A FREE CSAS FIELD TOOL

The Fall Data Window Playbook

A four-week sequence that turns fall screening data into instruction before the data expires. Built for principals, instructional coaches, and grade-level teams in the middle of the fall window right now.

INSIDE THIS PLAYBOOK

The week-by-week sequence

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READ THIS FIRST

Fall data has a shelf life of about 30 days

Every fall, schools invest weeks of instructional time collecting universal screening data, and in too many buildings that data goes into a spreadsheet, gets presented at one meeting, and quietly expires. Students keep learning and changing, so September data describes September. Act on it in November and you are acting on students who no longer exist.

This playbook compresses the distance between the last day of screening and the first day a student receives something different. One sequence, one week per step: **close and verify, diagnose, build and schedule, teach and check.**

> **THE NOVEMBER 1 TEST**
>
> Walk into any classroom on November 1 and ask one question: which students in this room are receiving something different because of the fall screener? If the answer is none, the window closed with the data unused.

The four weeks at a glance

Week	The work	Done when
Week 1	Close the window, verify surprises, hold the placement meeting.	Flagged list confirmed by the team.
Week 2	Run a quick diagnostic with every flagged student.	Every student has a named skill to teach first.
Week 3	Build skill-named groups in the supplemental band.	Every group has a roster, a time, an owner, a review date.
Week 4	Teach; calendar the first progress check.	Groups running; first check has a date.

ONE RULE UNDERNEATH ALL FOUR WEEKS

Supplemental support supplements core instruction. It never replaces it. No student misses Tier 1 reading instruction to receive help with reading.

Week 1: Close the window and verify

The goal: a complete, trustworthy data set and a flagged list the whole team believes, by Friday.

Days	Action
Days 1 to 2	Finish every make-up assessment. A data set missing the students who are hardest to pin down is missing the students the screener exists to find.
Day 3	Check for surprises before the meeting. A strong reader who flagged, or a known struggling reader who passed, usually signals an administration error, a bad testing day, or a genuine discovery. Recheck those students now, not in November.
Days 4 to 5	Hold the grade-level placement meeting that was calendared before the window opened. The agenda is one question: who is flagged, and do we believe it? The output is a confirmed flagged list per grade.

Done when

- [ ] Every enrolled student has a score or a documented reason why not.
- [ ] Every outlier was rechecked or explained.
- [ ] The confirmed flagged list exists in writing, by grade level.

> **THE TRAP TO AVOID**
>
> Do not spend Week 1 formatting a beautiful data presentation. The slide deck is not the deliverable. The confirmed flagged list is.

Week 2: Diagnose the flagged students

The goal: a named skill to teach first, for every flagged student. A screener is a smoke detector: it tells you there is a fire, not where it started. Two students with identical composite scores can need opposite instruction.

Days	Action
Days 1 to 4	Run the quick diagnostic (Part 2 of this playbook) with every flagged student. Five to ten minutes per student, administered by the teacher, coach, or interventionist. Divide the list across the team; do not assign it all to one person.
Day 5	Record one line per student: the lowest skill that blocks everything above it. That line is the student's entry point for Week 3.

Done when

- ☐ Every flagged student has a diagnostic line: name, skill to teach first, evidence.
- ☐ No student is labeled with a level or a color. Skills, not labels.

WHY THIS WEEK CANNOT BE SKIPPED

Groups built straight from composite scores put students who cannot blend sounds next to students who decode well but read slowly, and then one lesson serves neither. Ten minutes of diagnosis saves eight weeks of mismatched intervention.

Week 3: Build groups and schedule them

The goal: every flagged student placed in a skill-named group with a seat, a time, and an adult. A group that exists on paper but not on the master schedule does not exist.

Days	Action
Days 1 to 2	Sort diagnostic lines into groups of three to six students who need the same skill. Name each group for the skill it teaches (Part 4 of this playbook is the protocol).
Day 3	Write the entry point and exit criterion for each group before the first lesson. If you cannot say what score or skill moves a student out, the group has no finish line.
Days 4 to 5	Put every group on the master schedule inside the supplemental band, with an owner and materials. Protect core instruction: supplemental time supplements Tier 1, it never replaces it.

Done when

- [ ] Every group has a skill name, a roster, an owner, a time, and materials.
- [ ] No student is pulled from core reading instruction to attend a group.
- [ ] Each group's review date, six to eight weeks out, is already on the calendar.

Week 4: Teach, and calendar the first check

The goal: groups running daily or near daily, and the first progress check scheduled before anyone asks whether the plan is working.

Days	Action
Day 1	Groups begin. Explicit, systematic instruction on the named skill: model, guided practice, independent practice, every session.
Days 2 to 5	Leaders walk the supplemental band once this week. The look-for is simple: is the group teaching the skill in its name, and are students responding many times per minute?
By Friday	The first progress-monitoring check is on the calendar, two weeks out, using a measure matched to the skill being taught.

Done when

- ☐ Every group met at least three times this week.
- ☐ The first progress check has a date, a measure, and an owner.

> **WHY THE CALENDAR DOES THE HEAVY LIFTING**
>
> Teams rarely fail at caring. They fail at calendaring. Every meeting, review, and progress check in this sequence is scheduled before the work begins, so follow-through never depends on someone remembering.

PART 2 | ONE PER FLAGGED STUDENT, 5 TO 10 MINUTES

The quick diagnostic checklist

Work top to bottom and stop drilling down once you find the lowest skill that is not solid. That skill is the entry point. Copy this page for each flagged student.

STUDENT | GRADE | DATE

SCREENER AND SCORE THAT FLAGGED THIS STUDENT | ADMINISTERED BY

1. Phonemic awareness

- ☐ Blends spoken sounds into a word
- ☐ Segments a word into sounds
- ☐ Manipulates sounds (deletes, substitutes)

2. Letter-sound knowledge and decoding

Check each pattern the student reads accurately in unfamiliar words, not memorized ones.

- ☐ Letter sounds
- ☐ CVC words
- ☐ Digraphs
- ☐ Blends
- ☐ Silent e
- ☐ Vowel teams
- ☐ R-controlled vowels
- ☐ Multisyllabic words

3. Fluency

One-minute read of a grade-level passage.

WORDS CORRECT PER MINUTE | ACCURACY PERCENT | PHRASING AND EXPRESSION NOTES

4. Comprehension, once the code is intact

Only meaningful if decoding and fluency are adequate. Retell or two questions after the passage.

- ☐ Retells main ideas in order
- ☐ Answers a literal question
- ☐ Answers an inferential question

THE SKILL TO TEACH FIRST (THE LOWEST SKILL THAT IS NOT SOLID)

PART 3 | WRITE THE RULES BEFORE YOU LOOK AT NAMES

The decision rules template

A decision rule is an if-then sentence the whole team writes before anyone opens the data: **a student scoring below X on this measure receives this support within this many days.** Rules written in advance protect students from advocacy by volume, where the child with the most persistent teacher gets served first.

Two worked examples

If a student scores	On this measure	They receive	Within
Below the 20th percentile	Composite screening score	Quick diagnostic, then a daily skill group in the supplemental band	10 school days
Below benchmark, above the 20th percentile	Composite screening score	Targeted small-group support inside core instruction	10 school days

Your rules

If a student scores	On this measure	They receive	Within

OWNER OF EACH RULE (WHO MAKES SURE IT HAPPENS)

CHECK-BACK DATE (WHEN THE TEAM AUDITS THE RULES)

THE AUDIT QUESTION

On the check-back date, read each rule aloud and ask: did every student the rule describes receive the support it promises, on time? The exceptions are the implementation gap, made visible.

PART 4 | ONE CARD PER GROUP

The group-building protocol

1. **Name the group for the skill, never a level or a color.** "Vowel teams" tells the teacher what Tuesday's lesson is. "Red group" tells no one anything.
2. **Keep it three to six students with the same entry point,** drawn from the diagnostic, not the composite score.
3. **Write the exit criterion at formation.** A group without a finish line becomes a permanent address.
4. **Set the review date, six to eight weeks out, before the first lesson.** At review, change one variable at a time: the time, the group size, the materials, or the instructor, so you can tell what worked.

Group card

GROUP NAME (THE SKILL IT TEACHES)

OWNER (WHO TEACHES IT)

ROSTER (3 TO 6 STUDENTS)

ENTRY POINT (THE EVIDENCE THAT PUT THEM HERE)

EXIT CRITERION (WHAT MOVES A STUDENT OUT)

MATERIALS AND PROGRAM

SCHEDULE (DAYS AND TIME, SUPPLEMENTAL BAND)

REVIEW DATE (6 TO 8 WEEKS)

FIRST PROGRESS CHECK

BEFORE THE FIRST LESSON, CONFIRM

No student on this roster misses core reading instruction to attend. The group supplements Tier 1. It never supplants it.

WHEN YOU WANT A PARTNER IN THE WORK

This sequence is what we build with districts

The Center for Student Achievement Solutions helps districts implement the Science of Reading through side-by-side coaching, leadership development, and multi-tiered systems of support. We do not deliver a workshop and leave. We stay through the implementation, in classrooms, in data meetings, and in the supplemental band, until the system runs without us.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN THE WINDOW GETS USED

In a Brooklyn community school district, all 11 elementary schools ran this kind of data-to-instruction cycle with CSAS coaching for three consecutive years. Kindergarten students reading on grade level rose from 25 percent to 86 percent, verified by Acadience screening data.

Three ways to go deeper

1. **Read the blog.** New implementation guidance for superintendents, principals, and teachers every Tuesday and Thursday at studentachievementsolutions.com/blog.
2. **Bring this playbook to your next leadership meeting.** The sequence works best when the placement meeting, the supplemental band, and the review dates are protected at the building level.
3. **Talk with us about your fall data.** A 30-minute strategy call, no obligation: we will look at your screening results and the calendar between now and winter break, and leave you with next steps either way.

Schedule a strategy call

studentachievementsolutions.com | 888-475-8889 | admin@c4sas.com

445 Park Avenue, 9th Floor, New York, NY

CSAS
Center For Student Achievement Solutions

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