

ACTIVATE & ACCELERATE ELA

Effective ELA Strategies for Improved Student Learning

Research shows that a strong, equity-minded school leader accounts for about 25 percent of a school's impact on student achievement. When principals work with teacher teams to advance best practices in ELA and literacy instruction, teacher and student outcomes grow exponentially. Here are actions that leaders at every level can take to activate and accelerate ELA.

System Leader Actions

System Leaders create the conditions for the people within the district to learn, collaborate, and make a difference for students. Here are three actions system leaders can take right now to accelerate learning and teaching outcomes across their schools.



Prioritize the use of high-quality instructional materials in every classroom for every student

- Critique current instructional programs using criteria for high-quality instructional materials
- Allocate resources for the adoption of high-quality curricula where needed
- Seek teacher feedback on material selection, adoption and implementation



Support every school leader with implementing a multi-tiered system of support

- Ensure that schools have the resources needed to carry out a tiered intervention system that prioritizes impactful initial instruction
- Provide professional learning related to implementing a successful tiered intervention system



Leverage collaborative planning to develop collective efficacy and provide professional learning opportunities

- Ensure that master schedules include ample opportunities for collaborative planning
- Ensure that system-wide calendars include time for professional learning and collaborative planning

School Leader Actions

At New Leaders, we develop leaders who remove barriers to student success. Here are the three most immediate and effective ways school leaders can increase student achievement:

1

Build the capacity of **teachers** to deliver high-quality instruction

2

Increase the complexity of the **content** being taught

3

Shift **student** engagement from passive to active learning

To Build Teacher Capacity

Teachers learn best by doing, and not by being told what to do. We have identified six best practices that impactful teachers and teacher teams use to deepen their knowledge and deliver effective instruction in ELA and literacy.

Teacher Actions

What This Looks Like In Schools

Curate a selection of culturally relevant literature

Selection of culturally relevant literature is a deliberative process that focuses on representing the cultural and lived experiences of students and ensuring instruction meets standards-aligned learning needs.

Examine text complexity to determine comprehension strategies

Teacher teams need to identify and teach high-impact comprehension strategies so students can learn to apply them independently to access increasingly more complex texts.

Engage in collaborative planning

Teachers are more successful when they are surrounded by a strong network of peers and leaders who schedule consistent time for teams to analyze data and collaboratively plan for the needs of all students.

Ensure instruction supports students making meaning

The main objective in any ELA lesson is on making meaning. Focusing on individual standards can make ELA and literacy instruction a series of unrelated exercises in discrete skills and disconnected strategies.

Develop a mental model for ELA excellence

Teachers and leaders need to be familiar with current research and recognize best practices including text complexity, high-impact comprehension strategies, student discourse, critical thinking and interpretation.

Emphasize equity and efficacy

Building teacher mindsets that every student has the ability to grow as readers and writers ensures that teacher teams work together to develop instruction that is equitable and accessible for all students.

► To Increase Complexity of Content

Strong curriculum is rigorous, accessible and culturally relevant. ELA instruction and instructional materials also need to reflect high-level standards. Here's what to look for in your district, school, or classroom.

Effective Content

Is accessible, equitable, and culturally relevant

What This Looks Like In Schools

All students need daily opportunities to work with grade-level texts and tasks, including content that is culturally relevant, connects learning to students, and offers insights on different perspectives.

Provides regular practice with complex texts

In order to be college- and career-ready, students must read increasingly complex texts across the grades and engage with academic language and related vocabulary.

Builds knowledge through rich nonfiction

Students need to be exposed to a substantial variety of nonfiction and informational texts in order to build their content knowledge and vocabulary across every content area.

Provides regular practice with complex texts

Instruction that teaches students the process to decode words and to make meaning from the text is best practice. Building teacher knowledge around how children learn to read is essential.

► To Shift to Active Student Learning

In order to impact student achievement, teachers and leaders must change the role students play in the classroom. Here are four ways to jumpstart student engagement toward active learning.

Learning Expectations

Learning tasks are rigorous and students are held accountable

What This Looks Like In Schools

To be proficient readers, students should engage in productive struggle and demonstrate increasing independence with increasingly complex texts as they progress through the grades.

Students use textual evidence

Students need to write and speak to sources and evidence to demonstrate and support their understanding. This text-based approach also advances student voice and classroom discourse.

Students employ comprehension strategies

ELA and literacy instruction must teach high-impact comprehension strategies for readers to understand the structure of complex texts, unpack the language, make meaning, and expand content knowledge.

Students have voice, choice, and influence

Best practices in ELA and literacy instruction ensure students are given choice in topics, can provide input on how they demonstrate knowledge, and have equity of voice in classroom discussions.

We have the tools to get you started and the support you need to offset NAEP trends and drive sustainable results. Connect with us to discuss how New Leaders can partner with you in strengthening your instructional leadership practices for immediate and long-term student success.

Contact us at: partnerships@newleaders.org

LOOK-FORS TOOL: ELA INSTRUCTION

Use this tool to look for evidence of meaningful content, effective instructional practices, and active student engagement—and drive improved student learning.

Teacher	Content	Students
LOOK-FORS		
<p>Teachers exhibit strong preparation by setting a meaningful learning target and aligning the lesson to that end.</p> <p>Teachers select or create tasks worthy of students' time and hold students accountable for their work.</p> <p>Teachers ensure students have voice, choice, and influence in the way they engage in the work of the lesson.</p>	<p>Text is appropriately complex for the grade level and culturally affirming.</p> <p>Content is rooted in the science of reading and students are able to decode text and make meaning without relying on memorization or pictures (K-5).</p> <p>Texts are chosen for meaning and purpose, allowing students to build knowledge by engaging with a variety of nonfiction and informational texts.</p>	<p>Students are working with text, daily—reading, speaking, writing about the text they are reading.</p> <p>Students employ high-impact instructional strategies to assist them in accessing and making meaning of text.</p> <p>Students' cultural identities and personal perspectives contribute to engaging, affirming, and meaningful learning experiences.</p>
WHERE TO LOOK		
Collaborative team meetings, classroom observations, student learning tasks, sample task exemplars	Classroom observations, student learning tasks, collaborative team meetings	Classroom observations, classroom discourse, student work, teacher-student communication
EVIDENCE		
NOTES		

ACTIVATE & ACCELERATE MATH

High-Impact Strategies to Jumpstart Math Instruction

Research shows that strong instructional leaders can add up to three months of learning for students—every year. When principals work in tandem with teacher teams to advance best practices, student achievement soars. Here are actions leaders at every level can take to activate and accelerate math.

System Leader Actions

System Leaders create the conditions for the people within the district to learn, collaborate, and make a difference for students. Here are three actions system leaders can take right now to accelerate learning and teaching outcomes across their schools.



Prioritize the use of high-quality instructional materials in every classroom for every student

- Critique current instructional programs using criteria for high-quality instructional materials
- Allocate resources for the adoption of high-quality curricula where needed
- Seek teacher feedback on material selection, adoption and implementation



Support every school leader with implementing a multi-tiered system of support

- Ensure that schools have the resources needed to carry out a tiered intervention system that prioritizes impactful initial instruction
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Leverage collaborative planning to develop collective efficacy and provide professional learning opportunities

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To Build Teacher Capacity

Teachers learn best by doing, not by being told what to do. We have identified five actions that effective teachers and teacher teams do to deepen their knowledge and deliver effective math instruction.

Teacher Actions

What This Looks Like In Schools

Engage in collaborative planning

Teachers deliver better instruction when they are supported by a strong network of peers and leaders who dedicate regular time for teacher teams to analyze data and collaboratively plan.

Solve the problems assigned to students

This type of preparation and planning enables teachers to consider multiple ways in which the math problem can be solved and the prior knowledge or skills students need to do so.

Develop a mental model for math excellence

Leaders and teachers must identify and recognize best practices, including rigorous grade-level problems and related strategies, critical thinking skills, classroom discourse, and precision in student work.

Emphasize equity and efficacy

Far too many students think they are not “math people.” Teacher teams need to examine and replace inequitable practices, like tracking and inflexible grouping, so all students can excel in math.

Engage in culturally responsive teaching practices

Teachers and leaders must work together to ensure that math instruction makes meaningful connections between what students learn in school and their cultures, languages, and lived experiences.

To Increase Complexity of Content

Strong curriculum is rigorous, accessible and culturally relevant. Math instruction and instructional materials also need to reflect high-level standards. Here's what to look for in your district, school, or classroom.

Effective Content Is

Accessible, equitable, and culturally relevant

What This Looks Like In Schools

All students must have consistent and daily opportunities to work with rigorous grade-level problems. Math content also needs to be culturally relevant, absent any gender or cultural stereotypes.

Focused and aligned with the major work of the grade

Focus allows teachers to move away from a “mile wide, inch deep” curriculum and spend more instructional time to go deeper into the priority standards.

Linked within and across grades

Coherence asks teachers and students to connect and link learning within and across grades so students can continually build on prior knowledge and make connections to new learning.

Rigorous

Rigor requires equal attention to developing conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application to new contexts. To ensure all students are challenged, assessments and feedback are key.

To Shift to Active Student Learning

In order to impact student achievement, teachers and leaders must change the role students play in the classroom. Here are four ways to jumpstart student engagement toward active learning.

Learning Expectations

Learning tasks are rigorous and students are held accountable

What This Looks Like In Schools

When students are given tasks that are worthy of solving, they see themselves as problem solvers. Worksheets that ask them to solve the same problems over and over again only demonstrate rote learning.

Students persevere in the face of initial difficulty

When students are given opportunities to wrestle with mathematical ideas, they deepen their conceptual understanding, apply learning to new contexts, and develop flexibility in using tools and models.

Students go beyond finding the answer

Students who are proficient in math use the math they know to solve problems in everyday life. Teachers need to afford them the opportunities to do so in the classroom.

Students talk and ask questions

Math talk is essential. Students need to ask questions, clarify, and articulate their ideas. Effective teachers coach students to use precise language and talk through their learning moves.

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New Leaders
LEADERSHIP CHANGES EVERYTHING

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For more than 20 years, New Leaders has equipped equity-minded education leaders to be powerful and positive forces for change, especially in the most marginalized communities. We bring two decades of experience providing best-in-class leadership training—for teacher leaders, principals, and their supervisors—to accelerate learning for every student in every classroom, every year.

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Teacher	Content	Students
LOOK-FORS		
<p>Teachers exhibit strong preparation by setting a meaningful learning target and aligning the lesson to that end.</p> <p>Teachers select or create tasks worthy of students' time, encourage a growth mindset in math, and hold students accountable for their work.</p> <p>Teachers ensure students have voice, choice, and influence in the way they engage in the work of the lesson.</p>	<p>Tasks are focused on the major work of the grade and students are culturally affirmed.</p> <p>Topics are linked within and across grades to continually build on prior knowledge and make connections to new learning.</p> <p>Conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application of the content are appropriately balanced and pursued with equal intensity.</p>	<p>Students are working with mathematical tasks, daily—building perseverance and increasing comfort in applying math to real world situations.</p> <p>Students employ strategies to assist them in building conceptual understanding, leading to procedural skill and fluency.</p> <p>Students' cultural identities and personal perspectives contribute to meaningful learning experiences.</p>
WHERE TO LOOK		
<p>Lesson plans, collaborative team meetings, classroom observations, student learning tasks, sample task exemplars</p>	<p>Classroom observations, student learning tasks, collaborative team meetings</p>	<p>Classroom observations, classroom discourse, student work, teacher-student communication</p>
EVIDENCE		
NOTES		