

Grade 6 EL Pilot Update

Presentation to School Committee
April 13, 2026



Topics

- Rationale, Goals, Logistics
- Outcome data
- Feedback
- Next steps

Rationale

Why did we pilot EL in 6th grade?

- Last fall, all classrooms in grades K–5 implemented Expeditionary Learning as the district's new ELA program.
- There was general interest in understanding what EL looks like at the middle school level.
- Data trends show lower proficiency rates in grade 6 than in grades 5 and 7. This pattern is evident across both state and district assessments.

Goal

What do we hope to achieve?

- Would EL bring about positive student outcomes for proficiency in literacy?
- Would EL be a reasonable transition from elementary school to the middle school instructional model?
- Is EL fiscally and practically feasible for middle school classrooms?

Structure

How was the pilot executed?

Two 6th grade ELA teachers piloted one module with 128 students over a 12-week period. Teachers and students used print materials (books, workbooks, manuals) with digital resources to support instruction (slide decks, media). The module was comprised of the essential questions:

- What were the main events of the Space Race, and in what scientific, political, and social context did it take place?
- What were the accomplishments of the “hidden figures” at NACA, and why were they remarkable? (NACA is NASA’s predecessor)
- Why is it important to study the accomplishments of the “hidden figures” and of others whose stories have gone unrecognized?

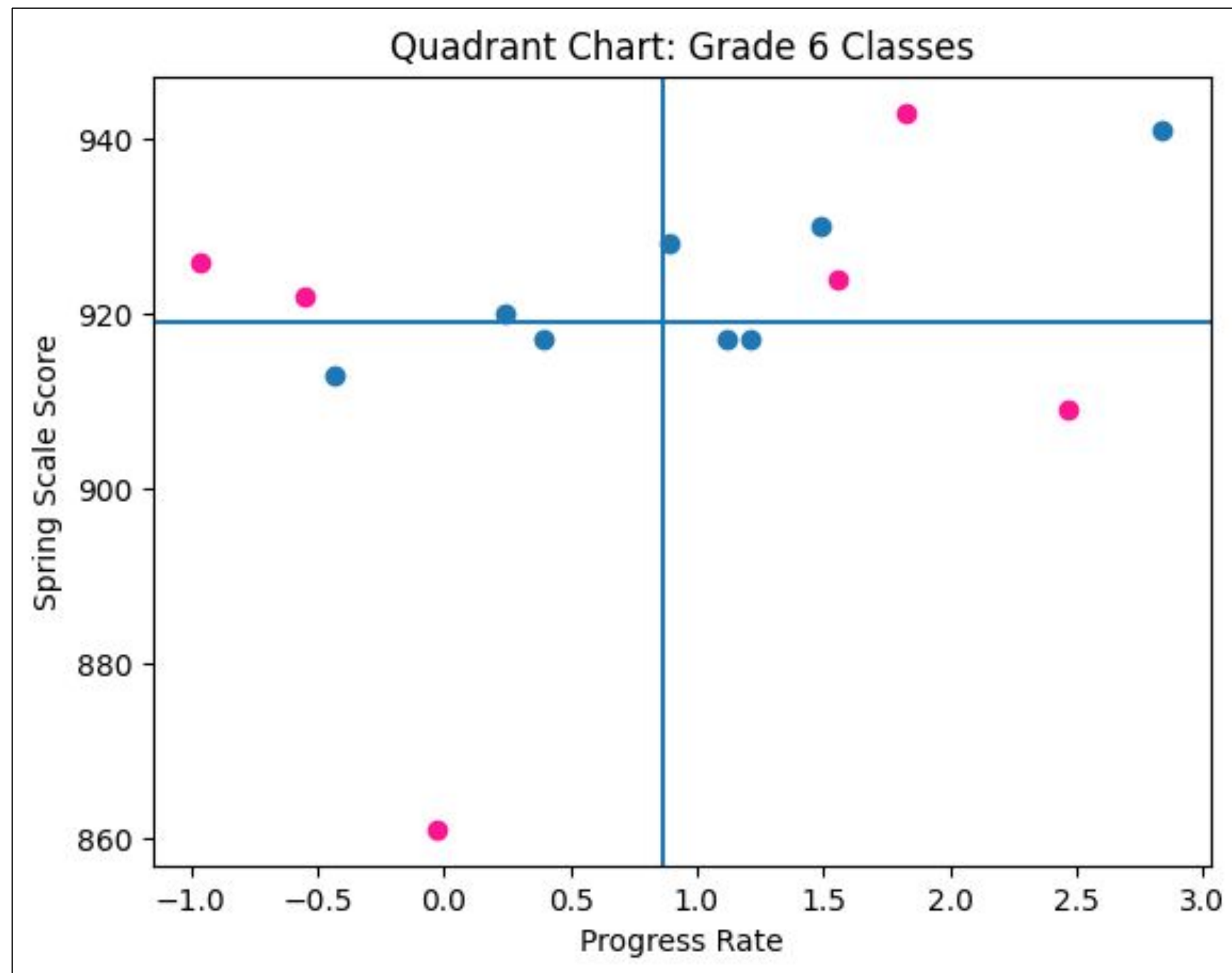
The core text was Hidden Figures (YA edition) by Margot Lee Shetterly.

Data

What were the student outcomes?

Data is based on the Track My Progress benchmark assessment. There were 16 weeks of instruction between the benchmarks. The EL pilot occurred for 12 weeks (75%) within this window.

The pilot classes are represented by the pink dots.



Feedback

What does the research say about EL?

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Strong standards alignment● Knowledge-rich thematic units● Authentic writing tasks● Well-structured lessons with instructional routines● Free, open-source curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pacing frequently considered unrealistic● Lessons are lengthy and complex to implement● Mixed accessibility for struggling readers without added supports● Limited direct experimental research on the curriculum itself● Teacher usability concerns

Feedback

What do SPS educators say about EL?

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Writing is a regular feature● Regular close readings with complex passages● Guiding questions to promote active and purposeful reading● Utilizes entrance tickets● Can incorporate Keys to Literacy Practices● Outside reading is expected● Level of rigor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lacks instruction for language skills (grammar, usage, mechanics, conventions) and vocabulary/word work● Lessons and materials require multiple alterations for length and content (ie. language skills)● “Jigsaw” reading – students aren’t accountable for reading all chapters● Teacher materials are cumbersome● Core literature is less desirable● Program is 9 years old and less diverse

Conclusion: EL provides a structure, instructional practices, and level of rigor we are striving for. It lacks content for some areas of literacy, practical usability, and feasible time on learning.

Conclusions

What are our next steps?

Based on goals, outcomes, experiences, and feedback, we will develop a hybrid curriculum using EL's open source materials with educator-selected literature and lesson plans.

2026-27

**Summer work: framework,
scope and sequence**

Revise unit 2

Implement Unit 2

2027-28

Unit revisions

**Implement units as
completed**



Budgetary Impacts FY28

Materials & Professional Development

- EL teacher resources \$600
- additional copies of Hidden Figures \$2,400
- additional copies of other titles \$5,000
- summer work \$3,600

Total: \$11,600

will continue into 2027