



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Principal ELS Experience Survey

Results and Findings

October 2018

Office of Research and Evaluation

Overview: The Early Literacy Specialist (ELS) Initiative

In an effort to ensure that all students are reading on grade level by age eight (Anchor Goal 2, Action Plan 3.0) and as part of the School District of Philadelphia's (SDP) large scale early literacy initiative, all K-3 elementary schools have a full-time Early Literacy Specialist coach (ELS coach) or Literacy Lead* as of SY 2017-2018.

ELS coaches and Literacy Leads support K-3 teachers by promoting research-based literacy teaching practices through the implementation of the 120 minute literacy block; improving teacher content knowledge, classroom environments, and classroom structure; and providing content-focused coaching and resources.

* a fully released SDP teacher who functions in a similar coaching capacity

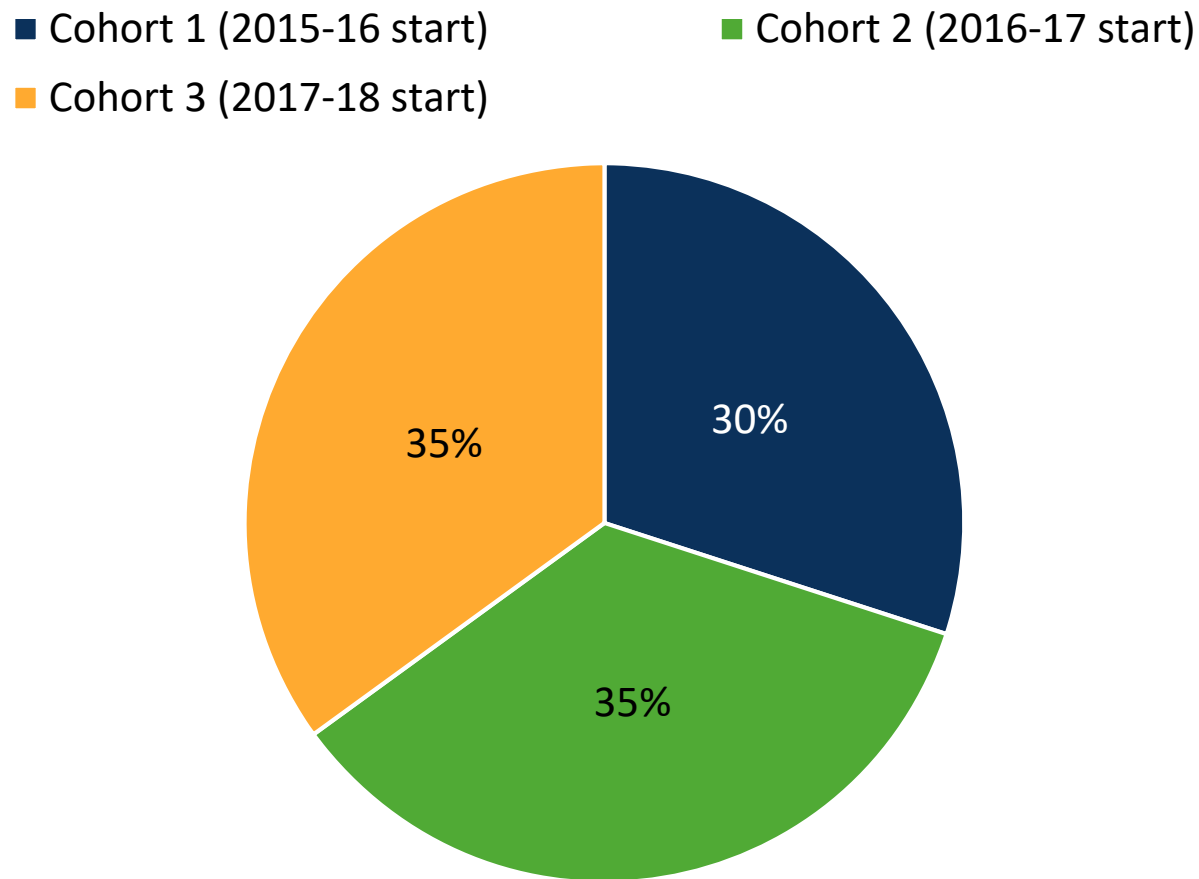
Overview: The Early Literacy Specialist (ELS) Initiative (continued)

- As of SY 2017-2018, 149 schools serving nearly 43,000 K-3 students have received coaching from an ELS coach.
- Coaching was implemented using a cohort model: in SY 2015-2016 40 schools received an ELS (cohort 1); in SY 2016-2017, 53 schools received an ELS (cohort 2); and in SY 2017-2018, the remaining 56 schools received an ELS (cohort 3).
- Because of this roll-out implementation approach, the number of years of support received by each school differs by cohort.

About the survey

- The purpose of was survey to gather principals' feedback about:
 - the implementation, benefits, and challenges of the ELS initiative,
 - the relationship between ELS support and improvements in AG2 implementation,
 - their understanding of the literacy block, and their confidence in coaching teachers in early literacy best practices,
 - the upcoming roll-out of the grades 4-8 literacy strategy.
- The survey was administered to principals via SurveyMonkey from July 9 - August 7, 2018.
- When this survey was administered, 108 schools serving grades K-3 had ELSs and the other 41 had Literacy Leads.
- This survey asked specifically about principal experience with ELSs, not Literacy Leads.

Principals from 110 schools responded to the survey for a response rate of 73%.



- Respondents¹ who reported their ELS cohort were fairly equally distributed across cohorts (n=104).
- Because the survey was administered over the summer, it is possible that some schools did not have a principal response because their new principal was not yet hired.

¹ In total, 110/149 principals responded to the survey and 104 respondents identified their ELS cohort.

About the Survey Findings

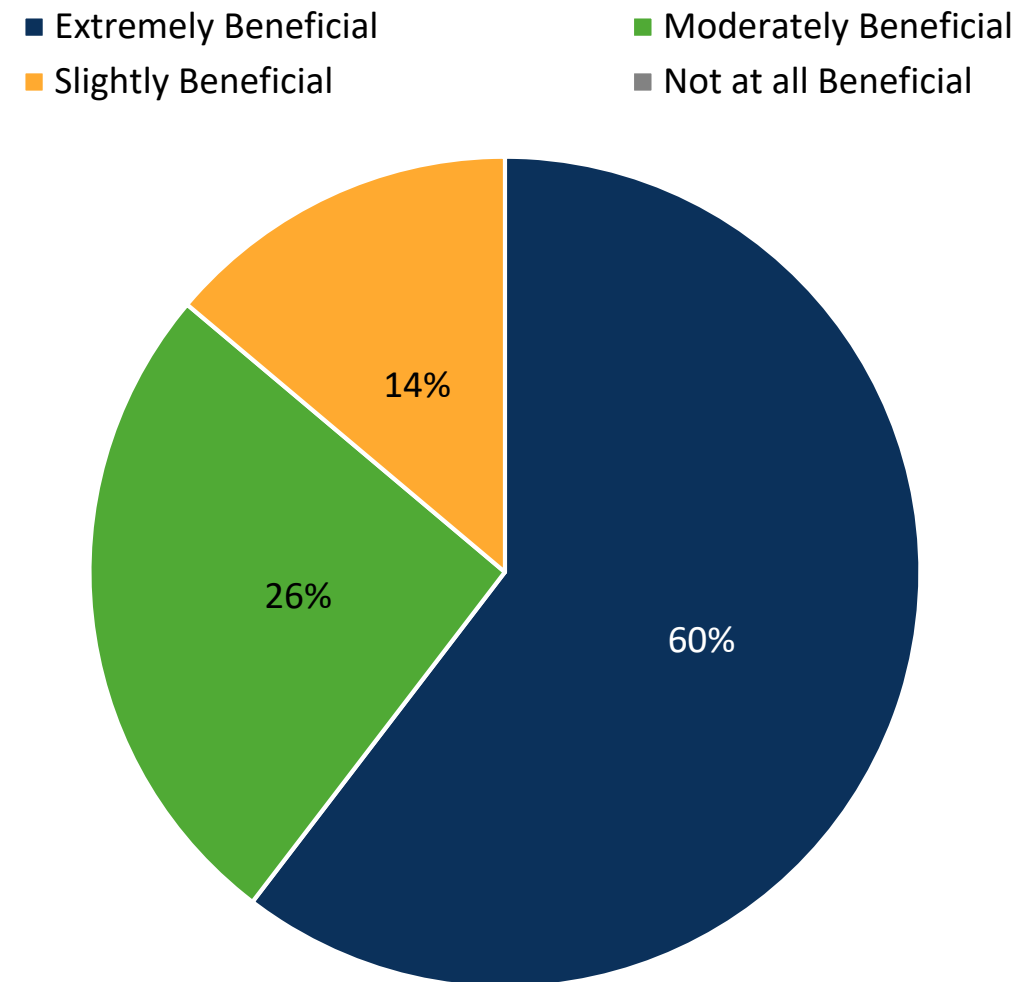
- The following slides are grouped by the following themes:
 - Perceived Benefits of Coaching
 - Principal Satisfaction
 - Helpfulness of Meetings and Data Collection
 - Perceived Impact of ELS Support and Suggestions for Improvement
 - Challenges to Implementation
 - Perceived Impact of ELS and Teacher Turnover
 - Feedback on Expansion to Grades 4-8
- For each theme, slides with quantitative findings are first, followed by slides with qualitative data from the open-ended responses.

Perceived Benefits of Coaching

86% of principals reported that having an ELS at their school was either *extremely* or *moderately beneficial*.

No principals responded that it was *not at all beneficial*.

Reported Level of Benefit of Having an ELS



N=101

In open-ended comments, principals noted three primary ways that having an ELS was a benefit to them. (N=82)

ELs support and drive school level literacy progress (N=27).

“The ELS has established working relationships with teachers in order to move the work forward. Our relationship allows us to plan and set goals and milestones.”

“The ELS was able to visit classrooms when I could not and speak to trends that could help move the school forward.”

“Having an ELS helped to unify our efforts centered around Early Literacy and lay a foundation for how to properly implement the 120 min literacy block.”

“There is someone specifically there to support my teachers with literacy instruction and improving overall outcomes for students.”

ELs provide expert knowledge through PD and feedback (N=14).

“Most of the teachers have grown in their craft. The ELS has provided professional development and coaching that has allowed most of the teachers to improve their instruction.”

“I benefitted from the data analysis, weekly meetings and support in providing professional learning opportunities for staff.”

“The ELS worked closely with myself and my SBTL to lead PD initiatives that teachers asked for as well as needed... The benefits were great as the ELS helped to shape teacher's literacy block and provide that one on one pre and post lesson feedback from a lens that is not judgmental but from a growth stand point.”

ELs develop the coaching capacity and early literacy knowledge of principals (N=7).

“My knowledge of early literacy strategies increased. It helped me to understand more in depth what I was looking for during observations.”

“I learned and developed my ability serve as a coach as a direct result of working with the ELS.”

“I significantly increased my knowledge, understanding and skill set of early literacy best practices.”

“I gained a better idea of literacy "look fors" and was better able to assess practice.”

In open-ended comments, principals noted three primary ways that having an ELS was a benefit to their teachers. (N=81)

ELs develop teacher knowledge and support professional growth in regards to early literacy (N=22).

“Having a fully released staff member for coaching and support has helped them fine tune their craft.”

“The performance levels of the teachers improved and was evident in informal and formal observations. There were also a lot of lightbulbs that went off for our teachers.”

“They benefitted by seeing the proper implementation of a variety of early literacy strategies and as an end product they became better at their crafts.”

“They had someone to go to share where they were having difficulty without feeling ashamed or inept...they could focus on becoming experts in one area at a time.”

ELs improve the structure, implementation, and delivery of balanced literacy framework (N=17).

“They improved their ability to deliver effective literacy strategies to improve student learning”

“They benefitted from creating classroom environments conducive to a positive classroom culture.”

“Teachers were able to lead effective literacy lessons especially guided reading and literacy centers.”

“The teachers benefitted from improving classroom culture and consistent implementation of the literacy block and guided reading.”

“They have not only a set of expectations, but side-by-side support in implementing our plan for early literacy.”

ELs provide targeted feedback and just-in-time PD to teachers (N=15).

“They greatly benefitted from the ELS coaching initiative through targeted supports, resources, modeling, and observations.”

“Having someone with the dedicated time to work intimately with teachers on improving practice and present on relevant topics during grade group and PD.”

“Teachers enjoyed the individual coaching sessions around their needs. They believed the feedback helped them to grow as teachers of literacy.”

“Teachers were given individualized coaching and PD that pushed their knowledge of and ability to implement best practices.”

In open-ended comments, principals noted three primary ways that having an ELS was a benefit to their students. (N=78)

As a result of coaching, the quality of instruction increased (N=26).

“Students benefited from the classroom transformation, more engaging learning activities, and deeper conversations.”

“Our children have benefitted by receiving expert instruction in literacy, in a environment that supports their learning, and engage in reading and writing in new ways.”

“Students at my school benefitted from the ELS coaching initiative through instructional practices that were improved upon through coaching and more effective practices in the literacy block.”

“As a result to the improvement to the teachers planning, reviewing the data, etc., the students received a higher quality of instruction.”

As a result of improved instruction, student reading outcomes improved (N=22).

The support/coaching that the ELS has provided to teachers has had a positive impact on increasing our students' literacy skills. The coaching provided by the ELS has allow many of our students to achieve their one year's growth target.”

“Scholars were presented with more intentional and rigorous instruction. This was evident in their performance on Aimsweb and DRA.”

“Our data indicates that dramatically increasing numbers of students are making significant and continuous progress in achieving their reading goals.”

“Our literacy scores have increased more than 20% since having an ELS in our school”

ELs provided additional support to teachers and students (N=16).

“Having an expert in the room acting as a co-teacher gives extra reading support to our struggling students.”

“The students were able to be supported in small groups by the ELS.”

“The students loved the ELS and she helped them feel valued as readers, learners, and people.”

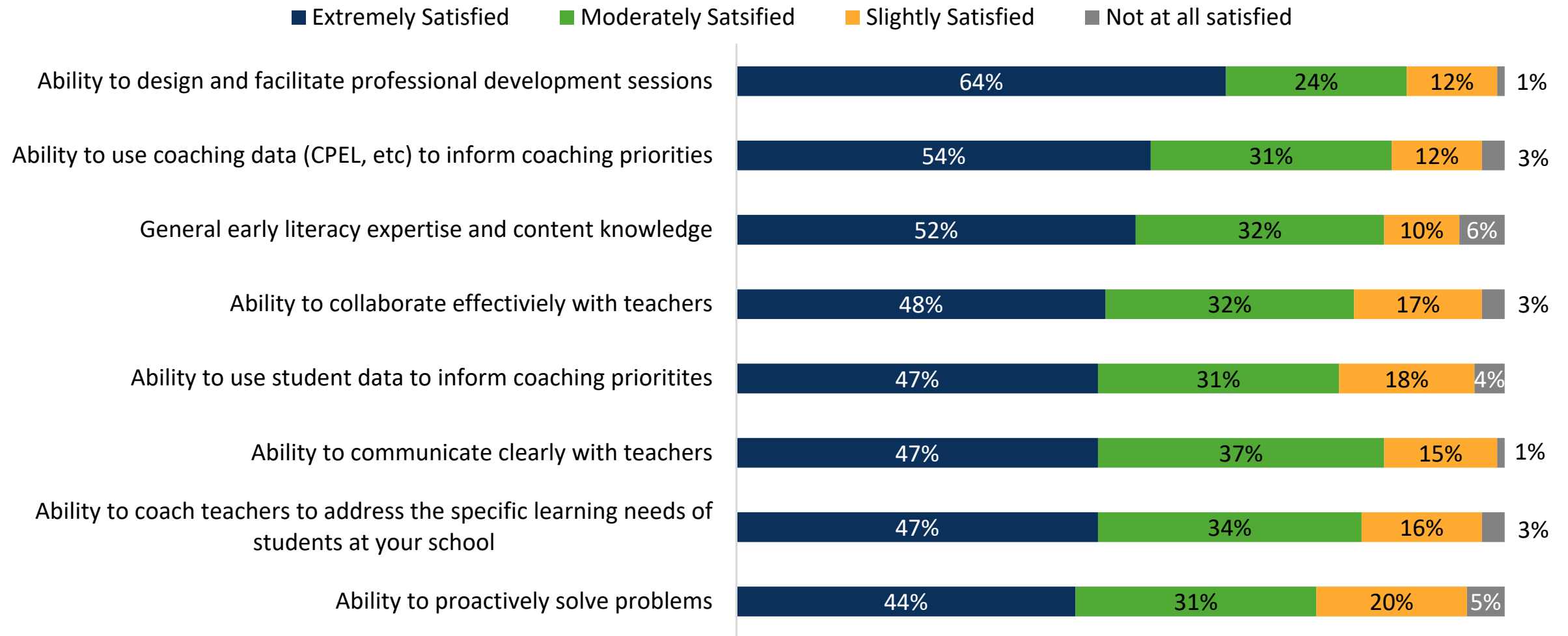
“She worked with the children and had personal relationships with the children in all the classes where she coached.”

“She was able to work with the teachers to develop specific action plans to help students meet their goals.”

“Students received more guided reading and the small group and 1:1 attention to move forward.”

Principal Satisfaction

Most principals (64%) reported that they were *extremely satisfied* with the ability of ELSs to “design and facilitate PD sessions” (top bar).



Open-ended comments provide additional insight into the areas where principals reported being most and least satisfied. (N=42)

Areas of greatest satisfaction include:

Strong Relationships (N=7)

- *“The ELS has done a great job of building relationships with the early literacy teachers so there is the opportunity for real coaching to take place; some were difficult at first.”*
- *“My coach was persistent in developing relationships with the teachers and eager to work daily.”*

Collaboration (N=6)

- *“I was highly satisfied with the ability for the ELS Coach to collaborate with myself and the school team to integrate our PBIS with the Power of Three.”*
- *“Her ability to work with the principal and leadership team to address student and teacher needs.”*

Perseverance and Work Ethic (N=6)

- *“The ELS was extremely skillful in persevering through roadblocks in coaching teachers.”*
- *“My ELS coach is willing to exercise all measures to ensure student success.”*

Areas of least satisfaction include:

Teacher Relationships (N=5):

- *“Our ELS failed to develop relationships with the teachers. She was very inflexible and not a team player.”*
- *“The ELS' was not well received by the teachers.”*

Ability to Use Data (N=5)

- *“I do believe some more work could be done around training them to work with specific student data.”*
- *“The ELS needs to do better with frequently analyze data such as Aims and DRA. “*
- *“I am dissatisfied with the level of data use in coaching and her workstreams.”*

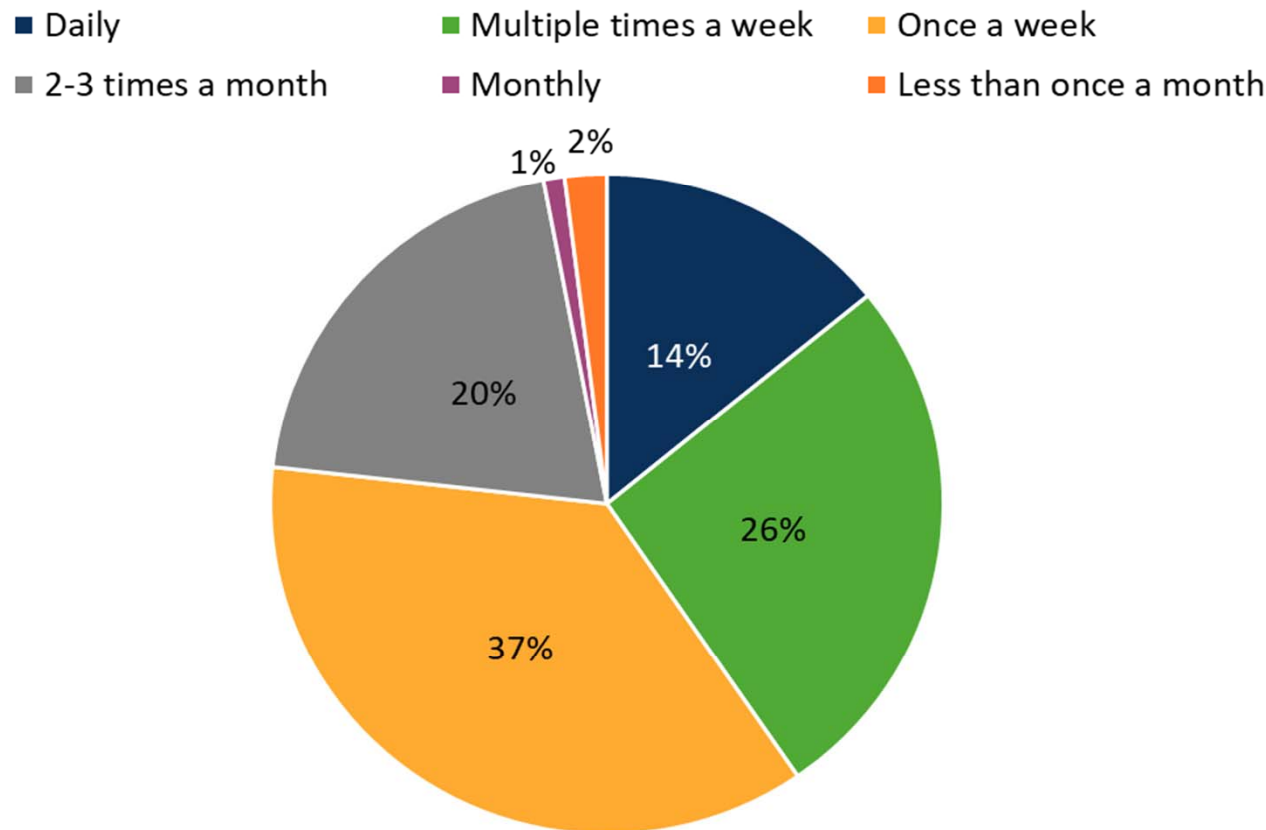
Approach to Coaching (N=3)

- *“...she didn't push my teachers hard enough.”*
- *“Hands off does not work, they should be able to see children on a regular basis to model small groups.*
- *“Case-load was too big to effectively coach everyone.”*

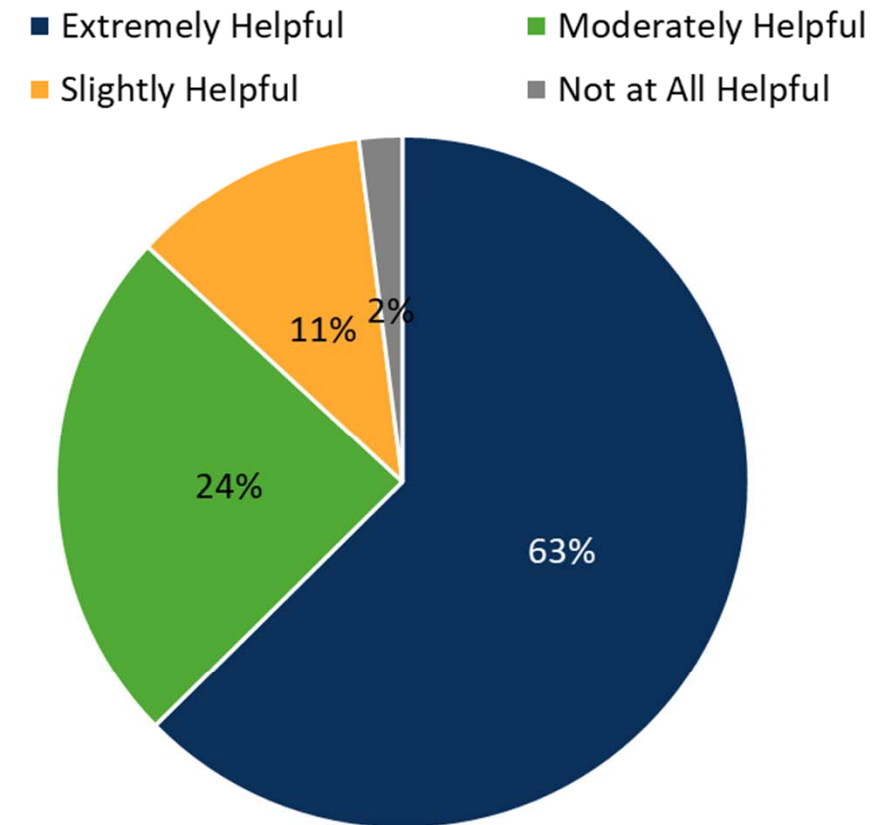
Helpfulness of Meetings and Data Collection

77% of principals reported that they met with their ELS *at least weekly*. 63% of principals rated their meetings (regardless of the frequency) as *extremely helpful*.

Reported Frequency of ELS/Principal Meetings



Reported Helpfulness of ELS/Principal Meetings



There is a statistically significant, moderate correlation between principals' reported frequency of meetings and their helpfulness rating.

Spearman's Correlation= .406, $p=.000$

N=99

Open-ended comments provide additional insight into the usefulness of ELS/principal meetings and areas for improvement.

Ways in which the meetings were effective and useful include (N=69):

- Discussing school-wide trends using CPEL data as well as formal and informal observations data (N=29)
- Identifying school-wide and teacher progress and areas for improvement and using that information to set goals and plan for professional development (N=21)
- Developing and executing an early literacy agenda and staying focused on goals/timelines (N=14)
- Providing consistent opportunities for communication and ongoing dialogue (N=12).
- Collaborating to identify strategies to best support teachers (N=10)
- Developing principals' early literacy expertise (N=3)
- Troubleshooting problems (N=2)

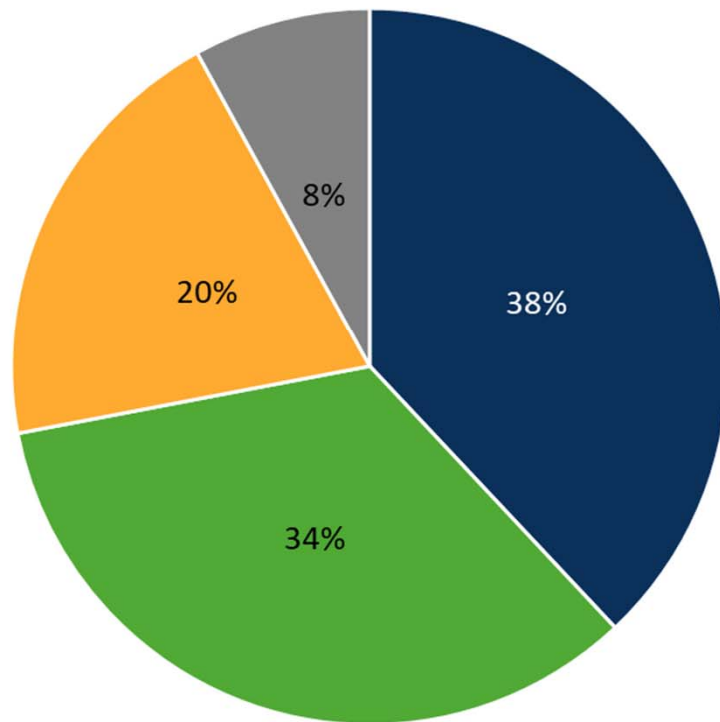
Ways to improve the effectiveness and usefulness of meetings include (N=44):

- Creating more time for meetings; reducing interruptions and scheduling changes (N=20).
- Consistently using meeting agendas, protocols, and timelines to improve efficiency and accountability (N=14).
- Using student and teacher data to drive the meeting (N=4).
- Greater specificity and transparency in regards to teacher feedback (N=3).

Principals regularly receive a report on school-level literacy block implementation which ELS's collect using the Coaching Protocol for Early Literacy (CPEL).

Reported Usefulness of CPEL Data

■ Extremely useful ■ Moderately useful ■ Slightly useful ■ Not at all useful



When asked about the usefulness of the CPEL data, 72% of principals reported that the data collected on the CPEL was either ***extremely*** or ***moderately useful***.

N=99

Open-ended comments provide additional insight into the usefulness of CPEL data and areas for improvement.

Ways in which the CPEL data is useful include (N=77):

- Identifying school-level strengths, weaknesses, and trends (N=28).
- Determining the focus/priority areas for professional development, PLCs, and targeted coaching (N=20).
- Progress monitor improvement and growth (N=8).
- Gauging implementation of the Literacy Block (N=6).
- Gauging quality of teacher instruction (N=6).
- Triangulating CPEL data with principal observation data and/or student outcome data (N=5).
- Driving discussions (N=2).

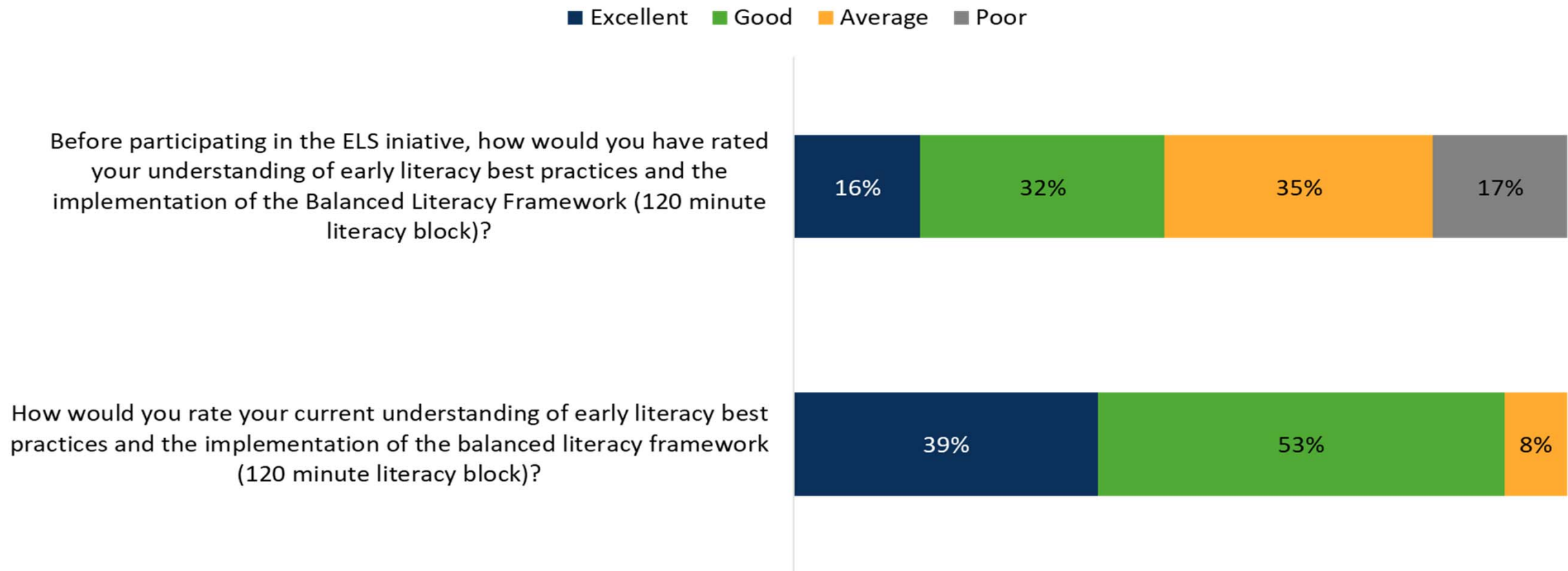
Note: Some comments were double coded.

Areas for CPEL improvement include (N=57):

- Condense the CPEL and the accompanying report by better aligning data collection to areas of coaching and reducing the areas for which data is collected (N=10).
- Decrease the subjectivity of the data collection (N=9) by having an outside observer collect data (N=2), providing an opportunity for teachers to self-assess (N=2), or extending the timeframe that coaches spend collecting data in the classroom (N=3).
- Collect CPEL data more frequently such as on a monthly or quarterly basis (N=8).
- Provide classroom/teacher level data to increase the authenticity of feedback and to help principals better address specific classroom/teacher level gaps (N=7).
- Provide more direct and transparent feedback to teachers and principals about what is observed in the classroom (N=6).
- Share results with teachers and principals in real time (N=5).
- Triangulate CPEL data with other data such as the Danielson Framework and student outcomes (N=2).

Perceived Impact of ELS Support and Suggestions for Improvement

About half (52%) of responding principals said they had **average** or **poor knowledge** of “implementing early literacy best practices **before** participating the in ELS initiative.” After having an ELS at their school, 8% said they had **average knowledge** and 0% said they had **poor knowledge**.

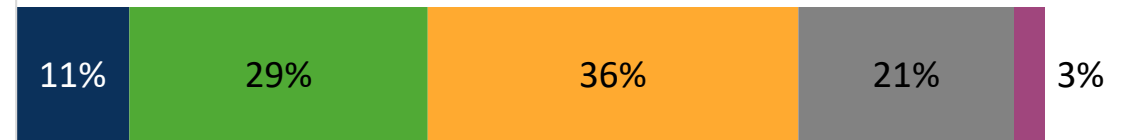


N=98

About a quarter of principals said they were a ***little confident*** (21%) or ***not confident*** (3%) in “helping teachers implement early literacy best practice **before** participating the in ELS initiative.” After having an ELS at their school, 1% said they were ***a little confident*** and 0% said they were ***not confident***.

■ Very confident ■ Confident ■ Somewhat confident ■ A little confident ■ Not confident

Before participating in the ELS initiative, how would you have rated your confidence in helping teachers implement early literacy best practices and the 120 minute literacy block?

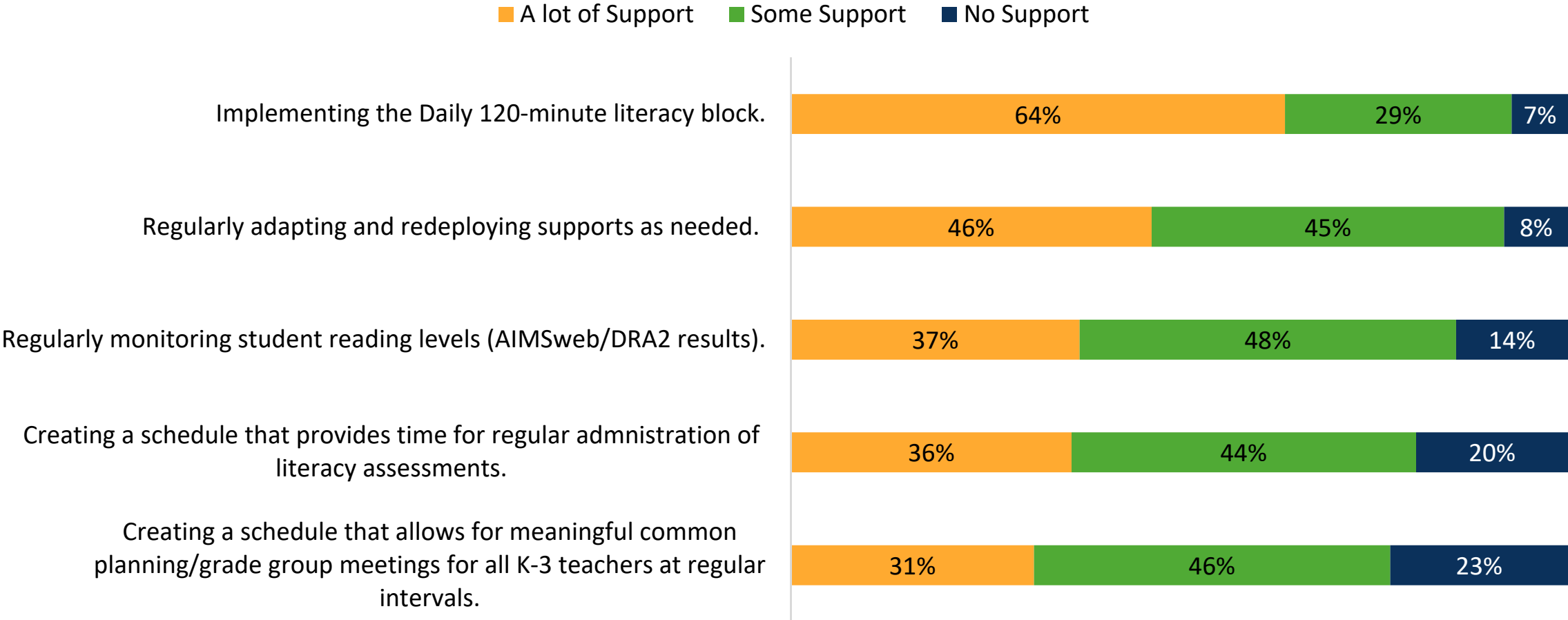


How would you rate your current confidence in helping teachers implement early literacy best practices and the 120 minute literacy block?



N=98

Most principals (64%) reported that ELSs provided *a lot of support* with “Implementing the 120-min literacy block” (top bar) and about a quarter (23%) reported there was *no support* with “Creating a schedule that allows for meaningful common planning/grade group meetings for all K-3 teachers.”



N=96

Open-ended comments provide insight into ways principals think the ELS initiative could better support their work and the work of their teachers.

Ways in which the ELS initiative could better support principals and teachers (N=109):

- **Extend and expand the ELS initiative after the end of the grant so schools can keep their ELSs/Lit Leads and potentially expand support**
 - *“Keep them! I need my ELS to be a permanent part of my team.”*
 - *“Extend the initiative for another two years and provide training for school based teachers to assume the role when the initiative ends.”*
 - *“Provide one per grade level (K, 1st, 2nd) in every school.”*
 - *“I would love for the District to implement ELS literacy coaching in grades K-5.”*
 - *“Continue to offer PD opportunities based on teachers’ needs.”*
- **Better alignment and consistency of data tools and measures**
 - *“Better familiarizing ELS workers and CLI with district assessments and data.”*
 - *“More transparency about CPEL and how it is used and what the particular areas of focus is.”*
 - *“Clarity on how to use the data provided by the ELS to support observation and evaluation, and alignment of the data with the Danielson Framework.”*
- **Remove the barriers that exist as a result of ELSs being non-SDP employees**
 - *“Provide ELS with access to school wide data.”*
 - *“Allowing principal to be supervisor.”*
 - *“Remove contract barriers.”*
 - *“Better clarify the role of coaching and feedback with teachers and PFT so that everyone is on the same page about ELS being a resource to SUPPORT teachers.”*

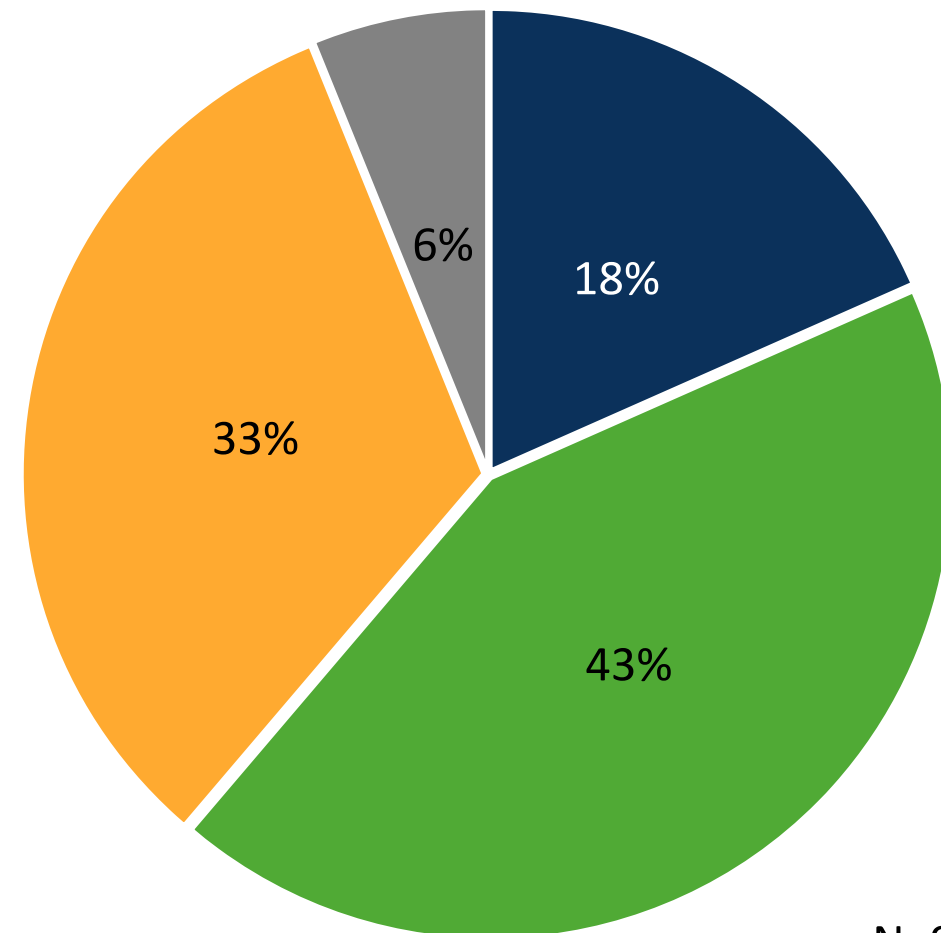
Challenges to Implementation

39% of principals reported that the implementation of ELS coaching was either *moderately* or *extremely* challenging.

18% of principals reported that implementation was *not at all* challenging.

Reported Level of Challenge in Implementing the ELS Initiative

- Not at All Challenging
- Slightly Challenging
- Moderately Challenging
- Extremely Challenging



N=98

In open-ended comments, principals noted three primary challenges to implementing the ELS initiative. (N=81)

Establishing teacher buy-in and reducing teacher resistance to coaching (N=32).

“Getting teacher buy-in was a challenge, but once they became familiar with the ELS, things flowed more smoothly.”

“Teacher buy in--SDP did not role this out effectively. It was poorly planned and all teachers knew it.”

“Some of the teachers' egos were difficult and [the ELS] was NOT initially clear on the environmental pieces which left those same teachers with an initial bad taste in their mouths.”

“Getting all teachers to buy into the support. However this happened when the ELS showed they were there to help and not evaluate.”

Establishing trusting relationships between the teacher and coach (N=16).

“With any new program/personnel, trust had to be established before the successful implementation of the program.”

“The initial building of relationships and rapport is the most difficult challenge. Once this occurs the walls come down and the learning can begin.”

“Because the ELS failed to form relationships with the teachers they were incredibly resistant to the coaching.”

“Allowing the ELS coach to form her own relationship with the teachers in order for them to trust that she was really there as a resource/support for them.”

Finding the time to support all teachers and for coaches and teachers to meet (N=13).

“With many new teachers with varied levels of expertise it was difficult for coach to establish a differentiated support schedule.”

“Time to meet with the coach can be a challenge. During the next teacher contract, the District should negotiate a 45-minute collaboration period daily. This would allow for time for teachers to meet with coaches, special education teachers, etc. without using their prep.”

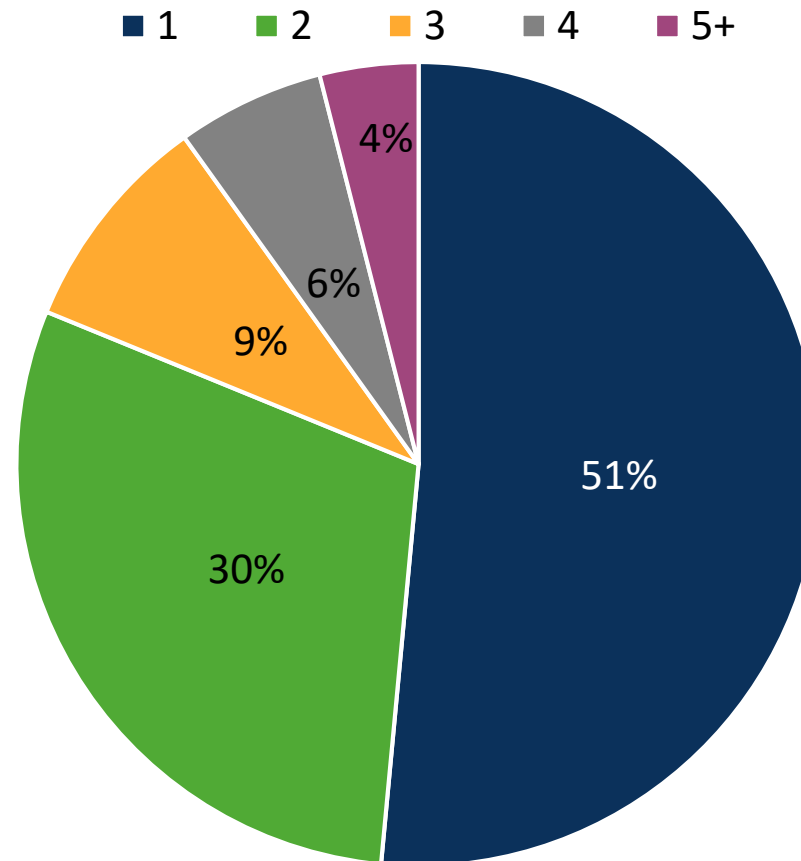
“Creating a schedule allowing the ELS to meet with teachers or visit classrooms throughout the day - typically all K-3 teach reading in the AM and this needed to be changed.”

Note: Some comments were double coded.

Perceived Effects of ELS and Teacher Turnover

Half of principal respondents (51%) reported having one ELS coach over the course of the ELS initiative.

Number of Reported ELS Coaches Over the Course of the ELS Initiative

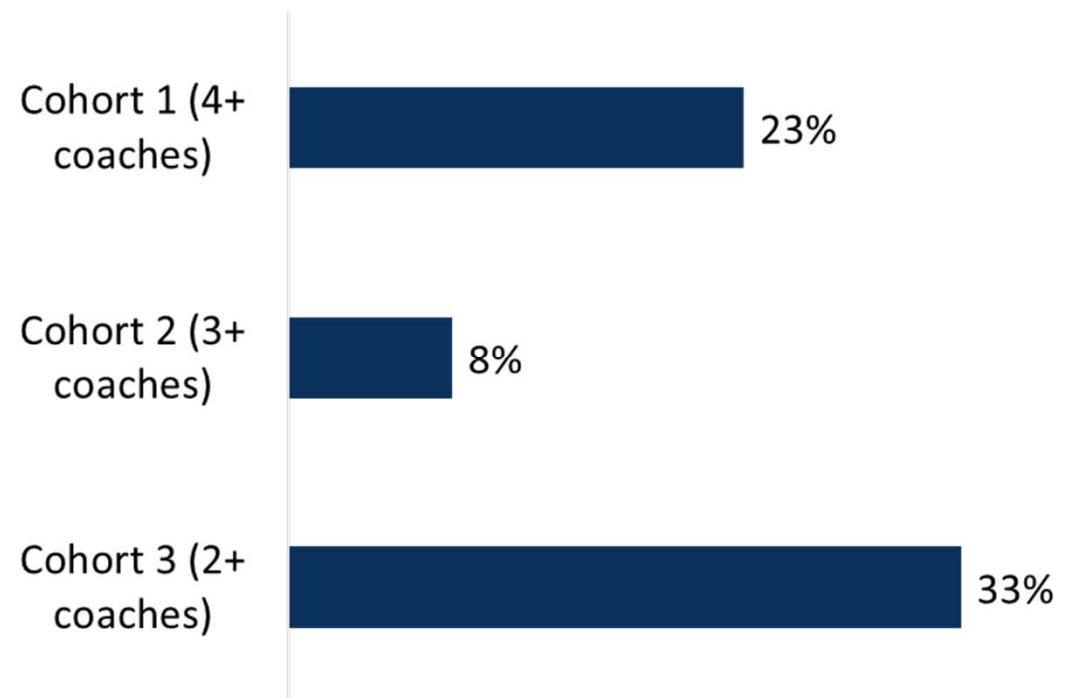


N=101

Cohort 3 schools had more coaches per year than other cohorts.

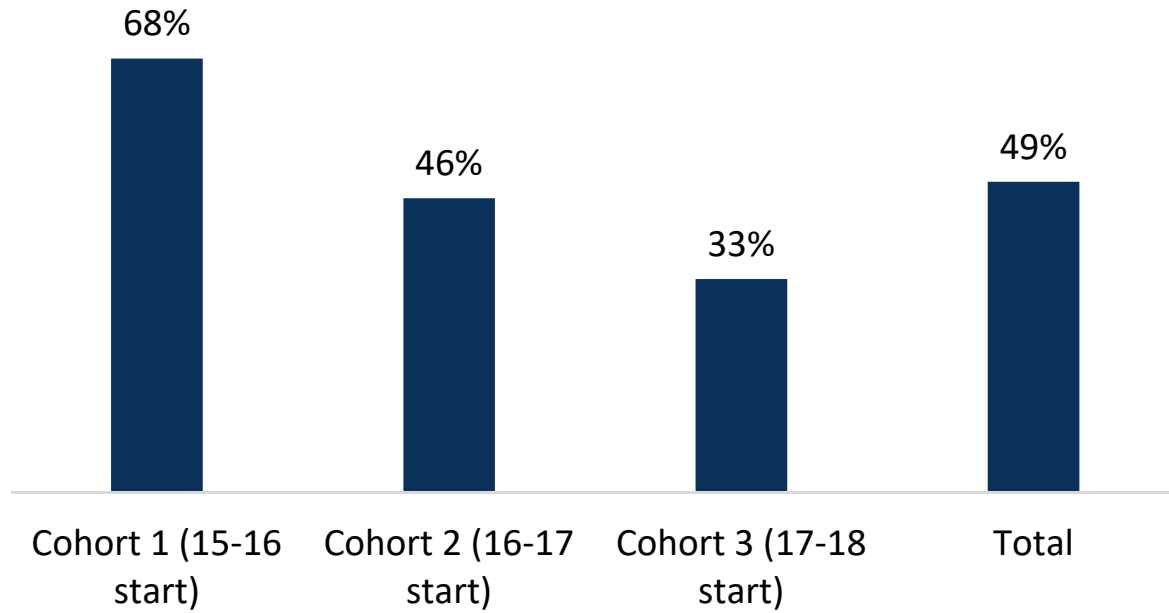
- If the schools in each Cohort experienced no within-year turnover, they would have at most one ELS per year.
- For Cohort 1 schools, that means any school with more than 3 ELS coaches, experience within-year turnover. For Cohort 2 schools, any more than 2 ELS coaches, and for Cohort 3 schools any more than 2 ELS coaches is an indication of within-year turnover.

Percent of Principals Reporting More than One Coach Per Year of Implementation

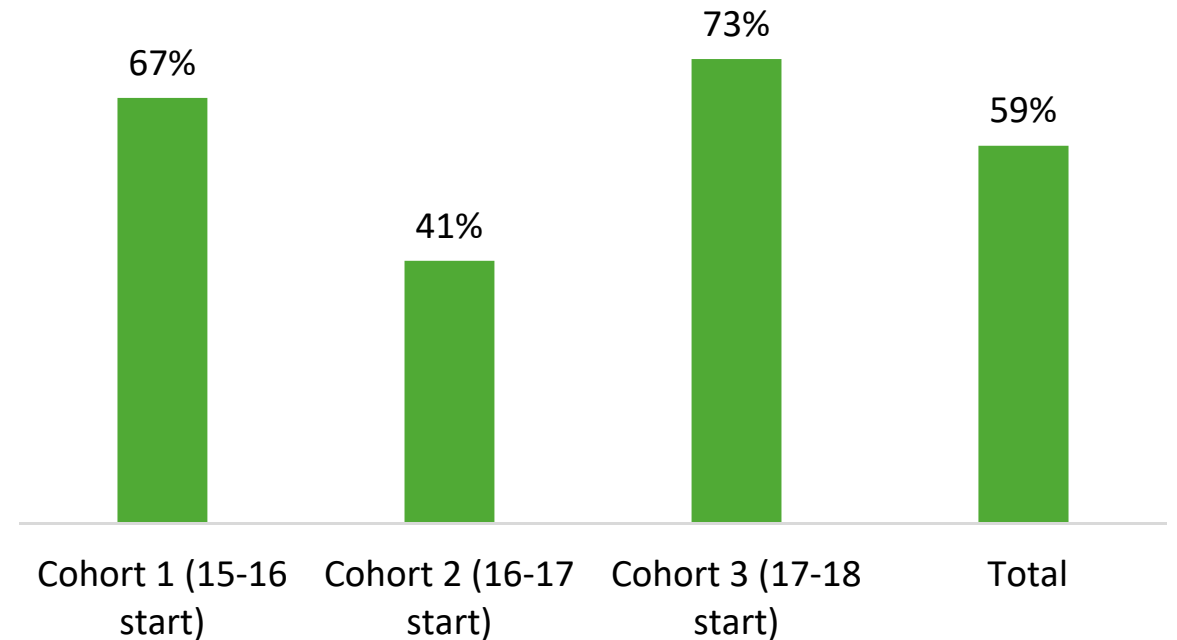


Half of principals (49%) reported having more than one ELS since the start of implementation. Over half of principals (59%) who had more than one ELS reported that ELS turnover has influenced the effectiveness or success of the initiative.

% of principals who reporting having more than one ELS across the implementation of the ELS initiative



% of principals with more than one ELS who reported that ELS turnover has influenced the effectiveness or success of the initiative



Open-ended comments provide additional insight into principal responses regarding ELS turnover. (N=34)

The principals who reported that turnover did not have an effect on the initiative provided two primary reasons (N=13):

All/both coaches were effective (N=3):

- *“Both individuals were extremely effective and supportive of everyone in our building.”*

The coaches built off of one another's work (N=3):

- *“Our initial coach laid a firm foundation. The following coach, who has been here for two years, built upon teachers previously taught knowledge and extended and depended it.”*
- *“My ELS jumped right in where the previous ELS left off so I don't feel like we missed a beat.”*

The principals who reported that turnover did have an effect of the initiative provided three primary reasons (N=21):

Lost momentum (N=6):

- *“It takes too much time in the school year for the new coach to acclimate to teachers and administration.”*
- *“Each year it felt like the program started all over.”*
- *“It has been a bit difficult to gain traction on some initiatives with the high ELS turnover rate.”*

Rebuilding relationships and trust (N=5):

- *“Having had an experience with an ELS that I found to be less effective set up a bit of a barrier to the receptiveness of teachers to the second more effective ELS. I think it was overcome, but there was definitely a delayed responsiveness”.*

A general “lack of consistency/continuity” (N=5)

Eight comments, in part or in full, reflect that although coach turnover may be difficult, it was also necessary.

- *“The individual has to learn the school every year, however I have seen a huge difference in my literacy environment and early literacy scores are on the rise.”*
- *“ELS coaches face considerable challenges in trying to get buy in at the teacher level. A transition in coaches was necessary, but that trust building process had to restart.”*
- *“I believe that having more than one has had a positive effect in a way that the ELS was able to provide coaching and support to new teachers and those that continue to struggle. However, for other teachers who had developed a positive relationship with the first ELS struggled developing a relationship with the second ELS.”*