



Nebraska Unfinished Learning Series Early Literacy Community of Practice

Session 1: Defining our Approach to Addressing Unfinished Learning

Research Snapshots

- Students who are not proficient in third grade are four times less likely to graduate on time (Hernandez, 2012)
- Third-grade scores are predictive of eighth-grade and high school scores, and college enrollment (Lesnick, George, Smithgal, and Gwynne, J., 2010)
- Seventy-four percent of third-graders who read poorly will still be struggling in ninth grade (Fletcher and Lyon, 1998)
- A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by the end of third grade is quite unlikely to graduate from high school (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998).
- First-grade reading scores are a “reliable predictor of later reading scores.” (Juel, 1998).

Setting the Context

Like many schools across the country, Piedmont Valley School started the year in a fully remote model with a phased return to in-person learning in January. Anticipating students would experience a spring/summer slide, Principal Garcia developed an approach to make up for lost instructional time. She works with each of her content leads to set a vision for how to address unfinished teaching and learning in math and ELA, realizing that the two content areas require slightly different approaches.

Let's Zoom in: What does this work look like in ELA?

The ELA Content Leads for K-2 and 3-5 determine that for their reading comprehension block, there's no reason to significantly adjust their scope and sequence. Together, they make a plan for supporting all students in successfully accessing complex, grade-level texts. In their weekly PLCs, each grade-level team closely analyzes the texts for their upcoming lesson to determine what, specifically, makes the text complex, including what knowledge students may need to fully access the text. Based on their analysis of text complexity, the



team works together to identify effective scaffolds they can implement to support students in reading and making meaning of the text(s).

While this approach has largely proven to be effective, teachers from both grade-bands quickly identify that this approach isn't quite enough when it comes to addressing *all* components of literacy instruction. In the 4th-5th grade PLCs, teachers raise concerns around students who struggle to decode and read even below grade-level texts with fluency. K-2 teachers name that they are noticing a wide range of student abilities during their Foundational Skills block. In their most recent planning meeting, Mrs. Gordon, a 2nd grade teacher, asks a very pointed question: "What do I do if many of my students haven't yet mastered some of the skills we already taught this year – do we keep moving forward with our scope and sequence? I am worried that if I keep stopping to reteach, my students will keep falling further behind, but I also worry if I push forward with our scope and sequence that my students who currently have gaps will just get lost. What do I do?" The team realizes that while moving forward with grade-level content works when it comes to focusing on complex, grade-level texts, the work of addressing unfinished learning of foundational skills is different and therefore, requires a different approach.

A Tale of Two Schools

Scenario 1- Mr. Monroe:

Mr. Monroe has had a challenging year adjusting to teaching his second-grade class in the time of Covid. He feels he has done his best to adapt his teaching to meet the needs of all his students but he admits that at times he is confused about what he should be doing. He knows that students missed the last two units of instruction in the previous school year with closures. He keeps hearing "accelerate, don't remediate" but students are struggling with the skills he is presenting this year. He wonders how his students are going to learn more complex vowel patterns when they haven't even mastered short vowel sounds. He also wonders how his colleagues are handling these challenges but there really isn't any opportunity for him to talk to them now that they aren't in the building together.

It is Sunday evening, and like every other Sunday, Mr. Monroe has set aside 30 minutes to plan for next week's instruction. He is grateful that all he is required to do is copy and paste the lesson objectives into the planning document and submit it to his principal by EOD Sunday, but he recognizes that this doesn't really doesn't leave him prepared to teach. He will set aside another 30 minutes



to review the week's lessons so at least he knows what he will be teaching this week.

As Mr. Monroe enters the student grades from last week, he notices that about 55% of the class was not proficient on one of the worksheets they completed using the new vowel digraphs that were introduced that week. He believes if students hadn't missed instruction last spring, they would be doing better this year with skills but since his leadership team has set the expectation that all teachers must stay on track with their pacing calendars, he will continue pushing forward with grade-level skills. He hopes if he just keeps moving along everyone will catch up eventually. He hopes that is what they mean by "accelerate don't remediate."

The school coach has provided a lot of websites with games for Mr. Monroe to use with his students for extra practice but he doesn't see any time in his schedule to fit in extra practice so he is just going to send those links home to parents and hope they will find time to have students do the extra practice. He is not sure if the games align specifically to the skills that are currently being taught but at least it is practice.

He is proud that he has managed to find time twice a week to pull a small group. He decides he will use leveled readers during those times with the groups that are struggling so they can practice reading at their level. The decodables are just too hard for his low students that have so many gaps in decoding and he doesn't want his students to get too discouraged.

As Mr. Monroe wraps up his planning, he reviews his calendar and notices that there is a Student Intervention Team meeting next week. He decides that he will submit the name of three of his students to see if they qualify for a Special Education referral. He has heard the Special Education Teacher is using a new phonics program that gives students a lot more opportunities for practice. Hopefully that will be just what his students need!

Scenario 2- Ms. Boudreaux

Ms. Boudreaux has had a challenging year adjusting to teaching her first-grade class in the time of Covid but thankfully her grade level team, with the support of her school leader, have worked hard to overcome many obstacles to ensure their students have a successful year. Right away, the team was concerned when the beginning of the year screeners indicated 40% of their first graders were behind in their phonics skills. Last year's professional development series made them keenly aware that without a strong reading foundation their



students would likely encounter many struggles in school. They also recognize that foundational skills are sequential so they must ensure that the skills instruction that was missed last year is addressed this year. Luckily, after review of the scope and sequence of skills across the grades, and specifically the skills covered in the missed units at the end of last year, they identified that many of those skills will be reviewed again at the beginning of this year. They have planned to intentionally build in extra time in the pacing calendar in order to fully introduce and provide ample practice of those skills.

Ms. Boudreaux's grade level team continues to meet weekly to monitor student data and plan for upcoming instruction. Ms. Boudreaux is so grateful for these opportunities to collaborate with her colleagues and share ideas for how to handle the unique challenges this year has brought.

In last week's meeting, the team planned for Unit 1 Lessons 1-5. The team began by reviewing the standard that will be the focus of the week's lessons, and the scope and sequence of this unit and prior units. The team determined that some of the skills they would be teaching in this unit were originally introduced in the units that they were not able to teach at the end of last year. Each teacher swiftly dug into their core materials to find some additional materials to add extra modeling and practice opportunities in centers and small groups for the skills in the upcoming lessons. They also decided that this week they would collect student's work on worksheet 3.1, which they determined aligns to RF.1.3.c, so they could check for student's ability to use the o-e and a-e spelling patterns, a focus of this week's lessons. They will bring those student work samples to this week's meeting so that they can analyze the data to ensure students are progressing and that they have adequately addressed any gaps.

In preparation for this week's meeting, the team has completed their lesson internalization protocol for next week's lessons and submitted questions they had on a shared document. Ms. Smith, their instructional leader, has reviewed their lesson internalization and questions prior to the grade level meeting and has prepared an opportunity for a quick discussion and practice of how to deliver the "tricky word" lesson with an online format in the coming week. She has sent the team the agenda for the meeting with a reminder of the pre-work and deliverables.

Ms. Smith opens the meeting with a quick warm up activity. Ms. Smith has prepared notecards in advance of the meeting with letter patterns the teachers have already taught, or will be teaching in this week's lessons. The teachers partner up and take turns running through the flashcards, saying the sounds of



the letters presented on the card. The teachers must correctly articulate the sound in order to get a point. If the sound is incorrectly articulated the partner must provide correction and have the teacher practice the correct articulation before moving on.

Ms. Boudreaux goes first in presenting her data from last week. She reports that the lessons last week went well in general. Based on her planning with the team last week she delivered the additional modeling in the lessons and practice opportunities in centers and small groups. She collected observational data throughout the week and shared the highlights of the data with the team, including the detailed anecdotal note that she collected while having students apply their learning while reading decodable texts. She notes that 3 of her students are still having difficulty discriminating the difference between long vowel sounds and short vowel sounds, and two of those students are also demonstrating confusion with the short vowel sounds /a/ and /e/. In preparing for the meeting Ms. Boudreaux reviewed those student's beginning of the year assessment data and noted that it indicated that those students had gaps with several short vowel sounds. One student also appeared to still have difficulty with segmenting and blending the sounds in the words. Ms. Boudreaux has identified all these skills as prerequisite skills for learning the long vowel patterns. Looking at the class performance on worksheet 3.1, all but 4 students scored proficient. One student was absent for some of the lessons so she has set up time to review the missed content with the student and provide additional practice opportunities from the unit. The other 3 students that were not yet proficient are the same students she identified in her observational data. She has used her curriculum to identify the lessons that align to the earliest point of weakness in their code knowledge and will use resources from her curriculum for additional instruction and practice to reteach/reinforce those skills in small group time. She will reassess each of these students at the end of next week and report back on their progress to decide next steps.

Ms. Boudreaux's two other colleagues also report out on their class' progress with the lessons, the data they collected and how they responded to meet their student's needs.

After their lesson delivery practice, Ms. Smith closes out the meeting and sets up time to observe two of the teachers deliver the part of the lesson they practice so that she can provide more specific feedback and support in next week's meeting. It has been a challenging year for the team but in challenges they see opportunity. The team has collaborated more than ever and together they know they can ensure all their students succeed!



Preparing for Next Steps: Self-Assessment

Access and make a copy of the self-assessment here:

[https://tinyurl.com/ EarlyLitSelfAssessment](https://tinyurl.com/EarlyLitSelfAssessment)

- **When** will you complete this self-assessment?
- **Who** will be the point person for holding the team accountable for completing the assessment?
- **How** will you work together as a team to complete and norm on this self assessment?