



**LIFT EDUCATION**  
LEADING INNOVATION FOR TENNESSEE



# INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDEBOOK 2019

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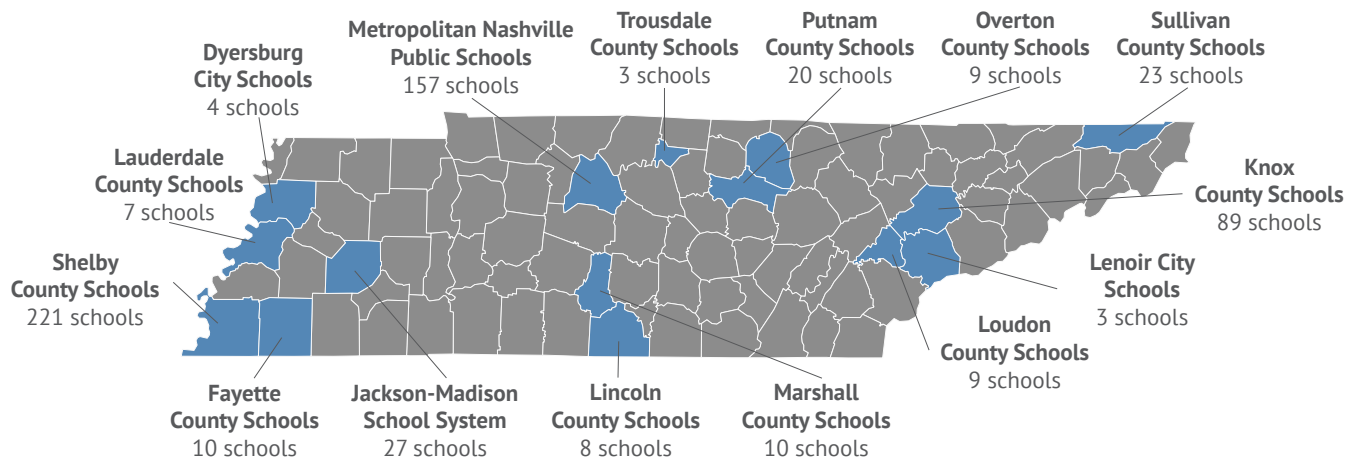
# LIFT EDUCATION

[Leading Innovation for Tennessee Education \(LIFT\)](#) is a small group of Tennessee districts working together to explore innovative approaches and share best practices that benefit students and other school districts. The network was first convened in 2012 to support high academic standards in Tennessee and in 2014 broadened to focus on directly improving student outcomes. The State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE), a nonprofit and nonpartisan research and advocacy organization based in Nashville, formally convenes the network. TNTP, a national nonprofit focused on supporting states and districts to end educational inequities, serves as a content partner for academic work. This partnership—combining knowledge of Tennessee’s context and people with a nationally recognized partner for academic success—has been key for our network.

Since March of 2016, LIFT’s primary area of focus has been improving early literacy instruction in its member districts. After examining their existing literacy programs, classroom practices, and student results, LIFT member districts adopted a shared problem of practice:

**K–5 students are not yet accessing a high-quality literacy program that supports them to meet the demands of Tennessee’s rigorous standards. Teachers and leaders have not yet made the instructional shifts that will support students to become proficient readers, writers, and thinkers.**

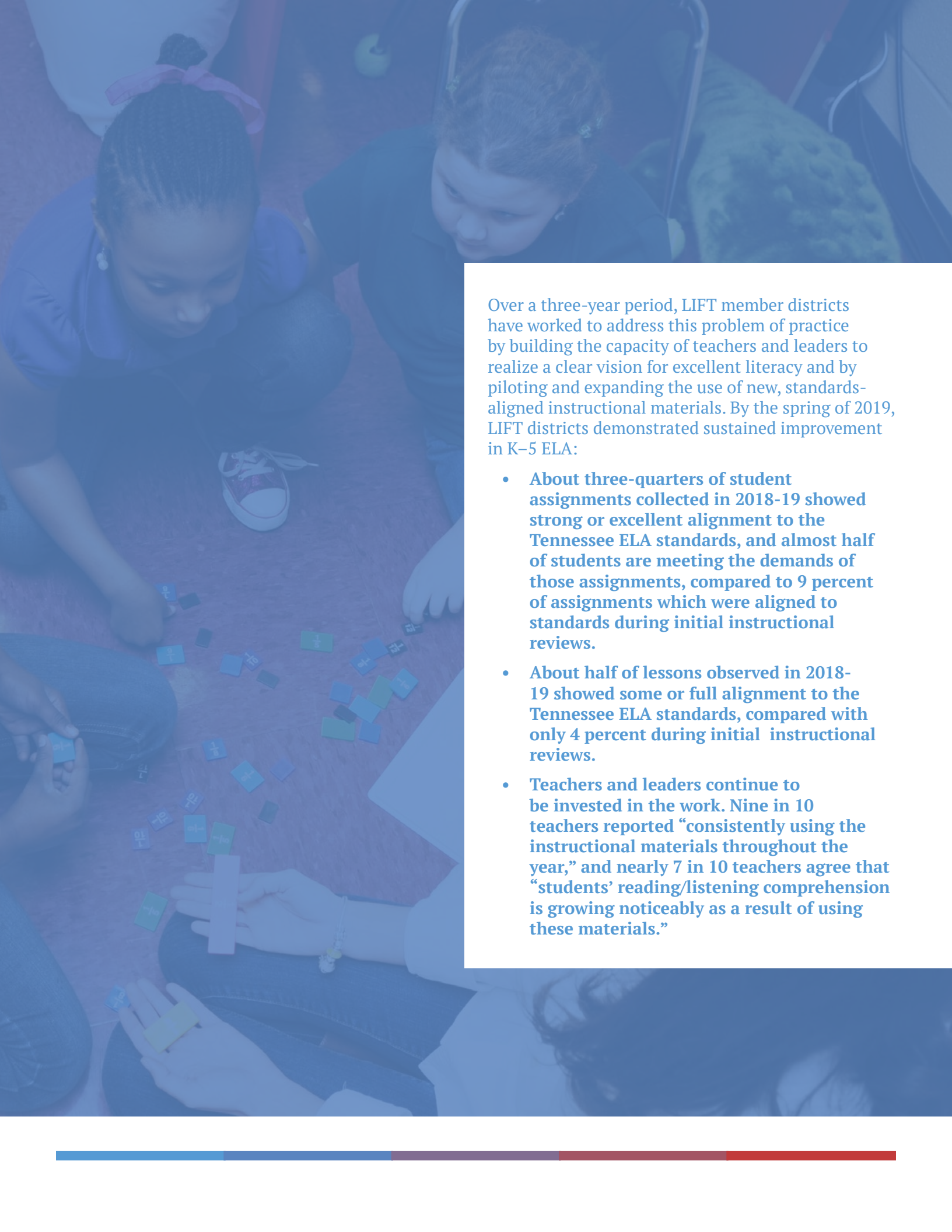
## LIFT Member Districts



## Contact Information

Questions? Comments? Suggestions for additional resources?  
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Over a three-year period, LIFT member districts have worked to address this problem of practice by building the capacity of teachers and leaders to realize a clear vision for excellent literacy and by piloting and expanding the use of new, standards-aligned instructional materials. By the spring of 2019, LIFT districts demonstrated sustained improvement in K–5 ELA:

- **About three-quarters of student assignments collected in 2018-19 showed strong or excellent alignment to the Tennessee ELA standards, and almost half of students are meeting the demands of those assignments, compared to 9 percent of assignments which were aligned to standards during initial instructional reviews.**
- **About half of lessons observed in 2018-19 showed some or full alignment to the Tennessee ELA standards, compared with only 4 percent during initial instructional reviews.**
- **Teachers and leaders continue to be invested in the work. Nine in 10 teachers reported “consistently using the instructional materials throughout the year,” and nearly 7 in 10 teachers agree that “students’ reading/listening comprehension is growing noticeably as a result of using these materials.”**



# THE GUIDEBOOK

A [recent study](#) from Harvard’s Center for Educational Policy Research compared average student growth in elementary schools using different curricula in six states. The researchers found that the adoption of more-rigorous curricula alone has not yet produced the improvements in student outcomes that prior research predicted.

However, the authors of the study [caution against](#) the interpretation that curriculum choice does not matter—pointing to the complexity of curriculum implementation and the fact that teachers in the study used the materials inconsistently and received very little training and support. Instead they urge states, districts, and the philanthropic community to understand the magnitude of the transformation and identify the package of supports teachers and leaders need to reorient their daily work with rigorous curricula.

As a network, LIFT member districts have been engaged in this action research to identify the package of supports teachers and leaders need to reorient their daily work with rigorous curricula. This guidebook codifies the approach and lessons

learned from LIFT member districts, and catalogues the processes, tools, and support these districts have used to manage change. Our hope is that this guidebook will be a valuable resource for districts adopting high-quality instructional materials as they think through the many supports that teachers need to effectively leverage high-quality materials to dramatically improve outcomes for students. We feel it may be particularly beneficial for districts in Tennessee who will be adopting new ELA materials in 2020.

The guidebook is organized into six chapters. Each chapter includes an appendix of materials collected from LIFT districts: sample schedules for implementation, annotated lists of materials, guidelines for pilot designs, session materials for teacher- and leader-training sessions, change management strategies, progress-monitoring tools such as surveys; and so on. While these resources are not comprehensive, they are intended to serve as models for implementation in districts undertaking this work.

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# CHAPTER 1: OUR WORK, RESULTS, AND APPROACH TO CHANGE

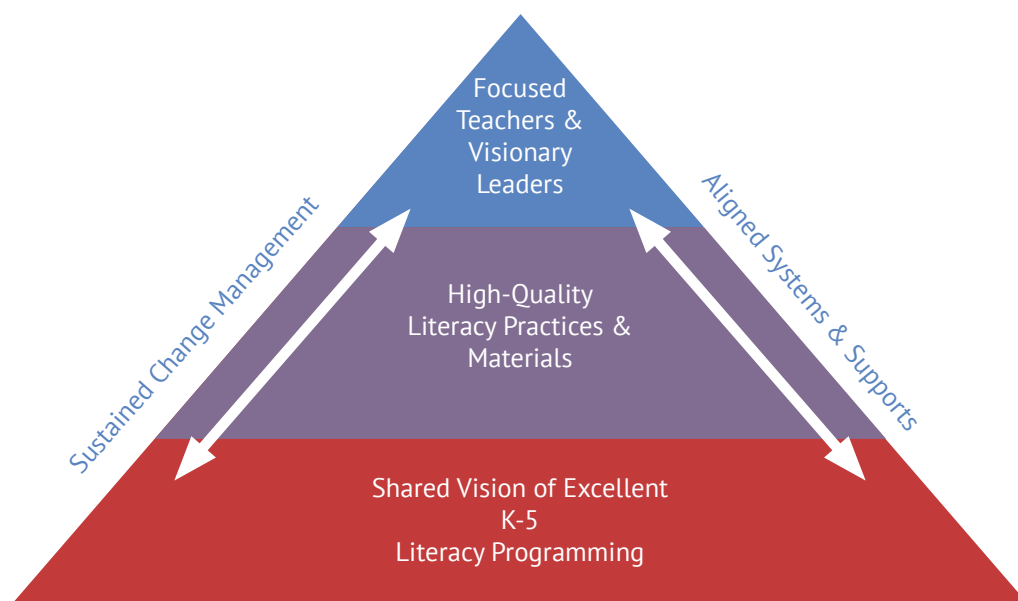
## LIFT's Theory of Change

Academic studies [show growing evidence](#) that putting strong curriculum in the hands of excellent teachers can lead to increased academic impact for students. The Louisiana Department of Education, in cooperation with the RAND Corporation, published a [2016 report](#) outlining the importance of instructional materials in their recent successes. Research and best practices show us that an effective instructional core has two components: excellent content and excellent teaching.

In the past, many teachers in LIFT member districts created or compiled the materials they used to deliver ELA instruction. The 2017 Tennessee Educator Survey revealed an alarming finding: “the average K–3 reading teacher spends 4.5 hours per week creating or sourcing materials for daily reading blocks.” Additionally, the 2016 RAND study found that nearly every teacher in America—99 percent of elementary teachers and 96 percent of secondary teachers—draws upon “materials I developed and/or selected myself” in teaching ELA. When asked where they found materials, the most common answer among elementary school teachers was Google (94%), followed by Pinterest (87%). Most teachers are not trained to create or evaluate materials for quality, leading to inconsistencies in the quality of instruction that students receive. This approach to sourcing materials limits the opportunities of teachers to coordinate and collaborate.

Classroom observations in LIFT member districts in the past revealed huge variance in the quality of these materials. This approach to sourcing curriculum creates a lack of coherence within and across grade levels, with teachers unsure what students have been previously taught. There are also significant implications for mobile and transient students who are moving within and across school districts. Variability in content dramatically decreases the likelihood that students moving from school to school or grade to grade will have a consistent, coherent experience.

Based on the emerging research on the impact of high-quality instructional materials, LIFT member districts hypothesized that, with the right structures and supports in place, **strong instructional materials that reflect the demands of Tennessee’s rigorous standards could drive significant improvements in classroom instruction.** Over the past three years, LIFT member districts have worked to support teachers in comprehensive literacy instruction using strong materials for both reading foundational skills and reading/listening comprehension in elementary grades. The following graphic illustrates a more comprehensive theory of action and draws attention to the many interrelated aspects of leading instructional change at scale.



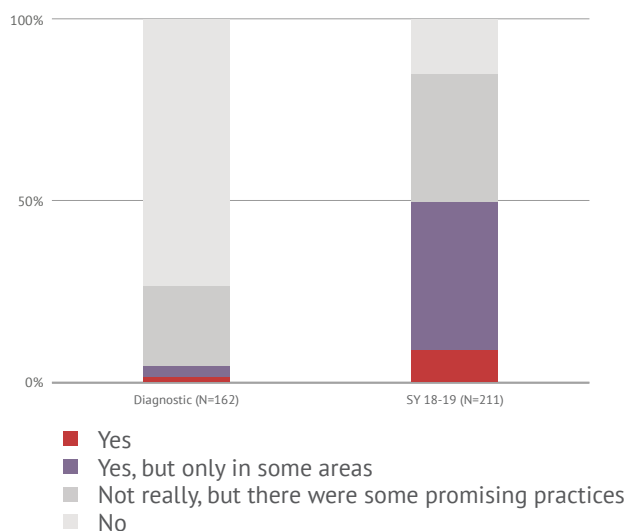


## LIFT Results

After three years, LIFT’s work has produced compelling evidence that working with strong curricular materials can positively affect the quality of instruction. Prior to piloting high-quality instructional materials, very few classrooms in LIFT member districts (4%) showed evidence of the instructional shifts required by the Tennessee ELA standards. By the 2018-2019 school year, more than half of observed classrooms showed some or full alignment to the standards, and fewer than 1 in 10 classrooms showed no evidence.

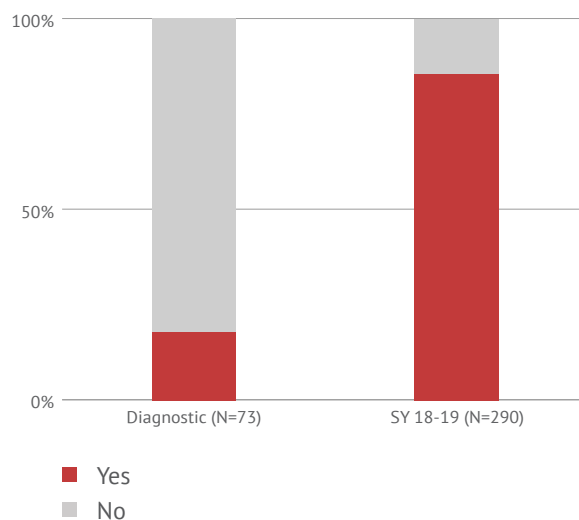
**Overall, did the lesson reflect the shifts required by the TN Standards?**

All non-diagnostic observations in SY 16-17, SY 17-18, and SY 18-19



Of importance was a shift in the quality of texts in classrooms. Prior to piloting high-quality materials, only 21 percent of lessons were centered on a high-quality, complex text. By the end of the first semester of implementation in districts piloting strong instructional materials, a staggering 86 percent of lessons were centered on high-quality, complex texts after just one year of implementation, and this change has been maintained over multiple semesters of implementation.

**Is the majority of the time in this reading and listening comprehension lesson spent on complex texts worthy of student time and attention?**



This change translated into significantly more time for students to interact with complex text, high-quality vocabulary, and complex ideas in early grades classrooms, an improvement in practice that pilot classrooms sustained in the second year of the pilot, both in the classrooms of the original pilot teachers and teachers who started using the materials in the 2017–18 school year as districts scaled up usage.



## Teachers See the Benefits of Strong Instructional Materials

Teachers implementing strong instructional resources also indicate that they like the instructional materials and that the materials benefit students. In a Spring 2019 survey of approximately 350 teachers using strong materials across nine districts, most teachers indicated that the instructional materials support their practice.

- **80 percent agree or strongly agree that students' knowledge about the world is growing noticeably as a result of using these instructional materials**
- **74 percent agree or strongly agree that students' vocabulary is growing noticeably with these materials.**
- **65 percent agree or strongly agree their students' reading/listening comprehension is growing noticeably as a result of using these materials**

The LIFT network has also gathered teacher feedback in focus groups and in open response questions on surveys. In February 2017, pilot teachers were asked to share their experiences with the new materials,

and in open response questions teachers noted that materials “didn’t involve a lot of work for the teacher. [They were] laid out well and I liked the flow of it.”

In later surveys, teachers also saw the benefits for students. “I see the change from that concrete thinking to that abstract rigorous thinking. And I know that has changed because of their language and their vocabulary! We just can’t believe the conversations we are having with our kids. And it’s because we have given them something to talk about. It’s just amazing.”

Teachers also report increased vocabulary and writing development. “Their vocabulary and language and ability to answer the deep questions has just blown my mind. They can comprehend so much more than I even realized.” “There’s always a huge change in writing. When you compare what they do in August to what they can do at the end of the year it’s dramatic. I think it’s because now we expose them to so much more writing than we used to do.”

Teachers found the materials were particularly beneficial for struggling students. “I also love the confidence [these materials have] given my lower [performing] students!”







## Parents and Stakeholders Report Increased Student Learning with the Use of Strong Materials

Several LIFT member districts participated in a parent and family survey in May 2018. Nearly 8 in 10 parents stated their child is becoming a better reader due to the instruction he/she is receiving in school. In reference to the new instructional materials, one parent said, “my child has grown leaps and bounds this year.” Another parent commented, “I was very impressed with the reading program this year. I have two children in grades K–2, so I was able to compare it to the previous curriculum.”

## Districts New to Implementation See Positive Results

In the fall of 2018, three additional districts (the LIFT Learning Network, or LLN) joined LIFT to pilot strong materials using a “light touch” support model. Using the lessons learned from the original LIFT member districts, these three districts saw an exciting change in instruction after one year of materials implementation. These results suggest that the best practices learned from LIFT’s efforts to improve early literacy can be replicated to expand impact:

- 73 percent of observed lessons in LLN districts are centered on a high-quality text, compared with just 56 percent in initial instructional reviews.
- 58 percent of sampled tasks in LLN districts reflect the demands of the standards, compared with just 30 percent in initial instructional reviews.
- 43 percent of observed lessons in LLN districts feature questions and tasks that support student access to complex text, compared with just 19 percent in initial instructional reviews.

- 11 percent of observed lessons in LLN districts allow students to own the rigorous thinking, compared with 0 percent in initial instructional reviews.
- 48 percent of students in LLN districts are meeting the demands of Tennessee’s rigorous standards, compared with 25 percent in initial instructional reviews. Teachers and leaders in LLN districts also report that the work is positively impacting student learning.
- 83 percent of observed foundational skills lessons in LLN districts provide the opportunity for students to master foundational skills, compared with 67 percent in our initial instructional reviews.

On every indicator of progress, LLN districts have made more progress than other LIFT districts did in their pilot year and have almost accelerated progress to the point of “catching up” with other LIFT districts, many of whom are three years into this journey. This data provides every indication that as Tennessee districts begin the ELA adoption process over the next year, they should reach out to peers who have begun this work to see what lessons can be learned and what pitfalls they should avoid.

These successes are early evidence of progress. Across the network, about half of lessons using strong materials are not yet aligned to standards. While the journey to stronger literacy results is far from accomplished, LIFT member districts are encouraged by the progress thus far and continue to believe this is the right path to improvement.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, LIFT member districts reflect on their shared work with the goal of strengthening their efforts and impact. They work closely with a “mentor district,” a member of the LIFT network using the same set of materials who provides resources, advice, and support to the LLN district through their first years of implementation. LLN districts have indicated that the mentor district relationship has been critical to their early successes, which speaks to the importance of having an established set of resources to pull from when implementing rigorous materials for the first time. Woven throughout these chapters are additional key lessons LIFT member districts have learned over three years of supporting teachers and leaders in this work and scaling it across districts.



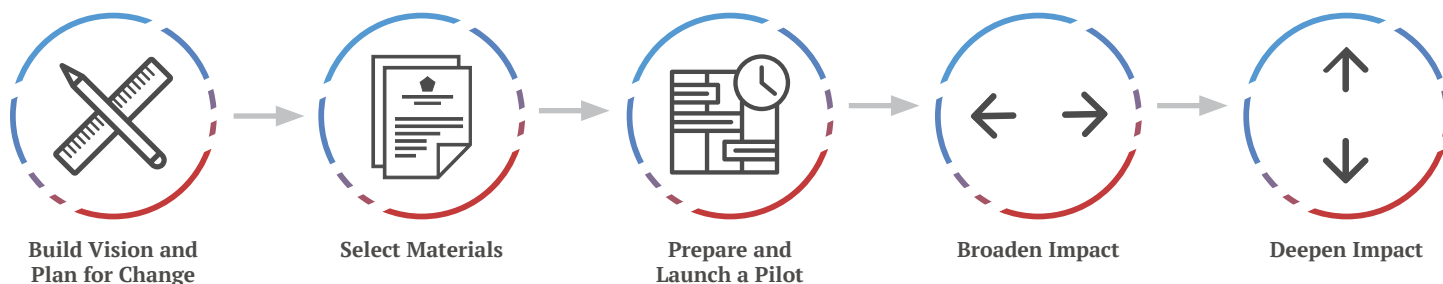
## Our Recommendations for Districts

Based on these strong results, LIFT recommends that districts seeking to improve their ELA outcomes consider the implementation of high-quality instructional materials, with ongoing and intensive supports for leaders and teachers, as a key strategy to drive instructional improvements.

We caution that materials are not a panacea; they must be embraced as a change effort and implemented well, including careful building of leader capacity and teacher knowledge. [As one LIFT leader recently wrote](#), “For school and district leaders, the hard part about reading instruction is leading a highly-effective implementation and sticking to the plan long enough for the work to have a meaningful impact. Putting a new curriculum in a teacher’s hand won’t get the job done. He or she needs support in order to teach it well.”

Teachers also need time to learn how to communicate the material effectively to students, and students need time to develop academically while learning it. But “time” is not a welcomed word in education. Thus, we encourage districts beginning this work to heed our recommendations to “go slow to go fast,” and to reach out to other districts who have begun this work for support and advice.

In that spirit, the rest of this guide is structured to support materials selection and implementation, and guides the reader through the implementation process that LIFT member districts have followed over the first three years of their journey:



“When we were creating our own curriculum and lessons, I thought we were so good at it. When I saw the questions and text passages in the curriculum, I saw that you must set the bar high for students for them to really grow. Looking back, our expectations were lower than they should’ve been.”

—Crystal Landis, teacher  
Trousdale County Schools

## Resources

### LIFT Resources

- [SCORE Sheet blog post: The Importance of Strong Literacy Instructional Materials](#)
- [SCORE and LIFT overview slides](#)

### External research on the importance of instructional materials

#### Quick Reads

- [A Primer for Continuous Improvement in Schools and Districts](#), by the Education Development Center
- [The Right Network for the Right Problem](#), by Louis Gomez, et al.
- [Don’t Give Up on Curriculum Reform Just Yet](#), by Thomas Kane and David Steiner
- [Creating a Coherent System to Support Instruction Aligned with State Standards: Promising Practices of the Louisiana Department of Education](#)
- [Want All Students to Learn? Make Sure Their Teachers Get Great Content for their Classrooms](#)

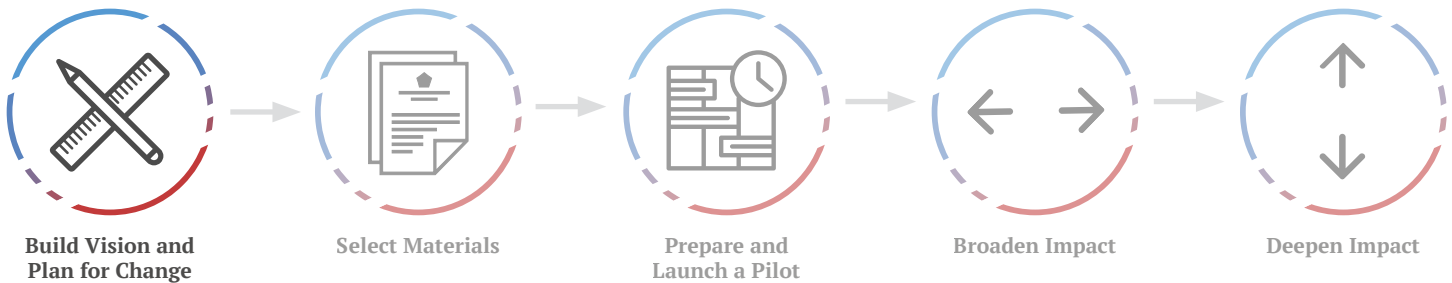
- [Reading Comprehension: Two Approaches](#), by Barbara R. Davidson
- [The Opportunity Myth](#) by TNTP
- [Failing by Design: How we make teaching too hard for mere mortals](#), by Robert Pondiscio
- [Simplifying Teaching: A Field Experience with “Off the Shelf: Lessons](#), by Jackson and Makarin
- [Big bang for just a few bucks: The impact of math textbooks in California](#), by Koedel and Polikoff
- [What We Teach Matters](#), by David Steiner et al.

#### Books Studies

- [Learning to Improve: How America’s Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better](#), by Anthony Bryk
  - [For a summary of this book, see this review from the Harvard Education Review](#)
- [Learning by the Book](#), by David Blazer, et al.
- [Curriculum Research: What We Know and Where We Need to Go](#), by David Steiner
- [Choosing Blindly: Instructional Materials, Teacher Effectiveness, and the Common Core](#), by the Brookings Institute



## CHAPTER 2: BUILDING VISION & PLANNING FOR CHANGE



### Primary Considerations for Building Vision & Planning for Change

To effectively create conditions for successful implementation, district and building leaders should lead the charge for change. The fundamental actions required for this include:

- Building a sense of urgency for change (using data) and possibility (with research on materials).
- Engaging in knowledge-building experiences to build shared vision for excellence (with reading science research).
- Assessing your current state against the vision (with an instructional review).
- Using this information to plan for change.

LIFT member districts found that these steps were critical for leaders, who are regularly required to make decisions about resource allocation, strategy development, budgets, timelines, and other key elements.

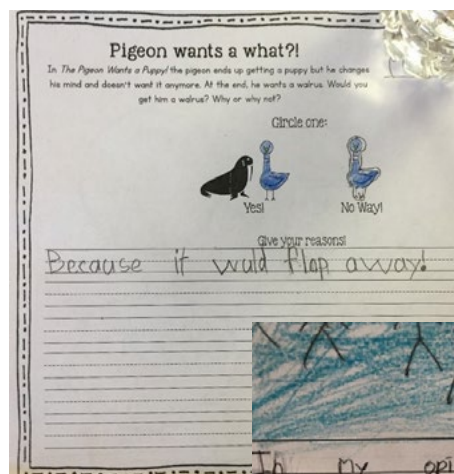
### How LIFT Approached Building Vision & Planning for Change

#### Build a Sense of Urgency for Change and Possibility

In beginning this work, LIFT leaders found that they needed to cultivate a sense of urgency using data on instructional practice and student learning. Different districts and schools used different data to inspire urgency (e.g., for higher-performing schools you

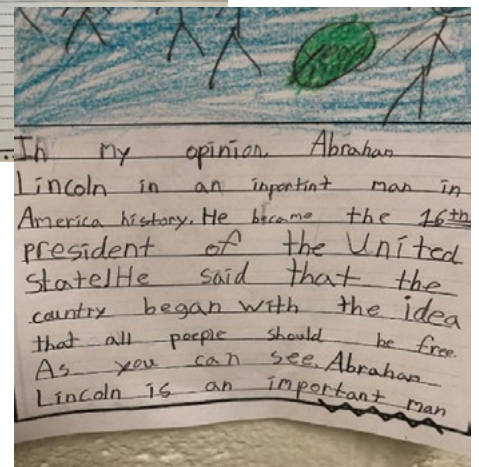
may need to point to achievement gaps or stagnant reading proficiency rates), but found that data was a critical component of helping inspire the need for change in leaders at the district and school level. Part of this also included creating a vision for success in order to help various stakeholders understand what is possible when students are receiving high-quality literacy instruction on a regular basis.

One strategy LIFT used to do this was to use “before and after” student work samples, such as those below, to highlight what students can do with consistent access to rigorous instruction. Additional [before and after samples can be found here](#), and in [TNTP’s Student Experience Toolkit](#). It is also recommended that leaders keep student work samples from before the work to leverage as part of the investment strategy for later phases of the work.



Before

After



## Engage in Knowledge Building Experiences to Build Shared Vision

LIFT found that a key component of the vision building stage was to create a common understanding of the ELA standards and shifts among district instructional leaders. While the idea of college and career ready standards is not new, many educators reflect that they have not had the training or support to deeply understand what these expectations look like in action. The LIFT network dedicated time to helping each district build a common understanding of the shifts and to continuously update its understanding as new research and practices emerged.

LIFT leaders also emphasize that all key decision makers, including board members, district leaders, school leaders, and teachers, must engage with the research about excellent literacy instruction to combat misconceptions and status-quo thinking. A starting point for this research is included in [Chapter 1](#). The website [curriculummatters.org](http://curriculummatters.org) also includes a wealth of resources for this purpose.

To create a shared action plan with buy-in from all stakeholders, they must agree on the common points of success and challenge against a shared vision for ELA instruction.



Knowledge and vision can be built in several ways:

- Knowledge-building sessions during the instructional review
- Co-observing classroom practice with school and district leaders during the instructional review\*
- Exploring curated pre-work and additional reading after the instructional review (see knowledge building materials linked in the “Resources” section in Chapter 1)
- Arranging visits to other districts to complete walkthroughs in classrooms that are implementing high-quality materials\*

*\*These are strategies we suggest you continue to use throughout your first years of implementation to continue developing your shared vision of excellence for early literacy.*

There are specific messages that LIFT districts found important to convey when working to invest various stakeholder groups in the need for new ELA materials:

- **Board members, school leaders, teachers:** Students will experience a coherent experience across grades. In districts with high mobility rates, students will experience coherent experience across schools when they move. Additionally, the materials provide the “science” of teaching, while allowing teachers to focus on the “art” of teaching.
- **Families:** Families become invested when they see their students’ work. In the beginning, what they need is bite-sized information about the research behind the materials and ways they can help at home. These newsletters from [Sullivan County Schools](#) and [Jackson-Madison County Schools](#) districts provide some examples of how LIFT member districts managed this messaging.







## Assess the Current State Against Vision

At the launch of the LIFT early literacy work, TNTP conducted a diagnostic visit in each district—called an instructional review—to better understand how current policies and practices were supporting or hindering rigorous, standards-aligned literacy instruction. It is highly recommended to begin similar work with this sort of “stock-take,” incorporating key decision-makers and stakeholders from multiple levels of a district in better understanding the current landscape.

Instructional reviews are intended to accomplish three objectives:

1. Norm your team’s expectations for excellent literacy instruction using a codified version of your vision. In the LIFT network, we adapted Student Achievement Partners’ [Instructional Practice Guide for this purpose](#).
2. Build stakeholders’ understanding of the current state of literacy instruction in the district by observing and analyzing classroom instruction and student assignments against your vision for excellence.
3. Use the trends from classroom visits and student work analyses to identify current areas of success, areas for improvement, and recommended next steps.

LIFT’s instructional reviews took place over two or three days, depending on the size of a district. They began with convening district instructional leaders (generally the superintendent, central office academic leaders, principals, coaches, and, occasionally, teacher-leaders) to discuss the key elements of high-quality early literacy instruction

and prepare to observe classroom instruction using a common tool (e.g., the [Instructional Practice Guide](#)).

Next, observation of instruction occurred in a sample of district schools (typically between 3–6) in small teams. Teams observed instruction in each classroom for approximately 20 minutes, briefly discussed what they observed, and then comprehensively debriefed trends in instruction at the end of each day. Throughout the instructional review, teams collected data using the [Instructional Practice Guide](#) to assess alignment of instructional practice, compared instruction to the intent of the standards being taught (using the [TN Academic Standards app](#)), and used a modified version of the [EQuIP Student Work Protocol](#) to assess the alignment of student work.

On the final day of an instructional review, the external observers (e.g., CORE Office ELA consultants, technical assistance providers) shared trend-level data from these classroom visits and student work analyses and identified areas of success, areas for improvement, and recommended next steps. District leaders then discussed an action plan to approach these areas for improvement. During the action-planning phase, almost all LIFT member districts chose to address the findings from the instructional review with exploration or adoption of new, standards-aligned instructional materials (see Chapter 1).

If you work in a Tennessee school or district and are uncertain about who to reach out to for assistance with instructional reviews, we recommend contacting your [CORE office](#), as CORE Office ELA Consultants may be able to provide this type of support.



## Planning for Change

LIFT member districts found that a key component of success in this work is building a *vertical spine of sponsorship*; that is, to ensure that all levels of a district team—from superintendent and other central office leaders, to principals, to coaches, and teacher leaders—have a shared vision for excellence and are equally invested in materials implementation as a strategy to achieve that vision. Leaders in the LIFT network participated in a wide range of knowledge- and vision-building experiences, and LIFT member districts have been clear that **investing in a shared vision for instruction is a non-negotiable component of improving early literacy.**

Districts also clearly articulated that creating a shared vision depends on **clear roles and responsibilities within the district team**—particularly having one person with capacity and charge to lead the work (often called a “strategy lead”).

Beyond establishing a strategy lead, LIFT member districts found the following to be critical when planning for change:

- **Ensure a broad base of support for new initiatives.** LIFT member districts found this to be true when considering instructional materials exploration or adoption. It’s essential to have strong buy-in from district leaders, but also from school leaders who will be asked to support or lead the work, coaches who will support teachers, and, of course, teachers themselves. Several LIFT member districts incorporated [focus groups](#) into their early action planning, soliciting feedback from both teachers and school leaders on different sets of instructional materials before selecting one or two to pilot.



### Top 5 Recommendations for Building Vision & Planning for Change

1. Purposefully invest various stakeholder groups, including leaders, teachers, and families.
  2. Create a sense of urgency by focusing on what is possible when students are receiving rigorous instruction.
  3. Conduct an academic review to understand what you are trying to change.
  4. Build buy-in from school leaders by including them at every decision-making level.
  5. Appoint a “strategy lead” who is responsible for leading the planning process.
- **Establish a clear “lead” or “sponsor”.** In most LIFT member districts, superintendents have been “sponsors” for the work, lending institutional support to the effort and ensuring that early literacy was a priority for the district. In each LIFT member district, there is also an identified “strategy lead” (often a CAO or literacy lead for the district) who pushes the day-to-day work forward.
  - **Determine a plan for monitoring progress.** Monitoring progress is also a key component of change management. District leaders work hard to identify incremental signs of progress as new instructional materials are implemented, generally using the IPG as a framework to measure improvement. LIFT member districts found it critical to use progress indicators outside of state test scores to measure improvement. Progress monitoring efforts are most influential when they are focused on the day-to-day experiences of students in the district. A recommended progress monitoring plan is found in the next section.

## Plan for Progress Monitoring

LIFT member districts found that a critical component of this work is measuring if the work leads to a change, and if the change is an improvement. To answer these questions, the LIFT member districts sought to identify the intended outcomes and means of measurement before introducing new materials, and then planned to

report on progress transparently. The LIFT network considers multiple sources of information when measuring the impact of our work. Anecdotal feedback is considered on a daily and weekly basis, measured by talking with teachers, watching instruction, and listening to students. LIFT member districts also look at the impact of the work in several more qualitative and formal ways:

Type of Data	Why LIFT Measures It	How LIFT Measures It
<b>Classroom Observations</b>	<p>At the heart of the LIFT theory of action is the idea that changes in classroom practice will result in changes in student learning.</p> <p>Teacher practices is measured through observations because it is believed to be a leading indicator for student learning, providing evidence of change on a short-term basis.</p>	<p>TNTP staff members visit classrooms in each LIFT district roughly once a month and observe instruction using the Instructional Practice Guide.</p> <p>Many districts also conduct their own walkthroughs with district staff or principals on a regular basis, also using the IPG.</p>
<b>Student Work Analysis</b>	<p>As with classroom observations, LIFT believes that student work, including the quality of tasks assigned and student performance on assignments, is a reliable leading indicator of student achievement.</p>	<p>TNTP staff gather student work samples once a semester from across the LIFT network and evaluates them based on the EQuIP student work protocol (see Resources on following page).</p>
<b>Teacher and Leader Knowledge of Shifts and Standards</b>	<p>LIFT believes a key component of this work is the knowledge of the shifts and standards held by district leaders (superintendents, CAOs, literacy leads, etc. and teachers).</p>	<p>LIFT measures this through a knowledge survey of leaders and teachers twice a year (see Resources on following page).</p>
<b>Teacher and Leader Sentiment</b>	<p>While investment is a key component of change management, LIFT also believes that it is critical to making a difference in student outcomes.</p>	<p>LIFT measures this through a sentiment survey of our leaders and teachers twice a year (see Resources on following page).</p>
<b>Parent Perceptions</b>	<p>Families are partners in encouraging students to become strong readers, writers and thinkers. By understanding parents' experience with our literacy program, LIFT districts can better engage parents in supporting students.</p>	<p>LIFT districts offer a spring family survey in (see Resources on following page).</p>
<b>Student Outcome Measures</b>	<p>Ultimately, LIFT districts hope to improve student outcomes in ELA.</p>	<p>Research demonstrates that instructional interventions (such as changes in instructional materials) can take multiple years to influence student achievement data. While this is a lagging indicator, especially for K–2 students, LIFT districts plan to investigate state test scores over time (in 2nd and 3rd grade).</p>

“I’ve always had high expectations for my students. That’s one of the reasons I really like [the EL Education Curriculum]. It’s even more rigorous than I used to push myself to be. I know sometimes we think, ‘Oh this is too hard.’ But if we give it a chance, students show us that it’s not.”

—Kristin Johnson, teacher  
Lenoir City Schools

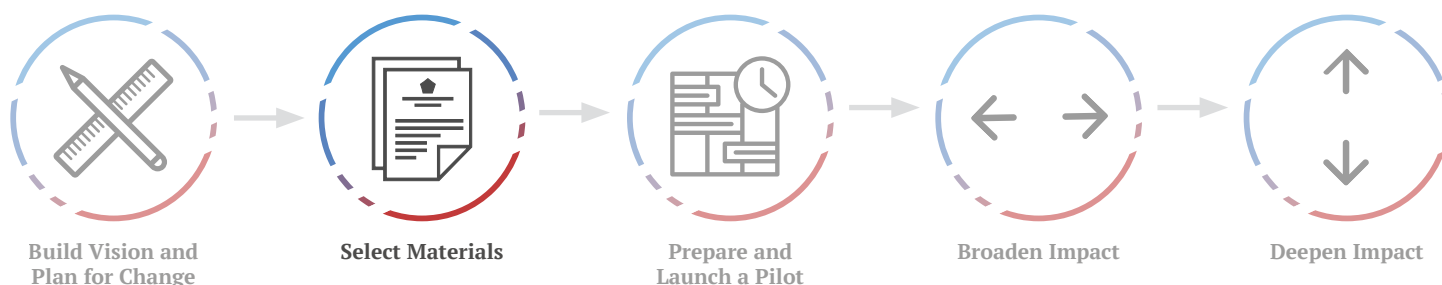
## Resources

### Instructional Review Materials

- [Instructional Review Sample Agenda](#)
- [Sample Day 1 knowledge-building and introductory slides](#)
- [Sample Day 2 knowledge-building and introductory slides](#)
- Student Achievement Partners’ [Instructional Practice Guide \(IPG\)](#)
- LIFT’s modified version of the [Instructional Practice Guide \(IPG\)](#)
- [EQuIP Student Work Protocol](#)
- [Teacher Focus Group Protocol](#)
- [Change Management: Session on Teacher Involvement and Investment](#)
- [Sample Action Plan](#)



## CHAPTER 3: SELECTING MATERIALS



### Primary Considerations for Selecting Materials

Once instructional reviews are complete, and a thorough investment plan is in place, districts should select the instructional materials they plan to pilot. Depending on your district policies, and where you are in the state adoption cycle, this process will look different for each district. Tennessee will release the final textbook adoption list in October or November 2019 for the 2020 ELA adoption cycle, and districts will conduct internal reviews to inform adoption decisions. This chapter provides best practices used by LIFT member districts. Each district is encouraged to use a process that suits their unique needs and context.

### How LIFT Approached Selecting Materials

#### Identifying High-Quality Materials

Excitingly, there are now multiple sets of high-quality early literacy instructional materials available on the market, either from traditional publishers or newer, open educational resource providers. LIFT member districts originally identified and learned about the details of these materials using several sources of information:

- [Edreports.org](https://edreports.org), the “Consumer Reports” for instructional materials. Each set of curricula is reviewed for alignment to high standards (like the Tennessee ELA and math standards) for each grade level, and a comprehensive report details the strengths and challenges of each. These reviews are conducted by carefully trained educators, several of whom are from Tennessee.

- The [Louisiana Department of Education](https://www.louisiana.gov/) has conducted in-depth reviews of many sets of instructional materials.
- Word of mouth. TNTP has supported materials adoption and implementation in many districts across the country and has seen different sets of materials in action. We suggest networking with the original LIFT member districts or nearby school districts to better understand what materials are currently used.
- Some districts in other parts of the country have reviewed materials on their own or in a consortium, using the [Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool](#) (IMET) to support analysis. While we believe that using preexisting reviews is a better use of districts’ time, this is an option.

It is worth noting that none of the materials LIFT member districts ultimately selected were available in their current form the last time that the Tennessee Department of Education reviewed ELA materials and, therefore, were not on the state-approved list. LIFT districts used these materials as “supplemental” materials during pilot phases.



While these external resources provide a strong starting point, it is also important that each district also consider what is critically important to their unique context. Some of these considerations may include, but are not limited to, ease of use, inclusion of diverse perspectives, cost of trade books, and so on. Additionally, districts will have access to the new list of options recommended by the state. However, it is necessary for districts to be critical consumers of these options based on their local contexts.

## Current Materials in Use in LIFT Member Districts

The following chart indicates the materials that have been piloted by districts in the LIFT network as of June 2019:



Instructional Materials	Districts Using
<a href="#">EL ELA</a>	Dyersburg (grades 2–5)* Lenoir City (grades K–8) Shelby County (grades K–5) Jackson Madison (grades 3–5) Trousdale (grades 3–8) Sullivan County (grades 6–8)
<a href="#">Core Knowledge Language Arts</a>	Sullivan County (grades K–5) Loudon County (grades K–3) Putnam County (grades K–4) Trousdale County (grades K–5) Jackson Madison (grades K–2) Fayette County (grades K–3) Metro Nashville Public Schools (grades K–4) Lincoln County (grades K–2) Marshall County (grades K–1) Overton County (grades K–4)
<a href="#">Wit &amp; Wisdom</a>	Lauderdale County (grades K–3)
<a href="#">LearnZillion ELA Guidebook Units</a>	Marshall County (grades 6–8) Metro Nashville Public Schools (grades 6–8)

\*Dyersburg also piloted the [Read Aloud project](#) in grades K–2. The Read Aloud project offers high-quality lessons that meet the bar of the instructional shifts and standards. Dyersburg has chosen to use the Read Aloud project as a short-term solution prior to the next materials adoption in Tennessee. We have chosen not to include information about Read Aloud project, as it is not a comprehensive instructional program. For more information on the Read Aloud project, visit or reach out to Student Achievement Partners.

## Managing Change through Selecting High-Quality Instructional Materials

Besides consulting outside reviews of instructional materials, LIFT member districts engaged in a comprehensive internal review process, including reviews by administrators, building leaders, teachers, and, occasionally, community members.

The review processes varied by district but focused on selecting materials that aligned with the district vision for excellent instruction as grounded in the Tennessee standards. To conduct reviews, districts relied on nationally vetted evaluation tools, such as [Student Achievement Partners' Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool](#) (IMET). TNTP staff members, who are trained to review curriculum, provided recommendations and districts facilitated the review process to ensure decision makers were supported in applying the review tools and the recommendations of others.

District processes also involved multiple stakeholder groups. It is strongly suggested that districts conduct at least two sets of focus groups before making any decisions to pilot. The purpose of these focus groups is both to ensure district decision makers have input from each group and to build buy in and trust with the groups who will be closest to the change once new materials are introduced.

- **Teacher focus groups.** By putting sample sets of instructional materials in front of educators before committing to any investment or pilot program, districts can gain significant buy-in and support from teachers in these efforts, as well as insight into the kinds of support that might be necessary to implement materials. LIFT member districts that did this successfully included all teachers who might pilot the materials in a focus group or exploratory meeting, often looking at two or three different sets of materials. See the [Resources](#) that follow for sample decks and materials.
- **Leader focus groups.** Just as teachers' input is invaluable in gaining support for and insight into resources needed for the implementation of materials, school leaders, and coaches/APs/etc. who might support the work should also have input. We suggest gathering school leaders

and coaches from schools where pilot programs might occur to better understand their reactions to materials. This can occur alongside teacher focus groups, although we recommend that at least some teacher focus groups occur without school leaders present.

- **Community focus groups.** Families and community members are true partners in our work to improve literacy for students, but too often their voices are overlooked. By engaging families and community members in the materials selection process districts can gather input about what the community currently values about literacy instruction and what improvements families would like to see. Though LIFT districts didn't include this in their process, we recommend carefully structuring community and family focus groups so that the questions and format leverage the expertise of the attendees, which will vary from the expertise teachers or leaders bring to the table. These conversations are also valuable opportunities to invest families and community members in the vision for excellent literacy instruction so that support extends beyond the formal school day.
- **Student focus groups.** As the intended beneficiaries of improved instructional materials, we shouldn't overlook the perspective of students. Consider ways to connect with students to hear about their current experiences with reading instruction and ask what is going well and what could be improved, particularly when thinking about the experiences of older students who have nuanced perspectives on what they are learning. Though LIFT districts did not use this process when selecting materials for early elementary literacy, it is strongly recommended to include the student perspective whenever it is appropriate and possible.

LIFT leaders also emphasized that this process should be transparent and time bound. Leaders should begin this process with a clear plan for when and how to solicit feedback, how feedback can be provided, who will make the final decision, and the timeline on which decisions will be made.



## Budget & Cost Considerations

Budget and availability of resources is undeniably a factor in choosing instructional materials. While Open Education Resources (OER) are a promising development in expanding the availability of resources for educators, LIFT member districts are quick to debunk the myth that any OER materials are “free.” Even when access to materials is free, implementing the resources may require purchasing texts, printing teachers’ editions, and printing or purchasing student materials. For more detail about the costs of the materials listed above see the [Curriculum Overview Document](#).

LIFT leaders also call out that budgeting for materials is not a one-time process. Materials have varied costs that are a combination of one-time costs, annual replacements, and multi-year replacements. For example, trade books and novels may only have to be replaced every 5–6 years depending on condition, while student workbooks must be re-purchased or reprinted annually because they are consumed by students over the course of the school year. Forecasting these costs over a multi-year materials implementation cycle is critical for long-term implementation success.



LIFT member districts managed costs in several ways depending on local context. Many districts funded the pilot through local sources, tapping into resources dedicated to early literacy resources for teachers. To leverage local funds, some districts audited the landscape of resources targeting ELA instruction to look for any duplication of effort or unneeded expenditures, involving teachers in the conversation about which resources were most effective for students. Other districts sought community support to fund the pilot, including conversations with local foundations and supporters of public education.

### *Top 5 Recommendations for Selecting Materials*

1. Consult external resources when evaluating materials, but also consider the unique context of your district.
2. Consult various stakeholders at each phase of the selection process.
3. Ensure that your materials selection process is transparent and time bound.
4. Consider the state adoption context and requirements for materials implementation.
5. Consider your budget. Evaluate requests for additional or supplemental materials and only invest in requests that allow for implementation of instructional materials with fidelity.

## Compatibility with Existing Materials

Once new materials were selected, LIFT member districts found it critical to evaluate all existing instructional resources (supplemental resources, tech programs, etc.) in the district to determine if they were compatible with new instructional materials. When they were not, district leaders communicated that to school leaders and teachers and physically removed old materials from schools. This process helped alleviate the inclination to combine programs or sets of materials and communicated to teachers and leaders the stake that the district placed in the new materials.

This also applies to the purchase of new instructional supplies. As districts are fielding requests for supplies or new initiatives, district leaders should consider whether those requests will create tension with strong implementation of instructional materials, and only fund those requests that allow for implementation with fidelity.

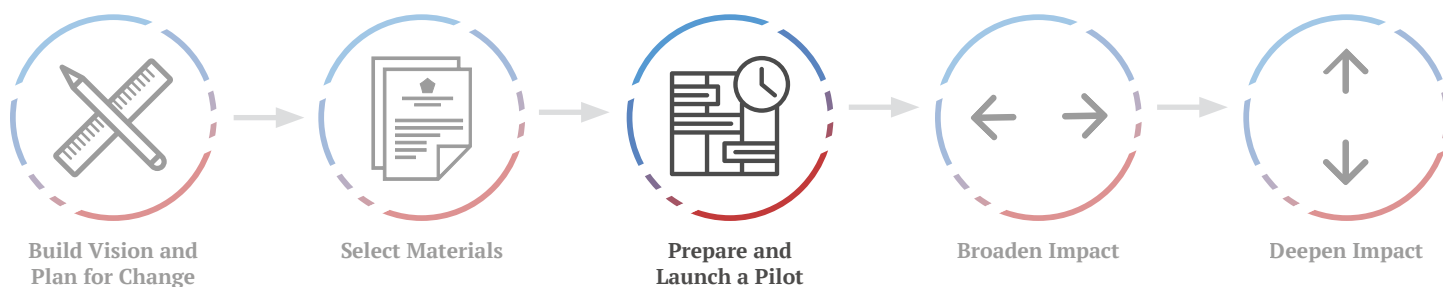
“The kids think the topics are neat. While we were studying healthy eating, they checked out books about different parts of their bodies. It opened up a whole world of information they weren’t even aware of.”

—Trina Smith, teacher  
Lauderdale County Schools

## Resources

- [Student Achievement Partners’ Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool \(IMET\)](#)
- [Louisiana Department of Education Instructional Materials Reviews](#)
- [Edreports.org](#)
- [Curriculum Overview Document](#)
- [Overview Core Knowledge Language Arts](#)
- [Overview EL Curriculum](#)
- [EL Trade Book Cost Estimate](#)
- [Overview Wit & Wisdom](#)
- [Core Knowledge Curriculum Website](#)
- [EL Curriculum Website](#)
- [Wit & Wisdom Curriculum Website](#)

## CHAPTER 4: PREPARING AND LAUNCHING A PILOT



### Primary Considerations for Preparing and Launching a Pilot

LIFT member districts have had success in starting small and piloting new instructional materials in a subset of classrooms before rolling out new materials to the entire district. Pilots have allowed for stronger change management and building a consensus on the right approach to improving literacy instruction before committing significant district resources and effort. Put another way, pilot models support districts to “go slow to go fast”. While changes in student achievement are paramount to all districts, we’ve learned that slower roll outs can often support sustainable change in the long-run.

Pilot models allow districts to provide pilot teachers with additional support during early implementation, identify and address potential challenges with materials before they are in front of all teachers in the district, and help leaders gain familiarity with materials before they are expected to support a full roster of teachers implementing the materials. Pilot models also allow teachers to become early experts of materials so that they can support additional teachers when materials roll out school- or district-wide. Finally, pilots allow districts to determine if and how materials will benefit students, which is the ultimate outcome.





# How LIFT Approached Preparing and Launching Pilots

## Choosing a Pilot Model

LIFT member districts have varied their pilot models based on their unique contexts. The three models below have proven to be successful, although the specific choice varies depending on district context.

Model	Pros	Cons
<b>Whole-school pilots.</b> One to three schools are picked to implement the new instructional materials with all teachers in certain grade levels (usually K–2). These schools generally represent a subset of all schools (e.g., 3 of 12 elementary schools or 2 of 6 primary schools).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School leaders support efforts across all grade levels, changing schedules, adjusting PLC/teacher work times, and investing in learning materials.</li><li>• School leaders are able to be closely involved in leading the work of implementation.</li><li>• Teachers have partners to support their implementation work.</li><li>• In districts that try two sets of instructional materials, schools can see the impact of those materials on scheduling, teacher effort, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pilot schools are generally the most invested in change efforts, meaning that full roll out the following year might include less-invested teachers and leaders.</li><li>• Both higher- and lower-performing teachers, as well as invested and less-invested teachers, are asked to use materials, potentially leading to weaker implementation.</li></ul>
<b>Scattered teacher pilots.</b> A handful of high-performing (and interested) teachers across all schools are asked to pilot materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only strong teachers that are able to give high-quality feedback are asked to pilot materials.</li><li>• Teachers only join the pilot program if they believe in the change effort.</li><li>• When larger roll outs of the materials begin after the pilot phase, there is already a teacher or two in every building who has experience with the materials.</li><li>• Non-pilot teachers begin to hear about and see materials through word-of-mouth within their schools.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is no dedicated “cohort” of pilot teachers with principals or instructional leaders dedicated to supporting them.</li><li>• Teachers do not always have partners in their schools teaching the same materials on the same grade level.</li></ul>
<b>Whole-district pilots.</b> District and school leaders (and teachers) elected to pilot across all K–2 classrooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Because everyone is involved in pilots, districts can alter schedules or redeploy resources as needed to support the work.</li><li>• No long-term roll out necessary if materials pilots are successful.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is a possibility that early implementation may go poorly and jeopardize long-term efforts.</li><li>• In larger districts, efforts may be diluted and not end up having strong support or implementation from all participants.</li></ul>



## Leading a Pilot

One common attribute of the pilots in the LIFT network was the level of prioritization placed on the pilots in a landscape of many initiatives and changes. This focus stemmed from the common, specific problem of practice in the LIFT Network on early literacy, and the work of LIFT member districts in narrowing their focus to get at the root cause of the instructional challenges they were facing. In other words, LIFT member districts were deeply invested in the strategy of the materials pilot as the best bet to move forward, and this investment translated into sustained attention, resources, and effort around the pilots.

Much of the work of the pilot was owned by each district’s “strategy lead.” The strategy lead was chosen by the district superintendent to act as the point person for pilot implementation. The strategy lead should be in a position of responsibility for improving early literacy and should serve as the point person on work such as organizing instructional reviews, monitoring progress, supporting pilots, etc. This person might be the district supervisor for K-5 or for ELA/literacy, a lead instructional coach, or a school-based leader, depending on the pilot model and district staff structure. **Superintendents have reflected that having a clear ownership plan and a single point person is key to pilot success.**



## Onboarding & Orienting Staff Members to Pilots

Once a pilot model is chosen, district leaders carefully supported teachers and leaders as they learned about and tried new resources. LIFT member districts found three steps to be critical here:

- **Strong “onboarding” is essential.** Teachers benefited from having a brief introduction to materials at the end of the semester before they started using them (i.e., in May before summer break or in December before winter break). Teachers then generally needed a more comprehensive introduction as they began teaching.
  - *Note: While teachers needed an introduction to the materials, it wasn’t as useful to support teachers in learning the theory and research behind the materials in the first few weeks of school, for two reasons. First, teachers were concerned with other priorities during the first few weeks of school or the semester. And second, teachers better understood the theory and research once they had a handle on how the materials were laid out and how they were used, being able to connect components of the materials to strong theory.*
  - Leaders benefited from onboarding before teachers, so that they could reinforce the rationale and roll out plan for teachers. Leaders often benefited from visiting other districts to see implementation in action and having time to discuss implications of the materials pilot on school systems (such as scheduling, observations, and other routines).



- **Teachers and leaders need to be supported throughout implementation.** Teachers and leaders need structures in place to discuss implementation and common challenges, as well as celebrate early wins. In one of our districts, pilot teachers came together for a half-release day each month under the supervision of pilot principals and Curriculum & Instruction team staff. During this time, they discussed logistical aspects of implementation, addressed common challenges that required district-level changes (such as scheduling or need for additional resources), began internalizing theory and research behind the materials (see Chapter 5 for more information), and discussed where their learning and implementation efforts needed to go next. This group then became mentors for new teachers when pilots expanded in the second year of implementation.
- **Strong feedback loops are necessary to support pilot teachers and leaders and ensure that their voices are heard.** LIFT member districts engaged in several methods of gathering feedback from teachers and leaders:
  - Monthly classroom walkthroughs with coaches, leaders, and TNTF staff
  - Annual or semester surveys of teachers and leaders (see Chapter 7 for details)
  - Monthly half-release days or planning sessions with teachers
  - Online communities, such as Google Groups, where teachers can post materials, highlights, videos, etc.
  - Focus groups of teachers and leaders to share successes and areas for growth, along with feedback on the implementation process





## Teacher Training and Support

LIFT member districts found that supporting teachers in the implementation of materials during the pilot year is critical. While some knowledge of the standards and shifts is important, most districts focused work on building teacher knowledge of materials with the idea that teachers will deepen their understanding of the standards through closer analysis of strongly aligned materials. In other words, strong use of the materials actually helps to build the vision for teachers.

During the pilot year, LIFT member districts focused teacher development on a few key goals:

- Understanding the instructional shifts called for by Tennessee’s rigorous standards.
- Understanding the design principles of the new instructional materials.
- Understanding how the instructional materials are organized (i.e., What physical materials will be used?)
- Establishing regular routines and engaging in consistent protocols for unit and lesson preparation

The following table describes types of successful professional learning experiences during the pilot phase, and provides some examples of trainings that have been used in LIFT member districts:

Focus Area	Description & Rationale	Examples
<b>Introduction to New Materials</b>	Successful introduction to new materials should include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rationale for new materials</li> <li>2. Understanding of resources design</li> <li>3. Tactical information, including materials organization, access to paper copies vs. digital copies, etc.</li> <li>4. Building a vision for implementation, such as seeing a model lesson and the start of unit planning</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">CKLA K-2 Listening &amp; Learning Strand</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">EL Modules</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Wit &amp; Wisdom</a></li> </ul>
<b>Unit Prep</b>	Implementing a unit preparation protocol allows teachers to focus on the knowledge that students should develop over the course of an entire unit and understand the arc of learning that students will experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">CKLA Unit Preparation Protocol</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">EL Module Preparation Protocol</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">W&amp;W Module Preparation Protocol</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">W&amp;W Book Preparation Protocol</a></li> </ul>
<b>Lesson Prep</b>	Lesson preparation protocols give teachers a structured way to internalize and customize a lesson prior to implementing it with their students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">CKLA Daily Lesson Preparation Protocol</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">W&amp;W Daily Lesson Preparation Protocol</a></li> </ul>
<b>Foundational Skills Introduction</b>	Instruction on Foundational Skills builds teacher understanding of student progression of learning. It also builds understanding of excellent instruction as defined by the IPG.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Sample Foundational Skills Training</a></li> </ul>

## Managing Change by Building Investment

In the spirit of “go slow to go fast,” LIFT member districts reflected that piloting new materials provided a stronger platform for building investment in the need for change and the strategy to achieve it.

Within pilot programs, district leaders made it clear teachers were not expected to master new instructional materials in the first few weeks or months; instead, they allowed for “messiness” and gave teachers time to really understand the materials before being held accountable for results. This space for trial and error was accompanied by meaningful, intentional support. The slower roll out built a cadre of teachers who were invested in the materials and had built their knowledge and skill to use them well, an asset that LIFT member districts lean on when scaling up the materials to other teachers. As non-pilot teachers heard about and saw the materials in action, they became excited about trying them themselves. Pilot teacher voice was also key in this effort—teachers heard from their peers that these materials supported them to teach great lessons for their kids.

LIFT member districts also found that celebrating early wins and recognizing the incredible work of teachers was pivotal in making this work a success. In many districts, teachers engaged in pilot programs were celebrated as being on the forefront of the work. District administrators framed the introduction of new materials positively by telling teachers that

these materials would allow them to spend extra time planning to meet the needs of their students rather than finding instructional materials. District leaders also celebrated examples of improved instruction, shared data with teachers, highlighted exciting classroom visits, and shared funny and touching anecdotes that demonstrated student growth.

“Unless teachers are the owners, these new standards will fail like all those before. But to make them owners, we must do more than invite a few token teachers to the next standards workshop. Teachers themselves must become the leaders when implementing the standards. Those who have mastered the ideas and the content must mentor their peers. Those who are challenged must work with their colleagues; those who are indifferent must become engaged; those who are cynical must be won over. Teachers must shape both the standards and assessments as educational tools rather than data-gathering instruments.”

*John Ewing, “Give the Standards Back to Teachers”*



## Additional Considerations and Learnings

Districts with strong pilot models found:

- **Teachers must be invested.** Teachers become the biggest advocates for the work, convincing other teachers, other school leaders, and sometimes parents and school board members that this is the right place to focus and the right way to spend district resources. That being said, leaders must communicate firm and clear expectations for use in order to ensure consistent implementation with fidelity. Leaders in LIFT used phrases like “condition of your employment” when communicating the expectations for use of materials.
- **Create a culture of error.** Leaders can create “safe spaces” where it is not only alright to fail—or at least not get everything right the first time—but encouraged. Successful districts said explicitly to teachers, “This is a pilot, and we know it’s not going to be perfect on Day One. Try it, tell us how it’s going, and we’ll adjust course if need be.”
- **Pilot teacher input is critical before rolling out materials to larger numbers of teachers.** Together, teachers and leaders have fine-tuned implementation efforts before rolling out to larger numbers of teachers. What does onboarding need to look like for teachers new to instructional materials? What supports do they need in their first few weeks in the classroom? What should the scope of professional learning look like after those first few weeks? What are the strong points of the instructional materials, and what might need to be supplemented or augmented?
- **Thinking through logistics is critical.** The logistics and systems implications of a materials pilot should be cared for early and often. For example, districts reported examining budget implications for multiple years before making purchasing decisions (rather than only considering purchasing as a one-time event). Principals and districts worked together to create distribution plans for new materials and involved pilot teachers in developing classroom systems to care for and maintain the new resources so that they will be a lasting resource for the district. It is important to know which resources are consumable and must be replaced

### *Top 5 Recommendations for Planning and Executing a Pilot*

1. Define the purpose of your pilot and be clear with stakeholders about that purpose.
2. “Go slow to go fast”—plan an intentional pilot which can then inform a larger roll-out of materials in subsequent years.
3. Establish clear and firm expectations for use of materials during the pilot year and beyond.
4. Give pilot leaders and teachers the opportunity to provide feedback on materials throughout the pilot year.
5. Build investment in materials by celebrating early wins and recognizing the work of teachers.

annually (i.e., student workbooks) and which are one-time or long-term purchases (i.e., class novel sets).

- **Consider the messaging of your pilot before the pilot begins.** Some districts have warned about using the language of “materials pilot” broadly, as they have received feedback that “pilot” efforts are sometimes seen as one-year initiatives that will not continue. To ensure that teachers understand that a year-one pilot is the beginning of a long-term initiative, these districts have recommended using terminology such as “early implementors” in lieu of “pilot” teachers or schools.

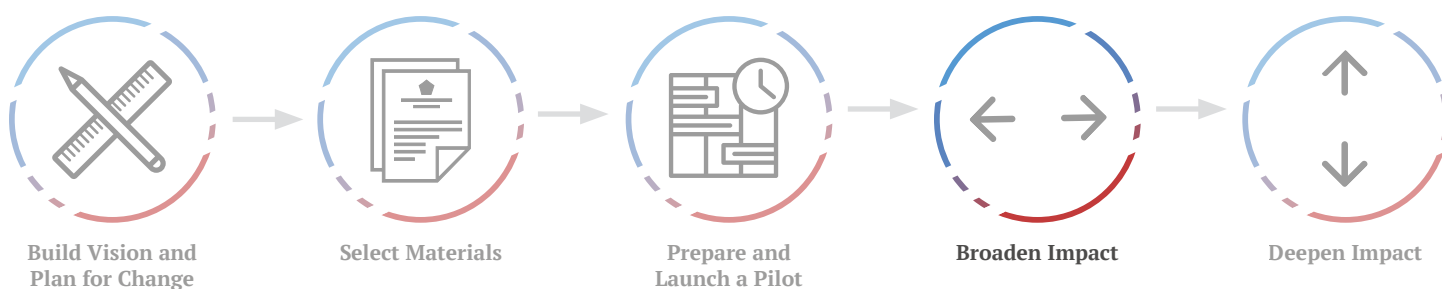
Additionally, when choosing materials, LIFT member districts found that starting with K-2 was critical to successful implementation. By starting materials implementation with early elementary students, students are set up for success to experience more rigorous materials in higher grade levels. Some districts may choose to pilot materials with upper elementary grade levels in certain classrooms with high performing teachers; however, for full roll outs, we recommend piloting in early elementary grades.



“In the past when I would look at the writing standards, I said ‘How do you get first graders to do all this? It’s so hard.’ But this approach scaffolds learning so that every student can meet the standards. It’s allowed me to do what I do better.”

—Rebecca Rezny, teacher  
Putnam County Schools

## CHAPTER 5: BROADENING IMPACT



### Primary Considerations for Broadening Impact

Greater improvement in instructional practice occurs when conditions for success are intentionally developed prior to implementation at scale. Simply put, this is the advantage of piloting the materials. As described throughout the Guidebook, the pilot not only allowed teachers to strengthen their implementation, but districts and leaders to get smarter about leading the change. Districts often cite this opportunity to prime the conditions prior to implementation at scale as critical to the success and sustainability of their efforts. To be clear, piloting is not the only way to build conditions for success with strong materials. Other paths could include capacity building and systems alignments prior to working with strong materials. However, LIFT member districts routinely mention that there is really no

substitute for trying out the materials, and ideally, that trial is done in a manageable scale so that learning and adjustment can happen quickly.

Given the promising progress in the materials pilots, most LIFT member districts decided to scale the work with new materials to more or all classrooms in their districts. The network articulated the next step of the work as seeking both depth and breadth in the work to improve early literacy instruction. This chapter will focus on how the network sought to expand the breadth of the work:

- First, the network expanded the use of ELA instructional materials that support reading/listening comprehension to additional K-2 classrooms in each district. Most districts are currently using the materials in all K-2 classrooms.
- Second, the network expanded the use of ELA instructional materials that support other elements of the K-2 literacy block, including foundational skills, writing instruction, and time for a volume of reading by students.
- Finally, the network expanded similar work to additional grade levels, as some districts piloted instructional materials in grades 3-5. As of June 2019, many districts are using materials in all grade levels, K-5.

In scaling the use of high-quality instructional materials to more teachers and additional grades, LIFT member districts have leveraged many of the same lessons and strategies from the pilot to larger scale implementation. However, new lessons have emerged that speak to the nuance and unique challenges of broadening impact.



# How LIFT Approached Broadening Impact

## Create a Clear Process for Expansion

LIFT leaders emphasized that the logistics for expanding a pilot matter, and that it is essential to have clear roles and responsibilities when considering expansion. One person should own timeline and logistics, and should create a strong plan that answers questions such as:

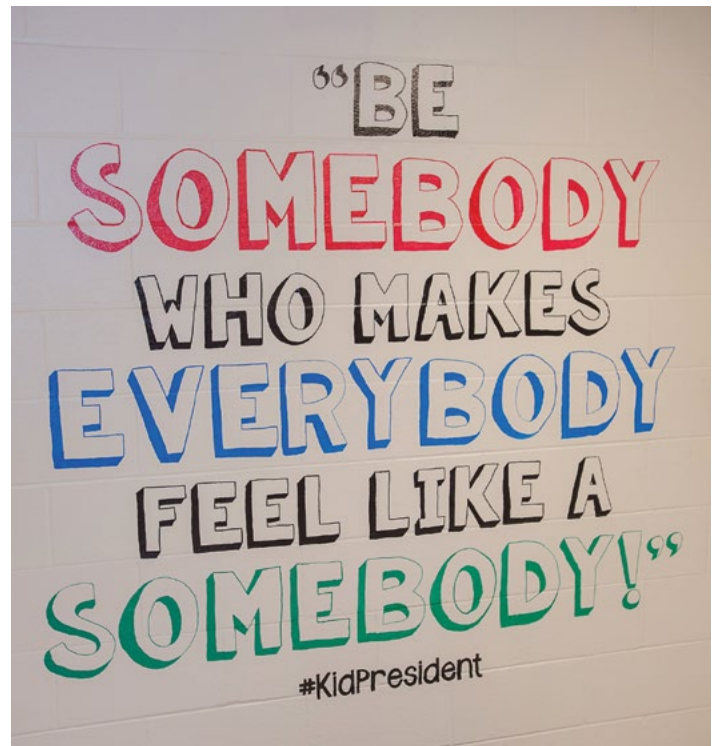
- When will materials be ordered? Where will they be delivered? How will they be distributed?
- How will new leaders be trained? New teachers?
- How will implementation be monitored in the first days of the school year?
- How will various staff members be utilized?

## Onboarding New Teachers to Instructional Materials

LIFT member districts leveraged pilot teachers to make the case for expansion of the work to teachers new to the materials. By facilitating peer-to-peer conversations about the instructional materials, and creating space for peer observations, LIFT districts invested teachers in the value of the materials prior to beginning wide-scale implementation.

### *Top 5 Recommendations for Broadening Impact*

1. Use your pilot teachers and leaders to invest teachers and leaders new to the materials.
2. Create clear roles and responsibilities related to expansion of materials usage.
3. Pay attention to and carefully plan for the logistics of expansion.
4. Provide differentiated teacher support for teachers both new and veteran to the materials.
5. Stay focused on the desired outcomes of implementation, and work through bumps in the road with a strategic approach.



## Teacher Training and Support

Given that teachers were now in different phases of materials implementation, LIFT member districts found it necessary to differentiate teacher training and support to meet teachers where they were in the implementation process. Teachers new to the materials continued to receive training similar to the experiences described in Chapter 5, with LIFT leaders, coaches, and pilot teachers taking on many of the training responsibilities in an effort to continue to deepen their own understanding of the materials and to model investment in the materials to the new implementors.

Meanwhile, those teachers who had participated in the pilot received ongoing professional learning designed to strengthen their implementation of materials with a focus on strengthening performance on Core Actions 2 and 3 on the IPG. [Examples of these trainings](#) can be found in Chapter 6. Some districts also elevated these teachers to teacher leadership roles and empowered them to lead learning for their peers as pilots expanded to full implementation.



## Additional Lessons Learned

After three full years of work with the materials pilots and expansion, LIFT member districts shared these lessons related to broadening impact:

- **Ensuring all students become strong readers will require sustained attention and deliberate strategy along the “vertical spine.”** While the instructional improvement LIFT member districts have seen is exciting, leaders know they are far from the finish line of truly transforming results for students. Districts reflect that having individuals with the skills, resources, and motivation to lead the change will be crucial for long-term success, and that these individuals need to exist in each layer of the system. LIFT member districts are continuing to foster widespread ownership of the work and maintain an intentional focus, particularly in the landscape of many competing priorities.
- **Creating and sustaining momentum requires focused and relentless district leadership.** While widespread ownership is key, LIFT member districts also reflect that there is no substitute for relentless and focused leadership at the center of the work. Districts have seen the most progress when the central office team is united and clear in their charge, taking a positive stance to engaging all stakeholders while fulfilling their role of setting direction and clearing obstacles.
- **Stay the course and do not be discouraged.** This work is challenging, and it is important to always remember the end game: better outcomes for students in your schools. It is critical to balance your sense of urgency with strategy, and to address bumps in the road as temporary challenges rather than unsurpassable challenges that cannot be overcome.



“Some of the texts my fourth graders are exposed to now in geology are things I read in college. They have to really dig deep into the text to get meaning from it. Exposure to challenging texts really pushes them to get the content.”

—Mallory Matthews, teacher  
Putnam County Schools

## CHAPTER 6: DEEPENING IMPACT



### Primary Considerations for Deepening Impact

Once districts have reached full materials implementation, focus must shift to deepening of the impact that materials can have on student outcomes. This chapter outlines several approaches and strategies LIFT member districts have pursued as they have worked to ensure excellent ELA instruction and outcomes for all students in their districts.

### Pursuing an Integrated Academic Strategy

As articulated by the “aligned systems and supports” portion of the LIFT theory of action, the network approaches the work with a commitment to thinking about the system as a whole. In planning the materials pilots, LIFT member districts recognized that any change to the materials teachers use would have an impact on other elements of the district academic system.

The Academic Strategy Levers diagram on the following page outlines common components of a district academic system and demonstrates how interrelated each are to one another.

LIFT member districts routinely revisit the Academic Strategy Levers in their planning and reflection. Even though one element might be a short-term focus, the other elements are never out of view. For example, when considering a pilot of new instructional materials, districts consulted the “levers” to ask themselves what impact the materials would have on each component of the system. A district might consider:

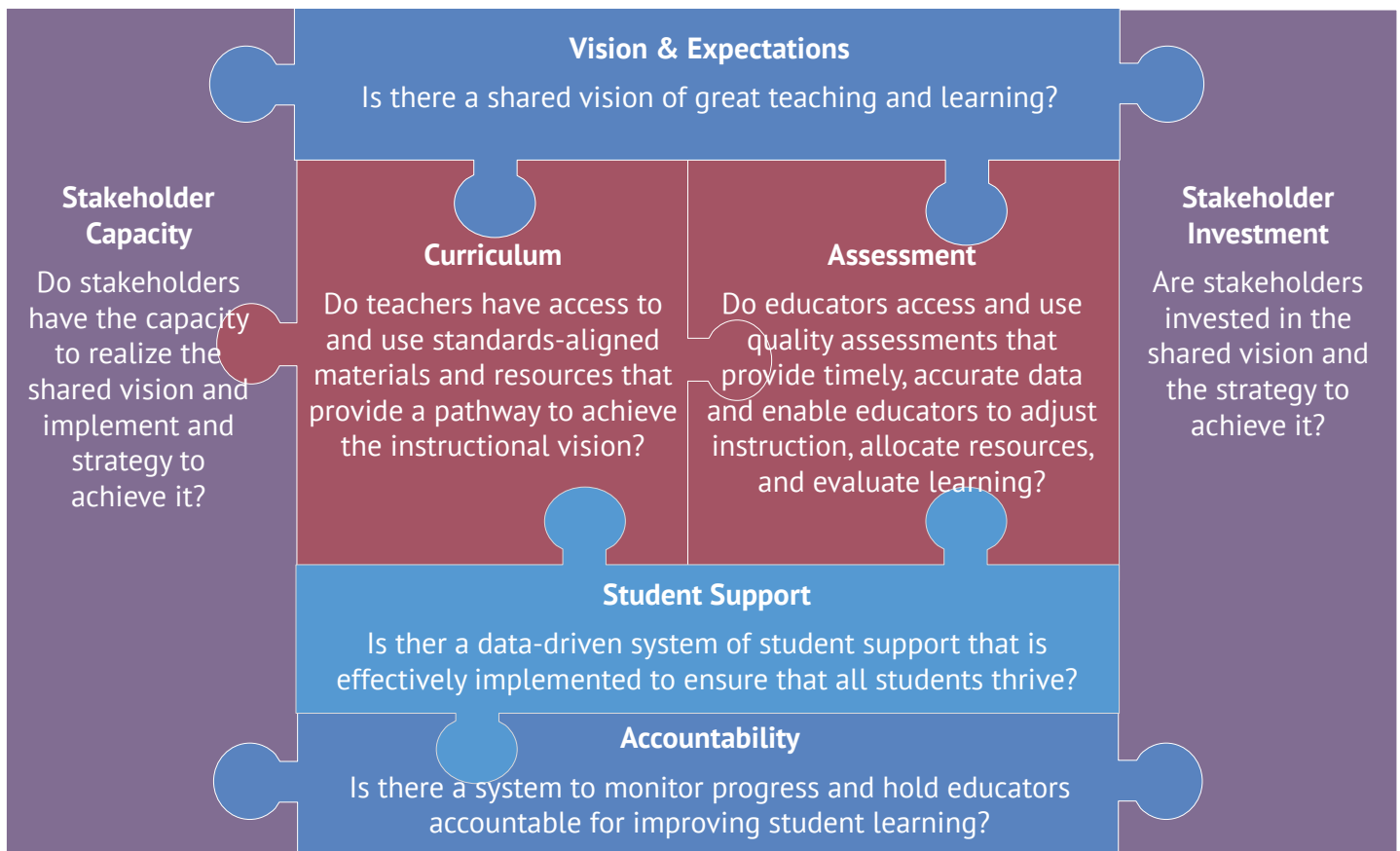
- Do we have a **vision** for strong instruction? How will our vision shape the materials we select?
- What **capacity** will our **teachers and leaders** need to implement the new materials?
- How can we build **investment** in the new materials, including in **educators, families, and community members**?
- What implications will new materials have on our **assessment strategy** in the district? Are there assessments we need to stop using? Are there gaps in our **assessment landscape**?
- How will new instructional materials align with our district’s approach to **supporting all students**, including through RTI?
- How will the system be **accountable** for taking on this change? How will we know that the changes are leading to improvements? What will we measure and when will we discuss our results to refine our strategy?

This list of questions is not exhaustive but demonstrates the type of thinking LIFT member districts have found is essential to building a coherent strategy.





## Academic Strategy Levers



While planning for coherence on the front end of any change is critical, these questions are iterative and attending to alignment across the system is an ongoing effort. Without attention to building a coherent academic strategy, we often hear about initiative fatigue and the challenge of competing initiatives. This phenomenon is often captured as “doing everything but nothing well.” In addition to the high-level lessons shared above, LIFT member districts have also shared more specific lessons learned about obstacles they’ve encountered along the way that are related to the academic strategy levers:

- **Accountability:** Some teachers involved in pilot programs were concerned about whether the teacher observation rubric would align with the vision for instruction in the pilot materials. Many LIFT member districts pulled evaluators together to analyze sample lessons and lesson videos from the instructional materials through the lens of the evaluation rubric in order to ensure evaluators were aligned in their vision for instruction. Other districts created guidance on the alignment of teacher evaluation and instructional materials for teachers.
- **Assessment:** In many districts, schools used standards-based report cards aligned with curriculum-at-a-glance documents that were different than piloted materials. Several districts are re-evaluating report card and grading policies to align with materials.
- **Stakeholder Capacity & Investment:** Districts acknowledged that the pilot materials required more and different knowledge of teachers in order to implement them well. To provide more support and time for teacher collaboration some schools revised PLC expectations and schedules, ensuring that grade-level peers had dedicated time to dig into the materials together to prepare for and reflect on instruction. For example, Trousdale County offers periodic early release days in order to provide teachers with additional collaboration time. The district has also selected grade-level leads who help guide collaboration time, so it is used effectively.
- **Stakeholder Capacity & Investment:** Different materials require different structures and amounts of time in dedicated literacy blocks. When piloting materials, not all districts had a literacy block that worked for those materials. Districts either created guidance about how to use the pilot materials in the existing literacy



block or worked with schools to redesign the literacy schedule.

- **Student Support:** While the pilot materials provide many resources to teachers, many districts recognized that teachers were supplementing the materials with PowerPoints or supporting centers materials. Some districts, including Sullivan County, pulled teachers together to develop strong supplemental materials, supporting them in the process to better understand the materials and to produce resources that maintained the rigor of the content. This strategy was particularly important in districts that opted not to purchase some available supplements to the materials as a cost-saving strategy.
- **Student Support:** Many districts positioned the materials pilot as one strategy in their overall vision and strategy for literacy, making sure to draw explicit connections between core instruction and intervention. Lauderdale County designed an innovative schedule for elementary students that supports flexible grouping for students to address foundational skills instruction and intervention while still ensuring all students access high-quality read aloud lessons on a daily basis.

Many districts approached these challenges head on, acknowledging that all components of an academic system might not align at first and working proactively to address them. However, nearly all LIFT member district reflected that, in hindsight, additional attention to these connections and proactive planning could have improved implementation, and this is an area of focus moving forward.

# Managing Change

In sharing lessons from early work, LIFT member districts emphasized that “change management” is critical to short-term and long-term success of efforts to improve early literacy.

LIFT defines change management as a consciously planned set of activities that engages and invests stakeholders (teachers, coaches, students, parents) in decision-making, communicates rationale and direction, and continuously gathers feedback throughout the change process. It also meant

approaching planning with an eye for “backward design”—so that immediate next steps are intentionally positioned within the overall trajectory of change in the district.

The LIFT network has engaged with the [Concerns-Based Adoption Model](#) (CBAM Model) to support thinking and conversation about intentional change management. In particular, LIFT member districts have used the Levels of Use (included in the following table) to plan for a successful change.

## Concerns-Based Adoption Model—Levels of Use

This chart describes what a person is actually doing in relation to implementing an innovation.

Stage	Name	Description
0	Non-use	The person is not using or not addressing the innovation.
1	Orientation	The person is acquiring information about the innovation through articles, information meetings, workshops, etc.
2	Preparation	The person is gathering the needed information, materials, and resources, as well as planning to begin use.
<b>Decision Point</b> The individual establishes a date and time to begin use.		
3	Mechanical	The person is implementing the innovation. Initially, a step-by-step process is carefully followed, there are occasional instances of failure, and participants spend a significant amount of time planning and gathering materials and resources.
4	Routine	The person has become more comfortable with the innovation and is able to implement without the major time commitments required during the Mechanical Stage. The focus is on the comfort level of the individual, not the impact on the students.
<b>Decision Point</b> The focus shifts from the individual to the students.		
4b	Refinement	The person begins to plan and implement with a clear focus on improving the impact on students.
5	Integration	The person begins to actively seek out and collaborate with others on ways to improve the impact of the innovation on students.
6	Renewal	The innovation has become “internalized” within the person’s instructional repertoire. The individual begins to seek out alternate ideas, strategies, methods, and innovations. Note: At this point, the change process begins again.



“By definition, improvement requires change. Unfortunately in education, change too often fails to bring improvement—even when smart people are working on the right problems and drawing on cutting-edge ideas.

...Propelled by a sense of urgency, educational leaders often plunge headlong into large-scale implementation. Invariably, the outcomes fall short of expectations. Enthusiasm wanes, and the field moves on to the next idea without understanding why the last one failed.

Such is the pattern of change in public education: implement fast, learn slow, and burn good will as you go.”

*Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better*

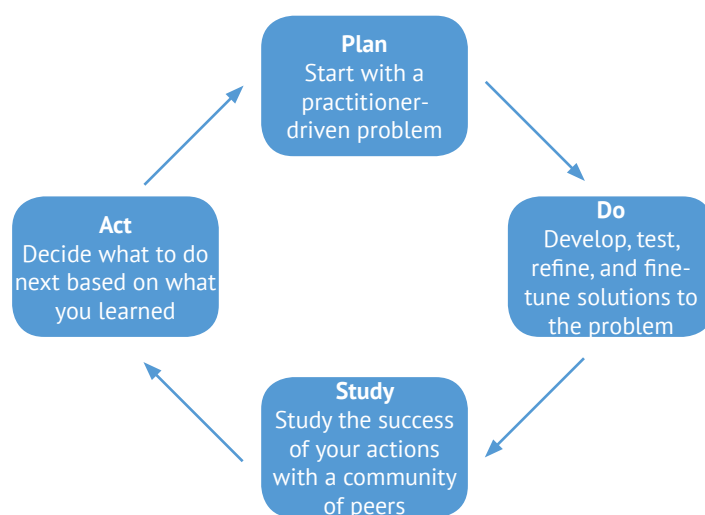
## Improvement Science: Using a Strategic Approach to Refine Practice

LIFT member districts are continually seeking methods that have the best chance of improving student learning. With this priority in mind, LIFT districts approach the refinement of their work with an “improvement science” lens:

1. What, specifically, is the problem we are trying to solve?
2. What change might we introduce and why?
3. How will we know that change is actually an improvement?

The LIFT network used these guiding questions to narrow in on the network’s initial focus and provide direction for the shared work and continues to refer to them to study and improve its efforts.

In addition to the three questions shared above, the LIFT network has also leveraged the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) framework, shown here.



Using this cycle, each district regularly specifies a challenge to focus on within their implementation and strategy, designs a change to improve that problem, studies the success of the action, and uses the gathered information to inform next steps.

Given their similar contexts, LIFT member districts often focus on similar challenges and leverage the knowledge of the network to gather ideas for what action to take, how to best implement the change, and how to study the results of the change. Many of the lessons and resources shared throughout the guidebook are products of the PDSA cycles LIFT member districts complete.

The CBAM Levels of Use tool helps clarify a progression teachers and leaders experience during a change initiative. The model also posits that a change must persist through all the stages to result in the intended improvement. With this caution in mind, LIFT member districts consider how to support stakeholders through each stage, so that the change doesn’t lose momentum before reaching its intended outcome.

This understanding of change management influences each district’s choices for how to pilot instructional materials, how to engage stakeholders in choosing and implementing the new materials, how to build capacity throughout the system, and how to communicate successes along the way, among other planning considerations.

**LIFT member districts emphasize that planning for change management is critical.** This is not a task that will simply take care of itself. Planning must be deliberate, ongoing, and include evaluations of efficacy. For example, in Fayette County, the superintendent and his cabinet stepped back on a regular basis last year to evaluate the progress of the pilot program, identifying key areas for support and discussing teacher sentiment and buy-in. In Loudon County, administrators laid out a clear plan for teacher and school leader input from the beginning of the year, including focus groups and intentional opportunities for teacher and leader input on the direction of the district plan.

# Teacher Professional Learning through the Lens of Change Management

Resource-specific professional learning experiences should be strategically sequenced to best support teachers and leaders. LIFT member districts have not only seen the value of resource-specific professional learning, but capacity building that attends to the specific needs of teachers as they engage with the larger trajectory of change management.

To address this ongoing process of change management, LIFT districts have structured support of teachers around three phases of professional learning that effectively build teacher capacity to implement high-quality instructional materials, outlined in detail in the [Phases of Curriculum-Focused Teacher Professional Learning](#):

	If we support teachers to...	Then teachers will...
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish regular routines and engage in consistent protocols for unit and lesson preparation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver units and lessons with fidelity – as written and intended by the curriculum.</li> <li>Build trust and confidence in the unit and lesson materials.</li> <li>Begin to identify what works and what doesn't for them and their students.</li> </ul>
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deepen and refine their unit and lesson preparation with a focus on the desired results for learners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver units and lessons with integrity—maintaining the intent of the curriculum but making strategic adjustments and decisions to improve the impact on students.</li> </ul>
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish regular routines and engage in consistent protocols for reflection on student learning; and</li> <li>Develop a toolkit of cognitive routines to support student ownership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empower students to own their learning; and then students will...</li> <li>Achieve the desired results for learners intended by the curriculum.</li> </ul>

Examples of this type of learning include:

Phase of Learning	Focus Area	Description & Rationale	Examples
Phase 1	<b>Introduction to New Materials</b>	<p>Successful introduction to new materials should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationale for new materials</li> <li>• Understanding of resources design</li> <li>• Tactical information, including materials organization, access to paper copies vs. digital copies, etc.</li> <li>• Building a vision for implementation, such as seeing a model lesson and the start of unit planning</li> </ul>	<a href="#">CKLA K-2 Listening &amp; Learning Strand</a> <a href="#">CKLA Skills Strand</a> <a href="#">EL Modules</a> <a href="#">Wit &amp; Wisdom</a>
Phase 1	<b>Unit Prep</b>	Implementing a unit preparation protocol allows teachers to focus on the knowledge that students should develop over the course of an entire unit and understand the arc of learning that students will experience.	<a href="#">CKLA Unit Preparation Protocol</a> <a href="#">EL Module Preparation Protocol</a> <a href="#">W&amp;W Module Preparation Protocol</a> <a href="#">W&amp;W Book Preparation Protocol</a>
Phase 1 & 2	<b>Lesson Prep</b>	Lesson preparation protocols give teachers a structured way to internalize and customize a lesson prior to implementing it with their students.	<a href="#">CKLA Daily Lesson Preparation Protocol</a> <a href="#">W&amp;W Daily Lesson Preparation Protocol</a>
Phase 1	<b>Foundational Skills Instruction</b>	Instruction on Foundational Skills builds teacher understanding of student progression of learning. It also builds understanding of excellent instruction as defined by the IPG.	<a href="#">Sample Foundational Skills Training</a>
Phase 2	<b>Tasks &amp; Writing</b>	Analyzing tasks and writing helps teachers better understand the tasks in the materials, and how they represent the standards and shifts. It also helps to see the alignment between end of unit tasks/assessments, daily tasks, and question sequences. If needed, it also gives teachers the opportunity to make adjustments to tasks.	<a href="#">Examining Tasks Session Plan</a>
Phase 2	<b>Student Work Analysis</b>	By analyzing student work, teachers are able to diagnose where student misunderstanding breaks down and create or modify plans for re-teaching and reinforcing content.	<a href="#">Student Work Analysis Protocol</a>



# Deepening Knowledge and Skill Among Leaders, Teachers, and Coaches

As previously stated, it is critical for district leaders, school leaders, and teachers to have deep understanding of the research behind, intent of, and technical aspects of the materials. However, different types of knowledge and skill are necessary at each level of the system:



- District leaders** need *deep familiarity with the design and intent of the curriculum* so that they can be responsive and make informed decisions when people have questions and/or push back. These are the leaders who are making decisions about budget and navigating politics, and they need to be able to strongly advocate for the materials. For example, if stakeholders identify that the writing instruction in CKLA is weak, district leaders need to be able to pull up the standards coverage map and point to the extension activities in Part B of the curriculum that many teachers skip as evidence of strong writing instruction.
- School leaders** need sequenced, intentional, and ongoing professional learning focused on *recognizing and supporting strong implementation*. They don't need to be able to teach a lesson or even know what is coming up in the sequence of lessons, but they need to be able to pull up the lesson during an observation and recognize if practice is consistent with strong implementation. They need to be able to give teachers feedback that is specific to vision and curriculum. Some districts have built this knowledge and skill by providing monthly norming opportunities or bi-monthly leader learning collaboratives.
- School leaders** also need *familiarity with the design and intent of the curriculum* so that they can be responsive and make informed decisions when people have questions and/or push back. Districts have used principal meetings to have principals engage in lesson prep protocols and required leaders to attend teacher-facing professional learning about materials in order to build this knowledge and skill.
- Teachers** need sequenced, intentional, and ongoing professional learning focused on *unit and lesson delivery*. Detailed examples of this are included in the table on the previous page.
- Instructional coaches** need the same *knowledge and skills as teachers*, but also must have familiarity with strategies to support adult learning.

Finally, it is critical to cultivate attitudes and mindsets around this work—not just in the technical elements, but in the benefits the materials bring to students. The most successful teachers in this work are those who recognized the value early and invested their time in understanding and learning the materials.

“This requires kids to discover their own learning. They own the lessons. Before, I was used to strictly following the order of the lesson. Now, my kids are leading it more, which is really neat to see.”

—Elizabeth Jones, teacher  
Lauderdale County Schools

## Resources

### Change management

- [Concerns-Based Adoption Model Resources](#)
- [Improvement Science Session \(from Dec. 2017\)](#)
- [The “Change Wheel”](#)

### District-level reform

- [Academic Strategy Levers](#)
- [Transforming schools an entire system at a time \(Fullan\)](#)
- [Strategy in Action by Rachel Curtis and Elizabeth City](#)

### Planning tools

- [LIFT Learning Pilot Planning Tool](#)
- [Pilot Expansion Planning Tool](#)

This Guidebook would not exist without the contributions and support of countless individuals who work tirelessly to improve outcomes for students in TN. We'd like to especially thank the following people for taking the time to provide input, feedback, and content to this Guidebook:

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## ABOUT SCORE

The State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) is a nonpartisan nonprofit education policy and advocacy organization based in Nashville, Tennessee. SCORE was founded in 2009 by Senator Bill Frist, MD, former US Senate majority leader, and works to transform education in Tennessee so all students can achieve success in college, career, and life.

## ABOUT TNTP

TNTP believes our nation's public schools can offer all children an excellent education. A national nonprofit founded by teachers, we help school systems end educational inequality. We work at every level of the public education system to attract and train talented teachers and school leaders, ensure rigorous and engaging classrooms, and create environments that prioritize great teaching and accelerate student learning. Since 1997, we've partnered with more than 200 public school districts, charter school networks, and state departments of education. We have recruited or trained more than 50,000 teachers, inspired policy change through acclaimed studies such as *The Opportunity Myth* (2018), *The Mirage* (2015), *The Irreplaceables* (2012), and *The Widget Effect* (2009), and launched the Bridge Fellowship, our signature program for diverse leaders with bold ideas for public schools. Today, TNTP is active in more than 50 cities.