

Amplify.

Literacy Change Management Playbook

**Navigating and sustaining change when
implementing a Science of Reading curriculum**



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Creating change that lasts when implementing Science of Reading practices

We're sure you've seen the headlines—the latest NAEP data shows that students' reading scores are slipping, with 37% of students in grade 4 performing below the NAEP Basic level in reading in 2022.

That's the bad news. The good: Educators across the nation are taking action and calling for change.

And the result has been increased attention on the Science of Reading, with its potential to restore those scores and support literacy development for this generation and the next.

In this playbook, you'll find processes, checklists, and other resources to support your efforts at creating change that lasts.

Why the Science of Reading is creating a moment for change across the nation

The Science of Reading refers to the extensive and ever-evolving body of research that indicates how to successfully teach children to read.

Our friends at the Reading League say that instruction based on the Science of Reading “will elevate and transform every community, every nation, through the power of literacy.”

There may be a number of reasons your district is adopting a new curriculum grounded in the Science of Reading. Perhaps you're in one of the 32 states that have passed laws or implemented new policies related to evidence-based reading instruction since 2013. Maybe you're making the shift to provide students with the literacy instruction they need to achieve the results you know they're capable of. Or perhaps you want to give your teachers the professional development they deserve, so they feel empowered to give their students their best.

Regardless of your reason for embarking on this challenging yet admirable endeavor, one thing is for certain: You are changing the lives of your students.

The following resources help explain why the Science of Reading, and its focus on evidence-based instructional practice, is creating a moment of change across the nation:

- [*The Knowledge Gap*](#) (Natalie Wexler)
- [*Science of Reading: A Primer, Part One*](#) (Amplify)
- [*Sold a Story: How Teaching Kids to Read Went So Wrong*](#) (APM)

In the words of educators...

“Knowing and understanding the way that the brain learns to read has helped me tailor my instruction to be the most effective teacher for my students. I would say that my greatest Science of Reading achievement would have to be my students and the progress that they have been able to make.”



Anna Elizabeth Carter, Kindergarten Teacher, Wake County Public Schools, North Carolina

Support systemic change: process, practice and people

The Science of Reading is a big deal, so it makes sense that shifting to a Science of Reading curriculum is a big deal, too. If you're taking steps to implement literacy change in your district, you'll need to think about not just some new materials, or one professional development session. You'll also need to do more than just rely on one teacher to add a little extra phonics instruction to the daily language arts block. This shift will involve fundamental cultural, and practical changes at all levels, from the district office down to the individual classroom. It is a systemic shift that requires time, effort, and routine maintenance, with all components working harmoniously toward a common goal.

When change is done deliberately and well, it is much more likely to stick and drive real results. Key drivers that support educational change focus on **process, practice, and people**.

Process

- Problem: Identify and investigate an issue.
- Plan: Develop a focused plan that includes deprioritization and prioritization of initiatives.
- Progress: Review progress to plan and adjust when needed (Hamilton, et al., 2022. *Building to Impact*).

Practice

- Curriculum: Develop knowledge of the program material.
- Behavior: Implement the teaching and learning processes intended by the curriculum (Fullan, 2016. *The New Meaning of Educational Change*).

People

- Communication: Plan for communication of the change for all stakeholders.
- Professional development: Implement training to support acquisition of new skills that requires new knowledge.
- Coaching: Create structures that allow for ongoing, long-term support for implementation of new resources and instructional practices (Deutschman, 2007. *Change or Die*).

The following Amplify resources support you in this work:

- [Focus implementation: Doing less to do more, with Dr. Doug Reeves, Science of Reading: The Podcast, Season 6, Episode 3](#) (Amplify)
- [Aldine ISD: Implementing change during uncertain times](#) (Amplify)

In the words of educators...

“This goes out to the interventionists, coaches, and administrators. Support your staff. Be a part of and/or lead staff trainings, provide push-in support, model and co-teach so that the staff will see that this is not just another initiative. Remember, this is the start of a long, powerful journey. Take small steps, do them well, then use data to move on to the next small step.”



Corey Beil

Instructional Interventionist, Quakertown Community School District, Pennsylvania



Evidence-based stages of implementation

Ready to go? When you're working to implement new practices or resources, a focus on those key drivers of change—process, practice and people—will be critical.

Stage 1: Exploration

Stage 1: Exploration

During the exploration stage, stakeholders explore the need for change, gather information, and begin to build buy-in for potential change.

Process

1. Identify key issues:
 - Conduct data analysis and gather feedback to pinpoint the unique challenges and areas for improvement in your district.
 - Document specific issues and concerns that need to be addressed.
 - Craft messaging for multiple stakeholder groups around the key issues that are uncovered.
2. Develop a short- and long-term plan:
 - Prioritize the areas requiring immediate attention and action.
 - Create a longer-term (2–3 year) plan to drive strong literacy practices and results.
 - Identify and create a plan to deprioritize competing initiatives as a result of the changes being implemented.

Practice

1. Develop a shared vision:
 - Collaborate with stakeholders to craft a concise and compelling vision for desired literacy practices in the district.
 - Ensure the vision reflects the goals, values, and aspirations of all involved parties.
2. Create a digital Science of Reading backpack:
 - Curate a collection of digital resources—such as articles, research papers, and videos—that explain the Science of Reading.
 - Organize the resources for easy access and sharing with stakeholders.
3. Gather information
 - Design a survey or gather anecdotal information about staff's understanding and openness to the Science of Reading.
 - Include questions to identify knowledge gaps and gauge receptiveness to change.

“Take the time to invest in putting together a literacy team....if you take the time to create a team within your district to sit and have the conversations about what the vision is and...what the plan is...then things will run smoothly because there is buy-in and a shared sense of collective belonging to the mission and vision.”

Kelly Moran, Curriculum Supervisor, Chardon Local Schools, Ohio
Science of Reading: The Podcast, Season 2, Episode 6

People

1. Engage a broad range of stakeholders:
 - Identify and involve diverse stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, parents, and community members in all aspects of the change process.
 - Establish clear channels of communication to engage and solicit input from each group.
2. Socialize the vision:
 - Communicate the literacy vision through staff meetings, workshops, and digital platforms.
 - Encourage dialogue and feedback to foster understanding and ownership among stakeholders.
3. Share selected resources
 - Identify key resources that highlight the challenges and need for change, such as articles, videos, or research papers.
 - Distribute the resources widely and encourage individuals to review and discuss them.

The key to this stage is to explore, build knowledge, and determine areas of need.

The following Amplify resources support you in this work:

- [Science of Reading toolkit](#)
- [Science of Reading resource site](#)
- [Your roadmap to the Science of Reading](#)

In the words of educators...

“And so my best advice for someone that’s looking to do this would be to really dig into the principles behind the science that are the Science of Reading. Those are phonemic and phonological awareness phonics, and then that part that we forget about building, that background knowledge and vocabulary that all has to work hand in hand to make it really happen.”

Eddie Bostic, Principal, Gallia Local Schools, Ohio



*language
comprehension*

knowledge

vocabulary

sentences

reasoning

mental model

*word
recognition*

sounds

letters

words

increasingly strategic →

increasingly automatic →

*skilled
reading*

Braid diagram based on Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for Research in Early Literacy* (pp. 97–110). New York: Guilford Press.

Stage 2: Adoption

Once you've established the rationale for change and built buy-in from stakeholders, you'll want to think about what program(s) will help your district transition to evidence-based practices that will drive results for students. There will be many moving parts with time-sensitive components during the adoption stage, so having a comprehensive adoption plan in place will be critical. You will not have a new curriculum in place, so taking the time to continue the study of evidence-based practices will set your teachers up for success when you step into the initial implementation stage.

It's easy for a program to claim alignment to the research, but it's up to you and your team to evaluate that program for its fidelity to the Science of Reading. This will ensure that you are selecting only the most effective instruction that will ultimately make the greatest difference to your students.

A program that's true to the Science of Reading will be guided by these universal principles:

- **Science-based** reading instruction is a matter of equity.
- **Learning** to read proficiently in any language requires both word recognition and language comprehension.
- **Literacy** instruction in each language must reflect its unique elements.
- **Reading** in any language is not natural and must be taught systematically and explicitly.
- **Background knowledge** and vocabulary are as critical to comprehension as decoding skills.
- **Foundational skills** and instruction must be systematic, explicit, and engaging, using multiple modes and senses.
- **Universal screening** and progress monitoring are critical to ensure all students receive the right instruction.
- **Science-based** reading instruction reduces the need for intervention and allows children to move forward as capable, confident readers.

When it comes to the Science of Reading, it's not just about the "what," but also the "how." Many programs will include phonics, but how they teach phonics is just as critical. They also might claim that the Science of Reading is synonymous with phonics, when really a program that is truly grounded in Science of Reading practices will focus on both word recognition and language comprehension at different rates depending on where students are in their learning trajectory. Rich and intentionally sequenced knowledge-building focused on a wide depth and breadth of content domains is an essential component of an evidence-based literacy program.

Clear selection criteria that evaluate a program's adherence to these principles will need to be embedded into this stage of change management practices. We recommend using [**this curriculum evaluation tool**](#) from our friends at The Reading League to guide you through this critical step.

Process

1. Establish an adoption committee:
 - Select a group of individuals representing a diverse group of teachers and coaches in the district—including Science of Reading skeptics who may have a large influence in their school communities.
2. Establish criteria for selection:
 - Determine the key factors aligned to evidence-based practices and requirements for selecting materials.
 - Ensure criteria is in alignment with all aspects of Science of Reading principles and research.
 - Consider factors such as alignment with district goals, evidence-based practices, cost, and usability.
3. Review and shortlist materials:
 - Gather potential resources that meet the established criteria.
 - Conduct a thorough review and evaluation process to create a shortlist of materials for further consideration. This can be done by a smaller group or with the adoption committee as a whole.
4. Involve the committee and stakeholders:
 - Share the shortlisted materials with the adoption committee and other relevant stakeholders.
 - Facilitate discussions, solicit feedback, and gather input on the suitability of each resource.
5. Make a purchase decision:
 - Based on the feedback and evaluation, make a decision on which resources to purchase.
 - Obtain all necessary approvals and complete the procurement process.



Job Title: Literacy Curriculum Committee Member

Description of Job: Cicero Public School District #99 is seeking teachers to participate on the Literacy Curriculum Committee. The purpose of the committee is to determine how well each of our pilot curriculums align to the curriculum evaluation tool, analyze student achievement and engagement data as well as teacher feedback during the pilots, and make a curriculum adoption recommendation to the board for the 23-24 school year. In addition to curriculum work, this group would also discuss how to best assess students' reading and writing abilities.

Performance Responsibilities: See job description

Reports to: Director of Reading and Language Arts

Qualifications: Valid Illinois Professional Educator License with an appropriate endorsement for the job for which you applied; working knowledge of current state standards as they relate to reading and language arts; pilot classroom teacher, coach or interventionist in a pilot building, or a district-wide coach.

Terms of Agreement: To attend all scheduled committee meetings 3:30-5:30 on Tuesday, November 15th, November 29th, December 13th, January 17th, and January 31st.

Additional work outside of committee meeting time may be needed
Complete all assigned professional readings or tasks in advance of meeting

An example agenda from committee meeting in Cicero Public Schools 99 in Illinois

6. Prepare for material delivery:
 - Order the selected materials from the chosen publishers.
 - Coordinate with schools and relevant staff to ensure readiness for the delivery and distribution of materials.

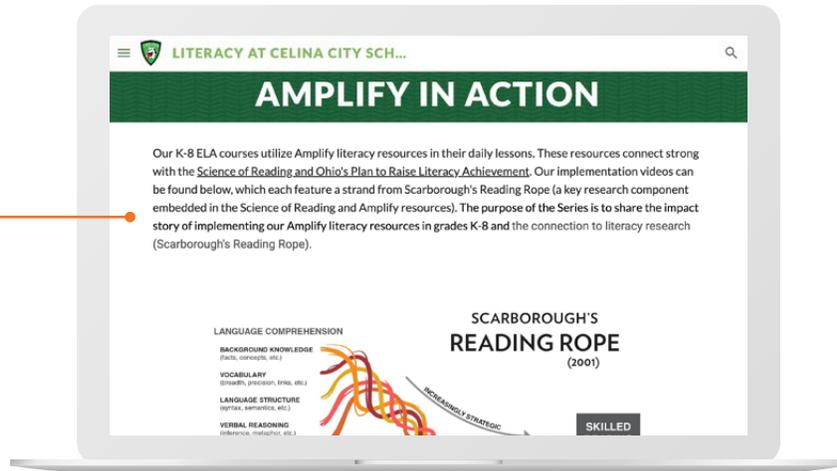
Practice

1. Conduct pilot programs:
 - Implement the selected programs that are under evaluation in a few classrooms as a pilot.
 - Monitor and evaluate the experiences of teachers and students using the new resources.
 - Collect data and results to inform the decision-making process.
 - Report back to the adoption committee.

People

1. Build understandings of Science of Reading:

- Begin to educate and engage all stakeholders, including educators, administrators, and families, that are not part of the adoption committee, about the Science of Reading and why the shift is being made.
- Create a plan to provide short-term and long-term professional development opportunities, workshops, and resources to deepen understanding and knowledge during this stage, emphasizing the study and exploration of evidence-based practices in literacy instruction.
- Encourage teachers and administrators to engage in professional learning and research to enhance their expertise and readiness for the initial implementation.



Using an online forum shown above, Celina City Schools in Ohio educates faculty, students, and families on the basics of the Science of Reading and the impact their implementation has had on the success of their student body.

Below are some resources to support the work:

- [Curriculum Evaluation Guide](#)
(The Reading League)
- [The Reading Rope](#)
(Hollis Scarborough)
- [Science of Reading principles](#)
(Amplify)

The key to this stage is to process, process, process. Complete and comprehensive plans will be critical to a successful adoption stage.

In the words of educators...

“It’s not just about the curriculum, it’s about the science behind how people, children, how we as humans learn to read. When we made the shift and began to move to Amplify [CKLA], it allowed our teachers to experience a different approach, a different way of looking at how we provide systematic phonics instruction to our students. Since CKLA is grounded in research, teachers transformed to the Science of Reading and promoted the approach in their classrooms every single day.”



Jovanna Mack, Lead Content Teacher, Caddo Parish, Louisiana

Stage 3: Initial implementation

Stage 3: Initial implementation

During the initial implementation stage, you'll put your newly adopted resources into practice. The focus is on providing ongoing support and monitoring progress to inform future adjustments.

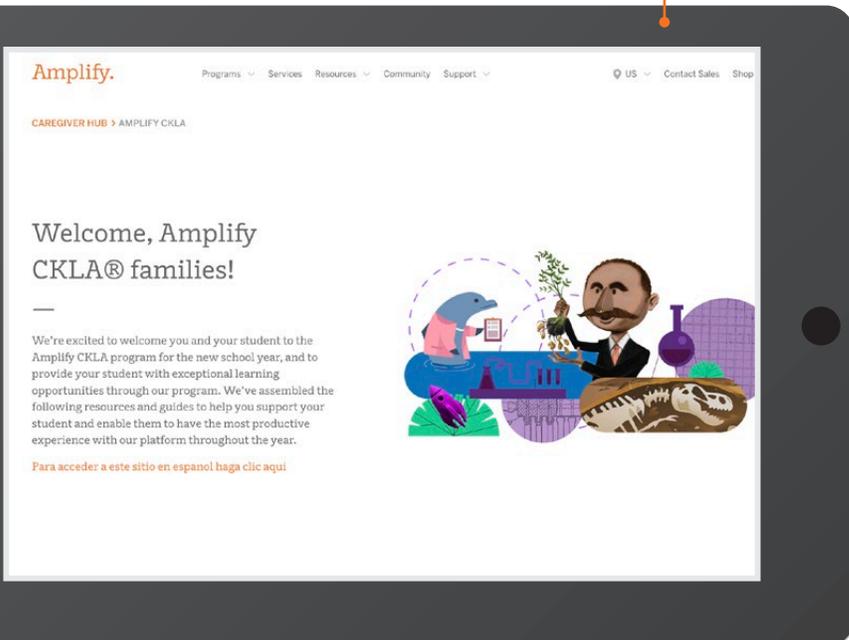
Process

- Build comprehensive training plans and materials for faculty and staff that will support implementation, including observation checklists and periodic training sessions throughout the year.
- Develop explicit processes for collecting and interpreting data to monitor the fidelity of implementation.
- Create resources to support engagement from families that emphasize understanding of the instructional practices that will be utilized as the new resources are implemented.

Amplify CKLA Observation Tracker

| | Foundational | Initial Implementation | Full Operation | Innovation |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Instructional Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Guide and primary student materials (Student Readers and Activity Books, if applicable) are utilized. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ancillary components, teacher and student materials, are correctly utilized. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flip Books/ Image Cards - Letter Cards (Spelling Cards) - Digital Components - Individual Code Charts - Chaining Folders, etc | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> CKLA supplemental resources are used to address student needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment & Remediation Guide: K-3 - Decoding & Encoding Remediation Guide: 4-5 - Fluency Packets: 2-5 <input type="checkbox"/> Unit/domain instruction is personalized with additional resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> CKLA integrated content |
| Instructional Delivery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Instruction aligns with required minutes for CKLA. (If not observed/evident, observer may move to Initial Implementation column.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80 min. K-2 Skills and 90 min. Knowledge - 120 min. for Grade 3 - 90 min. for Grades 4-5 <input type="checkbox"/> On average, lesson segments are taught in the time allotted. <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson segments are taught in the order outlined in the lesson. <p>Based on the classroom you observe, please use these additional look fors (K-2 Skills, K-2 Knowledge, or 3-5 Integrated):</p> <p>K-2 Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Instruction aligns to the sounds-first approach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher references sound versus letter name - Teacher references frequency of spelling for a given sound <input type="checkbox"/> Sounds are accurately and consistently articulated. <p>K-2 Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> All sections of the lesson are completed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The passage is read aloud to students versus printed or displayed - Only program materials are utilized versus supplemental activities added - Passage is read directly from the Teacher Guide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Instruction aligns with the Primary Focus Objective(s). <input type="checkbox"/> Students engage in practice related to the Primary Focus Objective(s). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilizes Activity Pages - Students Readers - Oral activities/games <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher utilizes sidebars during instruction to ask questions or define vocabulary words. <p>K-2 Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson execution aligns with the purpose of the lesson segment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phonemic awareness lesson is completed orally - Kinesthetic motions are appropriately utilized - Sample lesson examples are utilized - Chaining routines align with guidelines in program - Close Reading is completed (Grade 2) <p>K-2 Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The entire read-aloud text is read and images are shared with students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flip Books are utilized - Image cards are used for teaching points <p>3-5 Integrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson execution aligns with the purpose of the lesson segment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher instructional decisions for questioning are connected to the Primary Focus Objective(s) and develop student conversational skills. <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy skills are appropriately scaffolded, if necessary, to meet student need. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Universal Access/Core Connections are included | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Student extend - Addition - Classroom projects <input type="checkbox"/> Student reflects and pro |

An example observation checklist and implementation matrix leadership might use to aid the training and support of faculty and staff



The key to this stage is to help teachers move away from ineffective legacy practices and start making the shifts to evidence-based practices. Individual change is a critical component of organizational change.

Practice

- Prioritize the development of comprehensive understanding of the program material among stakeholder groups to ensure effective adoption of new literacy practices alongside the new materials.
- Provide continuous professional learning opportunities to facilitate this understanding.
- Engage in intentional planning, unit unpacking, instructional practice rehearsals, and ongoing coaching to support usage of the new instructional resources and practices.

People

- Acknowledge that this stage will involve a range of emotions, including anxiety, questions, and frustration.
- Celebrate successes, recognize the hard work of individuals, and highlight student growth.
- Establish effective communication channels to share positive stories with all stakeholders.

Below are some resources to support the work:

- [5 Shifts for True Science of Reading Instruction](#) (Amplify)
- [A full Amplify CKLA Skills Lesson in Action](#) (Amplify)



Stage 4: Full operation

In this stage, Science of Reading literacy practices are fully integrated throughout your system.

Process

- Conduct routine data analysis to monitor student progress and determine areas of needed improvement.

Practice

- Expand the focus on evidence-based literacy practice to other grade-level instructional areas to support the integration of these practices, when appropriate, into the larger system. That might include personalized learning, intervention, support for bilingual students, and others.

People

- Plan and implement onboarding processes for new teachers and administrators.
- Emphasize deeper understanding of resources and instructional practices through continuous improvement, coaching, and mentoring.

Resources to guide you at this stage:

- [Science of Reading roadmap](#) (Amplify)
- [MTSS principles](#) (Amplify)



Stage 5: Innovation and sustainability

Science of Reading practices will be utilized effectively at this point—and student growth will be the result.

This stage can also present an opportunity to continue building knowledge by focusing on middle school. Your middle schoolers need to build strong foundational skills and an academic knowledge base that will prepare them for success in high school and beyond. Continuing to bring research-based literacy practices to middle school instruction will aid this effort.

Process

- Make room for innovation that is aligned with ever-growing body of Science of Reading research.
- Consider creating processes that will allow for the expansion of pedagogy based on the Science of Reading into middle schools.

People

- A culture of collaboration, shared ownership, and community of practice can be emphasized at this point.
- Conversations should focus on student growth instead of the resources.

Practice

- Ensure current research and data is informing instructional decisions and continuing to deepen the knowledge base that has been built to this point.
- Implement systems such as the study of problems of practice, collaborative conversations about data, and peer-to-peer instructional rounds to support deeper implementation of resources and practices.
- Ongoing professional learning systems will need to be developed and put into practice.

This stage will allow for refinement of instructional practice and a much deeper understanding of how the Science of Reading research affects student achievement.

Below are some resources to support the work:

- [7 Research-Based Strategies to Help Middle School Students Thrive](#) (Amplify)

“After just one year of using Amplify CKLA, Allen Parish Grade 1 students met their goal of 80% proficiency, up from 58%. The overall level of proficiency for Grades K–2 in that year rose from 52% to 66%.”

Making the Shift to the Science of Reading in Allen Parish, Louisiana

Your timeline for successful change management

Now that you know what it will take to create change that lasts when implementing a curriculum grounded in the Science of Reading, it's time to START.

The timeline behind your version of this action plan is dependent on the needs of your district. Sometimes the exploration stage is three years and the adoption stage is three months. Or the exploration stage is three months and the adoption stage is two years. Know that the timeline is variable but creating change that lasts is a long-term plan.

| | 2-Year plan | 5-Year plan | 8-Year plan |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Exploration stage | 3 months | Year 1 | 3 years |
| Adoption stage | 6 months | Year 2 | 3 months |
| Initial implementation stage | 4 months | Year 3 | 9 months |
| Full operation stage | 5 months | Year 4 | 2 year |
| Innovation and sustainability stage | Year 3+ | Year 5 | 2 years |

1. Fixsen, D. L. et al., (2005). Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute.
2. The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231).
3. Fullan, M. (2016). The new meaning of educational change (5th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Conclusion

Now you have the tools, the plan, and the motivation to help drive life-changing results and improve literacy outcomes for all students—just by bringing change to *your* classrooms. We're happy to be part of that change. And we'd love to hear how it goes!

To get started with your transformation and start driving real results, visit amplify.com/science-of-reading

In the words of educators...

“The greatest achievement that I have in the Science of Reading I feel is truly having the teachers know that every kid can be a reader. It’s knowing that these teachers have the skills in order to teach these kids, and it doesn’t matter what level they’re at. We have complete confidence that every kid can learn to read.”



—Heather Campbell, Learning Coach, Sunset Elementary, Washington County District, Utah

To get started with your transformation and start driving real results, visit [**amplify.com/science-of-reading**](https://amplify.com/science-of-reading)

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