

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

Grade levels taught. An electronic survey was sent to teachers within the TLI vertical teams. Of the 204 teachers who responded, the majority (63%) worked with students in kindergarten through 2nd grade; the next greatest percentage (21%) of respondents worked with students from birth to 4-years-old and 16% of respondents worked with 6th through 12th grade students.

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

Table 1. Teachers’ Ratings (n = 204)

Statement	% Strongly agree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Strongly disagree	% Not sure/NA
I have seen reading skills improvement in the students who have received help through the Texas Literacy Initiative (TLI).	29	56	4	1	9
The TLI reading specialists/coaches are important to the academic reading success of my students.	37	48	4	2	9
There is mutual respect between the TLI reading specialists/coaches and teachers.	48	45	3	1	3
I collaborate with the TLI reading specialists/coaches to meet the needs of my students.	41	49	4	2	5
The TLI data meetings helped me to drive my instruction to support the needs of my students.	40	50	5	2	4
My campus administrators support the TLI grant work.	56	42	0	0	2
My campus administrators support the TLI funded teachers and/or coaches/specialists.	55	42	0	0	2

Source. TLI Fall 2014 Staff Survey

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

Teachers' use of literacy instructional strategies. Teachers were asked to report the frequency with which they used various instructional strategies or programs in their classroom that were introduced by their TLI coach/specialist. Of the 200 respondents, 33% said they used the strategies all of the time, 49% used them most of the time, 14% used them occasionally, 2% did not use them at all, and 4% said that their coach had not provided any literacy strategies or programs.

Teachers' use of progress monitoring tools. Teachers were asked to indicate all progress monitoring tools used in their classrooms. The majority of teachers (63%) indicated that they used Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) or El Inventario de Lectura en Español de Tejas (Tejas Lee) for kindergarten through grade 2, followed by self-created assessments (55%). Half of teachers said they used Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). When asked to specify “other” types of progress-monitoring tools they used, 25 respondents stated they used tools such as Reading Plus, observations, and running records.

Table 2. Progress Monitoring Tools Used by Teachers (n = 199)

Progress-monitoring tool	% Used
Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) or El Inventario de Lectura en Español de Tejas (Tejas Lee)	63
Self-created assessments	55
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)	50
Treasures or Tesoros	37
REACH program student learning objectives/assessments	36
AIMSweb (online progress-monitoring system by Pearson)	24
Circle Phonological Awareness Language and Literacy System (C-PALLS)/TANGO	21
District-provided benchmark assessments	17
Campus mandated progress monitoring tool	17
Other (please specify)	14
Istation	11
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	4
Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)	2
Language! Live	2
iLit (GRADE)	1

Source. Texas Literacy Initiative Fall 2014 Survey

Data monitoring frequency. Teachers responded to the question “How often do you review progress-monitoring data and/or measures?” Forty-two percent of respondents said they reviewed data several times a week, and 29% stated they reviewed progress monitoring data several times per month (Table 3).

Table 3. Review of Progress-Monitoring Data (n = 199)

Frequency of reviewing progress-monitoring data	Teachers	%
Daily	9	
Several times a week	42	
Several times per month	29	
Several times a semester	18	
Once or twice a year	2	
Never	0	

Source. Texas Literacy Initiative Fall 2014 Survey

Collaboration and involvement. Teachers were asked to indicate the activities they worked on with their TLI reading coaches/specialists throughout the school year. Table 4 summarizes the activities reported. Teachers had the option to select more than one activity. The most common collaborative activity mentioned was data meetings (83%).

Table 4. Collaborative Activities by Teachers With Texas Literacy Initiative (TLI) Reading Specialists/Coaches (n = 200)

Types of collaborative activity	Teachers	%
Participated in data meetings led by the coach/specialist	83	
Used student performance data to plan instruction or intervention	80	
Received professional development sessions from your coach/specialist	56	
Had your classroom instruction observed and received feedback	59	
Planned instruction with your coach/specialist	53	
Had the coach/specialist model effective instructional strategies for you	39	
Had the coach/specialist co-teach with you	12	
None of the above	3	

Source. TLI Spring 2014 Survey

Benefits as a result of TLI. Teachers (n = 140) provided examples of specific support from TLI coaches/specialists that was beneficial:

- “Reviewing data trends, strengths, and weaknesses for my current, former, and future students. I knew the group I had coming up for the previous grade was weak across the board in one particular Tejas Lee/TPRI skill from the end-of-the-year meeting. We started practicing that skill the first day of September and their TPRI scores reflect the gap has been filled.... Before TLI, I didn’t have the training to find that info. I also, got to see the data of how my former students are doing and what I could improve when my current kids went to the next grade.”
- “I believe the understanding and utilizing the students' lexile levels have benefited my classroom because it has allowed me to focus on what I need to do to improve fluency and comprehension for every individual student.”

- “My TLI reading specialist took the time to model effective instruction for me, co-teach with me, help plan instruction, and work with my students. She took me step by step through everything, from guided reading to progress monitoring. She has been a huge help to me personally and to my campus as a whole. My class is much higher academically this year, and I truly believe it is because of her dedication and persistence with both the teachers and the students of the grades below me.”
- “Data breakdown, [professional development activities] that were provided, and the in-class support that I have received.”
- “DATA MEETINGS!!!! Really help to get a clear idea of where all of your students are successful or struggling.”
- “It was very beneficial to analyze the data and to hear from the specialist and coaches good recommendations about activities or interventions that will help us to close the academic gap from our students.”
- “[The coach] is a great resource for ideas when we need help. She also helped advocate to help me obtain resources that were not provided for my class last year.”

Suggestions for TLI grant improvement. Teachers (n = 114) provided suggestions for additional support they would like to receive:

- “Respect for my content. I would like to utilize these strategies and techniques for my content area, [as] opposed to the expectation of my enrichment course being an extension of core classes. I need the importance of my content to be respected just as equally as core classes.”
- “I would like for the TLI specialist to have a scheduled time biweekly to come into the class to assist with the struggling students. Our specialist did this last year in the Spring semester, and it was beneficial. The campus asked for this to occur again, this year. We even asked for it to start earlier.”
- “I believe that the new push for Shared Reading (Read A-Louds) is reigniting the skill of storytelling. It would be nice to have a training on campus with animation, realia [objects and material from everyday life, especially when used as teaching aids], and fun.”
- “I would like to receive support from TLI coaches to recognize dyslexia or another problems which don't allow certain students to increase their pre-reading and reading skills. Also, I would like to know how to deal with those issues.”
- “More opportunities to observe [a coach] modeling a lesson and/or co-teaching.”
- “I wouldn't mind more direct coaching on specific strategies to implement, or things to put in centers to enhance my students' learning experiences.”
- “Perhaps having our C-PALLS/TANGO assessment data meeting before receiving this survey. Also, having the data assessment meeting earlier would allow the reading specialist to help us on giving ideas to implement in our classroom.”
- “We would like to get some additional training on how to help our students with oral development.”

Suggestions for improving campuses' reading and writing. Teachers (n = 111) provided suggestions on how to improve reading and writing at their campuses:

- “We should look at the resources that we are using for guided reading and writing and make the program more uniform. Pre-K through 2nd grade should do the same lessons, just at different level. We should organize a system of what that looks like at every grade level.”

- “I believe that students should be able have access to the library on campus. I think it would be beneficial if the library and the classroom collaborate together to have a day where students can explore outside resources, like books and other reading related material. I believe this would motivate the students to go beyond the classroom and explore reading materials on their own.”
- “I think it would be great to have writing camps every 2 months for different grade levels.”
- “Giving students more opportunities for authentic writing—less copying and more drawing, writing books, writing in journals, etc.”
- “Improving technology use and having specific tools that allow student self-guidance and self-assessment, as well as technology resources that can be used with small/guided groups to improve students’ fluency and comprehension by supporting classroom strategies.”
- “We need to have a better and wider selection of books in Spanish.”
- “Revise bilingual schedule, it is VERY hard to fit all this wonderful instruction in the day!”
- “Allow time for teachers to observe other teachers’ model lessons.”
- “More staff development on writing.”