RESEARCH for *ACTION*

Lessons from Inside the Classroom:

Teachers' Perspectives on the LDC Initiative

January • 2013

Special thank you to practitioners

This research would not have been possible without the participation of teachers and other educators, who shared their experiences in the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) initiative with Research for Action (RFA) staff.

The following school districts and networks of schools participated in this research: Hillsborough County Public Schools (FL), Kenton County School District (KY), Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (PA), and New Visions for Public Schools (NY). Teachers generously opened their classrooms and gave of their planning periods, lunch breaks, and after school time to share their experiences with RFA staff.

RFA would like to thank all educators who participated in this study. We hope that you find some value in this booklet that was produced with all of you in mind.

To find all of RFA's reports on LDC, go to www.researchforaction.org/rfa-study-of-tools-aligned-ccss/.

★　　★　　★　　★

RESEARCH for *ACTION*

# LESSONS FROM INSIDE THE CLASSROOM:

Teachers' Perspectives on the LDC Initiative

January • 2013

Introduction

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has invested in the development and dissemination of instructional tools to support teachers' incorporation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) into their classroom instruction. Literacy experts have developed a CCSS-aligned framework that allows teachers to provide content and literacy (reading and writing) instruction within their English/Language Arts (ELA), science and social studies curricula.

For the past two years, Research for Action (RFA) has been studying teachers' adoption of the LDC modules, concentrating on teachers' responses to and use of the modules, and their expansion and scale-up in 2011-12. The LDC framework is currently being used in urban, rural, and suburban school districts, as well as several national networks of schools. The figure below displays the states in which teachers have been trained in using the LDC framework over the past two years, and provides an indication of the approximate number of teachers receiving professional development in each state.
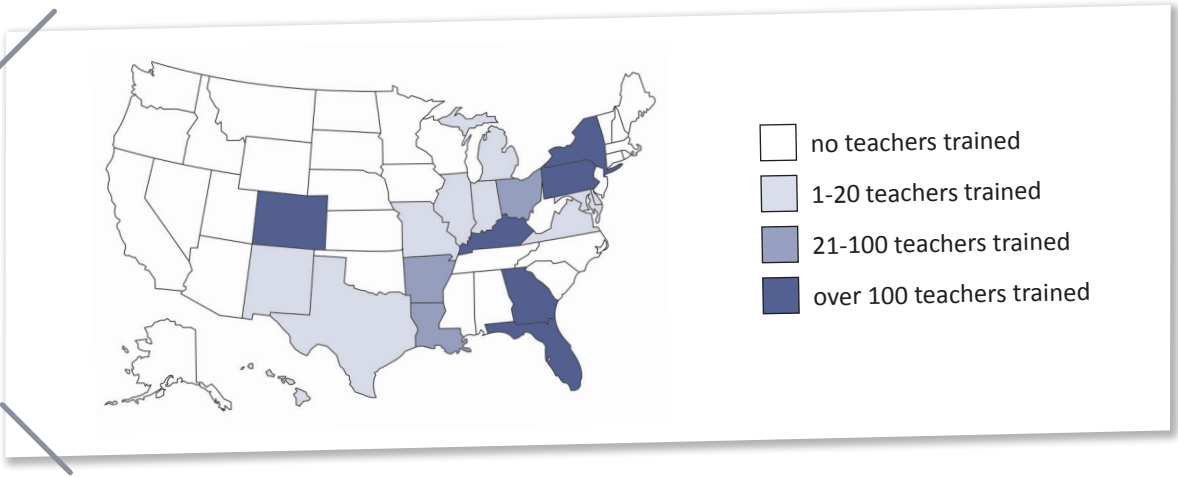
During the 2011-12 school year, RFA conducted fieldwork and administered surveys in four sites, and the resulting data informed this teacher booklet. RFA staff interviewed 71 teachers and conducted 20 observations of teachers using the modules in the following content areas: ELA, reading courses, science and social studies. Two hundred and forty teachers completed an on-line survey.

How to read this booklet

Building on *A View From the Inside*[1] about Year One of LDC, this updated booklet shares teacher perspectives on the second year of the LDC initiative. This booklet synthesizes teachers' reports of their experiences developing and using modules in the classroom, the supports they received from their administrators and peers, and their impressions about the impact of the initiative on their overall instructional practice and student learning. Throughout the initiative, teacher perspectives and feedback have helped tool developers, professional development providers and district and school leaders to continue to refine and improve LDC.

We hope that *Lessons from Inside the Classroom* continues to inform and prepare teachers and school leaders as they begin or expand their use of modules and that it reveals new insights, raises questions, and promotes discussions within schools and departments.

A word about terminology

In this booklet, we use many terms that are specific to the CCSS-aligned literacy tools.

- The **LDC Framework** is an instructional system for teachers to incorporate CCSS-aligned literacy instruction in their content areas, including English/Language Arts, science and social studies.
- A **module** is a specific lesson or unit of instruction. Teachers and other educators choose a template task from the Framework, fill in their specific content, identify skills students need to complete the task, and develop a plan for instruction.
- **LDC** refers to the broader initiative, which includes professional development to help teachers and other educators develop and teach modules.
- In this booklet, the terms **"experienced"** and **"first-year"** tool users refers to the length of time teachers have participated in this initiative. **"Experienced"** tool users participated in the LDC initiative during the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years and **"first-year"** tool users began participating during the 2011-12 school year.

What did teachers say about their work with LDC in Year Two?

Teachers were enthusiastic about using LDC. Three-quarters said their participation was worth the time and effort involved. Ninety-four percent of teachers said they planned to make improvements in how they teach modules next year. One teacher said:

Teachers' beliefs about literacy instruction were highly aligned with the LDC initiative. The vast majority of teachers affirmed that their beliefs about literacy instruction were aligned with LDC. Ninety-six percent of teachers reported that writing assignments allowed students to develop a strong understanding of content. Ninety-eight percent of teachers agreed that content area teachers should help students improve their literacy skills.

I love LDC! I hope and pray that, like so many education programs that they start, it doesn't fall apart....that they continue to get it going.

— high school social studies teacher

The LDC framework has become an important part of many teachers' instructional practice. A strong majority of teachers (75%) reported that LDC is an important part of their instructional practice. This indicates that the framework's integration with instruction may increase over time. In interviews, teachers described how they were integrating LDC into their overall practice:

I think unless you teach ELA you shy away from writing until you are told to write that obligatory writing piece that you have to turn in at the end of the year. This makes me focus a little bit more on having my students practice reading and writing throughout the school year. It has helped me incorporate that into my instruction, not just when we are working on a module, but throughout all of my units.

— middle school science teacher

Working with LDC modules has inspired me to locate other primary sources. For example, I found letters from primary sources in response to the Townsend Acts. So I have created other opportunities for them to interact with primary sources and asked students to do quick writes about a topic from those documents. I think the kids have responded well to working with primary sources and recording quick reactions. I use these for formative assessment to see if a kid understands what we were focused on in the document.

— social studies teacher

What were some key differences between the experiences of teachers new to LDC and those with LDC experience in Year Two of the initiative?

In general, first-year and experienced tool users reported positively about using the LDC modules in Year Two. **However, our research found that teachers who had more experience developing and using modules had more knowledge about how to use them in the classroom and reported more positively about LDC's impact on their teaching practice and student learning.** By highlighting these differences, we hope to illustrate for teachers and school leaders using LDC modules for the first time how knowledge and perceptions about using the tools evolve with experience. We also hope that highlighting these findings will help mitigate some of the anxiety that can accompany teachers' first-time use of the tools.

Experienced tool users were more aware of how tools were helping them to implement the Common Core State Standards. Ninety-one percent of experienced tool users agreed that using modules helped them implement the CCSS compared with 77% of first-year tool users. In interviews, teachers confirmed this perception of LDC alignment with CCSS.
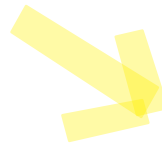
> *The connection between LDC and CCSS is clearer not just to me - but also to the students. They're seeing the connection. Because I have my learning targets up and on their study guides, they'll have the standards that apply to that unit. They're able to see that we hit this or that.*
>
> — high school social studies teacher

Experienced tool users were more likely to feel prepared to teach modules. Eighty-nine percent of experienced tool users said they felt adequately prepared to effectively use a module, compared with 69% of first-year tool users. Developing and implementing the module template was sometimes overwhelming for first-year tool users; as teachers gained experience with modules, this became more manageable.

Experienced tool users reported more positively about the demands of module development and implementation. Developing and implementing modules is a rigorous process, which teachers seemed to embrace more fully as they gained more experience.
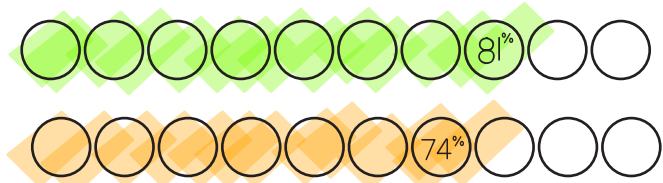
They would like to develop modules during the next school year.

Experienced Tool Users: 72%
First-Year Tool Users: 60%
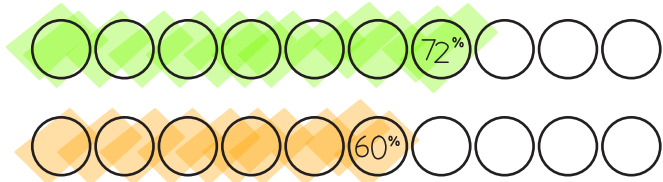
They look forward to teaching modules during the next school year.

Experienced Tool Users: 82%
First-Year Tool Users: 70%
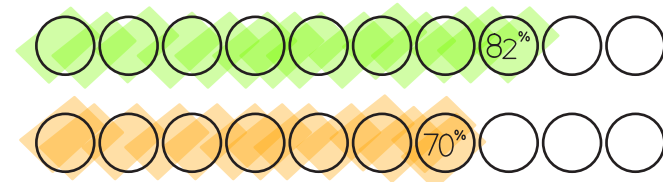
Their participation in the LDC initiative is worth the time and effort involved.

Experienced Tool Users: 81%
First-Year Tool Users: 74%

Experienced Tool Users   First-Year Tool Users

Experienced tool users were more likely to see a link between the modules and postsecondary success. Eighty-eight percent of experienced tool users, compared with 78% of first-year tool users, said that LDC will prepare students for postsecondary success.
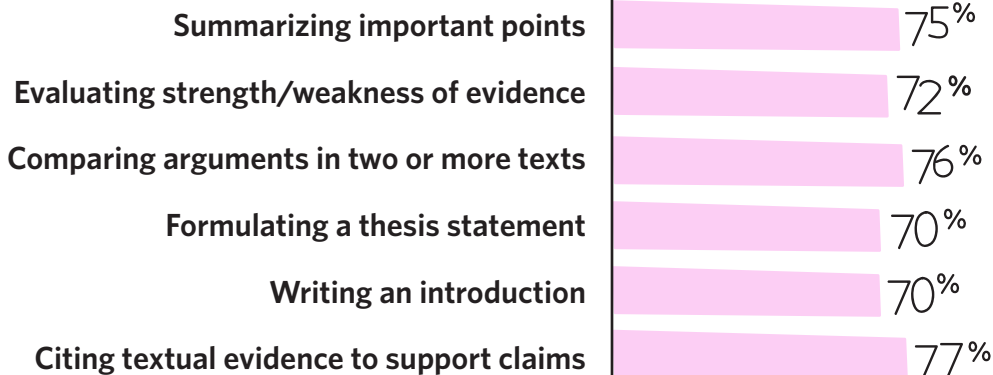
What did teachers say about using modules in the classroom in Year Two?

Teachers understood the building blocks needed in order for students to complete the template task. The vast majority (96%) of teachers surveyed indicated that they knew what skills their students needed in order to complete the template task; and 93% said that they knew the type of mini-tasks to give their students to prepare them to complete the template task. In interviews, teachers described how they were able to connect mini-tasks with the overall lesson goal for students.

Modules enabled teachers to address key areas of reading and writing. Seventy-three percent (73%) of teachers reported that modules helped them develop new ways to teach literacy skills in their content area. A large majority of teachers indicated that the LDC framework helped them thoroughly or sufficiently address the following tasks:

> I really am much more aware of planning with the goal in mind: "What's the task that I'm asking my kids to do at the end of this?" Because if what I'm asking them to do is not related to the final goal, then I'm not going to have them do it. I have really found myself making sure that what they're doing is not just an activity for the activity's sake, but that it is enhancing the skills that they need to ultimately conquer that learning set.
>
> — middle school ELA teacher

Task	Percentage
Summarizing important points	75%
Evaluating strength/weakness of evidence	72%
Comparing arguments in two or more texts	76%
Formulating a thesis statement	70%
Writing an introduction	70%
Citing textual evidence to support claims	77%

In interviews, teachers described how LDC gave them new strategies for integrating reading and writing skills into their courses.

It has made me focus more on the [literacy] side of teaching rather than just history. If I didn't have this tool, I probably wouldn't do writing assignments like these ones. I'd do smaller ones. I'm glad I'm doing it. It definitely benefits the students.

— middle school social studies teacher
(first-year tool user)

The biggest successes with LDC are that it has forced me to slow down, and spend the time in class working on the various steps of the writing process. The essays that they've been producing are the kind of stuff I was getting from [older students]. The process has definitely taught me something about how to teach writing.

— high school science teacher

Science and social studies teachers especially appreciated LDC's support for teaching literacy skills. Prior to the CCSS, most secondary science and social studies teachers were not required to teach reading and writing in their courses; doing so requires a unique skill set that many teachers need to time to develop. Science teachers (87%) and social studies teachers (77%) reported that using modules helped them develop new ways of teaching literacy skills, as compared to 64% of ELA teachers.

If I didn't have this [LDC], I probably wouldn't do writing assignments like this. I'd do smaller ones.

— social studies teacher

I'm always really scared of writing...that's why I went into science...[LDC], in a good way, forced [me] to think differently.

— science teacher

With modules, teachers found effective strategies for teaching subject content, and for going deeper into the content. Two-thirds (66%) of all teachers reported that using modules has helped them find effective strategies for teaching their subject content during module instruction. Across all content areas, teachers said they used the following LDC strategies to teach content:

- Make connections to the template task during mini-task instruction
- Strategically question students about module content
- Model writing about the content

In interviews, teachers also described how the modules enabled them to go deeper into the content with their students:

We hated teaching about global warming last year. This year, the LDC global warming module provided a way for me to enrich the content with the kids. The reason why we hated teaching that content was because we didn't have a whole lot of resources. The module provided a way for us to really incorporate additional resources into the content, allow kids to be creative with it, and still dive into the same content in a way that gave students more ownership over the material.

— middle school science teacher

★   ★   ★

LDC has totally changed my way of thinking about what I do in class. I had a bunch of different worksheets for kids about the New Deal which I had used in the past. In developing a module for teaching the New Deal, I chose to ask two good analysis questions instead of asking five questions. I then had them compare two articles. With the political cartoon, I gave them two good questions. Instead of having them analyze what they saw in the cartoon, I pared down the amount of questions I was asking and made them more meaty to get more out of them.

— high school social studies teacher

Modules helped teachers provide better feedback to students about their writing. Most teachers (75%) said that using modules helped them provide students with detailed feedback about their writing. Modules immersed teachers and students in very focused exploration of content through reading and writing tasks. This close engagement with text, along with the tasks in the instructional ladder that build student competence and knowledge, and the LDC and district writing rubrics provided teachers with rich data and a structure for responding to student writing.

Teachers' feedback about the LDC rubric was mixed. About three-quarters of teachers said the rubric was helpful in assessing students' final piece of writing and that it helped students understand the expectation for high quality writing. One middle school ELA teacher noted that it addresses "the genuine learning and growth that we wanted to see in the kids." Yet, about one-third of teachers said that the rubric did not fit the needs of their students. Some teachers said that it could be difficult for middle school students to use. In some sites, the LDC rubric conflicted with other rubrics already in use.
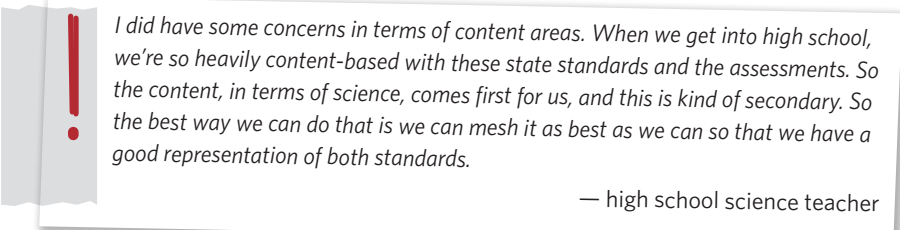
Many teachers used modules to meet the needs of their diverse students. Many LDC teachers needed to differentiate instruction for their diverse groups of students. The most common strategies to differentiate module instruction included:

- Using different-level texts for different students
- Assigning students different kinds of products
- Providing choice about what kind of writing assignments to produce, or expecting less writing (i.e., two rather than five paragraphs) from some students
- Using mixed-level pairs or groups, so that students can help and learn from each other
- Providing extra help and scaffolding to struggling, special education, and ELL students in the form of: one-on-one assistance, more graphic organizers, after-school meetings, more support reading difficult texts, sentence starters, and/or guided outlines

While a majority of teachers (64%) agreed that the modules are flexible enough to meet the needs of students, a significant minority (36%) disagreed with this statement.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Both developing and teaching modules can be very time-consuming. A large majority (85%) of teachers reported difficulty finding time to develop modules. It was also difficult to manage the time needed to teach the module while covering the required curriculum. In some cases, the need to cover curriculum coincided with the need to prepare students for the state assessment. Science and social studies teachers were more likely to experience this tension – 82% of science teachers agree that teaching modules takes too much time away from covering required curriculum topics, compared to 59% of social studies and 48% of ELA teachers:

> *I did have some concerns in terms of content areas. When we get into high school, we're so heavily content-based with these state standards and the assessments. So the content, in terms of science, comes first for us, and this is kind of secondary. So the best way we can do that is we can mesh it as best as we can so that we have a good representation of both standards.*
>
> — high school science teacher

Finding time to respond to student writing was also a challenge and teachers wanted more support for improving the quality of their writing feedback. Despite the high percentage of teachers who said that LDC modules have helped improve their feedback on student writing, a large majority reported that finding the time needed to provide meaningful feedback was a significant challenge. A strong majority of teachers (85%) reported that it is difficult to find time to respond to student writing and 40% reported that they are unsure about how to best give productive feedback on student writing. This has been a common theme in Years One and Two of the LDC initiative. In interviews, science and social studies teachers were especially likely to talk about the challenge of providing feedback for student writing.

The turnaround of grading and getting it back to students has been a problem. I had to read 116 pieces and write comments on them. Finding the time was difficult.

— middle school social studies teacher

Using modules to meet the needs of struggling students continued to be a significant challenge. While a large majority (80%) of teachers reported that LDC modules enabled differentiation for students with advanced literacy abilities, only a little more than half of the teachers said that modules helped them differentiate for ELL and special education students, or for students reading and writing below-grade-level. In interviews, teachers described the challenge of differentiating instruction for these groups of students.

It was very difficult to find scientific articles on their skill level. So I'll be honest - we had to spoon-feed them a lot with those articles, because was higher-order reading. This was good for my kids who read at a 12th grade level. But for my kids who read at a 2nd or 3rd grade level, we had to break the material into chunks and walk them through it. That part was very difficult.

— middle school science teacher

We adapted the module when we saw they wouldn't understand the vocabulary. We had to break it down for them. My lower level kids took 3-4 days to complete every activity, while it took only about one day for the honors students.

— middle school ELA teacher

What kind of professional support did teachers receive in Year Two?

Leaders provided teachers with a variety of formal and informal school and district-level professional learning opportunities (PLOs) to support their use of LDC.

- District and network-wide meetings
- Modeling or co-teaching with a district leader, literacy coach or professional development provider
- Webinars
- Planning and reflecting on implementation at department meetings
- Informal conversations in-person, via email or phone with peers and district leaders to problem-solve and strategize around tool use

Teachers found collaboration to be a highly effective form of support for developing and implementing modules. Seventy-five percent of LDC teachers reported that collaboration with their peers was helpful and 87% of teachers said that their LDC colleagues are collaborative. Collaboration helped teachers increase their knowledge about the LDC framework, co-develop modules, and discuss tool use challenges.

Collaboration around module development:

We went to [a regional] LDC PD and they gave us working time... Basically the other science teacher and I collaborated on what we would be teaching – something that is researchable and what we thought kids would enjoy writing about. We came up with everything that day. We do a lot of collaboration by text message. The other night we shot texts back and forth.

— middle school science teacher

Collaboration around module use:

I like being able to get with my peers and talk about these units and being able to share different things I do and hearing what my colleagues do differently to make it smoother, faster, better.

— middle school ELA teacher

Developing or revising modules proved to be an important learning opportunity. Teachers who participated in these activities reported higher levels of knowledge about module implementation. This finding suggests that the module development or revision process is an important learning opportunity for teachers and allows them to deepen their knowledge of the LDC framework. Teachers who developed modules reported more knowledge and understanding on four out of five tasks central to creating modules or refining them during implementation.

How Developing Modules Affected Teacher Knowledge

**1. They know what skills their students need in order to complete the template task.**

99% 92%
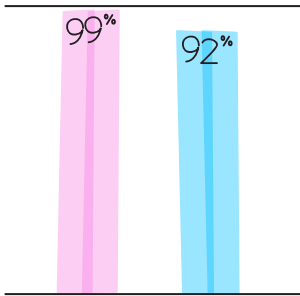
**2. They know the type of mini-tasks to give to their students to prepare them to complete the template task.**

96% 88%
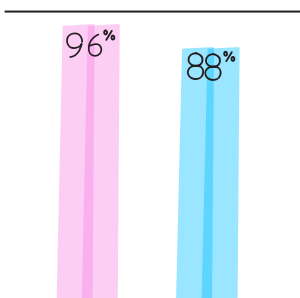
3. They are able to adjust instruction to meet the needs of individual students, based on the information collected from using LDC modules.

85% 70%
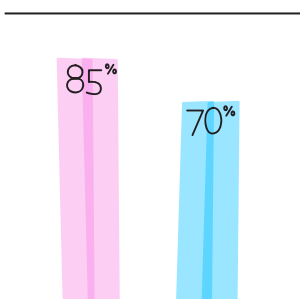
4. They feel adequately prepared to effectively use the module.

76% 65%
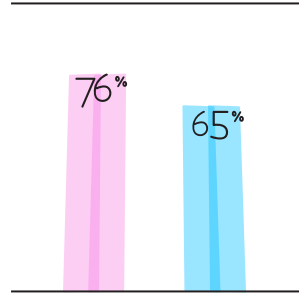
5. They understand how to use an LDC instructional ladder.

84% 84%
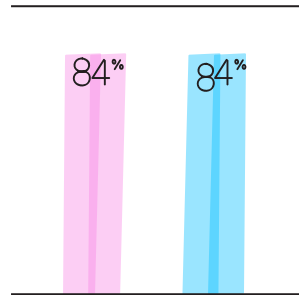
Developed/revised modules

Did NOT develop/revise modules

Teachers who did not develop modules reported less ownership and more uncertainty about how to implement the module:

> *I do not have much ownership on that module. I had just been handed the module and had to go to my counterpart and hand it to her, wade through it, and figure out how to do it with little direction. To say that we did it with fidelity is open to interpretation.*
>
> — middle school social studies teacher
> (first-year tool user)

Principals provided teachers with the time and resources to develop their knowledge about and skills for using Modules. In surveys and interviews, teachers said that their principals were involved and supportive of their work using the Modules. Eighty-seven percent of teachers agreed that their school administration had made formative assessment a priority in their school. Eighty-one percent of teacher said that their school administration provided ongoing support for the implementation of the Modules.

> *They've [Principal and A.P.] really embraced it. And they've been for it, and I think they've done a great job with that. Always supportive when it comes to helping us. They've been on-board; they've been with us at all of our meetings. So I think they've really been supportive of the movement.*
>
> — middle school science teacher

> *The principal meets with selected teachers and encourages us, tells us how big of a deal this is going to be. He's frequently communicated with me and asked how it's going. Has offered to set up any afterschool PD if we feel like we need it.*
>
> — high school social studies teacher

In some sites, teachers took on a leadership role to support and coach their peers. In some schools and districts, there was a formal role for teacher leaders. In other places, teacher leaders emerged more organically and were seen as the "go-to" people for the LDC initiative. Teachers spoke of the importance of having a teacher leader at their school to:

- Field questions and discuss ideas about using the tools,
- Provide background and clarity about the tools,
- Share their experiences with the tools in the classroom, and
- Be available as a resource for ongoing and often informal technical assistance.

More than half of LDC teachers would like to have more professional learning opportunities that address the following:

- Differentiating instruction
- Modules for students reading below grade level
- Finding reading materials
- Developing mini-tasks
- Providing feedback

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Lack of time to collaborate was a barrier in many sites. Even though the vast majority of teachers said that their LDC peers were collaborative, 50% of teachers reported that they did not have regularly scheduled common planning time with their LDC peers.

What did teachers say about the impact of LDC on their practice?

Teachers using LDC modules are able to provide more student-centered instruction. Teachers described how using LDC modules has enabled them to deliver more student-centered instruction.

Instead of me lecturing, they gathered the notes on their own. Then we talked about it - what they were seeing and the important parts of the readings on the Enlightenment thinkers. Instead of me saying Voltaire did this, now they're pulling out the information. The lecture became more of a large group discussion. The students were involved. It wasn't just me throwing out tons of notes. I think it gave them more of a hands-on experience and, instead of me answering their questions, they were answering their own questions.

— high school social studies teacher

My instruction is more student-centered by asking questions like "what do you already know? What do you need to know to be successful with this chapter?" I've been a little more intentional about trying to figure out where they are and where are their misconceptions. I've been letting them sift through the information and reflect on what they are getting out of it. I've been asking a lot more questions and asking them to discuss with their table partners and then share with each other. There's been a lot more thinking on the part of the students and less teacher-centered instruction.

— high school science teacher

Teachers have increased the rigor of writing assignments and raised their expectations for student writing. Eighty percent (80%) of teachers said that using modules had helped them increase the rigor of their writing assignments and 82% of teachers indicated that the modules had led them to raise their expectations for student writing.

In interviews, teachers described this greater rigor and higher expectations:

I got more out of the students that really struggled than I expected, because the writing process was broken down for them.

— middle school ELA teacher

Teachers are integrating LDC strategies into their general, non-module instruction. As teachers have become more familiar with teaching LDC modules, it has become easier for them to integrate module components and strategies throughout their teaching. Our findings suggest that instructional change begins in the first year of tool use for many teachers and it expands as teachers gain more experience with the tools. Experienced teachers were especially likely to use LDC strategies throughout their practice. Eighty-two percent of experienced teachers reported using module instructional strategies during non-module instruction, compared to 66% of new teachers.

In interviews, teachers described how they were integrating LDC strategies throughout their general, non-module instruction. Frequent examples involved including more opportunities for students to read and write and using mini-tasks and LDC strategies, such as note-taking and methods of providing supporting evidence.

> *I'm trying to incorporate more reading and writing and to give students more opportunity to read an article, use what they know, and summarize what they think. It directs my teaching and my planning to incorporate more reading and writing.*
>
> — middle school science teacher

> *I've definitely incorporated LDC into other work that we've done in the 9th and 10th grades this year. As with LDC modules, I am planning the structure and making sure I'm hitting those different pieces and using a lot of ideas that we touched on last year in the 9th grade module. I feel like it's definitely informed other work outside of the modules.*
>
> — high school social studies teacher

> *I find myself rewriting most of my lessons and I've found that I'm rewriting lessons in the LDC format without thinking too much about it. It seems to be the natural thing to do. When I sit down with other teachers to collaborate-and there are other teachers who've been exposed to this--it's like "yes, this is how we do it." If teachers can understand that this helps you grow as a teacher, then it has a huge impact.*
>
> — middle school ELA teacher

What did teachers say about LDC and student engagement?

Most teachers reported that students are either more engaged during module instruction or exhibit the same amount of engagement, compared to regular instruction. Approximately one third (29%) of teachers surveyed think students are more engaged during modules than during their usual instruction. Sixty-percent of teachers reported that engagement was the same and 11% said that students were less engaged.

Modules contributed to student engagement by allowing students to take ownership of the reading and writing process. Teachers highlighted specific characteristics of the modules and students' roles within the modules as important to promoting student engagement. These included:

High interest module topics.
Well-chosen module topics draw students into the content.

Argumentative tasks.
These call on students to take a stand and sift through evidence to back it up.

Instructional Ladder leading to template task.
Knowing the end goal keeps students focused on what they need to do. Teachers indicated that when students understood the assignment and what they were working on working towards, it contributed to student engagement.

Student choices.
These are often built into the template task and the accompanying research and writing processes.

Students as active learners.
Modules call for more student-centered, less teacher-centered ways of teaching. Classroom observations indicated that small group work contributed to student engagement.

Most teachers indicated modules helped them engage students with different needs, but a sizeable minority reported that using modules does not help them engage specific student populations. Seventy-seven percent of teachers reported that modules helped them engage students with different literacy abilities. However, teachers' responses about their ability to engage other student groups in module instruction were less positive. For example, only 57% of teachers surveyed reported that their use of modules helped them engage ELL or special education students. Forty-nine percent of teachers reported that modules helped them engage disruptive students.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Engaging students in rigorous and sustained work with modules can be challenging. Module instruction can span weeks and the teacher's role involves pushing students to work hard, and often in new ways, on writing -- a task many students find challenging. Student resistance to, even "dread" of writing was highlighted as a reason for lack of student engagement in modules by teachers in every district. While the trends in LDC student engagement seem to be in a positive direction, sustaining high student engagement across the multiple phases and weeks of a module is not an easy task for many teachers.

> ★
>
> *Having them [the students] come to a science class where they used to love to come and now walking in saying, "well this isn't science its [Language Arts] now". Well, they are more against doing the work now. ...With writing-obviously you can tell it's a weak point and that is why so many of them complain.*
>
> — middle school science teacher

What did teachers say about LDC and student learning?

Teachers indicated on surveys and in interviews that modules continued to have a positive impact on student learning in the second year of implementation.

Teachers indicated that their use of modules has increased students' writing skills. A strong majority of teachers (80%) reported that modules have resulted in higher quality student writing. In interviews, teachers reported that they saw improvement in students' writing as they progressed through the revision process and more specifically, they saw improvement in sentence structure, use of evidence and supporting details, and essay structure.

High School ELA Teacher

I'm pretty confident in the papers that they're turning out. I've seen them grow. And it might be painful for them, but I know that they're growing.

Middle School Science Teacher

My student work is way better than it was in the past. I was almost ashamed to put it in their writing folder [in previous years]. Now these writing pieces are pretty good and they are a lot better than what I was doing.

Middle School Social Studies Teacher

I've had them do writing afterwards and they're getting stronger with their writing skills - putting sentences together, putting words in the right place. I see that improving.

Teachers reported that their use of modules resulted in increased student content knowledge. Teachers reported that students engaged in rich discussions about the material, which also demonstrated understanding. Teachers said:

[They] learned more deeply than reading the textbook. [Working on] this paper gave them a very good look into how teepees are made, how and why Indians lived in them, gave them a look into their culture. Also the homesteaders - how they made sod homes. They read primary sources on life in sod homes. This year's class definitely understands more about Indians and homesteaders than any other year.

— middle school social studies teacher

I'm kind of a Socratic questioner. So I'll go around and I'll ask a kid a question, he'll give me a response, and I'll say, well, why do you think that is? And he'll give me a response and I'll say, okay, well good response. What do you think would have happened if this happened? And they'll be able to respond to me, which I feel like they're able to do that because we have gotten so deep into the content.

— middle school social studies teacher

Teachers indicated that their students' interaction with text has become increasingly sophisticated. In interviews, they reported that:

Students are better able to engage with text as a result of the modules

I could see the increased level of reading, interpretation. I had them read, underline words and phrases they didn't understand. Instead of glazing over words...they looked them up. We had a word board at the time for that unit. There was a lot of terminology that I now I see students using in discussions, and I know they wouldn't have used them had they not seen those higher-level readings.

— high school social studies teacher

Students are able to identify and use text as supporting evidence in their papers

I definitely thought it forced the kids to really think about something that they normally wouldn't have, and it made them really have to look for evidence to support their claims. They weren't used to the argumentative; they were used to an informative writing style. This really pushed them out of the box; and it was nice to see that most of them were capable of the work.

— high school science teacher

Students who completed a module in Year One exhibited stronger writing skills and were better prepared to handle the rigorous demands of modules in Year Two than those students who had no module experience in Year One. As one teacher noted:

When my kids came to me, they'd had a year of LDC in reading [when they were 6th graders]. They seemed to know they had to make references to text when they're writing... I was getting writing with a lot of references to text or something in reality to support what they were saying. So that was great. I said "Oh my God, my kids got this last year and remembered from over the summer.

— middle school ELA teacher

As students gained experience with modules during the course of Year Two, they also exhibited stronger writing skills, evidenced by teachers' comparison of student work from the first module with later modules they taught. Said one teacher:

Well, it was the second time that they had done a five paragraph essay and they did better than they did the first time - so that was great. They improved with their technical skills, internal citations, using multiple sources, etc.

— middle school ELA teacher

Questions for Teachers to Consider

As noted earlier, our intent with this booklet is to capture both the experiences and voices of teachers who have been using the modules, and to share their insights with other teachers – those considering using the tools and also those already familiar with them. In an effort to prompt discussions and reflections, we pose the following questions for you to take up in your own departmental meetings. Some of the questions will be applicable, and some will not, depending on your experiences and familiarity with the LDC framework. These questions are intended to start the conversation; you will add and ask your own questions.

1. How has your work with LDC impacted your practice? What successes and challenges have you experienced?

2. How can you support colleagues who are just beginning to use modules? What kind of support do you need/want from your colleagues?

3. What strategies do you use to adjust instruction to individual student needs?

4. How do you and your LDC colleagues collaborate? In what ways has collaboration helped you with modules? Describe any areas where you would like to have more opportunities for collaborating about LDC.

5. What strategies do you use to review and provide feedback on student writing?

6. What are the three most important things your district and school leaders can do to better support your use of the LDC framework?

7. What have you learned as a result of participating in the LDC initiative that you would like to share with a teacher who is new to the initiative?

If you and your colleagues have additional comments about your involvement in the LDC initiative that you would like to share with us, Lesson tool developers, or professional development providers, please send them to:

Rebecca J. Reumann-Moore
Senior Research Associate, RFA
rreumannmoore@researchforaction.org

Stephanie Levin
Associate Director, RFA
slevin@researchforaction.org

RESEARCH for *ACTION*

For 20 years, Research for Action has provided rigorous research and analysis designed to raise important questions about the quality of education available to disadvantaged students, and the effects of educational reform on students, schools, and communities.

NOTES

NOTES