Evaluation of the Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA): Case Study Report

Overview and Nine Individual Reports

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Texas Education Agency

CREDITS

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ICF would like to thank the administrators and staff who participated in the case study site visits.

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This full report can be accessed on TEA's website at:
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2914&menu_id=949

Throughout the present report, all references to the final evaluation report refer to the following citation: Evaluation of the Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA): Final Report (December 2010), which can also be accessed on the TEA website at:
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2914&menu_id=949

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Overview of the TALA Case Study Report

This report is an addendum to the Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA) final evaluation report and provides an overall summary of case study findings, including information about how campuses were selected, followed by detailed individual reports for each of nine case study sites.[1] The purpose of these case studies was to provide valuable, in-depth information regarding participants' thoughts about their TALA training experiences, support for participation in and implementation of TALA, barriers and facilitators to implementation, perceived effects of participation in the Academies, and participants' thoughts about the sustainability of the implemented instructional routines and strategies. To ensure confidentiality, the case studies do not identify individual schools, the nine campuses are identified as campus A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I.

The evaluation of TALA employed a mixed-methods design, using both the qualitative data reported on in detail here and quantitative data to generate overall statements about the quality of TALA training, classroom implementation of TALA routines and strategies, effect of TALA on student achievement, and cost-effectiveness. The ICF team accessed several extant data sources that provided programmatic, demographic, achievement, and financial information. To supplement these sources, ICF collected new data via observations of TALA training, classroom observations, interviews and surveys with key stakeholders (e.g., TALA participating teachers), and in-depth case studies. Throughout the overview section of the addendum, quantitative data that were reported on more thoroughly in the final report are briefly summarized here as connected to case study findings.

The TALA Model

TALA was created to improve literacy rates among middle school students. In order to achieve this goal, TALA focuses on improving teaching, rather than directly on students, by providing Grades 6-8 English language arts (ELA)/reading and content area teachers with successful, research-based strategies for improving their students' academic literacy. TALA is tailored for "the unique structure of middle schools" and is framed within a schoolwide approach to addressing the needs of adolescent readers, including those who are struggling. The TALA approach is a three-tier model of reading intervention, which is consistent with a Response to Intervention, or RtI, approach. Tier I applies to all students and includes general education instructional strategies. Tier II, named "Strategic Intervention" in TALA content, is designed for students with reading difficulties that cannot be addressed in Tier I. Tier III, referred to as "Intensive Intervention," is designed for students with severe reading difficulties. TALA instructional routines represent scientifically-based instructional strategies based on reading research.

The stated goal of TALA is to provide professional development for ELA/reading and content area teachers in the use of scientifically-based literacy practices to improve academic literacy. TALA is intended to help prepare middle school teachers to design appropriate instruction for all

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[1] The final report was published in December 2010 and examined the impact of TALA on student achievement through the 2009-10 school year and presented an analysis of the cost-effectiveness of TALA. An initial interim report focused on activity through summer 2008 was published in May 2009 and a second interim report focused on activity through summer 2009 was published in December 2010. The first interim evaluation report focused on TALA training related to Grade 6 teachers. The second interim evaluation report focused on TALA training related to Grade 7 and Grade 8 teachers and to Grade 6 teachers' implementation of TALA during the 2008–09 school year. Both interim reports and the final report can be accessed online at TEA's website here.

students, including those who are struggling with reading due to LEP, learning disabilities, dyslexia, and other risk factors for reading difficulties. While TALA training is provided to individual teachers, in order to have maximum impact, the design of TALA was based on the theory that teachers could have a better impact on student achievement with a school-wide approach to implementing TALA.

TALA Case Study Campus Selection

ICF designed a case study campus selection plan to identify a non-random sample of campuses to participate in a site visit and provide in-depth information about the extent to which TALA had been implemented schoolwide during the first two years of teachers participating in TALA. First, campuses with teachers who participated in TALA in both 2008 and 2009 (n=722) were identified. Eighteen campuses were removed from consideration due to missing Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) data (9 campuses did not have 2007–08 TAKS data, 17 campuses did not have 2008–09 TAKS data).[2] Four alternative schools were removed because the nature of these schools was not conducive to our site visit plan.

Data for each of the remaining campuses (n=700) were extracted from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to guide the selection process. These data showed that these campuses served students in an array of grade ranges (e.g., 5-8, 6-8, K-8, 6-12, K-12). The selection field was narrowed to include only campuses serving Grades 6-8 (i.e., middle schools) because TALA by design is tailored for the unique structure of middle schools and is framed within a schoolwide approach to address the needs of struggling adolescent readers in Grades 6-8. Furthermore, this group comprised over three-quarters of the remaining campuses in the sample.[3] This data reduction process resulted in 535 campuses eligible for selection.

Next, schools were limited to those with an above average participation rate in TALA (comparing all 535 campuses to each other) to ensure that a sufficient number of participating teachers would be available during the case study site visit to participate in interviews, observations, or focus groups. In order to do this, the selection sample was reduced to include campuses at or above the average participation rate for both 2008 and 2009. This resulted in 111 campuses (including three charter schools) for consideration.

In addition to TALA participation rate, ICF narrowed campuses to those that represented a range of variables that were of interest to Texas Education Agency (TEA):

- ICF wanted to represent various regions of the state. The TALA participating campuses were grouped by regional education service center (ESC). The number of TALA participating campuses in each region was calculated.

- TALA was designed to meet the needs of struggling readers. This included students who are identified as special education, limited English proficient (LEP), economically disadvantaged, or at-risk. Campuses with large populations of "struggling readers" were included in the selection process.

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[2] Note that eight campuses did not have TAKS data from either year.
[3] This grade level restriction does not apply to the 13 charter schools in the selection database, as many of the charter schools served students in grades preK-12 or K-12.

- Campuses that were "academically unacceptable" (AU) in reading were required to attend TALA. TEA was interested in conducting case studies with a sample of the academically unacceptable schools that sent teachers to TALA (not all participated in TALA). This would allow a greater exploration of how TALA was being implemented in AU campuses.

- The majority of participating teachers represented campuses that were "academically acceptable." TEA was interested in looking at campuses that adopted TALA and exhibited a positive shift in TAKS scores (TAKS-Reading, TAKS-Math, or both).

As previously stated, campuses with at or above average participation in TALA in both 2008 and 2009 were considered for inclusion in the case study (n=111). Once the TALA participating campuses were listed by region, the demographic characteristics of the campus were compiled. The characteristics included the percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged, LEP, special education, and at-risk at the campuses. Next, the change in the percentage of Grade 6 students who met the standard on TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math from 2007–08 to 2008–09 was calculated. ICF narrowed the possible campuses to 13 and presented the site selection plan to TEA. Table 1 presents information about the campuses recommended for inclusion. From the 13 recommended campuses, nine campuses were selected in consultation with TEA.

The nine campuses that participated in TALA site visits during spring 2010 differed by district type, geographic location, and academic accountability rating. Seven of the schools were part of independent school districts (Campuses A, C, D, E, F, H, and I), Campus G was part of a consolidated district, and Campus B was a charter school. Observations were conducted at two schools in urban locations (Campuses A and E), two schools in suburban locations (Campuses F and G), and five schools located in rural areas (Campuses B, C, D, H, and I). In 2009, TEA rated seven of the schools as academically acceptable (Campuses A, D, E, F, G, H, and I) and two of the schools as academically recognized (Campuses B and C). Additional information on student enrollment, student characteristics, and 2009 TAKS performance are provided by campus in the individual reports that follow this overview.

Table 1. Selection Criteria for Case Study Sites

Case Study Site	ESC Region	Participation Rate 2008	Participation Rate 2009	% Economically Disadvantaged	% LEP	% At-Risk	% Special Education	TAKS Reading Change	TAKS Math Change
H	1	48.2%	31.8%	0.2%	66.2%	73.7%	14.7%	-8	-12
-	1	60.9%	36.0%	66.1%	47.3%	71.0%	12.4%	+5	-5
-	1	62.5%	41.5%	0.0%	40.9%	68.5%	11.5%	0	+17
F	4	38.5%	82.8%	97.4%	4.7%	27.8%	13.2%	+4	+16
A	4	29.4%	66.7%	62.6%	7.0%	53.8%	19.0%	+2	+7
B	4	60.0%	33.3%	79.4%	24.7%	50.8%	5.3%	+10	-3
I	4	53.9%	37.0%	33.5%	0.6%	39.0%	7.3%	+4	+7
-	13*	42.9%	33.3%	63.6%	9.4%	38.9%	10.8%	+4	-6
C	13	37.5%	58.3%	45.2%	9.6%	55.4%	14.7%	+10	+2
G	14	70.0%	38.9%	39.3%	0.0%	39.0%	13.2%	+2	+8
D	17	72.7%	65.2%	79.7%	1.2%	64.7%	26.5%	+1	+18
E	19*	59.5%	45.3%	65.2%	15.5%	52.6%	7.8%	-7	-5
-	20	63.6%	34.8%	63.1%	4.0%	52.4%	7.2%	+8	+3

*Campus was AU in reading in 2007.

Data Collection Activities

The purpose of the nine case studies was to provide in-depth information regarding participants' thoughts about their TALA training experiences, support for participation in and implementation of TALA, barriers and facilitators to implementation, perceived effects of participation in TALA, and participants' thoughts about the sustainability of the implemented instructional routines and strategies. During the site visits, ICF conducted interviews with administrators, focus groups with teachers, and observations of teachers' classrooms.

- *Administrator Interviews.* During the nine case study site visits, 41 interviews were conducted with campus or district administrators, which is an average of about 4-5 per campus.

- *Teacher Focus Groups.* During the nine case study site visits, 86 teacher focus groups were conducted, including 41 focus groups with English language arts (ELA)/reading teachers and 45 focus groups with content area teachers by subject area. Specifically, 15 focus groups were held with science teachers, 14 with social studies teachers, 13 with math teachers, and 3 with special education teachers. This averages out to about five focus groups with ELA teachers and five focus groups with content area teachers across all case study site visits.

- *Classroom Observations.* During the nine case study site visits, members of the evaluation team observed 57 classrooms, including 28 ELA/reading classes and 29 content area classes (math, science, or social studies), or about three of each type of teacher at each campus. The breakdown of observed classes by grade level was Grade 6 (25%), Grade 7 (35%), Grade 8 (23%), and multiple grades (17%). Each observation lasted an average of 35 minutes of instruction.

Summary of Findings

This section describes the findings from the in-depth case studies, including the campus support for TALA; perceptions of TALA's effect on student achievement; perceptions of the quality of TALA content and training; classroom implementation of TALA routines; barriers and facilitators to classroom implementation; and recommendations for the future.

Campus Support of TALA Implementation

Participants (TALA participating teachers, campus administrators, and district administrators) at case study campuses reported various levels of TALA implementation, ranging from one campus where teachers reported they had not "heard the word TALA" since the training was completed, to two campuses at which the teacher handbooks and lesson plan outlines included TALA routines and strategies. Sites that reported the greatest school wide implementation (i.e., ELA and content teachers collaborated and used the strategies and routines) appeared to be those in which the administrators were very involved (e.g., they attended a supervisor overview and/or a teacher Academy, they reviewed lesson plans that had been designed with I Do/We Do/You Do sections embedded for teachers to complete, etc.), and where schoolwide TALA implementation was an explicit goal.

Support for TALA varied across the nine case study sites. Attending the TALA academies was encouraged at six campuses and mandated at two other campuses. Supplemental staff development and TALA training was reported by participants at four campuses. Another support, reported by participants at two campuses, was the administration's encouragement of incorporating the TALA instructional routines and strategies into lesson plans. Teachers and administrators at four campuses reported that TALA strategies were reinforced at departmental meetings, whereas teachers at one campus were "reminded of TALA" at the first meeting of the school year. Participants at four campuses reported receiving assistance from a literacy coach or literacy specialist to implement the strategies in the classroom. Classroom observations by an administrator, literacy coach/specialist, or other teachers were reported as a support strategy at four campuses. The administration provided materials/supplies (e.g., posters, markers) to teachers at four campuses to support the implementation of TALA strategies in the classroom. Only one campus provided collaboration time for teachers.

Feedback on surveys from TALA participating teachers and campus administrators indicated that across campuses where teachers had attended TALA, support for TALA was high. To a great extent, campus administrators made changes to or acted upon almost all campus support policies and practices for TALA implementation. These findings (survey and case study) are consistent with the expert technical advisory board (TAB) recommendation that, in order to effectively implement TALA in the schools, teachers need systemic support from reading coaches and school administrators, on-going follow-up activities, and opportunities to practice the routines with feedback (e.g., a school administrator trained in the TALA routines should evaluate the teacher during the year).

Perceptions of the Influence of TALA on Student Outcomes

Teachers and administrators at seven of the nine case study campuses reported perceiving that TALA participation positively influenced teachers' abilities to influence student achievement. One campus identified TALA as having a "big impact" on student achievement. Three campuses reported that there needs to be consistent use of TALA strategies and routines in the school to

influence student achievement. Only one campus reported that TALA had little to no influence on student achievement. One district administrator stated that he did not think TALA would help student achievement. Another reported that TALA was unrelated to TAKS.

When asked about the differential benefits of TALA among groups of students, participants at six campuses responded that all students would benefit from TALA, with participants at five campuses reporting that students classified as English language learners (ELL) were benefiting the most from TALA implementation. Participants at one campus reported that students identified for special education were receiving the greatest benefit from TALA, whereas another campus believed students identified as economically disadvantaged would receive the greatest benefit. Participants at two campuses explicitly stated that TALA is also a benefit to gifted students, whereas participants at another campus were unsure how TALA would help gifted students.

Similar questions were presented to campus administrators on the TALA survey. Over half of all administrator survey respondents indicated that they believed TALA will either help "quite a bit" or "a great deal" in improving student achievement (TAKS scores) at their campus, helping adolescent students who struggle with reading, and improving student outcomes in ELA/reading. In comparison, less than half believed that TALA would help "quite a bit" or "a great deal" to improve student outcomes in content areas (social studies, science, and math). Across all outcomes, the percentage of administrator respondents who had attended the TALA administrator overview training and reported that TALA would help "quite a bit" or "a great deal" was slightly higher than that of their counterparts who had not attended the training.

Perceptions of the Quality of TALA Training

TALA Content

Teachers at all nine sites commented on the superior quality of the TALA content included in the ELA and Content Area Academies. The majority of teachers thought that the routines were very user friendly and good for both new and experienced teachers and TALA provided sound research-based best practices for new teachers. Positive perceptions were also held by the TAB who reviewed the TALA materials and training strategies. The TAB concluded that TALA materials are highly reflective of best practices in literacy instruction and teacher professional development and aligned with national and state standards for literacy education.[4]

Several content area teachers commented on how the training and the materials provided made them more aware of the struggling readers in their classrooms. One of the only negative comments about the content was from content area teachers at Campus B who thought the material presented at their Academy was primarily for use by ELA/reading teachers and that it would be difficult to implement in a content area classroom.

At all nine case study campuses, teachers indicated that TALA training provided a variety of useful and easy to use routines and strategies. Teachers stated that because a variety of strategies were provided, they could select specific routines to help their students succeed. However, for a few teachers at case study sites, the number of options was a negative. Two

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[4] More information about the TAB review can be found in Interim Reports #1 and #2 which can be accessed online at the TEA website here.

sites had new teachers who reported feeling "overwhelmed" by the amount of material that was presented.

This favorable perception of TALA content was echoed by ELA and content area classroom teachers in the survey data. Of all teachers who responded to the survey, regardless of grade level or which session they attended (ELA or content area) or year (2008 or 2009), over 80% reported all aspects of the training they received as effective or highly effective. In particular, teachers rated the training materials, knowledge of presenters, and training content as effective or highly effective.

TALA Training

Attendees at all nine sites reported very different experiences at the TALA academies; however, the overall trend was positive. Many attendees reported that they had great presenters and appreciated the opportunity to go over the material multiple times. They liked the videos that gave them the opportunity to see how the strategies and routines could be used in the classroom. They also enjoyed the opportunity to talk with other teachers during the training and to use their own textbooks to think about how to incorporate the strategies and routines in their lessons. These perceptions mirror the observation findings in the final report where observers from ICF who observed TALA training indicated that TALA academies were implemented with high quality facilitation that led to participant engagement.

In contrast, other teachers reported that the presentations were overly structured and too repetitive. Teachers from three campuses reported that presenters were mandated to read the slides and present the course materials exactly in order. Teachers from two schools reported that a presenter even apologized for having to do it that way. Several teachers said they thought it was problematic for presenters to read the slides when the material was very clear and had already been provided for them to read in the binders. One teacher even commented that it made her feel that the designers did not trust the process they were teaching. A similar finding was identified by observers of TALA training, where the majority of the delivery method involved trainers reading directly from their notes.

At one campus, a math teacher said the presenters told his content area academy attendees that the strategies were designed for ELA classes and that they were not really sure how to implement them for math. The teacher reported that the presenter also asked for any suggestions the teachers might have for how to use them in a math class setting. This was a concern expressed by the TAB in their review of the TALA materials. The instructional routines were viewed as limited to reading a chapter in a book. In math, there are word problems. The TAB recommended a breakout session for math teachers and a packet of routines to help them since the nature of a math textbook is different from that of a social studies or science textbook.

Another issue reported by attendees at four separate campuses had to do with presenter comments and treatment of attendees regarding participation time and the stipend that was awarded. Teachers reported that they were warned (some even said threatened) by presenters that being late, leaving early, spending too much time in the bathroom, taking phone calls, and any other missed time would keep them from receiving the stipend. Several teachers reported that the treatment they received was "not nice" and that they "were not treated as professionals." One teacher wondered what would happen if students who arrived late were turned away; another felt the treatment was insulting and said that teachers should not have been treated in such a manner.

Classroom Implementation of TALA

Implementation of TALA in ELA Classrooms

As part of the in-depth site visits, 28 ELA classrooms were observed for the implementation of TALA instructional strategies and routines. In terms of general instructional strategies, 96% of the observed ELA teachers provided feedback to the students during the observed lesson, fostered student engagement, and provided explicit instruction to students. About two-thirds (68%) of teachers adapted instruction during the observed lesson. Students worked in groups/pairs during 57% of the observations. These findings are comparable to the classroom observations that occurred in spring 2009, where a majority of observed ELA teachers (71%) implemented general TALA strategies. In the classroom observations, the most often used general instructional strategies were providing feedback, fostering student engagement, and providing explicit instruction.

As predicted by the TAB, comprehension (43% of observed ELA lessons) and vocabulary instructional routines (57% of observed ELA lessons) were observed most frequently. There were fewer observations of word study syllable patterns (4%), word study morphemes (11%), fluency (7%), and inferential comprehension routines (7%). Similar findings occurred in spring 2009, where the majority of ELA teachers who were observed implemented vocabulary instructional routines (81%) and comprehension instructional routines (66%).

The observation findings are comparable to the focus group findings. Of the instructional routines and strategies that were presented, teachers most often reported using the explicit instruction routines. ELA teachers at all campuses reported using the scaffolding routine (i.e., I Do/We Do/You Do) and using vocabulary strategies (i.e., examples and non-examples). The least often reported strategy was the syllabification word study routine.

Data collected from the online follow-up and teacher survey mirror site visit observation and focus group findings. The most frequently reported general strategies by ELA teachers included fostering student engagement, adapting instruction to structure learning for all students, and grouping or pairing students. The most frequently reported TALA instructional routines were vocabulary and comprehension instructional routines (e.g., building background knowledge).

Implementation of TALA in Content Area Classrooms

As part of the site visits, 29 content area classrooms were observed for the implementation of TALA instructional strategies and routines. In terms of general instructional strategies, 97% of the observed content area teachers provided explicit instruction to students and fostered student engagement, while 93% of the teachers provided feedback to the students. A smaller percentage of teachers were observed adapting instruction during the lesson (69%). The students worked in groups during 62% of the observations. These findings are comparable to the classroom observations that occurred in spring 2009, where a majority of observed content area teachers implemented general TALA strategies. In the classroom observations, the most often used general instructional strategies were providing feedback, fostering student engagement, and providing explicit instruction.

In content area classrooms, vocabulary (52%) and comprehension instructional routines (28%) were observed most frequently. There was one observation of word study morphemes and fluency routines. None of the observed content area classroom lessons included word study

syllable patterns and monitoring comprehension routines. Since word study, fluency, and monitoring comprehension routines were not part of the content area academy content, they were not expected to be observed in content area classrooms. Similar findings occurred in spring 2009, where the content area teachers who were observed implemented vocabulary instructional routines (76%) and comprehension instructional routines (35%).

The observation findings are comparable to the focus group findings. Of the instructional routines and strategies that were presented, teachers most often reported using the explicit instruction routines. Content area teachers at all campuses reported using the scaffolding routine (i.e., I Do/We Do/You Do) and using vocabulary strategies (i.e., examples and non-examples).

Data collected from the online follow-up and teacher survey mirror site visit observation and focus group findings. The most frequently reported TALA instructional routines by content area teachers were vocabulary and comprehension instructional routines (e.g., defining words, building background knowledge).

Facilitators to TALA Implementation

Teachers mentioned several facilitators to implementation. These included attendance at the Academies, the binders provided to teachers, having a "TALA cheerleader/advocate on campus," campus-wide "buy-in" for the routines, the inclusion of TALA routines in the curriculum/lesson plans, involvement/follow-up by administrators, a personal desire to help students succeed, and receiving the stipend.

Survey data on TALA participating teachers and campus administrators provided insight on the facilitators to classroom implementation of TALA routines and strategies. The most often reported facilitators to TALA implementation pertained to the TALA training itself. The TALA training was reported as a facilitator to implementation. Another facilitator was the provided resources (TALA manual) that included helpful strategies for dealing with poor readers. Support from other teachers was also listed as a facilitator to implementation, similar to focus group findings.

Barriers to TALA Implementation

Teachers also mentioned several barriers to implementation. The number one barrier listed by teachers at every campus was time. Teachers reported that they needed time to plan and collaborate with other teachers, time to train students to use the strategies, and extra time to do some of the routines (e.g., the Frayer Model). The pressure to prepare students for TAKS was also mentioned by teachers at several campuses. Another barrier was lack of buy-in. Teachers at a few campuses mentioned a lack of administrator awareness of or knowledge of what TALA consists of as a barrier. Teachers at multiple schools also stated that a mandate to use the strategies and follow up by administrators to confirm use would likely lead to schoolwide implementation by ELA and content area teachers.

Another reported barrier was related to legal use of the materials that were provided at the Academies. Specifically, administrators and teachers were concerned about copyrights of the materials and whether or not they could or should share the strategies and routines with other teachers. More than one literacy coach reported a hesitancy to use the TALA specific materials due to warnings from TALA academy presenters about copyright infringement.

Survey data on TALA participating teachers and campus administrators provided insight on the barriers to classroom implementation of TALA routines and strategies. The most common response (by 33% of Grade 6 teachers, 26% of Grade 7 and 8 teachers, and 26% of campus administrators) was there were no barriers to implementation. While the overall response was positive, some barriers were also noted. Time was reported as a barrier to TALA implementation, similar to focus group findings. This need for time included more planning time, time for professional development activities, and proper testing and small group instruction. Another barrier reported was a lack of buy-in or support for TALA. Teachers reported a lack of buy-in from the students, whereas administrators cited difficulty with obtaining support from teachers. Administrators reported that their lack of training with the actual TALA strategies and routines was a critical barrier to TALA implementation.

Recommendations for the Future of TALA

Participants at case study sites reported several suggestions to improve TALA academies and implementation. The first group of suggestions was related to Academy content and delivery method:

- Allow teachers to share TALA materials freely.[5]

- Put the materials online with easy access and/or provide a *CD* with all materials.[6]

- Organize Content Area Academies by subject area.

- Separate novice and experienced teachers.

- Include videos of classes who are just beginning to use the materials instead of "picture-perfect" classes in which everyone follows the instructions perfectly. This last recommendation came from teachers who reported they had a hard time believing their students would ever be able to perform at the level of expertise or cooperation portrayed in the videos.

These suggestions mirror the TAB recommendations for improving TALA. The TAB was concerned about the short duration of the TALA training and follow-up and recommended that systematic support mechanisms (including ongoing follow-up, administrator support, and a dedicated website) could assist in addressing the concerns associated with the implementation of TALA in schools.

The next set of suggestions from participants in case studies regarded training dates and locations:

- Provide more training date options.

- Conduct the training at the campuses with the teachers who are expected to use the TALA instructional routines and strategies.

Teachers recommended doing one day of training to "get teachers started" and then coming back after some amount of time to show them the "next step" in the process (e.g., another group

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[5] This finding, when shared with TEA, allowed TEA to clarify with TALA trainers issues related to sharing materials.
[6] TEA is working to provide TALA professional development online through Project Share.

of strategies or routines). They explained that this schedule would facilitate the gradual building of skills with practice, rather than having everything presented at one time with the likelihood that they would forget the majority of the material.

The final suggestions from case study participants were related to attendance requirements and follow-up:

- Require that all administrators attend TALA training and understand what is being expected of teachers.

- Require that all ELA and content area teachers use TALA routines and strategies.

- Confirm the use of TALA materials by performing ongoing walk-throughs or other classroom observations.

- Send monthly reminders to teachers to use the strategies and routines.

Conclusion

As noted in the TALA final report in more detail, several themes regarding the TALA materials, academies, and implementation emerged from the interviews with teachers and administrators during the site visits. First and foremost, the vast majority of teachers reported that the TALA content was excellent. Teachers appreciated the materials, the opportunity to work with other teachers, and the stipend they received for attending the Academies. However, the overly structured presentation of the materials and the comments to teachers regarding the rules for the stipends negatively affected teachers' opinions of several of the Academies. In general, TALA implementation was positively affected by the presence of a TALA advocate on campus. The campuses with the highest levels of implementation were those at which administrators had attended the TALA academies and were actively involved in the follow up.

In terms of outcomes for teachers and students, several additional themes emerged. The first was that TALA participation improved teachers' literacy practices by giving them multiple tools to choose from and by providing a common language to use in ELA and content area classrooms. For some teachers, the TALA instructional routines and strategies were new; for others, TALA provided new names for methods they were already using. Whether the skills were completely new or only a newer version of a familiar routine, TALA participation reminded teachers how to evaluate middle school students' literacy skills and determine how to help struggling students. Participation in TALA also provided teachers with examples of research-based best practices. Finally, at those campuses on which teachers and administrators committed to TALA implementation, teachers reported higher levels of student participation, better class discussions, and a greater student willingness to seek help when necessary.

The following chapters present detailed individual case study reports for each of the nine sites visited.

Site Visit Summary: Campus A

A two-day site visit to Campus A took place during May 2010. The site visit included interviews with key personnel and observations of classroom activities. Two members of the evaluation team conducted interviews with the principal, the district coordinator, and the school literacy coach. Additionally, three focus groups were conducted. One focus group included teachers who attended TALA ELA Academies; the other two groups included mathematics and social studies teachers who attended the TALA Content Area Academies. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, observations of two ELA/reading and five content area classrooms observations were conducted. Table A.1 lists the number of participants in each site visit activity.

Table A.1. Number of Campus A Participants in Each Site Visit Activity

Interviews	
School Administrators	2
District Administrators	1
Focus Groups	
ELA Teachers	4
Content Teachers – Social Studies	4
Content Teachers – Mathematics	5
Classroom Observations	
ELA Classrooms	2
Content Classrooms – Social Studies	2
Content Classrooms – Mathematics	2
Content Classrooms – Science	1
TEA Reported TALA Academy Attendance	
ELA Teachers	11
Content Area Teachers	12

Table A.2 provides a summary of campus characteristics, including location, student enrollment, and student characteristics. Table A.3 provides a summary of campus academic achievement including student performance on TAKS-Reading and campus accountability rating from 2007–08 to 2009–10.

Table A.2. Summary of Campus A Characteristics

General Characteristics	
Grade Levels	6-8
Geographic Location	Urban
Student Enrollment	544
Student Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African-American	62.1%
Asian	0.2%
Hispanic	37.5%
Native American	0.0%
White	0.2%
Student Population (%)	
Economically Disadvantaged	93.2%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	8.6%
At-Risk	57.0%
Mobility (2007–08)	20.1%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Table A.3. Summary of Campus A Academic Performance on TAKS Reading

	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Grade 6 TAKS-Reading	86%	89%	83%
Grade 7 TAKS-Reading	83%	87%	82%
Grade 8 TAKS-Reading	93%	93%	91%
Campus Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Recognized

Note: The percentages listed represent the percentage of students at the campus who met the standard in TAKS reading.
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10

Overview of TALA Experience at this Campus

ELA/Reading Curriculum

At Campus A, and for the entire school district, the ELA/reading curriculum in use at the time of the site visit was the Horizontal Alignment Planning Guide (HAPG). The HAPG acts as a scope and sequence curriculum and a strategic document that defines what material should be taught and in what order it should be taught to students in specific grades. The HAPG has also been aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards. The HAPG states the guidelines for what needs to be occurring on campus for every six weeks of instructional time, as well as the objectives, time allocations, and instructional strategies used in classrooms. The HAPG has a vocabulary section embedded that fits well with TALA strategies and it provides resources for teaching each objective, which supported TALA strategies and literacy instruction. The benefit of the curriculum was that it was extremely flexible in that the materials provided by the HAPG were not required for the school to use, but the district expected the teachers to follow the plans and guidelines that were provided. The literacy coach at the school provided an example of the curriculum, "The HAPG will suggest reading Anne Frank, while the teacher can pick another book that is related to the Holocaust. We can modify the curriculum that is provided within the state as long as it is within the guidelines."

The district recently established a literacy commitment plan that included many strategies that were a part of the TALA program. The district coordinator stated, "Our main objective is a literacy push and we are still investigating the outcomes of this push. TALA, in all of its forms, has supported the literacy push." There was a poster in every ELA classroom with the TALA strategies on it. Overall, the teachers on campus used novels in the fall and focused on teaching testing strategies in the spring. After the TAKS, novels were used in the classrooms again for the rest of the year.

Other Literacy Intervention Programs at Campus A

In addition to TALA, Campus A has a literacy intervention program called the Upgrade Program. Selected students were required to participate in the Upgrade Program based on their benchmark scores and reading level. The program took place on campus during school hours. The students who needed this additional support were pulled from class to receive additional tutoring from a reading and math interventionist. The tutoring occurred four days a week for forty-five minutes each day.

The Upgrade Program was aligned with the HAPG and the TEKS. Additionally, it provided students with a wide variety of strategies designed to support the students in passing TAKS.

Many of these strategies were also strategies presented in TALA that were modified to help better work with these students. The literacy coach indicated that the most useful strategies were main idea, decoding the words, verification of students' answers, vocabulary, and writing skills. The literacy coach stated, "I tell them we are all a part of a ship. We all need the same things and we need to work as a team to get our scores up!"

Additionally, Campus A implements Literacy Leads the Way, a Tier I content area strategy program. Another literacy program, Language, is implemented as a Tier III program for Grade 6 students. The Language program is intended mainly for students who have difficulties with decoding and comprehension. The district coordinator stated that they were looking into developing a full-fledged preK-12 literacy program.

Non-TALA Professional Development Activities

In addition to TALA, a wide variety of professional development activities are provided to the teachers at Campus A through various means, including the district and the ESC. While teachers are required to attend 45 hours of training, it is clear there is a campus expectation to exceed the requirement. The extra hours often come from training opportunities off campus. All of the teachers interviewed had attended trainings at the ESC. Specifically, the ELA teachers attended trainings on the topic of struggling readers, and the math teachers attended a Math Literacy Strategy Academy at the district building. The math and ELA teachers both attended a gifted and talented training called Laying the Foundation. Laying the Foundation is intended for implementation in Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) classes for ELA and Mathematics, and focuses on Pre-AP strategies that include literacy. The social studies department also attends specialized trainings that focused on developing literacy through social studies. Further, a literacy coach provides on-site training one Wednesday out of every month for each department.

TALA Professional Development Activities

Seven of the eight ELA teachers who teach at Campus A attended the TALA ELA Academy. All of the content area teachers attended the TALA Content Area Academy, except for teachers who were new to the campus during the site visit year. By the time of the site visit, the new teachers and the one who had not previously attended TALA had already signed up for a TALA

> "We presented TALA to them as something that needed to be done. We realized that literacy is one of the major problems that we are having, not just in Reading/ELA, but across all content areas."
>
> - Principal

academy in summer 2010. The district coordinator stated that, overall, 700 teachers in the school district had attended TALA academies. Teachers learned of TALA from the administration and the literacy coach, both of whom indicated that it was highly recommended that the teachers attend TALA. A few of the participants interviewed were told by their administration that it was a mandatory training.

At the time of the site visit, TEA reported that 11 ELA teachers and 12 content area teachers from Campus A had attended TALA academies.

Comparison of TALA to other literacy intervention programs and/or professional development activities

Many of the professional development and literacy intervention programs that the teachers attended provided similar content to that presented in TALA. For example, the teachers attended English as a Second Language (ESL) training on campus at the beginning of the school year that taught strategies to help target the students classified as LEP and ELL who were struggling in reading. The language program focused on learning to read rather than reading to learn. Many in-service trainings that teachers previously attended covered strategies similar to TALA strategies, but used different terms for the strategies. Many social studies teachers shared that the TALA training and other professional development trainings supplemented what they already knew.

Satisfaction with the ELA Academy

> "Training is the most powerful thing for teachers."
>
> - Principal

Based on conversations with teachers, several ELA teachers made positive comments about the ELA Academy. They enjoyed that they could choose the location for their training and felt that the environment was conducive to learning. Additionally, they enjoyed the stipend provided for attending the training. Teachers expressed that having the opportunity to network and brainstorm with teachers from other schools supported and helped modify what they were currently doing in their classrooms. Lastly, a few of the participants felt the facilitators did a great job presenting the materials.

On the other hand, some ELA teachers were dissatisfied with the ELA Academy. These teachers felt that the ELA Academy was overwhelming, due to the large amount of information taught in a short amount of time. One teacher felt that as soon as she became comfortable with a strategy, another strategy was presented before she felt like she could practice the previous strategies. Two teachers felt that the academy should have occurred closer to September since the gap between the training and the school year was too long for teachers to be able to remember and implement the majority of the training. For example, a few of the teachers stated that they constantly had to refer back to their manuals when implementing a strategy. Additionally, many of the ELA teachers taught writing courses, and they felt that the ELA Academy's focus on reading strategies rather than writing strategies made the training less applicable to their classrooms.

Satisfaction with the Content Area Academy

Content teachers who attended the Content Area Academy reported that they enjoyed the provision of multiple ways to apply a variety of instructional strategies across all content areas, along with the provision of supporting materials. Some content teachers noted that they found the vocabulary strategies particularly helpful in broadening students' critical thinking skills. Several social studies teachers indicated the usefulness of the materials provided. Reviewing the materials and having them all in one binder eased the implementation of the strategies and practices in the classroom.

Additionally, content teachers reported that they appreciated the collaborative nature of the Content Area Academy. Several content teachers indicated that they enjoyed working with teachers who were not from the school district. Furthermore, the Content Area Academy was

presented using a collaborative, hands-on approach rather than a lecture format. Group work and hands-on activities kept the participants engaged, and teachers reported that the collaborative style was helpful in learning and practicing the strategies.

Teachers also shared some of their frustrations with TALA and suggestions for improvement. The majority of the social studies teachers shared that they found the training to be repetitive, as they felt that they had learned the same strategies in previous trainings. One social studies teacher indicated that she would have liked to see more engaging vocabulary strategies presented. Many math teachers felt that they were already implementing many of the strategies, but were using alternative names for them. One math teacher expressed frustration about how the training content was geared towards both math and science teachers. This teacher felt that seeing more math lessons rather than listening to both math and science would have been beneficial. Lastly, one math teacher felt that it would have been better to have the training during the school year rather than during the summer to support the ease of implementation.

TALA Administrator Training

The administration at Campus A did not participate in the TALA Administrator Training. However, the literacy coach attended a short, one-day TALA training held by their ESC during their monthly literacy meeting. The literacy coach and the district coordinator stated that they planned to attend the TALA academies this summer. The district coordinator indicated that last year, two hundred teachers from the district were trained to administer the Texas Middle School Fluency Assessment (TMSFA). The district was planning to require the remaining teachers to receive training on the administration of the TMSFA in the near future.

Implementation of TALA Strategies and Routines in the Classroom

"I see an increase in the use of literacy around the school. They are using more story maps in Science. My math teachers are using the Frayer Models to explain the problems. My history department is using graphic organizers more."

- Principal

Teachers reported that they were implementing TALA strategies and routines in the classroom, some more frequently than others. When implementing the general TALA strategies in the classroom, most of the teachers stated that they used the I Do, We Do, You Do instructional strategy, but that they referred to the strategy using a different name. All interviewed teachers reported implementing the Frayer Model in their classroom. One ELA teacher implemented the Frayer Model weekly, while the others implemented it bi-weekly with the students. Math and social studies teachers used the Frayer Model to support the learning process when new vocabulary was introduced.

One ELA teacher reported using the comprehension routines whenever the class read as a whole. Grade 6 math teachers used the comprehension strategy of building background knowledge because they were able to refer to students' elementary years to determine their level of mathematical understanding and skill. One math teacher stated that she used the Anticipation-Reaction Guide at the beginning of the year; but that it became too time consuming and she discontinued its use. Social studies teachers reported that building background knowledge was extremely important. Social studies teachers also felt that students greatly struggled in the areas of reading and comprehension, both of which are central to social studies coursework.

One ELA teacher reported that she used the word study instructional routines every time she introduced new vocabulary terms. Another ELA teacher taught a reading intervention class during which she used the TALA instructional routines frequently. ELA teachers reported that they frequently implemented partner reading, in which students were grouped by their scores on the TMSFA. ELA teachers stated that they helped students generate questions to comprehend text every time the class read a novel.

At the beginning of the year and at the end of the year, all of the ELA teachers administered the TMSFA. The literacy coach on campus was responsible for the interpretation of the results. The literacy coach then discussed the results with the ELA teachers and provided feedback. ELA teachers reported that they used the TMSFA results to rearrange the composition of reading groups in their classroom.

Preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers

> "It has helped with the TEKS selection. Not every novel or short story in our literature books is good for our students. It has made me more aware of the text."
>
> - Teacher

As viewed by the administration, the TALA program was successful at Campus A because TALA strategies were applicable to all students, at every level. Multiple learning styles were addressed at the TALA training to promote differentiated instruction for struggling readers. The literacy coach stated, "Because the strategies are applicable to our visual learners, our hands-on learners, and our audio learners, TALA supports all kinds of learners at our campus." The district coordinator indicated that the incorporation of TALA into the curriculum underscored the importance of the TALA literacy strategies to the entire campus. The teachers planned and used the TALA strategies in their classrooms and received feedback from the literacy coach to strengthen their implementation. Implementation of TALA strategies across all classrooms and academic content areas created consistency for students by ensuring that instructors were using a shared vocabulary.

Teachers' preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers was supported by a variety of TALA strategies. The ELA teachers found the TALA strategies helpful with the TEKS selection. Also, TALA's content provided the ELA teachers with more ideas to help facilitate comprehension and engagement of ESL students. Math teachers used the Get the Gist strategy, which consisted of students reading a passage from their textbook, closing the book, and then sharing with the class what they understood from the passage. This activity worked well in informally assessing a student's level of comprehension. The social studies teachers felt that TALA provided them with research-based practices and strategies that supported their students' growth. They found the Frayer Model to be an especially great tool when working with struggling readers in the general classrooms. Teachers felt that TALA gave them options and new ways of looking at vocabulary and reading. Struggling readers were able to tie everything together with the use of these streamlined strategies. While the strategies were not exactly new, TALA provided new insights into how to help all students.

> "Even seeing one improvement for a child is enough, but I have seen a number of ELL kids who are successful and who are trying more."
>
> - Teacher

All of the teachers interviewed used the TALA strategies and routines except for one teacher who taught an intervention class. This teacher was required to use the highly scripted Language Program, which offered little room to modify the strategies.

Support for the Implementation of TALA Instructional Strategies and Routines

> "I do observations in all of the classrooms. We have a sit down one on one and talk about what worked and what didn't. I am not observing from the viewpoint of assessing them; just to support them."
>
> - Literacy Coach

The campus literacy coach played a large role in supporting teachers on campus. The campus literacy coach's responsibilities included attending the grade-level and departmental meetings. The campus literacy coach provided teachers with all of the materials and resources, which included copies of handouts, supplies, posters, and more to facilitate the implementation of TALA. The literacy coach was also responsible for observing all of the classrooms on campus. Following the observations, the coach met with the teacher to provide non-evaluative feedback. Further, campus-wide assessments completed as part of the literacy network revealed that many students were not attentive or engaged during classroom instruction. The literacy coach, through observations of the classroom, was able to help the teacher determine the students' engagement levels, as well as develop strategies to promote engagement. The literacy coach specifically worked with the math teachers to provide them with strategies for word problems and other math questions that use words.

The principal indicated that the literacy coach provided instructional support, especially for the new teachers, by modeling strategies and helping teachers to make lesson plans. The principal walked through classrooms weekly, and gave kudos to a teacher every week in the campus newsletter. The literacy coach informed the principal as to which part of the teachers' lesson plans incorporated TALA strategies. This helped to distinguish which trainings the teachers attended and what strategies they used from each training.

The district coordinator indicated that the literacy coach was the campus' strongest source of support for implementing TALA. Additionally, the district coordinator stated that the high school and middle school department chairs communicated regularly. TALA and other literacy development initiatives were discussed at these meetings. As a result of one of these meetings, it was determined that all ELA teachers on campus would be trained in TALA.

Overall, all of the teachers felt that the administration was supportive of the TALA program, and no additional support was requested. The administration highly recommended attendance at the trainings and supported the TALA content taught in the classrooms. The administration provided the teachers with posters for their classrooms, collaboration time, grade-level meetings twice a week, departmental meetings, and opportunities to attend trainings. In addition, at the beginning of the school year, teachers were given time to collaborate and to demonstrate to new teachers effective instructional techniques and strategies for differentiation.

> "We all collaborate. The staff got together at the beginning of the year to demonstrate techniques to the new teachers. Some of the TALA strategies were shared to show differentiated instruction."
>
> - Teacher

Collaboration with other teachers

None of the teachers interviewed attended the TALA ELA Academy at the same time as the TALA Content Area Academy. They went to each during different years or attended the trainings at different sites. The ELA teachers provided resources for teachers who were unable to attend the training. The ELA teachers worked with the content area teachers consistently; these teachers held grade-level meetings twice per week. During the grade-level meetings, teachers discussed instructional strategies to help students who were struggling across all content areas. The literacy coach provided the teachers who did not attend the training with the necessary materials to implement TALA.

Facilitators to Implementation

The literacy coach indicated that the best facilitator to TALA on campus was the group of amazing teachers who had the students' best interests at heart. It was important that all of the teachers had buy-in to the shared goal of striving to make their students successful. In addition, having almost all of the teachers trained in TALA ensured that all of the teachers were speaking the same instructional language. The literacy coach provided a network and a system to promote strong communication among teachers. Departmental meetings were held on Mondays

> "We all use the Frayer Model. The Frayer Model was straight to the point and it became a habit. The students recognize the Frayer Model across all classrooms."
>
> - Teacher

and Wednesdays, during which teachers discussed which TALA strategies were working best in their classroom and which ones needed to be modified. Grade-level meetings were held on Tuesdays and Fridays, and teachers worked together for forty-five minutes to discuss the incorporation of TALA strategies and other ways to improve instruction as a team. Lastly, TALA was a great tool for supporting the school's existing model for promoting student engagement. The school stressed that they did not rely on a lecture format, and that TALA offered strategies for engaging students and promoting literacy across the campus.

The ELA teachers indicated that the flexibility to manipulate the curriculum and the guidelines facilitated the implementation of TALA. The social studies teachers felt that the district, not just the campus, strongly encouraged the implementation of the strategies. The district's aim for increased literacy across all content areas made it easier for the teachers and the campus to participate in TALA. The culture on the campus emphasized learning and continued participation in professional development trainings. The literacy coach worked on campus, and that presence was a great resource. Also, social studies teachers indicated that the literacy coach set up weekly meetings with the social studies teachers to discuss what was working and what was not with the TALA strategies.

Barriers to Implementation

The literacy coach felt that the major barrier to implementing TALA on campus was time. Teachers were contracted to be on campus for 7.5 hours a day; however, to best enable student success, there were many instances where more time was needed to meet student needs. Although additional instructional hours were fit in by pulling students from their elective classes or by asking students to attend Saturday tutorials, time for implementing new methods, like the TALA instructional routines and strategies was hard to come by.

The lack of alignment in curricula and instructional vocabulary throughout the district was cited by interviewees as a barrier to successful TALA implementation. The principal indicated that some of the principals from other campuses in the district had not come on board with the implementation of TALA. Even though the HAPG was a centralized curriculum, many campuses in the school district did not follow it. Instead, many campuses followed their own curriculum plans and independently modified the HAPG. This caused many difficulties for students who moved and attended different schools. Since the curricula were different, there were gaps in the learning process. At the time of the site visit, the district was addressing this issue as part of a larger reorganization. Interviewees noted that another challenge came from the lack of a common vocabulary used throughout the district. Lastly, the administration perceived that teachers did not see the need for change. The administration perceived that many of the content area teachers on campus did not see the applicability or need for literacy instruction in their classrooms.

The ELA teachers stated that in January their instructional focus shifted heavily to studying sample released TAKS reading passages which caused a shift in their teaching focus and possibly took them away from using TALA materials. In order to overcome the testing barrier, the school implemented peer tutoring, "tiering" (i.e., grouping), and after-hours tutoring sessions on Saturdays, after school, and before school. The social studies teachers felt that getting the students to read more would build their vocabulary, but many of the students did not have the opportunity to read outside of the classroom. The teachers also described low baseline levels of student literacy as a challenge. Teachers reported that all students were at different levels, and that teachers were at times responsible for teaching the basics of reading mechanics and comprehension. One teacher stated, "We assume kids have learned like we learned. We did not have the technology to support the learning that the kids do now. Every book now has a movie. The kids have not fallen in love with reading. We are from a different time… we learned a lot differently."

Perceived Effects of TALA Program Activities

Desired outcomes and evidence of occurrence

> "We all learned that you can't do these strategies a couple of times and expect everything to work perfectly. Repetition is extremely important to help solidify these strategies. If we still keep building on the strategies, we will see growth.."
>
> - Teacher

Participants differed somewhat on what they hoped would result from the TALA activities. The literacy coach stated that the desired outcome for her campus was to ensure that every student would be literate; that is, each student would be reading and comprehending text 100% of the time. The district coordinator felt that a desired outcome for the campus was to ensure that the teachers were knowledgeable about supportive strategies and routines that developed strategic readers, writers, and thinkers. Additionally, the district coordinator stated, "I hope we see more engaged learners in the classroom that interact with the text and have rich conversations. They have the strategies that they can take with them forever." The principal hoped for every teacher on campus to be a literacy teacher across all content areas. Many students who entered the campus had never met TAKS-Reading standards and, based on the benchmark scores, the school had received good follow-up scores. The principal felt that this was because the focus had been on engagement and literacy as a unit.

Effect on teachers' literacy practices

ELA teachers indicated that they modified their classroom literacy practices because of their participation in the TALA ELA Academy. ELA teachers felt that scaffolding, think-pair-share, and partner reading strategies influenced their literacy practices in the classroom.

> "We never heard of Get the Gist but after learning about it we realized that we already use that."
>
> - Teacher

Both ELA and content area teachers were already implementing TALA strategies, but were using different names for them. A common language for vocabulary usage across all content areas supported the streamlining of the strategies already employed in classrooms. In addition, students were working at different levels and paces; therefore, TALA's focus on reading comprehension for all different levels of readers was beneficial in reaching all students in a classroom.

Effect on ability to influence student achievement

Overall, TALA strategies and practices were successful in increasing achievement, and this was seen with TALA affecting the top students on campus. As part of the TALA program, teachers were required to pick a TALA strategy and implement it for one month. This requirement supported and reinforced the students' learning of the strategies in more than one classroom. Teachers indicated that many students embraced strategies that worked well for them and used them to motivate and learn. The teachers found the vocabulary skills strategies from TALA the most influential in their students' achievement. The teachers began to ask their students to explain and justify their answers more often. This led the students to think more about their answers and comprehend more. The students also saw all of the teachers using the same

> "One of my students who took a benchmark test used the Frayer Model for the entire test. It helped her a lot."
>
> - Teacher

strategies, which reinforced their implementation of TALA. Much of what happened with the development and growth of the students' education happened through interaction with teachers during school hours. Homework was assigned to the students, but it was rarely completed at home as few students on campus owned a backpack or school supplies.

Overall, focus group participants felt that all student groups benefited from the implementation of TALA strategies. A few participants felt that students classified as ELL benefited the most because their educational foundation was not the same as those students not classified as ELL. One social studies teacher stated, "Even seeing one improvement for a child is enough, but I have seen a number of ELL kids who are successful and who are trying more." The ELA teachers felt that they could now identify the students who are truly struggling, and use TALA strategies to support the students' success and confidence, thereby creating a better learning environment.

Sustainability of TALA Activities

Overall, interviewees felt that the TALA strategies taught at the Academies were examples of good teaching. As stated by the literacy coach, "There are some lower level strategies, mediocre strategies, and higher level learning strategies where we are reaching all of our students at every level." Because TALA strategies have the ability to reach all learners, TALA was a good fit for Campus A. Additionally, TALA fits well with the existing district-wide push

towards literacy, and focuses on those students who have not met TAKS-Reading standards. Not wanting to send these students to high school without the necessary literacy skills, the literacy coach presented TALA to the principal, who agreed that it fit perfectly with their literacy intervention goals. Many teachers were very supportive of the push for higher literacy and the implementation of TALA strategies to support it.

The district is in the process of reorganizing its support teams, and is hiring ten instructional specialists who will work with the principal and the schools in sustaining TALA. The literacy coach is extremely important to the implementation of TALA; however, the literacy coach position can only be sustained for one more year due to budget cuts. This could create problems with the sustainability of TALA in the future. Fortunately, almost all of the teachers on campus have been trained in TALA and can support each other, thereby facilitating TALA's sustainability.

Within the district, the literacy coaches had the best understanding of TALA, and they built the capacity to carry out what they learned on their campuses. Campus A has enough teachers trained to conduct a district-wide training if necessary. Ongoing training will be necessary to keep TALA at the forefront in the future. A refresher course would also be beneficial to the sustainability of TALA, as any teachers needed a refresher training in order to get feedback and to ask questions.

The need to focus on literacy is extremely important to Campus A and the school district. With TALA coming from the state and supporting the idea of the literacy push, there is more power behind the implementation of TALA. The district coordinator felt that in the future it would be beneficial to make TALA mandatory for all campuses. Additionally, the district coordinator restated the importance of TALA addressing literacy across all content areas.

Classroom Observations

During the site visit to Campus A, seven classrooms were observed: two ELA classrooms and five content area classrooms. Table A.4 summarizes the number of classrooms in which each of the TALA strategies were observed.

Table A.4. Number of Campus A Classrooms in Which Each TALA Strategy was Observed

TALA Strategy	ELA Classrooms (N=2)	Content Area Classrooms (N=5)
General Instructional	0	3
Vocabulary	2	4
Comprehension	0	2
Word Study	1	N/A
Fluency	0	N/A
Inferential Comprehension	0	N/A

ELA classrooms

Two ELA classes were observed during the site visit, with an average of 19 students in each classroom. The average length of an observation in the ELA classrooms was about 35 minutes each. Of the two ELA classrooms observed, both teachers fostered student engagement provided explicit instruction, guided students' work, paired students in groups to complete

assignments in small steps and to give each other feedback, and provided positive feedback to students.

Both teachers incorporated vocabulary into their instruction by pre-teaching vocabulary words, teaching academic vocabulary words through pronunciation, defining the words, and using the Frayer Model. One of the ELA teachers used word study strategies in the classroom. These strategies included the incorporation of recognizing morphemes through directed instruction of the roots and affixes. The teacher also determined the meaning of the word through definition, by thinking about the meaning, and by determining the meaning of the prefix and suffix of the root.

Content area classrooms

Five content area classes were observed: two social studies classes, two math classes, and one science class. The average number of students observed in each content area classroom was approximately 15. The average length of an observation was 31 minutes. Sixty percent of the content area teachers adapted their instruction during the lesson. Eighty percent of the teachers fostered student engagement, provided explicit instruction, provided guidance, and provided corrective and positive feedback during the lessons.

Eighty percent of the content area teachers' instruction included vocabulary strategies. Additionally, 80% of the content area teachers also provided content-specific vocabulary words by teaching the students to define the meaning of the word, identify characteristics of the word, generate examples of the word, and implement the Frayer Model with the vocabulary word. Two of the content area teachers incorporated comprehension strategies into their instruction. These strategies included having the students find the main idea of the text and of the paragraph.

Site Visit Summary: Campus B

A one-day site visit to Campus B took place during March, 2010, and included interviews with key personnel and observations of classroom activities. The site observer conducted interviews with the principal (who was also the superintendent) and with the director of administrative services (who was also the head of the English/language arts and reading [ELA] department). One focus group was held with teachers who attended TALA ELA Academies; two teachers who attended TALA Content Academies were interviewed separately. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, four classroom observations were conducted. Table B.1 provides an overview of the number of participants in each type of site visit activity.

Table B.1. Number of Campus B Participants in Each Site Visit Activity

Interviews	
School/District Administrators	2
Focus Groups	
ELA Teachers	2
Content Teachers – Social Studies	1
Content Teachers – Mathematics	2
Classroom Observations	
ELA Classrooms	2
Content Classrooms – Social Studies	0
Content Classrooms – Mathematics	1
Content Classrooms – Science	1
TEA Reported TALA Academy Attendance	
ELA Teachers	2
Content Area Teachers	3

Table B.2 provides a summary of campus characteristics, including location, student enrollment, and student characteristics. Table B.3 provides a summary of campus academic achievement including student performance on TAKS-Reading and campus accountability rating from 2007–08 to 2009–10.

Table B.2. Summary of Campus B Characteristics

General Characteristics	
Grade Levels	PreK-8
Geographic Location	Rural
Student Enrollment	288
Student Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African-American	15.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.8%
Hispanic	55.2%
Native American	0.0%
White	25.3%
Student Population (%)	
Economically Disadvantaged	80.9%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	29.2%
At-Risk	69.4%
Mobility (2007–08)	14.8%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Table B.3. Summary of Campus B Academic Performance

	2007–08	**2008–09**	**2009–10**
Grade 6 TAKS-Reading	90%	>99%	75%
Grade 7 TAKS-Reading	76%	88%	76%
Grade 8 TAKS-Reading	92%	92%	87%
Campus Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	Recognized	Academically Acceptable

Note: The percentages listed represent the percentage of students at the campus who met the standard in TAKS reading.
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10

Overview of TALA Experience at this Campus

ELA/Reading Curriculum

The ELA curriculum at Campus B during the time of the site visit was CSCOPE. ELA teachers reported that the program was being used throughout the region along with additional resources. One teacher noted that CSCOPE created the lesson plan database from which teachers selected lessons. Additional resources were available including textbooks, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Inventory (PAPI) scores, and Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA). CSCOPE and the additional resources allowed teachers to "pull what they wanted" for use in the classroom. Teachers noted that during the 2009/10 school year, there was a goal to improve lessons. Toward that end, materials were being matched carefully by grade level.

Other Literacy Intervention Programs at Campus B

TALA is the only intervention used for students in grades 6-8 at Campus B. For younger students at this school (Kindergarten-Grade 4), a "guided reading" intervention is used. The principal explained that DRAs are used to assess student reading skill levels and then reading assignments are provided. The interventions are used as part of a balanced literacy program in place at the school.

Non-TALA Professional Development Activities

Many professional development opportunities are available to teachers at Campus B. Teachers attend professional development sessions at the school, at the ESC, and at a major local university. One teacher noted that the ESC is a 70-mile drive for the teachers at the school. Teachers attend training in their content areas, student assessment techniques, technology integration, curriculum alignment, and classroom management. School administrators and teachers stated that teachers attend assessment and intervention professional development sessions. A school administrator stated that language arts teachers attend Debbie Diller professional development sessions for guided reading centers. The Daily 5, another activity attended by teachers, incorporates reading, writing, reading to self, and reading with others. Other reading programs include Star, Read Now Power Up!, and literacy training specific to particular student populations (e.g., English as a second language, special education, Advanced Placement).

Assessment and intervention programs include "Closing the Gap," training on how to monitor and assess students using the DRA, vocabulary building, and graphic organizers. Because

math and science technology is a focus at the school, trainings on reading in science classrooms have also been completed.

In addition to the many professional development sessions teachers reported attending, time for cross-curricular and vertical team curriculum alignment is also provided. One teacher noted that ELA and social studies teachers work together to provide cross-curricular lessons. In addition, department meetings typically include members of the vertical teams (Kindergarten-Grade 8) and allow teachers an opportunity to vertically align curriculum. Classroom management is the final area in which teachers receive professional development. The principal noted that many teachers attended professional development activities for the Positive Behavior Support System.

TALA Professional Development Activities

In all, four of seven teachers at Campus B participated in TALA training prior to the site visit and the three who had not attended, due to being new hires and scheduling conflicts, were planning to go during the summer of 2010. (NOTE: Data received from the ESCs indicated that five teachers attended TALA, which is one more than actually attended.) School administrators stated that teachers were strongly encouraged to attend and wanted to go. ELA teachers agreed that they wanted to go, and said that after hearing about the TALA routines, they attended in order to receive training on the TMSFA assessment and to prepare for a new middle school assignment. Two content teachers who were interviewed had different interpretations of the emails they received that provided information on the TALA training. One content area teacher characterized the message as a mandate, and added that the training would be useful because it counted toward continuing education requirements. In contrast, another content area teacher stated that administrators asked teachers to participate and provided information about the time and dates of the trainings.

Comparison of TALA to other literacy intervention programs and/or professional development activities

Similarities and differences among other professional development sessions attended and the TALA training were noted by interviewees. Teachers reported that some of the other reading programs included strategies much like those taught at the TALA academies. Programs were similar in that they taught teachers how to scaffold prior knowledge and use graphic organizers. Also, strategies could be used with the entire class even if a more intense focus was targeted on only a few students. TALA was different due to the testing component and the fact that it was a whole school approach. The other strategies only applied to literature. One math teacher had attended a math professional development session that included a literacy component focused on math vocabulary words that are important for ESL students. He noted that this training was a small part of a larger conference. In contrast, the TALA training was smaller and presented in a classroom.

> "You show them a shape and say, this is a polygon and then you show them another shape and say, this is not a polygon -- this is a non-example of a polygon."
>
> - Teacher

Satisfaction with the ELA Academy

All of the ELA teachers at Campus B stated that they were satisfied overall with the content and agreed "absolutely" that the TALA training prepared them to implement the strategies. They

stated that they were "really happy" with what they learned. One teacher noted that the training provided "a nice tool box" and characterized the training as "up front" and "clear cut" with examples of "how to actually use the routines." Another agreed the training included "real things" that could be used in the classroom, and added that the TALA strategies were a nice complement to the information provided during earlier teacher training.

The ELA teachers had only a few suggestions for improvements to the TALA academy. One teacher noted that learning how to alter the strategies effectively would be a benefit, and stated that more active strategies (e.g., making students stand up or sit down in response to questions) worked well for students at Campus B, particularly those with low English language skills. Another stated that having the resources online would make it easier for teachers statewide to get updated information. Additional training dates and times for the Academies were also requested to facilitate training for all teachers without creating a burden for smaller schools. The final suggestion was specific to the presentation. A teacher noted that presenters repeated some topics multiple times when it seemed they could have added more content instead, and also noted that Academy participants were released early most of the days.

Satisfaction with the Content Area Academy

Content teachers interviewed at Campus B stated that they were satisfied with some components of the Academy, but were left with some confusion about how to fully implement all of the strategies in their classes. The two strategies mentioned positively by the interviewees were the explicit instruction routines and the vocabulary instructional routines. One teacher reported using the I Do/We Do/You Do routine in the classroom almost every day, and stated, "We start with a warm up, give a lesson, we work together, [then] they can work on problems together and I monitor. Every Friday, they do it on their own. That's the 'You Do' routine." Teachers liked the routine because it was "short and simple and did not require a lot of explanation." The other strategy that content teachers adapted for their classrooms was the example/nonexample strategy. One teacher noted that this was not used as often as the scaffolding strategy, but that it was good when the class studied addition of equations or shapes. One science teacher stated that the Academy showed that the routines were "flexible" and that they did not have to be used "one way all the time." An administrator added that the strategies were useful across subject areas.

The content teachers had two areas of concern regarding the Academy they attended. First, teachers felt that the TALA strategies were primarily for ELA teachers and that the TALA Content Academy was not fully developed at the time they attended. For example, during the training, when math teachers asked about applying some of the strategies to math, they were told that they should offer suggestions. Teachers stated that presenters did not have good examples, which left teachers feeling that the Academy was "still being prepared for the content areas." They also felt that the 1.5 days was not enough time to learn to use the strategies. Teachers recommended that Content Academies be specific to a subject (e.g., math or science), and added that presenters for math teachers should be math teachers. That way, presenters could have better related the routines and strategies to math instruction.

Both ELA and content area teachers also recommended changes in presentation style. They reported that presenters read the material, which resulted in "making it a little dry." Teachers reported that one presenter said she "could not do it the way she wanted to – that the state said they had to read it word-for-word." Teachers suggested more freedom for the trainers and more interaction to facilitate engagement of participants.

TALA Administrator Training

None of the administrators interviewed attended TALA training. One was aware of the overview training, but did not attend. Another reported having no knowledge that an administrator training was available.

Implementation of TALA Strategies and Routines in the Classroom

Both ELA and content teachers reported that they used the explicit instructional routines often. One teacher noted that it was very easy to use. Teachers' comments revealed variation in the ways that the routine was implemented. Several teachers stated they used the routine daily, while another reported that that the I Do portion of the scaffolding was often used on one day and followed the next day by the We Do/You Do portions of the routine.

Both ELA and content teachers also stressed the importance of vocabulary for student understanding. ELA teachers stated that the vocabulary instructional routines were beneficial and used often, but content teachers reported less frequent use of the routines. An ELA teacher stated that the Frayer Model was useful for particular words or concepts, and added that using the Frayer Model helped her students connect with background knowledge at the beginning of new lessons. One of the content teachers reported using the Frayer Model about 10% of the time, and added that, more often, students were asked to generate only part of what would fill the graphic organizer. Specifically, students were asked to generate vocabulary word meanings using everyday words. Another content teacher stated the vocabulary words were important, but indicated that the Frayer Model was too complex for frequent use and opted instead to "keep it simple."

Teachers reported using comprehension instructional routines in ELA and content classes. A science teacher noted that Anticipation-Reaction Guides were used at the beginning of all lessons and whenever the lesson included readings. In addition, science students were asked to provide an overview of the main ideas of lessons which were reviewed and reinforced by the whole class. A math teacher noted building background knowledge and finding the main ideas in the text. Although it was not clear to the teacher whether his use of these strategies originated from TALA academy participation, the reminder that TALA provided to address student comprehension was characterized as reinforcement for those teachers already utilizing these types of strategies.

Teachers reported using all of the routines for struggling readers. An ELA teacher reported breaking words into syllables for students, and reported that students have said that it "makes it easier for them" to understand. The same teacher noted that fluency instructional routines were also utilized, and added that digital versions of oral reading were very helpful for ESL students and others with low reading levels. Teachers also reported the benefits of generating questions. One teacher noted that this was "a really good strategy because the kids learn to ask questions and then answer them. They learn the 'who, what, when, where, and how' – all the different ways it can be used. Then when they see the questions later, they know how to answer them. Writing questions makes them better question answerers. Because they have tried to trip up their classmates – or really tried to make the other students struggle to answer, they become better at answering."

Teachers at Campus B administered the TMSFA and used students' results to "tier students for tutorial purposes." Teachers reported that students with diverse skill levels shared the same ELA classrooms. However, tutoring classes targeted specific needs as determined by the assessment. One teacher stated that there were benefits to using the TMSFA for teachers and students. After reviewing the results of the TMSFA, teachers were able to identify the source of a student's problems. One teacher noted that "you can tell whether they are struggling with vocabulary or comprehension." In addition, students can "see their own growth."

> "[TALA allows for] that student who is amazing and over the top to stay involved and discuss what is going on. She or he won't get bored."
>
> - Teacher

Preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers

Administrators and teachers reported that TALA prepared teachers to design instruction for struggling readers and offered additional benefits as well. Benefits cited included accurate assessment of student skills, customization of state curriculum for local needs, time savings, and benefits for gifted students. Administrators noted that the testing component provided by TALA helped teachers adapt CSCOPE lessons for the specific needs of their students. A content teacher stated that all students were assisted in class as much as possible, and added that language arts teachers collaborated and assisted during tutorials with those students who needed more help. Another teacher noted that TALA strategies and routines were a time saving tool during lesson development. The teacher stated, "It makes it easy. You can take something that you would normally have to spend a lot of time figuring out how to take down or up, and poof! It is right there," and added that the routines and strategies are things that everyone in the classroom can use.

An important characteristic of the intervention was that it helped struggling students in the classroom without holding back other students. Interviewees stated that all students benefited from TALA strategies. For example, a science teacher stated, "I don't single anyone out; they can all benefit. There are many who are English language learners or struggling readers who are below grade level, so I do it for everyone." An ELA teacher noted that TALA strategies provided a method to "bring lessons down" for struggling students, but "did not frustrate exceptional students." Another ELA teacher agreed and stated that higher level students did not think it was "ridiculous work."

Support for the Implementation of TALA Instructional Strategies and Routines

> "We found that using TALA for grades 5-8 was more effective for the teachers and students, so we switched. They're getting more information for the students and it's less time consuming."
>
> - Administrator

Administrators reported that they provided support for teachers in these ways: encouraged participation, instituted TALA strategies instead of DRA for grades 5-8, and taught and reinforced strategies during language arts department meetings. A key support listed by teachers was the encouragement they received to attend the TALA academies. All of the teachers interviewed reported that administrators facilitated and encouraged their attendance at the Academies. One way that administrators facilitated teacher participation in TALA was that they provided coverage for classes while teachers attended Academies. In addition to encouraging participation, administrators instituted TALA strategies and routines as the reading intervention at Campus B instead of the DRA they had been using. A teacher noted that the school had previously used DRA "all the way up" through the grades. An ELA teacher noted that administrators had not only accepted teachers' recommendation to

move to TALA "with open arms," but were also "buying the materials to go along with it." Another way that administrators provided support for implementation of the TALA strategies and routines was by teaching and reinforcing the instructional practices during departmental meetings. Administrators reported that teachers "go through the strategies" during meetings. For example, a schoolwide staff development session on the Frayer Model was conducted.

Teachers characterized the administration at Campus B as very supportive of struggling readers and of TALA participation. One Math teacher noted that management at the school was "awesome" and added that they were very supportive of TALA and other reading improvement efforts. For example, they have provided textbooks, instituted a literacy night, solicited donations for books, and created a library. In addition, they have a program called DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) Time which is a weekly time set aside for students to go to the library to read a book.

Additional support needed

> "If [students] are struggling with reading, they are struggling with mathematics concepts [too]. There's not a single math problem that doesn't require them to read."
>
> - Teacher

Administrators reported that opportunities for additional training on TALA and other related topics would improve their ability to support teachers. One administrator stated that attendance at lexile training helped her discover how TALA and lexile levels worked together. The goal of attending the training was to help ensure that teachers can set up the interventions they need. Another administrator stated that a short refresher course on TALA instructional routines would be helpful.

Teachers agreed that professional development that included a refresher course or reinforcement of TALA strategies and enforcement of the campus commitment to cross-curricular implementation would be beneficial. All of the teachers interviewed recommended that refreshers or, at a minimum, reminders would encourage implementation of the strategies. In addition, all teachers acknowledged the administrations' support of the TALA initiative; however, there was some question as to whether the routines and strategies were being equally implemented in the ELA and content areas. Although some implementation and collaboration was evident, the ELA teachers recommended that the administration observe content area teachers to make sure they were implementing the routines and strategies. An ELA teacher added that there was "value in the schoolwide TALA approach." Another ELA teacher added that "reading is the rock on which everything gets built."

Collaboration with other teachers

Collaboration with other teachers varied by area and no collaboration with administrators was reported. ELA teachers reported collaborating with other ELA teachers and with content teachers. Additionally, ELA teachers collaborated across grades and discussed strategies with teachers from "kindergarten on up." One teacher who had attended the TALA ELA Academy noted that it would "be great if the strategies and routines were modified for the earlier grades." Another ELA teacher noted collaborating with content teachers, and added "with the focus on students being able to learn and then perform well on tests, reading has become more important. The strategies help them read it and then be able to write it." A Science teacher confirmed collaborating with ELA teachers about student success, but did not recall whether TALA strategies had been discussed, and added that no collaboration with other content teachers had occurred. None of the content teachers reported collaborating with other content

teachers. The size of the school was likely a factor, as a math teacher commented that at the time of the TALA Content Academy, no other Grade 6, 7, or 8 math teachers were on staff.

When asked whether or not they had shared TALA materials, the ELA teachers mentioned that they had shown the TALA binders to other ELA teachers. Lesson plans that included TALA strategies were also shared. A math teacher noted that it was a common practice to share information received at conferences and professional development sessions; however, the teacher did not remember sharing TALA materials.

> "You have to use the strategies to find out what works and what doesn't. It depends on the class. What works with one class may not work with another."
>
> - Teacher

Facilitators to Implementation

Three key factors were cited as facilitators to TALA implementation: TALA content and training, the teachers involved in implementation, and the stipend offered by the state of Texas. Many of the teachers noted that attending the Academies and working with the strategies outside of the classroom was crucial to successful implementation. Administrators noted that the "really good content makes it worthwhile for teachers to come back and implement what they learned." An ELA teacher commented that having material that was flexible and adaptable to different content was beneficial. This included adapting the strategies for use with the CSCOPE curriculum. Teachers also appreciated the binder of materials that was provided during the Academies. One teacher noted that being able to make copies of the materials was beneficial.

> "We need to figure out how to make TMSFA testing a priority and making it easier for them to take the time."
>
> - Administrator

Administraotrs felt that high quality content and training are of no value if teachers do not implement the strategies in the classroom. One administrator stated "you have to have the right people in place. At Campus B, teachers were eager and positive about it. If they buy into it, that's most of the battle." Teachers expressed these positive attitudes about the implementation in many ways. For example, one content teacher noted that the training offered new things to try and also helped clarify the importance of teaching reading across subjects. Another stated that only by trying the strategies could one tell what works and what does not.

Administrators and teachers reported that the stipend was an important incentive for attendance at the professional development sessions over the summer. One teacher noted that "teachers would likely have gone to the Academies without it, but would not have completed the follow-up session." Another teacher noted that the stipend made teachers feel that their time was valued.

Barriers to Implementation

Training schedules, time constraints, and buy-in from content teachers were listed as the only barriers to implementation at Campus B. Administrators reported that several newly hired teachers had missed the training, but would attend during the next available sessions. One administrator noted that "it takes good planning to get them all trained and get the strategies implemented." Another administrator stated that training at the school might alleviate some of the scheduling issues. Adequate time to administer the TMSFA was also a concern. Administrators noted that teachers "like the testing, but it takes a significant amount of time." Finally, some teachers noted that it took time to familiarize students with the strategies. A

content teacher noted that the first time they showed students the routine, students complained and said, "I don't know – I don't know!"

An administrator noted that convincing some of the content teachers (math and science) to use the strategies and routines had been a minor barrier. This barrier appeared to be caused in part by confusion or misinformation regarding TALA. For instance, one of the math teachers thought of the TALA initiative as a primarily language arts initiative, and an ELA teacher stated that one of the content teachers had been told at an Academy that TALA was not really applicable to math. In the latter case, the math teacher then believed that math classes had little need for TALA strategies.

Perceived Effects of TALA Program Activities

Desired outcomes and evidence of occurrence

Administrators agreed that helping students be successful and providing teachers with the tools to do so were the primary desired outcomes for participation in the TALA academies. In addition, they hoped that more successful readers would be more likely to pass TAKS. The principal reported positive gains toward their goals. Assessments and benchmarks had been completed and students showed improvement. For example, the Grade 7 and 8 teachers completed TALA two years earlier. Administrators reported that students in that teacher's class who had been multiple years behind grade level were now passing TAKS for the first time after repeated failures. These results, along with general comments from teachers about student progress, indicated that the schoolwide approach along with vertically aligned curriculum was having positive effects.

> "It's not all about TAKS, but it's so hard when they fail every year. It's so good when they have success, and I know some of it has to do with TALA."
>
> - Administrator

Effect on teachers' literacy practices

Changes in literacy practices were reported by both ELA and content teachers. In general, TALA strategies and routines provided teachers with a universal structure for presenting material and transitioning between topics. For example, one ELA teacher reported that the TALA methods provided the organization for transitioning because each lesson was structured around the strategies and routines to be used with each lesson. Another ELA teacher noted that the TALA structure helped during her transition from teaching Grade 1 to teaching the middle school grades. A science teacher reported changes in literacy practices and stated, "I no longer do round robin reading or give definitions out of the book because they told us it was bad. I have added the TALA strategies." A math teacher reported that routine use of the scaffolding strategy had contributed to a new awareness of student literacy challenges in the classroom.

Effect on ability to influence student achievement

Both administrators and teachers reported that TALA participation positively influenced teachers' abilities to influence student achievement. An administrator noted that the TMSFA allowed more precise assessment of student skills and was instrumental in successful interventions. In addition, a science teacher noted that paired reading allowed for more successful monitoring of student skill levels. An ELA teacher stated that using the Frayer Model

had been a successful way to build vocabulary and help students connect with background knowledge important for new lessons. Finally, another ELA teacher added that the routines had been effective for every student – regardless of ability.

Administrators and teachers stated that all groups of readers benefited from TALA routines and strategies. One administrator noted that TALA included a lot of visuals and concept maps. They stated that "the visuals are especially helpful. The ELL students benefit from the visuals and also from the think/pair/share and I Do/We Do/You Do. The repetitive process helps them." Another administrator said that some parts of TALA had been "good for our ELLs and some had been helpful for special education students." A science teacher agreed and stated, "I think everybody benefits from one of the strategies. If I do the main idea or note taking strategies, everyone benefits."

Sustainability of TALA Activities

TALA was characterized as a "big part" of the literacy program and goals at Campus B. Administrators stated that TALA is a first year professional development goal for teachers of Grade 5 through 8 students. One administrator noted that all first time teachers are trained, and added, "My 8th grade teacher trains, monitors, and follows up with the other teachers. In addition, in our weekly department meetings, we talk about TALA -- especially at testing times." An ELA teacher noted that the TALA strategies fit into the CSCOPE curriculum easily because the summary, main idea, and many of the strategies are very similar. The teacher added that it was "very nice that they support each other so well." Another teacher characterized the fit between TALA and CSCOPE as "seamless."

> "TALA is very important. We have to be able to meet these kids where they're at and bring them up. Good tools make that much easier."
>
> - Administrator

Administrators at Campus B reported that they would continue with TALA methods even if future trainings were not available. However, they hoped that the teachers would continue to be trained by the state. One administrator reported that the training and the incentive provided to teachers was important and helped implement the TALA strategies in a uniform way. Another stated that TALA strategies and routines had been written into school policies and the handbook. This included the TMSFA testing and many of the strategies (e.g., think-pair-share, I Do/We Do/You Do, the Frayer Model). Administrators said they would try their best to keep it going.

> "We would much rather continue to have the trainers and the stipend in place. I think it helps. Teachers work hard enough."
>
> - Administrator

Administrators and teachers strongly agreed that TALA was very important for the future success of their students. An administrator stated that TMSFA testing would be fit into the school's overall benchmark schedule and into the weekly department meetings. Another administrator stated that TALA instructional routines were an important part of future student success. Teachers seemed to concur. One ELA teacher said TALA strategies should be implemented "all the way to kindergarten." Another agreed, and said, "They will have to change the name!"

Classroom Observations

During the site visit at Campus B, four classrooms were observed: two ELA classrooms and two Content area classrooms. Table B.4 summarizes the number of observations in which different TALA strategies were observed.

Table B.4. Number of Campus B Classrooms in Which Each TALA Strategy was Observed

TALA Strategy	ELA Classrooms (N=2)	Content Area Classrooms (N=2)
General Instructional	2	2
Vocabulary	1	0
Comprehension	1	1
Word Study	0	N/A
Fluency	0	N/A
Inferential Comprehension	0	N/A

ELA classrooms

Two ELA classrooms were observed at Campus B. Classes contained an average of 15 students and both classes had a single instructor. Both observations lasted about 30 minutes.

In the first ELA classroom observation, TALA general instructional strategies and vocabulary instructional routines were observed. At the beginning of the observation, students arrived and started with warm-up activities. An agenda for the day's class was posted on the board. Students were asked to reflect on the "quote of the week" and the language it included. The teacher read the quote and identified vocabulary words (e.g., wellspring, within, and bubble up). The teacher then put each of the vocabulary words into a sentence and asked students to provide the meanings of the words in "their own words." Next, the teacher re-read the quotation substituting the student supplied definitions. Students were then asked to paraphrase the quotes in writing. The teacher circulated to check their progress. The site observer noted that the teacher fostered student engagement with a positive and upbeat demeanor. In addition, the teacher called on students by name. The teacher used scaffolding during the lesson and provided corrective and positive feedback to students. In addition, the teacher used both academic (e.g., wellspring) and content-specific (e.g., paraphrase) vocabulary words.

In the second ELA observation, TALA general instructional strategies and comprehension instructional routines were observed. Students and their teacher reviewed a chapter from a novel they had read. The teacher began the review by asking students what they remembered about the themes in the story. Students appeared comfortable answering questions and engaged by the social ideas (e.g., racism) presented in the story. As part of the review and to prepare for the next chapter, the teacher asked students to complete an Anticipation-Reaction Guide. After modeling how to complete the first item, the teacher provided students with time to find additional information in the novel and complete their guides and directed them to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Students worked individually to complete the task. During the lesson, the teacher provided corrective and positive feedback to students. The site observer noted that the teacher fostered engagement by calling on students by name. In addition, the teacher used active learning techniques. For example, students were asked to give a "thumbs up" if they agreed with particular statements. In response to another question, students were asked to stand up if they agreed. Students seemed to enjoy the lesson throughout the observation.

Content area classrooms

Two content area classrooms were observed at Campus B. As with the ELA classes, each contained an average of 15 students and both classes had a single instructor. Both observations lasted about 30 minutes. In one of the classes, a future substitute teacher was visiting, but did not present the lesson.

The first content area observation was a science class in which TALA general instructional strategies and comprehension instructional routines were observed. At the beginning of the observation, students worked on laptop computers. Their task was to research a particular scientist. Students worked quietly and the teacher monitored their progress. As part of the lesson, the teacher provided students with Anticipation-Reaction Guides. They were asked to provide evidence about the scientist they were researching to support their agreement or disagreement with the statements on the guide. The site observer noted that the teacher adapted instruction within the class by assisting several students individually. In addition engagement was fostered when the teacher checked with individual students and modeled how to find the online information. During the lesson the teacher provided corrective and positive feedback. Students worked individually at small tables to complete the task.

In the second content area classroom observation, students studied Geometry and TALA general instructional strategies were observed. The site observer arrived during individual work. A timer on the projected computer screen showed 13 minutes remaining for the task. Many of the students worked consistently on the task, but a few were not on task. The teacher monitored progress and encouraged students to work. When the timer was at 0, the teacher extended the time by five minutes, and handed out new homework for those students who had completed the original task. When the work time was up, students exchanged papers for grading. The teacher explained each answer, but had to stop talking several times to get the students' attention. During the observation the teacher attempted to foster engagement by stopping at each table to answer questions and to encourage completion of the task. The teacher modeled correct completion of the problems during individual conversations with students. Students completed the work individually and in groups at small tables. The site observer noted that the class was inattentive and that one student spoke disrespectfully to the teacher.

Site Visit Summary: Campus C

A two-day site visit to Campus C took place during February, 2010, and included interviews with key personnel and observations of classroom activities. The site observer conducted interviews with the principal and the school literacy lead, a Grade 8 ELA/reading teacher. The district in which Campus C is located does not currently have an ELA administrator. Two focus groups were also conducted; one focus group included teachers who attended TALA ELA Academies and the other group included teachers who attended TALA Content Academies. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, five classroom observations were conducted. Table C.1 lists the number of participants in each site visit activity.

Table C.1. Number of Campus C Participants in Each Site Visit Activity

Interviews	
School/District Administrators	2
Focus Groups	
ELA Teachers	3
Content Teachers – Social Studies	1
Content Teachers – Mathematics	2
Content Teachers – Science	1
Classroom Observations	
ELA Classrooms	1
Content Classrooms – Social Studies	1
Content Classrooms – Mathematics	2
Content Classrooms – Science	1
TEA Reported TALA Academy Attendance	
ELA Teachers	6
Content Area Teachers	4

Table C.2 provides a summary of campus characteristics, including location, student enrollment, and student characteristics. Table C.3 provides a summary of campus academic achievement including student performance on TAKS-Reading and campus accountability rating from 2007–08 to 2009–10.

Table C.2. Summary of Campus C Characteristics

General Characteristics	
Grade Levels	6-8
Geographic Location	Rural
Student Enrollment	175
Student Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African-American	3.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.9%
Hispanic	35.4%
Native American	0.0%
White	58.3%
Student Population (%)	
Economically Disadvantaged	51.4%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	10.3%
At-Risk	44.6%
Mobility (2007–08)	18.3%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Table C.3. Summary of Campus C Academic Performance

	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Grade 6 TAKS-Reading	82%	91%	90%
Grade 7 TAKS-Reading	86%	83%	88%
Grade 8 TAKS-Reading	96%	95%	95%
Campus Accountability Rating	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized

Note: The percentages listed represent the percentage of students at the campus who met the standard in TAKS reading.
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10

Overview of TALA Experience at this Campus

ELA/Reading Curriculum

When asked about the current reading curriculum, administrators and content teachers reported using the CSCOPE curriculum provided by the ESC. However, the principal reported that there is no specific reading curriculum, and stated that teachers select novels for the student reading assignments. ELA teachers confirmed the use of CSCOPE, and stated that CSCOPE aligns the TEKS into units of study. There are exemplar lessons, but teachers are not required to teach them. In addition to the exemplar lessons, there are instructional-focus documents which cover the TEKS and are included in each section that teachers are required to cover. Teachers who develop their own lessons must ensure that the associated TEKS are covered. Teachers agreed that CSCOPE was comprehensive and "supported the ultimate goal of following the TEKS."

Other Literacy Intervention Programs at Campus C

Administrators and teachers differed on their reporting of the current literacy intervention programs in use at Campus C. The principal reported that there is no formal literacy intervention program in use at the school besides TALA. The administrator added that teachers do implement Response to Intervention (RTI) and that the students identified at tier-3 (most needy) attend a regular tutorial period. In contrast, teachers reported using programs including Study Island and Power Reading. Study Island is a computer based TEKS mastery and TAKS preparation program. Power Reading is designed to help students with dyslexia.

Non-TALA Professional Development Activities

Teachers attended a variety of professional development activities in addition to the TALA academies. Professional development was provided at the campus, in the local area, at the ESC, and at state-wide conferences. The principal reported that teachers had completed two Marzano Book studies (i.e., *The Art and Science of Teaching and Differentiated Instruction*), technology workshops, "quite a bit" of RTI training, SPARKS professional

> "I kind of required it. I said everyone needs to go when it fits in. I'm not twisting arms, but the goal is for everyone to attend."
>
> - Principal

development (e.g., learning CSCOPE and integrating TEKS), Positive Behavior Support (PBS), Character Counts, and Why try. The administrator stated that every effort was made to provide teachers with financial support for whatever professional development they wanted to attend. Teachers reported attending the Wilson Reading training, the 6 Traits Writing training, RTI, and technology workshops. Teachers also reported attending many conferences, including the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) conference, and math

conventions, including the Conference for the Advancement of Mathematics Teaching (CAMT), an annual Texas conference for K-12 mathematics teachers.

TALA Professional Development Activities

In all, 10 of the 21 dedicated teachers (approximately 50%) from Campus C attended the TALA academies, specifically six ELA teachers and four content area teachers. An administrator stated that additional teachers would attend as soon as training dates were published. In addition, administrators stated that they would attend future TALA sessions in order to "speak the same language" as their teachers. At the time the site visit was conducted, administrators reported that they were not aware of the administrator overview that had been offered and had not attended either of the teacher Academies.

Teachers at Campus C reported attending the TALA academies for various reasons. One teacher attended to gain tools for working with struggling readers. Others attended because they had heard positive reports about the materials provided at the Academies. Although the principal reported that the training was required, most of the teachers said that their attendance had been requested or encouraged. Only one teacher reported that attendance was required. However, a new teacher mentioned that administrators especially wanted new teachers to attend. One of the experienced teachers noted that learning "throughout their careers" was important to teachers at the school, and that attending workshops and conferences facilitated that goal.

Comparison of TALA to other literacy intervention programs and/or professional development activities

Teachers reported that the goals of the TALA program and some of the other programs were the same: to help students succeed. One ELA teacher noted that the Wilson Reading program was geared more towards dyslexic students, and stated that it started with breaking the words down and teaching the basic sounds included in the words followed by blends of sounds (i.e., the letter, the sound, and the blends). The program was much more "basic" than the TALA instructional routines. The teacher stated that with TALA, those things are covered and students move on to comprehension.

Satisfaction with the ELA Academy

Both experienced and novice teachers were satisfied with the ELA Academy content and felt they were prepared to implement the strategies. A novice teacher reported that at the time of the Academy, she had not understood some of the material, but added that "now, looking back at the information, I see how to fit it together." The teacher reported overall satisfaction with the Academy, even though comparisons with other professional development were not possible. An administrator characterized the ELA Academy as "very positive."

In terms of the content, teachers at Campus C were especially satisfied with the presentation of the TMSFA assessments, fluency routines, and the Anticipation-Reaction Guides. One teacher stated, "They told us exactly we needed to do. They told us what we needed to copy for ourselves and our students. We were prepared, and now we have done the assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the year." Another teacher "really enjoyed" the partner reading routines for fluency, and stated that the Anticipation-Reaction Guides were also good. The teacher reported that the training modeled how to use these strategies throughout a story.

The ELA Academy attended by teachers from Campus C was conducted by two presenters. Teachers commented that it was good that the two presenters "had different styles." One teacher reported that the presenters worked well together, and stated that "Just as you got bored with one, there was another; that was good." Another teacher observed that the two presenters had different perspectives because they came from different subject areas. The different perspectives provided multiple opportunities for attendees to connect with the material.

Two suggestions were made to improve future Academies. First, teachers suggested that novice and experienced teachers attend separate sessions of the Academies. This suggestion was made by an experienced teacher who commented that, "at a certain point, you have heard it all before." The teacher added, "At the TALA academy, like at other conferences, many things were presented that would be good for new teachers, but I asked myself, why are they telling me that again?" Another teacher said that additional time should be allowed for the section on breaking down words (phonics). Trained for middle school, the teacher had never learned how to decode words and felt that additional knowledge about decoding would be beneficial.

Finally, a complaint was reported about "unfriendly" treatment of teachers by Academy staff relating to tardiness. A teacher reported receiving "bad instructions about the location" and being "confused about where to go." When a call was placed to get better directions, Academy staff stated that if teachers were late, they could not attend; they would be "turned away." The teacher acknowledged that there was a stipend involved from the state and understood that timeliness was important, but felt that teachers should be treated with more respect and consideration.

Satisfaction with the Content Area Academy

All of the content teachers stated that they had learned strategies that were important in the classroom. A science teacher felt that the Academy gave teachers a way to break down key terms and concepts, and explained that this allowed for more accurate monitoring of student skills. A math teacher believed that the structured note taking learned at the Academy was well received by students. Other teachers reported that they were now more aware of the importance of scaffolding and that they were using the I Do/We Do/You Do strategy and the think/pair/share routines often.

Attendees of the Content Academy praised some components of the presentation and also made recommendations. Teachers reported that they enjoyed the handouts and "hands-on" practice provided at the Academy. They also noted that using their own textbooks during the Academy to create examples was a very beneficial strategy. However, attendees felt that more time to work with the material and perhaps splitting the time into different sessions with time in between to practice, would allow teachers to get the most benefit from the professional development.

TALA Administrator Training

None of the administrators interviewed attended TALA administrator training.

Implementation of TALA Strategies and Routines in the Classroom

All of the teachers at Campus C reported using the explicit instruction routines and also commented on the results. ELA teachers reported using scaffolding (i.e., the I Do/We Do/You

Do routine weekly, if not daily. One teacher commented that "students feel more supported if they have the modeling first. They feel more confident trying new things with a partner, and then they feel more confident to try it on their own." Another teacher characterized the scaffolding as "old school," and stated that the process was a trusted part of the classroom method. Content teachers stated that they used the scaffolding more than any other TALA routine. One teacher stated that scaffolding was used almost every day. Teachers also reported using the think/pair/share strategy learned at the TALA academies. One teacher used CSCOPE combined with a textbook, and reported using the think/pair/share about every two weeks at the beginning of new topics.

Teachers varied on the extent to which they utilized the vocabulary instructional routines. One teacher noted that she used the Frayer Model every two to three weeks at the beginning of CSCOPE units. Another reported working on vocabulary "a lot", but stated that the TALA routines (Frayer Model and examples/non-examples) were not followed exactly. Other teachers agreed that vocabulary words were emphasized, but used alternative study methods. For example, in one teacher's class, students were asked to act out vocabulary words. Without looking at it, a student was required to put a word above her head and the other students were then asked to try to get the person to say the word. The teacher noted some difficulty with the activity when the vocabulary word was "decapitate." In another variation, a teacher allowed students to use an online thesaurus to find synonyms for vocabulary words.

Comprehension instructional routines were also used by teachers at Campus C. One teacher noted that the routines for finding the main idea were used "often." Another said it was used once each two to three week period at the beginning of every CSCOPE unit. A third reported using the comprehension instructional routines about once or twice each six week period, depending on the lesson or story the class was reading.

Teachers reported limited use of the word study instructional routines, but also noted benefits. One teacher stated learning root words helped struggling readers "quite a bit." Another teacher reported using syllabication to help struggling students.

Few of the teachers reported using the fluency instructional routines. One ELA Teacher reported using partner reading each week on Wednesday. Another stated that the routine had been used when students took turns reading TAKS problems to each other in preparation of standard assessments.

Teachers commented that generating questions was important because it was one of the TEKS, and reported current and planned future use of the strategy. One teacher stated that students generated "short open ended sentences to be used as a quiz for their next class." Another teacher had used the question flip cards from TALA and stated that the "students liked them." Although a final teacher reported no current formal use of this strategy, future use was planned.

> "I believe I do this [generate questions] naturally as we move from one project to another. I need to do more ahead of time – generating guiding questions. We're getting ready to read a novel. I will work it in."
>
> - Teacher

Teachers at Campus C were especially satisfied with the presentation of the TMSFA assessments at the ELA Academy. In addition, they reported that they felt prepared to use it and in fact had done the assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. Teachers also reported using TMSFA scores to rank and then group their classes (i.e., the top half with

the bottom half as instructed in the TALA Academy) for RTI and other activities. Finally, an ELA Teacher reported that TMSFA scores, along with TAKS scores, were used to determine whether students were assigned to Power Reading tutorial classes.

Preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers

Teachers reported that participation in the TALA academies had improved their abilities to design instruction for struggling readers by providing more accurate assessment, providing tools to use in the classroom, and by correcting preconceived ideas about student understanding. Several teachers stated that participation in TALA made them "more aware" of the reading

> "TALA routines have helped me by correcting my preconceived ideas about what students already understand. Breaking it down with a Frayer Model can show you their true starting point."
>
> - Teacher

issues in their classrooms. Two teachers noted that TALA illustrated "what things to look for" to know whether students were struggling, and stated that better assessment allowed faster referral to the tutorial period the school offered. Another teacher commented that TALA provided multiple strategies to use with struggling readers, and stated "If one does not work, you can try another."

Support for the Implementation of TALA Instructional Strategies and Routines

The principal reported full support of TALA implementation at Campus C. Administrators encouraged participation in the Academies. In addition, administrators reported following up with teachers to determine what was needed for a successful implementation, and also tried to stay informed about how TALA was being used at the school. For example, the principal stated that teachers had been requested to provide notification when TALA was being used in order to allow for a 10-minute walk through or a brief

> "It is a policy at this school that we are lifelong learners. This is a good program that the state is making available for us that is specifically for middle schools. It's golden for them, and I want them to take advantage of it."
>
> - Administrator

visit in the classroom. The administrator stated that the visit would help clarify what was needed to facilitate the implementation of TALA routines and strategies.

ELA and content teachers agreed that administrators were supportive of TALA implementation, and that the support they received was adequate. The primary example of administrator support was the encouragement teachers had received to attend the Academies. In addition, teachers reported that administrators at the school "spoke at departmental meetings and other professional development sessions about the value of the TALA routines and strategies" and "were always available to have informal conversations with individual teachers, as well." Overall, teachers reported that the support they received from administrators was positive. Teachers stated that "although they were certainly not micromanaged," they "received support for whatever they needed." Although teachers reported that they felt supported, one commented that funding to purchase supplies to implement the TALA strategies (e.g., paper, markers, poster boards, etc.) would "be nice."

Collaboration with other teachers

Teachers agreed that at Campus C, TALA strategies and routines were implemented individually with the exception of the TMSFA assessments. One teacher noted that collaboration was required in order to get the testing completed. Teachers did report receiving email follow ups after the initial TALA academy, but had not formally collaborated with other teachers in their own areas or with teachers in other areas. However, teachers did indicate that they shared informal conversations about the strategies and student success with other teachers and with administrators.

Facilitators to Implementation

In addition to collegial and administrative support, teachers noted that attending the training, having the materials on hand, and the compatibility of TALA with other school materials and practices facilitated implementation of the strategies and routines. Teachers indicated that attending the training, especially for novice teachers, was important for successful implementation. Teachers also commented that having the TALA materials on hand, including instructions and handouts, facilitated use of the routines. One teacher stated that "going back over the materials and reviewing the Frayer Model and instructions for the fluency assessment" independently was an important step in the process. Another teacher commented that the examples and the handouts were very useful. Finally, the fit between TALA strategies and existing or new materials and practices supported the TALA implementation. The principal noted that working to integrate new practices with existing practices was a goal, and stated that the TALA strategies and routines fit together with "the Marzano and the differentiation (RTI)" already in use at the school. In addition, one teacher commented that the school had purchased new desks that facilitated many of the routines. The teacher explained that the school used to have single desks; the new two-person tables made it much easier to try some of the strategies.

Barriers to Implementation

The primary barrier to implementation mentioned by administrators or teachers was time. The only additional unrelated issue was figuring out "which strategies and routines to use." Teachers overwhelmingly listed lack of

> "At the school we use CSCOPE, SIMS, we've got this and we've got that. Sometimes, it can be overwhelming."
>
> - Administrator

time as a problem. One teacher stated that "to overcome it, you have to just make yourself do it." Another teacher pointed out that time "was every teacher's lament," and added that successful implementation required teachers to "dig into the lesson plans and decide what the students are struggling with and pull TALA routines in as needed." Another agreed that time was an issue when developing new lessons using the strategies.

Perceived Effects of TALA Program Activities

Desired outcomes and evidence of occurrence

Administrators described desired outcomes for teachers and for students at Campus C. The principal hoped that after all the teachers at the school were trained to use TALA methods, the instructional practices at the school would be "cohesive" and "would flow for the students." Another administrator hoped that "the teachers would come away with good instructional strategies," and added, "If we all incorporate them [universally], the kids will be used to seeing

them and it will aid their learning. When the kids are familiar with it and know how it works, it will carry over from class to class." In addition, administrators hoped for improvement in TAKS scores and other benchmarks. One administrator noted that with other "multiple things in place it is hard to pinpoint that TALA is helping specifically." However, administrators reported that teachers believed the strategies and routines were helping students with their reading.

Effect on teachers' literacy practices

ELA and content teachers reported changes in their literacy practices as a result of TALA. One ELA teacher reported that TALA provided new strategies to try and also provided an opportunity to reflect on perceptions about student understanding. That is, TALA focused teacher attention on actual student skills instead of expectations about student skills. Another teacher reported a new emphasis on "hands-on" activities – especially for students classified as ELL. In addition, the teacher reported more frequent efforts to build on students' background knowledge.

Content teachers reported greater use of scaffolding and partner reading, and a greater emphasis on teaching vocabulary and main idea summary notes. Several teachers stated that after attending TALA, they were more likely to use the I Do/We Do/You Do scaffolding. Another teacher noted additional use of partner reading, and stated that TAKS problems "include a lot of words and sometimes the students just want to shut down." The partner reading helps them stay focused: "When they read the problems to each other, they see what is important and what they need to underline or emphasize."

Effect on ability to influence student achievement

The principal at Campus C stated that TALA was the cornerstone of the positive student achievement at the school during the previous two years when the school rating moved from almost "unacceptable" to "recognized." The administrator stated that even though the school was "in the in-between place right now in terms of benchmarks," more positive changes in test scores were expected to happen eventually. Administrators and teachers felt that TALA participation increased their ability to influence student achievement. The principal stated that "if all the teachers would get on board and weave the strategies into the curriculum, it will be good for the struggling readers and all the students in the school. It is research based and it will help."

> "Kids are good at hiding that they don't know something or don't read well. TALA helps teachers identify that. The education of the teachers, and then having them implement the strategies, is critical."
>
> - Principal

ELA and content teachers felt that the accurate assessment provided by the TMSFA and the multiple strategies provided by TALA improved their ability to increase student achievement. An ELA teacher stated, "I have a tool with the TMSFA to get concrete data to tell where they are and how they are doing at different times of the year." Several teachers noted that having multiple strategies to help struggling students had increased their influence on student achievement. A science teacher noted that some of the strategies also provide for informal assessment in the classroom. For example, when the Frayer Model was used in class to identify the main idea for natural selection, the teacher realized that student understanding of

> "I think the TALA academy was a good program. If we could get all the teachers to go to training and then try to come together to use the strategies universally it would help our struggling readers and all our students."
>
> - Teacher

the topic was not as complete as had been expected. The Frayer Model allowed the teacher to identify student misunderstandings and then fill in the gaps. The teacher stated, "I can prepare them better for assessment tests and my own unit tests when I know what they know. It is more effective that what was used before." Teachers reported that in addition to the improved assessment functions provided by TALA, the recommendations that classrooms should be more active and that students work together also improved outcomes. One teacher reported that when students work together and explain words or concepts to each other, they learn more.

Although administrators and teachers felt that the TALA strategies benefitted all students, they did identify English language learners as a group that might benefit the most. The principal stated that students classified as ELL were doing very well with the TALA-trained teacher. Another administrator attributed the positive outcomes for students classified as ELL to the graphic organizers from TALA that help students break down words into understandable parts. A content teacher stated that the benefit for students classified as ESL came from building up background knowledge.

Sustainability of TALA Activities

Administrators and teachers felt that TALA was a very good fit with the school literacy practices and goals. The school used CSCOPE (which is based on the TEKS) to set the scope and sequence for the lessons provided at each grade. As described by the principal, TALA was the "cornerstone" of how that curriculum would be delivered. The principal commented that the teachers reported a lot of overlap with TALA and CSCOPE. In addition, the TALA strategies were characterized by the administrator as a common sense base for curriculum delivery. ELA teachers agreed that TALA and CSCOPE were easily combined to benefit students. For example, one teacher reported using CSCOPE lessons on vocabulary based on Latin and Greek roots, and stated that using the Frayer Model (examples/nonexamples) had resulted in improved scores on vocabulary quizzes. Another teacher agreed that TALA fit into the CSCOPE curriculum and commented that together they work toward the ultimate goal of supporting student understanding of the TEKS and the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS).

The principal stated that TALA was very important to Campus C. The administrator added that for teachers to be able to attend and receive a stipend at no cost to the school was a wonderful opportunity. In addition, the principal stated that Campus C was a small school without many resources and that if TEA was not supporting the training, the school would not be able to participate at the same level. She stated, "I might be able to send ELA teachers, but would not be able to afford to send the content teachers."

Administrators characterized TALA as a wonderful opportunity that benefited students. The principal stated that it was really important to have some sort of program that all the teachers can structure lessons around. "It provides continuity, and the kids have something they are familiar with. When they're getting the same sort of instructions/strategies in multiple classes, as compared to having 50 different strategies, you will see success. I think with consistency we'll see gains." Another administrator added that "many times the middle school grades are the forgotten grade levels. TALA focuses specifically on this age group and supports them." The administrator characterized this as critical because these are sometimes the last grade levels in which educators have an influence.

Classroom Observations

During the site visit at Campus C, five classrooms were observed: one ELA classroom and four content area classrooms. Table C.4 summarizes the number of classrooms in which different TALA strategies were observed.

Table C.4. Number of Campus C Classrooms in Which Each TALA Strategy was Observed

TALA Strategy	ELA Classrooms (N=1)	Content Area Classrooms (N=4)
General Instructional	1	4
Vocabulary	1	2
Comprehension	1	2
Word Study	0	N/A
Fluency	1	N/A
Inferential Comprehension	0	N/A

ELA classrooms

One ELA Classroom observation was conducted at Campus C, and lasted for about 40 minutes. The class included 15 Grade 7 and 8 students identified as struggling readers and one teacher. During the observation, students read and discussed Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia*. Vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and other general TALA instructional routines were observed. At the beginning of the observation, students reviewed the story line of two chapters they previously read. The teacher and students discussed academic words (e.g., hum-drum) and content-specific words (e.g., climax, falling action). The teacher pronounced vocabulary words, defined them, and asked students to generate examples. The class was eager to discuss the book and quickly responded to the teacher's questions. At one point, when the teacher asked for examples of things that were hum-drum, a student playfully called out the teacher's name. The teacher and the class laughed at the joke. As part of the lesson, the students took turns reading aloud. During the TALA fluency routine, the teacher instructed students as they completed the cold read, warm read, and hot read segments of the routine. After students had completed the partner reading they posted their scores on individual fluency charts. Throughout the observation, the teacher provided positive and corrective feedback to students. The site observer noted that the students were well behaved and appeared engaged throughout the observation.

Content area classrooms

Four content area classrooms were observed at Campus C. Classes contained an average of 14 students. In three of the classes, only one teacher was present. In the fourth class, a second adult was in the room who appeared to be monitoring behavior. Academic support may also have been provided. Observations lasted about 30 minutes.

The first content area classroom was a U.S. History class in which students were studying mass production and the inventor, Robert Fulton. During the observation, vocabulary, comprehension, and general TALA instructional routines were observed. During the lesson, the teacher presented both academic (e.g., interchangeable), and content-specific (e.g., mass production) vocabulary words. The teacher pronounced the words and asked students to produce examples of the words. Students were also asked to provide the meanings of words in everyday language. During the part of the lesson in which students read from their textbook, the teacher assisted

them in producing multiple "get the gist" statements. Students read with partners and wrote statements to define the main idea of sections of the text. Throughout the observation, students worked individually and in pairs. The site observer noted that the teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and prompting them to extend their answers. In addition, the teacher provided corrective and positive feedback. Students were well behaved and engaged by the lesson.

In a science class observation, the class discussed survival of the fittest and reviewed material in preparation for a test scheduled for the following day. TALA general, vocabulary, and comprehension instructional routines were observed. The teacher began the class with a bell-ringer exercise on DNA. The teacher utilized a Frayer Model and modeled for the class how a sheet of paper should be folded to create the graphic organizer. The teacher stepped through the process of completing the organizer. Students worked individually and in pairs to complete the task. As the teacher and students discussed the lesson content, academic (e.g., natural occurrence) and content specific (e.g., DNA, natural selection, selective breeding) vocabulary words were discussed. Students provided examples of the vocabulary words. During part of the observation, the teacher built on students' background knowledge and then asked them to read aloud. The site observer noted that the teacher was very engaging and provided appropriate corrective and positive feedback to students. In addition, students appeared to be having a great deal of fun.

Two math classes were observed at Campus C. In the first math class, students were tutored to improve math skills. During the observation, TALA general instructional routines were observed. The teacher modeled how to complete a sample problem and then students were asked to do the rest. Students worked in pairs to read math problems and then identify three important parts. The teacher provided corrective and positive feedback to students. The teacher monitored student progress and, once or twice, had to correct behavior issues or ask students to get back on task.

In the second math class, students reviewed content from a lesson taught the previous day. During the observation, TALA general instructional routines were observed. At the beginning of the lesson, students worked individually and the teacher circulated and monitored their progress on two math problems. Next, students worked in small groups to complete angle evaluations. Groups discussed their answers and the teacher noted the importance of working together. The teacher also modeled multiple ways to complete different problems. By calling on students by name and by using real world examples to which students could relate, the teacher kept the class engaged. For example, the importance of accurate angles was explained using baseball and construction examples. The teacher pointed out how ineffective a baseball outfielder would be without knowledge of accurate angles. Another real world example was the disasters that would occur if the walls of buildings were not constructed at perfect 90 degree angles. The site observer noted that the students were attentive and appeared to understand the lesson.

Site Visit Summary: Campus D

A two-day site visit took place during March, 2010, and included interviews with key personnel and observations of classroom activities. The site observers conducted interviews with the principal, an assistant principal who was in charge of testing and curriculum, and the district's language arts coordinator for grades K-12. Four focus groups were also conducted. Two focus groups included teachers who attended TALA ELA Academies; the other two groups included teachers who attended TALA Content Academies. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, five classroom observations were conducted. Table D.1 lists the number of participants in each site visit activity.

Table D.1. Number of Campus D Participants in Each Site Visit Activity

Interviews	
School/District Administrators	3
Focus Groups	
ELA Teachers	9
Content Teachers – Social Studies	3
Content Teachers – Mathematics	3
Content Teachers – Science	3
Other Teachers – Special Education	1
Classroom Observations	
ELA Classrooms	2
Content Classrooms – Social Studies	0
Content Classrooms – Mathematics	1
Content Classrooms – Science	2
TEA Reported TALA Academy Attendance	
ELA Teachers	10
Content Area Teachers	15

Table D.2 provides a summary of campus characteristics, including location, student enrollment, and student characteristics. Table D.3 provides a summary of campus academic achievement including student performance on TAKS-Reading and campus accountability rating from 2007–08 to 2009–10.

Table D.2. Summary of Campus D Characteristics

General Characteristics	
Grade Levels	6-8
Geographic Location	Rural
Student Enrollment	481
Student Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African-American	17.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.4%
Hispanic	66.7%
Native American	0.0%
White	15.6%
Student Population (%)	
Economically Disadvantaged	83.8%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	3.1%
At-Risk	60.1%
Mobility (2007–08)	35.4%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Table D.3. Summary of Campus D Academic Performance

	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Grade 6 TAKS-Reading	85%	86%	75%
Grade 7 TAKS-Reading	78%	79%	83%
Grade 8 TAKS-Reading	93%	90%	87%
Campus Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable

Note: The percentages listed represent the percentage of students at the campus who met the standard in TAKS reading.
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10

Overview of TALA Experience at this Campus

ELA/Reading Curriculum

The ELA/reading curriculum in use at Campus D followed a scope and sequence defined by the district. The principal reported that the school was required to use it, and that teachers tailored the curriculum by selecting activities for use in the classroom. The district and school literacy specialists confirmed that the curriculum was unique to the district and that additional information used in instruction was pulled from various sources. For example, the school literacy specialist stated that the strategies she used and recommended were prepared for at-risk students, including students classified as ELL. The district administrator stated that the curriculum was based on the state's expectations for student achievement.

Other Literacy Intervention Programs at Campus D

> "A lot of what I have used comes from my ESL and bilingual background. We've used a lot of things that I knew worked including *Kagan* and *Reading from the Content Areas*."
>
> -School Administrator

Administrators and teachers reported that many literacy programs were in use at the school with varying levels of implementation. One school administrator stated that intervention efforts at the school were facilitated through training that combined components of many systems. The district administrator reported that programs were targeted based on the needs of the students, and included River Deep, Destination Reading (for RTI Tier 2 and 3 students), and Voyager's Passport and Journey programs (for students indentified for special education). The principal reported that Voyager was also used for the general student population. Teachers also reported using the Language! program for students identified for special education and resource level students (i.e., students who are just below mainstream).

Non-TALA Professional Development Activities

Professional Development for teachers at Campus D was provided by the ESC, the district, and at the school by school administrators. A school administrator, who was in charge of curriculum and testing, reported administering "most of the staff development and training for the staff." The district administrator reported that teachers attended professional development at the beginning of the year which focused on the updated TEKS and the associated new student expectations, and added that End of Course academies were planned. The principal stated that professional development offerings by the district had decreased recently, but that teachers had attended sessions aimed at helping students classified as ELL.

ELA teachers reported participation in many professional development sessions aimed at literacy intervention. For example, teachers confirmed that they participated in professional development for the Voyager literacy program at the district. They commented that Voyager used many of the same "systems" as TALA. ELA teachers also reported attending professional development activities provided by the district for SureScore (ACT/SAT high school intervention), Springboard (curriculum), and the Regional Service Center for Letters and Dibels (fluency and vocabulary). Content teachers reported attending professional development activities in their content areas (e.g., math) as well as for vocabulary and reading strategies. One teacher mentioned attending "several conferences and workshops with vocabulary strategies." Another stated that professional development was provided by an independent consultant.

TALA Professional Development Activities

Teachers were introduced to the TALA academies by school administrators who characterized the professional development as "district initiated." During the first year of training, all Grade 6 ELA teachers were required to attend. Teachers reported they received emails from the principal and assistant principal about the academies. Content teachers reported that after ELA teachers had attended, they provided a "mini training session" for other teachers. The following year, content teachers were strongly encouraged to attend. Teachers also reported that they were motivated to attend the academies because of the positive comments made by teachers who had already attended. The principal and assistant principal at Campus D also attended TALA training sessions. The principal and the assistant principal at Campus D reported attending the ELA academy to see what teachers were learning and what support they might need.

At the time of the site visit, TEA reported that 10 ELA teachers and 15 content area teachers from Campus D had attended TALA academies. There were some discrepancies regarding reports of the number of teachers who attended the TALA training. The principal stated that 26 of the 43 teachers on campus attended, the assistant principal reported that 90% of teachers attended, and a district administrator said that her list of the school's Academy attendees was 19, including the principal and assistant principal. Of the teachers who did not attend, several were music teachers and other specialists for whom the training would not have been appropriate. The district administrator added that about 70% of all ELA/reading teachers within the district had been trained. There is a district goal to make it mandatory.

Comparison of TALA to other literacy intervention programs and/or professional development activities

Similarities and differences between TALA and other programs included summarizing skills, concept mapping, graphic organizers, and a focus on fluency. For example, ELA teachers noted that the Project Read training included "summarizing" skills, but that it was not labeled like the TALA routines. Teachers also noted that the Frayer Model from TALA was similar to graphic organizers in other programs. Content teachers stated that the TALA paired reading strategy was similar to what they had seen in other trainings. However, they noted that several TALA strategies were new. For example, the note taking, notes log, and anticipation reaction guides were built in. One teacher noted that some of the summarizing the passages and getting the gist were "different than anything seen before." In sum, although several teachers noted similarities between the TALA strategies and routines and other professional development sessions attended, all agreed that the TALA academies provided new strategies and routines.

Satisfaction with the ELA Academy

Teachers and administrators were satisfied, overall, with the ELA Academy. A district administrator commented that teachers loved the Academies. The strategies were easy to implement and good reminders of best practices. The principal also approved of the Academies, and stated that the TALA academies came at the right time to help students. In terms of the content, teachers stated that TALA connected well with what they were already doing. It was characterized as "especially good" for new teachers. Teachers also enjoyed the training videos used during the Academy and stated that the way presenters used videos to model the routines and strategies was "extremely helpful."

Teachers universally approved of the materials provided at the Academy. Specifically, teachers thought that having the binder and all the materials that were included (e.g., examples, student worksheets, etc.) was very beneficial. One teacher stated that because of the binder, "we do not have to hunt for the materials." Another teacher reported referring back to the binder as necessary.

> "The academy prepared us to implement the strategies that we learned. The way that they led us through the training was great. We used the Frayer Model, scaffolding, and the level questions that we use all of the time."
>
> -Teacher

Although the content and materials were praised by teachers at Campus D, recommendations and complaints were made regarding the presentation of the content. One of the complaints reported by teachers concerned the "blanket approach" of the Academy, where everyone gets everything and the material is presented in the same manner regardless of the individual school needs. Teachers stated that a more focused delivery based on school needs would improve the Academy. For example, one teacher recommended that only elementary teachers do the fluency segment because middle school teachers needed more comprehension work instead. Another teacher recommended that novice and experienced teachers be separated into different Academies. For some of the more experienced teachers, the training was not as beneficial. One teacher noted that "it was too drawn out because teachers already knew how to do the kinds of routines that were being presented.

Other teachers commented that a lot of time had been spent on the training for the TMSFA, and yet they did not know how to use it to benefit their students. For example, one teacher noted that the students at Campus D had strong fluency skills, but needed additional help with comprehension. Another commented that the training did not address comprehension issues well, and added that the hot/cold/warm readings did not help with comprehension. One teacher said, "I wish I knew what to do with the fluency assessment that we do. We give it at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. We take a whole day to do the assessment and we look at it, but I want it to be more helpful to me. By the middle of the year, we know that a particular kid has problems, but what do I do after that?"

> "A more active, interactive, and engaging presentation would have been better. It was great information, but one of the worst trainings I'd been to."
>
> -Teacher

Teachers also commented on the lack of flexibility in the presentation. Teachers stated that the scripted presentation was boring, and noted that presenters should be allowed to learn the materials and then teach it in the way a class would be taught instead of "reading a script." Another teacher noted that a presenter had commented that the script was mandated by the developers, and added that forcing presenters to read a script "made us

wonder if they believed in the routines." A final complaint was related to instructions given to attendees about minimizing time spent out of the room during the training sessions. Teachers felt disrespected by some of the comments that were made by presenters.

Satisfaction with the Content Area Academy

All of the content area teachers reported that some of the strategies taught at the TALA academies were useful. However, several recommendations were offered to strengthen future TALA professional development sessions provided for content area teachers. Two teachers mentioned that they had used the student matching strategy provided at the Academy. One stated that sorting students by TAKS scores had proven to be very effective. However, it was the only TALA strategy that the teacher still used from the Academy. Several other teachers reported that they used the Frayer Model effectively in the classroom.

Multiple teachers stated that having teachers from different subject areas at one training was at times confusing and added that Academies organized by subject would have been more effective. For example, one social studies teacher stated that presenters provided "several strategies that we were unsure how to use." Another stated that there were examples from each subject area, but that additional practice with "focused training" by subject area would be necessary to enable teachers to fully implement the strategies. In addition, teachers reported that they never used their own textbooks to generate examples or ideas. Two math teachers stated that they struggled to apply many of the strategies in their classrooms. Finally, a special education teacher stated that it was difficult to pull the TALA strategies into the school's "very structured" special education curriculum.

> "Have your kids summarize in six words or less. This is not helpful for math. Math is deductive reasoning not creative thinking."
>
> -Teacher

In terms of the presentations, content area teachers appreciated the practice that they received, but were also critical of the overly "scripted" format. One of the teachers stated that the Academies were helpful, especially because teachers got to "be the student." That is, they learned the strategies in the same way their students would be expected to learn them. Although most of the content area teachers who were interviewed stated that the material in the academy was good, they reported that the presentations were "boring," "tedious," and "redundant." One teacher went so far as to say, "It was hard to stay awake." The main complaint seemed to be that presenters read the slides to the attendees. One teacher noted that "there was not a lot of room for discussion and modification." Another commented that the use of filmed exemplar classes in the academy was helpful, but said that the "perfect" students in the classrooms displayed were not realistic. The teacher added that many of the students in Campus D were "lost the first time these strategies were implemented." The teacher added that seeing more realistic portrayals of students working with the strategies would have been more useful to first time implementers.

TALA Administrator Training

Campus D had one of the highest levels of administrator participation of all the site visit participant schools. The district administrator attended the TMSFA training, the TALA overview training (along with many of the assistant principals in the district), and then went through the entire ELA Academy. The assistant principal attended the administrator overview and the ELA academy. Finally, the principal reported attending the ELA Academy. The assistant principal

commented that attendance at the administrator overview did not include enough information about what teachers were going to learn. The administrator attended the ELA training in order to have enough information to help the teachers implement the strategies. In addition, the TALA strategies were incorporated into the lesson plans that the assistant principal reviews for teachers. The administrator stated that attending the ELA Academy allowed a first-hand look at TALA strategies that could be used by teachers in all grades (e.g., student matching, I Do/We Do/You Do).

Implementation of TALA Strategies and Routines in the Classroom

Teachers reported that the TALA scaffolding routine was built into their lesson plan formats. Therefore, teachers at Campus D used the I Do/We Do/You Do strategy consistently. Some teachers reported using the strategy two to three times a week; others reported using it daily. Teachers noted that the assistant principal reviewed lesson plans weekly ensuring that

> "Generally, if there is a vocabulary concept that students do not understand, I will pull out the Frayer Model. We use it every other week."
>
> -Teacher

teachers remembered to incorporate the strategy. ELA teachers stated that they also used the Frayer Model. One teacher noted that some of the content specific words (e.g., mood and tone) were "very hard and that students needed more help. The TALA strategies helped." Content teachers reported that the I Do/We Do/You Do routine was used often. One teacher noted that in science classes scaffolding was "very helpful."

ELA teachers reported that examples, non-examples, and the Frayer Model were used consistently. One teacher reported using these routines twice a week on all "vocabulary days." Several ELA teachers reported using the Frayer Model in different ways. For example, one teacher reported using one word or several words, and added that sometimes the Frayer Model was reduced so that four of the organizers fit on one page. Another ELA teacher stated that a modified Frayer Model which included synonyms and antonyms was in use. One teacher only used the Frayer Model once a month.

Using examples and non-examples was also reported as very beneficial by math teachers. One teacher stated that for "the specific vocabulary in science (and even with math), sometimes it is easier to teach what something is not, rather than what it is." A history teacher reported using another explicit instructional routine: a modified version of the Frayer Model. A math teacher also reported modifying the graphic organizer, and stated that instead of listing characteristics of a word or concept, students were asked to draw pictures.

> "I have the best discussions when I use the Anticipation-Reaction Guides. The strategies help engage the classroom."
>
> -Teacher

Several ELA teachers reported using the Anticipation-Reaction Guides. One teacher stated that the guides were used in Grade 6 English throughout the six weeks when students read a novel. Another reported that the guides were very helpful with TAKS intervention classes, and added that statements were designed to make the material "relatable." Student responses were acceptable as long as students supported their ideas.

Two of the content area teachers reported that they used modified versions of the TALA comprehension routines. For example, a science teacher reported having students find the main idea often. The teacher stated that students completed "a lot of higher level reading and were asked to summarize each paragraph next to the original paragraph." Another teacher stated that

guides were used often to "generate ideas and questions." A common modification included doing the guides orally. Other content teachers found the comprehension routines less appealing. One teacher stated that Anticipation-Reaction Guides were "useless in the math classroom."

Only two teachers mentioned using the TALA word study instructional routines. One teacher reported using the routine as part of vocabulary lessons, and stated that pronouncing a word was helpful when students were unfamiliar with it. The teacher noted that most students at the school were familiar with words used at their grade level, and other teachers agreed. Another teacher noted that breaking down words into common syllable patterns was common for struggling readers involved in the Project Read program.

ELA teachers reported using partner reading to reach multiple goals. One teacher stated that Students at Campus D did not typically struggle with fluency. Two teachers used partner reading for comprehension rather than fluency. One added that partner reading also gave students an opportunity to help each other. Another teacher stated that students were ranked and then paired as described in the TALA academies. The teacher stated that at times, the lower level student will not read while the higher level reader will. A final teacher commented that partner reading was used daily for the students working with the Voyager program and two or three times a week for all others.

The ELA teachers reported that generating questions was a common practice. One teacher reported that the strategy was used "all the time." Other teachers agreed.

Teachers at Campus D reported that the TMSFA had been administered and interpreted by teachers. However, the next steps to help students who do not improve were unclear. ELA teachers reported that about 150 students who scored below 2150 on TAKS-Reading had been tested and tracked using the TMSFA. Teachers reported that providing the assessment was "an arduous task." One teacher noted that the TMSFA allowed teachers to confirm what they likely already suspected, but that it took a full day to administer. The first year the assessment was completed in the back of classrooms. Several teachers noted that the testing required substitute teachers. One teacher commented that doing the assessment in the classrooms was "distracting." The second year the testing was completed by the reading teacher as a "pull out," but teachers said they worked together to complete the assessment task. Overall, teachers characterized the assessment as a way of monitoring student improvement. However, several teachers stated that they were unclear how to help students who did not improve without removing them from the classroom. The current practice was to refer students to existing tutoring programs in a separate class.

> "The ones who are really struggling are already in the Language! program getting what they need. The student is already involved in an intervention, so we end up doing the [TMSFA] just to meet the standards."
>
> -Teacher

Preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers

> "So many teachers have been trained that the students are seeing a lot of repetitive structure. The students know how it works and they feel confident because they are familiar with the strategies."
>
> -Teacher

Administrators and teachers reported that participation in the TALA academies prepared teachers to help struggling readers. The district administrator noted that TALA provided "cooperative learning and cross-content" strategies that would help struggling readers. A school administrator commented that TALA provided a "uniform strategy or philosophy" to use at the school. The administrator added that with TALA, a math teacher could collaborate about strategies and routines with a reading teacher, and added that administrator monitoring was important for uniform implementation.

Teachers confirmed that administrators' goals for a unified approach were being met. Both ELA and content area teachers reported using the strategies and commented that students were seeing the structure repeatedly. ELA teachers stated that scaffolding strategies provided by TALA and included in the school's lesson plans had been helpful for struggling readers. One teacher reported that the strategies were especially helpful for students with low English proficiency. Content area teachers reported a new awareness of how they could help struggling readers. One teacher commented that "reading is the core of every other subject." Several teachers reported that using the Frayer Model or syllabication techniques helped students understand new vocabulary words. Teachers also reported grouping students according to reading skill level. One teacher stated that choral reading provided an opportunity to hear students when they made reading mistakes. The teacher reported that the entire class read word problems together and kept re-reading until the problem was read correctly. The teacher also reported breaking words into syllables when necessary. Another teacher used partner reading, and stated that students were comfortable because they were only reading to one other person. A math teacher stated that the TALA strategies and routines were important because much of the math TEKS involved reading and noted that even students who are not struggling readers sometimes do not read closely enough. The special education teacher's class was comprised completely of struggling readers. The teacher reported using strategies that were very similar to TALA before going to the training, and added that "nothing had to be added or changed."

Support for the Implementation of TALA Instructional Strategies and Routines

School and district administrators provided support for TALA implementation. The district administrator stated that "demonstration teachers" from the district office met with teachers across the district during Professional Learning Community (PLC) and planning periods to model the routines and strategies. The administrator added that the scaffolding (i.e., I Do/We Do/You Do) had been added to the curriculum for the district. School administrators reported supporting the TALA initiative by providing uniform training, building the scaffolding into teachers' lesson plans, including the strategies on the administrators' "walk through" form, and by providing

> "I think [administrators] are doing a great job. They encourage it, they remind us. They are doing a good job of supporting us."
>
> -Teacher

follow up training sessions to remind teachers to incorporate the strategies. Administrators felt they could support teachers even more by scheduling additional refresher sessions. By incorporating the strategies and routines (i.e., scaffolding and graphic organizers) into teachers'

lesson plans and by requiring that a minimum of two strategies be used in the classroom each week, administrators showed their support of the program. By committing to review lesson plans for 30 teachers weekly, administrators facilitated teachers' adherence to the school's directive. The administrator who reviewed the lesson plans stated that teachers who did not include the strategies were asked to revise their lesson plans, and stated that it was hoped that positive results would encourage teachers to use the strategies even more often.

 ELA teachers confirmed that the TALA strategies had been incorporated into the lesson plans and characterized their administrators as "very supportive." One teacher stated that administrators had supported TALA by "enforcing it." Another teacher commented that it was important that all teachers (ELA and content area) had been required to go. A third teacher added that teachers had also been supported with materials. For example, teachers were able to go to their materials production center and make whatever TALA posters they desired. The teacher added, "That was helpful." Content teachers agreed that administrators had been supportive. One teacher confirmed that all teachers had been encouraged to use the strategies. In general, teachers felt that administrators were doing a good job of supporting the TALA initiative at Campus D.

Some of the teachers at Campus D stated that no additional support was needed to implement the TALA routines and strategies. One teacher said, "I do not want any additional training; I prefer to look at the strategies and implement them myself." Another teacher agreed and preferred to research materials "independently." In contrast, several other teachers stated that additional strategies, additional training (e.g., classroom demonstrations, refresher courses), along with new incentives for follow up sessions would be beneficial. Two teachers noted that online resources and follow up would be useful. Along with online follow up, teachers stated that incentives for completing additional follow up sessions would motivate teachers and remind them to implement the strategies. Another teacher stated that it would be nice if administrators came into the classroom more often to model strategies and routines. In addition, one teacher stated that a "TALA cheat-sheet" that listed all of the strategies with a brief description would be a great help. A final recommendation for additional support was that administrators come into the classrooms more often to model the correct use of the strategies. The teacher stated that seeing strategies used effectively and targeted for specific content areas rather than generalized to all areas would help teachers include them more strategically.

> "Online resources and follow up -- with incentives -- would be helpful. We all have great intentions and we love it but once we go back to the classroom it is hard. When we do not have a reason to do it, it gets tough and you fall back on what you have always done.
>
> -Teacher

Collaboration with other teachers

Teachers at Campus D reported a high level of collaboration on TALA instructional routines. Many of the ELA teachers reported attending and sitting together at the ELA Academy. Since attending the Academy, ELA teachers reported collaborating during PLC time, during planning periods, and individually with ELA and content area teachers. During the PLC meetings, teachers from all grade levels in particular subject areas meet to coordinate instruction. Multiple teachers reported benefits from their collaboration. One ELA teacher reported that meeting together and talking about TALA reminds them to use the strategies. For example, one teacher stated that seeing another teacher using the notes log is a reminder to use it. Another said, "The collaboration has saved me." Other ELA teachers said they "worked with content area teachers

weekly." An ELA teacher reported collaborating with a science teacher to use the question routines. The teachers planned together to provide students with an opportunity to practice level 1, level 2, and level 3 questions. First, the science teacher asked students to complete level 1 questions. Later, the ELA teacher incorporated level 2 and level 3 questions in the students' lessons. Another ELA teacher reported that a social studies teacher had asked which TALA strategies and routines were appropriate for use in a history class.

Content area teachers reported some collaboration within and across subject areas. The math teachers stated that the department selected the strategies that would benefit math students (e.g., Frayer Model). Two content area teachers reported collaborating with ELA teachers. One Science teacher reported that an ELA teacher helped "tweak" the routines that they implemented. Another content area teacher had not collaborated with any other teachers regarding the strategies.

Both ELA and content teachers reported having a great deal of follow up with administrators. Teachers confirmed that the TALA routines and strategies were built into lesson plans and that administrators required that they be used. One teacher noted that blank versions of the TALA materials were available for their use. In addition, the teacher stated that school administrators were also available to provide suggestions. Another teacher noted that administrators had provided a "refresher" session at the beginning of the year. The one situation in which teachers did not collaborate regarding specific TALA strategies was when a teacher had not attended an Academy, since teachers are not allowed to share TALA materials with teachers who haven't attended the Academy.

Facilitators to Implementation

In addition to collaboration, administrators and teachers listed several additional facilitators to the implementation of TALA. The district administrator noted that one of the district's reading specialists had been a trainer at the TALA academies. The administrator felt that the specialist's role as trainer facilitated her assistance to teachers during weekly meetings. The administrator characterized the specialist as a "TALA advocate." One of the content area teachers stated that a new awareness of the reading difficulties that students face motivated teachers to increase their use of the strategies and routines. An ELA teacher stated simply, "It works. If you do the scaffolding, it works." The teacher added that class participation had increased due to strategies like the Anticipation-Reaction Guides, and added that students worked hard to create challenging questions for their classmates. The teacher attributed student improvement to the fact that they had seen the routines in several classes and knew that it was "do-able."

Barriers to Implementation

In general, teachers felt that the TALA strategies and routines were very useful and relatively easy to implement. However, some barriers to implementation were noted. One of the barriers listed by administrators was their inability to share TALA materials with teachers who had not attended the academies. One administrator stated, "I need some leeway – I had a first year teacher who got sick and had to leave the training. Because she was not trained at the ESC, I feel like I cannot help her." The administrator stated that the school and district completely supported the TALA initiative, but that not being able to share handouts or train teachers who had not had the opportunity to attend training, yet, has been burdensome. The principal noted that the school had 9 retirements the year of the site visit. New teachers that were hired had yet to be trained. In addition, a school administrator stated that any training that was completed for

new teachers or the whole school had to use "generic" strategies instead of the TALA materials. The administrator felt that more freedom to share materials and provide pre-TALA training to new teachers and other teachers who had not attended the Academies would help the universal implementation goal of the school.

> "We can use the Frayer Model and it is helpful, but the other tools are difficult and too time consuming. We have to keep up with the pace of the curriculum."
>
> -Teacher

Not having enough refresher sessions for the TALA strategies was also reported as a barrier to implementation. The school administrator stated that like all people, "teachers tend to forget" the new strategies they have learned and go back to what they were initially taught. "Time and inertia" work against innovation. One teacher stated that because the TALA materials could not be shared, refresher sessions at the school often included materials from another plan (i.e., Teacher Reading in the Content Areas" or generic materials).

Preparation time and instruction time were also reported as challenges. Administrators reported that content area teachers needed additional assistance in learning how to implement the strategies as they struggle to "cover their content." The district administrator noted that other coordinators who had only attended the administrator overview were less capable of supporting the teachers. Teachers noted that it took time at the beginning to teach students to use the routines and strategies. However, once the instructional routines were in use in multiple classrooms, that barrier was greatly diminished. One teacher stated that the Project Read curriculum in use was regimented and scripted and made it hard to interject TALA routines and strategies. In addition, an ELA teacher reported that using the Frayer Model took more preparation than if they did not use it, and stated, "Students come up with different examples/non-examples than I would in the Frayer Model. That takes a little more preparation."

Perceived Effects of TALA Program Activities

Desired outcomes and evidence of occurrence

Administrators shared the goal that at-risk students would be helped by the TALA routines and strategies. The district administrator hoped that the curriculum days that included literacy reminders and strategies held at the beginning of each year would remind teachers to utilize TALA routines to improve instruction. The principal hoped that teachers would spend the time to plan for strategy use and active "cooperative" activities for use in class. The assistant principal stated that the reason the school implemented TALA was to reach the at-risk students in all subject areas. The administrator added that just because teachers teach math does not mean they do not need to teach vocabulary.

There is evidence that the TALA strategies are benefitting students. Administrators reported that teachers were implementing the TALA strategies in the classrooms and that test scores were better. The principal stated that TALA strategies were being used, but added that they were likely used more in the fall because in the spring teachers had to focus on students meeting TAKS standards.

Effect on teachers' literacy practices

ELA and content teachers reported that their literacy practices had changed after participation in the TALA academies. An ELA teacher reported a greater focus on vocabulary, and stated, "I pre-teach words that are going to come up in the lesson." In addition, teachers stated that their use of scaffolding is more consistent and that students' work is "much better." Seeing the task modeled and working on the task with a partner improves the quality of work. In addition, students' confidence levels increases. Another teacher stated that having the scaffolding in the lesson plans was a big help. Other teachers stated that the new strategies helped students "take ownership" of their work, and helped teachers think more about facilitating learning rather than lecturing. One teacher stated, "I really like the student generated questions. When they do the questions, there is more ownership. They take pride in it and they do well." One content teacher stated that "TALA gives teachers a whole new way to think about the vocabulary. These strategies help the information stick." Even though the overall TALA picture at Campus D was very positive, one content area teacher still stated, "The vocabulary is always difficult. I can't be a vocabulary teacher as well."

Effect on ability to influence student achievement

Administrators and teachers believed that TALA participation increased teachers' abilities to influence student achievement. In support of this belief, the principal recalled research reported at the TALA academy. Results indicated that students' abilities to deal with content specific vocabulary determined their exit level test success. The administrator stated that the scaffolding strategies provided at TALA were likely the most influential part of the training because the scaffolding acted to improve students' critical thinking skills -- something especially important at this at-risk campus. Many of the teachers also believed that TALA was helping influence student achievement. One ELA teacher stated, "I think the strategies are helping them. We are seeing increases in fluency and their main ideas scores are getting better." A content area teacher reported that with TALA routines, current students had better learned difficult vocabulary compared to the teacher's students from the previous year when TALA routines were not in use.

> "It's putting more tools in their tool belt. I think that if the teacher is well versed and practicing what they learned at TALA they will benefit all kids.
>
> -Principal

One way in which TALA helped was by influencing the structure of the lessons. For example, several teachers noted that activities in the classrooms at Campus D were changing for the better. One ELA teacher stated that since the TALA routines and strategies had been implemented at Campus D, student participation had increased, the number of class discussions had increased, and the quality of student discussions had improved. The teacher added that students were now better able to verbalize their comprehension. A content teacher commented that due to use of the TALA routines, students were asking more questions about words they did not understand. The teacher believed that the students' willingness to ask marked an important change in their ability to learn. Both ELA and content teachers believed that when all teachers at the school implemented the strategies, the effects would multiply. One ELA teacher noted that now that all the content teachers were also trained, students were seeing the instructional routines throughout the day, and added "maybe we will see more evidence [of success]." Another teacher stated that because many of the teachers used TALA, students were now familiar with the routines and strategies.

> "We can use the strategies to teach the information, but application of the strategies by the students is harder."
>
> -Teacher

Many of the teachers' comments focused on whether or not success with TALA would translate into success on the TAKS. An ELA teacher stated that the TAKS were based on comprehension and that TALA was more focused on fluency and vocabulary. Another teacher commented that student success was built on more than just TALA. Another teacher pointed out that student stamina during the TAKS was an important factor in success that was unrelated to TALA. The teacher stated, "When we talk in class, we have 50 minutes. They struggle with the longer format of the TAKS. They may be going and going and then they get to a boring one and they are tired and they just cannot stick with it." The special education teacher, whose program included many of the same types of strategies as TALA, reported that although the program she used made a huge difference, she felt that whether or not students actually performed well on the test had little to do with her. A final teacher stated that TAKS success depended on whether students desired to do well. The teacher added, "If they do not think it counts or if the test they are doing is not the test, students do not care.

Administrators and teachers believed that TALA instructional routines would benefit students at all skill levels. For example, the principal stated that the vocabulary routines were "very good for the students classified as ELL and for those who came from home environments where there was little academic support. Teachers believed that the TALA strategies would benefit all students. One teacher commented that the benefits of the strategies would depend on how they were used. The teacher added that the presenters were good at saying what should be done for struggling students, but had not addressed how to use the strategies and routines with gifted students. Teachers felt that addition would benefit the diverse student population at Campus D. The assistant principal agreed that reaching the "high level" students was important, but believed that TALA routines provided a strategy to do so. The administrator stated, "We are also trying to challenge our high level kids. Instead of lecturing to them, we give them the strategy and let them do it. It works with all the kids."

Sustainability of TALA Activities

All interviewees believed that TALA instructional strategies were a good fit with the literacy program and goals at Campus D. Teachers reported that the strategies and routines learned at the TALA academies were similar to what the assistant principal was already using and encouraging at the school. The teacher felt that TALA was an improvement as it was something that could be used in both ELA and content classes. The principal stated that the strategies from TALA "will be helpful for the future," and added, "If kids are taught these strategies they [will] become stronger readers." The principal also commented that the use of TALA strategies by content area teachers was especially important because it shows a greater emphasis on a schoolwide focus on literacy. The district administrator stated that the district had shifted the discussion to constantly use the TALA strategies and routines at all grade levels. The administrator added that TALA "was now the foundation" of the literacy program.

Administrators agreed that improving literacy was critical to student success and hoped that TALA would be available to help schools succeed in that important task. The district administrator noted that TALA was "very important," and stated, "We need to build a literate society in order to succeed in the content areas. That means we need to equip our teachers with literacy strategies to help benefit kids." The assistant principal added that TALA provided good instructional practices for all teachers, and that improving the instruction for all students

was imperative. The principal stated that "TALA was very important, especially when teachers are expected to do more and more," and noted that TALA adds to the teachers' tool box.

Suggestions for changes in future implementation of TALA were also provided. Teachers agreed that the TALA training, along with the stipends, should continue. One teacher stated that the summer was "precious" time to lose to professional development and that the stipends helped. The principal suggested that part of TALA should include providing updates and encouragement to the teachers throughout the year. In addition, the district administrator felt that more information and training for TALA should be implemented online. The assistant principal reported that whether TALA would be continued without support from the state would depend on whether the materials could be legally shared. Overall, the teachers and administrators at Campus D were positive about their experience with the TALA academies.

Classroom Observations

During the site visit at Campus D, five classrooms were observed: two ELA classrooms and three content area classrooms. Table D.4 summarizes the number of classrooms in which different TALA strategies were observed.

Table D.4. Number of Campus D Classrooms in Which Each TALA Strategy was Observed

TALA Strategy	ELA Classrooms (N=2)	Content Area Classrooms (N=3)
General Instructional	2	3
Vocabulary	0	2
Comprehension	1	1
Word Study	0	N/A
Fluency	0	N/A
Inferential Comprehension	1	N/A

ELA classrooms

Two ELA area classrooms were observed at Campus D. Both classes contained 17 students and only one teacher was present in each. Observations lasted about 30 minutes.

In the first ELA classroom observation, TALA general and vocabulary instructional strategies and routines were observed. At the beginning of the observation, students arrived and started with warm-up activities. An agenda for the day's class was posted on the board. During the first part of the observation, students read silently for 3-5 minutes. Students were asked to work individually to "proof-read" an email message. Before students started working, the teacher modeled the activity by completing the first correction. Next, the teacher read the passage aloud and students offered corrections to grammar mistakes included in the passage. After that, students worked in small groups to complete a task from a previous class. They were asked to generate level 3 questions for a trivia game. The teacher circulated the room and monitored student progress. The teacher also modeled how text from the passage should be used to confirm correct answers. In a final task completed during the observation, students played a trivia game using the class-created questions. Students were told that they must support their answers using passages from the text. The site observer noted that throughout the observation the teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and providing corrective and positive feedback. In addition, the students enjoyed the trivia game and appeared engaged throughout the observation.

In the second ELA classroom observation, TALA general and comprehension instructional strategies and routines were observed. During the observation, students did choral reading from The Outsiders and created "We will" statements. At the beginning of the observation, the teacher asked students to recall the characters in the story who had already been introduced and events in the story had already taken place. Students answered willingly and seemed engaged by the novel. Next, the teacher read aloud and the students followed along. The site observer noted that this lesson could easily have been modified to use the partner reading routine presented at the TALA ELA Academy. Next, the teacher asked students to think about the relationship shared by two of the characters and decide if it reminded them of anyone in their own lives. After one minute, the teacher asked students to partner with someone across the room and talk about whether they had that type of relationship in their own lives. The teacher also questioned students about how the characters treated each other. Throughout the observation, the teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and asking questions as she read passages from the book. The teacher also provided corrective feedback (e.g., "think to yourself without opening your mouth"), and positive feedback (e.g., "I am so glad you know the answers").

Content area classrooms

Three content area classrooms were observed at Campus D. Classes contained an average of 19 students. In two of the classes, two teachers were observed, but the primary teacher taught the lesson. In the third class, only one teacher was present. Observations lasted about 35 minutes.

The first content area class observed was a science class in which general and vocabulary instructional routines were implemented. At the beginning of the observation, students worked in groups to complete solar system charts they had begun the previous day. Students who had completed the chart worked on a different task; they completed solar system questions. The teacher circulated, monitored student progress, and answered questions as needed. In the next part of the observation, students began work on a research project. The teacher pre-taught vocabulary words using the Frayer Model. The teacher taught both academic (e.g., research) and content (e.g., axis, rotation) words during the lesson. In addition, the teacher provided formal definitions and asked students to generate examples and provide everyday language definitions for the words. Throughout the observation, the teacher engaged the students by calling on them by name and by using active classroom management techniques (e.g., nod at me if this is familiar).

In the second content area observation, another science class was observed. During the observation general and comprehension instructional routines were observed. As the lesson began, the teacher and students discussed gene combinations. Next, students worked on Anticipation-Reaction Guides and completed partner reading. The teacher passed out the guides and asked students to decide whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The teacher then moved students into pairs and they read information on hereditary and environmental influences on development. Students were asked to complete the final column in the guides and provide the number of the paragraphs where the information supporting their decisions could be found. Throughout the observation, the teacher engaged the students by calling on them by name and inviting them to ask questions as needed. The teacher also modeled the behavior by stepping through an example of how the guide should be completed. The teacher also circulated throughout the group work to monitor progress. Corrective feedback was used to remind students to read quietly and to redirect one student who was off-task.

Positive feedback was used throughout the observation. When a student found an error in the handout (i.e., a typo), the student received a prize. The site observer noted that students were engaged throughout the lesson as they worked individually and as a large group.

In the final observation, a math teacher used general and vocabulary instructional routines as students studied the Pythagorean Theorem. The teacher taught both academic and content specific vocabulary during the class. In addition, the teacher pronounced the words, provided examples and used everyday language to explain the meaning. The teacher used a Frayer Model to help students understand the Pythagorean Theorem. Throughout the observation, the teacher engaged students by asking them questions.

Site Visit Summary: Campus E

A two-day site visit to Campus E took place during March 2010. The site visit included interviews with key personnel and observations of classroom activities. The site evaluator conducted interviews with the principal, the district's assistant director of curriculum and instruction, and the school literacy coach. Two focus groups were also conducted; one focus group included teachers who attended TALA ELA Academies and the other included science teachers who attended the TALA Content Area Academies. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, observations of two ELA and two content area classrooms were conducted. Table E.1 lists the number of participants in each site visit activity.

Table E.1. Number of Campus E Participants in Each Site Visit Activity

Interviews	
School/District Administrators	3
Focus Groups	
ELA Teachers	5
Content Teachers – Science	3
Classroom Observations	
ELA Classrooms	2
Content Classrooms – Social Studies	1
Content Classrooms – Science	1
TEA Reported TALA Academy Attendance	
ELA Teachers	24
Content Area Teachers	26

Table E.2 provides a summary of campus characteristics, including location, student enrollment, and student characteristics. Table E.3 provides a summary of campus academic achievement including student performance on TAKS-Reading and campus accountability rating from 2007–08 to 2009–10.

Table E.2. Summary of Campus E Characteristics

General Characteristics	
Grade Levels	6-8
Geographic Location	Urban
Student Enrollment	935
Student Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African-American	1.8%
Asian	1.8%
Hispanic	85.2%
Native American	0.3%
White	10.8%
Student Population (%)	
Economically Disadvantaged	67.4%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	18.7%
At-Risk	51.4%
Mobility (2007–08)	17.4%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Table E.3. Summary of Campus E Academic Performance

	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Grade 6 TAKS-Reading	91%	88%	84%
Grade 7 TAKS-Reading	87%	86%	83%
Grade 8 TAKS-Reading	89%	92%	90%
Campus Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Recognized

Note: The percentages listed represent the percentage of students at the campus who met the standard in TAKS reading.
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10

Overview of TALA Experience at this Campus

ELA/Reading Curriculum

The ELA/reading curriculum in use at Campus E was developed by the district and recently updated to include new state requirements. The principal stated that the district had done a great job developing the curriculum and combining different resources and added, "The teachers have some say, too, regarding the novels they choose to use." The district administrator reported that as part of the curriculum revision, new resources had been added to help teachers address different skill levels within the class (i.e., Tiers I, II, and III). Teachers confirmed the use of additional resources. One stated that they were required to use PLORE, a program designed to help students predict, locate, organize, remember, and evaluate, and added that the program was a preparation strategy for the TAKS.

Other Literacy Intervention Programs at Campus E

Administrators reported that several literacy intervention programs were in use at Campus E. The principal stated the school received assistance through the Priority Schools program, from the curriculum and instruction department, through staff development, and from the literacy coach. The principal reported that Priorities in Secondary Schools was a program in which failing schools had been grouped together by the district's superintendent and which included a district contact who provided literacy training. In addition to the district training, the school's staff development department provided training for teachers using Reading in the Content Areas. The literacy coach reported that after school tutoring was available to all students and that "pull-out" tutoring and mentoring programs were available for high risk students. Administrators and teachers reported that the Study Island and Read180 programs were also used in the school.

Non-TALA Professional Development Activities

Many professional development activities were available for teachers at Campus E. Training was provided at the district offices, at the campus during staff development meetings, and also during weekly PLC meetings. Training topics included training in specific subject areas (e.g., locating TEKS and reviewing assessment data, Reading in the Content Areas), TAKS writing strategies, reading and writing strategies, sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP) for LEP students, and classroom management (e.g., a "defensive course" for management of physically aggressive students).

The principal had also attended the Border Conference as part of a leadership team for Special education admissions, reviews, and dismissals (ARDs). In addition, the district administrator

reported that teachers had previously attended grammar instruction training (i.e., Alice 9), but that the district had "moved away" from some of the previous mandates for which strategies to use. The administrator added that the strategies were a resource, but not mandated. Teachers agreed that the school had a wonderful and thorough in-service program in the area. One teacher noted, "If something is available, we are sent."

TALA Professional Development Activities

At the time of the site visit, TEA reported that 24 ELA teachers and 26 content area teachers from Campus E had attended TALA academies. Administrators and teachers stated that TALA attendance was mandated for teachers at Campus E. The principal reported that the previous literacy coach organized the schedules. A school administrator stated that all teachers had been asked to attend, but characterized the request as a "strong request" rather than a mandate. Teachers reported that TALA academy attendance was mandatory, and added that they had been given options for attendance dates. About half of the teachers, including ELA, content area, special education, and ESL staff, attended TALA academies. School administrators reported that most of the ELA teachers had attended. One new ELA teacher had been hired since the Academies were held.

Comparison of TALA to other literacy intervention programs and/or professional development activities

TALA instructional strategies and routines were similar to what teachers were already using at Campus E. An ELA teacher commented that the strategies were "something familiar being reinforced with new names." In addition, one teacher stated that "SIOP and TALA went hand in hand," but another stated that TALA reinforced the strategies more than the SIOP training teachers had completed. Teachers also commented that the note taking strategies provided by TALA were similar to what was already in use and a content area teacher reported that the science curriculum in use included scaffolding strategies similar to the I Do/We Do/You Do routine provided at TALA academies.

> "After 38 years, I've had so much training, I can't separate it out. It was a reminder of a better way to teach vocabulary. I really liked that part."
>
> - Teacher

Satisfaction with the ELA Academy

Teachers reported that the materials provided at the TALA ELA Academy were good, but that poor presentation structure and inappropriate comments made to teachers during the Academy negatively impacted their impressions of the professional development sessions. Several teachers commented that the materials provided at the Academy were great. In addition, many of the teachers liked the notebook with blank guides. One teacher commented that the material was very complete, and appreciated getting the timer, calculator, and other items that would be necessary to implement some of the routines. Several of the teachers noted that the material was "cutting edge." Two teachers at Campus E had recently graduated from masters' programs that included research-based teaching

> "I didn't expect to get led through the material so slowly. I so rarely get to interact with the other teachers that I wanted to hear what the teachers had to say."
>
> - Teacher

strategies and routines. One of them stated that most of the material covered in the TALA ELA Academy had also been covered in her practicum. In contrast, another teacher stated that for "veteran teachers," the routines and strategies were something that had been implemented "5-10 years ago." The teacher added that seeing the strategies "cycle through again" affirmed what she was already doing in class. Another teacher agreed that the cross-curricular approach presented at the TALA academy affirmed what teachers at the school were already doing. A few of the teachers recommended that training be modified for those teachers with more than five years of experience. For example, one teacher felt that a "compressed" version for experienced teachers would be appropriate.

Several teachers and an administrator commented that the structure of the Academy was much less active than might have been expected based on the content being taught. For example, one teacher stated that it would have been easier to learn what to do with students had more of the routines been used to instruct teachers throughout the Academy. After having heard from teachers who attended, an administrator stated the training had too much "sit and get" (i.e., sit and get read to) in the sessions. Teachers had mixed impressions of the videos used to show the strategies. One teacher stated that she enjoyed the videos, but another stated that the videos were "very scripted and rehearsed and did not look like a real classroom." Another teacher wondered why the films of the routines were presented in multiple ways, and stated, "They read it to us, we had it in the book in front of us, and then we had to watch it." Another was "offended" that presenters read to the attendees, and added, "They told us that they were mandated to read it to us like a script." A final teacher stated, "If they had given us the notebook and let us sit and read it, I would have been happier and I probably would have gotten more out of it."

Two of the teachers reported that they had very good presenters in their sessions. However, several other teachers commented on what they felt were inappropriate comments that were made to teachers during the Academies. One teacher stated that presenters treated attendees like "little children" by telling them they could not leave the room. Another characterized the presenters as "very threatening," and reported that attendees were warned that if they left the room they might not receive the promised stipend. Speaking of these warnings, one teacher commented, "A teacher at this school voiced concerns about the Academy and later did not receive the second half of the stipend. He felt it was connected."

Satisfaction with the Content Area Academy

The teachers who attended the TALA Content Academy also reported that the content was good but voiced concerns about the presentation. Teachers commented positively about the Frayer Model, the notes taking strategies, and the materials included. Several teachers commented about the binders and stated that the master copies provided were very helpful. Another noted that examples used throughout the Academy were useful.

Although teachers appreciated the quality of the content, complaints and suggestions were provided regarding the presentation. In general, content area teachers had similar impressions as ELA teachers: there were complaints that the training was too scripted and that the repetitive structure of the presentation (i.e., the same material that was in the notebook was read to the attendees) made the training boring. Multiple teachers complained about the scripted presentation. One teacher stated, "We were told that they could not deviate from the material AT ALL." Another teacher added that due to the script, teachers had nothing to do, and stated, "We had looked ahead and seen it all." Another teacher said "they were long days." Teachers

recommended that the Academy be adjusted to allow for more interaction. For example, one teacher noted that if presenters had not read the presentation, teachers would have had time to actually "do the work." Another agreed and said, "Model the strategy and let the participants make it their own. That would make us more comfortable."

Although improving the pace of the Academy was their primary recommendation, teachers did offer additional suggestions for how future Academies could be improved. Teachers reported that the training environment should be improved. Specifically, interactions between presenters and teachers were sometimes negative. For example, two teachers who had attended a Content Academy together and sat together reported that when their table laughed during an activity, they were approached by a presenter and told to be quiet. Teachers recommended that the training environment be more "teacher friendly." In addition, teachers recommended that future Content Area Academies be separated by subject.

TALA Administrator Training

The district administrator for Campus E attended the half-day administrator overview. The administrator reported that the overview explained who was to attend each training academy, the requirements for the TMSFA, and how to help the literacy coaches through that phase of training. In addition, the district had a "literacy leader" on staff who was also a TALA trainer. The district administrator commented that having the TALA trainer available to answer questions was a great resource. School administrators reported that they were unaware of administrator training, but would attend if future sessions were held.

Implementation of TALA Strategies and Routines in the Classroom

Both ELA and content area teachers reported using the explicit instructional routines. Several of the ELA teachers reported using scaffolding regularly; one ELA teacher reported using the strategy three days a week. A content area teacher stated that the science teachers used scaffolding about 70% of the time. In contrast, one teacher reported no use of the scaffolding routine and stated, "If I used the routine, the gifted and talented kids would laugh me out of the room."

Vocabulary instructional routines were also used by teachers across subject areas. One ELA teacher reported using the routines twice a week. Another stated that the Frayer Model was used weekly. Two additional teachers reported using the Frayer Model about every two weeks. One stated, "We use it every other week for writing lessons." Content teachers also reported using vocabulary instructional routines and stated that the routines were part of their curriculum.

> "It would be nice if some follow up components were added to the structure of the training. We could look for evidence and review student work."
>
> - Administrator

Comprehension instructional routines were also used across subject areas. All of the ELA teachers reported using some form of the routines daily. However, some reported that they modified the strategies for their lessons. One teacher stated, "It is not strictly what came from TALA, but we do use it." A content area teacher reported using the comprehension routines "on a weekly basis."

All of the instructional routines for struggling readers except the TMSFA were used at Campus E. Teachers reported that word study instructional routines, fluency routines, and strategies to generate questions were being used. Regarding the word study instructional routines, one teacher reported using affixes weekly. Another teacher stated she used the routines daily because the students asked how to spell different words. Another teacher commented that the routines were used heavily during a section on Latin and Greek roots. Regarding fluency routines, one teacher reported using the routines as part of a "Jigsaw classroom" group activity. No other partner reading was reported at Campus E. ELA teachers also reported occasional use of the generating questions strategy.

The only instructional routine for struggling readers not in use at Campus E was the TMSFA. Teachers wondered about the necessity of doing the TMSFA because other tests were already being conducted and information about students' skill levels was provided at the beginning of the year. One teacher reported that teachers were not completing any individual student benchmarks, but that the school completed the TELPAS and other language assessments for LEP students. A few of the teachers added that the TMSFA training was inadequate. One teacher had been trained on the TMSFA by two different districts, but stated that neither actually used the assessment. One teacher commented that TMSFA training could be left out of the TALA training for them because it was not implemented at the school.

Preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers

The district administrator and school literacy specialist believed that TALA would prepare teachers to help struggling readers. The school administrator stated that TALA would "help quite a bit" with the LEP population and also with the general student population. The district administrator agreed and stated that follow up at the school would be a critical component to ensure implementation. The administrator stated that if the "follow up and follow through" (e.g., meeting about it during PLCs, monitoring in the classroom, etc.) did not happen, TALA instructional routines would not be implemented. The principal stated that the district did a good job of breaking down the state standards, but was not sure whether TALA would benefit teachers' efforts or not.

Teachers reported that information from non-TALA assessments were already in use which helped them identify struggling readers. For example, one teacher reported that at the beginning of the school year, teachers received student reading and math TAKS scores from the previous year. Teachers reported that the scores were especially useful because the school had a high LEP population. One teacher added that sometimes it was hard to identify LEP students and that the scores were used to group students during activities. Another teacher commented that teachers had also previously done the nationally normed Nelson-Denney test, and added that seating charts were color coded by ability and updated every six weeks. Teachers reported that this skill level information was used to group and re-group students to try and maximize learning. For example, sometimes high level students were matched with less skilled students to benefit the lower level readers. In contrast, sometimes higher level readers were matched with other high level students to keep their interest high.

Support for the Implementation of TALA Instructional Strategies and Routines

Administrators and teachers reported that the primary TALA support provided had been the mandate that teachers attend. Although many school practices were consistent with TALA practices, no district or school policies regarding the implementation of TALA instructional

routines were cited by administrators or teachers. The district administrator stated that support from the district was provided through the literacy coaches, and added that they "keep an eye on the TMSFA timelines." The principal reported that the school practiced small group instruction, brought in substitutes so that teachers could work with students in small groups for tutoring and skill building, and that administrators looked at student work. The school literacy specialist reported that concepts discussed during PLCs "overlapped" with the strategies and that she had heard teachers discussing some of the TALA strategies (e.g., I Do/We Do/You Do scaffolding). Teachers reported that administrators did not know very much about TALA. They added that, instead, the principal mandated the use of a different set of strategies (i.e., PLORE). ELA and content area teachers felt that TALA training would prepare school administrators to better support the implementation of the routines and strategies. One teacher commented, "Well, if they do not know what it is, how could they be supportive?" However, another teacher stated that teachers did not need administrator support to implement the instructional routines and strategies.

> "If I was familiar with what their (TALA) routines and strategies should be, I could answer that better."
>
> - Principal

Administrators and teachers reported that more training, time, resources, and a commitment to a schoolwide implementation of TALA were needed. The district administrator and the principal stated that additional training would have helped them support teachers better. The district administrator stated, "I would like to know more about the structure for the Language Arts teachers so that I could add it to the curriculum in more meaningful ways – as long as that is not a copyright issue." The School literacy specialist added that it would be nice to have the videos from TALA to use for instruction in school meetings and stated, "That would help the teachers see how to implement the strategies." Teachers agreed that additional training would be helpful. One teacher recommended that TALA strategies be taught at PLC meetings. Another teacher commented that it would be helpful if training was provided that showed teachers how to include the strategies in all lesson plans. Along with additional training, teachers asked for additional time to plan to use the TALA strategies. One teacher noted that two of the three planning periods a week were already scheduled, which reduced the amount of time available to actually plan. In addition, teachers commented that additional resources would help. For example, two teachers commented that they needed additional funding to buy materials. Another teacher stated that having white boards like the ones shown in the TALA videos would be beneficial.

> "We haven't heard the word TALA from our administrators since we went to training. The district mandated the TALA training, but our principal does not know about it."
>
> - Teacher

Administrators and teachers felt that additional administrator support was needed in order to implement TALA instructional routines successfully. One teacher stated that a mandate to consistently implement the strategies across subject areas was necessary. Another teacher stated that administrators should also understand that students needed to be taught "holistically," not just on those things that are included on the TAKS. Other teachers agreed, especially about teaching students multiple formats for written communication (e.g., phone messages, memos, persuasive letters, etc.). One administrator stated that the school had not facilitated a schoolwide implementation and commented, "I think we need to work more at using it as a whole campus. We have missed that along the way."

> "I would like to have gone through the training or, at least, have more information about it. It's hard to support something when you don't know the ins and outs of it."
>
> - Administrator

Although additional time for planning was requested, the school literacy specialist reported that changes in the way in which future planning periods were organized may facilitate more consistent implementation of TALA strategies. The administrator explained that during the 2009–10 school year, the PLCs were organized by content. That is, ELA teachers (and other subject area teachers) had planning periods together. For the 2010–11 school year, teachers would have this content planning period and also a team planning period. The team planning period was planned to include one ELA teacher, one math teacher, and one science teacher who shared the same students.

Collaboration with other teachers

Only the content area teachers at Campus E reported collaboration regarding TALA after the Academies. The ELA teachers said they had not collaborated with any other teachers or with administrators since their TALA training. In addition, no TALA materials were shared with teachers who had not attended training. In contrast, the science teachers interviewed at the content area focus group stated that they had worked as a department to incorporate the TALA strategies and routines. Teachers said they met during PLCs to discuss which strategies would be used and also how to modify the strategies to meet the needs of their students.

Facilitators to Implementation

Good communication between the district and the ESC, the literacy coaches, the TALA training and materials, and teachers' personal desire to implement the strategies were listed as key facilitators to TALA implementation. The district administrator reported that the ESC had done a good job of communicating with the district and in providing the TALA training. The administrator added that ESC personnel were also available to answer TALA related questions. The principal believed that having the literacy coach on campus and having teachers meet during PLCs facilitated implementation and stated, "I am hoping that the teachers are using similar strategies and routines in the classrooms to benefit the students." Content teachers stated that the notebook provided at the Academies was a "really great resource." Another teacher said the Academy helped teachers build their knowledge base, and added that it would be especially useful for new teachers. ELA teachers reported that only their personal desire and initiative influenced their use of TALA instructional routines.

Barriers to Implementation

Several issues at Campus E limited teachers' abilities to help struggling readers and thus were barriers to TALA implementation. One of the primary issues reported was a lack of individual time with students. For example, one teacher stated that teachers had no individual time with students in class, and added that with more than 30 students in the class, and with discipline concerns, there was no way to do the individual work. Other teachers agreed that the large

> I think there are so many things we're trying to do at once, it's hard to decipher what everything is and meet the needs of the students.
>
> -Teacher

class size limited the teachers' abilities to provide individual attention. Another teacher added that students at Campus E "interrupt the instruction," limiting time for individual attention even further. Another limiting issue reported by teachers was the emphasis on TAKS testing. One teacher commented that "way too much emphasis" was placed on the assessment, and added that class time for TAKS preparation was mandated and that students were even asked whether teachers had done it.

In addition to limited time with individual students, teachers reported that a lack of time to plan for implementation of TALA strategies was a barrier. Concerns about material copyright were also reported. Teachers stated they needed time to get familiar with the TALA instructional routines and learn how to best use them to serve students. Two teachers suggested that PLC days be dedicated to TALA strategies. Another teacher suggested that time outside of class be provided to practice the routines with other teachers. The principal noted that as with any new training, teachers had to "get past" what they have been doing forever, and added that additional training for administrators would help them monitor teacher progress. The district administrator agreed that a lack of knowledge about TALA was a barrier and added that worries about TALA copyrights were also a barrier. The administrator stated, "It is difficult to share if you are worried about that." The literacy specialist stated, "A common theme that I hear right now is that the teachers are overloaded with training. They don't have time to implement one thing before they're given another."

Perhaps the most significant barrier to TALA implementation at Campus E was that schoolwide implementation was not seen as a goal by administrators or teachers. The literacy specialist noted that the school did not have TALA implementation as a goal, and added that to successfully implement the program, additional activities at the school and better communication would be necessary. For example, some teachers should be asked to develop lessons and other teachers asked to observe. The administrator stated that this modeling would allow teachers to see how the routines could be implemented. The lack of a school wide initiative likely meant inconsistencies in the routines and strategies used to teach students. Another form of inconsistency reported by teachers was related to how English and writing were taught separately at Campus E. Therefore, students might attend a reading class with one teacher and a writing class with another. Teachers were concerned that the lack of continuity might negatively impact student learning.

Perceived Effects of TALA Program Activities

Desired outcomes and evidence of occurrence

Administrators hoped that TALA would help teachers and students in many ways. Administrators hoped that participation in the TALA academies would prepare teachers to help students be better readers and that better reading would improve student performance on TAKS. The district administrator hoped that teachers would be better informed about research based strategies that benefit students. The administrator said, "For too many years we have had teachers who simply lectured at the class and read the same novels using round robin reading. We need to be more creative with the strategies we use. That is what TALA is providing." The principal stated, "Whether or not we like the TAKS, they need it to graduate. Ultimately, it is a reading based test. They have to be able to understand vocabulary and have comprehension strategies. My ultimate outcome will be that they are better readers, so they know what good readers do and they will be able to be successful. That will help them in high school and beyond." The principal also noted that some of the strategies used at the school (e.g., PLORE and *99 Strategies for English Language Learners*) will also help students. The school literacy specialist hoped that participation in TALA would help LEP students achieve higher test scores. The administrator believed that some of the TALA strategies (e.g., partner reading, pairing kids effectively) would help with that. The administrator said, "TALA made the teachers aware that they needed to differentiate among their students. There are a lot of ESL students here. Some of our content teachers think they are someone else's problem (e.g., the ESL teachers). This will help them also take responsibility for the language acquisition of our students."

When asked if there was evidence that these goals were being met, administrators reported that no evidence was available. The district administrator reported that to see evidence of change, teachers would have to have been monitored before and after TALA. Although that was not done, the district administrator stated that she had seen teachers using TALA strategies and heard them talking about it at PLC meetings.

Effect on teachers' literacy practices

Only a few teachers at Campus E felt that participation in the TALA academies had affected their literacy practices. Two teachers reported greater use of note taking strategies and manipulatives. One teacher specifically reported using the Frayer Model with success. The teacher added that students "like foldables," and stated, "I think having to develop both examples and non-examples has also made me teach at a higher level. I've incorporated them into my interactive notebook." Other teachers also reported increased efforts to work on vocabulary. One teacher stated that students were given words to "own," and another stated that examples and non-examples were used as a "quick quiz." The teacher added that students ask how many non-examples they need to generate and are eager to get started. In contrast, two ELA teachers stated that TALA had not affected their literacy practices. A content area teacher said that because the routines were only used intermittently their impact was limited. The teacher added, "It is that thing about making a habit; you have to constantly remind yourself to use the strategies."

> To be honest, these are all things we've been doing. They just have new names.
>
> - Teachers

Effect on ability to influence student achievement

Administrators and teachers at Campus E saw little effect from TALA on teachers' abilities to influence student achievement. The principal characterized TALA as "one of many professional development tools," and reported that during staff development sessions when he met with teachers none of them mentioned the TALA strategies. The administrator stated, "I do not know whether it is being discussed out there." The school literacy specialist commented that there was likely no effect, yet, due to a lack of implementation. The district administrator concurred that the extent of use "may not be that great," and noted that teachers were more aware of the strategies, but that the district needed to get better at helping teachers implement the strategies on a daily, weekly, or unit-by-unit basis.

Teachers reported some positive effects of participating in the TALA academies. For example, one ELA teacher stated that attending the Academy increased her confidence because it affirmed the strategies that she was already using. Another teacher stated that learning to "split the class" as described in TALA was useful, but said that the benefit was hard to measure. Another teacher believed that the TALA routines and strategies had a positive effect on her ability to influence student achievement. The teacher commented that the strategies influenced students' higher level thinking, and stated, "With the Anticipation-Reaction Guides, students have to go back and reaffirm what they thought was correct. That helps build comprehension." A final teacher agreed that "some change had happened," and stated, "Any good teacher uses what they learn to promote student success."

Teachers believed that many students benefited from the TALA instructional routines and strategies. For example, a content area teacher stated that the students classified as ELL benefited more from the manipulatives or concrete things than other struggling readers. The

teacher added that strategies like the Frayer Model helped students "make a picture in their heads" of the content. An ELA teacher believed that the students with better reading skills benefited most from the inferential comprehension strategies (i.e., level questions). A final teacher stated that struggling and gifted students benefited from the strategies.

Sustainability of TALA Activities

Perhaps due to the low level of implementation at Campus E, administrators and teachers had few comments about the fit of TALA instructional routines with existing literacy programs and goals. The principal stated that the school was providing a literacy coach, time to plan, and lots of professional development that includes bringing in data, but added, "I do not know specifically about TALA." The school's literacy specialist stated that most of the teachers at the school reported using an "amended version of TALA routines and strategies." The district administrator reported that TALA strategies overlapped with existing methods, and stated, "The ones I am familiar with have been around in various forms. They are currently listed in the curriculum without examples." Teachers stated that TALA routines were similar to PLORE. They also stated that they had attended so much training, stating that "it was hard to decipher which routines and strategies go with which."

All of the administrators interviewed commented on the importance of a strong focus on literacy. However, the importance of TALA at Campus E was unclear. The district administrator stated that TALA was important because it "put everyone on the same page regarding highly effective strategies and routines that are research based." The administrator added that even though various districts or campuses may be at different expertise levels, TALA "leveled the playing field a bit for teachers," with benefits going to the students. The principal stated that it was important to focus on literacy, and added, "Everything they do as lifelong learners is based on reading. We will focus on literacy regardless of whether TALA training is available or not." When asked about teachers' hesitancy to use TALA, the literacy specialist noted that there was a lack of consistency in terms of the message about the TALA program at Campus E, stating that, "Teachers do not know whether TALA is something they should use, or something they could use. Some teachers still do not know what it is."

Classroom Observations

During the site visit at Campus E, four classrooms were observed: two ELA classrooms and two content area classrooms. Table E.4 summarizes the number of observations in which different TALA strategies were observed.

Table E.4. Number of Campus E Classrooms in Which Each TALA Strategy was Observed

TALA Strategy	ELA Classrooms (N=2)	Content Area Classrooms (N=2)
General Instructional	2	2
Vocabulary	2	1
Comprehension	1	0
Word Study	0	N/A
Fluency	0	N/A
Inferential Comprehension	0	N/A

ELA classrooms

Two ELA classrooms were observed at Campus E. Classes contained an average of 20 students and both classes had a single instructor. Both observations lasted about 30 minutes.

In the first ELA classroom observation TALA general and vocabulary instructional routines were observed as students completed a vocabulary worksheet and worked on a brief writing lesson. At the beginning of the observation students worked individually to complete fill in the blank vocabulary on a short passage. The teacher circulated the room and monitored student progress. In addition, the teacher adjusted instruction by explaining vocabulary words as necessary. Next, the teacher read a prompt (i.e., a starter sentence) out loud and students were instructed to write a passage to respond to the prompt. As students completed the passage, they moved on to the writing assignment. In the next part of the lesson, the teacher called on students to read the vocabulary words they used to fill in the blanks in the passage. For the next part of the lesson, the teacher reread the writing prompt and then asked students to volunteer to read what they had written. During the lesson, the teacher taught vocabulary words by reading the words and providing definitions. In addition, the teacher used Academic vocabulary words (e.g., empower, empathy). A Frayer Model was also used that included examples and non-examples and everyday definitions. The Frayer Model that was used in the class was modified to include pictures. The students seemed to enjoy working with the graphic organizer. The site observer noted that the teacher fostered student engagement by calling on students by name. In addition, the teacher used scaffolding during the lesson and provided corrective and positive feedback to students.

In the second ELA classroom observation, TALA general, vocabulary, and comprehension instructional routines were observed as students reviewed writing genres. During the observation, the teacher pre-taught vocabulary words before students read silently. The lesson included content-specific vocabulary (e.g., genre, fairy tale, and allegory). The teacher provided definitions for vocabulary words, and asked students to provide examples and non-examples to complete a Frayer Model. The teacher modeled how the graphic organizer should be completed. In the next part of the lesson, students read a story. Before they began, the teacher spent a few minutes to build on background knowledge by reviewing types of fiction and symbols. In addition, the teacher stated the primary focus of the text and connected the text to prior learning. The teacher fostered engagement by asking students questions. In addition, throughout the observation the teacher provided positive feedback.

Content area classrooms

Two content area classrooms were observed at Campus E. Each contained an average of 15 students and both classes had a single instructor. Both observations lasted about 30 minutes.

In the first content area classroom observation, TALA general instructional strategies were observed as students completed an activity on impact craters. At the beginning of the activity, the teacher asked students to read the objectives of the activity and set the plans for the day. Students completed a lab to show the impact of a crater. The teacher provided the instructions, showed students the materials, modeled how the activity should be done, gave additional hints, and asked if there were any questions. For the remainder of the observation, students worked consistently at the task. The teacher circulated, monitored student progress, and provided additional information as necessary. The teacher reported to the site evaluator that high and low-skill students were paired for the activity. Students worked in pairs or groups of three to

complete the lab. Throughout the observation, the teacher engaged students by calling on them by name. In addition, the teacher provided corrective and positive feedback. The site observer noted that students seemed to really enjoy the hands-on activity.

In the second content area classroom observation TALA and vocabulary instructional routines were observed during a social studies class. During the observation, students played a vocabulary game. First, students had to match the cards they received with cards that other students had selected. Students had to match cards that included the word, the definition, and a picture. To complete the exercise, students stood and formed a large circle. Students took turns reading their words aloud. The class repeated the words and the students reported the definition. After students did their part, the teacher provided additional information about the terms. Students worked in pairs and small groups to complete the vocabulary game. During the lesson, the teacher taught both academic (e.g., modify) and content-specific (e.g., agriculture, population, rural) vocabulary words. Throughout the observation, the teacher provided corrective and negative feedback to students. In addition, the teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and by asking them to focus. For example, at one point the teacher asked a question. When students were slow to respond, the teacher stated, "I want to see some head nods." Students responded cheerfully.

Site Visit Summary: Campus F

A two-day site visit to Campus F took place during April 2010. The site visit included interviews with key personnel and observations of classroom activities. The site evaluator conducted interviews with the principal and with the district's school improvement facilitator. Additionally, two focus groups were conducted; one focus group included teachers who attended TALA ELA Academies and the other included teachers who attended the TALA Content Area Academies. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, observations of seven ELA and one content area classrooms were conducted. Table F.1 lists the number of participants in each site visit activity.

Table F.1. Number of Campus F Participants in Each Site Visit Activity

Interviews	
School/District Administrators	2
Focus Groups	
ELA Teachers	6
Content Teachers – Science	4
Content Teachers – Social Studies	1
Other Teachers – ISS	1
Classroom Observations	
ELA Classrooms	7
Content Classrooms – Science	1
TEA Reported TALA Academy Attendance	
ELA Teachers	15
Content Area Teachers	9

Table F.2 provides a summary of campus characteristics, including location, student enrollment, and student characteristics. Table F.3 provides a summary of campus academic achievement including student performance on TAKS-Reading and campus accountability rating from 2007–08 to 2009–10.

Table F.2. Summary of Campus F Characteristics

General Characteristics	
Grade Levels	6-8
Geographic Location	Suburban
Student Enrollment	548
Student Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African-American	64.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0%
Hispanic	35.2%
Native American	0.0%
White	0.2%
Student Population (%)	
Economically Disadvantaged	99.8%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	9.7%
At-Risk	31.2%
Mobility (2007–08)	21.4%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Table F.3. Summary of Campus F Academic Performance

	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Grade 6 TAKS-Reading	79%	84%	70%
Grade 7 TAKS-Reading	73%	75%	81%
Grade 8 TAKS-Reading	92%	94%	77%
Campus Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable

Note: The percentages listed represent the percentage of students at the campus who met the standard in TAKS reading.
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10

Overview of TALA Experience at this Campus

ELA/Reading Curriculum

At the time of the site visit, the ELA/reading curriculum in use at Campus F was CSCOPE. The principal reported that the 2009–10 school year was the first year that CSCOPE had been implemented. Prior to that, the school utilized a curriculum developed by the district. The district administrator confirmed the implementation of CSCOPE and reported that some teachers felt "overwhelmed" by the change.

Other Literacy Intervention Programs at Campus F

The district administrator stated that the school used RTI techniques and provided help for their students classified as ELL. The principal reported that for literacy intervention the school used campus specific, school developed timelines and district benchmarks. For example, at the end of each six weeks, the district provided a benchmark exam for the TEKS taught during those six weeks. The principal believed that the school "needed to begin with the end in mind" and stated, "TAKS is a big focus for us. From the benchmarks, we determine where we are and what we need to do. This lets us revise the timeline to meet the deadlines. We do a lot of interdisciplinary teaching and planning, too." The principal outlined a schoolwide approach to student success. First, the school utilized academic teams organized by subject area (i.e., reading, English, science, social studies, and math). Each group taught a particular group of students "like one big family." Teachers in each group held planning periods together, and the teachers planned together with the TAKS in mind. For example, the Grade 6 and 7 teachers focused on reading and math. On math day for Grade 8 students, all teachers (including those who taught electives) had to develop a lesson that pertained to the use of math in their subject areas. As students went from class to class, they got instruction in their content areas and practiced math skills. On the following day, teachers followed the same process, but emphasized reading skills instead of math skills. The principal planned additional schoolwide interdisciplinary lessons for the future.

Advisory periods for students were also conducted. The administrator stated that students do TAKS driven drills during the "blitz" period organized by grade levels and testing areas. The teachers create the work, including writing and objectives, and students use interactive lessons (e.g., work with manipulatives). The principal reported that the blitz period and after school programs are aligned with what classes are doing throughout the day. For example, whatever skills were taught one week are worked on during after school programs the following week. The principal stated that this schedule provided an opportunity for repetition, and added, "About 25% of our students across grades attend the after school program. The class is from 4:00 to 5:00 PM." Campus F also conducted Saturday classes which were 4-hour classes for skill

building. The Saturday classes gave students "bonus points" toward grades, but the principal stated that the real purpose was to extend the week and give students more time to work on the tasks.

Non-TALA Professional Development Activities

There were several professional development opportunities for teachers at Campus F. Professional development was provided through the district, at their ESC, and at the campus. The principal stated that teachers attended training in their content areas as well as training for special education, team building, discipline, time management, restraint, and technology. Other trainings included Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) training for coordinators in particular subject areas and Building Inclusive Schools Initiative (BISI) training. Teachers also reported attending Read180 training, McGraw-Hill/SRA training, and sessions on how to teach gifted and talented students.

TALA Professional Development Activities

The principal reported that attendance at the TALA academies was strongly encouraged and stated, "It was one of the things our district put in place. They said they expected us to go." The administrator stated that during the first year, the training was just for the Grade 6 teachers, and then the 7th and 8th teachers attended. Teachers agreed that they were expected to attend, but only some of the teachers felt that attendance was mandated. All teachers stated that they were given some options on scheduling. ELA teachers reported being given a flyer about the Academy. Content area teachers stated that they heard about the Academies from the ELA teachers who had previously attended and also saw the information on the region's web site.

Teachers attended for a variety of reasons: while many felt they were expected to go, others attended because they enjoyed workshops, wanted to learn more about how to improve student literacy, and expected to gain another tool. Another reason provided was the opportunity to receive a stipend, an incentive that one teacher reported "was nice."

The principal stated that up to 40 teachers from Campus F attended TALA academies, and indicated that this number represented about 33% of the school's teachers. According to the district administrator, the percentage of participation for Campus F was low in comparison to the 80% of the teachers from another middle school in the district who attended the professional development. At the time of the site visit, TEA reported that 15 ELA teachers and 9 content area teachers from Campus F had attended TALA academies.

Comparison of TALA to other literacy intervention programs and/or professional development activities

Teachers reported similarities and differences between TALA academies and other professional development they had attended. One ELA teacher reported attending an SRA program that was similar to TALA in that it covered fluency and comprehension. Another ELA teacher reported attending a fluency program for 5th graders that was provided by the school district, and stated, "It was different than TALA in that the testing was not so intense." Other training programs were dissimilar to TALA. For example, some teachers had attended conferences in different subject areas. One teacher reported that a national conference covered reading strategies and the organization's "vision for the future of reading," but differed from TALA in the approach. The

teacher stated that the conference was larger and that TALA was more "like a one-on-one thing."

Satisfaction with the ELA Academy

The principal at Campus F was very satisfied with the TALA academies. The administrator reported that teachers really liked the Academies and stated that some of the routines and strategies that were already in use at the school and which met school goals were very similar to what teachers saw at TALA. For example, the TMSFA was very similar to an assessment used at the school for TAKS preparation purposes. In addition, the TALA academies helped teachers bond. The principal explained that the school had recently been reorganized and teachers from two schools were now on one campus. Teachers from both of the original schools met together for the TALA academies and the principal reported that they were now working together very well.

> "There were lots of ideas. You might not do them all, but you could pick what you wanted."
>
> - Teacher

All of the ELA teachers agreed that the TALA academy included good information and noted that teachers could customize the content to meet their students' needs. One teacher was very impressed with the TALA academy and stated, "The strategies should be used from elementary grades through high school." One benefit that teachers noted was that many routines and strategies were included. That allowed teachers to select the instructional routines or strategies that would work best for their needs. Another teacher commented that the vocabulary routines were beneficial.

Though satisfied, some teachers also recommended changes to improve future Academies, including: adjustments to content or time spent on certain activities. For example, one teacher felt the training was too short and that more time was necessary to train teachers well. Two other teachers suggested that more time be spent on the portion of the session that covered the TMSFA. Also, teachers stated that the videos used as examples should be more realistic with "real" students. The teachers wanted to see inner city classes interacting with teachers and other students. They specifically noted that it would have been helpful to watch teachers redirect or re-teach students who were not getting the strategies.

Satisfaction with the Content Area Academy

Content area teachers were unanimous in their positive appraisal of the TALA Content Academy, and offered suggestions for future sessions. Teachers reported that the instructors were thorough and that the training was "student centered." One teacher stated, "They gave us the opportunity to re-teach what they had just done. They did an excellent job." Teachers reported that the small groups who attended the meetings were able to work well together. Teachers liked the activities that allowed them to work as a group. One teacher stated that the partner reading was great, but seemed unrealistic. Another teacher stated that additional time to learn the notes taking technique would have been beneficial.

TALA Administrator Training

The principal and literacy specialist were unable to attend the TALA academies. The district administrator attended an ELA Academy in 2008 and stated that attending the session provided useful information on the routines and strategies that teachers would be expected to implement. The administrator also learned how to administer the TMSFA and what

> "The one thing I try to do is I listen. That's the biggest support I can give them. I listen to their concerns and I try to provide the tools they need."
>
> - Principal

supports should be provided to teachers who are going to administer the test (e.g., how to prepare folders, etc.).

Implementation of TALA Strategies and Routines in the Classroom

ELA and content area teachers reported using the explicit instructional routines daily. One ELA teacher stated that everyone used the scaffolding strategy. Another teacher stated that it was easy to incorporate the routine and stated that the I Do/We Do/You Do pattern was similar to something teachers had learned previously (i.e., Madeline Hunter's lesson cycle). Content area teachers also reported using the strategy daily. Teachers agreed that modeling improved student understanding.

All of the ELA teachers reported that examples were used often in their classes. For instance, one teacher stated that students were given examples and asked to determine the grammar rules in sentences. Another teacher stated that students were often asked to relate information to their "everyday life." Only one ELA teacher stated that non-examples were used in class. Similarly, only one ELA teacher reported that she had used the Frayer Model in class; the teacher had used it twice. When other teachers were asked why they had not used the graphic organizer, one teacher stated, "I thought it was a bit much. I have one class who might have handled it well, but the rest would be lost."

Content area teachers varied on how often they used the Frayer Model. One teacher reported using the graphic organizer often when introducing a new concept or revisiting a concept. The teacher stated, "It shows me what I need to teach and re-teach, and the pictures are neat." Several other teachers reported using similar graphic organizers (i.e., concept attainment lesson, the 5E model) even before TALA training. A social studies teacher commented that the vocabulary in social studies was "not that difficult," so did not require the Frayer Model.

ELA and content area teachers reported using the comprehension instructional routines. ELA teachers reported that they used the "get the gist" routine "all the time." Content area teachers stated that the strategies included in the comprehension instructional routines were academic goals that were included in the TEKS and that they were used often.

Teachers reported using all of the instructional routines for struggling readers. For example, two ELA teachers reported using the word study instructional routines. One teacher stated that the routines were "used a lot" at the first of the semester. The teacher reported seeing student progress. Another teacher stated that syllabication was used when students were unfamiliar with words. In terms of the fluency routines, two teachers reported using partner reading. One teacher commented that students with very low reading levels benefit from having a more skilled partner. Two teachers reported that students were asked to generate questions. One teacher stated that the strategy had been used "more than several times during the current semester."

Another stated that students were often asked "what kind of question they were working on." Finally, four of the six ELA teachers interviewed reported that they had administered the TMSFA. One teacher noted that the assessment was "time consuming and required that teachers be very detail oriented." Another said that it took an entire day to organize all of the materials and complete the assessment.

Preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers

Administrators and teachers felt that participation in the TALA academies prepared them to assist struggling readers. The principal and district administrator noted that TALA helped all students and gave the teachers new strategies for struggling students. All the teachers agreed that they adjust their lessons for struggling readers, and that the TALA academies had better prepared them to help these students. One teacher noted that even though the Academy had prepared them to design instruction for struggling readers, it was up to them to actually do it. All of the teachers agreed that the training had made them more aware of students who struggle.

Support for the Implementation of TALA Instructional Strategies and Routines

The principal reported high levels of administrative support for TALA implementation at Campus F. The primary indication of support was the mandate that teachers go to trainings and that both ELA and content area teachers use the instructional routines and strategies. The principal commented that the teachers were already so close to doing what they learned at the TALA academies, that adhering to TALA was "not a problem." Methods of administrative support included materials (i.e., supplies), staff development opportunities, assistance from the literacy specialist, and observations from other teachers (i.e., coaching). The principal explained that during staff development sessions, teachers provided lessons that included vocabulary and comprehension strands (e.g., get the gist and vowel pattern routines). The district administrator stated that support was provided when the TMSFA was administered, and noted "The teachers had already been trained at the Academy." The administrator added that the teachers understood how to use the strategies, and that the district made every effort to provide any additional assistance they needed. Content and ELA teachers confirmed receiving good support from campus administration. For example, teachers reported that they were encouraged by administrators to implement the strategies "as much as possible and to talk with the teachers who do the fluency tests so that we can be aware of students' deficiencies."

> "The one thing I try to do is I listen. That's the biggest support I can give them. I listen to their concerns and I try to provide the tools they need."
>
> - Principal

Administrators and teachers offered suggestions for additional support. The principal thought that additional materials and social support would be beneficial. The administrator commented that teachers might need additional funding for materials to use in class and added that more collaboration by teachers and more monitoring of teachers could be beneficial. The principal commented that additional monitoring by peers would help ensure that teachers were using the strategies, and proposed that teacher visits to other campuses would be an interesting way to implement the peer reviews. Administrators believed that teachers needed more time for refresher courses at the campus and to interpret the data from the TMSFA. Content area and ELA teachers also recommended the refresher courses and commented that larger stipends to support training participation would be appreciated. One teacher stated that an alternate way to submit lesson plans for the follow up portion of the training would be beneficial, and stated "If

the lesson submission for the training had been a face-to-face session, I would have done it. I logged in and got lost."

Collaboration with other teachers

Teachers at Campus F reported a high level of collaboration with other teachers and with administrators. Meetings in which TALA instructional routines were discussed were organized by subject areas (i.e., team meetings, cluster meetings) and cross-curricular collaboration was also reported.

> "We had lots (of follow-up) in departmental meetings, cluster meetings, team meetings, and a meeting to talk about the meetings."
>
> -Teacher

Teachers reported "a lot of collaboration by grade levels. One teacher stated that there were "checks and balances," and added the teachers often "piggy back on each other's lessons." ELA teachers reported meeting with content area teachers to help them understand the "get the gist." Teachers also reported collaboration with administrators regarding TALA at monthly staff development meetings.

Facilitators to Implementation

Administrators felt strongly that their teachers were the biggest facilitator to TALA implementation. The principal commented that the teachers at Campus F had "bought in" to TALA and worked hard to implement the strategies and routines effectively. The district administrator agreed that teachers were dedicated to the strategies, and added that "TALA solidified the fact that they were doing the right things." In addition, the principal felt that the campus wide implementation facilitated TALA success. The administrator stated that teachers "plan together and talk about the implementation of TALA and what will be needed." In addition, the principal believed that the teachers' sense of ownership over student success and the process was important. The administrator explained that teachers say, "This is my student. I have got to make this work."

> "Our teachers are proud and they are competitive. They want to be doing the latest and greatest. They want to be able to say, I have 'got it going on' [so] come and see what I am doing."
>
> - Principal

Teachers stated that their trust in the TALA routines and ongoing reminders to themselves to use the routines facilitated successful implementation. For example, one ELA teacher stated, "My belief that it will work makes me try it." A content area teacher agreed that the success of the strategies was a motivator. The teacher stated, "When I used the Frayer Model, it made them more engaged. I wanted them to feel comfortable working together and I wanted them to be able to show me what they had learned. The Frayer Model was actually pretty simple. Once they had done it once or twice, they knew how to do it...They also got to be more creative and that made them more engaged." Other teachers said that the planning they did with other teachers and that seeing the routines modeled in professional development presentations helped them implement the routines successfully.

Barriers to Implementation

Administrators and teachers felt that time was a barrier to implementation. The principal also noted that differences in student skill levels might hinder implementation and one teacher mentioned that as a barrier to using partner reading. The principal noted that developing a timeline that included the district benchmark assessments, TAKS, and the TMSFA, and did not

have students just testing "back to back" was challenging. The district administrator also noted time as a barrier and stated, "They have to do it one on one. They had 60 students on this campus who needed it. To work around it, the teachers have worked together. If one is testing, another is covering the class." Teachers also agreed that the TMSFA was time consuming. The principal noted that teachers' skill levels at the routines might pose a barrier; one teacher may do it much better than another. The principal added that teachers' strengths needed to be acknowledged and that they must be assisted with any weaknesses. The final barrier listed was related to partner reading. One teacher mentioned that the noise level in class was sometimes high, which hindered groups from effectively communicating with one another.

Perceived Effects of TALA Program Activities

Desired outcomes and evidence of occurrence

Administrators hoped that TALA instructional routines would improve students' reading skills and lead to better scores on standardized tests. Indeed, some evidence of improvement was reported. The principal noted that 60 students at Campus F had not met the Grade 6 TAKS-Reading standards and stated, "I expect to see a lot of growth for them this year. They did better on the midyear tests and (for most of them) their 6-week grades are up, too. As we get ready for the final tests, we are focusing on the weaknesses and trying to help."

Effect on teachers' literacy practices

Teachers reported that participation in the TALA academies reinforced what they were already doing and added effective new literacy supports. Several teachers reported that scaffolding had been a common practice, but that TALA "gave it a new spin." For example, one content area teacher stated that after TALA, she put an I Do/We Do/You Do diagram on the board and explained it to students. The teacher stated, "I had always done it, but now they knew the format. It made my expectations clear. The structure on the board made them more aware of what I expected and it never hurts to reiterate expectations." An ELA teacher agreed that labeling the scaffolding as I Do/We Do/You Do had helped students understand the process. Similarly, both ELA and content area teachers noted changes in their vocabulary strategies. One teacher noted that the new vocabulary strategies (e.g., Frayer Model, examples and non-examples) helped students become "more independent." Another stated that the "vocabulary piece worked really well for science." A teacher also noted that word study strategies had helped students and that "they liked the scooping" part of the strategies.

Effect on ability to influence student achievement

Administrators and teachers believed that consistent use of the strategies would lead to increased student achievement. Teachers noted benefits for all struggling readers. The principal stated that TALA tools gave teachers new skills to use with struggling students, and added that the training "pushed teachers to try new things." The district administrator agreed that if teachers used the strategies they would be effective. Teachers noted the importance of improving vocabulary skills and stated that students were "internalizing the routines." Teachers also noted that all struggling readers benefited from the routines, especially those that paired students (e.g., think/pair/share, partner reading). Although teachers were hopeful that students' skills had improved, they acknowledged that test scores would be the final judge.

Sustainability of TALA Activities

Administrators agreed that TALA was a good fit with the literacy programs and goals at Campus F. The principal characterized the TALA instructional routines as "usable" and "not farfetched" like other programs had been. The administrator stated that TALA was "on the money" because the procedures worked for all learners. An additional benefit reported by the principal was that TALA allowed staff members to work together to ensure student success. The district administrator agreed that TALA was a good fit. In fact, the administrator stated that "to really be helpful, TALA should not be limited to the middle schools; it should go down to the elementary grades."

Administrators agreed that TALA was an important part of the district's literacy efforts and that TALA instructional routines would continue to be used. The district administrator commented that TALA was "very important" because some students in the district had graduated without being able to read proficiently. The administrator added that the earlier the problems were identified, the better off students would be. The principal agreed that TALA was "very important," and explained that it was "another means of making sure that teachers focused on students' strengths and weaknesses" to help improve skills. The principal added that teachers at Campus F had the knowledge and skills to implement the strategies whether additional training was held or not, and stated, "Once I have this knowledge no one can take it from me."

Classroom Observations

During the site visit at Campus F, eight classrooms were observed: seven ELA classrooms and one content area classrooms. Table F.4 summarizes the number of observations in which different TALA strategies were observed.

Table F.4. Number of Campus F Classrooms in Which Each TALA Strategy was Observed

TALA Strategy	ELA Classrooms (N=7)	Content Area Classrooms (N=1)
General Instructional	7	1
Vocabulary	4	1
Comprehension	6	0
Word Study	1	N/A
Fluency	1	N/A
Inferential Comprehension	0	N/A

ELA classrooms

Seven ELA classrooms were observed at Campus F. Classes contained an average of 20 students and all but one class had a single instructor. In the class with two adults, the primary teacher provided the instruction. Observations averaged 36 minutes.

In the first ELA observation, TALA general, vocabulary, and comprehension routines were observed. At the beginning of the observation, students competed (girls vs. boys) to see who could correct a passage by removing slang and adding correct English. The competition was lively and students enjoyed the vocabulary drill. In the next part of the observation students completed a modified "get the gist" routine by identifying the main ideas from several songs. The teacher modeled the process at the beginning and built on prior knowledge by reminding students that they had heard one of the songs throughout the year. Individual student

summaries were shared with the class. Throughout the observation, the teacher facilitated vocabulary learning by pronouncing and defining academic words. In addition, the teacher asked students to generate examples of words and to explain words in everyday language. Students enjoyed the lesson and appeared familiar with the process. Throughout the observation, the teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and by encouraging them to participate by asking questions (e.g., "What do you want to tell me about that?"). The teacher provided positive and corrective feedback to students as necessary.

The second ELA observation included TALA general, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency routines. As the observation began, the teacher reintroduced students to a Normal Rockwell story by reading the first paragraph to the class. The teacher asked who, what, and where questions. After reading each paragraph, the teacher asked students to paraphrase what had been read. When the entire story had been read, the teacher guided students through several questions. Next, the class worked on a new story and practiced reading. The teacher read the first paragraph and then called on students by name to read. After each paragraph, students were asked to identify the main idea. During the observation, the teacher defined academic words (e.g., luminous, trudging) by pronouncing the words, providing formal definitions and by asking students to explain the meaning of the words with everyday language. The teacher attempted to engage the students by calling on them by name and also provided corrective and positive feedback. The site observer noted that during the observation several students were off-task and the teacher removed one student from the class for talking.

TALA general, vocabulary, and comprehension routines were observed in the third ELA classroom. Students worked independently for most of the observation on worksheets they had begun the day before. Students were instructed to "use their strategies," which included underlining points of reference, circling key words, and writing summaries of paragraphs. The teacher circulated to monitor progress and assist students as necessary. After about 30 minutes of individual work, the teacher and the students graded answers and the class moved to a new story. Students were asked to read aloud, and the teacher connected the story to real life experiences. During the observation, the teacher defined academic words (e.g., painstakingly) by pronouncing the words, providing formal definitions and by asking students to explain the meaning of the words with everyday language. The teacher called on students by name and answered all of their questions

In the fourth ELA observation, TALA general and comprehension routines were observed. Students worked in small groups to complete worksheets. They were instructed to identify the main ideas for all paragraphs and "get the gist" for the assigned paragraphs. The teacher circulated and monitored student progress as they worked. Next, students from each group read their summary paragraphs. The entire group read their main idea statements. The class seemed engaged by the activity. However, the teacher commented to students during the observation that they were much quieter than usual. During the observation, the teacher corrected off-task students and called on all students by name.

In the next ELA classroom observation, TALA general, vocabulary, and word study routines were observed. At the beginning of the observation students received packets of letters to unscramble into words. The teacher reviewed letter sounds and modeled how the vowel and consonant patterns (i.e., closed, open, and vowel-consonant – e) affected pronunciation. Students worked in small groups and reported out to the entire class. For the next task, students looked at pictures and determined the main idea. During both tasks, the teacher circulated to

monitor progress and answer questions as necessary. The teacher also pronounced academic words (e.g., elaborate, difficult, obsolete) and called on students by name.

In the sixth ELA observation, TALA general and comprehension routines were observed. First, the teacher provided instructions for students who were worked independently on passages. Students were instructed to read silently and identify the main ideas. Next, students completed a language log in which they corrected slang or misspelled words in a passage. Students were then asked to report on the main ideas and supporting details. The teacher modeled the process by asking students to specify who, what, when, and where information. In addition, the teacher reminded students about similar work they had completed previously. Throughout the observation, the teacher called on students by name and assisted students as necessary.

In the final ELA observation, TALA general and comprehension routines were observed. Students were first provided with a sample of a sales advertisement and questioned about persuasive devices used in the advertisement. The teacher engaged the students by telling them that in life they would need to be able to read many types of writing. The teacher reminded the students about the primary purpose of the text and compared this persuasive writing to stories they had read earlier. Next, students continued a reading task begun the day before. They were instructed to read passages and identify the main ideas for each paragraph. The teacher modeled the process by reading the first paragraph and asking students for the main idea. Students took turns reading paragraphs aloud and worked as a class to "get the gist." The teacher engaged students by calling them by name and by providing them with a real life meaning for doing well at their task.

Content area classrooms

One science classroom was observed at Campus F. The class contained 12 students and had a single instructor. The observation lasted 30 minutes and included TALA general and vocabulary routines. During the observation, students reviewed testing strategies. The teacher projected a PowerPoint presentation onto a white board at the front of the room. The testing strategy was RUBIES (i.e., Read and reread everything, Underline, Bracket the key word, Identify key concept or pattern being established, Eliminate wrong answers, and Select the best answer). The teacher modeled the process with sample questions. The teacher next identified different lab equipment that might be on the TAKS, but are no longer used in the classrooms at Campus F. The teacher engaged students by calling for volunteers. During the observation, the students learned academic (e.g., antonym, cultivate) and content-specific vocabulary words (e.g., conductor, gravity, weight vs. mass). To facilitate student understanding of the words, the teacher pronounced them and generated examples.

Site Visit Summary: Campus G

A two-day site visit to Campus G took place during May 2010. The site visit included interviews with key personnel and observations of classroom activities. The site evaluator conducted interviews with the principal and with the district's director of curriculum and special programs. In addition, two teacher focus groups were conducted: one included teachers who attended TALA ELA Academies and the other included teachers who attended the TALA Content Area Academies. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, observations of five ELA and content area classrooms were conducted. Table G.1 lists the number of participants in each site visit activity.

Table G.1. Number of Campus G Participants in Each Site Visit Activity

Interviews	
School/District Administrators	2
Focus Groups	
ELA Teachers	4
Content Teachers – Math	2
Content Teachers – Science	1
Content Teachers – Social Studies	1
Classroom Observations	
ELA Classrooms	3
Content Classrooms – Science	1
Content Classrooms – Math	1
TEA Reported TALA Academy Attendance	
ELA Teachers	7
Content Area Teachers	7

Table G.2 provides a summary of campus characteristics, including location, student enrollment, and student characteristics. Table G.3 provides a summary of campus academic achievement including student performance on TAKS-Reading and campus accountability rating from 2007–08 to 2009–10.

Table G.2. Summary of Campus G Characteristics

General Characteristics	
Grade Levels	6-8
Geographic Location	Suburban
Student Enrollment	343
Student Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African-American	1.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.3%
Hispanic	9.0%
Native American	0.9%
White	88.6%
Student Population (%)	
Economically Disadvantaged	39.7%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	0.0%
At-Risk	41.4%
Mobility (2007–08)	11.4%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Table G.3. Summary of Campus G Academic Performance

	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Grade 6 TAKS-Reading	90%	94%	80%
Grade 7 TAKS-Reading	85%	85%	88%
Grade 8 TAKS-Reading	95%	97%	92%
Campus Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Recognized

Note: The percentages listed represent the percentage of students at the campus who met the standard in TAKS reading.
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10

Overview of TALA Experience at this Campus

ELA/Reading Curriculum

The current ELA/reading curriculum at Campus G included components from the Success for All (SFA) and CSCOPE programs and included the use of teacher-selected textbooks. The district administrator reported that the elementary and intermediate campuses in the district had used the SFA reading program for two years. The principal reported that Grade 6 students used a version of the SFA program called The Edge. The administrator added that some components of the SFA program, along with textbooks, were used for the Grade 7 students, and parts of the CSCOPE program were used for Grade 8 students. The administrator noted that the 2009–10 school year was the first year that CSCOPE had been used. The district administrator stated that some parts of the SFA program were "very good" and focused on cooperative learning and visual aids. However, the SFA requirement to group students by ability and move students to new groups as they progressed was incompatible with the junior high class schedules. The district administrator also noted that the Grade 7 and 8 teachers were not included in the SFA training, but participated in vertical team meetings in which they were exposed to the program's strategies. Teachers reported that they did not follow a particular program, but instead selected textbooks and CSCOPE lessons to facilitate the scope and sequence required by the state.

Other Literacy Intervention Programs at Campus G

To improve literacy skills for their struggling readers, Campus G provided reading labs which utilized a computer based program called My Reading Coach. The principal reported that 12-13 students attended a specific class in which they received the intervention. According to the administrator, struggling students were identified through classroom performance (i.e., reading ability) and TAKS scores. Students selected for the intervention took the class in lieu of an elective. The district administrator commented that the My Reading Coach program was intended to help students identified for special education come closer to grade level.

Non-TALA Professional Development Activities

Many professional development opportunities were available for teachers at Campus G through the ESC, the district, and at the campus. The principal reported that the campus was part of the science collaborative at the ESC. Participation in the collaborative provided the school with a math consultant who delivered coaching to the schools' teachers. The principal added that social studies teachers had used the "History Live" program, ELA teachers had completed the "Writing Diamond" program for Grades 6 and 7, and more. Teachers reported attending

professional development for English as a Second Language (ESL) strategies and sheltered instruction. They added that the district also helped teachers during vertical alignment teams.

ELA teachers reported that the focus of much of their professional development was to make sure they were facilitating learning for all students. Teachers reported that the instructional programs provided at the TALA trainings were very similar to the SFA approach. Teachers characterized TALA training as "more comprehensive" than the SFA training. For example, one teacher stated that TALA training was "more hands-on" than other programs. Another said that TALA "broke down the strategies" and provided components for both writing and fluency assessment.

Content teachers stated that their professional development was organized by subject and included reading and comprehension strategies. One math teacher stated that the department had started calling their classes "the second reading class" in acknowledgement of the importance of reading skills for math success. Teachers also reported attending Six Traits Plus One training, Ernest Educational Concepts training offered by the district, and the Journaling for Science workshops, among others. All of the content teachers reported that they had attended some sort of training that focused on literacy skills (e.g., main ideas, graphic organizers, journaling, successful grouping, etc.) and that the training was helpful. One math teacher stated, "The [math] test has become [made up of] word problems. If they cannot read them, they cannot do them."

TALA Professional Development Activities

At the time of the site visit, TEA reported that seven ELA teachers and seven content area teachers from Campus G had attended TALA academies. Administrators agreed with one another that participation in the TALA academies was mandated for all core teachers. The district administrator reported that three additional days of TALA training were provided for teachers at the school. The administrator added that the decision to mandate the training was made in consultation with the campus principal and an ESC consultant and based on the expectation that it would be very beneficial and that there would be a stipend provided. ELA and content area teachers agreed that they heard about TALA from the principal. A content area teacher reported that the principal "strongly suggested" attendance. Other teachers stated that positive reports of the TALA strategies and the provision of the stipend were motivators. In all, about 50% of the teachers at Campus G attended the TALA academies.

Satisfaction with the ELA Academy

All of the ELA teachers reported that they were satisfied with the TALA academy they attended. One teacher commented that the sample lessons that were included were beneficial and should be kept. Other teachers agreed that the lessons were beneficial and said even more hands-on practice would improve the Academy.

Satisfaction with the Content Area Academy

Content area teachers also reported satisfaction with the TALA academies and commented on the presentation and the content. They also discussed their efforts to include some of the strategies in their classes. One teacher stated that the academy had a "good presenter." Several teachers felt the content was useful. In particular, teachers stated that the scaffolding routines were great. Another teacher stated that the pairing and ranking strategies were "gold"

and other teachers agreed. Several teachers also commented on the vocabulary routines and how they fit well with the content areas. For example, teachers commented that in science classes, many terms are new and students struggle with the vocabulary. Teachers added that they also used everyday vocabulary to help prepare students for TAKS.

TALA Administrator Training

The district administrator attended the TALA administrator overview and stated that the session provided information about the teacher Academies. The administrator reported that participation in the overview made her more familiar with the TALA content and the structure of the Academies. The principal was unaware that an administrator overview had been available, and commented that the district had provided a written general overview of what would be included in the TALA academies and had recommended that teachers attend.

> "In hindsight, I wish my principal had gone. I will look at that for next year. We need either the assistant principal or principal to do that. That would help with the consistency of implementation."
>
> - District Administrator

Implementation of TALA Strategies and Routines in the Classroom

> "I am constantly giving them the opportunity to practice. Eventually, they do it on their own. That's the goal."
>
> - Teacher

All teachers who were interviewed noted that scaffolding and modeling were commonly used at Campus G. One teacher commented that a lot of what happens is "not exactly TALA, but very close," including something similar to the think/pair/share routine. Content area teachers stated that they implemented various levels of the explicit instructional routines. For example, one math teacher had incorporated a "daily math mini" quiz with five problems. The purpose of the activity was to give students an opportunity to practice solving problems daily. The teacher stated that at first the problems were modeled, but that eventually students completed the problems on their own. Another teacher stated that explicit instructional routines were used three to four days a week depending on the lesson. Science and math teachers stated they used the routines often. For example, a science teacher stated that it was common to demonstrate first, before students did lab work.

Both ELA and content area teachers reported using the vocabulary instructional routines. One ELA teacher reported using the Frayer Model weekly; another said it was used some of the time. A third ELA teacher stated that a graphic organizer similar to the Frayer Model which included examples, synonyms, and antonyms was used as needed.

> "I do not teach all the words at the beginning of the lesson. It is more of a discovery thing. They come to it when they come to it. The vocabulary was one of my favorite things in the training."
>
> - Teacher

All of the content area teachers reported using some form of the vocabulary instructional routines. Two teachers stated that they used the Frayer Model or examples and non-examples occasionally. One teacher commented that the Frayer Model was ideal when two things were being compared (e.g., physical properties vs. chemical properties). Two other teachers stated that they used examples more than non-examples. One of them explained that non-examples were more difficult and sometimes confused the students. Another content area teacher stated that although vocabulary was stressed during classes, the Frayer Model was not used. Instead,

students were given vocabulary words every day to learn and practice. The teacher provided a new vocabulary word each day and on Thursdays students were quizzed on all the words they received during the current week. Some of the teachers were concerned about comments made during the TALA academies regarding students learning 17 words a day. One teacher thought that meant that each class should include 17 new words, and stated that that was too many. Several other teachers explained that the number provided at the academy included new words learned in all classes. Teachers agreed that that was more reasonable.

ELA teachers reported doing the comprehension instructional routines at least weekly. One said that students were asked to find evidence from their textbooks every day. Content area teachers also reported using the comprehension instructional routines. One described using warm up questions to begin all new lessons and also using the "get the gist" routine weekly. The teacher stated that questions were used to build background knowledge and stimulate interest, but added that these questions were completed verbally and not written. A math teacher stated that students were often asked to identify key terms in math questions.

Only a few teachers reported using the word study instructional routines. One teacher stated that a chart of prefixes and suffixes provided at the TALA academies was really good. Students used information from the chart to determine how to separate words into parts. The teacher explained that the information on the chart stated that if students knew these prefixes and suffixes, they would be able to understand about 90% of what they needed to know. The teacher added that the school had even discussed assigning the top 20 prefixes and suffixes from the chart by grade so that students understood them all. The teacher added, "We did not follow up on it, but we should." Other teachers also assisted students in identifying prefixes and suffixes. One teacher commented that students used prefixes and suffixes every few weeks.

> "I used the Florida State Reading Program (link from TALA). There were all kinds of games and activities."
>
> - Teacher

Teachers reported that they had not done the inferential comprehension routines very often. One teacher reported completing the routines "last year after teachers got back from a training session" and that it had been very successful. Another stated, "We have not done it much this year; I have not thought about it again." A final teacher commented that even though the formal routine was not being used, teachers modeled the process of generating questions for students often.

Teachers reported that during the 2008–09 school year all Grade 6 and 7 students completed the TMSFA and that during the 2009–10 school year, the assessments were used only with struggling readers who participated in the reading labs. These students were tested at the beginning of the year and were scheduled to be tested again at the end of the year. The teacher added that student scores were available to all teachers. One teacher stated that there was no way to do the testing in the room full of students when they were talking. The teacher believed that for the next school year (2010–11) a new reading lab for Grade 6 would allow the school to pull individual students and "get back to it because it does help to have the information."

Preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers

Administrators and teachers believed that the TALA academies highlighted the necessity for helping struggling readers. The district administrator reported that teachers learned new skills at the Academies that would help struggling readers. Teachers stated that the materials received at TALA gave them new things to try to facilitate student learning. For example, one teacher reported using hands-on activities that other teachers at TALA had recommended. The content area teachers also thought that the information provided at the TALA academies was very helpful. One teacher stated that TALA provided new strategies that "really made sense" to struggling students. Another teacher stated that simply learning how to identify students who were struggling was a big help. All of the content area teachers agreed that TALA participation made them more aware of their struggling readers.

Support for the Implementation of TALA Instructional Strategies and Routines

The teachers and administrators agreed that the primary form of encouragement and support for TALA was provided when administrators asked teachers to attend the Academies. In addition, the principal reported that some cross curricular student activities had been designed. For example, in one assignment, a social studies teacher and an English teacher collaborated and created a project for students to complete. Students received grades in both classes. The administrator stated that several similar cross-curricular assignments had been completed on all grade levels. The principal added that during staff meetings, ELA teachers had presented some of the routines and strategies (e.g., think/pair/share and group work) to the other staff. According to the principal and the district administrator, no other policies regarding TALA instructional routines had been implemented. In terms of resources, the principal reported the purchase of books that had some of the strategies in them (e.g., writer's handbooks for use in Grade 6). Teachers agreed that the administrators had supported the implementation of TALA by requesting that they attend. Administrators also set up reading labs for struggling readers and used the TMSFA data to refer students to the reading labs.

Although teachers agreed that administrators at Campus G were supportive regarding TALA implementation, they described additional needs. Teachers mentioned that additional time "to digest the material would be good." Another teacher stated, "We got a lot of material in the middle of the summer." Teachers added that to be expected to "flip back through it as we were preparing for school was a lot." Teachers also felt that reminders to implement the strategies would be useful. One teacher commented that for the "Thinking Maps" program, a coordinator put reminders in the teachers' mail boxes. The teacher recommended that TALA be facilitated in the same way. Another teacher stated that additional collaboration would improve implementation. The teacher stated that it would be "nice to get together with the teachers who were getting ready to go to TALA academies and brief them on what they were going to see. Then after they participated, we could have gotten together and talked about it."

Administrators reported that they worked diligently to provide general support to teachers. The principal stated that the school made every effort to put English classes in the biggest classrooms, and administrators worked diligently to get technology into the classrooms (e.g., interactive boards and projectors). However, administrators reported that nothing had been done specifically for TALA. The district administrator stated that there were no specific needs that she could think of but wondered if having an administrator "on the ground" to support TALA and act as a cheerleader might have facilitated greater schoolwide support of the initiative. Teachers agreed that it would be helpful if administrators provided reminders. Teachers also

agreed that coming back after the training and trying to pick and choose what to use was difficult. They added, "If we had had a chart or something with all the strategies it would have been better; a big picture would have helped."

Collaboration with other teachers

Although teachers reported that they had not shared materials with teachers who had not attended TALA academies, they did report collaboration with both ELA and content area teachers who had attended the Academies. Some of the ELA teachers reported that they attended the TALA academies together. Two teachers also stated that they had team taught the previous year and used TALA instructional routines. Several of the content area teachers also attended the TALA academies together. They reported collaborating with other content area teachers. One teacher commented that the collaboration was "mostly individual, informal collaboration." Content area teachers also reported collaboration with ELA teachers. For example, one content area teacher stated that teachers met every Friday by grade. The teacher added that if there were questions, the ELA teachers were available. No collaboration with administrators was reported.

> "I consider the English/Reading teachers the TALA experts. For me, I am amazed when I have students who cannot read or write well, but who is a genius at math. I work with the ELA/R teacher to try and find strategies that will help them"
>
> - Teacher

Facilitators to Implementation

The district administrator reported that the ESC consultant had been very helpful and added, "I believe she came out and spoke to our principal and the staff about TALA and gave them an overview. That meant they did not have to just walk in cold. She was very good at supporting us, but an administrator who was trained would be better." The principal added that TALA did have a place at the campus and said, "I think that we had been doing some good things. We brought from that specific training some very good ideas. We pulled them and made them ours and put them in place. We did not do it campus-wide, but each individual teacher took some of those strategies and used them. This training was jam-packed with a lot of good ideas. It helped them have some common language. This is what we do, and this is what we call it. I guess if we did one thing campus-wide that was stressed, it was pair and group work." Teachers added that the stipend was a good thing. One teacher said, "It was a reminder that there was money hanging over us IF we implemented the strategy." The teacher added that "it was good that it was not just at the beginning of the year. It helped to keep teachers engaged." Content area teachers agreed that the TALA training brought the idea of supporting struggling readers to the forefront.

Barriers to Implementation

The biggest barrier to implementation was time. The district administrator stated that it takes more time for teachers to modify their lessons to include parts of multiple strategies. The administrator explained that "sometimes teachers may think it is easier to just pick one thing and implement it. That's not always the best thing to do. They need to pick and choose. If they pick

> "The whole fluency issue fell through the cracks in my class. I have a room full of kids and there is no way to do the testing in the room when they are talking."
>
> - Teacher

the textbook, but do not implement the TALA strategies that could be embedded, or if they use CSCOPE and do not adjust things, that is not the best option. I think a lot of it is time. It's easier

to pick one thing and run with it." The administrator stated that to provide teachers with more time to collaborate, all math teachers had training periods together. The administrator commented that it might be beneficial to do the same thing for the other content area teachers.

Other barriers cited by teachers at Campus G included forgetting to incorporate TALA strategies and behavioral management issues that would impede the use of TALA strategies. Teachers reported successfully using strategies one year and then not even thinking about it the next (i.e., question routines). Teachers commented that reminders would be helpful. One teacher stated that having a graphic organizer of all the strategies with examples of how to use them would be helpful.

Perceived Effects of TALA Program Activities

Desired outcomes and evidence of occurrence

Administrators hoped that participation in TALA academies would change instruction at Campus G in ways that resulted in better student success. The district administrator stated that teachers had more data regarding student literacy skills because of the TMSFA. The administrator also said that data from the TMSFA helped teachers better understand why students were struggling and how to target interventions. The principal hoped that teachers would implement the strategies to help students be more successful and more confident. The principal also hoped that cross-curricular activities would help students see the connection between the subjects (social studies, English, science, and math). Some results were evident. The principal stated that since TALA, teachers seemed more aware of the need for students to use complete sentences, and stressed this to students. In regards to evidence of student improvement, the district administrator reported that TAKS scores in Grade 6 went down during the 2009–10 school year, but added that the test was also more rigorous than the year before.

Effect on teachers' literacy practices

Several teachers stated that participation in the TALA academies changed their literacy practices. ELA teachers reported that participation in TALA changed the way they did grouping, background knowledge (i.e., Anticipation-Reaction Guides), think/pair/share scaffolding, and mind movies. One teacher stated that before TALA, grouping was not done at all. Another teacher stated that she "would not want to use the Frayer Model for every vocabulary word, but that it was nice to have it to use. Otherwise, the students would get bored." Content teachers agreed that literacy practices had changed. One stated that the Frayer Model had not been used before TALA. Two other teachers stated that their awareness of struggling students had increased and changed their classroom practices. One teacher stated, "It is a big deal. Just being aware has changed things." Another teacher stated that before TALA, the focus had been on dates and facts. The teacher said, "Now, I want them to comprehend it and connect it to other information." The teacher added, "I'm trying to be more cross-curricular in what I do."

> "Changing things up, and not just doing things the same way all the time makes a difference. Having several different ways to go is good."
>
> - Teacher

Effect on ability to influence student achievement

The district administrator said that TALA met a need for junior high ELA teachers who had been unprepared for identifying the "holes" in students' literacy by remedying the deficits. Participation in the TALA academies taught teachers how to do basic phonics and decoding routines to help the struggling students. Teachers agreed that TALA made a difference. One teacher stated that TALA strategies helped her "work on grade level in the class and still help struggling students." The principal agreed that the active learning techniques discussed at the Academies would help by getting students to work together.

Differential Benefit among Groups of Struggling Readers

When asked about differential benefits among particular groups of struggling readers, teachers' and the principal's opinions differed. Teachers believed that all struggling students benefited equally. One teacher stated that TALA worked "across the board." In contrast, the principal stated that students who struggled due to low socioeconomic status (SES) might see a greater benefit due to increased participation. The administrator added that low SES students had "something to offer," but sometimes participated at lower levels than non-disadvantaged students.

Sustainability of TALA Activities

Administrators and teachers agreed that TALA instructional routines were a good fit with the schoolwide literacy efforts at Campus G. The district administrator stated that TALA provided additional tools and strategies that could be implemented in all classrooms to improve students' reading abilities. The administrator added, "The content teachers may never have thought about it, but now they know that they need to also teach reading. They have a better picture of the struggles that students face." The principal agreed that TALA was part of the schoolwide plan, and stated, "The group work and getting kids to work together has made a difference, and I think all of our teachers have bought into that."

Teachers reported that TALA instructional strategies were being used widely and that students were familiar with the routines. One teacher noted that she had recently used the Frayer Model for the first time in the current semester. When the model was drawn on the board, students knew what it was and how to complete it. The teacher stated that students were familiar with the graphic organizer because they used them in math, English, and science. Another teacher stated that TALA posters on the Frayer Model, "leveled" questions, and "getting the gist" were on display in her room. The teacher added, "They are good strategies and we use them even if we do not always call them by the same name."

Although the principal and district administrator stated that the routines were being used, the administrators commented on some of the challenges faced in continued implementation without training. The principal noted a concern that without ongoing training there would not be anyone who was "pushing TALA" at the school. The administrator stated that previous efforts to support and encourage TALA strategies (e.g., graphic organizers) were conducted by a teacher who had since left the campus and added, "I do not want us to forget the good things that we have done last year and this year. We want to push it forward and make sure everyone understands why we are doing as well as we are." The district administrator stated that successful implementation of TALA instructional routines should include training for teachers at all grade levels. The administrator added that ELA teachers from all grade levels had annual

meetings to discuss curriculum, tests, interventions, and related topics. The joint meetings highlighted the importance of the efforts of teachers at all grade levels. TALA was on the agenda for one of those meetings. The administrator suggested that teachers at all levels would benefit from the TALA strategies.

Administrators agreed that TALA was very important to the future success of students at Campus G. The district administrator believed that the tools provided by TALA were important if teachers were going to improve Tier I instruction, and stated, "I really wish we had gotten on board with this more." They also wished that the school had implemented TALA more broadly, and stated that to principal improve student success, it was important to keep best practices in front of teachers at all times.

Classroom Observations

During the site visit at Campus G, five classrooms were observed: three ELA classrooms and two content area classrooms. Table G.4 summarizes the number of classrooms in which different TALA strategies were observed.

Table G.4. Number of Campus G Classrooms in Which Each TALA Strategy was Observed

TALA Strategy	ELA Classrooms (N=3)	Content Area Classrooms (N=2)
General Instructional	3	2
Vocabulary	2	2
Comprehension	1	0
Word Study	1	N/A
Fluency	0	N/A
Inferential Comprehension	0	N/A

ELA classrooms

Three ELA area classrooms were observed at Campus G. Classes averaged 12 students and all had only one teacher present. Observations lasted about 35 minutes.

In the first ELA observation, TALA general strategies were observed as students read and discussed a novel (i.e., Big Joe's Funeral). At the beginning of the observation, the teacher asked for volunteers to read. Students and the teacher took turns reading paragraphs. Every student took a turn reading and all were ready when called on by name. The class was engaged and talkative before and after the reading practice. Next, the teacher provided Anticipation-Reaction Guides to students. Statements on the guides were factual (e.g., "The funeral took place on Christmas Eve."). Students were asked to decide whether the statement was true or false and to find the evidence for their responses from within the text. Students were also asked to record the paragraph number where they found their evidence. The teacher modeled the first item on the guide and then students worked independently to complete the rest of the items. Students worked quietly and consistently at the task. When the final student had completed the guide, the teacher and the students discussed the items and then turned in the handout. Throughout the observation, the teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and by providing positive feedback. Corrective feedback was also provided. For example, the teacher restated a phrase for one student who had read it incorrectly.

In the second ELA classroom, the students practiced reading and discussed passages from a novel entitled *Yankee Blue or Rebel Gray? The Civil War Adventures of Tom Shaw*. Vocabulary, comprehension, and general TALA routines were observed during the observation. At the beginning of the observation, the teacher addressed an incident that had happened during the previous class period. A student was disciplined for using the word "raunchy" out of context. The teacher used the incident as a real world example of the importance of understanding the meaning of words. The teacher next moved to "popcorn reading" practice during which she called on students by name to read a paragraph. In addition, the teacher pointed out to students how the book that they were reading aligned with social studies subjects. The students asked questions when they did not understand the words. The teacher pronounced the academic vocabulary and provided students with everyday language (e.g., seceded means left the union). In addition, the teacher performed a "think aloud" to model for students that they should be curious about what they will read next. The teacher asked students to identify the primary focus of the novel and also requested that they provide main ideas aloud for some of the paragraphs. During the last part of the observation, students continued reading silently. The teacher circulated and answered questions as necessary.

During the final ELA observation, students worked in small groups to determine the possible meanings of made up words. TALA general, vocabulary, and word study instructional strategies were observed. Students began the class with word study tasks. A made up word was posted on the board and students were asked to consider the parts of the word and what it might mean. Students were asked to create a definition for the word and support their reasoning. Students worked independently to complete the task. After the students had prepared their definitions, the teacher asked for volunteers to share their answers with the class. Students provided answers based on the parts of the words they could identify. Next, root words were added to Frayer Model graphic organizers. The teacher modeled how the word "graph" could be understood with the use of a Frayer Model. The teacher added the root word to the organizer and then asked students to turn to a partner and share what they thought the root word meant. After that, students were asked to provide examples and non-examples of the word to the class. The teacher and students discussed several other academic words that included graph as a root (e.g., autograph, cartography, and monograph). For the remainder of the observation, students worked in groups of three to complete another Frayer Model. The teacher assisted students as necessary. The teacher engaged students by calling on them by name.

Content area classrooms

Two content area classrooms were observed at Campus G. The first class had 18 students and the second included 17. Each class had one teacher present, and the observations lasted about 35 minutes each.

During the first content area classroom observation, TALA general and vocabulary instructional strategies were observed as students studied math. At the beginning of the observation, the teacher used a Frayer Model to help students understand math concepts. The teacher used a document camera to project the graphic organizer and students were eager to participate. The teacher connected the current lesson to previous lessons and guided students through the process of using inverse operations to isolate variables. During the observation, the teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and also provided corrective feedback when necessary. For example, the teacher redirected two students who had their heads down on their desks. One student was excused to the nurses office and the other paid closer attention to the

lesson. For the remainder of the observation, students worked on homework problems. The teacher circulated to monitor their progress and answer questions as needed.

The second content area classroom observation was a science lab in which TALA general and vocabulary instructional routines were observed. The teacher used a Smartboard and reviewed the topics of chemical and physical changes. The teacher requested that students "write a great definition" for each term. They worked in pairs and then volunteers put the definitions on the whiteboard. Additional students added details to the original definitions. Students were next asked to work with a partner to make a list of what happens when a chemical change has taken place. They were also called on by name to provide examples and non-examples. For the next part of the observation, students worked in two groups and completed a lab activity. Sugar was placed on a piece of foil and then held over a candle. The teacher monitored both groups carefully and answered questions as necessary. When the activity was completed, students returned to their desks and worked on review questions. During the observation, the science teacher connected topics to the students' math classes (e.g., ratio). In addition, the students learned both academic (e.g., malleable) and content-specific (e.g., element, compound) vocabulary words.

Site Visit Summary: Campus H

A two-day site visit to Campus H took place during May 2010. The site visit included interviews with key personnel and observations of classroom activities. The site evaluator conducted interviews with the assistant principal who was in charge of the ELA program and with the district's secondary reading instructional coordinator and language arts dean. In addition, two teacher focus groups were conducted; one included teachers who attended TALA ELA Academies and the other included science and social studies teachers who attended the TALA Content Area Academies. One math teacher who attended the TALA Content Academy was interviewed after the classroom observation. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, observations of six ELA and content area classrooms were conducted. Table H.1 lists the number of participants in each site visit activity.

Table H.1. Number of Campus H Participants in Each Site Visit Activity

Interviews	
School Administrators	1
District Administrators	2
Focus Groups	
ELA Teachers	3
Content Teachers – Science	2
Content Teachers – Social Studies	1
Classroom Observations	
ELA Classrooms	4
Content Classrooms – Science	1
Content Classrooms – Math	1
TEA Reported TALA Academy Attendance	
ELA Teachers	19
Content Area Teachers	15

Table H.2 provides a summary of campus characteristics, including location, student enrollment, and student characteristics. Table H.3 provides a summary of campus academic achievement including student performance on TAKS-Reading and campus accountability rating from 2007–08 to 2009–10.

Table H.2. Summary of Campus H Characteristics

General Characteristics	
Grade Levels	6-8
Geographic Location	Rural
Student Enrollment	1,272
Student Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African-American	0.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0%
Hispanic	99.9%
Native American	0.0%
White	0.0%
Student Population (%)	
Economically Disadvantaged	99.9%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	57.9%
At-Risk	70.5%
Mobility (2007–08)	17.4%

Table H.3. Summary of Campus H Academic Performance

	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
Grade 6 TAKS-Reading	71%	71%	63%
Grade 7 TAKS-Reading	64%	61%	65%
Grade 8 TAKS-Reading	78%	81%	74%
Campus Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable

Note: The percentages listed represent the percentage of students at the campus who met the standard in TAKS reading.
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10

Overview of TALA Experience at this Campus

ELA/Reading Curriculum

The current EA/Reading curriculum in use at Campus H is CSCOPE. An administrator reported that the district had used CSCOPE for two years and piloted use of the program the year before that. Teachers added that CSCOPE had lessons that aligned to the required scope and sequence. One of the ELA teachers added that additional materials were sometimes used to increase student interest.

Other Literacy Intervention Programs at Campus H

Students at Campus H had multiple literacy intervention programs in use. Students were matched with different resources based on their scores from the TAKS. For example, district administrators reported that Read180 was used for students who scored 1900-2100 on the reading portion of the TAKS, and Creative Education Institute Labs (CEI) was provided for students who scored 1800-1900 on the test. The assistant principal added that within the school, an Integrated Skills class was offered that worked as a TAKS practice course. In it, teachers focused on individual student needs. Students were grouped by TAKS status and specific needs (e.g., Special Ed status and specific needs such as decoding or fluency).

Non-TALA Professional Development Activities

Teachers at Campus H were offered many professional development opportunities. The assistant principal reported that topics included differentiated instruction (i.e., RTI), lesson planning, and collaborative grouping. The professional development sessions were all offered by their ESC. The district also provided professional development opportunities. The district trains the principal and then the principal does the turnaround training for teachers. The assistant principal noted that at the beginning of the current school year (i.e., 2009–10), there was a training session on dignity and respect, and on curriculum by subject area. Ongoing professional development for CSCOPE was also provided every six weeks. Teachers met in department meetings where master teachers presented upcoming lessons and strategized about how best to teach them.

District administrators stated that professional development was provided for the Read180 and CEI literacy intervention programs. For CEI, a representative came at the beginning and middle of the year and each month to check on the reading labs. For Read180, the training was

provided by district personnel or by veteran teachers. Master teachers do the training at each campus. The administrator stated that the programs were very prescriptive and that the TEKS were embedded. In addition, professional development was provided for the new TEKS related to ELPS and for the Thinking Maps curriculum.

TALA Professional Development Activities

A district administrator stated that emails were sent to school principals informing them that TMSFA testing was mandatory. In order to do the testing, schools had to send ELA staff to receive training. For the content areas, it was harder to get teachers to attend because it was not mandated. Also, because it was summer, many teachers were home with their children, back in school continuing their education, or teaching in summer programs. The assistant principal agreed that teachers did not want to attend training during the summer because of other commitments.

Teachers reported that they were strongly encouraged or mandated to attend the TALA academies. ELA teachers reported that they heard about the Academies through emails from their department heads. One teacher stated that the training was something the department heads thought was important. Another stated, "My name appeared on the list, so I needed to attend." Content area teachers stated that they heard about the TALA academies from the principal.

From the campus, there were varying reports on the number of teachers attending TALA. The assistant principal at Campus H estimated that 20 teachers attended the TALA academies; overall, the school employs 97 teachers, including those who teach elective courses. Alternately, a district administrator reported that there were three training sessions in the district during the first year, each of which was attended by 20 teachers. In 2009, the content area teachers went and the TMSFA training was held again. The administrator added that none of the district's Grade 8 teachers had attended. According to the same administrator, throughout the district, about 50-60% of the ELA teachers had been trained and 20% of the content area teachers and that overall, about 40% of all of the teachers had attended the TALA academies. Data from TEA indicated that 34 teachers from Campus H attended TALA academies, 19 ELA teachers and 15 content area teachers.

Teachers reported similarities and differences between the TALA academies and other professional development sessions. Teachers agreed that some of the content provided at the TALA academies was similar to sessions they previously attended. For example, a few teachers commented that there was quite a bit of overlap between the TALA instructional routines and the differentiated instruction training. Similarities included word walls and the idea of adapting instruction for different skill levels within a single class. One content area teacher stated that the concepts were similar, but that the activities were new. The teacher specified that the think/pair/share, the Frayer Model, and syllabication were new strategies. Differences in the pace of the presentation were also noted. One teacher commented that the pace of the TALA academies was very fast, with little time to assimilate the new information.

Satisfaction with the ELA Academy

Administrators reported that many teachers were very happy with the training – especially with the content. The administrator stated that two TALA academy trainers worked at Campus H, and stated, "When we do revisions for our curriculum, they make sure that the strategies are

incorporated. One of the trainers also helps plan the district-wide curriculum revisions during the summer. We are working to include the TALA strategies, but at the moment it is informal." ELA teachers also reported that they were very satisfied with the content of the Academies, but added that the pace of the delivery was too fast. Teachers also stated that additional training would be beneficial. A new ELA teacher acknowledged no basis for comparison, but stated that there was a lot of good material and that she liked the Academy. The teacher added that more time or less content would improve the training.

> "The pace of the TALA workshop was too fast; I found that everything was compressed. It was at warp drive."
>
> - Teacher

> "I hadn't been to any other literacy training. I liked all of the ideas. I grasped different parts of it, but didn't get all of it because they just provided an overview."
>
> - Teacher

Another ELA teacher characterized the content of the TALA academy as "insightful," and stated, "It showed me how to teach my 7th graders how to read. I do not typically do that. I teach comprehension and critical thinking skills. However, we have students who need to be taught more basic tasks like the sounds of the letters. I had never been taught that before. I just taught assuming or wanting the kids to be on level. I think it was a great introduction, and I would like more." The teacher added that the TALA academies provided more of an overview to the instructional routines and strategies than training. All of the other ELA teachers agreed.

Satisfaction with the Content Area Academy

Content area teachers also reported that they were satisfied with the material provided at the TALA Content Academy. Teachers reported that hands-on activities, vocabulary routines, and new ways of grouping students were beneficial. Teachers also mentioned possible improvements for the sessions. One teacher focused on vocabulary improvement after the TALA academy. The teacher cut down the number of words for each unit and gave students simple definitions to use in everyday language. The teacher reported that the vocabulary words were tied to TEKS objectives. Another teacher agreed that vocabulary was "a big issue" at Campus H. The teachers reported using the Frayer Model to define the scientific method, using more examples in class and adding hands-on activities to stress important concepts.

> "The hands on activities are memorable for me because I am a kinesthetic learner. The things that I learned by doing are also the things I am most likely to use in class."
>
> - Teacher

For future TALA academies, teachers recommended organizing the Content Academies by subject areas. One teacher commented that the content training was general and that it would have been better to have all science teachers together. Another teacher agreed and stated, "Grouping the teachers together by subject would have allowed teachers to brainstorm about the best way to use the strategies and routines." A second suggestion was related to addressing more learning styles. One teacher stated, "It would also have been good to include visual and auditory exercises. That would help teachers help those learners, too." A final set of recommendations related to the timing of the TALA trainings. Teachers recommended that the training be completed in the fall or the spring rather than summer. Many of the teachers at Campus H also taught summer school. That meant that they had to miss classes to attend the TALA academies. One teacher stated that the training should be done in May, right after the TAKS, or right before school starts. Another teacher agreed with the last

suggestion and stated, "I went to training in August and so it was easy to come back and implement it."

The district administrators confirmed that teachers were very happy with the TALA Content Area Academies. One administrator stated that the content teachers (e.g., social studies or science) have noted that the strategies can be used in their classes. The administrator stated, "They did not think they could be a reading teacher, but now they see they can do this." The administrator also reported hearing that students were having success with the strategies; when strategies were implemented correctly, the students were successful." A final comment from the administrator was that teachers said that they were already doing many of the strategies before attending TALA.

TALA Administrator Training

The assistant principal at Campus H attended the TALA ELA Academy as a teacher. The administrator attended to receive assistance on how to teach students with LEP. The administrator stated that the school had a large LEP population and that language problems often led to other issues (e.g., discipline). The administrator had not heard about the administrator overview. Neither of the district administrators who were interviewed attended the administrator overview. However, one administrator stated that four content area Deans (i.e., science, social studies, math, and ELA) attended the TALA teacher trainings.

> "I attended the training as a teacher. I loved it. I can honestly tell you that if I had not gone as a teacher, I would be clueless. If there was training for administrators during the summer, I did not know about it."
>
> - Assistant Principal

Implementation of TALA Strategies and Routines in the Classroom

Both ELA and content area teachers used the explicit instructional routines often. An ELA teacher reported using the scaffolding daily and mentioned that modeling was part of the CSCOPE curriculum. Content area teachers also reported high use of modeling. One stated, "I model often. I start with general topic of the day and they answer questions. With that information, I know what to show. After that, I give them a mini quiz, and then we go to lab." A social studies teacher reported that when students learn about a country, the class discusses it, they watch a video, and then the students complete an activity about what they had learned. The teacher noted that the short videos were like modeling.

Teachers reported that every classroom at the school posted a word of the day and that instruction for the words of the day included examples and non-examples. The Frayer Model was also mentioned by ELA and content area teachers. One ELA teacher noted that the students liked the Frayer Model and stated that it was used "consistently, but not daily." All of

> "I do not teach all the words at the beginning of the lesson. It is more of a discovery thing. They come to it when they come to it. The vocabulary was one of my favorite things in the training."
>
> - Teacher

the content area teachers reported that they used a modified version of the Frayer Model for vocabulary occasionally.

Teachers reported that the comprehension instruction routines were used often. One ELA teacher stated that connecting students with prior knowledge and looking for main ideas were used any time the students worked with novels. The teacher added that students had read eight

novels during the current school year. Another ELA teacher said the routines were used whenever students started a new story which was about twice each week. A content area teacher reported identifying background knowledge "quite a bit" and stated, "A lot of topics we are covering come from sixth grade. I try to refresh their memory." A social studies teacher stated that students had little prior knowledge for world history and said, "I start the units with a video. That acts as their background knowledge." A math teacher stated that students were often instructed to look for main ideas in word problems and students looked for main ideas to figure out what the question was asking.

Teachers reported using all of the instructional routines for struggling readers. Word study routines were used as needed. Teachers said that students do prefix and suffix work when they struggle with a word. Another teacher stated that students are instructed to use context clues to determine word meanings and stated, "If they get stuck on a word, I use clapping to help them. Some of them get it that way." Fluency skills were also practiced each day at Campus H. An ELA teacher reported that students practiced reading every day during their Integrated Skills class. Teachers reported that generating questions was a common practice to strengthen reading skills. The routine was used throughout the year in Grade 6 and 8, but was used consistently for only half the year in Grade 7. During the other half of the Grade 7 year, teachers focused on writing skills.

> "We go over the data and determine which students need to be pulled out and who needs to do the TMSFA assessment."
>
> - District Administrator

Students at Campus H had completed the TMSFA for the last three years. Teachers reported that two years before, teachers administered the tests. Elective teachers administered the tests last year, and for the current year (2009–10), district personnel administered it with help from some teachers. Teachers added that student scores from the TMSFA were used to gauge students' skills and added that data were sometimes used as the basis for grouping. One teacher stated that books were also recommended to students based on their levels. However, teachers reported that it was more typical to group students based on TAKS scores instead of TMSFA scores. The teacher added that the school used Accelerated Reader which also provided students with a rating. Therefore, there are multiple ways in which students were grouped.

Preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers

Teachers believed that participation in TALA had prepared them to assist struggling readers. Teachers reported that paired reading and scaffolding had been especially effective strategies. An ELA teacher stated that paired reading had "worked wonders" for struggling readers. The teacher explained that the strategy allows her to walk around the room and monitor student skill levels or to "monitor from afar." The teacher sometimes paired students based on TALA suggestions and other times allowed students to self-select a partner. The teacher commented that paired reading means that "even that shy person is reading." Other teachers agreed that the partner reading was useful and that students enjoyed it. A math teacher stated that TALA strategies had helped LEP students who often struggled with word problems. The teacher thought that the think/pair/share routine had helped a lot. The teacher mentioned that students also talked about cognates from English and Spanish and were taught to use multiple approaches to determine the word problems' meaning.

Support for the Implementation of TALA Instructional Strategies and Routines

The assistant principal reported providing support to teachers by becoming familiar with the TALA instructional routines and strategies and by providing teachers with time for planning. The administrator stated that without the information provided at the TALA ELA Academy, support would have been impossible. For example, familiarity with

> "We go over the data and determine which students need to be pulled out and who needs to do the TMSFA assessment."
>
> - District Administrator

the TMSFA testing allowed the administrator to provide assistance to staff who coordinated the assessment schedule at the school. Attendance at the Academy also allowed the administrator to support teachers by understanding that they needed time to plan. The administrator commented that the school set aside a half day every few months for teachers to get together and strategize.

District administrators reported that they supported teachers by assisting with testing and data, by including content area teachers in literacy instruction, and by integrating TALA strategies and routines into the districts' curriculum. One administrator reported working closely with intervention lab teachers to retrieve data from assessments so that teachers could monitor student progress. Another district administrator commented that the TALA academies provided an easy way to include content area teachers in literacy instruction. The administrator stated, "TALA made my task of going to the campus and telling [content area teachers] that 'all teachers were reading teachers' a little easier." After TALA, they knew how to do it because they received a binder and they saw the trainers model how it should be done. Another district administrator stated that Anticipation-Reaction Guides and vocabulary routines were integrated into the curriculum and that the district now recommended pre-teaching of vocabulary.

Teachers stated that while administrators were supportive of anything that helped students or teachers at Campus H, administrators had not been especially supportive of the TALA initiative. Teachers commented that everyone at the school "had a busy load" because there were so

> "Our school is very focused on trying to meet AYP (adequate yearly progress) and the morale is low. We are going for remedies because the district is watching. I think we need more guidance from the district on how to be curriculum leaders instead of just managerial leaders or assessment administrators."
>
> - Assistant Principal

many things that teachers and administrators were required to do. Several teachers stated that administrators were not very familiar with TALA instructional routines and strategies, and added that greater awareness would likely result in expectations for more focus on TALA and less on "drill and kill." One teacher asked, "How are they going to check on us, if they do not know what it is?" Another teacher felt that administrators were more interested in the TAKS results and stated, "There is a lot of data and people go with the numbers. The quality of what you are doing should be more important."

Administrators felt that additional support was needed to fully implement the TALA instructional routines and strategies. The assistant principal believed that additional training provided at the campus would help the campus succeed. The administrator stated that the school had mandatory training at the beginning of the year and indicated that this training could easily be used for TALA instruction. The administrator added that if the districts required it, the campuses would do it. The content areas need to do it, too. The administrator also stated that receiving

TALA training schedules earlier would improve teacher attendance. The administrator said, "Last year, we were close to June before we had the information."

District administrators also believed that additional training would be beneficial. One stated that some type of additional training for administrators would be helpful and added "I have looked through the binders, but training would be better." The administrator added that "more structure and direction were needed." Specifically, more resources and training for the TMSFA were required.

Collaboration with other teachers

Minimal collaboration with other teachers or administrators was reported at Campus H. ELA teachers commented that implementation of TALA instructional routines were mostly based on individual efforts. Teachers felt that the timing of the academies worked against collaboration. One ELA teacher reported collaborating "a little bit" with one other teacher, but felt that if the department had implemented the strategies as a team, it would have been better. Another ELA teacher reported being part of a team that included two math teachers and two ELA teachers who worked with the same students. Two teachers reported collaborating with teachers on the same types of teams, but added that the collaboration was not necessarily about TALA. One content teacher explained, "I have talked with other Grade 6 teachers about the content, but only a little collaboration about the strategies." No follow up with administrators or sharing of materials with non-TALA trained teachers was reported.

Facilitators to Implementation

Administrators and teachers were asked about facilitators to TALA implementation. Administrators stated that trained personnel were an important implementation support. The assistant principal stated that having a TALA trainer of trainers had really helped. The trainer helped the department and also the teachers. The administrator reported that the trainer had gone into the classrooms and provided mini-lessons for ELA teachers. The district administrators believed that administration was "very supportive at the district and campus levels", and added that district personnel assisted with all the TMSFA testing. The administrator added that everyone who went to the training heard the same thing, which helped them get on the same page. Teachers reported that the high quality of the content facilitated implementation. An ELA teacher commented that the routines and strategies were very user friendly and not complicated. Other teachers commented that they liked the strategies presented.

Barriers to Implementation

When asked about barriers to implementation, the assistant principal said that they would like refresher training. The administrator stated that even though teachers were familiar with the strategies, they needed opportunities to share ideas, practice the strategies, and expand their use of them. A district administrator stated, "The fact that content teachers did not see themselves as reading instructors was somewhat of a barrier, but once they got the information, that barrier went away. Now they feel that they can do it." Another district administrator and teachers repeated their complaint that the training was held in the summer. Teachers also mentioned that planning

> "The summer delivery is a barrier. Also, the strategies are not very different than what we have done in the past, but some teachers are set in their ways. It is hard to get them to change."
>
> - District Administrator

period schedules sometimes made it hard to have adequate planning time. A final barrier discussed was related to student behavior. One teacher stated, "In groups, there was more talking and playing around. Group work increased behavior issues."

Perceived Effects of TALA Program Activities

Desired outcomes and evidence of occurrence

District administrators stated that many of the students at Campus H read below grade level and that the campus implemented a "big push on reading." The administrators hoped that students' reading levels would improve" and that they "would no longer struggle." The assistant principal hoped that students would "go up at least a grade level in their

> "I've been tracking my students for two years. Now that they are 8th graders, I'm seeing growth. They do more critical thinking. I think it's because the teachers are modeling it."
>
> - Assistant Principal

vocabulary scores." The administrator stated some evidence of general improvement was evident and reported that students were more eager and were getting the idea. Students working in the intervention labs were said to be making progress. An administrator stated that every year, the students averaged a year or more improvement. The administrator added that according to teachers, there was improvement because students were keeping logs, writing summaries, and doing more than just reading. In addition, students in the intervention labs had improved their skills from one to three years.

Effect on teachers' literacy practices

Teachers reported definite changes in their literacy practices after attending TALA. Specific changes were mentioned in reading instruction, vocabulary instruction, and classroom management practices. An ELA teacher noted that paired reading was a big change and felt that it was an improvement over a round robin strategy. The teacher commented that some students like the paired reading because they can move at their own pace. With the previous strategy for reading aloud, some students got frustrated having to wait for slower readers. The

> "I have actually asked the students about the paired reading. One student said, 'at least we're reading, ma'am, instead of pretending.'"
>
> - Teacher

teacher added that using the partner reading also meant that classrooms are not quiet all the time. One teacher stated, "If you're going to do these strategies, there is going to be noise. The difference is that they are not just talking, they are working." Vocabulary instruction is another area where there were changes. One teacher reported that breaking up the syllables had helped students learn more words. All the other content area teachers agreed. An ELA teacher stated, "I used to tell them to look it up, look it up when they did not know a word's meaning, but the TALA program says to give them the definitions in plain English. Now I try to give them another word for the word they do not know. It is a little more difficult; they think I am a walking dictionary."

Effect on ability to influence student achievement

The assistant principal believed that participation in the TALA academies had positively affected teachers' abilities to influence student achievement. The administrator stated that the school saw a "big impact," and added that the teachers loved the strategies and the students'

knowledge expanded. A district administrator noted that when they went to the staff development, the teachers thought they had seen the strategies before, but when they were told it was ok to do phonics and other things that typically get taught at a younger age, they felt better about it. They now know it is ok to do phonics or blending if that is what the students need. A second district administrator did not think that TALA would help "to a great extent." The administrator explained that the lessons being taught at the school were very structured and that TALA strategies were being used to support the existing lessons.

All of the ELA teachers agreed that TALA had positively affected student success. One teacher remarked, "For once, you have evidence. Students are reading better. Instead of reading by themselves, you see and know that they are reading better." Another teacher reported that "improved vocabulary was also evident" and stated, "They can figure out the prefix and suffix. It helps them grasp the understanding of the words."

> "I think the students are going to a whole new place, especially for reading. They are understanding things that I would never have dreamt that they would understand. This is happening where the strategies are being used."
>
> - Assistant Principal

A third ELA teacher stated that students were more confident now, and noted, "They struggle with words, but now they know that they are just like other students. They are working together to figure it out. They also love to go online and read at TumbleBooks.com. It's a site that lets them read along."

Content teachers agreed that TALA instructional routines had helped them better teach the struggling students. One teacher noted that TALA provided more strategies to help students, and stated, "Any little thing that can help is good. The Frayer model has been very good. I think it has helped a lot, and I feel that they will be better prepared for 8th grade." Another acknowledged that it was hard to track the progress of students who were taught with the TALA strategies. One teacher added that student progress could be tracked through assessments.

Differential Benefit among Groups of Struggling Readers

Administrators and teachers agreed that all struggling students benefited from TALA routines and strategies. The assistant principal stated, "I honestly can tell you that I have never seen as much participation from the students as we have had this year when we used all these strategies." A district administrator commented, "The struggling readers are helped when strategies are geared toward them. Some of the 7th and 8th graders do not want to do 2nd grade work, but when it is integrated into the regular classroom, they can benefit from it." Teachers agreed that students from all different skill levels benefited from the TALA instructional routines.

Sustainability of TALA Activities

Teachers said that TALA instructional routines "integrated quite well" with the school's literacy practices and goals, and an ELA teacher stated that TALA helped because teachers learned strategies to use with struggling readers. The teacher added that TALA assessments helped teachers understand where to focus and provided data for teachers to use when making decisions about how to help or group students.

> "Without the mandate to do the TMSFA, schools will say they already have too much to do and they have other tests and interventions."
>
> - District Administrator

Although administrators and teachers agreed that TALA benefited teachers and students, they also

reported some issues that might interfere with TALA implementation. The assistant principal noted a mismatch in the schools' policies for struggling readers and teacher participation in the TALA academies. The administrator explained that it was elective teachers who often worked with struggling students during the Integrated Skills class, but that the elective teachers had not participated in the TALA academies. The administrator added that the elective teachers needed to attend the training because they were the ones who had contact with the students.

The district administrators reported that they were mindful that they needed to do TALA, but that there were also other requirements for their support of the school and that the number of students who were behind had reached a level that was difficult to support. An administrator stated that the previous year was "a little different than the current year because the school was in trouble with AYP." The administrator also stated that the district made binders using the Voyager materials and delivered them to all the middle schools. The district also sustained some of what was required to implement the Reading First program. The administrator added that if students did not pass Grade 6 reading, it meant that they were as much as three grade levels behind. At that point, teachers had the choice to use the Grade 3 materials with the students. The district assigned specific teachers to work with the students individually, but there were too many students who were behind. TALA fit into this strategy because of the testing component. Another district administrator commented that TALA provided resources for teachers to pick from to support what was already in use.

District administrators stated that some components of TALA would likely be continued without future training, but that other components would be discontinued. One administrator stated that if the state dropped their mandate, it will be more difficult to continue the TMSFA testing. The administrator added that some campuses might continue using it, but others would not. Another district administrator thought that the teachers in the district would continue to use the strategies because they were "good common sense." The administrator hoped that the district would continue to do the TMSFA, but agreed that when testing is not mandated, there is less support for doing it. However, the administrator added that when teachers become familiar with the assessment and what it means, they like knowing what the students need.

The assistant principal felt that TALA was "immensely important," and stated, "If we were to implement the strategies across grade levels in all classes, the result would be amazing. If there was consistency across content areas, I can only imagine the results." The district administrators thought it "mattered a lot and would make a difference." The administrator stated that reading was very important for getting struggling students back on track and on grade level. The administrator added that through TALA and the TMSFA, the teachers knew how to do this.

Classroom Observations

During the site visit at Campus H, six classrooms were observed: four ELA classrooms and two content area classrooms. Table H.4 summarizes the number of classrooms in which different TALA strategies were observed.

Table H.4. Number of Campus H Classrooms in Which Each TALA Strategy was Observed

TALA Strategy	ELA Classrooms (N=4)	Content Area Classrooms (N=2)
General Instructional	4	2
Vocabulary	2	1
Comprehension	1	1
Word Study	1	N/A
Fluency	0	N/A
Inferential Comprehension	0	N/A

ELA classrooms

Four ELA area classrooms were observed at Campus H. Classes averaged 17 students and all had only one teacher present. Observations lasted about 30 minutes each.

In the first ELA classroom observation, TALA general instructional routines were observed as students discussed and wrote about bullying. During the first 10 minutes of the observation, students completed a warm-up activity. The teacher provided a sentence stem (i.e., "My favorite animal is ___.") and asked students to complete the passage. Next, students discussed bullying. The teacher provided students with an Anticipation-Reaction Guide and read the statements on the guide aloud. Students were instructed to determine whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The teacher provided directions for each part of the assignment. Students worked in pairs and one group of three students to complete the task. Students were then directed to share their answers with each other. Next, the teacher moderated a classroom discussion on the topic. Throughout the observation, the teacher adapted instruction by speaking English or Spanish with individual students and answering questions as necessary. In addition, the teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and by providing positive feedback. Students also received corrective feedback to focus their attention on their task.

In the next ELA classroom observation, TALA general and vocabulary instructional routines were observed. During the observation, students were instructed to write one journal page on the "ultimate summer vacation." The teacher began the class by reminding students of the different writing genres. Academic (e.g., ultimate) and content-specific (genre, biography, and fiction) vocabulary words were included in the review. Next, students began work on their journals. The teacher modeled the task aloud by describing her ultimate vacation. Students then worked individually on their journal pages. The teacher circulated and answered questions as necessary. Throughout the observation, the teacher adapted instruction by speaking English or Spanish as necessary. The teacher also provided corrective feedback.

In the third ELA classroom observation, TALA general, vocabulary, and word study instructional routines were observed as students worked with prefixes and suffixes. First, the students warmed up with the words of the day. The teacher asked students to create sentences using the words. The teacher explained the assigned task, modeled how to create a sentence, and reviewed the instructions once more. A chart containing prefixes, meanings, and examples was available at the students' tables. Students next watched a short video on prefixes and suffixes. One student slept through the video, but the rest were attentive. During the next part of the observation, students worked independently to create word wheels. First, students selected a prefix and several root words. Using the lists, students created two-layered word wheels. The bottom layer of the wheel contained root words organized around a center point. The top sheet was connected at the center point and designed with a triangular cutout such that as it was spun

around the bottom layer it covered all of the root words except one which was revealed next to the prefix. The students enjoyed creating the word wheels and worked attentively. Next, students selected a word from the wheel they had created and added it to a Frayer model. Students worked individually for the remainder of the observation to complete the graphic organizers. Students learned academic (e.g., irresistible, irritable) and content specific (e.g., genre, fiction, non-fiction) vocabulary words during the lesson. The teacher pronounced words, defined words, and asked students to restate the words in everyday language. Throughout the lesson, the teacher provided corrective and positive feedback.

The fourth and final ELA classroom observation was an English tutoring class that focused on the TEKS. Because all of the students in the class had already met TAKS standards, they worked on enrichment activities. At the beginning of the observation, students worked together to get laptops from a central location and get them up and running. Students were instructed to continue work on an online research project related to unexplained phenomena (e.g., Loch Ness monster, vampires, etc.). The research, which was gathered by students in pairs or small groups, would later be used by individual students when they created logs for imagined expeditions related to the phenomena. The teacher circulated and answered questions as necessary. Throughout the observation, the teacher worked with individual students to model different ways to think about and conduct their searches. The teacher adapted instruction by speaking English or Spanish as necessary and engaged students by calling them by name. Positive and corrective feedback was provided. The students worked independently and seemed to enjoy working with the computers.

Content area classrooms

Two content area classrooms were observed at Campus H. One class had 15 students and the other had 18. Both classes had only one teacher present. Observations lasted about 30 minutes each.

The first content area observation was a math class. TALA general instructional strategies were observed. Students worked in small groups at tables to create bridge models using flat wooden sticks and glue. The teacher began the lesson by showing students models that had been created by a class from the previous school year. The teacher explained that bridges would be evaluated based on the amount of weight (i.e., in textbooks) they could support. During the observation the teacher showed a video of the bridge evaluations from the previous year. Students laughed as some bridges broke and others successfully supported weight. The teacher reviewed math concepts (e.g., symmetry) related to the lesson and engaged students by calling them by name and by telling them that the best bridges from this year would be the model bridges for a future class. Students worked on the bridge models for the remainder of the observation. The site observer noted that students were engaged and worked consistently; laughter and learning co-occurred.

The second and final content area observation was a science class. TALA general instructional strategies were observed as students learned about internal stimuli and responses. During the first part of the observation, students were asked to think through the cycle of body heating and cooling. Students learned, or were reminded of, content-specific vocabulary words (e.g., homeostasis, arteries, veins, and blood pressure). The teacher pronounced the words, defined the words, and asked students to use everyday language to explain the meanings of words. Next, students were called on to read. The teacher paraphrased the paragraphs and gave examples of the words. The students worked consistently and were engaged by the material.

The teacher fostered engagement by calling on students by name. The lesson was adapted for particular students when the teacher spoke English or Spanish as necessary to facilitate their understanding of the material.

Site Visit Summary: Campus I

A two-day site visit to Campus I took place during March 2010. The site visit included interviews with key personnel and observations of classroom activities. The site evaluator conducted interviews with the principal, the school's reading department lead, and the district's secondary curriculum director. In addition, two teacher focus groups were conducted; one included teachers who attended TALA ELA Academies and the other included teachers who attended the TALA Content Area Academies. In addition to the interviews and focus groups, observations of five ELA and content area classrooms were conducted. Table I.1 lists the number of participants in each site visit activity.

Table I.1. Number of Campus I Participants in Each Site Visit Activity

Interviews	
School Administrators	2
District Administrators	1
Focus Groups	
ELA Teachers	5
Content Teachers – Science	1
Content Teachers – Social Studies	1
Other Teachers – Special Education	1
Classroom Observations	
ELA Classrooms	2
Content Classrooms – Science	1
Content Classrooms – Math	2
TEA Reported TALA Academy Attendance	
ELA Teachers	9
Content Area Teachers	8

Table I.2 provides a summary of campus characteristics, including location, student enrollment, and student characteristics. Table I.3 provides a summary of campus academic achievement including student performance on TAKS-Reading and campus accountability rating from 2007–08 to 2009–10.

Table I.2. Summary of Campus I Characteristics

General Characteristics	
Grade Levels	6-8
Geographic Location	Rural
Student Enrollment	469
Student Race/Ethnicity (%)	
African-American	1.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.2%
Hispanic	5.5%
Native American	0.2%
White	92.8%
Student Population (%)	
Economically Disadvantaged	33.5%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	0.6%
At-Risk	39.0%
Mobility (2007–08)	15.0%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Table I.3. Summary of Campus I Academic Performance

	2007–08	**2008–09**	**2009–10**
Grade 6 TAKS-Reading	92%	98%	75%
Grade 7 TAKS-Reading	89%	77%	85%
Grade 8 TAKS-Reading	96%	95%	88%
Campus Accountability Rating	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Recognized

Note: The percentages listed represent the percentage of students at the campus who met the standard in TAKS reading.
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10

Overview of TALA Experience at this Campus

ELA/Reading Curriculum

The current ELA/reading curriculum used by Campus I was developed by the district and school and based on the TEKS. The district administrator reported that the district oversaw the curriculum development and said that there were district staff members who were working with TALA and RTI strategies. Teachers reported confirmed that the school created the curriculum in use and added that they used to use CSCOPE. One teacher noted that each department collaborated on the curriculum, but that no cross-curriculum teaching was being used. Another teacher stated that teachers filled out year-at-a-glance calendars that included scope and sequence objectives for class lessons during summer workshops, which were reviewed by department heads.

> "We did use CSCOPE. Now we are writing our own. This summer the departments got together and wrote the scope and sequence for math and science. Other than that, the teachers are writing it on our own based on the TEKS."
>
> - Teacher

Other Literacy Intervention Programs at Campus I

Administrators reported that literacy intervention was provided through targeted student class scheduling, state-supported initiatives and programs created by the school literacy specialist. The principal reported that the school used a double block schedule for students who had not met TAKS standards. For example, students who had not met standards on the previous year's TAKS-Reading were scheduled with two ELA classes. The administrator added that the school had a Student Success Initiative (SSI) and "pull-out" programs for students. The school literacy specialist reported that the school used an intervention program that she designed based on an earlier intervention program for dyslexic students.

Non-TALA Professional Development Activities

Many professional development opportunities were available for teachers at Campus I. Workshops were provided through the region, by the district, and at the school. The principal reported that the teachers attended regular professional development sessions at the ESC and added, "All teachers have the option of going. The teachers come to me and tell me what they want." The literacy specialist specified that the region had offered content-specific sessions and one session about implementing objectives into the curriculum. The district administrator noted that a session had also been provided on student engagement. The administrator added that topics of the summer sessions provided at the campus included reaching dyslexic students,

working with gifted students, and areas of intelligence. Teachers reported attending training for the Dibels assessment and the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) training. None of the content area teachers reported attending literacy professional development sessions.

TALA Professional Development Activities

Administrators reported that teachers had been strongly encouraged to attend the TALA academies. The principal stated, "We told them that we highly recommended that they go." The district administrator agreed that the principal had asked teachers to attend. Most teachers, however, felt that attendance had been mandated. A few of the ELA teachers stated that the principal recommended that they attend. Two others said that attendance was mandated. All the content area teachers reported that attendance was mandated. They added that one of the incentives to go early was that stipends were available.

The principal reported that 44% of the teachers at the school had attended (i.e., 14 of 32). The administrator added that some new teachers had yet to attend. The literacy specialist stated that three of the four reading teachers had attended. At the time of the site visit, TEA reported that nine ELA teachers and eight content area teachers from Campus I had attended TALA academies.

Teachers reported that TALA differed from the professional development they had previously attended. Several teachers explained that TALA was more comprehensive and lasted longer than other training programs. One ELA teacher stated that TALA was "more in-depth." Another noted that the TALA training had been mandated and that attendance at other professional development activities had been optional. All of the content area teachers agreed that the TALA training was more comprehensive that other programs. One teacher noted that the QAR training had only lasted half a day. Another stated that TALA included "a massive amount of information."

Satisfaction with the ELA Academy

> "They gave us one example of one lesson. If you want me to do it, I will need many more examples. They had us bring our book, but we never touched it."
>
> - Teacher

Administrators said that teachers were unimpressed with the Academies that were held the first year. The principal noted that "a lot of teachers said they were already doing some of the things they saw in the workshops and that other things had been seen in other training sessions." The literacy specialist said that teachers who went the first year training felt like the scenarios that were shown as examples showed an ideal class situation and that it was not realistic. The administrator also reported that during the Academy that she attended, the presenters acknowledged that the videos looked too perfect, but that they also "put their own spin on it."

Several of the teachers reported that they were satisfied with the ELA Academy and stated that they felt like the material was very good. Teachers also appreciated the stipends that were provided. One teacher commented that the stipend helped since the training was a full three days. Teachers agreed that much of the information provided in the ELA Academy was useful, and provided suggestions for future sessions.

Teachers also commented on the videos that were shown during the Academy. One teacher stated that the videos were important for the teachers who were visual learners. The teacher added, "Even though the video was a perfect scenario, just being able to see it was good." However, another teacher thought the videos were too perfect and stated, "It did not seem very realistic. There was a classroom of 10-15 students and there was no commotion. The students were perfectly cooperative. Something more realistic would have been good." Another agreed and said, "If it would have worked like they displayed it, it would have been good." Another commented, "I would like to have seen a video of a child not getting it or not cooperating. It would have been helpful to see the redirection and what the teacher did to get the student on track."

Several teachers commented on the timing and scheduling of the Academies. For example, one new teacher felt that the training was very long and said, "It was very overwhelming." Another teacher thought that TALA training provided during the semester would be useful. Another commented that it would be nice to do the training on campus with teachers from the same department. One teacher stated that follow-up during the year would help teachers stay focused on the routines.

Teachers also thought that changes in what was presented would improve future Academies. For example, one teacher stated that the strategy for ranking students and completing paired reading was good, but felt that additional instruction on how to train students was needed. The teacher stated, "They did not show us how to get the kids to the point where you can just say, 'OK, we're going to do the paired reading today.' The instructions on how to do it would have been helpful – especially for first year teachers. The students in the video already knew the routines. They were good strategies and they are research based, but the set-up was lacking. You have to give the teachers the complete information on how to get them to this point and they know what they are doing." Another teacher agreed and stated, "I know that nobody wants to spend more time, but we did rush through a lot of information. I was already doing the TMSFA and had already done the training on it. I think that some folks felt like that went by too quickly. They wanted something more in-depth. They wanted more time on the instruction and time to practice." One teacher suggested that the information be split into multiple sessions. For example, come in one day at the beginning of the first semester, leave and let teachers get started, and then come again, answer questions, and give teachers the next part to try. Another teacher stated that it was a waste of time to be trained on the TMSFA because there was no plan for her to administer it.

> "I hate to sound negative, but some who went that first year said, 'I don't know how this would ever work in my classroom.' I had a totally different take."
>
> - Literary Specialist

Only one teacher commented on the presentation part of the Academy. The teacher had attended the Academy during the first summer (in 2008) when the TALA material was new to the presenters. She felt that attendance when the presenters were still familiarizing themselves with the TALA content may have resulted in her negative appraisal of the experience. The teacher also noted that she was a new teacher and that her overall response to the material was a feeling of being overwhelmed.

Satisfaction with the Content Area Academy

Teachers from Campus I who attended the Content Area Academies reported that although they thought some of the instructional strategies that were described were good, they believed

the strategies were difficult to implement in content area classes and also felt less than prepared to implement the TALA instructional routines.

> "It seemed like being able to implement it takes a lot of time. Especially when you are teaching 8th graders and you have a TAKS test coming."
>
> - Teacher

One problem reported by teachers was time. They felt that the TALA routines took a lot of time to teach and to use. One teacher stated that that the time required to train students to use the instructional strategies would reduce the time available for the content teachers to teach. One teacher noted, "You have to train the students on how to do the strategies." Another teacher agreed and stated, "It takes a lot of time when you do not have it." However, a third teacher pointed out that if the routines were used schoolwide, the training required for students would take much less time.

Content area teachers also commented on their sense of preparedness to implement the strategies. One teacher echoed the sentiments of the ELA teachers that all the videos and demonstrations were "in these perfect settings, which we all know we do not have." Another teacher reported that students at Campus I were not quiet during the paired reading like in the videos. A teacher said, "I did not know where to start. We do a lot of these types of strategies. In fact, we did them before the training, but it was hard to know how to implement all that they showed." The teacher added that presenters were encouraging, but did not model how to implement the strategies in a science class. One teacher added that even doing the TALA follow up lesson was difficult and that it required the teacher to look back at the manual for the strategy names.

TALA Administrator Training

None of the administrators reported attending the TALA Administrator Overview. Neither the principal nor district administrator had prior knowledge of an overview. However, the school's literacy specialist attended the TALA ELA Academy. The administrator stated that the principal at the campus had instructed her to ensure that Reading teachers do what they needed to do.

Implementation of TALA Strategies and Routines in the Classroom

ELA and content area teachers reported using the explicit instructional routines. All of the ELA teachers stated that they used the strategy, but did not use the TALA terminology. One teacher stated, "It is modeling." Content teachers also used the scaffolding routine often. One teacher reported using the scaffolding "a lot" in classes that contained students at multiple levels. Another said the I Do/We Do/You Do

> "I would say I do this 99% of the time when I do a new objective. I want to make sure that they can do it on their own."
>
> - Teacher

strategy was used "all the time;" another agreed. A final content teacher stated that modeling was used every time a new lab activity was completed and said that modeling happens in science classrooms "naturally." Getting students to read was a challenge for teachers at Campus I. One teacher stated, "With my 8th grade TAKS kids, the biggest thing is that they don't like to read. They

> "I got some team roping books and did the think-pair-share. I almost fell over when they walked in and asked to read."
>
> - Teacher

will tell you that. They do not have comprehension. They think that reading is a 3-page work sheet with 10 TAKS-formatted questions. They think reading is a pencil and paperwork task." The teacher selected high interest stories to try and engage the students.

ELA teachers reported using examples and non-examples often, but rarely used the Frayer Model. One teacher stated, "We do the examples/non-examples all the time. We use it at the beginning of the sections. Before we read anything, we go through it and I will ask if there are any unfamiliar words and then talk about them as a group." Another teacher reported using personal examples (e.g., stories or sentences) to help students understand vocabulary words, and stated that her students did not like the Frayer Model. The teacher added that students complain if the name is even mentioned in class. A special education teacher stated that the Frayer model was "mind blowing for them." The teacher stated that students see the map and start panicking. It scares them. In some of my classes it worked, but not for the really low ones. In contrast, another teacher had used the Frayer Model and reported that the students "loved it." The teacher added, "I did use the Frayer Model a lot last year, but it got to where it took up too much time." None of the content area teachers reported using the Frayer Model more than once.

Teachers reported using the comprehension instructional routines. Several teachers reported building on background knowledge and using Anticipation-Reaction Guides. One teacher reported always building on background knowledge and using the Anticipation-Reaction Guides about 50% of the time. The teacher used pictures, PowerPoint presentations, and other tools to help with the background knowledge. One teacher stated, "I use the Anticipation-Reaction Guide and modify it. I ask them to answer questions instead of agree/disagree. I put in on the board last week. The questions were related to the story we were going to read. They had to draw a picture that was related to the story. To me, this is the same thing. It is getting them ready to read." One of the content area teachers also reported modifying the Anticipation-Reaction Guides. The teacher reported that students did the guide orally. Other content area teachers reported no use of the guides. A final content area teacher stated that students struggled so much with main ideas that their text book came with the main ideas and notes.

Some of the teachers reported using the word study instructional routines. One teacher stated that the routines were primarily used with "intervention" students that get pulled out of class. The teacher added, "This year my TAKS class kids are not that low, but I do have a few that needed decoding practice. It is different every year." Another teacher said that the routines were done "all the time as students read." A few of the teachers stated that routines were done as needed, but not as planned instruction. A science teacher stated that there was nothing that could be done for students who could not read.

> "Unfortunately in the science classroom, when they come to us and they can't read, there's nothing I can do. I do not have time to sit with them."
>
> - Teacher

Several teachers reported that they had tried the partner reading routine. As mentioned previously, teachers noted that their students were not quite like the students in the videos and felt that they needed more training to implement the strategy successfully. Only one ELA teacher reported using the partner reading the way it was shown at the TALA academy. The teacher added that the routine was not done all the time, but that strategy had been used successfully. The teacher added that the students had been ranked again and paired again recently to adjust for success.

> "I have told the teachers that they have all been trained and that we all need to do [the TMSFA]."
>
> - Literacy Specialist

Few of the teachers used the generating questions routine. One teacher stated that at the end of a section or chapter, students were instructed to ask themselves who or what the text was about and what was important about

what they had read. The teacher added, "I tell them if they do not know the answer, they should look back or ask for help. Generally, when we do a class discussion, I throw those questions out to them." Another teacher reported that the generating questions routine had been used successfully the previous year, but was no longer used.

Teacher's use of the data from the TMSFA varied. The literacy specialist reported having administered the assessment for the previous two years for all students in two classes. For the current year, she administered the assessment to her students who scored under 2100 on the TAKS. No other teachers reported using the TMSFA, and one teacher stated that it was a waste of time to learn how to do it because the teacher had no intention of ever administering the assessment.

One teacher stated that the assessment was good but added, "You wind up getting stuck in the track of trying to move forward – and you have the deadline of TAKS – and you think about it later, but you are just doing another test. They go to the computer lab one day and that leaves four days. You are trying to get ready for TAKS, and there is no time." Another teacher agreed that there was no time to administer assessments.

Preparation for the design of instruction for struggling readers

Most administrators and teachers felt that participation in the TALA academies helped prepare teachers to assist struggling readers. The principal stated that the training gave teachers a format and an outline to follow. The administrator thought that the guidelines teachers received at the training would be especially helpful for new teachers. The literacy specialist believed that learning to scaffold effectively would benefit teachers, and added, "When you have struggling students and you use the scaffolding, that is a victory. The scaffolding means they have seen it twice before they are on their own."

One ELA teacher reported that TALA showed "how to break it down for the struggling readers. It told teachers what to say and what to do. You also get the students involved in the process and that is good." In contrast, another ELA teacher reported that the Academy did not improve her understanding of how to help struggling students better. A final ELA teacher commented that routines for struggling readers were not being used and that struggling students in her class were removed to another teacher. One content area teacher stated that support for reading needed to be built into all classes and added, "Teachers need to understand that reading does not just happen in ELA classes."

"I do not use [TALA]. Most of my students are at the same level. If they are really struggling, they go to another teacher."

- Teacher

Throughout the interviews, teachers commented that they seldom used many of the TALA instructional routines and strategies. Reasons provided for this low level of implementation included a lack of understanding about how to implement the routines, the time it took to train students to use them, the time it took to implement them, and a general belief that their students were not capable of or not interested in using them. Teachers reported that only a few students in their classes were interested in or capable of using the strategies. Interestingly, teachers also reported successful use of the strategies (e.g., generating questions) one year and no use of the strategies the next year, or successful use of a strategy once (e.g., Frayer Model) followed by a decision not to use it again even though students were engaged by it, because it took too much time.

Support for the Implementation of TALA Instructional Strategies and Routines

The principal reported supporting teachers by allowing them to attend professional development sessions of interest. The literacy specialist reminded teachers about the TALA instructional routines during the first departmental meeting of the year. The specialist suggested that teachers use the strategies and also provided an introduction to some of the

> "It was just that we had to go (to the academies). We really did not hear any more about it until it was time for the next group to go."
>
> - Teacher

TALA routines (i.e., Frayer Model, paired reading, and get the gist routines) for new teachers who had not been to the training. No policies were implemented to support TALA specifically.

Teachers reported that administrators' primary involvement in TALA was the initial request that teachers attend. Additional support was provided when the literacy specialist included a reminder of some of the TALA instructional routines in the material for a planning session at the beginning of the present school year. ELA teachers thought that their administrators were supportive, but content area teachers did not feel there had been a big effort to support the implementation of the strategies.

Teachers felt that with a stronger focus on TALA, more collaboration with other teachers, and monitoring of teachers by administrators, the routines and strategies would have been implemented more widely. One teacher stated that a requirement to use the routines and strategies would have motivated teachers more. Another teacher stated that if administrators were familiar with TALA and asked teachers whether they were using the strategies or not, more teachers would use them. Teachers expected that more training and more time to plan would also lead to greater use of the TALA routines.

> "It was more voluntary than mandatory. I think you will see more reading teachers using the strategies than the content teachers. That is where we have been lacking. We should say, "I know what you learned and I want to see it in your classrooms." I think that is the missing piece."
>
> - District Administrator

The principal believed that handouts to remind the teachers what they need to do would be good. The literacy specialist wanted "mini updates," and stated, "We were told that last summer was the last year for the TALA training. We had new teachers and had one teacher who could not go because she was having a baby. We have so many things going on; it would be good to have reminders." The literacy specialist thought that the school's participation in the site visit was a good thing and wanted to impress upon the school and district administrators how important an intervention like TALA was to the school. The administrator added, "It would be helpful if the administrators knew what teachers were being taught to implement. They do walkthroughs and should be looking for it. When they have to talk to teachers with high failure rates, they could ask about TALA strategies. When they do their growth plans, they should be recommending TALA strategies and routines."

The teachers recommended that refreshers be provided throughout the school year. One teacher stated, "Bringing it to the school would be much better. You are doing it all together and you could share more information." Another teacher added, "We would be more motivated to do it." Another teacher noted that content area teachers needed to go and also needed to be motivated to use the strategies. A final teacher stated, "I think if we all went together, it would mean more to the whole group."

Collaboration with other teachers

Teachers reported limited collaboration with other teachers, some follow up with the literacy specialist, and no follow up with the principal or district administrators. One teacher commented again about the follow up session in which teachers were reminded about some of the routines. A teacher stated, "We did have the training in August and talked about the strategies. I have also talked with our department head and some other teachers about some of the terminology and strategies. We have talked about things, but have not had organized meetings about TALA strategies." ELA teachers also stated that there was little collaboration with content area teachers. One teacher said, "I have told them that partner reading would benefit the students in history, for example, but it has been informal." The special education teacher taught some of the strategies to a teaching partner who had not attended the TALA academies. Content teachers agreed that no formal collaboration had taken place. ELA and content area teachers reported sharing the TALA materials with other teachers who had not attended the training. There was no mention of cross curricular collaboration with the TALA strategies.

Facilitators to Implementation

The district administrator stated that all TALA implementation had been "campus driven;" that is, the district did not instruct nor mandate TALA implementation. Although not mentioned by teachers, the principal reported encouraging the use of TALA instructional strategies and routines and also reported reminding teachers about TALA strategies during weekly 10-15 minute walkthroughs. The literacy specialist stated that the biggest influence on actual TALA implementation had been attendance at a TALA academy by the department head. ELA teachers reported that the CD and resource binders were helpful. One teacher stated, "Those were definitely good. I liked the prefix charts that were included." Another teacher stated, "Having the material has been helpful. If I recognize that something might be helpful, I want to use it." Content teachers stated that the TALA activities that were simple and did not need training were good. Another teacher agreed that going to the training reminded teachers to continue to do the things that they were already doing (e.g., scaffolding).

Barriers to Implementation

Administrators and teachers commented on potential barriers to TALA implementation. The principal stated, "I see no barriers. Every teacher has been open to the strategies that would improve the students' learning." The district administrator believed that more support for administrators would benefit the initiative and stated, "I would have liked to go to the training."

> "We got them on the CD, but to use them, we would have to go to Kinko's and get them printed and pay for them ourselves. The regional service center is too far away to be helpful."
>
> - Teacher

The literacy specialist believed that time and the pressure of the TAKS limited implementation. The ELA teachers reported that some students did not cooperate with the strategies. For example, one teacher said that students did not want to focus and partner read when they should. The teacher stated, "I point out to them that if they are uncomfortable reading to just one person, it is a better option for them than if they have to read to the whole class. Every once in a while they just do not cooperate and they choose to read by themselves. Sometimes that is better in the long run." Other teachers thought that having poster printers to print the TALA posters would be helpful. Content area teachers thought it would be helpful to have more time to plan and to have everyone using the strategies so that less time would be needed for training.

Throughout the focus group, teachers talked about strategies in use before the Content Area Academy and described them in TALA terms. That is, they said they were actually implementing very little from the Academy. They added that they did not think that TALA was really a goal at the campus and that teachers who wanted to implement the strategies were "on their own."

Perceived Effects of TALA Program Activities

Desired outcomes and evidence of occurrence

Administrators hoped that TALA would become part of the curriculum at Campus I and that students would benefit. The district administrator hoped that TALA would be built into the teachers' content. The administrator stated that this would help students with poor reading skills get the help they needed to succeed. The principal hoped that Campus I would become an "exemplary campus," and added, "We would need improved TAKS scores. [Although] It is not just the TAKS scores, it is the students passing the classes and knowing what they need when they get to the next grade. That is what we are looking for." The principal added that scores in math had improved, as had scores in reading and ELA. The administrator added that science was "starting to pick up because science teachers attended the TALA training." The literacy specialist hoped that students would become better readers, both in fluency and in comprehension.

Effect on teachers' literacy practices

ELA teachers reported some positive changes in their literacy practices, but content area teachers reported many reasons why their literacy practices were not influenced by TALA instructional routines and strategies. One ELA teacher stated that some of the strategies provided at TALA were already used at the campus. The teacher added that using a word wall and partner reading instead of the round robin strategy were changes that came from TALA. Another teacher became more aware of Anticipation-Reaction Guides. The teacher said, "I did it in the past, but it was more oral. This year I have asked them to use paper rather than just talk about it." Another teacher said that scaffolding and paired readings were more often used since the TALA academy. The teacher noted, "I have done lots of paired readings, but I did not ask them to talk about it. I have also asked them to 'get the gist.' That is harder for them to do." A final teacher believed that TALA provided a better insight for how to "get the ideas over to the students."

> "I knew about partner reading, but until I went to TALA I never understood the benefit of partner reading over round robin. I do it a lot more often now and I see the benefit."
>
> - Teacher

All of the content area teachers reported that TALA had not affected their literacy practices. Although a few teachers said it was easy to adapt the routines for their students (e.g., scaffolding), the remainder of the teachers stated that the routines were too difficult for their students (e.g., Frayer Model), and that the routines "did not work in content classes." A math teacher stated that the only reading that was done in math class was of the directions, so that was not a literacy issue. A science teacher reported that students did not read a lot in science. The teacher stated, "They copy notes down as we talk and discuss things and discuss more things as we do the activities." Another teacher reported reading a chapter at a time and asking students to discuss the topics. A history teacher stated that students were required to read the chapters, but pointed out that Grade 7 history was likely the first time students had worked with non-fiction. The teacher said, "I try to teach them to use the topics, and the headlines, and how

a non-fiction book is set up. I also try to teach them the critical thinking skills that they will need to figure things out by themselves. Also, all quizzes are open book. I really try to make the history class a reading class."

Effect on ability to influence student achievement

Administrators stated that TALA had impacted teachers' abilities to influence student achievement, but the literacy specialist felt that TALA had impacted teachers' behavior at Campus I very little. The principal stated that TALA gave teachers new resources to draw from and helped them develop a better working relationship with the students. The district administrator believed that reading teachers had been positively impacted and added, "I think in reading it has [helped]. Our scores are doing well and have improved over the last few years." In contrast, the literacy specialist reported that comments heard from the teachers during the week prior to the site visit indicated low levels of TALA involvement.

Differential Benefit among Groups of Struggling Readers

The literacy specialist believed that all students benefited to some degree and stated, "I think that they could all benefit from these strategies. But, what I've observed is that the struggling kids benefit. The average students also benefit. The gifted students might also benefit, but some have the attitude that they don't know why they are in a reading class because they think they already know everything they need to. Sometimes they

> "From what I understand, these are strategies you can use with any student. I think it benefits all students. I think it is being used in our regular reading classes, not just our RTI reading classes. I think they are all benefiting."
>
> - District Administrator

figure out that they still have more to learn." The principal stated, "Some kids are going to catch on much faster than others in reading, math, and science. Of course reading is really "hammered" in the elementary grades; it is stressed much more than math. That is why so many students in the state are behind in math. The biggest problem we have is the parent participation. They are not making sure that the kids are reading at home. We have quite a number of students who are not receiving that support. It also happens in cycles. We have one teacher now who is outstanding. Her kids usually top out at about 97-98% successful in reading. However, last year we had a class come through that only passed at 76%. She was very disappointed and wondered what she had done wrong. The reality is that that class is a low performing class. They were down in all subjects."

Teachers reported that most of the school's struggling readers have learning disabilities like dyslexia. The school did not have a large population of ESL students. The school did have students from families with low socioeconomic status, but teachers reported that seemed to have little effect on their reading skills. One teacher stated, "My ESL kids read better here than my 9th graders in a local big city." Teachers also reported that students at the campus typically met TAKS standards. One teacher stated, "In Grade 7 last year it was about 76%. In Grade 8, it was 95-96%. Some of it has to do with motivation, rather than skills. The Grade 8 students have great motivation; they have to pass it to get to Grade 9. If that is the case, then are problems related to their ability or their motivation?" Another teacher added, "Some of it has to do with life here. The parents want them to go to school and they want them to do well, but the students do not see books at home. Their parents are just trying to survive. Home life makes a difference."

Sustainability of TALA Activities

Administrators reported that TALA fit with the school's literacy program and goals. The principal stated, "[TALA strategies] are used every day. We are putting the TALA routines into the curriculum we are designing." The district administrator agreed that the strategies fit and said, "We have been talking about RTI and using the Reading First strategies. TALA is the next step." The literacy specialist said, "I wouldn't say they fit 100%, but it fits more than just a little bit. Like I mentioned, if you are teaching, then the scaffolding should be there."

Teachers also thought that the TALA strategies fit well within the literacy program and goals, and added that the TALA strategies supported what they were already using. One teacher stated that any educator was interested in research-based strategies. Another teacher stated, "Everyone is using strategies that are keyed in on the TEKS. When we do the main idea from the TEKS for TAKS, we are using TALA strategies. TALA just made it clearer."

Administrators believed that TALA was very important for the future success of students at Campus I. The district administrator said that TALA showed teachers where the district was going with reading instruction and gave teachers the tools they needed to be successful. The principal also believed that TALA had its place because it provided techniques and strategies for teachers to use in the classroom. The administrator added that TALA was very good for both new teachers and experienced teachers, but added, "It is hard for the experienced teachers who have had a lot of success to use new strategies; if it is not broken, do not fix it." In regards to future training, the literacy specialist stated that all teachers needed some guidance. The principal added that it was standard practice to have teachers give workshops when they come back from professional development workshops.

Classroom Observations

During the site visit at Campus I, five classrooms were observed: two ELA classrooms and three content area classrooms. Table I.4 summarizes the number of classrooms in which different TALA strategies were observed.

Table I.4. Number of Campus I Classrooms in Which Each TALA Strategy was Observed

TALA Strategy	ELA Classrooms (N=2)	Content Area Classrooms (N=3)
General Instructional	2	3
Vocabulary	1	1
Comprehension	1	0
Word Study	0	N/A
Fluency	0	N/A
Inferential Comprehension	0	N/A

ELA classrooms

Two ELA area classrooms were observed at Campus I. Classes averaged 16 students and all had only one teacher present. Observations lasted about 30 minutes each.

During the first ELA classroom observation, TALA general instructional routines were observed as students read and completed worksheets. During the first part of the observation, students were asked to read silently and then highlight answers on a printed worksheet. The teacher

circulated and monitored student progress. Instruction was adapted as necessary. For example, one student was allowed to whisper read. Next, students worked in pairs to read and answer questions as part of a game. During the activity, students worked individually to answer questions and then worked in pairs to check each other's answers. The teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and by providing corrective and positive feedback.

During the second ELA classroom observation, TALA general, vocabulary, and comprehension instructional routines were observed. As a warm-up activity, students worked on vocabulary words. The teacher pre-taught academic vocabulary words (e.g., meticulous) and asked student to generate examples of the words. In addition, students were provided with opportunities to pronounce vocabulary words and use everyday language to define words. During the next part of the observation, students practiced partner reading and then wrote statements about each section of a story. The teacher built on students' background knowledge by asking them what they knew so far and connected the text to prior learning. Students were also asked to summarize each section of the text. Throughout the observation, students worked individually and in pairs to complete the assigned tasks. The teacher provided corrective and positive feedback.

Content area classrooms

Three content area classrooms were observed at Campus I. Classes averaged 13 students and lasted about 35 minutes. Two of the content area classrooms had one teacher. The third had two adults present, but the primary teacher taught during the entire observation.

Two math classes were observed at Campus I. In the first classroom, general and vocabulary instructional routines were observed during a lively geometry lesson. To begin, students completed a warm-up activity and then graded other student's work from the previous day. Next, students each completed a Frayer Model using colorful paper and which used math formulas as the concept to be defined. During the lesson, students learned content-specific vocabulary (e.g., trapezoid). The teacher pronounced the words, identified characteristics of the words, and generated examples of the word's meaning (e.g., rectangle like a plasma TV). Throughout the lesson, the teacher engaged the students by calling on them by name and by having fun as the work was completed. Students who worked consistently received positive comments and praise, and a student who had gotten off task was redirected with corrective feedback. Students appeared to work well together and helped each other complete their tasks.

During the second math class, TALA general instructional routines were observed as students did a warm-up activity, reviewed math concepts, and completed practice problems. During the review, the teacher and students discussed fractions, mixed numbers, and the butterfly computation method. The teacher circulated and assisted students individually as needed. During the remainder of the observation, students went to the board and demonstrated how to complete several problems. The teacher engaged students by calling on them by name and by having the rest of the class clap for students who provided correct answers to questions.

The third content area classroom was a science class that had been set up as a TAKS practice day organized by subject area (i.e., reading, math, science, and social studies) in which students created paper vests to wear at an upcoming TAKS pep rally. Students worked in groups to determine how to lay out paper, cut it, and connect the edges in order to make the vest. Next, students added topics to the vest determined by the content area their vest was supposed to represent. During the observation, the teacher guided students by creating a model

vest and thinking aloud about different options for vest design. The teacher called on students by name and redirected off-task groups as she monitored progress. Guidance was provided to each of the groups as they completed the task.

Glossary

Anticipation-Reaction Guide – A graphic organizer that helps students activate and evaluate prior knowledge. Students form opinions based upon background knowledge and evaluate these opinions after exposure to new information.

Building Background Knowledge – Helping learners connect to concepts about to be taught by using activities that relate to or determine the level of their existing knowledge. This is also known as building prior knowledge.

Academic Words – Words that are associated with instructions and questioning in school (e.g., analyze) and words that include more sophisticated language (e.g., provoke).

Closed Syllables – Have one vowel that is closed by a consonant and the vowel sound is short (e.g., rabbit).

Comprehension – Understanding the meaning of text by reading actively and with purpose (for learning, understanding, or enjoyment).

Content-Specific Words – Words that are specific to a content area and not likely to be encountered outside of a subject area (e.g., photosynthesis).

Decoding – The ability to figure out how to read unknown words by using knowledge of letters, sounds, and word patterns.

Explicit Instruction – The intentional design and delivery of information by the teacher to the students. It begins with (1) the teacher's modeling or demonstration of the skill or strategy; (2) a structured and substantial opportunity for students to practice and apply newly taught skills and knowledge under the teacher's direction and guidance; and (3) an opportunity for feedback.

Expository Text – Text that explains, informs, describes, or persuades the reader. Textbooks are an example of expository text.

Frayer Model – A graphic organizer used for word analysis and vocabulary building. It prompts students to think about and describe the meaning of a word or concept by defining the term, describing its essential characteristics, providing examples of the idea, and offering non-examples of the idea.

Fluency – The ability to read text accurately, quickly and with proper expression.

Get the Gist – A strategy that helps students learn to identify the main idea of a paragraph.

Graphic Organizer – A text, diagram, or other pictorial device that summarizes, organizes, and illustrates interrelationships among concepts in a text.

Irregular Syllable Patterns – Have letter combinations that do not make their expected sound.

Main Idea – The point the author of a text is making about a topic.

Morpheme – The smallest unit of meaning in oral and written language.

Morphemic Analysis – A strategy in which the meanings of words can be determined or inferred by examining their meaningful parts (i.e., prefixes, suffixes, roots, etc.).

Narrative Text – A text that tells a story.

Partner Reading – Pairs of students read together and the listener corrects the active reader.

Phonics – A method of teaching reading that focuses on letter-sound relationships.

Prefix – An affix that is added to the front of a word and changes its meaning (e.g., *im-* being placed in front of the word *possible*).

Root of a Word – Words from other languages that are the origin of many English words. (e.g., *geo* from Greek means *earth*)

Scaffolding – Providing temporary support until help is no longer needed.

Suffix – A group of letters added to the end of a word to form a new word (e.g., when *-ful* is added to the word *help*, a new word is formed: *helpful*).

Syllabification – Forming or dividing words into syllables.

Syllable – A unit of sound or group of letters made up of a vowel sound or a vowel consonant combination. Syllables contain only one vowel sound.

Text Structure – The organizational pattern an author uses to structure the ideas in a text. Common formats for text structure include compare/contrast, cause and effect, and sequencing.

Visualization/Mental Imagery – Visual images that are formed in the mind while reading.

Vowel-consonant-e (silent *e*) Syllables – End in one vowel, one consonant, and a final e. The vowel is long and the final e is silent (e.g., profile).