

Mitigate Learning Loss with the Science of Reading

There is an alarming disconnect between what scientific research recommends for reading instruction and what happens in the classroom. Most teachers receive minimal preparation and guidance around how to teach foundational skills, let alone learn the basic facts of human cognition and reading development. Further, current implementation approaches often fall short, contributing to educational disparities between teaching systems and reading instruction.

By incorporating the science of reading—a proven method essential for narrowing the third-grade reading gap—educators can revolutionize the learning experience for young readers. Here are the four critical implementation elements district leaders need to combine to mitigate any existing learning gaps.

BUILD SCHOOL-WIDE EXPERTISE IN THE SCIENCE OF TEACHING READING

District leadership and school instructors must be on the same page to see the positive influences of the science of reading. But most teachers don't receive instruction around phonetic awareness and aren't sure how to teach these foundational skills. Instead, students rely heavily on pictures and context clues rather than decoding skills to guess unfamiliar words.

+ Key Tactic

Create professional development programs to fill any knowledge gaps teachers may have regarding the science of reading.

AID TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING SCIENCE-BASED INSTRUCTION

It can be difficult for teachers to integrate professional learning into the classroom. District leaders should ensure teachers know what is expected of them by creating consensus around proper classroom time allocation, defining quality instruction, and highlighting what should and should not be emphasized in class.

+ Key Tactic

Set concrete, grade-level guidelines for how reading block time should be allocated across foundational reading skills.

REDESIGN SMALL-GROUP INSTRUCTION TO TARGET STUDENT SKILL DEFICITS

Grouping students based on accurate diagnostics of their skill needs rather than universal screeners is essential for effective small-group instruction in reading. This targeted approach involves pairing students with teachers who specialize in their identified skill gaps, ensuring a more personalized and supportive learning experience.

+ Key Tactic

Organize instruction groups based on skill needs, not reading levels.

MITIGATE SUMMER SLIDE WITH ENGAGING SUMMER PROGRAMMING

Summer slide poses a significant challenge to student learning, and crucial foundational skills are often forgotten. While effective summer programming can help narrow the learning gap in reading, few identified students enroll, and some may never attend despite districts' enrollment efforts.

+ Key Tactic

Incentivize summer school enrollment and spur continued attendance by creating a summer camp-like atmosphere.

School-wide expertise in the science of reading ensures a unified and comprehensive approach to mitigating learning loss and advancing literacy education in your district.

