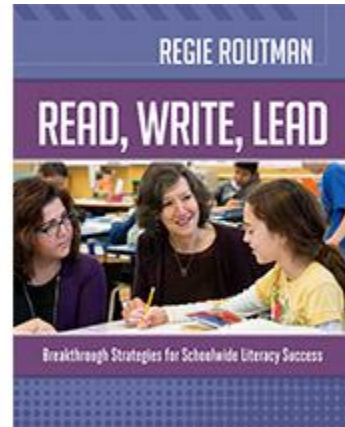


## **Read, Write, Lead: Breakthrough Strategies for Schoolwide Literacy Success**

How do we create schools where all learners—students, teachers, and leaders—are joyful, are engaged in meaningful work, and are self-directed? Author Regie Routman shares her insights from her latest book, published by ASCD.

[\*\*Literacy and Leadership >>\*\*](#)



# **Read, Write, Lead: Breakthrough Strategies for Schoolwide Literacy Success**

By Regie Routman

What if we change the crucial question we most often ask as leaders from, "How do we raise achievement for all learners?" to "How do we create schools where all learners—students, teachers, and leaders—are joyful, are engaged in meaningful work, and are self-directed?" What would it take?

My latest publication, *Read, Write, Lead: Breakthrough Strategies for Schoolwide Literacy Success* (ASCD 2014), is tailored to support principals, leaders at all levels, and teachers as they apply highly effective reading and writing practices across an entire school and embed a "we can do it" spirit and successful outcome for all learners. *Read, Write, Lead* focuses on the necessary intersection between literacy and leadership—within classrooms and the school as a whole—to accelerate and sustain professional learning and student achievement.

Based on decades of teaching, leading, and coaching in diverse schools in the United States and Canada, I have learned three basic truths about raising expectations and increasing and sustaining achievement, engagement, and enjoyment in learning:

1. A schoolwide culture of trusted relationships, respect, and collaboration is required for meaningful change to take hold; the principal is the key determinant in establishing this positive culture.
2. Principals must become highly knowledgeable about literacy. They must know what to look for, what to say and do to coach teachers in a productive manner that moves student learning forward.
3. Teachers must become highly knowledgeable about literacy and also assume a leadership role in supporting the principal to carry out excellent and ongoing professional learning.

Without these three essentials in place, worthwhile changes will stall every time. That is, only a few teachers become highly effective, which limits full achievement for all learners in a school. These three essentials are important to keep in mind as many schools and districts implement the Common Core State Standards or any designated standards. Although standards denote what students need to know and be able to do, the "how" is left up to schools and districts. And herein lies the problem. Without deep knowledge of instruction and learning, principals and teachers across a district reach for and rely on the latest, best, or Common Core-aligned materials and wind up marching in place. Nothing of substance changes, and several years later the whole time-consuming process of searching for the perfect program begins again.

*Read, Write, Lead* demonstrates how to change the dreary outcome that typically results for underperforming students when we educators rely excessively on programs because we lack sufficient knowledge and instructional expertise. A major emphasis in the book is on how to establish a professional learning culture that is integral to the daily literacy and leadership practices of the school. Educators learn how to begin any change effort by collectively examining and establishing shared beliefs about literacy and learning. Those beliefs then determine and align with research-based practices and an Optimal Learning Model. Only then, armed with firm beliefs and knowledge about teaching and learning, can educators wisely choose instructional and assessment resources. Those resources can then be selectively used as a supportive framework and guide instead of as the main curriculum.

Supported by current research and best practices, *Read, Write, Lead* explicitly shows educators at all levels and in all disciplines exactly what it takes to have a whole school of highly effective teachers and high-achieving students. Practical specifics in the form of demonstrations, explanations, lessons, examples of student work, quick wins, personal voices, and stories from real classrooms and diverse schools provide transferrable strategies, actions, ideas, and tips that ensure both short-term wins and long-term literacy gains across the curriculum.

The reader-leader of *Read, Write, Lead* comes away with the necessary thinking, questioning, planning, and specific actions on how to:

- Establish a culture of professional trust
- Make learning more personal, relevant, and authentic
- Provide more choices within a clearly defined structure
- Write daily, for a sustained time, for authentic audiences and purposes
- Read daily, for a sustained time, for enjoyment and understanding
- Incorporate skills and strategies into real-world instruction and learning
- Apply an optimal learning model that ensures all learners succeed
- Reduce the need for intervention through daily practices that encourage success
- Provide the language of productive feedback—most often through formative assessment—to move learners forward
- Embed ongoing professional learning through a professional literacy community culture supported by a school's leadership team
- Develop self-determining learners—leaders, teachers, students—who self-monitor and self-direct their own purposeful learning

These outcomes depend on ongoing professional development, and here the research is clear. To have a positive impact on student learning, professional learning must be school-based, ongoing, long-term, connected to classroom practices, and have time and support built in for application and refinement of new ideas and practices. *Read, Write, Lead* can be used as a professional development resource for building and sustaining teacher and leader expertise across a whole school.

In many ways, *Read, Write, Lead* is a passionate plea for maximizing educational opportunity for all students. Despite our best intentions, more rigorous standards, and implementation of new programs, not much changes for too many of our students, especially those who are low-performing and who most often are students of color, living in poverty, or learning English as a second language. Although successful educational reform across districts and cities remains elusive due to politics, inequitable funding, and a whole range of complex factors beyond our control, worthwhile change in individual schools is highly possible and within our control and abilities. That is, one school, one principal, one teacher, and one student at a time, we can move from low expectations and low results to accelerated learning and joy for all learners. *Read, Write, Lead* gives leaders and teachers the inspiration, knowledge, skills, and confidence to propel all learners in their schools to previously unimagined heights of accomplishment.

***In Read, Write, Lead: Breakthrough Strategies for Schoolwide Literacy Success***, Regie Routman draws upon her experience as a mentor teacher, reading specialist, instructional coach, and staff developer. [Click here](#) to order your copy, and learn more about Regie at [www.regieroutman.org](http://www.regieroutman.org).