

## **Strategies for Success with Literacy Evaluation Results**

*Strategies for Success with Literacy*, was a summer program provided to students entering grades 6 and 9 from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) during the summer of 2006. Developed by Cathryn Berger Kaye, this program combined research-based strategies from the fields of literacy, service-learning, civic development and citizenship, and social emotional learning to help students become better prepared for the next school year as they transitioned to a new grade span. The program was designed specifically to help students become more academically and civically engaged; acquire traits associated with positive character; and increase their literacy skills, particularly in the areas of vocabulary, higher order thinking skills, and literal and inferential comprehension. Middle school programs were 4 weeks and high school programs were 6 weeks in duration. Both were 2 hours per day.

Teachers were provided with professional development, a curriculum guide, a pacing guide, student guides, books and materials, and e-mail support for implementation. Coordinators were available to provide immediate logistical help as needed.

**Program Evaluation.** The program evaluation used multiple methods. A sample of middle school and high school students were given pre/post surveys that measured perceived competence in literacy, academic engagement, civic skills, dispositions, and engagement; and character traits. Post surveys also measured their perceptions of program quality and relevance. Teachers and program coordinators were asked to complete surveys at the conclusion of the program. Surveys explored program

implementation and effectiveness, along with their ratings of each of the program components. Professional development was observed and coded for alignment to standards for high quality professional development. Program materials were rated using benchmarks for effective instructional design. Participants in the professional development were asked to rate its quality and utility. Interviews were conducted with the program developer and selected district respondents. Interim feedback with participants was also collected at the midterm of the program.

**Results.** Program results were very positive. Evaluation of professional development showed that the professional development met all of the standards for high quality. Workshop evaluations collected from 238 participants at 3 venues indicated that ratings on all measured items averaged between “above average” and “excellent.” Over 96% reported that they learned new instructional strategies, could easily apply what they learned, and would participate in future workshops offered by the same facilitator. In open-ended questions, participants reported they liked the activities and hands-on, interactive nature of the training. Words they used most often to describe the workshop included “informative,” “valuable,” and “exciting.” Materials were also rated highly, demonstrating that the materials were clearly written, at the appropriate level of difficulty for the learners, with comprehensive objectives, consistent detail level and perspective, and logical sequence. A wide variety of instructional approaches was apparent in the materials, and instruction was logically sequenced.

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### Educators' Midterm Perceptions.

Midterm perceptions of the program were very positive, with coordinators and teachers reporting that the program was very engaging to students, the curriculum was relatively easy to follow, the reading materials were diverse and interesting to students, and there were many opportunities for students to interact with each other, with the teacher, and with outside community members.

### Educators' Concluding Perceptions.

The sentiments expressed at the midterm generally held through to the conclusion of the program. Over 85% of coordinators rated the teachers guide and student guide as “effective” or “very effective”. All respondents retrospectively rated the professional development as “effective” or “very effective” and 88% rated the books as “effective” or “very effective.”

Over 80% of teachers rated the Teacher Guide and Student Guide as “effective” or “very effective.” The program components rated by teachers as most effective included the School Tour, the Literacy Workshops, Words Matter, and the Service Fair.

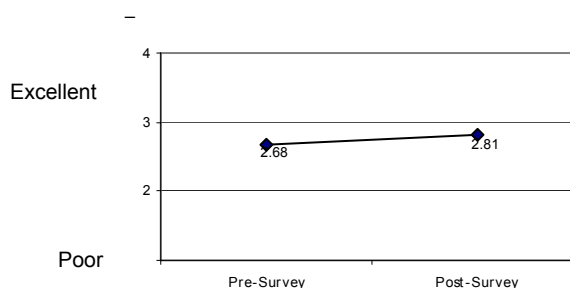
*“This was a great way to introduce incoming sixth graders to middle school. It was well thought out, had depth, and was detail-oriented.”* –Middle school teacher

*“The program was an excellent way for students to get a head start on their high school career. They learned social skills, school spirit, and made new friends, which eased their anxiety.”* – High school teacher

**Impact on Students.** Matched pre/post surveys were completed by 234 middle school students and 169 high school students. About 45% of these students were African American/Black; 36% Hispanic/Latino; and 7% were White. High school students were found to have made statistically significant positive changes in their self-reports of literacy competence, as shown below.

### Change Over Time on Student Ratings of Literacy Competence\*\*\* (N = 156)

\*\*\* $p < .001$



Statistically significant differences were also found for high school students in the areas of civic skill development. Positive trends were found in the areas of academic engagement, civic dispositions, and character development. Middle school students showed gains in literacy competence, but no differences in other areas. This may be because the program was 25% shorter than the high school program, and the Service Fair was not implemented at all sites. Analyses showed that the closer the implementation to the Teacher Guide, the stronger the results. Teacher experience significantly impacted results.

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