

# EFFECTIVE FIRST GRADE LITERACY TEACHING TEAMS

## A ULEAD INNOVATIVE PRACTICE REPORT BRIEF

### THEME OVERVIEW

### HIGH TEAM EFFICACY AND COLLABORATION

Four outlier teacher teams excelling in first grade literacy were interviewed to understand their practices contributing to grade-level success while implementing the Science of Reading. Three themes were identified. Key research and literature, practices, and takeaways from the theme High Team Efficacy and Collaboration are in this brief. To review the full report visit [schools.utah.gov/ulead/reports](https://schools.utah.gov/ulead/reports).



**Collaborative Climate is Essential for Effective Teams:** Research suggests that a collaborative climate is crucial for effective teacher teams and successful professional communities, leading to improved student achievement (Troen & Boles, 2012; Putnam & Borko, 2000). The shared belief among teachers in their ability to positively impact student outcomes has a significant effect on student achievement (Hattie, 2012; Horn and Little, 2009).

**Trust and Vulnerability are Crucial for Collaboration:** Trust, built through face-to-face collaborative work, enables teachers to be vulnerable and open about their practices, fostering a safe environment for improvement (Schleifer et al., 2017; Troen & Boles, 2012; City et al., 2011). Strong social connections among teachers, particularly within grade-level teams, facilitate the exchange of resources and ideas, positively impacting student performance (Leana & Pil, 2006; 2009).

**Quality of Collaboration Matters More than Quantity:** Deep collaboration focused on instructional practices is more impactful than superficial collaboration (Vangrieken et al., 2015; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996; Vescio et al., 2008).



#### Practitioner Practices

1. The teams demonstrated a **strong sense of trust**, allowing for open sharing of student data and teaching practices without fear of judgment. This trust fostered vulnerability and a willingness to seek help, contributing to a safe and supportive environment for collaboration.
2. The teams engaged in **continuous conversations about student learning, data, and instructional strategies**. These discussions occurred both formally, through weekly PLCs, and informally, through daily interactions and shared non-teaching times.
3. The teams viewed all students in the grade level as their collective responsibility, emphasizing a **collaborative approach to student success**. Data was shared and analyzed collectively, and intervention and extension groups were formed based on student needs and teacher strengths, rather than being confined to individual classrooms.
4. The teams maintained **consistent structures and practices**, such as regular intervention times, weekly PLCs, and data collection, to ensure continuity and focus on student learning.
5. The teams' collaborative efforts were centered on **improving instructional practices** and student outcomes. They used data and student work to identify areas of need and strategize effective teaching techniques, demonstrating a strong sense of **collective efficacy and a commitment to student success**.



1. Ground the work in data
2. Talk about students by name
3. Group across the grade level
4. Create time for formal and ongoing conversations
5. Focus on outcomes as a result of intentional instructional practice

“It’s a climate of comradery and acceptance and the freedom to risk. It’s safe to be wrong and it’s safe to try things.”

- 1st Grade Teacher

“I don’t have the solution but together we can come up with it.”

- 1st Grade Teacher