

SOLUTION SPOTLIGHT

## Making Up for Lost Time

Why LETRS Professional  
Learning Is Imperative for  
Literacy Acceleration

Lexia®



## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The Benefits of Effective Professional Learning	4
LETRS Professional Learning Helps Teachers Help Students	4
25 Years of Research Makes for Confident, Effective Teachers	5
7 Reasons Why LETRS Works	6
Invest in Teacher Confidence	8
References	9

## Introduction

Though educators across the country routinely participate in professional development, many are less than satisfied with their experiences (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The reason for this may be that most professional development seminars or workshops are one-size-fits-all (NCTE, 2019) and don't specifically address teachers' individual needs. Professional learning, on the other hand, is customized to a teacher's specific classroom context.

With everything that's happened in education since the pandemic started, it is clear teachers need better support. From navigating rapidly changing learning environments to learning new technologies to continuing to care for every student, teachers have had to juggle too much on their own. Now that schools are finding their footing, professional learning is exactly the kind of support teachers need to make up for lost instructional time and accelerate learning.

Success across the curriculum depends on having strong reading skills. That means effective professional learning is especially important for literacy or language arts instructors who need to know how to teach the science of reading through Structured Literacy. Yet only 51% of teaching institutions provide adequate instruction in the science of reading (NCTQ, 2020), leaving many teachers underprepared to provide targeted literacy instruction that supports the diverse needs of their learners.

LETRS can help.



**Only 51% of teaching institutions provide adequate instruction in the science of reading**  
(NCTQ, 2020)

## The Benefits of Effective Professional Learning

Teachers are the foundation of good schools. Enhancing teachers' knowledge through professional learning improves their classroom teaching, which improves student outcomes (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Research has shown that teachers who are prepared and supported throughout their careers with professional learning opportunities are better equipped to meet the needs of all students—meaning they develop and deliver content-rich, culturally responsive curriculum (Learning Policy Institute, 2021).

Professional learning also contributes to collective teacher efficacy, the No. 1 factor impacting student achievement. Collective teacher efficacy is about more than teacher confidence—it is teachers working together to have appropriately high expectations, and backing that with evidence that teachers make a difference (Visible Learning, 2018). That's where high-quality professional learning comes in, as teachers apply what they learn and see the positive impact they have on their students (Yoon et al, 2007).

This is precisely why professional learning is especially important for literacy instruction. A high-quality course of study like LETRS® will better prepare teachers to confidently and effectively teach the science of reading—fundamentals that are essential for the development of successful readers and learners (IMSE, 2021).



### **LETRS Professional Learning Helps Teachers Help Students**

The LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) Suite is professional learning that provides educators and administrators with deep knowledge to be literacy and language experts in the science of reading. Developed by renowned literacy experts Dr. Louisa Moats, Dr. Carol Tolman, and Dr. Lucy Hart Paulson, it is a flexible literacy professional learning solution for educators and administrators. LETRS teaches the skills needed to master the fundamentals of reading instruction—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language.

## 25 Years of Research makes for Confident, Effective Teachers

Teaching reading requires a deep understanding of the content and practical skills of instruction, including cognitive and language factors that shape student learning (Moats, 2018). Decades of multidisciplinary research into these topics have led to a body of research known as the science of reading (Moats, 2020).

However, you cannot teach what you do not know. For decades, the majority of teacher preparation programs have not offered courses on the science of reading.

LETRS condenses more than 25 years of research into actionable practice and teaches the skills needed to master the foundational and fundamentals of reading and writing instruction—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language. It does this by:

- 1 Providing content rooted in the science of reading
- 2 Teaching the fundamentals of explicit instruction
- 3 Translating research into practice
- 4 Enhancing educator and administrator effectiveness
- 5 Transforming instruction with new instructional strategies

When classroom teaching includes a range of research-based components and practices, especially explicit literacy instruction, we can prevent and mitigate reading difficulty. With LETRS, teachers gain an overview of the structure of the English language, as well as an understanding of the breadth and depth of research that supports the science of reading. Once they understand the why behind comprehensive literacy instruction, LETRS offers explicit instruction in how to effectively teach for the best results.



**“LETRS gave me new confidence in my teaching practice.”**

—Jan Kempf, a 20-year veteran teacher  
(kindergarten and third grade), Littleton Public Schools, Colorado

## 7 Reasons Why LETRS Works

The LETRS courses of study provide the research behind effective instructional and assessment practices, enhancing educators' expertise and confidence to make a difference for all students. LETRS incorporates best practices for adult learners, including autonomy, choice, practical application, and engagement. In addition, LETRS includes and expands upon many of the elements of effective professional learning, as determined by the Learning Policy Institute (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017). Here's how.



### 1. LETRS is relevant.

Adult learners need to know why they're learning what they're learning and be able to understand the immediate application for what they're learning. By understanding the "why" behind the science of reading, educators will be better prepared to teach their students how to read. With LETRS, teachers advance their understanding of how the human brain learns to connect sounds, letters, patterns, and meanings. More importantly, LETRS shows how explicit instruction in the fundamental elements of reading can help resolve many students' struggles. LETRS is both relevant and applicable, designed to be the cornerstone of a multiyear, systemic literacy improvement initiative that continues to support teachers as they accelerate learning for their students.



### 2. LETRS is engaging.

Professional learning should be experiential and interactive and include opportunities for both self-paced and collaborative learning. LETRS does just that, engaging educators through embedded video, coaching, and expert support to demonstrate how to deliver effective instruction in the five essential components of literacy, plus writing, spelling, and oral language.



### 3. LETRS is collaborative.

Recent studies suggest that one-on-one coaching can support the effective implementation of new curricula, educational tools, and approaches (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017). Effective professional learning features experts who share their knowledge as facilitators or remote mentors. LETRS also supports collaborative learning through coaching and expert support via in-person group workshops and remote mentoring classes.



#### **4. LETRS is accessible.**

To aid their learning, adult learners need to be able to draw upon their past experiences. Their learning should also be contextualized with familiar language and adhere to industry standards for inclusive design. LETRS achieves this by building on teachers' knowledge and providing a common language and understanding of evidence-based reading practices. LETRS meets educators where they are, providing them with the tools they need in a variety of formats—online, print, and in-person—as well as ongoing support throughout the school year with strategies specific to their instruction.



#### **5. LETRS is practical.**

The more an adult learner can practice new skills, competencies, or the application of knowledge, the more transformational impact the learning will have. Throughout LETRS, Bridge to Practice opportunities allow teachers to apply evidence-based concepts and best practices to daily classroom instruction, while embedded video demonstrates how to deliver effective instruction.



#### **6. LETRS is content-focused.**

Research shows that effective professional learning addresses both subject-area content and how to teach it. Why? Teachers need to know their subject-area content “well enough to anticipate student misconceptions and engage students in learning through a wide range of instructional strategies” (Hunzicker, 2010). That’s why LETRS focuses on the five essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.



#### **7. LETRS is sustained.**

Effective professional learning requires time. Research demonstrates that for professional learning to be meaningful—translating to changes in practice—it should offer multiple opportunities for teachers to engage in learning around a single set of concepts or practices (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2017). The LETRS Suite supports teachers over a sustained period of time with coaching and practical application demos, enabling educators to improve their skills and knowledge over time, for better outcomes.



## Invest in Teacher Confidence

Early literacy development is a vital component of students' future language, reading, and writing success. Providing them with the support and instruction they need means ensuring educators are fully prepared to lay this foundation with the science of reading and Structured Literacy. It is of even greater importance now as teachers manage the lost instructional time their students have experienced.

Educators matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling. By contributing to individual teacher effectiveness, confidence, and efficacy, LETRS empowers them to bring the science of reading into the classroom and reach even their readers who are struggling to get on grade level.



For more information about LETRS, visit [lexialearning.com/letrs](https://lexialearning.com/letrs)





## References

- Brady, S., Gillis, M., Smith, T., Lavalette, M., Liss-Bronstein, L., Lowe, E., et al. (2009). First grade teachers' knowledge of phonological awareness and code concepts: Examining gains from an intensive form of professional development and corresponding teacher attitudes. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. 22:425–455.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hylar, M.E., & Gardner, M. Effective teacher professional development. Learning Policy Institute. June 2017. Retrieved 11/1/21 from [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Effective\\_Teacher\\_Professional\\_Development\\_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Effective_Teacher_Professional_Development_REPORT.pdf)
- Garcia, E., & Weiss E. The role of early career supports, continuous professional development, and learning communities in the teacher shortage. Economic Policy Institute. July 17, 2019. Retrieved 10/19/21 from <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-shortage-professional-development-and-learning-communities/>
- Greenberg, J., McKee, A., & Walsh, K. (2013). NCTQ teacher prep review: A review of the nation's teacher preparation programs. Washington DC: National Council for Teacher Quality.
- Hunzicker, J. Characteristics of effective professional development: a checklist. Bradley University. June 2010. Retrieved 11/1/21 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED510366.pdf>
- IMSE Journal. What is the science of reading? January 14, 2021. Retrieved 10/20/21 from <https://journal.imse.com/what-is-the-science-of-reading/>
- Joshi, R., Binks, E., Hougen, M., Dahlgren, M. Ocker-Dean, E., & Smith, D. (2009). Why elementary teachers might be inadequately prepared to teach reading. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. 42:392–402.
- Knowles, M.S. (1980). The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall/Cambridge.
- Learning Policy Institute. (2017) Effective Teacher Professional Development. Retrieved 10/19/21 from <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/effective-teacher-professional-development-report>
- Moats, LC. (2018). Literacy PD: 10 reasons why it's essential. Voyager Sopris. Retrieved 11/8/21 from [https://www.voyagersopris.com/docs/default-source/professional-development/lets/lets\\_top-10-white-paper\\_8-31-18.pdf?sfvrsn=4233f285\\_4](https://www.voyagersopris.com/docs/default-source/professional-development/lets/lets_top-10-white-paper_8-31-18.pdf?sfvrsn=4233f285_4)
- Moats, LC. Teaching reading is rocket science: What expert teachers of reading should know and be able to do. *American Educator*. Summer 2020. Retrieved 10/20/21 from <https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2020/moats>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). 2020. Section: Assessments: Chapter: 1/Preprimary, Elementary, and Secondary Education; Reading Performance. The COndition of Education 2020. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe\\_cnb.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cnb.pdf)
- National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). Teacher prep review 2020: Program performance in early reading instruction. Retrieved 11/8/21 from [https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/NCTQ\\_2020\\_Teacher\\_Prep\\_Review\\_Program\\_Performance\\_in\\_Early\\_Reading\\_Instruction](https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/NCTQ_2020_Teacher_Prep_Review_Program_Performance_in_Early_Reading_Instruction)
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Shifting from professional development to professional learning: centering teacher empowerment. National Council of Teachers of English. July 30, 2019. Retrieved 10/19/21 from <https://ncte.org/statement/proflearning/>
- Scherff, L. Distinguishing professional learning from professional development. Institute of Education Science (IES). January 4, 2018. Retrieved 10/19/21 from [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog2\\_DistinguishingProfLearning.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog2_DistinguishingProfLearning.asp)
- Visible Learning. Collective teacher efficacy (CTE) according to John Hattie. 2018. Retrieved 1/19/22 from <https://visible-learning.org/2018/03/collective-teacher-efficacy-hattie/>
- Walsh, K., Glaser, D., & Wilcox, D. (2006). What education schools aren't teaching about reading and what elementary teachers aren't learning. National Council on Teacher Quality.
- Wahlstrom, D. 2020. Almost ALL Students Can Learn to Read. Deb's Data Digest. Retrieved from <https://datadeb.com/2020/02/14/almost-all-students-can-learn-to-read/>
- Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley. 2007. Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement. (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2007–No. 033). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest. Retrieved from [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/rel\\_2007033.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/rel_2007033.pdf)



Lexia is the Structured Literacy expert. For more than 35 years, the company has focused solely on literacy, and today provides a full spectrum of solutions for both students and teachers. With robust offerings for differentiated instruction, personalized learning, assessment, and professional learning, Lexia helps more learners read, write, and speak with confidence.

[lexialearning.com](https://lexialearning.com)



a **cambium** company

© 2022 Lexia Learning LLC, a Cambium Learning® Group company. Lexia® and other trademarks, names, and logos used herein are the property of Lexia Learning and/or its subsidiaries, and are registered and/or used in the United States and other countries. Additional trademarks included herein are the property of their respective owners.