



Research Partnership  
for Professional Learning

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# ROAR

## Implementation Guide

An open-access assessment platform  
grounded in ongoing research by the  
Stanford Reading & Dyslexia  
Research Program

In Partnership with



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## FOREWORD

The Advanced Education Research and Development Fund (AERDF)'s Reading Reimagined program aims to "build field awareness of the decoding threshold and early research-based solutions." Emerging research on the decoding threshold suggests that the positive relationship between decoding and reading comprehension only appears when older K-12 students are able to decode above a certain level of proficiency (i.e., Wang et al., 2019).

Foundational reading instruction is desperately needed in upper grades; in a recent report, grade 3–8 teachers reported that "44% of their students frequently have difficulty reading the instructional materials used in their classrooms" (Shapiro et al., 2024). Yet, upper grade and secondary ELA teachers are not trained to recognize the role of foundational reading skills in the tapestry of reading ability, let alone to deliver foundational reading instruction to their students. Often, advanced foundational skills, including word recognition, are not measured beyond the early elementary grades, leaving educators without key information about their students' reading development and the full scope of support needed to access grade-level text.

The Rapid Online Reading Assessment (ROAR), developed by Stanford University, is a validated measure of advanced foundational reading skills across grades K-12. It represents a potentially useful method for measuring advanced foundational reading skills across grade levels, and particularly in the upper grades, where foundational skills are not often measured. Equipped with a more complete understanding of students' literacy development, upper elementary and secondary educators and leaders can plan and implement interventions to address students' greatest literacy needs.

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*“There’s much more awareness that [teachers] need to do something, and an increased feeling of responsibility to do something.”*

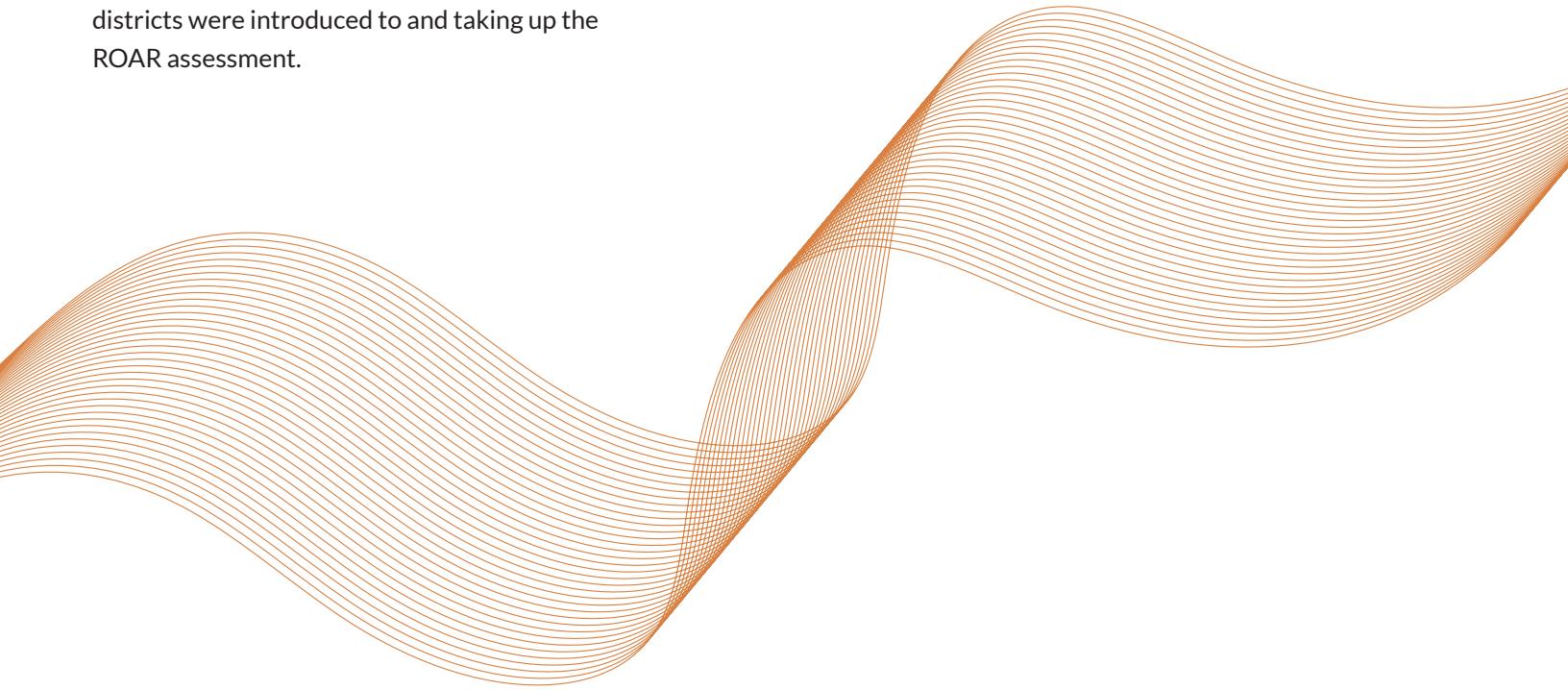
– PL Organization Leader

# INTRODUCTION

Since 2021, AERDF's Reading Reimagined research and development program has funded research on the decoding threshold and associated research-based decoding measurement tools and interventions. In SY2024–25, Reading Reimagined funded two professional learning ("PL") organizations and their district partners to take the first steps toward tackling the decoding threshold in their schools and systems by piloting the Rapid Online Assessment of Reading (ROAR) assessment in grades 6–12 to identify older learners who could benefit from explicit instruction in foundational reading skills. PL Organizations supported their district partners in unpacking the decoding threshold research and potential implications, understanding the ROAR assessment of foundational skills and its role in their assessment landscape, training educators and leaders on the ROAR assessment implementation, and facilitating ROAR data analysis and intervention planning.

The Research Partnership for Professional Learning (RPPL) served as the research partner in this work, aiming to surface and codify learnings and recommendations during the ROAR pilot processes. Through document analysis, PL observations, surveys, and interviews, we explored how districts were introduced to and taking up the ROAR assessment.

This guidebook is the result of that work, produced for districts/systems implementing a foundational skills assessment measure in the later grades (3–12) and for the PL Organizations that support them. The guidebook is organized as follows: Sections are organized around the key phases of implementation as identified by PL Organizations. Within these phases, we describe a series of implementation goals and the strategies that participants found to be most successful for achieving these goals. Next, we provide case study evidence that details how organizations and districts navigated each focus area, including challenges that they faced and strategies they employed to address those challenges. We end each section with a list of questions for PL Organizations to consider when working with districts in each area.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ENABLING CONDITIONS

Enabling conditions for ROAR begin with designing and implementing professional learning. Through thoughtfully designed PL, leaders, coaches, and teachers need to build and deepen their understanding of the foundational reading skills that ROAR assesses. Districts need to audit and streamline their assessment landscape to maximize impact and to develop the infrastructure for interventions based on assessment results. We believe this preparation is particularly needed at a system level: the U.S. public education system has not typically included foundational skills in assessments and instruction beyond grade 3, an issue that the decoding threshold research brings into question and refutes.

### I. Design and Implement Professional Learning

PL must provide (1) content knowledge about the foundational reading skills that are assessed, (2) logistics for administering the test, (3) protocols for analyzing the data, and (4) concrete instructional strategies to use to address reading gaps that are identified.

PL Organizations face the challenges of balancing among competing priorities within limited time for PL, and deciding whom to include in learning experiences.

### II. Build Understanding of Foundational Reading Skills

Educators understand why foundational reading skills are crucial to their students' success, and how they can implement instruction.

Secondary educators embrace the mindset that teaching reading is part of their role as a literacy teacher.

### III. Audit and Streamline Assessment Landscape

Districts determine whether sufficient data exists measuring students' continued development of foundational skills, in addition to comprehension.

Districts determine how and when to best utilize their suite of assessments, to avoid over-testing of students and overburdening of teachers, while capturing the most useful and impactful data to inform instruction.

### IV. Develop or Refine Infrastructure for Interventions and Tier 1 Instruction

Districts consider time for interventions, staffing and training of intervention instructors, curricular materials, and student placement and progress.

## IMPLEMENTING ROAR

During ROAR implementation, districts complete between three and four cycles of administration, data analysis, and intervention.

### I. Administer ROAR

Districts utilize powerful framing up front to support buy-in among school leaders, educators, and students.

Districts create smooth communication plans and realistic timelines to support multiple stakeholders to navigate the logistics of ROAR administration.

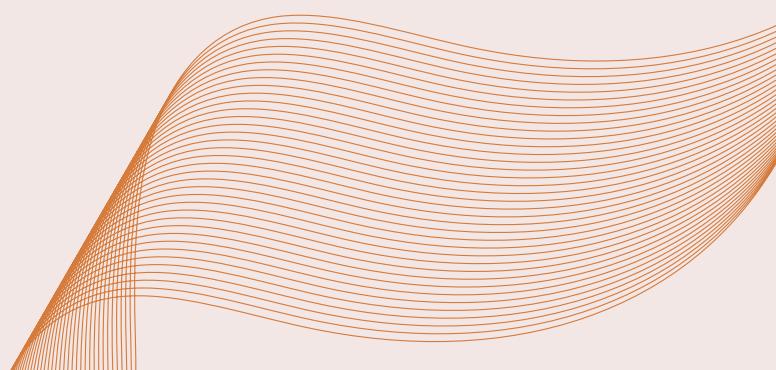
### III. Intervene to Support Student Success

Results from the ROAR assessment drive data-informed decisions about tailoring instruction to student needs, considering specific skill learning needed by groups of students, and how and when that learning could be integrated into students' experiences/schedules (e.g., Tier I vs. II settings, ELA classes vs. intervention spaces vs. content classes).

### II. Analyze ROAR Data

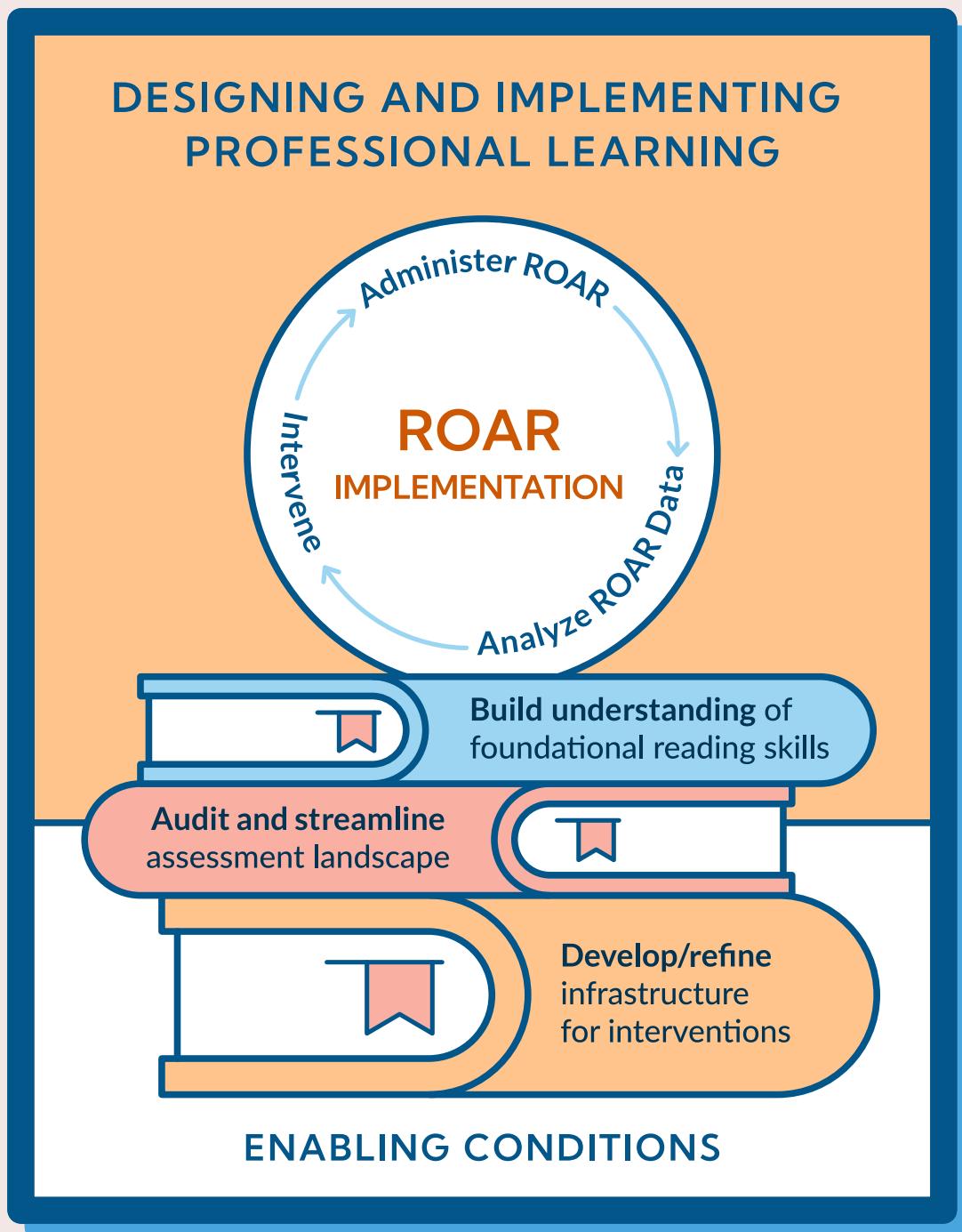
Coaches lead analysis of ROAR data using data analysis protocols and scheduled, collaborative data analysis sessions.

PL Organizations are crucial partners when analyzing ROAR data over time and supporting data triangulation across multiple assessments.



## ENABLING CONDITIONS AND CYCLES OF IMPLEMENTATION

The figure below represents both the enabling conditions and the iterative implementation cycles that emerged during the pilot study, all supported by effective design and implementation of professional learning.



## PILOT PARTICIPANTS

This study includes two local education agencies (LEAs) that implemented the ROAR assessment in the 2024–2025 school year and two PL Organizations. One LEA is a charter network in a large urban area with four participating middle schools in their first year of ROAR implementation (pseudonym: Mission Charter Network). The other is a mid-sized urban district with 13 secondary (middle and high) participating schools in their second year of ROAR implementation (pseudonym: Greenville).

Each pilot study district partnered with one PL Organization to support both ROAR implementation as well as broader goals. At Mission, they had a larger goal to develop their system of literacy interventions across the network, in which ROAR data was supportive. In Greenville, they were continuing a years' long partnership that included school-level and district-level support for a range of goals, many of which were literacy-related, and some of which were not.

Partnering with Greenville, Achievement Network<sup>1</sup> (ANet) is a nonprofit founded in 2005 that partners with more than 800 schools and 100 systems across 31 states to advance all students' access to an excellent education. ANet equips educators with professional learning, coaching, and assessments to deliver rigorous, empowering instruction—particularly for students who have been historically marginalized. Independent evaluations have shown that ANet's model drives significant student learning gains, including up to 6–8 additional months of progress over two years.

Partnering with Mission, TNTP<sup>2</sup> (previously The New Teacher Project) is a research, policy, and practice organization dedicated to transforming America's public education system to meet the needs of tomorrow- for students, families, communities, and the nation. Their mission is to create multiple pathways for young people to achieve academic, economic, and social mobility, leading to thriving lives in adulthood. An education nonprofit since 1997, TNTP has grown from preparing new teachers to supporting school systems serving over 40 percent of students in the United States. Today, they work side by side with educators, system leaders, and communities across 42 states and in more than 6,000 districts nationwide to reach ambitious goals for student success.

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<sup>1</sup> Learn more about ANet's work [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Learn more about TNTP's work [here](#), and check out our free online toolkits for educators [here](#).

# Enabling Conditions



- I. Design and Implement Professional Learning **06**
- II. Build Understanding of Foundational Reading Skills **11**
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# I. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Leaders, coaches, and teachers require effective professional learning experiences in order to prepare systems and teachers to administer the ROAR assessment and take instructional next steps based on the results. PL for ROAR implementation requires providing (1) content knowledge about the foundational reading skills that are assessed, (2) logistics for administering the test, (3) protocols for analyzing the data, and (4) concrete instructional strategies to use to address reading gaps that are identified. With multiple goals and limited time with educators, PL Organizations have to be strategic in their design and delivery of PL components. PL Organizations face the challenges of balancing among competing priorities within limited time for PL, and deciding whom to include in learning experiences.

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## Across the ROAR pilot year(s), PL Organizations worked with districts so that they could:

- Build an understanding of foundational reading skills.
- Audit and streamline the assessment landscape.
- Develop or refine infrastructure for interventions.
- Administer the ROAR assessment.
- Analyze the data.
- Intervene appropriately.

## PL Organizations were most successful when they:

- Combined school- or district-wide PL sessions with school-level and district-level coaching.
- Provided concrete instructional strategies during PL sessions.
- Worked in schools where the school-wide goals matched ROAR's capabilities (i.e., foundational literacy goals) to mitigate the impact of competing priorities.
- Included school leaders in PL.

## COMPLEMENTING PL SESSIONS WITH COACHING

Each PL Organization provided pilot study districts a set of PL experiences that included a mix of district-wide sessions and coaching. Both PL Organizations provided three to four district-wide PL sessions for district educators and engaged in coaching with the district-level leaders to support the systems change management required to fully implement ROAR. In both districts, school-based coaching, whether it occurred in-house (as in Mission) or via the PL Organization (as in Greenville), was a crucial component to the success of the ROAR work in the pilot years. Finally, on-site, twice-yearly district “learning walks” provided an opportunity for PL Organizations to gain insight into implementation and provide feedback.

At Mission, the PL Organization worked closely and frequently with their district’s Director of Science of Reading, who was hired explicitly to focus on the implementation of instruction promoting the Science of Reading across the district. The bulk of this leader’s time was spent auditing and crafting guiding structures for intervention; the ROAR assessment became part of the suite of assessments used to place and monitor students in literacy interventions. PL Organization coaches met with this leader weekly throughout the year to provide thought partnership and resources to support their intervention goals. As part of this work, they supported the leader in creating the materials for the three teacher-facing PL sessions that occurred throughout the year, focused on the Science of Reading and the ROAR assessment. In Year One of their pilot, four schools opted into administering the ROAR, and while the PL Organization had no direct contact with teachers, those schools received direct coaching from the district leader. There, leaders spoke about the strength of informal conversations and coaching in increasing teachers’ foundational reading understandings. The PL Organization Coach said,

*“The Mission team is very visible in the building, and I just think that helps, because when you do have to have a more critical conversation, when you have that relationship of coaching somebody, that sound foundation, it’s much easier to have those conversations.”*

In Greenville, there was a more robust set of PL provided by the PL Organization. First, they provided systems-level coaching to the partner district’s Director of Secondary ELA every two weeks. The systems coach supported the district leader with articulating their assessment vision and strategy and their intervention strategy, crafting district-wide communication, and building accountability across multiple layers of the district (from principals to coaches to teachers). Second, they provided four PL sessions to all school-based coaches. In addition to those four live/in-person PL sessions, they also offered video-recorded PL sessions. These specifically addressed ROAR administration logistics and were created to support educators who were unable to attend the optional sessions that were offered.

Several schools in Greenville also had separate relationships with the PL Organization, in which additional coaching for school-based coaches was provided. School-level coaching was not always focused on ROAR, as schools had a variety of goals, and not all were literacy-based. Still, having school-facing PL Organization coaches allowed for additional touchpoints regarding the ROAR in between their district-wide PL sessions. Coaching turned out to be an important lever for change in Greenville:

*“It’s really been through a lot of these informal conversations and coaching opportunities [that] we’ve really been able to see people’s mindsets be shifted, and it has had its impact.”*  
– PL Organization Coach

Participants from the PL Organizations and the districts agreed that it was crucial to include school leaders, principals in particular, in the professional learning. Principals are the drivers of systems change within a school, so it is crucial that they understand and prioritize the initiative. Interviewees emphasized the role that principals play in setting culture and expectations in a school building, and that having a range of personnel trained is supportive of implementation:

*“We often think about how principals are a pinch point in school communication, right? You have a huge network structure that comes down and filters through a principal, and then gets filtered out through all the teachers.”*  
– PL Organization Coach

*"Just providing it to teachers isn't going to get it done, but to try and provide a foundational understanding for all people invested, everybody who has a touch point with students, that's what I think is important. It's an opportunity to set expectations, have a discussion and understanding, see multiple entry points and support points."*

*- School-based Leader*

## TEACHING CONCRETE STRATEGIES

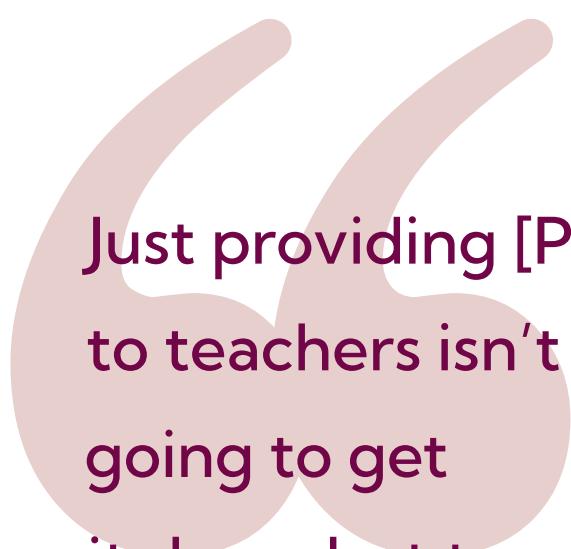
While PL Organizations tried to address many goals throughout their work with districts, participants particularly appreciated learning concrete strategies in their PL. One PL Organization described how they attempted to address both the conceptual and practical knowledge required to administer the ROAR assessment, saying,

*"The way we've set it up is a mix of providing content and then also giving application time and practice time: looking at their existing lessons and identifying what is strong already, aligned with foundational skills instruction. And, where are there opportunities to build out more of that? What would that look like, and how are they going to know which students to do that with? All of those nuanced pieces, while also trying to provide the high-level foundational knowledge around what and why."*

A district-based coach shared another example: "I learned some new strategies, like 'because, but, so.' I loved that. Bringing that back to the whole group was powerful." Indeed, their partner PL Organization planned most sessions around one or more strategies that coaches could bring to their teachers:

*"We teach a strategy. We have them look at their data and determine, is this going to be the best strategy for my students? If not, is there a different strategy I want to use? And then they make an implementation plan for how they're going to implement it in their classrooms."*

Importantly, these strategies were chosen by the PL Organizations according to trends that were seen in the ROAR results, and allowed the ROAR results to translate into immediate action for students.



**Just providing [PL] to teachers isn't going to get it done, but to try and provide a foundational understanding for all people invested... that's what I think is important.**

*– School-based Leader*

## CHALLENGES TO DELIVERING PL



PL Organizations named that preparing districts for ROAR implementation requires providing (1) content knowledge about the foundational reading skills that are assessed, (2) logistics for administering the test, (3) protocols for analyzing the data, and (4) concrete instructional strategies to use to address reading gaps that are identified. The biggest concern that emerged around the design of PL was having too little time. PL Organizations had between three and four PL sessions with their respective district partners, each approximately two hours long, in which to accomplish all of the aforementioned PL priorities. Neither organization felt that they had enough time, nor that they had the perfect balance among priorities, given the realities of the time constraints for PL. The time allotted in PL sessions was not enough to fully bring teachers along this journey, for different reasons in each district. At Mission, they were more focused on intervention and had many other topics that needed coverage in addition to ensuring smooth administration and usage of the ROAR assessment. In Greenville, while school-based coaches received PL around foundational reading skills, time constraints limited contact with teachers. Teachers were not involved in PL sessions directly, and coaches were expected to turnkey all of the information to them.

Competing priorities forced PL Organizations to make difficult decisions about what to include in PL sessions and what to sideline. In Greenville, school-based coaches were not required to attend PL sessions for administration logistics, which led to confusion and difficulties launching the assessment, as well as additional work for school-based coaches:

*"I feel like we didn't have a meeting about it ahead of time. I think it was just primarily through email."*

*"I received an email with a sample test. It had directions and how to access the platform and all of that."*

*"This year coming down was kind of similar in that it was: 'Please forward this email to your department and do this.' I wasn't asked to give 'what this is, why it is' - though I asked all those questions and made sure people had all those*

*answers. I put together my own email and presentation around it just because, if they don't know why, of course[...] So we spend a lot of time selling."*

At Mission, where participation in the ROAR pilot was voluntary by school, teachers were given the option of attending PL sessions for ROAR, but competing school priorities prevented consistent attendance. For example, for one session, teachers who were planning to attend a PL session were required by their principal to attend a different PL session on a different topic area on the same day, finding out only hours before the session. These inconsistencies made it difficult to build momentum in teachers' content knowledge of foundational reading skills and the analysis and use of ROAR results. Their PL Organization Leader shared,

*"They have professional development, but we are one of several topics within their professional development portfolio. And so they only have an hour to give, or two hours to give, when ideally, what would be happening is that improving secondary literacy would be their only priority."*

## LOOKING FORWARD



With more time, PL Organizations would like to double down on increasing secondary teachers' knowledge of foundational reading skills, and why and how to incorporate them into their instruction. One PL Organization Leader shared their aspiration for developing this knowledge in educators: "There should be a whole day or more on each foundational skill, in terms of really being able to build teacher knowledge and capacity." We learned that, although knowledge of foundational reading skills was indeed included in the PL provided to participants, time constraints left more to be desired in this area.

PL Organizations shared additional recommendations for thinking about the structures and sequences of a robust program of PL that would best support ROAR implementation (and associated interventions). They recommended starting with building a shared vision and understanding of what foundational literacy skills are and how they will be incorporated into instruction among leaders first. When one PL Organization did this, they found

that the leaders benefited from having time to process and push back, readying them to engage with teachers who may have similar questions or concerns down the line. Importantly, leaders need time to “feel safe in their learning environment” before bringing the information to teachers. They also need time to “build a learning stance,” as they are the drivers of this culture across a district. This is particularly important when developing these new skills and mindsets in secondary teachers. One PL Organization Coach suggested building comfort with secondary teachers by acknowledging and validating their experiences: “We understand you don’t feel safe or competent, because you weren’t trained for this as a secondary ELA teacher.” Attending to leaders’ and teachers’ social-emotional needs early and often throughout the process primes them to attend to students’ social-emotional needs once the assessment is being administered and instruction is taking place.

Another way to think about the sequencing of PL would be to start with teaching some practical strategies that teachers could use to address foundational reading gaps, and use these as an anchor to hook assessment results on. Seeing the results of the ROAR would allow educators to see who would benefit from the strategies they’ve learned, galvanizing them to understand why they are useful.

PL Organizations recommended using the first year, or as much time as possible, as a “runway” towards building infrastructure and mindsets. The ROAR assessment (like any other) is not a simple add-on to what already exists; incorporating it meaningfully into a district’s literacy program may require systemic changes to data infrastructure, personnel, and scheduling. Districts need time, support, and resources to make crucial decisions and act on them accordingly.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

**When tailoring the design and implementation of professional learning to fit PL districts’ needs:**

- » What are the district’s PL priorities, and how do they intersect or overlap with the ROAR assessment specifically, or building foundational reading skills more broadly?
- » To what extent can the district partner with a PL vendor to support capacity building and development across all of the areas required for successful implementation?
- » How will PL be differentiated for district leaders, coaches, core instruction teachers, and interventionists?

## II. BUILD UNDERSTANDING OF FOUNDATIONAL READING SKILLS

Educators (teachers, school leaders, district leaders) require knowledge of foundational reading skills to support older students' literacy proficiency. With this knowledge of foundational reading skills, educators can begin understanding the relevance of the ROAR assessment for secondary students, and ultimately to inform instructional next steps that arise from the assessment results. Educators need to understand why foundational reading skills are crucial to their students' success, and how they can implement instruction in Tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions to support students in gaining these necessary skills. Moreover, secondary educators need to embrace the mindset that teaching reading is indeed part of their role as a literacy teacher. We note that this understanding is needed at a systemic level, as secondary teachers do not typically receive training on foundational reading skills.

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### PL Organizations worked with districts so that educators would be able to:

- Articulate what the decoding threshold is and how it applies to their students.
- Name, describe, and identify advanced foundational reading skills necessary to access grade-level text.
- Articulate the purpose of the ROAR assessment, its connection to the decoding threshold, and its relevance to their work with students.
- Shift their mindsets around reading instruction, to build a sense of responsibility to support all students' reading growth.
- Understand the social-emotional needs of older struggling/striving readers.
- Understand developmentally appropriate foundational literacy instruction for older students, and when and where during the school day this instruction might occur.

### PL Organizations were most successful when they:

- Provided background information paired with concrete strategies for addressing advanced foundational reading skills.
- Provided national and local data about the decoding threshold and its relevance to older striving readers.
- Provided testimonials from teachers/coaches within the same district who found success using the ROAR assessment and its resulting data to drive instruction.
- Provided a combination of whole group PL sessions and ongoing coaching to leaders and educators.

## UNDERSTANDING RELEVANCE OF FOUNDATIONAL READING SKILLS TO STUDENTS AND ROAR

The ROAR assessment provides a unique opportunity for educators to dive into foundational reading skills, including advanced skills that are specific to older readers, such as morphology and multisyllabic word reading. In addition to foundational skills traditionally taught in grades K-2 (i.e., phonemic awareness), older striving readers need morphological awareness and multisyllabic word reading skills in order to access grade-level texts. Educators need to understand the research on the role of foundational reading skills, specifically advanced foundational skills, in order to determine whether they have the needed assessment data and interventions in place. Educating teachers and leaders in advanced foundational skills equips them to identify gaps in assessments and/or interventions. ROAR Word, Sentence, Letter, and Phoneme subtests are assessment measures validated across K-12 against other gold-standard assessments. ROAR subtests (validated and unvalidated) assess basic and advanced foundational skills, including alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, word recognition, sentence reading, and comprehension with morphology, syntax, and a phonics inventory under development.

*"ROAR has morphology [a measure not yet validated], which the other [assessments] don't, which is really helpful. But I also think that teachers aren't primed yet to make the connection between morphology and the other pieces. Morphology is a less talked-about skill. It's like, why [do I need it], if I already have phonics, I already have phonemic awareness, I already have sentence reading, and I already have comprehension in this assessment that we're already giving them?" – PL Organization Leader*

Secondary teachers are better prepared to understand the relevance of the ROAR assessment components and its results when they receive deep training in foundational reading skills that include an emphasis on the skills required for decoding the kinds of complex texts that students are exposed to in older grades, such as morphology.



**ROAR has morphology, which the other assessments don't, which is really helpful... Morphology is a less talked-about skill.**

– PL Organization Coach

Interview evidence from PL and district-based coaches confirmed that the introduction of the ROAR assessment requires an understanding of foundational reading skills. Yet, many teachers are still building their knowledge in this area. We found that teachers in one of our partner districts “still think that foundational reading skills are just phonics,” and “need to build understanding for morphology, multisyllabic words, fluency, etc.” Once educators better understand the decoding threshold phenomenon and the role that foundational reading skills play in students’ overall reading performance, the unique value of the ROAR assessment becomes clearer. One PL Organization Coach shared,

*“In order to select an assessment like ROAR, they have to have some substantive understanding of why ROAR is a quality assessment, and for that they need to understand the science of reading and what ROAR can enable folks to do.”*

In other words, knowledge of foundational reading skills supports buy-in and implementation of ROAR, and allows educators to connect what they see in the classroom to what appears on the assessment. As one district-based coach shared, “So as people start to internalize the information [about foundational reading skills] and data that’s produced, I think it builds more credibility.” Their district leader shared, “Training of phonemic awareness, fluency, etc, alongside comprehension, and then having an assessment that supports that, helps it feel more concrete.” This paves the way for educators to learn and implement strategies to address these skills, as well. One PL Organization Leader said that “because both [school] leaders and teachers don’t have that content knowledge right now, what we’re seeing is a lot of very mechanical use of materials, so it doesn’t actually attend to student data.” As educators’ understandings of foundational reading skills grow over time, they will be better equipped to attend to distinct student needs.

## VARIATION IN KNOWLEDGE OF FOUNDATIONAL READING SKILLS

Across both districts, we saw variation in district-based coaches’ and teachers’ depth of knowledge of foundational reading skills prior to the ROAR pilot. Coaches with the most knowledge were those who previously worked in elementary or reading intervention spaces. This prior knowledge helped build buy-in among these groups of coaches. We heard from coaches who had less experience with foundational reading skills that learning about these skills from the PL Organizations and their colleagues helped them understand the need for the assessment and how some of the strategies fit in. In addition to the variation across district coaches, teacher knowledge varied; some leaders noted that some newer teachers came in with science of reading knowledge through their teacher preparation programs.

We found evidence in our interviews that district leaders had more knowledge about foundational reading skills than their districts’ secondary teachers and coaches. This knowledge is supportive of implementation because leaders play an important role in setting the culture and building mindsets around the relevance of foundational reading skills in secondary teachers’ classrooms. As one PL Organization Coach shared, “I think the principal piece of it is a culture-setting piece: whether or not you’re setting the culture of accountability or having that learning stance. If the leaders do not buy in, nobody else is going to buy in.” The Secondary ELA Director in Greenville was motivated to learn about foundational reading skills after seeing the year-over-year literacy needs of secondary students in his district. Though he did not have a background in this area, he learned about foundational reading skills alongside his elementary literacy counterpart. In Mission, the district hired its Director of the Science of Reading because of her expertise working on foundational reading at the elementary level. Mission leaned heavily on her experience and knowledge to push this work forward with school leaders and teachers in their pilot year.

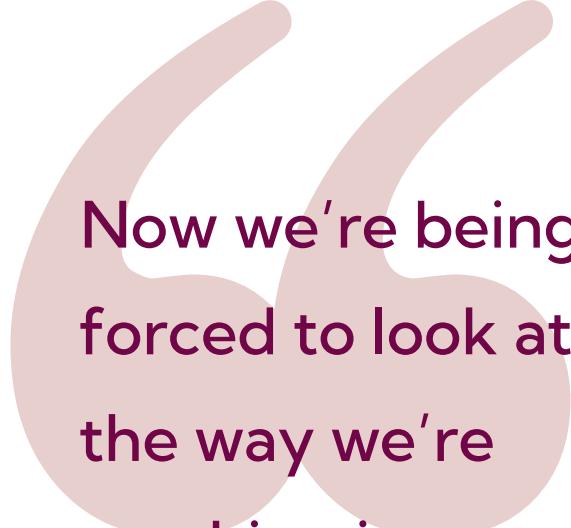
We heard mixed responses from coaches and leaders regarding the extent of teacher knowledge gained this year, beyond the group of teachers who had prior experience with the science of reading. In Greenville, leaders reported that they felt teachers deepened their understanding more in Year Two than Year One. In Mission, teachers directly involved in the coaching that supplemented PL sessions improved their knowledge, according to leaders. Still, their district leader felt there was much more to be learned following the pilot, and she plans on engaging different PL providers to support teacher learning. Following the first pilot year, Mission will take advantage of existing curricular material vendors (HD Word) to provide this learning for teachers, and supplement where necessary (i.e., fluency). This multi-year strategy is all in service of continuing to deepen teachers' knowledge of what these advanced foundational reading skills look like and how to deliver instruction to older students that effectively addresses their learning needs.

## MINDSET SHIFTS ABOUT THE ROLE OF SECONDARY TEACHERS

Learning about foundational reading skills, and more importantly, incorporating them into instruction, also requires a "mindset shift" for many secondary educators. Secondary literacy teachers are not trained to teach reading, and often do not believe that teaching reading is their responsibility:

*"If you went to school for education, you went to learn to teach kids to analyze their reading, like: Let's look at this poem. Let's tear it apart. So that's the mindset that most of the secondary ELA teachers are coming in with... Now we're kind of being forced to look at the way we're teaching in a totally different way."* – PL Organization Coach

After the ROAR pilot year(s), teachers across both districts are developing that sense of responsibility and redefining what it means to be a secondary teacher across all content areas, as foundational reading skills are necessary across subjects. One PL Organization Leader shared that "Now, there's much more awareness that [teachers]



Now we're being forced to look at the way we're teaching in a totally different way.

– PL Organization Coach

need to do something, and an increased feeling of responsibility to do something.” Another leader shared an example of success: hearing teachers “talking about needing ROAR to assess and diagnose potential reading difficulties and address them.” Cultivating that mindset shift in teachers, coaches, and district leaders is a critical component of building buy-in for the ROAR assessment and, more importantly, for building motivation to incorporate instructional strategies that address foundational reading needs into their classrooms.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When tailoring PL to build districts' understanding of foundational reading skills:

- » When it comes to leaders, coaches, and teachers, what is their prior knowledge of and experience with foundational reading skills?
- » What are the existing mindsets and beliefs about secondary teachers' role in teaching reading to secondary students?
- » What are the existing mindsets and beliefs about students' reading abilities, and the causes of their struggles?

### III. AUDIT AND STREAMLINE ASSESSMENT LANDSCAPE

Most districts utilize a multitude of literacy and reading assessments, such as i-Ready, MAP, STAR, and state assessments. Amidst a sea of sometimes overlapping assessments, districts require assistance navigating the landscape. If systems have not done the work up front to analyze what the existing data is telling them and any gaps that an assessment like ROAR might fill, the introduction of ROAR within schools can add to assessment fatigue and raise concerns about the extent to which the “juice is worth the squeeze.” Districts need support in determining how and when to best utilize their suite of assessments, to avoid over-testing of students and overburdening of teachers, while capturing the most useful and impactful data to inform instruction.

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#### **PL Organizations worked with districts so that:**

- Leaders had a clear depiction of the literacy assessment landscape, what existing data told them (purposes for each assessment), and any gaps in literacy data, particularly around advanced foundational skills.
- Leaders and educators understood how ROAR fit into the assessment landscape and the value ROAR data would provide around students' basic and advanced foundational skill development.
- Students' literacy skills would be appropriately and comprehensively assessed (not over-tested)
- Educators would receive the “right-sized” amount of data about students.
- Districts would have codified guidance around the cadences for all assessments, complete with plans for data analysis.

#### **PL Organizations were most successful when they:**

- Built understandings of the types of assessments and what they should be used for (i.e., summative/formative, screener/diagnostic).
- Created a schedule and cadence for all assessments, including administration and data analysis.
- Supported the development of streamlined infrastructure for collecting and housing all data in an easily accessible place.

## STREAMLINING THE ASSESSMENT LANDSCAPE

At the start of the pilot, both districts were requiring many literacy assessments, while lacking systems to analyze and make actionable the resulting data. As one PL Organization Leader shared with us, “That has been a big part of the job for our system coaches this year – getting the right assessments in the right schools at the right time. Every school had different assessments that they were giving. Some things were required by the district, some weren’t, and there was just a ton of over-testing happening.” According to another PL Organization leader, the problem was not that schools lack the necessary data, but rather that they did not use the data in an efficient manner:

*“What we typically find is that systems have a lot of data but don’t know what to do with it, or they don’t know how to design from it, or not, or it’s kind of ineffectual for their students’ needs.”*

Navigating the assessment landscape was a key activity for both districts involved in the ROAR pilot. Working with PL Organizations provided the opportunity for districts to make informed decisions about which assessments have data that would be the most impactful for teachers and students, and to understand where assessments might be duplicative. In Greenville, their PL Organization supported them with a multi-pronged approach, including both a district-based working group and a “systems coach” to guide district leadership along the implementation process. The working group included the Secondary ELA Director, a member of their Data and Assessment team, the Multilingual Learner (MLL) director, a school-based coach, and two teachers, all supported by the PL Organization. The work began with the creation of a unified vision for their assessment landscape, and they followed up by creating a theory of action. This process allowed the group to make decisions about which assessments were most critical to their vision. Questions they asked themselves during the process included: “Do the assessments serve the purposes we intend? Do we have a quick snapshot of data? Can we provide the interventions students need?”

They found that oftentimes, the use cases for the various assessments were not clearly defined, and the district did not have clear guidelines for how teachers and leaders would use the resulting data. PL Organization leaders agreed that assessment audit and landscape work must include supporting districts in understanding the purposes and uses of the different assessments in their purview, including which ones are formative versus summative, and which ones can be used as screeners versus as diagnostics. This understanding is crucial because these purposes guide the cadence and usage of the various assessments, at what times during the year, and for which students. By completing a systematic audit, Greenville made more informed decisions about the inclusion of an additional screener (ROAR), decided what assessments serve redundant functions, and what assessments could be replaced.

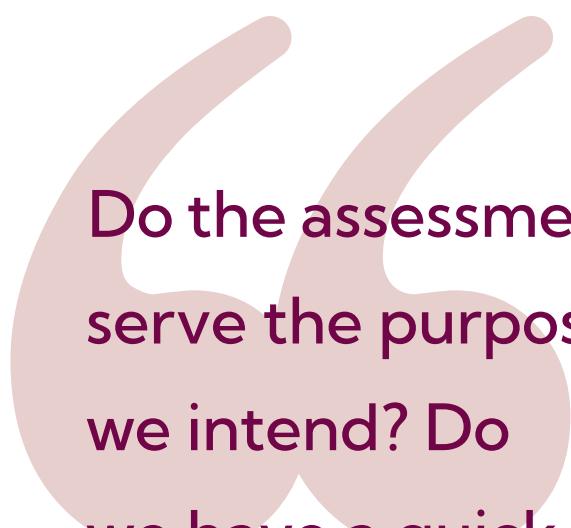
Following the audit, the Greenville working group produced a guidance document providing those use cases and addressed the previous overtesting that they found across the district. They found that they could reclaim instructional time across classrooms by streamlining their assessment landscape. For example, for the following year, Greenville decided that ROAR would replace its MAP test as a screener for incoming sixth and ninth graders. Those students took the ROAR at the beginning of the school year to determine where they fell on the decoding threshold. If students scored in the “green” (indicating they have “achieved the skill”), they did not need to take the assessment in future administrations. In Mission, their PL Organization partner similarly worked with their district leader to create an assessment calendar that included details about “when they were going to use it and for whom, we got the rosters for who they were going to use it for.” Mission decided that they would use the validated ROAR Word and Sentence subtests as a primary screener for all incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders, and students who fall below a certain threshold would then be identified for diagnostic testing. By the end of the pilot year(s), district leaders recognized the value-add of the ROAR assessment in the context of their broader assessment landscape. They also appreciated

that the ROAR assessment is free, in contrast to the many other assessments they have to pay for. However, leaders acknowledged that it would be difficult to implement the ROAR assessment (and the accompanying data analysis and instructional strategies) without the support of a PL Organization. Amidst district budgetary constraints that are ending PL Organization partnerships with districts, ROAR will be discontinued in Greenville. While ROAR is free, the partner PL Organization supported Greenville with ROAR data analysis and professional learning. Without these supports, one district leader expressed the difficulty of continuing ROAR implementation. Instead, they will be utilizing a fluency diagnostic test that is embedded in their new literacy curriculum.

## **ROAR'S VALUE-ADD IN THE ASSESSMENT LANDSCAPE**

One “aha” moment experienced by districts was the fact that most of their available assessments failed to assess fluency at the secondary level – and this was a place where ROAR’s sentence subtest was a value-add. After assessing students with the ROAR, educators were “shocked” at the level of need their students demonstrated around fluency. Fluency needs are commonly overlooked in secondary classrooms because teachers do not typically have students read aloud in class. Assessing fluency with ROAR allowed districts to reveal a pressing need among their students and create appropriate plans to address it in Tier 1 and Tier 2 spaces, with the understanding that Tier 2 might look different based on student needs.

The ROAR assessment also filled a need in the broader assessment landscape for distinguishing foundational literacy needs from language needs for MLLs. Specifically, the use of the Spanish language ROAR subtests can help educators pinpoint whether students possess foundational reading skills in their home language, which would indicate that language supports may be most appropriate for those students. Neither of our partner districts could use this feature of the ROAR to its fullest potential during the pilot years. This was in part because the



**Do the assessments serve the purposes we intend? Do we have a quick snapshot of data? Can we provide the interventions students need?**

– PL Organizing Leader

ROAR Spanish tests are not yet validated. In this case, that meant that their score reporting differed from the other validated tests, lacking normed scores. Lack of validation also meant that districts felt wary of their usefulness. As Stanford builds the validity case for these subtests, we imagine more districts will benefit from their use.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When tailoring PL to help districts audit and streamline the assessment landscape:

- » What are the current literacy assessments in the district? What data is currently collected, and to what extent do they measure advanced foundational reading skills?
- » How might ROAR fit into the existing assessment landscape? Will it be used as a primary screener or a secondary screener?
- » What instructional programs are in place (i.e., Dual Language or ESL)? And how will that affect the assessment needs and language(s) of the assessment?
- » Who will take which ROAR subtests? When, and how often?
- » What additional diagnostic assessments will the district have available to follow up with students who have identified needs?
- » What is the overall assessment calendar for the district?
- » Where will the resulting data be housed?
- » When will the resulting data be analyzed? Who will analyze the data?

# IV. DEVELOP/REFINE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR INTERVENTIONS AND TIER 1 INSTRUCTION

When preparing for ROAR administration and use of the resulting data, districts found that they needed to develop and/or refine their structures for intervention. While there is a need for coherence in instructional strategies across Tier 1 and Tiers 2–3, most of the instruction on foundational reading skills in secondary schools occurs in intervention spaces. Across both districts, time for interventions, staffing and training of intervention instructors, curricular materials, and student placement and progress monitoring emerged as important areas for consideration when building out effective structures for interventions.

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## PL Organizations worked with districts so that:

- They identified all students with foundational reading gaps and placed them in appropriate interventions, and had them exit interventions when appropriate.
- Intervention instructors would be qualified and prepared, including understanding the scope and demands of Tier 1 instruction.
- Master schedules allowed for co-planning between interventionists and core subject area teachers.
- Teachers had access to HQIM curricula AND appropriate instructional strategies .
- Students would be involved in progress monitoring (they know what they're working on and why).
- MLLs would have access to both appropriate literacy intervention instruction and language development instruction and supports.

## PL Organizations were most successful when they:

- Provided systems-level coaching to district leaders to assist with creating plans for intervention structures.
- Supported the district in restructuring schedules to incorporate interventions.
- Examined student needs holistically to provide appropriate services (i.e., foundational reading and language support separately to MLL students).

## TAILORED INSTRUCTION THROUGH INTERVENTION INFRASTRUCTURE

Although the main goal for this year's pilot was administering the ROAR assessment, their leaders, coaches, and teachers were also highly motivated to explore the instructional action steps that would result from ROAR data. This required a critical look at their existing infrastructure for interventions.

Prior to the ROAR pilot in Greenville, most schools lacked any type of intervention structure, creating the challenge of figuring out when Tier 2 foundational reading instruction would take place for those students who needed it. Their PL Organization Coach said, "Before, if they knew a kid couldn't read or was struggling with decoding, they did nothing. Or, they gave them an extra reading period, without instruction in foundational skills." In these extra reading periods, students utilized the Read180 literacy program as a form of extra support. Now in Year Two of their pilot, some schools made improvements to their intervention structures to allow for more tailored instruction to occur. For example, in one school, they moved their intervention block from the end of the day, where attendance was spotty, to the middle of the day. From these changes, more students received the necessary reading interventions needed for their development, and the schools saw improvements in attendance. Furthermore, teachers used more specific strategies tailored to their students' needs, as revealed by ROAR and other assessments, improving their ability to support older struggling readers. In another school, they addressed personnel issues by staffing their intervention classes with their literacy experts, including: "our ELA teachers, our literacy coaches, our MLL instructor, our students with disabilities instructor." In this way, they are "putting our all stars with kids who have the most need." Additionally, middle schools across the district embedded fluency practice into all Tier 1 ELA classrooms, ensuring that all students received a low-touch but consistent foundational reading intervention. PL organizations identified whole-school trends in their ROAR data that

later informed their partner district's decision to implement fluency interventions.

On the other hand, Mission already had an intervention structure standardized across schools, but the instruction occurring during intervention was inconsistent. Some of the personnel teaching those classes did not always have a background in literacy instruction. One PL Organization Leader noted,

*"They have interventionists, but then when we figured out who their interventionist was, it was like, 'Oh, it was somebody who had an open period, or it was the PE coach, and not an actual interventionist.' So they have the thing, but not at the level that we need them to have."*

The PL required for these personnel demanded even more attention to developing knowledge of foundational reading skills.

Despite a structure in place for intervention time, schools lacked nuanced methods for placing students into intervention classes. Instead, students with a wide variety of needs were in the same classes, receiving broad services instead of instruction tailored to their ROAR results/reading needs. Mission's PL Organization Coach noted,

*"A lot of multilingual learners come into the classroom with a huge understanding of phonics, it just might be in whatever their home language is. But [struggling] students were all receiving these blanket reading intervention services. We would see some growth, but we weren't seeing as much growth as we would like to see."*

A PL Organization Leader working with Mission said, "We walked into classrooms with students who had a pretty wide range of needs, [who were] all getting the same thing, and the things that they were getting weren't particularly tailored to [their needs]." To address this need, the PL Organization worked with them to develop and codify a set of intervention pathways to place students into appropriately tailored intervention groupings. With a large population of MLLs whose home language is Spanish, they also explored ways to triangulate the English and Spanish

ROAR results, along with other assessments, to create personalized approaches to literacy intervention services for their students.

*“We’re creating these student profiles - what do we do when a student comes in whose English is not their first language, but they’re scoring pretty well in Spanish, and they’re really struggling with morphology? Or they don’t have phonemic awareness for some letter-sound agreements. What about students who need both? What does that approach look like?”*

- PL Organization Coach

In addition to staffing and student placement, the PL Organization supported Mission to develop an “Intervention Guidebook” that will guide instructional practices during intervention periods. The Guidebook outlined several structures that could be used during this time, such as

parallel teaching and targeted small group instruction. This demonstrates how important strong infrastructure for interventions is to the successful implementation of the ROAR assessment.

At both Greenville and Mission, structural changes to intervention structures proved to be a multi-year endeavor, with a few steps taken one year, followed by reflection and iteration, and additional steps later. Creating well-functioning interventions with high-quality materials is thus a long-term process. Greenville and Mission provided examples of districts that did not wait for perfect structures to be in place; instead, they undertook ROAR implementation simultaneously. These processes can inform and strengthen each other.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When tailoring PL to help districts develop and refine infrastructure for interventions and instruction:

- » Across schools in the district, when during or after the school day do Tier 2 and 3 interventions occur?
- » Who teaches intervention lessons, and what PL do they need to receive?
- » What curriculum or materials are used for intervention? Are the materials developmentally appropriate and rooted in effective foundational literacy skill instruction?
- » How do students get identified and placed into intervention? When and how do they move out of intervention?
- » How is student progress monitored? How is this data used for instructional decision-making for the intervention group?

# ROAR Implementation

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# I. ADMINISTER ROAR

Building knowledge of foundational reading skills for leaders and educators, streamlining the assessment landscape, and developing infrastructure for interventions enable the success of ROAR implementation. Though both of our pilot study districts attended to these areas while simultaneously launching the ROAR assessment, PL Organizations agreed that having these pieces (at least partially) in place before launching the ROAR assessment would be beneficial to future district work.

We now turn to ROAR implementation, which includes cycles of ROAR administration, data analysis, and intervention. In our pilot study districts, these cycles occurred three or four times during the year. When schools are ready to launch the ROAR assessment, framing, communication, and logistics are crucial for successful implementation.

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## **PL Organizations worked with districts so that:**

- Teachers would be familiar with the technical/operational aspects of the ROAR (e.g., what is taken on, how students take the assessment, how to use the ROAR dashboard, etc.).
- Communication would be streamlined from district leadership and communicated to multiple stakeholders.
- Appropriate time would be allotted for administration.
- Students and families would understand the purpose of the assessment.

## **PL Organizations were most successful when they:**

- Built buy-in for teachers by framing the “why” of the assessment up front.
- Communicated effectively through multiple layers of the district (i.e., district leaders, school leaders, coaches, teachers, students, and their families).
- Prepared teachers for technical aspects and logistics:
  - » Ensuring accurate student rostering, so students take the correct subtests.
  - » Logging into platform(s) (i.e., Clever).
  - » Previewing student reports and dashboard.
  - » Preparing for troubleshooting.
- Prepared students to take the assessment:
  - » Building understanding of the assessment itself, understanding of the associated research, and buy-in.

## FRAMING OF THE ROAR ASSESSMENT

The exact framing and communication rollout may differ for different districts, depending on their existing communication structures and the current state of knowledge and buy-in across the district. Still, both districts found success when they spent time on the “why” of the assessment up front. This incorporated the work accomplished in the arenas of both foundational reading skills and the assessment landscape. That is, leaders and teachers needed to know (1) what foundational reading skills are and their relevance to secondary students, and (2) how the data would be useful to them.

Communication begins with framing of the ROAR assessment for school leaders, coaches, teachers, and students. In Year One of Greenville’s pilot, the district mandated its use with little framing for stakeholders. Not having autonomy in the decision to adopt the ROAR was frustrating for educators on the ground. One of their PL Organization coaches noted,

*“ROAR was just chosen, selected, and given. Teachers and [coaches] and principals are just tired of having things being given to them without feeling like they have the power to choose. Now we’re trying to figure out how to build reverse autonomy, now that we’re two years in.”*

School-based coaches and teachers did not understand why they needed to implement the ROAR on top of the other literacy assessments they already gave, and did not understand how the data would be used. This caused confusion and frustration that Greenville and its PL Organization partner had to mitigate during the second year of the pilot. Indeed, in their second year of implementation (our pilot study year), Greenville pulled back on their mandate and allowed schools to exercise more autonomy in their administration of ROAR. They found the administration smoother in Year Two as a result. This suggests that beginning ROAR adoption with schools that opt in, who are already invested, like in Mission, may be a helpful strategy.

PL Organizations were successful in framing the ROAR when they highlighted its relevance by presenting national and (when available) local student data pointing to low achievement in ELA, and research on the decoding threshold. This helped coaches and teachers understand how national trends in reading were showing up in their own district, and motivated them to act. Coaches in Greenville responded positively to this data: “Seeing the data from last year was like, ‘Oh!’ A lot of them said, ‘This makes sense, I see this happening in our schools.’” Their PL Organization presented student self-efficacy data alongside the reading data, revealing a “direct connection” between students’ discomfort reading in class and their fluency. This motivated teachers to want to learn more about the ROAR and how it could ultimately help students feel more confident and capable in reading. Coaches shared that teachers “had a lot of urgency around it,” and wanted to “do something about this,” saying, “We’ve gotta tackle fluency with our kids and help them feel more confident.” In the second year of this pilot, Greenville was able to present testimonials from coaches who used the ROAR assessment data in Year One to make impactful instructional shifts for their students. One PL Organization Leader shared,

*“We showed them one of the other [coaches] who actually did something with ROAR last year, actually implemented a fluency routine, and saw progress in their ROAR scores. And so we had her tell a little bit about that experience in the session. And after that, the [coaches] were like, ‘Tell me more. What did you do? How did you do it?’ They were so bought in.”*

Importantly, in Year Two of Greenville’s pilot, their partner PL Organization realized that educators also needed time to process all of that information, and provide feedback and pushback. When this time was available, the PL Organization coaches could engage educators in conversations to address their questions and concerns, which ultimately supported their buy-in.

## COMMUNICATING ABOUT ROAR ADMINISTRATION

Consistent communication also supports accountability. Actors in different roles require clarity for their responsibilities before, during, and after ROAR administration. As one PL Organization Coach shared, “Implementation is hard if there’s no follow-up or reminders to [coaches].”

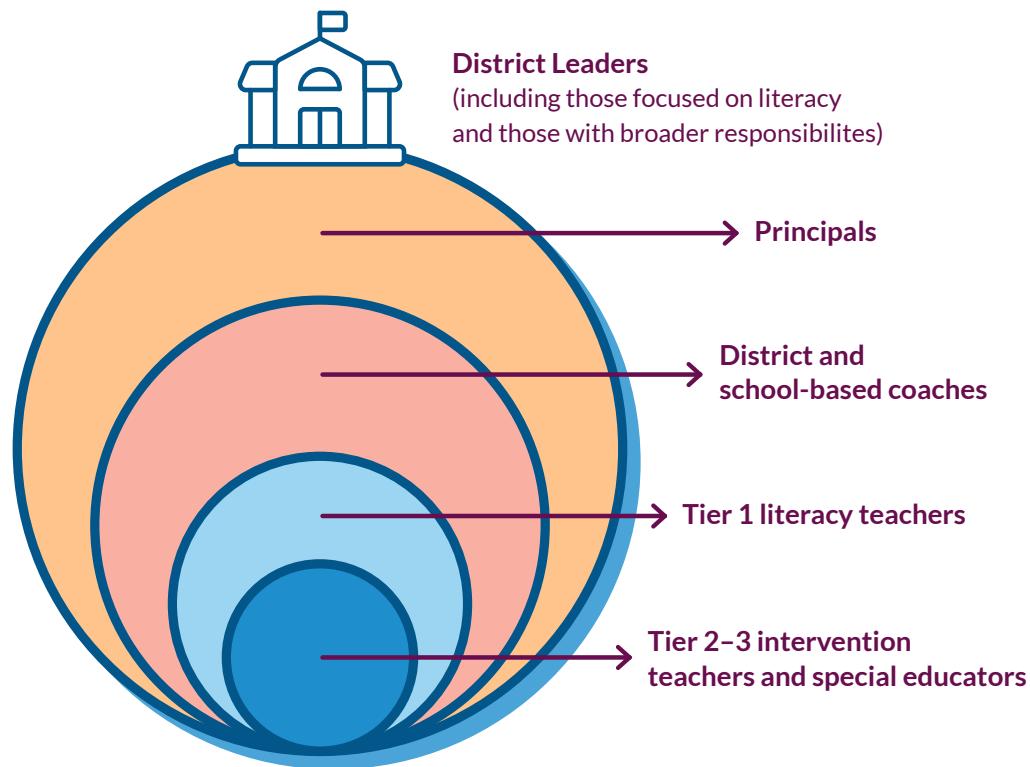
PL Organizations grappled with the appropriate balance of information for school leaders (principals), in particular. Principals have many priorities that are not all literacy related, and hold contextual knowledge of their buildings beyond that of the PL Organization and even district leaders. They are also, ultimately, instructional leaders, and therefore need enough content knowledge related to ROAR to make informed decisions. Striking this balance of providing enough information, without overwhelming principals, is important for PL Organizations to account for as they build out implementation plans.

After this pilot, PL Organization coaches also reflected that leaders could have used more training around the assessment, as they are ultimately the drivers of assessment completion and data use in school buildings.

They believe that the “scale of the impact could have been greater if principals, their supervisors, and assistant principals” had been meaningfully involved in PL prior to and during the pilot. In Greenville, the principals were more “operationally-oriented” than “instructionally-oriented” – which may have contributed to holding their teachers less accountable for implementing ROAR. This was paired with a historical culture of significant autonomy among building leaders, which made it difficult for district leaders to hold principals accountable. Understanding these dynamics and making appropriate plans is key for smooth implementation of ROAR.

## COMMUNICATING ABOUT ROAR ADMINISTRATION

PL Organizations learned that appropriate and relevant information should be communicated to the varied stakeholders across multiple layers of the organization:



## PREPARING STUDENTS FOR ROAR



Both districts and PL Organizations named that student buy-in is necessary for their successful participation in the ROAR assessment, and for learning foundational reading skills more broadly. In Greenville, a

PL Organization Coach shared about their first year in the pilot that "I think many times [students] throw the data. They just click. Because what we have seen, teachers said that a majority of kids didn't care, and we'd have kids flagged in the pink who were excelling on [the state summative assessment]." Some school-based coaches and teachers had the perception that these dynamics led to unreliable results, which in turn promoted a cycle of distrust in the data.

To build student buy-in, one PL Organization created customized scripts and videos to orient students to the ROAR assessment, as well as giving explicit information about the research that is ongoing. "We told them this year, 'You're part of our research.'" They are hopeful that even more can be done in this arena, calling for "data chats" or ongoing surveys for students to understand their feelings and affirm their engagement in the assessment. They suggested:

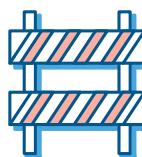
*"Having something at the end of the actual assessment that gives them some sort of response around what's going to happen next. Like, you know, this is going to go to your teachers. Or giving them a little survey of like, how did this feel for you? Something for kids to feel valued and heard in the process, or affirmed."*

The other PL Organization took time to discuss with educators how to frame the assessment with their students in a way that attends to their social-emotional needs. One leader shared,

*"We tried to weave in the SEL components of being an older, striving reader, and how that shows up. And how to set up a classroom for doing the ROAR assessment. Because you're asking students to take an assessment on something that they feel bad at right at the beginning of the year. And they don't know you. What are the implications?"*

In this way, they aim to support students' participation in the ROAR by attending to their lived experiences, which should support their buy-in and have the additional benefit of increasing the reliability of the assessment results. Moving forward, Mission's district leader plans to ensure that motivation and sense of belonging are the gateway to reading intervention for all learners: "You can have the best materials, but if your students feel demoralized and you're not addressing it, you're not developing students' identities as readers, then we're going to continue to see significant gaps." To accomplish this, they plan to incorporate "data chats" as part of the intervention block, using a combination of resources embedded in existing materials (i-Ready) and newly developed ones. These "data chats" would be aimed at communicating with students where they are in terms of literacy growth, and provide opportunities for students to set goals and take ownership over their learning.

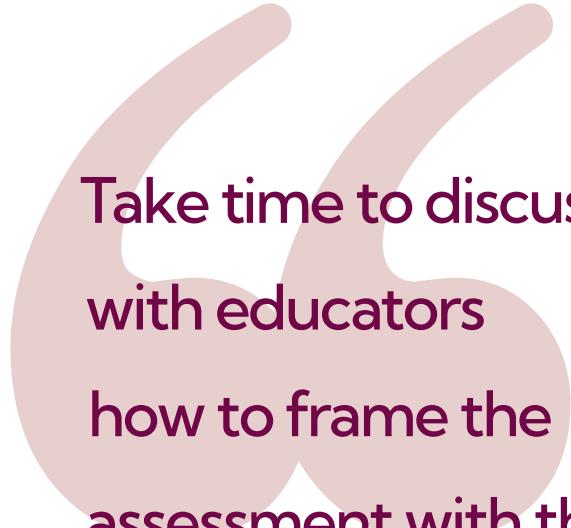
## TECHNICAL CHALLENGES



Over the course of the two pilot years, both districts faced several technical issues when administering the ROAR assessment. Greenville's PL Organization shared that in Year One, "There were so many issues with the ROAR assessment itself that we lost a ton of buy-in from the [coaches]." Their district leader shared, "The actual testing and everything has had enough glitches that it's made people a little bit weary." The challenges included:

- **Agreements:** Implementation timelines did not always incorporate sufficient time for necessary legal agreement review and signing, which ultimately delayed district start dates for ROAR administration.
- **Login access:** Many teachers, leaders, and PL Organization coaches experienced difficulties getting logins and access to the dashboard. Some PL Organization coaches had to wait until the ROAR administration to see what difficulties teachers had using the dashboards.

- **Lack of longitudinal data reporting:** The ROAR dashboard did not display individual student growth from administration to administration, leaving educators to manually calculate any growth (which PL Organizations did).
- **Appearance of ambiguous items:** Some coaches reported that students shared examples of one or more items in the fluency section that they found ambiguous, leading them to spend more time considering those items than was allowed by the timed test. This raised questions for some coaches about the accuracy of students' fluency scores.
- **Validated subtests:** Both pilot districts only used the validated subtests of the ROAR (Phoneme, Word, and Sentence). Some students across these districts took the Spanish-language version of tests, but educators were confused by the results because they were not reported in the same scaled way as the English-version validated subtests. Neither district used the ROAR Morphology subtest because it was not yet validated at scale. Thus, they were not yet leveraging the full potential of the ROAR assessment because they didn't measure the advanced decoding skills that ROAR affords. The pilot districts did not see the value-add of utilizing the subtests that are not yet validated.



Take time to discuss  
with educators  
how to frame the  
assessment with their  
students in a way that  
attends to their social-  
emotional needs.

– PL Organizing Leader

Technical challenges decreased participant buy-in over the course of the pilot and made administration and data analysis overly taxing for educators. Still, in the face of these challenges, district leaders and some educators remain enthusiastic about the potential uses of ROAR for their older striving readers. Addressing the above technical issues will go a long way toward supporting stronger implementation.

Another challenge that eroded buy-in on the ROAR assessment was the time it took to administer. Teachers were told that the tests would take 10–15 minutes;

in reality, some teachers reported that students would take up to an entire 45-minute class period to complete one or more subtests. This was disruptive to teachers' plans and caused frustration. Instead, district leaders recommend that expectations are set differently in the future. One district leader shared, "Sometimes when we sell things, we try to make them smaller than they are," in order to get teachers hooked. Instead, they recommend saying something like, "This is really important, so we're going to plan accordingly."



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When tailoring to PL districts so that they can administer ROAR:

- » During the initial ROAR launch, will participation be mandatory across the district? Or will the administration start with volunteers for early adoption?
- » What paperwork, including data sharing agreements (DSAs), must be in place before assessments can be administered?
- » What is a realistic timeframe for getting agreements in place?
- » Does the district have a plan for communication and logistics across school leaders and teachers?
- » How will teachers be prepared to administer the assessment?
- » How will students be prepared for the ROAR assessment?
- » How will families be communicated with?
- » What is a realistic timeframe for communicating with and preparing school leaders and educators?

## II. ANALYZE ROAR DATA

For ROAR results to become actionable, the data needs to be analyzed effectively. Districts may find it useful to analyze trends at the district level, school level, and classroom level to inform decisions such as the provision of whole school professional development, student placement and movement in interventions, and tailored instruction.

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### **PL Organizations worked with districts to:**

- Identify district- and school-wide patterns of gaps in foundational reading skills.
- Identify which students were in need of additional assessments, and what those assessments are.
- Identify which skills need to be addressed by whom, at what time, and in which setting.
  - » Tier 1 and/or Tiers 2 and 3.
- Triangulate data across multiple literacy assessments.

### **PL Organizations were most successful when they:**

- Provided data analysis protocols for leaders, coaches, and teachers to unpack ROAR data.
- Walked through data analysis protocols with leaders, coaches, and teachers.
- Supported leaders, coaches, and teachers in drawing insights from the ROAR results.
- Connected ROAR results to foundational reading skills.

## IDENTIFYING INSIGHTS FROM ROAR RESULTS

The ROAR assessment was designed to provide unique and quickly accessible information about older students' foundational reading skills. The ROAR assessment gave districts information about students' fluency through the Sentence subtest, information that they were not previously assessing for. In Greenville, a PL Organization Leader noted insights from the Sentence subtest, saying "[Teachers] are not hearing kids read out loud a lot, so I think this did uncover the need for work in that area." This insight led to fluency interventions being implemented district-wide in Tier 1 middle school classrooms, which led to marked student gains in fluency. Mission approached analyzing the ROAR data by comparing scores on the Word and the Sentence subtests, and used that information to distinguish among student needs and place them in appropriate groupings within Tier 2 interventions.

In gleaning additional insights, districts encountered the challenge of examining student growth over time. During the pilot year(s), ROAR dashboards did not display student growth over time (though this is set to change in the 2025–2026 school year, according to a recent Stanford webinar). As a result, PL Organizations had to create their own reports and dashboards to support this analysis at different levels. Using a combination of screenshots from ROAR's dashboard and their own visualizations created by manually inputting student scores, PL Organization coaches supported district coaches and teachers in looking at changes that happened over time, asking them to reflect and create action steps. In the district where PL Organizations worked only with coaches, coaches were expected to turnkey this process to their teachers.

Districts shared their aspirations for leveraging the ROAR data to gain additional understanding of their students. Eventually, districts want to analyze ROAR data separately by subgroups in order to further understand the nuances of their students' foundational reading skills. Greenville's district leader said he "would want PL more targeted towards that." In Mission, with a large population

of MLLs, they are also interested in this work. This year, they have considered how the Spanish ROAR tests (once validated) could help them "parse out between newcomer language programming and actual reading intervention." This could ensure that they are streamlining supports for these students, "so they're not in too many redundant interventions." Furthermore, teachers and leaders at Mission expressed interest in item analysis with ROAR to avoid duplicating work with various assessments.

## PL ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING DATA ANALYSIS

To support data analysis, both PL Organizations provided districts with data analysis protocols and walked them through the processes. District leaders examined the data at the district level, while coaches and teachers looked at school-level and teacher-level data, working with district leaders to determine "when there were fluency gaps or decoding gaps." PL Organizations supported district partners in navigating the ROAR dashboards, including progress and score reports. Progress reports showed the number of students who were assigned different ROAR subtests, how many tests were completed, and how many tests were still in progress. These ROAR results showed breakdowns by student, grade, subtest, and school. The score report also indicated the skill mastery level by subtest.

PL Organizations were crucial partners in this work; as one PL Organization Leader shared: "Having a coach there, walking leaders and teachers through the analysis process is very necessary, especially the first time. I don't know if we gave the data reports to them on their own that they would be able to [analyze]." This perspective highlights the current gap between the work PL Organizations do to analyze data and the existing capacity of districts. During the ROAR pilot, PL Organizations would often complete data analysis before meeting with leaders and coaches, and present their findings to each stakeholder, giving them time to reflect on the trends, draw insights, and plan for next steps. PL Organizations needed to do additional preparation, including finding information about proficiency cutoffs, as they were not identified in the existing ROAR dashboard.

While this data analysis approach helped district leaders synthesize assessment data quickly, it did not develop the long-term capacity of district leaders to own this analysis in the long run. One Greenville district leader noted persistent gaps in teachers' understanding of the ROAR data — underscoring this tension between PL Organization support and capacity-building.

PL Organizations helped their districts translate the data into action in intervention. Greenville's partner PL Organization provided a "flowchart" to guide student placement in intervention based on their combination of ROAR subtest scores. For example, if a student scored "pink" on ROAR Word and "yellow" on ROAR sentence, this guide suggested they be placed in a particular tier of intervention. This type of specific guidance helped coaches make sense of the data and turn it into tangible, immediate action steps.

## DATA TRIANGULATION

ROAR data should be analyzed in the context of other literacy assessments, providing information about which students are in need of what types of interventions (i.e., fluency) and/or require additional diagnostic testing. Both districts worked to triangulate ROAR data with other assessments during the pilot year(s); however, there were a few technical challenges they encountered. First, while other assessments provide information on student growth over time, teachers do not have the ability to access that information on the ROAR reporting platform. Second, the ROAR platform currently lacks the ability to link students to their unique IDs, making it difficult to compile all students' data into a single database for educators.

To address these technical challenges, PL Organizations assisted districts with data triangulation among multiple assessments. For example, to account for ROAR's lack of growth reporting, Mission's PL Organization partner worked with them to create a cohesive beginning, middle, and end-of-year data template that incorporates both



The ROAR is giving us some ability to toggle between different profiles of students to be more strategic about what interventions they get.

— PL Organizing Leader

i-Ready and ROAR. (This template required manual input of student ROAR scores, given the student ID issue.) This effort provided the opportunity to triangulate ROAR's results with existing literacy assessments to better understand students' strengths and needs:

*"The ROAR is giving us some ability to toggle between different profiles of students to be more strategic about what interventions they get. Like, here's their i-Ready score, here's their ELPAC score, here's their ROAR score. How might that help us figure out what constellation of intervention supports and ELD supports they might need?"*

- PL Organization Leader

Again, the amount of extra work needed to turn data reports into actionable insights emphasized the utility of having PL Organizations supporting districts in ROAR implementation.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When tailoring to PL districts so they can analyze ROAR data:

- » When will data analysis occur for the ROAR results?
- » Who will support educators in analyzing ROAR data?
- » How will ROAR results be analyzed holistically among other literacy assessments and known student information (i.e., MLL status)?
- » How will students be included in the data analysis process?

### III. INTERVENE TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

Ultimately, the ROAR assessment's value lies in its capacity to guide instructional decision-making to support all students' reading development. Intervening to support students' reading development requires educators to use data to make informed decisions about appropriate materials and instructional strategies, and to deliver those strategies across all tiers of instruction.

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#### **PL Organizations worked with districts so that they could:**

- Choose and deliver appropriate instructional strategies that address student gaps across all tiers of instruction.
- Adapt and enhance Tier 1 instruction according to district- and school-wide patterns in the data.
- Place students in appropriate groups for interventions.
- Utilize and tailor appropriate Tier 2/3 intervention materials.

#### **PL Organizations were most successful when they:**

- Trained educators on instructional strategies that are developmentally appropriate for older striving readers.
- Utilized coaching to provide accountability and feedback to educators delivering instruction.

## DRIVERS OF SUCCESS: KNOWLEDGE, COACHING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In addition to rolling out the ROAR assessment during the pilot year(s), both districts worked on improving the instruction students received for foundational reading skills. A number of factors drove success in instruction: (a) educators' knowledge of foundational reading skills, (b) consistent coaching cycles, and (c) accountability. As detailed earlier in this report, a nuanced understanding of foundational reading skills allowed teachers to not only identify gaps but also to effectively choose and deliver instructional strategies that match students' needs. In both districts, a subset of teachers had the opportunity to engage in coaching or "teaching and learning" cycles. These cycles supported both teacher buy-in for instruction and their effective delivery. Moreover, coaching was part of a system of accountability in some schools that promoted consistent instruction. In Greenville, in schools that had previously chosen literacy as a school-wide goal, building leaders and coaches worked together to collect artifacts of teacher strategy use so they could understand their impacts and give feedback to teachers. In this way, school leaders built accountability and supported teachers' growth in their use of strategies. Their leader described "learning walk[s], that all happens within a number of weeks. So we take a look and see what's happening in the classroom, see what the results are, and then go back and kind of go, Okay, we thought we saw that. And this is why we think this data is here."

Other strategies for accountability were the use of trackers and focal groups. PL Org-provided trackers helped coaches (and the PL Organization) to follow which interventions were being applied to which students, so they could align and make sense of any ROAR progress they saw. In Greenville's "focal group approach" to tracking student progress, each school-level coach involved in the pilot identified a small group of students for whom to track their ROAR use and progress. Coaches then followed their focal group's ROAR results, following up with their teachers, and saw real-time growth that occurred as a consequence of the instructional changes implemented. The focal groups "really help to get granular so that [coaches] can actually show what they've learned and take action."

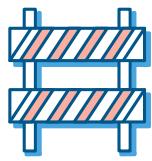
## PROGRESS IN INTERVENTION INSTRUCTION

At Mission, the Director of Science of Reading used the ROAR beginning-of-year data to determine which students needed Tiers 2 and 3 reading intervention, and placed them accordingly. While intervention teachers did improve in their use of school-provided intervention curriculum, they remained stuck using it with "fidelity" but not "integrity." Their PL Organization Coach clarified that teachers were not making intentional choices about which lessons and student practices to emphasize, and their instruction lacked consistent checks for understanding. In other words, they did not use the collected assessment data to drive their teaching, nor did they tailor it to their students' needs. Some classrooms, for example, were implementing some of their intervention curricula, and then moving to "novel study" with a focus on comprehension – which did not align with the foundational skills they were still missing. Their district leader shared that in other classrooms, "This year it felt like teachers were just putting something in front of the students, without goals or clear direction." Many intervention teachers were not seeing the misalignment between the assessment data and the material they taught during intervention, and required additional training to that end. One PL Organization Leader expressed that it might be helpful for teachers to learn the specific skills with which their students need additional support.

Greenville demonstrated more growth in this arena than Mission – their teachers finished the pilot year(s) feeling more confident with choosing and delivering strategies aligned to student data. Their instructional shifts were mostly driven by whole-school trends and delivering strategies in the Tier 1 classroom, as opposed to making instructional decisions tailored to the individual student level.

Across both districts, participation in the ROAR assessment pilot pushed them to think more deeply about the interventions they are providing to students. Specifically, districts were eager to leave behind their "one-size-fits-all" approaches in favor of providing targeted, tailored instruction to students, at the right times and for the right duration.

## CHALLENGES TO INTERVENING



Both districts faced challenges in implementing appropriate intervention instruction. First, district leaders shared that it was difficult to prioritize foundational literacy supports among many competing instructional priorities not centered around literacy. A district leader in Mission noted that prep time is limited for teachers assigned to reading interventions. Since reading interventionists might teach multiple classes, they may prioritize some content areas over reading intervention. In Greenville, they implemented new curricula across their middle and high schools, an endeavor that took much effort from coaches and teachers alike. Schools were more successful when the ROAR assessment and its accompanying intervention work aligned with existing school-wide initiatives.

Another challenge shared by a Greenville district leader was the issue of student engagement, in particular because there is a feeling that the content may feel “baby-ish” — existing intervention materials aren’t necessarily developmentally appropriate for older striving readers. This puts extra onus on teachers to frame and tailor the instruction in ways that feel motivating and meaningful for their students.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When tailoring to PL districts for successful interventions:

- » Who is responsible for placing students into (and exiting them out of) appropriate interventions?
- » When will interventions occur?
- » Who will be teaching interventions, and how will they be prepared?
- » What materials and/or instructional strategies will be utilized during interventions?
- » What does progress monitoring within interventions look like?



## A NOTE ABOUT SYSTEMS CHANGE

As noted above, both of the pilot study districts were deeply partnered with PL Organizations to support their ROAR launch and the associated district-, school-, and educator-level shifts required for its success. Addressing persistent gaps in students' foundational reading skills is a critical mission, and it requires substantial resources. Even well-resourced districts may not have the existing capacity and expertise to manage all of the shifts involved on their own. PL Organizations can provide the thought partnership and resources that support changes at multiple levels of a school system.

At its core, this work applies the concepts of the Science of Reading to upper grades. Nationally, we have seen a tidal wave of reforms, including funding, dedicated to providing training and resources to schools to implement instruction aligned with the Science of Reading. For example, California's Early Literacy Support Block Grant allocated \$50 million for approved high-need districts to spend on professional development, instructional coaches, assessment tools, instructional materials, tutoring, and other community supports focused on improving literacy in Kindergarten through third grade (Novicoff & Dee, 2025). Our pilot studies provide initial evidence that substantial investment in many of these same areas is necessary to make the shifts in literacy instruction in upper grades, as well.

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**Shapiro, A., Lee, S., & Woo, A. (2024).** Exploring Foundational Reading Skill Instruction in K-12 Schools: Findings from the 2023 American Instructional Resources Survey. Research Report. RR-A134-23. RAND Corporation.

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# APPENDICES

## A. Example of Assessment Landscape Template

### a. ANet's Full Guidance Document

Link Preview:

## Guidance for Building a Strong Secondary Literacy Assessment Strategy

Download this strategy guide to strengthen assessment systems that inform teaching, support equity, and accelerate student achievement. Get clear guidance on how to design and use formative, interim, and summative literacy assessments that inform instruction, track growth, and align schoolwide goals. This framework helps districts ensure assessments truly drive student success.

## B. Example of ROAR Implementation Timeline Matrix

### a. TNTP's ROAR Implementation Timeline

Link Preview:

Timeline	District/School Team	ROAR Team
At least 2 months before ROAR	Provide signed Letter of Agreement for ROAR's IRB	Send Signing Official the Data Use Agreement (DUA) for signature
<p>If you would like to enter a formal data agreement, send ROAR the following information:</p> <p>(a) the name, title, and email address of a Signing Official, who will sign the agreement</p> <p>(b) the name, title, and email address of a Technical Official, who is responsible for data sharing.</p>		

# APPENDICES

## C. Examples of Protocols for Data Analysis

### a. ANet's Full Protocol

[Link Preview:](#)

#### Practical Protocols to Strengthen Literacy Instruction

Download the ROAR Protocol to guide data-driven decisions and empower every reader in your classroom. Unlock a step-by-step protocol to analyze ROAR data, adapt instruction, and strengthen literacy outcomes. Gain clear strategies, tools, and recommendations to better support student reading growth.

### b. TNTP's Full Protocol

[Link Preview:](#)

#### School Level Data Analysis Protocol — Adapted from TNTP

##### **Purpose:**

To guide administrators and literacy leaders in analyzing student data and identifying the appropriate levels of support for diverse learning groups using a consistent approach. This tool facilitates responsive data-informed instructional decisions through structured independent and collaborative analysis.

# APPENDICES

## D. Additional Resources for Intervention

### a. Big Words - Building Words and Making Meaning

Link Preview:

#### Big Words Program

The BIG Words program is a set of instructional resources for teachers to provide explicit instruction to students in grades 3–6 in multisyllabic decoding, spelling, writing sentences, and reading fluently.

### b. Read Stop Write

Link Preview:

#### Read STOP Write

Read STOP Write provides a set of instructional resources for teachers in grades 4–9 that integrates foundational skills, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing instruction within the context of authentic informational text reading in order to improve students' reading achievement, writing quality, and motivation to read informational text.

### c. NWEA Fluency Protocol

Link Preview:

#### NWEA - Increasing Fluency in Middle School Readers

The NWEA fluency protocol draws on research-based fluency instructional routines that any teacher grades 5–8 can use to support students' oral reading fluency in grade-level text.



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