

2017-18 Evaluation of Literacy Leads

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At-a-Glance

To support student reading achievement, Dallas Independent School District (ISD) Reading and Language Arts (RLA) and Early Learning (EL) staff members developed a K-12 Literacy Plan.

The Plan included a pathway to achieving student achievement goals for literacy through shared best practices, guidance on implementing those best practices in instruction, and observational tools for teachers and campus leaders to improve literacy instruction.

A component of the Literacy Plan, the K-8 Literacy Leads initiative, focused on elementary and middle school teachers integrating three interdependent practices into every literacy classroom: creating the optimal learning environment; capturing and responding to student data; and implementing purposeful and targeted literacy instruction. This targeted instruction centered on one of three topics: text analysis, writing, and small group instruction.

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe the 1) characteristics of the Literacy Leads initiative; 2) campus instructional coach and lead teacher perceptions of Literacy Leads; and 3) academic outcomes of Literacy Leads students.

The total funding amount available for 2017-18 was \$400,000 from Title I funds. A total of 48,126 students in grades K to 8 (30.7% of Dallas ISD) were involved in this initiative.

Methodology

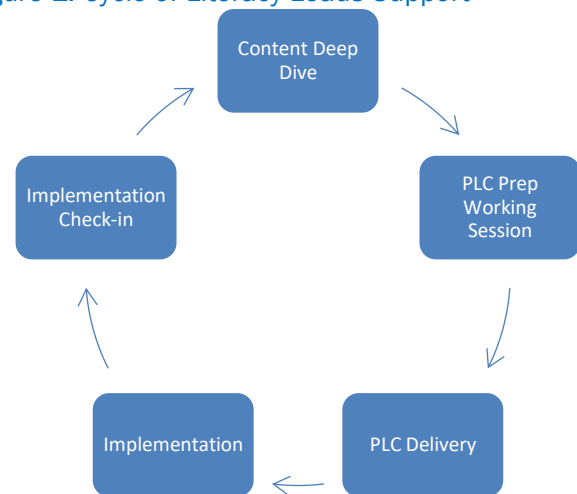
Contextual information was gathered from internal documents and interviews. Student data were extracted from the October 2017 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) file for analyses. The results of *TerraNova*, *SUPERA*, and the *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* exams were extracted from the Dallas ISD's MyData Portal site and district files. Scores were analyzed by grade level. Dallas ISD results of the *Assessments of Course Performance (ACP)* were also analyzed by grade level. Literacy Leads survey results were also analyzed. Frequency and crosstabs analyses were tabulated. The collected qualitative data were synthesized.

Literacy Leads Initiative

The Reading Language Arts (RLA) and Early Learning (EL) departments planned five cycles of professional development (each lasting four to six weeks) during the

2017-18 school year for Dallas ISD elementary and middle school teachers (Figure 1). Beginning with the Content Deep Dive, Teaching and Learning (T&L) staff and feeder pattern Academic Facilitators (AF) focused on the topic for the cycle. They planned the focus for the professional learning community (PLC) and delivered professional development to the Lead Teachers and Campus Instructional Coaches (CIC). The fourth step of the cycle was for teachers to implement their learning with their students. Finally, AF's conducted literacy walks to observe areas of focus for the next cycle.

Figure 1: Cycle of Literacy Leads Support



Note: PLC=Professional Learning Community
Source: Reading Language Arts department.

The K-12 Dallas ISD Literacy Leads initiative included 86 Dallas ISD elementary and middle schools within 12 feeder patterns. Participants included a teacher from each campus for each grade level, plus an instructional coach if that campus had one.

A total of 48,126 students in grades K to 8 (30.7% of Dallas ISD) were involved in this initiative. Notably more English Language Learners (49.3% vs. 44.2%) and economically disadvantaged (87.6% vs. 83.8%) students participated in the Literacy Leads initiative when compared to the district.

Individual campus staff selected Achieve3000 (N=50), iStation (N=18), or both (N=18) to provide literacy support to their students. Teachers accessed their students' results from the computer based programs to tailor their instruction to specific needs.

Perceptions of Literacy Leads Teachers

A survey was developed to measure participant perceptions of the Literacy Leads initiative. The overall purpose of the survey was to determine the helpfulness of the professional development offered by RLA, EL, and T&L staff. Most of the items were fixed on a five-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The survey was administered to participants at the first and final professional development sessions.

Items on the survey were grouped into four areas: word study (WS), small group instruction (SGI), text analysis (TA), and writing (W). All items in all areas showed an increase from the beginning to the end of the year. The following highlights the items that measured the greatest growth in each area from the beginning to the end of the year.

- WS: I understand how to select appropriate tier 1, 2, and 3 words (17% increase).
- SGI: I regularly work with students in small groups organized by their skill levels (19% increase).
- TA: My students know how to annotate texts (45% increase).
- W: I am confident teaching my students the writing process (26% increase).

A second survey was administered to participants in April of 2018 by RLA, EL, and T&L staff members to gather additional perceptions of Literacy Leads participants. Of the respondents (n=152), 88.7 percent (n=134) reported that they would like to continue their work in the Literacy Leads initiative next year.

Participants were also asked to rate the extent that their teaching practices changed on a scale from one (not at all) to five (a great deal) because of participating in the Literacy Leads initiative. Most (47.7%, n=72) rated the changes in their teaching practices a four, followed by 30.5 percent (n=46) who rated their changes a five.

Literacy Leads Student Outcome Results

First semester *Assessment of Course Performance* (ACP), *TerraNova/SUPERA* (K-2), and *STAAR* Reading (3-8) scores were analyzed. *STAAR* Writing scores were analyzed for grades four and seven.

Overall, for eight of the 11 end-of-year standardized assessment comparisons (K, 1, and 2 *TerraNova/SUPERA*; grades 3, 4, 7, and 8 *STAAR* reading; grade 7 *STAAR* writing), year-to-year growth occurred for students in Literacy Leads, students not in Literacy Leads, and for all district students. Year-to-year results were mixed for grade 4 writing,

grade 5 reading, and grade 6 reading. Due to the initiative not beginning until fall of 2017 and because much of the Literacy Leads professional development was provided during the school year, 2017-18 data should be viewed as preliminary. Also, it typically takes more than one year to demonstrate meaningful academic growth. Even so, early year-to-year trends are positive for the most part.

Recommendation

Continue offering targeted professional development for English Language Arts teachers. Per survey results, Literacy Leads teachers indicated a desire to continue learning text analysis, writing, and small group instruction strategies.

An electronic version of this report as well as the full 2017-18 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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