

## CHAPTER 1

# What Do We Need Now to Support Literacy Learning in Our Schools?

Welcome to *Accelerating Learning Recovery for All Students: Core Principles for Getting Literacy Growth Back on Track*. This is a book about effective literacy instruction intended to support practicing teachers, school administrators, reading specialists, literacy coaches, curriculum facilitators, and other educational stakeholders in their efforts to enhance literacy learning and recover student learning loss. This text presents a holistic approach to responsive literacy instruction aimed at supporting students' instructional and social-emotional needs. As schools prepare for supporting literacy instruction aimed at learning recovery, a responsive approach that reflects students' racial and linguistic identities is needed to support meaningful literacy opportunities in and out of school. What is needed as we think now and plan ahead for supporting student literacy growth is not a business-as-usual mindset but rather using the lessons learned from previous years about the strength of partnerships between schools and communities, the important role of students' outside-of-school lives and interests, and how to integrate them into literacy instruction approaches that capitalize on ways to develop more equitable instructional opportunities in schools.

Prior to writing this book, we sat down with principals, teachers, and superintendents and asked, "What do you need *now* to support literacy learning in your schools?" As you can imagine, the responses

varied. Some expressed the need for innovative approaches to literacy interventions, others shared that they needed to rethink student motivation, while others centered on the growing concerns about students' (and teachers') social-emotional needs and lack of interest in school. There were some common themes, but each person we asked answered the question differently, explaining characteristics of their school and needs that were different from the next.

Approaching learning recovery from multiple perspectives is required. Although schools may be tempted to reinstate overly directive literacy curricula to mitigate the learning loss that has resulted in recent years, evidence demonstrates that a "skill-and-drill" approach to supporting student literacy learning rarely supports transferable learning and does not benefit students, particularly students from historically underrepresented communities (Tatum, 2000). In fact, in many cases, prescriptive instructional resources that focus on isolated skills narrow the curriculum and decrease students' motivation to read and write (Vaughn et al., 2020).

Recent educational reforms support this perspective. High-stakes test accountability as promoted by No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2002) and continuing with Race to the Top (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) resulted in restrictive contexts where teachers provided highly prescriptive literacy instruction to ensure student success on high-stakes literacy assessments. Using standardized curricula, teachers faced pressure to adhere to such programs to teach prescriptive literacy curricula to their students although such programs have repeatedly failed to meet the linguistic needs and address the racial and cultural backgrounds of students (Handsfield, 2015) along with disappointing results in achievement, with no gains in students' reading after 5 years of implementation (Gamse et al., 2008).

Continued debate ensues on how to best teach reading, as a set of isolated skills has resulted in a highly politicized educational landscape that may further polarize efforts to improve student literacy achievement. For example, across the nation, the *science of reading* (SoR), a perspective on teaching reading that emphasizes the need for teaching discrete skills in isolation to support reading acquisition, is currently gaining increased attention in schools and in the field of reading. Effective literacy instruction requires that schools prioritize adaptive and culturally responsive practices within the teaching of these skills and possess a view of students' cultures, backgrounds, linguistic strengths, and racial identities as integral in the learning process. We emphasize

that teaching literacy skills *is* indeed essential but that such skills (e.g., phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension) should be taught in connection with authentic instructional tasks focused on supporting students' interests and reflecting students' racial and linguistic identities. Classrooms where students engage in authentic, real-world instructional activities and assessments can provide teachers and schools with the necessary knowledge to develop schoolwide plans aimed at supporting student learning recovery.

As teachers and schools continue to face pay-for-performance measures linked to student achievement, the pressure to comply with requirements that they teach literacy using standardized curricula continues in many schools across the nation. Although such prescriptive programs are widely adopted, such programs continue to fail to meet the linguistic, cultural, and varied instructional needs of students, particularly students from nondominant cultures and minority groups in the nation.

The search for the most effective way to teach reading reminds us of the fallacy of searching for the silver bullet that Duffy and Hoffman (1999) counseled us at the brink of the No Child Left Behind Legislation (2001). In other words, there is no perfect method or silver bullet that works for all students in all schools, no magic curriculum, no singular high-stakes assessments that can provide the panacea for recovering student learning loss now and beyond. Schools across the nation and the world are too diverse for uniformity. Although research has provided much guidance about effective literacy instruction, it cannot be packaged, scripted, or formulaic for all students, meet their instructional and social-emotional needs, and support students' varied prior experiences and linguistic abilities.

Adding to this complexity are the shifting demographics of schools across the United States. Schools face increasingly diverse student populations as they undergo rapid change due in part to political crises, economic insecurities, and natural disasters. For example, the United States has the highest number of immigrants in the world, with one in four people in the U.S. population either a first- or second-generation immigrant (Russell & Mantilla-Blanco, 2022). The influx of immigrant and refugee families provides contexts where teachers teach in dynamic and everchanging classrooms with students from different backgrounds, cultures, and lived experiences who have a variety of interests and motivations, and varying levels of skills, language proficiencies, and abilities.

## **A COLLABORATIVE, ADAPTIVE, AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE APPROACH**

What is needed is a collaborative approach to address this diversity and to enhance literacy learning and recover student learning loss by addressing the whole child. To enhance literacy learning, schools must look at students' instructional needs and social-emotional needs, along with embedding students' cultural and linguistic strengths into the curriculum. Essential to this perspective is the view of teachers as professional decision-makers who adapt and modify their instructional approach to meet a variety of diverse student needs. A learning recovery plan that addresses a whole-child approach extends beyond viewing standardized assessment scores as the primary indicator of student success. Further, it requires innovative thinking that expands beyond implementing intensive remedial interventions that further isolate students and separate students from authentic, engaging, and culturally responsive learning opportunities. Rather, it highlights the need for schools to support student learning opportunities even more intentionally, with remedial efforts focused on developing more equitable and responsive learning environments where students' linguistic repertoires, cultures, and background experiences are invited into the curriculum and where students' motivations and interests for learning are equally encouraged. Critical to this perspective is recognizing the whole child and viewing teachers as skilled, knowledgeable professionals.

Students need multiple strategies to help them continue to navigate learning and to recover the learning loss they have experienced. We must support adaptive and responsive learning environments both in and out of school that help engage and motivate students. Such opportunities can support students academically and emotionally and can simultaneously serve as intellectually rich and culturally responsive learning environments where students can thrive. Responsive instruction and interventions that emphasize literacy skills, motivation, and children's well-being both in and out of school are critical dimensions needed to recover and to support and enhance student literacy learning.

The need to implement authentic, culturally responsive instructional approaches that center on flexible learning environments with a skilled teacher who possesses the necessary pedagogical skills and social-emotional learning understandings of students is vital. We need teachers who can use assessment to guide their instructional actions while implementing curricula that meet the complex needs of today's diverse student populations. This is of particular importance for schools

in communities with historically underrepresented student populations. Central to this is providing students with the opportunities to engage in authentic, real-world learning opportunities that allows students to construct knowledge that builds on their social contexts and deepens their academic skills.

In order to support literacy learning and to recover learning loss, an adaptive instructional approach is necessary as teachers work to support students' literacy needs. Adaptability is a core dimension of effective and responsive literacy instruction. Adaptive instruction is an instructional approach where teachers construct instructional actions focused on students' specific instructional needs and social-emotional needs while supporting opportunities that maximize learning environments that support students' linguistic capabilities, interests, and abilities. Exemplary literacy teachers have been identified as adaptive. In pivotal research on exemplary first- and fourth-grade teachers across the United States, adaptability was considered a central component of teachers' instructional practices (Pressley et al., 2001). Formidable educational theorist John Dewey (1933) is particularly relevant now in our thinking about developing this type of flexibility that we can apply in our thinking and planning for recovering student learning loss. Specifically, Dewey (1933) outlined the type of flexibility we need to embrace as we plan ahead.

Flexibility, ability to take advantage of unexpected incidents and questions, depends upon the teacher's coming to the subject with freshness and fullness of interest and knowledge. There are questions that [they] should ask before the recitation commences. What do the minds of pupils bring to the topic from their previous experience and study? How can I help them make connections? What need, even if unrecognized by them, will furnish a leverage by which to move their minds in the desired direction? What uses and applications will clarify the subject and fix it in their minds? How can the topic be individualized; that is, how shall it be treated so that each one will have something distinctive to contribute while the subject is also adapted to the special deficiencies and particular tastes of each one? (pp. 276–277)

Effective literacy teachers are adaptive and have the necessary pedagogical content knowledge to enact instructional actions expertly and innovatively in response to the specific instructional situation at hand and to support student literacy learning. The need for a flexible and adaptive approach is paramount as we move forward in the field. For this reason, we emphasize *principles* of literacy teaching and learning

aimed at addressing the instructional shifts schools must focus on to target areas in which many students have fallen behind. Armed with scientifically based principles of effective literacy instruction, school leaders and teachers can flexibly apply these principles in ways that are responsive to the individual students, contexts, and standards in which they work. This approach elevates the role of teachers as highly educated professionals with deep knowledge about their students and schools who approach teaching from an adaptive and responsive mindset to support student learning. The overriding goal of this book concerns the central question *How can schools enhance literacy learning to recover learning loss now and beyond?*

As we think about this question, we must understand what our beliefs are and how we situate students, teachers, and instructional interventions. Beliefs are tools to help us connect what we think, from our personal experiences, knowledge of pedagogy, students, and content. For teachers and principals, beliefs influence instructional practices, intervention plans, and various aspects of classroom and schooling. Our beliefs influence whether or not we think we can pursue a task, and we weigh whether or not we want to put forward the necessary effort to work toward completing a task. In other words, our beliefs guide what it is we want to do and what we think we can do. Beliefs set the stage for preparing our actions in our work. For example, prior to writing this book, we met and discussed our core beliefs about our work in schools. Because we have known each other for well over a decade, we had a good idea already about our central beliefs about literacy interventions. However, by discussing and reflecting on our collective beliefs, we were able to carefully orient our positions, while examining our understandings and knowledge about supporting environments focused on enhancing all students' literacy learning. Critically examining our goals and beliefs allows for us to guide our instructional decisions about what we value and the actions we want to take to pursue them. Accordingly, we outline these below.

***Our core goal is to support students, teachers, and learning environments so that literacy learning is effective and equitable for all.***

Our beliefs are focused on this goal and are central to our instructional actions—how we work alongside teachers and administrators in the schools where we work, how we teach our students in our teacher preparation courses and in professional development, and how we interact as parents with our individual children and their schools. This core goal is guided by our beliefs. Connected to this goal is our vision. We will talk more about visioning in Chapter 3, but we want to include

visioning in this section briefly because beliefs are also connected to visioning and allow for teachers and schools to envision what it is they wish for their students, their work as teachers, and their classrooms and schools. Visioning is a “conscious sense of self, of one’s work, of one’s mission . . . a personal stance on teaching that rises from deep within the inner teacher” (Duffy, 2002, p. 334). Visioning is deeply tied to beliefs and how teachers and schools can imagine a “mental model” (Duffy, 2005), and to a “self-understanding about a commitment to extended outcomes” (Fairbanks et al., 2010).

Schoolwide visioning processes are influential decision-making spaces because they help set the agenda for action within a school. Vision is not just about the wordsmithed statements in school improvement plans or mottos painted in a school lobby. Put simply, visions can be tools the school community can use to make consequential improvements and decisions. (Rodela & Bertrand, 2021, p. 469)

Teachers and schools must collaboratively discuss their visions with one another and invite students, parents, and communities into this envisioning process. Visions are guided by our beliefs and serve to support the many actions we may take. For example, our vision for writing this book was to create a comprehensive text that reflects theories on ways to support students, teachers, and to provide a pathway for supporting literacy recovery and enhancing student literacy learning now and beyond. This vision is supported by the belief that students have strengths, teachers are professionals, and learning environments that are adaptive and flexible support opportunities for authentic and culturally responsive literacy instruction that is needed to enhance literacy learning and recover student learning loss. We discuss these beliefs further below.

## **BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENTS’ LITERACY GROWTH**

Before we begin outlining the principles in each chapter, we share our core beliefs rooted in research on teaching and learning and our work as former classroom teachers and now literacy researchers. These beliefs guide our vision and influence understandings of how to apply principles to instructional actions. Beliefs shape how our understandings of how we think and learn are conceptualized into practice. Through critical reflection of these core beliefs, we can implement more equitable

learning environments for our students. The following beliefs about students and learning recovery are essential when thinking about how to implement and design learning environments where all students can grow, achieve, and excel.

## **Beliefs about Students**

When we think about core beliefs about students, we must recognize that central to what we know about supporting students is the understanding that students come to school with rich background experiences, cultures, and knowledge, and possess linguistic repertoires that demonstrate sophisticated understandings about literacy and language usage. Meaningful and equitable learning opportunities support the inclusion of students' background knowledge, prior experiences, languages, and cultures. Below we outline the underlying beliefs about students' literacy growth that guide the principles outlined in the upcoming chapters.

### ***Belief #1. Students' families and communities are essential partners in supporting students' literacy learning.***

Families and communities are inherently students' first teachers and possess knowledge and skills that can support student learning. Moll and colleagues (1992) emphasize that students and families come to school with funds of knowledge. The funds-of-knowledge approach to viewing literacy learning means that students' first languages, cultures, and prior knowledge and experiences are important and valid and provide schools with rich opportunities to learn about students' lives. Teachers should invite students' funds of knowledge into the classroom and learn about ways to embed this knowledge into daily instructional practices. The funds-of-knowledge perspective counters a deficit-oriented perspective expressing the belief that a student's lack of academic success is unrelated to schooling but is indicative of students' lives, languages, and cultures. Instead, viewing students from a funds-of-knowledge lens accurately portrays how educators can view their students and families. These beliefs about students as knowledge generators allows for a rich lens to view how to develop learning opportunities to support learning recovery. Critical to this is the understanding that:

- Students come to school with rich background experiences, cultural knowledge, and linguistic repertoires.
- Students' families and communities are knowledgeable partners.



- Classroom materials and instruction should reflect the diversity of students' families and their communities and invite funds of knowledge into the classroom.

Moll and colleagues (1992) emphasize that far too often schools have neglected to view students and families with a funds-of-knowledge orientation. However, the funds-of-knowledge lens on literacy learning supports learning environments where students' first languages, cultures, and prior knowledge and experiences are invited into the curriculum. Educators can invite students to share their languages and prior experiences, along with their families and communities, to support opportunities for literacy learning (see Chapter 2). You can see this in innovative community literacy programs like increasing access to books in communities and also in schoolwide initiatives to provide before-school and after-school tutoring for students (see Chapter 7) where the curriculum invites students' out-of-school lives and interests into curricular approaches.

***Belief #2. Students have assets and strengths as readers and writers.***

All students have assets and strengths, especially those who are underperforming. Central to this is the understanding that all students can thrive in school and have motivations and interests that schools can support. Given directives to increase student performance on standardized literacy assessments, you will often see, in the spring of each school year, blitz testing preparation where students receive intensive test preparation through repetitive instructional drills. For many students, by the time the state test comes around, they are stressed and exhausted. This approach to supporting student literacy learning at all costs is counterintuitive. As schools move into planning for student literacy growth and learning recovery, the role of authentic instructional assessments is critical so that we can move beyond viewing student literacy learning from a narrow frame of achievement as indicated by a score on a standardized assessment. Schoolwide literacy achievement and recovering from learning loss centers on a student-asset-driven mindset where questions focus on what students currently have, what students need to support their motivation and instructional needs, and what schools can do to support students' strengths and extend their learning. Accordingly, the following must reflect our beliefs about students as we plan for learning recovery:

- All students can learn to read and write and excel.
- We must promote high expectations for all students.
- Students must be able to see themselves and others in classroom materials and engage with culturally responsive materials.

When we view students as knowledgeable from an asset-driven mindset in the learning recovery process, we understand that students have instructional needs and strengths that must be supported. We emphasize that we must have high expectations for all students and our instructional approaches must center on engaging students with curricula and learning activities that reflect the rich diversity of today's student populations.

Instructional approaches must center on authentic and engaging literacy experiences and not isolated, prescriptive instructional activities where students are viewed as passive learners. In classrooms and innovative interventions, we see students and teachers working collaboratively, where interventions and assessments emphasize literacy skills and student motivation (see Chapter 6).

## Beliefs about Teachers

*Belief #3. Teachers are knowledgeable professionals who possess the insight and knowledge to deliver instruction that is focused on the individual strengths of the students with whom they work.*

Teachers use their professional knowledge and instructional vision to support student learning and to craft instructional actions to meet the specific and individual needs of the students in front of them. Essentially, our belief about teachers is that teachers are knowledgeable professionals who possess the necessary skills and dispositions to support students' literacy learning. Much like orienting our vision for schoolwide achievement and learning loss from a student-asset-driven mindset, we must also direct our approach to teachers in the same manner, asking ourselves, "What do teachers currently have to support their students, what do teachers need, and what can we do to support their professional abilities to support student literacy learning?" Central to this is the view that:

- Effective teachers are reflective decision makers.
- Teachers enhance opportunities for student learning and make connections with students using a variety of approaches.

- Teachers use a variety of assessments to support student learning outcomes.

Vital to this view of teachers is trusting that teachers are autonomous decision makers who make professional decisions to scaffold and support student learning. As we have seen ever more clearly in recent months, teachers are remarkable, knowledgeable, and highly capable and can make flexible decisions about their instructional actions. Adherence to one prescriptive literacy curriculum to *fidelity* to meet the needs of all students is in stark contrast to a view of teachers as professionals. In order to enhance student literacy learning and mitigate the effects of learning loss it is vital to view teachers as knowledgeable professionals who have the skills and insight to creatively adapt their instruction to support the varied instructional and social-emotional needs of their students. Throughout the chapters that follow in this book, we emphasize this belief.

***Belief #4. Teachers are visionary co-collaborators in school reform.***

One of our favorite metaphors that has been used to think about teachers in the process of school change and reform is how teachers are the “linchpins” in educational reform (Cochran-Smith, 2005). According to Webster, a linchpin is “a person or thing vital to an organization” or “a pin passed through the end of an axle to keep a wheel in position.” Put simply, without linchpins, the wheels would fall off. Similarly, without teachers a school would not work. Teachers are vital in schools. A core belief essential in guiding all of the principles in this book is that teachers are visionary co-collaborators and should be valued in the school reform process, especially as we talk about supporting literacy learning recovery in students. This includes inviting teachers into schoolwide decision making (see Chapter 4) while providing the necessary structures and support to encourage schools where teachers are viewed as leaders helping to structure their learning and the learning of their peers in a community of practice (see Chapter 3). This view emphasizes that teachers are adaptive and innovative. In this view:

- Teachers possess a vision for students and teaching.
- Teachers must have agency in their roles.
- Teachers are committed partners to support student learning and school success.

When we think about our beliefs about teachers, we can see how such a view emphasizes the importance of structures and supports that are necessary to create learning environments that support both students and teachers in the learning recovery process.

## Beliefs about Learning Environments

Learning environments that support opportunities for students to learn include spaces where students can explore their interests and topics that are relevant to their lives. Think about a time in your schooling where you were heavily invested in what you were learning. I (Margaret) immediately think back to my seventh-grade English class, where my teacher, Ms. Hanset, invited students to find poetry we liked and to write a poem based on the topic presented or to self-select our own topic of interest. You, too, probably have several schooling experiences that you remember where you were heavily engaged, felt valued, and thrived. Now, compare it to a time when you were passive, and the learning provided minimal engaging opportunities. For example, I think about a history class I took as an undergraduate where the professor lectured for an entire hour with no student input or collaborative discussion or meaningful activities. The only way I stayed engaged (and awake) was to try to write down what he said in my notebook, word for word, as he lectured. I am not a fast writer, so this strategy barely worked. Perhaps like me, if you compare the content and skills you learned across these two settings, you can remember exactly what you learned in the engaging context and only a minimal amount about the other context. For example, the poem I selected was “A Coney Island of the Mind” by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and I wish I remembered any of the history taught in that history class. Repeatedly, research shows that learning environments that invite students’ cultures, prior experiences, interests, and motivations into the classroom provide richer opportunities for student learning.

***Belief #5. Effective learning environments are engaging and culturally responsive to students.***

Consider what you see when you walk into an effective literacy teacher’s classroom. What do you see? More than likely you see evidence of all these beliefs either overtly displayed (e.g., students have choice in what they are doing and self-select high-interest texts) or things are not necessarily visible (e.g., teachers are making reflective decisions in the moment to then enact instructional decisions in the next moment).

Across these overt and covert dimensions, you see that students are actively engaged in meaningful instruction, pursuing their ideas and meaningful literacy activities relevant to their lives and interests. You also see that the teacher is providing instruction that is flexible, not prescriptive, to support student learning and cultivate an active learning environment. In these spaces, students are active learners, not passive in their approach to what they are doing.

In learning environments that are engaging and culturally responsive, students are viewed as co-collaborators and are encouraged to pursue their interests, ideas, and passions. In classrooms where students excel, authentic experiences across the curriculum are planned, and students are invited to use a variety of materials to pursue their interests. Consider how learning is viewed in classrooms where the beliefs about students and teachers as outlined previously are encouraged. In these classrooms, students have agency and are supported in their efforts to engage in authentic, meaning-making activities across the curriculum (Parsons, Malloy et al., 2018; Vaughn, 2021). Accordingly, these learning environments support:

- Authentic and engaging instructional tasks.
- Opportunities for students to utilize a variety of materials and modes (e.g., high-interest texts, technology).
- Literacy activities that are flexible and adaptive, and that invite students into the decision-making process.

As a result, a central belief about learning environments is that they must be intentionally structured to provide access and opportunities for high-quality and engaging literacy instruction. We discuss more about such spaces across several of the following chapters (e.g., Chapter 6).

***Belief #6. Effective learning environments support opportunities for students to thrive.***

Approaching students from an asset-oriented mindset aligns with a view of literacy learning where students have agency as readers and writers and are motivated to learn. By agency, we reference how students choose what it is they want to learn about while developing literacy skills rooted in authentic experiences that take place in classrooms where students participate in real-world, engaging literacy experiences throughout the instructional day and beyond. In these learning environments, students thrive.

We explore this idea more in Chapters 5 and 6, where we discuss targeted differentiated instructional strategies and interventions focused on increasing students' motivation and engagement with reading. For example, when scaffolding instruction to support student reading comprehension, one core practice is to provide opportunities where students can engage in high-interest, culturally responsive texts that they find interesting on topics they wish to pursue. Within this environment, to support students and their agency as readers and writers, there must be opportunities for students to engage with:

- Authentic learning opportunities.
- Writing, composing, creating, and talking opportunities using a variety of modes (e.g., first languages).
- Opportunities to choose what and how students read and write.

We discuss more learning environments conducive to these aspects in Chapter 7 when we address how to structure purposeful literacy instruction before and after school where students develop literacy for real-world problem solving and their interests.

Our beliefs about students, teachers, and learning environments shape the decision-making process in terms of how to structure literacy instruction that can support student learning recovery. In keeping these core beliefs central in planning, we can apply the principles outlined in this book to support ways to meet increasingly diverse students' instructional, linguistic, and social and emotional learning (SEL) needs.

As Figure 1.1 suggests, students, teachers, and learning environments are interconnected to enhance literacy learning and recover student learning loss in schools. Central to this is the understanding that as we plan for schoolwide reform, we hold these beliefs about students, teachers, and learning environments as our foundation. Students possess linguistic and cultural strengths that are central in constructing literacy experiences. Teachers and schools must possess a vision for students where students' families and their lived experiences, languages, and racial and cultural identities are invited into the classroom. Teachers must be viewed as autonomous decision makers who possess necessary skills and knowledge and reflect on their instructional actions to support student learning. These teachers view students as active meaning makers, highly engaged in the reading and writing process. Learning environments are active and generative spaces where students participate in meaningful, authentic learning experiences focused on high-interest and motivating tasks and activities.

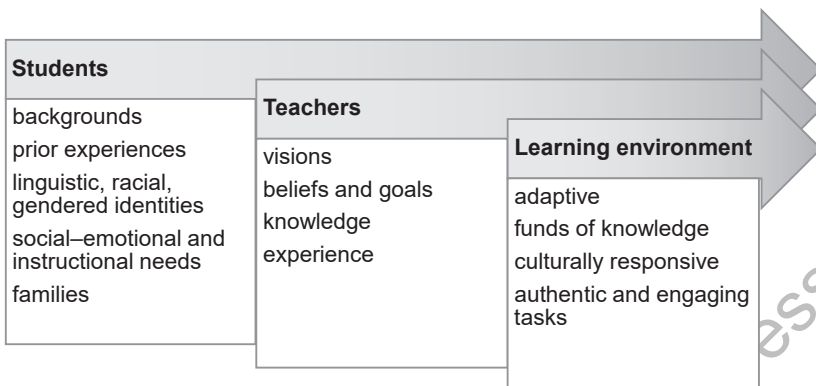


FIGURE 1.1. Partnering for learning recovery.

## PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Much as there is no silver bullet to increase literacy achievement for all, we want to recognize the many aspects of where we are in the field that allow for a contextualized discussion on supporting student learning recovery. There are so many aspects of our lives where schools are in control: from allocating resources to planning schedules, to developing instructional plans, to supporting students across varying levels. However, there are also aspects of students’ lives and communities where schools are not in control, for example, providing universal preschool, addressing community development disparities in equal access to resources and materials, and instituting policy reform for wider national educational movements.

We support such efforts and want to encourage and advocate for such measures but recognize that schools are an important part of a multi-tiered network of systems and structures intended to support individuals, communities, and families. There are so many aspects of student learning recovery that extend well beyond the realities of what schools can feasibly do. We are strong advocates and dedicated allies of public schools and wrote this book to highlight some of the areas where we *do* have control as educators working within a broader system and structure on ways to support students and teachers and create learning environments that invite students’ lives into the classroom.

An intentional and responsive approach to supporting students’ literacy needs requires specialized knowledge of pedagogy and adaptability

in order to support literacy learning and to recover learning loss. As schools prepare for supporting literacy instruction aimed at enhancing literacy learning now and beyond, an adaptive instructional approach is needed that can support authentic and culturally relevant opportunities in and out of school. A schoolwide plan must support students' linguistic repertoires and cultural backgrounds while enhancing interventions that emphasize literacy skills and motivation both in and out of school through innovative practices aimed at recovering student achievement gains. A responsive and targeted approach to literacy instruction is needed now more than ever in today's schools. To make the things we can do even more visible, we highlight *principles* aimed at supporting schools in their efforts to target student literacy learning and recovery now and beyond.

## **CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK**

In each of the following chapters, we outline a principle and related theories that show just what we can do to support student learning, holding these core beliefs as central in our decision-making process. For example, we can strengthen school–community partnerships (Chapter 2) and develop a schoolwide plan to support student learning recovery (Chapter 3), while implementing collaborative and distributed literacy leadership (Chapter 4) and using assessment to differentiate literacy instruction (Chapter 5) so we can design targeted interventions that support literacy skills and motivation (Chapter 6). Finally, we can align authentic learning experiences and adaptive instructional approaches with supplemental learning programs in and out of school (Chapter 7) to enhance literacy learning and recover learning loss. We then provide a concluding chapter tying the main principles together and summarizing next steps (Chapter 8). Within each chapter, we provide discussion ideas and questions in the “On Reflection” section so that readers can take ideas presented in the chapter and apply their thinking to actionable items.

## **CONCLUSION**

Schools face extraordinary pressures in these times of extreme uncertainty and complex demands on elevating student performance and recovering student learning loss. Many students have experienced



trauma in recent months, from the global pandemic to the heightened racialized violence across communities and schools. In the chapters that follow, we outline principles to guide schools in accelerating all students' literacy learning post-pandemic and beyond. When developing a post-pandemic approach to enhancing literacy learning and instruction, school leaders and teachers can use these principles to make sound decisions that are rooted in scientifically based research to support students' learning. We discuss relevant theories about supporting adaptive and flexible environments aimed at supporting students' literacy learning. Principles are fundamental understandings that serve as the foundation for behavior—in this case, instructional behavior. Focusing on principles allows for responsive and contextually informed implementation of scientifically based literacy instruction.

We invite you, as you read through the chapters, to reflect on the core beliefs about students, teachers, and learning environments. We suggest thinking about how the beliefs and the principles outlined in these chapters can provide a collaborative approach to developing adaptive and responsive environments focused on students' instructional needs while embedding interventions and instructional plans rooted in students' linguistic strengths, cultural knowledge, linguistic repertoires, and background experiences.

### ON REFLECTION

- Think about your classroom/school/community beliefs about learning recovery. Create a list of these beliefs and share them with all stakeholders, inviting feedback and revision to these beliefs.
- Using these collaborative beliefs, create a T-chart outlining “If we believe *this*, our actions should reflect *this*,” and provide specific, targeted actions to complete the chart.
- What are some experiences that have occurred in the past month/year that have shaped your commitment to learning recovery? How have they influenced your beliefs?