

# Top 10 Strategies Exemplar Schools Use on their Journey to Becoming a Science of Reading School

*This is a compilation of key strategies and practices that can significantly aid schools and districts in their pursuit to fully embrace the Science of Reading approach. By focusing on these areas and deploying the appropriate methodologies, we can accelerate the transformation of schools and districts towards being completely aligned with the Science of Reading. This transition will lead to superior literacy teaching, improved student performance, and a broader prevalence of reading proficiency among students.*

1. **Consistency of Approach and Language:** Establishing consistency in instructional language, terminology, and approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, and other structured literacy elements is essential for ensuring a coherent and cohesive learning experience for students. This consistency should not only be maintained within each grade level but also across grade levels (such as K-3 or K-5) to ensure a seamless progression of skills. Consistency should extend to intervention rooms and classrooms, ensuring that all students receive the same evidence-based instruction.
2. **Improving Teacher Knowledge:** Providing ongoing professional development opportunities is crucial for improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of the Science of Reading approach. Training sessions should focus on evidence-based instructional practices, the latest research in reading instruction, effective assessment techniques, and data-driven instruction. It is essential to have a single source of training that aligns with the chosen Science of Reading approach, ensuring that all educators are equipped with the same knowledge and instructional strategies.

3. **Improving Data Collection and Analysis:** Enhancing the capacity to collect, analyze, and interpret data related to students' foundational literacy skills is vital for effective implementation of the Science of Reading approach. Schools and districts should invest in reliable assessment tools and establish systematic data collection processes. This includes administering assessments aligned with the Science of Reading principles and using technology platforms that streamline data collection and analysis. Data should be regularly reviewed and disaggregated to identify patterns, trends, and areas of improvement.
4. **Improving Capacity to Review Data:** Building the capacity of teachers and administrators to effectively review and analyze data is key to leveraging the insights provided by assessment results. Providing training and support in data analysis and interpretation empowers educators to identify individual student needs, target instruction accordingly, and make informed decisions about intervention strategies. Additionally, leveraging AI technology can enhance data analysis capabilities, helping to identify predictive patterns and trends in student achievement.
5. **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Using data as a foundation for decision-making ensures that instructional strategies, interventions, and resources are aligned with students' needs. Regularly reviewing and analyzing data enables educators to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement, allowing for targeted intervention and differentiated instruction. Data-driven decision making helps educators adjust instruction based on evidence, track student progress, and make informed choices about intervention allocation and resource allocation.
6. **Phonics in Early Grades Matters:** While the Science of Reading encompasses various elements, emphasizing systematic phonics instruction in the early grades is crucial. Explicit instruction on letter-sound relationships, phonemic awareness, and decoding skills provides students with the foundational skills necessary for reading proficiency. Implementing a comprehensive and evidence-based phonics program ensures that all students receive explicit instruction and practice in phonics, setting them up for success in reading development.

7. **The Science of Reading isn't just about Phonics:** While phonics instruction is a crucial component, it's essential to recognize that the Science of Reading encompasses more than just phonics. Effective reading instruction also addresses oral language development, vocabulary, and background knowledge. Assessments should screen for oral language deficits and vocabulary deficiencies, and instructional strategies should focus on improving these areas alongside phonics instruction. Providing students with rich language experiences and opportunities to build background knowledge supports overall reading comprehension and fluency.
8. **Summer Learning:** Offering summer learning programs that focus on reinforcing foundational literacy skills is highly beneficial. These programs can help prevent summer learning loss and provide targeted interventions for students who need additional support. Structured literacy activities, small-group instruction, and engaging reading experiences can help students maintain and further develop their reading skills during the summer break.
9. **Using Intervention Teams Wisely and Scheduling:** Leveraging the expertise of intervention teams and implementing strategic scheduling is crucial for effectively supporting students who require targeted intervention. Schools and districts should ensure that intervention teams are well-trained in evidence-based intervention strategies and collaborate closely with classroom teachers. Strategic scheduling should allow for dedicated intervention time and coordinated efforts to provide timely and appropriate support to students in need. Maximizing the impact of intervention efforts requires thoughtful coordination and effective use of resources.

## 10. Dispelling Common Misconception about Learning to Read.

Science of Reading schools work to reject myths surrounding reading acquisition. The misconception that learning to read is akin to learning to speak is actively debunked, as reading is not hard-wired like speech. Moreover, the Science challenges the belief that explicit instruction is only necessary for struggling readers, emphasizing its importance for all children. While every child may be unique, studies show that the brain

architecture necessary for reading is similar in all individuals, making effective instructional principles beneficial for all early readers. The Science refutes the idea that English is irregular and unpredictable, revealing that understanding its multiple layers reveals teachable patterns in the majority of words. Additionally, it dispels the theory that readers rely on multiple cues when figuring out print, stressing the significance of accurate and fluent word reading. Foundational skill instruction, particularly phonics, is unveiled as engaging and essential for discovering patterns in words, not mere "skill and drill." The Science contradicts the myth that decodable text kills a love of reading, recognizing it as a scaffold to apply phonetic patterns during early reading stages. It challenges the notion that comprehension primarily depends on strategies, highlighting various factors contributing to it. Contrary to the misconception that we lack knowledge about reading development and instruction, the Science presents significant evidence from the Science of Reading, leading to refined instructional practices. Lastly, the Science debunks the "wait and see" approach for struggling readers, as universal screeners and diagnostic assessments can identify at-risk students, making instruction crucial for their progress.

Take a stand for quality reading instruction! Let's equip every child with the tools they need to excel in reading. To delve deeper into anything in this document and gain comprehensive insights, call Really Great Reading. Our team, comprising Molly, Julie, Joan, Scott, and many others, is eager to provide expert advice upon request. Together, we can pave the way for a future where every child achieves reading success.