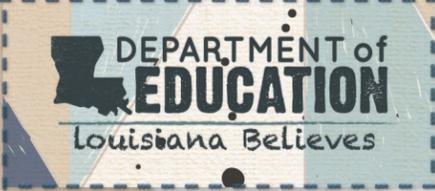


CLASSROOM CHRONICLES

PURSUING PROFICIENCY

How a FirstLine Schools Content Leader Uses Evidence-based Instruction to Support Early Literacy



Research shows students who do not read proficiently by the end of the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of school, and those who have not mastered at least a basic level of reading proficiency are nearly six times as likely to leave school without earning a diploma. To ensure success in early literacy, the

Early Literacy Commission—made up of a group of state leaders, educators, and parents—is working toward developing and proposing a timeframe for increasing the reading proficiency of third-grade students and establishing benchmarks for intervening years.

At a recent Early Literacy Commission meeting, **Content Leader José Guadarrama, of FirstLine Schools in New Orleans**, joined the conversation, bringing his 10 years of education experience to the table. We sat down with Guadarrama to learn more about the importance of developing evidence-based competencies and skills needed to ensure reading proficiency from an early age.

Q. How does your role support early literacy?
A. As a **Content Leader** at FirstLine Schools, I support the vision of early literacy in K-4 across five schools, but also support the professional learning that is necessary to actualize that vision. This involves how children develop reading skills at an early age, but also encompasses more practical and technical aspects. My work additionally consists of creating scope and sequence—determining what will be taught and the order in which it will be taught—for teachers, designing professional development learning experiences for teachers related to curriculum and assessment, and collecting data for teachers and school leaders to be able to answer what our progress goals are based on student achievement data.

Q. Why do you feel it is important to use evidence-based instruction in early literacy?
A. There are so many different philosophies about how to teach children to read. Instruction should be founded in evidence-based practices that present a road map of the skills and knowledge students need to yield meaningful, measureable results. This is especially important for those students that enter our classrooms with learning gaps, or unfinished learning, from previous grades.

HIGH-QUALITY, EVIDENCE-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS HELP TO MAXIMIZE OUR MOST PRECIOUS AND FLEETING RESOURCE, WHICH IS TIME WITH STUDENTS.

Q. What does evidence-based instruction look like in early literacy?
A. Quality, evidence-based lessons begin with high-quality instructional materials and prepared teachers. At FirstLine, we really pride ourselves in having our teachers understand the arc and purpose of the lesson so that they are better informed and make decisions that amplify the intended learning of the lesson.

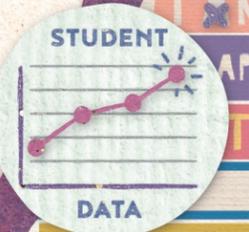
Q. Why is internalization essential?
A. A big part of implementation is the internalization piece—making sure that we are thinking about students' needs and where they are—but also making sure that teachers are prepared. During a lesson, there are many moments where teachers need to make a decision of where to go next based on live feedback from students. Making these decisions toward the intended learning of each lesson is important to acknowledge, as there is a balance in marrying historical data with live progress. Progress monitoring is critical because it informs instruction and supports teachers in knowing that students are demonstrating proficiency within any given lesson.

Q. How do you use progress monitoring to increase reading proficiency?
A. We use student achievement data as a lens to help answer the questions, “How many students have learned what has been taught?” and “How might we refine our teaching so more students learn and achieve?” At the district level, I work to expand the bandwidth of our teachers and leaders by offering tools and structures that help answer these questions. This includes implementing lesson and unit internalization protocols that inventory opportunities to monitor student progress during a lesson and designing weekly development sessions where lessons are internalized in grade-level groups.

“THE OVERALL GOAL IS TO ENSURE MOST OF OUR STUDENTS END EVERY LESSON MORE PROFICIENT IN READING. PROGRESS MONITORING HELPS US DO JUST THAT.”

Q. How do you support your teachers in their efforts to provide effective, evidence-based reading instruction to their students?
A. Through my role, I help teachers see the forest through the trees. My teachers are focused on supporting students in demonstrating proficiency through a lesson or a unit. I help them see the bigger picture through collaboration. This collaboration, established on the foundation of evidence-based instruction, is what supports teachers in developing the competencies and skills needed to ensure reading proficiency from an early age.

• WANT TO LEARN MORE?
The Early Literacy Commission's next full panel meeting is scheduled for December 16 at 12:00 p.m. Watch it [live](#) and listen in as the commission discusses recommendations ahead of their final report going to the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Louisiana Legislature in January 2020.



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