Enacting Common Core Instruction:
How Intermediate Unit 13 Leveraged its Position as an Educational Service Agency to Implement and Scale the LDC Initiative

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A Note about Terminology

In this case study, we use several terms that are specific to the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) initiative and the Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 context. Brief definitions are provided below.

- The **LDC Framework** includes CCSS-aligned **template tasks**, which educators fill in with their specific content to create a writing task. Teachers identify the skills students need to complete the task and create a **module**, a plan for teaching students the content and literacy skills necessary to complete the writing task.
- **LDC** refers to the broader initiative, which includes professional development to help teachers and other educators use modules on a daily basis.
- **Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (IU 13)** is the educational service agency that serves the public school districts in Lancaster and Lebanon counties by providing educational support programs and assistance.
- **IU Administrator** includes individuals at the IU 13 office responsible for overall IU operations and the supervision of IU Staff.
- **IU Staff** includes individuals at the IU 13 office responsible for the training and implementation of LDC in the IU. We sometimes refer to "the IU" as shorthand for staff leading LDC implementation.
- The **Pennsylvania Core Standards** are closely aligned with the content of Common Core State Standards, but reflect the organization and design of the previous state standards. The State Board adopted Common Core Standards in July 2010, but in 2013 the decision was made to revise the standards to more closely fit the Pennsylvania context. While both terms have been used in Pennsylvania during the implementation of LDC in IU 13, this case study will refer to the Pennsylvania Core Standards when discussing LDC use in IU 13.
- **Building administrator or principal** refers to the designated leader responsible for coordinating the LDC work and leading school-based professional development in an individual school in the IU. Generally, these individuals were principals or assistant principals.
- **District administrators** include a broader group of district central office leaders.
- LDC has been used in varying ways in IU 13 since 2010-11. We refer to the **timeline** in the following way:
  - Year 1: IU 13 Pilot Year (2010-11) – LDC piloted in two districts
  - Year 2: IU 13 Cohort 1 (2011-12)
  - Year 3: IU 13 Cohort 2 (2012-13)
  - Year 4: IU 13 Cohort 3 (2013-14)

The LDC and MDC Initiatives: An Overview

Funded by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) and Math Design Collaborative (MDC) offer a set of instructional and formative assessment tools in literacy and math, which were developed to help educators better prepare all students to meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and succeed beyond high school. The Foundation's goal is to provide supports for educators to implement the instructional shifts called for by the CCSS.

According to the LDC website, LDC "offers a fresh approach to incorporating literacy into middle and high school content areas."[1] It makes literacy instruction the foundation of the core subjects, allows teachers to build content on top of a coherent approach to literacy, and prepares students with the rigorous reading and writing skills necessary for postsecondary success. LDC is a literacy framework that connects the Common Core State Standards with secondary English language arts, social studies, and science classrooms.

As part of MDC, experts from the Shell Centre developed a set of Formative Assessment Lessons (Lessons) for secondary mathematics teachers to facilitate CCSS-based student mathematics learning and provide teachers with feedback about student understanding and mastery. Lessons reverse the traditional, teacher-driven instructional model by challenging students to work on a series of math problems both independently and collaboratively.[2]

In the early years of the LDC and MDC initiatives, the Gates Foundation supported the districts and school networks to co-develop and pilot the tools. This support included professional development, efforts to link tool-users across sites, and ongoing refinement of the tools to better meet the needs of educators.

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[1] http://www.mygroupgenius.org/literacy
[2] The Daily: Unleashing Group Genius, Volume 2, Number 1, June 27, 2011. Retrieved from:
http://www.kenton.kyschools.us/userfiles/915/Acrobat%20Document.pdf

Enacting Common Core Instruction:

How Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 Leveraged its Position as an Educational Service Agency to Implement and Scale the LDC Initiative

Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit (IU 13) provides an example of how an intermediary educational service unit – or other regional organizations in other states – can offer leadership, leverage resources, and build district capacity to effectively use literacy tools aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and scale such initiatives. This approach to the implementation and scaling of a CCSS-aligned literacy framework also provides useful lessons for how states with similar entities can approach elements of their CCSS strategy.

Case Study Background

Following three years of extensive data collection in LDC study sites throughout the country, Research for Action (RFA) has produced three case studies to illustrate how the LDC and MDC tools have been adopted in different settings and contexts, and which approaches and supports have contributed to the successful adoption and use of the tools. The case studies provide a set of "road maps" for other sites that will be adopting or scaling up tool use. Case study sites have been examined through the lens of three overlapping conditions found to be necessary for effective scale-up:

- Effective **leadership** at multiple levels: Effective leaders at all levels, including the state, region, district/network and school, need to champion and guide the initiative, provide needed resources and training and help teachers understand how it fits into an overall plan for educational improvement.

- **Alignment** with the CCSS, curricula, and state assessments: In order for a school reform to be successful, it needs to be in alignment with other policies and initiatives taking place in the state, district and school where the reform is being implemented. If initiatives and policies are at cross-purposes, it becomes difficult to progress in any one direction; and,

- Meaningful and ongoing **professional learning opportunities** (PLOs): Teachers and leaders need meaningful and ongoing professional development and technical assistance to understand the purpose of the tools, how to implement them in the classroom, and how to refine their practice as they move forward. Along with formal professional development sessions, professional learning opportunities include more informal collaboration between teaching colleagues on a regular basis.

These conditions are depicted as three overlapping circles in the Theory of Action for the overall initiative (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Theory of Action[3]
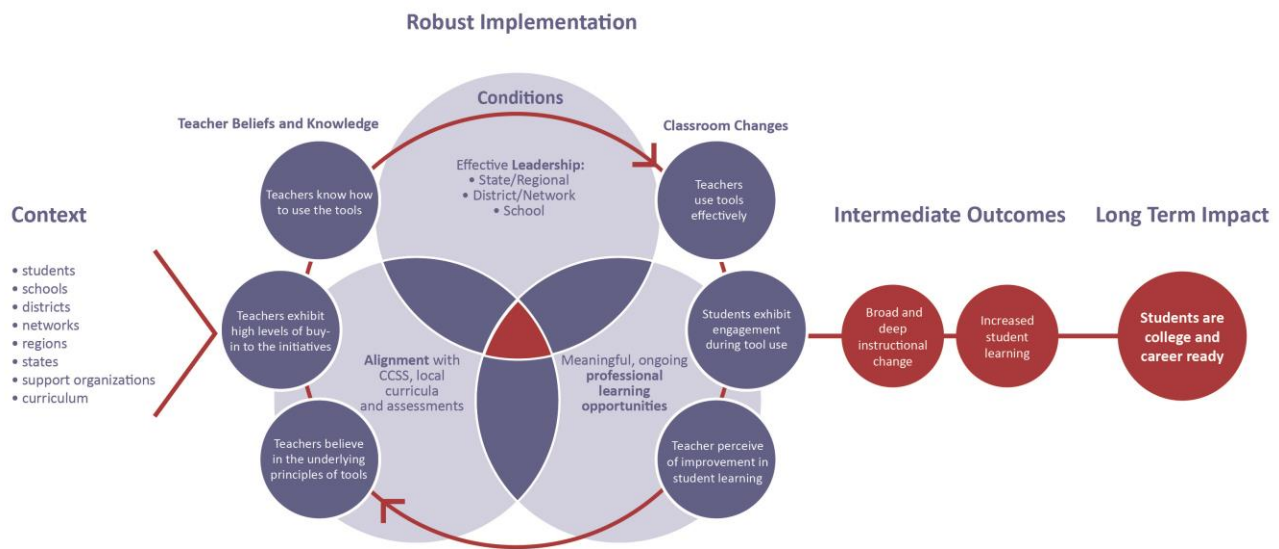
These conditions provide the organizing framework for the case studies and guide our analysis of the strategic approaches undertaken by state, regional, local, and network entities that enabled strong initial implementation.

RFA chose case study sites (see Table 1) that shared initial success in implementing the tools, but which differ dramatically on three dimensions:

- Geographic location and student demographic characteristics;
- Type of lead entity responsible for planning and coordinating implementation, such as a state department of education, a local district, an educational network, or educational service agency; and,
- Shape of initiative roll-out and scale-up.

Each case study illustrates how the tools were implemented and scaled under a specific set of circumstances that are likely to be applicable to many other sites. As such, they are intended to inform further exploration and discussion on how to effectively roll-out the LDC and MDC tools across a wide range of districts and schools.

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[3] More details on RFA's Theory of Action for the LDC/MDC Initiatives can be found in several of our reports. The September 2013 report on LDC/MDC scale up and sustainability can be found at http://www.researchforaction.org/rfa-study-of-tools-aligned-ccss.

Table 1. Case Study Sites

Case Study Site	Kenton County, KY School District	Hillsborough County Public Schools, FL	Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13
District Size/Type	Single, mid-size, rural and suburban district	Single, large, urban and suburban district	22 small and mid-size, urban, rural and suburban districts
Lead Implementation Entity	District	District	Educational Service Agency (ESA)
Tools Implemented	LDC and MDC	LDC	LDC
Publication Date	December 2012	May 2013	January 2013

About this Case Study

This document describes how Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (IU 13) implemented the LDC initiative. It is composed of the following sections:

- A brief overview of the educational reform and policy context in Pennsylvania and IU 13;
- A summary of IU 13's approach to LDC implementation—balancing the strengths and limitations of their role as an educational service agency; and,
- Descriptions of 10 IU 13-initiated strategies, organized by the three supporting conditions depicted in the Theory of Action (Figure 1), that have impacted early adoption and success of the LDC initiative.
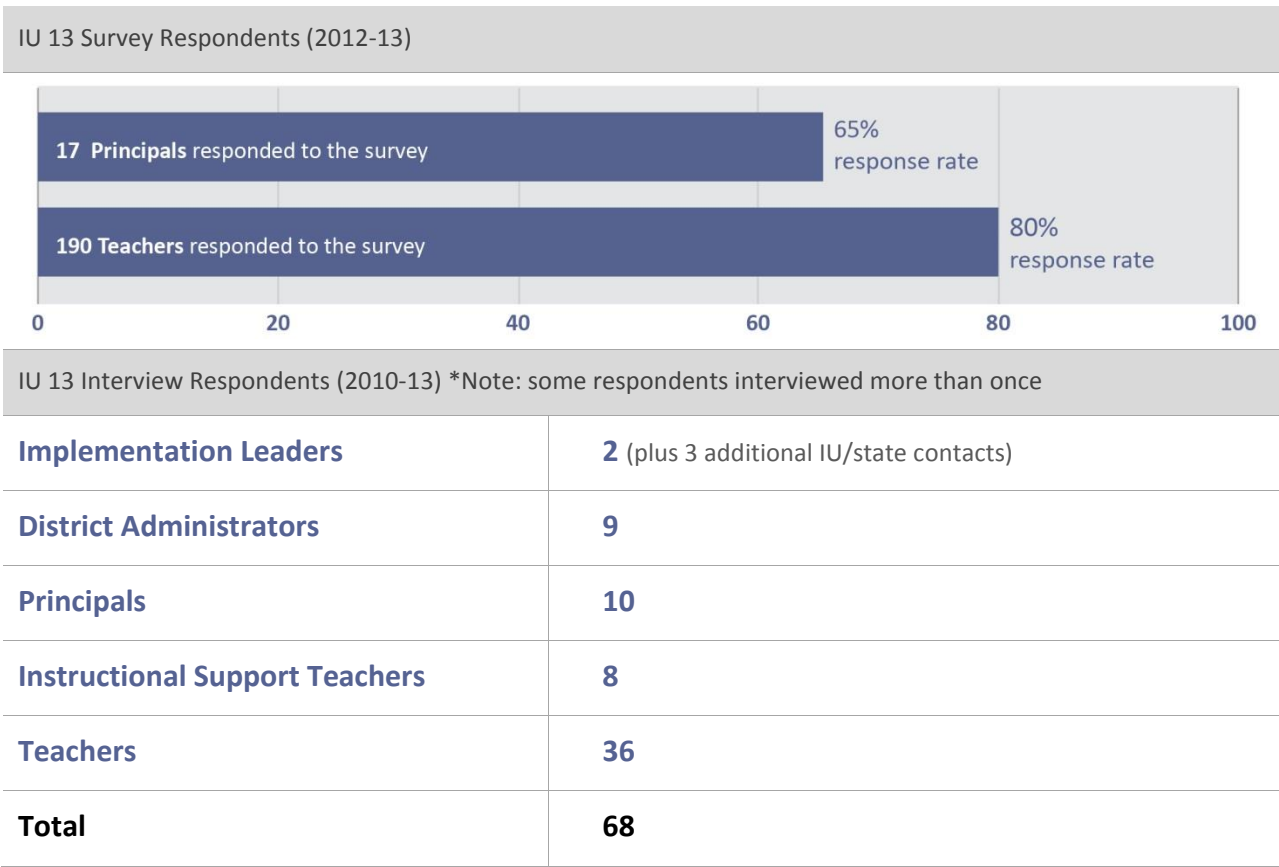
Data used for this case study include:

1. 2012-13 teacher, principal, and district administrator survey data from all participating IU 13 districts. Survey respondents include teachers, principals and district administrators involved in LDC.[4] In some instances, the case study compares IU 13 survey responses to overall survey responses from all RFA survey sites, including IU 13.
2. 2013 interviews with IU 13 staff members, as well as district and school administrators, and teachers from four districts involved in LDC in the IU 13 region. RFA selected these four because they were in different stages of LDC implementation and represented a variety of district- and school-level LDC roll-out and professional support strategies.
3. Interview data from 2010-11 and 2011-12. Except where noted, all teacher and administrator quotes are from 2013.

Table 2 illustrates the number and type of survey respondents (2012-13) and number of interviews over the length of the RFA study.

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[4] The survey sample was based on convenience sampling. For the teacher sample, 67.5% of the sample was based on a nationwide list of 2011-12 teacher professional development participants provided by The Gates Foundation. The other part of the teacher sample (32.5%) was based on teacher participant lists provided by our contacts in some of the district sites RFA had closely studied in school years 2011-12 and 2012-13. For the principal and district administrator samples, the participants were obtained from our contacts in eight states.

Table 2. IU 13 Survey and Interview Respondents

IU 13 Survey Respondents (2012-13)

IU 13 Interview Respondents (2010-13) *Note: some respondents interviewed more than once	
Implementation Leaders	**2** (plus 3 additional IU/state contacts)
District Administrators	**9**
Principals	**10**
Instructional Support Teachers	**8**
Teachers	**36**
Total	**68**

Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13: State and Regional Context

Pennsylvania State Context: Uneven Progress toward Implementing the CCSS

Despite the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 by the State Board of Education as part of the state's Race to the Top application and the approval of regulations in March 2013, legislators have been hesitant to implement them and the final approval process for the standards has encountered a number of hurdles along the way:[5]

- **May 2013:** Due to concerns voiced by both state legislators and the general public, Governor Corbett decided to delay the implementation of the standards until the fall, pending further state board action.[6]
- **June 2013:** A group of Republican legislators called for an end to the standards in Pennsylvania altogether.[7]
- **July 2013:** Pennsylvania education officials signaled to the two assessment consortia (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) that they were withdrawing from further participation with the tests.[8]
- **September 2013:** The state board approved revisions to Pennsylvania statute on academic standards and assessment (Chapter 4), changing the name of the standards to the Pennsylvania Core Standards to indicate that Pennsylvania was not simply adopting "national" standards but was, instead, adapting the Common Core State Standards using the Pennsylvania standards framework.[9]
- **November 2013:** The revisions to Chapter 4 were approved by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC).[10] The anticipated effective date of the regulation is January 2014.

Along with the Pennsylvania Core Standards, the state has also seen considerable legislative pushback to its new end-of-course tests in Algebra I, Literature, and Biology aligned with the standards. These Keystone Exams were administered for the first time during the 2012-13 school year, but did not receive final approval by the state board as graduation requirements until September 2013; the class of 2017 will be the first to be required to pass the tests.

In addition, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has been working since 2010 to develop an educator effectiveness system. Implementation of the first of the new field-tested systems – for classroom teachers – started on July 1, 2013. The next round – for non-teaching professionals and principals – will begin implementation on July 1, 2014. Portions of the criteria for teacher evaluation are based on the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching.[11]

Despite these challenges to the standards, Pennsylvania has developed a number of resources to assist districts in implementing the standards. Many of these resources are available through the Standards

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[5] http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/14/pa-commoncore-edu-idUSnPnDC77511+160+PRN20130314
[6] http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2013/05/corbett_orders_delay_in_common.html
[7] http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2013/06/lawmakers_call_for_quashing_th.html
[8] http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2013/06/pennsylvania_signals_departure_from_test_consortia.html
[9] http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/current_initiatives/19720/chapter_4/1120975
[10] http://www.irrc.state.pa.us/regulation_details.aspx?IRRCNo=2976
[11] The Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching is a set of components of instruction based on the constructivist view of learning and teaching and clustered into four domains of teaching responsibility. This Framework is incorporated into many district and state teacher evaluation systems. Source: http://www.danielsongroup.org/article.aspx?page=frameworkforteaching

Aligned System (SAS) portal.[12] Developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the portal provides tools to help implement the Pennsylvania Core Standards, such as the Pennsylvania Core Standards Instructional Frameworks, which include curriculum maps based on the standards in math and English language arts. The maps offer examples of content and topics that are aligned to the Pennsylvania Core Standards that can serve as guides for schools and districts to review, revise, and create their curricula using these as a foundation or reference. Also accessible from the portal are exemplary Literacy Design Collaborative tasks.

Training on the implementation of the Pennsylvania Core Standards has been often provided by the Intermediate Units (IUs), educational service agencies throughout the state. Each of these IUs has at least one staff member prepared to provide professional development on the new standards through state-developed professional development modules. These Intermediate Units have been central to the implementation of Pennsylvania Core Standards support services due, in part, to the limited staff capacity at the state department of education. IU 13 has emerged as a statewide leader in its approach to supporting effective standards implementation across districts and schools.

IU 13 Context and LDC Scale-Up: Role of the Educational Service Agency

Many states across the country have education service agencies, "public entities created by state statute to provide educational support programs and services to local schools and school districts within a given geographic area." According to the Association of Educational Service Agencies, 620 educational service agencies exist in 42 states.[13] In Pennsylvania, these agencies are called Intermediate Units (IUs). Twenty-nine IUs in the state are charged to provide "cost-effective, management-efficient programs to Pennsylvania school districts."[14] IU 13 serves the 22 public school districts in central Pennsylvania's Lancaster and Lebanon counties.

In July 2010, the Gates Foundation provided funding to IU 13 and two districts it serves – Elizabethtown Area School District and Lebanon School District – to form the Lancaster-Lebanon Literacy Design Collaborative. The LDC initiative was piloted during the 2010-11 school year in those two districts and each participating district involved one middle school team of ten educators, including classroom teachers, one or more instructional support teachers,[15] and a building administrator.[16]

Following the first year of implementation, the Gates Foundation provided additional support to IU 13 to expand the project to 14 districts in the region.[17] During 2011-12, each of these districts involved a launch team of six classroom teachers, an instructional support teacher, and an administrator from a district middle or high school. In 2012-13, a similar launch team from the remaining secondary school became involved.

For the 2013-14 school year, IU 13 received an extension to the grant – utilizing the funding they had been able to reserve. The IU continues to provide services to schools and districts already involved in the initiative while bringing new sites on board through a fee-for-service model.

The scale-up of the LDC initiative in IU 13 over the course of the two grant periods (2010-11 and 2011-12 through 2012-13) can be seen in Figure 2.

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[12] http://www.pdesas.org
[13] http://www.aesa.us/cms_files/resources/qa.pdf
[14] https://www.paiu.org/ius.php
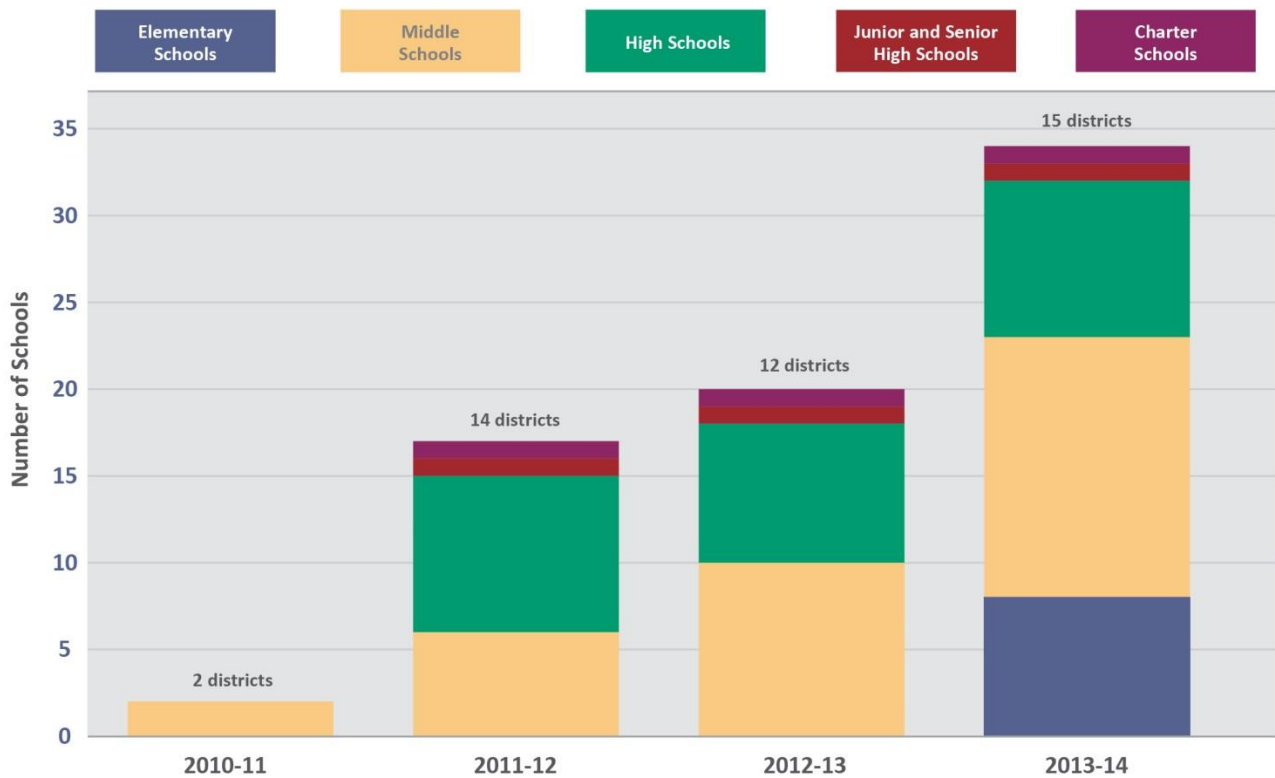[15] Instructional support teachers could include reading coaches, librarians, special education teachers, or teachers of English language learners.
[16] Building administrators leading LDC included principals and assistant principals. We will use principal to refer to these leaders as a group.
[17] http://www.iu13.org/CommunityRegionandState/inthenews/Pages/PressReleases.aspx#ldc

Figure 2. Number of Districts and Schools by Type Implementing LDC in IU 13: 2010-11 through 2013-14

Over the four years of the initiative, the total number of districts participating in LDC increased from two to 15. This includes two districts discontinuing use of LDC in 2012-13 and several new districts joining.

- The total number of schools participating in LDC during that time increased from two to 34. Middle schools have been the most active in the LDC initiative with 15 schools participating, followed by high schools (9) and elementary schools (8), along with one combined junior and senior high school. In addition, one charter school became involved in 2011-12 and has continued with the LDC initiative.
- During the 2013-14 school year, elementary schools were added to the LDC initiative for the first time through the expansion of fee-for-service contracts.

IU 13 by the Numbers

Figure 3 provides a demographic snapshot of the group of IU 13 districts that have been involved in LDC during any phase of the initiative. Range and either the median or average is provided for each indicator to reveal the variation among districts included in the initiative.

Figure 3. IU 13 Demographic Overview of Districts Participating in LDC[18]

Number of schools per District
Range: 3-20 schools
Average : 7

Number of Students per District[19]
Range: 1,360-11,158 students
Average: 4,209 students

Student Demographics of each District[20][21]

Range:

White 15.4% - 92.1%

African-American: 0.9% - 18.5%

Hispanic: 3.8% - 58.3%

Asian: 0.6% - 8.3%

Median:

White 82.8%   **Hispanic 9.3%**

African-American 3.7%   **Asian 2.2%**

Range: 18.6% - 82.4%
Median: 31.6%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch[22][23]

Range: 0.8% - 17%
Median: 1.8%
English Language Learner Population[24][25]

Range: 11.1% - 21%
Median: 15%
District special education population[26][27]

Range: 68.7% - 96%
Median: 91.5%
High School Graduation Rate[28]

Range: 93% -97%
Median: 95.9%
Student Attendance Rate[29]

Range: $10,683 - $16,764
Median: $12,928
Per Pupil Spending (2011-12)[30]

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[18] We excluded La Academia Charter School from this chart because it was an outlier in nearly all categories.

[19] http://paschoolperformance.org/SelectCounty (2012-13)

[20] http://paschoolperformance.org/SelectCounty (2012-13)

[21] http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_045.asp (2010-11)

[22] We report the median in categories for which the percentages, as opposed to the actual number of students, are reported on the state website. Percentages lend themselves to calculating the median as a measure of central tendency.

[23] http://paschoolperformance.org/SelectCounty (2012-13)

[24] http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/national_school_lunch (2012)

[25] http://paschoolperformance.org/SelectCounty (2012-13)

[26] http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/english_as_a_second_language/7529

[27] http://paschoolperformance.org/SelectCounty (2012-13)

[28] http://penndata.hbg.psu.edu/BSEReports/Data%20Preview/2012_2013/PDF_Documents/Speced_Quick_Report_State_Final.pdf (2012-13)

[29] http://paayp.emetric.net/ (2011-12)

[30] http://paayp.emetric.net/ (2011-12)

The data illustrate the following:

- Districts involved with LDC in IU 13 range widely in terms of the number of schools per district (three to 20), the number of students in the districts (1,360 to 11,158) and per-pupil spending ($10,683 to $16,746);
- The racial make-up of most participating IU 13 districts is predominately white and the median percentage receiving free- and reduced-price lunch is around 32%.
- Lebanon and Lancaster school districts are outliers in several categories. More than 80% of their students receive free- and reduced-price lunch and the majority of their students are non-white. Lancaster and Lebanon are the largest and fifth-largest participating districts respectively.
- While the student attendance rate varies little among participating districts, the graduation rate varies considerably: two districts have rates as low as 69%, three districts have rates above 95%, and most fall within the range of 87-94%.

IU 13's Approach to LDC Implementation: Effectively Balancing the Strengths and Limitations of an Educational Service Agency

IU 13 has a strong reputation within the region as an effective convener of teachers and administrators and a high-quality service provider. This reputation contributed to its credibility with educators and administrators across the many districts in its region. One district administrator illustrated this level of credibility: "They always implement everything with the greatest competence. IU 13 does everything with the highest level of integrity."

In its role as an educational service agency (ESA), the IU had built a track record of bringing together teachers and administrators to learn and collaborate around a number of instructional topics and reforms. The IU's expertise and credibility as an effective convener became an important part of the LDC roll-out. At the same time, IU 13's role as an ESA also meant that it lacked direct authority over districts and schools. This presented a unique challenge to LDC implementation. An IU staff member described this challenge: "We have no governance over school districts so the districts decide how LDC fits in."

In this context, the IU created an approach to LDC implementation that built on its strengths and addressed limitations related to its role.

Element 1. Leveraged Strengths: IU 13 took full advantage of its strengths as a respected regional entity responsible for delivering PLOs to districts and schools. Its reputation and credibility as a high-quality professional development provider enabled IU administrators and staff to provide strong leadership for LDC implementation across its region and encourage development of LDC across the state. The IU's strong initiative leadership allowed districts to focus on LDC instruction and school-level leadership. This configuration reflects the Association of Educational Service Agencies' description of the role of an effective ESA:

> *Educational service agencies provide high quality, cost-effective support programs for local schools and districts. By working cooperatively, districts can share costs rather than fund duplicative programs. This*

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[31] http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/financial_data_elements/7672 (2011-12)

enables local districts to direct more resources to the classroom and away from administrative and support costs.[32]

As an ESA, IU 13 was able to offer additional resources – partnerships, planning, professional development, expertise – beyond what individual districts could access or generate on their own. IU 13 also served as an "LDC translator," interpreting for districts how LDC fits into other state initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards and the Pennsylvania educator effectiveness system, while also helping districts translate policy into instructional practice. In this role, IU 13 worked with multiple districts at once to help them simultaneously launch LDC, allowing for more efficient implementation and scale-up across the region.

Element 2. Addressed limits and built local capacity: Since the IU did not have direct authority related to district programming or staff members, its role was to support the development of local capacity for LDC and root the work as strongly as possible in the district and school contexts in order to create conditions for success. This meant using the grant's framework to develop a the Letter of Understanding to provide specific guidance to district administrators and principals on how to structure the roll-out of LDC at the school level and on how principals would provide ongoing professional development and support to teachers. For example, IU 13 developed specific requirements at the school level for ongoing professional learning that would be coordinated by the principal, thereby ensuring additional training beyond what the IU directly provided and also building ownership for the initiative among school leaders.

By emphasizing high-quality professional development and local district and school leadership capacity, IU 13 built on its strengths and addressed its limitations as an educational service agency (ESA) to successfully implement LDC. Previous research on LDC has shown that, in order to successfully implement and scale up this initiative, the three conditions depicted in the Theory of Action (Leadership, Alignment, and PLOs) must be in place. Figure 4 illustrates how IU 13's role as an ESA shaped its approach to implementation and how the conditions were operationalized according to governance level (i.e., state, district, school).

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[32] http://www.aesa.us/cms_files/resources/qa.pdf

Figure 4. IU 13's Role as LDC Implementation Leader
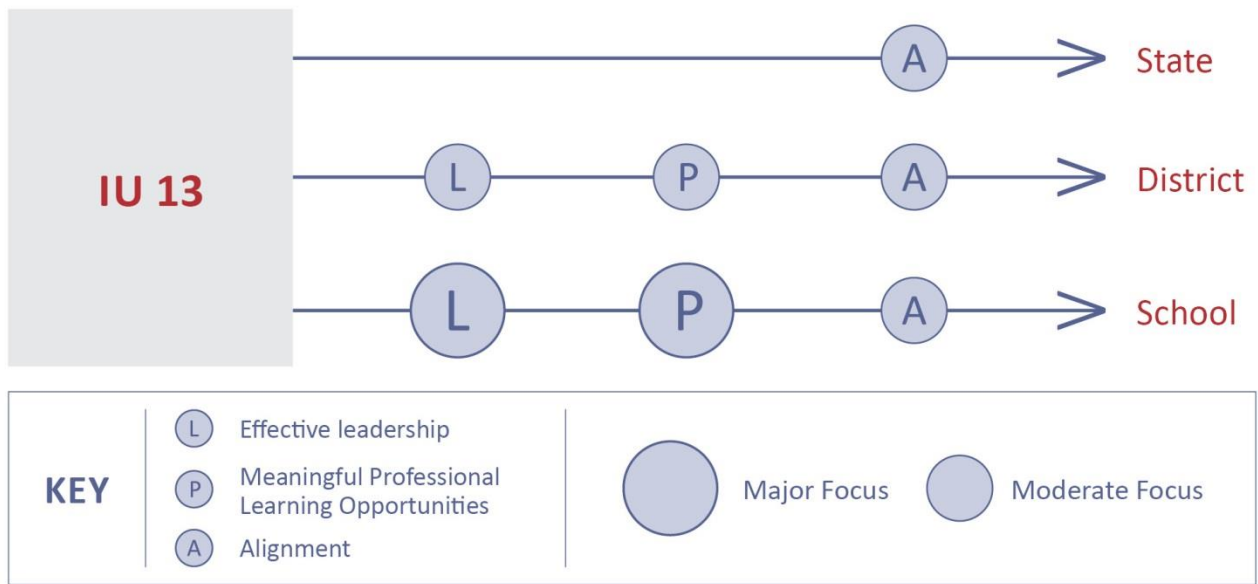
These conditions for robust implementation operated as follows in IU 13:

- **Effective leadership**: IU 13 focused on creating clear school and district leadership roles. Building LDC leadership capacity at the school level (principals, teachers, instructional support teachers, and others) was the primary focus, while district LDC leadership development was a more moderate emphasis.
- **Meaningful PLOs**: IU 13 regularly convened teachers and principals to learn about and collaborate on specific LDC implementation and scale-up topics, making school-level professional learning a major focus. District administrators also participated in LDC district leadership meetings and some professional development.
- **Alignment**: IU 13 used its convening and facilitator roles to (1) convey or "translate" the connections between LDC and state initiatives, such as the Pennsylvania Core Standards and the new teacher evaluation system and (2) serve as a resource on the alignment between LDC and district curricula.-Because much of the work of alignment takes place at the state (CCSS, teacher evaluation) or the district (curricula) level, alignment was a moderate focus for all three levels for IU 13.

The discussion that follows explores the ten strategies developed by IU 13 to implement the LDC initiative in the region. The strategies are organized by condition, starting with leadership (strategies 1-5), alignment (strategy 6) and professional learning opportunities (strategies 7-10). See Table 3.

Table 3. Strategies to Implement LDC

What the Conditions Looked Like in IU 13

Leadership

- **Strategy 1** - Develop clear implementation guidelines and role expectations for school and district administrators responsible for LDC.
- **Strategy 2** - Focus LDC implementation capacity at the school level.
- **Strategy 3** - Provide opportunities for teacher leadership regionally, statewide, and nationally.
- **Strategy 4** - Leverage strategic partnerships to provide additional LDC resources and bolster regional capacity.
- **Strategy 5** - Create feedback loops to refine implementation and address practitioner needs.

Alignment

- **Strategy 6** - Highlight LDC's alignment with state initiatives and district curricula.

Professional Learning Opportunities

- **Strategy 7** - Offer multiple and blended PLOs.
- **Strategy 8** - Integrate collaboration into both on-site and regional professional development sessions.
- **Strategy 9** - Make student work a central component of PLOs (PLOs).
- **Strategy 10** - Develop plans to sustain LDC funding and implementation.

For each of these strategies, we provide a concrete description of how IU 13 enacted the strategy; what its rationale was for adopting it; and what impact the strategy has had on implementation of LDC. Where appropriate, we also discuss any work still in progress to strengthen this strategy.

Condition 1: Leadership

The first condition required for successful LDC implementation is effective leadership at the state, regional, district, school and teacher levels. IU 13 structured LDC to include clear implementation guidelines and role expectations for school and district administrators responsible for LDC. It also focused on building capacity for participating teachers and across the IU by engaging partners and providing opportunities for teachers to become leaders in the initiative.

Strategy 1: Develop clear implementation guidelines and role expectations for school and district administrators responsible for LDC.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

In an effort to clarify expectations for district and building administrators regarding the implementation of the LDC initiative, IU 13 produced two documents: 1) a Letter of Understanding for LDC and 2) the 2012-13 Principal's Guide for LDC (specific to IU 13).

Letter of Understanding. The letter of understanding outlined the roles and responsibilities for both district and school administrators, as well as for IU 13 staff involved with LDC. It also described how schools would benefit from LDC, what services schools would receive and what schools would be required to provide to IU 13. The roles and responsibilities for district and school administrators are listed in Table 4. While, for the most part, district and school administrators had discrete responsibilities, both were required to participate in research activities and other requirements of the Gates Foundation.

Table 4. Roles and Responsibilities as Outlined in the IU 13 LDC Letter of Understanding

District Administrators	School Administrators
− Monitor the project and maintain appropriate documentation	− Recruit and lead a seven member LDC launch team to implement LDC in the school
− Work with [other] district administrators to identify two middle and/or high schools for participation in two-year project	− Participate in all professional development sessions held at IU 13 for LDC launch teams
− Work with Building Administrator to eliminate implementation roadblocks and barriers to success	− Participate in a regional summer showcase for the purpose of collaboratively sharing modules, student exemplars, and implementation successes and challenges
− **Participate in research activities and expectations of the Gates Foundation**	− Become a SAS registered user and access resources through the SAS portal
− Serve as the district liaison for the Lancaster-Lebanon IU 13 Literacy Design Collaborative (LLLDC)	− Work with District Point of Contact to eliminate implementation roadblocks and barriers to success
	− Coordinate substitute coverage for project teachers
	− Oversee task completion, maintain appropriate

District Administrators	School Administrators
	documentation, and submit information to District Point of Contact and/or IU 13
	− Coordinate 24 hours of ongoing professional development for the LDC launch team within the school
	− Communicate with IU 13 to troubleshoot issues and plan technical assistance
	− **Participate in research activities and expectations of the Gates Foundation**
	− Develop an LDC launch plan to implement LDC in the school

Principal Guide.[33] In the second year of the initiative, the IU developed an extensive principal's handbook for LDC that detailed expectations for each school involved in the initiative; principals' oversight role; and, principals' accountability for implementation time lines. The guide includes the following:

- Definition of LDC and introduction to the Initiative in IU 13
- Calendar of LDC Implementation Deadlines and Events for the 2012-13 Year
- Letter of Understanding
- Professional Development Log (template to log the professional development hours)
- Checklists for Cohort 1 and 2 Activities (teacher cohorts for Year 1 and Year 2 of LDC)
- Sample Launch Team Meeting Agendas
- LDC Launch Plan Template (asks schools to list and prioritize goals for LDC)
- Showcase Information (end of the year regional showcase to display LDC work)
- LDC Module Scoring Guide (jurying LDC modules for quality)

What was the rationale?

Ensure clarity regarding the requirements for effective LDC implementation. The IU works at the regional level and, thus, does not have a daily presence in schools or districts to monitor and support implementation. Therefore, the IU staff needed to design an efficient and effective way to communicate the roles and responsibilities of LDC participation to stakeholders in multiple districts and schools. Clarifying expectations up front helped district and school staff to understand what was required of them for successful LDC implementation. As one IU 13 staff member explained, "Everybody has roles and responsibilities and signed on to them from the beginning." IU staff also wanted to make sure that everyone was clear on the level of commitment required to successfully implement LDC: "LDC is a heavy lift, so people need to understand what this is going to take. Leaders need to understand what the commitment is and not feel lied to. So you need a letter of understanding that is substantial."

Support consistent implementation despite lack of authority. The IU does not have a direct supervisory role with district staff, so IU staff clearly defined roles in the Letter of Understanding in

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order to ensure more consistent implementation and "accountability for results that live up to the vision of LDC" (IU 13 Staff Member). An IU 13 administrator explained that they "spent a lot of time working with principals and assistant superintendents so they would understand LDC, the expectations, and hold their people accountable." Another IU 13 staff member explained the relationship between IU 13 and the districts: "We're the service agency and we try to build capacity in ways that we have control over. We try to provide opportunities for teachers to have leadership for things that we're coordinating. When it comes to districts, we don't have any jurisdiction over them."

Address requests for additional direction. Despite the creation of the Letter of Understanding, principals requested further clarity on their responsibilities after Year 1 of the initiative. In addition, principals noted that they did not have enough ownership of implementation, since much of the work in the two pilot districts during Year 1 was led by the central office. This feedback resulted in the development of a principal guide for the 2012-13 school year that provided more detailed information on expectations for the year.

What was the impact of the strategy?

District administrators and principals clearly understood their implementation roles. They reported that the IU was effective in making its expectations for LDC implementation clear:

> *I thought it was extremely well communicated. They were very up front about what would be required.*

> *The expectations were communicated by the letter of understanding and there were point of contact meetings throughout the year.*

> *I think they did a great job of communicating regularly. The principal guide was helpful and I used it.*

> *As [IU 13] grew over time in providing their resources and communication, everyone got a much clearer understanding of what we were doing.*

Due to the regional role of the IU, it was essential to establish the roles and responsibilities of district and school leaders in the initiative. Clear expectations laid the groundwork for developing the kind of local engagement and capacity-building that the IU sought. This was especially true of their work with school leaders. The next strategy explores an additional impact of this clarity, namely the high level of understanding and involvement among principals in implementing and supporting the LDC initiative.

Strategy 2: Focus LDC implementation capacity at the school level.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

The IU staff began the LDC initiative by engaging superintendents to recruit pilot school sites. After Year 1, districts' role in the LDC initiative typically focused on supporting schools in use of the tools, rather than leading LDC implementation. At the school level, the IU's strategy was composed of two key components: 1) the development of a strong principal role; and, 2) the Letter of Understanding requirement that each school have a launch team.

Strong school principal role. The IU designated principals as having the primary responsibility for LDC implementation via the Letter of Understanding. *District* responsibilities focused on overall monitoring of the project, while *principals* were required to immerse themselves in LDC content and in ongoing implementation. For example, principals were required to attend **all** professional development sessions sponsored by the IU along with their teachers, and also to coordinate an additional 24 hours of onsite professional development and the IU's technical assistance visits. This implementation model produced a more intense level of principal involvement in LDC implementation activities than in other LDC research sites.

IU staff described the principal as the "lynchpin" of the initiative, explaining that it was essential for school level administrators to "push LDC and become the champions of the initiative." IU 13 staff described their emphasis on supporting and "growing principals as instructional leaders":

> *We tried to put in a whole bunch of supports for building administrators because they have so much on their plate. We wanted to support our administrators so they could champion LDC. For them [building administrators] to own LDC implementation, they needed to be knowledgeable so they could provide the support their teachers needed.*

LDC School Launch Teams. The IU guidelines required school building leaders to create interdisciplinary launch teams in each school to pilot the tools, provide support for the initiative and informal leadership to their colleagues. Launch teams needed to include two English, two social studies, and two science teachers, as well as one instructional support teacher (e.g., librarian, special education teacher, reading coach). The IU provided general guidelines for school launch teams but did not specify specific roles and goals for team members. For example, launch team responsibilities included meeting regularly "to share ideas, work through challenges and celebrate successes" (IU 13 2012-13 Principal's Guide for LDC). At the end of Years 1 and 2, launch teams represented their schools at a regional showcase to promote the LDC work.

What was the rationale?

Focus on where instruction happens. When explaining why the IU focused so strongly at the school level, an IU staff member stated: "The IU philosophy is to focus on the people closest to the work. You need all the levels, but we generally try to put a huge emphasis on where the work is going to be." This rationale was not specific to LDC; it was also common across services provided by the IU.

Create a core of strong school champions. The IU wanted to move from a pilot led by the central office to an initiative where principals would serve as the key drivers of daily implementation, while the district leadership focused on providing the overall vision and resources needed. An IU 13 staff

member explained, "Work goes much better with principal understanding and support." Further, the launch teams were designed to promote the initiative by including "highly effective teachers who will help spread LDC in their school" (2012-13 Principal's Guide for LDC (IU 13)).

What was the impact of the strategy?

More school administrators understood the LDC Framework in IU 13 than elsewhere. As can be seen in Figure 5, higher percentages of IU 13 survey respondents agreed that principals understood the LDC framework than did survey respondents in all LDC districts studied in 2013 combined.

Figure 5. Perceptions of School Administrators' Understanding of LDC: IU 13 and Overall Survey Respondents
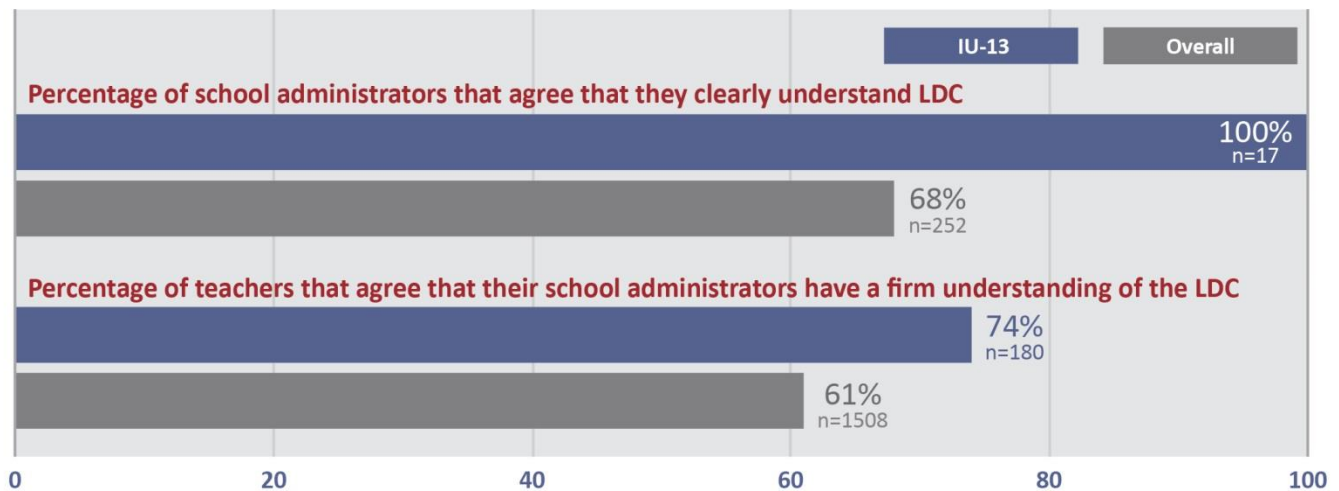
- All of the responding principals in IU 13 agreed that they clearly understood LDC as compared with approximately two-thirds of principals from all survey sites.
- A higher percentage of IU 13 teachers agreed that their school administrators have a firm understanding of the LDC framework as compared with teachers from all survey sites.

Principals were more involved in LDC implementation in IU 13 than in other implementation sites. In most LDC sites, district administrators played a larger role than school administrators. In IU 13, however, principals played a larger role in LDC than did district administrators. The survey data below indicates that principals in IU 13 were involved in LDC implementation activities to a much larger degree than principals in the overall survey sample (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. LDC Responsibilities as Reported by Principals: IU 13 and Overall Comparison

Legend: IU-13 (n=17), Overall (n=272)

- Developing LDC modules with teachers: 41% (IU-13), 15% (Overall)
- Providing professional development to teacher leaders: 59% (IU-13), 36% (Overall)
- Providing professional development to teachers: 71% (IU-13), 43% (Overall)
- Providing feedback to teachers on the use of modules: 71% (IU-13), 55% (Overall)
- Monitoring overall implementation of LDC: 94% (IU-13), 71% (Overall)
- Observing instruction of LDC modules: 94% (IU-13), 80% (Overall)

- A higher percentage of principals in IU 13 reported being involved in a range of LDC implementation activities, compared with principals across the survey sample (n=17 for IU 13 and n=272 overall).
- In addition, only 35% of principals in IU 13 reported that they gave responsibility for LDC to someone else, as compared to 75% across the survey sample of all principals. This may indicate a higher sense of ownership among principals in IU 13 (n=17 for IU 13 and n=273 overall).

Interview data from IU 13 school and district administrators aligned with survey data, emphasizing the IU's strong LDC focus at the school level. Further, according to our interview respondents, the involvement of district administrators varied by site within IU 13.

For example, one middle school principal explained that "IU staff appeared to be very school team focused, and their level of support to our school team was very instrumental." At the district level, an assistant superintendent stated that "there is ownership at the school level because the IU puts responsibilities on the principals, who have to lead the teachers."

What work is still in progress?

Achieving a consistent level of district ownership for the initiative. While IU 13 staff recognized that there "has to be leadership involvement at all levels," the explicit district-level responsibilities outlined by IU 13 were limited regarding direct involvement in professional development or implementation. District leaders took on varying levels of ownership of the initiative. While some district administrators moved beyond the responsibilities listed in the Letter of Understanding to become more deeply involved in LDC (e.g., conducting LDC walkthroughs with their principals), this was not the case across districts. Strong district ownership is necessary for the long-

term sustainability of the initiative, especially with the large number of curricular initiatives districts have to consider and implement on a regular basis.

Using launch teams more consistently across schools and districts to support and sustain implementation. While the launch team structure was important for implementing the LDC tools, after the team's initial year of LDC implementation, team members did not play the kind of ongoing role in initiative planning and development that the IU had envisioned. An IU 13 staff member confirmed this variation in the use of LDC launch teams across schools: "In terms of spreading the work, I'm not sure all teams have launched." Similarly, some district and school respondents did not see the teams as central to LDC leadership. However, individual launch team members went on to play larger roles in later years – as described in our teacher leadership section – and some schools and districts are beginning to use their launch team members in more systematic ways.

Strategy 3: Provide opportunities for teacher leadership regionally, state-wide, and nationally.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

Professional growth opportunities for teacher leaders. The IU considered a range of factors when identifying teachers for leadership roles, including teachers' interest in leadership, the need for a teacher LDC champion in a particular school or district, whether teacher characteristics matched a partner's needs, and their goal of distributing leadership opportunities across districts.

The IU then connected these identified teacher leaders with regional, state, and national trainings and conferences provided by LDC partner organizations. Examples include the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) conference, trainings on the Teacher Moderated Scoring Systems (TeaMSS), and meetings of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies. Beginning in Year 1, IU 13 staff selected individual teacher leaders in an "organic way" based on their LDC work and involvement.

Participation in these types of trainings and conferences enabled teacher leaders to develop expertise in areas such as creating and jurying modules and scoring student work, thereby enhancing their LDC knowledge and skills that they could then share with educators in their districts. A district instructional coach confirmed the IU's overall approach to finding and developing teacher leaders:

> *IU 13 did a good job of providing training, feedback and resources, answering questions, and communicating regularly. They did a good job of finding people's strengths and then giving them opportunities based on these strengths by sending teachers to conferences and working with them to share information with other groups in the district. This also united the staff by making people less compartmentalized.*

Teacher leaders as resources in the region and the districts. The IU also provided strong LDC teachers with opportunities for new roles at the regional and district levels. One IU 13 staff member explained that "one way that we use teacher leaders is to take experienced folks and have them help with regional trainings."

These teacher leaders provided support and training to their peers in various ways during regional professional development sessions and in their local districts and schools as well, including:

- Providing feedback to teachers on module development;
- Training faculty members on LDC in their individual school sites;
- Acting as LDC "buddies" to new teachers; and,
- Serving as informal resources to teachers first learning how to use the LDC Framework.

What was the rationale?

Increase teacher knowledge in order to build capacity for regional and district-level professional learning. The inclusion of IU 13 teachers in trainings and conferences outside the IU provided additional LDC training capacity. Teacher leaders also played a more active role at regional LDC trainings sponsored by the IU and in their districts. One principal linked this increased teacher capacity with schools' ability to sustain the work, stating that, "in terms of sustainability and building capacity internally, we will use these folks who have been trained as leaders."

Use teacher growth and success as an indicator of IU effectiveness. IU staff described external recognition of teacher accomplishments as an indicator of their own success. They believed that the effectiveness of these LDC teacher leaders was a good gauge of how well the IU was leading LDC implementation. One IU staff member explained this perspective: "Some of our teachers are being recognized in many different ways for their implementation of LDC. We feel like proud parents many times. We know we're successful as an IU when our districts shine."

What was the impact of the strategy?

Teachers became better equipped in LDC implementation. Teacher leaders from IU 13 participated in and presented at trainings and meetings outside IU 13 and became better equipped in LDC implementation. This built their LDC knowledge and experience, positioning them for greater leadership roles and improving their individual skills. For example, an IU 13 staff member described these opportunities for LDC knowledge development and networking:

> *Now we have scoring leaders trained by Measured Progress and the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). A teacher and an instructional leader were flown to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) conference to present.*

Teachers became resources in their own districts. While not a common role across all districts and generally informal, experienced LDC teachers sometimes served as resources in their own districts, providing training to other teachers or presenting at school or district meetings. One high school principal described this role: "Teachers who are launch team members act as an informal resource, presenting at faculty meetings and supporting other teachers as needed."

A teacher confirmed this informal role in schools: "I don't have an official role. I'm more of a support role for the newer teachers. They are constantly bouncing questions off me."

In a few cases, teachers took on formal leadership roles or championed LDC through their existing roles, such as department head. In interviews, respondents said that it was especially effective to hear directly from other teachers about their work with LDC. One teacher explained: "The most beneficial part is talking to people who have done it. Whenever I have a question, I talk to an experienced LDC teacher. You can talk to somebody who is in charge of LDC all you want but they have never taught it in middle school."

What work is still in progress?

More formal development of teacher leaders. While the IU modeled teacher leadership at the regional level through the utilization of experienced teachers in training sessions, teachers and administrators reported that the use of teacher leaders to support their peers in schools and districts was often unstructured and varied across districts. An IU staff member explained that the "development of teacher leaders was organic." This stands in contrast to the clear roles and responsibilities assigned to school and district administrators involved in LDC by the IU.

Utilization of teacher leaders within districts. Most IU teachers surveyed who worked with an experienced LDC colleague to develop and teach modules (64%, n=45) reported that it helped "a great deal" or a "fair amount." However, only one-third of survey respondents had worked with an experienced LDC colleague. The limited collaboration reported here provides an opportunity for experienced teachers to play a larger support role. One principal reported that "we haven't used teacher leaders as fully as we should." But another district administrator reported planning to use experienced LDC teachers in the fall of 2014 to train new teachers.

Strategy 4: Leverage strategic partnerships to provide additional LDC resources and bolster regional capacity.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

Partnerships with multiple organizations. IU 13 established numerous partnerships with regional and national organizations involved in LDC. The IU engaged partners to provide a variety of training opportunities and resources in the region, often in exchange for professional learning services provided by the IU to these groups. An IU 13 staff member explained that "we trade services with everybody we can." Key LDC partnerships included the following organizations:

- **California University of Pennsylvania** was interested in receiving training in LDC, so in exchange for access to training and materials, they agreed to work with IU 13 to develop webinars on LDC.
- **Eduplanet 21,** a social networking site for educators, is working with IU 13 through the Striving Readers (Keystones to Opportunity) grant to host online professional development, including sessions on LDC.[34]
- **Measured Progress** (a developer of K-12 student assessments) and **SCALE** (a technical assistance provider focused on assessment scoring) trained teachers from IU 13 on scoring LDC student work and jurying LDC modules. In turn, some of these teachers presented on that work at a national SREB conference. One goal of the training was for participants to provide turnaround training and support in their districts.
- **MetaMetrics,** a developer of academic achievement measures and technology resources, provided training to IU 13 teachers at regional training sessions on the use of Module Creator[35] to design LDC modules.
- **National Paideia Center**, an organization that encourages rigorous education for all students, offered a pilot program with voluntary and free training to teachers on how to use the Socratic Seminar format for discussing text within the LDC framework.

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[34] The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program is a federal initiative that provides grants to states to develop a comprehensive approach to improving literacy outcomes for children.
[35] Module Creator is an online platform for designing LDC instructional units.

- **SREB**, a national non-profit that works with 16 southern member states to improve public education, established a partnership with the IU 13 Development and Training Specialist responsible for LDC in the region, to provide technical assistance on their implementation of LDC.
- **Teaching Channel**, a video showcase of teaching practices accessible via television and Internet, has worked with IU 13 on LDC through the Deeper Learning Labs (DLL) Project.[36]

What was the rationale?

Enhance LDC resources and strengthen overall IU professional development capacity. IU 13's goal in partnering with other organizations was to increase the availability of LDC implementation resources and broaden the range of the IU's expertise. One IU staff member explained this approach in multiple ways: "It's my intentional strategy to be the partner that everyone wants to partner with…We are trading with everybody we can get and trying to bring outside expertise knowing that capacity builds capacity. It's an investment."

The IU also sought out partnerships to increase the quality of LDC professional learning services and implementation work. One IU 13 staff member explained that "partners are helpful in strengthening the quality of the work."

Create opportunities to collaborate with others about LDC implementation. IU 13 generally utilizes "collaboration and networking through 'job-alike' sessions with colleagues" as a common feature in the professional development they provide.[37] In applying this practice to the LDC initiative, IU 13 looked for opportunities to collaborate with other organizations to expand their expertise in LDC implementation. An IU 13 staff member described the benefits of collaborating with multiple partners: "[LDC provided] different kinds of people to collaborate with – many people needed a local playground and we were seeking low cost or no cost expertise and different ways of thinking. There were things that other people needed and things that we needed."

What was the impact of the strategy?

Partnerships enhanced the services provided to districts and schools. Connections to strategic partners outside the region expanded the resources the IU could provide to schools and districts and improved the quality of IU 13 training and technical assistance. For example:

- IU 13 had a strong partnership with MetaMetrics and a much higher percentage of IU 13 teachers (97%) reported that professional development sessions included training on and use of module creator to build modules than in the survey sample overall (71%).
- Other partners worked individually with IU 13 staff as well as small sub-groups of teachers within the IU. Those teachers developed resources and skills that were then available to larger groups of teachers.

Partnerships expanded the internal capacity of the IU itself. Opportunities to work with national organizations provided the IU with access to new ideas and a broader range of resources than would have been available otherwise. An IU staff member explained these opportunities as "a side benefit that we got from these partnerships": "[LDC] has been a great way to open us up to a broader

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[36] Deeper Learning Labs (DLL) is a digital form of professional development for teachers to assist them in improving their practice.
[37] Intermediate Unit 13 website at http://www.iu13.org/EducatorsandAdministrators/Pages/default.aspx

range of partners and see bigger things and see other leaders in education. This has opened us up to think tanks and new ideas, and that has been a side benefit that we got out of it."

Strategy 5: Create feedback loops to refine implementation and address practitioner needs.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

Throughout the initiative, IU 13 created feedback loops and collected data for the purpose of improving LDC implementation and supports. IU 13 accomplished this goal by facilitating the following:

Formal and informal feedback mechanisms. An IU staff person described the approach as "360 feedback," including both formal survey feedback and informal feedback at face-to-face meetings. The IU collected post-training evaluations after each regional convening. They also surveyed teachers, principals, and building administrators at the beginning and end of each school year. In addition, they solicited feedback during technical assistance visits, meetings with participating principals (e.g., after regional trainings or virtual meetings) and during informal interactions with participants.

Adjustments to expectations and professional development. The IU made a range of refinements based on teacher and administrator feedback over the course of the initiative including:

- *Developing the Principal Guide in Year 2* based on school administrators' requests for additional direction on roles and responsibilities. An IU 13 staff person explained the genesis of the principal guide:

    We created, at the principals' request, (…) a principal's guide. They really wanted something like that and that seems to help them. It's like a little checklist: 'have you talked to your team about how it's going?, have you thought about arranging for them to observe each other's classrooms?' Literally [it is] a month by month guide.

- *Revising the professional development structure.* Examples include:

    o Dropping "virtual office hours" and focusing more on webinars from Year 2 to Year 3;
    o Moving from four to three days of regional training, and back to four, based on the realization that three days was not enough to develop modules; and,
    o Changing use of webinars. Due to varied teacher response to webinars, IU 13 staff made adjustments for 2013-14. "We've reduced the webinars to a few key popular topics. We also made them into quick, video tutorials that are in short segments."

- *Changing the expectations for module implementation.* For example, they adjusted the number of modules experienced LDC teachers created. An IU staff member explained: "The grant said teachers would create two modules each year, but experienced teachers also wanted to revise theirs and said that two was too much. So we changed the expectation to one or more." The IU also adjusted the time window for implementation, lengthening the time between the regional trainings on module development and scoring student work, so that teachers would have more time to teach the modules.

What was the rationale?

Refine LDC implementation through participant feedback. Feedback from participants provided insight into successes and challenges that the IU could use to make implementation adjustments. As an IU administrator noted: "I heard many times from IU staff members that they did something a certain way during the first year and that when teachers told them it didn't work, they decided to try something different for the next year." An LDC staff person explained: "We recognize and value the wisdom of practitioners and want to improve our support so that LDC is their co-built framework which is continually improving. Teachers and principals are closest to the work and we want to learn from them."

Enhance LDC Sustainability. Refining LDC implementation and supports can enhance sustainability and success. An IU 13 staff person noted that past initiatives related to literacy across the content areas "have always fallen a bit short in the teachers' eyes of being a good fit. If LDC isn't a good fit, it will not survive and thrive." Thus, soliciting teacher and administrator feedback and using it to improve LDC implementation increases the initiative's sustainability.

What was the impact of the strategy?

Participants reported that the responsiveness of IU 13 staff facilitated implementation across diverse districts. Overall, participants said the IU was very responsive to any issues that arose. Some cited ways the IU tweaked their services to meet the needs of their individual district, for example, by being flexible on the number of people involved in trainings in larger districts. A principal said that IU staff members were "very accessible; whenever we had any questions, they got back to us right away." A district administrator from a different district confirmed this level of responsiveness: "They made themselves available and that was very important. It's what I call 'just in time' learning, right when we needed it."

Feedback channels led to changes and ongoing improvement. Participants recognized that the IU was using their feedback to improve the initiative. One district administrator said: "I would say they made changes based on feedback. When they were here, they asked for feedback in person and they also asked for feedback through surveys and meetings." One principal noted that at a regional training session, "the IU described how they had modified their training based on feedback from the previous year." Two instructional coaches noted that IU staff frequently sought feedback on webinar topics.

In interviews, some administrators specified changes the IU made in response to feedback. But others, especially teachers, were not consistently aware of specific changes or refinements. In part, this could be the case because training and intensive involvement with the IU is structured to focus on one cohort at a time, so some participants may not have been aware of changes made for the next cohort in response to their own cohort's input.

Condition 2: Alignment

IU 13's position between the state and the district levels provides it with a unique vantage point from which to inform and align education policy. The IUs have regular and direct access to the state department of education in a way that districts do not, allowing them to help communicate alignment between LDC and state requirements to districts and schools.

Strategy 6: Highlight LDC's alignment with state initiatives and district curricula.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

Connecting LDC with state initiatives. IU 13 worked to integrate LDC with other state initiatives in two key ways: (1) by articulating the links between LDC and the initiatives; and, (2) by building LDC into larger projects and proposals.

- *Articulating links between LDC and state initiatives:*

  o *Pennsylvania Core Standards:* When LDC participants met for the IU's regional trainings, IU 13 staff members emphasized that LDC could help teachers and districts operationalize Pennsylvania's version of the Common Core State Standards. They also communicated how LDC could increase student engagement in reading, writing, and research.
  o *Teacher evaluation system:* LDC is closely aligned with certain aspects of the Charlotte Danielson Framework, which is the basis of portions of the new teacher evaluation system in Pennsylvania. IU 13 outlined the relationship between that framework and aspects of the LDC framework during regional trainings, technical assistance visits to local districts, and webinars.

- *Building LDC into project proposals:*

  o *Striving Readers Grant (Keystones to Opportunity):* The LDC tasks were included as one of nine areas of professional development provided to all districts receiving five-year Striving Readers Grant in Pennsylvania.

Connecting LDC with district curricula. During on-site technical assistance and through webinars, IU staff "connected the dots" between LDC and district curricular initiatives already in place in the schools and districts, such as Collins Writing and Reading Apprenticeship.

Connecting LDC with state assessments. In addition to connecting LDC to the Common Core State Standards and district curricula, IU 13 staff communicated the connection between the LDC Framework and state assessments such as the Keystone end-of-course exams and the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). However, the messaging on these connections with state assessments was limited. This may have been due to the fact that end-of-course exams were still being developed and piloted during most of the grant and the PSSA was also likely to change or be replaced as the CCSS is more fully implemented.

What was the rationale?

Create buy-in for LDC. IU 13 staff emphasized the importance of creating buy-in to LDC to build understanding of its value in the context of many other state and district initiatives. IU staff reported that it was helpful to use the language of the established curriculum to explain how LDC could fit into what schools were already doing.

Compensate for IU 13's lack of authority over district operations. Because the IU had no budgetary or accountability levers to mandate the use of LDC, IU staff needed to communicate in

different ways how LDC could support the implementation of existing requirements. When possible, they also served as a resource to facilitate embedding LDC in other initiatives.

What was the impact of the strategy?

Strong teacher buy-in. IU 13 teachers we surveyed reported that LDC aligned with the CCSS, state assessments, and school curricula, as can be seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Percentage of IU 13 Teachers Reporting Alignment among LDC and Standards, Assessments, and Curricula
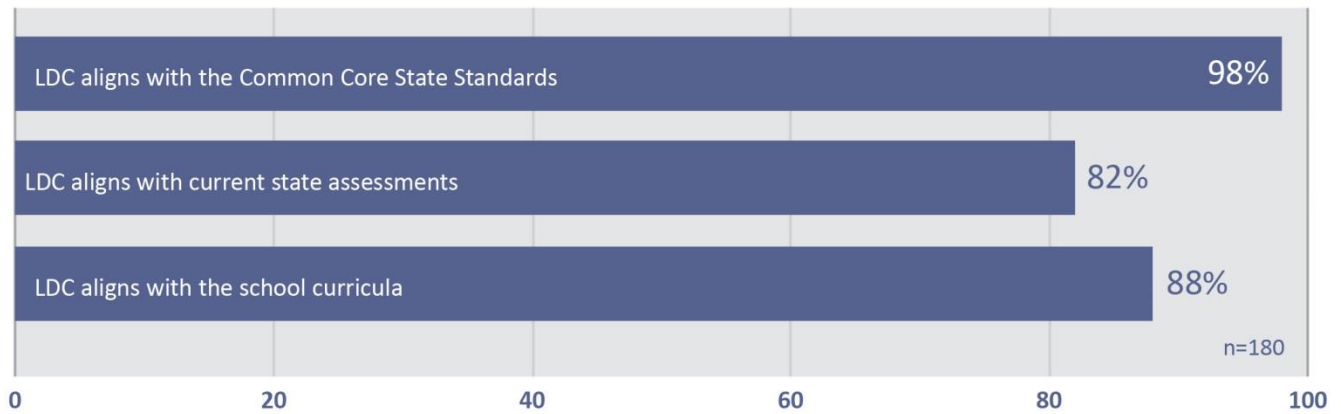
- Nearly all IU 13 teachers surveyed (98%) agreed that the LDC framework is aligned with the CCSS.
- A strong majority of IU 13 teachers also agreed that LDC is aligned with the current state assessment system in Pennsylvania (82%), despite the lack of emphasis during LDC trainings.
- Most IU 13 teachers also reported that LDC aligned with their local school curricula (88%).

In IU 13 fieldwork interviews, teachers elaborated on their perceptions of alignment:

- *CCSS alignment:* One teacher stated that she "really liked how LDC is bringing us into the Common Core" while another explained that "it does align with the Common Core State Standards that we're supposed to meet."

- *State assessment alignment:* When asked about LDC alignment with state assessments, one teacher explained that "it definitely lines up very closely; it's important and this is just one more way that we can help those students that aren't achieving proficient scores."

- *Curricular alignment:* When asked about the alignment between LDC and district curricular initiatives, a teacher explained that his school used Collins writing "which I think is very similar. I think it fits really well."

Further, 92% of teachers surveyed reported that they received training in the LDC modules specifically as a way to implement the CCSS.

What work is still in progress?

Messaging about the connection between LDC and the teacher evaluation system. Despite the IU's efforts to emphasize the connections between LDC and the teacher evaluation system, interviewees in only one district reported getting this message. As the teacher evaluation system continues to be rolled out over the next two years, it will be important to find ways to make the alignment between LDC and the Charlotte Danielson Framework clear to a greater portion of teachers and administrators in order to underscore the value of LDC implementation.

Addressing misunderstandings about alignment of LDC and district curricula. The role of the IU as a support structure outside of the district does not allow for the IU to make decisions regarding the selection and implementation of district curricula. IU staff tried to make connections between LDC and district curricula via technical assistance visits to individual districts and webinars available to all participants. However, participation in webinars was voluntary and focus on LDC-curricula alignment was only one of many possibilities for technical assistance, so the frequency of addressing this topic varied across districts. This process did not allow for a consistent focus on this alignment across districts, leaving some gaps and misunderstandings about LDC's relationship to curricula.

Condition 3: Professional Learning Opportunities

Providing professional development and other adult learning supports is central to IU 13's mission. IU staff built on their deep knowledge of their region's districts and on their experience facilitating professional development, to shape and continually adjust LDC PLOs.

Strategy 7: Offer multiple and blended PLOs.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

Transition to a blended model of professional development. With only two districts participating in Year 1, IU staff offered high levels of hands-on professional development, including frequent school visits, observations, and coaching. A larger grant from the Gates Foundation in Years 2 and 3 supported expansion to 16 districts. IU staff knew they could not continue to be involved in such a hands-on way when the initiative expanded to a larger number of districts. Therefore, the IU created a blended model, along with clear expectations and resources to support professional learning and implementation. As one IU 13 staff member said, *"*When I talk about blended, I mean multiple things.*"* The model blended:

- virtual with face-to-face professional development; and,
- region-wide, cross-district, structured professional development with school-based customized technical assistance.

Most of the PLOs in Years 1 and 2 focused on school launch teams, which were primarily composed of teachers in the first year of LDC implementation. Opportunities available included:

- *Regional trainings*: Three to four one-day professional development sessions hosted at the IU office focused on developing modules and scoring student work.
- *Technical assistance*: IU staff visited each school with a first-year LDC teacher cohort (usually one school per district) for two days, negotiating the focus and timing of the visits with the school principal. Visits focused on a wide range of topics, including collaborative scoring, support for module planning and implementation, walk-throughs with administrators, and delivery of topic-specific professional development, such as reading and writing strategies or linking LDC to other instructional initiatives.
- *On-site professional development:* Schools were required to provide 24 hours of on-site professional development, coordinated by the principal, on topics such as debriefing implementation, ongoing planning, and examining student work.
- *Virtual professional development:* In 2012-13, the IU offered 15 different webinars. Webinars could be watched live or recorded. Participation was voluntary and could take place individually or as part of the 24 hours of professional development.

Transfer some professional responsibilities to the sites by setting clear expectations and providing support and resources to meet those expectations: With the larger grant in Year 2 and the increase in the number of sites, IU 13 staff knew they could not provide ongoing leadership for all professional learning needs at each site. They built in specific expectations for principal leadership of professional development at the school level, including mechanisms to monitor participation, and also offered resources and support. The IU communicated expectations for teacher participation and school

administrator involvement and leadership in a Project Implementation Plan. The Principal Guide contained a range of resources, including calendars, professional development logs for submission to the IU, and suggestions for on-site professional development, including sample agendas for team meetings and protocols for processes such as sharing successes or examining student work.

What was the rationale?

Create a sustainable and effective approach to professional development. The pilot year model of personal coaching by IU staff was too labor-intensive to sustain as the initiative grew, so the professional development approach needed to be affordable yet still maintain high quality. As one IU staff member explained, "we're trying to make the training model as lean and high quality as we can."

Offer choices for participants. The IU developed a selection of webinars that enabled teams to select topics that met their needs. While the regional trainings used structured agendas to address topics the IU identified as central to understanding and implementing LDC, school teams were able to request specific topics for technical assistance visits.

What was the impact of the strategy?

High percentages of IU 13 teachers participated in a range of PLOs, with markedly higher webinar participation than other sites. Figure 8 compares participation in a range of PLOs by teachers in IU 13 and by teacher survey respondents from all RFA survey sites.

Figure 8. IU 13 Teacher Participation in PLOs
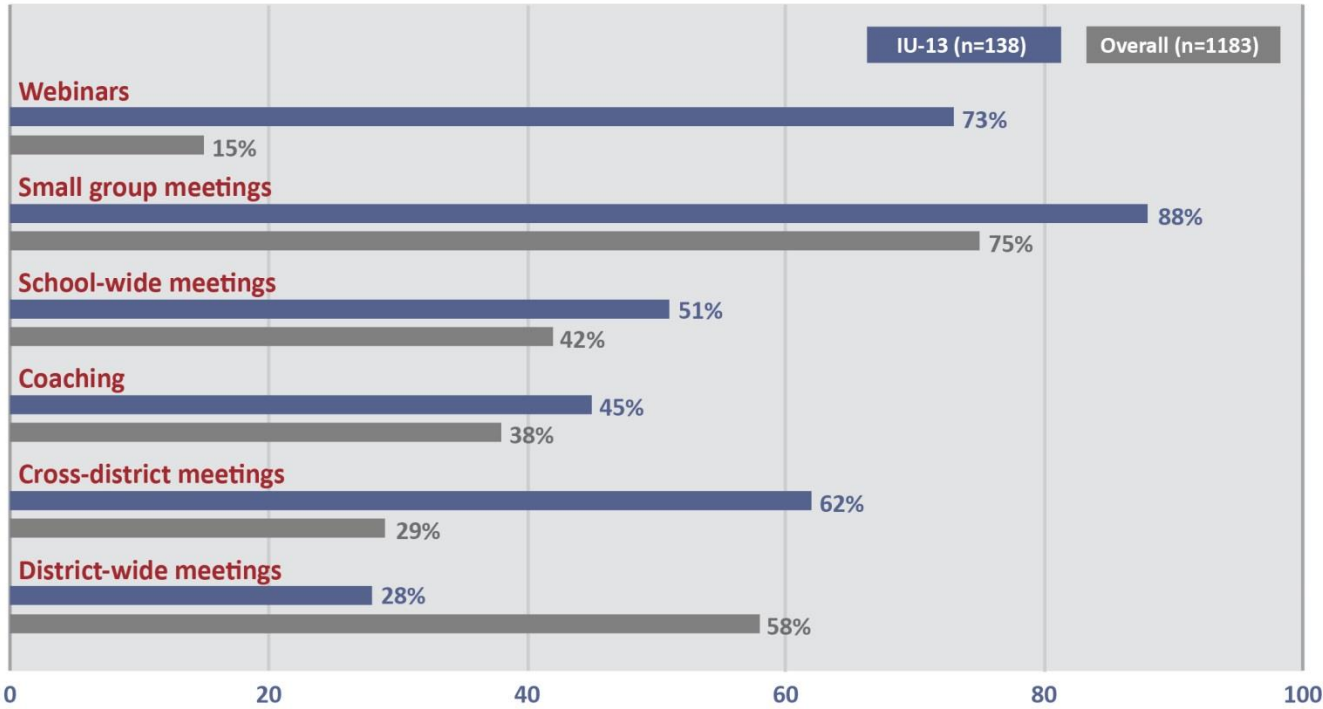
- IU 13's strategy resulted in high participation in virtual professional development, with 73% of IU teachers reporting that they had participated in a webinar, compared with 15% of all survey respondents.

- This trend was mirrored among administrators, with 94% of IU principals (n=17) reporting webinar participation, compared with 22% of all principals (n=205) who completed the survey.
- Reflecting the IU's provision of regional training and its requirement for LDC launch teams and school-level professional development coordinated by the principal, IU 13 survey respondents were *more* likely than all survey respondents to report participating in cross-district meetings, school-wide meetings, and small group meetings.
- Reflecting the lack of focus on district-level professional development, IU 13 survey respondents were *less* likely than all survey respondents to report participating in district-wide meetings. This is not surprising given that many IU districts were still scaling up from one to two or more schools at the time of the survey.

Participants described IU 13's professional development approach as effective and targeted to their needs. In interviews, participants elaborated on the benefits of the IU's blended approach to professional development. One principal said, "We were able to ask them to do something more specific and tailored to teachers' needs when they visited." Another principal appreciated the fact that IU staff provided "immediate feedback" to teachers during site visits.

One district administrator expressed appreciation of the variety of professional development opportunities available: "The blend is what was the most appropriate. There was a need for face-to-face and collaboration but the webinars were also positive. We could pick and choose based on where our teachers were struggling. The variety of what was provided was the strength."

Moreover, teachers and administrators consistently praised IU staff's responsiveness and accessibility. The two IU LDC leads provided their cell phone numbers and Twitter and Skype IDs to participants. One principal said, "They were constantly contacting us to see if we needed additional help." A principal from another district added, "They were very accessible. Whenever we had any questions they got back to us right away."

What work is still in progress?

Development of effective and engaging virtual professional development. IU staff noted that engaging teachers in less-familiar, technology-based professional development was challenging. The IU dropped one offering – virtual office hours – after the first year. Though high percentages of teachers had participated in at least one webinar, some webinars drew few live participants.

Teacher reports on webinars were mixed. While some found the information useful, many interview respondents either did not watch many webinars or reported somewhat negatively about their experiences with them. Some found it difficult to find the time, and others, such as the teacher below, preferred face-to-face interaction: "I think it's a lot easier to ask questions when the person is there physically with you. A webinar is like a classroom. You don't want to be the one who asks a stupid question in front of everyone."

An IU staff person confirmed teachers' mixed experiences with webinars: "Some teachers loved them and wanted the archives. But, for others, webinars either felt awkward, or teachers felt pulled in too many other directions by their professional responsibilities and could not attend." For 2013-14, IU staff narrowed webinar offerings to a few key popular topics. The IU remains committed to blended professional development and will continue to assess and refine virtual approaches.

Strategy 8: Integrate collaboration into both on-site and regional professional development sessions.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

The IU built collaboration into the PLOs it facilitated. In addition, through the Letter of Understanding, the IU encouraged school-level collaboration by requiring districts to create launch teams to work on LDC implementation in an ongoing way.

Collaboration in PLOs. IU-sponsored collaboration took place in regional trainings and on-site technical assistance, as well as in virtual and in-person meetings. The following are some examples:

- Regional meetings included collaboration within school content teams to build modules or review student work, as well as brief collaborative assignments for cross-district groups organized by content areas.
- Many technical assistance visits also involved collaboration. During the two days of technical assistance per district, IU staff often facilitated collaborative sessions with the entire launch team, or with smaller groups by content area. In some schools, these teams continued working together to build or refine modules or look more closely at student work and scoring.
- Principals were invited to collaborate in a variety of ways across districts, including during regional trainings, post-training face-to-face meetings, and virtual meetings. This administrator-level collaboration included sharing successes and challenges and problem-solving implementation issues.
- District administrator collaboration, while less intensive than that of principals, included three to four face-to-face meetings per year appended to other regional meetings the district liaisons already attended, and a few virtual meetings.

Launch teams as a collaborative strategy at the school level. The Principal Guide directed principals to choose "highly effective teachers who will help spread LDC in their school" for the launch team. The launch team had the responsibility of attending professional development, developing and implementing modules, and working as a team to develop school plans for LDC after the launch year. The launch team structure (two teachers in each content area, an instructional support teacher, and an administrator) helped support collaboration at the school level. The guide encouraged collaboration among the two teachers within each discipline in planning and implementing LDC modules, and, among the whole group, in planning for future LDC implementation and ongoing sharing of challenges and successes.

What was the rationale?

Accelerate participant learning and overall LDC implementation. The belief that learning is social and that collaboration enhances the learning process undergirds the IU's work and is a basic principle of LDC as well. An IU staff person explained, "We believe learning is social and people learn from practice – we are social constructivist in our perspective."

Experience in Year 1 bolstered this belief. IU staff noted that Year 1 teachers who lacked content and grade-level collaborators struggled more with LDC implementation. An IU staff member described how such teachers needed more support: "We believe that teachers should have a partner. When teachers

are developing modules solo, as facilitators, we try to serve as sounding boards to help them think through their modules and check in on their progress"

Reduce teacher and administrator isolation. Teachers and administrators can sometimes feel isolated in their classrooms and offices. Collaboration expands interaction possibilities for all participants. It may be especially helpful for smaller districts, where teachers and administrators have fewer peers. An IU staff person explained:

> *I would say that our teachers and districts serve as a consortia. Some [districts] are very small and can feel isolated, so we need to cut down on teacher and administrator isolation. The work is complex (…) so people should not be reinventing the wheel. It is not transmitted by us [lecture style] – the learning is from the schools to us and to each other. Learning that can maximize collaboration is what we want to do.*

What was the impact of the strategy?

Most teachers developed, revised, and taught modules with support of a colleague. Most IU 13 teachers collaborated with colleagues around various stages of LDC, as Figure 9 indicates.

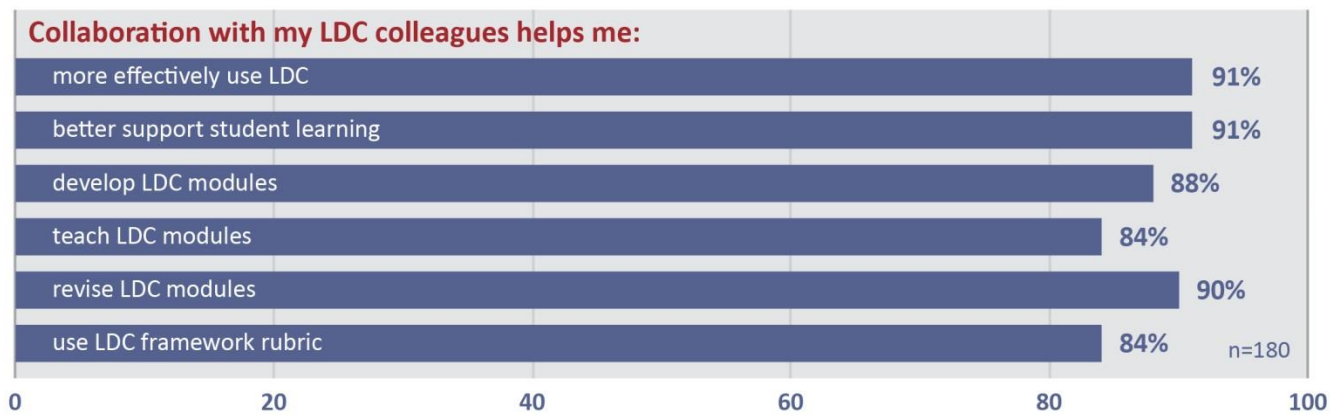Figure 9. Teacher Participation in LDC Module Use
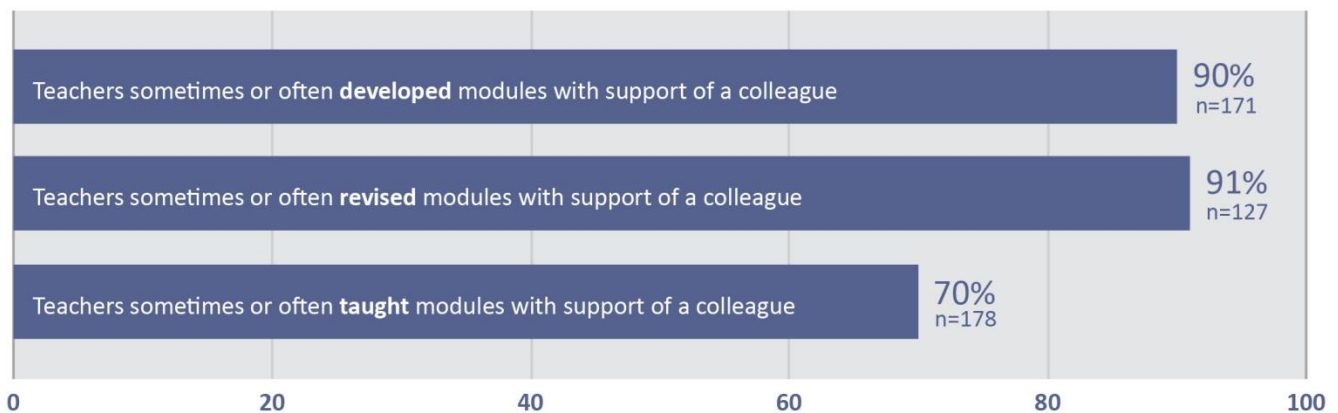
- At least 90% of teachers sometimes or often developed and revised modules with the support of a colleague.
- 70% of teachers sometimes or often taught a module with the support of a colleague.

In addition, almost three-quarters of teachers (71%, n=180) indicated having informal discussions with LDC colleagues once or more per month.

Teachers described their colleagues as collaborative and affirmed the value of collaboration. Ninety-two percent of IU 13 teachers (n=180) described their colleagues as collaborative. As Figure 10 indicates, large majorities of teachers reported that collaborating with their LDC colleagues helped them in specific ways with all aspects of LDC implementation, ranging from developing modules to teaching them and supporting student learning.

Figure 10. Teacher Perceptions of the Impact of LDC Collaboration

Collaboration with my LDC colleagues helps me:

more effectively use LDC	91%
better support student learning	91%
develop LDC modules	88%
teach LDC modules	84%
revise LDC modules	90%
use LDC framework rubric	84%

n=180

The involvement of an instructional support teacher created new avenues for collaboration or deepened existing collaboration. In interviews, teachers and administrators identified collaboration with the launch team instructional support teachers, including librarians, reading coaches and special education teachers, as an effective aid for LDC implementation. Including these educators as part of LDC training and implementation enriched module development and instruction, and fostered new kinds of collaboration at the school level. In two case study districts, special education teachers worked with LDC teachers to adapt assignments for diverse learners. One principal described this type of collaboration:

> We'll look at modules and the special education teachers talk about what types of adaptations we would need to make for different levels of kids. We've looked at taking a module and differentiating it so that we can use it with an AP [Advanced Placement] kid, an honors kid, level 1, level 2 or a special needs child.

That same principal illustrated an additional type of teacher-educator collaboration:

> One of the key pieces of our launch team was our librarian [who] helped teachers embrace the idea of research. It was just amazing. I don't know if a lot of people have done that but, if they haven't, they're really missing out by not bringing a media specialist or a librarian to be part of their launch team.

An administrator from a different district in which reading specialists, special education teachers, and librarians participated in LDC also noted an increase in collaboration. This administrator explained that specialist or support educators had always collaborated with teachers, "but not to this level."

What work is still in progress?

Regular collaboration time at the school level. Though the IU built collaboration into its professional development, they did not have control over whether and how collaboration happened at the district or school level. Many schools, especially high schools, lacked common planning time for LDC teachers. Structures and supports for collaboration varied greatly across sites, and the collaboration that did take place was often informal. Overall, only 35% of IU 13 LDC teachers surveyed had regularly scheduled common planning time for LDC. In addition, collaboration across departments, grade levels, and schools was generally limited.

Principals varied in their commitment to supporting collaboration. Some voiced support for collaboration but did not set the necessary structures in place to facilitate it, while others provided substitutes to cover teachers' regular instructional time while they engaged in collaborative activities. In some cases, teachers – usually led by a department chair or highly involved LDC teacher – focused strongly on LDC collaboration during department meetings or facilitated collaboration time at the departmental level.

Strategy 9: Make student work a central component of PLOs.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

The IU collected student work samples from participating teachers and made scoring student work the focus of one of the regional professional development sessions each year.

Submission of student work at the mid-point and end of the year. The Principal Guide identifies student work samples as "key deliverables" for the project. Teacher participants were required to submit student work from two modules to IU 13. The guide notes that the work might be posted on state or LDC websites as student exemplars or used in PLOs.

Scoring student work during professional development sessions. During trainings, teachers examined student work together and compared approaches to scoring. IU staff created benchmark sets of student work for reference and participants brought their own students' work for scoring practice.

What was the rationale?

Utilize student work as a tool for professional learning. Student work takes the discussion beyond the module itself and gets a "reality-based conversation" started among teachers about implementation and impact. As one IU staff person explained, "A module can look great, but when you use it, it can be a disaster. You have to look at the student work, otherwise it's a fairytale."

Hold teachers accountable for implementing the LDC framework. The IU's collection of student work kept the IU involved throughout the stages of module implementation and allowed them to see the results of LDC instruction. According to an IU staffer, "Teachers knowing they have to submit student work is a level of accountability they weren't used to, at least through the IU."

What was the impact of the strategy?

Student work informed instruction. More than three-quarters of IU 13 teachers surveyed agreed with the statement that their LDC colleagues helped them use student products to inform instruction and provide feedback to students about writing. Reviewing student work also gave teachers additional insight into how the module had worked and what changes they needed to make next time. One district office staff member described review of student work as very helpful for the school team: "Our teachers in the middle school were flabbergasted that students had no research skills, and we found that out through the student work. It was a form of formative feedback and we made revisions in the module."

An IU staff member described the scoring session that took place in December after teachers had taught the first module: "It's really eye-opening for teachers. For example, sometimes they see that mini-tasks were lacking. I've heard teachers really reflect on the delivery of their modules and say, 'My papers are not what I thought they would be and I know that I need to make some adjustments in my instruction.'"

Student work raised teacher expectations about student capabilities. While examining student work sometimes revealed areas of student weakness, as indicated by the quotes above, many teachers also found that the multiple reading and writing activities of the LDC modules often helped students to create stronger written products than the teachers had expected. Survey data provides evidence that the student work resulting from LDC modules gave teachers new insight into student capabilities, especially with regard to writing. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of teachers agreed with the statement that using modules raised their expectations for student writing. One teacher described how LDC raised her expectations for her students: *"I'm starting to realize that I underestimated them. I'm surprised at what they can do. This is the first time I said 'read this part and this part' and I let them read it. They had the guiding questions so they knew what to look for. I'm just more confident in their abilities."*

Strategy 10: Develop plans to sustain LDC funding and implementation.

What did Intermediate Unit 13 do?

Starting at the beginning of the grant, the IU initiated efforts to sustain the initiative over the long term. These efforts included the following:

Planning at the school level. The Letter of Understanding required every school to create a launch plan to guide LDC implementation and spread the initiative beyond the initial year of launch team training. The launch plan had the dual purpose of helping "teams to map out next steps for furthering LDC at this school and serving as evidence of implementation for the purposes of the LDC regional grant." The plan asked the team to assign responsibilities and to identify LDC goals, a timeline, needed resources, and indicators of implementation and effectiveness.

Development of high-quality and relevant professional development materials. During Year 2, an IU 13 staff person explained that they had been able to use the grant to cover the "cost of time and people to build things in order to get professional development materials together, ready and developed, and have this process be less labor intensive after the grant ends." Through the grant, the IU also developed a toolkit for IU administrators to facilitate their support of LDC. It included webinars, sample agendas from LDC principal meetings, and examples of email communication with district contacts and principals.

Inclusion of LDC in other state grants and materials. IU 13 staff worked with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to integrate LDC into other funded projects:

- *Striving Readers Grant:* LDC is included as one of nine areas of professional development for all Pennsylvania districts receiving the federally-funded Striving Readers Grant. Whether or not their school districts received a Striving Readers Grant, all IUs could participate in LDC training. In a train-the-trainer model, IU staff conducted the Striving Readers LDC training for the participating districts.
- *Cross State Learning Collaborative (CSLC) Grant:* PDE received a Gates Foundation CSLC Grant to: 1) develop principals' capacity to implement the CCSS as well as the new educator effectiveness system; and, 2) support the development of more LDC tasks at the middle school level. IU 13 staff were asked to submit a proposal for the second portion of the grant.

IU 13 staff also worked to integrate LDC as a resource into relevant state documents and websites:

- *Pennsylvania's Comprehensive Literacy Plan:* As an IU staff person reported, "We made sure LDC is referenced in PA's Literacy Plan, which is a key guiding document in the state."
- *SAS Website:* The SAS (Standards Aligned System) Portal is a website providing information and tools to support educators in implementing standards-aligned instruction. The portal hosts 96 examples of LDC tasks and modules developed by Pennsylvania educators. It also provides links to further information about LDC itself.

Development of the IU 13 LDC portal. The IU 13 LDC SharePoint Portal makes available a wide range of LDC resources to educators from participating districts. These include tasks and modules, along with examples of student work, access to virtual professional development (e.g., webinars), videos about LDC, and links to all participating schools and whatever they have posted about LDC. Usually schools have posted sample modules, their launch plan, and, sometimes, student work. An IU 13 staff person hoped the portal could function as "a low cost way of continuing services."

Grant extension to continue building the work. IU 13 asked the Gates Foundation for an extension of the grant to continue to work with partners and to use their reserved funding to transition from 2012-13 to 2013-14. The IU will continue to provide services to schools and districts already involved in the initiative while bringing new sites on through a fee-for-service model which will include the online portal.

Development of a fee-for-service plan. IU 13 started planning early on for transition to a fee-for-service model once Gates funding ended. An IU 13 staff member described the transition during Year 2: "One of the things we're building since the first year is the fee-for-service around LDC. So we believe that we're getting this to a point where the kinds of things we do this year will become fee-for-service."

What was the rationale?

Make a long-term commitment to support strong implementation and sustainability. From the beginning, IU staff and administrators wanted to create an initiative that would endure long-term. An IU 13 administrator explained that "working to make sure it remains viable" is a priority. An IU 13 staff member said, "What we really wanted to do was create something that was scalable in terms of human capacity but also financially."

Bolster school and district buy-in. Development of the launch plan, structured involvement of school and district administrators in the Letter of Understanding, and engaging district administrators in thinking about integrating LDC into their plans all supported the goal of creating more engagement in and ownership of LDC. According to one IU staff person, "Districts are very reluctant to sign onto something if they see it as a temporary thing. So we are working a lot with the district administrators to make sure they see LDC as part of their process."

What was the impact of the strategy?

Districts contracted for fee-for-service LDC training in 2013-14. Despite the switch from grant-funded to fee-for-service training, 14 new school teams signed up for training. Some of these teams represented IU districts which are new to LDC. Others come from already participating districts which wanted training for teachers in additional grade levels and content areas. In March 2014, IU 13 staff reported that teams are beginning to sign up for the 2014-15 year. Their early estimation is that the IU's LDC training work is a sustainable service that will evolve with district needs.

Connecting LDC to other initiatives enabled broader and deeper LDC implementation across IUs in the state. The link with Striving Readers means that large numbers of teachers and administrators across the state received LDC training. According to a Striving Readers staff person, "To date we've trained about 27,000 teachers and 3,400 administrators in the nine Striving Reader professional development areas. This staff person emphasized the importance of that grant in bolstering LDC implementation state-wide: "Without Striving Readers, I'm not sure where LDC would be outside of IU 13 at this point. That was a strategic move."

IU 13 district administrators were working on generating funding for LDC. Compared to all administrators surveyed across LDC sites, a higher percentage of IU 13 district administrators indicated they were identifying additional funding to continue the use of the tools moving forward (63%, n=8 vs. 27%, n=208). For example, one district leveraged a school improvement grant to support expansion of LDC.

LDC expanded to the elementary grades. Interview sites want to expand LDC to the elementary grades, something the IU is now offering through fee-for-service training. Some districts purchased fee-for-service trainings for elementary teachers and others were able to expand LDC to their elementary schools through the Striving Readers grant. In several fieldwork sites where LDC had not yet extended to elementary schools, administrators spoke of this as a goal. One district administrator talked about trying to engage elementary principals now: "You bring out the whole arsenal. You talk to the principal and say, 'hey why don't you call the high school principal?' We had some of the teachers bring the LDC work to an elementary principals' meeting."

District and school administrators were making plans for future scale-up of LDC. School principals were looking beyond their launch plans, which addressed the first year after launch team training, either 2011-12 or 2012-13. In interviews, administrators from fieldwork districts cited plans and goals for expanding and sustaining LDC, which were in various stages of development. One district cited a plan through 2015-16 to use a train-the-trainer model to successively train more teachers.

District and school administrators believed that teacher enthusiasm and buy-in would help sustain LDC. One principal said: "It's opened their eyes to what students are capable of doing. Once teachers see this, they'll implement it more and more." A principal in another district said: "Our teachers see benefits and when they see benefits, they'll go with it. As excitement works through the departments, we're really seeing it kick into gear in the high school. It's a process."

What work is still in progress?

Research indicates challenges to sustainability emerge at multiple levels, including the state, district, and school:

State championship for LDC. Since the expiration of the statewide LDC grant, IU 13 has continued to play an active role in LDC implementation and scale-up. The state has worked to build LDC into state resources and digital supports, but is not active in scale up. The limited role of state leadership in LDC makes long-term sustainability and broader scale-up across Pennsylvania more challenging.

Competing priorities pose a challenge for sustainability in some sites. Interviewees in three sites worried that multiple initiatives at the school level have the potential to undermine LDC. A teacher in one district said, "I really hope [LDC continues]. I think right now we have a lot of initiatives going and that might be the one thing that keeps it from lasting." In another district, a district administrator

explained, "I think in our district we have so many competing priorities and so many initiatives and projects going forward that sometimes you don't take advantage of things the way they were designed."

Ensuring strong district leadership for LDC implementation and sustainability across the IU. Variability of district involvement in LDC implementation means that in some sites, district administrators have not been intensively engaged with LDC, raising questions about how best to build sustainability and ongoing LDC leadership. The IU's role in supporting leaders remains important going forward. As one district administrator said: "I really depend on IU staff to keep this baby running and to keep me up to date on it." Further, lack of intra-district communication was an issue in some sites. For example, one district administrator spoke about developing plans for LDC expansion but a principal who was very interested in this expansion was unaware of these plans.

Questions to Consider

This case study was designed to provide an example of how one education service agency adopted and scaled the use of the LDC instructional tools. As your state, education service agency, district, or school considers how to adopt or scale the use of the tools, we suggest you consider the following questions:

1. What kind of roles do administrators and teachers play in the implementation of LDC?

2. What strategies do you use to build school capacity to support LDC implementation and spread?

3. What opportunities do teachers in your schools and districts have to become LDC leaders and provide training to others locally, regionally, and even state-wide or nationally?

4. What organizations might be strong partners in the work of LDC implementation, and how could you engage those organizations in the initiative?

5. In what ways do you look for teacher and administrator feedback on new initiatives and use that feedback to continually improve program implementation? How will you do so with LDC?

6. In what ways is the LDC initiative aligned with your district's curricula and your state's standardized assessments and evaluation systems?

7. What kinds of PLOs does your school district provide? Do you include blended formats, i.e. both face-to-face and virtual? Do these opportunities reinforce strategies needed to implement LDC?

8. What kind of opportunities do teachers in your district have to collaborate around LDC? Is the amount of time available adequate? If not, in what ways could the district facilitate increased opportunities for teacher collaboration?

9. How do you use student work to inform and refine instructional strategies and provide professional development for teachers and administrators?

10. What suggestions do you have for sustaining LDC?

11. In which ways is your state, education service agency, district, or school similar to and different from IU 13 and how does this inform the potential utility of the above strategies in your district?

    a. What additional reforms are you currently implementing and how do they relate to LDC?

    b. What kind of relationships do you have with teachers/the teachers' union and how does this influence a major initiative such as LDC?

About Research for Action

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization. We seek to use research as the basis for the improvement of educational opportunities and outcomes for traditionally underserved students. Our work is designed to strengthen public schools and postsecondary institutions; provide research-based recommendations to policymakers, practitioners, and the public at the local, state, and national levels; and enrich the civic and community dialogue about public education. For more information, please visit our website at www.researchforaction.org.

About RFA's Work to Study the Implementation of LDC/MDC Teacher Tools

RFA is currently in the third year of a mixed-methods study examining implementation of literacy and math tools aligned to the CCSS in multiple sites across the country. RFA researchers have collected survey data and conducted observations and interviews to determine teachers' use and perceptions of the tools. In addition, RFA is investigating the context and conditions necessary for scaling and sustaining tool use across districts and states, and for maximizing their impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning.

RFA has produced a number of research products geared to both inform the Gates Foundation's strategy for supporting use of the tools, and for the teachers and administrators who are or will be using them. A complete listing of products associated with this project can be found at http://www.researchforaction.org/rfa-study-of-tools-aligned-ccss/.

Thank You!

This research would not have been possible without the participation of teachers and administrators from multiple school districts within IU 13, as well as the IU staff. We are very appreciative of the efforts of IU and district administrators who facilitated our work in many ways. Principals, teachers, district administrators and IU staff generously shared their experiences with and insights about LDC, helping us to learn both about the particular shape of LDC in their setting and about the broader implications of their work for LDC nationally.