

Implementation Report of the Literacy Coaching Model

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of this study was to examine how the Literacy Coaching model was implemented in the six pilot schools in SY2015-16. In doing so, we investigated the stakeholders' awareness and planning for implementation, the type and amount of support Literacy Coaches provided in their respective schools, teachers' reported levels of participation in PDs and implementation of the literacy-related activities, and teachers' and Literacy Coaches' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Literacy Coaching model. The following research questions guided this study: 1) What was the level of participation (or implementation) in the literacy-related activities implemented throughout the year?; 2) How did participating teachers perceive the effectiveness of the literacy-related activities and the support they received from their Literacy Coach?; and 3) What supports and challenges existed in the implementation of the Literacy Coach role in pilot schools?

To address the research questions, data were gathered from documents provided by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (C&I), surveys collected by Research and Evaluation in June 2016 from teachers and Literacy Coaches, group discussions with Literacy Coaches, and school observations.

A. Stakeholder Awareness of the Literacy Plan

The evidence gathered in this report indicates that the purposes and goals of the Literacy Plan and the role of the Literacy Coach in implementing the plan were not clearly communicated to all stakeholders at the beginning of implementation. On average, only three-quarter of teachers reported attendance of system-wide Literacy conference and less than a third felt they were clearly informed about the plan.

B. Overall Program Implementation

Literacy Coaches provided PD sessions about literacy-related topics such the administration of the Literacy Task, supported departments and teachers one-on-one, organized Learning Walks to observe classrooms and provided feedback about literary-related instruction, and worked with administration to support school-wide goals for literacy. The biggest proportion of Literacy Coaches' time was devoted to the administration of the Literacy

Task (38%) and associated content-specific PDs to the implementing departments (21%). Activities that involved Literacy Coaches working with teachers one-on-one such as lesson planning guidance, co-teaching, unlocking the writing prompt, and scoring of essays accounted for less than a quarter of the time spent by all Coaches. Overall, Literacy Coaches used 13% of their time participating in training and collaborative planning with the other Literacy Coaches.

Overall, the six Literacy Coaches provided 26 school-wide and 101 content-specific PD sessions to departments in SY16 and over 175 teachers in total attended each type of PD. Coaches reported that 402 teachers (70% of classroom teachers) administered the Literacy Task and a total of 211 teachers (37% of classroom teachers) had their classrooms observed as part of the Learning Walks. Literacy Coaches report providing one-on-one support to a total of 100 teachers, for an average of 17 teachers per school. However, not all Literacy Coaches equally implemented the Literacy Coaching model. There was at least one Literacy Coach who reported not providing any school-wide PDs or organizing Learning Walks.

In terms of the implementation of the Literacy Task, results from the Teacher Survey show that social studies, science, and math teachers implemented the Literacy Task at a higher rate. Among those teachers who reported using the Literacy Task in their classrooms, over 91% fully implemented the main components of active reading, close reading, and essay writing. However, fewer number of teachers report scoring students' essays (86%) and an even smaller percentage (70%) report sharing the scores of the essays with their students. In addition, less than half (47%) of teachers had their classroom observed by other teachers as part of the Learning Walks and only 31% of teachers observed their peers for Learning Walks.

In terms of the activities of school Literacy Teams, Literacy Coaches and other team members report that the school teams were mostly active in reviewing the school's Literacy Plan, student writing scores as well as reviewing data from Learning Walks. It is also noteworthy that there was a school where there was no review of writing scores or Learning Walk data by its Literacy team.

C. Perceived Effectiveness of Literacy-related Activities and the Literacy Coach

A majority (68%) of teachers who administered the Literacy Task report that the prompt for reading and writing was relevant to their learning goals for the year and 73% to 80% feel that the purposes and goals of the Literacy Task were effectively communicated to them by the school administration or the Literacy Coach assigned to them. Teachers felt strongly that the implementation of the Literacy Task should be aligned with the curriculum, tailored to subject

and reading ability of students, and should not conflict with other important instructional activities such as state testing and SLOs. In terms of the Learning Walks, three-fourths of teachers had a good understanding of the need for Learning Walks but only two-thirds of teachers report that the purpose of the Learning Walk was clearly explained to them. However, an overwhelming majority of teachers (85%) whose classroom was observed are satisfied with the feedback they received from their peers and also report using the feedback they received to improve their teaching practices (81%).

In terms of teachers' perception on improving their teaching practice, three-fourths of teachers report that they have become more purposeful in their activities for unlocking reading text. About half of the teachers also report improvements in their students in engaging with text and class discussion techniques. It is important to note that only 39% of teachers report that their departmental collaborative culture has improved because of the coaching they received and teachers often expressed a desire to be involved in the planning for the implementation of the literacy-related activities. Although three-fourths of teachers believe that the Literacy Task provided them with good teaching practices, they feel that the implementation of the task took up valuable instruction time. Some teachers felt that the role and purpose of the Literacy Coach was unclear and that the potential benefits of the Literacy Coach were not explained well to school staff.

D. Challenges and Support Needs of the Literacy Coach role

Overall, Literacy Coaches report that they see the value of being based in C&I as it ensures they have the training, resources, support, and time needed to focus on literacy work. Two-thirds of Literacy Coaches report that they are very satisfied with the support they received from C&I. However, they report needing more direction on how many PD sessions they should offer to their schools, clear guidance regarding the amount of time they should spend with teachers, and guidance on the order of coaching activities. Two-thirds of Literacy Coaches report that they are very satisfied with the amount of time to collaborate with other Literacy Coaches, while half of the Coaches report that they are very satisfied with the support they received from the school administration.

Almost all of the Literacy Coaches report that lack of buy-in from teachers and lack of school staff understanding of the Literacy Coach role were barriers. A possible explanation for these barriers is the lack of strong messaging around the need and relevance of the Literacy Plan. Lack of departmental collaborative culture was another commonly cited challenge by the Literacy Coaches. Thus, Literacy Coaches believe that there is a strong need to clearly

communicate the importance of the Literacy Coaching model in order to gain staff buy-in and build a culture of collaboration to implement the various strategies outlined in the Literacy Toolkit.

Literacy Coaches report that they want to ensure that all the literacy-related activities are purposeful and worthwhile for the teachers. In particular, the Literacy Task should be more relevant as to not feel like it is disruptive or a waste of time. All Literacy Coaches report dissatisfaction or call for improvement of the relevancy of the Literacy Task topics while half of them seek improvement of the scoring rubric for the Literacy Task. Literacy Coaches also advocated for additional resources for schools to implement the Literacy Task. There was also a consensus amongst Literacy Coaches that they would have liked to provide more PDs and additional support around literacy to their school's staff.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As expected, in SY16 the administration of the Literacy Task and related PD activities were the primary focus of Literacy Coaches as evidenced by the percentage of Coaches' time devoted to these activities and the proportion of teachers in the pilot schools who administered the Literacy Task. Based on the findings presented in this report, we make the following recommendations to improve the functioning of the program.

- Clarify and simplify the Literacy Plan.
- Empower the Literacy Coach.
- Set annual goals and monitor progress.
- Provide additional resources.
- Enhance school and departmental collaborative culture.
- Literacy Coaches should lead data-driven instruction.