

**LANGUAGE DIVERSITY & LITERACY DEVELOPMENT:
LEADING ADVANCED LITERACY INSTRUCTION TO FOSTER ELLS' ACHIEVEMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS**

OCTOBER 2013-MAY 2014

Nonie K. Lesaux, Ph.D.
Sky H. Marietta, Ed.D.
Emily Phillips Galloway, M.S.Ed.

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Meeting #1 Agenda

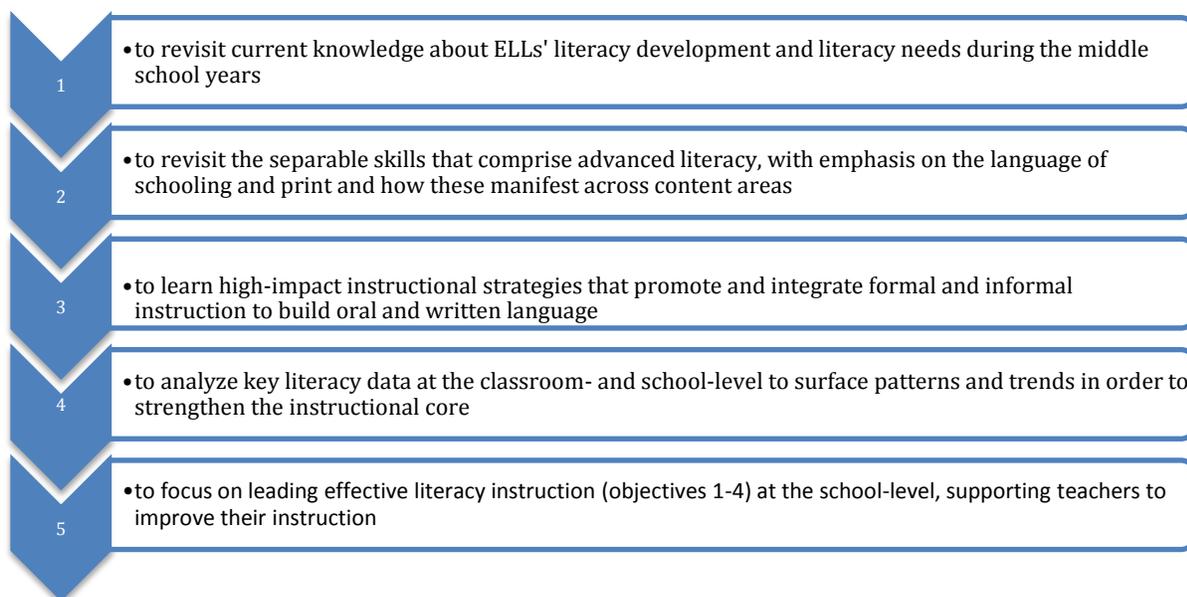
- 9.00 a.m. The Institute
- 9:30 a.m. The ELLs in your School
- 10:00 a.m. Introductions
- 10:30 a.m. Why Middle School Literacy?
- Unpacking the promises and challenges of literacy instruction in today's middle schools
- 11:15 a.m. Case Analysis: Meet our Profile Students
- 12.00 p.m. Lunch
- 12.45 p.m. The Blueprint Process: Starting with our Case School Site
- 1.45 p.m. Starting your Blueprint: Stages 1 & 2
- 2:30 p.m. Going Forward
- Meeting 2
 - Meetings 3 through 9

Table of Contents

Institute Purpose, Objectives & Products	5
Professional Learning Communities	7
Institute Participants Schools: A Summary Profile	9
Middle School Literacy Instruction	10
Teaching Cases: Meet our Students	12
Teaching Cases Activity	14
Beginning Your Blueprint: Taking Stock	20
Going Forward: Leadership Series Overview	23

I. Purpose and Objectives

This 9-day institute is designed to address the pervasive challenge for today's middle school instructional leaders serving linguistically diverse populations: how to ensure that their classrooms and instruction are designed to develop students' *advanced* literacy skills, rather than *basic* literacy skills. The institute is designed around 5 specific objectives for participants' professional learning:



II. Institute Design & Resources

The institute will be held monthly from October through May, and will be facilitated by Nonie K. Lesaux, Sky Marietta, and Emily Phillips Galloway from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Across the institute, an emphasis is placed on school-based application of the information learned. To this end, each session will progressively build knowledge while supporting participants to take their new learning and apply it to their school. The sessions are designed to model best practices in adult learning. A number of structured discussion protocols and tasks that guide participants through the learning process will be used—and can be used by participants at their school.

All institute materials will be made available to participants, including:

- The slides from each session
- A module from each session, which will give further information on the content
- Webinars on key topics with an associated, embedded, turnkey presentation
- Key articles and resources that reflect best evidence
- Discussion protocols to support school-based PLC work

The institute will close with a summative exercise to capture the content and learning across the 9 days.

III. Institute Product

As a main product, each participant will have the opportunity to develop a “blueprint” for their school—to bring together and guide efforts to promote advanced literacy skills among the student population, including ELLs. The blueprint process has several steps, including a baseline analysis, resource allocation analysis, and action planning (e.g., professional development) to determine appropriate supports and next steps. We will facilitate this process over the course of this institute; all work will take place within institute hours.

For Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):
Conducting a baseline analysis should involve multiple stakeholders. Who might these people be in your school?

***NOTE: There is no work required between institute meetings. The PLC materials, including webinars, are strictly a resource for those who would like to take this work out of the institute and into their site.

IV. Institute Guiding Principles

For literacy instruction and supports to be effective in any school, but especially schools with high numbers of students from linguistically diverse backgrounds, there are at least 3 guiding principles to consider:

1. Struggling readers are not struggling thinkers
2. The aim of literacy instruction is to give students access to high-level ideas and content
3. There are multiple potential sources of students' literacy breakdowns, related to the learner, text, and the learning context

For Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): These three guiding principles not only direct the institute design, but also could direct the work of PLCs focused on developing students' advanced literacy skills. As a precondition to moving the effort forward, PLCs might ask:

1. How are we organized to meet the needs of struggling readers, giving them access to high-level content?
2. How do we find out the source of comprehension breakdown(s) for our struggling readers?

V. Effective Professional Learning Communities

"...A Professional Learning Community is a collaboration of teachers, administrators, parents, and students, who work together to seek out best practices, test them in the classroom, continuously improve processes, and focus on results." -Rick DuFour, (2002)¹.

1. Shared mission, vision, values, goals

What distinguishes a learning community from a more general collection of professionals is its collective commitment to guiding principles that articulate what the members believe and that govern their actions and behaviors.

2. Collaborative Culture

Professionals in a learning community work in teams that share a common purpose. They learn from each other and create the momentum that drives improvement. They build within the organization the structure and vehicles that make collaborative work and learning effective and productive.

3. Collective Inquiry

People in a learning community relentlessly question the status quo, seek new methods of teaching and learning, test the methods, and then reflect on the results.

- They reflect publicly on their beliefs and challenge each other's beliefs.
- They share insights and hammer out common meanings.
- They work jointly to plan and test actions and initiatives.
- They coordinate their actions, so that the work of each individual contributes to the common effort.

4. Action Orientation / Experimentation

Members of professional learning communities constantly turn their learning and insights into action. They recognize the importance of engagement and experience in learning and in testing new ideas.

For Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):

Because advanced literacy instruction in the middle school requires the engagement of all members of the school community, establishing a shared vision and norms for inquiry is a particularly important first step.

PLCs might begin by:

1. Drafting a mission statement or vision.
2. Establishing norms and systems for collaborating and for shared inquiry.
3. Agreeing upon practices for translating insights into actions and for evaluating the success of these efforts.

¹DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

5. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Members of a learning organization are not content with the status quo and continually seek ways to bring present reality closer to future ideal. They constantly ask themselves and each other:

- What is our purpose?
- What do we hope to achieve?
- What are our strategies for improving?
- How will we assess our efforts?

6. Results Orientation

Professionals in a learning organization recognize that no matter how well-intentioned the efforts, the only valid judgment of improvement is observable and measurable results. Assessment and re-evaluation are the keys to continued improvement.

Effective Participation in the Institute

Our goal is to build a PLC where there are no bad ideas and no assumptions; a place where we can come together with open minds to move our collective work forward.

- Effective learning requires a safe climate for participants to express themselves
 - Listen with respect
 - Withhold judgment
 - Be mindful of confidentiality
- Involvement is necessary to increase the richness and relevance of content
 - Attendance is vital to participation
 - Be fully present
 - Minimize distraction (silence cell phones, no email, no side conversations)
- Strong contributions often integrate one's learning with their own self-assessment and reflection

VI. Institute Participants Schools: A Summary Profile

Figure 1: Population of Non-ELLs, ELLs, Newcomers, and SIFE students from participating schools

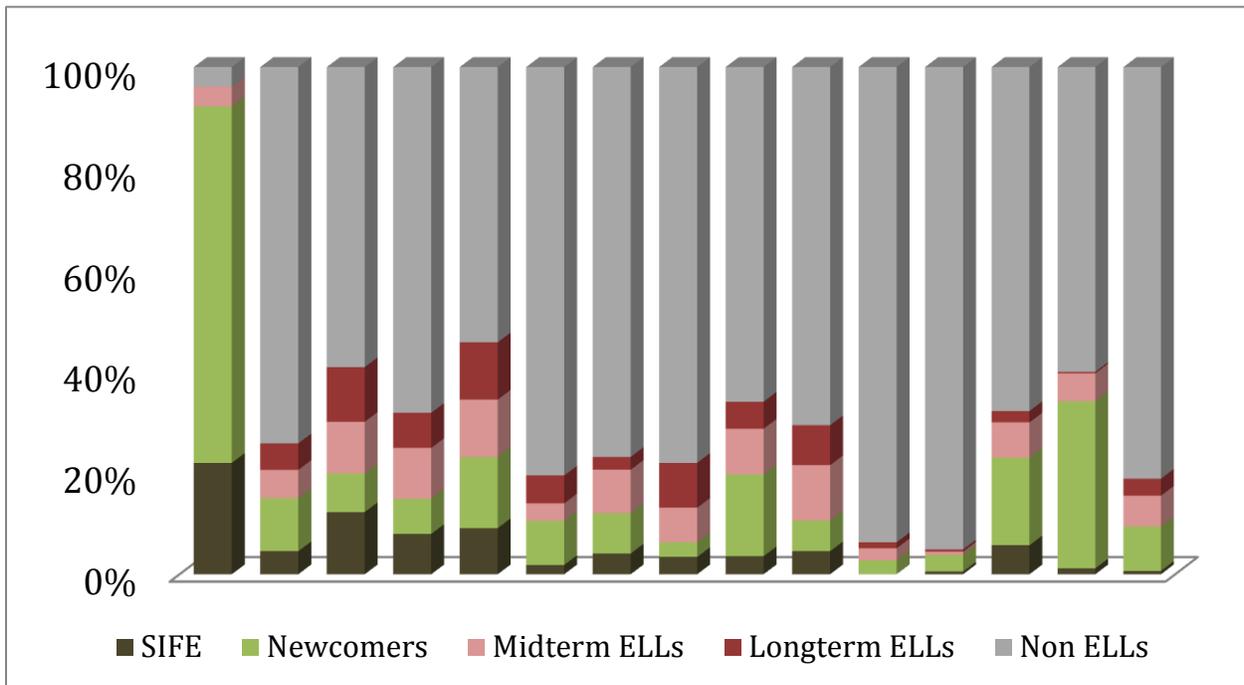
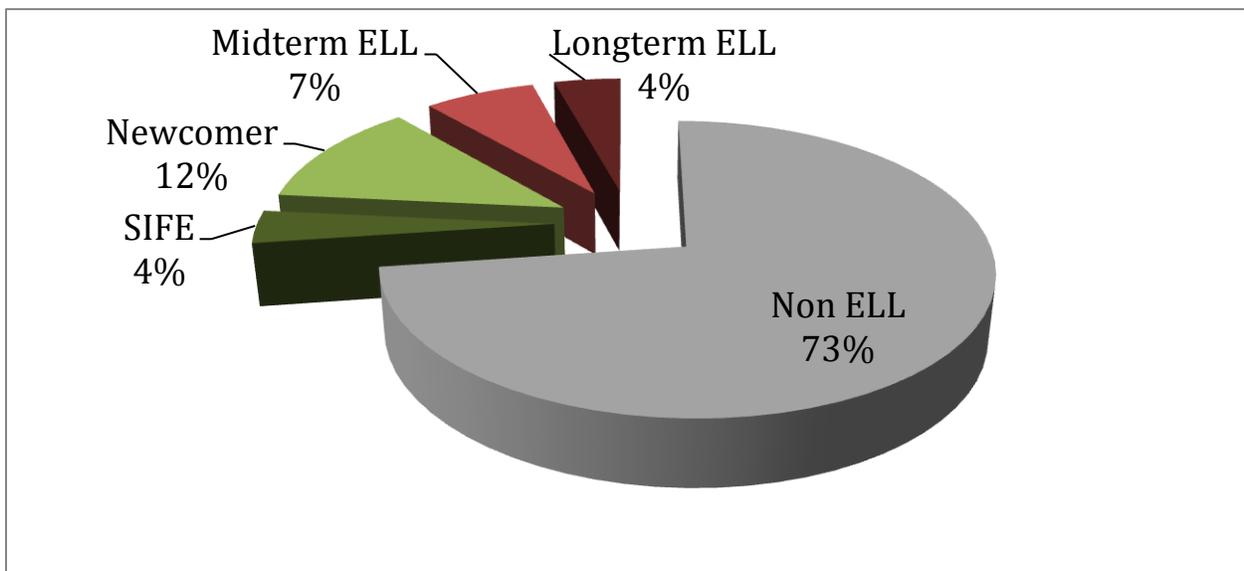


Figure 2: A prototype of student population, based on our participant schools



VII. Middle School Literacy Instruction

Why Middle School?

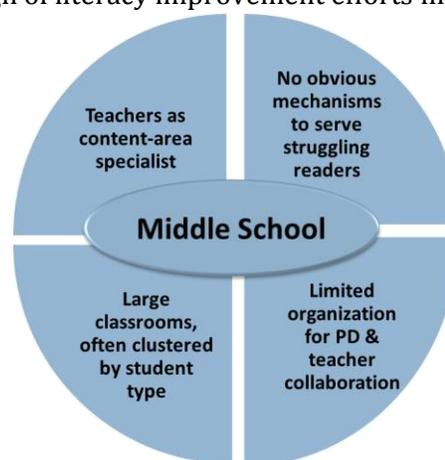
Developing students' literacy skills beyond the primary grades and through the middle school years is a pressing challenge for middle grade administrators and educators. Reading at age 12 is not the same as reading for a 7 year-old, yet there is limited attention to how to successfully teach adolescents. Historically, we have thought about the job of the elementary school as “preparing” students for the reading demands of subsequent schooling, but we know now, more than ever, that even those readers who appear ‘proficient’ in elementary school may still struggle to keep pace with the literacy demands of the curriculum as they advance into middle school.

As the demographics of the U.S. school-age population shift and 21st century literacy demands raise the proficiency bar for what it means to be “literate,” a large percentage of students need more targeted literacy instruction and intervention efforts. This is especially a challenge in schools serving high numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs)—a population that includes many students who do not possess the advanced literacy skills needed for success in high school and beyond. For many ELLs, literacy levels stagnate during the middle school years, compromising their chances of successfully completing high school. At the same time, across the nation, middle school administrators and teachers report feeling under-prepared to effectively meet ELLs' language-learning needs *and* foster their advanced literacy skills. If we are to prevent middle and high school ELLs from falling further behind, we need to enhance current middle school efforts to bolster student achievement.

The Middle School Context for Instruction

The middle school context for literacy instruction is very different from the elementary school context. Middle school characteristics that influence the design of literacy improvement efforts may include:

- a strong distinction between ELA and content courses;
- many teachers who consider themselves teachers of academic content, not ‘reading’ teachers;
- the notion that reading instruction is the job of the elementary school—to “prepare” students for successful achievement in the middle school years;
- ELA curriculum and instruction that tends to focus on literary response and analysis;
- limited organization for professional development and teacher collaboration;
- the presence of unique challenges and the diversity of requisite skills required for reading for meaning in each content area (e.g., reading as a scientist is different from reading as a historian).



Sample Text: *CPO Focus on Earth Science, Grade 6*



Waves

Wind causes waves Ocean waves at a beach occur as a repeating pattern of wave crests and troughs. A **crest** is the high point of a wave, and a **trough** is the low point. The height of a wave is the distance between the wave crest and trough.

Wave height The wind is the most common cause of ocean waves. The height of a wave is influenced by:

- The strength of the wind.
- How long the wind blows.
- How much open water the wind blows over.

Wavelength The distance between two wave crests is called the **wavelength** of a wave. The ability of a wave to disturb the ocean bottom as it approaches a beach depends on its wavelength. A passing wave can “reach” down about half its wavelength. That means that a wave with a wavelength of 10 meters can only disturb the ocean bottom if it is five meters deep or less.

Waves stir up sediment on the ocean bottom Most waves will reach deep enough to affect the part of the shoreface nearest the beach. The lower part of the shoreface is only affected by the strongest waves with the longest wavelengths.

VOCABULARY

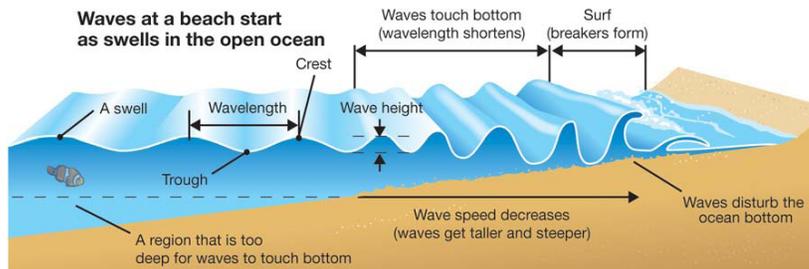
crest - the high point of a wave.
trough - the low point of a wave.
wavelength - the distance between two wave crests, or the distance between two wave troughs.

Swells

In the open ocean, most waves look like moving humps of water called swells. Swells can travel great distances over open water without losing much energy because although the swell moves, the water stays close to the same place.

If you could watch a blob of water as a swell passed by, you would see it move in a circle. First the blob would drop and move toward the approaching swell. Then the swell would lift the blob and push it forward. Finally, the blob would drop back to its starting place. Because the blob would end up right where it started, little energy is lost. That's why swells can travel great distances without losing much energy.

By the time a swell reaches a beach, if it has a lot of energy, it can become a huge breaker! A breaker is a wave that becomes foamy as it hits the beach.



What might be challenging about this text? What background knowledge does the reader need to support comprehension? Anything else you are struck by?

VIII. The Institute's Case Students

Josie is a 7th grader who has been attending New York City schools since kindergarten, but is still classified as ELL (intermediate level). During elementary school, she did well through the primary grades but received a number of academic supports to try to accelerate her reading during the upper elementary years. She is conversationally very proficient and participatory during class discussions—sometimes funny, and often outgoing. Some teachers find this behavior disruptive, but others embrace her gregarious personality. She has had her cell phone confiscated several times, and is often at the center of conflicts within her circle of friends. Her parents, immigrants from Haiti, said that Josie's 5th grade teachers had communicated concerns that she was “stuck” at her reading level; her parents have been hoping that she would outgrow these difficulties. Josie's teachers agree that she's a good candidate for tutoring (via CityYear) and for after-school support. They also agree that she doesn't have clear indicators of a learning problem. One teacher is concerned that she's never actually received targeted instruction to support her language development for academic success.

Marcia is a 6th grade student who entered school at M.S. 555 in 2nd grade. She completed kindergarten and 1st grade in Puerto Rico, in Spanish, and then moved to the Bronx during the summer after grade 1. She has been receiving ELL supports since school entry (4 years); while her 5th grade NYS-ELA scores placed her at a Level 2, Marcia is doing a poor job with (1) homework assignments, (2) answering text-based questions, and (3) participating in content-based discussions in the classroom. She is on track to fail math and science, but her ELA teacher describes her as eager to learn, and knows that Marcia loves writing and generating stories. He doesn't think that Marcia's performance is related to lack of effort or motivation. Marcia lives with mother. The two of them travel to PR to visit relatives 2-3 times/year.

Anthony is a 14 year-old enrolled in the 8th grade for the second time. He is a monolingual English speaker with native-English speaking parents. He does not have an identified disability. Anthony performs at the fourth-grade level on reading assessments and he struggles in science, social studies and ELA, especially when working independently. His math scores are in the average range. Anthony was retained a grade level in order to give him a chance to “catch up.” This year, 3 times each week he receives web-based reading support designed to boost his skills. When there is independent reading time, Anthony can often be found reading the sports page of the newspaper or a sports magazine.

David is a 12-year old who has just arrived from a rural part of the Dominican Republic. His aunt, who walks him to school each day, along with his two sisters, has shared a great deal about the family with the school secretary. David's father has been living in the United States for many years and was joined by David's mother two years ago. By working double shifts, David's parents saved enough money to bring their children to New York, along with the children's maternal grandmother—who had been raising the children—and his aunt. In the DR, David received a few years of formal schooling, picking up some basic Spanish reading and writing skills. David and his siblings are starting to use a mix of Spanish and English at home. His mother and aunt speak mostly Spanish; his father has good conversational English. David knows a handful of English words and

phrases his father has taught him in preparation for attending school: “hello,” “my name is David,” “goodbye.”

Soojin arrived to the U.S. from Korea in the middle of what would be her 7th grade year, based on age. Now, in the spring of 7th grade, she has very limited proficiency in English. Her Korean schooling records indicated that she was a very strong student there—she had A’s across the board and was considered an “honors” student based on the exam system. Although Soojin took some English classes in Korea, the instruction was mostly focused on written English and Soojin is realizing that she knows much less than she thought she did, and she’s very anxious about school. She spends a lot of time online chatting with her friends in Korea. Soojin and her parents live in the Bronx; her father has just started a full-time research position at Fordham University and her mom is at home during the day. She brings Soojin to and from school, and is hoping that Soojin’s grandmother will come for an extended period of time to help them get settled in.

Working with the Teaching Cases

Part I: Individual Case

Step 1: Read & Brainstorm

Individual Think Time: Read the student case that your group has been assigned. Before beginning the discussion of your student case as a group, allow all participants ample time to populate the row for your assigned student in the accompanying chart.

Student	What do you know about this student?	What additional information would you like about this student?	What other questions do you have?

Discuss & Write

As a Group: After populating the chart independently, work together to answer the following questions and populate the chart on your chart paper:



What do you know about this student?



What may be causing this student's reading difficulty? (list each unique factor you can identify on a single post-it note.)



What instruction might support this student? (list each unique instructional support on a single post-it note.)



What additional information would you like to know about this reader? (list each unique instructional support on a single post-it note.)

<i>Potential Causes of Reading Breakdown</i>	<i>Potential Instructional Supports</i>	<i>Lingering Questions</i>
		

Step 2: Case Presentation

As a Group: Select a team member to present your case study student to the larger group (5 minutes). In presenting your case, you will address the following questions in your presentation:



What may be causing this student's reading difficulty?



What instructional supports might aid this student?



What lingering questions do you have about this student?

Part II: Cross-Case Analysis**Step 3: Structured Note Taking**

After listening to the case presentations, complete the first two columns of the structured note taking protocol.

Student	Areas of Need for Literacy Instruction	Potential Instructional Supports	Type of Learner (SIFE, Long-Term ELL)
Josie			
Marcia			
Anthony			
David			
Soojin			

Step 4: Classifying Students by ELL Designation

As a Group: Use the chart below to determine the ELL designation for each student to complete the fourth column in your chart.

Subgroup	Definition
Newcomers	Students who have been in our schools for three years or less and are English Language Learners. ELLs in our schools one year or less are exempt from the ELA.
Middle-year ELLs	Students who have completed between 4 and 6 years of ELL services in New York City schools and continue to require them.
Long-term ELLs	Students who have completed at least 6 years of ELL services in New York City schools and continue to require them.
Special Education ELLs	ELLs served by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). An IEP team determines a student's eligibility for special education services and the language in which special education services are delivered.
Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE)	ELLs who have entered a US school after second grade; have had at least two years less schooling than their peers; function at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics; and may be pre-literate in their first language.
Former ELLs	Students who have reached proficiency on a test of English language skills and no longer require ELL services.

Step 5: Noticing Common Instructional Needs

As a Group: Look at the chart you just completed as you listened to the case presentations and think about how these students are alike and different by answering the questions below.



What are some common areas of instructional need?



Which students share these needs? What needs are specific to certain subgroups?



What does this mean for instructional groupings?



What might this mean for organizing for instructional impact?

IX. The Institute's Teaching Case

M.S. 555: Inspiration Academy

Student Demographics & ELL Population

M.S. 555 in the Bronx enrolls 620 students, and approximately 85% of them qualify for Free or Reduced Price Lunch. 70% of students are Hispanic, 20% are Black, 6% are White, and 4% are Asian. Of the 170 ELL students, their characteristics are as follows:

- 63 ELLs who have received 4-6 years of supports
- 37 long-term ELLs (6+ years of supports)
- 42 ELLs are also receiving special education services
- 70 newcomers
 - 25 of these are SIFE students

Within the school, about 10% of students are recent immigrants to the United States. These students are arriving from diverse global locations, including Senegal, Bangladesh, and Mexico, and speak a correspondingly diverse set of languages. However, the majority of students at the school (65%) were born in the U.S., in homes where Spanish is the primary language spoken along with English, to varying degrees.

Student Achievement

M.S. 555 latest results on the NYS ELA exam:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Overall Population	51%	36%	10%	3%
ELLs	85%	12%	2%	1%
Former ELLs	30%	54%	14%	2%

Instruction & Professional Development

At M.S. 555 (Inspiration Academy), there is a push to improve literacy instruction and supports for all students, across content areas. In the last two years, the school focused on two strategies for boosting achievement across content areas: 1) Accountable Talk; 2) forming reading groups and then teaching Harvey's *Strategies that Work*, including 'close reading' strategies, to help students comprehend non-fiction texts. All ICT/ELL classes include a specialist who works with the classroom teacher to adapt the curriculum to support the ELLs. For some struggling readers, *Wilson*

For Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):

Your school may differ from M.S. 555, but we suggest that using a case as a way to introduce the issue of promoting students' advanced literacy skills.

Reading Program is used in small groups during the school day. An extended day program takes place 2X/week before school; during this time, students are on computers. Some students use *Great Leaps* to develop their fluency and others work with *Achieve3000*. Some staff are concerned they aren't seeing any results from the extended day program. Others are concerned there isn't sufficient programming for the newcomers. In the area of professional development, the principal has been working on the master schedule to build in common planning time, with the goal of having all staff engaged in weekly planning session that will take a PLC format. The principal has been weighing the overall strategy for boosting literacy, thinking about the balance between the time and resources needed for offering supplemental services and the time and resources needed for developing stronger daily classroom practices, to be offered to all students.

Initial Case Analysis

1. What do you notice about M.S. 555?
2. What questions do you have? What other information would you want?
3. What are your thoughts and questions about instruction?
4. Thinking back to our case students, what are your initial impressions and questions about M.S. 555's instruction and supports for struggling students (both ELLs and English-only students)?
5. Thinking about your own school, what are the similarities and differences? What issues resonate with you?

For Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):

PLCs may want to engage with these questions, drawing links between the teaching case and their own school context:

1. What do you notice about M.S. 555? What are some potential strengths and weaknesses? How are we similar and different?
2. What are your thoughts about instruction at M.S. 555? What are your initial impressions and questions about M.S. 555's instruction and supports for struggling students? How is our instructional plan similar or dissimilar?

X. Beginning your Blueprint: Taking Stock

Step 1: Who are our struggling readers? Do they fit particular classification groupings?

Step 2: What supports do we have in place for students?

Step 3: What instructional initiatives do we have in place to support literacy? What is the associated professional development?

Step 1: Who are our Struggling Readers?

Who are our struggling readers? By subgroup? What are the likely sources of reading difficulty?

Subgroups	What percentage are struggling readers?	Where do you get this information?	What are the likely sources of reading difficulty?
Monolingual			
Former ELLs			
Middle-year ELLs			
Long-term ELLs			
Newcomer			
SIFE			

Step 2: Supports for Reading Development

What instructional strategies, approaches, and programs—daily instructional and supplemental—are in place to serve struggling readers at your school? Do these differ by student subgroup or type of struggling reader?

Literacy Supports During the School Day

Programs?	For whom?	What is the process for deciding who receives this support?
-----------	-----------	-------------------------------------------------------------

--	--	--

--	--	--

--	--	--

Supplemental Literacy Supports Before / After School

Programs?	For whom?	What is the process for deciding who receives this support?
-----------	-----------	-------------------------------------------------------------

--	--	--

--	--	--

--	--	--

Step 3: Instructional Initiatives and Professional Development

What instructional initiatives do you have in place to support literacy? What is the promise of this initiative? What are the potential pitfalls?

Initiative	Promise	Pitfall

How are teachers supported in implementing these initiatives? What instructional strengths or weaknesses might support the success of this initiative?

Initiative	Teacher Supports	Instructional Strength	Instructional Weaknesses

XI. Institute Overview

