



DEPARTMENT of
EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

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1. Introduction

Despite heroic efforts by teachers, school and system leaders, and families, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the education of many students across the state. This guidance will help schools and systems plan for recovery and as well as for improved teaching and learning for years to come.

The guidance acknowledges a few truths:

- Many children had unfinished learning before the pandemic. A return to past practices would not address the needs of many students. Students need and deserve better.
- Disruption during the 2020-2021 school year may have prevented some topics and standards being taught to some students, and many students will not have mastered all that was taught.
- Practical best practices exist, and all children deserve to benefit from this well-established research.

This guidance was developed in partnership with District Management Group. It draws on extensive research including the What Works Clearing House, John Hattie's *Visible Learning*, The National Reading Panel, and the practices of schools and districts that have closed the achievement gap.

Overview of Document Updates

This updated version of the guidance document builds upon the first version released in March of 2021. Given the urgent nature of planning for the 2021-2022 school year and the desire to provide support to the field, LDOE moved quickly to provide actionable guidance. Over the last several months, LDOE coordinated outreach to hundreds of stakeholders across the state to seek feedback, questions, and suggestions to improve upon this guidance. LDOE facilitated conversations, focus groups, and surveys with a diverse cohort of individuals representing various geographies, job types, and perspectives. This included general education teachers, special education teachers, principals, central office leaders, special education directors, EL directors, superintendents, and association leaders as well. LDOE is committed to listening to its diverse stakeholders and is committed to incorporating their feedback so that guidance is responsive to their needs.

Updates contained in this document are in direct response to the rich feedback from hundreds of educators and education leaders from across the state. Additionally, feedback and questions that emerged from the various staffing and scheduling guidance webinars and support activities were also incorporated into this document. The result is a document that represents the multiplicity of voices, perspectives, and needs of educators from across the state.

Specific updates include:

- Guidance for hiring retired teachers
- Sample language for IEPs to reinforce and support this best practice guidance
- Refined guidance related to integrating acceleration and core instruction
- Expanded options for creating time for acceleration

What is this document?

This document provides guidance for addressing unfinished learning. It draws upon research based best practices. It is relevant in a time of a pandemic but also for years to follow. It covers three interrelated topics:

1. What are the best practices for helping students with unfinished learning?
2. How should staffing change in order to effectively implement these best practices?
3. How should schedules change in order to effectively implement these best practices?

Who is this document intended for?

This guidance will assist school and system leaders as they plan for post pandemic recovery and for years to come as they work to meet the needs of students with unfinished learning and diverse learners. This includes:

- Superintendents
- Chief academic officers
- Special education directors
- English learner (EL) directors
- Directors of student well-being
- Directors of teaching and learning
- School principals
- Department heads
- School counselors and others involved in scheduling
- School business officers

Which students will this guidance help?

The best practices apply to a wide range of students. Since many children across the state had disrupted education, many have unfinished learning needs. Moreover, many students needed support before the pandemic. The best practices are well designed to meet the needs of:

- **Students with Unfinished Learning:** Students who have grade level skills and knowledge that they have not yet mastered.
- **Diverse Learners:** *Students with disabilities as identified with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and English learners. Note: Students with significant disabilities will likely need more specialized services than those discussed in this guidance.*
- **Students Experiencing Trauma:** Students who have or are currently experiencing the impact of adverse childhood experiences including, but not limited to, racism, poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, peer victimization, community violence, bullying and any additional circumstances related to instability in the student's home and/or community.

Since all children have unique learning needs and styles, the best practices are not appropriate for 100% of students. Children with significant disabilities, students with limited English language proficiency, and others may need more customized supports.

How do I navigate this guidance document?

This document has three main sections and includes a summary of implementation supports for LEAs as well as an appendix with supporting documents. The document is organized using a consistent numbering system to allow for easy navigation. Sections are intentionally repetitive to reinforce the connection of teaching and learning best practices with staffing and scheduling implications. Additional resources, including detailed guidance on acceleration best practices and instructional coaching, are linked.

Sections of the Guidance Document:

- 1. General Overview of Best Practices.** This section provides a high-level summary of how best to address unfinished learning and meet the needs of diverse learners. It also pinpoints where to look elsewhere in the document for more details on a given topic.
- 2. Staffing Implications.** People matter. This section provides detailed guidance on what skills are needed, how many staff members are required, and practical approaches for finding the necessary talent to implement the best practices.
- 3. Scheduling Implications.** Time matters, too. The best practices cannot be squeezed into existing schedules. Many schedules will need to adjust to support the best practices. This section provides details for building schedules aligned to the guidance.
- 4. Summary of Supports for LEAs.** LDOE in partnership with District Management Group (DMGroup) is providing live technical training and support sessions to LEA staff across the state. This section overviews those supports and provides key details for how LEAs can register.
- 5. Supporting Documents.** Additional guides and research are provided in this section. Links to resources are also dispersed throughout the document.

Legal Disclaimer

The information provided in this document does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal or regulatory requirements; instead, all information, content, and materials available in this document are for general informational purposes only and to assist LEAs in their 2021-2022 planning efforts.

2. General Overview of Best Practices

Accelerating learning and closing the achievement gap is not easy, but well-established best practices provide a roadmap. At the highest level, this guidance includes six interconnected recommendations:

1. High-quality core instruction is the foundation.
2. Effective literacy instruction is central to student success.
3. Students with unfinished learning and diverse learners need extra instructional time to catch up.
4. Both core instruction and acceleration must be provided by content specific staff.
5. Meeting the well-being needs of students supports academic achievement.
6. Equity should be at the forefront of all these strategies.

This best practice guidance for meeting the needs of diverse learners and addressing students' unfinished learning requires a systems thinking approach to implementation. Recommendations must all be implemented as a set. They also have implications for staffing, scheduling, and how teachers are supported.

The next section describes in greater detail each of the high-level recommendations. Subsequent sections share how staffing and scheduling can support effective implementation of the guidance. Acceleration as a method to support students with unfinished learning is referenced throughout this document. For more specific guidance on the recommended content and details of acceleration sessions, follow the link to LDOE resources: [Link to Accelerate](#).

2.1. [High-quality core instruction is the foundation.](#)

Ensuring high-quality core instruction is fundamental to addressing unfinished learning and the needs of diverse learners. While acceleration, intervention, and special education services are also important, they are not a replacement for high-quality core instruction. High-quality core instruction requires:

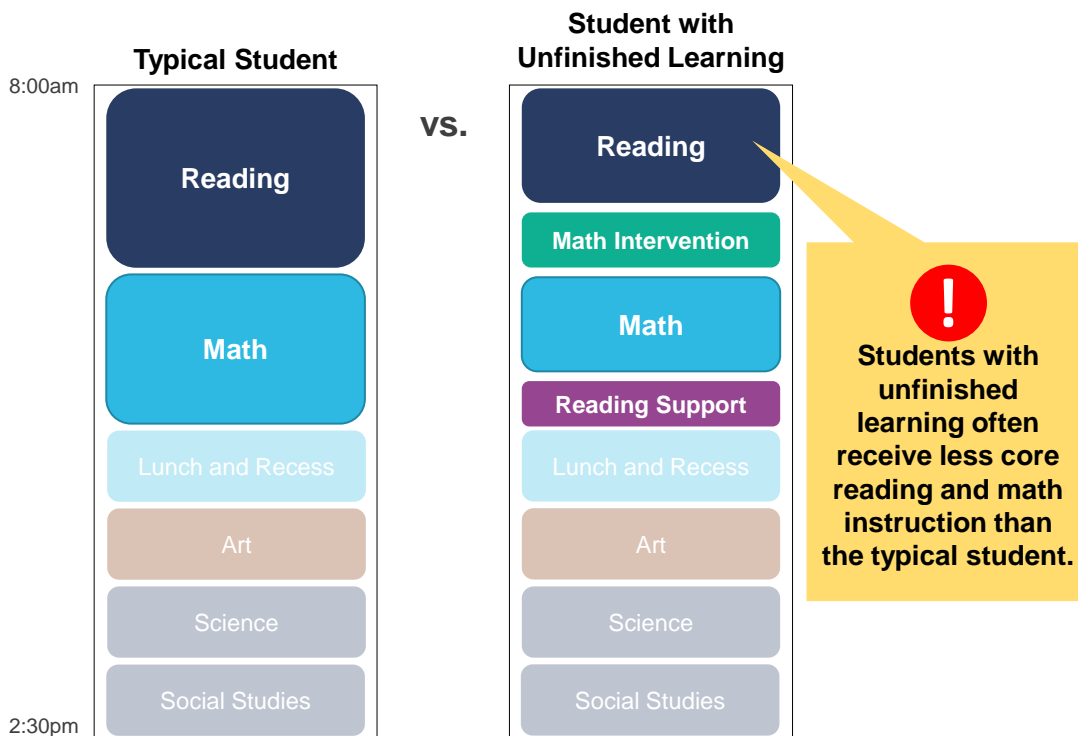
2.1a. Core instruction must be on grade level, always rigorous, and provided in the least restrictive environment. While the challenges and disruptions that lead to unfinished learning can be significant, it is essential that core instruction remains on grade level, or students will fall further behind.

A caution: Some educators will, from a place of “kindness”, think that core instruction for diverse learners and students with unfinished learning should be below grade level to “meet them where they are.” Sometimes, core instruction is diluted for students with diverse learning needs or with unfinished learning in an attempt to address skill gaps. While well intentioned, this lowering of expectations locks students into staying below grade level. Acceleration is the time and place to address prior year skill gaps. Instead of diluting the rigor, core instruction must be augmented with interventions and acceleration to address unfinished learning.

2.1b. More time on a subject increases learning. Research shows that there is a positive relationship between annual time spent on teaching and learning a subject and student mastery. For example, more time teaching math or reading leads to more learning in math and reading, assuming high-quality teaching and curriculum.

2.1c. Students should not be pulled from core reading, math, or English Language Arts (ELA) for other services. In many schools, students with unfinished learning or diverse learners performing below grade level actually get less core instruction than their peers who have mastered standards. Too often, they are pulled out of core reading, math, or ELA for related services or other services. In these cases, they receive less core instruction rather than extra help in addition to core instruction.

As part of safeguarding core instruction, students should not be pulled from core subjects for services or intervention. Core instruction time is paramount for students with diverse learning needs or unfinished learning. Ideally, schedules will include designated intervention blocks and related services outside of core instruction. If there are conflicts, core instruction in reading, math, social studies, and science should be protected.



Challenges with the standard approach to pull-out supports for students with unfinished learning. In many school systems, students with diverse learning needs or unfinished learning are pulled out of their general education core instruction classes to receive intervention or special education services. This pull-out leaves those students, who often already need acceleration in core content, to receive less core instruction than their peers.

A note about IEPs: Nearly all of the best practices are appropriate for many students with disabilities. By law IEPs must be individualized to meet the individual needs of students. The best practices should be considered by IEP teams and incorporated if the IEP team determines them to be appropriate. Conversely, the best practices should not be dismissed for students with disabilities if they are not currently in the IEP. IEPs are intended to be living documents and can be amended at any time by the IEP team, which of course, includes the parent or guardian. For additional information on IEP language, see section 2.8.

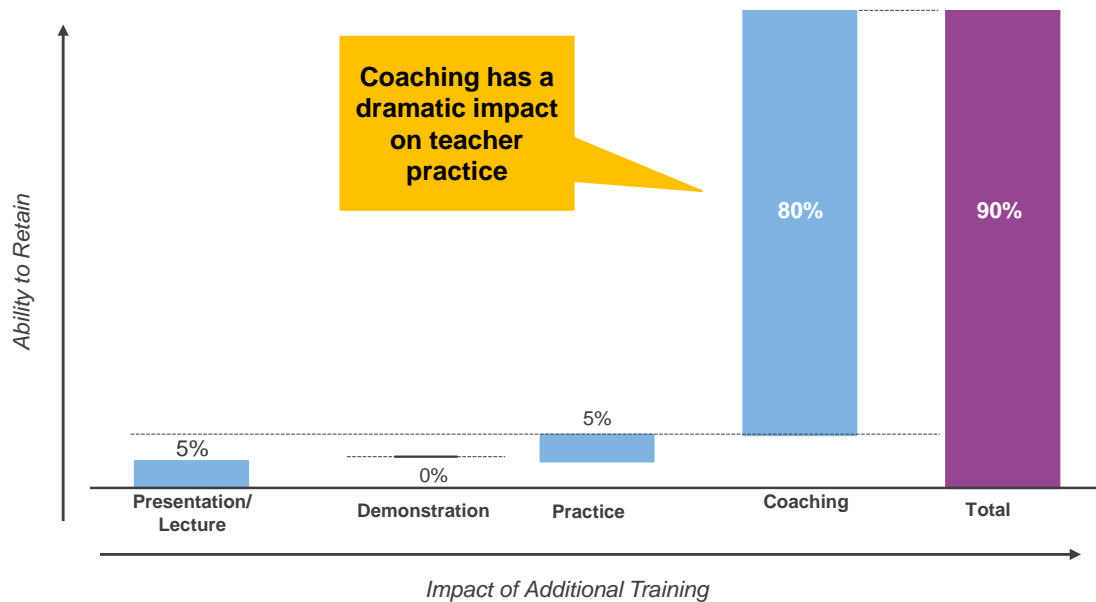
2.1d. Given reduced direct instruction during the pandemic, some courses and topics will need acceleration time to explicitly teach content critical to current year lessons. Time must be made through acceleration to scaffold missing key concepts from prior grade.

A caution: Don't expect the typical schedule to include enough time for all students for acceleration of untaught content from the previous school year. Schedules will need to ensure dedicated time to teach the previously untaught content whether during small group instruction in their math or ELA block or an additional block of time.

2.1e. Instructional coaching from content leaders and mentor teachers can improve core instruction.

The most effective means of improving core instruction is through focused and sustained professional development coupled with strong instructional coaching. Teachers often retain only a small amount of what they learn from traditional professional development. They implement even less.

Coupling training with instructional coaching has shown to increase the retention and use of new approaches significantly by allowing teachers to practice and iterate on new skills alongside reflection and feedback. School-based content leaders and mentor teachers are positioned well to provide coaching supports for teachers.



The impact of additional training practices on teacher content retention. Coaching increases the percent of content that teachers retain by sixteen times the amount that teachers tend to retain from a presentation or lecture alone. Source: Joyce & Showers, 2002.

2.1f. High-quality curriculum is important. High quality core instruction requires that all classrooms utilize high-quality curriculum and materials. This was true before the pandemic and is, of course, true after the pandemic. For more information, follow the link to LDOE materials: [Link to High-Quality Materials and Resources](#)

2.1g. Regular progress monitoring from curriculum-embedded assessments should guide core instruction. In conjunction with a high-quality curriculum, a robust system of assessments, both

formative and summative, should be integrated into core instruction. Such assessments provide students and teachers regular feedback to determine how students are progressing and what adjustments may be needed to better support students' diverse learning needs.

Sometimes assessments are disconnected from the curriculum and do not align to the specific content standards taught. Curriculum-embedded assignments such as weekly quizzes, exit tickets, end of unit assessments and in class "do now" assignments are effective progress monitoring resources.

A caution: There may be a tendency to assess less given the great deal of unfinished learning. This is not in line with best practices. Now, more than ever, it is critical for students and teachers to have a clear picture of what students can and cannot do, and what learning is still unfinished. Easily administered formative assessments in tandem with examples of student work can give teachers and school leaders a clear picture of how students are performing so that lessons and acceleration supports can be adapted accordingly in real time.

2.2. Effective literacy instruction is central to student success.

Within core instruction, literacy is of paramount importance. Building foundational reading skills, along with knowledge and vocabulary, is essential to student success.

2.2a. Reading is the gateway to all other learning. Without mastery of reading, students will struggle in many subjects. Moreover, third grade reading proficiency is a strong predictor of lifetime achievement. Difficulty with reading is the most common reason for students to be referred to special education. Master schedules should dedicate sufficient time to reading instruction, dedicate time for reading acceleration, and ensure that students aren't pulled from reading for other services.

2.2b. Clear best practices for elementary literacy instruction exist. Best practices for teaching reading are well established. The National Reading Panel, What Works Clearinghouse, and achievement-gap-closing schools all agree on a clear set of best practices, which are summarized below. For more detail on elementary literacy instruction, refer to section 4.2 of this document.

Elementary Reading Best Practices:

Standards	A. Clear and rigorous grade-level expectations B. Identification of students with unfinished learning in reading beginning in early grades C. Frequent measurement of achievement
Core Instruction	D. At least: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o 120 minutes per day of core instruction in grades K-2o 60 minutes per day of core instruction in grades 3-5 E. Explicit teaching of foundations of language and literacy
Intervention	F. At least 30 minutes per day additional time for all students who need acceleration G. Tight connection of acceleration to core instruction
Effective Teaching	H. Highly skilled and effective teachers of reading

2.2c. Some middle school and high school students will need direct instruction in foundational literacy skills. Ideally, no student enters middle or high school still struggling to read. Unfortunately, many do. Data clearly shows that students who struggle in math, science, ELA, and social studies at the secondary level often struggle with reading as well.

Successful secondary reading instruction and intervention programs rely on skilled teachers of reading. The skills needed to teach foundational literacy skills are different than discussing the themes in a novel or how to write a thoughtful essay. Schools must ensure that reading interventions are staffed by skilled teachers of reading. See section 3.2c to learn more about how to staff for this critical position.

2.2d. Some middle school and high school students will need direct instruction in reading, including comprehension, academic vocabulary, and knowledge building.

Striving readers need targeted instruction and support, often in reading comprehension and academic vocabulary. Acceleration should provide foundational literacy instruction as well as support with knowledge building. Too often, secondary students are placed in acceleration classes, study skills, or special education services that don't include direct instruction in reading, and thus fail to address an underlying cause of their struggle. Establishing a robust secondary reading program for students with an identified need is central to strengthening academic performance across the board.

2.3. [Students with unfinished learning also need extra instructional time to master learning.](#)

Core instruction is the foundation, but students with unfinished learning or diverse learning needs will require more than just core instruction. Many students will need extra instructional time during the school day for acceleration.

Acceleration happens in two ways. Acceleration is briefly woven into core instruction time as well as during dedicated extra time for acceleration. When acceleration happens during core instruction, it should be brief and similar to traditional scaffolding. Teachers should review pre-requisite skills in

preparation for the upcoming grade level content. They should spend the majority of core instruction time on grade level material.

Acceleration for many students will likely take more time than what has been historically dedicated to teach the core content. During this additional dedicated acceleration time, most of the time can be used to teach the precursor skills that will be needed to master upcoming grade level content.

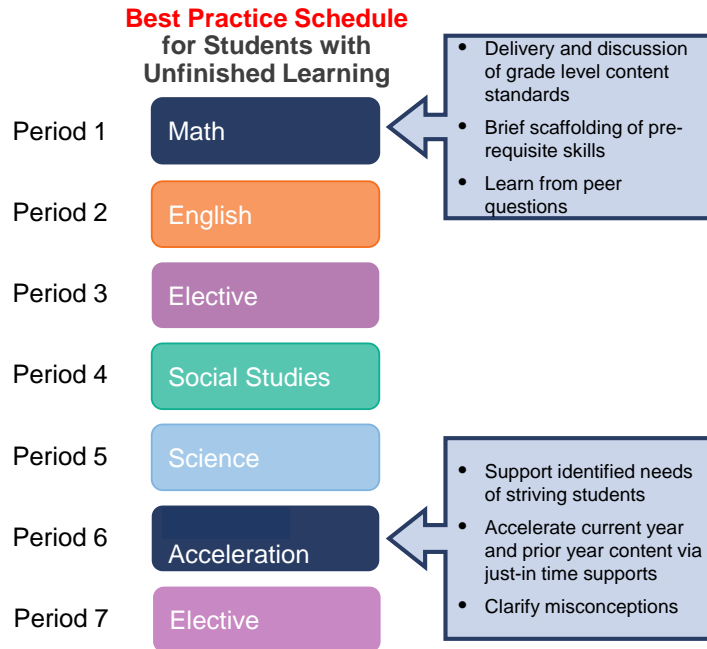
In many schools, acceleration will take the form of a distinct acceleration/enrichment block, but dedicated acceleration time, which is additional time beyond what is needed for core, need not be a separate block. It can be a lengthened single block. For example, a school might consider extending its 60-minute math block to 90-minutes to allow for an additional 30-minutes of acceleration time. Regardless of the form, extra time must be built into the schedule for many students. It can also be a block that already includes small group time. For example, a 90-minute math block may include 60 minutes of whole group instruction and 30 minutes of small group instruction.

2.3a. In addition to core instruction, students who struggle need dedicated time for intervention typically in reading, math, or writing. Reading, ELA, and math are fundamental topics and skillsets that spiral throughout grades K-12. Science, social studies, and world languages are hard to master without strong skills in reading, writing, and math.

Unfinished learning takes time to become mastered learning and is directly related to the time allocated for teachers to provide direct instruction and time for students to learn new skills, many from prior year content. Teachers can and should incorporate acceleration into core instruction by briefly scaffolding prerequisite skills to support mastery of grade level content, but the majority of core instruction time should be spent on grade level content.

Unfinished learning support cannot take place just during time dedicated to grade-level core instruction but should also be the focus of dedicated intervention or acceleration time. There simply isn't enough time to teach current year material and prior skills as well without added time for those students with significant unfinished learning.

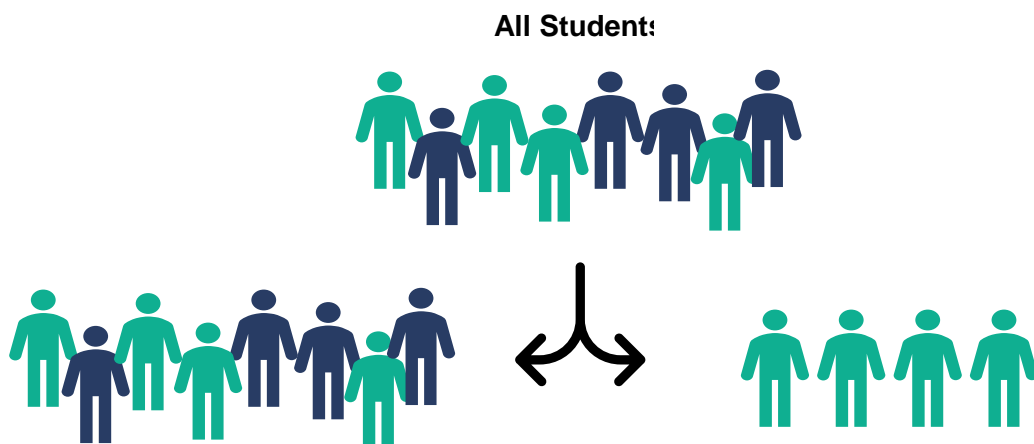
Importantly, as outlined in section 2.1c and in the example below, students are not receiving intervention services at the expense of grade-level core instruction but rather during a dedicated acceleration block. Note that the below schedule is an example.



Best practice secondary schedule for students with unfinished learning or diverse learners in math.
In many schools, students with unfinished learning or diverse needs are placed in alternate course sections with lower standards or provided with push-in or co-teaching support during core instruction. These strategies are not representative of best practices as they do not provide extra time for acceleration and often reduce the role of the general education teacher in providing core instruction. Best practice for students with unfinished learning ensures they attend their grade level core content courses and have additional time in their schedules for acceleration.

2.3b. There are two key reasons that students may need academic support in the aftermath of the pandemic: unfinished instruction and unfinished learning. The disruptions from the pandemic meant some content wasn't taught and other material may have been taught but not mastered.

- Unfinished Instruction refers to content that was not taught because of disruptions during the pandemic.
- Unfinished Learning refers to skills and knowledge that students have not yet mastered. Students may have been present in class or virtually while content standards were being taught, but for any number of reasons, some students didn't master all that was taught. Unfinished learning also includes all the skills and content that students struggled with prior to the pandemic.



Supporting both unfinished instruction as well as unfinished learning. 100% of students will likely have unfinished instruction because of pandemic-related disruptions, and some portion of students will also have unfinished learning. Acceleration must address both kinds of learning needs.

As systems and schools devise acceleration plans, keeping in mind these two reasons that students may need acceleration will be helpful. It will be important for systems and schools to continue to provide strong core instruction on grade level, using acceleration time to address unfinished learning and instruction.

Unfinished instruction likely means that acceleration will be needed for large cohorts of students. Unfinished learning applies to many students. Both unfinished instruction and unfinished learning require assessment to pinpoint specific learning gaps. For both unfinished instruction and unfinished learning, acceleration should draw upon high-quality instructional materials and should be scaffolded before and during the associated co-requisite on grade level work throughout the year.

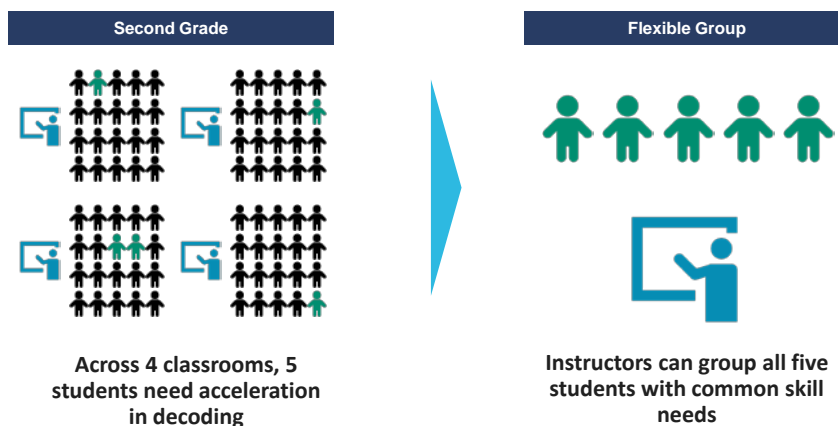
2.3c. Extra time acceleration for unfinished learning should be direct instruction, specifically targeted to a student's specific skill needs and misunderstandings. There is not a set game plan for what to teach during acceleration for unfinished learning. The specific skill needs of the students in the room will drive instruction. LDOE has a robust set of lessons for Math and ELA that should serve as a guide for teachers and content leaders as they assemble plans for this type of acceleration.

Follow the enclosed link for LDOE resources: [Link to Accelerate](#).

2.3d. Students with similar areas of need may be placed in small groups for acceleration. Since acceleration for unfinished learning must target the specific needs of the students in the acceleration class, narrowing the range of needs can be beneficial for students and teachers alike.

For example, at the elementary level, acceleration groups can be created for students who need additional support in segmenting phonemes while another group may be created for students who need additional support on short vowel sounds. At the secondary level, a math acceleration group might have students who mostly need support with functions while the other serves students who may need support with ratio and rate reasoning. Groupings must not be static and should be modified or updated on a regular basis as students progress through content or additional needs are identified.

This intentional grouping by similar area of need allows content experts to target specific content standards and skillsets in an efficient manner allowing for personalization that would be more difficult in a mixed group.



Scheduling acceleration by grouping students by common areas of need does add some complexity, but what is lost in simplicity is gained in much greater outcomes. Schools and systems might consider grouping English learners strategically during acceleration to be able to provide English language development during acceleration while also addressing unfinished learning content.

2.3e. Time matters more than group size. Acceleration should be available 5 times per week with group sizes between 3-5 students at elementary and 15 students at secondary. These group sizes assume that students are grouped by similar areas of need and are taught by a content strong teacher. Groups should be flexible and adjusted as students master content and new student needs are identified.

A tip: If creating small groups for intervention poses complexities, consider two questions. 1) Will smaller group sizes mean some students who need acceleration won't receive it? 2) Will smaller group sizes mean that some students in need of acceleration receive instruction from teachers who may not be considered content experts in the given subject area? If the answer is yes to either question, consider increasing group size to meet the school's needs. Although not ideal, increases in group size may be necessary to prevent the issues outlined below.

- **Rationing services.** If having small groups means that many students get no support while a select group receive support in a very small group, learning and equity of access suffer. Cutting the average group size in half means only half as many students get extra help.
- **Reducing frequency.** If students receive additional support every other day, then one teacher can theoretically support twice as many students. While technically true, daily support is the recommended best practice when accelerating student learning and ensuring that additional instruction is highly tailored and high-quality.
- **A shift to less qualified staff.** The most common impact of very small acceleration groups is shifting instruction from a small team of effective, content-strong teachers to larger group of general support staff (i.e. paraprofessionals, non-core instructors, operations staff, etc.). This seldom results in the acceleration necessary for students with unfinished learning to achieve grade level mastery.

Grouping by similar area of need. More important than how many students are in an acceleration group is what their academic needs are. Creating groups of students with similar needs makes the instruction more targeted, more impactful, and easier to plan and deliver.

Consider the two groups below. Each student has been identified as needing additional support in reading, however, individual needs vary between fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Group A is smaller and consists of only three students with varying needs. Group B, alternatively, is slightly larger, consists of five students and has been grouped according to one common need (fluency). Because Group B has been grouped according to similar area of need, these students are more likely to demonstrate accelerated progress with unfinished learning compared to their peers in Group A.

Needs of Group A

1. Fluency
2. Comprehension
3. Vocabulary

Needs of Group B

1. Fluency
2. Fluency
3. Fluency
4. Fluency
5. Fluency

For research on group size recommendations, see document 6.1 in the Supporting Documents section.

2.4. Both core instruction and acceleration must be provided by content strong staff.

Who provides acceleration matters as much as how much acceleration is provided.

2.4a. Knowing the content deeply improves instruction and learning. Research shows that the content expertise of an instructor has significant bearing on the student’s likelihood of mastering the material. Content-strong experts can teach a concept multiple ways, identify missing skills, correct misconceptions, and break down complex ideas in a way that is more accessible for learners who struggle.

Acceleration is most effective when math is taught by math teachers, writing by English language arts teachers, and reading by staff specifically trained in teaching reading. Too often acceleration is staffed by who is available rather than certification or skill.

A caution: Providing acceleration led by staff without deep content knowledge and expertise seldom is effective, yet it is a very common strategy. See section 3.5 for how to find sufficient staff with the needed skills.

2.4b. General education staff should play a major role in acceleration, including for students with mild to moderate disabilities. Increasing the role of content expert general education staff can improve results for students with mild to moderate disabilities and students with unfinished learning. This increases the likelihood of closing achievement gaps. Students with unfinished learning benefit from acceleration taught by teachers with content expertise, which include general education staff. Too often schools and systems incorrectly assume that only a special educator can provide services to a student with an IEP. While some special educators have content expertise, some do not. Many schools that have successfully addressed unfinished learning use general education staff to provide the vast majority of acceleration, including for students with mild to moderate disabilities.

Note: While accelerating the acquisition of previously unmastered content, it is required that all IEP supports and related services are also provided. In some cases, students will benefit from revising their IEPs to better reflect the best practices.

2.5. [Meeting the well-being needs of students supports academic achievement.](#)

Schools cannot improve academic outcomes without also addressing students' well-being needs. Students are much less likely to learn math, reading, critical thinking when they feel insecure, overwhelmed, or stressed.

2.5a. Student well-being should have a designated time in the schedule with clear expectations for how best to use the time. In an ideal schedule, student well-being has a clear, designated time and teachers have lesson plans from a student well-being curriculum to make the most of the time. Student well-being support consists of facilitating meaningful interactions to develop sustaining, strong relationships within the classroom and throughout the school. Interactions should promote leadership development, character building, overall mental health, and engaging students in school. There are inherent conflicts of trying to fit too much into a short day. Unfinished instruction and unfinished learning demand extra time during the day. Making student well-being an equal priority means finding dedicated time in the schedule. For more information about scheduling student well-being, see [section 4.10. Time for Student Well-being](#) of this document.

A caution: Don't add student well-being expectations without subtracting something else. Too often teachers are asked to squeeze in student well-being lessons, activities, or curriculum but nothing is removed from an already full schedule. At the elementary level this might include having student well-being as part of the rotation with art, PE and music. At the secondary level it may mean dropping a different period each week.

2.5b. A focus on building authentic student-teacher relationships is a key element for increasing student engagement and sense of wellbeing. Time and again, research points to the importance of

strong student-teacher relationships in producing positive results for students. Designated student well-being time can allow for the development of authentic relationships. Often, secondary schools look to advisory periods to meet this need. Unfortunately, an unstructured advisory block or one where students are randomly assigned too often devolves into a study hall. Best practices for secondary level advisory include:

- **Pair students and staff with common interests.** Relationships form around shared interests.
- **Avoid previously strained relationships.** It's hard to build a friendship with frustration or animosity as its foundation.
- **Keep the groups small:** Relationships are hard to form in a large group.
- **Structure meaningful activity:** Most friendships are formed while doing something with someone.
- **Prioritize quality of time over quantity:** More isn't better. Better is.

2.6. [Educational equity should be at the forefront of all planning.](#)

The National Equity Project states that “Educational equity means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential.”

The pandemic impacted all students, but historically marginalized communities and underserved children were disproportionately affected. Students of these communities, even before the pandemic, were less likely to perform on grade level, graduate on time, and achieve post-secondary success than their more affluent peers. The pandemic has only exacerbated these issues.

This inequity will be manifested in the magnitude and impact of unfinished learning that, unless disrupted, will serve to reinforce the status quo and once again leave our most vulnerable students behind. Because of this, educational equity must be at the forefront of all planning.

2.6a. Implementing the best practice guidance will improve equity of opportunities, access, and outcomes. Effectively supporting students who struggle is an important aspect of improving equity. Addressing unfinished learning head-on by dedicating time, resources, and talent commensurate with and tailored to student need will level the playing field and provide our most vulnerable students with legitimate opportunities to realize their full academic and social potential.

2.6b. Equity is greatly impacted by staffing decisions. Education is a people-centric profession. Student outcomes are directly related to the effectiveness of those responsible for their education. This is true for all students but even more so for students with unfinished learned and those with diverse learning needs. Too often, students in need of acceleration get less instruction from highly skilled staff than their non-struggling peers. Essentially, students that need and deserve the most are often provided with the least. This is inequity in action. See section 3.4 for how to staff equitably for recovery and equity.

Thoughtfully assigning staff within a school and across systems to ensure appropriate staffing based on student need can help keep equity at the forefront of planning.

2.6c. Most students with mild to moderate disabilities benefit from the best practice guidance. Too often students with mild to moderate disabilities receive less core instruction and are excluded from highly effective general education interventions in favor of special education supports.

Special education services, though well meaning, are often provided by staff lacking the core subject expertise necessary to provide high-quality instruction in specific content areas. Additionally, academic assistance is often provided by non-certified staff. This seldom accelerates learning. Districts, are of course, required to prove the services in all IEPs, but IEPs can be updated through the amendment process.

To mitigate these issues, systems should intentionally engage special educators in opportunities to increase core instructional content expertise such as content-based professional development and Learning Communities that combine general educators and special educators teaching similar content to ensure that special educators get content focused instructional coaching. This will not only build capacity within individuals but also within school systems by increasing the number of qualified personnel with deep content expertise.

As special educators work to deepen content knowledge and expertise, general educators may have to play a larger role in accelerating students with mild to moderate special needs.

IEP teams should protect core instruction and consider general education intervention and acceleration supports that use content-strong staff and robust curricular materials before removing students from the general education environment in favor of special education specific supports, as allowable by the student's IEP.

2.6d. Providing extra help before school or after school should not take the place of providing it during the school day. While well intentioned, interventions outside of the school day are often out of reach for students who have outside responsibilities or who might struggle to attend such programming. For example, students without access to transportation or those with job or family responsibilities often miss out. Also, many students do not treat before or after school help as important. "If it's so valuable, why isn't it during the school day," they think.

Moreover, tutoring that occurs outside the school day is often led by non-certified staff. Schools should instead ensure that extra help and interventions are offered during the school day, so that all students, regardless of their background and other commitments, can access them. However, for students who have access to before or after school time such as students who arrive early to school, effective teachers could use that time to tutor students.

2.7. Common Misconceptions and Strategies to Avoid.

As schools and systems shift to these best practices, it's equally important that some past practices come to an end to provide time, staff, and energy to the new approaches.

A number of common practices across the state are at odds with this guidance, including the following:

2.7a. The use of paraprofessionals for academic support or reading instruction seldom accelerates learning. Paraprofessionals play an important role in serving many students with disabilities and behavioral challenges. They are a critical component of meeting the needs of students with significant disabilities and supporting inclusion. They are not, typically, highly skilled content strong teachers, who are best able to address unfinished learning and accelerate mastery.

Some systems may embrace a small group tutoring strategy. Tutors who are certified teachers or recent or soon to be college graduates with relevant majors will be more impactful than paraprofessionals who may lack a related degree or content expertise. Paraprofessionals with some college, who have a 2- or 4-year degree in a relevant field, or specialized training will also be more impactful than staff who lack content expertise.

2.7b. Co-teaching is hard to scale and often crowds out more impactful alternatives. Co-teaching, pairing a special education teacher with a general education teacher in a general education classroom is a popular means of increasing inclusion and access to rigorous instruction. Inclusion and access to rigorous material are best practices but research indicates that co-teaching is a difficult means to a desirable end.

The research is clear. On average, co-teaching does not accelerate learning and in many cases has the opposite effect. It's not that co-teaching never is effective, but that it's hard to do well at scale. It requires:

1. Both teachers to be content experts
2. Good chemistry between both teachers
3. Long-term working relationships between both teachers
4. Daily common planning time for both teachers

If even one of these critical ingredients is missing, the results can be disappointing for students and frustrating for staff.

The funds for co-teaching can be more impactful if invested in extra-time acceleration with content strong staff.

2.7c. Push-in support during core instruction is not a substitute for extra time intervention from content strong staff. Push in support alone does not give students extra time to master content from prior years or teachers the time they need address skill gaps.

2.7d. Typical short dose, "sit and get" professional development is not as impactful as instructional coaching. Increasing teacher capacity to provide high-quality core instruction is impactful, but short dose PD is not. For adults to learn a new skill and actually use it in the classroom, at least 50 hours of PD and coaching is needed on a single topic. A few hours of PD, no matter how important the topic or engaging the presenter, seldom improves outcomes.

2.8. Sample IEP Language to Support Best Practice Guidance.

Every student's needs are unique and should be evaluated by the IEP team. Sometime, unintentionally, IEP language undermines a student's access to the best practices for addressing unfinished learning. Small changes to IEP language can help ensure students with mild to moderate disabilities benefit from best practice supports.

Recommended IEP language should address:

- When services are provided
- Who provides the services
- Inclusion in general education intervention/acceleration

The typical IEP often assumes all services are provided by special education certified staff or special education paraprofessionals. The best practices encourage some needs being met by classroom teachers, reading teachers, math teachers and other content strong staff. The typical IEP also assumes that each provider will schedule services at their best discretion. Best practices, however, require clarity about when services are provided.

Sample language that may be added to the comment section of the IEP to ensure services don't reduce access to core reading and math

- Student shall receive 100% of core reading and math instruction each day. Services will be scheduled at other times during the school day.
- Student shall receive services during regularly scheduled acceleration period.
- Student shall receive services during regularly scheduled reading intervention/RTI/MTSS period.
- Student shall receive services during _____ (state what will be missed).

Sample language to ensure services are provided by content strong teachers:

- Services to be provided by certified reading teacher classroom teacher.
- Services to be provided by certified math teacher.
- Services to be provided by reading specialist, interventionist or individual strong in the content area.

Sample language to ensure students participate in high quality general education acceleration at the secondary level:

Many schools have created graded and/or credit bearing extra time acceleration classes taught by general education content strong staff. These are often called math lab, English acceleration or similar. These courses can and should serve students with and without disabilities. IEPs can support high school students with disabilities using the following sample language in the "Regular Classes" section noted in the "Electives" box:

- Student to be enrolled in math lab (or another appropriate course)

3. Staffing Implications

Teachers matter!

The best practice guidance for addressing unfinished learning and meeting the needs of diverse learners requires a systems thinking approach to implementation. A number of interrelated steps must be taken in order to implement the system well. Aligning staffing to support the best practices is a key step to effective implementation.

In fact, one of the most common reasons schools and systems who have embraced the best practices fail to see the expected gains in student outcomes is that they failed to align staffing to support the guidance. Staffing is also an important aspect to ensuring educational equity, ensuring that the most effective teachers work with students with the greatest need, especially student from historically marginalized communities.

3.1. [What positions are impacted by the best practice guidance?](#)

To effectively implement the best practice guidance, schools and systems need staff with the right skills and training. They also need enough staff to meet the increased need due to the pandemic and prior unfinished learning. Key roles that are central to implementing the best practices include the following.

- a) Highly skilled **classroom teachers** are the foundation of high-quality core instruction. No strategy, program, or curriculum can be effective without highly skilled classroom teachers. Nothing in this guidance is a substitute for high-quality teaching. In fact, the guidance requires and prioritizes high-quality teaching above all else.
- b) Effective **instructional coaching** from mentor teachers or content leaders can be instrumental in improving the quality of core instruction. Given the critical role of classroom teachers, mentor teachers and content leaders are greatly valued. Research shows that instructional coaching is the most impactful means to improving classroom teacher effectiveness.
- c) Experienced **teachers of reading** are important for ensuring that all students who struggle to read get extra help from content strong staff. Helping striving readers catch up is foundational to the best practices. Teaching striving readers is a very specialized skill.
- d) **Content strong math and ELA interventionists** at the secondary level are key to providing effective extra time acceleration. Secondary content is complex and usually only certified math and ELA teachers have the required skills and content expertise to provide the needed acceleration services. As the number of students with unfinished learning grows, so must the number of qualified math and ELA teachers. Districts and systems might consider using approved vendors to boost the number of content strong math and ELA teachers. See section 3.5 for details on approved vendors.
- e) **EL teachers** play a vital role in providing the intentional support, resources, and instruction necessary to drive English Language Development and English language proficiency.
- f) **Counselors, social workers, and others with mental health expertise** play an important role in meeting the social and emotional needs of students, which is central to meeting their academic needs. The pandemic magnified the already significant levels of stress, anxiety and trauma facing students.
- g) An experienced and savvy **scheduler** will also help to ensure an efficient plan. As outlined in the next section, aligning schedules to the best practice guidance is also critical.

3.2. [What are the key skills needed for these critical roles?](#)

It's not sufficient to simply have the right number of full-time equivalents (FTE) in these critical roles. It is important that they have the appropriate skills. Jim Collins said it best. It's critical to "have the right people on the bus."

A caution: Many schools and systems may be tempted to simply rearrange the folks already on the bus, assigning the staff that are closest to what is needed even if they lack some key skills. This is understandable given the pressures and challenges, but it is unlikely to be effective. It would be better to think strategically and intentionally to ensure staff have the needed skills.

Key skills needed for the identified staff positions and roles are provided below:

3.2a. Classroom teachers: All the qualifications that make for effective, content strong teachers still apply. No change from past practice. Addressing strong core instruction, acceleration and unfinished learning prizes highly skilled teachers, but it doesn't change what a highly skilled teacher is.

To the extent that schools and systems have data about strengths of teachers, leaders might consider pairing teachers with students based on the relative strengths and needs of staff and students. For example, a school might ensure that staff who are skilled at teaching foundational reading skills teach students who have a need in foundational reading skills.

3.2b. Mentor teachers or content leaders: To be an effective mentor teacher or content leader in the context of instructional coaching requires two distinct skills. 1) Being an effective teacher of students and 2) being a tactful, helpful guide for adults.

It may seem obvious that in order to help others become more effective teachers, mentor teachers or content leaders themselves must be highly effective teachers of students. In many schools, however, this may not be the case.

The three most common pitfalls to avoid while staffing these roles are:

- 1) Emphasizing seniority over skill. In some schools, there is an expectation that veteran staff should get these roles. Research indicates little correlation between teacher effectiveness and longevity after the first few years of teaching. It matters more that staff selected for these positions have the requisite skill sets.
- 2) Removing a problematic teacher from the classroom. While the exact opposite of a best practice, sometimes mentor and content leader roles are used to transfer a less than effective teacher out of the classroom.
- 3) Mistaking energy for proven effectiveness. Highly effective teachers generate above average growth in student learning. If effectiveness is measured by observation, rather than student growth scores, a teacher with energy and enthusiasm can be mistaken for highly effective.

Simply being an effective teacher of students is not sufficient to be a mentor teacher, content leader, or instructional coach. Teaching adults is very different. A mentor teacher or content leader must be able to help their adult peers change behavior. This skillset requires:

- 1) Being able to explain to others best teaching practices, not just knowing instinctively what to do.
- 2) The ability to build trust and rapport with colleagues.
- 3) The tact to deliver constructive feedback in a way that doesn't make others defensive.
- 4) Comfort giving negative feedback. The most common reason instructional coaching fails is because skilled and talented mentor teachers and content leaders are uncomfortable giving negative feedback to their colleagues.

A tip: Neither observing a teacher work with students nor a standard interview are an effective means to assessing a teacher’s skill at working with adults. Real life roleplay and observing a mock feedback session are more indicative of future success.

3.2c. Teachers of reading: Teaching students who struggle to read and comprehend well is a skill. At the elementary level, strong teachers of reading may have many different types of certification. Some are certified reading teachers, many are general education classroom teachers, and some are special educators or speech therapists.

Certification, however, is not a strong indicator of skill. Reading teachers must be deeply trained in reading best practices. Their training, rather than their certification, is a better indicator. For example, some special educators or speech and language therapists have extensive training in how to teach reading while others with identical certification may have other specializations.

The best indicator of who is an effective teacher of reading is past student growth. A highly effective teacher of reading can be expected to help readers who struggle make 18 months reading gain in a single school year, as measured by literacy screeners.

A caution: Being able to read is not an indicator of being a highly effective teacher of reading. Some schools use an “all hands-on deck” approach, asking music, art, PE, paraprofessional, and custodial staff to help with reading acceleration and intervention. This is seldom impactful. While these practices may help improve exposure to reading, they seldom accelerate learning.

At the secondary level, teachers of reading should have training or experience specific to teaching reading to middle and high school students. This specialty is often in short supply. Sometimes fourth and fifth grade teachers are asked to take these roles in middle and high schools.

Typically, traditional ELA teachers do not have the required specialized background in teaching foundational literacy skills. They possess a different skillset. They expect students to read and comprehend, so they teach how to write, analyze, and think critically.

3.2d. Content strong math and ELA interventionists: Acceleration at the secondary level, both for missed instruction and unfinished learning, requires staff with deep content expertise.

To teach core content that was omitted during the pandemic takes the same skills and knowledge as any other core content. If a certified math or ELA teacher normally taught the material in the past, they are best suited for teaching it in the future.

Acceleration for unfinished learning also requires instructors with deep content knowledge. Because students with unfinished learning often have already been taught a concept in the past, but haven’t yet mastered it, the instructor will need multiple means of teaching the concept. Ideally, teachers will be able to see a wrong answer and infer where the student had a misunderstanding. Both skills require deep content expertise. Typically, general education certified math and ELA teachers will have sufficient content expertise.

A caution: Too often secondary students with mild to moderate disabilities do not receive extra help or acceleration from staff with content expertise. Some IEPs are written for students to get this help from special educators or paraprofessionals. Often, these staff members lack the required level of content expertise to directly support students' academic needs. Students with mild to moderate disabilities can and should receive acceleration and/or extra help from general education, content strong teachers. See section 2.8 for more information on possible IEP language.

Some special educators of course have deep content expertise and they too are well equipped to provide acceleration. Some special educators have the interest and aptitude to develop content expertise but are not provided the opportunity. Including interested special educators in general education, content specific PLCs, instructional coaching sessions, department meetings and other professional development can increase the number of content experts in a school. Not all special educators need to be content experts as there are a multitude of other key responsibilities necessary for the successful implementation of special education programming including student advocacy, instructional support, pupil appraisal, IEP development and maintenance, related services provision, compliance monitoring and case management.

A note regarding small group tutoring:

Some schools may utilize small group tutoring for acceleration to address unfinished learning. This strategy has recently been discussed widely in education journals. The term tutoring can be misleading. Some assume it refers to paraprofessionals who are called tutors in some schools, rather than the British sense of the word, which suggests a master teacher working one-on-one with a student.

Some leaders have mistakenly assumed that tutors can be a typical paraprofessional or community volunteer. While some effective tutoring models do use non-certified staff, such staff are usually college students or recent college graduates with deep content expertise in relevant fields. For example, tutors majoring in math or engineering might support math, while English or history majors could tutor ELA and writing.

When staffing tutoring, the following hierarchy can ensure skilled staff members are supporting students with diverse learning needs or unfinished learning:

1. Content strong certified teachers
2. [Approved vendors](#)
3. College graduates with specific, relevant expertise
4. Current college students with specific, relevant expertise
5. Well trained and closely supervised paraprofessionals (Although, their impact is marginal compared to options 1,2,3 and 4)

3.2e. EL teachers: Teaching students English as a second language requires a mix of skills. There is a science to language acquisition. Beyond this, having a solid understanding of how to teach reading is very beneficial. For more information on supports for EL teachers and students, see the following linked LDOE materials: [Link to EL Materials](#).

3.2f. Counselors, social workers, and others with mental health expertise: Formal training in counseling and mental health related services is of greatest value.

3.2g. Scheduler: Given how important scheduling is to implementing the best practice guidance, it follows that the skill of the scheduler is also important. Scheduling can be split into two separate tasks, each with distinct required skills: 1) the strategic “what to schedule” and 2) the tactical “building of the schedule”.

Before starting to build a schedule, it is critical to have a clear plan based on the best practice guidance for what should be scheduled. Developing this plan requires expertise in teaching and learning and a deep understanding of the best practice guidance. It does not require actually being a skilled scheduler.

Once a clear and thoughtful plan of what to be scheduled is set, only then is there a need for a tactical scheduler. This hands-on role requires specific technical expertise. At the elementary level, it is someone who can create a master building schedule from scratch. No formal training is typically needed, but often the individual has a knack for creatively seeing how all the pieces can fit together.

At the secondary level, the hands-on scheduler should be trained and skilled in using scheduling software such as Power School. Formal training by the supplier or a master scheduler is highly prized.

A caution: Experience in building schedules is not the same as skill in building schedules. It is not uncommon for a counselor, assistant principal, or principal who has been building schedules for years to not actually be highly skilled. Sometimes these individuals know just enough to modify past schedules for the next year, but not enough to craft a whole new schedule that reinforces the best practice guidance.

3.3. [What are reasonable staffing levels?](#)

Having the right staff with the right skills is central to effectively implementing the best practice guidance. Having enough of them is equally important. A leading reason that these best practice strategies fail to make a meaningful difference is that historic staffing patterns lead to key players being stretched thin or having too many students with needs go unserved. For example, imagine a highly skilled teacher of reading providing acceleration services to students with unfinished learning. On the surface, this is good, but what if the teacher of reading was assigned 100 striving readers. It is unlikely they could meet often enough or have small enough groups to be effective. Similarly, imagine a school with 100 striving readers and one teacher of reading supporting 20 students. Eighty students in need would be underserved.

Target staffing levels recommended for the identified positions and roles are provided below:

3.3a. Classroom teachers: No change from past practice. Reducing class size as strategy to address missed instruction or unfinished learning is not supported by the research, with one exception. See more information on class sizes and unintended consequences of class size reduction efforts in section 3.4a.

3.3b. Mentor teachers or content leaders: No position is more prone to being stretched too thin than mentor teachers and content leaders. Despite being one of the highest leverage investments to improve

outcomes for diverse learners and students with unfinished learning, mentors, content leaders and coaches are often chronically understaffed in many systems.

Ideally schools will have the equivalent one full-time instructional coach, mentor teacher, or content leader per every 20 teachers to be supported. This needn't be one person working full time as an instructional coach. It could be two part time mentor teachers or two folks who teach half the day and are content leaders the other half.

If a person, for example, spent 50% of their time teaching students, then they would be expected to support 10 teachers, not 20. Similarly, if a person spends 25% of their time as an interventionist, they would be expected to support 15 teachers.

Typically, elementary classroom teachers, elementary acceleration teachers, teachers of reading, and secondary math and ELA teachers are priorities for receiving coaching.

Because instructional coaching can be so impactful to improving core instruction, and high-quality core instruction is the foundation of supporting the needs of students with unfinished learning and diverse learners, every minute in a mentor teacher or content leader's day is precious. To maximize their impact, their schedules should include:

- 75% of their time spent working with, observing, and modeling for classroom teachers. Time for planning, writing up notes, and other activities should be limited to 25% of their instructional coaching time.
- Giving mostly verbal feedback rather than detailed written feedback is quicker. It is also less threatening and easier to be provided in the moment.
- Coaching with individual staff should take place weekly or every other week.
- Some small group coaching during common planning, team time, or department meetings that can extend the reach of the mentor teacher or content leader. The majority of time, however, should be working with individual teachers.

A tip: Which teachers receive coaching should not be left up to the coach themselves. Haphazard assignments put coaches and teachers in an awkward position. Generally, all teachers benefit from instructional coaching, not just new teachers.

A caution: Instructional coaching is not intended to primarily support teachers who struggle. Coaches should have systems and structures in place that ensure all teachers are supported.

3.3c. Teachers of reading: At the elementary level, a full-time reading interventionist can support 35-50 readers in acceleration. This estimate assumes an average group size of 3 to 5 students and 8 to 10, 30-minute sessions, 5 days a week.

See the supporting document in section 6.1 for more information on group sizes.

How many striving readers can a teacher of reading support?

# of Groups	6	7	8	9	10
Teaching Time per Day	3 hours	3 1/2 hours	4 hours	4 1/2 hours	5 hours

Group Size					
1	6	7	8	9	10
2	12	14	16	18	20
3	18	21	24	27	30
4	24	28	32	36	40
5	30	35	40	45	50

A tip: If more than 40% of a school's students need reading intervention and acceleration, then classroom teachers also need to provide intervention in addition to core instruction. In some models, most classroom teachers also provide intervention to readers who struggle, not just dedicated teachers of reading.

In the event that remote instruction persists, intervention and acceleration should be prioritized for in-person learning.

At the secondary level, readers needing acceleration can be supported in groups of 15. Each teacher of reading should have a similar teaching load (number of periods taught each day) as core subject teachers. This means a full-time secondary reading teacher can support up to 75 students, given a five period per day teaching load.

3.3d. Content strong math and ELA interventionists: These are often not a full-time role. They are often either a few sections of a math or ELA teacher's teaching load or a few sections taught by a part time teacher. For setting staffing levels, it is easiest to calculate total full-time equivalents (FTE) needed even if work is distributed across many people.

A full-time interventionist at the secondary level can support approximately 75-100 students with unfinished learning needs. This estimate assumes class sizes (grouped by similar areas of need) of 15-20 and a typical full-time teaching load of 5 periods a day.

3.3e. EL teachers: The best practices don't call for more EL staff, but they place a high value on their time. EL teachers should spend as much time with students each day as reading teachers at the elementary level and core subject teachers at the secondary level. Based on schedule sharing data from staff in over 100 districts across the country, in some districts EL staff spend 30- 50% less time with students than many of their peers.

3.3f. Counselors, social workers, and others with mental health expertise: Prior to the pandemic few if any schools had sufficient mental health and counseling services. After more than a year of interrupted

instruction, trauma, and stress from the pandemic, the needs for counseling services have increased significantly.

Given this great need, it may be prudent to allocate COVID relief funds for additional mental health providers such as social workers and counselors.

3.3g. Scheduler: This position is seldom full-time and often paid a stipend. A skilled scheduler can help build an elementary schedule in 1 day, a middle school schedule in 2 days, and a high school schedule in 3 days.

Too often the scheduler job is assigned to someone based on their title such as assistant principal or school counselor. It is more important to find someone with the necessary technical skill. This person could be a teacher or a central office administrator. Many principals may feel that the scheduler should be someone who works in their school. A better perspective is that the design of what is scheduled is led by school-based staff, but the technical task of actually building the schedule can be delegated to a very skilled person in another school, in the central office, or to a third-party consultant.

3.4. How does a commitment to equity influence staffing?

It is critical that equity be at the forefront of serving students with unfinished learning and diverse learning needs. Staffing practices have, unfortunately, been a common cause of inequity in the past.

Equity in its most basic form calls for staffing levels to be based on student need, not overall enrollment or historic staffing patterns. Equitable staffing means:

3.4a. Classroom teachers. Some school and system leaders believe that equity means smaller class sizes in schools serving students with greater needs. Research shows, however, that reduced class size does not raise achievement. Providing other supports in greater number such as mentor teachers, content leaders, interventionists, mental health counselors and behaviorists does help improve equity and outcomes.

A smaller class size strategy can actually harm student achievement. If new, inexperienced teachers are hired to staff the added classrooms, then students in these classrooms could make fewer academic gains than if they had a slightly larger classroom with a more effective teacher. If resources for smaller classes preclude hiring of sufficient mentor teachers, content leaders, skilled teachers of reading or content strong secondary interventionists, then students' gains are also likely diminished.

One exception to the rule: Research has shown that in grades K-3, in schools serving students primarily living in poverty, reducing class sizes to 15 AND staffing these classes with a skilled teacher can be effective. Slightly reducing class size from say 22 to 18 students is not impactful, nor is the strategy helpful in older grades or serving students not living in poverty.

3.4b. Mentor teachers or content leaders might have different staffing ratios based on staff experience. While the system-wide target could be one full-time equivalent (FTE) for instructional coaching for every 20 teachers supported, a school serving students with greater needs might have a lower ratio, such as 1:15, and a school serving students with fewer needs might have 1 FTE to every 25 teachers supported. This is influenced, in part, because schools serving high needs students tend to have less experienced

teachers. All teachers benefit from instructional coaching, not just less experienced teachers, but the level of support can vary based on experience.

3.4c. Teachers of reading and content strong interventionists should be staffed based on the number of students with unfinished learning and number of diverse learners in a school. For example, the greater the number of students with unfinished learning in reading, the greater the number of skilled teachers of reading.

3.4d. A number of common practices should be avoided because they typically lead to inequitable staffing, which leads to inequitable outcomes for students.

This includes:

- 1-per-school staffing rules and ratios
- Staffing based on total enrollment, not adjusted for student need
- Relying solely on Title I to ensure sufficient extra resources
- Assuming that past staffing levels are equitable

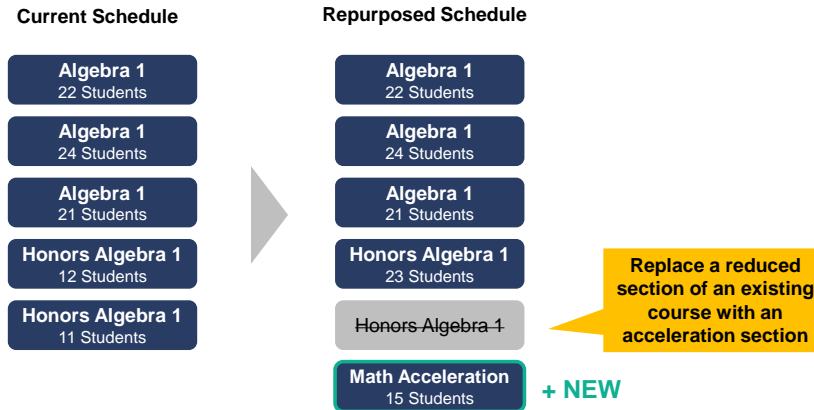
3.5. [Where to look for additional staff?](#)

Finding the highly skilled staff needed to implement the best practice guidance can be challenging. While difficult, it is central to meeting the needs of students. The search for such staff should be a top priority and will likely require looking in new places and searching in new ways. Traditional channels and approaches may fall short. Allowing inadequate staffing will be detrimental to students.

Too often when school systems struggle to find sufficient staff with the needed skills and expertise, they either reduce the number of students served or they rely on lower skilled employees.

Beyond the traditional sources for hiring teachers, a few additional options include:

- **Existing staff used more efficiently can reduce the need for hiring new staff.** By staffing more precisely to class size or group size targets, existing staff can often be freed up for acceleration. For example, a high school might have a few courses with low-enrollment due to scheduling challenges. The school might consider consolidating sections of similar courses or adjusting offerings to be able to free up time in teachers' schedules to offer additional acceleration sections.



Note: Districts and systems should not increase class sizes above district targets. However, staffing precisely to class size targets can help to free up staff for acceleration or other supports.

- **Retired teachers** are an important source for teachers of reading, mentor teachers, content leaders, and content strong interventionists. Many retired teachers do not want full time work but miss working with students. These critical roles can easily be served by part time retired teachers.

The school system should consult with [TRSL](#) for information about rehiring retired teachers.

- **Teachers who left to care for children or parents** are also a source for part time roles similar to retired teachers. Nearly half of all teachers leave the profession within their first 5 years. Some individuals leave because they do not want full time jobs given the need to care for children or parents. Many would welcome a part time opportunity.

A tip: To attract and retain part time staff, it is important that the school and teacher schedule is “part time friendly.” This means the schedule is based on the days of the week, Monday through Friday, and class times do not rotate or drop. A part time person can, for example, plan around working Monday and Tuesday or working 9:00 to 11:00 but not on A days, that might be a Monday one week and a Tuesday the next. Bell schedules that place period 1 at 9:00 am one day and 10:00 am the next also make part time work very difficult.

- **Approved vendors for tutoring services** can be a source for additional skilled staff. Follow the link for more information: [LINK](#).
- **Recent college graduates with math, science, and writing related majors.** The role of a tutor for acceleration need not be a certified teacher. A college graduate with content expertise (supported by training, supervision, and high-quality curriculum) can be a better option than a less content strong paraprofessional.
- **Current college students with math, science, and writing related majors.** Similar to recent college graduates, current college students can supplement the pool of tutors on a part-time basis.

Temporary federal funding can provide the resources to hire more social workers, counselors, and other mental health staff, but there is a limited pool for these professionals who want to work full time in K-12. More than other positions, mental health professionals may work in a variety of settings including

private practice, community-based centers or larger hospital systems. Fortunately, schools can tap into this larger pool:

- **Engage fee for service providers:** As an alternative to full time staff school systems can utilize fee for service providers as contractors. Often much of the cost of them providing services can be offset by other funding sources as well.
- **Utilize Tele-therapy.** Even before the lock down zoom-based counseling had become very popular.
- **Hire a director of community mental health partners.** Having a dedicated resource to finding and managing outside, community based mental health providers can double or even triple the number of staff with mental health expertise available to students.

3.6. [Strategies for Hiring Retired Teachers.](#)

Content-strong staff providing acceleration is critical to successfully addressing unfinished learning, and hiring retired teachers is one way to expand the pool of these high-skilled staff. Some districts and networks have had great success hiring highly skilled retired teachers. Many districts and networks, however, worry that they will run afoul of the many rules governing retired teachers returning to work.

While the rules are a bit complex, they are also relatively easy to understand with a bit of research. Given the importance of content-strong expertise and chronic teacher shortages, fully understanding the steps necessary to hire retired teachers is a worthwhile investment of time and energy. Any effort to hire retired teachers should be reviewed by a district or network's HR administrator.

What follows is basic overview of ground rules.

TRSL does not limit a district or network from hiring retired teachers or retired teachers from being employed by school districts or networks. Individual districts or networks may have some LEA imposed limitations. The once in a lifetime nature of the pandemic and its impact on students might be a compelling reason for districts and networks to revisit and re-evaluate any district or network-imposed limitations on hiring retired teachers.

While TRSL does not limit hiring retired staff, in some circumstances the retirement benefits of the re-employed teachers would be impacted. For guidance from TRSL see ([LINK](#)). There are a number of ways in which it is economically sensible for retired teachers to return to work. This general summary provided is not intended as legal counsel. It does, however, point to a number of pathways to hire retired teachers with the needed skills and training.

1. When a teacher first retired or when a teacher first returns to work impacts which rules govern return to work. The three relevant time periods are:

- First retired before June 30, 2010
- First retired between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2020 and returned to work before July 1, 2020
- First returned to work on or after July 1, 2020

2. Teachers who first retired before June 30, 2010 can return to work with few limitations. These teachers are grandfathered into the 2010 Retiree Return-to-Work (RRTW) law. They can return to work

and not have their retirement benefits reduced, even if they work full time. TRSL has clarified that this group has no limitations.

3. Teachers subject to the 2010 RRTW law can return to work without any reduction in retirement payments if a critical shortage exists. The best practices call for acceleration teachers with deep content expertise in reading, math and English. Much of the state has had chronic shortages of reading and math teachers.

Generally speaking, a district must determine and document if there is a critical shortage for a given position. This includes advertising a position twice and receiving less than three certified non-retired applicants. Some districts report regularly receiving no certified applicants, thus opening the door to hiring retired teachers full- or part-time without the teachers experiencing a reduction in their ongoing retirement payments.

4. Retired teachers who return to work on or after July 1, 2020 can earn up to 25% (per fiscal year) of their final average compensation (FAC) from their original retirement without having their retirement benefits reduced. For example, if a teacher retired with final average compensation of \$50,000, then they can earn up to \$12,500 per fiscal year without impacting their retirement benefits. This could be appealing to a teacher who might come back in a part time position to teach a few acceleration sections each day or to teach acceleration academies during vacation weeks or the summer.

Because the earning cap is based on fiscal year (July to June) earnings, staff hired mid-year, say in January, can effectively earn more. For example, the teacher above who can earn \$12,500 per fiscal year could earn \$12,500 between January and June and then another \$12,500 the following school year. This allows for a few more acceleration sections during the January to June window.

5. Teachers who return to work on or after July 1, 2020 can earn more than 25% of their final average compensation (FAC) and their retirement benefits will be suspended, but service credit is earned during re-employment and the retiree accrues a supplemental retirement benefit. This service credit can be beneficial to staff who have not maxed out their retirement benefits, such as teachers who retired early and thus had a reduction in earned retirement benefits. For teachers who retired early, this can be a strong financial incentive to return to work. In this case, full-time compensation could greatly exceed their paused retirement benefit and the supplemental retirement benefit earned can be financially valuable for decades to come.

6. Teachers who returned to work on or before June 30, 2020 are subject to the 2010 RRTW law and can earn 25% of their annual retirement benefit. For example, if the teacher retired with an annual benefit of \$36,000/year, they can earn up to \$9000 each fiscal year (July-June).

7. Retired teachers who are subject to the 2010 RRTW law may make an irrevocable election to be in the 2020 RRTW Group. Such an election would increase the actual potential earnings under the 25% cap by calculating the earnings limit based on the FAC instead of the retirement benefit, or, could allow the retiree to suspend retirement benefits and begin to accrue supplemental retirement benefits when ceasing employment.

3.7. [What if highly skilled teachers don't want to leave the classroom?](#)

Some positions like teachers of reading, interventionists, instructional coaches, mentor teachers, and content leaders (such as math department heads or English department heads, etc.) have limited pools of applicants because staff do not want to leave the classroom. These roles can be structured so that teachers do not completely give up classroom instruction, thus expanding the pool of highly skilled candidates.

Instructional coaching via mentor teachers or content leads: At the secondary level, mentor teachers or content leads can split their time between their time teaching and coaching. They might teach a few periods and coach a smaller number of teachers.

At the elementary level, the role can be configured to require leaving the classroom just 5-8 hours a week. The teacher supports 3-5 other teachers and other adults cover their class during test taking, read alouds, independent reading, etc.

Content strong math and ELA interventionists: Schools could consider splitting a teacher's time between core content and acceleration. For example, a math teacher could teach three periods of core math such as Algebra 1, then two periods of acceleration.

Scheduler: Some teachers or school staff members have the needed skills and aptitude and will likely provide this support for a stipend. There are some independent consultants who do this work for a fee of a few thousand dollars per school. Some larger school systems create a part time central office scheduling expert role.

Sometimes a principal or other skilled scheduler at one school will help build the schedules for other schools in the school system.

3.8. [Can incentive pay help fill staff shortages?](#)

Unlike most other sectors, traditionally all types of teachers and positions are paid the same, based on district, experience and graduate courses taken. Supply and demand doesn't factor in. In most other sectors, employers raise the compensation of positions in short supply to attract more folks with the needed skills.

Given the availability of extra federal funds districts might consider incentive pay for selected positions, such as content strong acceleration teachers, mentor teachers, content leads or mental health professionals.

A few cautions:

- **Avoid long term commitments that may be difficult to keep.** People like when their compensation goes up but tend to be very unhappy when it goes down. Extra pay incentives funded by one time money can be hard to maintain. It can be important to message that the incentive is not a permanent salary adjustment but is instead a bonus tied to special funding that will most likely last for just 1 or 2 years. While additional pay should accompany additional responsibilities, systems must plan for sustainability for years to come.

- **Consider the cost to existing staff.** It's not just the additional staff that typically get an incentive boost, as existing staff in the role would also be subject to the boost. Consider the case of a system with 10 reading acceleration teachers searching for one additional to its staff. After struggling to hire through conventional means, the district offers a \$10,000 incentive. This equates to paying an extra \$110,000 plus their regular salary for this one extra teacher, as the existing 10 teachers will receive the extra \$10,000. Other alternatives such as tapping into retired or part-time teachers may be more cost effective.

4. Scheduling Implications

Schedules matter!

How time is used during the day is central to implementing the best practices effectively. This section provides guidance on how schedules can bring the best practices to life. It is unlikely that the best practice guidance can be implemented well without some changes to school and staff schedules. The scheduling guidance is organized by grade level: elementary, secondary, and all grade levels.

How are schedules impacted by the guidance?

Time on learning matters and schedules impact the amount of time that students learn from teachers. Specifically, the following best practices impact the schedules:

1. **Time for core instruction:** Research indicates that there is a large, positive relationship between academic learning time and student achievement¹. In other words, the more time a student spends in a given subject, the more they will learn (assuming an effective teacher and high-quality curriculum).
2. **Time for literacy:** Schools must find time for direct literacy instruction five days a week at both the elementary level (for all students) and secondary level (for students who need it). How time is spent during the elementary literacy block also matters greatly.
3. **Time for acceleration:** As previously shared, there are two key reasons that students need acceleration in the aftermath of the pandemic: unfinished instruction and unfinished learning. The first, unfinished instruction, refers to content that was not taught because of disruptions during the pandemic. The second, unfinished learning, refers to skills and knowledge that students have not yet mastered. Time for acceleration can and needs to be incorporated into school schedules.
4. **Time for student well-being and student engagement:** No schedule built for improving outcomes for students with unfinished learning is complete without time for supporting students' well-being needs and building strong relationships with students.

¹ *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Practice, Marzano, 2003*

Which schedules are impacted by the guidance?

- Elementary master schedules
- Schedules of elementary special educators, related services providers, and reading teachers
- Secondary master schedules
- Schedules of secondary math and ELA teachers
- Schedules of mentor teachers and content leaders

How much time is needed?

Simply put, students will learn more math if they have 60 minutes per day of math instruction instead of 45 minutes, if teachers are effective, and the curriculum high-quality.

LDOE also has requirements for instructional time aligned to Louisiana Revised Statute 17:154.1:

Category	Requirement
Length of School Year (Days)	177 instructional days
Length of School Year (Minutes)	63,720 instructional minutes
Length of School Day (Minutes), Grades 1-12	360 instructional minutes

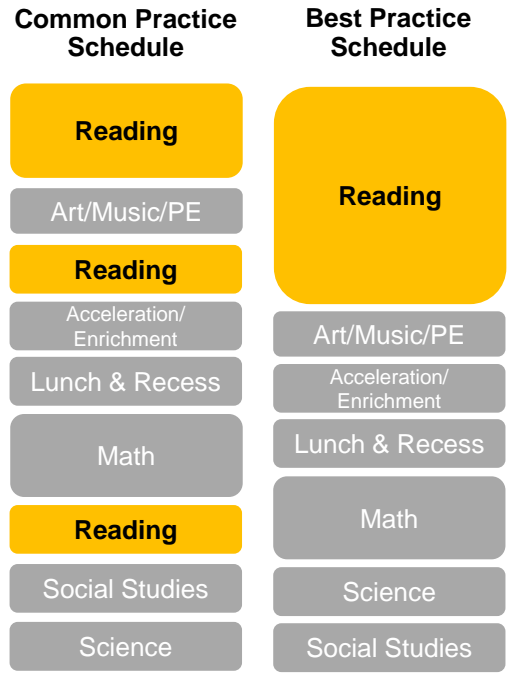
LEAs must also adhere to instructional time minimums to award Carnegie credits at the secondary level. The below guidance is consistent with standards set by LDOE and the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Elementary Scheduling Implications

4.1. Time for Core Instruction.

4.1a. At the elementary level, schedules should allow for:

- At least 120 minutes for reading and literacy for grades K-2 and 60 minutes for grades 3-5, plus 30 minutes for acceleration or enrichment for all grades.
- 60 minutes for math each day

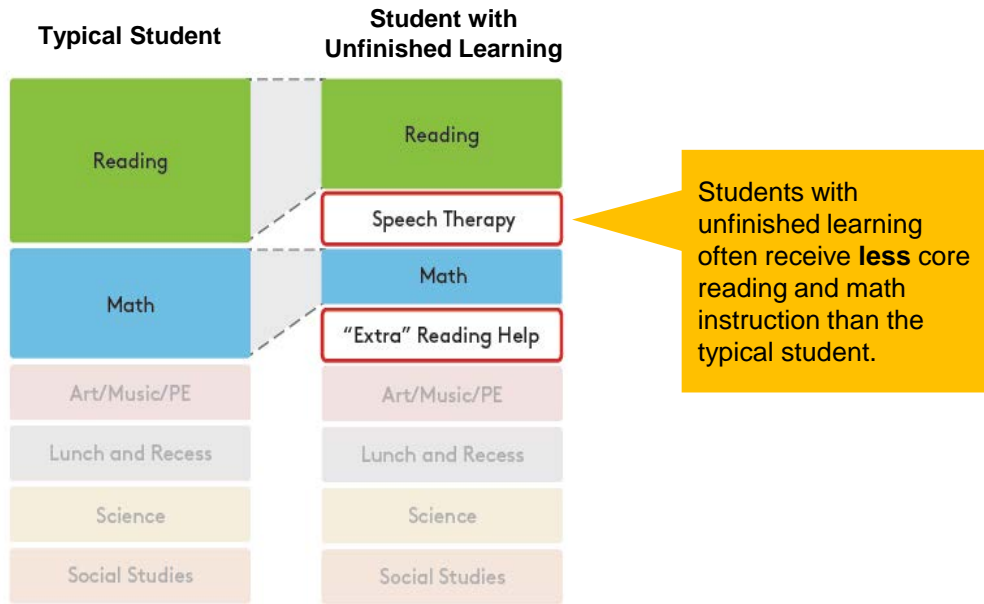


Sample best practice elementary schedule with uninterrupted reading time.

A tip: How long core instruction happens is more important than during which part of the day it happens. Whether reading, for example, occurs in the morning or after lunch is less important than having an uninterrupted reading block taught by a skilled teacher. In fact, research indicates that reading instruction can be effective at any time of the day, despite the commonly held belief that its better in the morning. Moreover, if all grades teach reading in the morning, then it's nearly impossible to provide special education EL or related services to some students without pulling them from reading.

A tip: Don't exclude diverse learners from high quality general education led acceleration. Schools should schedule many students with disabilities into acceleration with peers in a general education setting rather than in separate special education acceleration, when appropriate.

Sample Schedule to AVOID – Pulling Students with Unfinished Learning from Core Subjects

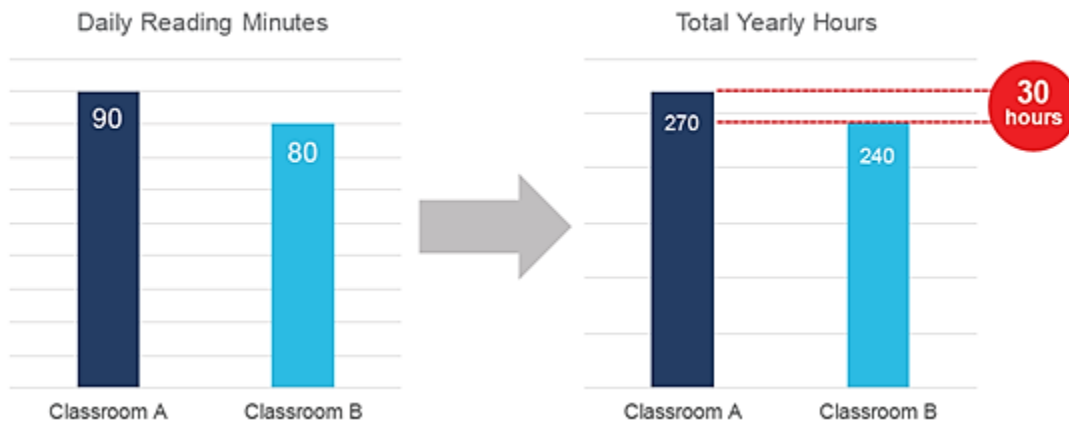


It is important to ensure that students with unfinished learning are not pulled out of core instruction in reading and math. Related services should occur during other times of the day, in consultation with a student's interests and needs.

4.1b. Ensure a consistent amount of time for core instruction across grade levels.

Setting a minimum for instructional minutes can ensure that students are receiving sufficient and equitable time in core subjects across classrooms. Sometimes, the amount of instructional time for a subject is determined by school history, teacher preference, or other factors like ancillary subjects or lunch schedule.

A caution: Small differences add up. Over a year, just ten minutes difference in instructional time can add up to 30 hours of missed instruction, which is equal to missing an entire month of reading instruction.



Small differences in daily reading minutes between schools can lead to large differences in learning time over the course of a year.

4.2. Time for Literacy.

At the elementary level, specific time should be designated for literacy for all grade levels. For grades K-2, 120 minutes should be devoted to literacy, plus 30 for acceleration/enrichment. For grades 3-5, 60 minutes should be devoted to literacy instruction and 30 minutes for acceleration/enrichment.

What happens during the literacy instruction also matters greatly. Districts and systems should provide details on how to use the time during the reading block. The details change based on the grade level.

At the K-2 level, the block should spell out:

- 60 minutes for foundational skills, including phonological awareness, phonics, sight word recognition and writing
- 60 minutes for building knowledge, including background knowledge, vocabulary.
- 30 minutes for targeted acceleration (or enrichment).

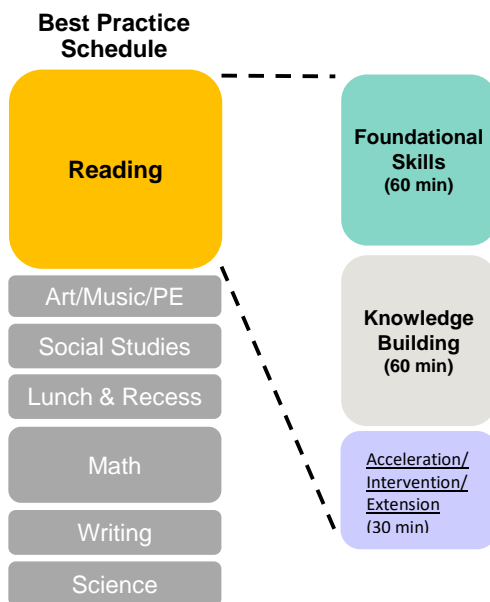
At the 3-5 level, the block should spell out:

- 60 minutes for reading to learn or knowledge building.
- 30 minutes for targeted acceleration (or enrichment).

Both K-2 and 3-5 literacy blocks should embed writing instruction throughout.

Providing a fine level of detail helps guide best practice literacy instruction. The example below has just a minimal level of detail.

Sample K-2 reading block with some detail:



The level of detail provided to teachers in the schedule can greatly increase the impact of instruction. Instructional leaders and teachers should use their curriculum guides to create a detailed schedule for their reading block.

4.3. Time for Acceleration.

4.3a. Unfinished instruction and unfinished learning both need time in the schedule

As referenced in section 2.3b of this document, there are reasons that acceleration may be needed.

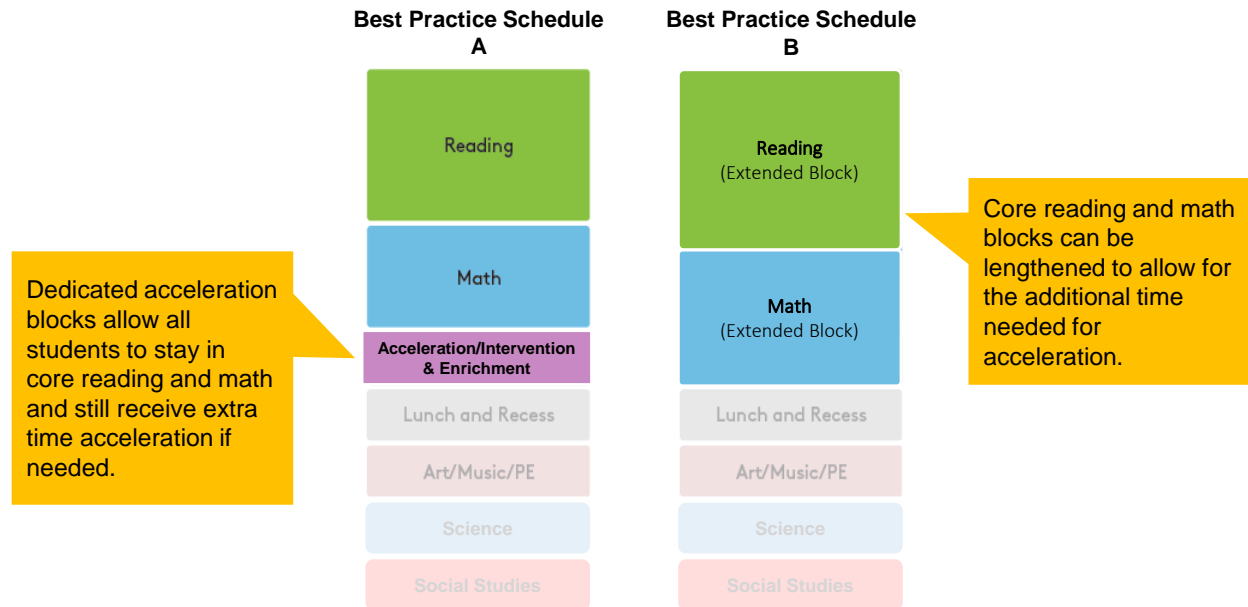
Unfinished Instruction: Acceleration for unfinished instruction is when foundational content was not taught or not taught fully due to the disruptions from the pandemic.

In terms of determining student need for acceleration, not all missed content needs to be taught, only content standards that are central to future mastery. Dedicated time in the schedule is needed for this type of acceleration.

Acceleration for unfinished learning is most impactful, when taught “just in time” that is days or hours before the skill or knowledge is needed for mastery of current year content.

Unfinished Learning: Students who have unfinished learning in reading, writing, or math, which may predate the pandemic or was increased by it.

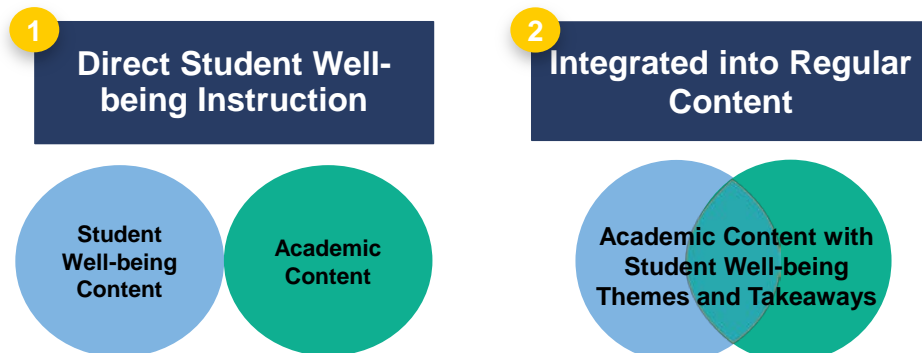
Students with unfinished instruction and unfinished learning should receive extra support in addition and *not instead of* their regular instruction. Scheduling an extra acceleration block allows for schools to provide extra time. It is recommended that this block be at least 30-minutes every day.



Sample best practice elementary schedules with time for acceleration and enrichment. Students who may not need acceleration would have opportunities for enrichment during this time.

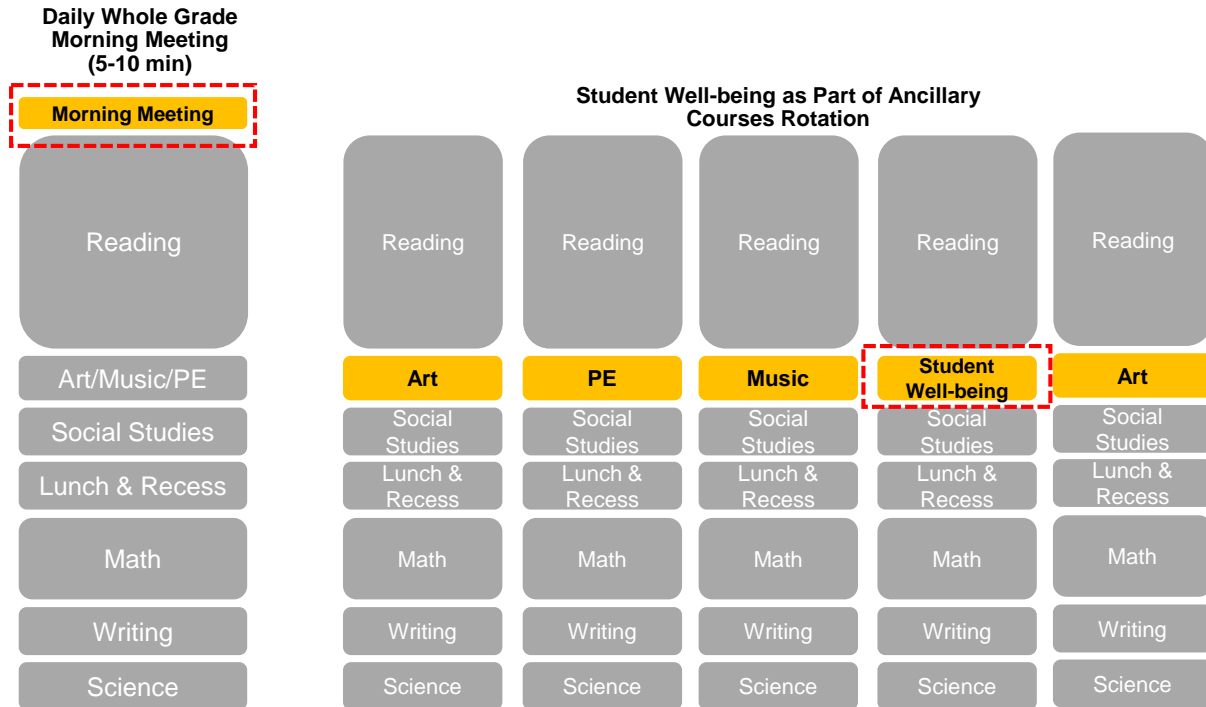
4.4. Time for Student Well-being.

Student well-being and student engagement can be incorporated into the schedule in two ways: through dedicated time for direct instruction or through integrating student well-being competencies into regular content, which does not need special time carved out from the schedule.



4.4a. Direct Student Well-being Instruction

Schools should incorporate approximately 30-45 minutes of dedicated time for student well-being each week. At the elementary level, this may include building in time for student well-being as part of the ancillary courses rotation or morning meeting.



Sample approaches to incorporating student well-being into an elementary schedule.

Schools may consider incorporating a short (5-10 minute) whole grade morning meeting period into the schedule (left) or scheduling a student well-being period as part of the ancillary rotation (right).

Significant time dedicated to student well-being, such as daily or every other day, is often hard to use well and can be better utilized in other ways. As a rule of thumb, the more time dedicated to student well-being in a schedule, the more planning support and instructional guidance teachers and staff need to implement student well-being effectively.

4.4b. Integrated Student Well-being into Regular Content

Integrating student well-being content into regular instruction is an effective strategy for encouraging students to apply and practice their well-being competencies and does not require dedicated time in the schedule. In fact, students benefit most when they can rigorously practice and apply well-being lessons to real-world scenarios.

4.5. Sample Schedules.

The following section outlines a sample best practice elementary schedule that incorporates many of the practices outlined in this document.

4.5a. Sample K-2 Elementary Schedule with Acceleration/Enrichment Period

	K	1	2
8:00a	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet
	8:15a – 10:15a Reading	8:15a – 9:15a Math	8:15a – 9a Ancillary Courses
		9:15a – 9:45a Acceleration/Enrich	9a – 11a Reading
10:00a		9:45a – 10:15a Science	
	10:15a – 10:45a Acceleration/Enrich	10:15p – 10:45p Social Studies	
	10:45a Recess	10:45a – 11:30a Ancillary Courses	11a – 11:30a Acceleration/Enrich
	11:05a Lunch	11:30a Lunch	11:30a Lunch
12:00p	11:30a – 12:30p Math	11:55a Recess	11:55a Recess
	12:30p – 1:15p Ancillary Courses	12:15p – 2:15p Reading	12:15p – 12:45p Science
	1:15p – 1:45p Science		12:45p – 1:15p Social Studies
2:00p	1:45p – 2:15p Social Studies		1:15p – 2:15p Math

Key Schedule Components:

- Includes at least 30-minute acceleration/enrichment period to provide time to address students' unfinished learning, especially in reading.
- Acceleration/enrichment periods are staggered across grades such that skilled staff are available to meet with a variety of students during the day. (This approach is *instead* of one acceleration/enrichment period for all grade levels at the same time.)
- Reading and math classes are staggered such that supports for special education and English learners do not lead to students' missing reading and math instruction.
- Includes 15-minute daily morning meeting to welcome students, incorporate student well-being curriculum, and build community

Breakdown of Time for Elementary Schedules

Based on guidance for elementary schedules given in this document, below are two options for suggested time breakdowns given a typical 7-hour (420-minute) elementary school day (8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.).

It should be noted that there is no law or policy in Louisiana related to the number of minutes in various subjects for elementary schools, with the exception of 150 minutes per week in physical education. The breakdown of instructional minutes given below is an example. Systems and schools should consult the time requirements of their curricula as they develop their own schedules. For example, if a math curriculum is designed for 60-minute instructional blocks, schedules should be built accordingly.

Option 1: Acceleration/Enrichment Block

Grades K-2 Schedules		Grades 3-5 Schedules	
Block	Minutes	Block	Minutes
Morning Meeting	15	Morning Meeting	15
Literacy	120	Literacy	60
Math	60	Math	60
Social Studies	30	Social Studies	45
Science	30	Science	45
Recess	30	Recess	30
Lunch	30	Lunch	30
Ancillary	45	Ancillary	45
Acceleration	60	Acceleration	60
		Foreign Language	30
Total		Total	
	420		420

Option 2: Extended Core Literacy and Math Blocks

Grades K-2 Schedules		Grades 3-5 Schedules	
Block	Minutes	Block	Minutes
Morning Meeting	15	Morning Meeting	15
Literacy (Extended Block)	150	Literacy (Extended Block)	90
Math (Extended Block)	90	Math (Extended Block)	90
Social Studies	30	Social Studies	45
Science	30	Science	45
Recess	30	Recess	30
Lunch	30	Lunch	30
Ancillary	45	Ancillary	45
		Foreign Language	30
Total		Total	
	420		420

In addition to the master building schedule (as shown in the previous diagram), schools should also have individual schedules for every reading teacher, special educator, related service provider, interventionist, paraprofessional, instructional coach, school psychologist, social worker, and counselor.

4.6. Scheduling Process.

A thoughtful scheduling process with opportunities for staff feedback is essential to building a master schedule that supports the best practice guidance. Having a scheduling process in place that incorporates staff feedback increases staff buy-in, reduces scheduling headaches, and positively impacts school culture.

4.6a. Determine scheduling non-negotiables.

Determining scheduling non-negotiables can guide the scheduling process, guarantee the most important priorities get scheduled, and ensure equitable student experiences across classrooms and buildings. Sample scheduling non-negotiables can include:

- No pull-out from core instruction
- Reading block will be at least ___ minutes long
- ___ minutes of phonics each day in grades ____
- Acceleration will occur ___ times a week for ___ minutes per session

4.6b. The order in which schedules are built matters.

The actual act of building a best practice schedule is both art and science. The science includes knowing that the order in which the blocks are placed on the schedule impacts the ability to meet the best practices. For example, if you first place reading first thing in the morning in every grade, it will not be possible to provide staggered acceleration blocks throughout the day.

Experience has shown that the following order facilitates implementing the best practice guidance:

- 1. Ancillary Subjects (red) and Fixed Blocks (light blue):** Subjects like music, art, and PE often have the most constraints and must be scheduled across all grades. A common class at the beginning or end of the day such as morning meeting should be added to the schedule first.

	K	1	2	3	4	5
8:00a	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet
			8:15a – 9a Ancillary Courses			
10:00a				9:15a – 10a Ancillary Courses		
		10:45a – 11:30a Ancillary Courses				
12:00p					11:30a – 12:15p Ancillary Courses	
	12:30p – 1:15p Ancillary Courses					
2:00p						1:30p – 2:15p Ancillary Courses

- 2. Recess and Lunch (gray):** cafeteria and recess space must be coordinated early in the schedule process.

	K	1	2	3	4	5
8:00a	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet
			8:15a – 9a Ancillary Courses			
				9:15a – 10a Ancillary Courses		
10:00a						
	10:45a Recess	10:45a – 11:30a			10:45a Lunch	
	11:05a Lunch	Ancillary Courses			11:10a Recess	11:15a Lunch
		11:30a Lunch	11:30a Lunch		11:30a – 12:15p Ancillary Courses	11:40a Recess
12:00p		11:55a Recess	11:55a Recess	12p Lunch		
	12:30p – 1:15p Ancillary Courses			12:25p Recess		
2:00p						1:30p – 2:15p Ancillary Courses

- 3. Acceleration/Enrichment (purple):** Blocks for acceleration/enrichment need to be staggered to allow for more students to receive targeted support from staff with specialized skills as well from classroom teachers during acceleration or enrichment throughout the day.

	K	1	2	3	4	5
8:00a	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet
			8:15a – 9a Ancillary Courses		8:15a – 8:45a Acceleration/Enrich	
		9:15a – 9:45a Acceleration/Enrich		9:15a – 10a Ancillary Courses		
10:00a						
	10:15a – 10:45a Acceleration/Enrich	10:45a – 11:30a	11a – 11:30a Acceleration/Enrich		10:45a Lunch	
	10:45a Recess	Ancillary Courses			11:10a Recess	11:15a Lunch
	11:05a Lunch	11:30a Lunch	11:30a Lunch		11:30a – 12:15p Ancillary Courses	11:40a Recess
12:00p		11:55a Recess	11:55a Recess	12p Lunch		12p – 12:30p Acceleration/Enrich
	12:30p – 1:15p Ancillary Courses			12:25p Recess		
				12:45p – 1:15p Acceleration/Enrich		
2:00p						1:30p – 2:15p Ancillary Courses

4. **Reading & Math (green and blue):** Reading should be scheduled first, ideally adjacent to acceleration, and then math.

	K	1	2	3	4	5
8:00a	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet
	8:15a – 10:15a Reading	8:15a – 9:15a Math	8:15a – 9a Ancillary Courses		8:15a – 8:45a Acceleration/Enrich	
		9:15a – 9:45a Acceleration/Enrich	9a – 11a Reading	9:15a – 10a Ancillary Courses	8:45a – 9:45a Reading	
10:00a	10:15a – 10:45a Acceleration/Enrich				9:45a – 10:45a Math	10:15a – 11:15a Reading
	10:45a Recess	10:45a – 11:30a Ancillary Courses	11a – 11:30a Acceleration/Enrich	11a – 12p Math	10:45a Lunch	
	11:05a Lunch	11:30a Lunch	11:30a Lunch		11:10a Recess	11:15a Lunch
	11:30a – 12:30p Math	11:55a Recess	11:55a Recess	12p Lunch	11:30a – 12:15p Ancillary Courses	11:40a Recess
12:00p	12:30p – 1:15p Ancillary Courses	12:15p – 2:15p Reading		12:25p Recess		12p – 12:30p Acceleration/Enrich
			1:15p – 2:15p Math	12:45p – 1:15p Acceleration/Enrich		12:30p – 1:30p Math
				1:15p – 2:15p Reading		1:30p – 2:15p Ancillary Courses
2:00p						

It is critical to stagger reading and math blocks by grade level to provide multiple push-in and pull-out opportunities for special educators, related services, and reading teachers. For example, in a school with K-2 reading occurring from 9:00 to 11am, a special education teacher would be unable to pull groups for most of the morning.

5. **Science & Social Studies (yellow):** Science and social studies periods should then be scheduled, according to grade level guidelines.

	K	1	2	3	4	5
8:00a	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet	8a – 8:15a Morning Meet
	8:15a – 10:15a Reading	8:15a – 9:15a Math	8:15a – 9a Ancillary Courses	8:15a – 9:15a Science	8:15a – 8:45a Acceleration/Enrich	8:15a – 9:15a Social Studies
		9:15a – 9:45a Acceleration/Enrich	9a – 11a Reading	9:15a – 10a Ancillary Courses	8:45a – 9:45a Reading	9:15a – 10:15a Science
10:00a	10:15a – 10:45a Acceleration/Enrich	9:45a – 10:15a Science		10a – 11a Social Studies	9:45a – 10:45a Math	10:15a – 11:15a Reading
	10:45a Recess	10:15p – 10:45p Social Studies	10:45a – 11:30a Ancillary Courses	11a – 11:30a Acceleration/Enrich	10:45a Lunch	
	11:05a Lunch	11:30a Lunch	11:30a Lunch	11a – 12p Math	11:10a Recess	11:15a Lunch
	11:30a – 12:30p Math	11:55a Recess	11:55a Recess	12p Lunch	11:30a – 12:15p Ancillary Courses	11:40a Recess
12:00p	12:30p – 1:15p Ancillary Courses	12:15p – 2:15p Reading	12:15p – 12:45p Science	12:25p Recess	12:15p – 1:15p Science	12p – 12:30p Acceleration/Enrich
	1:15p – 1:45p Science	12:45p – 1:15p Social Studies	1:15p – 2:15p Math	12:45p – 1:15p Acceleration/Enrich		12:30p – 1:30p Math
	1:45p – 2:15p Social Studies			1:15p – 2:15p Reading	1:15p – 2:15p Social Studies	1:30p – 2:15p Ancillary Courses
2:00p						

4.6c. Make scheduling a team sport.

Master building schedules are highly interconnected and deeply impact the schedules of multiple staff members. When special educators, related service staff, reading teachers and principals build all their schedules together, in the same room, at the same time, the many interconnections come to life and can be harmonized to support the best practices. If staff are shared across schools, then the principals of those schools should build their schedules at the same time, together as well.

4.6d. Have an escalation protocol to resolve scheduling conflicts.

An escalation protocol is a plan for bringing scheduling sticking points to a higher authority. Often a school-based leader can't meet the nonnegotiable because of a limitation or constraint that is beyond their authority. Such non-negotiables can include a shared staff member not available when needed or a rule or expectation that makes the schedule "impossible". Often only a district or system leader has the authority to remove the obstacle.

4.6e. Infuse scheduling expertise.

Scheduling is a skill that some are better at than others. When building your scheduling team, it is important to recognize who on or outside your team has scheduling expertise and utilize their skills.

Secondary Scheduling Implications

4.7. Time for Core Instruction.

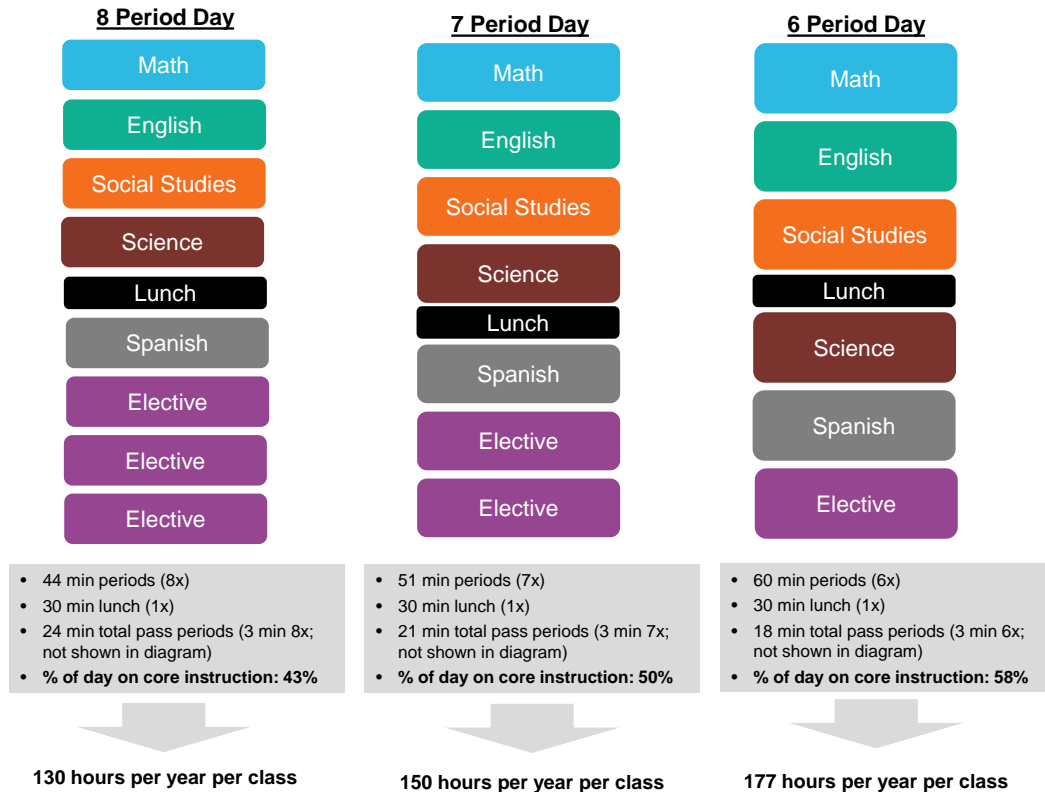
4.7a. Ensure sufficient time for core instruction. At the secondary level, it is best to think about instructional time in terms of hours per year per subject because there are many types of schedule models. For example, 50 minutes a day for 180 days is 150 hours/year.

- Core subjects (math, ELA, science, and social studies) each should be at least **150 hours/year**.

In a typical secondary school this means that at least 50% of the day should be devoted to core instruction.

What if more time is needed for core instruction?

Create longer core periods by moving from 8 periods to 7 periods or 7 periods to 6 periods: The greater the number of class periods in a day, the shorter each class period is and thus, less time per subject. Schools can maximize the amount of time spent in instruction by reducing the number of periods in a given day. Note, the below schedules are samples.



Note: assumes 177-day school year; core instruction includes math, English, social studies, and science courses

Sample use of time across an 8-period, 7-period, and 6-period schedule.

There is no “right” number of periods per day; however, the greater the number of periods in a day, the shorter each period must be and the greater the number of transition times that are required.

4.8. Time for Literacy.

At the secondary level, there should be dedicated acceleration time for students who are striving readers that need foundational literacy skills support. Students scheduled for this time are those that are struggling to access core content that are reading significantly below grade level (e.g., struggling with decoding or fluency). This block of time would be a targeted literacy intervention that would support students in foundational skills. Not all students will need this dedicated time. See section 2.2 for additional guidance on effective literacy instruction.

	Schedule of Non - Struggling Reader	Schedule of Struggling Reader
Period 1	Math	Math
Period 2	English	English
Period 3	Social Studies	Social Studies
Period 4	Science	Science
Period 5	Spanish	Spanish
Period 6	Elective	Targeted Literacy Intervention

Best practice secondary schedule for students who need targeted literacy intervention. A reading acceleration period should be scheduled for students who demonstrate need and should replace a non-core course.

A caution: Some middle schools provide a double block of ELA to address unfinished learning in reading. This double block does not provide direct instruction in reading since ELA teachers are not typically trained as teachers of reading. Also, students who do not need acceleration could better utilize the time differently.

4.9. Time for Acceleration.

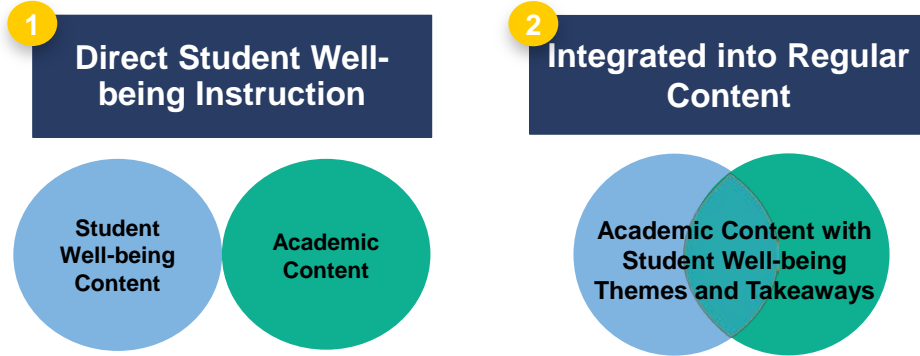
4.9a. Unfinished Learning may require dedicated time in the schedule

While acceleration of English courses can happen within the English course, some students may need targeted intervention to support learning of foundations reading skills. Students who need targeted intervention like this will need additional time built into their schedule.

	Semester One		Semester Two	
	A Day	B Day	A Day	B Day
Period 1	Math	Math	Math	Math
Period 2	English	English	English	English
Period 3	Targeted Intervention	Elective	Elective	Elective
Period 4	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies
Period 5	Science	Science	Science	Science
Period 6	Elective	Elective	Elective	Elective
Period 7	Elective	Elective	Elective	Elective

4.9. Time for Student Well-being.

Student well-being and student engagement can be incorporated into the schedule in two ways: through direct student well-being instruction/advisory or through integrating well-being competencies into regular content.



4.9a. Direct Student Well-being Instruction

Schools should incorporate approximately 30-45 minutes of dedicated time for student well-being/advisory each week. This may take the form of an advisory period, a course that teaches specific well-being skills and competencies, and/or grade-level assemblies.

	Option 1 Create Student Well-being Period (1x/week)	Option 2 Create Split Student Well-being Period (1x/week)	Option 3 Create Advisory Period (1x/week)
Period 1	Math	Math	Math
Period 2	English	English	English
Period 3	Student Well-Being	Elective	Elective
Period 4	Social Studies	Student Well-Being Social Studies	Social Studies
Period 5	Science	Science	Science
Period 6	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish Advisory
	Overview: A student well-being specific period taught by a counselor replaces an elective/specials course 1x/week	Overview: A student well-being period taught by a counselor replaces half of a course 1x/week; the course the student well-being period replaces rotates weekly	Overview: An advisory period is scheduled 1x/week; staff meet with students in groups of 6-12 students

Sample approaches to incorporating direct student well-being instruction into the schedule.

Create Whole-Grade Community Circle

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Community Circle	Math	Math	Math
English	Community Circle	English	English
Elective	Elective	Community Circle	Elective
Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Community Circle
Science	Science	Science	Science
Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish

Sample approaches to incorporating a community circle time for an explicit focus on student well-being into the schedule.

A very impactful way to build authentic relationships between students and staff is to offer an afterschool-type club during the day. This opportunity can be offered on a weekly basis during a grade-wide or school-wide “active advisory” period. Such clubs allow staff and students an opportunity to build relationships through shared interests.

	Monday - Thursday	Friday
Period 1	Math	Math
Period 2	English	English
Period 3	Social Studies	Social Studies
Period 4	Science	Science
Period 5	Elective	Elective
Period 6	Elective	Elective
Period 7	Elective	Enrichment / Student Club

Photoshop
Shark Tank
Fantasy Sports Math
Interior Design
Apocalyptic Survival
Hip Hop History

Sample approach to incorporating an “afterschool club” during the school day.

A caution: Significant time dedicated to student well-being, such as daily or every other day, is often hard to use well and can be better utilized in other ways. As a rule of thumb, the more time dedicated to student well-being in a schedule, the more planning support and instructional guidance teachers and staff need to implement well-being effectively.

4.9b. Integrated Student Well-being into Regular Content

Integrating student well-being content into regular instruction is an effective strategy for encouraging students to apply and practice their well-being competencies. In fact, students benefit most when they can rigorously practice and apply well-being lessons to real-world scenarios.

4.10. [Best Practice Schedule Checklist.](#)

There is no one best practice secondary schedule. In fact, there are hundreds of schedules that are best practice schedules. What they all have in common is that they incorporate critical elements. A best practice secondary schedule includes all of the following:

- 150 hours a year of core instruction per subject:** At least 50% of a student's day is devoted to core instruction yielding approximately 150 hours of instruction each in math, ELA, science, and social studies.
- Acceleration:** All students with unfinished learning have access to extra-time acceleration in math, reading, or writing built into the schedule in addition to brief scaffolding during core instruction.
- Rigor:** All students have access to rigorous learning opportunities.
- Student Well-being:** At least one intentional time during the day each week for students to build relationships with each other as well as with teachers.
- Structured Support Time or Study Hall:** Student time in support time such as drop-in support, homework help, study halls, and athletic training classes is utilized to accelerate learning.
- Course and elective offerings** should be determined by student need and school priorities, not by precedent or history.
- Voice and Choice:** Student voice is taken into consideration when determining course offerings and students are given some level of choice over the courses they take.

A Few Cautions

Scheduling practices to avoid include:

- **Do not focus on block versus non-block.** What is important is having the best practice elements, which are possible in block (with some modifications) or a non-block schedule. Existing research

has not identified a correlation between block versus non block schedules and student achievement.

- **Avoid block schedules that do not teach two core subjects for half a year.** These so called “semester block schedules” can be very challenging for students with diverse learning needs or unfinished learning. The equivalent of summer slide can happen during the school year, given long gaps between learning a subject.

4.12. [Scheduling Process.](#)

Building a best practice schedule needs a best practice scheduling process as well. Too often, schools get frustrated that they can't build a schedule that brings the guidance to life. In most cases, it's the process that causes the challenge. Effective scheduling requires integrating structures, systems, and players in the right order.

1. **Define priorities and non-negotiables:** It is important to prioritize the most important goals in a school schedule. This will help your team make tough decisions about scheduling tradeoffs when you build the schedule. It is helpful to make a short list of specific top priorities. Based on these priorities, your team will then decide what must be present in the schedule, or a “non-negotiable.” Sample non-negotiables include:
 - All students who need acceleration in math, ELA, or reading have access to daily intervention with a content expert
 - Student participation in grade level courses is maximized
2. **Determine staffing needs, especially for content strong acceleration teachers:** Based on assessed student need and section requirements for acceleration gathered in the previous steps, determine staffing requirements to effectively staff acceleration support.
3. **Ensure the budget reflects required core and acceleration staffing:** Avoid “locking in” school budgets and staffing decisions until you have determined the number of students that have unfinished learning needs, the content areas in which they have unfinished learning, and the staffing that will be required to effectively serve them. Work with the central office budget and human resources teams to make adjustments to the budget and staffing plans, as necessary, to reflect students' assessed unfinished learning needs.
4. **Task an expert scheduler to run draft schedules:** With a clear picture of which students will receive which acceleration support and which teachers should teach each acceleration courses, task an expert scheduler to build the schedule that incorporates acceleration time. Scheduling is a skill that some are better at than others. When building your scheduling team, it is important to recognize who on or outside your team has scheduling expertise to use the scheduling software effectively.

A caution: The scheduler should be asked to run a schedule based on non-negotiable and students identified for acceleration. They should not be expected to set the strategy, but just implement it.
5. **Identify roadblocks and reschedule based on input from school leadership:** Building schedules involves navigating many tradeoffs. The scheduler should work closely with school leadership and elevate challenges or issues that prevent the non-negotiables from being scheduled.

6. **Escalate obstacles to central office as needed:** An escalation protocol is a plan for bringing scheduling sticking points to a higher authority. Often a school-based leader can't meet the non-negotiable because of a limitation or constraint that is beyond their authority. This can include a shared staff member not available when needed or a rule or expectation that makes the schedule "impossible". Often only a district leader has the authority to remove the obstacle.
7. **Update the schedule as new information is available.** Sometimes school-based staff strive to finish the schedule "as early as possible". They view this as well managed, and students and staff have early notification of what's to come. Unfortunately, new information often emerges over the summer. Planning for a late summer update can lead to a better schedule.

All Grade Levels

4.13. Extended Learning Time.

There is much to do and not much time in the typical school day to do it all. A number of strategies can increase the total time students have to learn over the course of a school year.

4.13a. More instructional days

- **Summer Learning Programs:** Provide targeted summer school programming to students who have the most unfinished learning. Programming should focus on a mix of core academics as well as enrichment and student well-being activities that help students reacclimate to the school learning environment.
- **Vacation academies:** Vacation academies consist of a week of acceleration during school vacations in which exemplary teachers are matched with students with unfinished learning who can benefit most from additional instruction. Sample schedules and activities can be found here: [Acceleration Academies](#).
- **Balanced Calendars:** LEAs in Louisiana are considering balanced calendars, which allow for year-round learning without increasing the number of school days. The long summer break and its associated summer slide are eliminated and shorter breaks are scheduled throughout the year. (e.g., Students attend school for approximately 45 days, then transition into periods of intersession or off-days). Intersession days could be used to provide professional development or to provide extra support for students with unfinished learning. Follow the link for an example year-round balanced calendar: [Link to LDOE Balanced Calendar](#)
- **Longer school year:** Schools and districts may also consider extending the school year, either for all students or specifically for those students with the most unfinished learning. This may include adding 10-20 additional days to the calendar in the spring and/or starting the school year early by 10-20 days in the fall.

A Note on Equity: Voluntary and optional supports (such as optional before- or after-school tutoring) often underserve those most in need. Schools should instead provide additional instructional days in a manner that is accessible to students who need the support the most.

4.13b. Longer School Days

- **Longer school days for teachers and students:** LEAs may consider lengthening the school day for teachers and students to extend learning time. The extra time should be given to classroom instruction but could also be used for tutoring students in core subjects.
- **Longer school day for students, but not teachers:** LEAs may also consider structuring longer days for students, with staggered start and end times for teachers. In doing so, LEAs ensure students receive access to more instruction without extending the school day for teachers.

	Sample Student Schedule	Sample Math Teacher Schedule	Sample Science Teacher Schedule
Period 1	Algebra 1	Algebra 1	
Period 2	English 9	Algebra 1	
Period 3	U.S. History	Algebra 1	Biology
Period 4	Biology	Geometry	Biology
	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Period 5	Spanish	Planning Period	Chemistry
Period 6	Advisory	Targeted Intervention	Planning Period
Period 7	Robotics		Robotics
Period 8	Targeted Intervention		Chemistry

Sample staggered schedule in which students are in school for eight 55-minute periods while teachers are scheduled to teach for only 5 periods of the day. Teachers do not have a longer day, as they come or leave at a different time from students.

5. Summary of Supports for LEAs

Supporting LEA Staff in Implementing Best Practices

Overview: As part of its work to provide insight, guidance, and support to educators in Louisiana to better serve diverse learners and recover from COVID-related unfinished learning, the LDOE is partnering with the District Management Group (DMGroup) to provide live technical training and support sessions to LEA staff across the state. These sessions and supports will be provided in three rounds during spring, summer, and fall 2021 and be facilitated by DMGroup staff. The goal of these training sessions is to provide direct best practice technical assistance to LEAs as they work to support diverse learners and address unfinished learning. The supports and national perspective provided by DMGroup will compliment and integrate with the LDOE’s state-level guidance and recommendations.

School systems can email em.cooper@la.gov with questions.

Support Activity	Description	Audience	Format	Spring 2021 Timeline* (all times CST)
LEA Guidance Kickoff Session	DMGroup will host a kickoff webinar to share best practice guidance documents and supports available to LEAs spring – fall 2021.	Open to all LEAs and educators	Virtual	Wednesday, 3/31 1:00 – 2:00pm
Best Practice Webinar	DMGroup will host a webinar focused on practical tips for implementing LDOE’s best practice guidance. DMGroup will also share copies of <i>Six Shifts to Improve Special Education and Other Interventions: A Commonsense Approach for School Leaders</i> with LEA superintendents and directors of special education (or equivalent).	Open to all LEAs and educators	Virtual	Wednesday, 5/5 1:00 – 2:00pm Webinar Registration Link
Job Alike Support Sessions	DMGroup will host four (4) job alike groups (1 per role) to discuss role-specific practices and guidance as it relates to addressing unfinished learning. The four job alike groups are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● District Academic Leadership (CAO, Director of T&L, etc) ● School Leadership (Principals, Asst Principals, School Leadership Teams) ● Diverse Learners Leadership (Director of Special Education, Director of English Learners) ● Counselors and Counseling Leadership (Counselors, Director of 	Open to specific roles at all LEAs	Virtual	District Academic Leadership Tuesday, 5/11 11:00am – 12:00pm Diverse Learners Leadership Tuesday, 5/11 1:00 – 2:00pm Counselors and Counseling Leadership Wednesday, 5/12 11:00am – 12:00pm School Leadership Wednesday, 5/12 1:00 – 2:00pm

	<p>Counseling, those who support school scheduling, etc)</p> <p>Participants are strongly encouraged to attend the best practice webinar on 5/5 (or watch the recording) and have read the LDOE best practice guidance document prior to joining the job alike session.</p>			<p>Job Alike Registration Link</p>
Targeted Q & A Sessions	DMGroup will host two virtual Q & A sessions to go deep into best practices related to effectively staffing and scheduling to addressing unfinished student learning.	Open to school and district leadership from all LEAs	Virtual	<p>Staffing Best Practices Wednesday, 6/16 1:00 – 2:00pm Staffing Session Registration Link</p> <p>Scheduling Best Practices Wednesday, 6/30 1:00 – 2:00pm Scheduling Session Registration Link</p>
Regional Technical Support Series	<p>DMGroup will host three (3) regional technical support series for LEAs that would like more in-depth support and guidance. LEAs must opt-in to join regional groups, which will be based in New Orleans area, Baton Rouge area, and northern Louisiana. LEA registration includes enrollment of up to 8 individual participants from each LEA.</p> <p>LEAs must register by Tuesday, May 4th to receive this support. Only one registration per LEA is required.</p>	Staff from Opt-In LEAs	Virtual (in-person for summer /fall)	<p>Region 1: New Orleans Area Monday, 5/17 1:00 – 4:00pm</p> <p>Region 2: Baton Rouge Area Tuesday, 5/18 1:00 – 4:00pm</p> <p>Region 3: Northern Louisiana Wednesday, 5/19 1:00 – 4:00pm</p> <p>Regional Support Registration Link</p>
“Phone A Friend” Coaching Support	DMGroup will provide “just-in-time” coaching support to LEAs that opt-in to regional technical support groups. LEAs can schedule 60-minute phone/zoom coaching sessions with DMGroup experts to discuss LEA-specific questions and challenges.	Staff from Opt-In LEAs	Virtual	LEAs that opt-in to regional technical support groups (above) may schedule coaching support calls between the weeks of 4/12 – 6/30

The dates and times of summer and fall support activities are listed below.

Registration links will be available later this summer.

Support Activity	Summer 2021 Timeline* (all times CST)	Fall 2021 Timeline* (all times CST)
Best Practice Webinar (virtual)	Wednesday, 8/23 1:00 – 2:00 pm Registration Link <i>Topic TBD pending LEA feedback and input</i>	Wednesday, 10/13 1:00 – 2:00 pm Registration Link <i>Topic TBD pending LEA feedback and input</i>
Job Alike Support Sessions (virtual)	District Academic Leadership Tuesday, 8/31 11:00 am – 12:00 pm Registration Link Diverse Learners Leadership Tuesday, 8/31 1:00 – 2:00 pm Registration Link Counselors and Counseling Leadership Wednesday, 9/1 11:00 am – 12:00 pm Registration Link School Leadership Wednesday, 9/1 1:00 – 2:00 pm Registration Link	District Academic Leadership Tuesday, 10/19 11:00 am – 2:00 pm Registration Link Diverse Learners Leadership Tuesday, 10/19 1:00 – 12:00 pm Registration Link Counselors and Counseling Leadership Wednesday, 10/20 11:00 am – 12:00 pm Registration Link School Leadership Wednesday, 10/20 1:00 – 2:00 pm Registration Link
Targeted Q & A Sessions (virtual)	Wednesday, 9/29 1:00 – 2:00 pm Registration Link Wednesday, 10/6 1:00 – 2:00 pm Registration Link <i>Topics TBD pending LEA feedback and input</i>	Wednesday, 11/3 1:00 – 2:00 pm Registration Link Wednesday, 11/10 1:00 – 2:00 pm Registration Link <i>Topics TBD pending LEA feedback and input</i>
Regional Technical Support Series (in-person)	Region 1: New Orleans Area Monday, 7/26 8:00 – 12:00 pm Region 2: Baton Rouge Area Tuesday, 7/27 8:00 – 12:00 pm	Region 1: New Orleans Area Monday, 10/19 8:00 – 12:00pm Region 2: Baton Rouge Area Tuesday, 10/20 8:00 – 12:00 pm

	Region 3: Northern Louisiana Wednesday, 7/28 8:00 – 12:00pm	Region 3: Northern Louisiana Wednesday, 10/21 8:00 – 12:00pm
“Phone A Friend” Coaching Support (virtual)	LEAs that opt-in to regional technical support may schedule coaching support calls between the weeks of 7/5 – 8/30	LEAs that opt-in to regional technical support may schedule coaching support calls between the weeks of 9/6 – 10/25

6. Supporting Resources

6.1. Elementary Acceleration Group Sizes Research.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Research has shown that in comparison to intervention group size, the training and background of the instructor, the length of intervention time provided, and the type of instruction presented during intervention, are more significant factors for increasing student achievement.² As a result, proactively managing intervention group size becomes a mechanism by which a district can expand the reach of its highly skilled teachers of reading.

- Studies by the What Works Clearinghouse have shown that small instructional groups of up to five students have been as effective as one-on-one instruction.³
- Similarly, the National Institute of Health has shown that groups of three students can be as effective as one-on-one instruction, and that even groups of up to ten students can provide benefits, although with smaller outcomes on achievement. (Notably, this study did not test or include groups of 4-9 students).⁴
- More specifically, the RTI Action Network recommends utilizing groups of 5-8 students for the majority of students who struggle (~15% of all students receiving 30 minutes of additional instruction 5x a week), and recommends smaller groups of 1-3 students for only students with severe reading disabilities (approximately ~3% of all students).⁵

In keeping with this research, an average group size of no more than five students is recommended, as it allows students to succeed while providing interventions in a manner which maximizes available resources.⁶

² Vaughn, S., Wanzek, J., Murray, C. S., Roberts, G. (2012). *Intensive interventions for students struggling in reading and mathematics: A practice guide*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

³ Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C.M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., and Tilly, W.D. (2008). *Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention for reading in the primary grades. A practice guide*. (NCEE 2009-4045). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/>.

⁴ Vaughn, S., Denton, C., & Fletcher, J. (2010). Why Intensive Interventions Are Necessary For Students With Severe Reading Difficulties. *Psychol Sch.*, 47(5), 432-444. doi:10.1002

⁵ Harlacher, J., Sanford, A., & Walker, N. (2015). Distinguishing Between Tier 2 and Tier 3 Instruction in Order to Support Implementation of RTI.

⁶ Vaughn, S., Wanzek, J., Murray, C. S., Roberts, G. (2012). *Intensive interventions for students struggling in reading and mathematics: A practice guide*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.