



Science of Reading: Leading for Literacy

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Leading For Literacy: Equity and Excellence

To achieve excellence and equity, district and school leaders must take key action steps that are in alignment with the Science of Reading. These action steps center on building core knowledge, creating a shared vision, collaborative data-driven decision making, and an understanding that meaningful change demands persistence and consistency, year-over-year.

LEADERSHIP ACTION STEP #1: Understand the “Science Of Reading”

The term Science of Reading refers to a body of 50+ years of interdisciplinary research that describes literacy development and provides guidance for instruction and interventions from early childhood through adolescence. See Briefs 1 and 2 for Science Of Reading Explained: Key Ideas And Myths.

LEADERSHIP ACTION STEP #2: Understand the Relationship Between the Science of Reading and Key Instructional Frameworks

A high-quality instructional architecture reflects the connections among key instructional frameworks, and creates stronger supports for educators and learners.

	Description	Interconnectedness With The Science Of Reading
<p>Culturally- Responsive Sustaining Education Framework</p>	<p>The CR-SE framework helps educators create student-centered learning environments that affirm racial, linguistic, and cultural identities; prepare students for rigor and independent learning, develop students’ abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically marginalized voices; and empower students as agents of social change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-centered, welcoming, affirming environments • Inclusive curriculum and assessments • Learning experiences characterized by rigor and high expectations, and adaptive to student needs
<p>Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework</p>	<p>The SEL framework supports educators in creating environments that cultivate key competencies. The framework is organized around five competencies that all young people need to be successful in life:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-awareness (e.g., linking feelings, values, thoughts) 2. Social awareness (e.g., managing one’s emotions; stress management strategies) 3. Self-management (e.g., perspective taking, goal setting) 4. Responsible decision-making (e.g., reasoned judgments; evaluating consequences of actions) 5. Relationship skills (e.g., communication, empathy, listening) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning cycles, routines, and project-based tasks that focus thinking, and encourage problem solving and collaboration • Work with rich texts, text-based discussions and writing tasks that promote perspective taking, abstract reasoning, social awareness, and cognitive flexibility • Unit themes and topics that reflect multiple identities, cultures, linguistic diversity and assets

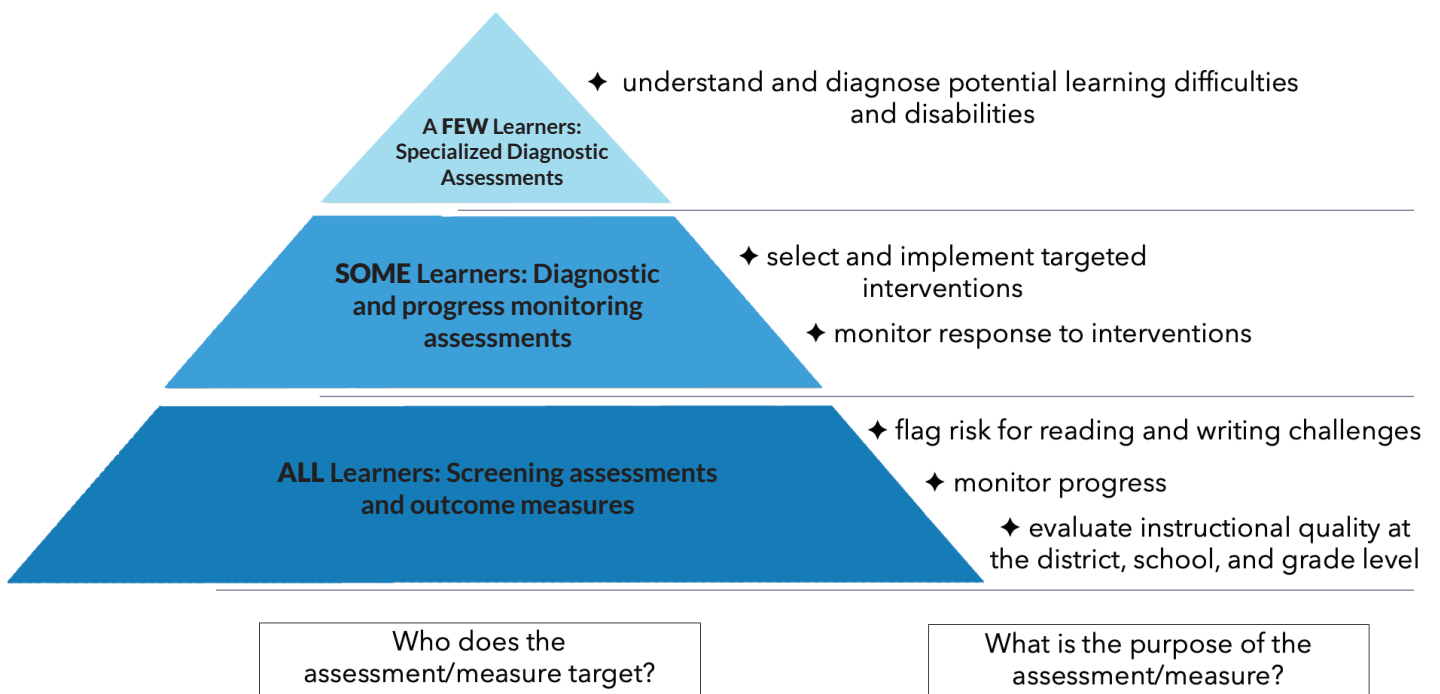
LEADERSHIP ACTION STEP #3: Cultivate the Conditions for Adult Learning and Collaborative Planning and Action

Leading literacy improvement in a district or school requires building up the conditions and supports to create a culture for teams to engage effectively in the complex and challenging work of regularly examining data, including student work, to inform instructional plans and adjustments.

Systems and Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meeting time for collaboration (e.g., professional learning communities, data teams, student meetings) • Transparent, sustainable data use methods, practices and processes that are shared among stakeholders • Strategic team meetings (e.g., protocol use, commitment to grounding all decisions and statements in evidence) • Regular, on-site coaching and professional learning connected to strategic priorities and new initiatives
Culture and Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing conversations around mission, vision, and beliefs • Leadership commitment to building educators' capacity for success. • Leadership that honors the complexity and challenge of the work • Proactive leadership, where leaders actively engage in and drive initiatives • Normalizing of risk-taking and feedback

LEADERSHIP ACTION STEP #4: Implement Assessment Systems for Identifying Student Progress and Needs

Effective practice starts with effective assessment. Therefore, getting to high-quality literacy instruction in schools and districts demands a comprehensive assessment system, with three levels.

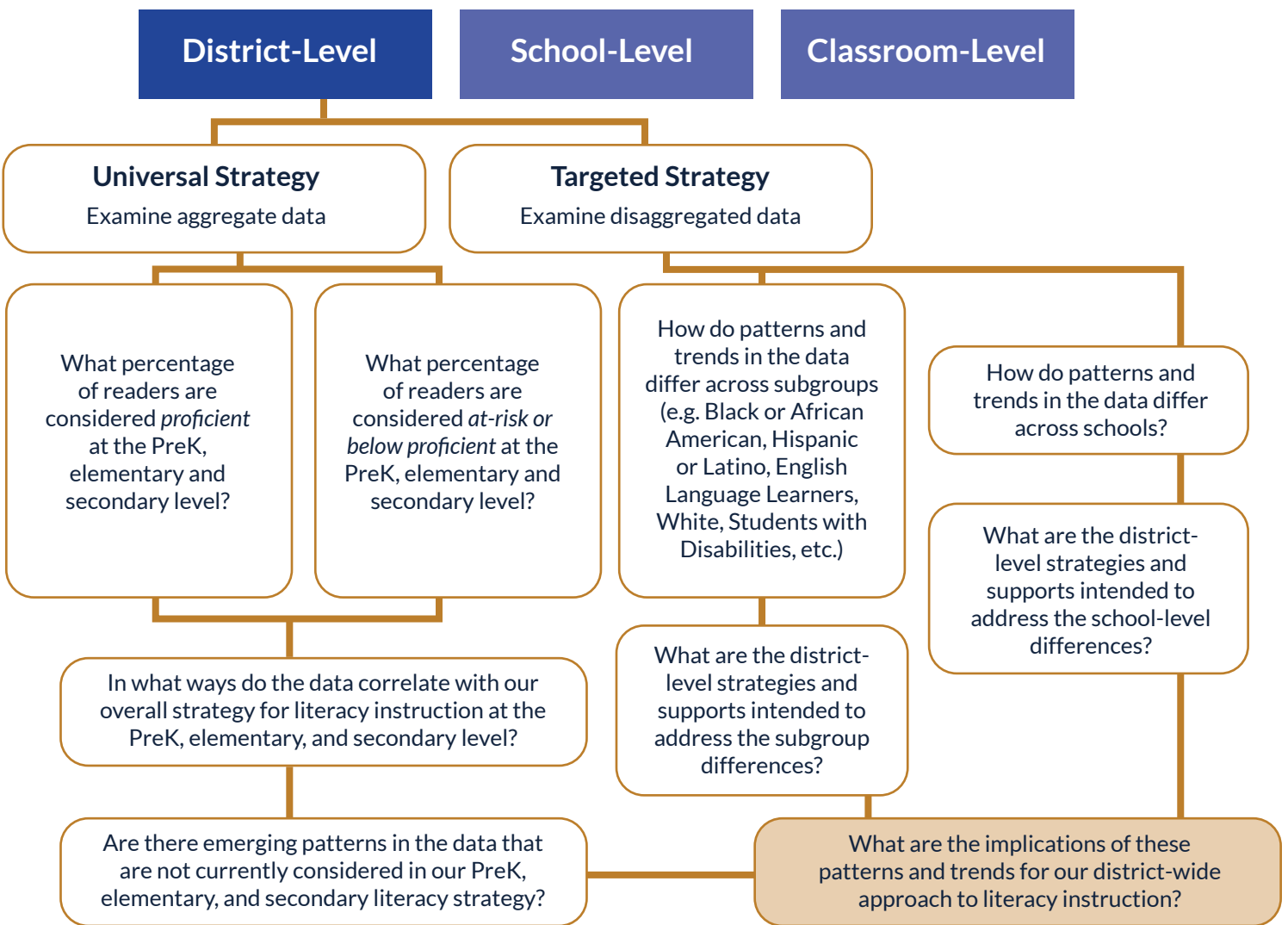


LEADERSHIP ACTION STEP #5: Build Systems for Effective Assessment-Instruction Links to Support Educators and Serve All Learners

With the assessment system in place, leadership teams are poised to build systems that facilitate differentiated instruction and interventions, with the goal of ensuring all students can access rigorous, age appropriate learning and teaching. Many of today’s frameworks, including Response to Intervention (RTI), Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reflect these design principles. Below, we outline the design of systems for assessment-instruction links at three levels—the district, school, and classroom.

Assessment-Instruction Links at the District-Level

Key strategic questions to guide teams leading literacy improvement:

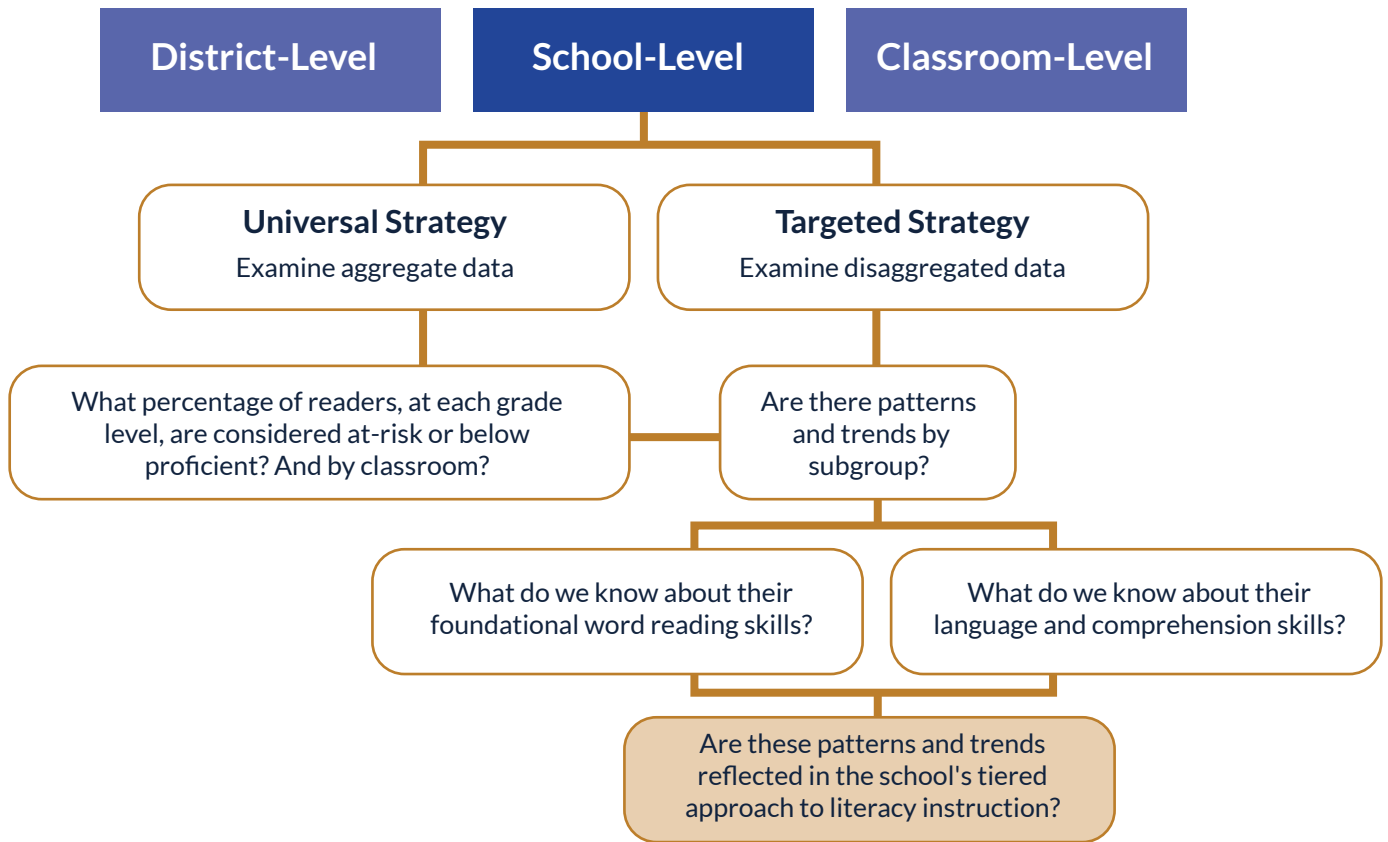


Small Numbers Matter

Today’s funding and equity strategies focus on each child—every child! With a focus on data trends and serving the majority, sometimes small numbers of students are left behind. It’s crucial that all school leaders commit to a strategy that includes serving small groups and individuals whose progress and outcomes is distinct from the majority.

Assessment-Instruction Links at the School-Level

Key strategic questions to guide teams leading literacy improvement:



Case Snapshots



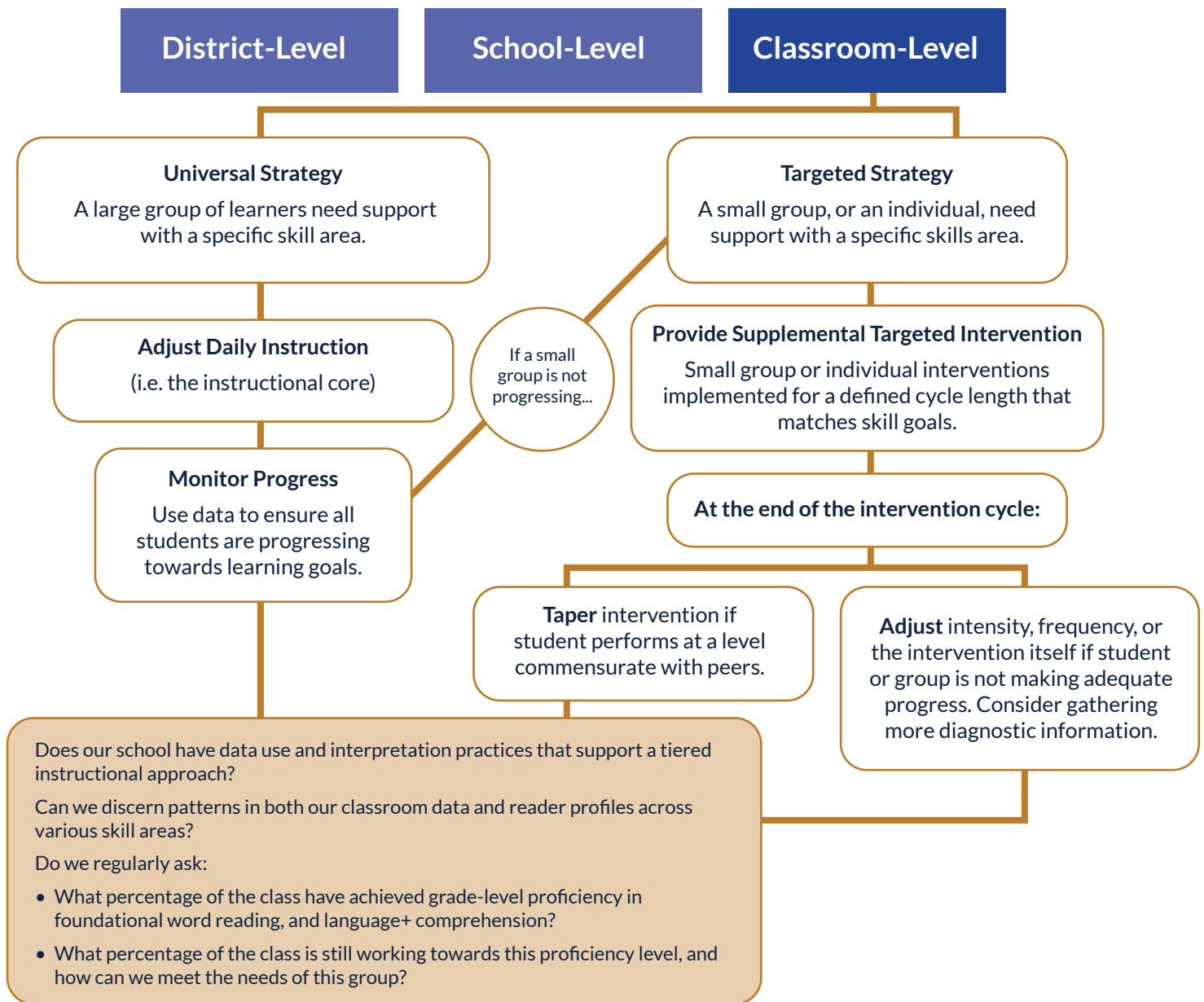
Assistant Superintendent Rice was thrilled to hear about momentum and renewed excitement among principals and grade-level leaders around the district’s latest literacy work. As part of this push for a more evidence-based approach, there was a specific focus on data use for a tiered model. In order to facilitate this work, Superintendent Rice established an assessment calendar and a more coordinated system for data collection and analysis, including a protocol for identifying patterns and trends with an assets and equity-based lens, and responding to those trends with clear action. The revised system also included a set of protocols for data meetings focused on better understanding individual students’ profiles. Superintendent Rice saw it as her duty to both applaud the school-based leaders for the work that they were currently doing, but also to lead this work to the next level—a more systematic and efficient approach to identifying school-based literacy achievement, while also keeping a close eye on progress among students with identified needs, including English Language Learners, and historically under-served populations.



Principal Landry was nervous to share the latest state test results with teachers. Despite their extensive efforts to examine individual student data and their commitment to data-driven instructional practices, the latest round of results didn’t show the kind of result they were expecting. But after meeting with fellow principals and learning more about the role of assessment in improving literacy practice, Principal Landry saw where they needed to go. The links between assessment and instruction weren’t maybe as tight and clear as he previously thought. With a goal of strengthening these links between literacy assessments and classroom practice, Principal Landry gathered a committee comprised of key literacy stakeholders. Together they audited current assessment practices and crafted a more efficient and developmental approach. The goal was to get to a skill-based assessment battery that support: flagging for risk in word reading and comprehension skills; progress monitoring; and initial identification of breakdowns for readers. Principal Landry felt recommitted to establishing a solid foundation for differentiated instruction that dovetailed perfectly with the district’s commitment to Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

Assessment-Instruction Links at the Classroom-Level

Key strategic questions to guide teams leading literacy improvement:



Case Snapshot



Mr. Pei, a 6th grade language arts teacher, was committed to determining the source of Simon’s challenges. Simon, a former ELL, had passed the reading proficiency screener this fall, but Mr. Pei regularly observed challenges with comprehension and writing. A self-proclaimed data guru, Mr. Pei closely examined the grade level data, sorting and resorting the results in several ways. As he dug in further, he noticed that Simon was flagged for under-developed vocabulary—and so too were a considerable number of students in his class and across the grade. Concerned, Mr. Pei brought these results to his grade-level colleagues at one of their regular cross-department meetings. They talked about their current approaches to vocabulary instruction, some very explicit strategies as well as some more implicit, with a nod to different words for different content areas. After some reflection, they decided to elevate classroom discussion as a grade-level priority area. The team committed to a book study on deepening discussions across the content areas. Mr. Pei focused on layering language goals into his content goals, and established several structured discussion routines that became part of daily practice.

Reflect and Analyze: Professional Learning & Strategic Planning

- Integration of frameworks (e.g. Social-Emotional Learning, Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Response to Intervention) with the Science of Reading is key for developing high-quality literacy instructional environments. Share specific strategies that both reflect the interconnectedness of these frameworks and promote student success.
- Addressing the key challenges of establishing a strong link between literacy assessments and classroom practice is a critical step towards school improvement. What are the barriers that your district, school, and classrooms leaders face in this work? What resources, structural and systematic shifts, or professional learning opportunities would help dismantle these barriers?
- After reading the three case studies, each of which presents literacy leadership challenges and opportunities at the district, school, and classroom level, how has your thinking changed about how to create change in your own district/school/classroom? Where will you start? What supports do you need?

Key References & Resources

References

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