When it comes to literacy instruction that fosters students’ word recognition and language comprehension skills, the need for strong organizational and instructional school leaders is greater than ever. Research shows that principals and other school leaders are integral to improving student achievement and retaining quality teachers. Effective school leaders use a continuous improvement process to evaluate, build, implement, and sustain evidence-based literacy practices.
Lead for Literacy Center’s 5 Framework Elements

Effective literacy leaders make reading a schoolwide priority and focus on continuous improvement and support, as well as high-quality reading instruction. They guide teams in purposeful data use and use job-embedded learning formats to ensure their professional development is effective and relevant.

The Lead for Literacy (L4L) Framework consists of five critical elements that, when implemented well, establish a strong foundation for a multitiered system of support in reading.

1. **Standards, Priorities, and Goals**
   This element is grounded in the essential components of reading and anchored in evidence based-practices and instructional intervention at every level. Successful implementation ensures all reading instructors have a shared vision for high-quality reading instruction.

2. **Administration, Organization, and Communication**
   This element emphasizes strong instructional leadership, maintaining a focus on high-quality instruction and allocation of resources to support reading. Successful implementation improves communication regarding reading programs and practices.

3. **Instruction and Intervention**
   This element includes programs, practices, interventions, and materials that have documented efficacy and are evidence-based. Successful implementation results in increased use of evidence-based literacy practices and interventions to support learners at all levels of instruction.

4. **Assessments**
   This element provides reliable and valid information so that data informs instruction in a meaningful manner. Successful implementation promotes efficient schoolwide assessment practices and effective data analysis.

5. **Professional Development and Job-Embedded Collaborative Learning**
   This element requires available and continuous professional learning support to develop and maintain educator expertise in instructional reading practices. Successful implementation leads to purposeful selection, design, and application of professional development.
Reflection Questions

1. How can we capitalize on elements of the L4L Framework we implement well in our school?

2. What elements could be more strongly implemented?

3. How do we meet the literacy instruction and intervention needs of our students in a remote learning environment?
Word Recognition and Reading Comprehension

Collecting implementation data informs a school leader about the nature of reading instruction and the degree to which evidence-based practices and interventions shown to support students’ word recognition and language comprehension skills are implemented within and across grades.

For a student to successfully read a passage and understand what they are reading, they must master both word recognition and language comprehension:

- **Word Recognition**: Phonological awareness, decoding, phonics, alphabatics, and other skills that allow readers to recognize and map sounds of letters to words for effective and efficient word recognition.

- **Language Comprehension**: Skills that allow a reader to use language to understand what they are reading such as oral language proficiency, background knowledge, vocabulary, and understanding grammar and discourse structures.

If readers struggle in one area, reading comprehension might be impeded. Word recognition skills can be improved when a teacher uses explicit and systematic instruction to teach complex skills that focus on decoding across all levels of instruction.

Other practices such as peer-to-peer learning opportunities, visual and verbal supports (such as sentence frames, paragraph frames, and graphic organizers), and learning and reinforcement opportunities targeting inferential and narrative language, vocabulary, and academic language structures will promote and strengthen language comprehension skills in elementary school children.

Reflection Questions

1. Is our school’s reading instruction anchored in high-quality evidence-based practices and interventions that enhance students’ word recognition and language comprehension skills?

2. Does our school consistently and accurately use data and data-based decision-making processes to inform reading instruction and ensure that it is evidence-based?

3. Are we collecting data that inform the type of reading instruction taking place within and across grades?
Learning Walk-Throughs

Reading walk-throughs are usually not intended to be evaluative in nature. However, school leaders can use walk-throughs to formatively observe reading instruction. These data help school teams set schoolwide reading priorities and provide professional development that addresses the needs of school staff.

The following are a few resources to help support leaders in observing reading instruction for evidence-based instructional practices that enhance children’s word recognition and language comprehension skills:

- **Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (MCPER) Walk-Through Tools**
  MCPER houses a variety of walk-through tools on explicit and systematic instruction, instructional grouping, scaffolded practice, and differentiated instruction.

- **Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest (REL Southwest) Literacy Walk-Through Tool**
  REL Southwest developed the School Leader’s Literacy Walk-Through tool to assist school leaders in observing evidence-based practices during literacy instruction. This guide includes a pre-walk-through meeting guide, observation tool, and post-walk-through meeting tools.

- **RESET Rubrics**
  These reading rubrics are based on evidence-based practices for students with disabilities for components important for word recognition and language comprehension skill development, such as decoding and vocabulary.

Reflection Questions

1. Is our school using a systematic process for identifying students who might be at risk for poor reading outcomes? Do these students struggle with word recognition, language comprehension, or both skills?

2. How is student reading progress measured to ensure there is an accurate picture of student reading performance?

About the Lead for Literacy Center

The Lead for Literacy Center is a partnership among literacy experts, education leaders, university researchers, and technical assistance providers, focused on improving school leaders’ access to and implementation of evidence-based literacy practices in elementary schools nationwide. The Lead for Literacy (L4L) Framework assists school, district, and state leaders in navigating the process of evaluating, building, implementing, and sustaining schoolwide use of evidence-based literacy practices for educating students with, or at risk for, literacy-related disabilities. To learn more about the L4L Framework and its five elements, visit leadforliteracy.org/framework.