



# Leadership

Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework

*School leadership prioritizes attainment of reading goals for all students*

|           | Goals | Assessment | Instruction | Leadership | Professional Development | Commitment |
|-----------|-------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Schools   |       |            |             | ★          |                          |            |
| Districts |       |            |             |            |                          |            |
| State     |       |            |             |            |                          |            |

Functions of School Leadership:

- ★ School administrators and leadership teams work together to create a coherent plan for reading instruction.
- ★ School administrators and leadership teams focus on ALL students meeting or exceeding grade-level reading goals.
- ★ School administrators and leadership teams are knowledgeable about reading standards, assessments, and instructional programs and materials.
- ★ Leadership structures exist at multiple levels—principal, mentor coach, grade-level teams, department-level teams, and the School Leadership Team—to maintain the focus on all students reading at grade level or above and to establish mechanisms to support students' reading progress.

***The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework is aligned to Response to Intervention (RTI)***

Research demonstrates that effective school leadership is positively associated with student learning, second only in magnitude to quality curriculum and instruction.<sup>1</sup> The influence of leadership on student performance is particularly important in schools that serve students at risk for learning difficulties or dropping out of school.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, principles of effective leadership—necessary to support effective reading instruction for **ALL** students—are addressed. It is important to note here that leadership at the school level is most effective when supported by state and district-level leadership as described in the [State](#) and [District](#) sections of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework.

## Leadership Creates a Coherent Plan for Reading

It is critical that the principal, reading coach, and the School Leadership Team work together to create a coherent plan for reading.<sup>3</sup> Ongoing communication and consistency within and between each of these levels of distributive leadership is critical. Using their knowledge and shared expertise, these leaders can develop a schedule that maximizes and protects instructional time, organizes resources and personnel to efficiently support all students in the building, and ensures that instruction in special programs (e.g., Title, Special Education, ELL) is coordinated with, and is complementary to, the reading instruction provided in general education. Through grade-level/department-level teams and the School Leadership Team, school-level educators will have the opportunity to communicate and to plan instruction for students that is aligned with a coordinated School Reading Plan (see [Commitment](#) chapter, 2).

Excellent leadership, excellent initial instruction, and excellent data systems have always been essential pieces of high performance schools.

Fielding, Kerr,  
Rosier (2004)

## Leadership Prioritizes Attainment of Reading Goals for All Students

Above all, school-level leadership prioritizes the attainment of reading goals for **ALL** students.<sup>4</sup> If students are **not** meeting reading goals, school leadership provides clear communication about which reading goals have not been met and which goals have. School leaders examine and present data to identify possible reasons why students did not meet reading goals and these reasons should make clear those variables the school has the ability to change. In some cases structural variables such as scheduling, grouping, and choice of instructional materials may be hindering student progress and in other cases barriers to high quality, effective implementation may be the cause. In some instances, however, both structural and quality of instruction and implementation variables may be causing the insufficient reading development of students.

**Successful school leaders help identify variables under the school's control that may be contributing to poor reading outcomes, establish and implement plans to change or alter those variables, and collect data to determine whether the changes made have resulted in better student reading outcomes.**<sup>ii</sup>

I want all our kids succeeding. That's what it's all about. It's going to happen. I have no doubt.

Oregon Principal

An example of prioritizing reading goals based on data follows: an unusually high percentage of students may have begun the school year reading at grade level, made less progress than expected, and ended the year

<sup>1</sup> Center for Education Policy Analysis, 2003; Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement

<sup>2</sup> Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Meltzer, 2006; Torgesen, Houston & Rissman, 2007

<sup>4</sup> Haynes, 2007; Torgesen & Miller, 2009

reading slightly below grade level. Implementation data collected and analyzed revealed that these students received less instructional time directly with the teacher than was specified in the School Reading Plan. Part of the solution to improve reading outcomes for these students could be to arrange the reading schedule for the following year so that these students spend more time directly with the teacher each day for explicit reading instruction. Data would be collected to determine how well the plan was implemented and whether it resulted in better reading progress and outcomes for this group of students. This would be considered a structural change.

If a sufficient number and percentage of students are meeting reading goals, and other data indicate that the quality of daily reading instruction is strong, then school leadership focuses on reinforcing the instruction that school staff is providing to students. Acknowledging and celebrating the dedicated work of staff that is directly tied to successful outcomes for students is powerful within the school community. Highlighting details of effective classroom practices associated with improved outcomes for students affirms these effective practices and provides specificity for replication. **Acknowledging the attainment of challenging reading goals will help the school maintain its focus on reading goals and effective instruction, and the celebration of these significant accomplishments communicates the central importance of effective instruction in the school's service to its students and families.**

In schools where students **are** meeting reading goals, effective leadership also emphasizes the importance of continuous improvement. The leadership identifies specific instructional practices and supports that teachers and other staff, including the school leaders themselves, can focus on as a cohesive and collaborative group. For example, a school may have been successful in improving students' expressive language. The leadership team and staff can emphasize and continue this success by focusing on the instructional expectation that students speak and write in complete sentences. The school may hang a banner in the halls that states, "At Adams School, we say the whole thing."<sup>5</sup> The banner is a daily reminder to students, parents, staff members, and the leadership team that encouraging and improving expressive language is an important school goal. Specific instructional goals can also be identified for small group instruction based on student reading performance, classroom observations, and other sources of trustworthy data. **Identifying school goals and instructional goals demonstrates a school's commitment to success through continuous improvement and supports the vision of providing instruction for ALL students so poor readers become good readers and good readers become great readers.**

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<sup>5</sup> Example based on the work of the principal and staff at Laird Elementary in Phoenix, Arizona.

## Leadership is Knowledgeable about Standards, Assessments, and Instruction

Principals and the school leadership staff need to be well-versed in the Oregon Reading Standards [http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/newspaper/Newspaper\\_Section.aspx?subjectcd=ELA](http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/newspaper/Newspaper_Section.aspx?subjectcd=ELA).<sup>6</sup> To effectively work toward all students being grade-level readers or above, **they need to understand how reading standards, assessments, and instruction work together** to support successful outcomes for all students. The six school-level chapters of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework provide guidance for implementing a school plan, one that is based on student data and that supports **every** reader to the grade-level reading goal. Specifically, principals and school leadership teams must have a thorough understanding of what the priority reading skills are, when they are to be met, and how the instruction necessary for successful reading development needs to be delivered. Principals accumulate this knowledge over time by studying the standards, attending professional development activities designed for teachers, and working closely with consultants hired to assist with implementation of specific reading programs and practices. Finally, principals and leadership staff need thorough knowledge of the assessment system, including what the measures are, the schedule for administration, what the results mean, and how to use the data collected to make sound decisions regarding the instruction provided to students.

As the instructional leader of the school,<sup>7</sup> it ultimately falls to the principal to assume the largest share of the responsibility for the overall implementation of effective reading instruction. This does not mean that the principal must have extensive expertise in all facets of the framework. Rather, principals can fill this key leadership function if they have sufficient knowledge of the three components at the heart (see [framework graphic](#)) of the framework—goals, instruction, and assessment.<sup>8</sup>

**A deep knowledge of classroom reading instruction and the schoolwide assessment plan enables principals to make informed instructional decisions.** For example, a principal who understands essential and detailed aspects of instruction and assessment will schedule initial student screening within the first few weeks of school so that instructional groups can be formed, and differentiated reading instruction can begin as early as possible. A principal who understands the importance of intense reading instruction will place the most effective reading teachers with groups of students who need the most intensive support.<sup>9</sup> Understanding that only teachers with special training in the necessary interventions can effectively teach students with instructional needs that cannot be met within the core reading program is critical to successful instruction for these students. The sections that follow further delineate the role of the principal and the functions of the school leadership staff.

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<sup>6</sup> NASSP, 2005

<sup>7</sup> Leithwood et al., 2004

<sup>8</sup> National Association of Secondary Principals, 2005; NASBE, 2006

<sup>9</sup> Gersten et al., 2009; NASSP, 2005

## Effective Leadership Is Distributed, Connected, and Consistent

Committed leadership is critical in implementing a literacy program. Leaders at the school and district levels not only need to be actively invested in pursuing successful outcomes for students, they also need to be actively invested in consistently connecting, communicating and collaborating among distributed leadership in order to sustain successes. Leaders communicating frequently and consistently around key topics for review and improvement will yield the collaboration necessary to sustain implementation efforts. Two concepts guide how effective leadership at the school level can be organized.

- First, leadership is distributed among different individuals and groups within the school.<sup>10</sup> **Distributed leadership** helps ensure that the range of important leadership tasks can be accomplished through multiple individuals sharing responsibility for schoolwide leadership. Distributed leadership builds the capacity within the school to provide effective reading instruction, and it promotes shared accountability among the staff for ensuring that students reach reading goals.
- Second, leadership tasks and responsibilities are conceptualized as **leadership functions**, and are not linked to specific individuals or even positions. Certainly, the dedication and skill that individuals bring to their leadership responsibilities will influence leadership quality and student reading achievement. However, important leadership positions are described in terms of the key functions they address, and these key functions are integrated within the culture of the school. For example, instead of relying on the position of a reading coach to successfully implement the reading plan, the key functions a coach performs, and how these functions can be carried out, are determined and described. One typical coaching function is observing instruction in classrooms and providing feedback. A school might use a peer coaching model to accomplish this task, or a grade-level team leader in each grade might conduct observations and provide feedback. Conducting classroom observations is the key function, and the school then specifies in the School Reading Plan (see [Commitment](#) chapter, 2) how this function is to be carried out. **As personnel within the school change over time, foundational features of the reading program, including leadership functions, do not change simply as a consequence of staff turnover or elimination of certain positions.**<sup>iii</sup>

I am not an expert in reading, but with the training and coaching we've had, I've been able to learn right along with the teachers. Now I can walk in and take a teacher's group for a few minutes and know what to do.

Oregon Principal

Within the school, functions associated with the principal, a reading coach, grade-level and department-level teams, and the School Leadership Team contribute to effective implementation of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework. Key functions within and among these levels of distributed leadership are described in the following sections.

<sup>10</sup> Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, (2004). "How leadership influences student learning"

## Principal

Within the school, the principal is most responsible for developing the infrastructure necessary for teachers to provide effective reading instruction to all students.<sup>11</sup> Given the extensive range of a principal's responsibilities, most principals will not have deep expertise in all areas of the framework or the School Reading Plan (see [Commitment](#) chapter, 2). However, principals can understand essential issues in key areas and be engaged in school decision-making in relation to these areas. Ultimately, it is the principal who ensures that all components of the reading plan are implemented consistently with the district's framework and that teaching and learning in the classroom is continually enhanced. Below, the key responsibilities for principals in developing and supporting the School Reading Plan are outlined.

### Principals facilitate planning for instruction

Effective classroom instruction is the centerpiece of a school's reading program. To that end, planning done by teachers and others to prepare for effective instruction in the classroom is a critical school priority. That is why it is essential that principals designate time for teachers to plan reading instruction.<sup>12</sup> By participating in the planning process in an active and supportive way, principals also make sure that the planning time is used effectively. While principals' schedules will not allow them to participate in all of the instructional planning meetings, it is critical that principals be as engaged as possible, particularly at the beginning of the year when screening data are used to form instructional groups and develop instructional support plans. Part of this planning for **elementary schools** will involve how the core reading program, supplemental materials, and intervention programs will be used as part of daily reading instruction. In **middle schools** and **high schools**, much of the planning will focus on how to integrate reading strategies into course content so students can access the information from their subject-area textbooks. Principals need to know enough about the programs and textbooks to engage meaningfully in these initial planning sessions and throughout the year as teachers use data to make instructional changes.<sup>iv</sup> ■

If the plan is not working, we do whatever is needed to change the plan. If it is not working after two weeks or a month, you need to change it. You need to make sure the plan is working. Failure is not an option.

Oregon Principal

### Principals make data-based decisions

Principals need strong expertise in all facets of the school's assessment system to determine whether students are meeting goals. Because principals ensure that schoolwide assessment data (see [Assessment](#) chapter) used for formative or summative purposes are appropriate for those purposes, they must understand how to interpret data. Specifically:


- When students are screened for reading problems at the beginning of the year, or when outcome data collected at the end of year are used as **screening data** for the following year, principals make sure interpretations about reading performance are appropriate.

<sup>11</sup> NASSP, 2005

<sup>12</sup> Herman et al., 2008



- When **progress-monitoring data** are analyzed, principals determine whether individual students, or groups of students, are making progress, and whether progress is sufficient for students to reach reading goals.
- When **outcome data** are analyzed, principals, as part of a team, determine when students have met reading goals and how well the school is doing over time (e.g., successive years) in improving reading instruction and student outcomes.

**Principals must then utilize screening, progress monitoring, and outcome data to drive decision making.**<sup>13</sup> For example, a principal and staff can begin by determining the most important goals and objectives for students to accomplish by the middle of the year and by the end of the year in each of the five elements of reading (see [Goals](#) chapter, 5). The principal can then lead the staff through an examination of the data from the middle of the year (see [Assessment](#) chapter, 14-17). As they consider how they are doing, they can ask questions such as, “Are students in each class at each grade level on track for successful reading outcomes?” and “What percentage of students made adequate reading progress from the beginning of the year to the middle of the year (fall to winter)?” If student progress is not sufficient to meet reading goals, it is critical that the principal and staff identify those grades or groups of students that are not making adequate progress and devise a plan to improve performance. **When planning ways to improve outcomes, the principal takes into consideration two major areas: infrastructure (e.g., scheduling, curriculum, instructional groups) and quality of implementation (e.g., fidelity of implementation, professional development, instruction).**<sup>14</sup>  (See [Instruction](#) chapter, 2-10 and [Assessment](#) chapter, 14-17.)

## Principals observe reading instruction in the classroom

Classroom observations conducted by principals serve several purposes.

- First, classroom observations of reading instruction are one of the most important and valuable ways for principals to gather information about effective reading instruction in the classroom. Principals can use what they observe in the classrooms of their **master teachers** to gain a vision of what instruction could look like in all classrooms.
- Second, by dedicating time to observe in classrooms on a regular basis, principals demonstrate to staff that **effective reading instruction is an essential school priority**.
- Third, and most importantly, regular observations allow principals to understand **how reading instruction is being delivered** in the classrooms and to use that information to support teachers' efforts to provide effective instruction.

I visit the classrooms not with the idea of, "What are you doing right or wrong?" but "What can I learn from you?" and "How can I support you?"

Oregon Principal

**It is essential that the purpose of these regular classroom observations be distinguished from the observations principals do as part of their teacher supervisory responsibilities.** This distinction needs to be clear at all times and communicated regularly to the teaching staff.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, & Kosanovich, 2007; NASSP, 2005

<sup>14</sup> Biancarosa, & Snow (2006).

<sup>15</sup> David, 2008

It is more important that observations be frequent rather than lengthy, although it is generally true that the longer the observation the more that can be learned. These observations, sometimes referred to as **walk-throughs** if they are brief, can be as short as five minutes and still be very valuable. It is important that principals and teachers work together to establish a culture in which the observations and feedback exchanges are seen as opportunities to gather and share information. These exchanges are about the instruction students need to reach key reading goals. Student performance and specifically what students need instructionally are always the focus of the observations and feedback.

Structured observations are the most effective.<sup>16</sup> There are many tools available to provide structure to the principal's observations.<sup>vi</sup> An observation framework, or tool, can help the principal know what to focus on during walk-throughs. To be effective, these observations need to be guided by a vision of reading instruction that is understood and shared by the principal and the teachers. To be effective, teachers need to know what principals are expecting to see in their classrooms. Setting schoolwide

"look fors" is an example of how to foster this shared vision.<sup>viii ix</sup> A principal, working with a coach or consultant, can identify common implementation issues across classrooms. The principal then creates schoolwide targets that he or she will "look for" during all classroom walk-throughs. It may be, for instance, that teachers need to provide consistent and effective correction procedures when implementing the new intervention program. The principal then communicates with teachers via a staff meeting, email, or memo that he or she will be looking for consistent use of the full-correction procedures when visiting classrooms. An example of a principal "look for" communication is provided in the figure below.

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<sup>16</sup> Protheroe, 2009



## Example of Principal “Look Fors” Communication

Teachers,

Below is the list of “Look Fors” for my next observation in your classroom. Please note: I’ve included previous “Look Fors.” This is a continuation and growth process, and “Look Fors” are cumulative and ongoing.

- Partner reading and responses are occurring in your room. Partnerships are posted and changed as necessary.
- Pick-up and delivery of students for groups is on time. (A timer is helpful.)
- Immediate positive praise is given to students when they are doing what you are asking; this can be whole group and/or individual.
- Vocabulary words from each story are posted. (Ongoing)
- Sound/Spelling cards are displayed in your classroom; refer to them as you are teaching, “This is the /ar/ sound like the artist card.” (Ongoing)
- Students are responding in full sentences, “A time when I was excited was....” This will take some practice and coaching. Needs to occur throughout day-long curriculum. (Ongoing) We’ve been working very hard on multiple opportunities for students to respond.

Thank you!

(principal’s name)

**Feedback for teachers that emerges from principal observations needs to be timely, specific, positively framed, and student focused.** An example of written feedback from a principal walk-through is provided on the following page. This requires clear, respectful, and precise communication between the principal and teachers. The communication is content-driven and conducted in a manner that emphasizes what students need instructionally to become better readers. This communication is highly technical and professional in nature and will take time and effort on the part of both the principal and the teachers for optimal effectiveness to be achieved.

### Example of Written Feedback from a Principal to a Grade 2 Teacher

#### Behaviors to Continue - Three "Keepers"

- The students were successful in the independent centers because the centers all provided direct practice of the core instruction lesson.
- The students were very engaged in the vocabulary review because you provided many opportunities to practice.
- The students were all working during the independent seatwork because you consistently monitored students by moving around the classroom while the students were seated at their desks.

#### Behaviors to Modify - Two "Polishers"

- It is important that the students have examples of the vocabulary words. To do that, please display the vocabulary words with the student-friendly definitions in the classroom. Please meet with the coach for examples of how to do that.
- It is important that students learn to use full sentences when responding to questions. In order to give them practice, try having students verbally answer comprehension questions in full sentences.

A key function often given to the reading coach is to work with teachers on instruction issues in the classroom. Consequently, it is important that the observations the principal conducts be aligned with the work of the coach. It is critical that teachers not receive different or conflicting messages from the principal and coach. This coordination will require expert communication between the principal and coach. In the section that follows, the role of a reading coach is discussed in greater detail.

## Reading Coach

Whenever possible, a reading coach is assigned to each school to work with classroom teachers and school-based teams to support effective reading instruction in reading classes and effective reading instruction across the instructional areas.<sup>x</sup> ■ Coaching is a critical part of professional development.<sup>17</sup> In the **elementary schools** a coach's key role is typically to improve reading instruction by facilitating implementation of multiple tiers of reading support aligned with student need. In **middle schools and high schools**, the typical role of literacy coaches is to improve instruction for all students by working collaboratively with teachers across the instructional areas,<sup>18</sup> although secondary coaches also support reading teachers working with struggling readers. Across coaching models in which the key role of the coach is to help improve classroom instruction, there is general consensus that coaches should support, guide, and mentor teachers. Moreover, these models suggest that at different times, coaches take on the role of instructor, curriculum expert, school-level planner, data analyst, and researcher.<sup>19</sup> **Please note: the functions described can be distributed among team members; however, for the purposes of description, they are delineated as part of coaching duties.**

<sup>17</sup> Showers & Joyce, 1996; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; IRA, 2006; Bean, 2008

<sup>18</sup> IRA, 2006; Bean, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Walpole & McKenna, 2004

These different roles can be summarized into three major coaching functions.

- First, coaches work with teachers in the classroom to help them provide robust reading instruction and subject-specific instruction that is aligned to state standards and the instructional needs of students. To accomplish this challenging agenda, teachers need **feedback and support**. The coach serves this supportive function.
- Second, coaches ensure that the objectives of the School **Reading Plan** are being implemented throughout the school. These objectives include having established measurable goals, conducting reading assessments, providing effective instruction, providing leadership, engaging in ongoing professional development, and sustaining a commitment to all students reading at grade level or higher. A coach, for example, can ensure that assessments are administered on schedule, that staff is trained to reliably administer the measures, and that the data is entered into a database in a timely fashion.
- Third, coaches assist grade-level and department-level teams in using **student reading data** to make decisions about reading instruction and reading instruction across the instructional areas.

The purpose of ongoing collaboration is to provide the appropriate support for a teacher to learn and master a new teaching practice.

Sprick, Knight, Reinke, & McKale (2006)

Ideally, mentor coaches are excellent classroom teachers who receive extensive professional development on how to be an effective coach, including specific preparation in the skills coaches need to work effectively with adults.<sup>20</sup> Coaches need professional development above and beyond classroom teachers on the following: effective reading programs and strategies, the use of course textbooks to teach reading, reading assessments, and data-based decision making. Good communication between a coach and teachers is essential for effective coaching, and establishing the professional environment needed for this communication to occur will take time to develop. The foundation of effective coaching communication is to focus on what students need instructionally to meet reading goals, not on what teachers should do differently to teach more effectively, or whether the teacher is doing a “good job.” The ongoing, professional relationship between a coach and a teacher can be compromised if the focus is on the teacher rather than on student performance and if the coaching expectations are not clear.

Coaches do not often provide instruction directly to students. Teaching students, except to model lessons for teachers, undermines the **central purpose of coaching** and also makes it difficult for coaches to fulfill their other responsibilities. For similar reasons, coaches do not carry out clerical tasks such as ordering, distributing, and managing materials.<sup>xi</sup>

Coaching effectively is challenging, and the job can be stressful. The principal needs to be a strong supporter of the coaching role and of the coach filling that role.<sup>21</sup> The principal explains to the staff what the coaching functions are and why they are critical in improving reading instruction. The principal provides support and removes obstacles so the reading coach can coach and so teachers are reinforced for

There is nothing more satisfying than seeing hordes of people engaged to do good together because of the leadership you helped produce.

Michael Fullan (2005)

<sup>20</sup> Bean & Eisenberg, 2009

<sup>21</sup> Walpole & McKenna, 2004; Neufeld & Roper, 2003

participating actively in the coaching process (as well as in other opportunities to improve their instructional skills). A strong coach will help change the culture of the school so that a continuous focus is on what students need instructionally to meet reading goals and reading goals across the instructional areas. **Changing the culture of the school is more likely to happen when the coach and principal work together to build a cohesive atmosphere among teachers that focuses on meeting the needs of students.**

## School Implementation Teams

School teams oversee the day-to-day implementation of reading instruction and reading instruction across the instructional areas throughout the school.<sup>22</sup> It is best to have two types of teams to serve this purpose. One team includes members that cut across multiple grades or departments, which is frequently referred to as the **School Leadership Team**. A second type of team is a **grade-level team** at each grade in elementary school, and a **department-level team** in middle school and high school.<sup>23</sup> The focus of both types of teams is on the attainment of reading goals and objectives. The teams use assessment data and other data to make decisions about the overall system of 1) teaching reading and 2) teaching reading across the instructional areas. The teams also focus on the reading development of individual students who are not making sufficient reading progress. Each type of school-based leadership team is described in detail below.

### Grade-Level Teams and Department-Level Teams

In **elementary schools**, each grade works together as a team. Grade-level teams consist of all the teachers in the grade level and relevant support staff (e.g., specialists, school psychologists). In **middle schools** and **high schools**, staff members usually meet by departments, but sometimes as integrated teams. Department-level teams include all of the teachers in a particular instructional area (e.g., mathematics, science), as well as relevant support staff (e.g., specialists). The coach works with the principal and other key faculty members to assemble these teams and to arrange for them to meet regularly to accomplish their objectives.

**Regular meetings focus on using formative and summative assessment data to guide the selection of instructional programs and implementation of practices in each classroom.** At the beginning of the school year, these teams examine screening data to determine the level of instructional support in reading each student needs to meet reading goals and academic expectations (see [Assessment](#) chapter and [Goals](#) chapter). Within each grade, four levels or tiers of support need to be provided to differentiate the type of reading instruction students will receive to meet reading goals and reading demands across the instructional areas. Four tiers of support are aligned to meet the needs of students who are at **no**, **low**, **moderate**, or **high** risk for **not meeting** formative and summative reading goals. This multi-tiered framework is consistent with a **Response to Intervention (RTI)** approach.<sup>24</sup> The teams clearly describe how instruction will be differentiated for students in each tier. This description occurs through some type of written documentation, such as an **Instructional Support Plan (ISP)**<sup>xii</sup> (see [Instruction](#) chapter, 40-41 that is developed for each grade or each instructional area at the beginning of the school year.

The Instructional Support Plan (ISP) includes important details of reading instruction. These details include who will provide the instruction for each tier of support, what program materials will be used, how long reading instruction will last, when during the day the instruction will occur, what the group size will be, and how reading progress will be monitored. **The ISP also addresses how reading instruction will be coordinated across**

<sup>22</sup> NASSP, 2005; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006

<sup>23</sup> In small schools with only one teacher per grade level across-grade teams can be used in place of grade-level teams. The primary purpose is to ensure that teachers have the support to analyze data and to make instructional decisions.

<sup>26</sup> Gersten et al., 2009

**the various service delivery systems** (e.g., Title 1, Special Education, programs for English language learners).

In **middle schools and high schools**, it is useful not only to have an **ISP for each grade level** that outlines reading support by tier but also to map out support that will be provided in **each instructional area**. For example, a literacy coach at the secondary level may meet with all of the social sciences teachers to make a plan for teaching students to use atlases, timelines, or other graphic tools. Instructional-area support maps can include information on accommodations that will be made for students who do not have foundational reading skills and those who have acquired foundational reading skills but continue to struggle accessing content from textbooks in literature, science, social sciences, mathematics, health, and other instructional areas.<sup>xiii</sup>

During the school year, grade-level and department-level teams closely examine progress-monitoring data to evaluate the effectiveness of each of the multiple tiers of instructional support. They might use a tool such as the **“Elements of a Healthy System Checklist”** to guide them in a problem-solving process at the systems level.<sup>xiv</sup> When progress is not sufficient, these teams identify ways to change instruction in the relevant tier of support. For example, the data may indicate that students at high risk of reading difficulty are making adequate progress toward important formative reading goals, but the progress of students at moderate risk is not sufficient.<sup>25</sup> The grade-level or department-level team, under the leadership of the coach, helps determine what instructional modifications may offer better instructional support for students at moderate risk. When students are not making adequate reading progress, the team targets the manipulation of variables that are most directly under the school’s control and that are likely to have the greatest positive impact on progress. A tool that can help identify instructional variables under the school’s control is the **“Alterable Variables Chart.”**<sup>xv</sup> This tool (see [Assessment](#) chapter, 16) provides grade-level and department-level teams with a continuum of increasingly intense instructional options on five instructional dimensions.

**At the end of the school year, grade-level teams and department-level teams evaluate the overall impact of reading instruction provided through multiple tiers of support by calculating the percentage of students who met formative and summative reading goals within each tier and across all tiers.**

Depending on the data being reviewed, this evaluation may occur at an overall staff meeting, especially at the secondary level. This staff meeting and data discussion is sometimes called a **data summit** (see [Commitment](#) chapter, 7-8). The data will help these teams reach conclusions regarding which instructional programs and practices are working effectively and should be maintained and which are not working as well as necessary and should be modified somewhat, or changed extensively. In areas where changes are needed, the teams discuss the adjustments that will be implemented by the beginning of the next school year. The rule of thumb is that the degree of adjustment should correspond to the data. For example, there should be fewer and smaller adjustments, on average, in grades where 90% of the students met end-of-year goals compared to grades where 50% of students met end-of-year goals. The following table provides an example of how a grade-level team can summarize data to make these types of decisions.<sup>xvi xvii</sup>

<sup>25</sup> In a three-tiered system, Tier I may be referred to as the Benchmark, Tier II as Strategic, and Tier III as Intensive.

| Grade and Literacy Skill Measure                   | Percent Meeting Goal Spring Last Year | Percent Meeting Goal Spring This Year | Percentage Point Increase/Decrease (+ or -) | Percent Not Meeting Goal Spring Last Year | Percent Not Meeting Goal Spring This Year | Percentage Point Increase/Decrease (+ or -) |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Kindergarten Measure 1: (e.g., phonemic awareness) | _____%<br>_____/____                  | _____%<br>_____/____                  |   | _____%<br>_____/____                      | _____%<br>_____/____                      |   |
| Kindergarten Measure 2: (e.g., Word Reading)       | _____%<br>_____/____                  | _____%<br>_____/____                  |   | _____%<br>_____/____                      | _____%<br>_____/____                      |   |
| Grade 1 Measure 1: (e.g., Word Reading)            | _____%<br>_____/____                  | _____%<br>_____/____                  |   | _____%<br>_____/____                      | _____%<br>_____/____                      |   |
| Grade 1 Measure 2: (e.g., Reading Fluency)         | _____%<br>_____/____                  | _____%<br>_____/____                  |   | _____%<br>_____/____                      | _____%<br>_____/____                      |   |
| Grade 2 Measure 1: (e.g., Reading Fluency)         | _____%<br>_____/____                  | _____%<br>_____/____                  |   | _____%<br>_____/____                      | _____%<br>_____/____                      |   |
| Grade 3 Measure 1: (e.g., Reading Fluency)         | _____%<br>_____/____                  | _____%<br>_____/____                  |   | _____%<br>_____/____                      | _____%<br>_____/____                      |   |

| Grade and Literacy Skill Measure        | Percent Meeting Goal Spring Last Year | Percent Meeting Goal Spring This Year | Percentage Point Increase/Decrease (+ or -) | Percent Not Meeting Goal Spring Last Year | Percent Not Meeting Goal Spring This Year | Percentage Point Increase/Decrease (+ or -) |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 6-8: Measure 1 (e.g., CBM - MAZE) | _____%<br>_____/____                  | _____%<br>_____/____                  |   | _____%<br>_____/____                      | _____%<br>_____/____                      |   |
| Grade 6-8: Measure 2 (e.g., OAKS)       | _____%<br>_____/____                  | _____%<br>_____/____                  |   | _____%<br>_____/____                      | _____%<br>_____/____                      |   |
| Grade 9-12: Measure 1 (e.g., OAKS)      | _____%<br>_____/____                  | _____%<br>_____/____                  |   | _____%<br>_____/____                      | _____%<br>_____/____                      |   |

## School Leadership Team

The School Leadership Team in an elementary school consists of the principal, coach, specialists, school psychologist, and grade-level representatives. In a middle school and a high school, each department is represented. This team meets regularly. The School Leadership Team has three primary functions related to the school's reading program.

**First, the team maintains a focus on the overall implementation of reading instruction throughout the school.** In **elementary schools**, this is accomplished by monitoring implementation of the schoolwide reading model across all grades (e.g., K-5). In **middle schools** and **high schools**, this is accomplished by a) monitoring implementation of reading interventions for students who are not reading at grade level and b) monitoring how reading is being taught and supported across the instructional areas for all students. The “blueprint” for reading instruction across these different areas needs to be described in the School Reading Plan (see [Commitment](#) chapter, 2).<sup>xviii</sup> In secondary schools, this is often referred to as a Comprehensive Literacy Program/Plan.<sup>26</sup>

**Second, the School Leadership Team analyzes data on student reading performance across grades and recommends adjustments to instruction that will enable more students to reach better reading outcomes.** Again, the focus is not on a particular grade or department, but rather on looking across all grades and departments to identify areas of need and to prioritize. The School Leadership Team uses an **action plan** (see [Commitment](#) chapter, 4-7) to specify the instructional changes students need in order to reach stronger reading outcomes. The action plan can be used to communicate this expectation to teachers throughout the school.<sup>xix</sup>

**Third, the School Leadership Team helps grade-level teams and department-level teams solve challenging problems.** These problems might occur at the systems-level or student-level. For example, the School Leadership Team might assist the grade-level team in grade 3 to solve a systems-level problem associated with providing better reading instruction and support in Tier 2 for students at moderate risk for not meeting goals. The **problem** may be that students receiving Tier 2 instructional supports need to make greater progress towards end-of-year goals, and the **solution** may involve adjusting the schedule to allow more small-group instruction to take place each day. At the student level, the School Leadership Team in a middle school may work, for example, with a team of reading teachers to evaluate how well a student has responded to an intervention and to decide whether the intensity of the intervention should be increased by providing more time each day for explicit reading instruction.

The focus and activities of the School Leadership Team change over time. The following table describes key activities of this team across the school year.

<sup>26</sup> Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Haynes, 2007; NASBE, 2006



| Time of the School year | School Leadership Team Focus and Activities  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Beginning</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collect two pieces of information from each grade level: (a) summary screening reports that document across each grade level the percent of students that require Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, and Tier 4 levels of reading instruction and support and (b) an Instructional Support Plan for each grade level.</li> <li>● Collect instructional-area support maps from each department in the upper grades, middle school, and high school. The School Leadership Team makes sure there is alignment between the data and the support plans. That is, the team ensures that the intensity of the tiers of support matches the intensity of students' instructional needs.</li> <li>● Identify those grade levels that require additional support and resources to meet end-of-year goals, based on either problematic data from the previous year or a high percentage of students in the current year that require intensive levels of reading instruction and support.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>During</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meet regularly to evaluate the Instructional Support Plans (ISPs) and instructional-area support maps, including reaching formative decisions regarding how well each tier is supporting students' needs.</li> <li>● Representatives from each grade-level team (elementary) and department-level team (middle school and high school) provide regular updates to the School Leadership Team on student progress. Based on these reports from grade-level teams or department-level teams, <b>the School Leadership Team helps foster changes in the school's reading program.</b> For <b>middle school</b> the reading program updates include 1) the reading classes (convened based on data) recommended for every student, with specific focus on struggling reader data, and 2) reading offered across the instructional areas for all students. For <b>high school</b> the reading program updates include 1) reading classes designed for struggling readers and 2) subject-specific reading offered across the instructional areas.</li> <li>● If the school conducts three schoolwide assessments per year (e.g., fall, winter, and spring), the School Leadership Team examines the percent of students within each tier of support that are making adequate progress towards the end-of-year formative and summative reading goals at each point in time.</li> </ul> |

## End

- Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the multiple tiers of instructional support across grade levels, within each grade level, and across the instructional areas by examining the percentage of students that have met the formative and summative reading goals.
- Based on these data, the team makes decisions regarding which instructional programs and practices are working and should be maintained and which have resulted in poor reading outcomes.
- For areas where there are problematic outcomes, the School Leadership Team discusses what kind of schoolwide adjustments, or within-grade adjustments, or within instructional area adjustments should be put in place at the beginning of the next school year. These proposed changes are formalized in the school **action plan**.<sup>xx</sup>

## Summary

It is critical that the principal, reading coach, grade-level/department-level teams, and a School Leadership Team work together to create and implement a coherent, schoolwide plan for reading. Effective building leadership must prioritize student attainment of grade-level reading goals by vigorously supporting teachers to provide classroom instruction that meets students' needs. To effectively work toward all students meeting or exceeding grade-level reading standards, the principal and the leadership teams need to become knowledgeable about state reading standards, have a thorough understanding of the instruction necessary for successful reading development, and be able to utilize the data collected from assessments to inform instruction.

Leadership needs to be distributed among different individuals and groups within the school and conceptualized as leadership functions, not linked to specific individuals or positions. Key individuals and groups include the principal, a reading coach, grade-level/department-level teams, and a School Leadership Team. It is essential that principals designate time for teachers to plan reading instruction, ensure that schoolwide data are used for formative and summative decision-making, and observe reading instruction in the classroom. If possible, a coach should work with classroom teachers, school-based teams, and the principal to support effective reading instruction. The School Leadership Team oversees the day-to-day implementation of reading instruction, including reading in all classrooms.

## Links to Resources

<sup>i</sup> For a helpful brief on ideas for building strong leadership in reading, see *Developing Effective Reading Leadership* at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/support/sustaining.html>

<sup>ii</sup> *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools*, a practitioner guide by the What Works Clearinghouse, highlights the role of school leaders in improving school practices.  
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/>

<sup>iii</sup> See The Planning and Evaluation Tool-Sustainability (PET-S) at [http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/ldrshp\\_tools.html](http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/ldrshp_tools.html) for a handout on the critical functions of a reading program.

<sup>iv</sup> See the *Reading Next* report for the role leadership plays in improving adolescent literacy achievement [http://www.all4ed.org/publication\\_material/reports/reading\\_next](http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/reports/reading_next)

<sup>v</sup> For a complete module on data-based leadership, see [http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/ldrshp\\_data\\_based.html](http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/ldrshp_data_based.html)

<sup>vi</sup> Examples of principal observations tools include the Five-Minute Observation on Structural Elements, the Five-Minute Observation Form for General Features of Effective Instruction, and an observation form that focuses on background, engagement, teaching, time, environment and results. A complete training package on conducting principal walk-throughs can be found at <http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/>.

<sup>vii</sup> For more information on “look fors” or Principal Walk-Through observations see [http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/ldrshp\\_walk\\_throughs.html](http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/ldrshp_walk_throughs.html).

<sup>viii</sup> For guides on instructional leadership see the Center on Instruction website – *Adolescent Literacy Walk-through for Principals*  
[http://centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=reading&subcategory=&grade\\_start=4&grade\\_end=12](http://centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=reading&subcategory=&grade_start=4&grade_end=12)

<sup>ix</sup> The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) offers a slideshow presentation of a principal walkthrough at:  
<http://www.fcrr.org/staffpresentations/snettles/principalwalkthroughcontent.pdf>

<sup>x</sup> For a helpful brief on the roles of reading coaches, see *Leading for Reading Success: An Introductory Guide for Reading First Coaches* at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/support/leadership.html>

Also, see the *Literacy Coach: A Key to Improving Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools* by the Carnegie Corporation of New York for an overview of reading coaches in the secondary grades:

<http://carnegie.org/> and the Center on Instruction's *Improving Instruction Through Coaching* at:  
[http://centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=special&subcategory=&grade\\_start=&grade\\_end=](http://centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=special&subcategory=&grade_start=&grade_end=)

<sup>xi</sup> A sample of a reading coach job description can be found at <http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/>. A more thorough description of coaching at the middle and high school levels can be found at <http://www.reading.org/General/CurrentResearch/Standards/CoachingStandards.aspx>.

<sup>xii</sup> See [http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/inst\\_tools.html](http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/inst_tools.html) for an Instructional Support Plan template

<sup>xiii</sup> Visit the Center on Instruction website for a helpful guide on literacy and content instruction in Grades 4-12. – *Bringing Literacy Strategies into Content Instruction*

[http://centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=reading&subcategory=&grade\\_start=4&grade\\_end=12](http://centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=reading&subcategory=&grade_start=4&grade_end=12)

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<sup>xiv</sup> An “Elements of a Healthy System Checklist” can be found at <http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/toolbox.html#swrm>.

<sup>xv</sup> An example “Alterable Variables Chart” can be found at [http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/inst\\_tools.html](http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/inst_tools.html).

<sup>xvi</sup> A module (IBR IV: Evaluation and Planning (Spring 2004)) on using data at the end of the school year to evaluate outcomes can be found at [http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/pd\\_cohorta\\_ibrs.html](http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/pd_cohorta_ibrs.html).

<sup>xvii</sup> See the practitioner guide, *Using Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making*, by the What Works Clearinghouse for guidelines on using achievement data to set instructional goals <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/>

<sup>xviii</sup> A template for School Reading Plan can be found at <http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/toolbox.html>.

<sup>xix</sup> A sample of a school action plan can be found at A sample of a school action plan can be found at [http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/downloads/goals/0708\\_action\\_plan\\_sample.doc](http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/downloads/goals/0708_action_plan_sample.doc)

<sup>xx</sup> A module (IBR IV: Evaluation and Planning (Spring 2004)) on using data at the end of the school year to evaluate outcomes can be found at [http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/pd\\_cohorta\\_ibrs.html](http://oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/pd_cohorta_ibrs.html).