

Background. The Texas Literacy Initiative (TLI) is currently implemented in Austin Independent School District (AISD) within the LBJ, Travis, and Lanier vertical teams.¹ The purpose of TLI is to improve school readiness and success in the areas of language and literacy for students in AISD. To do this, AISD uses the Literacy Lines model, which provides instructional and programming alignment for language, pre-literacy, and literacy development to ease the transition for children across their entire learning careers. A Literacy Line is a vertical collaborative among feeder-pattern campuses within the district, and partners eligible educational organizations (e.g., prekindergarten [pre-K], elementary, middle, and high schools) with their , associated early childhood education (ECE) providers, who may include Early Head Start, Head Start, public or private or nonprofit licensed child care providers, and public pre-K programs. In Spring 2014, staff in AISD’s Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) worked with TLI grant management staff to create and administer a survey to principals, teachers, and TLI reading specialists/coaches at all TLI campuses. This report summarizes responses from teachers at TLI campuses.

Grade levels taught. An electronic survey was sent to 426 teachers within the TLI vertical teams. Of the 287 teachers who responded, the majority (75%) worked with students in kindergarten through 2nd grade, the next greatest percentage (23%) of respondents worked with students from birth to 4-years-old, and 4% of respondents worked with 6th- through 12th-grade students.

Teachers’ ratings. Teachers’ responses to questions related to the TLI grant are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Teachers’ Ratings (n = 287)

Statement	% Strongly agree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Strongly disagree	% Not sure/NA
I have seen reading skills improvement in the students who have received help through the Texas Literacy Initiative (TLI).	35	52	7	1	5
The TLI reading specialists/coaches are important to the academic reading success of my students.	39	46	6	2	7
There is mutual respect between the TLI reading specialists/coaches and teachers.	46	45	5	2	2
I collaborate with the TLI reading specialists/coaches to meet the needs of my students.	41	45	8	1	6
The TLI data meetings helped me to drive my instruction to support the needs of my students.	43	45	6	2	3
My campus administrators support the TLI grant work.	51	43	2	2	3
My campus administrators support the TLI-funded teachers and/or coaches/specialists.	48	43	3	2	4

Source. TLI Spring 2014 Staff Survey

¹ Vertical teams refer to the elementary and middle schools that feed into a particular high school.

Teachers' use of literacy instructional strategies. Teachers were asked to report the frequency with which they used various instructional strategies or programs in their classroom that were introduced by their TLI coach/specialist. Of the 287 respondents, 31% said they used the strategies all the time, 43% said most of the time, 17% said they used them occasionally, 2% did not use them at all, and 6% said their coach had not provided any literacy strategies or programs.

Teachers' use of progress monitoring tools. Teachers were asked to indicate all progress monitoring tools used in their classrooms. The majority of teachers (72%) indicated that they used Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) or El Inventario de Lectura en Español de Tejas (Tejas Lee) for kindergarten through grade 2, followed by the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). Nearly two thirds of teachers indicated use of self-created assessments. When asked to specify "other" types of progress-monitoring tools they had used, 24 respondents stated they had used tools such as Read Naturally, Heggerty's Phonemic Awareness, pre-kindergarten guideline rubrics, and running records.

Table 2. Progress Monitoring Tools Used by Teachers (n = 287)

Progress-monitoring tools used by teachers	% Used
Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) or El Inventario de Lectura en Español de Tejas (Tejas Lee)	72
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)	69
Self-created assessments	60
Treasures or Tesoros	48
REACH program student learning objectives (SLOs)/assessments	31
District-provided benchmark assessments	26
Circle Phonological Awareness Language and Literacy System (C-PALLS)	24
Campus mandated progress monitoring tool	20
Istation	16
AIMSweb (online progress-monitoring system by Pearson)	14
Other (please specify)	9
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	4
Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)	1
iLit (GRADE)	1
Language! Live	1

Source. Texas Literacy Initiative Spring 2014 Survey

Data monitoring frequency. Teachers responded to the question "How often do you review progress-monitoring data and/or measures?" Forty-three percent of respondents said they reviewed data several times a month, and 31% stated that they reviewed progress monitoring data several times per week (Table 3).

Table 3. Review of Progress-Monitoring Data (n = 287)

Frequency of reviewing progress-monitoring data	% Teachers
Daily	5
Several times a week	31
Several times per month	43
Several times a semester	18
Once or twice a year	3
Never	0

Source. Texas Literacy Initiative Spring 2014 Survey

Collaboration and involvement. Teachers were asked to indicate the activities they worked on with their TLI reading coaches/specialists throughout the school year. Table 4 summarizes the activities reported. Teachers had the option to select more than one activity. The most common collaborative activity mentioned was data meetings (90%).

Table 4. Collaborative Activities by Teachers With Texas Literacy Initiative (TLI) Reading Specialists/Coaches (n = 287)

Types of collaborative activities	% Teachers
Participated in data meetings led by the coach/specialist	90
Used student performance data to plan instruction or intervention	84
Received professional development sessions from your coach/specialist	74
Had your classroom instruction observed and received feedback	58
Planned instruction with your coach/specialist	55
Had the coach/specialist model effective instructional strategies for you	37
Had the coach/specialist co-teach with you	13
None of the above	3

Source. TLI Spring 2014 Survey

Benefits as a result of TLI. Teachers (n = 211) also provided examples of specific support from TLI coaches/specialists that was beneficial:

- “The data days that we are provided is very beneficial. Our administrators allow us to have a sub for an entire day and our coach makes the best of the entire day. We look at data and plan for each individual child. Also, we were allowed to go to media services center to make materials for our class. It was awesome!”
- “Feedback from observations.”
- “Providing small group instruction to students reading below grade-level.”
- “Clarifying TEKS [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills] objectives in Reading so that teachers are using strategies specifically designed to teach these TEKS and analyzing what students need to master and how they will show mastery.”

- “Data meetings are very beneficial for BOY [beginning of year] and MOY [end of year].”
- “I believe that the data analysis and the strategies to solve the problems were very good. The trainings were quite good too.”
- “Helping us navigate through Tejas Lee/ TPRI website and showing us all the resources available using it, including [Tejas Lee/TPRI] games.”
- “Helping interpret the Tango data. Using activities from the "I Love Letters" book. Providing the iPod Touches for use in the classroom were so helpful is helping students write letters and numbers as well as starting to read.”
- “The coach always answers questions in a timely matter. She is always available when I have a question or concern.”
- “The direct coaching from TLI specialist was probably most beneficial. Most PD [professional development] sessions were beneficial when they were about new information.”
- “Reading and writing strategies' workshop”
- “Coming into the classroom and work with the students in small groups.”
- “Provided copies of materials we used with our Heggerty program.”

Suggestions for TLI grant improvement. Teachers ($n = 182$) also provided suggestions for additional support they would like to receive:

- “More time helping the students in the classroom; specially, during testing times. Once a semester is not enough.”
- “Follow up of the reading and writing workshop to check on what strategies were implemented and what worked or not.”
- “There were only a couple videos that modeled one or two strands on how to teach Heggerty, but I would appreciate more videos on strategies to teach the more complex strands of Heggerty as it advances.”
- “I would like a standardized way of determining the students Lexile levels, beyond our Achieve 3000 source.”
- “I would like them to pull out and support groups that are struggling in reading.”
- “The assigned TLI [reading] specialist/coach had other duties during the spring semester. My students were rarely pulled. My campus received limited Tejas LEE kits and progress monitoring kits. We are also expected to use Dr. Haggerty strategies, but our grade level did not receive the manual. These needs were expressed to the coaches and don't know if that was communicated to the principal for purchase.”
- “More detailed rubrics for the Writing. Too vague. All the teachers on my team graded differently. I was told one thing, while another teacher graded differently.”
- “More assistance selecting Spanish texts.”
- “How to increase vocabulary and writing skills.”
- “Modeling some lessons.”
- “I believe the new teachers need more support and actually training in their classrooms to see how to do things with their current students and their needs. It would be good to see a specialist take over for a week and have the new teacher observe and take notes. One day isn't a real snapshot of the class and what is happening in it.”

- “If the coaches could work on a weekly basis with a designated small group of students who need more help with the basics of reading and writing.”

Suggestions for improving reading and writing. Teachers (n = 175) provided suggestions about how to improve reading and writing at their campuses:

- “Allowing teachers the opportunity to observe a model teacher implementing the skills learned during direct instruction and during guided reading.”
- “Improved literacy library, guided reading scope and sequence.”
- “More small-group intervention, EARLY dyslexia screening and training on how to deal with students with reading disabilities”
- “Care about kindergarten once and for all and provide reading intervention for them instead of waiting until they fail, struggle and end having a bigger gap when they get to 3rd or 4th grade. Kindergarten students with reading problems who get reading intervention from the specialist besides the one getting from the classroom teacher have stronger foundation and would not have to deal with so much reading problems impacting their academic achievement in 3rd grade and above. All schools should have a primary bilingual reading specialist who spends time not just coaching but also playing a reading interventionist [role].”
- “Need more frequent interventions for struggling readers. Once a week is not enough.”
- “We need to start interventions from the very beginning of the year.”
- “Bring TEKS expectations all the way to pre-K. Flood pre-K, kinder, and first with the necessary manpower for low performing schools, and get parents on board for the buy in.”
- “More integration of writing in reading lessons.”
- “More selection in Spanish books.”
- “I think the students are missing the enjoyment and background knowledge of reading. If we worked on that I think students would try harder to learn to sound out the words and vocabulary and as a result of that have better comprehension. I think we should have the principal and community leaders involved to have students truly enjoy reading.”
- “I would like to have a phonics/spelling curriculum that has the right sequence of skills that our students need to master at the end of the year.”
- “I think all of our students who are non-pre-AP [advanced placement] should be in Reading II and sophomores in Reading III, and the Tier 3 students should be in Reading I. This way all of the students would get the support they need and not have to be placed in classes with course names that aren't indicative of what's being taught.”
- “School-wide vertical teams with expectations about: correct letter formation, sentence mechanics, paragraph writing, etc. so that all teachers can be providing similar instruction. AISD roadmap/street view can allow for a lot of flexibility.”
- “I would like to see more pull-out time for students who need tier 2 or 3 intervention because it is hard to work with them individually if they are academically lower than most students.”
- “Choose a great reading program and make sure that you are faithful to it. Make sure everyone is on the same page as to content, frequency and monitoring.”
- “Educate the whole school about scaffolding reading materials and reading strategies.”
- “More media days so teachers at underfunded schools can make the materials they need.”
- “More professional development [training] that is during school hours.”

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