



# LITERACY MASTERMINDS

*The Literacy Architects*

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Literacy Masterminds supports student growth in literacy through the incorporation of evidence-based instructional routines into the daily classroom experience.

## OVERVIEW

Literacy Masterminds drives growth and achievement in literacy by giving students access to targeted, evidence-based instructional routines designed to benefit those struggling with foundational reading skills such as phonemic awareness, decoding, or fluency. Literacy Masterminds offers three series, with Series 2 focusing specifically on accelerating reading growth through fluency for students in grades 3–12. By the end of this series, teachers have established a regular fluency routine that engages students via a mix of whole group, small group, partner, and independent practice.

Teachers learn these routines through a 12-week, flipped professional development model, during which they explore evidence-based literacy strategies on their own via an online platform before convening each week in remote, small-group PLCs to plan, reflect, and problem-solve. The model's flipped design ensures that when teachers meet, the bulk of their time is spent collaborating meaningfully to apply the strategies to their specific context. Teachers can join as school cohorts, or they can join as individuals, which allows teachers to build community across schools and districts, share best practices, and ultimately feel less siloed.

Literacy Masterminds currently works with four districts across the country as well as with Teach for America Corps Members and Alumni from TFA D.C. and TFA Philadelphia.

- [Literacy Masterminds Overview](#)
- [Literacy Masterminds Course Objectives](#)
- [Literacy Masterminds Testimonial](#)

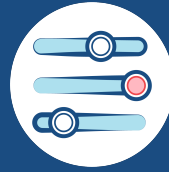


## What Makes This Model Innovative?



### High Expectations with Unlimited Opportunities

Reading is foundational to student success across content areas. Equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills, and support they need to implement high-quality literacy instruction positions students to meet their academic goals throughout school and into their future.



### Customization

Literacy Masterminds equips teachers to fold manageable instructional routines that align to the specific needs of their students into their existing schedules, making literacy instruction targeted and feasible.



### Rigorous Learning

Literacy Masterminds ensures teachers walk away with the practical skills required to implement literacy routines in their classrooms so they can provide all students with the necessary foundation required for rigorous learning.

## DESIGN

### Goals

The ultimate goal of Literacy Masterminds is to increase teacher capacity to use data to plan and facilitate targeted literacy instruction that improves students' reading and writing achievement and growth.

#### Student Achievement and Growth in Literacy

Effective implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction will result in student achievement and growth in reading and writing.

#### Effective Planning & Facilitation of Literacy Instruction

Teachers feel confident in their knowledge of how to assess students and how to use the data they collect to design instruction targeting students' literacy needs, resulting in improved facilitation of literacy routines in the classroom.

# Experience

Research shows that as reading fluency improves, students spend less of their working memory on decoding words—freeing up more space to focus on comprehending what they read. To that end, Literacy Masterminds Series 2 prepares teachers across content areas to engage students in regular routines—whether as a whole group, in small groups, with partners, or independently—that utilize a variety of research-based techniques to improve fluency to help students work towards this goal. These routines build students’ skills in decoding and automatic word recognition, boost their vocabulary and background knowledge, and increase their understanding of how pace and expression are cued by syntax, vocabulary, and text structure. Teachers maintain up-to-date assessment data on oral reading fluency, evaluating students’ accuracy, rate, and prosody, in order to provide targeted instruction consistently. [Multi-Day Fluency Routine](#)

Routines typically involve the following key components, addressed through multiple readings of the same text:

- Vocabulary and knowledge-building
- Modeling
- Comprehension practice
- Continuous improvement

Literacy Masterminds also offers two other series—Series 1: Structured Literacy for All Learners (K-2), and Series 3: Targeting Reading Needs with Advanced Decoding Instruction (3-12). To learn more, visit [The Literacy Architects website](#).

The image displays two sample forms from The Literacy Architects. The left form is a 'STRUCTURED LITERACY LESSON PLAN' which includes sections for Phonemic Awareness (3 minutes), Sound/Spelling Correspondences (3 minutes), Decoding & Encoding (5-7 minutes), Irregular Words (5-10 minutes), and Connected Text (5-10 minutes). Each section contains checkboxes for various activities like 'Sound Chaining', 'Auditory Drill', 'Visual Drill', 'blending drill', 'word sort', 'word list', 'syllable division', 'word chains', 'spelling dictation', and 'phoneme-grapheme mapping'. The right form is 'THE LITERACY ARCHITECTS DECODING SURVEY RECORDING FORM - PAGE 1', which contains four sections: 1: Letter Names - Uppercase, 2: Letter Names - Lowercase, 3: Lowercase Consonant Sounds, and 4: Single Vowel Letter Sounds. Each section includes a prompt, a list of letters or sounds, and a 'Total Correct' score line.

## Vocabulary and Knowledge-Building

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As part of the fluency routine, teachers learn to engage students in regular pre-reading activities that build background knowledge and to pre-teach critical vocabulary. Vocabulary and background knowledge provide students with entry points into the text, building their schema and ultimately boosting their comprehension as well as their fluent reading of the text.

For example, a teacher may decide to select a text connected to a topic that students are studying in their social studies class. Pre-reading activities in this case may consist of asking students to recall key facts about what they have learned about the topic and drawing attention to vocabulary that will deepen their understanding of the theme of the reading.

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## Modeling Fluent Reading

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A crucial component of any fluency routine is modeling fluent reading. In Literacy Masterminds fluency routines, teachers provide students with ample time listening to fluent readers, focusing on different components of fluency over the course of multiple readings.

For example, early in the week, students focus on proper pacing, expression, and accuracy while listening to a teacher's model read. During subsequent model reads, students might focus on annotating for comprehension, with the goal of answering text-dependent questions. Reading the text multiple times for different purposes allows students to focus on developing the skills specific to fluent reading.

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## Comprehension Practice

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The primary goal of reading is comprehension, so students are best served by understanding that the skills and strategies they learn serve this important purpose. There are multiple routines for students to engage in comprehension practice, including the two illustrated below.

- **Whole-Class** – After listening to the text read aloud once, students are introduced to text-based questions to anchor their annotations during a second read by the teacher. Students then participate in a check for understanding to assess their comprehension, providing text-based evidence to substantiate their responses. To make them accessible to a variety of learners, checks for understanding may be completed in writing, through discussion, or even in the form of a graphic or illustration.
  - **Partners** – Students may participate in a partner reading routine called “Paragraph Shrinking,” where students take turns reading aloud for five minutes before pausing to restate the most important “who” or “what” in the paragraph and what happened to them, and then finally restating this information in ten words or less. For example, “Thomas Edison was the most important who or what. The most important thing that happened to Thomas Edison was that he was raised on a farm, but he didn’t like living on a farm because he liked working with machines. In 10 words or less, ‘Thomas Edison didn’t like farming; he liked working with machines.’”
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## Continuous Improvement

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Developing fluency necessitates ongoing practice, feedback, and error correction. During their reading routines, students receive feedback as they read aloud. This comes in a variety of forms, including but not limited to:

- **Choral reading** – Students and a teacher read aloud in unison. The teacher’s voice is slightly louder to provide a model of fluent reading.
  - **Echo reading** – The teacher reads part of a text while students follow along to provide a model of fluent reading. Then, students read the same part aloud in unison.
  - **Buddy or partner reading** – Students work in pairs where a passage is read aloud by one student to another, who is there to provide feedback by identifying words that are read incorrectly and modeling the correct pronunciation. It is important in buddy reading that students are paired strategically, so that one reader is more fluent and can coach the other. In addition, teachers circulate during buddy reads to offer students additional feedback. ▶ [Partner Reading](#)
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## Supporting Structures

The strategies learned through Literacy Masterminds build participants’ capacity to support reading and writing instruction across content areas and do not require significant changes to a teacher’s or school’s daily schedule or overall operations.

### Literacy Masterminds enables teachers to integrate high-quality literacy assessment and instruction into existing curricula.



#### CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT

Participation in Literacy Masterminds enables teachers to administer and analyze diagnostic assessments and explicitly and effectively plan and teach literacy concepts to whole groups, small groups, and individuals.

Teachers learn to break down high-impact literacy routines into bite-sized steps that they can integrate within existing curricula, leading to their full implementation in the classroom.

In each series, teachers learn how to use formative data to implement targeted instructional routines related to the focus skills (i.e., phonemic awareness, letter knowledge and decoding (K-2); oral reading fluency (3-12); and advanced phonics, including syllable types and patterns (3-12)).

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**Literacy Masterminds is an innovative solution for schools with teachers who are new to the science of teaching reading *and/or* for those without strong literacy support for teachers.**



**SCHOOL COMMUNITY  
& CULTURE**

Because Literacy Masterminds focuses on fundamental reading skills, it is best for schools that need literacy expertise in these areas. This might include:

- Schools that have a large number of new teachers or teachers who are new to the science of teaching reading and evidence-based practices around fluency and decoding, *and/or*
- Schools with a high teacher-to-literacy-coach ratio or without a literacy coach or instructional leader holding deep knowledge of literacy strategies.

This model is also well suited for teachers who would benefit from additional time to ask questions, to connect with grade-level peers, and to receive support adapting strategies to their classroom.

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**To launch lasting, effective fluency routines, teachers must commit to 12 weeks of flipped professional development with Literacy Masterminds.**

Literacy Masterminds requires teachers to commit to 12 weeks of professional development that includes asynchronous independent work, synchronous collaborative work, and optional office hours for continued support between sessions. This model is excellent for the busy teacher’s schedule, as teachers can plan their time to accommodate the different learning activities. [📄 Sample Week in the Life for a Literacy Masterminds Participant](#) [📄 PD Model Overview](#)



**ADULT ROLES, HIRING,  
& LEARNING**

**On-Your-Own Learning: Asynchronous Independent Work** – On their own, teachers log into Literacy Masterminds’ virtual platform weekly for 12 weeks to build knowledge and skills related to key literacy content. They engage in a variety of learning experiences, including watching videos, completing readings, responding to discussion board prompts, and applying their learning. [▶ Sample On-Your-Own PD Video](#)

- **Videos:** Watching short instructional videos that are engaging, digestible, and aligned to the literacy content of the series.
- **Readings:** Reading content that explains the evidence base underpinning the literacy routine(s) being taught in the series. Examples include, but are not limited to, word recognition and phonics, reciprocal brain processes involved in reading and spelling, phonemic awareness, and orthographic mapping. [📄 Sample Reading from the Fluency Course](#)

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- **Application Assignments:** Completing practical assignments to apply the skills they learn, including planning lessons and trying strategies with students.

**Masterminds Meetings: Synchronous Collaborative Work** – For each of the 12 weeks, teachers also participate in 75-minute online professional learning communities (via Zoom) with a course instructor and grade-level peers. During these professional learning communities, teachers have time to discuss their step-by-step implementation plans and receive support from peers and facilitators as they plan to integrate the literacy routine they are learning into their class curriculum.

Unlike typical PD webinars, these calls are teacher-driven. Teachers are given space to reflect, exchange ideas, and troubleshoot together, helping them feel less isolated and encouraging them to build meaningful connections with other grade-level teachers across campuses.

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# IMPLEMENTATION

## Supports Offered

The Literacy Architects offers the following support to help you implement their approach.

### Weekly PD

*Cost Associated  
Funding Available*



Literacy Masterminds is a multi-week professional development package with three signature 12-week series\*. Each series includes weekly:

- Zoom sessions filled with opportunities to collaborate, lesson plan, and practice with each other
- Asynchronous modules with videos, readings, and learning tasks
- Optional office hours for teachers to receive continued support between sessions
- Emails to participants about next steps re: implementation

Districts can purchase a full cohort of Literacy Masterminds (max 20 teachers), or they can purchase individual seats in community cohorts.

\* Shorter series are available. Learn more on their [website](#).

### [Get In Touch](#)

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## 1:1 Virtual Coaching

Cost Associated



The Literacy Architects, the organization behind the Literacy Masterminds model, offers 1:1 virtual coaching for teachers to support them to implement practices aligned to the science of reading. Features include:

- Virtual pre-observation planning and goal-setting meeting
- Feedback on one 30- to 45-minute observation
- Virtual post-observation meeting
- Customized learning pathway for each teacher to review videos/readings of key literacy strategies ► [Sample 1:1 Individualized Learning Pathway](#)

[Get In Touch](#)

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## Reach

3

Texas  
Districts

4

States

20

Schools in  
Self-Paced  
Courses

## Impact

Literacy Masterminds was launched in 2021. Because the model is young, The Literacy Architects is continuing to collect data on impact. Preliminary data is captured below.

In spring 2022, select TFA DC and TFA Philadelphia Corps Members and Alums participated in a pilot of Literacy Masterminds focused on Series 2: Accelerating Reading Growth Through Fluency.

- 70% of participants decided to continue their learning by participating in a second pilot on Targeting Reading Needs with Advanced Decoding Instruction.
- Confidence ratings and perceived knowledge of key literacy areas improved between a pre- and post-assessment across all key indicators, including:
  - *I know how to support my students' reading growth (67% pre; 100% post)*
  - *I know how to design instruction to target my students' fluency needs (33% pre, 100% post)*
  - *I have a plan for collecting and analyzing diagnostic literacy data (33% pre, 100% post)*
  - *I know how to use small groups to target instruction (67% pre, 80% post)*



- *I know how to lead data-driven activities during my literacy instruction time (44% pre, 100% post)*
- *How confident do you feel designing instruction to target your students' fluency needs? (0% pre, 100% post)*
- *How confident do you feel using reading data to inform instruction? (0% pre, 100% post)*

The Literacy Architects has also collected qualitative feedback to understand the participant experience. Below are a few excerpts from their testimonials. [Additional Literacy Masterminds Series Feedback](#)

- "I would strongly encourage my teaching colleagues to enroll in a Literacy Mastermind course. The instructors are motivating, in addition to knowledgeable. Further, while the content includes theory, it is also highly practical, enabling its quick and effective application in the classroom."
- "It was helpful to talk specifically with colleagues about their classroom experiences—seeing the learning put into action is inspiring!"
- "I appreciated having thought partners as I planned concretely for next week! I liked being able to take the resources that were given to us and think about how they will best work in the classrooms I serve."
- "I love how adaptable this program is, and they actually listen to feedback and make changes almost immediately. I have been able to express concerns or interests and find it implemented in the following week's lesson. This has been the most responsive program I have EVER done. [. . .]"

## Contact

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Managing Director

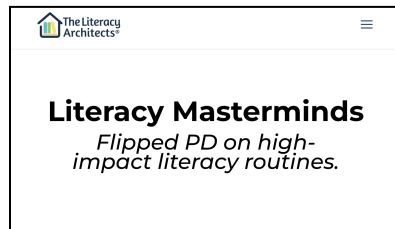
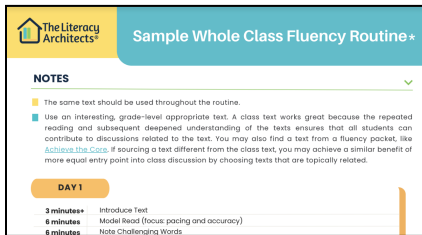
[seema@theliteracyarchitects.com](mailto:seema@theliteracyarchitects.com)

# RESOURCES

 <p><b>INTRODUCING LITERACY MASTERMINDS</b></p> <p><a href="#">Literacy Masterminds Overview</a></p> <p>A document outlining the three 12-week series that</p>	 <p><b>LITERACY MASTERMINDS</b></p> <p>Course Objectives</p> <p><a href="#">Literacy Masterminds Course Objectives</a></p> <p>An overview of the Literacy Masterminds program,</p>	 <p><b>Literacy Masterminds™</b></p> <p>Expert-led. Teacher-driven.</p> <p><a href="#">Literacy Masterminds Testimonial</a></p> <p>A brief video where teachers explain the benefits of Literacy Masterminds on their practice.</p>
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comprise the Literacy Masterminds PD.

including course offerings and objectives.



### [Multi-Day Fluency Routine](#)

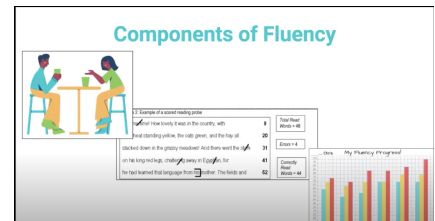
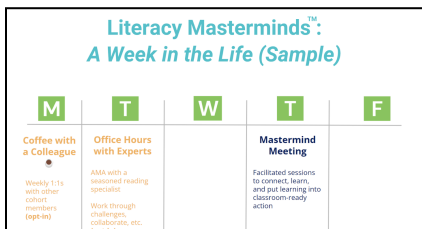
A one-pager outlining the agenda of a brief four-day literacy routine.

### [The Literacy Architects Website](#)

The Literacy Masterminds page on The Literacy Architects website.

### [Video of Partner Reading](#)

A video illustrating a partner reading routine supporting fluency.



### [Literacy Masterminds Sample Week in the Life](#)

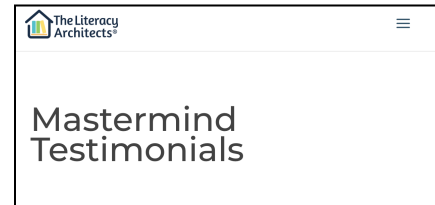
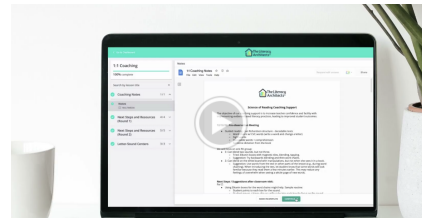
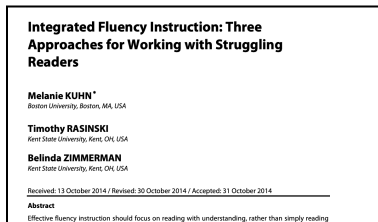
An image depicting how teachers fit Literacy Masterminds into their weekly schedule.

### [PD Model Overview](#)

An image outlining the major components of the 12-week model.

### [Sample On Your Own PD Video](#)

A video used by Literacy Masterminds participants about Fluency and Scarborough's Reading Rope.



### [Sample Reading from Fluency Course](#)

A sample of the type of readings assigned during Literacy Masterminds

### [Sample 1:1 Individualized Learning Pathway](#)

A brief video explaining the 1:1 virtual coaching offering by The Literacy Architects.

### [Literacy Masterminds Series Feedback](#)

Testimonials from former PD participants.