

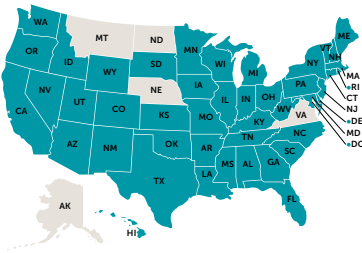


# InFOCUS

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## Sustaining Effective Teacher Practice: The Impact of the EL Education Language Arts Curriculum and Professional Development on Teachers' Instruction

### EL Education



The EL Education Language Arts Curriculum is in use in 45 states plus the District of Columbia and has been downloaded more than 10 million times.

Teachers play a crucial role in helping students develop the skills needed for success in school, career, and life. These skills—which are a focus in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—include higher-order thinking and complex literacy skills, such as reading, writing, and citing evidence from texts.<sup>1</sup> Professional development (PD) can strengthen teachers' instructional practices to help students learn these skills, especially if the PD is paired with curriculum, intensive, sustained over a long duration, and ensures that teachers integrate what they learned.<sup>2</sup>

To address the need for high quality and lasting professional learning for teachers, EL Education developed the Teacher Potential Project (TPP), which includes the CCSS-aligned EL Education Language Arts Curriculum in combination with intensive PD. In an independent study funded by a U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation grant, Mathematica Policy Research examined a range of middle grades teachers' CCSS-aligned instructional practices after one and two years of TPP engagement. The study team found that TPP teachers demonstrated and sustained a range of CCSS-aligned instructional practices more than teachers who did not engage with the TPP.<sup>3</sup> These two-year findings build on previous positive results of one year of TPP engagement.<sup>4</sup>

### ABOUT THE TEACHER POTENTIAL PROJECT

The TPP features the interdisciplinary, content-based EL Education Language Arts Curriculum alongside engaging professional learning supports for teachers that include (1) learning institutes throughout the year; (2) ongoing, personalized on-site coaching; and (3) online support.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Significantly more TPP teachers encouraged students' higher-order thinking skills—such as inference, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—in both the first and second years.** A larger proportion of TPP teachers engaged their students' critical thinking skills and focused on deeper textual analysis compared with the control teachers (Figure 1).

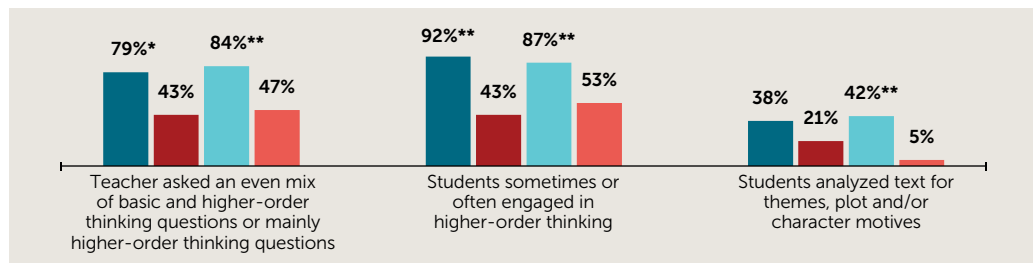


Figure 1

TPP treatment and control groups significantly different from each other at the .05 (\*) or .01 (\*\*) level, two-tailed test.

## ABOUT THE STUDY

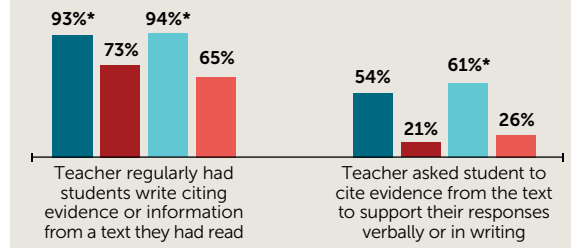
This two-year study included teachers of students in grades 4 through 8 in 18 schools across five districts. Ten of the schools used the EL Education Language Arts Curriculum and PD (TPP treatment) for two years and 8 schools used the curriculum and PD provided by their districts (control).

To learn about the effects of the TPP, the study team compared teachers' practices across the TPP and control groups using data from teacher surveys and classroom observations conducted by the study team.

The TPP and control teachers were similar in their demographic characteristics, average number of years teaching, education background, and certification area at the start of the study. This gives greater confidence that findings from the study are due to the EL Education language arts curriculum and PD and not differences across the teachers in each group.

## Significantly more TPP teachers asked students to cite evidence from texts in discussions and their writing.

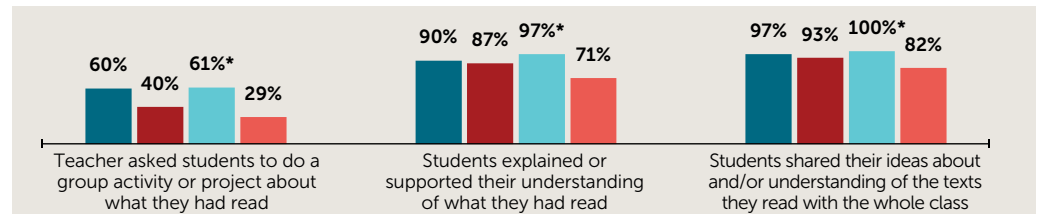
A larger proportion of TPP teachers engaged students in writing activities using text-based evidence in both the first and second years of the project (Figure 2). In addition, in the second year, a greater proportion of TPP teachers prompted students to cite evidence from texts to support their responses verbally.



**Figure 2**

TPP treatment and control groups significantly different from each other at the .05 (\*) or .01 (\*\*) level, two-tailed test.

**Students taught by TPP teachers engaged significantly more often in reading, writing, and speaking about texts in the second year of TPP.** A larger proportion of TPP teachers asked students to collaborate in a group activity or project about what they read, had students explain or support their understanding of what they read, and had students share their ideas or understanding of what they read compared to control teachers. (Figure 3).



**Figure 3**

TPP treatment and control groups significantly different from each other at the .05 (\*) or .01 (\*\*) level, two-tailed test.

## NEXT STEPS

This study is part of a larger, rigorous randomized controlled trial evaluation in which the study team will examine the impact of the TPP on student achievement using students' state English language arts test scores with the full sample of study schools (72 schools in 18 districts). The study team will estimate one- and two-year impacts of the TPP on student achievement by comparing those taught by TPP teachers with those taught by control teachers. These findings will be available in summer 2019.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative. "Key Shifts in English Language Arts." CCSS Initiative, 2010. Available at <http://www.corestandards.org/other-resources/key-shifts-in-english-language-arts/>. Accessed September 5, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Darling-Hammond, L., M.E. Hyler, and M. Gardner. "Effective Teacher Professional Development." Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Analyses included only the teachers who were part of the evaluation in both school years (2016–2017 and 2017–2018) and included both experienced and novice teachers (those with zero to three years of teaching experience in 2016–2017).

<sup>4</sup> Choi, J., S. Richman, and S. Dolfin. "Transforming Teachers' Practice: The Impact of EL Education's English Language Arts Curriculum and Professional Learning on Teacher Practices." Oakland, CA: Mathematica Policy Research, 2017.

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