# LITERACY AUDIT

## Orange County Schools, Fall 2021

## WHAT'S IN YOUR LITERACY AUDIT REPORT?

Orange County Schools partnered with TNTP to examine students' access to grade-appropriate assignments and instruction in ELA. To understand students' access to these resources, we worked with a set of ELA classrooms in grades K-12 in 13 schools, collecting 155 assignments and student work samples, observing 62 classrooms, and surveying teachers about their experiences.

**We found that students have access to strong Reading Foundational Skills instruction, but they do not yet consistently have access to strong Reading/Listening Comprehension instruction.**

---

**Grade-Appropriate Assignments**
Content that reflects college- and career-ready academic standards.

*While 83% of Reading Foundational Skills assignments were aligned to grade-level standards, that was true for only 43% of Reading/Listening Comprehension assignments.*

---

**Strong Instruction**
Teaching that asks students to do the intellectual heavy lifting.

*Teachers and students are working hard: we saw a strong culture of learning in 85% of the classes we observed. However, only 39% of the Reading/Listening Comprehension lessons included a grade-appropriate text.*
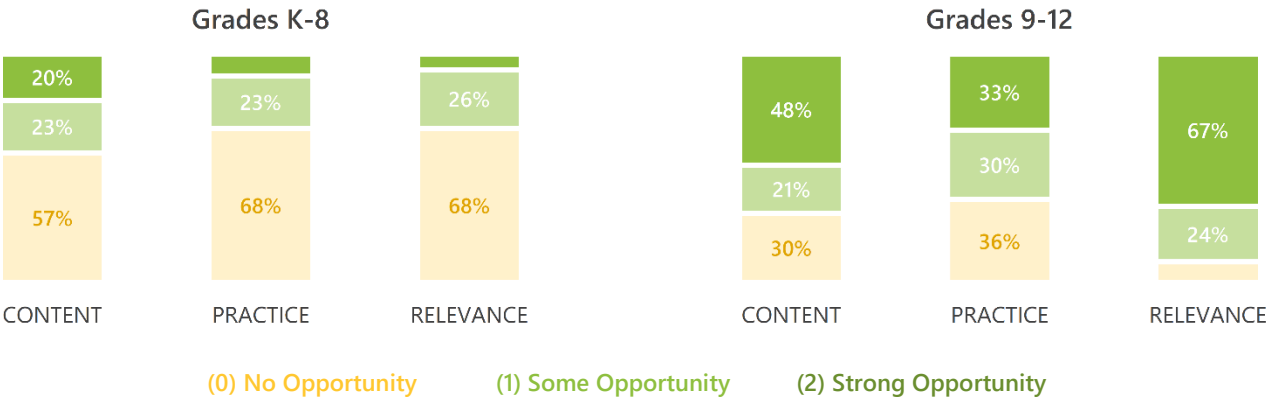
We also compared how these resources were distributed across these 13 schools, looking at the opportunities given to classes that differed in their proportion of students of color, proportion of English Language Learners, proportion of students with disabilities, and average prior achievement. We found few statistically meaningful differences between subgroups, though we did find that classes with a higher proportion of English Language Learners tended to have better instruction than classes with fewer English Language Learners. However, this finding is mostly explained by a higher proportion of ELL students in the Reading Foundational Skills classes we sampled.

This report provides details about the data we collected, as well as our recommendations for the district. For more information about our methods, sample, and analyses, see the Appendix.
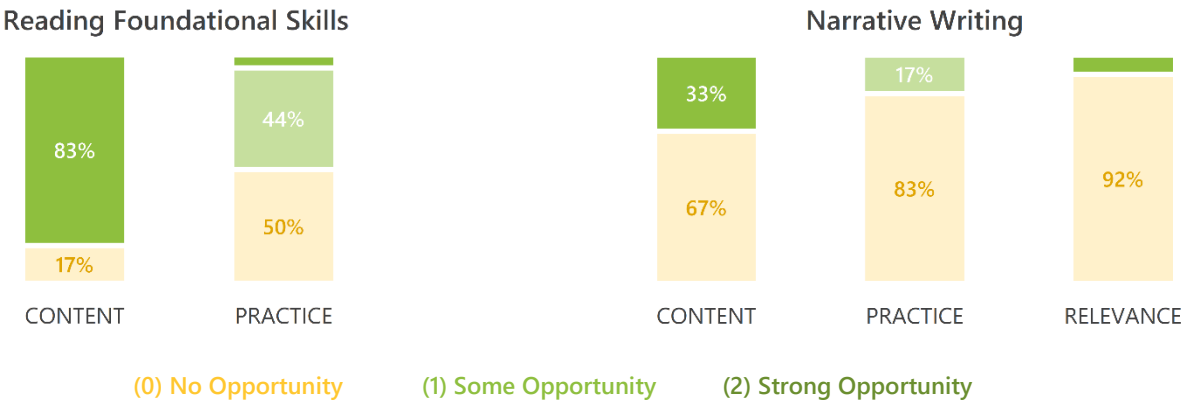
# STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

Teachers provided blank copies of the work students were expected to complete for **155 assignments**. For each assignment, we rated the extent to which it had grade-level *content*, provided meaningful *practice* opportunities on that content, and gave students a *relevant* opportunity to connect the content to real-world issues or contexts. Each of these three domains was rated on a scale of 0-2. Reading Foundational Skills assignments are not rated for real-world relevance.

## Reading and Listening Comprehension Domain Ratings

### Grades K-8

| | CONTENT | PRACTICE | RELEVANCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| (2) Strong Opportunity | 20% | | |
| (1) Some Opportunity | 23% | 23% | 26% |
| (0) No Opportunity | 57% | 68% | 68% |

### Grades 9-12

| | CONTENT | PRACTICE | RELEVANCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| (2) Strong Opportunity | 48% | 33% | 67% |
| (1) Some Opportunity | 21% | 30% | 24% |
| (0) No Opportunity | 30% | 36% | |

**(0) No Opportunity**    **(1) Some Opportunity**    **(2) Strong Opportunity**

## Reading Foundational Skills and Narrative Writing Domain Ratings

### Reading Foundational Skills

| | CONTENT | PRACTICE |
|---|---|---|
| (2) Strong Opportunity | 83% | |
| (1) Some Opportunity | | 44% |
| (0) No Opportunity | 17% | 50% |

### Narrative Writing

| | CONTENT | PRACTICE | RELEVANCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| (2) Strong Opportunity | 33% | | |
| (1) Some Opportunity | | 17% | |
| (0) No Opportunity | 67% | 83% | 92% |

**(0) No Opportunity**    **(1) Some Opportunity**    **(2) Strong Opportunity**

Teachers also provided student work samples for **60 of the assignments** – a total of **339 samples of student work**. For each student work sample, we determined whether the student met the expectations of the assignment *and* whether the student met the expectations of the target standard(s) for the assignment.

## Student Success on Assignments

| | Overall | Grade-Appropriate Assignments |
|---|---|---|
| Avg. Percent Met Expectations of the Assignment | 70% | 70% |
| Avg. Percent Met Expectations of the Target Standard(s) | 18% | 59% |

**Avg. Percent Met Expectations of the Assignment**    **Avg. Percent Met Expectations of the Target Standard(s)**
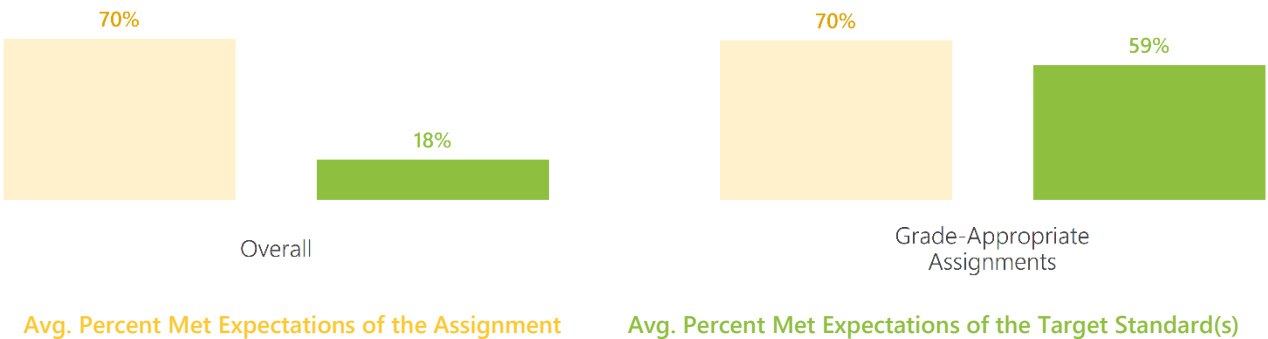
# Curriculum and Instructional Materials

When teachers submitted assignments, they also told us where their assignments came from. This allows us to determine the proportion of assignments that gave students an **opportunity to interact with the district's official curricula**. Reading Foundational Skills was the only category where most assignments were from approved district sources and where assignments from approved sources had higher average scores than teacher-created content (see mean assignment scores for each source at the top of the charts below). For Reading and Listening Comprehension and Narrative Writing, assignments from official curricula had the lowest average assignment scores.

## Teacher-Reported Assignment Source by Assignment Type

|  | 43% | | 30% | | 86% | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Overall | | Reading and Listening Comprehension and Narrative Writing | | Reading Foundational Skills | |
|  | 57% | | 70% | | 14% | |

From the official curricula

Teacher created or found
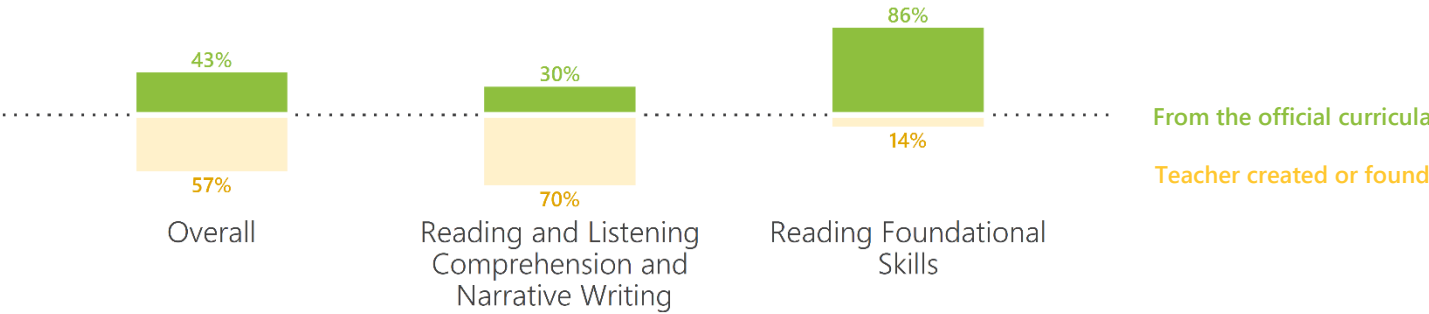
## Reading and Listening Comprehension and Narrative Writing Assignments

| Official Curricula | Number of Assignments |
|---|---|
| *Units of Study* | 28 |

| Approved Supplements | Number of Assignments |
|---|---|
| *Primary Comprehension Toolkit* | 1 |
| *Common Lit* | 1 |
| *Reading A-Z (RazPlus)* | 1 |
| *Newsela* | 3 |

| Teacher Created or Found | Number of Assignments |
|---|---|
| Teacher Created | 68 |
| Teachers Pay Teachers | 7 |
| Other | 5 |

## Reading Foundational Skills Assignments

| Official Curricula | Number of Assignments |
|---|---|
| *Letterland* | 29 |
| *From Phonics to Reading* | 1 |

| Approved Supplements | Number of Assignments |
|---|---|
| Fountas and Pinnell Phonics Lessons | 1 |

| Teacher Created or Found | Number of Assignments |
|---|---|
| Teacher Created | 3 |
| Teacher Pay Teachers | 1 |
| Other | 1 |

*Note: In the "Teacher-Reported Assignment Source by Assignment Type" figure above, assignments from "approved supplements" are included in "from the official curricula". Like the tables above, narrative writing assignments are included in Reading and Listening Comprehension in the figure.*

# Reported Use and Assessment of Materials by Teachers

We also asked teachers to report how frequently they used resources from different supplements in their classroom, both for reading and writing lessons and reading foundational skills. This came from questions asked in the teacher survey. The figure below lists resources in descending order by the percent the materials are always used. For reading and writing lessons, Units of Study had the highest reported level that it was always used, following by Reading A-Z (RazPlus) and something the teacher created.

## Frequency of Materials Use in Reading/Writing Lessons

| Resource | Never | Sometimes | Most of the time | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Units of Study | 22% | 17% | 35% | 27% |
| Reading A-Z (RazPlus)* | 47% | 30% | 10% | 13% |
| Teacher created | | 55% | 32% | |
| Teachers Pay Teachers | 27% | 53% | 13% | |
| Online resource | 13% | 63% | 22% | |
| Newsela* | 55% | 38% | | |
| A colleague's resource | 17% | 62% | 20% | |
| Study Island* | 83% | 15% | | |
| Some other resource | 25% | 68% | | |
| Edmentum* | 72% | 27% | | |
| Discovery Ed* | 65% | 35% | | |
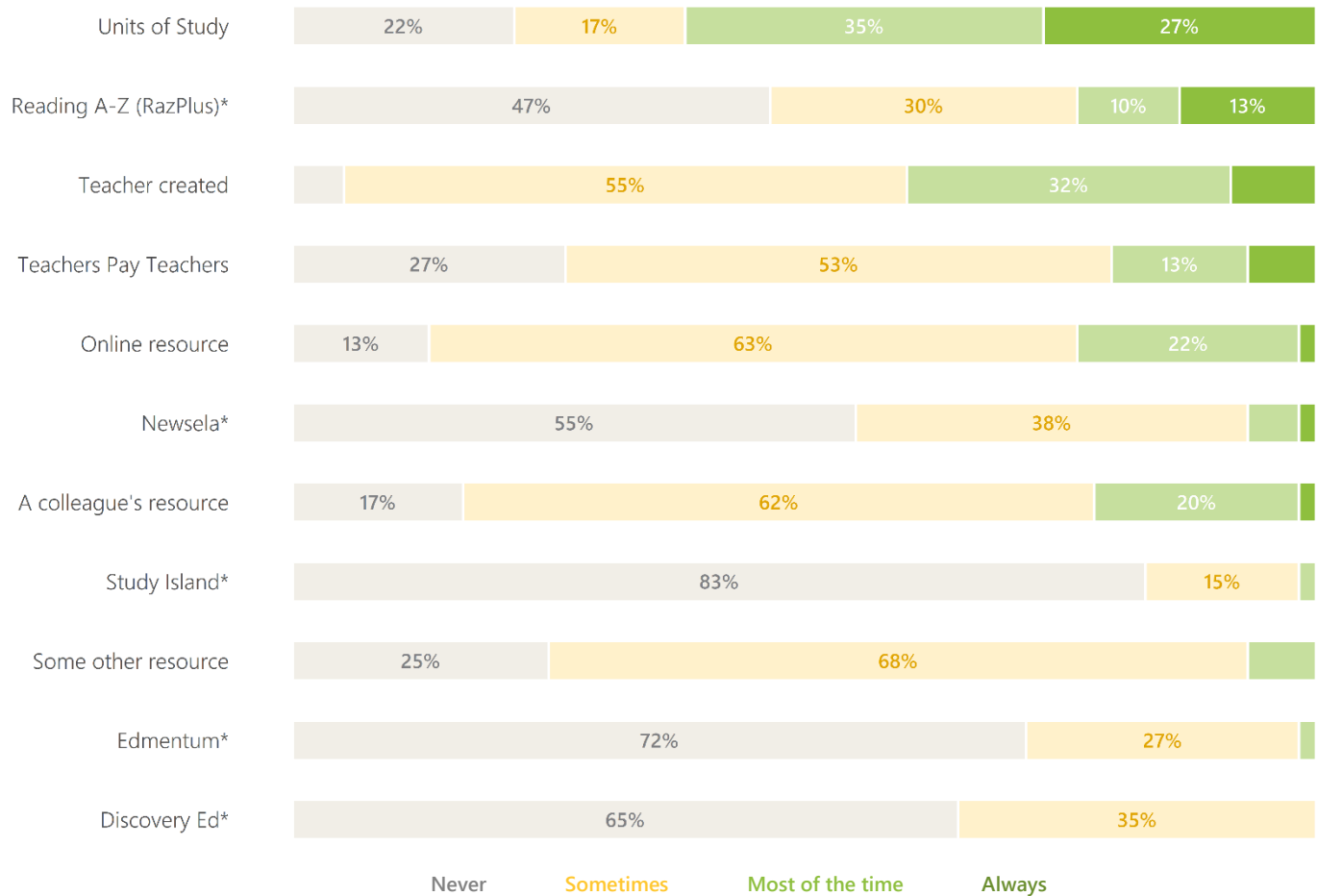
*n = 60 teacher survey responses. *Denotes an approved supplement purchased by the district.*

# Reported Use and Assessment of Materials by Teachers (Continued)

The figure below lists resources in descending order by the percent the materials are always used. For Reading Foundational Skills, Heggerty and Letterland are largely always used by teachers who teach K-2 grade level classes.
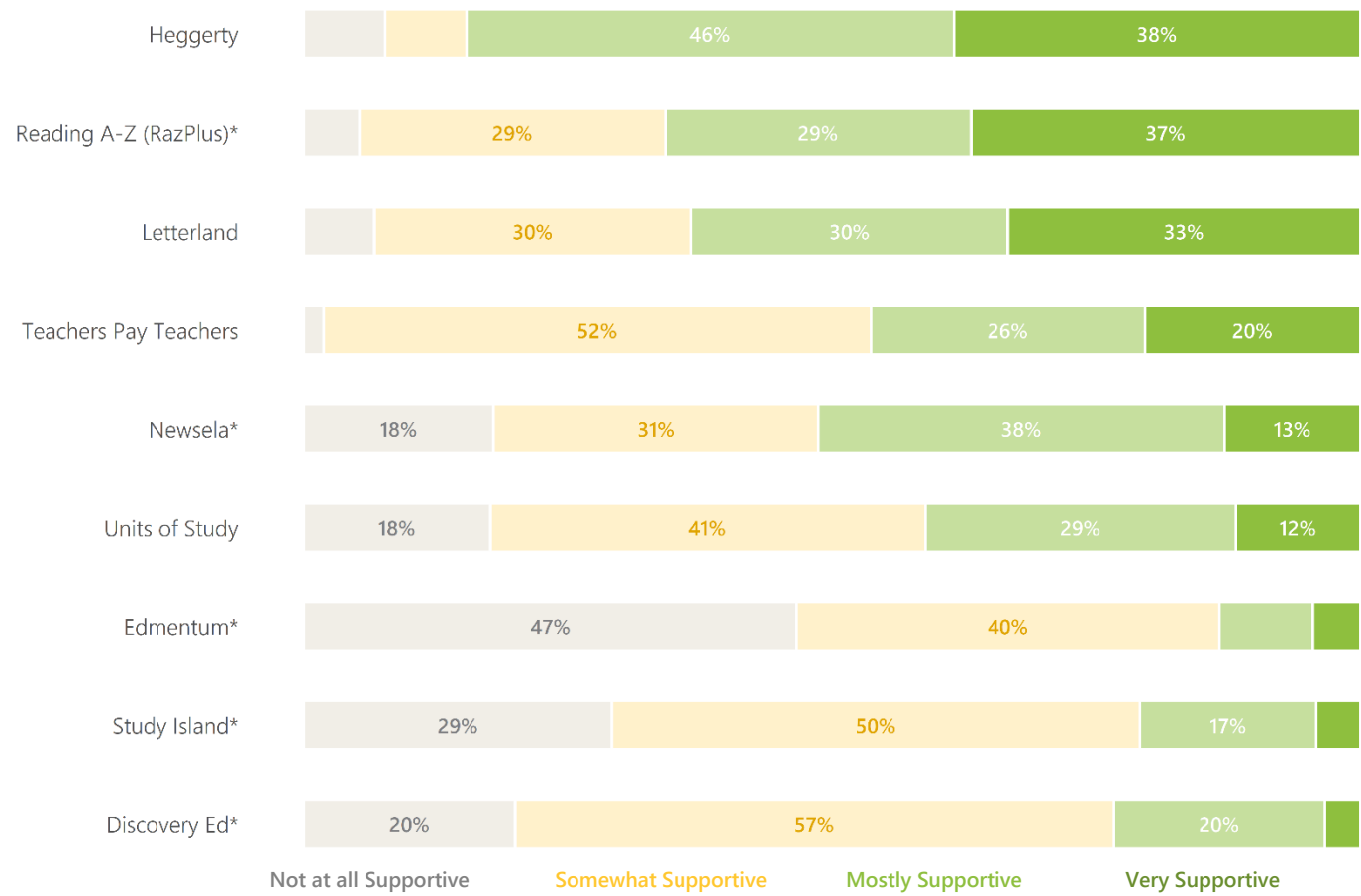
## Frequency of Materials Use in Reading Foundational Skills

| Resource | Never | Sometimes | Most of the time | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Heggerty | | | 14% | 86% |
| Letterland | | | 24% | 76% |
| Teachers Pay Teachers | 14% | 48% | 19% | 19% |
| Online resource | | 67% | 19% | |
| Teacher created | | 76% | | |
| Some other resource | 24% | 76% | | |
| A colleague's resource | 14% | 67% | 19% | |

Never   Sometimes   Most of the time   Always
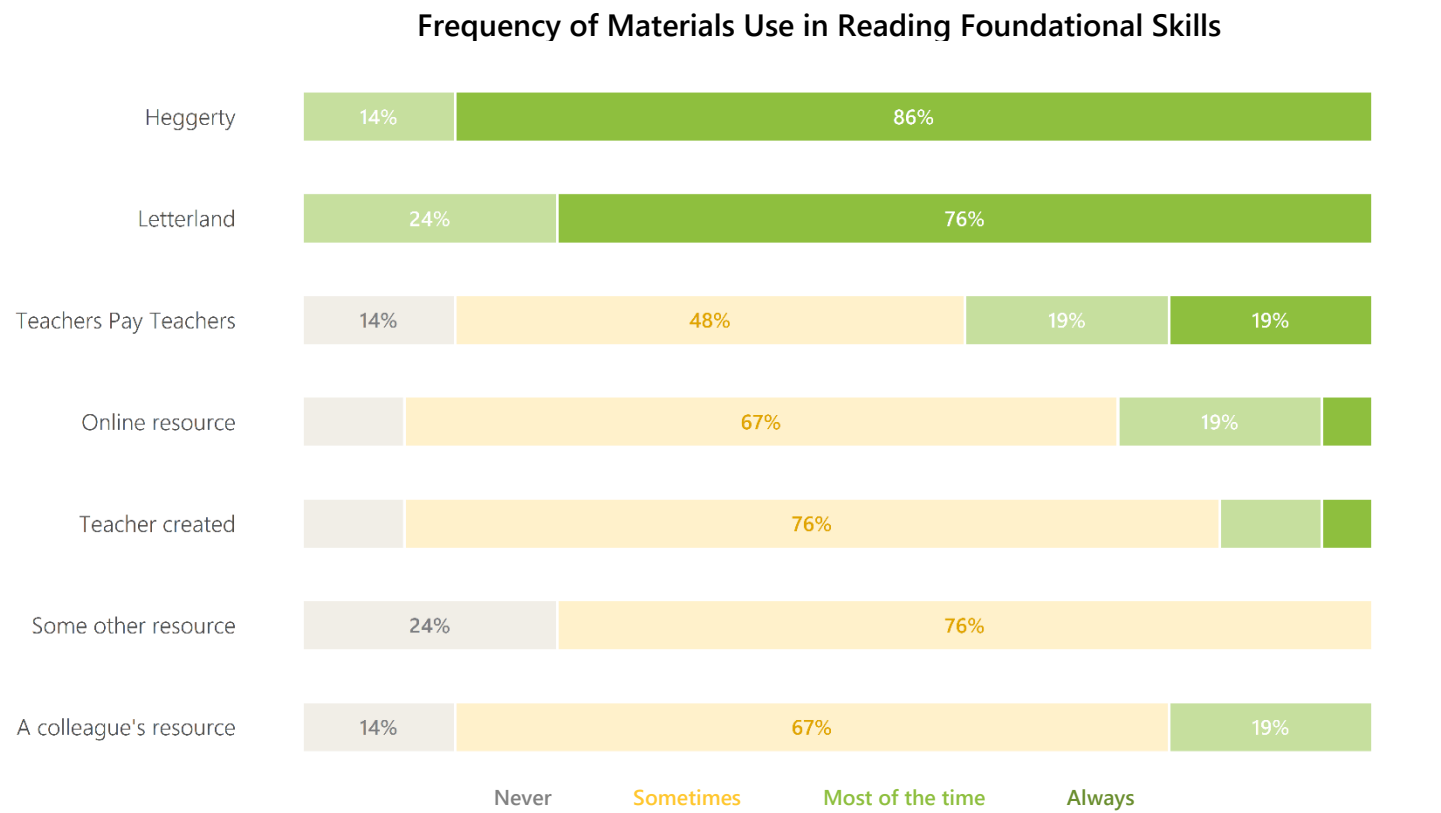
*n = 21 teacher survey responses for Reading Foundational Skills.*

# Reported Use and Assessment of Materials by Teachers (Continued)

Finally, we asked teachers to evaluate whether the curriculum resource supported students in meeting state standards. Heggerty, Reading A-Z (RazPlus), and Letterland had the highest ratings for being very supportive or mostly supportive of students meeting state standards. Units of Study was rated lower.
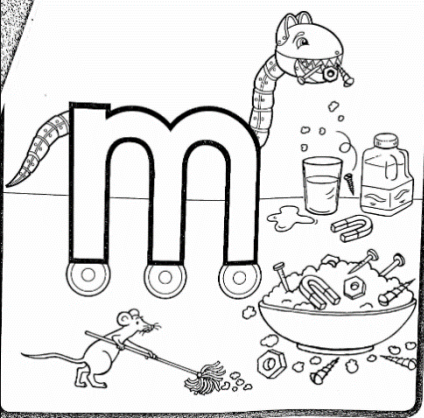
## The Level Teachers Believe a Resource Supports Mastery of Standards

| Resource | Not at all Supportive | Somewhat Supportive | Mostly Supportive | Very Supportive |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Heggerty | | | 46% | 38% |
| Reading A-Z (RazPlus)* | | 29% | 29% | 37% |
| Letterland | | 30% | 30% | 33% |
| Teachers Pay Teachers | | 52% | 26% | 20% |
| Newsela* | 18% | 31% | 38% | 13% |
| Units of Study | 18% | 41% | 29% | 12% |
| Edmentum* | 47% | 40% | | |
| Study Island* | 29% | 50% | 17% | |
| Discovery Ed* | 20% | 57% | 20% | |

*n = 60 teacher survey responses, but teachers were also able to respond "N/A" if they did not use a particular resource, so each material has a different number of ratings. *Denotes an approved supplement purchased by the district.*

# Sample Assignment Artifacts - Reading Foundational Skills

**Grade-Appropriate Assignments:** These Letterland assignments give Kindergarten and 1st grade students, respectively, sufficient opportunity to engage with grade-level standards. In the Kindergarten assignment on the left, students are asked to circle all of the letters in the sentence with the letter 'm' and then find all of the objects in the picture with the /m/ sound. This assignment provides students with the opportunity to engage with standards RF.K.1 (understand the organization and basic features of print) and RF.K.4a (letter-sound correspondence for the most frequent sounds for each consonant). In the 1st grade assignment on the right, students are asked to practice reading words that contain sounds and spelling patterns they have studied recently, including the "th" digraph, the "short u" sound, and words with the inflectional ending '-s'. This assignment provides students with the opportunity to engage with several facets of standard RF.1.4 (know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words).





*Providing Even More Opportunities:* Letterland typically provides students with one decodable text per week. To support students with mastering foundational reading skills, consider providing students with more opportunities to engage with decodable texts. Some publishers, such as the publisher of this 1st grade text below , provide students with decodable texts that are longer and allow for richer discussions.

## The Trip to the U.K.

Nat went to the U.K., and I felt sad. But then Mom set up a trip to the U.K.

Mom and I went on a jet. Ships are fun, but jets are the best!

I got to sit next to the wing. I had lunch. Then I had a nap. Mom got this snap shot of the nap.
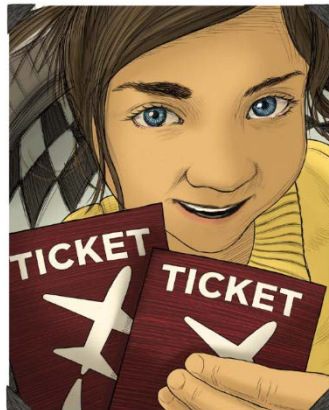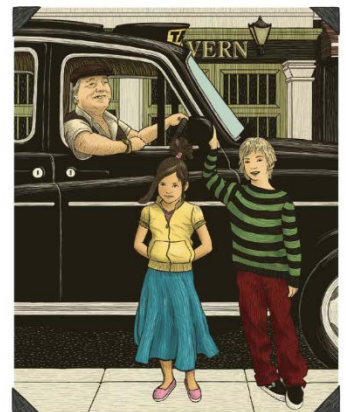


Nat met us at the end of the ramp.

I ran up to hug him.

Then Nat's mom, Dot, got us a cab.

This is a snap shot of us with the cab man.

Nat and I had a lot of fun.

Then, Mom and I slept in a bed next to Nat's bed.

# Sample Assignment Artifacts - Reading/Listening Comprehension

**Grade-Appropriate Texts:** One in five K-8, and nearly half of 9-12, assignments included a sufficiently complex text. Examples of grade-appropriate texts we saw included *The Tiger Rising* by Kate DiCamillo (4th grade), *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton (7th grade), and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte (12th grade).
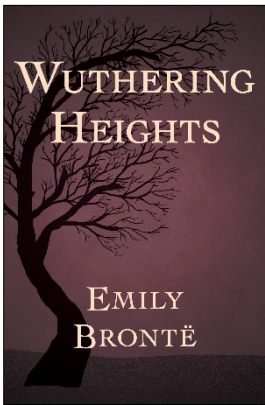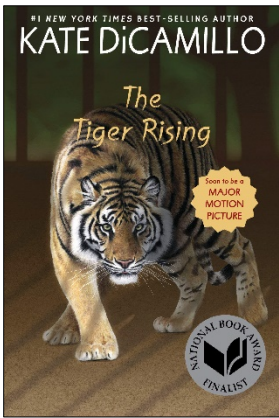
**Grade-Appropriate Questions and Tasks:** Roughly 1 in 10 assignments in K-8, and about 1 in 3 in grades 9-12, asked students to engage with strong text-dependent questions that allow them to think about the complex features of the text. The example below, from a 7th grade classroom, provides students with the opportunity to practice with multiple standards, including RL.7.1 (use text evidence to support analysis), RL.7.4 (analyze the impact of specific words and phrases), and RL.7.6 (analyze the development and perspectives of characters in a text).

| Question |
| --- |
| What is one really important window moment in the story that reveals a character? |
| What did this moment reveal about the character? |
| Name 1-2 different techniques that the author uses in this moment. Give a specific example from the story for each technique! |
| WHY did the author use this technique? What goals was the author working towards? |

**Below-Grade Texts, Questions, and Tasks:** Most of the assignments we reviewed did not provide students with an opportunity to engage with a sufficiently complex text and/or with questions and tasks that push students to think deeply about the text. Furthermore, few assignments gave students the opportunity to build the background knowledge and vocabulary necessary to tackle more challenging texts in the future.

The assignment on the left is from a 3rd grade classroom. While the quantitative complexity of the text, i.e., the Lexile level, is appropriate for 3rd grade, the text isn't particularly challenging. As a result, students are asked very surface-level questions, such as "What is the name of Brittany's soccer team?".

The assignment on the right is from a 6th grade classroom. The Lexile level is 830, which is below the appropriate range for 6th grade (925-1070). Furthermore, the article is a disconnected reading activity, rather than a part of a set of texts in a unit meant to build students' knowledge and vocabulary.

Brittany loved playing with The Ravens, her soccer team. The team helped each other, the way a team is supposed to work. When Brittany was on the field playing, she knew that she had her teammates support. But she was going to have to sit out the next game and she was really upset. She knew her team could win without her, but she really wanted to play. During practice the day before she had kicked the ball wrong and hurt her ankle. Her mom had taken her to the doctors for an x-ray and while it wasn't broken, they told her to stay off of it for three days. That meant no game for her tomorrow. Her coach was going to let her help plan plays though, so Brittany could still participate.

What is the name of Brittany's soccer team?

Why couldn't Brittany play?

How did they determine what was wrong with Brittany's ankle?

How long does Brittany need to stay off of her ankle?

What was Brittany going to do instead?

# When wild pets prove too much for owners, Wolf Run provides a home

By Lexington Herald-Leader, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.15.16
Word Count 668
Level 830L



Daron Lockard visits wolves including Jericho (right) in the high-content wolf enclosure at Wolf Run Wildlife Refuge in Nicholasville, Kentucky, Dec. 15, 2015. Pablo Alcala/Lexington Herald-Leader/TNS

NICHOLASVILLE, Ky. — Many animals have found a safe place at Wolf Run Wildlife Refuge. Wild wolves have not lived near the refuge in central Kentucky for more than 100 years. However, wolves crossbred with dogs can be heard howling there.

The Nicholasville, Kentucky refuge is a nonprofit group. It does not try to make money. Instead, it runs on gifts of money and volunteer work. Animal care volunteer Kara Baird says, "It's not pretty like a zoo, where all the animals are new and bred for being looked at. This is a place for these animals to feel safe."

*Providing Stronger Opportunities:* Once students learn to decode, they need opportunities to engage with complex texts that allow them to build their vocabulary and knowledge of the world around them. Often, publishers create units centered around a knowledge-building topic, with a variety of texts aligned to that topic, and questions and tasks that push students to think deeply about the text and topic.

---

**Grade 5 Module 1 Overview**

<u>Title</u>: Stories of Human Rights

<u>Description</u>: What are human rights, and how do real people and fictional characters respond when those rights are challenged? Students read closely the introduction and selected articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), paired with firsthand accounts of real people facing human rights challenges. They then study *Esperanza Rising*, applying their new learning about human rights as one lens through which to interpret character and theme. Finally, students revisit the text and themes of the UDHR and *Esperanza Rising* as they prepare and perform a Readers Theater.

<u>Big Ideas and Guiding Questions</u>:

**What are human rights, and how can they be threatened?**
- *Human rights belong to everyone, but they can look different to different people in different places.*
- *We can better understand how human rights can be threatened by reading about the experiences of fictional characters in stories.*

**How can we use writing to raise awareness of human rights?**
- *We can raise awareness of human rights issues by writing about the issues fictional characters face.*

---
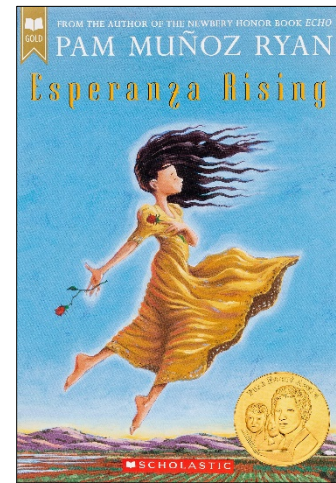
**Work Time**

**B. Jigsaw Protocol: Understanding the Historical Setting (30 minutes)**
- Tell students that in order to understand the setting—both the *geographical* place and *historical* time period—of the novel, they will spend a little time today building background knowledge about Mexico.
- To do this, they will be using a simple Jigsaw protocol. This protocol allows small groups to engage in an effective, time-efficient comprehension of a longer text. Students don't always have to read every page or section of a reading. The Jigsaw structure lets students divide up the text, become an expert in one section, and hear oral summaries of the others and still gain an understanding of the material.
- Divide students into groups of three and ask the triads to sit together. Give each triad a folder with all the materials for the Jigsaw protocol, including the Background Texts about Mexico in the 1920s.
- Assign one topic to each member of the triad:
    1. Government and Revolution
    2. Neighbor to the North
    3. Rich versus Poor
- Be sure that students also see the accompanying pictures.
- Tell students that they will each read about one topic, and then will share with the other members of their triad. Reassure them that they are not expected to understand everything about their excerpt or pictures. The goal is simply to begin to build basic background knowledge about Mexico. They will keep learning more throughout this unit.
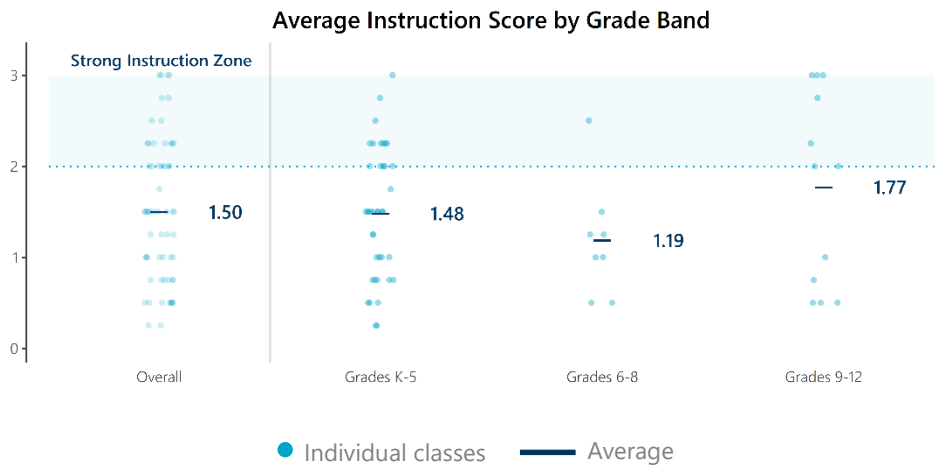
---

Reread Chapter 1 and do a "first draft" read of Chapter 2: "Las Uvas/Grapes."

As you read, think about these questions. Use your evidence flags to mark specific passages in the text to discuss with your triad. You do not need to write out answers as part of your homework; just keep track of your thinking with your evidence flags.
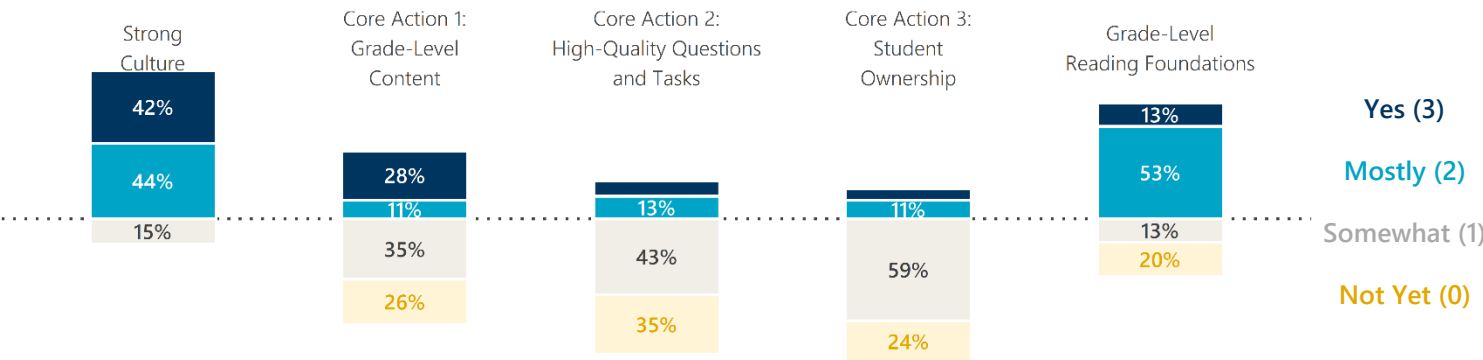
1. Describe the geographical setting of *Esperanza Rising*. What is it like where Esperanza lives? Use details from the text to support your answer.

2. What is Esperanza's relationship with her papa like? How do you know?

3. What is Esperanza's life like in Mexico?

# CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

We observed **62 lessons**, and during each observation, assessed the extent to which the lesson demonstrated a strong *culture of learning*, used grade-level *content*, employed appropriate *instructional practices*, and promoted *student ownership* over the thinking of the lesson. Each of these four domains was rated on a scale of 0-3; lessons with an average rating of at least a 2 were deemed to have offered strong instruction.

## Average Instruction Score by Grade Band

Strong Instruction Zone

| Overall | Grades K-5 | Grades 6-8 | Grades 9-12 |
|---------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1.50 | 1.48 | 1.19 | 1.77 |

● Individual classes　━━ Average

## Percent of lessons that had…

| | Strong Culture | Core Action 1: Grade-Level Content | Core Action 2: High-Quality Questions and Tasks | Core Action 3: Student Ownership | Grade-Level Reading Foundations | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Yes (3)** | 42% | 28% | | | 13% | |
| **Mostly (2)** | 44% | 11% | 13% | 11% | 53% | |
| **Somewhat (1)** | 15% | 35% | 43% | 59% | 13% | |
| **Not Yet (0)** | | 26% | 35% | 24% | 20% | |

Note: Values under 10% not shown. Reading Foundations only rated in K-5 ELA classes when they were attempted, N = 15.

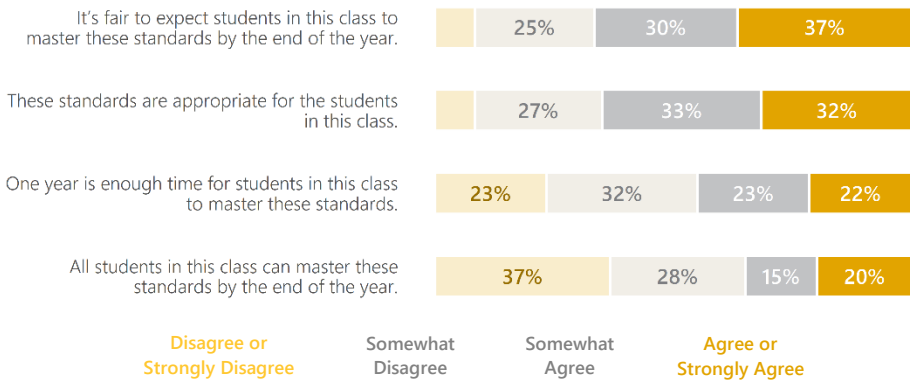## Detailed Core Action Ratings by Lesson Type

| Reading and Listening Comprehension | Percent Yes/Mostly | Reading Foundational Skills | Percent Yes/Mostly |
|---|---|---|---|
| Core Action 1a: Students spend the majority of the lesson listening to, reading, writing, and/or speaking about text(s). | 63% | RFS 1a: The foundational skills being taught are aligned to the standards for this grade. | 87% |
| Core Action 1b: The text(s) are at or above the complexity level expected for the grade and time in the school year. | 39% | RFS 1b: Foundational skills instruction is explicit, including teacher modeling and student practice. | 80% |
| Core Action 1c: The text(s) are worthy of student time and attention. They exhibit exceptional craft and thought and/or provide meaningful knowledge. Where appropriate, the texts are richly illustrated. | 39% | RFS 1c: Students have sufficient opportunities to practice reading and writing newly acquired foundational skills. | 53% |
| Core Action 2: Does this lesson employ questions and tasks, both oral and written, which integrate the standards and build students' comprehension of the text(s) and its meaning? | 22% | RFS 1d: Students connect acquisition of foundational skills to making meaning from reading. | 13% |
| Core Action 3: Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom? | 17% | RFS 1e: Students spend time on skills they are still working to develop, not those they have already mastered. | 80% |

# TEACHER SURVEY

We received survey responses from **60 teachers** (response rate = 85%). We asked teachers about their expectations for students, their opinions about literacy curriculum materials, and what resources or support their students need.
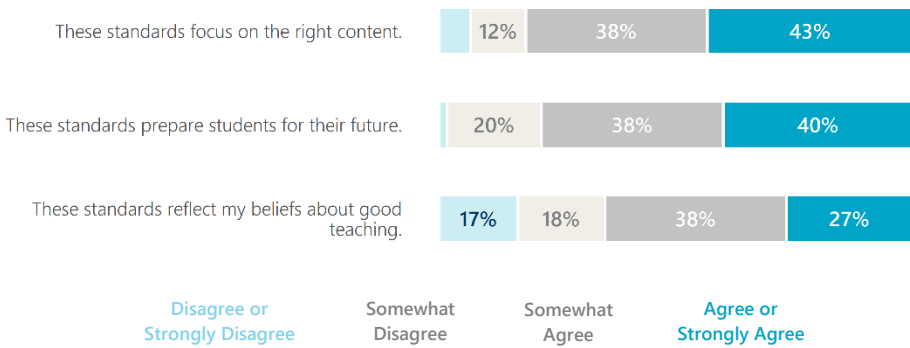
We asked teachers about their beliefs about student mastery this year.  Like in many districts across the country, teachers are unsure whether their students can fully master grade-level standards after nearly two years of disrupted learning.

## Teacher Expectations for Students This Year

| | Disagree or Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree or Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| It's fair to expect students in this class to master these standards by the end of the year. | | 25% | 30% | 37% |
| These standards are appropriate for the students in this class. | | 27% | 33% | 32% |
| One year is enough time for students in this class to master these standards. | 23% | 32% | 23% | 22% |
| All students in this class can master these standards by the end of the year. | 37% | 28% | 15% | 20% |

We also asked teachers about how much they supported the standards generally.

## Support for the Standards

| | Disagree or Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree or Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| These standards focus on the right content. | 12% | | 38% | 43% |
| These standards prepare students for their future. | | 20% | 38% | 40% |
| These standards reflect my beliefs about good teaching. | 17% | 18% | 38% | 27% |

**When asked about the professional development experiences, they've found most helpful, teachers frequently cited PLCs, working with a literacy coach, and the recent Heggerty training.**

---

"Meeting in PLC (Professional Learning Communities) with team and Literacy coach."

"Planning with my content partners and our literacy coach."

"Time with our literacy coach to analyze data and plan targeted intervention groups specific to what our kids needed. Would love to have more time for this."

"Science of Reading PD, weekly meetings with our literacy coaches."

"My team PLC meetings and curriculum planning with my school team is the most helpful."

"This year, Heggerty training has been supportive in providing foundational reading skills."

"Heggerty training"

"Training in Heggerty has been helpful. Fellow teachers who have been using Heggerty for longer in their classrooms helped teach me and clear up confusion from initial PD."

"I am enjoying Heggerty!"

---

**When asked about additional resources or support students need to fully master grade-level standards, teachers suggested additional fluency support beyond K-2 and a reading comprehension curriculum that provides students with rigorous texts and more opportunities to build their vocabulary.**

---

"Students in upper elementary need continued supports in phonics and decoding skills due to the gaps in learning produced by Covid-19."

"More fluency supports. Many of our students cannot read at all."

"Continue with clear phonics instruction. Continue Heggerty and use it for longer."

"My fifth graders still need basic decoding skills which is not at all part of our units of study."

"Programs like *From Phonics to Reading* that can be used in small group setting to support students substantially behind."

"Students need reading instruction that explicitly teaches kids how to read. Units of Study is NOT that."

"Students need more phonics, word roots, types of words (nouns, verbs, etc.), sentence structure (subject/predicate), etc."

"Small group instruction; high quality curriculum materials; science of reading"

"A different curriculum than Lucy."

"Units of Study is a terrible program that is not user friendly nor student friendly."
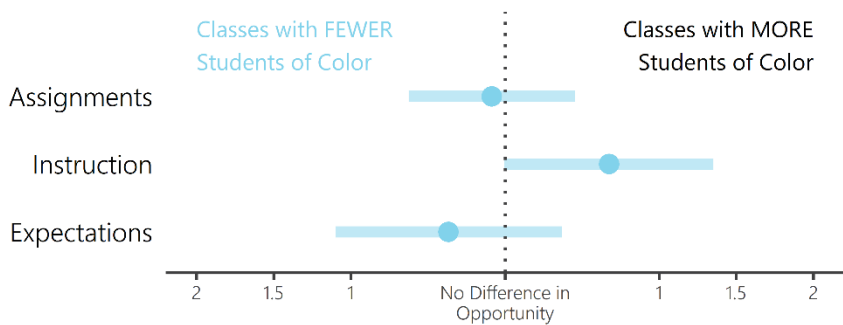
"Vocabulary support"

"Phonics instruction and a reading curriculum that actually teaches students to read (not Units of Study)."
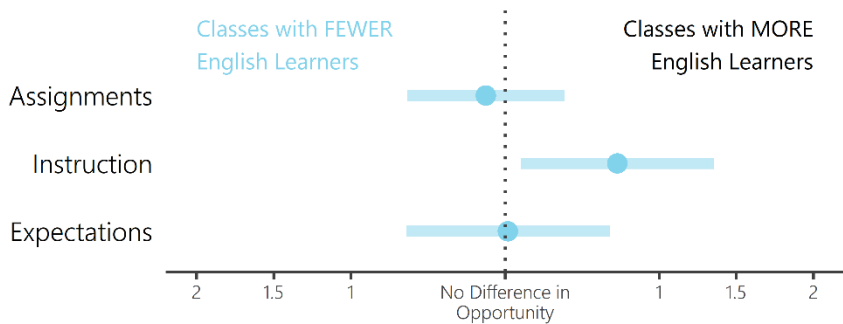
---

# EQUITY ANALYSIS

We used administrative data to determine the characteristics of students in each class. In order to put all metrics on the same scale, each metric was first standardized so that the values below represent the average differences in standard-deviation units. For each characteristic, we estimated the difference between the typical class from the 25% of classes with the least number of designated students versus the typical class from the 25% of classes with the highest ratio of students. We've also shown the error bars: bars that cross the "No difference" line imply that we are less statistically confident a true difference exists between the two types of classes.
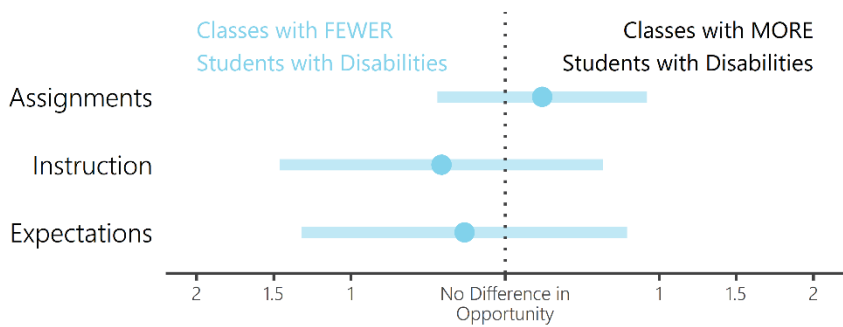
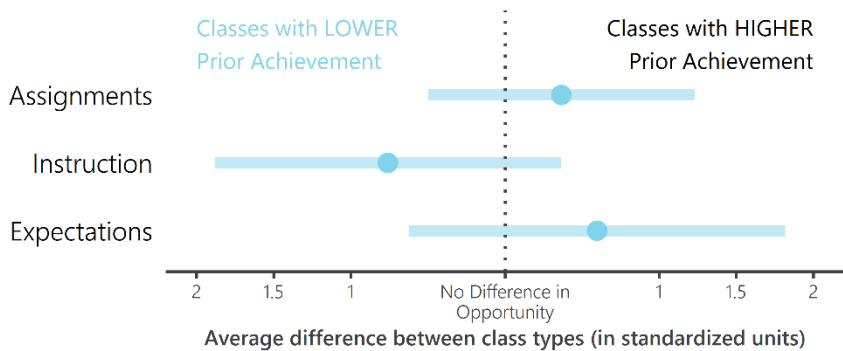## Average Differences in the Resources by Class Demographic



Classes with FEWER Students of Color — Classes with MORE Students of Color

- Assignments
- Instruction
- Expectations

2  1.5  1  No Difference in Opportunity  1  1.5  2

**An experience in a class with more STUDENTS OF COLOR was...**

**9%** more likely to have **worse** assignments,

**2.3 times** more likely to have **better** instruction, and

**47%** more likely to have **lower** expectations

... than in a class with fewer students of color.



Classes with FEWER English Learners — Classes with MORE English Learners

- Assignments
- Instruction
- Expectations

2  1.5  1  No Difference in Opportunity  1  1.5  2

**An experience in a class with more ENGLISH LEARNERS was...**

**15%** more likely to have **worse** assignments,

**2.5 times** more likely to have **better** instruction*, and

**4%** more likely to have **higher** expectations

... than in a class with fewer English Learners.



Classes with FEWER Students with Disabilities — Classes with MORE Students with Disabilities

- Assignments
- Instruction
- Expectations

2  1.5  1  No Difference in Opportunity  1  1.5  2

**An experience in a class with more STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES was...**

**42%** more likely to have **better** assignments,

**56%** more likely to have **worse** instruction, and

**31%** more likely to have **lower** expectations

... than in a class with fewer students with disabilities.



Classes with LOWER Prior Achievement — Classes with HIGHER Prior Achievement

- Assignments
- Instruction
- Expectations

2  1.5  1  No Difference in Opportunity  1  1.5  2

**Average difference between class types (in standardized units)**

**An experience in a class with lower PRIOR ACHIEVEMENT was...**

**66%** more likely to have **worse** assignments,

**2.7 times** more likely to have **better** instruction, and

**2.0 times** more likely to have **lower** expectations

... than in a class with higher prior achievement.

*Note: This difference is largely explained by a higher proportion of English Language Learners in the Reading Foundational Skills classes we sampled.

# KEY TRENDS

We are so honored that Orange County Schools chose to partner with TNTP to collect data about literacy instruction in the district. Based on the assignments, observations, and teacher survey data we collected, we found that:

1. **Everyone is working incredibly hard.** Students completed what was expected of them and there was a positive and purposeful climate in most classrooms (85%). Teachers frequently mentioned how much they value the support they receive from their literacy coaches. Given the immense challenges over the past two years, everyone should be commended for their work.

2. **Foundational Skills:**
   - **Overall, foundational skills instruction is going well, and the implementation of the new Heggerty materials is off to a strong start.** Most assignments and lessons we observed provided students with access to grade-level standards. Furthermore, 100% of surveyed teachers said they use these resources most or all of the time and a majority believe they support students' mastery of the standards (84% said so for Heggerty, 63% for Letterland).
   - **Students get few opportunities to connect foundational skills to making meaning from reading.** Of the foundational skills lessons we observed, only 13% of the time did we observe students getting the opportunity to apply the target skills from the lesson to a text, i.e., a decodable reader.
   - **Teachers want to extend foundational skills support to students beyond 2nd grade.** When asked what resources or support students need to be successful, several teachers asked for additional foundational skills support in upper elementary and beyond.

3. **Reading/Listening Comprehension:**
   - **Students do not consistently have access to grade-appropriate, complex texts during reading/listening comprehension lessons.** We saw a grade-appropriate, complex text in only 39% of the lessons we observed. Of the assignments we reviewed, just 20% of K-8 and 48% of 9-12 assignments were based on a grade-appropriate, complex text. In some cases, the text was significantly below grade level. For example, in one 8th grade class, students were working with a 610L text, which is more appropriate for 2nd or 3rd graders.
   - **Most teachers do not believe the *Units of Study* curriculum is meeting students' needs.** Only 62% of teachers say they use *Units of Study* most or all of the time, and only 41% believe *Units of Study* supports students with mastering grade-level standards.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, TNTP recommends that Orange County Schools largely stay the course with foundational skills instruction while beginning the process of choosing a reading comprehension curriculum. Specifically, we propose:

1. **Foundational Skills:**
   - **For now, OCS could stay the course with Letterland and Heggerty while providing students with more opportunities to practice reading foundational skills with decodable texts.** Given the relative strength of the foundational skills instruction in the district, we recommend continuing to implement and support teachers with Letterland and Heggerty. One area for improvement is providing students with more opportunities to practice their newly acquired foundational skills with a decodable reader. Letterland typically provides students with one decodable reader per week, but students would benefit from additional opportunities. After sourcing additional decodable readers, consider using a protocol, such as this one from Student Achievement Partners, to support implementation.
     - *To support implementation of this recommendation, provide school leaders with professional development about the characteristics of high-quality foundational skills instruction, including the role of decodable texts. Give school leaders a list of "look-fors", have them observe a few lessons, and then provide a space for the leaders to debrief their observations with one another.  TNTP will provide OCS with materials that can be used as a starting point.*
   - **To provide additional support, consider expanding the *From Phonics to Reading* pilot to all 3rd grade classrooms and implement a weekly practice routine in grades 2-12 for students struggling with fluency.** Since the district uses Letterland only through 2nd grade, OCS has piloted the use of *From Phonics to Reading* materials in select 3rd grade classrooms. Because this is a strong, systematic and explicit program, OCS should consider expanding *From Phonics to Reading* from an optional pilot to all 3rd grade classrooms to provide students with an additional year of foundational skills support. Furthermore, consider implementing a weekly practice routine in grades 2-12 for students struggling with fluency. Student Achievement Partners provides a protocol and packets of texts here.

- **After adopting new Reading/Listening Comprehension materials (see next recommendation), consider replacing Letterland.** The Letterland curriculum provides students with a systematic, explicit foundational skills curriculum. However, if OCS supplements Letterland with additional decodable readers, uses a different set of materials in 3rd grade, and adopts new reading/listening comprehension materials (see below), it may make sense to consider replacing Letterland with a foundational skills curriculum that needs little to no supplementation, and/or may be packaged with, or at least more aligned to, the reading/listening comprehension curriculum.

2. **Reading/Listening Comprehension:**
   - **As a temporary measure, ensure students work with appropriately complex texts during *Units of Study* mini-lessons and when engaging with texts from supplemental resources, such as Newsela.** Students must have opportunities to hear and work with appropriately complex texts in order to grow. While students choose their own text for much of their engagement with *Units of Study*, all students engage with the same text as part of the mini-lessons. For each mini-lesson, ensure that teachers read aloud from and model comprehension strategies with appropriately complex texts. Similarly, if teachers use texts from approved supplemental resources, such as Newsela, ask that they use texts that are appropriately complex for the given grade.
     - *To support implementation of this recommendation, provide school leaders with professional development about text complexity, including quantitative, qualitative, and reader-task measures. Give school leaders a list of "look-fors", have them observe a few lessons, and then provide a space for the leaders to debrief their observations with one another.  TNTP will provide OCS with materials that can be used as a starting point.*
   - **For a longer-term solution, partner with your literacy coaches to choose and implement a new reading comprehension curriculum**. In addition to our findings about students' access to strong reading comprehension materials, there has been considerable evidence over the past several years that *Units of Study* is not meeting students' needs (see this report from Student Achievement Partners and these findings from EdReports). Put simply, *Units of Study* is incompatible with a science of reading-aligned approach as it encourages students to guess words based on pictures or context (known as "cueing"), has students work with texts "on their level" instead of spending time with sufficiently complex ones, and prioritizes student choice over providing students with the opportunity to build a wide body of knowledge and vocabulary. Given these significant gaps, along with the fact that a majority of teachers do not believe *Units of Study* is meeting students' needs, OCS should partner with the school-based literacy coaches to choose and implement a new reading comprehension curriculum by:
     - Drafting a selection and implementation plan after reviewing the latest research about implementation science and learning from districts that have recently implemented new materials:
       - Tennessee LIFT Instructional Materials Implementation Guidebook
       - NIET Curriculum Implementation Guide
       - Instruction Partners Curriculum Support Workbook
       - Stakeholder Engagement Case Study: Baltimore City Public Schools
     - Updating the district's vision and framework for literacy instruction, including alignment with revisions to the state's Read to Achieve program as part of Senate Bill 387 passed earlier this year
     - Using resources like EdReports to analyze curriculum strengths and gaps, and to choose a short list of materials to vet more thoroughly
     - Piloting materials in a small number of classrooms (read more about best practices for piloting materials in the Tennessee LIFT guidebook linked above, and also in these resources from EdReports and Student Achievement Partners)
     - Visiting school districts that have experienced success with the new materials OCS is considering
     - Building out the implementation plan, including professional development and opportunities to collect data about how implementation is going and, if necessary, adjust course
     - Engaging with stakeholders throughout the process by communicating updates, allowing the public to preview materials, and administering surveys to gather feedback at key points

# APPENDIX

## How we studied students' opportunity and how to interpret the results

### How we collected data and how we scored it

We collected data from the ELA teachers at each of the 13 schools that participated in the Literacy Audit, selecting one classroom per teacher to include in the study. The number of ELA teachers who participated at each school varied, ranging from one to nine. Data for each component of the Literacy Audit came from a different source:

- **Assignments**: Each teacher was asked to provide blank copies of three assignments that were given to students in their sampled class that fulfill the following criteria: students must have spent at least 10 minutes of class time on the assignment, it must be from the 2 weeks before site visit or the week of site visit, and it cannot be a test or unit assessment. Teachers were also asked to provide six samples of students work for one of the assignments that fulfill the following criteria: samples from two students who typically perform below grade level on benchmark assessments or standardized tests, samples from two students who typically perform approaching or on-grade level on benchmark assessments or standardized tests, and samples from two students who typically perform above grade level on benchmark assessments or standardized tests. (If teachers did not have access to student assessment data, they were asked to randomly select six students before looking at their performance on that particular assignment.) For each assignment, teachers indicated the source of the assignment. All assignments and student work samples were reviewed by trained and normed raters, who scored them on TNTP's assignment rubric. Grade-appropriate assignments are those assignments that scored sufficiently high on the three domains of this rubric: content, practice, and relevance. Each student work sample was assessed on whether the student met the expectations of the assignment, as communicated by the directions and/or scoring key (if no directions and/or scoring key was provided, raters assumed 80% accuracy and completion meets the assignment expectations), and whether or not students met the expectations of the target standard(s) for the assignment. Unless otherwise noted, Narrative Writing assignments are only included in Overall statistics.

- **Instruction**: All teachers participating in the Literacy Audit were observed teaching a portion of their selected class by a trained and normed TNTP reviewer. Each teacher was observed once. Lessons were defined as exhibiting strong instruction if the observer scored it sufficiently high on the four domains of the observation rubric: learning culture, grade-level content, instructional practices, and student ownership.

- **Expectations:** All teachers participating in the Literacy Audit responded to a survey about their selected class. These questions linked to the specific constructs displayed in the Literacy Audit report.

- **Equity**: To determine the proportion of students in a class who were students of color, English Language Learners, or students with disabilities, we used the demographic data provided by your district's central office. This way, these class-level classifications represent the official proportions for each class. For prior achievement, we averaged the ELA scores from the 2020-2021 North Carolina End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and NCEXTEND1 tests for all students in the class. Only classes with at least 10 students who had a prior test score were included. Therefore, many classes were not included in the analysis of prior achievement.

- **Teacher Perspectives**: All teachers participating in the Literacy Audit were asked two open-ended questions on the teacher survey:
  - *What professional development, coaching, etc., have been most helpful in supporting your ELA instruction this year?*
  - *What additional supports do you believe our students need in order to increase reading proficiency in our district?*

  Responses were assessed for common themes, and illustrative quotations were selected for use in the Literacy Audit.

### How we analyzed data

**Reported means and percentages**
Most analyses in the Literacy Audit report are simple calculations of averages and percentages. These values mostly represent raw means and distributions. This is true in all figures and tables except for the "Average Assignment Score by Grade Band" plot and the equity analyses (see next section). Unlike classroom observations and teacher surveys, we have multiple assignment scores for each classroom participating in the study. Therefore, in the "Average Assignment Score by Grade Band" plot, the dots represent the mean assignment score for all assignments rated for a single classroom, while the mean bars represent the mean assignment score across all assignments rated.

**Comparing opportunity across student groups (equity)**

Equity analyses are based on separate linear models predicting each resource. We modeled each standardized resource score as a function of class grade and the proportion of students of the given demographic group in the class. For assignments, we used multi-level models at the assignment-level and included random effects for classes to account for the fact that multiple assignments come from the same class.

Demographic variables were scaled so that 1-unit represents a change in the demographic composition of going from an average class in the bottom quartile (i.e., lowest proportion of students in the demographic group) to the average class in the top quartile (i.e., highest proportion of students in the demographic group). For students of color, this represents going from a class with 28% students of color to a class with 73% students of color; for English Language Learners, this represents going from a class with 0% English Language Learners to a class with 35% English Language Learners; for students with disabilities, this represents going from a class with 2% students with disabilities to a class with 28% students with disabilities. For average prior achievement, a 1-unit change represents going from the average class in the bottom quartile of prior achievement scores to the top quartile. The estimates for these 1-unit changes are represented in the report along with error bars representing twice the estimated standard error – a rough 95% confidence interval.

To estimate the probability that students in a top quartile class (based on demographics) had a better/worse experience, we used the estimate and its estimated error to simulate values for different demographic categories in order to calculate the proportion of simulations that one demographic group outscored the other. This approach follows Gelman & Hill's *Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models* (2007, page 273). We then divided the probability of having a better (worse) experience by the probability of having a worse (better) experience to calculate the likelihood of having a better (worse) experience. This value is known as a risk ratio.