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# LEADING LESSONS

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# Literacy Leaders

## The School Leaders' Role in Effective Reading Instruction

**W**hen 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.





## 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, alphabets, 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?

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**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?

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**3** Are we collecting data that inform the type of reading instruction taking place within and across grades?

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