

Results from the Annual Literacy Institute: Changes in Teacher Knowledge of Early Literacy Best Practices

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BACKGROUND

- Literacy Institute, held each summer starting in 2015, is a weeklong early literacy professional development workshop for K-3 teachers in the School District of Philadelphia.
- Institute is one of the key initiatives geared toward improving literacy instruction in service of Anchor Goal 2 (100% of children reading on grade level by age 8).
- Approximately 1,935 educators from 151 schools have attended Institute between 2015 and 2017.

OBJECTIVES

- Analyze the relationship between Institute attendance and changes in teacher knowledge in regards to best practices of literacy instruction and the implementation of the 120 minute literacy block.
- Identify patterns of improvement in teacher knowledge across constructs, by Institute cohort, as well as prior teaching experience.
- Determine areas of teacher strengths as well as areas for continued professional development.

METHODS

- Early Literacy Knowledge (ELK): pre- and post-assessment aligned with the content of Institute sessions and used to measure changes in teacher knowledge.
- ELK measures changes in 13 constructs with 2-4 questions asked for each construct.
- The matched sample included teachers who took both the pre- and post-assessment over the three years of Institute (n= 683) or 35% of attendees.
- NOTE: The ELK was updated each year to reflect changes in content but the constructs generally remained the same.

FINDINGS

Figure 1. Matched Sample average pre- and post-Institute ELK scores by year

Year	Number of Teachers (n) [^]	% Correct-Pre Institute	% Correct-Post Institute	Pre/Post Change (percentage points)
2015	266	48%	54%	+6***
2016 ^a	129	49%	59%	+10***
2017 ^a	228	60%	69%	+9***
Total	683	53%	62%	+9***

[^]Teachers with both a pre- and post- assessment data
^a2016 and 2017 cohort demonstrated greater score growth than the 2015 cohort, statistically significant at the 95%, p<0.05
 ***statistically significant at the 99%, p<0.001

Figure 2. Average pre- and post-Institute scores by literacy teacher experience groups

Teacher Experience	Number of Teachers (n) [^]	% Correct-Pre Institute	% Correct-Post Institute	Pre/Post Change (percentage points)
New (0 years)	46	45%	47%	+2***
Early Career ^b (1-3 years)	124	48%	57% ^a	+9***
Mid-Career ^b (4-7 years)	101	52%	61%	+9***
Veteran ^b (8+ years)	352	55%	63%	+8***
Total	623 ^{^^}	52%	60%	+8***

[^]Teachers with both a pre- and post- assessment data
^{^^}60 teachers did not report number of years teaching literacy
^a Early Career teachers outperformed new teachers, statistically significant at the 99%, p<0.001
^b Experienced teachers demonstrated greater growth than new teachers, statistically significant at the 95%, p<0.05
 ***statistically significant at the 99%, p<0.001

Figure 3. All constructs saw an increase in the percent of correct responses from pre- to post-Institute, n=683

Early Literacy Knowledge (ELK) Construct	Average % Correct – Pre Institute	Average % Correct – Post Institute	Pre/Post Change (percentage points)
Working with ELLs	28%	48%	+20
Early Literacy Block for Students with Disabilities [*]	42%	52%	+10
Explicit Phonological & Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction [^]	43%	53%	+10
Creating a Literacy-Rich Environment in the Classroom	48%	58%	+10
Classroom Organization, Student Behaviors, and Routines for a Successful Literacy Block	52%	61%	+9
Guided Reading During the Literacy Block	52%	63%	+11
What Are Other Students Doing While the Teacher is Running Guided Reading Session?	54%	64%	+10
Independent Reading, Leveled Libraries, and Fluency	59%	61%	+2
Read Aloud and Shared Reading	60%	66%	+6
Using Data to Inform Literacy Instruction [^]	64%	66%	+2
Effectively Engaging Families in Supporting Children's Literacy	62%	70%	+8
Writing Objectives and Lesson Planning Using the Curriculum Engine [*]	65%	71%	+6
Developing Writers in the Literacy Block and Beyond	70%	76%	+6

^{*}Construct added in 2016 and 2017; [^]Different construct name in 2015

- Teachers' post-assessment scores across each Institute and across each experience group were statistically significantly higher than their pre-test scores indicating improvements in knowledge due to Institute attendance (p=.001) (Figure 1 & 2).
- Literacy teachers' with any experience demonstrated statistically significantly greater growth in scores than teacher with no literacy experience (p<0.05) (Figure 2).
- The largest pre- to post- change occurred in *Working with ELLs* (20% increase) construct. However, the average percentage correct at post remained below 50% (Figure 3).

CONCLUSIONS

- Institute contributed to an increase in teacher knowledge of foundational literacy practices as demonstrated by the average percentage correct increase from pre- to post-assessment.
- 2016 and 2017 Institute attendees demonstrated statistically significantly greater growth in scores than the 2015 attendees. This may be the result of updates to content as well as better alignment between content and ELK assessment.
- Working with ELLs* remained, on average, the lowest scoring construct on both the pre- and post-ELK. This indicates that while knowledge increased, additional PD is still needed in this area.
- The minimal growth made by teachers with no experience indicates that some experience may be beneficial to understanding the content presented at Institute.

CONTRIBUTORS

- Funding was provided by the William Penn Foundation for the Summer Literacy Institute

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