

EL Education

Teacher Potential Project

DID THE TEACHER POTENTIAL PROJECT IMPACT ELA INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENT ELA ACHIEVEMENT?

Project Overview

THE PROBLEM: What Challenge Did the Program Try to Address?

There is a growing need to help students develop the skills required to become college- and career-ready, as defined by rigorous state standards that have been implemented by a vast majority of states, such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). It is critical that teachers have the supports needed to provide effective instruction in these areas; this is especially true for novice teachers, those with zero to three years of full-time teaching experience, who face the dual challenge of becoming effective teachers and meeting the new standards.

THE PROJECT: What Strategies Did the Program Employ?

EL Education received an i3 validation grant (2013-2019) to implement the professional development program Teacher Potential Project (TPP) to build instructional capacity in English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, and novice teachers in particular.¹ The impact study used a randomized control trial (RCT) to assess the impacts of a single year of the teacher potential project (TPP) implementation. EL Education recruited 19 relatively high-need school districts in three cohorts that participated during 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017. Seventy schools in 18 school districts participated in the study. The study examined outcomes of TPP in teacher instructional practices and student achievement. EL Education designed TPP to build the instructional capacity of English language arts (ELA) teachers, and novice ELA teachers in particular. TPP aims to enhance ELA teachers' instructional practices in areas aligned to CCSS and to foster student learning and achievement outcomes. TPP provides an ELA curriculum paired with teacher professional learning supports to help teachers deliver high-quality ELA instruction. Details of the TPP approach to teacher professional learning appear below:

¹ Validation grants provide funding to support the expansion of projects that address persistent education challenges to the regional or national level. All i3 grantees are required to conduct rigorous evaluations of their projects. The quality of evidence required to demonstrate a project's effectiveness depends on a project's level of scale or grant type.

THE TPP MODEL

- **Common Core-aligned ELA curriculum.** An open-source ELA curriculum for 3rd through 8th grade, available online, that is aligned to the CCSS. The curriculum consisted of CCSS-aligned literacy modules, which span eight to nine weeks of instruction and are designed to engage students with complex texts and write informational, argumentative, and narrative texts intended for external audiences. There is also a strong emphasis on opportunities for students to collaborate.
- **The Institutes.** Interactive Professional Development (PD) workshops with a TPP coach or other EL Educational professional that can last from one to three days and are designed to deepen teacher's content knowledge and instructional expertise. Four TPP institutes were offered to teachers during the summer and school year.
- **Onsite and video-based coaching.** Primarily provided to novice ELA teachers, coaching consisted of observing teachers in their classroom, providing feedback to support implementation of the ELA curriculum, and modeling effective instructional practices aligned to the curriculum and to CCSS instructional shifts.
- **Online supports.** Collaborative and independent professional learning activities that teachers could use voluntarily on their own time. The supports included additional resources and materials teachers can use to address their professional needs or interests.

Summary of Results

DID THE TEACHER POTENTIAL PROJECT IMPACT ELA INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENT ELA ACHIEVEMENT?

The study investigated the impact of the TPP on teacher use of instructional practices based on teacher surveys and classroom observations, and on student achievement, based on student ELA standardized test scores and grading of a writing activity. Analyses included all teachers in the sample, with subgroup analyses on novice teachers.

ELA Instructional Practices

Topics	Constructs for which there is a Statistically Significant Difference between TPP versus Comparison Teachers' Scores	Novice Teachers	All Teachers
General Instruction			
Connected Lessons	Connected lessons † State learning purpose † ◇	✓	✓
Higher-order thinking	Assessment of higher order thinking Higher order thinking and reading Observed higher order thinking ◇		✓
Student participation	Collaborative discussion practices ◇ Student engagement in class Student participation in discussion ◇		✓
Reading and Writing Instruction			
Reading, writing, and/or speaking about texts	Close reading and writing that demonstrates understanding of texts ◇ Reading, writing, and/or speaking about texts in the past two weeks Reading, writing, and /or speaking about texts in typical week		✓
Use of text evidence	Assessment of text evidence use Self-reported text evidence use ◇ Text evidence use and argument writing Use of writing conventions		✓
Overall ELA practices			
Overall ELA practices	Observed † ◇ Reported in survey		✓

†= statistically significant for novice teachers

◇=statistically significant for all teachers

- **OVERALL ELA INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES.** A single year of TPP had positive, statistically significant impacts on all teachers' overall ELA instructional practices. Treatment teachers used more of the ELA instructional practices than those in control schools.
- **GENERAL INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES.** One year of TPP showed positive statistically significant impacts for all teachers and novice teachers having clearly stated learning purposes in their lessons. It also had positive, statistically significant impacts for all teachers supporting students; higher order thinking, engaging students in collaborative discussion practices, and encouraging students' participation in discussion.
- **CCSS-ALIGNED READING AND WRITING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES.** There were statistically significant, positive impacts on CCSS-aligned instructional practices of all teachers supporting students' close reading and writing to demonstrate understandings of texts but no impact on the subgroup of novice teachers only. There were no statistically significant different impacts on any other reading and writing instructional practices.
- **CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENT.** There were no statistically significant impacts for one year of TPP on any ELA instructional practices outcomes related to classroom management and environment for novice or all teachers.
- **STUDENT TEST SCORES.** TPP did not have a statistically significant impact on student ELA achievement after one year of implementation. The two-year impact findings, using a quasi-experimental design (QED) of schools that opted to continue to implement the TPP, also showed a positive, statistically significant impact among schools. The study found a positive and statistically significant overall two-year impact among all study schools that received either one or two years of TPP.
- **STUDENT WRITING ACTIVITY SCORES.** The study developed a literacy task aligned to CCSS because CCSS includes a focus on students' use of texts and extended argument writing not fully captured in state standardized ELA assessments. Scores in this literacy task were analyzed in the aggregate by teacher. TPP did not have a statistically significant effect on students' writing conventions, writing quality, or overall writing scores.

Please see Appendices B and C for information about the evaluation's design and the quality of the evidence, respectively.

SECONDARY FINDINGS

- A secondary study examined the impact of two years of TPP use. The two-year study used a quasi-experimental design, as participating schools had to opt in. It found no statistically significant impacts of two years of TPP on novice nor all teachers' ELA instructional practices.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The study included an implementation evaluation that examined fidelity of implementation across all schools. Findings from the implementation evaluation and considerations regarding the samples in the impact studies are presented below.

- **TPP ELA CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION.** According to coaches' reports and classroom observations, the TPP CCSS-aligned ELA curriculum was implemented in all treatment student schools.
- **PD IMPLEMENTATION.** School-level implementation fidelity of the PD components was high for all teachers in the first and second years of implementation. However, use of the online supports was low for novice ELA teachers in the second year.
- **IMPACTS THAT CANNOT BE ATTRIBUTED TO TPP ONLY.** Due to differences between the treatment and the control schools at the start of the study, certain statistically significant findings cannot be attributed to TPP. These include differences in the use of evidence from text.
- **QED USED SMALLER SAMPLE.** The two-year study used a smaller subset of districts, schools, and teachers. With such small sample sizes, the analysis is underpowered and potentially unable to detect differences among groups while controlling for background characteristics at baseline. Similarly, for the literacy task analysis, the effects of TPP would need to be very large for the analyses to be able to detect significant impacts

For More Information

Evaluation Reports

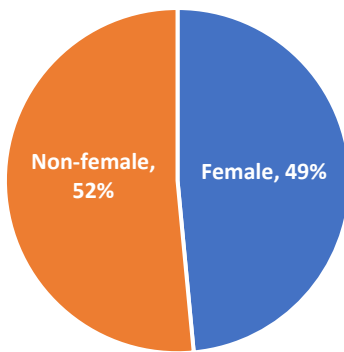
[Evaluation Report](#) (Dolfin et al, July 2019)²

² The information and data for this result summary was collected from the most recent report as of 01/22/2020: Dolfin et. al, (2019). *Evaluation of the Teacher Potential Project*. Retrieved from <https://eleducation.org/uploads/downloads/Teacher-Potential-Project-Final-Report-7-5-19-1.pdf>

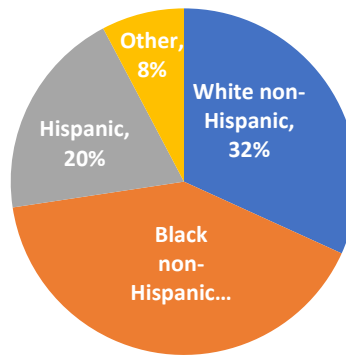
Appendix A: Students Served by the Project³

GRADE(S)													
PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

GENDER



RACE/ETHNICITY



COMMUNITY

Not Reported

HIGH-NEED STUDENTSⁱ

Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	English Learner	Students with Disabilities
57.9	7.2	Not Reported

³These data reflect the entire student population served by the intervention, not just the evaluation sample used in the impact study.

Appendix B: Impact Evaluation Methodology⁴

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Design:

The study included a randomized controlled trial for schools that adopted TPP for 1 year, with a follow up quasi-experimental design study with a smaller group of schools that continued to use TPP in the second year. The RCT methodology and samples are discussed in Appendix B of the report.

Approach:

- Using an RCT, schools were assigned to the treatment or control condition. The study estimated impacts by comparing average outcomes across the treatment and control groups, adjusting for characteristics of the sample that may be related to the outcomes and that may differ across the experimental groups, and allowing for clustering of the sample within the schools. The RCT examined impacts of the treatment on teacher instructional practices (captured in teacher surveys and classroom observations) and student achievement (via a writing assignment and standardized ELA scores). Impact analyses focused on all teachers and on novice teachers (zero to three years of teaching experience) only.

Study Length:

One year

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Study Setting:

69 schools drawn from 18 school districts across the U.S.

Final Sample Sizes:

- Treatment Group*: 35 schools, average number of teachers 37, number of students 6,150
- Control Group*: 34 schools, average number of teachers 36, number of students 6,709

Intervention Group Characteristics:

- Free/reduced-priced lunch: 57.9%
- Black: 40.7%
- Hispanic: 19.6%
- White: 31.7%
- Other: 7.7%
- Female: 48.5%
- Special Education status: 11.1%
- English Language Learners: 7.2%

⁴ These data reflect only the evaluation sample in the impact study, not the entire population served.

Comparison Group Characteristics

- Free/reduced-priced lunch: 62.4%
- Black: 28.8%
- Hispanic: 20.9%
- White: 42.7%
- Other: 7.6%
- Female: 49.6%
- Special Education status: 10.5%
- English Language Learners: 8.9%

Data Sources:

- Student records: Enrollment, attendance, suspensions, course grades
- Surveys: Administrators, students, and teachers

Key Measures:

- ELA instructional practices: Teacher survey including items related to key CCSS shifts and general teacher instructional practices.
- ELA instructional practices: Teacher observations used an observation instrument similar to the teacher survey with items related to teachers' general instruction, reading and writing instruction, classroom management, and environment.
- Student achievement: ELA statewide standardized test scores. Specific standardized test used varied by state, so study constructed a standardized test score of study students relative to the average student nationally.
- Student Achievement: Student literacy task via teacher administered writing project. Students in 4th and 5th grade were assigned a task consisting of an opinion writing activity, whereas 6th to 8th graders were assigned an argument writing activity.

List of practice area and topics covered in survey and observation instrument appears below.

Practice area	Topics
General Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connected lessons Connections to world Content knowledge Higher-order thinking Multimedia use Students prior knowledge Student independence Student participation Student responsibility for learning
Reading and writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic vocabulary Multiple types and purposes of writing Reading, writing, and/or speaking about texts Use of text evidence Writing conventions
Classroom management and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom climate Classroom management

Appendix C: Quality of the Evidence

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW⁵

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/22/2020	N/A

EVIDENCE FOR ESSA REVIEW⁶

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/22/2020	N/A

NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS REVIEW⁷

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/22/2020	N/A

⁵ <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW>

⁶ <https://www.evidenceforessa.org/>

⁷ <https://intensiveintervention.org/>

The [*Investing in Innovation Fund \(i3\)*](#), established under section 14007 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is a Federal discretionary grant program at the U.S. Department of Education within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). i3 grants help schools and local education agencies work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community to develop and expand innovative practices that improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and/or increase college enrollment and completion rates for high-need students.

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ⁱ “High-need student” refers to a student at risk of academic failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, attend high-minority schools, are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, in foster care, have been incarcerated, have disabilities, or who are English learners. For more information see: [*Applications for New Awards; Investing in Innovation Fund-Development Grants, 81 FR 24070 \(April 25, 2016\)*](#).