

JUNE 2023

THE SHARE

Demonstrated Success Newsletter



Empowering Educators to Improve Student Learning

Encouraging Efficacy

MIKE SCHWARTZ

Improvement is central to education and at the heart of the work we do at DS to help empower educators and support their efficacy. In the course of a busy day, it can be hard to find the necessary time for improvement. As an educator you may not know which changes will make a difference or how to make those changes. The workshops, webinars, school support and coaching, opportunities we highlight in this newsletter about literacy instruction, the implementation of MTSS, and the role of listening in leadership are designed to help teachers and educational leaders make incremental improvement as well as offer the time and space to reflect on practice. Additionally, our IT solutions like the survey/form creation tool ESP, especially designed for the needs of educators at the state, district, and school level, make vital data collection that much easier. So, please read on and learn more about what we have to offer!



DS offerings

Upcoming Workshops:

Leading through
Listening: Small Shifts,
Big Impact
August 2

Making MTSS Doable
October 5 & 6

You Can Have It All:
Bringing Together
Research, Teacher
Expertise & Child-
Centered Literacy
October 23

Creating Effective
Teams to Make a
Real Difference

READ OUR LATEST
BLOG POST



Listening: A Vital Leadership Skill

REBECCA DAWSON WEBB

We tell our students, children, and partners to listen. And by this, we often mean: be quiet and hear what I have to say. But is this what it *really* means to listen? And how well do we model this skill? After all, we equate talking with authority. Indeed, as parents, teachers, and leaders, we are granted the right to talk and to assert what we think. Listening, we may believe, has less impact.

But the power of listening cannot be underestimated. It is one of the most vital human skills, especially for those in leadership. Listening is an opportunity to gain insight and learn what's really going on. It's also essential to building relationships. When we listen well, we gain understanding, cultivate trust, and build rapport, key factors in our ability to lead others, implement plans, and influence outcomes. Listening to someone else also makes it more likely that they will listen to us. And as any hostage negotiator will tell you, listening is one of the best ways to diffuse difficult situations.

When we don't listen, people stop telling us things. Grievances go underground, where problems can fester. When we don't listen well, we can end up with an inaccurate understanding or addressing the wrong problem. As William Ury, co-founder of the Harvard Program on Negotiation and author of *Getting to Yes*, observes, "How can you possibly change someone's mind if you don't know where their mind is?"

It is telling that we teach public speaking but not public listening, as though listening is merely a matter of opening our ears and closing our mouths. But hearing, after all, is not the same as listening, let alone making someone feel heard. Indeed, we've all experienced the defensive, "I was listening!" that didn't convince us at all that we were understood. "Listening is not the act of hearing the words spoken," notes inspirational speaker Simon Sinek, "it is the art of hearing the meaning behind those words."

Indeed, listening is more than mechanical and not just a set of skills—make eye contact, nod your head, use small encouragers, like un-huh. Listening is a mindset and a practice. At its best, it is curiosity in action. It's a willingness to be open to someone else's thoughts, ideas, experiences, and perspective, even when they don't align with ours. Ideally, it's a desire to help someone else clarify what they mean to say. Too often, however, we listen with an intent to reply, waiting our turn, thinking about what we agree or disagree with, concerned about what we'll say next. When we listen to understand, we shift to supporting the speaker, asking questions that invite them to clarify or say more, checking our understanding. Listening like this takes patience and effort. And it is how we gain insight and vital information, how we create a bridge between ourselves and others. This kind of listening can, in fact, be even more powerful than talking.

So let's spend more time developing our capacity to listen and help kids understand the true value of what we ask them to do. **Join us August 2nd to hear your colleagues thoughts on this topic.**

**Join Demonstrated Success and the NH Principal Association for
Leading through Listening: Small Shifts, Big Impact
August 2, 2023, 9:00am - 3:00pm in Concord, NH**

[Learn More](#)



Reading Instruction through the Lens of a Reflective Practice

JACLYN KARABINAS

Across the country, numerous states have either passed, or are in the process of debating, state mandated policies around reading instruction. You might just be learning about the heightened conversation around reading curricula and pedagogical approaches, or perhaps you are already immersed in the conversation, carrying strong feelings about the issue.

One way or the other, the conversation about literacy instruction has gone awry. Once again, the jargon education loves to toss around has been weaponized, particularly in the media; there is no shortage of alphabet soup acronyms asserted to be the way. And, amidst the stress of this profession, information can sometimes be perceived as a threat rather than an opportunity to evolve. What should be a conversation about literacy instruction has devolved, yet again, into finger wagging “reading wars.” The unfortunate polarization of the topic deters collegiality among exhausted teachers and is not conducive to examining the complex nature of teaching children to read. I fear the frustrating path this conversation has taken is a missed opportunity.

Having been in education for over 20 years, I've been around this carousel a few times. It pains me to hear about districts around the country throwing out critical elements of literacy instruction, both literally and metaphorically. Teaching and learning is nuanced, and making decisions about curriculum and approaches needs to respect this fact. These days, I choose to direct my energy to spaces where the conversation is both/and rather than either/or. I have found success, agency, and joy as a practitioner, actively reassessing approaches, looking at research, observing my students, and teaching responsively.

In my first year of teaching, I remember trying to make sense of reading instruction. That first year, the National Reading Panel report had just been published and its findings, along with recent test scores, fueled the overhaul of literacy instruction in my school. As part of the effort, the students in our fourth-grade classes were reshuffled for reading instruction into groups leveled by ability, and I was assigned the “just below grade level” group. The reading specialist told me to just follow the basal, which would tell me exactly what to do. I didn't yet have the experience, language, or research-based knowledge to understand the why for what I was

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“I have found success, agency, and joy as a practitioner, actively reassessing approaches, looking at research, observing my students, and teaching responsively.”

JACLYN KARABINAS,
DS DIRECTOR OF LITERACY



SAVE THE DATE: Join us October 23!

You Can Have it All: Bringing Together Research, Teacher Expertise, & Child-Centered Literacy Practices

What does it look like to critically evaluate your literacy instruction when there are so many contrasting ideas and competing voices telling you what you should do? If this is causing you doubt, confusion, or overwhelm, then this interactive workshop is for you!

LEARN MORE

"It's important that our reading instruction is based in research AND it's considerate of and relevant to the children we teach."

- Kathy Collins, internationally recognized literacy expert and co-facilitator of our October 26 literacy workshop

Reading Instruction through the Lens of a Reflective Practice (cont'd)

doing, but I knew it didn't always look or feel right. I saw that my students weren't showing any excitement for reading as we moved through the stories in the basal. Some of my students were unable to sound out words, something I naively assumed everyone could do by Grade 4. And the workbook pages provided no space for authentic thinking.

This led me instinctively to structure what I now know is a differentiated reading classroom. I formed small groups to address struggles with decoding. I tried to boost engagement by providing more choice, creating a classroom library of books bought at a thrift store, and having students design their own reading response journals.

I began devouring professional books about literacy teaching, and nurtured a sustained, reflective teaching practice by hearing what the experts had to say and determining what might work with my current students. In the process, I gained language for what I was experiencing in the classroom and felt affirmed in many of my choices. I also connected with others like me—hungry for research, reflection, and revision of practice. In the art and science of teaching, we need spaces where we can interrogate our teaching practices—evaluating what to keep, revise, or let go of based on research, experience, and what we observe in children every day.

We know so much more about teaching and learning than we did 20 years ago, and we will know even more 20 years from now. Science is not fixed. Children change. Positioning education as a practice strengthens our chances of improving instruction for all learners because decision-making can encompass all the sciences, all the experience, all the expertise. To address the inequities that persist in schools across our country—literacy included—we need to reject sensationalism that creates fear as well as one-size-fits all policy. It will be more efficient and successful if we instead address what is really a school design challenge—how to meet the needs of our students by drawing on what we know, what we've learned, and what we observe kids actually doing in classrooms over time.

To do this, we need to cultivate spaces where, regardless of pedagogical stance or favorite curricula, educators can combine expertise and research to impact practice. After all, design challenges require high-functioning teams, diversity, collaboration, and inquiry. So, let's work together as true practitioners do, drawing from all we know to support our shared goal: highly literate children. **Join us October 23 at our literacy workshop to continue the conversation!**



Making A Wholistic Impact on Students One MTSS Team at a Time

TAMMY HILTON

When it comes to effectively meeting the needs of all students through the framework of Multi-Tiered System of Supports of Bonny Eagle Middle School in Buxton, Maine is at the forefront in New England.

Bonny Eagle attended our two-day Making MTSS Doable workshop last fall with the goal of figuring out how best to support their large, diverse population of students through inclusive intervention and enrichment opportunities accessible for all students. They absorbed the DS coaches' advice, "to start small" and "go slow to go fast," and Bonny Eagle made impressive progress this year toward meeting their goal.

Following the MTSS workshop, Bonny Eagle Middle School established a Tier II/III Team, made up of administrators and school specialists from across the building. This team met regularly to discuss the progress of students requiring additional support. To build on their progress, the school requested further MTSS coaching. As one of Demonstrated Success's MTSS coaches, I was happy to work with the leadership team, administrators, and the Tier II/III team this spring to develop a shared understanding of the MTSS framework and to help them look ahead to how to strengthen and refine it in the 23-24 school year. Then over four short, productive coaching sessions, the Tier II/III team assessed and revised the effectiveness of their current supports and enhanced their ability to better evaluate student needs. They accomplished a tremendous amount. Here are highlights:

- Articulated and agreed on their MTSS team norms.
- Established MTSS team roles and responsibilities.
- Followed a data protocol to conduct student data meetings with team leaders to monitor student progress.
- Used an MTSS readiness assessment to identify priority areas.
- Built a 23-24 schedule for more inclusive, productive, and efficient student data meetings.
- Began a 23-24 strategic plan focused on student success that laid out concrete action steps and timelines for accountability.

By establishing effective data teams to support the work of the Tier II/III Team and working to set out an action-oriented strategic plan, Bonny Eagle Middle School has successfully strengthened its ability to meet the needs of all students.

Join us October 5 & 6!

Making MTSS Doable: 2-Day Workshop

These two productive days will provide teams with targeted support to do focused work together to make progress toward implementing an MTSS framework at their school.

[Learn More](#)



Our IT Team: Making Data Collection Easier for Educators

RYAN STEVENS



I'd like to introduce Russ Eckell, a Senior Developer on our talented IT team. Russ has a specialization in the field of K -12 educational technology. He enjoys using his creativity and empathy to create high-quality code that addresses the needs of end users and makes people's work easier. Russ is a master at thinking like the end user to develop effective IT solutions.

Russ is currently working hard on ESP, a DS platform that allows organizations to develop and send online surveys, questionnaires, and forms; anonymize responses; target specific respondents; and use data tools to analyze the feedback. Russ helps to keep the IT Team fueled and focused on meeting their goals. The team loves Russ's great sense of humor and wit, not to mention his love of cats and guitars.

By making data collection more automated and much easier, ESP can be a game changer for states and school districts. ESP provides a central place, with a single sign-in, to design, send, remind, and monitor responses to online surveys and forms. A particularly useful feature of ESP for states and districts is the ability to target groups of users based on organization, organization level, and roles, as well as other criteria. DS is proud that the New Hampshire Department of Education has adopted this valuable tool!

The DS IT Team also maintains and develops state-level databases that facilitate quality education, create transparency and engagement, while helping to ensure that school support and funding is equitable and effective. These user-friendly platforms save time by organizing procedures, streamlining operations, and making it easy to access information vital to school success.

To Learn more about our work visit www.DemonstratedSuccess.com



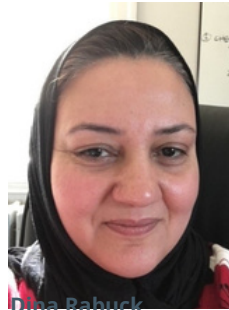
Meet Some New Members of Our Team

DS welcomes Jeff Gardanier, Luke Tomanek, and Dina Rabuck to our IT Team and Jaclyn Karabinas and Marissa Farley to our PD Team. We are excited to have the addition of their experience and expertise!



Jaclyn Karabinas,
Director of Literacy

Jaclyn is passionate about supporting an evolving teaching practice. Motivated by new information and experiences, she welcomes the chance to challenge and enrich her own learning, especially through the collective sharing of expertise. As a teacher and coach, she values an adaptive approach, drawing from a range of arts-based, technological, and inter/intrapersonal possibilities. She is particularly interested in the various ways humans can interact with information and how this grows the wide range of existing literacies.



Dina Rabuck,
Senior Data Architect

Dina looks forward to contributing to the DS data culture as she continues to support NHED's data warehouse on behalf of Demonstrated Success. As a data architect, she finds it both challenging and rewarding to make the small decisions at the beginning of the design process that can completely change the capabilities of any data solution. She particularly enjoys using data in new ways to provide information. Slicing and dicing through data rows and finding design flaws and correcting them is, for Dina, a satisfying form of cleaning house.

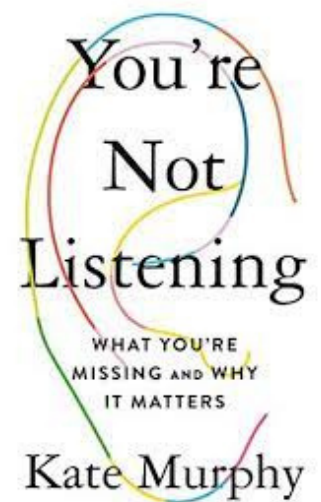
[Meet more of the DS Team!](#)

Suggested Summer Reading

You're Not Listening: What You're Missing and Why It Matters by Kate Murphy

LAUREN MERCIER

We recommend you check out this persuasive case for the vital, often neglected, art of listening. Murphy's well-researched book addresses various aspects of listening: its value, what makes it challenging and the ways it's done poorly, the mindset and specifics that contribute to effective listening. The author highlights the negative effects of political divisions, social media, and our smartphones on our capacity to listen. And reminds us of why listening is so vital to our personal and work relationships. She links the problem of people not feeling heard to what Surgeon General Vivek Murthy identifies as an epidemic of loneliness in the United States, with its serious negative impact on our physical and emotional well being. This is a book that can benefit the reader both personally and professionally.



[Click on the image to learn more.](#)

