EAB

Reading and Writing Workshops at Secondary Schools

District Leadership Forum

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Becca Debus
Research Associate

Matthew McCarthy
Research Manager

Olivia Rios
Senior Research Manager

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Table of Contents

1) Executive Summary 4
Key Observations 4
2) Implementation 6
Overview of the Model 6
Impetus 7
Curriculum 9
Scheduling 12
3) Supporting the Model 14
Resources 14
Initial Professional Development 17
Ongoing Teacher Support 18
4) Assessment and Feedback 20
Methods of Assessment 20
Stakeholder Feedback 21
5) Research Methodology 23
Project Challenge 23
Project Sources 23
Research Parameters 24

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1) Executive Summary

Key Observations

Reading and writing workshops refer to a model of literacy instruction popularized by educator Lucy Calkins and the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). The workshop model emphasizes differentiated instruction and independent work for students. Lucy Calkins and TCRWP designed their approach to the model for elementary school students. However, both TCRWP and administrators at districts have adapted the model for secondary schools. Districts that implement the workshop model typically use the curriculum developed by TCRWP, though some districts develop reading and writing workshop curriculum based on the principles of the workshop model.

Profiled districts implement the reading and writing workshop model at secondary schools because research suggests the model improves academic outcomes and stakeholders enthusiastically support the model.[1] Contacts at multiple profiled districts note that teachers and administrators with experience in the workshop model advocated for its implementation the district. Further, contacts at **District A** and **District B** report that administrators adopted the workshop model to address stagnant student achievement with more traditional instructional models. Contacts at **District C** emphasize teachers' enthusiasm for the model. They note that many teachers informed them that the workshop model improves students' reading and writing skills. Contacts add that teachers prefer to instruct reading and writing workshops over other instructional methods.

Alternate units or divide lessons to adapt the workshop model to short class periods. The workshop model popularized by Lucy Calkins and TCRWP requires several hours of English Language Arts (ELA) instruction per day. Contacts note that districts must adapt the workshop model to fit into the time constraints of class periods at secondary schools. To accommodate both the curriculum of the workshop model and the structure of class periods, secondary school teachers at **District E** and **District F** alternate reading and writing units. Teachers at **District A** instruct lessons over two days, while integrating the reading and writing lessons.

Provide teachers with a diverse classroom library to address the needs of different students. To effectively instruct the workshop model, students need access to books that represent different writing styles, stories, and reading levels. This diversity allows students to choose books that best support their educational needs and interests (i.e., students read books calibrated to their reading level on topics that interest them). However, contacts note that districts often lack funds to purchase books for a classroom library. To address this financial constraint, **District A** purchases books in bulk, **District C** seeks donations from parents, and **District F** supplements classroom libraries with trips to school or public libraries.

To prevent pushback, ensure teachers understand the research that supports the workshop model. Administrators at **District B** emphasize research that supports the workshop model during the initial professional development they offer teachers prior to implementation. Administrators focus on research that supports the efficacy of the workshop model to ensure teachers understand how to instruct students effectively. For example, New York state testing data shows that schools which use the workshop model outperform schools which do not use the model by 10 percent overall, and 25 percent for schools with a significant relationship to the TCRWP.[2]

1) "Our Data," The Reading & Writing Project, accessed May 21, 2019. https://readingandwritingproject.org/about/our-data.
2) Ibid.

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Conduct classroom walkthroughs to assess the efficacy of the workshop model. Administrators at **District B** and **District C** assess the efficacy of the workshop model through observational data collected during classroom walkthroughs. Classroom walkthroughs allow administrators to assess the effectiveness of the model holistically, whereas assessment data only allow administrators to assess discrete aspects of the model. To properly assess the workshop model, district administrators train school administrators on the elements of a well-run workshop. School administrators observe workshop lessons in the classroom and ask teachers and students about their lessons as part of every walkthrough.

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2) Implementation

Overview of the Model

The Workshop Model Teaches Students English Language Arts Skills Through Differentiated Instruction

Lucy Calkins and other educators associated with the Teachers College at Columbia University popularized the reading and writing workshop model of English Language Arts (ELA) instruction.[3] The model is based on differentiated instruction and sustained practice. Students spend time every day engaged in independent reading and writing. The model recommends teachers tailor books and writing exercises to students' skill levels. Teachers spend most of their time during class conferring with individual students about their work or conducting small group lessons, rather than delivering instruction to the entire class. Heinemann Publishing (which distributes a reading and writing workshop curriculum from Lucy Calkins) describes the four components of workshop as:

1. **Mini-Lesson**: The teacher delivers a five to 10-minute lesson to the entire class. This lesson explicitly teaches students reading and writing strategies.
2. **Independent Reading or Writing**: This consume most of the class time. Students develop the skills described during the mini-lesson and work toward their reading or writing goals independently.
3. **Conferring/Conferencing**: As students work independently, the teacher confers with individual students and addresses any problems they encounter. If multiple students experience the same type of problem, the teacher conducts a small group lesson on the topic. When appropriate, the teacher asks students to confer with their peers.
4. **Share Time/Debrief**: During a few minutes at the end of the lesson, students come back together to discuss the lesson, share samples of their work, and conduct brief formative assessments.[4]

The Teachers College initially developed the workshop model for K-5 students. However, educators adapt the principles of the model and successfully apply them to secondary instruction, as well. All districts profiled in this report use the reading and writing workshop model at middle schools. One profiled district, **District A**, also uses the model at high schools.

3) "Overview - What Is the Classroom Workshop Model," Lucy Calkins and Colleagues Units of Study, accessed May 20, 2019, http://www.unitsofstudy.com/introduction.
4) "What Are the 4 Components of Writing Workshop?," *Heinemann Publishing* (blog), January 25, 2017. https://medium.com/@heinemann/what-are-the-4-components-of-writing-workshop-26502ab171d6.

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Profiled Districts Adopt the Workshop Model to Improve ELA Instruction

Contacts among profiled districts note that administrators implement the workshop model at secondary schools because research, personal experience, and recommendations from other districts all suggest it improves students' ELA achievement.

Impetus for Implementing Reading and Writing Workshops at Secondary Schools at Profiled Districts

Insufficient Achievement with a Previous Model

Contacts at **District A** report that the district's previous, more traditional model of ELA instruction failed to achieve results district administrators desired. The district hired a new director of secondary ELA who introduced the reading and writing workshop model to the districts' middle and high schools in 2012.

District B also adopted the workshop model at secondary schools because of a lack of academic outcomes with more traditional ELA teaching methods. Teachers and administrators had experienced success with the workshop model at other districts, so district administrators implemented the model in K-8 in 2011.

Observed Success with the Model

Contacts at **District F** note that teachers' enthusiasm for the workshop model led to its adoption at both elementary and middle schools. Multiple K-5 teachers experimented with aspects of the model in their classes. These teachers brought the workshop model to the district administrator's attention. After the formal adoption of the model in K-5, its success impressed secondary teachers and administrators. The middle school formally adopted the workshop model in 2019, after the Teachers College released the **Units of Study** curriculum for middle school grades.

Similarly, **District E** adopted the workshop model at secondary schools in 2014 after teachers and administrators observed the success of the model at their elementary schools.

Recommendations from Other Districts

When administrators at **District C** considered adopting a new ELA program, the superintendent reached out to a nearby district that used the workshop model and asked them to discuss their success with it. Speaking with administrators at this district convinced teachers and administrators at District C to adopt the reading and writing workshop model at elementary and middle schools.

State Curriculum

In 2011, administrators at **Intermediate District D** developed an ELA curriculum that aligns the workshop model with Common Core for their state. Many districts within the state implemented the curriculum, including the workshop model, at that time. While the state does not require individual districts to use the curriculum, it makes the curriculum freely available to them.

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Consider Implementing the Model Gradually to Acclimate Teachers to the Workshops and Reduce Pushback

Administrators at **District E** and **District F** implemented reading and writing workshops gradually to increase teacher familiarity with the model and mitigate pushback. At District E, administrators implemented the workshop model in phases at secondary schools, while administrators at District F piloted the workshop model for one year before implementation.

Types of Gradual Implementation

Gradual Implementation

Phased Implementation

- **District E** introduced the workshop model in sixth grade one year, seventh grade the next year, and eighth grade the following year.
- The three-year timeline allowed the district more time to hire teachers with experience in the workshop model. Initially, the district asked teachers familiar with the workshop model to teach sixth grade. As the district hired new teachers familiar with the workshop model, these teachers taught the upper grades. This allowed the district to introduce the workshop model with experienced teachers at each phase of the implementation process.

Pilot Program

- Administrators at **District F** encouraged all secondary ELA teachers to try the workshop model in their classrooms one year before implementation.
- Administrators paid for teachers to access the Teachers College curriculum. Teachers could try as many units as they wished.
- Teachers less comfortable with the model alternated a workshop unit with the more traditional model of reading a novel together as a class.
- Contacts note that this flexible pilot program increased teachers' familiarity and comfort with the workshop model, without forcing them to immediately forgo more traditional lessons.

Use the Workshop Model to Meet the Diverse Educational Needs of Students

Contacts among profiled districts note that teachers easily adapt the workshop model to meet the needs of students at multiple levels of development. According to a Response to Intervention (RTI) model of instruction, reading and writing workshops support Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. Because the workshop model includes time for highly differentiated instruction, teachers easily integrate Tier 2 interventions into classroom instruction.

District C, **District E**, and **District F** provide additional classes or pull-out programs to support students in need of remedial education. However, contacts at these districts note that the workshop model allows most students to remain in class with their peers and also receive individualized support.

Tier 1 refers to instruction received by all students. Tier 2 refers to additional interventions needed to support students. Tier 3 refers to intensive interventions.

For more information, see EAB's report, **Response to Intervention**.

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To Select a Curriculum, Consider Advantages and Disadvantages of TCRWP and Homegrown Options

Administrators at profiled districts implemented different curriculum to meet the needs of the district. Three profiled districts (i.e., **District C**, **District E** and **District F**) adopted the Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP) curriculum, called Units of Study. Two profiled districts (i.e., **District A** and **District B**) created a reading and writing curriculum based on the basic tenets of the workshop model developed by the Teachers College. Administrators at **Intermediate District D** assisted state efforts to create a curriculum available to all districts within the state.

Contacts among profiled districts note advantages and disadvantages to both the TCRWP curriculum and homegrown curricula (with the cost of the TCRWP curriculum being a major disadvantage). However, contacts at District B suggest that if literacy instruction incorporates the principles of the workshop model, the specific curriculum does not matter.

Reading and Writing Workshop Curricula Used by Profiled Districts

TCRWP Units of Study (grades 6-8)

Lucy Calkins, the founder of TCWRP, created these curriculum guides for the workshop model. Districts must purchase the curriculum from Heinemann. The Units of Study consists of individual units of reading and writing curriculum available separately. These units provide a curriculum including explicit instruction in necessary skills, tools for assessment, and training for teachers.

Download the free Comprehensive Overview of the Units of Study **here**.

***District B*'s Curriculum (grades 6-8)**

Administrators and teachers at **District B** developed a curriculum based on the TCRWP Units of Study. They supplemented the curriculum with resources published by the Teachers College and Lucy Calkins.

State Curriculum (grades 6-12)

Administrators at **Intermediate District D** developed this publicly available curriculum that aligns with their state standards. Every reading and writing unit includes goals, common core standards, guiding questions, assessment tasks, and individual lesson plans.

***District A*'s Curriculum (grades 6-12)**

Administrators and teachers at **District A** created a curriculum based on the tenets of the workshop model and that closely aligns to state standards. The curriculum includes definitions of each standard, unit overviews, guiding questions, resources, and individual lesson plans.

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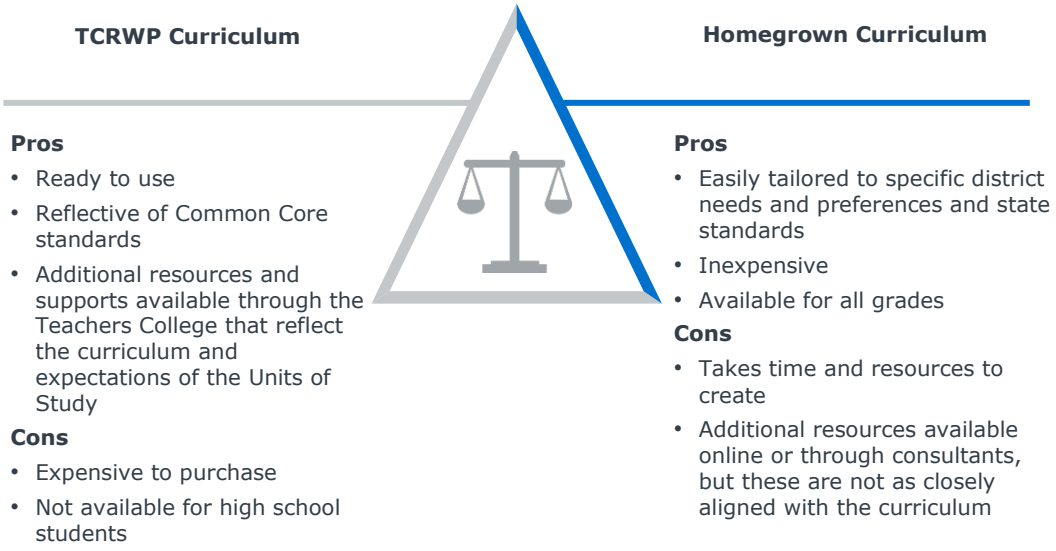
Purchasing the TCRWP Curriculum versus Creating a Homegrown Curriculum



Align State Standards to Workshop Units to Help Teachers Incorporate Standards into the Workshop Model

At **District A**, the secondary ELA coordinator works with teachers to create curriculum documents that align state standards with workshop units. For each grade level, the coordinator selects a team of six ELA teachers. Three of these teachers instruct standard-level courses and three teach honors-level courses, so the team represent all student ability levels. This group creates the curriculum documents for the grade level.

Contacts explain that the curriculum documents ensure inexperienced teachers feel supported and confident in the workshop model and instruct according to state standards. Contacts at District A add that many new teachers lack experience with the workshop model and benefit from these documents.

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Process to Create a Curriculum Aligned with State Standards at *District A*

1 Match Units and Standards

The team of ELA teachers and the secondary ELA coordinator match state standards with workshop units.

2 Describe Standards

To ensure all teachers understand each standard, the group writes documents that describe each standard.

3 Differentiate Standards Across Grade Levels

If a standard is the same across multiple grade levels, the team adds additional information on what level of development or mastery of a concept the district expects of students at each grade level. For example, a standard that requires students to "follow and give complex oral instructions to perform specific tasks, answer questions, or solve problems" exists for grades six to eight. Contacts report that the team adds language highlighting that while the standard is the same, eighth-grade students should display a greater mastery of this skill than sixth-grade students.

4 Create Unit Overviews

After the secondary ELA coordinator and the team of teachers defines standards for every grade level, they create detailed overviews for each unit. These unit overviews support teachers by outlining for them the purpose of each lesson, the resources available for them to teach each lesson, and activities for students to work on after each mini-lesson. The overviews include:

- State standards aligned to the specific goals for each unit
- A list of vocabulary for students to learn during the unit
- Guiding questions for the unit
- Suggestions and resources to assist teachers during the unit
- A layout of specific mini-lessons and workshop activities for each day

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Adapt the Workshop Model to the Time Constraints of Secondary Class Periods

District E, **District F**, and many middle schools within **Intermediate District D** dedicate one 50-minute class period to ELA instruction per day. Similarly, for grades 8-12, administrators at **District A** allot one 45-minute ELA period per day. Contacts at these districts describe two different solutions to fit reading and writing workshops into one class period. Contacts note that in cases where districts dedicate a one class period per day to ELA instruction, administrators do not need to change master schedules to accommodate the workshop model.

District C maintains a modified block schedule, where each class meets four times per week; two blocks of 45 minutes, and two blocks of 65 minutes. This affords the students more time to complete their work. However, seventh and eighth grade students receive only one period of ELA instruction. Therefore, teachers alternate reading and writing workshops.

Adapting Reading and Writing Workshops to Class Periods

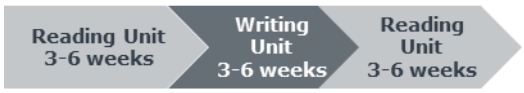
Alternating Units

Workshop Cycle

A workshop cycle takes one class period to complete.

Units

Teachers alternate reading and writing units, focusing on reading or writing workshops one at a time.



One Class Period

- *Mini-Lesson*: 5-10 minutes for explicit instruction
- *Independent Work*: 20-30 minutes for independent reading, small group work, and conferencing
- *Debrief*: 5-10 minutes to share student work and conduct a brief formative assessment

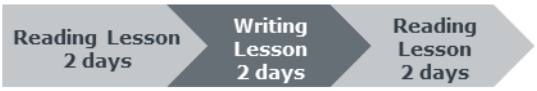
Divided Lessons

Workshop Cycle

A workshop cycle takes at least two class periods (occurring over multiple days) to complete.

Units

Teachers interconnect reading and writing units. Teachers alternate focusing on reading and writing every few days, according to the needs of the classroom.



First Class Period

- *Mini-Lesson*: 10-12 minutes for explicit instruction
- *Independent Work*: 20-30 minute for independent reading, small group work, and conferencing
- *Check-In*: 5 minutes to share student work and discuss the lesson

Second Class Period

- *Recap Mini-Lesson*: 5-10 minutes for brief reminder of explicit instruction
- *Independent Work*: 20-30 minute for independent reading, small group work, and conferencing
- *Full Debrief*: 5-10 minutes to share student work and conduct a brief formative assessment.

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Two Districts Allot Two Periods Per Day to ELA Instruction

Sixth grade students at **District C**, and sixth and seventh grade students at **District A** receive two periods per day of ELA instruction (as noted above, administrators at both districts allot one period of ELA instruction per day to grades 8-12). Students receive one period of reading instruction and one period of writing instruction every day. These two periods allow students to receive instruction in both reading and writing concurrently, rather than in alternating units.

Contacts at these districts note that these two periods of ELA instruction complicate scheduling because the districts need to balance electives and other core classes with the need to schedule an additional period of ELA. Contacts report that administrators at District A note increased difficulty scheduling ELA periods because they attempt to schedule the two ELA periods back-to-back for students (i.e., turning the time into a double-period ELA block). Contacts note that while administrators prefer to schedule this double-period ELA block, when it is impossible to fit a double period within the schedule, school-level employees prioritize keeping the same group of students with the same teacher (e.g., instead of periods three and four becoming an ELA block, a students would attend ELA classes in periods two and seven with the same class and same teacher).

Despite the increased complexity these two periods of ELA instruction add to a master schedule, contacts at District A do not report major scheduling concerns. Contacts among profiled districts report that school-level administrators deal with any scheduling constraints and that master schedules are not a major issue at their district. Contacts add that school leaders create master schedules for their campus with minimal assistance or input from district-level employees.

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3) Supporting the Model

Resources

Maintain Diverse Collections of Books to Meet the Needs and Interests of Students

Traditional literacy instruction typically requires students to read books together as a class. Teachers that use the workshop model select different books for each individual student to read independently. Contacts at **District B** and **Intermediate District D** emphasize the necessity of building and maintaining classroom libraries with a variety of books to instruct according to the workshop model. Contacts suggest classroom libraries include books in different genres (e.g., informational non-fiction, biography, fantasy) and different structures (e.g., plays, graphic novels, poetry) at multiple reading levels. This variety allows students to find books that interest them and suit their needs as readers (i.e., books hard enough to challenge them, but not confuse them).

Target Number of Books

Administrators at **District E** set a target of **30 books per student** for middle school classroom libraries. The district is working towards this goal, but contacts note that not all classrooms have reached this target.

Contacts at District B and **District E** report that building and maintaining classroom libraries is one of the largest expenses associated with supporting the workshop model at secondary schools. While all contacts emphasize the importance of a robust selection of books for the success of the workshop model, not all districts possess the funding necessary to maintain full classroom libraries. Therefore, profiled districts obtain books through several methods.

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Strategies to Ensure Access to Diverse Selections of Books with Minimal Funding

Focus on Literature Circles/Book Clubs

Instead of focusing on classroom libraries, **District A** purchases approximately 15 of the same book, which allows two teachers to conduct a literature circle or book club on this book with 5-7 students. While literature circles do not provide students with as wide a variety of books as a classroom library, it allows the district to order fewer books and order in bulk to reduce costs.

Supplement with School and Public Libraries

At **District F**, teachers supplement classroom libraries with trips to the school and public libraries. While not as organized as a classroom library (which teachers typically organize by reading levels and units of study), both libraries provide a large variety of books to students at no additional cost to the district.

Use Parent Donations and Fundraising

Parent clubs fund all classroom libraries at **District C**. Leaders of multiple parent teacher associations in the district form a club, Rapport. Contacts report that this club has maintained the classroom libraries through fundraising and donations for five years.

Engage Parents with the Workshop Model to Encourage Fundraising

Administrators at **District C** invite parents on building tours to observe a workshop lesson in the classroom. After, administrators speak to parents about the workshop model. They also explain why the district requires a variety of books to instruct the workshop model. Administrators emphasize the need for parent support to obtain books for classrooms. Contacts report that this engagement convinces parents of the efficacy of the model and highlights exactly how parents can assist the district with fundraising and book donations.

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Provide Teachers with Supplemental Texts for Additional Support

In addition to curricular resources, profiled districts provide teachers with books, videos, and research on the workshop model. These supplemental texts provide opportunities for self-guided professional development and offer additional resources to teachers struggling to instruct the model.

Examples of Supplemental Texts Available to Teachers at Profiled Districts

Notice and Note
by Kylene Beers
Provides strategies for close reading

That Workshop Book
by Samantha Bennet
Explains strategies and methods to conduct a successful workshop

Teaching with the Brain in Mind
by Eric Jensen
Provides an overview of brain-based learning and strategies to increase academic achievement

DIY Literacy
by Kate and Maggie Roberts
Details how to create and use teaching tools to improve instruction

No Profiled District Added Additional Staff to Support the Workshop Model

None of the districts profiled added additional permanent staff to support the implementation of the workshop model. One district, **District F**, did contract a writing coach to provide additional training to their teachers a few times a year after implementing reading and writing workshops, but this coach is not an employee of the district. Contacts among profiled districts note that experienced teachers assist peers satisfactorily during times when outside trainers or the district's Secondary Literacy Specialist cannot provide support.

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Emphasize Research that Supports the Workshop Model to Obtain Teacher Buy-In

Contacts at **District A** and **District B** note that middle school teachers respond best to the workshop model when administrators or trainers explain research that supports its efficacy during initial professional development sessions. Contacts at District A state that middle school teachers need to understand the theory behind new practices to accept them. Contacts at District A add that providing secondary teachers with the resources to understand the theoretical framework behind the workshop model increases teacher buy-in and improves instruction.

Research Supporting the Workshop Model

TCRWP maintains a compendium of research supporting the workshop model, **Research Base Underlying the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop's Approach to Literacy Instruction**. This compendium lists every component of the workshop model and provides the research which informs that aspect of the model.

Gradual release refers to an instructional model where responsibility for learning gradually transfers from the teacher to the student. The workshop model reflects the principles of gradual release with its emphasis on independent learning and personalized instruction. For more information, see this **article**.

Additionally, contacts at District B note that focusing on the research behind the workshop model alleviates confusion and frustration among teachers. Contacts report that some middle school teachers reacted negatively to the proposed workshop model initially because they saw some elements as childish (i.e., bringing students together to sit on the rug). Contacts explain that these teachers felt that the workshop model did not address the needs of secondary students.

To address these concerns, administrators at District B emphasized the research behind the efficacy of the workshop model. They focused the discussion on specific strategies (e.g., conferencing, gradual release) and explained how these strategies resulted in academic achievement for students. This focus directs teachers' attention to the principles underlying effective instruction. Contacts report that this tactic reduced pushback among teachers already at the district and makes new teachers to the district more eager to accept the model.

Ask Teachers to Define Core Beliefs to Create Common Goals for Literacy Instruction

The workshop model requires additional work on the part of teachers compared to a traditional, one-size-fits-all instructional model. Contacts report that this additional work results in pushback from teachers who feel overburdened. To increase buy-in among teachers, administrators show them how this additional work directly supports their core beliefs about education.

As part of the initial professional development for the workshop model at **District A**, district administrators ask teachers to define their core belief or values in the classroom. When teachers voice concerns about the workshop model, administrators invoke these core beliefs. For example, if a teacher wishes to teach one novel to the whole class instead of selecting the appropriate books for each student, administrators remind them that one of their core beliefs is that every child deserves to receive the best instruction for them. Core beliefs give teachers and administrators a common set of goals for literacy instruction and provide a strong foundation for any changes to literacy instruction (i.e., the implementation of the workshop model).

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Defining Core Beliefs at *District A*

During a professional development session, the secondary ELA coordinator defines core beliefs for ELA teachers.

After the lecture, teachers divide into their Professional Learning Community (PLC) groups. They discuss their core beliefs as a group. The groups do not yet finalize their core beliefs.

After the professional development day, teachers work for the next few weeks in the PLCs to finalize their core beliefs. They submit these beliefs to the secondary ELA coordinator, who reviews them. Teachers revisit these core beliefs yearly during professional development sessions.

Ongoing Teacher Support

Use TCRWP Summer Institutes to Develop Teacher Leaders

Contacts at profiled districts report that the summer institutes operated by TCRWP provide excellent professional development opportunities for teachers and coaches. **District B**, **District C**, **District E**, and **District F** have sent teachers to TCRWP summer institutes. Due to the popularity of the institute, it accepts a limited number of teachers each year and declines many applicants. To receive the most value from a limited number of teachers able to attend, administrators at District C prioritized teachers who demonstrated a commitment to the workshop model, demonstrated experience with the model, and who earned a high level of trust and authority among their peers.

Teachers who attended the institute returned to the district with more knowledge about the nuances of the workshop model. These teachers also served as leaders and resources for their less-experienced peers. Prioritizing some teachers allowed the district to make the most efficient use of their limited professional development budget, and of the limited spaces available at the Institute.

Similarly, at District B, the curriculum specialist and three lead teachers attended the TCRWP institute. These staff used the knowledge and skills they gained from the institute to train other teachers at the district. This allowed the district to receive more professional development for all teachers at a lower cost than hosting trainers from the TCRWP or sending additional teachers to the institute.

Use Collaborative Professional Development to Increase the Effectiveness of the Workshop Model

Contacts at **District E** and **District F** emphasize the importance of establishing time for teacher collaboration as part of ongoing professional development. At District E,

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teachers use their grade level meeting time to review the Units of Study (from TCRWP). This dedicated time allows teachers to examine the units together, collaboratively plan lessons, and provide suggestions for improvements. Contacts note that this collaborative work improves teacher efficacy. While teachers possess limited time for collaborative planning outside these meetings, contacts report that administrators aim to provide teachers with additional opportunities to collaborate on projects such as customizable toolkits for each unit in the future.

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4) Assessment and Feedback

Methods of Assessment

Conduct Classroom Walkthroughs to Assess the Adoption of the Workshop Model and Determine Impact on Student Learning

Administrators at both **District B** and **District C** use classroom walkthroughs to assess the effectiveness of the workshop model. Administrators at these districts regularly observe classrooms during lessons and speak to teachers and students about their learning. To help administrators conduct successful walkthroughs, the secondary literacy specialist at District B conducts monthly meetings with them. At each meeting, the secondary literacy specialist presents a different aspect of the workshop model, so administrators know how to identify successful implementation of that element in the classroom.

Elements to Examine in Classroom Walkthroughs

Student Learning

Administrators at **District C** hold conversations with students during classroom walkthroughs to assess learning. Each conversation begins by asking the student "What are you working on as a reader or writer?" Students should be able answer by describing a goal for their workshop time, such as "Putting more voice into my story." The administrator should be able to have a conversation with the student about what they are doing during workshop time to realize that goal. Students who successfully articulate these goals and the steps to achieve them reflect a high level of learning in the classroom.

Intentional Book Selection

Much of the effectiveness of the reading workshop comes from allowing students to read on or just slightly above their current reading level. Therefore, **District B** asks administrators to examine how teachers select books for their students. Administrators also solicit teacher and student feedback to assess the effectiveness of book selection processes.

Access to Texts

Administrators at **District B** look for teachers to focus their lessons on access to texts versus the texts themselves.

For example, a teacher saying "This is my unit on determining central ideas and writing objective summaries" indicates a focus on access to texts. However, a teacher saying "This is my unit on The Monkey's Paw" might indicate a focus on the texts rather than the essential concepts that allow students to access the texts.

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Consider Tracking Assessments and Test Scores to Evaluate the Workshop Model

See the **TCRWP website** for more information on how to use running records to assess students.

Several profiled districts use assessments and test scores as metrics to assess the effectiveness of the workshop model. Administrators at **District F** use the running record method (i.e., a method of formative assessment) and students' state test scores to track ELA performance at the secondary level. These metrics reflected improvements in student achievement after the implementation of the workshop model. Similarly, administrators at **District E** track grades, the Developmental Reading Assessment from Pearson's, and the Scholastic Reading Inventory to assess student progress.

These assessments provide profiled districts with concrete data to show the effects of the workshop model. However, contacts at **District B** believe that observational data, collected through classroom walkthroughs, provides a fairer assessment. They note that particularly at larger districts, a variety of factors (e.g., student poverty, teacher turn-over, parent involvement) influence data-driven assessments. Contacts state that due to the diversity of their schools and student experiences, administrators express discomfort linking student grades or test scores with the efficacy of the workshop model.

Stakeholder Feedback

Teachers and Students at Profiled Districts Respond Well to the Workshop Model

Contacts at all profiled districts report student and teacher satisfaction with the workshop model. At **District C**, contacts note that one teacher referred to the model as "life-changing" for both them and their students. While presenting at a board meeting, the teacher even apologized to former students for not providing the same quality of education as students receive now under the workshop model. Contacts at **District F** note that the model receives enthusiasm from students as well—students especially enjoy choosing their own books and discussing them in small groups. Contacts at District F observe that students engage more in class than they did under the previous model of reading one book as a whole class.

Praise for the Reading and Writing Workshop Model

"[Reading and writing workshops] is what all our students need to find love in reading and joy in reading through their choice of books and their choice of writing. And from that comes great things."

- Contact at **District C**

At **District E**, contacts note that while teachers respond positively to the model, they recently received feedback from teachers asking for additional support. Specifically, teachers request more ongoing embedded professional development to help them effectively implement the workshop model. This suggests the potential for improvements to the implementation of reading and writing workshops, though it is not a criticism of the model.

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Parent Feedback Reflects a General Acceptance of the Workshop Model

District C works directly to engage parents in the workshop model (for more information, see **page 14**). Contacts state that parents in the district approve of the workshop model and work to support it.

All profiled districts except **District C** report that they receive minimal to no direct feedback from parents on the workshop model. **District F** conducts yearly surveys through Panorama to assess parent responses to school climate, curriculum, and use of technology. While survey responses indicate that parents may be noticing a positive increase in the rigor of ELA education, contacts state that the survey questions lack the specificity to provide more details on parents' responses to the model.

Administrators at other profiled districts do not solicit direct feedback from parents. However, contacts at **District A** note that the presence or absence of parent complaints serves as an indicator of their acceptance of the workshop model. Teachers and principals rarely elevate positive parent feedback to district level staff, but they always report serious complaints. Additionally, aggrieved parents often escalate complaints to the district on their own. Therefore, contacts interpret a lack of complaints as positive feedback and an indication of parent satisfaction with the results of the workshop model.

Contacts note that no curriculum specialist or secondary literacy coordinator at any profiled district reported hearing parent complaints about the workshop model.

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5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- Why did contact districts implement the reading and writing workshop model at secondary schools?
- How did contact districts implement the workshop model at secondary schools?
- How do contact districts adapt the workshop model to fit within secondary class periods?
- How do contact districts develop a master schedule that accommodates the extra English/Language Arts (ELA) time commitments required by the reading and writing workshop model?
- What funding and resources do contact districts require to effectively implement and maintain the workshop model?
- What additional staff do contact districts employ to implement and operate the workshop model?
- How do contact districts write ELA curricula that aligns with both state standards and the workshop model?
- What professional development and instructional resources do contact districts provide for teachers operating the workshop model?
- What metrics do contact districts use to determine the efficacy of the workshop model?
- What feedback do stakeholders at contact districts provide about the workshop model?

Project Sources

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Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed directors of curriculum and literacy specialists at school districts that use a reading a writing workshop at secondary schools. The Forum also interviewed administrators at one intermediate school district (i.e., regional service agency) whose constituent districts use a reading and writing workshop model at secondary schools.

A Guide to Districts Profiled in this Brief

District	Location	Approximate Number of Students
District A	South	24,000
District B	South	32,000
District C	Pacific West	3,500
Intermediate District D	Midwest	210,000 students across multiple districts
District E	Mid-Atlantic	3,500
District F	Pacific West	3,500

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