



2024

San Diego County Office of Education

LINCOLN CLUSTER LITERACY PROGRAM

YEAR 1 EVALUATION BRIEF



BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) has focused on improving literacy education to ensure all students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, can read proficiently. This initiative addresses long-standing challenges faced by students who are English learners (ELs), have disabilities, or come from low-income families. The program aims to provide equitable access to quality literacy education and overcome disparities in learning.

A significant focus of the evaluation is on a partnership between SDUSD, the Diamond Education Excellence Partnership (DEEP), and the California Reading and Literature Project (CRLP). This partnership supports literacy development in four schools within the “Diamond Community,” a region known for its diverse population and educational needs. The collaboration emphasizes the implementation of effective literacy instruction, particularly through the “Science of Reading” (SOR), a research-based framework that covers essential reading skills such as phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension.

RATIONALE FOR THE EVALUATION

In recent years, literacy instruction in the district has shifted from a “Balanced Literacy” (BL) approach, which combines phonics and whole-language practices, to SOR. SOR emphasizes explicit, systematic teaching of foundational reading skills. The evaluation assesses the effectiveness of this new approach within the DEEP schools and how it compares to the rest of the district.

FINDINGS

IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY LITERACY PROGRAMS

1. DEEP schools have focused on using the Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS) curriculum to strengthen students’ reading skills.

- Teachers in DEEP schools receive continuous support through professional development centered on effective reading strategies aligned with SOR. They also participate in monthly classroom observations to enhance and refine instructional practices.

2. Impact on Literacy Outcomes

- A “Beating the Odds” (BTO) analysis was conducted to compare how well schools in the

Lincoln cluster, which includes DEEP schools, performed relative to other schools in San Diego County. Some DEEP schools exceeded expectations, indicating effective literacy strategies.

- While overall performance between DEEP and non-DEEP schools was similar, the DEEP model showed significant benefits for ELs. EL students in DEEP schools scored approximately 9 points higher on reading assessments than their counterparts in non-DEEP schools. To put it into perspective, the benefit of participating in the DEEP Program for ELs is about 23 times stronger than the negative effect of being absent from school.

3. Challenges and Barriers

- Inconsistent Curriculum Implementation: Schools have faced challenges in uniformly adopting the new literacy curriculum, causing variability in student outcomes.
- Limited Access to Materials: Teachers noted difficulties in accessing necessary literacy resources, impacting instruction quality.
- Need for Enhanced Professional Development: While training was provided, it was not frequent or comprehensive enough, lacking practical classroom-focused sessions to sustain effective teaching practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

● Standardize Curriculum Implementation

- Develop a consistent literacy framework across schools, provide comprehensive training for teachers, and create inclusive instructional materials.
- Address gaps in training for new educators and integrate resources like SIPPS and CRLP more effectively.

● Enhance Teacher Support

- Increase the quality and frequency of professional development, emphasizing peer coaching and specialized support for vulnerable student groups.
- Expand the availability of instructional coaches and mentors and facilitate opportunities for teacher collaboration.

● Utilize Data to Improve Instruction

- Incorporate regular assessments and data analysis to guide instruction and provide teachers with data literacy training.
- Implement tools and support systems that allow for data-driven decision-making to improve student learning outcomes.

NEXT STEPS

The evaluation will expand to include other literacy aspects such as fluency and comprehension. Additionally, it will investigate the broader influences on literacy development, including extracurricular activities and community partnerships, which play a significant role in student language development.

CONCLUSION

The DEEP model has shown promising results, particularly in supporting EL students' literacy development. However, there are challenges in curriculum implementation, teacher training, and access to materials throughout the cluster that need to be addressed to ensure all students benefit from high-quality literacy instruction. The recommendations aim to support a more uniform, data-informed, and effective literacy program across all SDUSD schools. Continued evaluation will help refine and expand successful practices to achieve equitable educational outcomes for all students.

You can access the full report [here](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Shannon E. Coulter, Ph.D.
Director, Research and Evaluation

San Diego Office of Education
6401 Linda Vista Drive, San Diego, CA 92111
scoulter@sdcoe.net | 858-295-8825