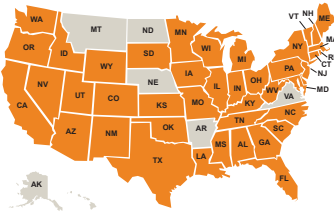


InFOCUS

EL Education



EL Education's literacy curriculum is in use in 44 states plus DC and has been downloaded over 8.7 million times.

ABOUT THE TEACHER POTENTIAL PROJECT

EL Education's TPP features interdisciplinary, content-based English/language arts curriculum alongside engaging professional learning supports for teachers that include (1) five institutes throughout the year; (2) ongoing, personalized, on-site coaching; and (3) online support.

The TPP curriculum and professional learning are closely aligned with the CCSS for English/language arts and literacy, which have been adopted by the majority of states.

Jane Choi, Scott Richman, and Sarah Dolfin

Transforming Teachers' Practice: The Impact of EL Education's English Language Arts Curriculum and Professional Learning on Teacher Practices

The widespread adoption of more rigorous state guidelines for student learning, such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), has led to tremendous interest in how best to prepare and develop teachers to foster the skills that students need to meet the new standards and succeed in college and careers. A promising pathway is to combine quality curriculum and professional learning so that teachers' instructional practices are directly aligned with the content they are teaching.¹ While the emerging research suggests the need to integrate teachers' knowledge and skill development with instructional materials, further evidence is necessary to support the effectiveness of such an approach.

EL Education² developed the Teacher Potential Project (TPP) to address the growing need to prepare teachers and support student learning through curriculum and embedded professional development. Mathematica Policy Research is conducting an independent, randomized controlled trial evaluation of the TPP to understand its effect on teachers' instructional practices and student achievement. The U.S. Department of Education is funding the project with a five-year Investing in Innovation (i3) grant.

Central to this evaluation and its conceptual framework for student achievement are impacts on teachers' instructional practices after one year of engagement in the TPP. The study team examined a wide range of CCSS-aligned instructional practices and found that TPP-trained teachers engaged students more in reading, writing, and developing content knowledge than teachers who were not trained in the TPP. In addition, the TPP-trained teachers placed more emphasis on having students cite evidence from text, use higher-order thinking skills, and develop responsibility for their own learning.

The study focused on novice teachers,³ who face the dual challenge of becoming effective educators and meeting the CCSS. However, the study's teacher impact results were similar for both novice and experienced teachers.

¹ Weiner, R. and Pimentel, S. (2017). Practice What You Teach: Connecting Curriculum and Professional Learning in Schools. Washington, D.C.: Aspen Institute.

² EL Education is a K-12 educational non-profit organization with the mission of engaging students and teachers in work that is challenging and meaningful so that learning and achievement flourish. EL Education's overarching vision for increasing students' achievement includes three dimensions: mastery of skills and knowledge, character, and high quality student work.

³ Novice teachers are teachers with 0-3 years of full-time teaching experience, not including substitute and student teaching.

ABOUT THE STUDY

EL Education commissioned Mathematica to conduct a rigorous, independent evaluation of the TPP. The study includes 72 schools in 18 districts across the country, including 10 districts in large, urban areas.

The study team created matched pairs of schools within each district and then randomly assigned schools within those pairs either to adopt the TPP or to continue with the curriculum and professional development offered by the district and school (the control condition). The study team compared teachers' practices across the TPP and control groups by using data from classroom observations conducted by trained members of the research team and surveys of teachers.

As part of its i3 grant evaluation, Mathematica will examine the impact of TPP on student achievement using students' state English/language arts test scores. The study team will estimate one-year and two-year impacts of the TPP on students by comparing those taught by TPP teachers versus those taught by the control teachers. These findings will be available in the summer of 2019.

KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation examined teaching practices that research suggests have the potential for high leverage in preparing students to meet rigorous state learning standards. Impact estimates showed positive effects of the TPP on teachers' CCSS-aligned instructional practices as well as on students' critical thinking skills and engagement with texts.



TPP novice teachers had students do close readings of the text and developed students' content

knowledge more often than the control novice teachers (Figure 1). TPP novice teachers also used an average of three writing activities per class period compared to control novice teachers who used an average of two writing activities.

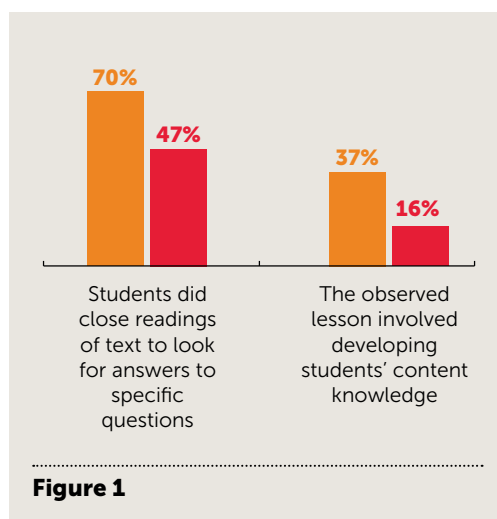


Figure 1



More TPP novice teachers had their students cite evidence from texts, a key research-based skill in the CCSS.

A larger proportion of TPP novice teachers had activities focused on understanding the meaning of text compared to the control novice teachers (Figure 2). TPP novice teachers had students reread the text and cite text evidence to support their responses more often than the control novice teachers.

■ Percentage of TPP novice teachers
■ Percentage of control novice teachers

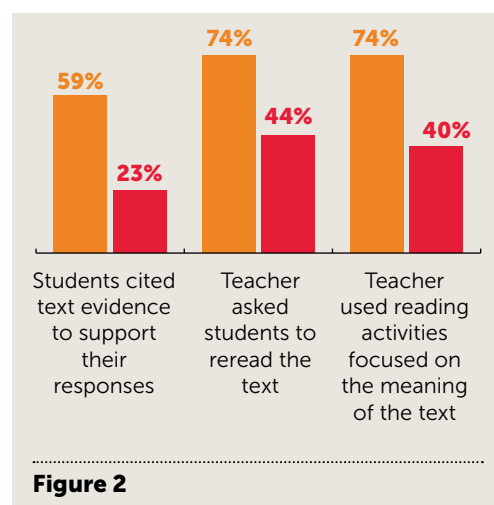


Figure 2



TPP novice teachers more often encouraged students' high-order thinking skills—such as inference, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

A larger proportion of TPP novice teachers engaged their students' critical thinking skills during classroom discussions compared to the control novice teachers (Figure 3).

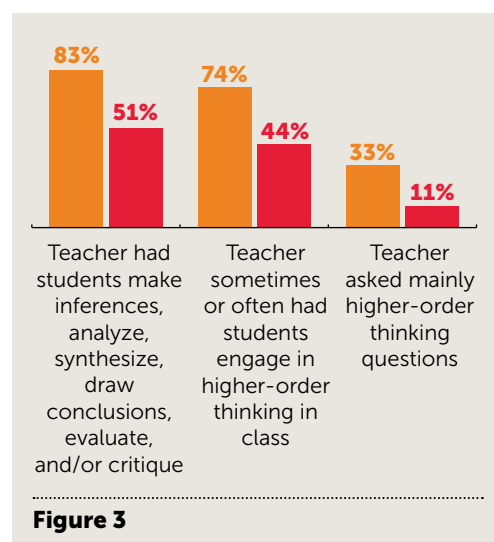


Figure 3

Students taught by TPP novice teachers engaged more often in practices that develop students' responsibility for their own learning.

Students did more of the work in developing their content knowledge by collaborating with peers and interacting in class. A larger proportion of students in TPP novice classrooms worked together in pairs or small groups, provided feedback to one another, and talked in class at least as much as the teacher compared to students in the control novice classrooms.

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