

# A pilot study of Write to Succeed: An intervention to enhance writing instruction in New Mexico

Presentation to district and school partners and the statewide advisory group

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## Today's presentation will cover:

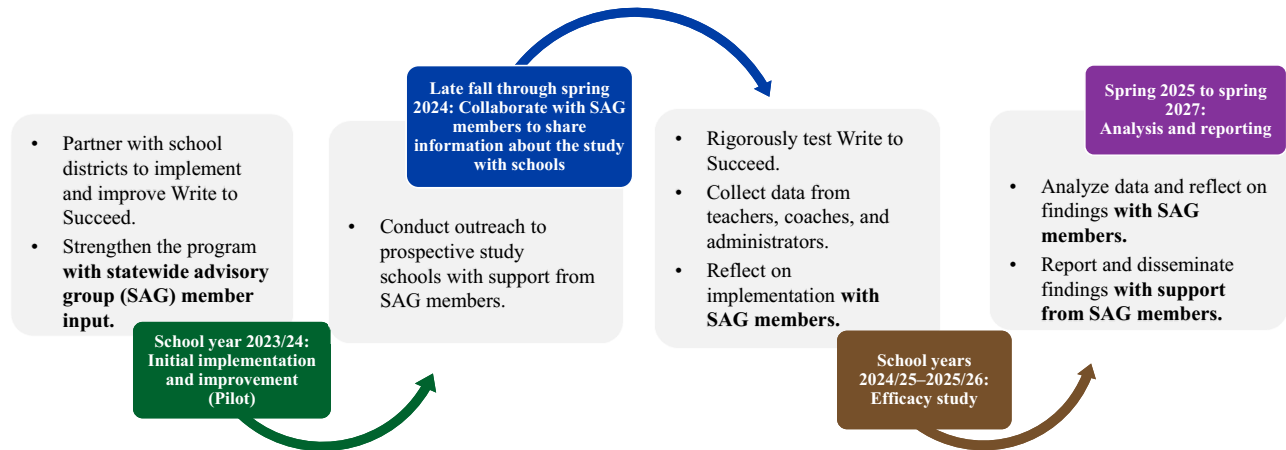
- A literacy **challenge** facing New Mexico.
- A potential **solution** to the literacy challenge: Write to Succeed.
- A **pilot** of the solution: Findings from a pilot study of Write to Succeed.
- Implications and discussion.



See <https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/report/descriptive-study/pilot-study-write-succeed-intervention-enhancing-writing-instruction-new-mexico> for the accompanying technical appendixes.

The accompanying technical appendixes provide additional background of the study and detail on the data, methods, and analyses used to answer the study's research questions.

## This study is part of a larger research–practice partnership: The Southwest English Learner Literacy (SWELL) Partnership



This study is situated within a research–practice partnership. This slide depicts the model for the partnership.

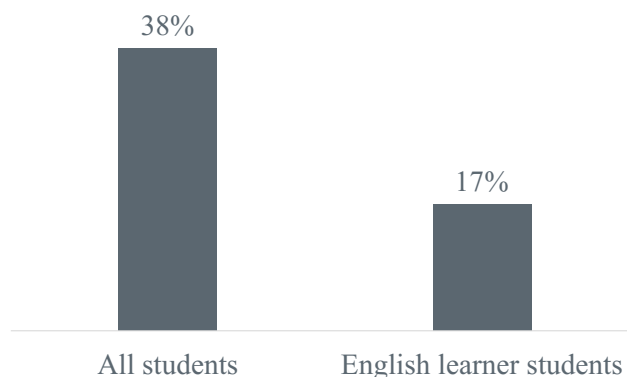
The initial implementation pilot occurred in 2023/24 (green box at the far left), and REL Southwest partnered with school districts to implement and improve Write to Succeed. During the pilot, REL Southwest used learnings from the fall implementation to refine materials and improve implementation for spring. The program was also strengthened through the statewide advisory group, whose members provided helpful insight during the pilot.

# Why this study?

## The challenge: Fewer than one in five English learner students in New Mexico met state literacy standards in 2022/23.

Further supports are needed for English learner students' and all students' literacy and writing development.

*Percentage of New Mexico students meeting grade-level proficiency standards in English language arts in 2022/23*



Source: [https://nmvistas.org/Archive/New\\_Mexico#readingProficiency](https://nmvistas.org/Archive/New_Mexico#readingProficiency)

Literacy is a key area of opportunity for New Mexico. The state especially has an opportunity to further support English learner students; for instance, 17 percent of English learner students met the grade-level proficiency standards in English language arts in 2022/23. Overall, 38 percent of all students in New Mexico met grade-level proficiency standards.

These data underscore what REL Southwest has heard from administrators and educators in New Mexico:

- Writing needs more attention and teachers need explicit support to implement effective writing instruction.
- Teachers often feel alone (and limited in time) and benefit when they connect with other teachers on improving their instruction.
- Coaches need to build their capacity to support literacy, and especially writing instruction.
- Educators need to address the specific needs of English learner and Native American students.

# A potential solution

## The Write to Succeed (WTS) professional learning program for grade 4–8 teachers

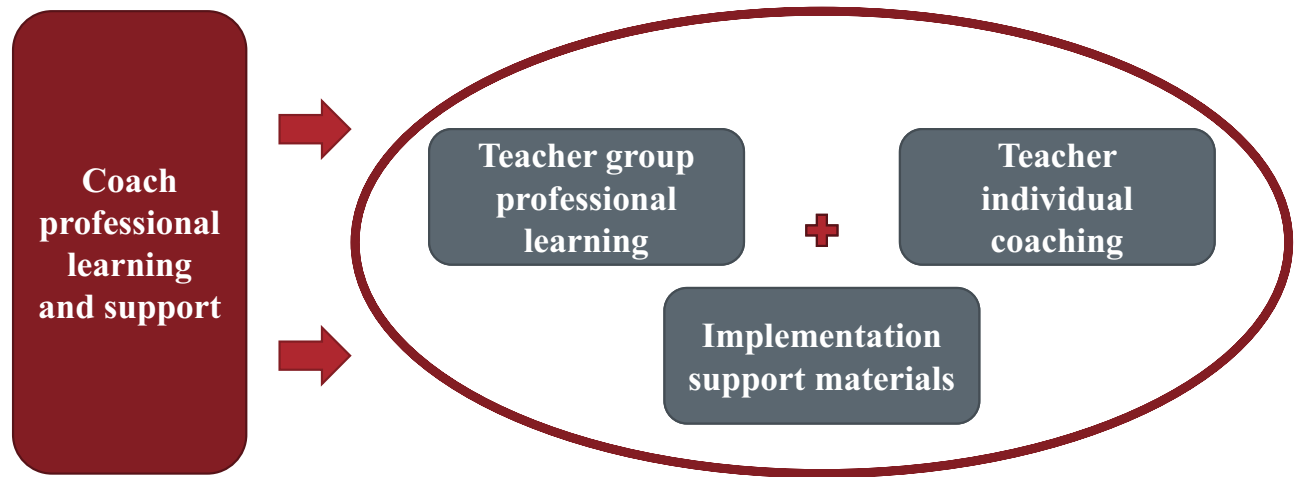
- Teachers engage in collaborative learning on **evidence-based literacy practices** that:
  - **Develop students’ language skills within content instruction.**
  - **Scaffold writing for all students, and English learner students, in particular.**
- Teachers receive **ongoing support** from a coach and colleagues **to integrate the practices into their existing lessons.**



The practices can be used to support writing instruction in all content areas and any curriculum.



Write to Succeed includes two semesters of training and coaching.



The slide depicts the general structure of the program, which lasts for a school year. Coaches receive training and support from a REL Southwest expert. Teachers receive group professional learning and individual coaching from their coach. Teachers also receive implementation support materials from REL Southwest.

Write to Success (WTS) is based on a focal unit that teachers select that has a writing goal and in which teachers will incorporate the WTS practices. Teachers then will participate in group learning facilitated by a coach, see the practices modeled by the coach, and plan the lessons in advance of the focal unit. Teachers then implement the lessons, and the coach will come to observe and debrief with the teachers afterward.

## Coaches receive training and support to lead implementation with teachers.

- Coaches attend a two-day institute at the start of each semester led by the REL Southwest project team.
  - Coaches experience Write to Succeed as teachers and learn how to facilitate the activities.
- Coaches receive three hours of ongoing feedback and support from a REL Southwest team member each semester.
- Approximately 19 hours per semester.

## The professional learning activities equip teachers to implement evidence-based practices.

Professional learning activities	Description	Dosage and timing
Teacher group professional learning; coach modeling of practices	Teacher team meets with coach to learn about WTS practices and see them modeled by the coach	6 hours per semester; implemented prior to a teacher implementing their focal unit.
Coach facilitates collaborative planning with teachers	Teachers plan on how to incorporate practices into selected lessons	3 hours per semester; implemented prior to a teacher implementing their focal unit.
Coach observes teacher delivering a lesson	Coach observes lesson and debriefs with teacher afterward	2–3 hours per semester; implemented during the selected lessons during which teachers planned to use the practices.
Implementation support materials	Includes teacher binder with practices' description and templates, and a guide for integrating WTS into curriculum	N/A

Teachers participate in group professional learning. The team of grade 4–8 teachers meet as a group with their coach to learn about the evidence-based literacy practices, which are modeled by the coach. The total exposure for each teacher is approximately six hours per semester.

The team also engages in collaborative planning to incorporate each practice into an upcoming lesson. The exposure for each teach is approximately three hours per semester.

Teachers also receive individual coaching from a coach. As teachers implement the lessons, they are supported by their coach who works with them one on one to observe them teach a lesson, and debrief on the lesson, implementation of the practices, and the extent to which students met their learning goals. Each teacher receives this support for approximately two to three hours per semester.

Additionally, teachers receive implementation support materials. For teachers, there is a binder with step-by-step guidance to implement the evidence-based literacy practices. It includes model examples and blank reusable templates for use with students. Teachers also receive a guide to support integration into their curriculum.

# A pilot of the solution

## In 2023/24, REL Southwest conducted a pilot study of Write to Succeed at five schools in New Mexico.

The study addresses three research questions:

1. How easy was it for teachers to participate in WTS, and did teachers find it helpful for them and their students?
2. To what extent did teachers' self-reported confidence in teaching literacy and English learner students change during the year?
3. To what extent did teachers' self-reported collaboration and culturally and linguistically relevant instruction (CLRI) practices change during the year?

The design compared changes from baseline to end of year.

## Data and analysis method

Instrument		Research question	Beginning (September, October 2023)	Middle (December 2023)	End (April, May 2024)	Analysis method
<b>Teachers</b>	Surveys	1, 2, 3	✓	✓	✓	Calculated averages and distribution of responses into the response categories.
	Interviews	1		✓	✓	Coded themes.
<b>Coaches</b>	Interviews	1		✓	✓	Coded themes.
	Logs	1	✓ ongoing after training activities	✓ ongoing after training activities	✓ ongoing after training activities	Calculated proportion of activities received.

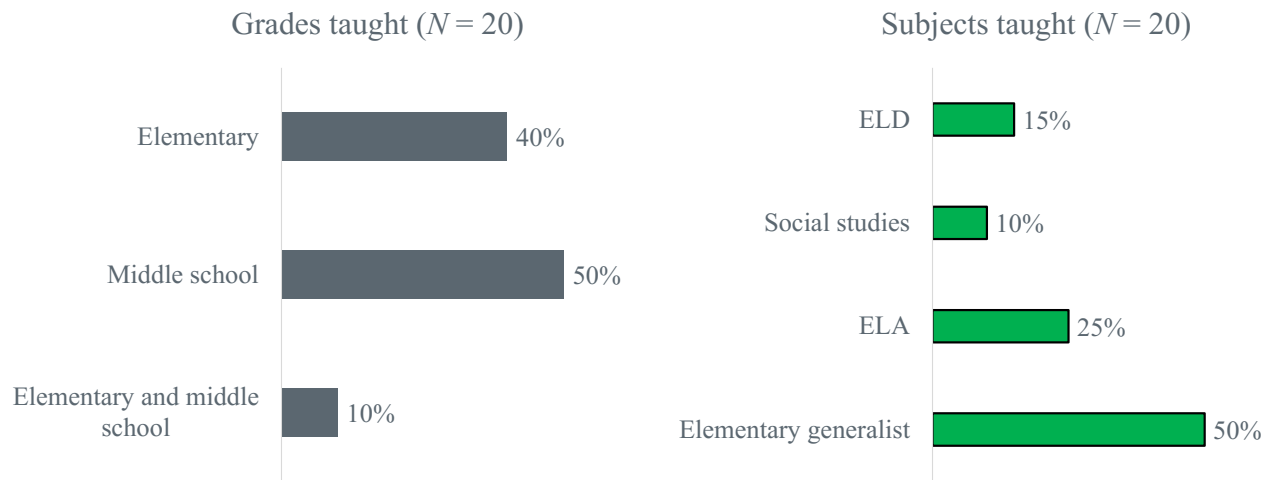
REL Southwest used four sources for this study. The associated research question and data collection timing are listed on the slide. Twenty-two teachers began the study, and the study team identified six coaches to support teachers.

The survey of teachers included items on teacher confidence for teaching literacy and serving English learner students, teacher collaboration practices, and multicultural competency, items related to program implementation, and teacher background information. It was given at beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year to all teachers; 20 teachers took all three surveys and are the focus of the survey analysis. The analysis focused on calculating averages and distribution of responses into response categories.

The teacher and coach interviews covered perceptions of feasibility and usefulness, benefits, and challenges. The study team purposively selected teachers and coaches to represent variation of grade level, content area, and English learner students served, and interviewed the same group in winter and spring. For spring interviews, had eight teachers (out of nine in the winter), and five coaches (out of five in the winter). Interview data were analyzed by coding themes.

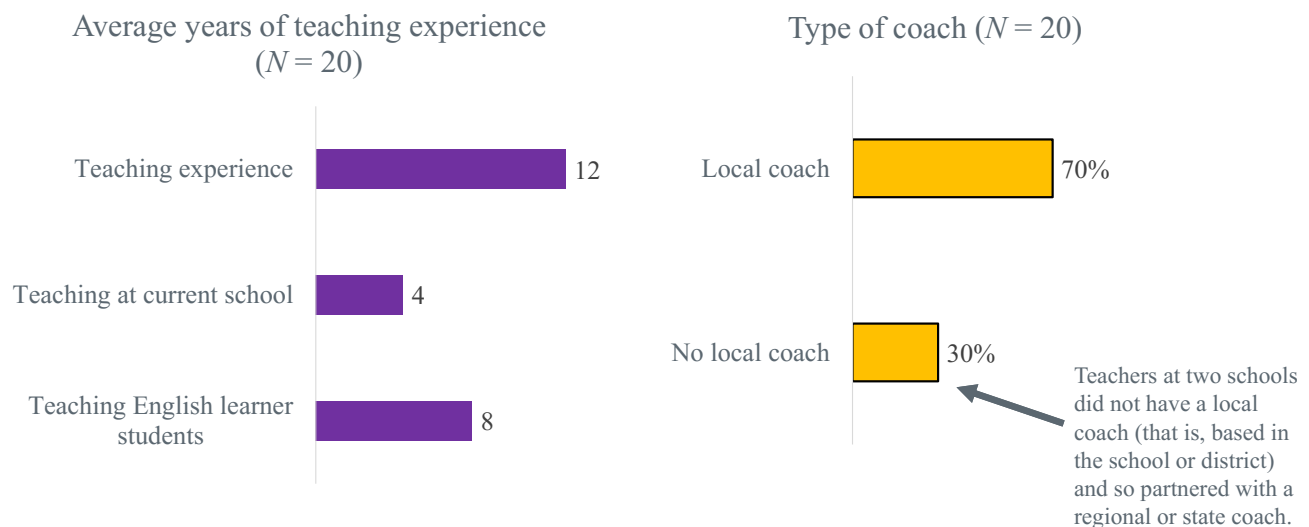
Coach logs document training activities, teacher attendance, and modifications, and they were based on analysis coaches collected after every training activity. These were analyzed by calculating proportion of activities received.

## The teachers worked in a variety of grades and subjects.



ELA is English language arts. ELD is English language development.

The teachers represented a range of teaching experience and were supported by different coach types.



The teachers were fairly experienced, with an average of 12 years in teaching, 4 years teaching at current school, and 8 years teaching English learner students. Ninety percent of teachers have been teaching for 3 or more years.

REL Southwest left it to schools to identify a coach and helped two schools that could not find someone local to partner with someone from the regional center or the state. Seventy percent of teachers were supported by a local coach, in other words someone based at the school or district. Thirty percent of teachers—all the teachers at two schools—did not have a local coach. At the beginning they were supported by regional and state coaches, but this support was inconsistent.



# Findings



## Overview of findings

1. Coaches and teachers found it difficult to complete all the professional learning activities and needed more support with the materials and using the teaching practices.
2. Despite these challenges, coaches and teachers liked the program. Most teachers used each teaching practice at least once—and found them helpful for students.
3. Over the year, teachers became more confident in teaching literacy and especially in teaching English learner students.
4. Teachers reported an increased use of CLRI practices over the course of the year. Teacher collaboration remained unchanged.

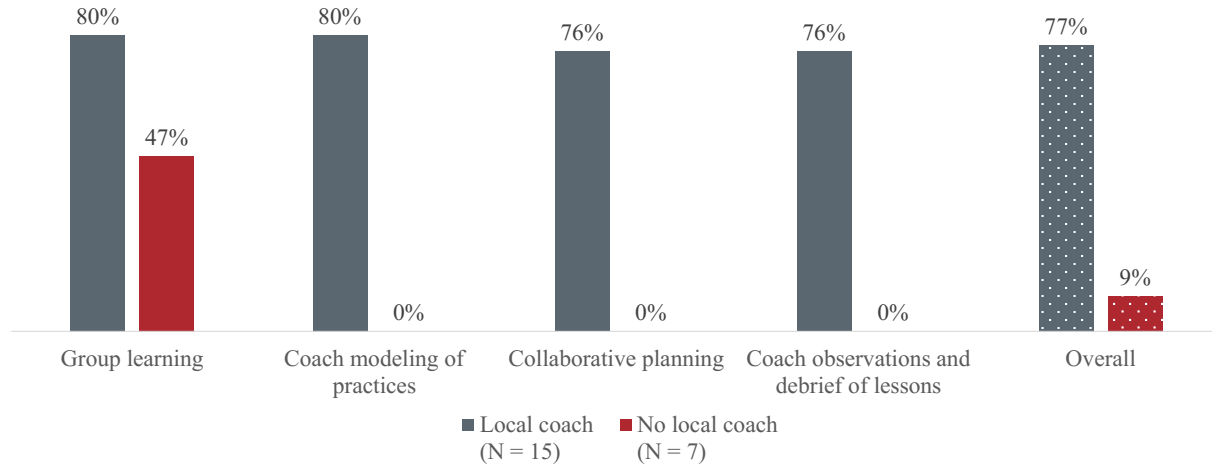
How easy was it for teachers to participate in Write to Succeed, and did teachers find it helpful for them and their students?

### **Finding 1:**

Coaches and teachers found it difficult to complete all the professional learning activities and needed more support with the materials and using the teaching practices.

## Teachers who worked with a local coach were more likely to complete the intended professional learning activities.

Percentage of teachers participating in the professional learning activities



Teacher participation in the required professional learning activities was particularly low for those without a local coach. Participation was higher for those with a local coach, but even those teachers with local coaches were not able to attend all the activities.

This information is based on the coach logs, which were filled out for teachers who began the intervention ( $N = 22$ ).

The overall category includes all activities and is the percentage of total activities completed.

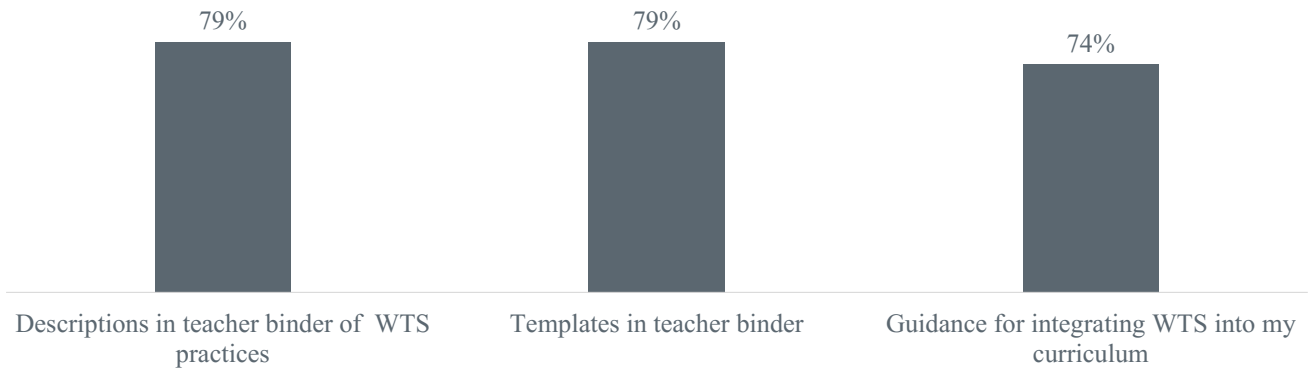
## Coaches and teachers recommended starting implementation earlier.

- The timing of WTS activities should be aligned with the right timing in the curriculum for teachers to implement the practices.
  - Having group professional learning earlier in the semester (teachers).
  - Having sufficient time and planning to overcome scheduling challenges of individual coaching observations (coaches).
- Coaches also expressed wanting increased supports for coaching teachers.

When asked about group professional learning: “I think it would be awesome to have like all our PDs in the summer or even in August, then we’re ready to hit the ground running for the whole school year with it.”  
–WTS teacher

## At least three quarters of teachers found the professional learning materials helpful or very helpful.

Percentage of teachers who indicated the resources were helpful or very helpful (N = 18)



WTS is Write to Succeed.

## Some coaches and teachers wanted explicit support for applying the practices to all text genres.

- Teachers and coaches felt the WTS materials did not apply to all text genres, and they desired clarity about which genres are best supported by the WTS practices.
- In the fall, teachers mentioned wanting digital materials.
- Teachers were pleased by changes to the materials for spring implementation, especially the one-page practice overviews.

“Maybe if it's possible...[provide] something similar for narratives [genres] too. That way the teachers get all three of the main reading programs that they do.”

–WTS teacher

“The teachers love [the WTS one-page practice from the spring].... One of [the teachers] made a comment like ‘I could show this to my class or even like a substitute, and it could easily be followed.’”

–WTS coach

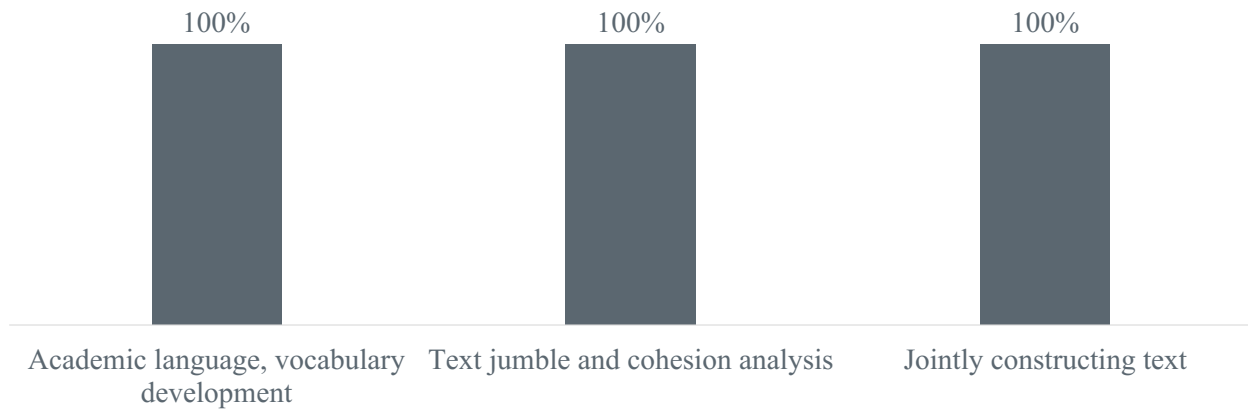


## Finding 2:

**Despite these challenges, coaches and teachers liked the program. Most teachers used each teaching practice at least once—and found them helpful for students.** The practices became easier to use over the course of the year, which reflects positively on the changes made to the materials between fall and spring semesters and starting training earlier in the spring.

## All teachers found the WTS preparation and coaching helpful for learning about and implementing the practices.

*Percentage of teachers who indicated in the second semester that preparation and coaching were helpful or very helpful (N = 19)*



## Overall, teachers and coaches had positive perceptions of WTS.

- Teachers and coaches had positive reflections about WTS (including professional learning and coaching, collaboration, WTS practices, and student learning).
- Teachers and coaches who had challenges with implementation still saw the promise of the program.

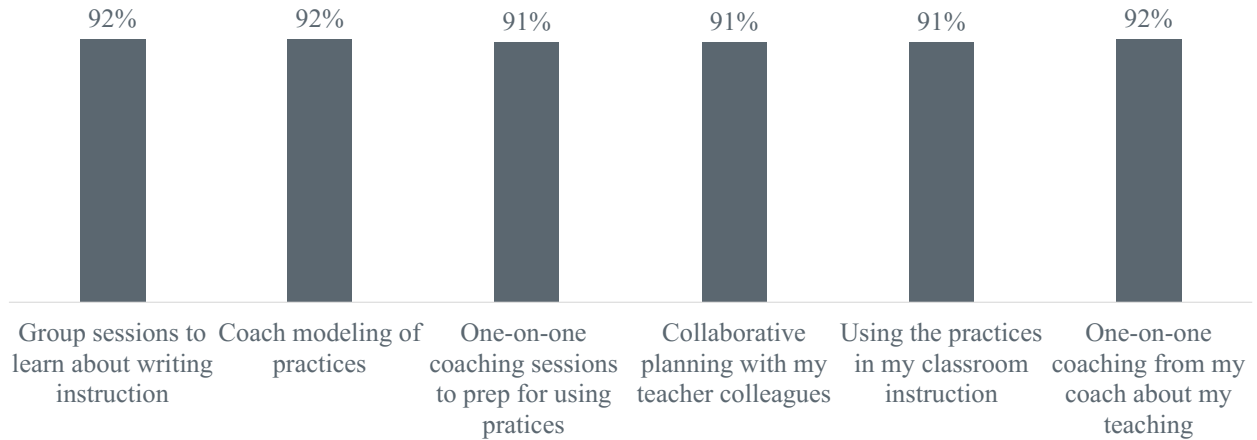
“Oh, I definitely think it’s helped. I mean, I’m a first-year teacher, so it helps just to have a little bit more instructional strategies in my toolbox.”  
–WTS teacher

“I’m excited. You know what I mean, like after you teach for a while, you’re like, yeah, it’s another program. But like this one,...I’m excited.... It’s regional and it’s really tailored to our New Mexico kids.”  
–WTS teacher

“[Teachers] thought [the practices] were very helpful. They will implement them again next year. [The teachers] thought that it helped improve their students’ writing.”  
–WTS coach

## Almost all teachers who had local coaches found the training activities useful.

Percentage of teachers who had local coaches who rated training activity as useful or very useful (N = 13)



Those teachers with local coaches generally found all the training activities to be useful.

Teachers without local coaches generally found the training activities to be less useful (see exhibit A2 in the technical appendixes).

## Teachers and coaches benefited from seeing the practices modeled.

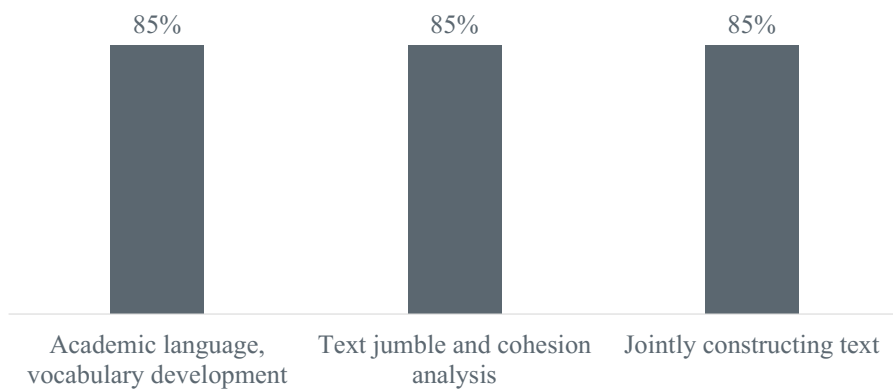
- REL Southwest staff modeled the WTS practices for coaches during the coach institutes.
- Coaches then modeled the WTS practices for teachers during group professional learning.

“I think something that I felt that was super helpful...was a really good job of [coaches] modeling...allowing [us] to ask each other like, why did you do this?...So like for them to be able to model that for us was really helpful.”  
– WTS coach

“Oh, it was great!... [The coaches] showed us exactly what we needed to be doing in terms of modeling and what we would teach students, and then what they were supposed to be doing. It helped out quite a bit.... I don't think it would have been as successful if we didn't have that.”  
– WTS teacher

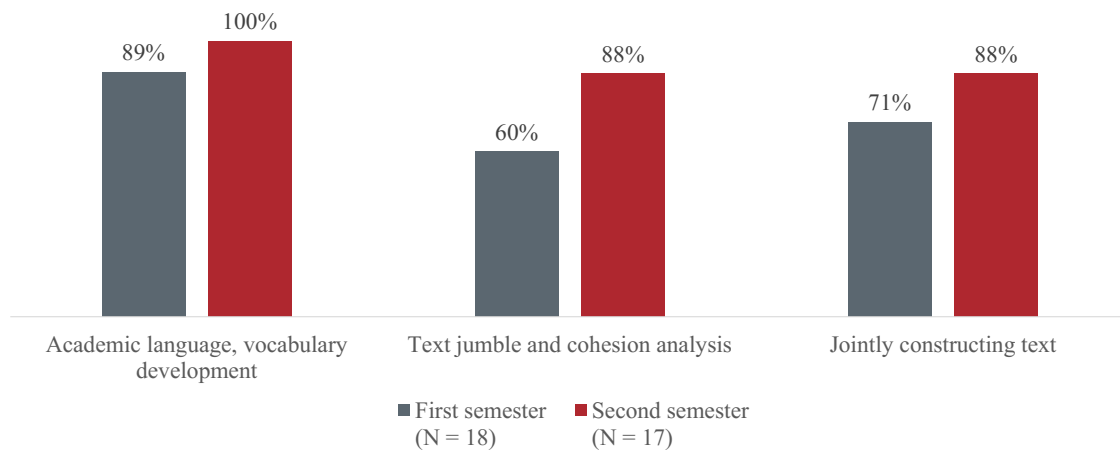
## Eighty-five percent of teachers reported using the WTS practices at least once in classroom instruction.

*Percentage of teachers who indicated that they used practices in classroom instruction at least once (N = 20)*



Teachers who used the practices indicated that they were easy to use, and the perceived ease of use **increased** across semesters.

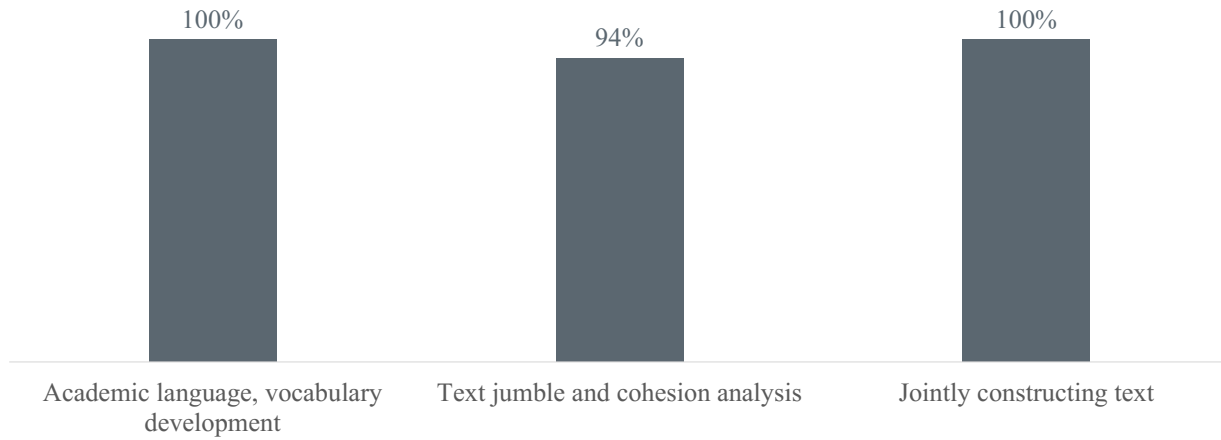
*Percentage of teachers who indicated that the practice was somewhat or very easy to use*



This analysis is based on the sample of teachers who reported using a practice at least each semester. Each bar represents the percentage of teachers who reported that the practice was either somewhat or very easy to use as part of classroom instruction with students.

## Teachers believed that the practices were helpful for their students.

Percentage of teachers who indicated that the practice was helpful or very helpful (N = 17)



This analysis is based on the sample of teachers who reported using a practice at least each semester. Each bar represents the percentage of teachers who reported that the practice was either helpful or very helpful for students.



## Teachers reflected positively on how WTS supported students, including English learner students.

- Teachers specifically mentioned continuing to use the practices in the future.

It gives [English learner students] confidence and more ideas when they can collaborate with others during the practices and it's not only the teacher thinking through the process for students.

–WTS coach

“[Students] are learning the vocabulary. They’re even using vocabulary in their daily talking to each other. I've heard them use some of the words, and that's pretty cool.”

–WTS teacher

“I think [Write to Succeed] has been extremely helpful for [students]. It's helpful for them because it's helped me to know how to help them.”

–WTS teacher

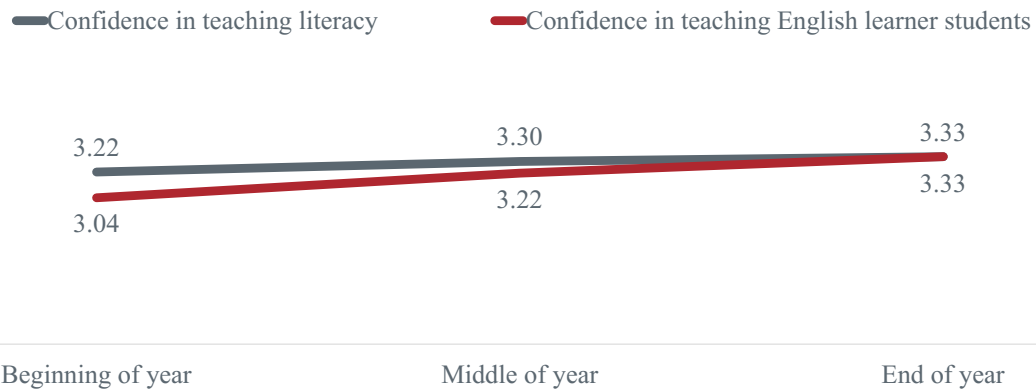
To what extent did teachers' self-reported confidence in teaching literacy and English learners change over the year?

### **Finding 3:**

Over the year, teachers became more confident in teaching literacy and especially in teaching English learner students.

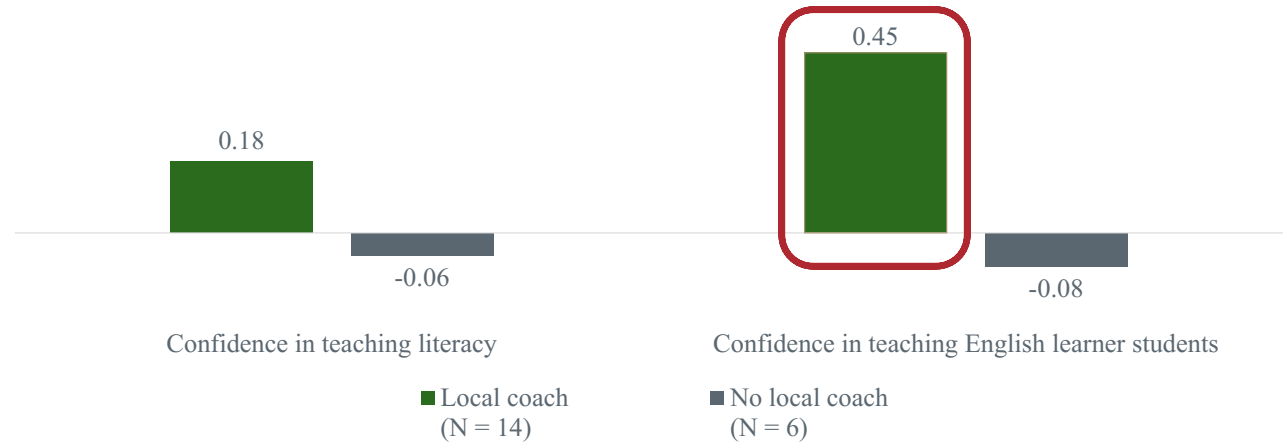
**Teacher confidence for teaching English learner students** increased over the year and was at a similar level as confidence in teaching literacy by the year's end.

*Average teacher confidence (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree; N = 20)*



## Teachers who had a local coach increased in confidence, especially for confidence in teaching English learner students.

Average increase in teacher confidence from beginning to end of year<sup>a</sup>



a. The unit is levels of change (for example, moving from agree to strongly agree is 1.0 level).

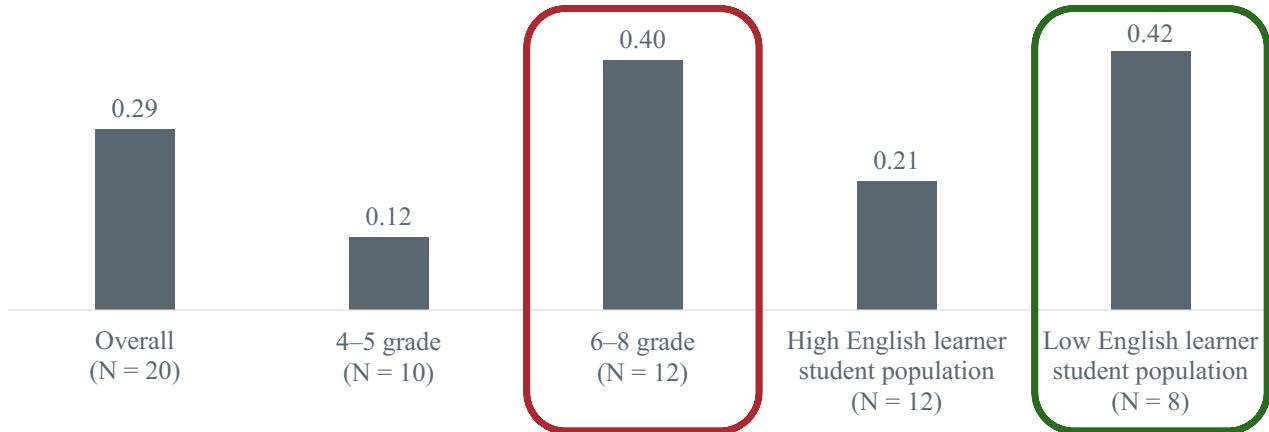
This chart shows the average increase in confidence based on whether teachers had a local coach. The unit is levels of change (for example, moving from agree to strongly agree is 1.0 level).

Teachers who had a local coach had higher growth in self-efficacy than those who did not (these teachers had small decreases), especially for English learner student self-efficacy.

The difference is statistically significant for confidence in teaching English learner students.

Teachers in **middle schools** or schools with **low English learner student populations** had the highest gains in confidence in teaching these students over the year.

*Average increase in confidence in teaching English learner students from beginning to end of year<sup>a</sup>*



a. The unit is levels of change (for example, moving from agree to strongly agree is 1.0 level).

This chart shows the average increase in confidence for teaching English learner students by teacher or school type. The unit is levels of change (for example, moving from agree to strongly agree is 1.0 level). The differences between grade and English learner student population are not statistically significant.

Low English learner student population denotes whether the school had less than state average (15%) of English learner students. Two teachers are K-8, and so they are included in both 4-5 and 6-8 estimates.

To what extent did teachers' self-reported collaboration and CLRI practices change over the year?

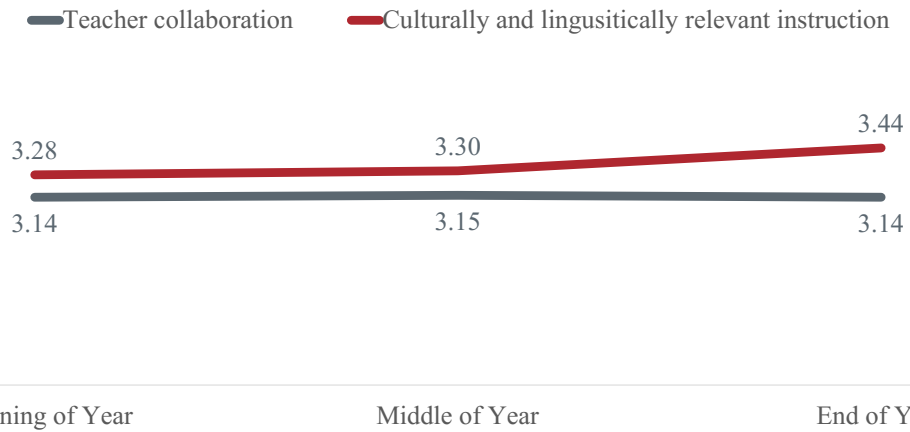
#### **Finding 4:**

Teachers reported an increased use of CLRI practices over the course of the year. Teacher collaboration remained unchanged.



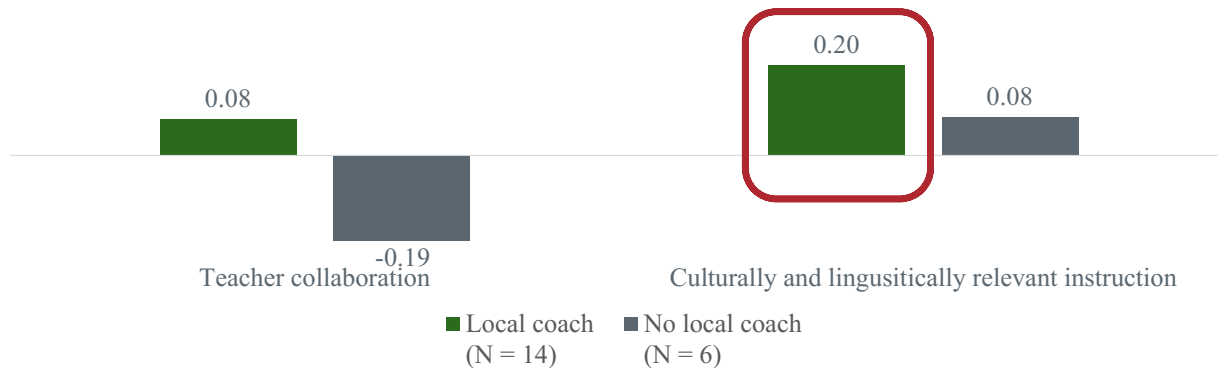
## Teachers increased their use of **CLRI practices** over the course of the year. Teacher collaboration overall remained unchanged.

Average teacher use of teacher collaboration and CLRI (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree; N = 20)



## Teachers with a **local coach** had higher growth especially in the **use of CLRI**.

Average increase in collaboration and CLRI from beginning to end of year<sup>a</sup>

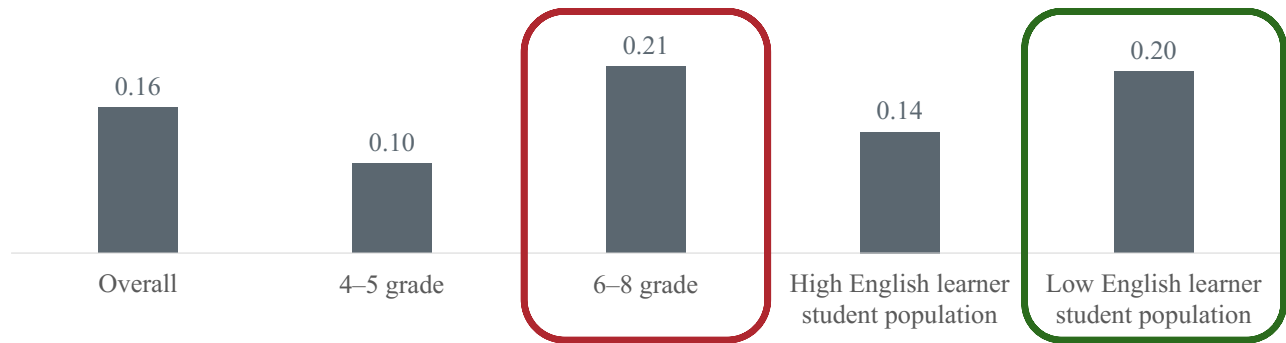


a. The unit is levels of change (for example, moving from agree to strongly agree is 1.0 level).

This chart shows the average increase in teacher collaboration and use of CLRI based on whether they had a local coach. The unit is levels of change (for example, moving from agree to strongly agree is 1.0 level). Teachers with a local coach had higher growth particularly for CLRI. For collaboration, teachers who had a **local coach** had slightly higher growth in scores, whereas those who did not have a local coach had a decrease in collaboration scores over the course of the year. These differences are not statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

Teachers in **middle schools** or schools with **low English learner student populations** especially increased in use of CLRI practices during the year.

*Average increase in use of CLRI practices from beginning to end of year<sup>a</sup>*



a. The unit is levels of change (for example, moving from agree to strongly agree is 1.0 level).

This chart shows the average increase in use of CLRI practices by teacher and school type. The unit is levels of change (for example, moving from agree to strongly agree is 1.0 level). The differences between grade and English learner student population are not statistically significant.

Low English learner student population denotes whether the school had less than the state average (15 percent) of English learner students. Two teachers are K-8, and so they are included in both 4-5 and 6-8 estimates.

## Summary, implications, and discussion



## Summary of findings

1. Coaches and teachers found it hard to participate in all the professional learning activities and needed more support with the materials and using the teaching practices.
2. Despite these challenges, coaches and teachers liked the program. Most teachers used each teaching practice at least once—and found them helpful for students.
3. Over the year, teachers became more confident in teaching literacy and especially in teaching English learner students.
4. Teachers reported an increase in the use of CLRI practices over the course of the year. Teacher collaboration remained unchanged.

## REL Southwest made changes to improve feasibility of activity participation and make the materials more useable.

Teacher and coach feedback informed revisions that are in place for implementation during 2024/25:

- Clearer guidance emphasizes the need to plan ahead for implementation and to schedule trainings in advance.
- Coach logs have been revised, and coaches will receive additional reminders to complete the logs in a timely and accurate manner.
- Materials now
  - Are housed in NMPED’s Canvas platform.
  - Include one-page overviews and vignettes for each practice.
  - More explicitly describe how practices can apply to a variety of genres.
  - Include supports for novice coaches.
  - Better support teachers to work as a team when a coach is not available.

REL Southwest made several changes to the WTS materials based on learnings from the pilot study.

- In order to support implementation for schools that may not have a local coach, as well as based on feedback on wanting to access all digital materials in one place, the materials are now housed in NMPED’s Canvas platform.
- Based on feedback to make the materials more accessible, REL Southwest included in the materials for the efficacy study one-page overviews for each practice. These were piloted during spring implementation, and they received positive feedback. Based on feedback from participants who wanted an example of how the practices could be implemented and how coaches and teachers could respond during implementation, REL Southwest included vignettes of each practice in the materials.
- In response to feedback from teachers and coaches, who spoke of wanting materials that could apply to multiple genres, especially narrative writing, REL Southwest updated the materials to now more explicitly describe how they could apply to a variety of genres.
- Based on feedback from less experienced coaches who wanted greater support with coaching, REL Southwest included supports for novice coaches in the materials.
- In response to the finding that teachers did not have a local coach had poor implementation, REL Southwest updated the materials to better support teachers to work as a team when a local coach is not available.

## Limitations and challenges of the pilot study

- The pilot study is based on a small sample and therefore may not represent the experiences of a larger group of teachers and schools.
- The pilot study cannot determine whether WTS caused the outcomes.
  - In 2024/25, there will be an efficacy study that randomly assigns schools to participate in the program or wait until the following year, in order to estimate the causal impact of WTS.
- The study team found that the coaches did not complete the coach logs consistently.
  - In 2024/25, coach logs have been revised to better support analysis. Coaches will receive additional reminders to complete the logs in a timely and accurate manner.

## Q&A

- What resonates with you?
- What other questions do you have?
- What related things are you hearing in your context related to writing instruction and literacy more broadly?

