implementing the protocol as designed.	
Process (utilization)	Student participation	Are students participating in the fluency protocol?	Percentage of students who engage in the steps of the fluency protocol.	100% of students participate in the steps of the fluency protocol.	It can be expected that some students may be reluctant to participate in a new instructional protocol initially, but the goal is to build engagement over time.

PRACTICE TOOL

Repeated Reading Protocol

Spark Educational Consulting 3-Day Fluency Instruction Task Card

Day 1 (~10 minutes)

1. Students conduct “cold read,” calculate rate, and graph progress.
   - Depending on group size, options include: the teacher times the student, a partner times the student, or the student times her/himself.
2. The teacher previews and model reads the passage.
   - Prompt the students to listen for expression and prosody — e.g.: “Good readers do not read word by word with one tone of voice, like a robot. They read with expression and in phrases, or meaningful chunks of words. As I read this passage, notice how I read in phrases, how I vary my tone, and how I pause at the end of sentences.”
   - Model making a prediction for reading based on a preview of the passage — e.g. “Previewing before I start reading can help me better understand what I’m reading. This passage is about...I wonder if I will learn about...”
3. Ask students to share what they noticed about the reading, and/or what they learned from the text.
4. Chorally read the passage. Explicitly notice and comment on expressive and prosodic reading.

Day 2 (~10 minutes)

1. Provide a review of the passage and reinforce the “why” — good readers read accurately, quickly, and with expression, and fluent readers are better able to pay attention to and understand what they are reading.
2. Echo read the passage.
   - The teacher reads a sentence, modeling expression and prosody, and students chorally read (“echo”) the sentence. Repeat for the full passage.
3. Pair students for partner reading of the passage.
   - Students will either be the reader or the coach.
   - The job of the reader is to read accurately, quickly, and with good expression.
   - The job of the coach is to listen for the reader’s mistakes, help with hard words, and give feedback. Types of mistakes and corrective feedback include:
     - Mistake: Saying the wrong word; Correction: Point to the word, provide the correction, and ask the reader to read the sentence again.
     - Mistake: Getting stuck on a word (more than ~3 seconds); Correction: point to the word, say the word, ask the reader to say the word, and ask the reader to reread the sentence.
     - Mistake: Skipping a word; Correction: Tell the reader a word was skipped and ask the reader to re-read the sentence.
     - Mistake: Adding an extra word; Correction: Tell the reader a word was added and ask the reader to re-read the sentence.
     - Students read the passage through one time, switch roles and read again.

Spark Educational Consulting

Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

Day 3 (~10 minutes)
1. Provide a review of the passage and reinforce the “why” — good readers read accurately, quickly, and with expression, and fluent readers are better able to pay attention to and understand what they are reading. 2. Students individually read the passage quietly aloud 3–5 times. – It is important that students are reading aloud at this phase as silent reading will have less impact on oral reading fluency. 3. When students feel ready, they conduct their “hot read,” calculate their rate, and graph their progress. If the oral reading fluency goal was met, celebrate student success.

Notes

1 Hudson et al., “The Complex Nature of Reading Fluency”

2 Torgesen and Hudson, “Reading Fluency: Critical Issues”; Stecker et al., “Toward Understanding Oral Reading Fluency”

3 Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*

4 Perfetti and Lesgold, “Coding and Comprehension”

5 Chard et al., “A Synthesis of Research”

6 Gilmour et al., “Are Students With Disabilities Accessing the Curriculum?”

7 Torgesen and Hudson, “Reading Fluency: Critical Issues”; Stecker et al., “Toward Understanding Oral Reading Fluency”

8 Furey and Loftus-Rattan, “Actively Involving Students”; Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*; Southward and Goo, “Repeated Reading”

9 Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, *Report of the National Reading Panel*, 3-15–3-20; Chard et al., “A Synthesis of Research”; Meyer and Felton, “Repeated Reading”

10 Stevens et al, “The Effects of Reading Fluency Interventions”

11 Southward and Goo, “Repeated Reading”

12 MetaMetrix, “About Lexile® Measures for Reading

13 Stahl, “Vocabulary Development”

14 Cole et al., “Engaging English Language Learners”

15 Furey and Loftus-Rattan, “Actively Involving Students”

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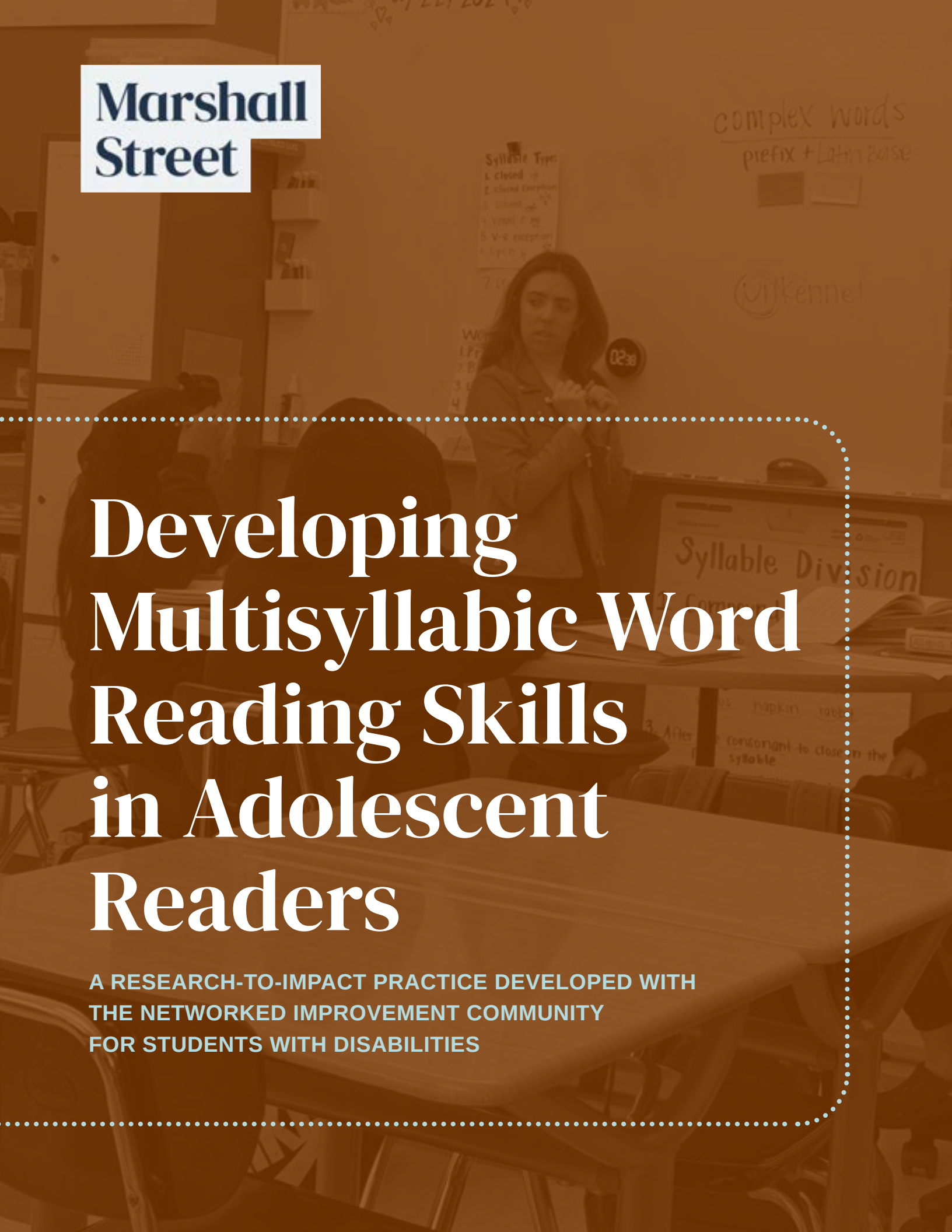
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Marshall Street

Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills in Adolescent Readers

A RESEARCH-TO-IMPACT PRACTICE DEVELOPED WITH THE NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5.3..... Practice Overview

5.3 | What is the Practice?

5.4 | Why is this Practice Important?

5.5..... Bringing this Practice to Life

5.8..... Implementation at a Glance

5.8 | Enabling Conditions

5.9 | Steps to Implement

5.10..... How to Implement this Practice

5.10 | Lay the Groundwork

5.10 | Step 1: Identify Students Likely to Benefit from Interventions in Multisyllabic Word Reading

5.10 | Step 2: Select or Design a Systematic Scope and Sequence for Teaching Syllabication Skills

5.10 | Step 3: Determine the Setting for the Intervention

5.12 | Plan the Intervention

5.12 | Step 4: Identify Anchor Texts to Leverage for Instruction

5.12 | Step 5: Prepare for Daily Lessons

5.13 | Implement the Intervention

5.13 | Step 6: Introduce the Purpose of Multisyllabic Word Work to Students

5.13 | Step 7: Deliver the Word Study Intervention

5.17 | Step 8: Provide Ongoing Opportunities for Practice

5.18 | Monitor the Effectiveness of the Intervention

5.18 | Step 9: Analyze Student Progress

5.19 | Practice Snapshot

5.21..... Summary

5.22..... Appendix

5.23 | How to Measure

5.25 | Notes

5.25 | Bibliography

Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills in Adolescent Readers

Implementation Level

- [ ] District/Central Office
- [ ] School
- [ ] Program/Department
- [x] Classroom

Who Implements

- [x] Teacher(s)
- [ ] Instructional Coach
- [ ] Principal
- [ ] Central Office Leadership
- [x] Specialist

Practice Overview

What is the Practice?

Systematic and explicit instruction for secondary students in the subskills that contribute to fluent and automatic reading of multisyllabic words, including syllabication strategies (how to break multisyllabic words into syllables) and morphological awareness (the ability to recognize and read commonly occurring morphemes, or word parts, efficiently).

Key Terms for this Practice

Syllabication and morphological awareness are two important skills that proficient and fluent readers apply in order to decode unknown multisyllabic words.

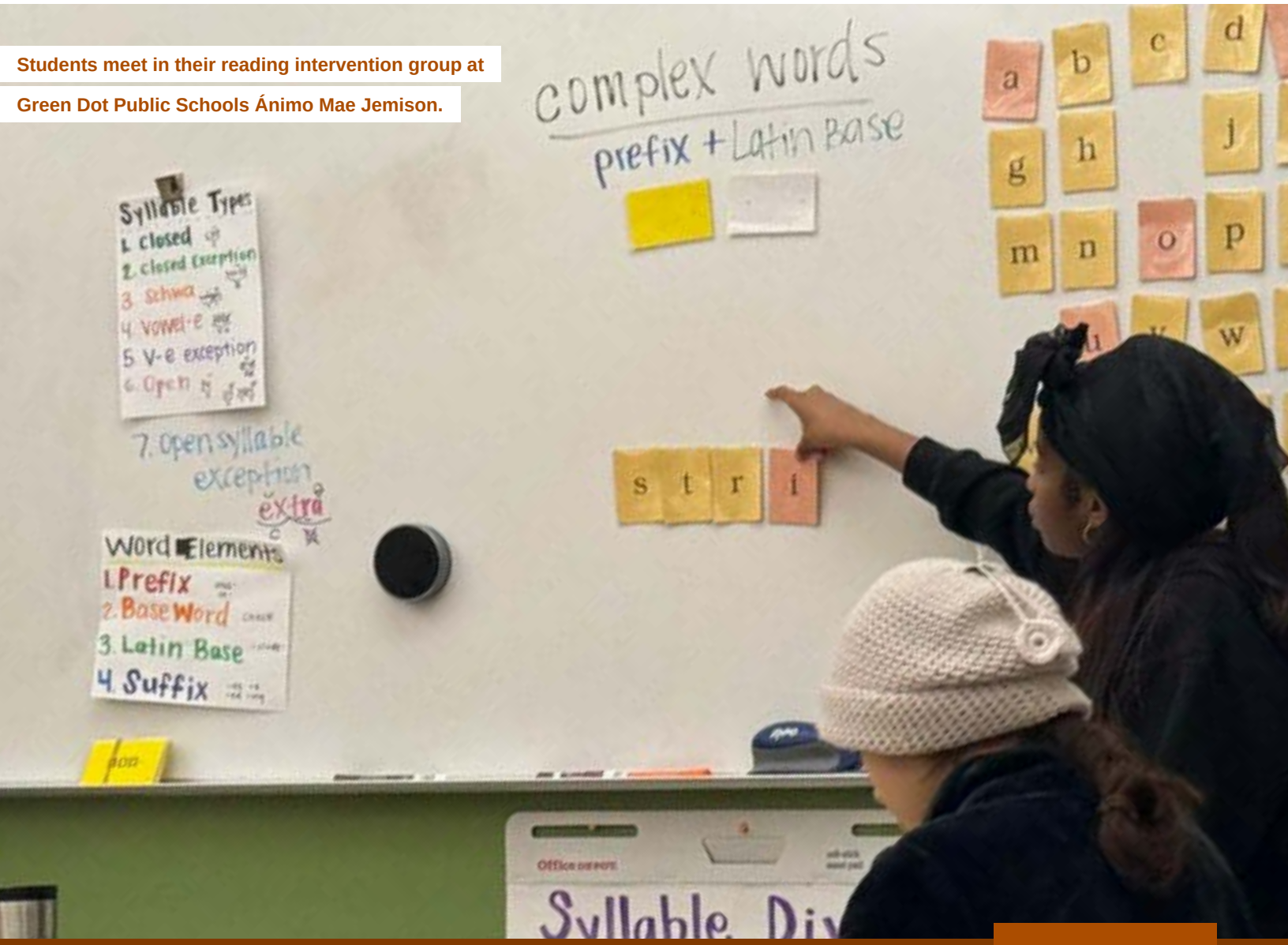
Syllabication refers to dividing multisyllabic words into individual syllables, each of which contains one vowel sound. Syllable division principles generalize how and where to break a multisyllabic word into syllables. See **How To: Teach Syllabication** for more.

Morphological awareness refers to an understanding of how morphemes — that is, the smallest meaningful parts of words, like prefixes, suffixes, and roots — contribute to word meaning. See **How To: Teach Morphological Awareness** for more.

Why is this Practice Important?

Often, older students who are not yet reading grade-level texts fluently and accurately can decode single-syllable words but have difficulty decoding multisyllabic words.[1] Because the majority of words that secondary students encounter in grade-level texts are multisyllabic, slow and effortful reading of these words is a significant impediment to comprehension of the overall text. This barrier to meaningful participation in grade-level instruction grounded in complex texts contributes to the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their typically developing peers.[2]

Word study instruction, or instruction in word analysis and word recognition, is often recommended as an essential focus of instruction for secondary students with reading disabilities.[3] Word study intervention can improve reading outcomes for struggling students by teaching them to be flexible decoders and to access word analysis and word recognition strategies.[4] Explicit instruction designed to build morphological awareness has been shown to be especially helpful for English language learners[5] and secondary students with disabilities.[6]



Students meet in their reading intervention group at Green Dot Public Schools Ánimo Mae Jemison.



Bringing this Practice to Life

HOW UNCOMMON USED WORD STUDY TO BUILD READING FLUENCY

At Uncommon Charter High School (UCHS) in Brooklyn, New York, Literacy Innovation Specialist Val Dutta co-teaches Academic Prep with Giovanni (Gio) Zaccheo, a UCHS special education teacher and department chair. Academic Prep is a reading intervention class for 9th grade students with reading disabilities designed to build the foundational reading skills necessary to facilitate meaningful engagement with grade-level content and texts. The case study below opens with a scene describing a typical interaction in Academic Prep, where word study has become integral to reading instruction.

Uncovering a Need

Chance, a 9th grade student, is reading aloud a passage about social activism:

> CHANCE: Social activism refers to the use of… dee… del… delibate?
>
> GIO: *[listening carefully, prompts Chance]* Let's pause and break this down. How many consonants are between the two vowels?

Gio and Chance work to break the word *deliberate* into syllables, and soon the text Chance is reading has been marked up with divisions: *de.lib.er.ate*. They continue:

> GIO: Let's read the word by syllables. Then try for the real word and be careful, there are a few schwas in this one.

CHANCE: De…lib…er…ate… *[He recognizes the word as one he is familiar with.]*

CHANCE: Deliberate! *[starting again]* Social activism refers to the use of deliberate actions to bring about social change…

This interaction represents the instruction that Chance and his Academic Prep classmates are receiving in explicit strategies for recognizing and decoding multisyllabic words. This focus on multisyllabic word reading was the result of deliberate, data-driven planning on the part of Val and Gio.

It all began at the start of the 2022–23 school year when Val administered an **Oral Reading Fluency Curriculum-Based Measurement** (ORF CBM) to the students enrolled in Academic Prep to more deeply understand their reading skills and needs. She then met with the Networked Improvement Community literacy content expert, Genevieve Thomas, to analyze the results.

Genevieve and Val noticed that students were largely successful with single-syllable and high-frequency words, and the vast majority of errors on the ORF CBM were made with multisyllabic words. Students didn't seem to have a strategy to attack these longer words and the "slow down" caused by these inefficiencies was interfering with their ability to read the passage fluently. Val and Genevieve acknowledged that, if students were encountering these roadblocks when reading a relatively short, isolated passage, they were almost certainly facing even more challenges with the longer and more complex texts they were seeing in their content area classes — challenges that would prevent a cohesive understanding of the ideas in the text. It was clear that building proficiency with multisyllabic word reading would need to be a key goal of instruction in Academic Prep.

Val and Gio decided to focus first on explicitly teaching syllabication — that is, the principles for where to divide a multisyllabic word into syllables — starting with basics and, over the course of several weeks, moving from less to more complex concepts. They worked with Genevieve to develop a progression of instructional targets. (See **How To: Teach Syllabication** below for a detailed instructional progression.)

Building the Skills for Reading

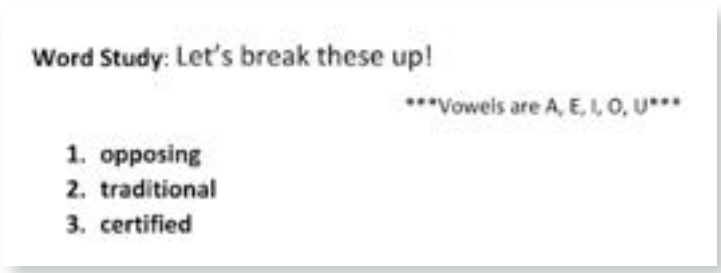
Val and Gio began by teaching students the concept of open and closed syllables. First, they provided many opportunities for students to practice reading open and closed syllables in isolation. As students became more automatic and fluent in this practice, Val and Gio began to teach students the basic syllabication principles they could use to break multisyllabic words into individual syllables. Automaticity with reading those isolated syllables — that is, their quick and precise recognition — would free up students' working memory for more

Syllabication Basics

Open syllables end in a vowel sound, and the vowel sound is long (like the sound of *a* in the first syllable of paper: [pā]). **Closed syllables** end in one or more consonants, and the vowel sound is short (like the sound of *a* in the first syllable of rabbit: [răb]).

Open and closed syllables comprise almost 75 percent of English syllables and thus comprise "the building blocks of polysyllabic decoding."[7]

complex word analysis. Val and Gio were careful to teach one syllabication strategy at a time and to give students extended opportunities to practice in isolation before teaching a new strategy.



Words are selected from an anchor text for syllabication practice in an Academic Prep lesson plan.

After Val and Gio explicitly taught all the syllabication strategies in isolation, they transitioned to providing students with opportunities to practice syllabication when reading connected texts. The Academic Prep course leverages one anchor text in each lesson, and students develop various reading skills, including syllabication, through this text.

Seeing Results

As a result of the explicit instruction and extended opportunities to practice and apply syllabication strategies, Val and Gio noticed an improvement both in students' accuracy of multisyllabic word reading and in their confidence as readers. The 2022–23 end-of-school-year administration of the ORF CBM indicated that all students in the Academic Prep course were reading text with 98–100% accuracy. Describing the results of the practice, Gio shared, "Students have seen growth and are building their confidence in reading. I'm seeing students volunteer to read who I never would have thought at the beginning of the year would be reading in front of the whole class."



Implementation at a Glance

The information in this section provides a high-level view of what to consider when implementing this practice. **Enabling Conditions** describes the minimum conditions needed for successful implementation, including resources, mindsets, staffing, and recommended time allocation. **Steps to Implement** presents a concise checklist of action items, which are explained in detail in How to Implement this Practice below.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Assessments and data tracking practices that indicate who might benefit from intervention in multisyllabic word reading
- Curricular resources and/or instructional guidance that includes evidence-based interventions for developing multisyllabic word reading skills
- Initial educator training in the implementation of the intervention

Dedicated time for the instruction to take place (likely within an existing reading intervention time)

CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE

- Teacher agency to plan and implement reading interventions within existing classes/schedules. For example, teachers have the autonomy both to plan for literacy interventions based on student needs and to determine when and where in the instructional day those interventions are best scheduled.
- Teacher ownership of reading skill development in all students

Recommended Materials

- Authentic texts from core content courses for word study practice and application
- A list of commonly-occurring prefixes, suffixes, and root words to teach
- Evidence-based word study scope and sequence

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) is a website maintained by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. The WWC provides accessible information about the scientific evidence on programs, products, and practices and is an excellent resource for educators looking for evidence-based programs.

CORE's Teaching Reading Sourcebook provides comprehensive guidance on the research behind each of the key elements of effective reading instruction coupled with practical recommendations for implementation. It includes a chapter on multisyllabic word reading and is an excellent resource for identifying and defining evidence-based reading strategies.

Staff Commitment	• Ongoing teacher coaching to support the continued refinement of instructional planning and implementation • Possible financial commitment if engaging an external partner or if purchasing a packaged curriculum
Recommended Time Allocation	**TEACHERS** • Time to participate in training (2–3 hours, ideally divided over multiple sessions) • Time to implement (minimum 5–10 minutes daily), ideally three times a week • Time to participate in data-based instructional decision-making (review progress-monitoring data, plan intervention adjustments based on student progress, and document decisions) • Time to engage in ongoing coaching conversations **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP** • Time to develop and implement training (if doing training internally) or to vet and select an external partner for training • Time to provide real-time coaching and engage in coaching conversations (or to identify an external partner to lead this aspect of the work) • Time to support data-based instructional decision-making

Steps to Implement

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

- [ ] Identify students likely to benefit from intervention in multisyllabic word reading
- [ ] Select or design a systematic scope and sequence for teaching syllabication skills
- [ ] Determine the setting for the intervention

PLAN THE INTERVENTION

- [ ] Identify anchor texts to leverage for instruction
- [ ] Prepare for daily lessons

DELIVER THE INTERVENTION

- [ ] Introduce the purpose of multisyllabic word work to students
- [ ] Deliver the word study intervention
- [ ] Provide ongoing opportunities for practice

MONITOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERVENTION

- [ ] Analyze student progress

How to Implement this Practice

Lay the Groundwork

Step 1: Identify Students Likely to Benefit from Interventions in Multisyllabic Word Reading

Use data from universal screening and diagnostic assessments to identify students who are likely to benefit from intervention in multisyllabic word reading (see **Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment** for more guidance).

Identify students for whom a combination of the following statements are true:

- They perform poorly on grade-level assessments of reading comprehension.
- They read grade-level texts slowly (below a rate of 120 correct words per minute) and/or inaccurately (below an accuracy rate of 95%).
- They have mastered single-syllable word reading (i.e., these students know the relationships between letters and sounds and are able to apply this knowledge to read isolated single-syllable words).
- They have difficulty reading words with more than one syllable fluently and automatically.

Step 2: Select or Design a Systematic Scope and Sequence for Teaching Syllabication Skills

Advanced planning is required to select or design a systematic scope and sequence for teaching syllabication skills. Instruction should progress from less to more complex concepts, generally starting with teaching open and closed syllables and then teaching syllabication strategies. See **How To: Teach Syllabication** below for a recommended scope and sequence of instruction and **Further Learning** for additional instructional guidance.

Step 3: Determine the Setting for the Intervention

Determine the setting in which to implement the practice. Potential settings include the following:

- Within a scheduled reading intervention class (e.g., Read 180) for students who are not yet reading at grade level
- In 1:1 conferences or in small groups of students with reading disabilities within a resource room, learning center, or other environment dedicated to specialized instruction
- In core content classes, like science and social studies, using vocabulary words from the course

PROS AND CONS OF CURRICULUM VS. STRATEGIES

Some schools may decide to utilize a structured curriculum to build students' multisyllabic word reading skills, rather than designing their own. When using a curriculum, educators will sometimes need to adapt or supplement the curriculum to meet the needs of students.

	Pros	Cons
Curriculum	Well-designed curricular programs for teaching multisyllabic word reading will have a systematic scope and sequence, potentially reducing the planning load for teachers. Curricular programs can provide a helpful starting place for new teachers and may represent a reduced training load. Many curricular programs include in-program teacher supports that help build teacher knowledge as they teach the program.	Curricular programs may feel disconnected from grade-level instruction and content. There is generally a cost for purchasing and maintaining curricular resources.
Strategies	Strategies can be applied to authentic texts that students are reading in their content area classes, which can support transfer of skills. The time to teach and practice strategies can be flexibly adjusted to fit within existing class structures.	Strategy instruction may require more initial and ongoing teacher training and coaching, particularly if teachers are not knowledgeable about reading instruction. Strategy instruction may require a more significant planning load (choosing words from texts, for example) for teachers.

There are many commercially available programs that use evidence-based practices to systematically and explicitly teach word study, including programs like **REWARDS** and **SIPPS Challenge**. To accelerate progress for nonproficient secondary students in our priority population in both skill development and grade-level course mastery, the NIC prioritized using an **instructional sequence** and authentic texts from content area courses.

Plan the Intervention

Step 4: Identify Anchor Texts to Leverage for Instruction

Leveraging grade-level ELA or content area texts for word study instruction can support comprehension of grade-level material, improve students' ability to transfer syllabication skills and morphological knowledge to unique texts, and support motivation to read increasingly complex texts. Choose an anchor text (for example, an article related to a topic of instruction in a World History class or a passage from a novel in an ELA class) from which target words for word study instruction will be selected.

Step 5: Prepare for Daily Lessons

Carefully select, in advance, words from the selected anchor text. Ideally, after initial syllabication strategies have been explicitly taught, students practice syllabication and morphological awareness — explained further in the **How To** sections below — with three to five words daily. Consider the following guidance when selecting words for instruction:

- Choose words that align with the specific syllabication strategies that have already been taught. For example, if students have learned only one pattern for syllabication division, choose only words that include that pattern.
- Once students have learned all of the syllabication division rules, choose words with different patterns to provide practice with a variety of syllabication strategies.
- When initially teaching syllabication division rules, choose words that "follow the rules." Once students become more proficient with the division principles, introduce words that are "rule breakers" (e.g., words that include a schwa).
- For teaching morphological awareness, choose words that include affixes that have high instructional value. Consider using vocabulary words for syllabication and morphology work. For example, if *autocracy* were a vocabulary word in a World History class, the teacher might have students first practice syllabication — by dividing the word into syllables, reading the word by syllables, then reading the full word — and then teach them the meaning of the prefix *auto-*.

When planning for daily lessons, practice syllabication of the target words to identify any potential misunderstandings and prepare scaffolds and explanations. If teaching a specific prefix, suffix, or root that has meaning, craft the language to explain the meaning (e.g., "The affix *auto* means *self*.")

Implement the Intervention

Step 6: Introduce the Purpose of Multisyllabic Word Work to Students

Explain to students that it can be challenging to read long words that are unfamiliar, especially when taking on the entire word at once. However, when readers have strategies for breaking words apart, they can more easily read those smaller "word parts" and then put them together to read the whole word. Introduce the idea that many word parts appear frequently in text, so becoming fluent with those commonly occurring word parts (or morphemes) can help build reading fluency.

A teacher might use the following sample script to introduce word study when taking the strategies approach described above:

> *We're starting a new practice — breaking words into syllables. We'll learn rules for how to break big words into smaller parts so we can tackle the words part-by-part.*
>
> *We will practice breaking words apart three times a week using words from the stories we are reading in class. The point of this is to help us become stronger readers and to help us better understand what we are reading. Often, the first time we try to read a big word that we haven't seen before, we aren't quite sure how to read it correctly. We spend a lot of our brain's energy trying to read those words, and we don't have much energy left over to think about what the words mean. I know that's true for me when I come across complex words in my reading. If we have strategies to break apart those big words, it's a lot easier to read the small parts and then put them together to read the whole word. There are also lots of word parts that show up over and over in lots of the words we read. When we practice reading those common word parts, it becomes easier and more automatic to recognize them even in big words.*

Step 7: Deliver the Word Study Intervention

Using the chosen vocabulary words and selected texts, deliver the word study intervention. Both syllabication and morphology strategies should be employed in this step, though the depth of focus on each skill may vary in lessons. This step is broken into detailed explanations for **How To: Teach Syllabication** and **How To: Teach Morphological Awareness**.



Research suggests that word study instruction can positively impact student reading, even in short increments of 5–10 minutes daily. Explicit instruction should be provided at least three days per week.

How To: Teach Syllabication

TEACH STUDENTS HOW TO READ OPEN AND CLOSED SYLLABLES.

Follow this sequence for teaching open and closed syllables:

1. Explain that a syllable is a smaller part within a larger word and each syllable contains one vowel sound.
2. Write a closed syllable (e.g., [man]) on a board and ask students to read it.
3. Explain that [man] ends in a consonant, which makes it a closed syllable. Closed syllables always end in a consonant, and the vowel sound in a closed syllable is always short.
4. Write 3–5 more closed syllables on a board and ask students to read them. Point out that each syllable ends in one or more consonants, and that the vowel sound in each syllable is short.
5. Write an open syllable (e.g., [pā] as in *paper*) on the board. Tell the students that the syllable is [pā] and ask them to read the syllable. Explain that [pā] ends in a vowel, which makes it an open syllable. Open syllables always end in a vowel, and the vowel sound in an open syllable is always long.
6. Write 3–5 more open syllables on a board and ask students to read them. Point out that each syllable ends in a vowel, and that the vowel sound in each open syllable is long.

After teaching students the generalization, provide daily opportunities to practice reading isolated open and closed syllables until students consistently read both syllable types accurately. This can be a brief warm-up before engaging in syllabication division work.

Note that students are often more proficient in reading closed syllables and need more practice reading open syllables. Some students may need to be retaught short and long vowel sounds before they are ready for open- and closed-syllable instruction.

TEACH SYLLABICATION DIVISION STRATEGIES.

Teach students the basic syllabication division strategies, moving from less complex to more complex. The most useful syllabication strategies to teach are explained in the table on the following page.

How To: Teach Syllabication (continued)

Division	Description	Rule	Examples
VC/CV	Two consonants between two vowels	When two consonants come between two vowels, the word will be divided between the two consonants.	rab.bit nap.kin
V/CV or **VC/V**	One consonant between two vowels	When one consonant comes between two vowels: • 75% of the time, the word will be divided before the consonant. • 25% of the time, the word will be divided after the consonant.	pa.per ti.ger riv.er mag.ic
VC/CCV or **VCC/CV**	Three consonants between two vowels	When three consonants come between two vowels, a consonant blend (two consonants that represent two distinct sounds) or digraph (two consonants that represent one sound) is included and is kept together.	hun.dred ath.lete

Use a gradual release sequence to teach each syllabication strategy:

1. Explain the syllabication division rule.
2. Model dividing 1–2 words using the division rule and explaining your thinking. After dividing the word, read each syllable and then read the full word.
3. Practice dividing 2–3 words along with students, asking them where to divide the word, and then asking them to read each syllable and read the full word.
4. Provide students with 3–5 words to divide and read independently or with a partner.

Teach one syllabication division rule at a time, and introduce the next only when students are consistently dividing words correctly, reading the syllables accurately, and reading the full words accurately.

How To: Teach Syllabication (continued)

TEACH STUDENTS TO BE FLEXIBLE DECODERS.

Once students are proficient with the rules for dividing and reading multisyllabic words, teach students the concept of "flexible decoding."

Explain that the syllabication division rules will help them read many words, but in some cases, it won't lead to the exact pronunciation of a word. In such cases, readers need to be flexible and think about whether the unfamiliar word sounds like a word they've heard before. This is because English can be a complicated language and it doesn't always follow the rules.

Provide an example, sharing your thinking aloud. For example, a teacher might write the word *classify* on a board, and use the following script:

> *Let's look at an example of a word that doesn't follow the rules. Now, you may know this word, but remember that our syllabication rules help us read words we don't know, so I'm going to pretend I don't know this one. Following my syllabication rules, I'm going to divide this word like this:* clas.si.fy. *Based on my open and closed syllables, I would read these syllables as [clăs-sī-fī]. Hmm… does that sound like a word I know? Oh, it sounds like [clăs.sə.fī]! Breaking this word into syllables didn't get me to the exact pronunciation, but it got me close enough that I could match it to a word that I know and that makes sense.*

One reason the pronunciation of a multisyllabic word may not match its syllable-by-syllable pronunciation is that it has a schwa. A schwa is a vowel sound that is distorted in the unstressed syllable (such as the second syllable in the *classify* example above), and the schwa occurs frequently in multisyllabic words. Teach students the definition of *schwa* and include words with a schwa in practice.

One reason the pronunciation of a multisyllabic word may not match its syllable-by-syllable pronunciation is that it has a schwa. A schwa is a vowel sound that is distorted in the unstressed syllable (such as the second syllable in the classify example above), and the schwa occurs frequently in multisyllabic words. Teach students the definition of schwa and include words with a schwa in practice.

How To: Teach Morphological Awareness

Morphemes are the smallest meaningful parts of words, like prefixes, suffixes, and roots. Instruction in morphology should co-occur with syllabication instruction. When words selected for syllabication practice include commonly occurring morphemes, use the following process to build students' morphological awareness (see **Further Learning** for a resource listing commonly occurring morphemes):

1. Teach students the meaning and pronunciation of commonly occurring morphemes. Focus on one morpheme at a time.

   Isolate the morpheme from the full word and teach students its pronunciation and, if applicable, its meaning. For example:

   > *Today we are going to learn the word part* rupt*, which means "to break."*

   Ask students to read the morpheme *rupt*.

2. Ask students to read a word that includes the morpheme by syllables then read the full word.

   > *Let's read a word that has this word part in it.*

   Ask students to read *bank.rupt* by syllables.

3. If it is a morpheme that holds meaning, engage students in a conversation about what the full word might mean based on the meaning of the morpheme.

   > *If* rupt *means "to break," what might* bankrupt *mean?*

4. Provide students with 3–5 more words that include the target morpheme, and instruct them to read by syllables, read the full word, and discuss.

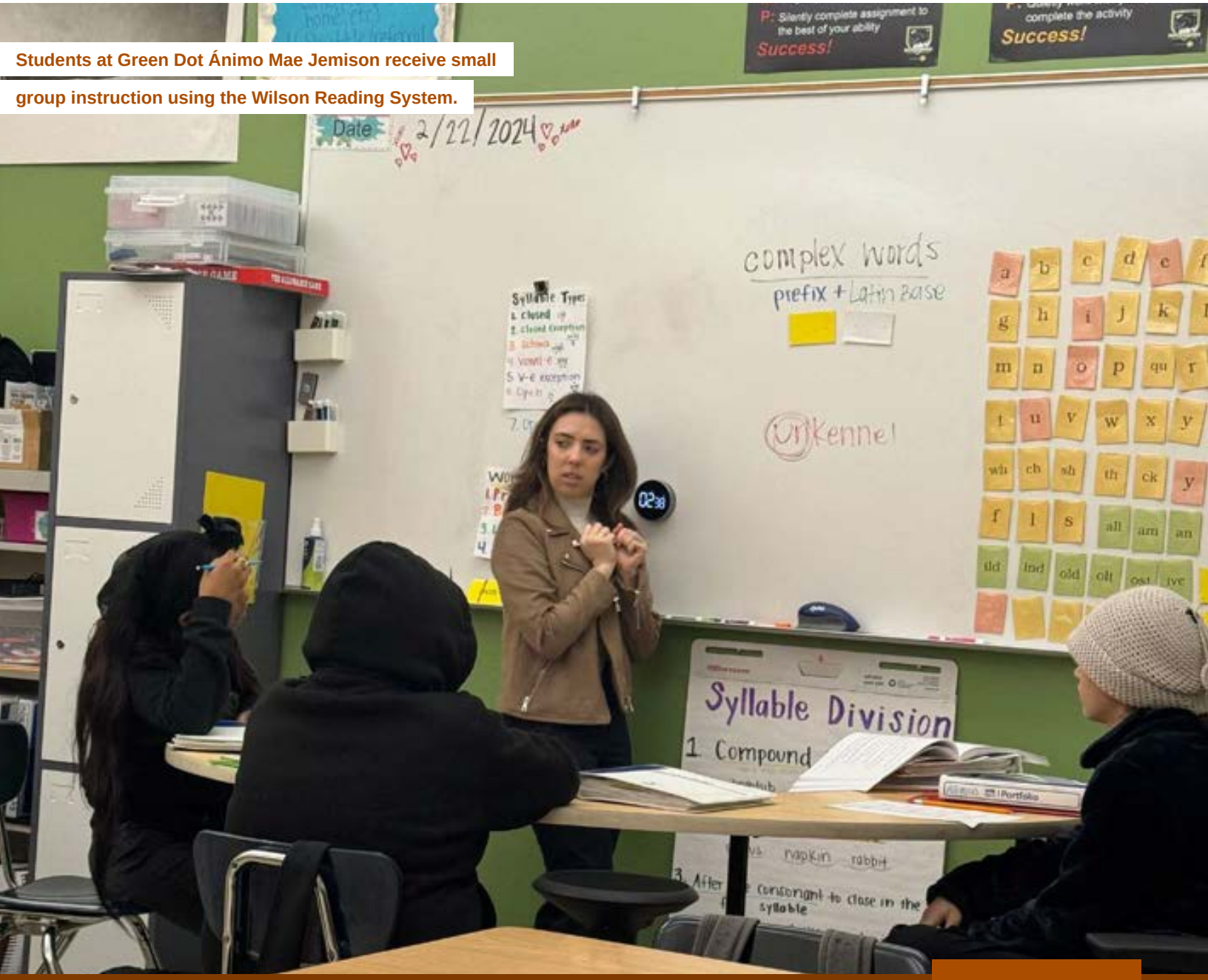
Step 8: Provide Ongoing Opportunities for Practice

Once the discrete multisyllabic word reading skills have been taught, provide students with many opportunities to practice applying the skills with new and authentic words. This is important whether students have been taught syllabication using anchor texts or a structured, commercially available program. Students should be explicitly encouraged to apply these skills not only during multisyllabic word reading instruction but also in their independent reading when they encounter a multisyllabic word they don't know.

Monitor the Effectiveness of the Intervention

Step 9: Analyze Student Progress

Monitor the effectiveness and impact of the protocol by collecting data. This might include assessing student accuracy of reading isolated multisyllabic words and/or ORF CBMs (see ***Strengthening Timely Interventions Through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring***). Evaluate the effectiveness of the word study intervention by assessing the extent to which word study instruction increases the accuracy and fluency with which students are able to read multisyllabic words.



Students at Green Dot Ánimo Mae Jemison receive small group instruction using the Wilson Reading System.

Practice Snapshot

GREEN DOT'S WILSON INTERVENTION

At Ánimo Mae Jemison, a Green Dot Public Schools California middle school, students with disabilities with the most intensive reading needs are scheduled into an Academic Prep course where they receive small group instruction using the Wilson Reading System (WRS). The implementation of the WRS is enhanced by Green Dot's deep commitment to the program — shown in the collaboration between teachers, counselors, and school leaders to prioritize the needs of this group of students — and by the supportive atmosphere they have built around it. The case study below describes how Green Dot students work with the classroom teacher or trained paraeducator to build word reading skills using the structured literacy program and accompanying materials.

On a typical day, seven to nine students enter the reading intervention classroom, retrieve their binders from a bookshelf, and sit down around one of two kidney-shaped tables. Looking to the front of the room, students greet their teacher, Whitney, as they open their workbooks to the day's lesson warm-up activity.

The warm-up begins with a word study drill for students to break words into syllables and mark known sounds and word parts (e.g., suffixes) following a routine they've been taught. They place slash marks between the syllables within each word and use a coding system to mark the spelling sounds and morphemes they recognize within the words. Whitney monitors this activity, using the extensive training she has received to support students in their work and to reinforce the positive culture of the classroom. She offers praise to individuals and the group while prompting students to persist when they get stuck.

When this word analysis work is complete, Whitney asks each student to read the syllables aloud and then read the full word. When Whitney notices a student error with a word, she provides an immediate and brief correction. The student re-reads the word correctly and the practice continues.

This process allows a virtuous cycle to be created between students, their teachers, and one another. Often, secondary students who are not yet proficient with reading also struggle with self-doubt, frustration, and negative self-talk. Green Dot's intervention method establishes a learning environment in which taking risks and making mistakes is encouraged and valued as part of the reading process. Students learn to complete the error correction protocol with their teacher's prompting, and eventually, with the support of peer coaches. Corrective feedback is a normalized part of the process.

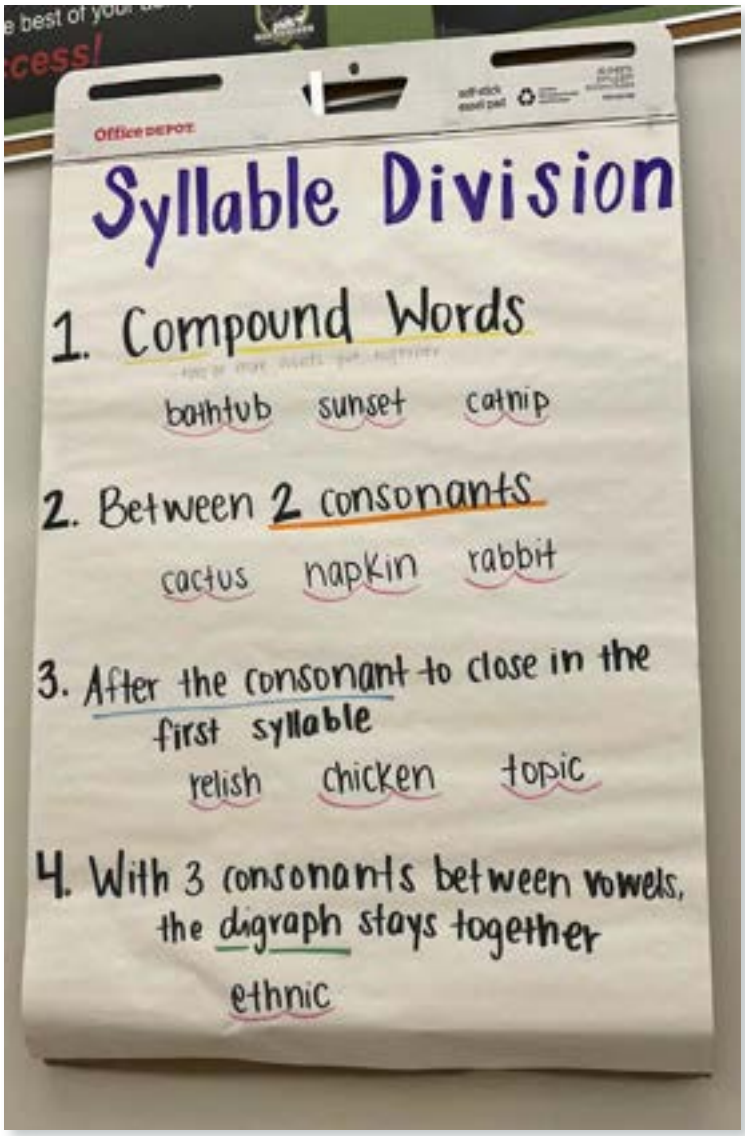
The Wilson Reading System is a teacher-directed instructional program that provides systematic and explicit instruction in the key elements of reading, including word study. At the upper levels of WRS, students learn strategies for reading multisyllabic words, progressing from less complex

tasks — such as reading two-syllable words with two closed syllables — to multisyllabic words including both open and closed syllables and tricky concepts such as the schwa.

Each day's lesson generally includes four to eight steps:

- Teach and review concepts for spelling
- Passage reading
- Comprehension
- Sentence reading
- Sound quick drill
- Dictation at the sound, word, and phrase level
- Sound instruction
- Word reading drills

While the Uncommon case study shared above illustrates how evidence-based strategies for developing multisyllabic word reading skills can be implemented without a structured curriculum, Green Dot offers an example of this instruction being provided via a commercially available program. Green Dot students participating in the WRS program have reported that they are able to read more challenging words, have improved their reading fluency, and are reading more in general, both in class and outside of class. Students also report improvements in comprehension and their confidence as readers. Green Dot, seeing the value of the program, is spreading the practice to high schools in its network.



Summary

English Language Arts standards for secondary students ask readers to engage in deep meaning-making work with complex texts, yet many students enter middle and high school not having had the opportunity to develop the foundational reading skills necessary to engage in this work. This problem is particularly pronounced for Black and Latinx students, students experiencing poverty, and students with disabilities. Many of these readers are able to apply phonic decoding skills to sound out words, yet do not yet read multisyllabic words fluently and automatically. Because multisyllabic words make up the majority of words that secondary readers encounter in text, weak or dysfluent multisyllabic word reading can significantly impact a reader's ability to access and make meaning from complex grade-level texts.

Encouragingly, research suggests that explicit strategies to build multisyllabic word reading skills, including teaching syllabication principles and building morphological awareness, have strong potential to positively impact reading fluency, which in turn leads to improved reading comprehension. These evidence-based practices to support the development of multisyllabic word reading skills are a critical component of a comprehensive plan for reading intervention in middle and high schools, and implementing evidence-based multisyllabic word reading instructional strategies has strong potential to improve student proficiency and automaticity in reading, ultimately providing greater and more equitable access to grade-level instruction and rich, complex texts for all students.

FURTHER LEARNING

"What is growth mindset?"
UNDERSTOOD.ORG

The Teaching Reading Source Book, 3rd Edition
(CHAPTER 8, MULTISYLLABIC WORD READING)
CORE

Root Words, Suffixes, and Prefixes
READING ROCKETS

"Using Morphology to Teach Vocabulary"
JOAN SEDITA

Morphology Matters: Building Vocabulary Through Word Parts"
WILLIAM VAN CLEAVE

DEVELOPING MULTISYLLABIC WORD READING SKILLS IN ADOLESCENT READERS

Appendix

How to Measure

When implementing literacy instruction for students with disabilities at the secondary level, the following measures should be implemented to support students in growing their literacy skills in fluency and identifying multisyllabic words. At a minimum, these measures are most essential:

PRIMARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Intervention schedule	Is the intervention taking place at least 3 days per week? Yes / No	Number of days per week that the intervention is implemented	Multisyllabic word reading intervention takes place at least 3 days per week.	
Process	Observation or teacher report	Are teachers implementing the intervention as intended? Yes / No	Percent of teachers implementing the intervention as intended	100% of teachers implement the intervention as intended.	*As intended* means frequency, duration, and adherence to the specific instructional routines.
Outcome (formal; criterion-referenced)	Correct words per minute on Oral Reading Fluency Curriculum Based Measurement	What is the change in the number of correct words per minute for students in the intervention?	Number of words read correctly in one minute on a criterion-referenced CBM passage	Students' progress is sufficient to meet or exceed established goals/targets.	This measure can look at both accuracy and rate to measure progress in decoding skills of students receiving multisyllabic word reading intervention.

Additional measures can guide a team to know whether the multisyllabic word reading intervention is leading to the desired improvements for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Teacher perception data	Do teachers feel they have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement the instruction?	After training and coaching, teachers report confidence in their ability to implement the instruction (1–5 scale).	100% of teachers report feeling confident in implementing the instruction.	
Process	Student participation	Are students participating in the intervention?	Percent of students who engage in the steps of the intervention	Increasing percent until 100% of students participate in the steps of the intervention	It can be expected that some students may be initially reluctant to participate in a new instructional sequence, but the goal is to build engagement over time.
Process	Student perception	Do students who participated in the intervention report increased confidence when reading grade-level texts?	Percent of students who report higher confidence in reading grade-level texts after the intervention than before it	Increasing percent of students who increased their confidence in reading grade-level texts until reaching 100%	

Notes

1 Archer, Gleason, and Vachon, “Decoding and Fluency”

2 Gilmour et al., “Are Students with Disabilities Accessing the Curriculum?”

3 Roberts et al., “Evidence-Based Strategies”

4 Scammacca et al., *Interventions for Adolescent Struggling Readers*

5 Haager and Osipova, “Enhancing Academic Instruction”

6 Harris, Schumacher, and Deshler, “The Effects of Strategic Morphological Analysis Instruction”

7 Shefelbine and Newman, *SIPPS Plus Teacher’s Manual*

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Marshall Street

Strengthening Timely Interventions Through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring

A RESEARCH-TO-IMPACT PRACTICE DEVELOPED WITH THE NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6.3..... Practice Overview

6.3 | What is the Practice?

6.4 | Why are Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring Important?

6.5..... Bringing this Practice to Life

6.9..... Implementation at a Glance

6.9 | Enabling Conditions

6.10 | Steps to Implement

6.11..... How to Implement this Practice

6.11 | Before Implementing

6.11 | Step 1: Select a Progress-Monitoring Tool

6.11 | Step 2: Train Faculty on Administering the Tool and Interpreting the Data

6.12 | Implementing Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring

6.12 | Step 3: Collect Baseline Data

6.13 | Step 4: Collaborate with Students to Set Goals

6.13 | Step 5: Conduct Progress Monitoring and Enter Progress-Monitoring Data

6.14 | Step 6: Analyze Progress-Monitoring Data, Engage in Decision-Making, and Document Decisions

6.16..... Summary

6.17..... Appendix

6.18 | How to Measure

6.20 | Notes

6.20 | Bibliography

Strengthening Timely Interventions Through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring

Implementation Level

- ☐ District/Central Office
- ☑ School
- ☑ Program/Department
- ☑ Classroom

Who Implements

- ☑ Teacher(s)
- ☑ Instructional Coach
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Central Office Leadership
- ☑ Specialist

Practice Overview

What is the Practice?

Educators establish reading goals, monitor student progress toward those goals, and analyze progress-monitoring data to inform decisions to continue, intensify, or discontinue reading interventions.



What do we mean by *progress monitoring*?

Progress monitoring serves three primary purposes within multi-tiered systems of support:[1]

- Assess students' performance
- Quantify a student's responsiveness to intervention
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions using valid and reliable measures

Why are Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring Important?

When coupled with structures for reviewing the data and using data to guide intervention decisions, consistent progress monitoring can ensure that (1) students receive more intensive support if they aren't responding adequately to intervention and (2) students are referred for a less restrictive plan when they no longer demonstrate a need for the current level of service.

Students with disabilities often are not as responsive as students without disabilities to standard administration of evidence-based academic interventions. For this reason, a primary function of the specially designed academic instruction provided through special education is to intensify and individualize instruction for this population. Using data to inform decisions while intensifying instruction for students can result in improved outcomes for students with disabilities,[2] and using established criteria to inform decision-making can reduce bias and ensure equitable services and access for all students.

It is also critical that students don't remain in an intervention when they no longer need the support. While a primary goal of special education is to close academic achievement gaps between students with disabilities and their typically developing peers, the majority of students, including students with high-incidence disabilities, who are found eligible to receive special education services continue in special education across the duration of their school careers, and students experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage are even less likely to exit special education services.[3] Consistent progress monitoring and data-driven planning can serve to ensure instruction is provided within the least restrictive environment.

Why it Works

PROGRESS MONITORING ENABLES CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTION.

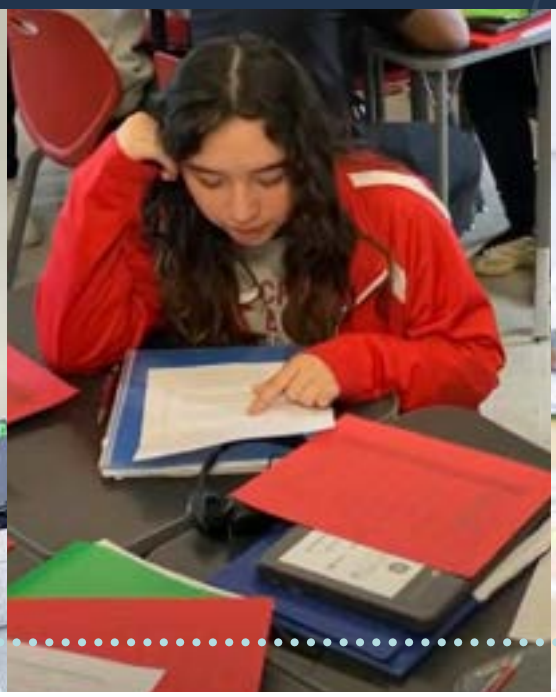
Progress monitoring using tools such as curriculum-based measurements (CBMs) helps teachers design more effective instructional programs that result in improved student outcomes.[4] See ***Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment*** for more information on CBMs.

WHEN COUPLED WITH DATA-BASED DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES, PROGRESS MONITORING DEMANDS A BALANCE OF SCAFFOLDS AND STUDENT INDEPENDENCE.

Data-based program modification is defined as a "sequence of decisions that are made when modifying a student's program and a parallel set of evaluation activities that are intended to increase the likelihood that program modifications [will] be successful."[5] This regular monitoring and analysis of progress spurs actions such as increasing scaffolds in response to low rates of improvement and increasing student independence as mastery and progress are achieved.

ENGAGING STUDENTS IN GOAL SETTING AND PROGRESS MONITORING CAN SUPPORT MOTIVATION TO READ AND BUILD BENEFICIAL SKILLS.

Many secondary students who are not yet proficient readers have a history of reading failure and a low sense of reading self-efficacy. Being able to visualize their own progress toward a goal via a progress-monitoring graph can serve as a strong motivator and reinforce the benefits of reading practice.[6] Oftentimes, progress monitoring is something that is done *to* students, instead of being a collaborative process completed *with* students.[7] When implemented appropriately, goal setting and progress monitoring build self-determination skills and strategies like self-monitoring and self-evaluation, which have been found to be especially beneficial for students with learning disabilities.[8]


Bringing this Practice to Life

PRACTICE SNAPSHOTS OF GOAL SETTING AND PROGRESS MONITORING FOR ADOLESCENT READERS

Across the Networked Improvement Community, organizations tried out different approaches to progress monitoring and goal setting with secondary readers to discover what would work for their student populations. Each team focused on developing data-rich routines and resources that engaged students as key stakeholders in their process.

DESIGNING A PROGRESS-MONITORING SYSTEM AT UNCOMMON CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL



Uncommon Charter High School *set out to redesign Academic Prep, a reading intervention course for 9th grade students with disabilities. Literacy Innovation Specialist Val Dutta and Special Education Coordinator Giovanni (Gio) Zaccheo worked in partnership with the Networked Improvement Community (NIC) team to develop a process for monitoring student progress and using data to drive instructional decision-making. The following case study highlights their journey from selecting a progress-monitoring tool to analyzing student data and adapting interventions.*

Early in the process of redesigning Uncommon Charter High School's reading intervention class, Val knew that she and Gio would need a way to quickly and efficiently monitor students' responsiveness to the **word study** and **fluency** interventions they were implementing in the classroom. Val set about designing a progress-monitoring system that allowed her team to efficiently and accurately answer the following questions:

- Which students are responding as expected to interventions? Which students may no longer need these interventions?
- Which students are not responding as expected to interventions? Which students may require a more intensive level of reading support?
- How is our program working overall? Are most students responding as expected to interventions, or do we need to redesign our overall approach to better reach students?

With an understanding of the importance of selecting progress-monitoring assessments that are valid and reliable while also quick and easy to administer, Val decided to leverage curriculum-based measurements (CBMs) as the primary assessment to support progress monitoring for the students participating in the Academic Prep class.

Students' reading progress in Academic Prep is now monitored monthly via ORF CBMs. Val and Gio meet regularly to review student data and evaluate student progress in rate and accuracy. As an example of the decisions that they reach in these meetings, upon noting that students were misreading words that included inflectional endings (e.g., *-er, -ing, -ed*), Val and Gio included explicit instruction and practice targeting inflectional endings in upcoming lesson plans. Consistent progress monitoring allows Val and Gio to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions and adjust their instruction as needed, celebrate success with students, and report on student progress to key stakeholders.

An oral reading fluency curriculum-based measurement (ORF CBM) is a one-minute timed assessment of the rate and accuracy of a student's oral reading fluency. ORF CBMs are administered in a 1:1 setting, during which the student reads aloud for one minute from a leveled passage while an adult listens and scores, noting errors and the number of words the student reads in one minute. The administrator of the assessment calculates both accuracy (the percentage of the total words read that were read correctly) and rate (the total number of words read correctly, typically expressed as "correct words per minute," or CWPM). ORF CBMs are one of the strongest predictors of a student's overall reading performance[9] and are widely used as screening, diagnostic, and progress-monitoring tools. Common commercial publishers of ORF CBMs include **DIBELS**, **Acadience**, and **AIMSweb**. Explore the **repeated reading chapter** for more detailed information on oral reading fluency assessment and intervention.

SETTING PROGRESS-MONITORING GOALS AT NOBLE SCHOOLS



***Noble Schools** has a mission to ensure all students have "school experiences that equip them to complete college and lead choice-filled lives." As they examined their data at the outset of their work with the NIC and faced the reality that less than three percent of their students with IEPs were considered proficient readers at their two focal campuses, they knew redesigning their approach to supporting literacy would be a necessary focus of their improvement work.*

The Noble team understood that to improve student reading outcomes, they would need to create systems to support students in understanding their reading levels, investing in setting personal growth goals, and naming strategies to work toward those goals.

Upon selecting a common universal screening tool at two focal sites piloting reading systems in their network, Noble Schools began administering the Achieve3000 LevelSet assessment three times yearly as a means of regularly collecting information on student reading proficiency and growth via a Lexile score (a number representing both a reader's ability on the Lexile scale as well as the level of text a reader is likely to comprehend). Rowe-Clark Math & Science Academy, one of the two focal sites, initiated the goal-setting process by educating students on the meaning and importance of their Lexile scores. They leveraged a **centrally created slide deck** to provide staff and students with shared language for defining Lexile, connecting Lexile levels to specific college and career paths, and providing guidance on realistic and ambitious Lexile growth goals. With this shared understanding in place, **general education teachers now meet 1:1 with students** after each administration of the LevelSet to review their individual Lexile scores, set a growth goal, and name one or more strategies to support progress toward that goal. Students are provided with a **graphic organizer** to support active engagement in the conferencing process.

Building Motivation and Engagement in Adolescent Readers

Adolescent readers who are not yet reading proficiently often experience lower motivation to read than their peers who don't experience reading difficulty. Explicit strategies for building motivation and engagement are a key feature of adolescent literacy instruction. A primary recommendation for increasing motivation to read among secondary learners is to provide interesting content goals for reading, such as exploring different genres, building reading stamina, or learning about a specific topic of interest via reading.[10]

As a result of the goal-setting conferences, Noble has found that students not only express investment in knowing their Lexile levels but also are able to articulate the connection between their reading levels and future college and career goals. Taking what they have learned from the small-scale pilot at their focal sites, Noble has now standardized universal screening across all campuses in their network so all Noble students engage in universal assessment of Lexile levels two times per year, with an additional mid-year assessment for Noble students with IEPs. Noble is also currently expanding their student conferencing and goal-setting practices to further their impact on student reading growth and self-determination skill development.

USING PROGRESS-MONITORING DATA TO GUIDE INTERVENTION PLANNING AT GREEN DOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS



***Green Dot Public Schools** has worked to design a suite of evidence-based reading interventions to support their students who are not yet reading grade-level text proficiently. For students who are receiving interventions targeting word reading and/or reading fluency skills, intervention teams are collecting ORF CBM data to evaluate students' responses to interventions.*

Green Dot has developed a structured protocol to support collaborative instructional decision-making rooted in student data. This protocol asks teams to:

- individually review student data against Green Dot's decision-making criteria, and
- discuss individual and group-level trends and determine which students are ready to exit intervention, which students will continue in the current interventions, and which students need adaptations or adjustments to their intervention plans to accelerate progress.

Specific decision-making guidance supports these conversations (see ***Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment*** for advice on creating decision-making guidelines).

Half of the students who participated in the reading fluency intervention during the 2022–23 school year increased their oral reading fluency by over 30 words per minute from fall to spring, and in a follow-up conversation using the protocol, a Green Dot intervention team decided to exit these students from an oral reading fluency intervention because they had met the benchmark. Structured processes to support collaborative, data-driven intervention decisions are supporting Green Dot to ensure not only that students are responding to the reading interventions they are participating in, but also that they are exited from those interventions as soon as they no longer need them.

Implementation at a Glance

The information in this section provides a high-level view of what to consider when implementing this practice. **Enabling Conditions** describes the minimum conditions needed for successful implementation, including resources, mindsets, staffing, and recommended time allocation. **Steps to Implement** presents a concise checklist of action items, which are explained in detail in **How to Implement This Practice** below.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Progress-monitoring assessments that are valid and reliable for the population being served
- A platform for collecting data and generating reports (see ***Implementing Routine Data Cycles to Rapidly Address Student Needs***)
- Defined roles and timelines for monitoring the collection of data, data cleaning as necessary, and report generation

CULTURE

- Investment in the use of data to drive instructional planning and programming decisions

HABITS AND ROUTINES

- Collaborative data-based decision-making processes and structures, including:
  - protected time for meetings immediately following the close of each screening assessment window,
  - established data-based decision-making guidelines, and
  - meeting agendas and protocols
- Processes and structures to support goal setting with students

Recommended Materials

- **Resources:**
  - An established progress-monitoring schedule (at least monthly)
  - Student-facing documents or resources to track progress toward goals and document goal-setting conversations

POTENTIAL FINANCIAL COST OF BOTH THE PROGRESS-MONITORING PLATFORM AND TRAINING

Cost will vary by assessment and by the number of assessments purchased. The current cost of some common progress-monitoring systems used in secondary schools include:

- AIMSweb Plus: $8.50/student/year
- Acadience: Test materials are free; Data management is $1.50/student/year

Staff Commitment	• Dedicated staff member(s) (teachers or paraprofessionals) to conduct progress monitoring and lead goal-setting conversations with students • Dedicated staff member(s) (instructional coach, special education leader, lead teacher) to oversee the implementation of progress-monitoring plans, data-based decision-making and documentation, revision of instructional plans, and student conferencing
Recommended Time Allocation	**CENTRAL AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP (INCLUDING TEACHER LEADERS)** • Time to vet and select progress-monitoring tools (or supervise this process if teachers lead it) (1–2 hours) • Time to provide training (or secure external partners for training) on the administration of new progress-monitoring tools and interpretation of the data (1–2 hours) • Time to participate in data-based decision-making meetings (1–3 hours per intervention cycle) **TEACHERS** • Time to administer progress-monitoring assessment – This will depend on (1) the measure chosen and (2) the frequency of progress monitoring. – Weekly administration of oral reading fluency curriculum-based measurements will require approximately five minutes per student, including preparation, administration, and scoring. • Time to facilitate student goal-setting and progress-monitoring conferences – Approximately five minutes per student per conference

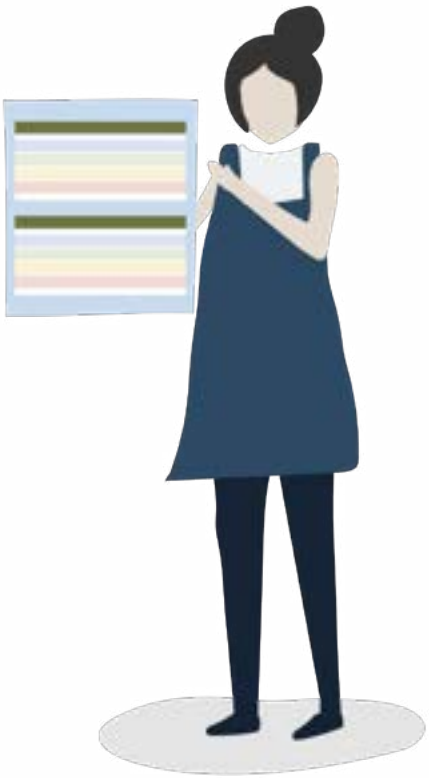
Steps to Implement

BEFORE IMPLEMENTING

- ☐ Select a progress-monitoring tool
- ☐ Train faculty on administering the tool and interpreting the data

IMPLEMENTING GOAL SETTING AND PROGRESS MONITORING

- ☐ Collect baseline data
- ☐ Collaborate with students to set goals
- ☐ Conduct progress monitoring and enter progress-monitoring data
- ☐ Analyze progress-monitoring data, engage in decision-making, and document decisions



How to Implement this Practice

Before Implementing

Step 1: Select a Progress-Monitoring Tool

Choose a progress-monitoring tool that meets the following criteria:

- It is **valid and reliable** (see ***Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment*** for more guidance on assessment validity and reliability).
- It has a sufficient number of **alternative forms** (e.g., different passages that are equally leveled) to allow for regular monitoring of progress.
- It provides **performance benchmarks**.
- It is **efficient** to administer and score.

Step 2: Train Faculty on Administering the Tool and Interpreting the Data

Prepare for progress monitoring by establishing the systems and routines required for implementation, including the data management system where staff will input student scores and monitor student progress, and training staff in their use. Training on progress-monitoring tools can be orchestrated through in-person and online learning options. If using a common progress-monitoring tool such as CBMs, free training is available via several online resources:

- **"How to: Assess Reading Speed with DBM: Oral Reading Fluency Passages"** from Jim Wright and Intervention Central
- **"Reading Curriculum Based Measurement (Oral Reading Fluency)"** from Vanderbilt University
- ***DIBELS 8th Edition Administration and Scoring Guide*** from the University of Oregon

These online resource platforms often include handouts for families and students alongside training videos and tools that can be useful for staff training and support.



Step 3: Collect Baseline Data

Assess students using the selected progress-monitoring tool at the onset of the intervention and record this as the baseline score. When using CBMs for progress monitoring, common practice is to administer three passages and use the *median* score as the baseline score. Subsequent progress monitoring only collects data on one passage.

Baseline data should be gathered in the established data management system for staff to access and review at the individual level, as well as at group levels (e.g., classroom or grade levels) and at subgroup levels (e.g., students with IEPs, students identified as multi-lingual learners).

It is also important to consider how baseline data will be shared with students and families. While conferencing protocols can account for sharing this information with students, schools will also want to consider when and how baseline data from universal and progress-monitoring assessments will be shared with families, and gather key resources that can aid families in understanding the information shared. The **University of Oregon's Resource Page** includes a number of handouts in English and Spanish that can be shared with families for such purposes. Additional guidance for engaging with students and families can be found in the **Further Learning** section below.

DIBELS® 8th Edition Benchmark Goals
Updated: July 2020

Fourth grade			Fifth grade			Sixth grade			Seventh grade			Eighth grade		
B	M	E	B	M	E	B	M	E	B	M	E	B	M	E
Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) – Words Correct														
131+	159+	159+	139+	149+	157+	151+	157+	160+	152+	161+	164+	142+	156+	159+
130	158	158	138	148	156	150	156	159	151	160	163	141	155	158
87	**121**	**125**	**103**	**122**	**137**	**123**	**133**	**141**	**126**	**136**	**141**	**125**	**131**	**135**
86	120	124	102	121	136	122	132	140	125	135	140	124	130	134
62	98	99	81	108	124	99	117	125	101	121	127	110	116	121
61	97	98	80	107	123	98	116	124	100	120	126	109	115	120
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) - Accuracy														
96+	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**	**96+**
95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91	91
90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

DIBELS® 8th Edition Benchmark Goals, updated July 2020

Step 4: Collaborate with Students to Set Goals

More often than not, goals are established by schools for students rather than in collaboration with them. To ensure goals are meaningful and motivating to students, schools need to review student baseline data, establish individual goals for student growth grounded in research, and engage with students in goal-setting activities. Document these goals in a central location, such as a data management system shared across the school, for team reference.

There are two primary evidence-based methods for setting student goals:

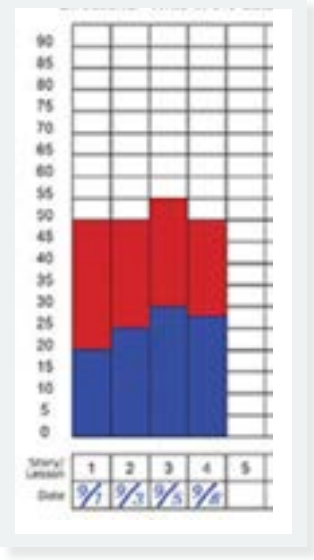
- **Benchmarks:** Progress-monitoring tools include internal benchmarks that can be used for goal setting. For example, the **benchmark rate for oral reading fluency** for 8th grade students at the beginning of the year using the DIBELS 8th Edition is 125 words correct per minute.
- **Rate of Improvement (ROI):** Use an expected rate of improvement to set a goal representing gap-closing growth. For example, if typical 8th grade students increase their reading fluency at a rate of .5 words per week, a goal might be set for a student to increase their fluency at a rate of .75 words per week.

See **Further Learning** below for detailed guidance on setting goals using both methods.

Schools can take a variety of approaches to goal setting with students, including **1:1 conferences**, small group conferences, or classroom goal-setting routines with a focused mini-lesson, like the one **highlighted in the Noble case study** above. School teams may share the baseline score and growth target they have established and are tracking internally. Alternatively, they may share suggested reading growth targets for rate and accuracy and encourage students to establish their own growth goals, as well as goals around reading confidence, habits, or personal accomplishments. It is highly encouraged that students and staff share these goals with families to build buy-in and engage in school-home partnership to support student growth.

For students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), align progress-monitoring goals with reading goals in the IEP to streamline data collection and reporting.

Step 5: Conduct Progress Monitoring and Enter Progress-Monitoring Data



MTSS frameworks recommend progress monitoring at least monthly for students receiving Tier 2 support and weekly for students receiving intensive, individualized interventions at Tier 3. While it may not always be possible to progress-monitor at this frequency, establishing a progress-monitoring schedule and calendar can ensure progress monitoring happens regularly.

Progress-monitoring data should be graphed to facilitate communication of progress and data-based decision-making. Some assessment platforms (e.g., **Acadience**, **AIMSweb**) have internal platforms that graph student progress when data is entered. Free online tools such as **EasyCBM** or the **National Center on Intensive Intervention's Student Progress Monitoring Tool** can also facilitate the graphing of progress-monitoring data.

Building Student Agency Through Progress Monitoring

Educators can use these activities regularly to involve and engage students in the progress-monitoring process:

- Teaching students how to calculate their scores
- Asking students to complete progress-monitoring graphs
- Co-creating progress-monitoring goals with students
- Explicitly naming behaviors contributing to progress and gradually encouraging students to reflect on similar behaviors

A specific six-step protocol for engaging students in progress monitoring suggests that schools:[11]

1. Provide explicit performance feedback (actual numbers).
2. Share true, specific, affirmative feedback (anecdotal feedback on growth/performance).
3. Work with every student to graph data.
4. Collaboratively analyze the data with the student.
5. Engage the student in a reflective discussion about their behaviors/actions that have contributed to performance.
6. Work together to reflect on the current goal, adjust as needed, and discuss an action plan.

The **Further Learning** section includes the full six-step protocol, including a sample script for engaging students in progress monitoring. Adaptations can be made by school teams to involve families during or after these collaborative steps to bolster student agency and motivation.

Step 6: Analyze Progress-Monitoring Data, Engage in Decision-Making, and Document Decisions

Review student data at the end of each intervention cycle (approximately every six to eight weeks). It is recommended that six to eight data points be collected before engaging in decision-making.[12] Identify next steps for individual students based on progress-monitoring data, which might include the following:

- The student has made accelerated progress, has met their growth goal and the benchmark target, and **no longer needs this intervention.**
- The student is making good progress but has not yet met the benchmark target and should **continue in the intervention as it is currently implemented.**
- The student is making some progress but it could be more accelerated. They will **continue in the current intervention with adaptations.**
- The student is not making progress and **needs a more intensive level of intervention.**

Team agendas and **protocols** can facilitate decision-making and support documentation of decisions. Teams should document the intervention next steps in a central location and plan for how decisions will be shared with students, families, and other staff members.

Diagnostic Data Informs Intensification of Interventions

One outcome of consistent progress monitoring and data-based decision-making can be the identification of students for whom interventions are not working. Often, teams will need to collect additional diagnostic data to guide the intensification of intervention for these students. **The National Center on Intensive Intervention** provides technical assistance on the implementation of **data-based individualization**, a framework for leveraging data and evidence-based interventions to design intensive intervention plans.



Ánimo Watts teacher Mr. Soria meets 1:1 with a high school student to set goals for reading growth.

Summary

Consistent progress monitoring using valid and reliable measures is an essential component of an effective reading intervention program for secondary students. When educators regularly review progress-monitoring data, it supports a decision-making process that not only flags students for more intensive support if progress is insufficient, but also ensures students don't continue in intervention after they no longer need it. While the goal of special education is to facilitate full participation in the general education program for students with disabilities, most students found eligible for special education services, and students experiencing poverty in particular, continue in specialized programs for the duration of their educational careers. Consistent progress monitoring and data-driven planning can increase participation in general education programming and ensure that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment.



FURTHER LEARNING

Assessment Practices Within a Multi-Tiered System of Support
CEEDAR CENTER

Six-Step Instructional Routine for Engaging Students in Progress Monitoring
PROGRESS CENTER

Progress Monitoring
CENTER ON MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

Academic Progress Monitoring Tools Chart
NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

Strategies for Setting High-Quality Academic Individualized Education Program Goals
NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

How To Speak With Families and Communities About MTSS
BRANCHING MINDS

STRENGTHENING TIMELY INTERVENTIONS THROUGH GOAL SETTING AND PROGRESS MONITORING

Appendix

How to Measure

When implementing goal setting and progress monitoring, measuring how useful, usable, and utilized the practice is by team members and across the school system can accelerate learning to improve outcomes for students. At minimum, these measures are most essential:

PRIMARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Baseline data	Do all students have an established baseline score and progress-monitoring goal based on established cut points?	Percent of students who have a baseline score and goal established and documented in the data management system	100% of students have both a baseline score and goal documented.	A plan for make-up assessment is critical to ensure all students have baseline data available.
Process	Progress-monitoring data	Is progress monitoring happening with the expected frequency? Yes / No	Percent of students who have consistent progress-monitoring scores documented in the data management system	100% of students have consistent progress-monitoring scores.	
Outcome	Progress-monitoring data	Are students meeting their progress-monitoring goals? Yes / No	Percent of students on track to meet or exceed their progress-monitoring goals	100% of students are on track to meet or exceed progress-monitoring goals.	Curriculum-based measurements lend themselves to this type of analysis because the results can easily be graphed.

Additional measures can guide a team to know whether the reading fluency protocol is leading to the desired improvements for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Data-based decision-making meetings outcome tracker	Do students who are off track to meet progress-monitoring goals have a plan for an intervention change? Yes / No	Percent of students identified as "off track" who have an intervention change documented	100% of students who are "off track" have an intervention change documented.	
Process	Data-based decision-making meetings outcome tracker	Do students who meet progress-monitoring goals have a plan for reduced intervention? Yes / No	Percent of students who meet progress-monitoring goals have a plan for reduced intervention	100% of students who meet progress-monitoring goals have a plan for reduced intervention.	In some cases, this may mean a student exits from intervention altogether (e.g., if the student is now reading at grade level), and in other cases, it may mean that the student continues to receive reading intervention but a less intensive support.
Perception	Student perception survey	Do students believe they are making progress on their reading goal(s)? Yes / Somewhat / No	Percent of students who believe they are making progress on their reading goal.	100% of students report they are making progress in their reading.	
Process	Teacher perception data	Do teachers feel they have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement progress monitoring?	After training and coaching, teachers report confidence in their ability to implement progress monitoring as designed.	100% of teachers report feeling confident in implementing progress monitoring as designed.	

Notes

1 American Institutes for Research, “Progress Monitoring”

2 Austin and Filderman, “Selecting and Designing Measurements”

3 Woods, “Examining Longitudinal Patterns”

4 Fuchs and Fuchs, *What is Scientifically-Based Research*

5 Deno, “Data-Based Decision-Making”

6 Ming, “Five Oral Reading Fluency Strategies”

7 Furey and Loftus-Rattan, “Actively Involving Students”

8 Harris, Graham, and Mason, “Self-Regulated Strategy Development”; Montague, “Self-Regulation Strategies”

9 Ardoin et al., “Examining the Incremental Benefits”

10 Guthrie and Humenick, “Motivating Students to Read”

11 Ardoin et al., “A Systematic Review and Summarization”

12 American Institutes for Research, Six-Step Protocol

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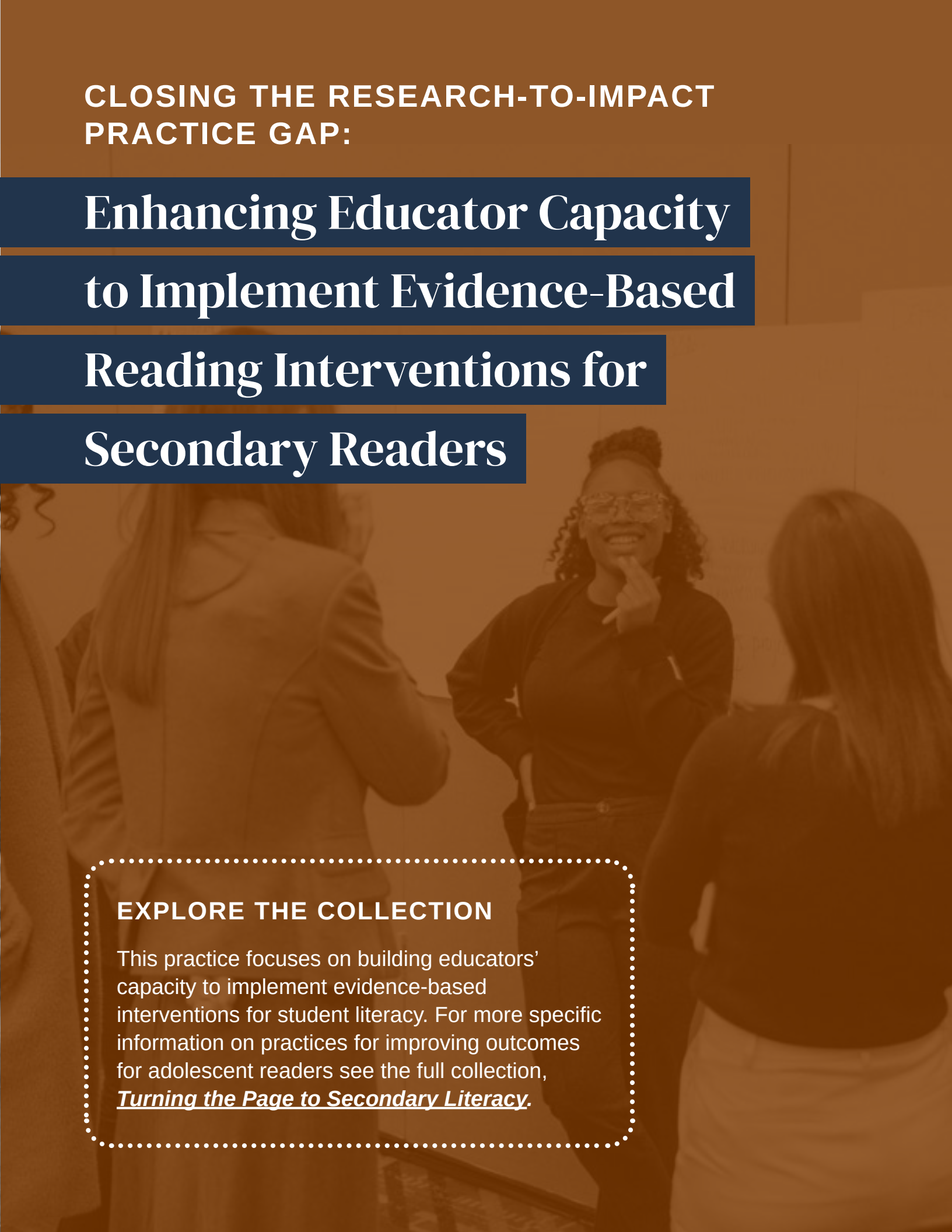
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CLOSING THE RESEARCH-TO-IMPACT PRACTICE GAP:

Enhancing Educator Capacity to Implement Evidence-Based Reading Interventions for Secondary Readers



EXPLORE THE COLLECTION

This practice focuses on building educators' capacity to implement evidence-based interventions for student literacy. For more specific information on practices for improving outcomes for adolescent readers see the full collection, ***Turning the Page to Secondary Literacy***.

Snapshot

WHAT IS THE PRACTICE?

Practitioner-focused professional development and **aligned coaching** that builds the knowledge and skills of secondary teachers to effectively provide evidence-based interventions (EBIs) aligned with the science of reading to adolescents with disabilities.

Key Terms for this Practice

What do we mean by *practitioner-focused professional development?*

For the purposes of this practice, practitioner-focused professional development refers to professional development sessions that provide educators with structured opportunities to:

1. **build knowledge** of evidence-based instructional practices aligned with the science of adolescent reading,
2. **apply learnings** through in-session reflection and practice,
3. **engage in collaborative learning** to build collective knowledge and establish mutual accountability, and
4. **adapt practices** for the specific needs of the populations served by the participants with a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities.

What do we mean by *aligned coaching?*

For the purposes of this practice, coaching refers to individualized teacher coaching that is:

1. **content-specific,** with the intended outcome of increasing teachers' capacity to implement evidence-based practices specific to improving reading outcomes for adolescent readers with disabilities, and
2. **job-embedded,** meaning that coaching experiences occur during the teachers' contracted school days and are directly aligned with their instructional responsibilities.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

National assessments of reading consistently indicate that an alarmingly high number of secondary students lack the foundational reading skills necessary to meet grade-level reading benchmarks.[1] These low levels of reading proficiency are particularly pronounced for Black and Latinx students as well as students with disabilities. Low reading levels present significant barriers to students accessing, making meaning from, and finding joy in rich, complex, grade-level texts and ultimately limit students' options for education and employment.

Snapshot

CONTINUED

To improve literacy outcomes in students — particularly Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty — educators must be well-versed in how to teach reading. Elementary teachers typically receive training in teaching reading as part of their credentialing, but secondary teachers typically do not. Though a comprehensive body of research points to practices that are most likely to close the gaps for adolescent readers with disabilities, these practices are not consistently implemented in secondary schools and classrooms, and secondary teachers consistently report that they do not feel equipped to teach foundational reading skills.

Encouragingly, research shows that sustained, intensive professional development that focuses on specific academic content and is connected to practice is associated with student achievement gains.[2] Providing professional development that meets these evidence-based criteria has significant potential to improve reading outcomes for students.

WHY IT WORKS

Practitioner-focused professional development and aligned coaching bridge theory and practice, supporting the consistent implementation of evidence-based interventions in classrooms and schools. The professional development practices described in this case study help secondary educators understand and apply the science of reading, while equipping them with the tools and coaching to teach reading skills as part of their core instruction.

The guidance contained in these stories shows how schools can build the capacity of instructional coaches and district staff to craft effective and efficient professional development with the goal of consistent implementation of evidence-based interventions aligned with the science of reading. These best practices emerged from Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) on evidence-based literacy interventions as part of the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC). Together with corresponding recommended resources, the best practices provide a blueprint for schools across the country to build educator capacity for teaching reading.



The Challenge

How can schools support secondary literacy teachers to implement evidenced-based reading interventions?

The NIC's literacy-focused PLC was initially established to build the capacity of systems-level leaders to design and deliver literacy-focused professional development within their own networks. After the first year, the Marshall team found that the content was not consistently transferring to classroom-based educators. Further, participants consistently reported a lack of teacher knowledge related to adolescent literacy instruction as a key barrier within their improvement efforts. This is aligned with research on the topic, which finds that while the science of reading provides a great deal of guidance regarding how individuals learn to read, why some struggle, and the most effective instructional approaches for teaching reading, evidence-based practices are not consistently implemented in classrooms and schools,[3] and this disconnect between theory and practice disproportionately impacts students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students learning English.[4]

What is *the science of reading*?

The Reading League proposes this as a common definition for the term:

"The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing.

This research has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and it is derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages. The science of reading has culminated in a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some have difficulty; and how we can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties."[6]

One contributor to this research-to-practice gap may be a lack of knowledge of evidence-based practices on the part of secondary teachers. This group consistently reports that both teacher preparation programs and job-embedded professional development opportunities fail to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to address reading deficits for adolescent readers.[5] To build confidence in their capacity to implement evidence-based reading interventions and to ultimately improve reading outcomes, secondary teachers need access to ongoing professional learning opportunities that focus on student learning, are content-specific, and are connected to instructional practice.

Along with the Marshall team, Green Dot Public Schools, Noble Schools, and Uncommon Schools, the three participating partner schools within the NIC's literacy PLC, needed to find a way to close these gaps and ensure that their adolescent students were receiving the evidenced-based reading interventions that they needed.

The Practice

Year-Long Practitioner-Focused Professional Learning Community to Build Educator Capacity

The Marshall team, in partnership with educators from the three networks and NIC content expert Genevieve Thomas, decided to shift the focus of the PLC to be practitioner-focused and to include classroom-based educators and the network-level staff from the participating networks. The intention behind this shift was to build capacity and alignment across levels within the systems. The PLC was redesigned to increase educator and staff capacity to implement evidence-based instructional practices for adolescent readers with disabilities. A subset of PLC members participated in regular, job-embedded coaching with a literacy content expert with the goal of increasing the transfer of research to practice within their classrooms.

Because the intended outcome of the PLC was to bridge the research-to-practice gap by increasing participants' capacity to implement evidence-based reading practices, the PLC used a review of the literature on effective reading practices for adolescent readers with disabilities — "Evidence-Based Strategies for Reading Instruction of Older Students with Learning Disabilities," by Roberts et al.[7] — as the foundation for their scope and sequence of topics. This research summary outlines five instructional priorities for adolescent readers with disabilities: word study, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation. The **scope and sequence** of the PLC was designed to build capacity within each of these instructional areas.

Intended Outcomes

The goals of the PLC were to support participants to:

- **connect** with other educators from across the NIC to **build community, increase capacity** to implement evidence-based instructional practices, **collaboratively seek solutions** to common barriers, and share and **celebrate successes**;
- describe the **evidence-based strategies** for reading instruction of adolescents with disabilities, including **summarizing the essential research**; and
- **modify instructional approaches** and materials to more effectively include evidence-based practices for supporting reading development in secondary readers.

Professional Learning Community Structure

The PLC was designed and facilitated by Genevieve Thomas, literacy content expert, in partnership with members of the Marshall Improvement team. PLC participants included teachers as well as school- and network-level leaders from the participating networks. The PLC met monthly for 90-minute virtual sessions, which included one hour of knowledge building and application around a specific element of reading, followed by 30 minutes of opt-in small-group or one-on-one coaching with the content area expert.

PLC sessions were carefully designed to:

- summarize the most relevant research findings related to the specific literacy area of focus;
- provide practical applications that participants could immediately implement into their planning and instruction; and
- provide these experiences within a short time frame in order to work within the schedules of busy educators.

Instructional Resources

One way in which the practitioner-focused PLC supported participants to close the research-to-practice gap was through the creation of streamlined instructional resources that clearly summarized the research behind an evidence-based practice and provided concrete recommendations and resources to support implementation. Through facilitating the PLC sessions and collaborating with the Marshall team, Genevieve learned about participants' instructional priorities and needs and how they aligned with their larger organizational goals for improvement. In response, Genevieve was able to create practical, research-informed resources to support participant instructional planning and execution. Examples include:

- **a protocol for repeated oral reading** (an evidence-based practice for developing reading fluency),
- **an instructional progression for teaching syllabication strategies** (an evidence-based practice for developing word study skills), and
- **planning considerations for facilitating independent daily reading and student conferencing.**

Digging into Evidence-Based Practices for Vocabulary Development

One of the instructional priorities for adolescents with reading disabilities is vocabulary, and the PLC covered evidence-based practices for developing vocabulary across two sessions. In the first session, participants learned key findings from the research on vocabulary development and instruction; for example:

- Vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with reading comprehension.
- Effective vocabulary instruction includes explicit instruction in specific word meanings, word-learning strategies, and building word consciousness.

After learning key research findings, participants learned about an evidence-based instructional sequence for teaching vocabulary. They first learned the steps of the sequence, then explored each step via a think-aloud example facilitated by Genevieve. Finally, they had the opportunity to practice designing an instructional sequence following the model and using vocabulary words from the texts they were using in their ELA and reading classes. After sharing their examples and hearing feedback from a partner, the session closed with participants documenting their key learnings and committing to next steps.

Based on the session survey, 100% of participants felt that the session increased their capacity to design and deliver evidence-based practices for increasing student vocabulary.

Coaching Structure

PLC members also had access to individual and small group coaching between PLC meetings. The intended outcome of coaching experiences was to provide individual support to teachers as they worked to apply the learnings from the content-focused PLC sessions to their local contexts and support them in accelerating their improvement efforts for students with disabilities. Coaching activities included:

- co-creating instructional materials;
- analyzing student data in order to draw conclusions and inform planning;
- modeling, practicing, and receiving feedback on specific instructional routines; and
- designing instructional protocols.

Putting Word Study in Action at Uncommon Schools

In an early coaching conversation, Val and Genevieve worked together to co-analyze the results of an oral reading fluency curriculum-based measurement that Val had administered to the students in her reading intervention class. Val and Genevieve identified that one root cause of low fluency was difficulty reading multisyllabic words.

As a participant in the literacy PLC, Val learned about effective **word study instructional practices**, including teaching syllabication and building morphological awareness. In her coaching conversations with Genevieve, she developed a hypothesis that explicitly teaching these strategies would improve students' skill in reading multisyllabic words, thus improving their reading fluency and ultimately reading comprehension. Val and Genevieve collaborated over the course of several coaching conversations to plan instructional strategies, debrief their effectiveness, and make modifications to instructional plans based on learnings. After several coaching cycles, the instructional protocol for this reading intervention class now consistently includes **explicit word study** instruction using evidence-based practices.



Val and Genevieve co-teach a word study lesson during a NIC site visit with Marshall Street.

Implementation at a Glance

Enabling Conditions provides a high-level view of what to consider when implementing this practice, describing the minimum conditions needed for successful implementation, including resources, mindsets, staffing, and recommended time allocation.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites	School and district commitment to literacy instruction for secondary readers, including: • Dedicated and protected time for educators to participate in professional learning experiences • Specified time in the school day for differentiated reading instruction that enables application of professional learning content (e.g., pull-out reading intervention courses or co-taught courses where differentiated reading instruction regularly occurs) • Strategic alignment of the professional learning approach with broader school priorities
Recommended Materials	• Professional learning scope and sequence for session topics • A central location for participant materials and resources to be shared (e.g., shared folder, website, or other digital platform) • Coaching protocol or agenda
Staff Commitment	• A **content expert** with deep knowledge of (1) the science of reading and its application to adolescents with disabilities and (2) principles of adult learning and effective professional development design. This could be an internal team member or an external partner. – The cost of contracting external expertise varies significantly by provider but is typically between $150 and $400 per hour for virtual professional development and $1,500 to $4,000 per day for in-person professional development. • One or more individuals to provide aligned and individualized **coaching** to teachers, e.g., the content area expert designing professional learning opportunities or an instructional coach working closely with the content area expert. • **Staff Coverage:** Professional learning opportunities, including coaching, may require additional resource allocation, such as substitute teachers, if provided within the contracted day, or compensation, if provided outside of contract hours.
Recommended Time Allocation	**Teachers:** • Release time to attend PLC meetings monthly (typically 60–90 minutes monthly) • Coaching sessions between teacher and coach (30–45 minutes at least 1–2 times monthly) • Time to gather student data and revise instructional plans to integrate learning from PLC (time will vary based on skill)

Recommended Time Allocation (continued)

Content Area Expert and Coaches:

- At the start of the PLC, planning time of a half-day or more to design professional learning experiences and/or aligned coaching in collaboration with key stakeholders
- Monthly time to facilitate PLC and complete follow-up steps (minimum 2–3 hours monthly)
- Time to attend and follow up on coaching sessions (30–60 minutes at least 1–2 times per month per session)

School and Central Leadership:

- Strategic planning time with core team members to establish the enabling conditions, identify a content area expert to lead the design of the professional learning activities, determine who will facilitate coaching experiences, and align the professional learning approach with broader school priorities
- Time to plan, participate in, and monitor the ongoing effectiveness of professional learning activities

How to Implement this Practice

Step 1: Plan Professional Development Opportunities that Build Teacher Capacity to Implement Evidence-Based Reading Practices for Adolescents with Disabilities

The process for planning the professional development series is nonlinear. The order of the steps that follow will vary based on each school or network's local context, and some steps may not be needed.

Identify a content area expert.

Identify a content area expert who will lead the design of the professional development series and the individual sessions. This should be an individual with expertise in the science of reading as it relates to adolescents with disabilities, as well as experience designing professional development for adult learners. If no internal team members have this expertise, source, vet, and contract with an external consultant.

Articulate a purpose for the professional development series.

Articulate a purpose that clearly connects to improved reading outcomes and increased access to grade-level texts and content for adolescents with disabilities. Explicitly grounding the purpose of the professional learning experiences within the school's or network's priorities for students with disabilities, with a focus on increased access to grade-level text and content, ensures that equitable access and outcomes for all learners remain the north star.

The following questions may serve as helpful catalysts for articulating the purpose of the professional development series:

- What are the current, related school and/or network priorities, and how might this professional development serve to further progress toward these priorities?
- What does the data currently tell us about reading achievement and progress for students with disabilities? How does this compare to the general student population?
- What are teachers saying about their readiness to implement evidence-based reading practices for students with disabilities? What do performance evaluations and/or instructional observations suggest about the knowledge and skills teachers need to develop?
- How will building teacher knowledge and skill around evidence-based reading practices for students with disabilities move the school or network closer to established goals and priorities?

Identify participants.

Start by determining the scale of the implementation. If practitioner-focused professional development related to evidence-based reading practices for students with disabilities is new for the school or network, consider testing the structure with a smaller group of users before spreading and scaling. When starting small, select participants who can commit to participating in the experiences, express excitement about the content, will work to implement the practices in their planning and instruction, and are willing to transparently share their learnings and feedback in the interest of improving the structure before scaling. To create the strongest possible experience, leaders can participate alongside practitioners. This adds both support and accountability.

At scale, participants in the professional learning experiences should include not only the educators who are responsible for planning and implementing reading instruction for adolescents with disabilities, but also those who coach them. If students with disabilities are educated primarily in general education settings, both special and general educators should be equally involved. Determine participation expectations for educators, including who is required to participate and who can voluntarily participate.

Design the scope and sequence.

When designing the professional development scope and sequence of topics, consider both the intended outcomes of the series and the current, relevant research related to those outcomes. For example, if an intended outcome is for participants to implement valid assessments and analyze the results to identify specific student reading needs, review the literature on this topic, and extract key findings to anchor the scope and sequence of topics. See **Further Learning** for suggested articles summarizing the most important science of reading concepts for secondary educators of students with disabilities.

Generate a list of learning needs for the target participants in relation to these outcomes. For example, if the participants have a strong foundation in best practices for vocabulary instruction following a previous school-wide focus on vocabulary, but little depth of knowledge related to word study and fluency instruction, consider a focus on word study and fluency that explicitly builds on participants' knowledge about effective vocabulary instruction.

Determine the number of professional development sessions, aiming to convene at least monthly, and map out the topic for each session.

Create a plan for measuring effectiveness.

Based on the intended outcomes for the professional development series, consider the metrics you will use to measure impact and effectiveness. Consider how you might measure the following:

- Participant perceptions of the professional learning experiences
- Participant learnings (i.e., what participants know and can do as a result of the professional learning experiences)
- Application to practice (the extent to which participants apply learnings in their planning and instruction)
- Student outcomes on school or district measures of reading performance and growth

See the **How to Measure** section of this chapter for more guidance on metrics and measurement.

Define the team of individuals that will meet to review the metrics of success as well as the cadence for those meetings. This might include the content developer, professional learning facilitator, coaches, school leaders, and network or district leadership. Convening on a quarterly basis will allow the team to modify the plan in response to participant feedback and needs.

Step 2: Design the Individual Professional Learning Sessions

Determine the intended outcomes for each session.

Begin planning with the end in mind, focusing on the series-level outcomes for professional learning. Consider, “As a result of participating in this professional development series, what do we want educators to know, believe, and be able to do?” For example:

- Participants will know and be able to define the literacy instructional focus areas for adolescents with disabilities.
- Participants will believe that explicit and systematic instruction aligned with identified student needs will result in improved reading outcomes.
- Participants will increase their sense of self-efficacy related to designing and implementing evidence-based reading instruction for adolescents with disabilities.

Plan the individual sessions.

With these outcomes in mind, generate activities that will support participants in achieving the outcomes. Activities should include facilitated practice and application of learning to participants’ individual contexts, as well as structured opportunities to connect and collaborate with others. Plan ways for participants to actively capture learnings and make meaning across the session.



Finally, create the accompanying resources and materials. These might include the following:

- A **facilitator's agenda** with a pacing guide and detailed talking points for each activity
- A **participant guide** that includes the intended outcomes, an agenda, and a place for capturing notes, learnings, and next steps
- A collection of additional related resources participants can explore for further learning
- A **slide deck**

Reimagining Reading Comprehension Instruction

One session of the practitioner-focused literacy PLC implemented within the NIC was focused on evidence-based practices for supporting reading comprehension instruction. The purpose of the session was articulated as "reimagining reading comprehension instruction as an opportunity to explicitly develop the specific subskills that will support secondary students, particularly secondary students with reading and language disabilities, in accessing and making meaning from complex, grade-level texts in order to ensure equitable access to core content for our target population."

After clarifying the purpose of the session, Genevieve designed activities to support participants in achieving this outcome. These included:

- a reflection activity in which participants shared in partners their current understandings of reading comprehension;
- a summary of the most relevant and current research related to reading comprehension instruction for adolescents with disabilities, followed by an opportunity for participants to process and capture learnings;
- breakout conversations where participants could choose one aspect of reading comprehension instruction to dig into more deeply with peers; and
- time for participants to consider applications to their current instructional planning practices and to commit to action-oriented next steps.

Step 3: Deliver the Professional Development Sessions

Facilitate professional development sessions.

It is important that sessions are led by strong facilitators who possess cultural humility and an awareness of cultural and identity-sustaining pedagogy. This is particularly important for our target population. Effective facilitators acknowledge the ways in which dynamics of race, class, and ability impact reading achievement for the target population while simultaneously communicating high expectations for both students and educators.[8]

Use feedback to assess and improve.

Gather feedback after each session, and use it to assess impact and inform the design of subsequent sessions. While articulating a scope and sequence for the professional development series will aid in planning individual sessions, it is also important to view the scope and sequence as a flexible roadmap

that will be adapted based on participant needs and feedback. Collecting feedback at the end of each professional learning experience helps to know both the extent to which session objectives were met and what participants may need for future sessions and coaching experiences. Feedback can be gathered using a variety of methods, including surveys, pre- and post-assessments, or frameworks such as "3-2-1," in which participants share three key learnings from the experience, two immediate, action-oriented next steps, and one lingering question or idea they intend to explore further.

Adjust the scope and sequence as needed.

A team should regularly revisit and revise as necessary the professional development scope and sequence. The team should review feedback, collaboratively synthesize trends, identify pressing participant needs, and brainstorm responses. After feedback has been reviewed and analyzed, plan to communicate back to participants what was learned from their feedback and how the professional learning approach is being modified to address their needs.

Step 4: Provide Content Area Coaching Between Professional Development Sessions

Plan for coaching.

Determine who will lead the coaching experiences between professional development sessions. This might be the individual that designed and facilitated the professional development, or it could be another team member. First and foremost, the coach should have a strong foundation in teacher coaching practices. The coach should also be well-versed in evidence-based reading practices for adolescents with disabilities, which implies that they should be attending sessions alongside the teachers they coach.

Align the coaching approach with any relevant school or network coaching models or processes. For example, if the district has a specific protocol that is followed in other instructional coaching experiences, apply that same framework for these literacy-focused coaching sessions.

Determine the frequency of coaching sessions, ideally biweekly, but with at least one coaching session occurring between each professional learning session. Schedule coaching sessions with individual teachers early in the process of planning professional learning to support consistency and accountability, but practice flexibility and allow for adjustments to the schedule as needed.

Facilitate coaching experiences.

Coaches should establish a student-centered outcome for each coaching touchpoint in collaboration with the teacher, and outcomes should clearly align with the reading instructional knowledge and skills developed in the professional development sessions. Coaching experiences should include active practice of instructional planning and/or literacy practices, along with feedback whenever possible. Both the coach and the teacher are responsible for documenting key decisions and next steps, and for following through on their respective next steps between coaching touchpoints.

Practice Snapshot

SPREADING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AT NOBLE SCHOOLS

Several special education teachers at Noble Schools have been implementing a structured protocol for developing reading fluency since the 2021–22 school year. After seeing consistent implementation of this practice result in improved reading fluency for students, the special education leadership team decided to provide a professional learning experience to other educators within the network in an effort to spread the promising practice.

The team first set out to identify content area experts to design and deliver the professional development session. They solicited an internal co-teaching team, special education teacher Megan Murphy and general education World History teacher Derek DeHaan, who had been successfully implementing a reading fluency protocol in their co-taught World History class for several months, to lead the work.

Megan and Derek designed a professional development session and key training materials in alignment with the recommended practices described within this chapter. First, they explicitly shared the "why" by summarizing important research that clearly establishes the role of reading fluency in the ability to make meaning from text. They thoughtfully connected the specific topic of fluency to their overall network goals, sharing that "Literacy is the key to healthy, choice-filled lives for our students."

Within the session, Megan and Derek clearly communicated the evidence-based practices for developing reading fluency by sharing a specific instructional protocol, showing a video of their class engaged in the protocol, and reviewing the resources they developed to support implementation of the practice. They built participant buy-in by sharing data that clearly suggested an improvement in student reading outcomes as a result of participating in the reading fluency protocol, as well as testimonials from students. The session concluded with opportunities for participants to choose from several optional activities designed to support them in applying learning to their own instructional contexts.

Megan and Derek facilitated the session twice during Noble professional development days, in which teachers could choose sessions aligned with their instructional priorities. Across the two offerings over 50 Noble teachers opted to attend. Feedback collected following the session indicated that a significant number of attendees planned to incorporate reading fluency practices into their instructional planning after attending the session.

See ***Repeated Reading: Building Oral Reading Fluency in Secondary Readers*** for comprehensive guidance on how to implement instruction designed to improve students' oral reading fluency.

The Impact

Empowering Educators to Put Knowledge in Action

Upon conclusion of the year-long practitioner-focused PLC, 100% of participants reported that the PLC:

- enhanced their knowledge related to adolescent literacy,
- provided them with practical tools and resources that were applicable to their work, and
- was instrumental in addressing challenges faced within their roles and local contexts.

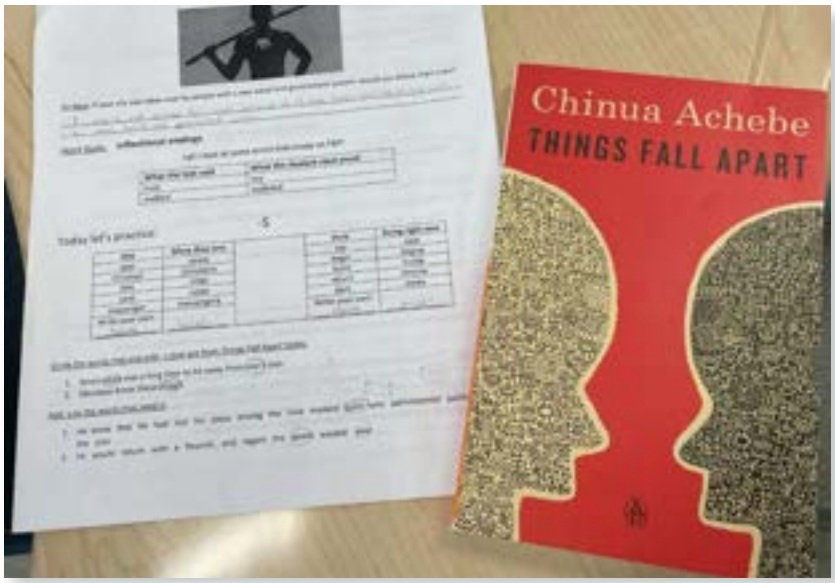
Feedback from participants collected over the course of the PLC suggests that structured professional development sessions and aligned coaching were successful in achieving the intended outcomes and enhancing NIC members' continuous improvement efforts. The shift to a practitioner focus for the 2022–23 school year more effectively met the needs of both systems-level and classroom-level participants. For example, Glynis Shulters, a member of the Green Dot improvement team working at the network level, reflected on the ways in which participating in the PLC supported her team's efforts to enact both tiered literacy assessments and evidence-based practices for supporting reading fluency: "The Literacy PLC has helped me deepen my knowledge base of the science of reading, which has helped me be able to support our site team at Watts to create a multiple gating approach and structures for fluency intervention to begin." Val Dutta, the literacy innovation specialist and teacher of reading intervention classes within the Uncommon network, reported, "I had not taught word study to high school students before, and this PLC has given me materials that I can directly use with teachers and students. The students are very engaged in this sequence of materials and building real skill, thanks to this PLC."

The applied learning achieved through the PLC also increased educators' capacity to implement a variety of evidence-based instructional practices for adolescent readers with disabilities across NIC partners:

- At **Green Dot California**, explicit professional development has been designed to build the knowledge and skill sets of educators to implement **oral reading fluency interventions** as they spread and scale efforts. This includes an initial team training with application activities, guidance documents grounded in the research and practical knowledge from the PLC members, and a gradual release coaching model. Additionally, PLC participation inspired conversations about research on motivation for struggling readers, which led one school to implement an incentive program that increased software engagement and Lexile growth.
- At **Uncommon Schools**, Val Dutta continues to apply the knowledge acquired from the PLC in Academic Prep and other reading intervention spaces, focusing on building reading skills within the context of grade-level instruction. Uncommon has spread their instructional framework and literacy coaching practice to additional schools, with the intent to scale it further in the upcoming school year.
- At **Noble Schools**, PLC members are integrating the research and practice they gathered within the PLC to construct and adopt district-wide professional development and **related resources** for educators on building reading skills. They have trained classroom teachers and support staff in the science of reading and the implementation of a structured repeated-reading protocol to apply evidence-based interventions in core classes. The protocol helped **students build reading fluency** while learning course content.

Experiences like these have the potential to increase teacher knowledge, skill, and sense of self-efficacy, and to build shared language and collaborative partnerships across systems.

As teachers at participating schools become more skilled at implementing these practices, reading progress will be accelerated and students with disabilities will be more likely to be equitably engaged in grade-level content and instruction and more likely to experience success in school and beyond.



Uncommon student work highlights how evidence-based reading interventions are designed to align with grade level instruction.

FURTHER LEARNING

Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Practice Brief
CENTER ON INSTRUCTION

Reading Next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy
ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION

Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION EVALUATION AND REGIONAL ASSISTANCE

Evidence-Based Strategies for Older Students with Reading Disabilities
GREG ROBERTS, JOSEPH K. TORGESEN, ALISON BOARDMAN, AND NANCY SCAMMACCA

*The **Marshall Street Networked Improvement Community (NIC)** is a three-year intentional community of 10 public charter school networks nationwide aiming to make dramatic gains for Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. Collectively, the 10 networks identified over 20 best practices that improve learning outcomes and school culture for students positioned furthest from opportunity. Three of the 10 schools participated in the professional learning community (PLC) described in this case study.*

Appendix

How to Measure

When implementing a practitioner-focused PLC structure, measuring how useful, usable, and utilized the practice is by team members and across the school system can accelerate learning to improve outcomes for students. At minimum, these measures are most essential:

PRIMARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Outcome	Reading assessments	Are the students of teachers who participate in professional learning growing as readers?	Student growth on internal reading/ ELA assessments	Increased student achievement compared to (1) prior to implementation and/or (2) students of teachers who do not participate in professional learning	Leverage the reading assessments already in place within the school or network to evaluate impact on student outcomes.
Outcome	Informal assessments before, during, and after professional development sessions	What do teachers know as a result of this professional learning experience? What are they now able to do?	Percentage of teachers who demonstrate increased knowledge related to key learning targets	Increasing the percentage of teachers able to demonstrate mastery of key learning targets, until reaching 100%	Informal assessments of key learnings can easily be included in feedback surveys.
Outcome	Teacher perception data	Do teachers report that the professional learning experiences meet their stated objectives?	Percentage of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing that professional learning experiences are resulting in increased efficacy in implementing evidence-based reading instruction	Teacher sense of self-efficacy related to implementation of evidence-based literacy practices increases over the course of the professional learning experiences.	Align teacher perception surveys with the specific objectives for professional learning experiences to most directly measure increases in sense of self-efficacy.

Additional measures can guide a team to know whether practitioner-focused professional learning opportunities are leading to the desired improvements for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Professional development attendance Coaching touchpoints	Do teachers value the development provided via the professional development series and coaching?	Percentage of teachers participating in professional development sessions/ coaching opportunities	Aim for 100% attendance for each session.	Track the percentage of target participants who join each professional development session and who participate in scheduled coaching experiences.

Notes

1 US Department of Education, *National Assessment of Education Progress*

2 Darling-Hammond et al., "State of the Profession"; Basma and Savage, "Teacher Professional Development"

3 Castles et al., "Ending the Reading Wars"

4 Seidenberg, *Language at the Speed of Sight*

5 Ness, "Reading Comprehension Strategies"

6 The Reading League, *Science of Reading*

7 Roberts et al., "Evidence-Based Strategies"

8 Terry, "Delivering on the Promise"

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Marshall Street

How-To:
Assessment of Adolescent Readers

TURNING THE PAGE TO SECONDARY LITERACY

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

How-To: Assessment of Adolescent Readers

Guidance Document for School and Network Leadership

Introduction **8.3**

Universal Screening **8.3**

Diagnostic Assessment **8.4**

Progress Monitoring 8.5

Data-Based Decision-Making **8.6**

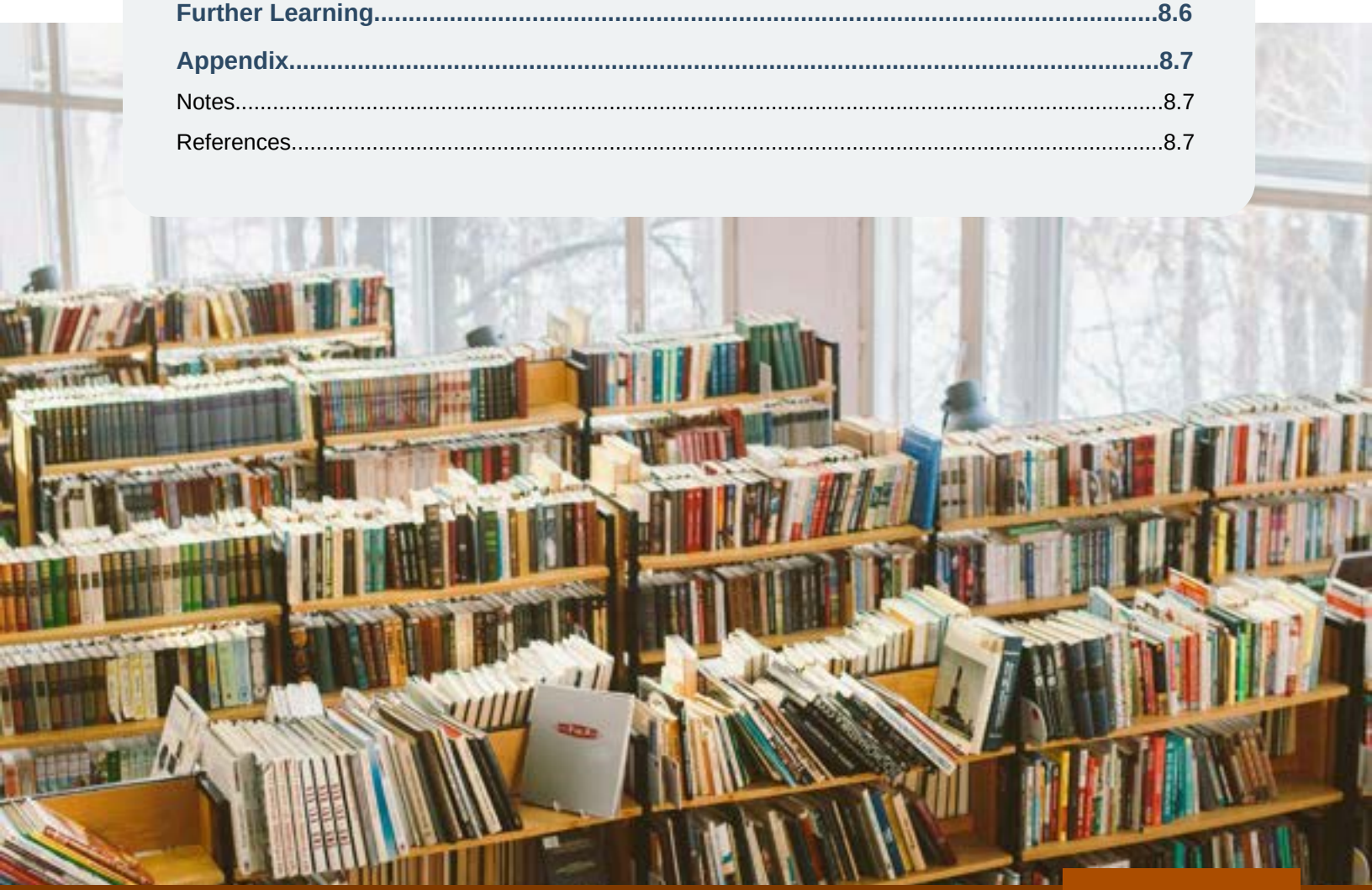
Summary **8.6**

Further Learning **8.6**

Appendix **8.7**

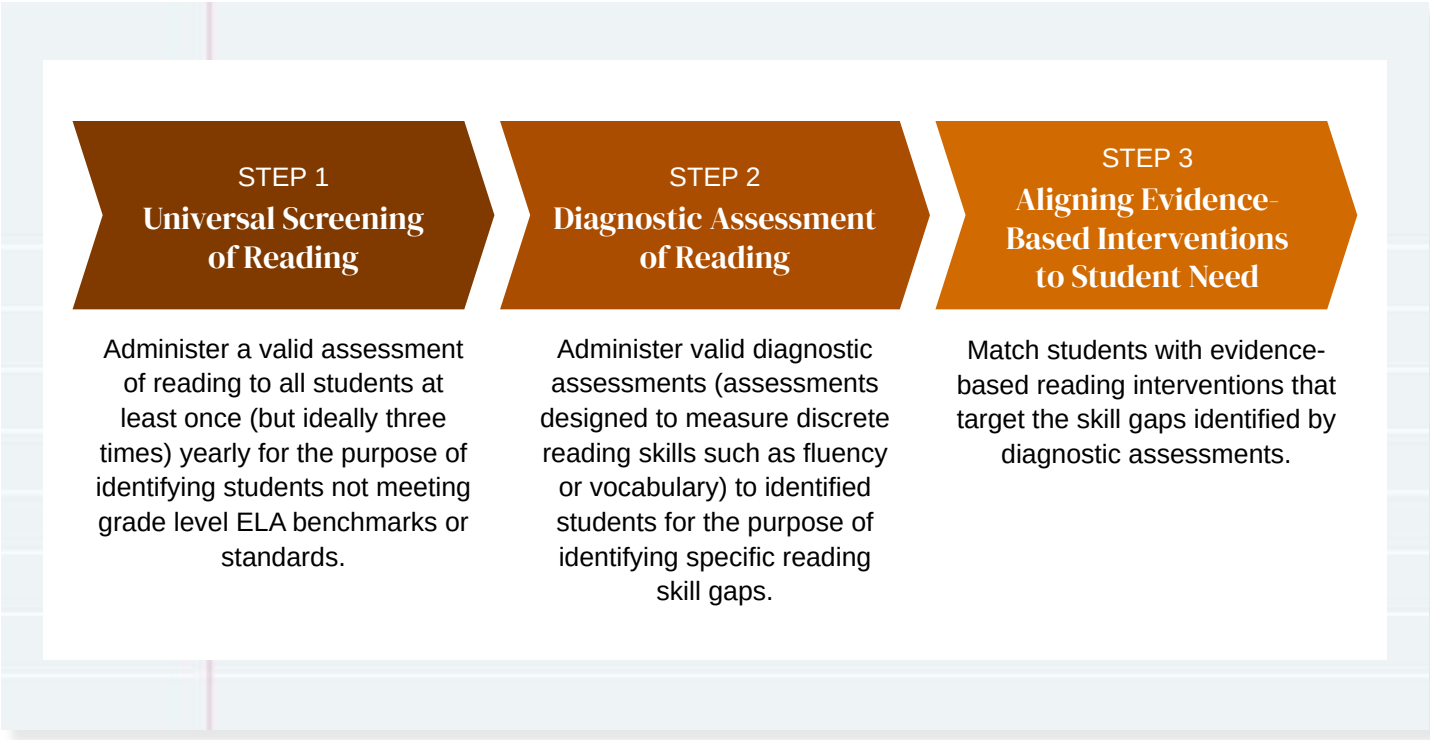
Notes 8.7

References 8.7



Introduction

Multi-tiered intervention models are effective frameworks for supporting students with reading disabilities, including secondary students.[1] At its core, the MTSS framework leverages data to plan, monitor, and continually improve the academic, social-emotional, and behavioral instruction and intervention provided to students. To accomplish this, educators are encouraged to plan for three types of data collection: **universal screening, progress monitoring,** and **diagnostic assessment**. Additionally, teams are tasked with designing infrastructure and protocols to support ongoing **data-based decision-making**. Each of these components of assessment and decision-making within the MTSS framework is defined and described below.



Universal Screening

Universal screening refers to the practice of administering valid and reliable screeners of proficiency to all students within a school system at least once yearly.[2] A system for screening all students in reading can identify students at risk of not meeting grade-level ELA benchmarks and standards early in the school year as the first step in designing and tailoring interventions to support reading acceleration. Universal screening data can also be used to evaluate programs for disaggregated subgroups of students and to assess the extent to which programs are successful in helping all students meet grade-level ELA standards. This creates a system of accountability for ensuring access and progress for all students.

The basic process for conducting universal screening of reading is as follows:[3]

1. Identify screening measures
2. Set proficiency cut points to identify students with differing levels of risk or need
3. Determine the frequency of screening (at least one time yearly)
4. Identify personnel to conduct screening
5. Collect universal screening data
6. Input, organize, and summarize the data
7. Respond to the results

When considering universal screening measures, schools need to select measures that are valid and reliable, demonstrate classification accuracy, minimize statistical bias, and are representative of the school's population. The National Center on Intensive Intervention provides detailed guidance to support schools in evaluating assessment options against each of these criteria.[4] In some cases, schools may need to adopt new assessment systems to conduct universal screening of reading. In other cases, they may be able to leverage existing resources. Research has suggested that assessments such as state-level assessments and computer-adaptive tests can reliably identify students who are not reaching grade-level reading targets.[5] Early warning systems, which use indicators such as course performance, attendance, and suspension data to flag students at risk of not meeting academic or behavioral expectations, are also recommended at the secondary level.[6]

Proficiency cut-points categorize students as at risk or not at risk of not meeting academic or behavior benchmarks. Schools can utilize various methods to establish proficiency cutpoints (e.g., below a specific percentile on a norm-referenced assessment or within a predetermined standard, such as "below basic," on a state-level assessment). Cut points must be established thoughtfully as they have a significant influence on the number and characteristics of students who may be identified via the screening process.[7]

When planning for the administration of a universal screener, schools need to account for training both those who will administer the screener and those who will interpret the results. Schools should also plan to monitor implementation fidelity. Inconsistent assessment administration, scoring errors, and data entry errors can impact the accuracy and usefulness of screening data. Schools can minimize these errors by providing ongoing training, practice, and coaching in administration and data entry, using administration checklists and protocols, and checking periodically for consistency.[8]

Diagnostic Assessment

While universal screening can serve to identify students who are nonproficient readers, it is insufficient for informing the design of effective reading interventions. As established earlier in the **Collection Literature Review**, nonproficient adolescent readers have diverse reading profiles, and the degree and nature of support needs can vary greatly across individual students. Diagnostic assessment of the specific reading needs of students identified as nonproficient readers is an important supplement to screening measures and is necessary for effective intervention planning at the secondary level.[9]

Diagnostic data can be collected through formal (e.g., standardized measures) and informal approaches (e.g., error analysis of student work samples). Curriculum-based measurements (CBMs) of oral reading fluency are one reliable measure of reading rate and accuracy,[10] and analysis of student errors from CBMs can serve as a helpful diagnostic measure.

Educators and problem-solving teams can then use diagnostic data to develop hypotheses about the causes of student reading difficulties. These hypotheses can then inform the development of an intervention plan that targets those specific causes.[11] For example, educators can analyze CBM errors to determine if a student is reading accurately yet slowly and may benefit from intervention targeting reading rate or if the student is reading inaccurately with errors in multisyllabic word reading and may benefit from intervention targeting word study skills.

The National Center on Intensive Intervention recommends schools first confirm the fidelity of instruction and intervention implementation before engaging in diagnostic assessment.[12] This refers to a process of evaluating the extent to which instruction or intervention was delivered as planned and designed. This includes assessing the level of student engagement in instruction, adherence to the instructional plan, duration of instruction, quality of instructional delivery, and the degree to which the intervention aligned with identified student needs.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring, or the ongoing collection of data to assess student responsiveness to instruction, is an essential component of MTSS.[13] The steps to implementing a progress-monitoring system include:

1. Designing the progress-monitoring process
2. Selecting progress-monitoring tools
3. Training staff
4. Developing student progress-monitoring plans
5. Collecting progress-monitoring data and monitoring fidelity
6. Analyzing progress-monitoring data

Progress-monitoring assessments should be administered at least monthly for students receiving interventions at the Tier 2 level within an MTSS and at least weekly for students receiving interventions at the Tier 3 level.[14] Fidelity of administration, scoring, and data entry should be monitored using the approaches described above (see **Universal Screening**).

As with universal screening measures, progress-monitoring measures must be valid and reliable. Further, they should (1) have a sufficient number of alternative forms to allow for frequent administration, (2) specify what would constitute sufficient progress, and (3) provide benchmarks of progress.[13] Curriculum-based measurements of oral reading fluency have been established as a valid and reliable tool for monitoring the progress of secondary students participating in reading interventions,[15] although the frequency of progress monitoring may be more widely spaced for secondary students than the weekly administration typically recommended for elementary students.[16]

Developing student progress-monitoring plans includes setting individual student goals. Strategies for setting individual student goals include using benchmarks for middle- or end-of-year performance, establishing a rate of improvement (ROI) based on normative data, or using the intra-individual framework.[17] See the **Further Learning** section of this appendix for a resource from the National Center on Intensive Intervention that provides comprehensive guidance for each of these approaches.

Data-Based Decision-Making

The previous sections of this resource have outlined the types of data that are collected within a well-functioning MTSS, and data-based decision-making refers to the processes and protocols that schools use to translate those assessment results into actions for students. Using data to inform decisions while intensifying instruction for students can result in improved outcomes for students with disabilities,[18] and using established criteria to inform decision-making can reduce bias and ensure equitable services and access for all students.

Data-based decision-making occurs at all levels of the MTSS. MTSS teams analyze universal screening data to identify students requiring academic or behavioral interventions, evaluate the effectiveness of programs, determine needs, allocate resources, and set schoolwide goals. Once sufficient progress-monitoring data has been collected (typically six to nine data points[19]), MTSS teams review data to determine whether students have met progress-monitoring goals and no longer require intervention, are responding favorably to intervention and should continue to participate in the intervention as it has been planned, or are not demonstrating sufficient progress and require a more intensive or individualized intervention plan.

Ultimately, data-based decision-making is the vehicle for supporting continuous improvement from the school to the individual student level.

Summary

This resource has outlined the types of data that are collected within a well-functioning MTSS and the ways in which schools can leverage this data to design, monitor the effectiveness of, and continually improve intervention plans for individual students and to evaluate the effectiveness of all levels of instruction.

FURTHER LEARNING

Using Diagnostic Data to Inform Intervention Planning

Academic Progress Monitoring Tools Chart

Strategies for Setting High-Quality Academic Individualized Education Program Goals

NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

Assessment Practices Within a Multi-Tiered System of Support

CEEDAR CENTER

Universal Screening

Progress Monitoring

Data-Based Decision Making

CENTER ON MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT, ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

Appendix

Notes

1 Vaughn and Fletcher, “Response to Intervention”

2 American Institutes for Research, “Screening”

3 Kurns and Tilly, *Response to Intervention Blueprints*

4 American Institutes for Research, “Understanding Screening”

5 Pyle and Vaughn “Remediating Reading Difficulties; Vaughn and Fletcher, “Response to Intervention”

6 Bailey, Colpo, and Foley, *Assessment Practices*

7 Jenkins and Johnson, “Universal Screening for Reading Problems”

8 American Institutes for Research, “Ensuring Fidelity”

9 Klingbeil et al., “Universal Screening with aimswebPlus”

10 American Institutes for Research, “Diagnostic Data”

11 Vaughn and Fletcher, “Response to Intervention”

12 Weingarten and Steinle, *Using Diagnostic Data to Inform Intervention Planning*

13 American Institutes for Research, “Essential Components of MTSS”

14 Bailey, Colpo, and Foley, *Assessment Practices*

15 Espin at al., “Creating a Progress-Monitoring System”

16 Vaughn and Fletcher, “Response to Intervention”

17 Bailey and Weingarten, *Strategies*

18 Austin and Filderman, “Selecting and Designing Measurements”

19 Bailey, Colpo, and Foley, *Assessment Practices*

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Marshall Street

Conclusion

TURNING THE PAGE TO SECONDARY LITERACY

A collection of research-to-impact practices developed with the Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities

Conclusion

Readiness for college and career in the twenty-first century requires the development of a broad set of competencies ranging from critical thinking to information, media, and technology literacy to communication and collaboration. Reading proficiency is not only a necessary contributor to the development of these skills, but it is also correlated with educational and life outcomes, including high school completion, employment and earning potential, and physical and social-emotional well-being. Schools must do more than prepare some students for college and career in the twenty-first century; they must ensure that all students are equipped with the competencies needed to succeed in their post-secondary lives.

The aim of the Marshall Street Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC) is to systematically improve the way our education system serves those furthest from these opportunities with a focus on Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty. Within this work, one challenge is clear: students within our priority population are not developing the reading skills necessary to support twenty-first-century college and career readiness. Addressing low reading proficiency rates poses unique problems for secondary educators. First, nonproficient secondary readers are a particularly heterogeneous group who differ greatly in both the degree and the nature of their reading difficulties. This broad range of student needs necessitates an equally wide range of interventions, an approach that is often missing in the “one-size-fits-all” reading intervention provided in many secondary settings. Traditional assessment systems and practices in secondary settings fail to illuminate individual student reading profiles, limiting schools’ ability to align interventions with student needs. Effective reading intervention in the secondary setting depends on educators who understand how reading develops, are knowledgeable about language and literacy constructs, implement evidence-based instructional practices, and are proficient with using assessment data to drive instructional planning. Yet, secondary educators report feeling woefully unprepared by both preservice training and in-service professional development to address students’ wide range of reading needs. These structural challenges are compounded by the reality that secondary students who don’t read well have often experienced years of reading failure, contributing to low motivation to read.



Over the course of three years, the NIC, a group of 10 public charter school networks serving more than 75,000 students nationwide, identified and piloted various best practices for improving outcomes for our priority population. This collection — itself an outcome of the work these schools accomplished — highlights the strongest and most promising of the practices implemented with the goal of improving reading proficiency. It details four best practices: **Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment, Repeated Reading: Building Oral Reading Fluency in Secondary Readers, Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills in Adolescent Readers,** and **Strengthening Timely Interventions through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring**. It concludes with a case study showcasing an ongoing, responsive approach to developing educator capacity to implement evidence-based practices for secondary reading intervention, and a guidance document for school and district leaders on assessing adolescent readers.

Four principles guided the approach taken by schools within the NIC:

- First, schools understood that effective secondary reading intervention had to be driven by **data-based decision-making**. Recognizing that traditional "one-size-fits-all" reading intervention driven by the availability of commercial programs has consistently failed to serve students in the target population adequately, NIC educators worked to select valid and reliable assessments to identify and understand nonproficient readers within their communities, develop decision-making criteria and protocols to systematically plan interventions, and strategically align interventions with individual student reading profiles.
- Second, schools in the NIC committed to the implementation of **evidence-based practices in secondary reading intervention**. The problem is not that we don't know how to serve secondary students with reading skill deficits; in fact, "...enough is already known about adolescent reading – both the nature of the problems of struggling readers and the types of interventions and approaches needed to address these needs – in order to act immediately on a broad scale."[1] Educators within the NIC continually worked to align their efforts with the best practice recommendations from the field of research on secondary reading intervention.
- Third, our approach to secondary reading intervention maintained a **focus on meaningful access to and participation in rigorous, grade-level academics**. As schools worked to address the needs of students with foundational reading skill gaps, their work was guided by the "north star" of grade-level content and texts. As such, NIC educators worked to integrate reading intervention within core, general education curriculum and courses and, even in pull-out intervention models, to leverage grade-level texts and content for instruction.
- Finally, the NIC's approach to secondary reading intervention included a **commitment to responsive, ongoing educator professional development.** The professional learning opportunities provided to educators within the NIC were similarly driven by evidence-based best practice recommendations from the field of research on adult learning and served to connect the driving principles of our approach to secondary reading intervention for teachers and leaders.

[1] Biancarosa, Gina, and Catherine E. Snow. 2006. *Reading Next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy: A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York (2nd ed.)*.Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

The work driven by these guiding principles and highlighted across this collection has improved student outcomes and meaningfully impacted both students and educators within the NIC. At **Green Dot Public Schools**, the majority of students who participated in a supplemental repeated reading intervention planned through the tiered assessment process increased their oral reading fluency, with half of the students increasing fluency rates by over 30%. Students with IEPs who participated in the repeated reading protocol implemented in a co-taught World History class at **Noble Schools** made growth in reading proficiency rates commensurate with students without IEPs, and **Uncommon** students who received reading intervention consisting of several evidence-based practices for secondary readers increased reading fluency rates by an average of 20 correct words per minute over the course of a school year.

These results are not minor; because of the strong correlation between reading fluency and reading comprehension, the improvements mean that students are on the path to independent meaning-making of grade-level texts. Educators also experienced lasting benefits from the practices implemented within the NIC, with those who participated in the Professional Learning Community and individual coaching structures consistently reporting that these opportunities increased their capacity to implement evidence-based practices.

Key Takeaways

ADOLESCENCE IS NOT TOO LATE TO INTERVENE.

As members of the NIC engaged in the work of continually planning, implementing, evaluating, and refining their approaches to secondary reading intervention, they learned that this work can result in meaningful benefits for secondary learners and educators. They documented meaningful improvements in students' reading proficiency rates and attitudes toward reading and reported increased educator capacity to implement the practices that are most likely to lead to these results. Given the role of reading proficiency as a critical contributor to positive postsecondary outcomes, a key takeaway of this work is that investing in these practices has the potential to yield life-changing impacts for the NIC's target population.

EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENTS AND DATA ANALYSIS PRACTICES PROVIDE THE ROADMAP FOR DESIGNING GAP-CLOSING READING INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING IN THE SECONDARY SETTING.

Like all secondary education systems, members of the NIC implemented mechanisms for collecting student data long before engaging in the Networked Improvement Community. However, as they began the work of refining their approaches to reading intervention, they learned that they weren't always collecting the *right* information, nor did they have in place the decision-making processes necessary for effective intervention planning. Members of the NIC recognized that closing persistent reading gaps for secondary students requires targeted and specific interventions and the ability to pivot quickly when an intervention is no longer needed or isn't yielding the expected results. This required an evaluation of current assessment practices and a willingness to reimagine or replace current approaches with the goal of developing systems that allowed them to know which students weren't reading proficiently, what specific areas of reading to address for those students, and how those students were responding to the interventions provided.

SECONDARY READING INTERVENTION DOES NOT HAVE TO EXIST IN A SILO.

Many schools within the NIC had structures for providing reading intervention to students; however, these approaches were generally characterized by standalone, non-credit-bearing courses driven by commercially available programs. This approach failed to result in students transferring skills to grade-level academic texts and content and contributed to low engagement and motivation from students who had difficulty connecting the work of these classes to broader academic programs and goals. Members of the NIC experimented with embedding and aligning reading intervention within grade-level content, texts, and learning goals and learned that this approach yielded benefits. Leveraging core, general education content as the bedrock around which reading intervention was designed contributed to less social stigma for students receiving intervention, improved comprehension of grade-level content and/or texts, and increased collaboration between general and special education teachers for members of the NIC.

SECONDARY EDUCATORS WANT TO AND CAN DEVELOP THE KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCIES NECESSARY TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS THE RANGE OF READING NEEDS THAT PRESENT IN THEIR CLASSROOMS.

Educators within the NIC reported similar experiences and concerns to those that the larger field of secondary educators has reported; namely, that they felt unprepared by their preservice and in-service professional development opportunities to teach nonproficient secondary readers. While the challenge of equipping teachers with the knowledge and competencies necessary to effectively intervene with nonproficient secondary readers may seem daunting, members of the NIC learned that it is possible. Responsive and collaborative professional learning grounded in evidence-based practices and coupled with individualized coaching to assist educators with implementation led to increased knowledge and skill in just one academic year.

The four chapters, case study, and guidance document in this collection lay out the key components of effective secondary reading intervention.

Together, these components set the stage for addressing the diverse needs of nonproficient secondary readers while simultaneously growing the capacity of the educators who serve them. The participating members of the NIC found that, as they developed their capacity to implement evidence-based practices for nonproficient secondary readers, student learning outcomes increased at a greater rate. However, It is a misconception that these components cannot be implemented until each is carefully manicured and perfected. Instead, we urge school and system leaders to start *now*. Each school system has different needs, but prioritizing reading intervention will result in improved student outcomes, more meaningful participation in core academic programming for students with disabilities, and increased educator efficacy.

Networked Improvement Community

FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Networked Improvement Community for Students with Disabilities (NIC), a group of 10 public charter school networks serving more than 75,000 students nationwide, identified the best practices through their work between 2019 and 2023.

Led by **Marshall Street** at Summit Public Schools, in partnership with technical assistance providers NIRN, RTI International, SRI International, and SWIFT Education Center, the purpose of the three-year NIC was to systematically improve the way our education system serves Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty and share these solutions with school systems everywhere.

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