

2024

PROJECT ARISE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reading Instruction and Intervention (RII) grant program generates and disseminates professional learning opportunities for educators in the areas of evidence-based literacy, intensive literacy interventions, and support of pupils' executive functioning skills. Led by Contra Costa County Office of Education in collaboration with Glenn County Office of Education and San Diego County Office of Education, Project ARISE (Accelerating Reading Intervention for Systemic Excellence) aims to improve literacy outcomes for all students through the implementation of research-backed literacy instruction and interventions, grounded in whole-child principles, across all schools by engaging local education agencies (LEAs) at multiple levels of differentiated support. Project ARISE responds to the urgent need to intervene appropriately when students are struggling with literacy, particularly English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities, students with dyslexia, and students dually identified.

The evaluation of Project ARISE includes three phases (planning, formative, and summative). This report summarizes Year 2 grant activities and focuses primarily on the planning and formative phases of the evaluation. Our findings inform recommendations for Year 3 activities, to support the ongoing development and implementation of Project ARISE and the continuous learning of the program team.

INITIAL FINDINGS

The online course sequence is high-quality, but only a fraction of educators statewide has enrolled:

- Five Project ARISE courses, containing 35 hours of content, are available at no cost to all California educators.
- Just under 1,500 participants have enrolled in the courses, 15% of the yearly recruitment goal.

Collaboration and coordination are key to program success and program coherence:

- Three County Offices of Education and six partner organizations have effectively designed and launched Project ARISE across the state of California.
- Across these organizations, different conceptions of program design exist.

Professional development boosted teacher learning and online course effectiveness by closely aligning content and instructional modeling with course materials:

- When site-based professional development included instructional modeling, participants reported shifts in conceptions of literacy instruction.
- When online course content was embedded within site-based professional development, participants had a 70% course completion rate. Multiple sites with this support reached close to 100% course completion.

The Implementation Network required clear communication of prerequisite learning expectations to support engagement and create system-level change:

- Despite the Implementation Network's original sequential design following online course completion, Implementation Network participants had varying levels of course completion prior to the network's launch, limiting the network's ability to meaningfully and reliably extend course learning.
- Between each Implementation Network meeting, attendance decreased slightly but steadily. Over the year, attendance decreased by 25%. Participant time spent in each meeting decreased by 12% over the year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reconceptualize and Accelerate Statewide Recruitment Efforts
- Clarify and Communicate Program Structure and Objectives
- Enhance Online Course Training and Support Materials
- Incentivize and Enhance In-person Professional Development Delivery
- Improve Implementation Network Design and Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Assembly Bill 130, Section 145 (Statutes of 2021) of the Education Omnibus Trailer Bill authorized \$10 million to the Reading Instruction and Intervention (RII) grant program to generate and disseminate professional learning opportunities for educators in the areas of evidence-based literacy, intensive literacy interventions, and support of pupils' executive functioning skills. The RII Grant Program aligns with and contributes resources to California's Statewide System of Support (SoS). Additionally, the RII Grant Program aims to support educators across the state in integrating and implementing the California Comprehensive State Literacy Plan (SLP), adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) in March 2021.

The California Department of Education (CDE) awarded Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) \$9.8 million in RII funds for Project ARISE. The San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) and Glenn County Office of Education (GCOE) join as regional partners in the statewide implementation of Project ARISE. Project ARISE partners also include multiple institutions of higher education and technical assistance providers, including: Center for Whole Child Education at Arizona State University (The Center), TNTP, the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII), University of La Verne, and University of California San Francisco. Aligned to the goals outlined by the CDE, Project ARISE aims to build capacity of school leaders and educators to:

1. Lead evidence-based reading instruction, including biliteracy instruction, for diverse learners, including early learners, English learner students, pupils with disabilities, and pupils with dyslexia
2. Develop knowledge and skills for appropriate use of screening strategies and evidence-based literacy instruction, including biliteracy instruction, for diverse learners
3. Implement intensive intervention strategies for pupils struggling with literacy, including tutoring and small group strategies, and strategies for target pupil groups
4. Support the development of pupils' executive functioning skills

The overarching goal of Project ARISE, which stands for Accelerating Reading Intervention for Systemic Excellence, is to improve literacy outcomes for all students through the implementation of research-backed literacy instruction and interventions across all schools by engaging local education agencies (LEAs) at multiple levels of differentiated support. Project ARISE responds to the urgent need to intervene appropriately when students are struggling with literacy, particularly the following student groups: English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities, students with dyslexia, and students dually identified. Foci of the project, aligned to CDE goals, include:

- Improving Tier 1 Literacy Instruction, informed by research-backed frameworks such as the science of reading, whole child design, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and MTSS
- Increasing LEAs' and educators' capacities to understand and implement site-based literacy screeners with fidelity
- Increasing LEAs' capacity, including partners from across the system, to implement and sustain research-backed literacy instructional practices
- Creating a state-wide network of educators and LEAs engaged in sustaining the implementation of research backed literacy instruction and interventions

BACKGROUND

The goals of Project ARISE are not new to California or the nation, yet there has been, in the wake of the pandemic, a renewed focus on the research behind effective literacy instruction and a general inquiry into why effective literacy instruction is not universally implemented in classrooms around the country. For decades, the National Reading Panel has stressed five core components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. While ideological divides do present barriers for implementation of these five components, Project ARISE takes up as its focus the largest barrier preventing teachers from implementing research-based literacy instruction: the lack of pre- and in-service learning opportunities grounded in the core components of reading instruction available to teachers.

As current research and practice continues to present the need for high-quality reading instruction for all students, teachers report that their preparation programs did not equip them with the skills and knowledge to teach foundational literacy skills, such as phonological and phonemic awareness. Project ARISE takes on the challenge of supporting educators to develop the skills and knowledge to teach all students to read. In California, only 2% of educator preparation programs teach the five core components of reading instruction, compared to 25% of teacher preparation programs nationwide, according to the National Council on Teacher Quality (Ellis et al., 2023). Even more troubling, 44% of California's teacher preparation programs address none of the core components in their coursework for aspiring teachers. In the National Council on Teacher Quality's analysis, California comes in 49th in the nation for the quality of reading instruction available to aspiring educators. It is important to note the steps California is taking to address this, such as Senate Bill 488, which tightens scrutiny on literacy coursework and fieldwork in teacher preparation programs. While research seems clear on the need for foundational literacy instruction to develop students' phonological and phonemic awareness (Gersten, 2007; Salinger et al., 2010; Foorman et al., 2016; Moje et al., 2020), we must now turn our attention to supporting all educators to develop their capacity to enact instructional strategies that they likely neither experienced as students nor learned while entering the profession.

Additionally, Project ARISE's deliberate focus on supporting the reading development of diverse learners, in particular students with dyslexia, students with disabilities, English learners (EL), and dually-identified students, responds to and centers students largely unrepresented in pre-service and in-service teacher training programs (Lucas, Strom, Bratkovich, & Wnuk, 2018), resulting in persistent inequitable educational outcomes (De Bre, 2019) and lower instructional quality (Lai et al., 2021). While difficult to accurately account for all cases, especially in California where dyslexia screening is not yet mandated, experts agree that roughly one in 10 students is dyslexic (Stoker et al., 2019). In the 2022-2023 school year, 1.113 million students in California were EL, according to the California Department of Education, representing 19% of the total enrollment in public schools. These 1.113 million students reflect incredible diversity, representing over 100 languages and numerous cultures, races and ethnicities, and nationalities. Compared to their non-EL peers, ELs are both over-identified as having a specific learning disability or a speech or language impairment and are simultaneously under-identified for disabilities (Zacarian, 2022), highlighting the need for research-backed instruction and intervention for diverse learners, including universally accessible dyslexia screeners in multiple languages. Project ARISE's focus on ELs, students

with disabilities, students with dyslexia, and students dually identified must be unwavering in the face of both persistently inequitable educational outcomes for California’s most vulnerable students and a teacher preparation landscape slow to respond to the real needs of teachers within classrooms.

Post-pandemic CAASPP scores, which dropped in both ELA (-4.4%) and math (-5.1%), highlighted the educational inequities California students experienced during the pandemic, erasing years of consistent growth throughout the state. Concerning, too, are the mental health challenges proliferating across schools due to the pandemic (Li, 2022), indicating a need for whole-child approaches to supporting children’s emotional and academic development (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018), while also codifying a definition of “whole-child” to support educators’ understanding of it in relation to other initiatives and frameworks (Brackenridge, 2024). California’s MTSS framework, for example, includes the “Whole Child Domain” as one of its five domains and includes definitions of its core components. While research on pandemic learning loss could result in an amplified focus on the acceleration of learning through the increase of classroom instructional time (Kane & Reardon, 2023), other researchers point to the need for a heightened focus on student well-being, belonging, and social development, which they argue is neurologically necessary for learning to occur (Hamilton & Gross, 2021).

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The internal evaluation of Project ARISE is led by the San Diego County Office of Education Evaluation team. The evaluation includes three phases (planning, formative, and summative), and data collection and reporting will span the phases where appropriate.

The formative and summative phases have been driven by the logic model developed during the initial planning phase of this evaluation. Additionally, the evaluation team has collaborated with key partners to develop data collection protocols. The evaluation team’s approach focuses resources on the collection of rich and varied data types, both qualitative and quantitative, and has engaged a team with expertise in coordinating findings from these different types of data in all phases of the project. Using mixed methods in both the formative and summative evaluations, rather than a singular qualitative or quantitative approach to each one, provides continuity throughout the grant period as well as nuanced and informative evaluation reporting.

The internal evaluation of Project ARISE was organized around key evaluation questions co-constructed in partnership with the program leadership. These questions were both formative and summative in nature, supporting the ongoing development and implementation of Project ARISE while also supporting program leadership’s understanding of the project’s ongoing impact. In the project’s first year of implementation, this report focuses on formative questions to support the ongoing design and implementation of Project ARISE.

A comprehensive list of evaluation questions with accompanying data sources can be found in the appendix. The data collection during the 2023-2024 reporting period attempted to respond to these questions through the triangulation of multiple data sources. The following formative questions were most salient during the first year of implementation:

1. What progress is being made toward implementing Project ARISE as it was designed?
2. What barriers have emerged in implementing Project ARISE as it was designed?

In subsequent reports, the following summative question will be reported on:

3. To what extent did the project meet its outcomes?

Our evaluation approach focuses resources on the collection of rich and varied data types, both qualitative and quantitative, and coordinates findings from these different types of data in all phases of the project to respond to the above evaluation questions. We use a mixed methods approach throughout our evaluation to provide nuanced and informative evaluation reporting.

INTERVIEWS

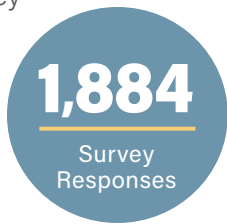
We conducted interviews with two audiences, program leadership and district and school partners participating in the Implementation Network, guided by distinct evaluation questions and interview protocols. In our interviews with project leadership, we gathered perspectives on the early implementation of Project ARISE from all participating organizations. This included project leadership (n=14) from the three county offices of education: Contra

Costa County Office of Education, Glenn County Office of Education, and San Diego County Office of Education. These interviews also included all partner organizations: TNTP, The Center for Whole Child Education (The Center), National Center for Intensive Intervention (NCII), University of La Verne, and University of California San Francisco (UCSF). Interviews with project leadership surfaced their perspectives on the successes and challenges in program design, collaboration between partners, recruitment efforts, and early implementation within districts and schools. Interviews with participants in the Implementation Network (n=11) represented district administrators, site administrators, and instructional leaders in multiple districts participating in San Diego County and Glenn County. These interviews gathered perspectives from school and district partners on in-person professional development, Implementation Network meetings, the online course sequence, and any successes and challenges they had experienced working with Project ARISE. Interviews lasted one hour and were conducted virtually.



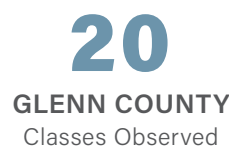
SURVEY

To evaluate the ongoing experiences and learning of Project ARISE online course participants, the program has administered a pre- and post-course survey, embedded within the online courses. The survey aimed to assess the degree to which participants have developed new knowledge, skills, and beliefs as a result of online course participation. This survey was jointly constructed with the Project ARISE leadership team. Partner organizations created items that corresponded to the goals and objectives of their online courses. Pre-course surveys were administered to participants in the following courses: Part 1: Executive Functions; Part 2: Literacy as Equity; Part 3: Foundational Skills; and Part 5: Intensive Intervention. Post-course surveys were administered to participants in the following courses: Part 1: Executive Functions and Literacy; Part 3: Foundational Skills; Part 4: Comprehension; and Part 5: Intensive Intervention. 1,884 surveys were completed by participants assessing their understanding of course concepts both pre- and post-course completion.



OBSERVATIONS

The evaluation team conducted observations of a total of 60 classrooms of participating Project ARISE teachers, guided by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). CLASS provides an in-depth understanding of the interactions between educators and students. Originally developed by researchers at the University of Virginia, CLASS is known for its ability to assess and measure the effectiveness of instruction through the lens of multiple domains, from positive relationships to instructional support. CLASS offers a research-based framework that supports an unbiased and descriptive view of instruction through three domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. Within each domain are multiple dimensions. This scoring system was used by trained observers in Tier 2 and 3 sites within San Diego County, Glenn County, and Contra Costa County. Scores for each dimension range from 0-7 (0-2 = low, 3-5 = mid, 6-7 = high). Each observation reflected at least four classrooms and a minimum of 10 minutes and maximum of 20 minutes in each classroom. Scores were aggregated at the county level and compared to threshold values, which indicate the level at which this domain becomes effective in the context of instruction (Theriault et al., 2020).

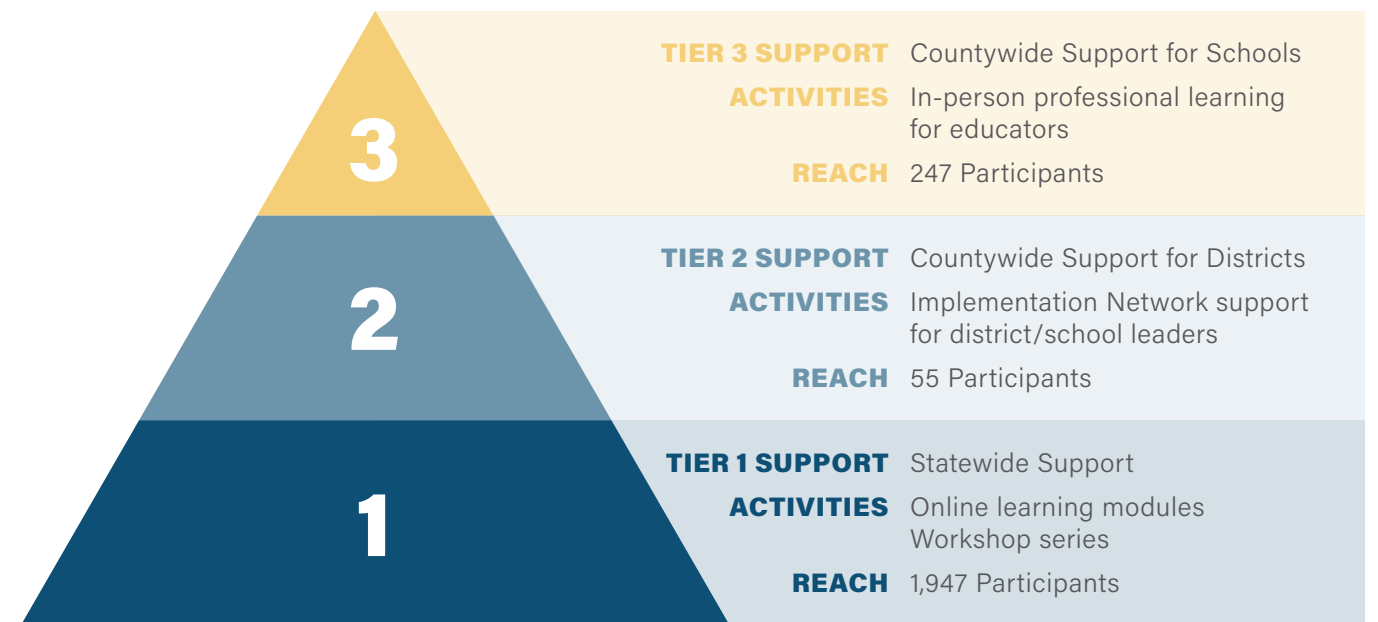


PROGRAM DESIGN

Project ARISE takes on the challenge of supporting educators across California to develop the core components of high-quality reading instruction and intervention, grounded in whole-child development. The program brings together multiple partner organizations to enact the vision of Project ARISE. Joining lead agency Contra Costa County Office of Education, San Diego County Office of Education and Glenn County Office of Education form the three regional hubs of Project ARISE. Additionally, the following public and private organizations join as partner organizations:

- TNTP
- Center for Whole Child Development at Arizona State University (The Center)
- National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII)
- University of La Verne, LaFetra College of Education
- University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Dyslexia Center

Project ARISE was initially conceived as a tiered system of support for California educators. While this initial framing has shifted for 2024-2025 as a result of the leadership team's learning during the 2023-2024 reporting year, this report will present the tiered structure and will use the language Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 to describe program design and offerings. Project ARISE is grounded in MTSS principles, both in its vision for children and its programming for adult learners. The project's supports are tiered to align with different levels of district and school capacity to consistently deliver high-quality reading instruction and intervention. Together, the tiered structure aims to support each California educator to develop the capacity to implement research-backed reading instruction and intervention strategies, through a whole-child lens.



TIER 1

The backbone of Project ARISE's program is a high-quality, research-backed course sequence available at no cost to California's more than 300,000 educators, through which Project ARISE has the potential to impact the experiences of roughly six million public school students in our state. As with MTSS's universal support, 100% of California's educators have access to Project ARISE's high-quality professional learning on research-backed reading instruction and whole-child education principles, in the form of a sequence of online courses. This online course sequence is available to all through the Learning Management System (LMS), Thinkific. This course sequence is described more fully below under Online Course. Project ARISE also offered a series of workshops to statewide participants, providing a high-level overview of the online course content.

TIER 2

For districts needing supplemental support implementing the learning from the online course sequence at a system level, Project ARISE convenes education partners in virtual learning opportunities, led by partner organizations TNTP, The Center, and NCII. This group of districts was called the Implementation Network during the 2023-2024 reporting year. These districts are located within the three regional hubs associated with Contra Costa County Office of Education, Glenn County Office of Education, and San Diego County Office of Education. For a list of participating Tier 2 districts and schools, see Table 1. John Swett Unified School District received only district-level support and had no associated schools participating during this reporting period.

TIER 3

In the case that more intervention is needed in any Tier 2 Implementation Network site, Project ARISE provides intensified support by directly working with districts and schools to deliver in-person professional learning to educators. These schools are located within the districts participating in Tier 2 programming, located within the three regional hubs associated with Contra Costa County Office of Education, Glenn County Office of Education, and San Diego County Office of Education. As with MTSS, Tier 3 supports would be the result of first assessing the impact of Tier 2 supports. For a list of participating Tier 3 schools, see Table 1.

Table 1

Participating districts and schools receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 support

COUNTY	DISTRICT/LEA	SCHOOL
Contra Costa Office of Education (Tier 2)	Mt. Diablo Unified School District	Ygnacio Valley Elementary
		Walnut Acres Elementary
		Wren Elementary
		Rio Vista Elementary
	John Swett Unified School District	N/A
	Martinez Unified School District	John Muir Elementary
		John Swett Elementary
		Las Juntas Elementary
		Morello Park Elementary
		Martinez Junior High School
Glenn County Office of Education (Tier 3)	Orland Unified School District	Mill Street Elementary
	Princeton Joint Unified School District	Princeton Elementary
	Capay Joint Union Elementary School District	Capay Elementary
	William Finch Charter School	William Finch Charter School
	Willows Unified School District	Murdock Elementary
San Diego County Office of Education (Tier 3)	Alpine Union Elementary School District	Boulder Oaks Elementary
		Shadow Hills Elementary
	Mountain Empire Unified School District	Campo Elementary
		Clover Flat Elementary
		Descanso Elementary
		Potrero Elementary
	San Diego Unified School District	Hamilton Elementary
Barona Indian Charter School	Barona Indian Charter School	
Coastal Academy	Coastal Academy	

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

ONLINE COURSE

The online courses served as the Project ARISE access point for all California educators. Created by TNTP, the Center, and NCII in partnership with the three regional hubs, the online course sequence was a prerequisite for any Tier 2 or Tier 3 participation by districts and schools. It additionally served as an anchor text for Tier 2 and Tier 3 professional development and coaching. The courses were grounded in a strong research base and responded specifically to project and grant goals. Participants could pursue three semester Continuing Education Units (CEUs) through the University of the Pacific by completing the course sequence. The sequence was made up of five courses broken into multiple parts:

1. Literacy As Equity (two hours)
2. Executive Functions and Literacy (six hours)
 - o Introduction to Executive Functions and Literacy
 - o For Executive Functions, Context Matters
 - o Skill Building for Executive Functions
3. Foundational Skills (14 hours)
 - o What is Excellent Foundational Skills Instruction
 - o Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
 - o Phonics and Word Recognition
 - o Decoding, Fluency, and Connected Text
 - o The Foundational Skills Block
4. Comprehension (11 hours)
 - o Making Sense of Complex Text
 - o Building Knowledge and Vocabulary Through Text
 - o Evidence-Based Discussion and Writing
 - o Goal Setting and Action Planning
5. Intensive Intervention (one and a half hours)
 - o Introduction to Intensive Interventions
 - o The Five Steps of Data-Based Individualization
 - o The Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity



Each course was hosted on the learning management system (LMS) Thinkific, which allowed project leadership as well as district and school leaders to track individual participant enrollment and engagement. Project ARISE leadership had outlined a goal of reaching 10,000 new online course participants each program year. Actual enrollment in its first year fell quite short of that goal. The total unduplicated count of participants during this reporting period was 1,474 enrollees. Most of those participants were enrolled in the entire course sequence, called the Course Bundle. There were a total of 6,865 total courses enrolled in during the 2023-2024 reporting period.

Engagement in the online course sequence varied between tiers and between county offices of education. Tier 2 and 3 schools and districts had higher rates of course completion than unaffiliated Tier 1 enrollees, who completed the full course sequence at roughly 17%. While schools and districts in Tier 2 and Tier 3 experienced higher course completion rates, these rates varied depending on the leadership and implementation strategies of the county offices of education overseeing these tiers. Glenn County schools and districts had the highest rates of course completion at 70%, followed by Contra Costa County Office of Education at 43%. San Diego County Office of Education had the lowest rates of course completion at 29%. A large portion of Tier 1 enrollees were affiliated with a separate contract with TNTP, which was grounded in the Project ARISE coursework. It should be noted, though, that these participants were enrolled only in TNTP courses, not the entire course bundle, shortening the course sequence by 7.5 hours. Their completion rates reflect only TNTP courses. The rates of completion at the TNTP sites were high compared to unaffiliated participants and were comparable to other Tier 2 and 3 sites. We excluded TNTP from the analysis below due to the hands-on coaching and in-person professional learning provided at these sites, which supported the implementation of the Project ARISE courses, even though these sites are not formally associated with Tier 2 or Tier 3 activities. When TNTP site participants are considered Tier 1 enrollees, the Tier 1 completion rate increases to 27%.

Table 2

Online course completion rates by affiliation with organizations facilitating learning

PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS	COMPLETION RATE
CCCOE	42.80%
GCOE	70.33%
SDCOE	29.25%
TNTP	54.11%
Unaffiliated	16.60%

Table 3*Online course completion rates by affiliation with county office of education*

PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS	COMPLETION RATE
CCCOE	42.80%
GCOE	70.33%
SDCOE	29.25%
Tier 1	26.57%

The evaluation team surveyed participants before and after each course in order to assess the extent to which participants learned content, developed skills, and shifted mindsets as a result of their participation in the courses. The evaluation team collected a total of 1,884 survey responses. Participants' post-course survey results increased by an average of 53%, indicating a stronger understanding of course-specific skills and content and changes in beliefs about instruction and learning. Participants in NCII's Intensive Intervention course demonstrated the greatest change between pre- and post-course survey. The proportion of participants who strongly agreed or agreed with both knowledge and mindset questions saw a substantial increase from 31.79% to 83.26% between the pre- and post-course survey. A notable limitation of our findings is the 39% opt-out rate among survey participants. Survey completion trends do not differ between one-time course participants and repeat-course participants, indicating that repeat participants are likely opting in and out of the survey at similar rates to one-time participants. Participants engaged in multiple courses across the sequence will encounter a survey seven times. There was a concern that "survey fatigue" would be a barrier for participants enrolled in multiple courses (Karlberg, 2015), despite the distinct survey content associated with the individual course. The similar rates of survey completion between one-time participants and repeat participants would indicate that survey fatigue is not affecting repeat participants more than one-time participants, despite the increased number of surveys they are encountering.

In interviews with program leadership, the online course was seen as a significant accomplishment, undertaken collaboratively by multiple partner organizations. From technical decisions around LMS platforms to instructional choices around lesson design, all Project ARISE partners balanced individual organization preferences with the value of a collective process and product. An early meeting facilitated by Contra Costa County Office of Education to support the creation of shared value was often cited as a turning point in the creation of the online courses. Some challenges emerged after the initial rollout of the courses as county office of education leadership raised concerns about the absent perspectives of multilingual learners. Through significant collaboration between TNTP and San Diego County Office of Education, the organizations completely revised the course content to ensure the perspectives of multilingual and emergent multilingual students were reflected.

WORKSHOP SERIES

Online workshops based on the Project ARISE online course sequence were offered in the fall and spring. A total of 6 workshops were offered to statewide participants and provided a high-level look into online course content. Contra Costa County Office of Education led the design and facilitation of these state-wide opportunities, with the support of TNTP, the Center, and NCII. The purpose of the workshops was to build on and create a foundation for

learning online course content, as well as to increase recruitment to the online course and future learning opportunities. Workshops addressed major components of the online course sequence, including executive functions in literacy, effective foundational skills instruction, and Data-Based Individualization. Fall and spring workshops had a total of 328 registrants. Additionally, the University of La Verne offered two workshops available to all state-wide participants focused on understanding the experiences of students with dyslexia. The first workshop was a dyslexia simulation, which included content developed by the International Dyslexia Association. The second workshop focused on exploring the neuroscience of dyslexia, with the purpose of providing educators with tools and resources to support their students. The dyslexia simulation had 78 registrants, and the follow-up workshop had 67 registrants from across the state.

Table 4*Hours spent in professional development by regional hub county and school*

PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS IN REGIONAL HUBS	HOURS SPENT IN TIER 2/3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Contra Costa County	80
John Swett Unified School District	8
Martinez Unified School District	14
Mt. Diablo Unified School District	58
Glenn County	135
Capay Joint Union Elementary School	24
Mill Street School	62
Murdock Elementary School	16.5
Princeton Elementary School	16.5
William Finch Charter School	16
San Diego County	179.5
Alpine Union Elementary School District	41.5
Barona Indian Charter School	18
Mountain Empire Unified School District	74
San Diego Unified School District	38
Classical Academy	4
Total Hours Spent in PD Across Districts: 400.5	

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Project ARISE delivered virtual and in-personal professional development to schools and districts participating in Tier 2 and 3 supports. The Implementation Network was led by Contra Costa County Office of Education and included participants from all three regional hubs. Contra Costa County Office of Education additionally led Implementation Network activities with participating districts within Contra Costa County. Because of Contra Costa County Office of Education's focus on Tier 2 system-level supports, no instructionally focused professional development is associated with Contra Costa County Office of Education in this report. District and school leaders did participate in professional development led by Contra Costa County Office of Education, which is noted below.

Tier 3 districts and schools received professional development and coaching from county office of education project leaders. Professional development and coaching were designed to support the implementation of the online course content in instructional settings. Professional development was offered to each individual school receiving Tier 3 support. Professional development design varied between Glenn County and San Diego County, detailed below. Participating schools and districts in all three counties spent a combined 400 hours engaged in Project ARISE professional development.

Implementation Network

The Implementation Network convened all participating district and school administrators quarterly through Zoom in meetings designed to support the system-level implementation of new learning and strategies from the online course sequence. The Implementation Network was led by Contra Costa County Office of Education. Implementation Network meetings were largely designed by the program partners TNTP, the Center, and NCII, in partnership with the three county offices of education. The design of the Implementation Network anticipated full site participation in the online course sequence prior to Implementation Network meetings.

The first Implementation Network meeting, designed and facilitated by TNTP, for example, stressed the importance of "strategic coherence" and "instructional coherence," guided by the content from Parts 2-5 of the online course sequence, and took participants through a "strategic coherence" self-assessment. By the time of this Implementation Network meeting in early October of 2023, roughly 200 individuals across the state had enrolled in the online course sequence. The preparation of those individuals who had been enrolled varied widely between county regional hubs. San Diego County participants, for example, had a 15% course completion rate at the time of the first meeting. Contra Costa County participants had a 40% completion rate at the time of the first meeting, while Glenn County had a 71% course completion rate. Feedback received after the second Implementation Network meeting confirmed facilitators' perceptions: Implementation Network participants had not engaged deeply in course material prior to meetings. The meetings had presented scaffolding for the extension of online course learning but had not anticipated the unfinished and incomplete learning from online courses. Additionally, participant engagement decreased slightly but steadily between each of the quarterly meetings. Over the year, attendance decreased by 25%. Participant time spent in each meeting, measured as time between sign-on and sign-off, decreased by 12% over the year.

In interviews with program leadership, there was variation in how individuals understood the purpose and design of the Implementation Network, as well as its place within the Project ARISE tiered system of support. Interviews

with Implementation Network participants revealed a similar lack of clarity around the purpose of Implementation Network meetings. For participants at the district level, the connection of the material to district needs was variable. Some districts needed exactly the content that was provided, while others expressed being unprepared as a district for the content and associated tasks. All participants mentioned that the most beneficial aspect of Implementation Network meetings were opportunities for collaboration within and between districts. Ultimately, this component of Project ARISE has shifted for the 2024-2025 program year to respond to participants' needs and to support the system-level implementation of research-based reading instruction, reading intervention, and instruction that develops executive functions.

San Diego: Lesson Study

In participating San Diego County schools, SDCOE Project ARISE leadership designed 15 day-long professional development opportunities called by the team Lesson Study¹. Lesson Study, as the Project ARISE team conceived it, involved instructional modeling of literacy instruction, followed by group reflection. Lesson Studies took place two to three times at each school over the year and followed a gradual release model, which turned lesson design and enactment over to participants by the final Lesson Study.

Across all San Diego County sites, participants spent 75 hours engaged in Lesson Study. Each San Diego County school participated in at least two Lesson Studies between February and April of 2024. Each Lesson Study began with a presentation for all participating staff, called a "level-set," which summarized a few core concepts from the online course sequence. The level-set typically took place during time set aside by site-based administration for teachers' professional learning. During Lesson Study, the level-set included all participating teachers, while the instructional modeling included a smaller group of teachers, typically volunteers. This group observed the SDCOE program leader teach a lesson in one of their classrooms, often on literacy content from their core or supplemental English Language Arts curriculum. After, the group of teachers debriefed the lesson with the SDCOE program leader and discussed the next Lesson Study, with the goal of assigning the classroom and choosing content. In some cases, a teacher or teachers volunteered to plan and teach the content. In other cases, the SDCOE program leader took responsibility for planning and teaching during the next Lesson Study cycle. For teachers participating in the level-set and the instructional modeling, Lesson Study lasted over four hours.

¹ *This model was adapted from Benchmark curriculum representatives in Oceanside Unified School District who used the term "Lesson Study" to refer to instructional modeling. Japanese Lesson Study is unaffiliated with the Project ARISE model. While the Project ARISE Lesson Study model does share some core components of the Japanese Lesson Study model, such as group observation of instruction and reflection on next steps, Project ARISE leadership does not reference Japanese Lesson Study in its use of the term and has not referenced research on this model in their planning of professional learning. In the context of Project ARISE, Lesson Study should be interpreted as instructional modeling.*

SAN DIEGO COUNTY: CAMPO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Geographically the largest school district in San Diego County, Mountain Empire Unified School District (MEUSD) spans over 650 miles and serves 4,280 students, 16.5% of whom identify as English learners and 55% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. To the south of MEUSD stands the US border with Mexico, which many students, families, and staff cross daily. To the east and north, MEUSD is bordered by Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. To the west is Cleveland National Forest. While neighboring San Diego averages 4,369 people per square mile, Mountain Empire averages 15.

From one MEUSD elementary school to another is around 30 miles, though teachers are quick to point out that 30 miles could take 60 minutes, depending on the weather. When it is sunny in San Diego, it might be snowing in Mountain Empire. An accident on mountain roads can delay commuters for hours. At sunrise, no traffic in sight, driving through Mountain Empire is as beautiful as it gets. In every way, the landscape defines the community's experiences. As one teacher lovingly said of her students, they are "mountain kids."

The shift veteran teachers are making around literacy instruction is seismic.

Across California, rural students perform well below state averages in all measures of academic outcomes. MEUSD students are no exception. Despite significant investments in literacy programming, the district has been frustrated with its ELA CAASPP scores, which have hovered around 28% of students meeting or exceeding standards in the years during and since the COVID pandemic. 55 percent of students in the district are considered chronically absent. 35 percent of graduating seniors met UC/CSU course requirements and 34% enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

The "mountain kids" at Campo Elementary School are just as likely to tell you how to approach a scorpion in the wild as they are to expertly identify syllable types during their What I Need (WIN) time. One teacher, a veteran who only in the last year began working

through the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) curriculum with her students, was now so inspired by the growth she had seen in her students that she vowed to never skip a UFLI lesson. By May of 2024, she had successfully taught one UFLI lesson every day of the school year.

The August before, though, when San Diego County Office of Education's Melanie Stone was discussing Campo Elementary School's participation in Project ARISE with school and district leadership, their principal wasn't sure Campo was ready. She was new to her role and felt that another initiative would be too much for her and her veteran staff to handle. Sheri Miller, the District Literacy Specialist, encouraged Campo's principal to just see if there was interest and open the door to any teacher who signed up on a volunteer basis.

At Campo's first Lesson Study, Stone noticed that teachers were incredibly engaged. She felt like the "barrier" of compliance had been removed. Instead, teachers could approach Lesson Study with curiosity and positivity. For the first Lesson Study, only two teachers participated in the instructional modeling. When she asked for volunteers for the next cycle, 6 teachers volunteered, including an entire grade level team. They ended up designing a "beautifully orchestrated lesson," as Stone recalls, that each teacher helped teach.

The victory here was small in scale. Six teachers participated in collaborative lesson design and enactment, guided by professional development that modeled research-backed reading instruction. But as Campo's literacy teacher on special assignment (TOSA), Patti Reed, summarized, the shift veteran teachers are making around literacy instruction is seismic. It is the same shift she made only a few years prior.

"I think about some of them even now, as I continue learning about how kids learn to read," Reed said, reflecting on the students she taught during her decades of teaching in MEUSD. "They pop back into my mind from years ago. I feel like I have a better understanding of what was causing their struggles, how I could have helped them more. It kind of feels like I failed kids just not knowing more. But know better, do better, right?"



Glenn County: Trainings

In participating Glenn County schools, the Glenn County Office of Education Project ARISE lead designed 45 trainings for instructors, each lasting between 30 minutes to two hours long. These trainings were tightly coupled with the online course sequence and included stipends for participation in the course and the professional learning. Across all Glenn County sites, participants spent 85 hours engaged in in-person professional development.

The one- to two-hour trainings typically took place monthly between August, 2023 and March, 2024. Trainings were tightly coupled with the online course sequence and began with a level-set presentation on online course content. Participants received a stipend for both the trainings and the online courses, which is Glenn County Office of Education's practice for all county-led professional development. Participants received a schedule for course completion, in order to receive stipends at designated times with their paychecks. This schedule aligned with the in-person professional development offered at each site.

Feedback gathered from interviews with professional learning participants in both counties highlighted distinct preferences and experiences. In Glenn County, educators valued the iterative approach to professional learning, appreciating the deeper engagement with content over time. In San Diego County, while the relevance of the Lesson Studies was praised, there was a notable desire for these professional learning opportunities to occur more frequently and in a timelier manner, ensuring continual support and reinforcement of instructional strategies. The insights from these interviews highlight the importance of professional development that is flexible, responsive, and tailored to meet the specific needs and challenges of local educational environments.

AUDIENCE

Project ARISE isolated three separate audiences for its interventions: statewide, countywide within three regional hubs, and district and school partners within those three regional hubs. Tier 2 and 3 schools must be located within one of the three regional county hubs in order to allow for potential Tier 3 in-person experiences. At all three tiers, Project ARISE aimed to support multiple roles within schools and districts: district and site-based administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff.

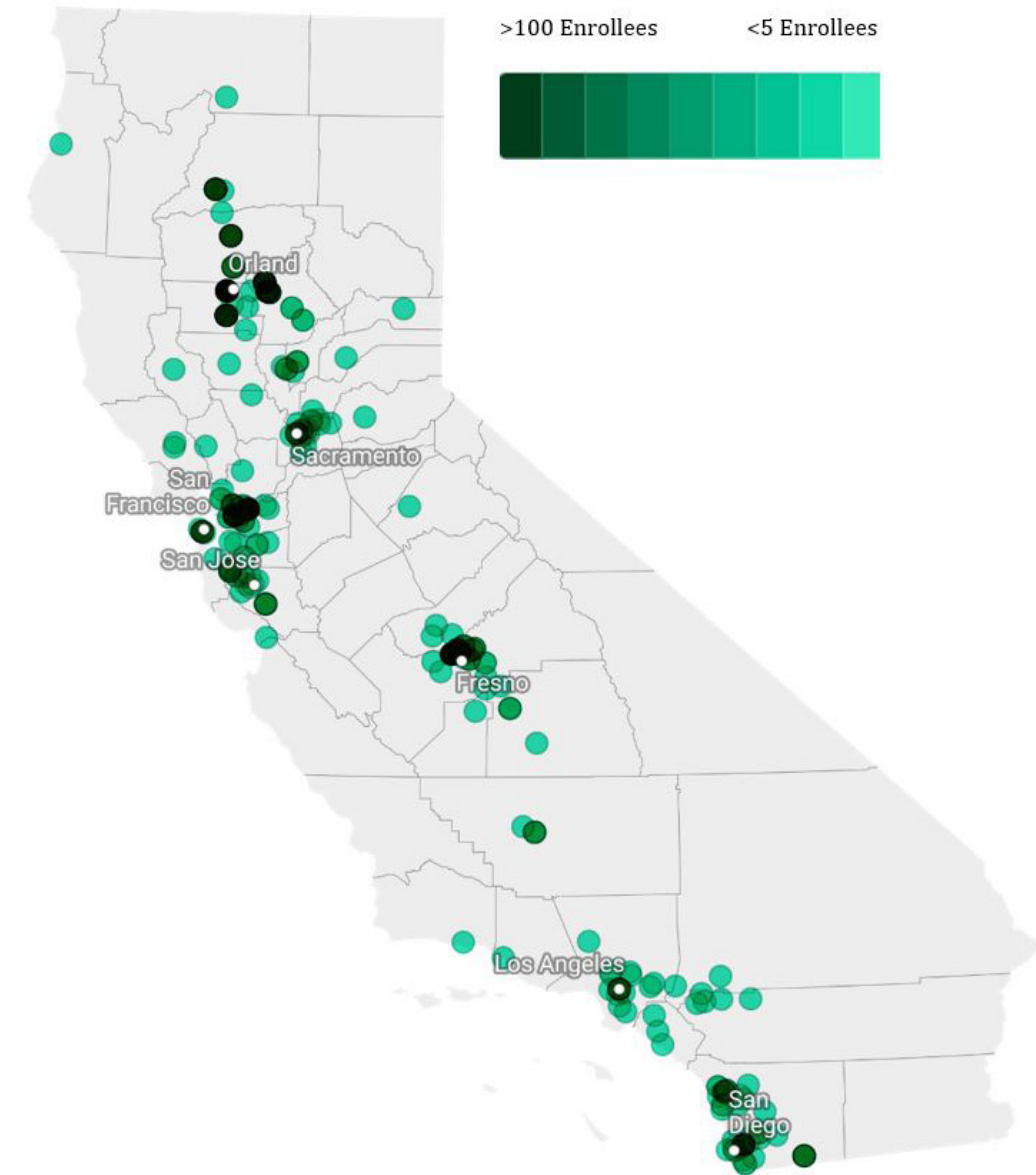
STATEWIDE AUDIENCE

Project ARISE online courses are available to all California educators statewide. Participation in the courses spans the state, with heaviest participation within the three regional hubs. Efforts to extend the program's reach included presentations at statewide conferences, established channels within county offices of education to promote courses and workshops, and others. Despite these efforts, participation stands at 1,475, achieving just shy of 15% of the annual target set by the project.

Figure 1

Map of statewide enrollment in Online Course

Project ARISE Online Course Statewide Enrollment



Survey data reveals general education teachers represent roughly half of online course participation. Adding teachers on special assignment, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals, 75% of all survey respondents worked directly with students in an instructional capacity. Lower elementary (PK-2) is the most represented grade band within course survey respondents. Ten percent of respondents primarily teach grades 6-12, indicating that there is a secondary audience for Project ARISE materials.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL AUDIENCE

Within the three regional hubs, Contra Costa County, Glenn County, and San Diego County, a total of 13 districts and 23 schools participated in Tier 2 and 3 Project ARISE activities. Districts and schools completed an application to participate in Project ARISE, which also supported program leadership to assess the appropriate level of support. Although the program was designed for districts to progress from Tier 2 to Tier 3, most sites started with Tier 3. The recruitment process indicated a limited demand for Tier 2 support. Most participating schools and districts, including every site within San Diego and Glenn Counties, participated at a Tier 3 level of support during the 2023-2024 reporting period. 38.7% of students in all participating districts met or exceeded the state standard on the 2023-2024 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), roughly 9% below the state average. See Table 5 for CAASPP results by each district.

As a result of the tiered structure of Project ARISE, districts receiving Tier 3, in-person instructional support were also participating in Tier 2 district-level support focused on systemic change. Table 1 lists participants within the three counties serving as regional hubs, as well as their tier of support. All districts and schools participating within Contra Costa County received Tier 2 supports. All districts and schools within San Diego and Glenn Counties received Tier 3 supports.

Districts and schools spent a total of 390 hours engaged in Project ARISE activities over the 2023-2024 reporting period. Activities ranged from needs assessments to individual coaching to departmental professional development. Tier 3 sites invested significantly more time into activities than Tier 2 sites, which is consistent with the types of activities that characterized Tier 2 versus Tier 3 supports.

Table 5

Participating school CAASPP ELA percentage met or exceeded

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	CAASPP ELA 2023-2024 PERCENT MET OR EXCEEDED
Contra Costa County	
John Swett Unified School District (JSUSD)	29.13%
Martinez Unified School District (MUSD)	53.72%
Mt. Diablo Unified School District (MDUSD)	26.32%
Glenn County	
Capay Joint Union Elementary School	54.96%
Mill Street School	N/A
Murdock Elementary School	13.52%
Princeton Elementary School	32.65%
William Finch Charter School	27.27%
San Diego County	
Alpine Union School District (AUSD)	44.33%
Barona Indian Charter School	36%
Mountain Empire Unified School District (MEUSD)	24.94%
San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD)	54.22%
Classical Academy	67.39%
Overall Average for All Schools: 38.7%	

Districts and schools were most actively involved in Tier 3 professional learning activities, which included trainings, site-based workshops, and Lesson Study. These time intensive activities were largely absent from system-focused Tier 2 activities offered through Contra Costa County Office of Education. All activities were self-reported by county office of education personnel and reflect some natural error.

Table 6*Activities offered by each county office of education*

ACTIVITIES OFFERED BY COEs	CONTRA COSTA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION	GLENN COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION	SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION	TOTAL
Asset-mapping/Needs Assessment	4	4	26	34
Implementation Network Meeting	4			4
Individual Meeting	13	12	24	49
Lesson Study			15	15
Site-based Coaching		4	3	7
Workshop/Training	12	45	4	61
Online Workshop	8			8
Total Activities Offered:	41	65	72	178

Within each regional hub, participation was distributed across school and district leadership, teachers, and paraeducators. Teachers represented the largest group of Project ARISE participants in Tier 2 and 3. Within San Diego County schools, teachers represented 77% of participants. In Glenn County Schools, teachers represented 56% of participants. In Contra Costa County schools, participation was split roughly in half between teachers and administrators, which matched statewide rates of participation of teachers, as self-reported on the survey. Paraeducators represented the smallest group of participants between all participating schools, but within Glenn County, where the highest number of paraeducators participated in Project ARISE, their participation nearly matched teachers. District leadership in participating Glenn County schools saw paraeducators as key to the success and sustainability of the implementation of new instructional practices and invested in the development of paraeducators.

Table 7*District and school-based participation across county regional hubs by role*

OFFICE OF EDUCATION	ADMINISTRATORS	GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS	PARAEDUCATORS
Glenn County	5	75	53
San Diego County	23	86	3
Contra Costa County	27	29	1

GLENN COUNTY: MILL STREET SCHOOL

It's 8 a.m. and, not unlike their mascot, the Honeybees, Mill Street School is buzzing with activity. Many students walk or take the bus to school from their homes in downtown Orland, but some could be driving as far as 70 miles each morning from the farthest edges of the district. At a population of 8,217, Orland is the largest and fastest growing city in Glenn County, primarily an agricultural community in Northwestern California. Orland Joint Unified School District spans from the Coastal Mountain Range in the west to the Sacramento Valley in the east.

Mill Street School serves the earliest learners in the district, grades UTK-2. Both of the elementary schools in the district provide a dual-immersion pathway, established in 2017 and part of the district's Pathway to Biliteracy program. Roughly 70% of the student body identifies as Hispanic and 30% as white. Just under 84% of the student body qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch. Twenty-four percent of the student body qualifies as English learners, slightly higher than the state average of 18.4%.

Project ARISE has given Mill Street School paraeducators the opportunity to become experts within the classroom on literacy practices.

Juana Diaz, an intervention teacher at Mill Street School, got involved with Project ARISE after her principal told her about the program. "I love to learn. I love to study," she said. "I love how the brain works." The online course sequence was an exciting opportunity to deepen her understanding of content she was passionate about: effective literacy instruction and intervention. Now she supports her colleagues at Mill Street School to try new literacy practices in their classrooms, some of which, she acknowledges, are quite different from the instruction they had been trained to deliver in teacher preparation programs and previous literacy models. The teachers at Mill Street School are, by Diaz's assessment, veterans with incredible experience. Still, she says, "Change is hard." She tries to model everything for her colleagues so that they can actually see the instruction they are learning about through Project ARISE.

Of all participating Project ARISE schools, Mill Street School has the highest number of teachers and paraeducators participating in the online course sequence and in-person professional learning, practically 100%. Eventually, the district plans to engage all grade level educators in Project ARISE activities to reach students from UTK through 12. In the first year of the district's participation, Mill Street School alone participated in 64 hours of in-person professional learning, led by Glenn County of Education's Emily Green. Additionally, Mill Street School educators have incredibly high rates of online course sequence completion, close to 80%.

With 26 teachers and 24 paraeducators involved in Project ARISE, Mill Street School truly stands out not just within Glenn County and California but the entire nation. Paraeducators have played an increasingly important role within schools and classrooms, while few, if any, opportunities exist for their professional development and advancement (Bisht et al., 2021). Orland Joint Unified School District saw the incredible potential that paraeducators in their schools could play in supporting teachers to implement the research-backed reading instruction and intervention practices from Project ARISE. They were, until now, an underutilized resource.

As Green notes, paraeducators provide an essential window into the perspectives of students within a school and district. They typically work with very small groups of students, but, says Green, "They also have the unique position of being in often multiple classrooms and multiple contexts across the day, and so have a unique understanding of what's happening even across grade levels and across classrooms." Project ARISE has given Mill Street School paraeducators the opportunity to become experts within the classroom on literacy practices. While the immediate goal is for paraeducators to apply their knowledge within Mill Street School classrooms, Green says she hopes the perspectives of paraeducators will "inform the entire system."



Within participating schools and districts, Project ARISE reached the greatest saturation within Glenn County. Of all employees who could have participated in Project ARISE activities across all participating Glenn County schools, roughly 60% are being reached by Project ARISE. In participating San Diego County schools, 25% of school-based employees are being reached. In Contra Costa, where the level of support was less intensive and focused primarily on administrators, participation reached roughly 5%, which is consistent with the expected participation levels of sites receiving Tier 2 supports.

Within 16 of the 23 individual school sites, the evaluation team, with support from project leadership at Contra Costa County Office of Education and Glenn County Office of Education, conducted observations of a total of 60 classrooms of participating Project ARISE teachers between March-May. Observers used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Scores for each dimension range from 0-7 (0-2 = low, 3-5 = mid, 6-7 = high). Each observation reflects at least four classrooms and a minimum of 10 minutes and maximum of 20 minutes in each classroom. Scores were aggregated at the county level and compared to threshold values, which indicate the level at which this domain becomes effective in the context of instruction.

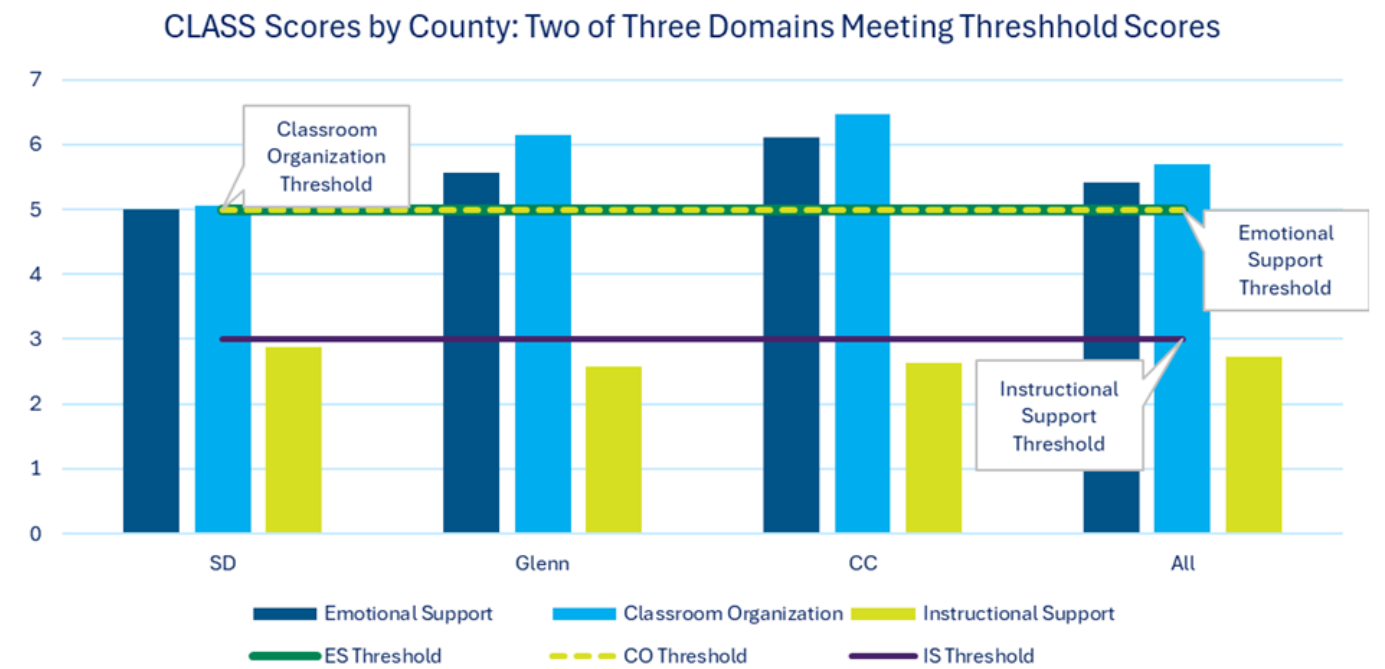
The CLASS scores for the 16 schools within the three regional hubs serve to inform our baseline understanding of each site's instructional environment. While sites had received some Project ARISE interventions, such as the online course and in-person professional learning, project and site leadership do not expect to see changes to instruction, indicating application of learning from courses and in-person trainings. Most of the observed classes focused on literacy instruction with students engaging in verbal interactions and textual analysis. These observations should be considered descriptive data, building understanding of the contexts Project ARISE supported.

The scores across each county demonstrate that sites are meeting threshold scores in the Emotional Support domain and Classroom Organization domain, indicating that most teachers in Project ARISE classrooms stress belongingness while clearly articulating community expectations and norms. CLASS was chosen as an observational tool for Project ARISE in large part for its ability to assess instructional and classroom qualities that support the development of executive functions, represented in both the Classroom Organization and Emotional Support domains. Research has demonstrated that supportive, responsive, and warm teacher-student interactions support children to develop social and emotional skills (Johnson, Seidenfeld, Izard, & Kobak, 2012), all captured within the Emotional Support domain of CLASS. Additionally, children develop stronger self-regulation in classrooms characterized by clear organization and classroom management (Rimm-Kaufman, Curby, Grimm, Nathanson, & Brock, 2009), captured within the Classroom Organization domain of CLASS.

Nationally, the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domain thresholds are notably higher than the threshold for the Instructional Support domain. In all three counties, observers noted slightly higher Classroom Organization scores than Emotional Support, though these two domains were highly correlated. In all three counties, Instructional Support scores were much lower than the other domains and were not meeting the threshold.

Figure 2

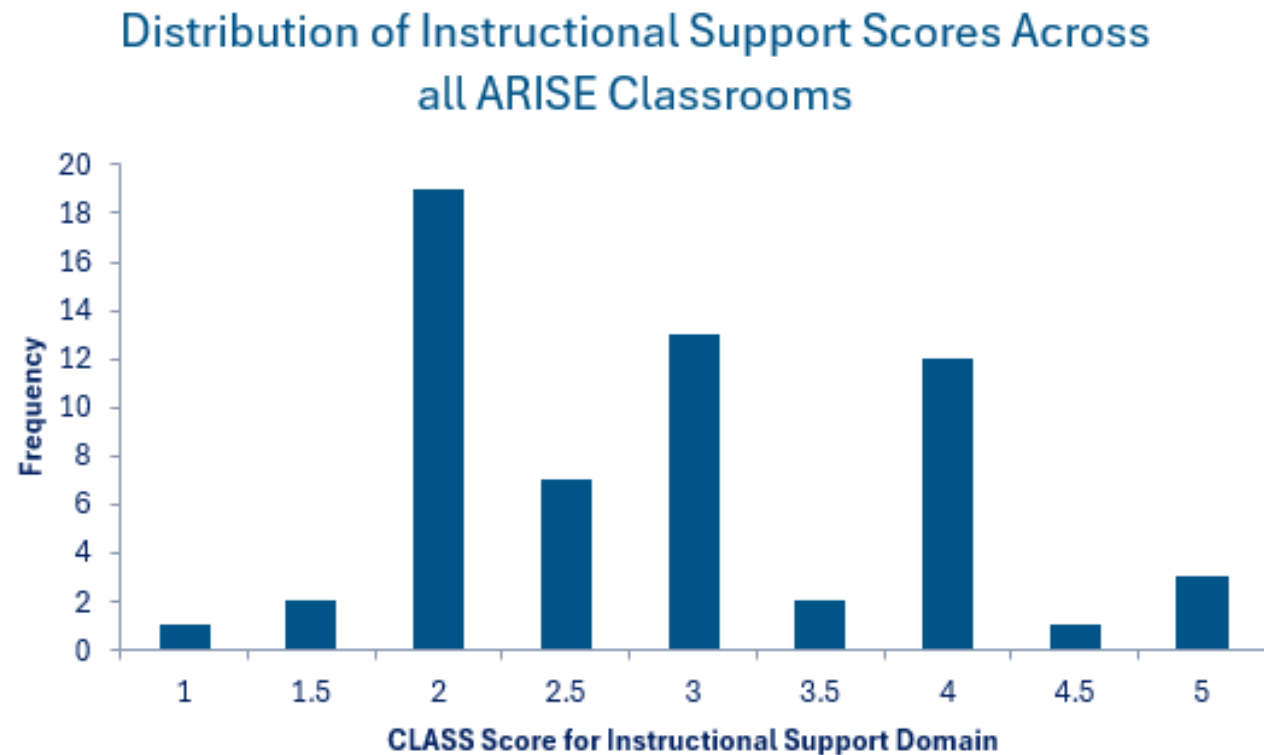
County regional hub CLASS scores across each domain



Most observed classrooms demonstrated low Instructional Support scores, with none achieving high scores of 6 or 7 in this domain. The majority of observed classrooms were not individually meeting the Instructional Support threshold score of 3. Within the Instructional Support domain are three dimensions: Concept Development, Quality Feedback, and Language Modeling. These dimensions focus on developing students' critical and creative thinking and providing them opportunities to use language meaningfully with teachers and peers.

Figure 3

Distribution of Instructional Support domain scores across all observed classrooms



The National Reading Panel has promoted what they refer to as “explicit, systematic instruction” in phonics and phonemic awareness as a practice that significantly strengthens students’ literacy development (2000). Many recent studies and programs cited by the What Works Clearinghouse as promising refer also to direct instruction, though in each of these programs, direct instruction lasts for a few minutes at a time, after which students engage in interactive activities with peers (Foorman et al., 2016). While these Project ARISE classroom observations cannot definitively indicate the amount of time spent in direct instruction, it did seem that the observed literacy instruction was not providing students with enough opportunities to develop skills associated with the Instructional Support domain, such as interpersonal communication, creativity, and critical thinking.

The first three core components of reading instruction, phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, were present within classroom observations, indicating a baseline level of comfort with the instruction. Instruction focused on building students’ vocabulary and comprehension, though, should provide opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking skills and language skills in meaningful ways. The low Classroom Support scores across every site indicate an opportunity for Project ARISE leadership to support sites in implementing literacy instruction that supports students’ vocabulary development and comprehension. Additionally, vocabulary instruction in which “teachers provide rich and varied language experiences” is essential in supporting ELs’ comprehension, which requires understanding 85-90% of the words within a text (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011, p. 110-111).

FINDINGS

The following findings represent the nuanced approach to data collection taken by the evaluation team to ensure we understood the experiences of participants across multiple levels of program support, as well as program leadership and development. Findings represent qualitative and quantitative data collected through interviews, surveys, observations, and document review. While our data collection and formative evaluation processes were informed by the full list of evaluation questions, in this report we respond to two key questions that encapsulate multiple evaluation questions. For a full list of formative and summative evaluation questions, see the appendix.

1. What progress is being made toward implementing Project ARISE as it was designed?
2. What barriers have emerged in implementing Project ARISE as it was designed?

ONLINE COURSE SEQUENCE

Leadership within county offices and partner organizations identified the creation of the Project ARISE online course as a major milestone in the enactment of the Project ARISE program design. The collaboration and coordination involved with the creation of the course was a particular success. For county office of education leaders, **the online course sequence is the backbone and organizing element of the Project ARISE program at all tiers.** Tier 2 activities within the Implementation Network are tightly focused on the online course sequence, often built on specific lessons or materials within the courses. In Glenn County, the online course sequence served as the scope and sequence of in-person professional learning and coaching. In San Diego County, the online course served as the foundation for professional learning activities.

Despite the clear focus on the online course sequence in communication to districts and schools, Tier 2 and 3 program participants report varying levels of use of the online courses. In Glenn County, the online courses are referenced frequently by participants in the context of the Tier 3 professional learning they are receiving. In San Diego County, online courses are not highlighted when participants reflect on Project ARISE. San Diego County site and district leaders mention many barriers that prevent their teachers from engaging with the online courses, most importantly the need to make what they interpret as abstract content immediately relevant to the classroom. As one teacher said at a site, the online courses were “university” material, not something she could use the next day in her classroom. Online course sequence completion rates in both Glenn and San Diego County sites mirror the qualitative findings: participants from Glenn County had an average completion rate of 70%. Participants from San Diego County sites had an average course sequence completion rate of 29%, comparable to statewide Tier 1 enrollees. **Without a clear understanding of the concrete ways the online course sequence can be applied within classroom instruction, participants do not complete the course sequence efficiently or consistently.**

For participants completing courses, surveys indicate a clear and, in the case of NCII, significant change in the knowledge and skills needed to enact research-backed reading instruction and intervention and whole-child strategies. Enrollment rates remain low, reaching 15% of the desired statewide audience during the 2023-2024 reporting period. When participants engage with the material, it is impactful to them. Most potential statewide participants remain untapped, though. **Project ARISE is not meeting its statewide recruitment goals.**

COLLABORATION

In its first year of implementation, Project ARISE has made a significant footprint in the world of early literacy, biliteracy, structured literacy, and multilingual support. The presence of Project ARISE is most clearly seen at the regional hub level, where multiple districts and schools have worked closely with project leadership to learn site-specific approaches to implementing research-backed literacy and whole-child instructional approaches and strategies. At the heart of all Project ARISE work is a powerful team of partners, representing public and private organizations across the state and country. It is clear that **collaboration drives Project ARISE's collective impact and sustainability.**

Project leadership across all organizations mentioned the importance of collaboration in achieving the goals of Project ARISE. Leadership discussed the productivity of meetings, the collaborative spirit of colleagues in partner organizations, and the genuine enjoyment felt as a member of the project leadership team. Leadership stressed the need to support the ongoing collaboration between organizations and the development of relationships between project leaders, even as Project ARISE matures.

Within the three regional hubs, in particular in the creation and delivery of Tier 3 program offerings, collaboration occurs within hubs but less frequently between regional hubs. Compared with Tier 1 and 2 program offerings, Tier 3 activities at regional hubs often happen independent of other regional hubs and partner organizations. When county office of education leaders discussed the planning and implementation of program activities in their respective counties, they presented activities in site-specific ways. County office of education leaders prepared materials and planned professional learning for their counties and schools but rarely mentioned collaborating on Tier 3 program activities across counties. These interviews revealed that many products are being created across counties that might be duplicative and are not part of a coherent program vision. More importantly, **the collective wisdom of the team is not being tapped to produce a coherent set of Tier 3 program activities.**

While collaboration occurred in the creation of the program design, program leadership, both in county offices of education and in partner organizations, expressed an inconsistent and at times unclear understanding of the distinction between Tier 2 and Tier 3 activities across regional hubs. While county office of education leaders clearly articulated the rationale for a tiered structure and the distinctions between tiers, the rationale and definitions were not shared across or within the regional hubs. Partner organization leadership was less able to offer clear definitions of Tier 2 activities and especially Tier 3 activities, from which they were removed in the planning and enactment. **The lack of a common understanding of Project ARISE program design and rationale is limiting the potential to deliver a coherent, collaboratively designed program to state and county audiences.**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Program leadership invested significant time and resources, both in the planning and enactment, into professional development. Quarterly Implementation Network meetings convened district leaders supporting the implementation of learning from the online course sequence. In-person instructionally focused professional development in San Diego County and Glenn County reflected the most time-intensive activities for schools and districts. The models in San Diego County and Glenn County shared core components but differed significantly in design and associated outputs. Contra Costa County Project ARISE participants did not receive Tier 3 professional development and

were not interviewed as a part of Year 2 evaluation activities. As a result, the following findings speak specifically to professional development in San Diego and Glenn Counties. Tier 3 professional development will occur in Contra Costa County in subsequent program years. Contra Costa County participants will be included in Year 3 evaluation activities and reporting

San Diego County

In San Diego County, the content from the online courses was a starting point for the Lesson Study model, with participants actively considering how to adapt and apply this material to their specific teaching environments. This practice was integral to the Lesson Study design and was characterized by longer and less frequent sessions. Lesson Studies were crafted to align precisely with the curriculum that educators were teaching, ensuring greater relevance and application. This approach aimed to make the studies more directly actionable for participants, although it also introduced challenges related to scheduling, as the length of sessions sometimes acted as a barrier.

Participants in Lesson Study spoke of their experiences positively and, in particular, appreciated seeing instruction modeled that was new and challenging to incorporate into their daily routines, important proof to teachers that the instructional moves outlined in their curriculum guides were indeed possible. Some administrators felt the extended time between each Lesson Study limited teachers' ability to apply learning from the online course sequence to their instruction. Both project leadership and district and school administrators reported that scheduling Lesson Studies was difficult, due to the full-day commitment, the need for substitute teachers, and the limited time designated for professional development within the workday. At times there was a mismatch between when the Lesson Study was scheduled and when teachers had completed online courses, which some administrators said disincentivized teachers to complete the course sequence according to any schedule. Compared to both Glenn County and Contra Costa County, course completion rates remained low in San Diego County schools, ranging from 27% to 40%.

Administrators in San Diego County heard teachers discuss the new beliefs about instructional moves modeled during Lesson Study, indicating the **instructional modeling in Lesson Study positively impacted teachers' perceptions of literacy instruction.** The time and resources needed for all participating teachers to engage in the components of Lesson Study, though, made the model as currently enacted unsustainable. **Additionally, without direct and tight connections to a schedule for online course completion, Lesson Study did not encourage online course engagement, course completion, and content understanding.**

Glenn County

In Glenn County, trainings were shorter, between 30 minutes and two hours long and more frequent. Glenn County trainings were tightly coupled with the online course scope and sequence and followed a schedule for completing courses and receiving stipends. At trainings, participants were provided with tools, such as slide decks and hand-outs, that they could use to integrate to course content into their instruction. Separate trainings were offered for general education teachers and paraeducators across all sites.

While the stipend might have incentivized participants' course completion, Glenn County participants themselves

did not mention the stipend when discussing Project ARISE professional development. Instead, they discussed the connections between the in-person trainings and the online courses. The trainings made concrete the abstract theory of the courses and provided them with tools they could use to explore course content in their own instruction, such as slide decks. As a result of this, they mentioned the applicability of the course material to their work. Compared to San Diego County and Contra Costa County, Glenn County participants have the highest rates of online course sequence completion, ranging from 77% to 95%.

While administrators in Glenn County could not yet speak to how the professional development was translating to changes to instruction within the classrooms, **shorter and more frequent trainings tightly coupled with the online course scope and sequence supported online course engagement, course completion, and content understanding.** This aligns closely with best practices in professional learning and CDE's Quality Professional Learning Standards (QPLS), particularly Standard 2: Content and Pedagogy and Standard 5: Design and Structure, which identifies the need for educators to iteratively "acquire, implement, and assess improved practices" (California Department of Education, 2015).

IMPLEMENTATION NETWORK

Contra Costa County Office of Education led the Implementation Network and supported the partner organizations to design their content for Implementation Network meetings. Contra Costa's facilitation of this collaboration was key in delivering this content to Tier 2 and 3 participants over the quarterly meetings. By designing and presenting a professional development scope and sequence focused on a district and school administration audience called the Implementation Network, program leadership aimed to support district- and school-level leaders to create systemic conditions that supported the implementation of Project ARISE online course content.

Implementation Network content was tightly tied to the online course sequence and was designed by the three partner organizations who created the course content: TNTP, the Center, and NCII. A prerequisite of Implementation Network participation was online course completion. Where participants were in terms of their progression through the online courses varied between county and district, creating difficulty for partner organizations to design meaningful learning for all Implementation Network members.

As the year progressed, the Implementation Network did not sustain consistent attendance. Over the year, attendance decreased by 25% and participant time spent in each meeting, measured as time between sign-on and sign-off, decreased by 12%. While some participants found the Implementation Network meetings highly relevant and useful, others did not perceive as much value in the material provided and admitted attending sporadically or not at all. It was not clear to participants that the Implementation Network content supported and extended material from the online course sequence and necessitated participants' full engagement in the online courses. Program partners had built their Implementation Network content to extend online course learning, but Implementation Network participants did not have a clear understanding of these expectations or their responsibilities.

The goal of the Implementation Network was to support the systemic implementation of materials and strategies and extend the learning from the online course sequence. **In the face of low course completion rates, inconsistent meeting attendance, and unclear expectations of participation, though, the Implementation Network did not achieve this goal.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations attempt to respond to the findings, while centering the continued development of this program and the learning of its leadership. Project ARISE is entering its third year, though in its second year of implementation the project will benefit from recommendations that are actionable, developmental, and high leverage.

Reconceptualize and Accelerate Statewide Recruitment Efforts

In order to meet the annual goal of 10,000 online course enrollees and, in the next reporting period, the goal of 20,000 total enrollees, Project ARISE must reconceptualize participant recruitment efforts and significantly increase the time and resources program leadership devotes to recruitment. With only 15% of the 2023-2024 statewide recruitment goal met, the program must immediately accelerate recruitment efforts in order to remain on pace for following years. Project ARISE leadership should consider the following to enact this recommendation:

- Hire an education marketing company to develop and implement a comprehensive marketing and communications plan for Project ARISE.

The following could be supported by an outside organization but could also be implemented by the Project ARISE team:

- Engage participating institutions of higher education in formally recognizing Project ARISE professional learning opportunities within their schools of education websites.
- Market continuing education units (CEUs) through the University of the Pacific more consistently in outgoing communication and more clearly online.
- Develop engaging multimedia content, through COE communications departments, that highlights Project ARISE testimonials and case studies to be shared on all partner social media accounts.
- Leverage journalism to support a wider audience to engage with Project ARISE content in a context perceived as objective.
- Repurpose materials from workshops, trainings, and conferences to communicate at regular intervals.
- Use formal COE, CISC, and CDE channels to promote online courses.
- Engage Project ARISE teammates in free marketing trainings. Google's Skillshop provides trainings focused specifically on using Google marketing tools.

Clarify and Communicate Program Tiers and Objectives

Develop clear descriptions and communications regarding the distinct objectives and activities of Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. Distribute these descriptions through multiple channels to ensure all participants and stakeholders have a uniform understanding. This could include simplified guides, visual infographics, a concise slide deck, and regular informational webinars.

Enhance Online Course Training and Support Materials

Enrich the online course content with practical, actionable tools and resources that educators can immediately implement in the classroom. This could include downloadable slide decks, graphic organizers, lesson plans, classroom activities, and instructional videos that demonstrate best practices in action. Embed materials created for in-person professional development directly into online lessons. Additionally, create engagement opportunities within the online courses for live demonstrations and question-and-answer sessions to address specific implementation challenges.

Incentivize and Enhance In-person Professional Development Delivery

Tightly couple professional development to the online course sequence, providing scaffolding for all participants to engage with the courses, including paraeducators and support staff. When possible, stipend and incentivize course completion. Model instructional strategies that apply course content learning, gradually releasing the design and teaching responsibility to educators. In sites continuing participation in Project ARISE for a second year, utilize site-based literacy interventionists, coaches, and teacher leaders to model instructional strategies. Strive for short cycles of professional development, application, and feedback.

Improve Implementation Network Design and Engagement

Customize the Implementation Network meetings to better meet the different needs of the districts. Vary the timing of the meeting to support attendance. Administer pre-meeting surveys to gauge participant needs and tailor content accordingly. Distribute content scaffolding prior to meetings, including note-catchers, graphic organizers, and slides. Focus on creating breakout sessions that allow for smaller, more focused discussions on relevant topics to different groups.

CLOSING

When the Project ARISE leadership team set out to design 35 hours of online course content and accompanying in-person and virtual professional learning content with nine partner organizations, across county offices of education and institutions of higher education, they were charting new territory. Project ARISE represents an unprecedented approach to disseminating research-backed reading instruction and intervention training to educators across the state of California. While reading instruction courses are easily found online, they are often fee-based and represent a specific organizational perspective or curriculum. Project ARISE effectively unites multiple organizations – and multiple organizational agendas – under the umbrella of high-quality reading instruction and intervention, at no cost to participants. Project ARISE’s additional district and school-facing supports explore the potential to meaningfully integrate in-person professional development with online learning, which could act as a model for future statewide professional development initiatives.

Year 3 evaluation efforts will focus on individual student outcomes on local literacy measures, to develop a baseline understanding of participating sites and track change over time. This will provide a clearer understanding of the literacy outcomes of ELs, students with dyslexia, students with disabilities, and students dually identified who are served by Project ARISE. The evaluation team will launch a Project ARISE dashboard to highlight the program’s work while also providing the leadership team with access to real-time enrollment, survey, and local literacy data. Additionally, the evaluation team plans to partner with the Center to consider uses of their Whole-Child Design Inventories, a recently validated measure of whole-child principles and practices in schools and classrooms. The evaluation team will continue to monitor the role that incentives play in online course completion rates, both for district and school partners and for statewide enrollees.

Project ARISE is a complex program, involving multiple partners, multiple regions, and as many priorities as there are participants. Project leadership should feel proud of their accomplishments this year. In a state where only 2% of educator preparation programs teach the five core components of reading instruction, Project ARISE is taking on the challenge of preparing educators to support all California students to read by third grade. As Project ARISE leadership looks ahead to Year 3, they have the opportunity to scale successes and refine program design based on their learning. With the trust the team has developed with and among program partners, leadership should feel confident in the team’s ability to continue making progress toward the goals of Project ARISE.



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APPENDIX: EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND DATA SOURCES

Table 1. Formative Evaluation Questions

NUMBER	QUESTION	DATA SOURCES
1	What systems and processes supported the grantee in selecting evidence-based strategies, selecting RII partners, and developing PL?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews • Interviews • Document review
2	Are RII partners collaborating effectively?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews
3	At each tier of support, who is implementing? Where? How often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Program documents • Attendance logs • Activity tracker
4	At each tier of support, what is being implemented? Where? How often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Program documents • Attendance logs • Activity tracker
5	At each tier of support, how often are stakeholders meeting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Activity tracker
6	What PL are educators getting? What are the outcomes? Are the outcomes being accomplished?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Pre-/post-surveys • Observations • Interviews
7	How, where, and when is the learning from PL being implemented by educators?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-/post-survey • Observations • Interviews

NUMBER	QUESTION	DATA SOURCES
8	At the Strategic and Intensive tiers, what systems are in place to support PL implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Observations • Key informant interviews
9	At the Strategic and Intensive tiers, how is the classroom environment changing in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional content • Educator practices and behaviors • Student interactions and engagement • Physical learning spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interviews
10	How are Strategic and Intensive sites and RII partners collaborating, and how can this collaboration be strengthened?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Activity tracker • Key informant interviews
11	At the Strategic and Intensive tiers, are site-based systems improving around new PL practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews • Document review • Observations
12	At the Strategic and Intensive tiers, are literacy screeners being implemented across sites?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Literacy screener reports
13	At the Strategic and Intensive tiers, how are literacy screener results changing over each year of cohort involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy screener reports
14	How are sites accessing tiered levels of support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews • Document review • Activity tracker
15	How are resources curated for the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key informant interviews • Document review

Table 2. Summative Evaluation Questions

NUMBER	QUESTION	DATA SOURCES
1	What are the characteristics of instructional staff and local education agencies served at each tier of support during the grant period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program documents • Attendance logs
2	To what extent did the project meet its outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Pre-/post surveys • Literacy screener reports • CAASPP ELA results
3	What aspects of the project are successful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews
4	What can we learn from the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews
5	What are the barriers to success and how did the project address these barriers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews
6	What are the potential recommendations for moving forward with sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Evaluation Active Learning Cycles
7	In what ways are teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes changing regarding the PL?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-/post-surveys • Module learning outcomes • Interviews
8	In what ways are students' literacy and language development changing, especially for English learners, students with disabilities, and those dually identified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment data (local literacy data, CAASPP, ELPAC)

NUMBER	QUESTION	DATA SOURCES
9	<p>To what extent was professional learning received through the grant associated with changes in students':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy achievement? • CAASPP ELA performance? • ELPAC performance? • Gaps in performance of different groups? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment data (local literacy data, CAASPP, ELPAC)
10	<p>To what extent was implementation of the literacy screener associated with changes in students':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy achievement? • CAASPP ELA performance? • ELPAC performance? • Gaps in performance of different groups? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment data (local literacy data, CAASPP, ELPAC)
11	What partnerships and structures were developed by grantees to support continued and sustained learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Document review

CONTACTS

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Julie Dooley

Director, Curriculum & Instruction

jdooley@cccoe.k12.ca.us

Michelle Kerwin

Literacy Instructional Lead

mkerwin@cccoe.k12.ca.us

Nicole Matthew

Literacy Instructional Lead

nmatthew@cccoe.k12.ca.us



GLENN COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Emily Green

Educational Services Coordinator

egreen@glenncoe.org



SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Dr. Kirstin Northenscold

Coordinator, Research and Evaluation

kirstin.northenscold@sdcoe.net

Dr. Shannon Coulter

Director, Research and Evaluation

scoulter@sdcoe.net

Melanie Stone

English Language Arts Coordinator

melanie.stone@sdcoe.net

Mónica Aguirre

Project Specialist, Biliteracy

monica.aguirre@sdcoe.net



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Kirstin Northenscold, Ed.L.D.

Coordinator, Research and Evaluation

San Diego County Office of Education

Data and Impact Center of Excellence

2202 Comstock Street

San Diego, CA 92111

kirstin.northenscold@sdcoe.net

858-290-5833

