

Action Guide for District & School Leaders

The majority of older students in the United States aren't reading at grade-level.

What can district and school leaders do to change that?

Reading Reimagined undertook five years of research and development to better understand what's holding readers back, especially in the later grades—and how to help. Our research found that a gap in advanced decoding skills underpins the literacy crisis for older readers.

Conservative estimates indicate that many older readers struggle to decode grade-level texts:

1 in 3

Fourth graders
struggle

1 in 4

Sixth graders
struggle

1 in 6

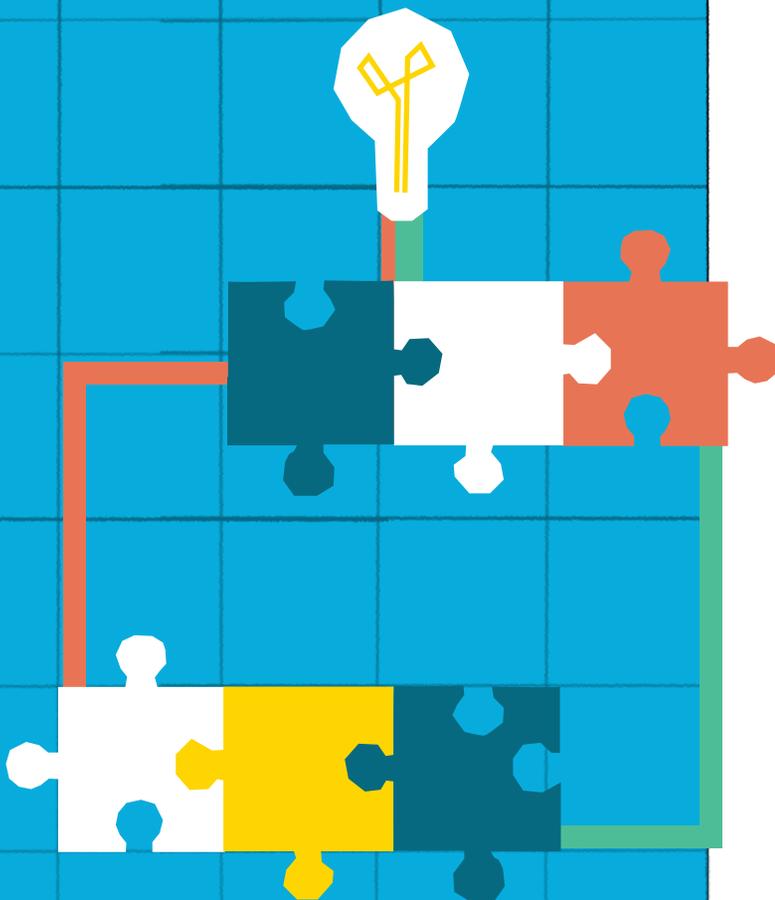
Eighth graders
struggle

These students may be able to decode simple words using the basic phonics skills they learned in early elementary grades, but they have not yet developed advanced skills to decode the more complex, multisyllabic words that appear in later grades. Without sufficient decoding skills to drive automatic word recognition, reading development stalls—and students cannot comprehend what they read.

Why are so many older students missing these skills? Because they aren't being taught in school.

District leaders play a key role in ensuring all students develop the skills they need to become automatic and fluent readers.

[Read the Full Report Here](#)



1 Adopt developmentally appropriate assessment tools designed to measure advanced foundational literacy skills in older readers.

To support older readers, educators must have access to precise data on their students' skill gaps. Right now, most schools don't assess older students on advanced foundational reading skills. When older students are assessed, it's often with assessment tools that are designed primarily for younger readers, yielding little information on the advanced foundational skills necessary to read beyond grade 3.

To address this data gap, district leaders should invest in new digital assessment tools that are specifically designed to measure older students' foundational reading and writing skills. The Rapid Online Assessment of Reading (ROAR) is one such tool.

WHAT IS ROAR?

- Designed by Stanford University in partnership with Reading Reimagined, ROAR is a free suite of adaptive online assessment tools, designed to measure the foundational reading skills of students from grades K-12. It has been validated in K-12 classrooms with more than 20,000 students.
- ROAR tasks are designed to capture the developmentally appropriate skills students need to read at grade level, at every age.
- ROAR is intended to minimize disruption to learning time: It does not require a test administrator and assessments are completed in thirty minutes or less.
- Because ROAR is self-directed with instructions delivered automatically to students via headphones, administering ROAR does not require any additional training for teachers.
- Teachers receive real-time data on their students' results as students complete the assessments. Score reports offer data on individual student skills, as well as tables that group students according to skill gaps, allowing teachers to easily assign small groups for support.
- ROAR is available free to schools via a Research Practice Partnership Model.

To learn more about implementing ROAR, explore the [ROAR Implementation Guide](#).

2 Integrate technology-enabled tools with teacher-led instruction to access the best of both.

Even with insight into which specific skills their students are missing, it will be impossible for teachers to provide the individualized word work all students need, given the range of needs in any given classroom, teachers' lack of training in advanced foundational literacy instruction, and other demands on teachers' time.

This is where technology must come in. Technology should be used to teach the advanced foundational reading skills that teachers in grades 3-8 are not trained for, allowing teachers to focus on background knowledge, academic vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension.

By integrating technology with teacher-led instruction, teachers are able to spend their time on instructional practices for which in-person discussion is irreplaceable, while students also receive the individualized word work they need to build foundational skills.

**For more information,
read the full report here:**



The False Divide



Instructional Component	What?	Tech or Teacher?	Recipient
Assessment	Measure foundational literacy skills with developmentally appropriate tools.	Tech-enabled	All Students
Phonics and Word Recognition	Alphabetic principle Phonological awareness Initial code Advanced code	Tech-enabled	Individualized, based on student assessment results
Multisyllabic Word Instruction	Morphology Syllables Chunking Spelling Etymology Encoding	Tech-enabled	Individualized, based on student assessment results
Academic Vocabulary	Meaning Morphology Spelling Application in context	Tech-enabled	Individualized, based on student assessment results
Fluency	Applied reading Prosody Fluency through social tasks (eg, reading with others)	Partially tech-enabled, partially teacher-led	All students
Classroom Read-alouds	High-quality, grade appropriate texts	Teacher-led	All students
Comprehension Instruction	Sentence comprehension Inferencing Evaluating evidence Text structures Functional vocabulary Background knowledge Tier 3 vocabulary	Primarily teacher-led, some focused tech enabled	All students

CONSIDERATIONS FOR TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

When evaluating tech-enabled tools for use, district leaders should look for:

- **Efficacy rates by student subgroups, including students who are furthest behind**
- **Implementation requirements to achieve efficacy rates**
- **How skills are integrated and how much students are able to practice**
- **Any evidence of linguistic bias**
- **Use of validated assessment results**