

The Woes of Winter and the Impact on Instructional Momentum

By Gina Fugnitto | Categories: Individualized Daily Reading, Implementation

This winter!

It has brought with it an unprecedented number of snow days across the country, impacting the stamina of teachers, students, and parents. It has affected instructional momentum and student learning.

What can we do to regain instructional momentum, increase stamina, and support student learning?

The Greatest Impact: Mastery of Foundational Skills

With disjointed small-group instruction in Sets 1–5 and limited opportunities for students to practice the foundational skills in texts, we are seeing an increased number of students not pass the Mastery Tests. Here are some things you can do:

- Don't jump right into instruction! Yes, that is what we are recommending.
- Spend time reviewing previously learned spelling-sounds and high-frequency words.
- Spend time rereading the books from the current set of instruction as well as the previous set of instruction. Don't forget the practice/reteach books!
- Bring back the sorts! Ask students to practice sorts for the current and previous set of instruction during Independent work.
- Revisit the Group Progress Assessment(s) for the current set of instruction, review the suggestions offered, and determine if there are suggestions that might support student acquisition of the foundational skills.

Considerations Across the Literacy Strands

Use the list below to support your planning and decision-making as you strive to regain instructional momentum. Yes, we realize we are asking you to slow things down a bit! Allowing students time to reactivate their learning is essential.

For those educators whose schedules have been impacted the most, the starting point for regaining instructional momentum should be when they are able to provide a full five days of instruction.

Community-Building

Consider the state of the classroom community.

- Provide time for students to catch up and reconnect.
- Revisit classroom expectations.
- Practice cooperative structures.

Shared Reading

Kindergarten and first-grade students will benefit from rereading the Shared Reading texts.

- Select a few of the big books to enjoy together as a class. Use the echo and choral reading techniques, and discuss the story.

- Spend time rereading the poems in the Poetry Reader. Encourage students to locate any high-frequency words and spelling-sounds they have learned.

Word Study

The second part of the school year provides instruction of pivotal word-learning strategies for second-grade students.

- Revisit and practice previously learned word-learning strategies.
- Ask students to identify unknown words from their reading and guide them to use the strategies previously taught.

Small-group Reading Sets 7-12

Allow students the opportunity to settle back into the small-group instruction.

- Revisit previously taught texts for the purpose of rereading and discussing.
- Consider if there is a need to engage in the More Strategy Practice or Extension activities from previous weeks.

IDR

All students (as well as teachers) need to regain their reading stamina! The best way to do this is to engage in reading for an extended amount of time.

- Provide a variety of easier books for students to read in order to build stamina and support fluency.
- Slightly reduce the amount of IDR reading time to ensure all students are able to engage in the work. Over time, add those lost minutes back on!
- Revisit the IDR sections from previous lessons and provide students the opportunity to practice those strategies.
- Review the IDR Mini-lessons and determine if the students might benefit from experiencing the offered instruction, either in small groups or with the whole class.

Writing Time

All students (as well as teachers) need to regain their writing stamina! The best way to do so is to engage in writing for an extended amount of time.

- Provide ample opportunities for students quick-write and regain their voice.
- Revisit previous writing. Ask students to reread, reflect, and consider their previous writing.

The publishing process might be impacted as well. Consider where in the unit the students' writing was impacted the most and adjust to meet their needs. Students may need reteaching or permission to give up a piece of writing.

Come on, spring!

As we wait for the glory of spring to spread across the country, consider the aspects of instruction that will help you regain instructional momentum and best support student learning. Student success is contingent on the strategic decisions you make across the remaining days of instruction.