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SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

2025

San Diego Unified School District

LINCOLN CLUSTER LITERACY PROGRAM

YEAR 2 EVALUATION BRIEF



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Year 2 Evaluation Brief summarizes the final findings from a two-year study of the Lincoln Cluster Literacy Program in the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD), conducted in collaboration with the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE). The study evaluated the implementation and impacts of the Diamond Educational Excellence Partnership (DEEP) model compared to the district's Business as Usual (BAU) literacy approach, with a focus on grades 2 through 5.

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 spell out Science of Reading (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.

KEY FINDINGS

- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COACHING**
  DEEP schools provided significantly more hours of sustained, job-embedded professional development, particularly in Science of Reading-aligned programs such as SIPPS and CRLP. Teachers reported greater instructional clarity and more frequent access to site-based literacy coaches.
- **INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES**
  DEEP educators implemented more structured phonics routines, small-group instruction, and data-informed teaching strategies. CLASS observations showed strong classroom organization and emotional support across all schools, with moderate instructional support.
- **STUDENT OUTCOMES**
  Although DEEP students scored, on average, 4.25 points higher on the aReading assessment, the difference was not statistically significant. However, DEEP showed stronger implementation fidelity and promising results for English learners, who gained up to nine points more than peers in non-DEEP schools in Year 1.
- **EQUITY CHALLENGES**
  Students with IEPs and English learners consistently underperformed regardless of model, highlighting persistent equity gaps. Chronic absenteeism was also strongly correlated with lower reading performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Expand access to high-impact, sustained professional development across the district.**
2. **Standardize curriculum and materials, with clear implementation guidance.**
3. **Increase embedded coaching and structured data-use practices.**
4. **Address equity through early intervention, differentiated instruction, and biliteracy training.**
5. **Scale DEEP's extended learning and family engagement strategies, such as Super Tuesday/Thursday.**

CONCLUSION

While overall student achievement growth did not differ significantly between DEEP and non-DEEP sites, the DEEP model demonstrated greater instructional coherence and potential for long-term impact. DEEP's evidence-based structure—sustained PD, coaching, aligned curriculum, and family engagement—offers a scalable foundation for advancing educational equity and literacy outcomes districtwide.

You can access the full *Year 2 Insights and Summative Report*, along with the previous Year 1 Report, at www.sdcoe.net/educators/data-measurement-and-impact.



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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