

Fall 2022



LIFT EDUCATION
LEADING INNOVATION FOR TENNESSEE

Leveraging High-Quality Instructional Materials to Accelerate Student Learning

This report outlines lessons learned from the 2021-2022 school year, our most challenging year to date. Districts in the network faced the unprecedented challenge of recovering student learning loss that occurred during school closures from the previous school year while continuing to manage the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. We hope our learnings will be valuable to policymakers and practitioners broadly, and particularly those in Tennessee who remain committed to implementing and supporting new high-quality instructional materials for English Language Arts because of their promise and potential for students.

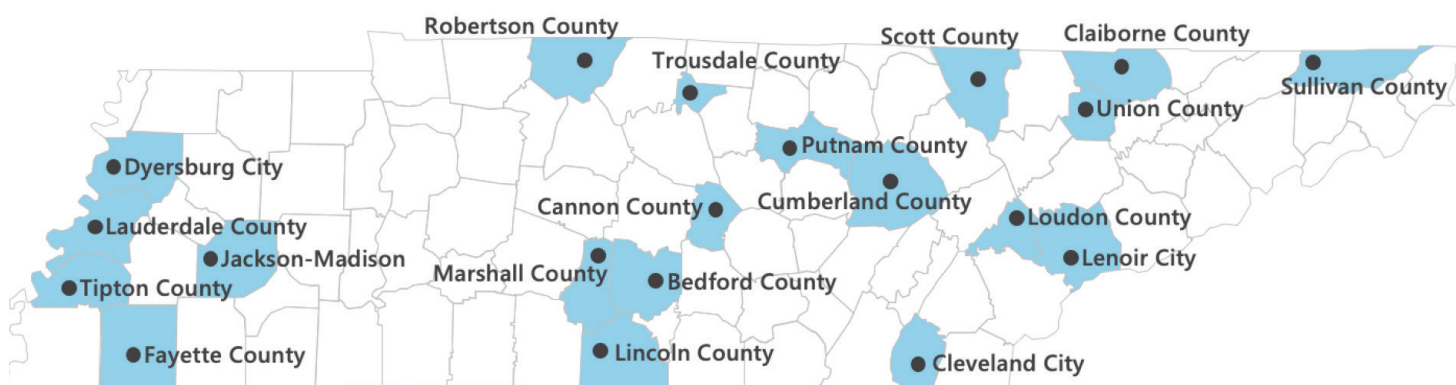
Data in this report look at leading indicators of instruction based around the **Instructional Practice Guide, student work, and teacher and leader resources**, in line with the methodology used in TNTP's national report *The Opportunity Myth*. It also takes into consideration data from the 2022 TN DOE Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program¹. Those seeking to learn from LIFT's work may also be interested in our previous reports and published resources.²

¹ More details about the TCAP program can be found at <https://www.tn.gov/education/assessment/tnready.html>.

² Please read the 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 LIFT annual reports to learn more about the network and the lessons learned in our first five years of implementation and the **Instructional Materials Implementation Guidebook** to see a comprehensive description of the innovative approaches and best practices from the network: <https://lifteducationtn.com/resources/>

INTRODUCTION

Leading Innovation for Tennessee Education (LIFT) is a group of Tennessee districts working together to explore innovative approaches and share best practices that benefit students and other school districts.



In spring 2016, the districts in the LIFT network examined their existing literacy programs and classroom practices and identified a shared problem of practice: K–5 students were not yet accessing a high-quality literacy program that supported them to meet the demands of Tennessee’s rigorous standards. Teachers and leaders had not yet made the instructional shifts that would support students to become proficient readers, writers, and thinkers.

Since then, the districts in the LIFT network have worked to address this problem of practice by expanding and supporting the use of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and building the capacity of teachers and leaders to deliver standards-aligned literacy instruction. Additionally, the network has added twelve new districts who are similarly invested in driving forward outcomes in early literacy and who have worked to implement high-quality instructional materials using lessons learned from the original LIFT districts.

Over the past six years, the network has made significant progress:

■ **Improvements in classroom instruction:**

This year, **67 percent** of observed lessons reflected the demands of Tennessee’s rigorous standards, compared with only **6 percent** during initial reviews.

■ **Improvements in classroom assignments:**

This year, **85 percent** of sampled assignments were grade-appropriate, compared with only **8 percent** during initial reviews.

■ **Improvements in student learning:**

This year, **61 percent** of students met the demands of grade-level standards on assignments, compared with **5 percent** during initial reviews.

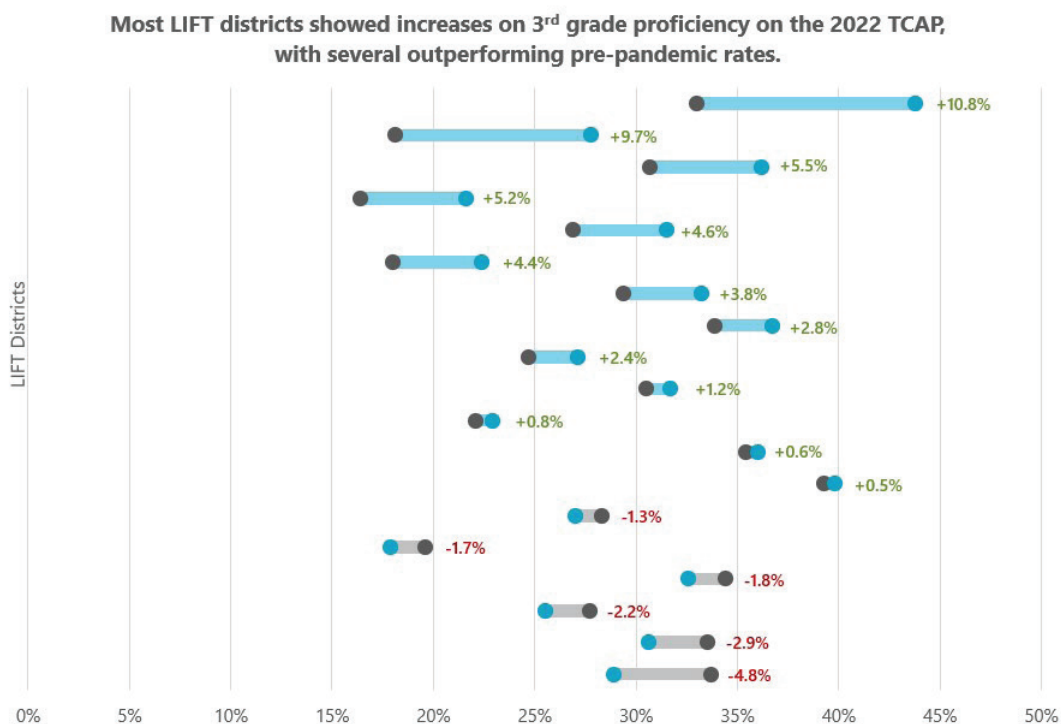
Additionally, the majority of LIFT districts saw growth on the TN Comprehensive Assessment Program, resulting in net positive growth across the network outweighing declines in some districts. These results are comparable to the state average. This year’s results also demonstrate that over one-third of LIFT districts have fully recovered COVID learning losses for economically disadvantaged students.

KEY LEARNING 1

HQIM are an important tool in accelerating student learning following the Covid-19 pandemic. LIFT districts across the state of TN were able to improve student test scores with strategic initiatives focusing on student ownership and leader capacity building, and some districts exceeded scores from 2019.

As districts across Tennessee entered the 2021-2022 school year, most had one primary focus: to address student learning loss that had occurred during the interrupted 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. As evidenced in the 2021 LIFT Annual Report, LIFT districts with high-quality

instructional materials in place during the Covid-interrupted school years saw less learning loss than other TN districts.³ In 2022, the majority of LIFT districts saw an increase in student test scores, with several districts exceeding their 2019 TN Ready scores.



In 2021-2022, LIFT districts pursued strategies of learning acceleration⁴ in an effort to ensure students could make up learning lost due to Covid closures while still making sure that students had access to grade-level content. These strategies were designed to ensure that every student had opportunities to do the grade-level work that will prepare them to reach their goals after high school. Research has

shown that remediation—asking students to spend most of their time in work below their grade level in the hopes that they'll eventually catch up—is the wrong approach to helping students recover unfinished learning. Despite its popularity and good intentions, our own research has shown that remediation makes it less likely students will ever catch back up to grade level⁵

Instead, LIFT literacy strategies focused on accelerating students back to grade level—not by rushing through the curriculum, but by using proven strategies that help students engage with the most critical work of their grade as efficiently and effectively as possible.

LIFT districts pursued strategic actions that included supporting teachers with tools such as:

- **Pacing guides** to help teachers effectively time their units and lessons over the course of the year
- **Structured and focused intellectual preparation routines** that helped teachers understand the most important content and instructional strategies of each unit and lesson
- **Student work review protocols** to review student performance and plan for intentional reteaching as needed
- **Ongoing observation and feedback** to improve instruction and meet the needs of as many students as possible
- **Developing the capacity of school leaders and coaches** to identify high-quality instruction and provide teachers with actionable feedback.

Many of these strategies were leveraged with our original LIFT districts prior to the pandemic. Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, these strategies were revived as schools returned to regular in-person instruction. Newer LIFT districts also began to implement these strategies with more consistency, leading to improved instruction over the course of the school year

³ In 2021, LIFT districts demonstrating an average 12.1 percent drop on 3rd grade TCAP scores from 2019 to 2021, compared to an average 16.8 percent drop in non-LIFT districts. Additionally, over one-quarter of LIFT districts avoided the drop in average test scores observed across the state. More details can be found at: <https://lifteducationtn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/LIFT-2021-Annual-Report.pdf>.

⁴ To learn more about Learning Acceleration, visit <https://tntp.org/covid-19-school-response-toolkit/view/learning-acceleration-for-the-next-three-to-five-years>.

⁵ To read our recent research report on remediation in literacy, visit: <https://tntp.org/publications/view/teacher-training-and-classroom-practice/unlocking-acceleration>

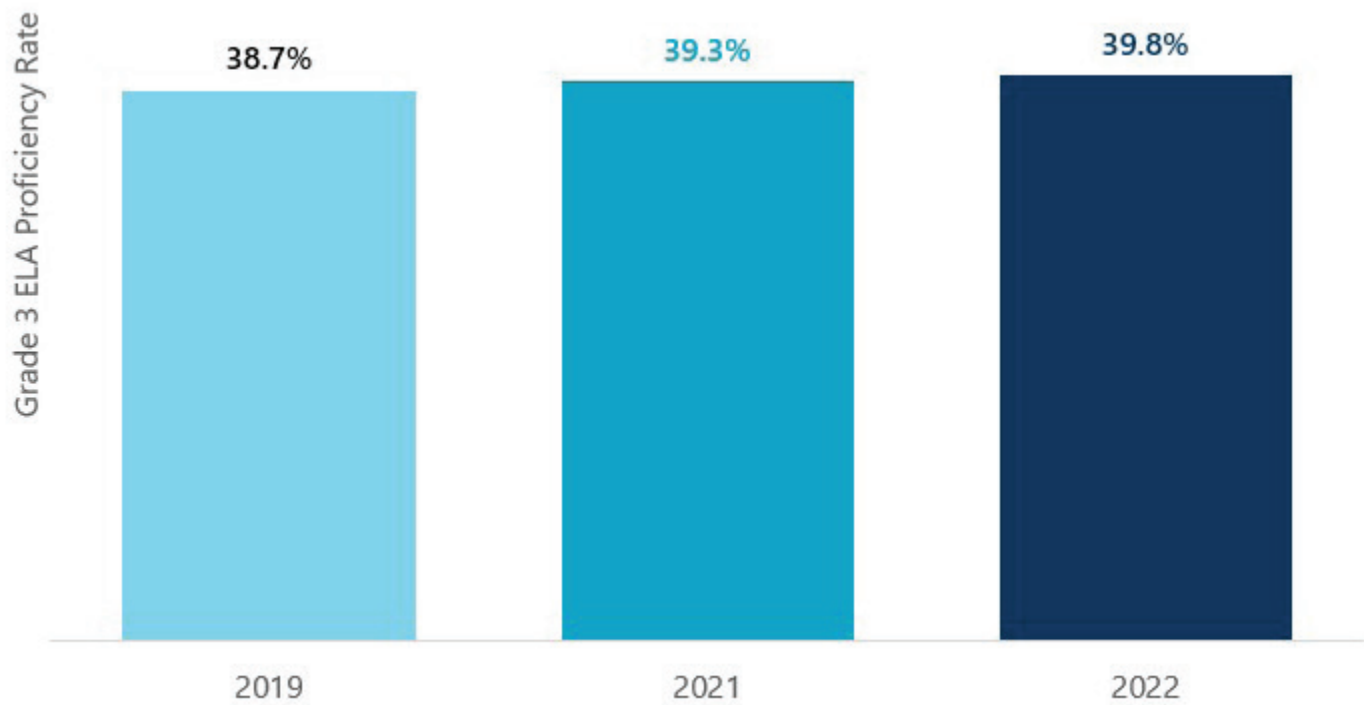
MAINTAINING AND ACCELERATING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN PUTNAM COUNTY

Putnam County began their journey with high-quality instructional materials as an original LIFT district in the 2016-2017 school year. Since then, they have scaled the use of Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) to grades K-5 across eleven elementary schools. Over the past year, Putnam pursued an instructional strategy grounded in their instructional materials that focused on developing the capacity of leadership at the district, school, and teacher level. Putnam’s strategic priorities included creating systems and structures that aligned professional learning with a clear instructional focus for administrators, coaches, and lead teachers in an intentional way.

As part of this priority, Putnam took several strategic action steps, including:

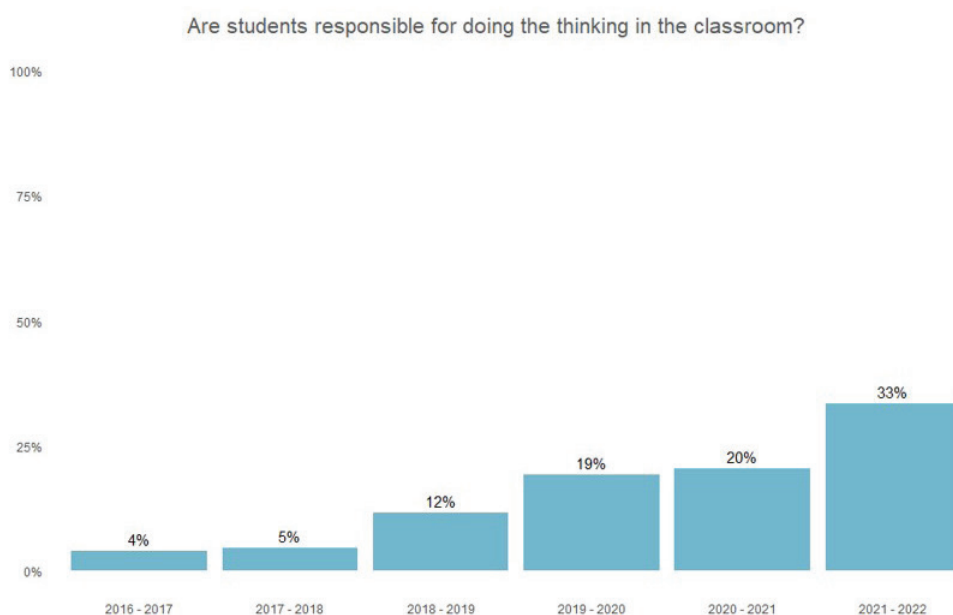
- **Developing an intentional scope of learning for administrators** that was executed through existing administrator meeting structures
- **Scheduling learning walks** to follow administrator professional learning so that admins could immediately apply their learning to observation and feedback
- **Designing and executing an intentional scope of learning for lead teachers**, a newly created role that allowed for deeper instructional expertise in each school building
- **Creating clear expectations** for admins and lead teachers to turnkey content back to school faculty

This intentional approach to capacity building allowed school leadership to better develop instruction in their buildings. As a result, Putnam 3rd graders outpaced their performance on the 2019 TCAP assessment.



As part of their targeted instructional strategies focused on ensuring access to grade level content, LIFT districts continued to focus incredible effort on increasing student ownership in lessons – with exciting results. LIFT districts define student ownership as increasing the rigor of and opportunity for students to own and drive the cognitive work of the lesson. This strategy tightly aligns to the

principles of learning acceleration, as it increases the time and energy students spend on grade-appropriate content. LIFT districts saw a 13% increase in student ownership from Spring of 2021 to Spring of 2022, the largest single-year increase since LIFT began gathering classroom observation data in 2016.⁶



LIFT districts' use high-quality instructional materials that place substantial emphasis on shifting the cognitive work of the lesson from teacher to students, ensuring that students have multiple opportunities to engage with text, discuss and write about text, and evaluate their own thinking and that of their peers. This approach to classroom instruction has proven the most challenging shift for teachers in LIFT districts over the past several years, as it represents a substantial mindset shift as teachers adjust their instruction to be facilitators of learning rather than focusing on direct instruction.

In several LIFT districts where teachers have been using high-quality instruction materials since prior to the pandemic, districts were able to make rapid progress in student outcomes. Additionally, **the districts who were able to make large gains also had strong evidence of students owning the cognitive work of the lesson, suggesting that this is a key instructional practice for improving student outcomes, when combined with other markers of strong instruction.**⁷

⁶ Our technical assistance provider, TNTP, conducts these classroom observations and trained reviewers hold a consistently high bar for instruction across classrooms, schools, and districts.

⁷ Detailed information about the methodology behind TNTP's instructional observation process can be found at https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP-OppMyth_TechAppx_FINAL.pdf.

DISTRICT CASE STUDY

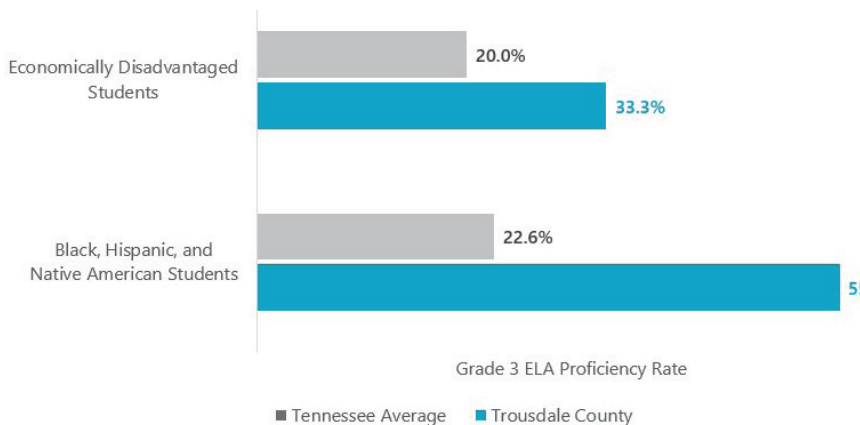
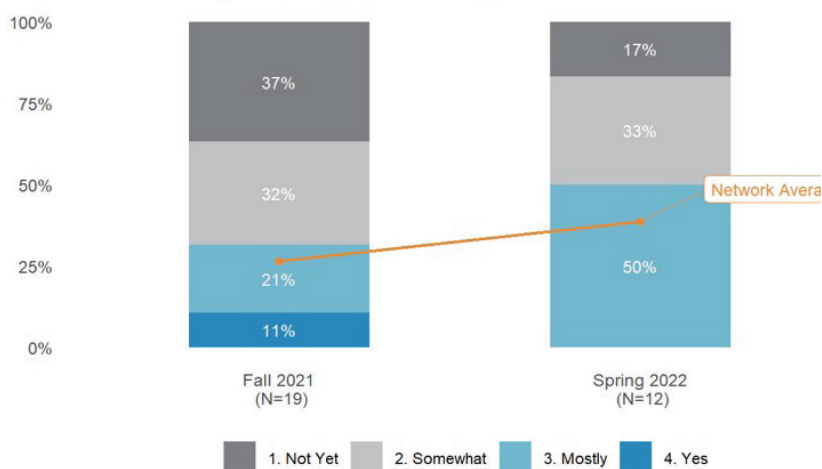
LEVERAGING HQIM TO INCREASE STUDENT LEARNING IN TROUSDALE COUNTY

Trousdale County has been using high-quality instructional materials in their elementary school since the 2016-2017 school year and has seen consistently strong results for students in both classroom observations and student scores on the TN Ready assessment. Following a challenging year of hybrid instruction in 2020-2021, Trousdale was able to significantly increase student assessment scores over the course of the 2021-2022 school year with a strategic approach that focused on providing strong instruction that targeted student learning gaps. School leadership focused their time on observing teacher implementation of lessons and providing feedback rooted in their HQIM, while also helping teachers provide multiple opportunities for students to own the work of the lesson.

As a result, Trousdale saw notable improvement in the amount and quality of student ownership their Reading Comprehension lessons, with over 50% of lessons providing adequate opportunity for students to own the thinking of the lesson.

The increased quality of instruction created conditions for students to demonstrate their learning on the state TCAP assessment. Not only did Trousdale improve their overall TCAP scores, substantially outpacing the state average for 3rd grade, they also demonstrated remarkable proficiency for student subgroups, including Black, Hispanic, and Native American students, and students who are economically disadvantaged. HQIM like those in use in Trousdale County help provide equitable instruction for all students by ensuring that all students have access to equally rigorous content while also assisting teachers with the scaffolds and supports that they need to make that content accessible to all students.

Are students responsible for doing the thinking?
Fall 2021 to Spring 2022 Progress - Grades K-5



KEY LEARNING 2

In order to create conditions for improved instructional quality, districts need Directors who prioritize engagement in the academic work to drive student literacy outcomes. Districts with consistently engaged senior leaders saw accelerated growth on key instructional indicators.

Since prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, LIFT has shared the importance of a shared vision along the vertical spine of leadership to drive toward an aligned instructional vision that leverages high-quality instructional materials⁸ LIFT districts operate under the premise 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.

The Covid-19 pandemic, and the associated struggles that school districts have faced, has again demonstrated the importance of the vertical spine, with particular evidence pointing to the power of having a strong and engaged Director of Schools who can champion the work and keep teachers, school, and district leaders focused on the end goal of outstanding literacy instruction for all students. Across LIFT, we have found that districts with leaders who engage in a specific set of actions that span several key structures tend to see faster instructional progress in their literacy classrooms:

This set of actions, drawn from observing leaders in LIFT districts that have seen remarkable instructional over the past several years, can serve as a roadmap for Directors of Schools who are seeking to motivate their teams to instructional progress moving forward.

VISION & STRATEGY

- Articulate a clear, research-based vision for excellent ELA instruction, set goals for progress toward the vision, and set a strategy to achieve goals.
- Reflect on progress and refine goals and strategy with ELA Strategy Leads.
- Maintain focus on ELA improvement as a district priority by communicating progress towards annual and longer-term goals to key stakeholders (board, district & school leaders, teachers, families).

SYSTEM-WIDE STRUCTURES

- Identify and support a district-level lead (CAO/ Instructional Supervisor) and schoollevel leads (Principal Coaches) to execute the district literacy strategy; ensure leads have the clear directive and authority to execute strategy at their respective levels.
- Establish and protect structures (e.g., PLCs) for teachers to regularly and collaboratively plan, reflect and learn about research-based best practices.
- Establish and protect ongoing structures for leaders to monitor and give feedback on teaching and learning.
- Hold school-based leads accountable for high-quality opportunities for teachers to regularly and collaboratively plan, reflect and learn about research-based best practices.
- Hold district leaders accountable for regular high-quality opportunities for leaders to monitor and give feedback on teaching and learning.

MONITOR, REFLECT & REFINE

- Walk ELA classrooms regularly to understand the current state of teaching and learning and progress toward the vision.
- Seek feedback from stakeholders and monitor progress toward goals (instruction, expectations, and student learning data).
- Reflect on formal progress monitoring results and engage Strategy Leads in reflection on barriers to success; work to eliminate systemwide barriers.

OTHER BEST PRACTICES

- Champion the vision by deepening your understanding of excellent ELA instruction. Model learning - talk about and share new learning on a regular basis.
- Create and facilitate opportunities for ELA Strategy Lead to collaborate and coordinate with Strategy Leads of other district initiatives (RTI, ELL, etc.) to ensure coherence and shared goals.
- Protect authentic family engagement in literacy improvement work as a priority.

⁸ To learn more about previous lessons shared by the LIFT Network, visit <https://lifteducationtn.com/>.

DISTRICT CASE STUDY

HARNESSING STRONG LEADERSHIP TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY IN MARSHALL COUNTY SCHOOLS

Marshall County Schools began implementing CKLA in 2018 and has since scaled their implementation to grades K-3 across four elementary schools. Over the past several years, they have learned the importance of strong district-level leadership to drive instructional outcomes. During the 2021-2022 school year, Marshall County significantly improved the overall quality of Reading Comprehension Instruction, with 85% of observed lessons meeting the shifts required by the Tennessee standards for grades K-3. Below is a conversation with Jacob Sorrells, Director of Schools in Marshall County, and Tammy

What actions have you taken in your role to improve the quality of ELA instruction since you started using CKLA?

Tammy: I have organized numerous professional development events for our teachers from Amplify and TNTP. In addition, I have attended the trainings myself. Not only does this strengthen my own tools, it shows our administrators and teachers that I am learning alongside them and am committed to supporting a strong implementation of CKLA. I attend LIFT meetings and state meetings and trainings and share the information with all stakeholders. I attend PLCs regularly and assist with ELA walk-throughs in each elementary school. I walk with the instructional coach and principal and collaborate with them to give strong feedback to the teachers.

Jacob: We set the expectation that teachers will use the adopted curriculum, that we will work together as a district to implement the curriculum, and that principals will be the instructional leaders. We set the expectation that the curriculum supervisor will work with teachers to implement the curriculum.

Tammy, how does having the support of your Director of Schools help you monitor and improve instruction in schools across the district?

Tammy: Our Director is the gatekeeper to improving instruction. He sets clear expectations for school leaders around PLCs, ELA walkthroughs, and unit and lesson prep. His commitment and expectations lay the groundwork for me to come to schools and do the detailed work specific to individual school needs.

What do you see as your role in improving literacy instruction in the district?

Tammy: My role is to support the principals as they continue to build their toolbox with the tools they need to support their teachers in improving literacy instruction. The principal is the driving force for improvement. I am here to coach them and support them in any way needed. I also work with individual

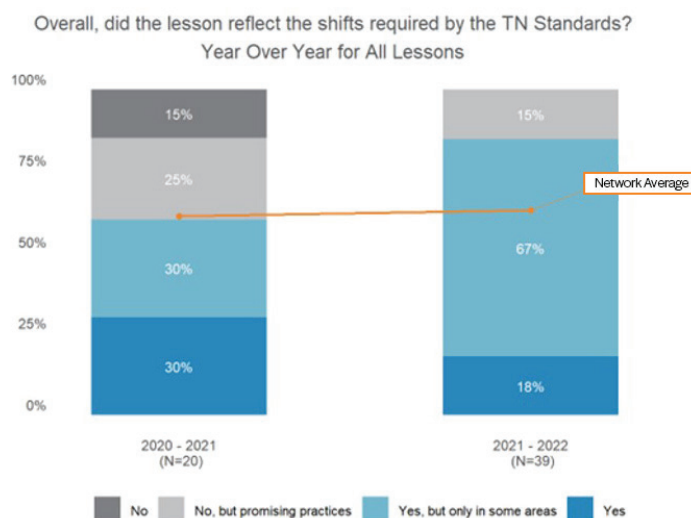
teachers or groups of teachers in PLCs focusing on standards alignment, lesson prep and unit prep.

Jacob: I set the goals and expectations and we work with the curriculum coordinator and principals to make sure they are implemented with fidelity as well as create space for professional growth.

Jacob, what advice would you give other Directors of Schools as they seek to leverage HQIM to improve literacy instruction in their districts?

Jacob: Do your homework!

- Create a leadership team and get everyone on the same page.
- Identify your obstacles and create a plan with your team as to how you will overcome them.
- Communicate the why with your board and be sure to keep them updated along the way. Make sure they have answers to the questions and or concerns they may get from staff.



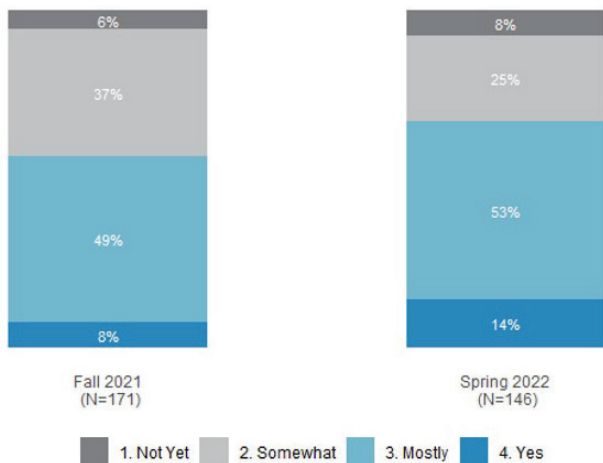
KEY LEARNING 3

A strong literacy vision allows districts to create aligned systems of support that provide increased opportunities for accelerating progress. When districts are able to strategically align their resources, they can create cohesive literacy strategies that drive toward the same overarching vision and goals.

Funding provided to support learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, along with intentional investment in high-quality ELA materials from the state of Tennessee, created a resource-rich environment for school districts to provide schools, leaders, and teachers with professional learning and instructional support during the 2021-2022 school year. With several networks of implementation-focused support sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Education, along with support from LIFT, districts found themselves with more support and resources to improve literacy instruction than ever before. Additional support from the TNDOE Reading 360 initiative, strategically aligned with existing support from the LIFT Network, increasing the quality of foundational skills instruction at a faster pace in districts in their second year of implementation. This was also true for reading comprehension instruction in districts who strategically used their support from the TNDOE Literacy Implementation Networks alongside support from LIFT. In spite of the abundant support available, it is likely that some districts struggled to effectively align their support in a way that truly drove student outcomes. However, **LIFT districts with strong visions for literacy instruction were better able to utilize their resources by streamlining the number of inputs and ensuring that all support was aligned around a single instructional vision that put high-quality instructional materials at the center of their strategy.**

In districts where support from LIFT was tightly aligned to support received from other TN-specific initiatives, instructional quality improved rapidly, with notable growth in Reading Foundational Skills. Across the network, LIFT districts saw improved Foundational Skills Instruction, with specific improvements in the amount and quality of practice taking place during lessons. While many literacy strategies focused on improving Foundational Skills instruction, districts were also able to leverage the learning that took place in Reading 360 trainings during the Summer of 2021, during which teachers received substantial training on the research base of systematic foundational skills instruction while also refreshing their understanding of their specific Foundational Skills materials. Coming out of those trainings, districts were able to use district-specific professional learning time to tailor learning to instructional trends of the district and the specific needs of teachers as determined by classroom instruction.

Overall, does the instruction explicitly and systematically provide all students with the opportunity to master foundational skills?



STATE OF TENNESSEE INITIATIVES THAT PROVIDED SUPPORT DURING THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR:

Literacy Implementation Networks:
Regional implementation networks consisting of six to eight districts that meet monthly to learn from each other about their support of HQIM with a grade band focus (K-2, 3-5, 6-8 or 9-12)

Summer Early Reading Training:
A two-week hybrid online and in-person training experience focused on sounds first foundational skills instruction and aligned HQIM that was offered to all Tennessee K-5 teachers in the summer of 2021

Early Literacy Network:
A network of 92 school districts that each received grant awards to provide direct support for teachers and leaders in the implementation of sounds-first instruction in grades PreK-2.

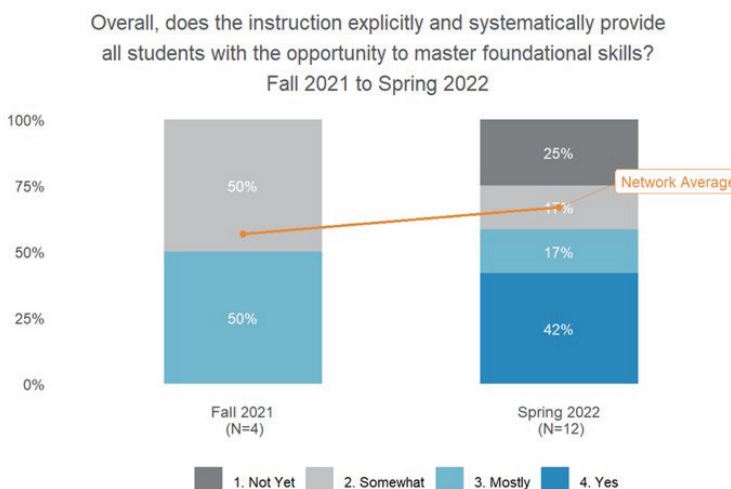
DISTRICT CASE STUDY

ALIGNING FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS SUPPORT IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY

During the 2021-2022 school year, Cumberland County worked to align their support from LIFT and the Early Literacy Network grant to ensure that all teachers and leaders had the knowledge and skills they needed to provide high-quality sounds-first foundational skills instruction. Specifically, Cumberland County took the following actions:

- Provided training for school leaders to understand the scope and sequence of foundational skills and how to support teachers in their implementation of CKLA Foundational Skills instruction
- Provided any teacher who had not attended Early Reading Training with a one-day training targeting critical Foundational Skills content
- Identified new and struggling K-2 teachers and provided them with additional training on the routines and structures of CKLA, which were then followed up with school leaders providing observation and feedback on foundational skills lessons
- Trained PreK teachers on the Science of Reading and sounds-first instruction

This aligned strategy of targeted teacher and leader support led to dramatic growth in the quality of K-2 Foundational Skills instruction in Cumberland County.



Additionally, districts who pursued thoughtfully aligned actions that strategically utilized their resources to drive toward a unified vision and provide learning and support to all levers of the vertical spine were able to dramatically improve reading comprehension instruction and make significant progress in shifting the cognitive load of lessons to students.

By pursuing a single strategy while using resources from multiple initiatives, some LIFT districts were able to maximize their resources to ensure that all inputs – including leader development, teacher coaching, and all curricular resources – were being discussed and implemented in a streamlined way that ensured consistent messaging around instructional expectations. This also allowed districts to pursue a single, integrated instructional strategy spearheaded by the same team in district offices, which eliminated confusion about literacy priorities and ensured consistent communication to teachers and leaders about curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

This consistent communication is a critical point to emphasize when considering how to best utilize resources across multiple initiatives, as having too many or contrasting messages can derail a district's ability to pursue aligned, high-quality literacy instruction across schools and grade bands. By streamlining communication through a single strategy and limiting the number of trusted inputs, districts are better able to control their message and drive toward their goals for student literacy experiences.

DISTRICT CASE STUDY

ALIGNING SUPPORT TO IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION IN UNION COUNTY

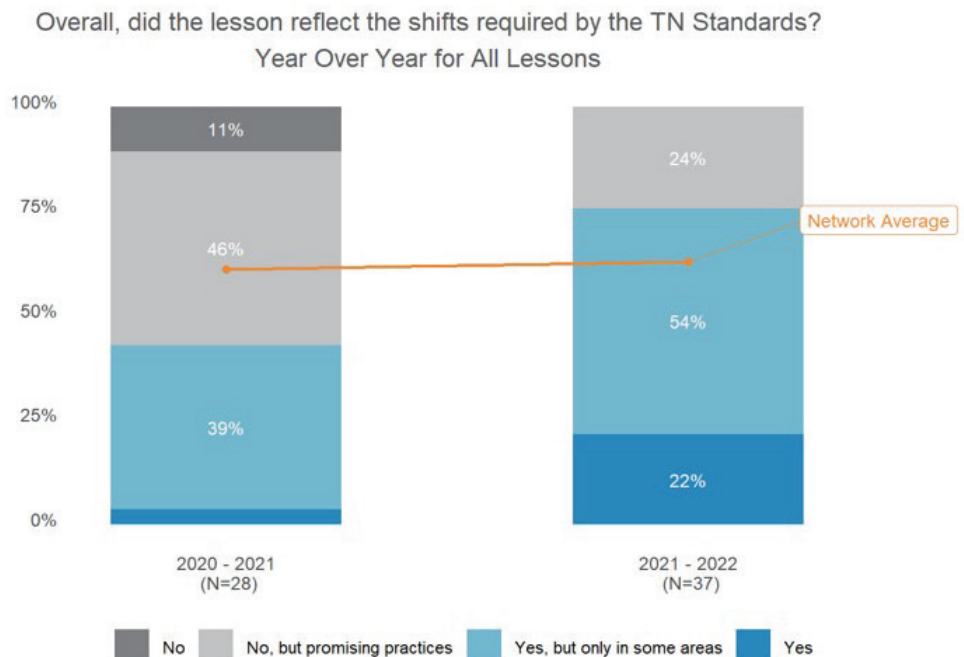
During the 2021-2022 school year, Union County was an active participant in both the LIFT Network and the East Literacy Implementation Network and had access to considerable vendor support through both networks. Union chose to align their support under a single vendor, TNTP, and as such, was able to work with their consulting partner to craft a single literacy strategy that tackled improving instruction in a data-based way.

Despite using different sets of high-quality instructional materials in grades K-2 and 3-8, Union worked to create a set of goals and priorities for reading comprehension across grades K-8 that leveraged the same structure of supported intellectual prep:

■ **K-2 Priority:** Through effective intellectual preparation, ensure that K-2 teachers are consistently spending time on the most important question sequences and choosing methods for questioning that push students to own the cognitive work of the lesson during CKLA Knowledge lessons.

■ **3-8 Priority:** Through effective intellectual preparation, develop the ability of 3-8 teachers to effectively execute well-paced Wit & Wisdom lessons that consistently drive toward the overarching goals of the module and focusing question arc, as well as push students to own the cognitive work of the lesson.

The district then worked with the same TNTP lead to craft a set of action steps that supported both grade bands with their materials and developed district instructional coaches to lead work with teachers and school leaders. By working with the same vendor, the district was able to capitalize on the capacity of the vendor to create efficiencies in the work and maximize the time that the TNTP lead was on site in the district and through virtual support to ensure that everyone was aligned and on the same page. The result was huge gains in the overall quality of Reading Comprehension instruction in Union County, with 76% of observed lessons meeting the demands of the TN Standards, up from 43% the previous school year.

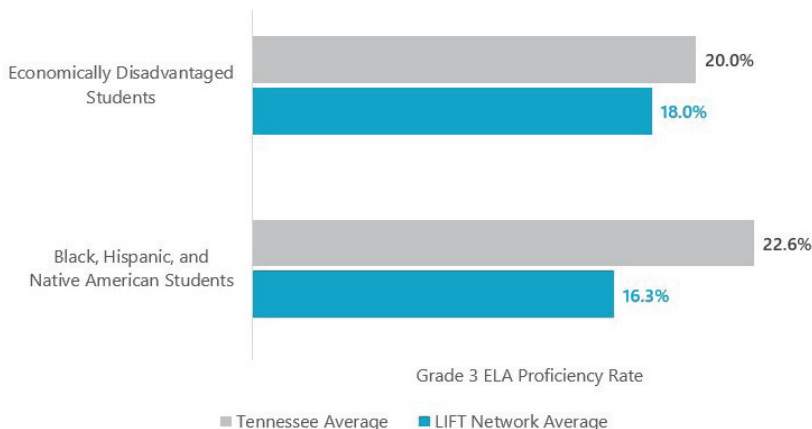


KEY LEARNING 4

With incredible focus and support, many districts have returned student test scores to pre-pandemic levels. Given this, districts should turn their focus from learning loss and focus their efforts on aligning systems of support for students who are still behind, particularly those students who are traditionally underserved.

Across the state of Tennessee, districts did incredible work in the 2021-2022 school year to drive student achievement and bring student learning back to 2019 levels. As the Tennessee Department of Education shared in their July 2022 press release, “State ELA proficiency rates now exceed pre-pandemic levels. Since the pandemic, 72.6% of districts now meet or exceeded pre-pandemic performance in ELA.”⁹ This is an incredible accomplishment given the challenges of school years affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Much of this work was driven by strategies of learning acceleration and focused on the general student population. While there is much to celebrate, deeper analysis of the data indicates that there are still many students who are still performing behind grade level; this is particularly true of traditionally underserved student subgroups, including Black, Hispanic, and Native students, and students who are economically disadvantaged. This is true state-wide but is also true in our LIFT districts.



Over the past years, LIFT has learned that incredible gains can be made when literacy priorities are intentional and focused on meeting the specific needs of students. With this in mind, **in the coming school year, districts should turn their attention to aligning systems of support for**

students who are still behind, focusing on those students who are traditionally underserved and on meeting the needs of ALL students, including students with IEPs, multilingual learners, and students who are economically disadvantaged. While the principles of Learning Acceleration will continue to be important for this work, strategies centered around systems of instructional coherence will also be critical to ensure that all students have access to high-quality instruction across all of the instructional opportunities available to them, including Tier 1 instruction, RTI/intervention, and tutoring.

Instructional program coherence means ensuring that every element of an instructional program and its strategies — from core instruction to interventions to extended time— works together to advance the same set of grade-level student experiences.¹⁰ It encourages educators and leaders to align their multitiered systems of support in ways that will accelerate learning for all students. Educators within instructionally coherent systems continually examine the alignment and coherence of their program and recognize that “when faced with incoherent activities, students are more likely to feel that they are targets of apparently random events and that they have less knowledge of what should be done to succeed.”¹¹

With this in mind, in the coming year LIFT districts will work to ensure coherence across their instructional programs with the aim of ensuring equitable outcomes for all students, including the traditionally underserved groups of students mentioned above. In pursuing this work, LIFT hopes to build on our knowledge of the importance of clear vision and aligned strategy to push strategy across all areas of instruction and improve the entire educational experiences for students as they become proficient readers, writers, and thinkers. As a network, LIFT also plans to focus professional learning on improving writing instruction, as student work analysis demonstrates that this is still a development area for most districts.

⁹ Additional information can be found at <https://www.tn.gov/education/news/2022/7/6/t DOE-releases-2021-22-tcap-district-level-results-driving-student-academic-achievement-and-acceleration-.html>.

¹⁰ For more information about Instructional Coherence, visit <https://tntp.org/covid-19-school-response-toolkit/view/instructional-coherence-a-key-to-high-quality-learning-acceleration-for-all>.

¹¹ See “Instructional Program Coherence: What It Is and Why It Should Guide School Improvement Policy” especially, page 301.

CREATING CONDITIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS TO THRIVE IN LOUDON COUNTY

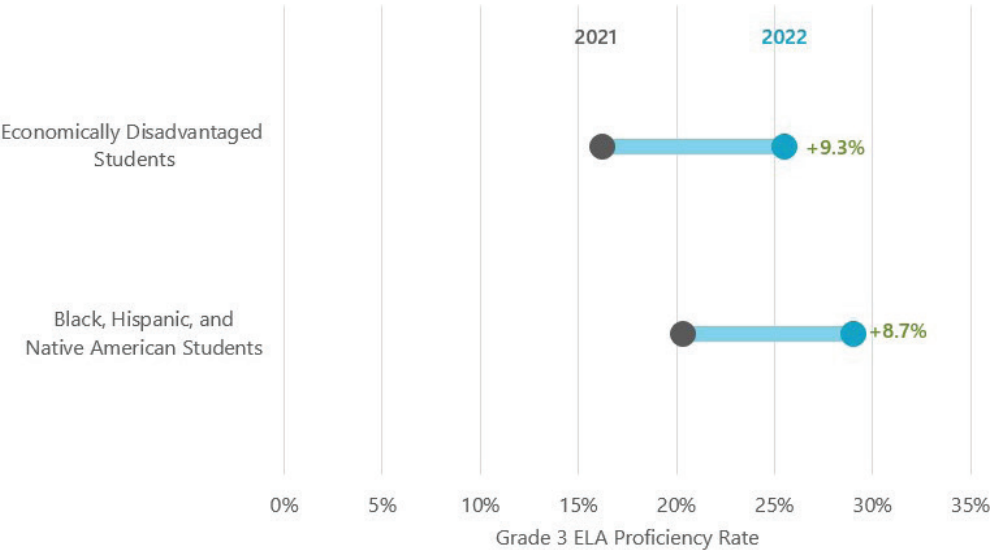
Loudon County joined the LIFT Network in 2016 and began their journey to improve literacy instruction by leveraging HQIM during the 2017-2018 school year. During that time, Loudon has continuously modeled the ability to learn and grow and has undertaken a literacy strategy that incorporates elements of an instructionally coherent system by targeting knowledge, skills, and mindsets in teachers and leaders across all areas of literacy.

During the 2021-2022 school year, Loudon took several strategic actions intended to help them continue to improve literacy outcomes in their district:

- Loudon County made a conscious effort to shift ownership of literacy strategy from district leadership to school leadership. To do this, they held school-leader specific training to develop curriculum-specific knowledge, ensured that school leaders were participating in all learning walks, trained leaders to provide feedback to teachers, and held them accountable for doing so.

- School leaders also began to examine adult expectations for students and took care to ensure that leaders were observing for and examining the experiences of students who were struggling, as well as multilingual learners and students with IEPs. Leaders also began to build their knowledge of concrete actions teachers took that were evidence of the expectations – both high and low – that teachers held for students.
- The district coach was supported in implementing cycles of observation and feedback for a small number of teachers to develop her ability to identify and coach the teachers who needed the most support.
- Throughout the year, the Director of Schools, strategy lead, and TNTP lead continued to meet at key touch points to check in on progress and ensure that conditions were in place for continued progress.

These layered supports, all driving toward the same instructional goals, led to Loudon’s incredible growth in both instructional quality and student performance.



CLOSING

After several years of work in districts across the state of Tennessee, the work of the LIFT network has produced compelling evidence that working with high-quality instructional materials can improve both instructional quality and student outcomes. But this work takes time, a relentless focus on strategic priorities, and intentional systems to invest teachers in their materials to both improve instruction and increase teacher expectations.

In the year ahead, the LIFT districts will maintain their commitment to a research-based vision of literacy, data-informed priorities, and rigorous instructional materials. Our efforts to improve literacy across the network, with innovative solutions, will center on four learning priorities:

■ **Data Systems and Strategy:**

What are the essential systems, key data points, best practices, and critical structures that need to be in place to successfully advance literacy instruction and learning outcomes?

■ **Adult Expectations:**

How can we increase adult expectations for students in literacy classrooms and what replicable action steps can help us increase teacher expectations?

■ **Supporting All Learners:**

How do we ensure that we have the mindsets, systems, and structures in place to ensure equitable outcomes in literacy instructional for all learners, including students with IEPs, multilingual learners, and students who are economically disadvantaged?

■ **Improving Student Writing Proficiency:**

How can we leverage our high-quality instructional materials to increase student writing capability and proficiency?

We will continue to share our learnings, outcomes, and resources as we test new ideas and study their impact on students.



State Collaborative on Reforming Education

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 rigorous academics. This partnership—combining knowledge of Tennessee’s context with a nationally recognized partner for academic success—has been key for our network

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS?

Please contact us!

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