

Decide What Independent Reading Looks Like in Your School

Knowledge workers are defined as people who work in fields requiring the exchange and use of knowledge. Educators fall into this category. Peter Drucker, Simon Sinek, Daniel Pink, and other thought leaders in the field of leadership and management have explored the unique aspects of working with knowledge workers. To make meaningful change, knowledge workers need to know and understand the “why” of the work—its purpose. And it’s equally important to remember to revisit regularly the “why” of your own work (Pink, 2011; Sinek, Mead, & Docker, 2017). Why do you want students to read independently at school? Here’s what I suggest.

1. Meet as a leadership team and discuss the benefits of independent reading. What does the research say about it? How does it help students to be successful in school and after they move on? Why is it especially important to students who may not have opportunities to read independently at home?
2. Determine what is already happening on campus to support independent reading time. Are there practices to expand or eliminate? What are the best strategies being implemented and how can the staff learn from them and grow together?
3. If independent reading is not happening, figure out how to carve out 30 minutes for it during the school day. Remember, it is not an add-on, but rather an integral part of a robust ELA curriculum. It must become a priority in your school. Allocating time to it will be evidence of your commitment.
4. Discuss how you will support emergent bilingual, immigrant, and refugee students during independent reading time. What resources are needed to support those students?
5. Develop an implementation plan for schoolwide independent reading. You may roll it out one grade level at a time, but be sure, within a reasonable amount of time, students in all grades, from all language backgrounds, are spending time in their day reading on their own.