

Literacy Leadership Team Guiding Questions

Vision and Alignment

1. What are the most important literacy priorities identified in our school's reading plan? *Our most important literacy priorities are to strengthen standards-aligned Tier 1 instruction, accelerate the growth of students in the Lowest 25%, and increase the number of students reaching grade-level proficiency. Our measurable ELA targets are to reach at least 67% proficiency and 67% learning gains for the Lowest Quartile, while contributing to the school's overall movement to 67%. Priority practices include explicit instruction, purposeful small-group differentiation, targeted intervention matched to specific deficits, consistent progress monitoring, and student ownership of learning goals.*
2. How do these priorities align with district goals and the B.E.S.T. ELA Standards? *The priorities align with the B.E.S.T. ELA Standards by keeping grade-level standards and complex text at the center of core instruction while providing the scaffolds students need to access that work. Instruction will emphasize the reading, vocabulary, fluency, foundational, and written-response skills required by the standards. District curriculum, pacing, assessment expectations, and approved intervention resources will provide the common framework; school-based data will determine where additional differentiation and intervention are necessary.*
3. Which student groups require our greatest attention this year? *Our greatest attention must go to two strategic groups. First are students in the Lowest 25%, because their acceleration is essential to reaching the 67% ELA Lowest Quartile learning-gain goal. Second are students who are approaching proficiency and can reasonably move to Level 3 or above with targeted standards-based support; their movement is important to reaching 67% overall school performance and ELA proficiency to 59%. Students with persistent foundational skill deficits, ESE students, multilingual learners, and students showing limited response to Tier 1 will be monitored closely within these priority groups.*
4. What evidence demonstrates that our current literacy practices are meeting student needs? *Evidence will include FAST growth across progress-monitoring windows, district/common assessment performance, classroom formative data, student work, intervention progress-monitoring results, and movement between instructional groups. We will also look for evidence that students are mastering previously identified deficits and transferring those skills to grade-level reading and writing. Because our overall school performance goal is 67%, our evidence must show not only isolated improvement but sufficient growth toward that target and the specific ELA/LQ goals.*

5. Where do we see the greatest opportunity for improvement? *The greatest opportunity is in tightening the connection between assessment, instruction, and intervention. We can improve by identifying the precise reason a student is struggling, responding quickly with targeted instruction, monitoring whether the response is working, and regrouping without waiting for the next major assessment window. A second opportunity is strengthening Tier 1 differentiation so that intervention supplements rather than replaces grade-level instruction.*
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Science of Reading Implementation

1. How consistently are Science of Reading practices visible across all K–5 classrooms? *Consistency should be measured through walkthroughs, collaborative planning, student work, and data rather than assumed. Across K–5, we expect evidence-based literacy practices to be visible in daily instruction, including explicit modeling, systematic skill development, cumulative review, purposeful practice, checks for understanding, corrective feedback, and application in connected text. Walkthrough trends will be used to identify practices that are strong schoolwide and practices requiring coaching or professional learning.*
2. How are teachers providing explicit and systematic instruction? *Teachers will provide explicit, systematic instruction across the five essential literacy areas below. Instruction will be driven by student need and diagnostic evidence, while maintaining access to grade-level B.E.S.T. ELA expectations.*
 - *Phonological awareness? For students who demonstrate a need, teachers will explicitly teach and model oral manipulation of sounds, including blending, segmenting, and manipulating phonemes. Instruction will be brief, targeted, cumulative, and connected to students' identified deficits. Students who have already mastered these skills will not receive unnecessary foundational practice.*
 - *Phonics? Teachers will provide explicit and sequential instruction in sound-spelling relationships, decoding, encoding, syllable patterns, and word analysis when data indicate a decoding deficit. Students will receive guided practice and immediate corrective feedback, followed by opportunities to apply the skill in connected text. Intervention lessons will be selected according to the specific phonics pattern or decoding need.*

- Fluency? Teachers will strengthen accuracy, automaticity, rate, phrasing, and expression through teacher modeling, supported oral reading, repeated reading, and appropriately challenging connected text. Fluency support will be targeted to students whose data show that inefficient or inaccurate reading is interfering with comprehension, and progress will be monitored for transfer into grade-level reading.
 - Vocabulary? Teachers will explicitly teach high-utility academic and text-specific vocabulary before, during, and after reading. Instruction will include student-friendly definitions, context, morphology such as roots and affixes, multiple exposures, discussion, and opportunities to use new words in speaking and writing. Vocabulary instruction will support students' ability to comprehend increasingly complex grade-level text.
 - Comprehension? Teachers will explicitly model how proficient readers make meaning from text and will gradually release responsibility to students. Instruction will address B.E.S.T.-aligned skills such as determining central/main idea, summarizing, making inferences, analyzing text structure and author's purpose, comparing information, citing text evidence, and responding to reading in writing. Students will regularly explain their thinking and apply strategies in authentic grade-level texts rather than completing skills only in isolation.
3. How do we ensure instruction is responsive to student data rather than solely following pacing? Teachers will maintain grade-level pacing for core instruction while using data to determine scaffolds, small groups, reteaching, and intervention. PLC/data meetings will identify the standard or skill students have not mastered and establish a short instructional response with a reassessment point. Students should not remain in a group simply because of an initial placement; grouping and intensity will change when evidence changes.
 4. What instructional practices should be strengthened schoolwide? Priority practices include explicit teacher modeling, frequent checks for understanding, standards-aligned questioning, purposeful use of text evidence, vocabulary/morphology instruction, structured student discussion, written response to reading, differentiated small groups, and immediate corrective feedback. We also need consistent use of data to identify the actual skill deficit before selecting an intervention lesson.
 5. How are students receiving opportunities to apply literacy skills in authentic reading and writing tasks? Students will regularly read

connected grade-level text, discuss meaning, cite evidence, write about reading, compare information across texts, and apply vocabulary and comprehension skills in meaningful contexts. Intervention lessons will include transfer opportunities so that students demonstrate the targeted skill in authentic text rather than only in isolated practice.

Core Reading Instruction (Tier 1)

1. What evidence indicates Tier 1 instruction is effective for most students? *Tier 1 effectiveness will be judged by the percentage of students mastering grade-level standards through common/formative assessments, FAST growth, student work, and reduced need for intensive intervention. If large numbers of students demonstrate the same deficit, the first response will be to examine core instruction and reteaching rather than automatically moving all students into intervention.*
2. Are instructional materials being implemented with fidelity? *Teachers are expected to use district-adopted core materials and pacing as designed while making appropriate standards-aligned adjustments based on student data. Fidelity will be supported through collaborative planning, walkthroughs, lesson review, and discussion of student work. Supplemental resources such as Magnetic Reading and Ready/Teacher Toolbox will be used intentionally for identified needs and not as a replacement for grade-level core instruction.*
3. How are teachers differentiating within Tier 1 instruction? *Differentiation will occur through flexible grouping, scaffolded questioning, explicit vocabulary support, targeted prerequisite-skill review, varied levels of teacher prompting, additional guided practice, and extension for students who demonstrate mastery. Group membership will be driven by current evidence and changed as students progress.*
4. How are teachers using student engagement strategies during literacy blocks? *Teachers will use accountable talk, turn-and-talk, collaborative text analysis, annotation, response boards, written response, purposeful questioning, and opportunities for students to explain their thinking with evidence. Engagement will be defined by students doing the cognitive work of reading, speaking, listening, and writing—not simply being compliant or busy.*
5. What classroom practices should be highlighted as exemplars? *Exemplars should include classrooms where grade-level rigor is maintained while scaffolds are responsive to data; teachers explicitly model thinking; students cite text evidence and explain reasoning; small groups have a clear instructional purpose; formative checks lead to immediate adjustments; and students can articulate their learning goal and progress.*

These practices can be shared through peer observation, PLCs, demonstration lessons, and coaching.

Assessment and Data Analysis

1. How are FAST and district assessment results informing instructional decisions? *FAST and district assessment data will be used to identify schoolwide, grade-level, class, subgroup, standard, and student trends. FAST provides major progress-monitoring checkpoints, while district/common assessments and classroom evidence provide more immediate information for instructional decisions. Data will identify students needing acceleration, students near proficiency, standards requiring reteaching, and students requiring diagnostic follow-up. The result of each data review must be an instructional response with an owner and a reassessment date.*
2. Which grade levels are demonstrating the strongest growth? Why? *This question must be answered with the current grade-level data at each data review; the attached guiding-question document does not provide grade-by-grade results. The LLT will identify the strongest-growth grades using FAST and district/common assessment evidence, then examine the practices contributing to that growth—such as consistency of Tier 1 implementation, effective grouping, targeted intervention, collaborative planning, or stronger progress-monitoring cycles—and determine which practices should be replicated.*
3. Which grade levels require additional support? *The LLT will look for repeated strengths and deficits across grades, including comprehension standards, vocabulary, fluency, foundational skills, written response, and the performance of Lowest Quartile and near-proficiency students. Cross-grade trends will guide schoolwide professional learning and resource decisions, while grade-specific trends will be addressed through targeted planning and intervention.*
4. What trends are evident across grades? *This will also be determined from current grade-level data rather than assumed. Grades below expected proficiency or growth trajectories, especially those with high concentrations of Lowest Quartile students not making adequate progress, will receive intensified coaching, collaborative planning, data analysis, resource support, and intervention coordination.*
5. Which foundational skill deficits are most common? *The most common deficits must be confirmed through diagnostic and classroom evidence.*

For students whose performance suggests a foundational weakness, teachers will determine whether the primary need involves phonological awareness, decoding/phonics, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary/language, or comprehension. Intervention will then be matched to that specific need rather than based only on an overall test level.

6. *How frequently are teachers reviewing student data? Teachers will review classroom/formative evidence continuously and conduct structured data reviews during PLC/collaborative planning cycles. Intervention progress-monitoring data should be reviewed at regular short intervals appropriate to the intervention, with more frequent review for students receiving more intensive support. FAST and district benchmark windows will serve as larger checkpoints for evaluating trajectory toward the 67% ELA proficiency and 67% ELA LQ learning-gain goals.*
 7. *How do we ensure data discussions lead to instructional action? Every formal data discussion will end with four decisions: (1) the specific standard or skill need, (2) the instructional response, (3) the person responsible and students involved, and (4) the date/evidence used to determine whether the response worked. At the next meeting, the team will review the agreed-upon evidence before creating a new plan. This creates a continuous cycle of assess → analyze → act → monitor → regroup.*
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Interventions

1. *How are students identified for intervention? Students will be identified using multiple measures: FAST performance and growth, district/common assessments, classroom formative data, diagnostic evidence, student work, and teacher observation. Priority will be given to Lowest Quartile students and students whose skill deficits prevent successful access to grade-level instruction. Identification will be based on demonstrated need rather than a single score.*
2. *Are interventions aligned to specific student skill deficits? Yes. Intervention will be selected only after the team identifies the student's specific need. Reading intervention may address foundational decoding/phonics, fluency, vocabulary/language, or comprehension/meaning-making. Resources such as Magnetic Reading, Benchmark intervention components, and Ready/Teacher Toolbox can be used when they match the identified need. The resource should follow the deficit—not the other way around.*
3. *How do we know interventions are working? An intervention is working when progress-monitoring evidence shows an adequate rate of*

improvement and students increasingly apply the targeted skill in grade-level work. Teams will compare performance to the student's baseline and short-term goal. If growth is inadequate, the team will examine fidelity, dosage, group size, instructional match, and whether a more intensive or different intervention is needed.

4. What progress-monitoring data are being reviewed regularly? *Teams will review skill-specific probes or checks connected to the intervention, curriculum/common assessment evidence, classroom performance, student work, and FAST/district data when available. The progress-monitoring measure should be sensitive enough to show whether the targeted skill is improving between major benchmark windows.*
 5. Are intervention groups flexible and adjusted based on student growth? *Yes. Intervention groups will be flexible. Students may move to a different skill group, receive increased or decreased intensity, or exit an intervention when evidence demonstrates sustained mastery and successful transfer. Students will not remain in a group for convenience or for an entire grading period without data supporting that placement.*
 6. How are Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports coordinated with core instruction? *Tier 2 and Tier 3 will supplement—not replace—grade-level Tier 1 instruction. Classroom and intervention teachers will communicate about the grade-level standards being taught, the student's prerequisite deficit, strategies being used, and progress. This coordination allows intervention to close skill gaps while students continue receiving access to grade-level B.E.S.T. instruction.*
 7. What barriers exist to effective intervention implementation? *Potential barriers include limited intervention time, competing schedules, inconsistent attendance, groups that are too large, insufficient diagnostic information, intervention that is not matched to the deficit, inconsistent progress monitoring, and lack of communication between core and intervention teachers. The LLT will identify which barriers are actually present and address them through scheduling, resource allocation, coaching, and accountability.*
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Professional Learning and Coaching

1. What literacy professional learning has had the greatest impact on instruction? *The school should determine this from walkthrough trends, teacher feedback, implementation evidence, and student outcomes. Professional learning with the greatest impact will be the learning that results in observable changes in classroom practice and improved student performance. Priority areas are likely to include explicit instruction, B.E.S.T.-*

aligned comprehension and written response, differentiation, foundational-skill diagnostics, small-group instruction, and data-driven intervention.

2. What additional support do teachers need? *Teachers need protected collaborative planning/data time, support interpreting assessment results, help identifying the root skill deficit, modeling of effective small-group lessons, support differentiating without lowering grade-level rigor, and assistance using intervention resources strategically. Support should be differentiated for teachers just as instruction is differentiated for students.*
3. What trends emerge from classroom walkthroughs and coaching cycles? *Walkthrough and coaching trends will be summarized by instructional practice rather than by individual teacher. The team will look for patterns in explicit modeling, student cognitive engagement, standards alignment, questioning, small-group purpose, vocabulary instruction, written response, checks for understanding, and use of formative data. These patterns will determine coaching and professional-learning priorities.*
4. How are coaching conversations connected to student achievement data? *Coaching conversations will begin with a specific student-learning need and connect that need to an observable instructional practice. For example, if students are weak in citing evidence, coaching can focus on modeling, questioning, text annotation, and written response. Follow-up will examine both implementation and student work to determine whether the instructional change improved outcomes.*
5. Which instructional practices should be coaching priorities? *Priorities should include explicit and systematic instruction, maintaining grade-level rigor with appropriate scaffolds, formative checks and immediate feedback, purposeful flexible grouping, vocabulary/morphology, fluency where indicated, comprehension through complex text, evidence-based written response, and use of progress-monitoring data to adjust intervention.*
6. How can teacher leaders help build literacy capacity across the school? *Teacher leaders can facilitate PLC/data conversations, model effective lessons, share student-work protocols, support collaborative planning, open classrooms for peer observation, help analyze standards and assessment items, and share successful intervention strategies. Their role should help create consistency across classrooms while building collective responsibility for the 67% schoolwide target, 67% ELA proficiency target, and 67% ELA Lowest Quartile learning-gain target.*