



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Literacy and Learning Centers: Cohort 2 (2018-19) Evaluation Report

Key Findings

- SDP used internal funds to renovate 163 PK-3 classrooms at 12 schools in the summer of 2018. Work in the classrooms included physical renovations, new furniture, and new materials and resources.
- Teachers attended an average of 13.6 hours of PD during the 2018-19 school year.
- New technology was a challenge for teachers in their classroom, and an area where they would have liked more training.
- Teachers asked for increased communication and more of a voice in planning and wanted more storage space and the size of their classroom taken into account.
- The average Coaching Protocol for Early Literacy (CPEL score) of schools increased almost half a point, from a 2.3 to a 2.7, and schools made the most progress in Guided Reading.
- Students' National Percentile Rank on AIMSweb increased from fall to spring across all grades.
- Renovated schools' third-grade PSSA proficiency levels decreased from 2017-18 to 2018-19.

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Contents

Why this Evaluation?	3
What We Examined	3
Research questions	3
Data collection and analysis	4
District administrative data.....	4
Teacher survey.....	4
Coaching Protocol for Early Literacy (CPEL) scores	4
Student AIMSweb Plus reading data.....	5
Student PSSA data.....	5
Student attendance data	6
What We Found.....	6
Research Question #1: To what extent have the renovations and professional development been implemented as intended?.....	6
SDP renovated 163 classrooms.....	6
Students at eleven schools serving economically-disadvantaged students benefited from the renovations.....	7
Teachers attended an average of 13.6 hours of PD	9
Research Question #2: To what extent are classroom teachers satisfied with the renovations and professional development?.....	9
New technology was a challenge for teachers in their classroom.....	9
Teachers wanted more storage space and the size of their classroom taken into account.....	10
Teachers wanted increased communication and more of a voice in planning	11
Teachers would have liked more training on using new technology and monitoring student productivity.....	12
Research Question #3: How do teachers perceive changes to their instructional practices and student outcomes associated with the project?.....	13
Most teachers are using centers daily during the literacy block.....	13
Teachers identified centers as beneficial to several components of literacy block implementation	13
Teachers said their students have more opportunities to be creative and are more academically engaged	15

Research Question #4: To what extent have participating teachers experienced changes in their implementation of the 120-minute literacy block?15

 The average CPEL score (across all practice areas) of renovated schools increased almost half a point, from a 2.3 to a 2.7, and schools made the most progress in Guided Reading..... 15

Research Question #5: Did students in the renovated classrooms show growth in literacy and attendance rates? If so, to what degree? 16

 Students’ average National Percentile Rank increased from fall to spring..... 16

 Renovated schools’ third-grade PSSA proficiency levels decreased from 2017-18 to 2018-19.20

 Three schools had an increase in attendance rates.....21

Recommendations21

Why this Evaluation?

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) redesigned 163 pre-kindergarten to third-grade classrooms into interactive learning environments. Physical renovations and classroom set-ups were completed by the end of summer 2018. Teachers received professional development sessions on incorporating the new equipment (and related topics) and access to sample units and lesson plans for using centers throughout the 2018-2019 school year. Program staff at SDP identified eleven schools to receive renovations in all of their PK-3 grade classrooms: Childs, Day, Farrell, Hunter, J.H. Brown, McMichael, Rhoads, Rowen, Steel, Taggart, and Webster.

These renovations and activities build upon the District-wide Early Literacy Strategy already underway in the District, which includes implementation of the Balanced Literacy Framework, a weeklong Summer Literacy Institute, and a full-time Early Literacy Specialist (ELS) in every school. The strategy was rolled out in a cohort model over three years and reached all elementary schools in the 2017-18 school year. The District-wide Early Literacy Strategy focuses on job embedded coaching to support all K-3 teachers in establishing and using best practices in early literacy. Physical workstations such as an independent reading library and a guided reading center facilitate teachers' successful implementation of the Balanced Literacy Framework. The Literacy and Learning Centers project was designed to be an extension of the Early Literacy Initiative and to provide teachers with the opportunity to integrate high quality literacy instruction in a renovated, interactive learning environment.

What We Examined

Research questions

This evaluation examined five primary questions over the 2018-19 school year:

- 1) To what extent have the renovations and professional development been implemented as intended?
 - a. Which classrooms were renovated?
 - b. Who benefited from the renovations?
 - c. Who participated in professional development?
- 2) To what extent are classroom teachers satisfied with the renovations and professional development?
- 3) How do teachers perceive changes to their instructional practices and student outcomes associated with the project?
- 4) To what extent have participating teachers experienced changes in their implementation of the 120-minute literacy block?
- 5) Did students in the renovated classrooms show growth in literacy and attendance rates? If so, to what degree?

Data collection and analysis

Six sources of data were collected or reviewed to answer the research questions: District administrative data, teacher surveys, Coaching Protocol for Early Literacy (CPEL) scores, student AIMSweb (reading level) data, student PSSA data, and student attendance data. This section describes each data source and how the data were analyzed to address the research questions.

District administrative data

We used administrative data to answer Research Question 1, including records of classroom renovations, student demographic data at schools receiving renovations, and professional development records (list of attendees for each session and satisfaction survey data).

Teacher survey

Teacher survey and focus group data were used to answer Research Questions 2 and 3. Descriptive statistics are presented for survey data, and open-ended items were analyzed for common themes. ORE administered a survey in March 2019 to assess satisfaction with program supports, satisfaction with the renovations/new materials, and teacher perceptions of program influence on instruction and student/teacher interactions. Fifty-two teachers responded for a 34% response rate.

Coaching Protocol for Early Literacy (CPEL) scores

The Coaching Protocol for Early Literacy, or CPEL, is a tool that ELS coaches use to inform coaching priorities and track teacher progress around the implementation of the 120 minute literacy block and related practices. The CPEL has eight practice areas aligned with the District's balanced literacy framework and best practices in early literacy (Classroom Culture, Literacy Environment, Phonics/Phonemic Awareness, Read Aloud, Independent Work Time, Guided Reading, Shared Reading, Writing Workshop)

Teachers receive a 0-4 rating in each practice area (4=Exemplary, 3=Meets Expectations/Proficient, 2=Progressing, 1=Developing, 0=No Evidence). Each score is an aggregate of several "look-fors" that measure the quality of implementation of that practice area. ELS coaches and Literacy Leads collect CPEL data at multiple points throughout the year (fall, winter, and spring) and report the data to the District at the school level (individual teacher data is never reported). This analysis uses the baseline (fall) and summative (spring) CPEL data to examine changes in teacher practice to answer Research Question 4.

Student AIMSweb Plus reading data

SDP uses AIMSweb Plus, a universal early literacy screening, benchmarking, and progress-monitoring tool from Pearson, to assess literacy proficiency for all K-5 students. Teachers score students' performance on each AIMSweb Plus assessment according to the number of cues students identify correctly or incorrectly in a 60-second period. Each grade level is administered one core assessment (in addition to other required measures) at three time points across the year (fall, winter, and spring):

- Kindergarten; **Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) assessment:** Measures letter identification
- 1st Grade; **Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) assessment:** Measures phonemic awareness
- 2nd Grade; **Oral Reading Fluency¹ (ORF):** Measures oral reading fluency
- 3rd Grade; **Oral Reading Fluency (ORF):** Measures oral reading fluency

For each core assessment, ORE examined the descriptive outcomes of students on the following data points for Research Question 5:

- **Raw Score:** the number of correct responses
- **National Percentile Rank (NPR):** A norm-referenced measure that compares students' raw scores to a national sample of students
- **Rate of Improvement (ROI):** The number of points a student or group of students increased per week between assessment periods [i.e., (spring correct-fall correct correct)/number of weeks]
- **Student Growth Percentile (SGP):** Percentile norms that indicate the percentage of students in the nationally representative sample with similar baseline scores (*well below average, below average, average, above average, well above average*) that had an ROI equal to or smaller than a particular student's or group of students' average ROI.

Table 1. Number of students included in the AIMSweb Plus analysis

Grade Level	AIMSweb Plus Assessment	Number of Students
K	LNF	671
1st	NWF	627
2nd	ORF	705
3rd	ORF	701
Grand Total		2,704

Student PSSA data

The PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessments) is a standards-based, criterion-referenced test that is administered to all grade 3-8 students in Pennsylvania. Students receive a scale score for each assessment based on the questions they answer correctly. Using cut-points that can vary

¹ Previously named Reading - Curriculum Based Measurement

across grade and subject, the scale score corresponds to one of four proficiency levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. For example, students with a scale score ranging from 600-904 on the third grade PSSA-English Language Arts (ELA) fall in the Below Basic category and students with scores from 905-999 fall in the Basic category. We present proficiency levels for third-grade students at renovated schools for Research Question 5.

Student attendance data

We also looked at student attendance data to see if the renovated classrooms and any possible changes to teacher practice encouraged students to attend school more often. These results are under Research Question 5. We looked at the percent of students attending 95% or more days of school. The attendance analysis only included students who were enrolled at the same school in both years (2017-18 and 2018-19) and for at least ten days. This analysis included student enrollment in that school at any point in the school year and only included student attendance while at that school. The number of students included for each school is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Number of students included in the attendance analysis

School	Number of Students
Childs	151
Day	132
Farrell	320
Hunter	165
J.H. Brown	219
McMichael	112
Rhoads	172
Rowen	203
Steel	173
Taggart	156
Webster	317
Total	2,120

What We Found

Research Question #1: To what extent have the renovations and professional development been implemented as intended?

SDP renovated 163 classrooms

SDP used internal funds to renovate 163 PK-3 classrooms at 12 schools in the summer of 2018 (Table 3). Gideon only had 3rd grade classrooms done in 2018 because their PK-2 grade classrooms were done the prior summer. Work in the classrooms included physical renovations, new furniture, and new materials and resources. Examples of renovations included painting, updated electrical

fixtures, and new flooring. New furniture included new chairs and desks for students, new bookshelves and other storage, and new centers. Centers varied by grade level but included a play kitchen, laundry center, sand and water tables, art center, listening center (where students can listen to an audiobook and follow along in a physical book), writing center, library/cozy corner, dramatic play center (with puppets), guided reading table, and dry erase center (for students to practice writing). Examples of new materials and resources included technology (panel boards and iPads), audiobooks, and classroom manipulatives.

Table 3. Number of renovated classrooms by school

School	Number of Classrooms
Childs	14
Day	12
Farrell	18
Gideon	2
Hunter	14
J.H. Brown	13
McMichael	11
Rhoads	13
Rowen	13
Steel	14
Taggart	12
Webster	27

Students at eleven schools serving economically-disadvantaged students benefited from the renovations

Across the eleven schools who received renovations in all of their early elementary classrooms, K-3 enrollment ranged from 199 to 482 (Table 4). The schools all had over 65% of their enrollment certified as economically disadvantaged and had student populations of mostly Black, Hispanic, or Asian.

Table 4. 2018-19 demographics by school

	Childs	Day	Farrell	Hunter	J.H. Brown	McMichael	Rhoads	Rowen	Steel	Taggart	Webster
Total Enrollment (K-3)	239	199	482	233	358	163	260	287	240	227	480
% Special Education	14%	11%	12%	12%	12%	17%	13%	12%	8%	11%	14%
% English Learners	23%	1%	21%	6%	11%	0%	0%	1%	0%	37%	6%
% Economically Disadvantaged ¹	85%	71%	65%	85%	75%	82%	85%	82%	85%	74%	86%
% Female	52%	53%	51%	46%	44%	46%	46%	44%	45%	48%	50%
% Black	38%	93%	18%	16%	34%	96%	97%	93%	93%	12%	31%
% Hispanic	21%	2%	19%	72%	22%	1%	1%	1%	3%	22%	52%
% White	6%	2%	36%	2%	31%	1%	0%	2%	2%	5%	10%
% Asian	26%	1%	18%	1%	4%	0%	0%	0%	2%	53%	1%
% Multi-Racial/Other	8%	3%	7%	9%	10%	2%	2%	4%	1%	7%	6%

¹Reflects the number of students who are certified as economically disadvantaged by receiving governmental assistance, not the number of students who receive free lunch.

Teachers attended an average of 13.6 hours of PD

Across all schools, SDP offered 215 hours of professional development (PD; see Table 5). The number of hours offered varied by school, with Steel receiving 13.5 hours and Webster receiving 42. Teachers attended, on average, 13.6 hours of PD, with Steel having the lowest average (6.8) and Webster the highest (22.2). All teachers in renovated classrooms received PD, with a range from 2 hours to 30 hours.

Table 5. SDP offered schools between 13 and 42 hours of PD

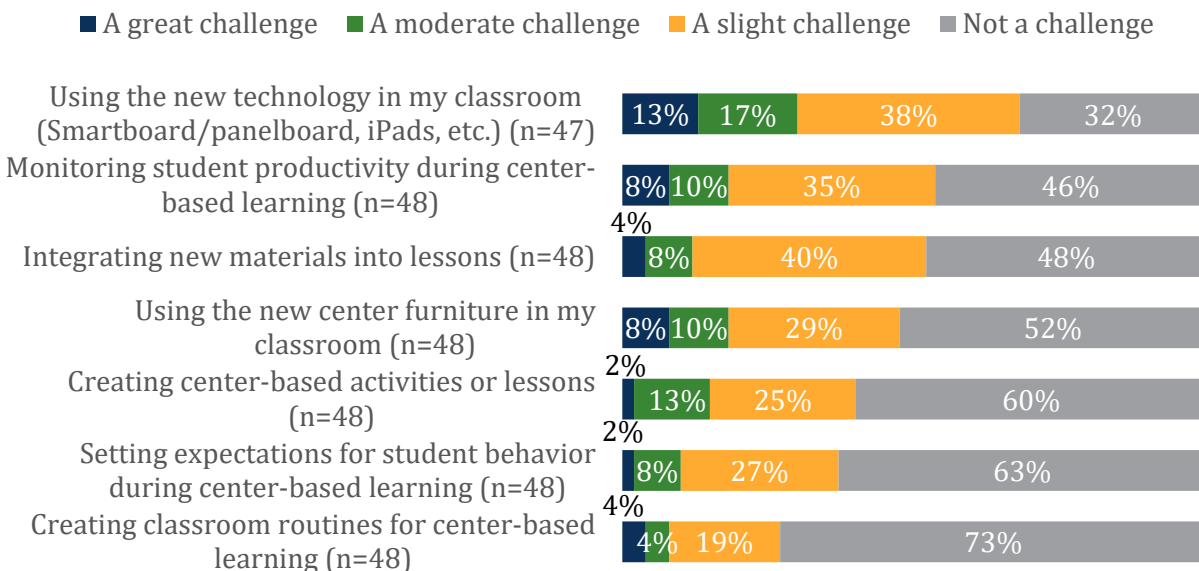
School	Number of Hours of PD Offered	Number of Teachers	Average Hours of PD Attended by Teachers
Childs	24.5	14	14.4
Day	14	11	9.2
Farrell	14.5	16	11
Hunter	14	12	10.5
J.H. Brown	16.5	14	13.8
McMichael	17.5	8	11.8
Rhoads	19.5	14	14.2
Rowen	18.5	14	12.9
Steel	13.5	12	6.8
Taggart	20.5	11	16.5
Webster	42	21	22.2
Total	215	147	13.6

Research Question #2: To what extent are classroom teachers satisfied with the renovations and professional development?

New technology was a challenge for teachers in their classroom

Teachers identified using the new technology in their classroom as a challenge (68% of teachers identified technology as at least a slight challenge; Figure 1). In addition, 53% of teachers said that monitoring student productivity during centers was at least a slight challenge. More than half of teachers said that using the new center furniture, creating center-based activities, setting expectations for student behavior, and creating classroom routines were not challenges.

Figure 1. 68% of teachers said using the new technology was at least a slight challenge

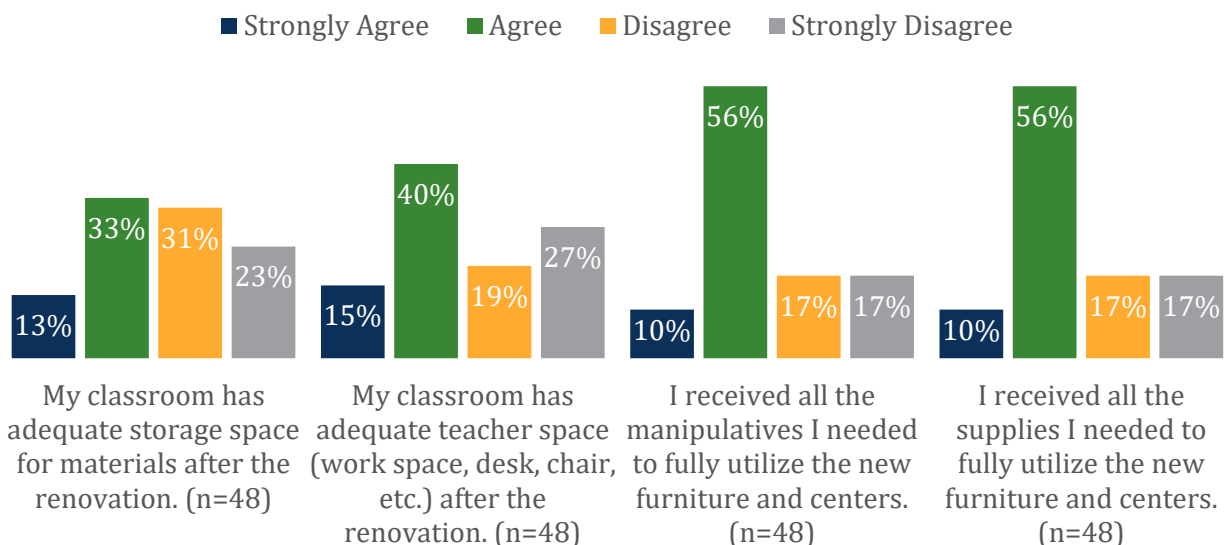


Teachers wanted more storage space and the size of their classroom taken into account

The majority of teachers (66%) said they received all the manipulatives and supplies they needed to utilize the new centers (Figure 2). About half of respondents (55%) agreed that their classroom had adequate teacher space. Just over half of respondents (54%) felt their room did not have adequate storage space after the renovation.

Top suggestions teachers had for renovating future classrooms were taking into account the teacher’s preferences and considering the room layout and size and whether it can accommodate all of the furniture. As one teacher said, “Measure the classroom, take into account that classrooms may have 30 students in them, consider the size of the furniture. Way too much furniture for the space available. I think we have less foot space for students instead of more at this point.”

Figure 2. Teachers said they received the manipulatives and supplies they needed but did not have adequate storage space

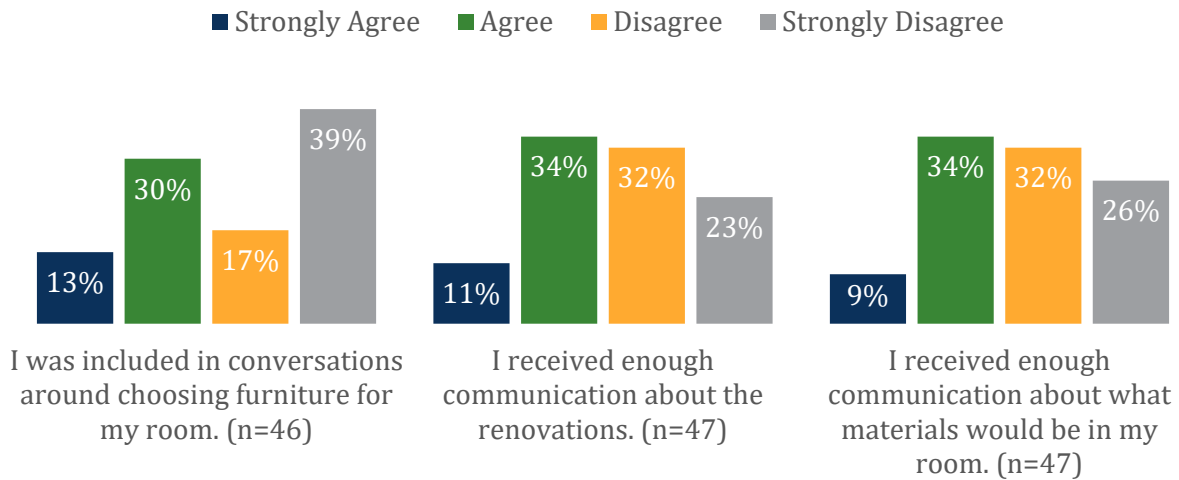


Teachers wanted increased communication and more of a voice in planning

More than half of teachers disagreed that they received enough communication about the renovations (58%) and about what materials would be in their room (55%; see Figure 3). A similar percentage (56%) did not feel they were included in conversations around choosing furniture for their classroom, and 39% strongly disagreed with this statement. Similarly, when asked what one thing they would recommend changing if the District implements this project in other schools, the most common theme was including teacher voice in designing classrooms. One teacher said, “Have the people who are using the materials/teaching on a daily basis have input and suggestions. I have never felt so ‘left out’ of a change to my classroom. It would have been nice to have more communication and input.”

Teachers also felt their perspective was important so that their room could reflect their needs and teaching style rather than having all classrooms be uniform. One teacher explained, “My suggestion...is to have more conversation with teachers on what works, what does not, what we are trying to accomplish and how we feel it can best be accomplished. Classroom culture is important. I’m not sure everything works for everyone.”

Figure 3. More than half of teachers disagreed with statements about adequate communication and being included in discussions about new furniture

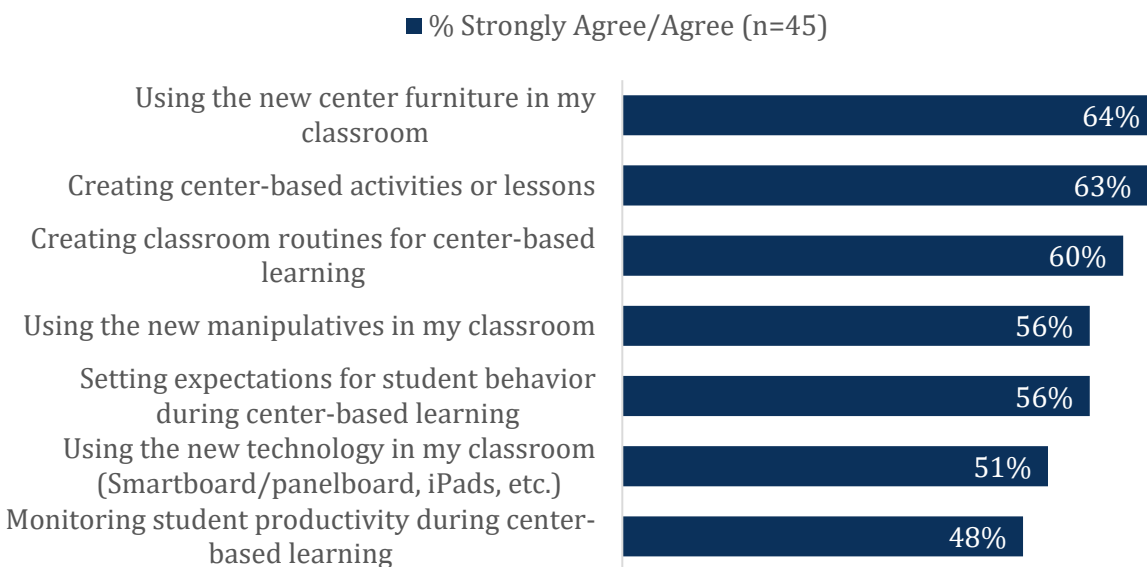


Teachers would have liked more training on using new technology and monitoring student productivity

Teachers said that they received the most sufficient professional development (PD) in using the new center furniture (Figure 4).² However, teachers rated technology and monitoring student productivity as the areas where they did not receive enough PD, which aligns with teachers identifying these areas as the greatest challenges.

² Teachers also took surveys after each PD session. However, ORE did not receive enough surveys to include a comprehensive summary in this report.

Figure 4. Teachers agreed/disagreed with whether they received sufficient PD in these areas



Research Question #3: How do teachers perceive changes to their instructional practices and student outcomes associated with the project?

Most teachers are using centers daily during the literacy block

About three-quarters (79%) of respondents said they use centers daily during the literacy block. This is slightly lower than last year's respondents from Cohort 1, all of whom said they use centers daily during the literacy block. Additionally, 75% of respondents said they use centers during another part of the day. Most (82%) of the respondents who use centers outside of the literacy block use them during math. Other subjects that teachers mentioned were science (12%), social studies (9%), and throughout the whole day (9%).

Teachers identified centers as beneficial to several components of literacy block implementation

When asked about benefits from the project, teachers identified their ability to work with students in small groups and more opportunities to differentiate instruction as the top benefits (Figure 5). The specific components of the literacy block where teachers identified the greatest benefits were the Literacy Environment and Independent Work Time (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Teachers rated how much benefit the project provided to their teaching

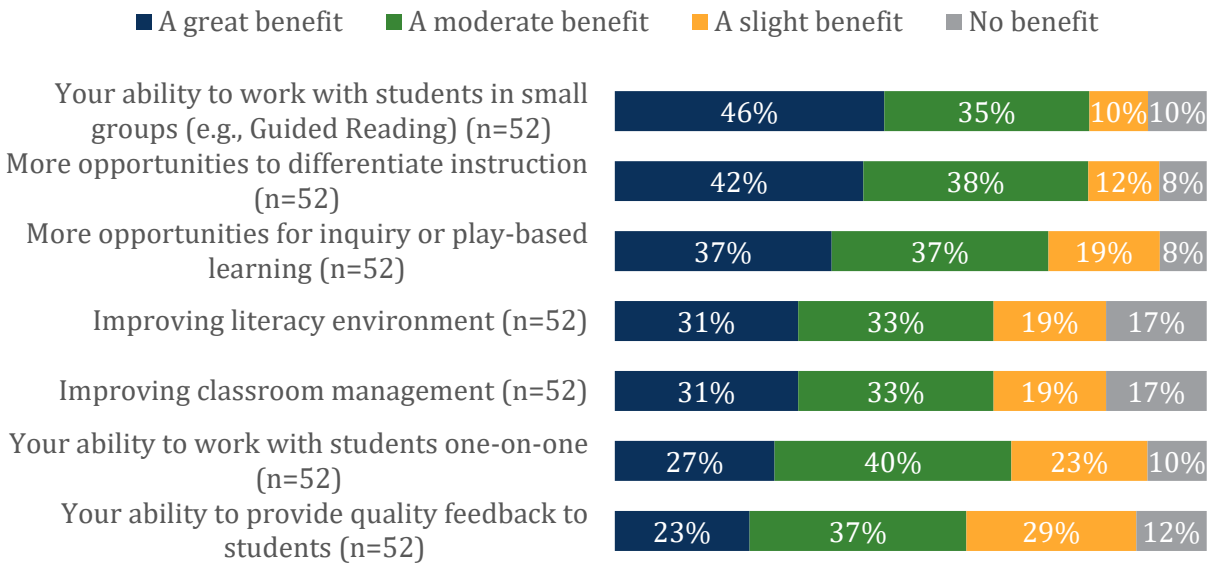
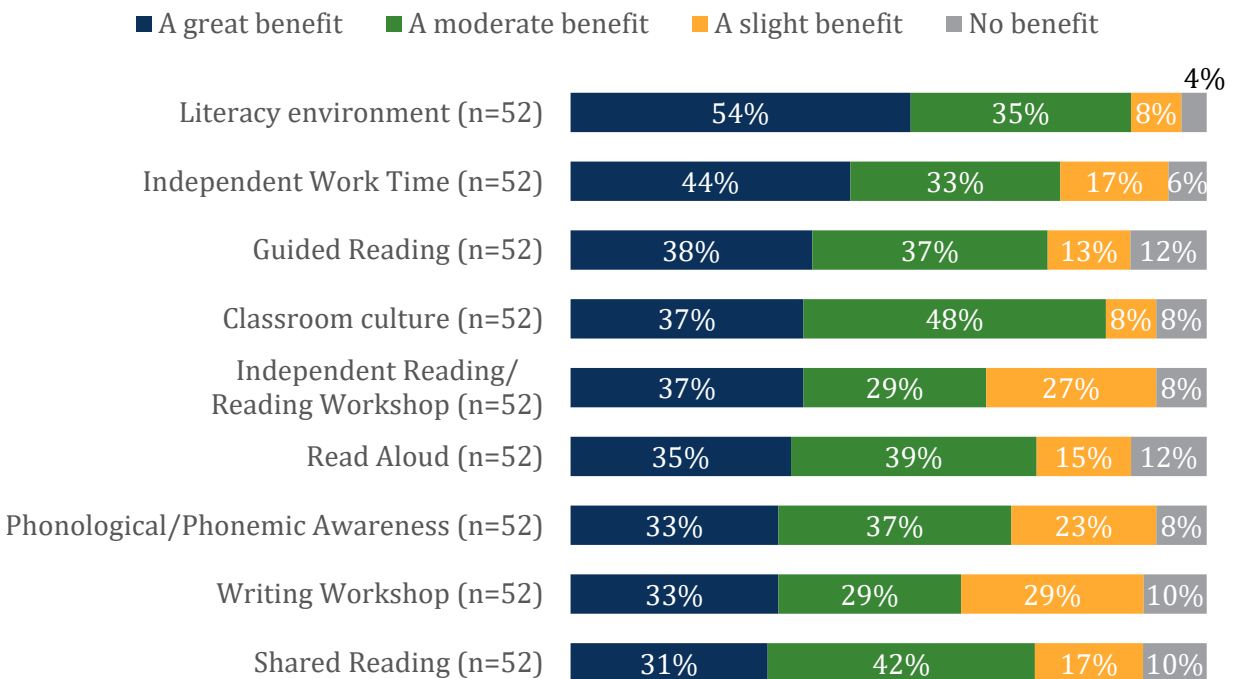


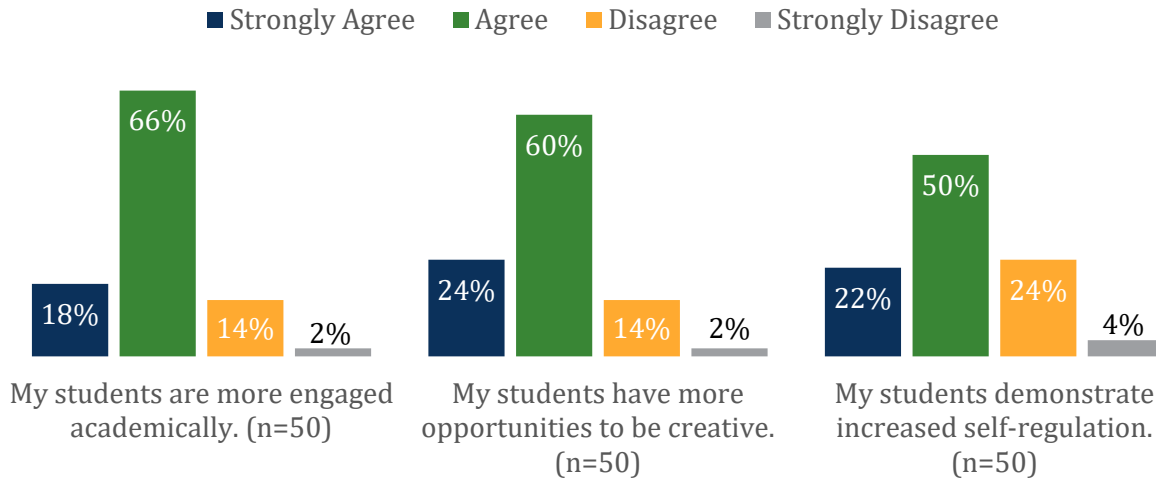
Figure 6. Teachers rated how much benefit the project provided to their ability to implement the components of the literacy block



Teachers said their students have more opportunities to be creative and are more academically engaged

When asked specifically about benefits the project provided to their students, 84% of teachers said their students have more opportunities to be creative and are more engaged academically (Figure 7). A slightly smaller amount (72%) said their students demonstrate increased self-regulation.

Figure 7. 84% of teachers said their students have more opportunities to be creative



Research Question #4: To what extent have participating teachers experienced changes in their implementation of the 120-minute literacy block?

The average CPEL score (across all practice areas) of renovated schools increased almost half a point, from a 2.3 to a 2.7, and schools made the most progress in Guided Reading

LLC schools increased their average CPEL score by 0.4 points between the first (baseline) and last (summative) CPEL administration (Table 6). Initially, the average CPEL score across all practice areas was a 2.3 and after the summative CPEL administration, the average CPEL score across all practice areas improved to a 2.7. Both the baseline and summative scores are considered “Progressing” and not yet proficient. LLC schools improved nearly a full point (+0.9) in Guided Reading, increasing from a 1.8 (Developing) at the baseline CPEL administration to a 2.7 (Progressing) at the summative administration.

Table 6. The average CPEL score of LLC schools increased by 0.4 points

Practice Area	Baseline Score (October 2018)	Summative Score (May 2019)	Change
Classroom Culture	2.4	2.7	0.3
Guided Reading	1.8	2.7	0.9
Independent Work Time	2.1	2.7	0.6
Literacy Environment [^]	2.9	2.9	0.0
Phonics	2.4	2.8	0.4
Read Aloud	2.2	2.7	0.5
Shared Reading	2.4	2.8	0.4
Writing Workshop	1.8	2.4	0.6
<i>All Practice Areas</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>0.4</i>

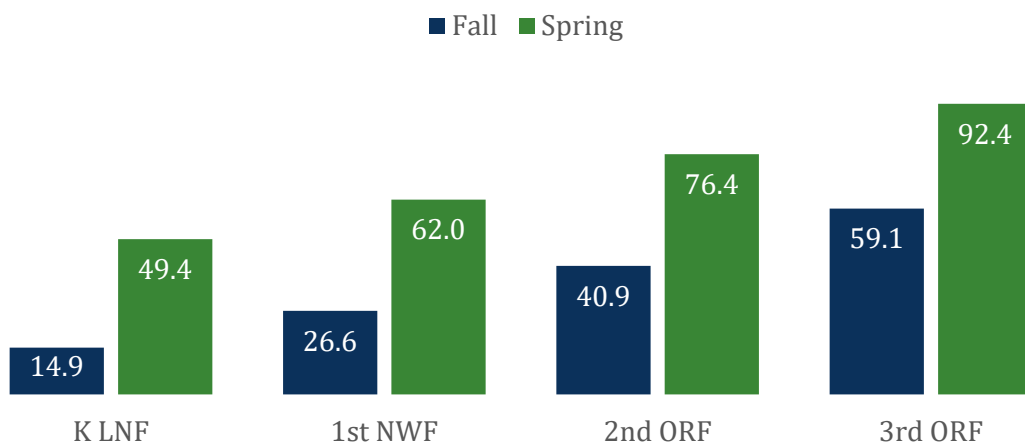
[^]Baseline data collected in January rather than October

Research Question #5: Did students in the renovated classrooms show growth in literacy and attendance rates? If so, to what degree?

Students’ average National Percentile Rank increased from fall to spring

Students in renovated classrooms experienced an overall increase in their average raw score on their core assessment³ from fall to spring in SY 2018-19 (Figure 8). First- and second-grade students had the largest increase in their average raw scores (+35.4 and +35.5, respectively), while third-grade students experienced the lowest (+33.3).

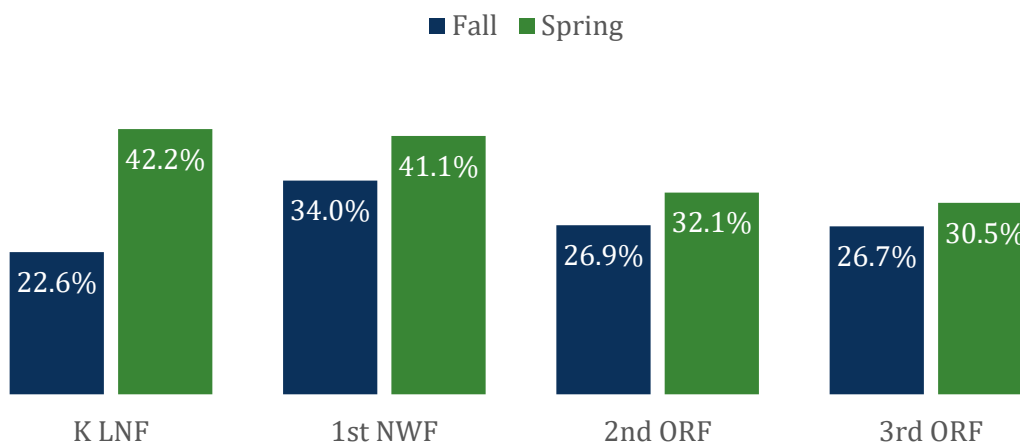
Figure 8. Students’ average raw scores increased from fall to spring



³ Definitions of core assessments are on pages 2-3.

All students in renovated classrooms experienced an increase in their average national percentile rank from fall to spring. This indicates that students' raw scores increased between fall and spring at a rate high enough to increase their national percentile ranking (NPR). Kindergarten students had the biggest increase in their average national percentile rank (19.6%, Figure 9).

Figure 9. Students' National Percentile Rank (NPR) increased from fall to spring



Rate of Improvement (ROI) is the number of points a student increased per week between assessment periods. Students in renovated classrooms in all grades had similar average ROIs, which indicates that they were learning literacy skills at the same rate (Figure 10). First- and second-grade students had the highest average ROI (1.08).

Figure 10. First- and second-grade students had the highest Rate of Improvement



Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) are used to measure the growth of students compared to other students across the country with similar baseline (fall) scores. Students' fall scores are used to categorize students by performance level from *Well Below Average* to *Well Above Average* based on

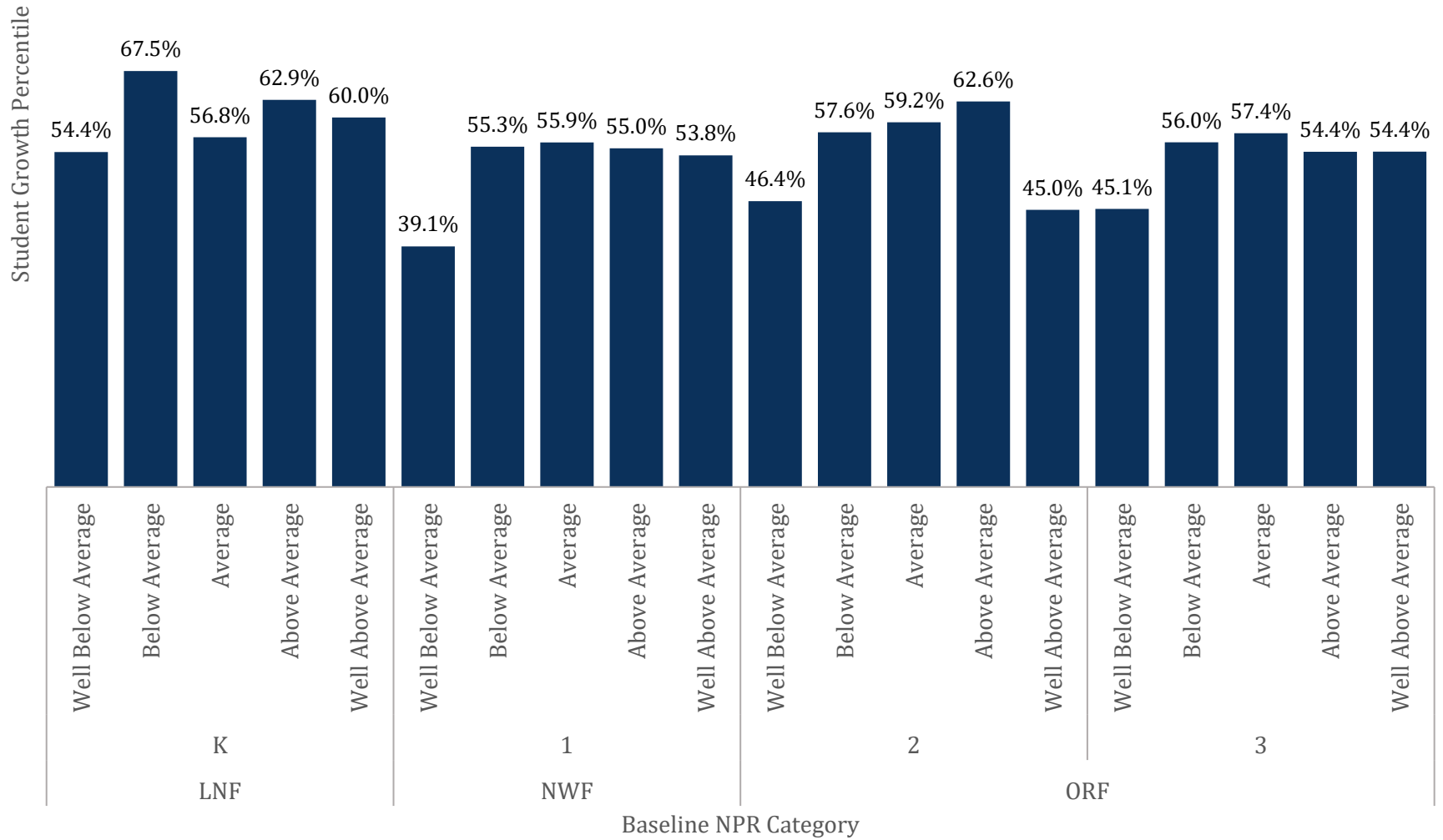
their NPR. Fifty-eight percent of students were placed in the *Well Below Average* or *Below Average* categories at baseline (Table 7).

Table 7. Just over half of students' fell into the *Well Below Average* or *Below Average* categories at baseline

Grade	Assessment	Number Assessed	Well Below Average (1-10%)	Below Average (11-25%)	Average (26-74%)	Above Average (75-89%)	Well Above Average (90%-99%)
K	LNF	671	46.1%	18.8%	31.6%	2.1%	1.5%
1	NWF	627	28.2%	18.5%	42.6%	6.5%	4.1%
2	ORF	705	39.7%	20.3%	32.3%	4.1%	3.5%
3	ORF	701	40.2%	17.8%	34.4%	5.0%	2.6%
Total		2,704	38.8%	18.9%	35.1%	4.4%	2.9%

After students are categorized based on their initial NPR, SGPs are calculated by comparing the rate of improvement of students within each group. Kindergarten students in renovated classrooms who were categorized as *Well Below Average* in the fall grew at a faster rate than first- through third-grade students who were *Well Below Average* based on their fall assessment (Figure 11). Additionally, Kindergarten students across all baseline categories grew at faster rates than their peers nationally (for example, Kindergarten students who had a *Below Average* baseline NPR grew faster than about 68% of their *Below Average* peers nationally; conversely, they improved at a slower rate than 32% of their *Below Average* peers).

Figure 11. Kindergarten students overall had higher average student growth percentiles from fall to spring than other grades



Renovated schools' third-grade PSSA proficiency levels decreased from 2017-18 to 2018-19

Schools who received renovations saw a decrease in the percent of third-grade students who scored Proficient or Advanced on the ELA PSSA from 2017-18 to 2018-19, from 30.8% to 25.2% (Figure 12). Eight of the schools saw decreases (ranging from 5.5% to 31.7%), while three saw increases (Table 8).

Figure 12. 25% of third-grade students scored Proficient or Advanced on the ELA PSSA in 2018-19

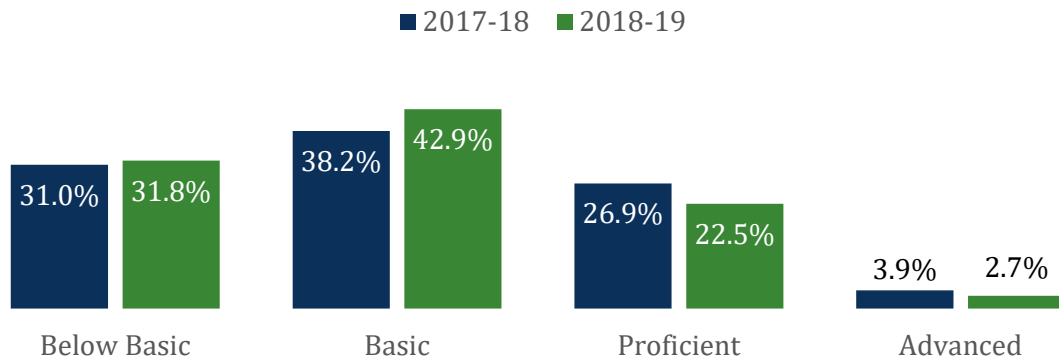


Table 8. Three schools had an increase in the percent of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the ELA PSSA

School	% of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on the ELA PSSA in 2017-18	% of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on the ELA PSSA in 2018-19	Change from 2017-18 to 2018-19
Childs (n=57)	28.1%	19.3%	↓ -8.8%
Day (n=46)	47.4%	47.8%	↑ 0.5%
Farrell (n=115)	37.7%	32.2%	↓ -5.5%
Hunter (n=56)	21.9%	7.1%	↓ -14.7%
J.H. Brown (n=72)	32.5%	40.3%	↑ 7.8%
McMichael (n=41)	48.8%	17.1%	↓ -31.7%
Rhoads (n=64)	18.0%	28.1%	↑ 10.1%
Rowen (n=69)	37.7%	27.5%	↓ -10.1%
Steel (n=48)	17.6%	10.4%	↓ -7.2%
Taggart (n=55)	31.3%	21.8%	↓ -9.4%
Webster (n=109)	25.2%	19.3%	↓ -5.9%

Three schools had an increase in attendance rates

Only three out of the eleven schools had an increase in the percent of students attending 95% of more of schools days between 2017-18 and 2018-19 (J.H. Brown, Rhoads, and Webster; see Table 9). Two schools had the same rate and six schools decreased.

Table 9. Three schools had an increase in the percent of students attending 95% or more days

School	% of Students Attending 95% or More of School Days in 2017-18	% of Students Attending 95% or More of School Days in 2018-19	Change from 2017-18 to 2018-19
Childs (n=151)	51.7%	48.3%	↓ -3.4%
Day (n=132)	43.2%	43.2%	— 0.0%
Farrell (n=320)	63.4%	62.8%	↓ -0.6%
Hunter (n=165)	35.2%	33.3%	↓ -1.9%
J.H. Brown (n=219)	36.1%	41.1%	↑ 5.0%
McMichael (n=112)	41.1%	33.9%	↓ -7.2%
Rhoads (n=172)	30.2%	34.3%	↑ 4.1%
Rowen (n=203)	49.3%	48.3%	↓ -1.0%
Steel (n=173)	25.4%	25.4%	— 0.0%
Taggart (n=156)	65.4%	63.5%	↓ -1.9%
Webster (n=317)	36.3%	37.9%	↑ 1.6%

Note: Only includes students who were at that school in both years and enrolled for at least ten days, and only includes their attendance while at that school.

Recommendations

Based on teacher feedback, we recommend the program team consider the following suggestions:

- Program staff may want to consider adding more storage space to renovated classrooms and teacher space (such as a teacher desk, chair, etc.).
- Program staff may want to consider taking into account the size of the classrooms and the layout to determine whether furniture will fit in all the classrooms to be renovated.
- Program staff may want to consider ways for teachers to provide input in what materials/furniture are in their classrooms and if all classrooms must be uniform or if it is possible for teachers to have some level of customization.
- Program staff may want to consider providing more PD on technology and monitoring student productivity, the areas teachers cited as both the greatest challenges and the areas where they did not receive sufficient PD.