A FREE CSAS LEADERSHIP TOOL | GRADES K-2 AND 3-5

The Science of Reading Implementation Checklist

Implementation is not a purchase; it is the alignment of four systems. Bring this to your next cabinet or leadership meeting and check only what you could prove with evidence tomorrow morning. Twenty-two items across four domains, grades K-2 and 3-5; your lowest domain is where your results are hiding.

DISTRICT OR SCHOOL	COMPLETED BY	DATE

Domain 1: Instruction, grades K-2

- ☐ Every K-2 classroom delivers an explicit, systematic foundational skills lesson daily, following a published scope and sequence, not teacher-by-teacher improvisation.
- ☐ Students apply new phonics patterns in decodable texts they actually read, not in books that invite guessing from pictures and context.
- ☐ Daily phonemic awareness work happens in the early grades: brief, fast, and cumulative.
- ☐ Three-cueing and guessing-based strategies have been explicitly retired, not quietly tolerated.

Domain 1: Instruction, grades 3-5

- ☐ Advanced word study is taught explicitly: multisyllabic decoding and morphology (prefixes, roots, and suffixes), not just vocabulary lists.
- ☐ Fluency is taught, not assigned: repeated reading with a purpose, feedback, and expression work, not silent reading time alone.
- ☐ Comprehension instruction builds knowledge deliberately; science and social studies content is treated as reading instruction, because background knowledge and vocabulary drive understanding.
- ☐ Students write about what they read daily, in every grade; writing is treated as part of reading instruction.
- ☐ Students in grades 3-5 who still have decoding gaps are found by screening and receive explicit phonics intervention, not comprehension-strategy workarounds.

DOMAINS 2 AND 3

Professional learning, schedules, and structures

Domain 2: Professional learning, how knowledge becomes practice

- [ ] Teachers in every grade band have received substantive training in how the brain learns to read, not just an orientation to the new materials.
- [ ] Every training strand is paired with in-classroom coaching. Joyce and Showers (2002): training alone transfers for a small fraction of teachers; adding coaching raises implementation to roughly 95 percent.
- [ ] Coaching follows a cycle, model, observe, debrief, in the teacher's own classroom, in the same week.
- [ ] A meaningful share of the professional learning budget funds transfer (coaching) rather than exposure (workshops).

Domain 3: Schedules and structures, where the minutes live

- [ ] The daily, protected literacy block, foundational skills in K-2, word study and knowledge-building in 3-5, is findable on every master schedule. If you cannot find the minutes, neither can students; the schedule is the strategy.
- [ ] Tier 1 is carrying its weight: roughly 75 to 80 percent of students meet benchmarks through core instruction alone.
- [ ] Intervention supplements core instruction and never replaces it; no struggling reader is pulled from grade-level reading instruction to receive reading intervention.
- [ ] Intervention groups are skill-based and flexible, reviewed for movement every six to eight weeks against written decision rules.
- [ ] Data meetings run on a protocol and end with a named instructional change, an owner, and a check-back date.

DOMAIN 4 AND SCORING

Leadership practice, and an honest score

Domain 4: Leadership practice, what leaders can see and protect

- ☐ Building leaders walk classrooms with literacy-specific look-fors and watch what students are doing, not whether adults are complying.
- ☐ Feedback reaches teachers within 48 hours of a walkthrough.
- ☐ The district has named one visible instructional non-negotiable, and leaders model it in every walkthrough and staff meeting.
- ☐ Initiatives are pruned. Torgesen (2004) documented how rarely struggling readers catch up once the window narrows; focus is not a preference, it is the intervention.

SCORING THE CHECKLIST HONESTLY

20 to 22 checked with evidence: protect and refine; your work is sustaining. 12 to 19: your gap lives in the lowest domain, and Domain 3 problems masquerade as Domain 1 problems more often than leaders expect. Below 12: do not buy anything; audit first, sequence second, purchase last if at all.

ITEMS CHECKED (OF 22)

WHERE THE GRADE BANDS DIVERGE, AND WHY

LOWEST DOMAIN

☐ 1: Instruction ☐ 2: Professional learning ☐ 3: Schedules and structures

☐ 4: Leadership practice

STRONGER GRADE BAND

☐ K-2 ☐ 3-5 ☐ Even across bands

FROM CHECKLIST TO PLAN

Name the gap, then sequence the work

THE EVIDENCE WE COULD NOT PRODUCE (THE UNCHECKED ITEMS THAT SURPRISED US)

THE FIRST MOVE, ITS OWNER, AND ITS DATE

WHAT THE FOUR DOMAINS PRODUCE WHEN THEY ALIGN

In a Brooklyn community school district, all 11 elementary schools improved for three consecutive years with CSAS coaching; kindergarten students at or above benchmark rose from 25 percent to 86 percent, verified by Acadience screening data. The materials barely changed. The four domains did.

The checklist above is the leadership-meeting version of a deeper instrument: the District Literacy Audit we complete with every new partner, covering the same four domains with evidence prompts and a scoring guide, before another dollar goes to literacy purchases.

Get the full audit, free

A 30-minute strategy call, no obligation. We will walk your checklist results with you and leave you with next steps either way.

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