What is the disconnect between where we are and the possibilities?

Only 36% of fourth graders are reading proficiently
- 9% advanced
- 27% proficient
- 33% basic
- 31% below basic

Research shows that 9 out of 10 students can become average or even above average readers.

- Foorman; Mathes, et al; Allor et al.; Felton; Vellutino; Torgesen

“Children who are good readers tend to stay good readers and children who are poor readers tend to stay poor readers.” - Mesmer, Cunningham, & Hiebert, 2012

Less than half of our high school students nationwide meet the recommended benchmark levels in Reading on the ACT. (ACT Profile Report, 2014)

“The high percentage of students who are below college and career readiness achievement targets at all grade levels—and the difficulty of catching them up—should also lead educators and policymakers to focus on the importance of an early start and an emphasis on prevention over remediation.”

What does the research say?

Children learn in a developmental sequence. Well-designed curricula are therefore based on developmentally sequenced activities.

**What about neuroscience?**

**Fluent Reader**

**Beginning Reader**

Guinevere Eden, Georgetown University Study

“Within his brain, the child is literally building the neural circuitry that links the sounds of spoken words, the phonemes, to the print code, the letters that represent these sounds” (Shaywitz, 2003, p. 177).

Beginning readers who focus on letter-sound relationships, or phonics, instead of trying to learn whole words, increase activity in the area of their brains best wired for reading... the way a learner focuses their attention during learning has a profound impact on what is learned (Yoncheva, et al., 2015.)

“A deficiency in any of the component skills has the potential to affect the development of other skills and, ultimately, the development of the child as a proficient reader.”

- Hudson, Torgesen, Lane, Turner, 2012

**Integrating ELA Instruction**

Reading skills must be developed in concert with all other language skills.

- Oral language development
- Listening and speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Handwriting
- Spelling
- Grammar and Mechanics
What about text?

Collectively the results indicate that **decodability is a critical characteristic** of early reading text as it increases the likelihood that students will use a decoding strategy and results in **immediate benefits**, particularly with regard to **accuracy**. (Cheatham and Allor, 2012)

The kind of text we put in front of beginning readers determines the strategies they will use.

The lesson-to-text match is **pivotal** to the successful use of decodable text.

A Staircase of Complexity...

- Is based on a careful and intentional progression of texts
- Serves as a conduit for practice of newly learned decoding skills
- Supports students’ gradual move from decodable to non-decodable text

Research suggests that properly supporting readers in more challenging texts actually **accelerates progress**.
In Conclusion

The Takeaways

⭐ Prevention is KEY! Students need explicit instruction in phonics and decoding to build the neural links critical for reading success.

⭐ Methodology Matters! An integrated, multimodal approach to literacy development is well-supported by research.

⭐ Text Matters! Students need to practice their growing decoding skills in texts that are closely aligned with the sequence of skills they are learning...and they need high-quality, well-written texts.

After research-based instruction, the percentage of first graders below 30th percentile can be reduced to 4-6%.

Foorman; Mathes, et al; Allor et.al.; Felton; Vellutino, Torgesen

Thank you for being here today and for the important work you do every day on behalf of your students!

If you would like any additional information, including any of the research from today’s presentation, please feel free to e-mail me: Laura.stewart@zaner-bloser.com