

SESSION 1: OCTOBER 24<sup>th</sup> (ON SITE)

## **Embracing the Science of Reading**

What do people really mean by the “science of reading,” and how can administrators lead informed conversations with their staff about how neuroscience can inform the choices they make in their classrooms? This research presentation and facilitated discussion is designed to equip school and district administrators with the insights necessary to move beyond unproductive debates about the “reading wars” and lead informed conversation about how to improve early literacy in their schools.

### **Session Objectives**

- Unpack the research behind recent advocacy for the “science of reading,”
- Understand why neuroscientific insight into how our brains learn to read should inform the choices teachers make each day in their classrooms
- Learn how leading districts have successfully aligned school and district systems with those insights without simply forcing a new curriculum on their staff
- Discuss how these insights either align or contrast with participants’ existing beliefs about how children learn to read

### **Post-Session Work**

- Use provided look-for documents and listening tour questions to gather a current-state picture of reading instruction in your schools

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SESSION 2: NOVEMBER 29<sup>th</sup> (VIRTUAL)

## **Applying District-Wide Knowledge of the Science of Reading**

How have leading districts achieved transformative improvements in reading outcomes in their schools? Knowledge of the science of reading is just the beginning. This session will provide a roadmap for systemic change that is cost effective for the district, empowering for teachers, and proven to deliver results for students.

### **Session Objectives**

- Discuss the findings participants’ observations and listening tours
- Review best-practices for scaling the adoption of new instructional practices
- Draft initial implementation roadmaps for participants’ districts

### **Post-Session Work**

- Identify champions for literacy initiatives
- Share resources and draft plans with literacy champions for feedback and discussion

## SESSION 3: FEBRUARY 7<sup>TH</sup> (VIRTUAL)

### **Building a Framework for Accelerating Progress**

Improving early literacy begins with aligning Tier I instruction with the science of how our brains learn to read. But EAB research found that data-driven differentiation is central to the dramatic improvements in reading outcomes seen in leading districts across the country. This session will explain the essential shift from “leveled literacy” to “skills-based grouping,” then unpack the logistical implications that administrators should be aware of and plan for. Importance of re-structuring both Tier I and Tier II instructional time to maximize the acquisition of foundational skills in Grades K-3, while addressing common concerns about an overemphasis on “reading science” and constant pendulum between phonics and whole language that we have seen in recent decades. Participants will discuss:

#### **Session Objectives**

- Establish the difference between leveled literacy and skills-based grouping
- Review implications for reading block design and staffing
- Clarify when and how to incorporate skills-based grouping as a district-wide practice
- Discuss how to compliment an emphasis on building foundational skills with robust vocabulary development

#### **Post-Session Work**

- Identify an appropriate pilot-site for skills-based grouping in your schools
  - Select resources, initiative leaders, and a timeline for initiative launch
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## SESSION 4: MARCH 7<sup>TH</sup> (VIRTUAL)

### **Sustaining Teacher Morale Through Change**

This session will prompt administrators to look at literacy reform through a different lens: ensuring that teachers feel able to engage in the work. The session will focus on establishing a systematic approach to raising teacher morale and engagement, in-turn improving the readiness and willingness of district educators to adjust their instructional practices.

#### **Session Objectives**

- Explore lessons from leading organizations on how to successfully increase and sustain employee morale
- Review a systematic series of practices that can be adopted by districts of any size and means
- Discuss the importance of sustaining morale during periods of change
- Clarify next steps for implementation of the Morale Momentum Loop

#### **Post-Session Work**

- Determine ownership of employee morale initiatives at the district and individual school levels
- Integrate a draft timeline for implementation alongside literacy initiatives

SESSION 5: APRIL 25<sup>TH</sup> (VIRTUAL)

## **Closing Opportunity Gaps Through Evidence-Based Summer Programming**

Achieving sustained improvements in reading ability will require districts to think beyond the traditional school year. This session will discuss the compounding impact of missed-learning and the summer slide for under-resourced communities, then outline proven strategies for summer interventions that can sustain student progress through the summer months.

### **Session Objectives**

- Discuss how to design summer programming that maximizes attendance and learning
- Share simple but effective strategies for enabling students who are unable to attend summer programming to sustain progress
- Key considerations for summer program staffing and operations

### **Post-Session Work**

- Compare recommendations with participants' existing summer programs and practices
  - Identify opportunities for improvement
  - Clarify ownership for next steps
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SESSION 6: MAY 16<sup>TH</sup> (ON SITE)

## **Recap, Plan Comparison, and Pre-Mortem Analysis**

Throughout this six-part series, participants will have gained knowledge of the insights and practices leveraged by leading districts to achieve game-changing improvements in early literacy and reading scores across their schools. They will also have used those insights to craft components of a plan to replicate those practices during and between each session. This final session will provide participants with an opportunity to share and compare their initial plans, identify likely pitfalls to successful implementation, and collaboratively craft solutions to increase their odds of success.

### **Session Objectives**

- Summarize key lessons from across the research previously presented
- Ask participants to outline and compare their intended paths for adoption
- Engage participants in an exercise to proactively identify potential pitfalls and strategies to avoid or minimize the impact of those pitfalls on district results

### **Post-Session Work**

- Establish a central location for storing plans and updates
- Establish a timeline for region-wide check-ins and progress monitoring



### **About Eric Flowers, Ed.D**

Eric serves as a Senior Director for K-12 districts and schools. He comes from the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) where he served as the Chief Academic Officer and previously served as the Chief Opportunity Officer. In these roles, Eric provided leadership and oversight for efforts in both the K-12 and higher education divisions working collaboratively with district, 2-year and 4-year leaders.

Eric was a lead member for the state with the Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Southwest to conduct applied research and training to support a more evidence-based K-12 education system. He led the development of the 2021-26 Arkansas Division of Higher Education strategic plan focused on closing equity gaps at the state's universities. In addition, Eric is also an avid graduate adjunct faculty and dissertation committee member having served at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and University of Central Arkansas. Prior to working at ADE, Eric served in various roles as both an educational researcher and university administrator with 15 years of proven achievement in leading teams, planning, and implementing programs focused on college access and academic success.