



Leading Beyond the Threshold: Scaling Sustainable Literacy Success Across The Instructional Systems

Inclusive Welcome



In 60 seconds, share one 'hidden chapter/gem' of your leadership journey—a skill or experience you have that *isn't* on your LinkedIn profile or resume.

Objectives

1. **Define** the clear path from letter sounds to a self-driven reading culture.
2. **Analyze** case studies by looking at real reading behaviors to see exactly where the "mental map" is forming
3. **Identify** where high cognitive load is stalling students and replace it with orthographic mapping.
4. **Move** teachers from comprehension strategies to automatic word recognition pertinent to upper grade-levels.



Agenda

- *Grounding: What is the decoding threshold?*
- *Application of Research to Case Studies*
- *Decoding Threshold Look-Fors*
- *Strategies to support progress toward the Decoding Threshold*
- *Coaching on Coaching Fishbowl*
- *Architecting Systems: Decoding Threshold*



Grounding Article

- *10 minutes to read the article or listen to the podcast.*
- *5 minutes to engage in the **Connect, Extend, Challenge Protocol** (directions on the next slide)*

*ets research institute

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HIGHLIGHT

The Decoding Threshold: Measuring the Roots of Older Students' Reading Difficulties: New Evidence



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Grounding

Connect, Extend, Challenge:

- **Connect:** How does the concept of a "decoding threshold" connect to what you already know about foundational literacy or the Science of Reading?
- **Extend:** How does understanding a specific "threshold" for decoding extend your thinking about why some upper-elementary students still struggle with comprehension?
- **Challenge:** What feels challenging or confusing about implementing a decoding threshold focus in your building? What do you wonder about regarding the data or instruction needed?



Stamping our Learning

- *The decoding threshold marks a critical shift—when word reading becomes automatic and real comprehension begins*
- *When students are at the decoding threshold students are likely to leverage the Self-Teaching Strategy (Attacking new, unknown complex words using the decoding skills that they have acquired to further deepen their understanding of text.)*



Application- Case Studies

Case Study Group Work

1. Read the case study silently to yourself.
2. Discuss with your group members the questions at the bottom of the case study
3. Codify your thinking on chart paper responding to the responding to the questions at the bottom of the case study.
4. Select one person from your group to share out your thinking to the rest of the group.

Case Study 1	Case Study 2	Case Study 3
<p>A cohort of students demonstrates high-level orthographic mapping and phonological automaticity. Specifically, they accurately process multisyllabic real words (e.g., <i>elect</i>, <i>mineral</i>, <i>symbolic</i>), indicating a robust mental lexicon. More critically, they demonstrate sophisticated phonological processing by correctly pronouncing pseudo-homophones—nonsense words that map to known oral vocabulary, such as <i>brane</i> (brain) and <i>feest</i> (feast).</p> <p>Based on these reading behaviors in this group of students, what is the likelihood of demonstrating these behaviors when encountering new vocabulary according to the Decoding Threshold? And why?</p>	<p>In a data-walk through a foundational literacy block, a group of fourth-grade students is observed during a word-study assessment. When presented with multisyllabic real words like <i>calculate</i> or <i>universal</i>, the students struggle to move beyond the first syllable, often substituting the word for a familiar one with a similar start, such as "calling" or "uncle." Their phonological instability is further highlighted by pseudo-homophones; when they encounter <i>froot</i>, they sound out the phonemes <i>/f/ /r/ /oo/ /t/ /\$</i> but fail to recognize the underlying oral word "fruit." Furthermore, completely novel pseudo-words like <i>vost</i> or <i>plid</i> cause significant processing delays and frequent errors</p> <p>Based on these reading behaviors in this group of students, what is the likelihood of demonstrating these behaviors when encountering new vocabulary according to the</p>	<p>In a mid-year data review, a leadership team identifies a systemic plateau in upper-elementary literacy scores. Across the schools, the prevailing narrative among staff is that students simply need to work on critical thinking and comprehension skills. Teachers are heavily prioritizing "Deep Analysis," "Identifying Author's Purpose," and "Evaluative Questioning," operating under the belief that the students' primary barrier is a lack of high-level cognitive engagement with the text.</p> <p>However, a closer look at student performance on word-level tasks reveals a different reality. When asked to process multisyllabic real words like <i>calculate</i> or <i>universal</i>, students exhibit frequent hesitations and "glitches" in the middle of words. On pseudo-homophones like <i>froot</i> or <i>strate</i>, they laboriously sound out the letters but fail to connect the sound to</p>



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Group Share Out:

1. Read the case study out loud to everyone
2. Share you all's response to the questions



Decoding Threshold Observation Tool

1. What do you notice about descriptions for student behaviors?
2. What do you notice about descriptions for teacher behaviors?
3. What connections do you see to the research on the Decoding Threshold?

Focus Area	Teacher Moves (The Input)	Student Moves (The Output)	Progress Monitoring (The Data)
1. Diagnostic Precision	Administers a diagnostic assessment and distinguishes language acquisition from decoding gaps.	Articulates specific "stuck points" in text; participates in diagnostics without "remedial" stigma.	Threshold Audit: Teacher maintains a list of students below 225 and tracks movement toward automaticity.
2. Morphology & Linguistics	Explicitly teaches phonics and Morphology; uses the Interdependence Hypothesis to bridge home language cognates (e.g., <i>biología</i> → <i>biology</i>).	Deconstructs multi-syllabic, Tier 2/3 words into roots and affixes and teaches word parts; uses home language structures to map English decoding.	Transfer Probes: Students demonstrate the ability to decode "untaught" words by identifying known morphemes.
3. Instructional Coherence	Integrates fluency drills (e.g., Choral Reading) directly into grade-level texts like <i>The Raven</i> rather than using isolated interventions.	Engages in high-level content while practicing prosody and rate; tracks text with eyes and voice during group reads.	Integration Check: Formative assessments require students to use decoded vocabulary in grade-level writing/discussion.



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Instructional Exchange

1. Blending Lines
2. Accountable/Decodable Text
3. Morphological Practice



Fishbowl- Coaching on Coaching

- What are 2-3 questions that 'coach' of coaches asks?
- How do the questions align to leading beyond the decoding threshold?
- Presuming this were a trend across your school/system, what would be some things you all would lead for to support teachers to get students to self-teaching hypothesis based on what we have discussed today?



What: Plan feedback aligned to Decoding Threshold

1. What is the highest leverage action step for this teacher?
2. Is it connected to ongoing professional development of decoding threshold research?
3. What is the feedback that I am giving the teacher and what strategy is being elevated as it aligns to the decoding threshold look-fors tool?



Group Share Out:

1. Debrief with coaching on coaching model with your table
2. Share out with whole group



Architecting the Future

1. What data are you considering aligned to be able lead beyond the Decoding Threshold?
2. What will the Professional Learning Look Like in your Buildings?
3. In what month will this professional development take place?
4. What will teacher practice look like? Student practice look like?
5. What will be the outcome data you all will use to measure students at the decoding threshold?
6. What will ongoing conversations look like to support instructional leadership in leading for these shifts?



Architecting the Future

1. Design and Arc of the Year
2. Determine Key Initiatives for Literacy for Lower and Upper Elementary
3. Calibrate on ways to build capacity within the instructional leaders in your buildings

