

4 Things to Spot on a ‘Science Of Reading’ Learning Walk

1. How does the class begin?

Starting right is key.

- In a lesson on phonemic awareness, for instance, a teacher must start with a warm-up activity like “manipulating” sounds.
- For foundational reading skills, teachers should include classroom supports—for example, images of mouth shapes that go with specific sounds.
- Teachers need to develop a culture of learning and a sense of joy around reading books.



2. Is the cadence right?

Adhering to the sequence is key.

- Without the ability to manipulate sounds, students may struggle to sound out words and write them down.
- Principals should identify if teachers are skipping parts of the lesson and ensure that those practices are included in subsequent classes.
- Students should develop the habit to move between different routines, from shared reading to writing to independent practice. If teachers instill these habits in earlier grades, students can cope better in higher ones.



3. Is there a “productive struggle?”

Teachers must let students tussle with new material.

- The teacher’s instinct may be to scaffold their attempts—give the answer too soon without letting students work through new words on their own. Principals need to watch for these signs.
- There’s a flip side to this, too. Some curricula hinge on carefully timed lesson blocks, so teachers must balance that against giving students time to apply new knowledge.



4. How are you using the time between learning walks?

Learning walks are checkpoints.

- Principals should use learning walks to collect data on areas of improvement or what teachers are already implementing well and use that to build specific PLCs. Post-PLC, principals should leverage their walks to check if the practice is being followed.
- Principals should be careful not to use learning walks as teacher evaluations. Teachers need to feel supported as they work their way through new, complex, and dense material.



Three Key Features Of Learning Walks

- ✓ Usually **15-20 minutes** long
- ✓ Done every **4 to 6 weeks**
- ✓ Each walk focuses on a **specific lesson**—like phonemic awareness or shared reading