30 TLI Grantees

Alice ISD
Arlington ISD
Austin ISD
Bartlett ISD
Bastrop ISD
Brooks County ISD/
    Ramirez CSD
Brownsville ISD
Chilton ISD
Como-Pickton CISD
Connally ISD
Edinburg CISD
El Paso ISD
Greenville ISD
La Marque ISD
La Vega ISD
Lubbock ISD
Manor ISD
McAllen ISD
Mercedes ISD
Nixon-Smiley CISD
Odem-Edroy ISD
Pilot Point ISD
Raul Yzaguirre School
    for Success
San Antonio ISD
San Saba ISD
Sinton ISD
Taft ISD
Taylor ISD
Tenaha ISD
Tornillo ISD

TLI Tidbits

Smallest Literacy Line
    has 2
    sites/campuses
    serving 487
    students
Largest Literacy Line
    has 62
    sites/campuses
    serving 49,325
    students
TLI grant serves
    262,055+ students

TLI UPDATES

➢ **Personnel Exchange Network (PEN):**
The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) PENs facilitate knowledge sharing and network development. The first PEN focused on *Data-based Decision Making* and was held in Atlanta, Georgia on February 24-25, 2014.

The Texas Literacy Initiative is hosting the next **PEN** focused on *Improving Learning Outcomes* and *Coordination and Collaboration to Ensure a Coherent Approach to Literacy. It will be held on* **May 7-8, 2014** at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center in **Austin, Texas.**

For more information about the SRCL PEN meetings, visit **http://www.srclcenter.org/meetings.html**.

➢ **TLI Online Course:** The **Implementation Plans** from the **TSLP Process Module** should be uploaded in the Lesson 5 Workgroup by **May 5th** as they will be used by Grant Implementation Teams during the 2014 Leadership Summit.

➢ **2014 Leadership Summits and TLI Institutes:**

Westin Galleria Houston
- **Leadership Summit: June 23, 2014**
- **TLI Institute: June 24-25, 2014**

Sheraton Dallas
- **Leadership Summit: July 15, 2014**
- **TLI Institute: July 16-17, 2014**

In This Issue

➢ **Alice ISD** shares action steps taken to address areas in need of improvement: oral language development, vocabulary in all grade levels, and characteristics of specific knowledge of genres across all grade levels. "Read Full Story"

➢ **Chilton ISD** communicates attribution for substantial gains on 4th grade STAAR writing assessment during the 2012-2013 year: professional development focused on cultivating authentic writers, continuous reflection on improvement by all, and intentional planning of instructional vertical alignment. "Read Full Story"

➢ **Manor ISD** outlines innovative methods that enable the district to communicate effectively with all stakeholders. Be sure to check out *Turner's Digital Dashboard:* a unique way to keep all stakeholders informed on a weekly basis. "Read Full Story"

LASERS ON LITERACY

ALICE ISD: EMBRACING COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PROGRAMS

Determining Need

Through valid and reliable teacher–administrated literacy assessments, Alice ISD identified areas in need of improvement: **oral language development, vocabulary in all grade levels, and an increased knowledge of the characteristics of specific genres across grade levels.** Focus for professional development is based on District and Site/Campus Improvement Plans and the following Texas State Literacy Plan Action Steps:

Texas State Literacy Plan Action Steps		
0-SE	**L6-**Establish an outreach system for parents/families and other stakeholders to provide relevant information and learning opportunities for Language and Pre-Literacy Development.	
K-5	**SBI5-**Develop and implement a school-wide, systematic approach to incorporate academic vocabulary (words that influence achievement) across all content areas.	**SBI7-**Develop and implement a school-wide systematic approach to provide multiple opportunities for students to read independently at their instructional level and/or independent level in various genres with teacher support and monitoring.
6-12	**SBI8**–Develop campus-wide system for teaching academic vocabulary or words that influence achievement in multiple disciplines.	**SBI9-**Provide multiple opportunities for students to read independently at their instructional and/or independent level in various genres, with teacher support and monitoring.

Vocabulary Professional Development

Teachers in grades 3-12 have received professional development on *"Vocabulary and Oral Language Development"* through the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts (VGC). This year, with VGC support, the focus for PD is **vocabulary booster sessions** delivered to teachers on a monthly basis for:

- Choosing Tier II words,
- Creating student-friendly definitions,
- Providing examples and non-examples, and
- Engaging in deep processing activities.

Administrators and literacy coaches each use a specific **observation form** that **assists teachers with implementation**. Looking at current data from curriculum-based assessments and state assessment results, campuses will monitor overall growth in scores based on increases in student vocabulary acquisition.

Dubose Intermediate School is piloting a vocabulary program called *Word Zappers.* The goal of the program is to encourage students to become **more aware of learned vocabulary in reading, writing and conversation.** This endeavor is meant not only to enhance vocabulary, but to provide a home to school connection. Parents were advised of the *Word Zappers* Program during a recent P.T.A. meeting and encouraged to participate in their student's learning. Students earn points or stars by using, identifying, or providing an example of a word being used in an oral or written context. Large charts are used in each classroom to track student participation and "Gem Levels." Student incentives include weekly and monthly drawings. In addition, the top students over each three-week period are allowed to choose a book as their reward. At the end of the year, top *Word Zappers* will be recognized and all participants will receive a certificate for their level of distinction.

ALICE ISD: EMBRACING COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PROGRAMS (cont'd.)

Genres Study Professional Development

Through a training of trainers (TOT) model, literacy coaches received comprehensive training in specific genres across grade levels. At the beginning of this school year, literacy coaches and Alice ISD District Literacy Shepherd, Sheila Boultinghouse, implemented training for teachers in grades 3-8 on genre study through inquiry-based learning with an emphasis on reading comprehension and writing. This inquiry approach engages students in exploring various texts so that they notice and name the characteristics of each specific genre and construct a working definition that guides their thinking in both reading and writing.

Teachers learned how to use prompting guides as tools to explore genres during interactive read-alouds and raise the level of rigor of questions students are able to answer with deeper understanding of various genres. Immersion in interesting and memorable texts nourishes students as writers. When students read like writers in various genres, they add to their writing repertoire.

Family Literacy Outreach Program

Data collected from CIRCLE assessments on PK students show that vocabulary development in our youngest students needed improvement. Since parents and families are the students' first teachers, Alice ISD established an outreach program for families to embrace literacy development. Through training about Dialogic Reading, parents learned a way of sharing books with their children that involves them in the experience and has tremendous benefits for powerful language development. Instead of just reading a book to the child, parents engage them in conversation by talking about what they see in the pictures and story line.

Outreach Process to Engage Families in Literacy

- Invite families to come to their child's PK campus 90 minutes before dismissal.
- Demonstrate the 3-step process using a high interest book:
    1. Ask "What" questions.
    2. Expand on what the child says.
    3. Ask open-ended questions.
- Encourage parents to place sticky notes throughout book with questions for their child.
- Invite PK students to join parents to engage in the reading activity.
- Give each child a book and a bookmark with instructions in English and Spanish.

All of the conversation during the reading of the book helps children learn and understand new words.

CHILTON ISD: GETTING TO THE HEART OF WRITING

Chilton ISD experienced substantial gains on 4th grade STAAR writing assessment during the 2012-2013 school year. Chilton attributes the following for the increase: having a focus on cultivating authentic writers with ongoing professional development, continuous reflection on improvement by all, and intentional planning of instructional vertical alignment.

Focused, Supported Professional Development

Data analysis focused the professional development on writing. After identifying writing as an area of need, Chilton ISD:

- Developed writing goals and identified aligned action steps across age/grade levels on the **Data-informed Plan (DIP)**
- Restructured their **coaching support** using a mentor model focused on explicit instruction and student engagement
- Made a conscious effort to select **common resources** around writing goals and action steps
- Concentrated on **uniformity of instructional practices** and the need to develop a **strong writing foundation** in the early grade levels through peer collaboration

Ongoing Reflection

Ongoing reflection required vertical age and grade levels to understand the importance of writing, as well as learn how to monitor progress toward the goal of cultivating authentic, lifelong writers. This included collaborative and **purposeful planning**, as well as **assisting students in understanding how to monitor their own writing practices**.

Explicit instruction with **modeling** and **systematic**, **scaffolded instruction** are the foundation for the variety of the **intentional grouping formats**, including:

- whole-group instruction
- small, flexible groupings
- individual conferences

The differentiated grouping formats are based on student data which hinges on each teacher knowing students' data, but also knowing students on an individual basis to foster personalizing their writing.

The teachers have developed a series of guiding questions that are used during individual student writing conferences. These individual conferences **focus on teaching students how to become more aware of their writing** and allow the teacher to listen and understand what the student might be trying to say. After careful listening, the teacher then assists the student with word choice, sentence fluency, or a skill needing to be addressed. As one fourth grade student said, "My teacher guides me through a series of questions to make my paper better."

Based on what the teachers learn during the individual conferences, differentiated mini-lessons are developed and taught during whole- or small-group instruction based on student needs. For example, the teacher has explicitly taught a lesson on prepositions to the **whole group**, and then notices during the **individual conferences** that 3-5 students have not quite mastered the usage of prepositions in their writing. The teacher then teaches a preposition mini-lesson to this **small, flexible group** of 5 students, provides practice opportunities, and monitors their progress towards mastery.
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"Writing allows me to express my imaginative side."

4th grade Chilton student

"Thinking about organizing my ideas will help me get into college and fill out a job application."

4th grade Chilton student

CHILTON ISD: GETTING TO THE HEART OF WRITING (cont'd.)

Using data allows teachers to select writing samples that are appropriate for the current needs of students. The writing samples also allow students the opportunity to become familiar with and analyze different writing techniques. Teachers use samples of exemplary writing so that **students analyze techniques and evaluate the craft of writing alongside a rubric**—particularly the "what" and the "how" and the use of academic language. Through collectively dissecting writing samples, students gain exposure to the writing process through targeted conversations and practice.

Vertical Expectations

During the 2012 Institute's writing strand, the importance of **quality over quantity** in writing was stressed as was the notion to assist students in **tightening their focus on the "seed," or smaller idea**, **on which to elaborate** in their writings. Out of this grew the expectation and deliberate planning to assist students in zooming in on the small moments to showcase; this in turn, spurred on more focused writing pieces with intentional language.

In addition to differentiating their instructional grouping formats, teachers **focus on the state standards**. The 2012 TLI Institute served as a catalyst in aligning efforts as the concept of "narrow and deep" development of writing was reinforced to the teachers. They hone in on the expected outcome(s) by age/grade level and then discuss how to **connect these expectations across the age/grade levels**. This process taught them the importance of frequent, purposeful communication focused on aligning instructional practices in writing and using common academic language when teaching the writing process.

Communication, commitment, and consistency in instructional best practices became more transparent and remain the goal for Chilton ISD. The vertical target—to **daily implement consistent instructional routines with fidelity**—continues to prosper as they cultivate lifelong, successful writers. As a result, Chilton ISD students are becoming better writers, teachers are noticing progress on assessments, and everyone is being more consistent in the use of instructional approaches across age/grade levels.

Authentic & Practical Writing

In the teachers' efforts to align expectations and cultivate lifelong writers, they knew they had to instill a lifelong enjoyment for writing, as well as translate writing into everyday life application. Writing opportunities must be broader than in the 4th grade Language Arts class and **writing would need to be integrated across content and subject areas**. Furthermore, the literacy line wanted to extend the endeavor **beyond the school doors to encompass the home-school connection**.

On parent night, **writing expectations were shared with parents** along with a graphic organizer to capture special occurrences in their child's lifetime. **Parents were able to assist their child in brainstorming ideas** about memories which developed **theme thinking (**e.g. Friendships, Triumphs, Mistakes, Growing Up, Family Traditions, First Times, Special Places, Trials and Tribulations). The rooms were buzzing with conversations, laughter, and a plethora of writing seeds from which the students could continue to cultivate.

Overall, the TLI goals continue to assist the daily efforts in Chilton ISD as they focus on instructional improvements, target areas of need, and implement a writing process that results in heightened student achievement. Chilton attributes their success to ongoing collaboration, TLI partner support, ongoing professional development, and funding. While they certainly pay attention to all of their data, the measure of their success seems to come from students' ability to apply their writing in new contexts and see the value of learning to write well.

MANOR ISD: INNOVATIVE METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Description

Manor Independent School District's (MISD) **Grant Implementation Team** (GIT) recognizes that maintaining an open dialogue with our **Professional Learning Community** is a vital component of the team's operation and success.

With this in mind, the Manor ISD Literacy Line is ensuring that its district wide literacy line is committed to Action Step L10, which reads, *"Implement an online Professional Learning Community (PLC)."* This article, coupled with the link to Digital Dashboard is an account of practices that focus on the District GIT's unique relationship with the **Site/Campus-Based Leadership Teams (S/CBLTs),** and highlights practices that enable our district to communicate effectively with all of our stakeholders.

In The Beginning

After receiving the TLI grant, the district GIT with identified S/CBLTs, representing the 0–SE, K-5, and 6–12 grade levels, worked together over the course of the first year to answer the following questions:

- *How will the TLI grant transform literacy instruction in our district?*
- *What does success look like?*
- *What do we want our Manor ISD Literacy Line to look like?*
- *What are the challenges we will face?*
- *Are we equipped to handle these challenges?*
- *How can we best support the S/CBLTs to ensure we move from good to great?*

The Data-informed Plans/Pre-Language & Literacy Development Plans, paired with campus **SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely) Goals,** are the answer to these questions.   Our teams and stakeholders are pivotal to ensuring the success of our district in accomplishing all that we have set out to do with this grant.

Part of this success lies in how effectively we communicate with all members of the learning community. Communicating within our organization is a unique endeavor where **the goal is not only to inform, but to also be transparent to a wide array of stakeholders, including students, parents, staff, our region service center, and community partners.** Through a series of needs assessments and surveys conducted by the GIT, our S/CBLTs expressed a need for **TLI information to be delivered to them in a clear and concise format on a weekly basis.** With a constant flow of information and communication between the district and the campuses, we felt this is one way to transform our S/CBLTs from good to great!

As the district GIT team evaluated this need, we found it necessary to develop a plan for communication to help accomplish this goal. Thus our guiding principles for effective communication emerged.

Our Guiding Principles

- *Well-informed S/CBLTs can help provide positive campus and community support.*
- *Using a variety of sources and strategies enhances our team's ability to communicate effectively and thoroughly.*
- *Communication strategies must be explicitly linked to the mission and goals of the Texas Literacy Initiative grant, but most importantly to the mission and vision of our entire school district.*
- *Creating key messages and talking points to establish **"one clear voice"** throughout all communication channels is paramount.*

Manor ISD: Innovative Methods of Communication (cont'd.)

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Turner's Digital Dashboard

A communication tool used to disseminate TLI Information to Manor ISD

https://www.smore.com/gf2en

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Following these guiding principles, Manor ISD settled on the use of a variety of state, district, and campus communication tools to effectively communicate to stakeholders. The strategies include face-to-face interaction, participation in school wide events, district and campus website updates, handwritten communication, and E-Newsletters. Each strategy is designed to deliver a common message that will meet the needs and learning styles of all of our team members. The primary tool for communication used to initially disseminate information is **Turner's Digital Dashboard** (sample is provided below).

Digital Literacy at Its Best

Use this link https://www.smore.com/gf2en to explore our methods of communication and read more explicitly about:

- The 5 lessons Manor ISD's TLI Grant Implementation Team has learned on strengthening communication within their PLCs
- Examples of effective communication processes
- Various modes of communication with a description of purpose and audience
- Sample layouts of *Turner's Digital Dashboard*
- *What Manor ISD's S/CBLTs are saying about communication in their district*

Outcomes

The weekly Digital Dashboard has been a key vehicle our GIT team uses to disseminate information regarding TLI in hopes that each campus will use the tools embedded within the dashboard to drive literacy initiatives on their campus. Since its conception, our S/CBLTs have expressed how much more informed they are about upcoming TLI & campus events, Project Share course updates, and campus celebrations. **Denise Deckard, Instructional Coach at Manor Elementary School** sums it well, *"Turner's Digital Dashboard eliminates the distance between campuses. It allows all CBLT's to communicate with one another. Even within our campus each team member has a different job title and assigned duties/responsibilities during the day. The Dashboard provides pertinent information for our meeting day. We all come prepared ready to discuss, follow-up, and implement when needed."*

While we are able to assess the Dashboard's effectiveness by viewing the analytics, testimonies like Denise's validate the true effectiveness of our communication. The evidence and testimony thus support the guiding principles of communication that we abide by.

Highlighting TLI Effective Practices

We would like to thank the following people and their districts for submitting their articles about practices they have put in place and feel are effective for their TLI Literacy Lines:

- **Sheila Boultinghouse, Alice ISD District Literacy Shepherd**
- **Gladys Graves, Principal Chilton Elementary**
- **Felicia Turner, Manor ISD 21st Century Literacy Coordinator**

Look Who's In the News!!

Winners Announced!!

Gladys Graves
Elementary School Principal

Edinburg CISD
Large District Award

The **2014 HEB Excellence in Education** regional finalists have been announced. Each finalist's love of learning and leadership have made them all winners to the students they inspire every day.

Teaching Award Rising Star - Elementary Category
Misty Simpson - Blake Manor Elementary, Manor ISD

Lifetime Achievement - Elementary Category
Manuela Sanchez - Escandon Elementary, Edinburg CISD

Elementary School Principal
Gladys Graves - Chilton Elementary, Chilton ISD

Large District Award and School Board Category
Edinburg CISD

Process for submitting TLI Effective Practice Highlights for publication:

TLI Districts will:

- Work with assigned State Literacy Liaison(s) (SLL) to identify goals set and achieved from Language and Pre-Literacy Development Plan(s) and/or Data-informed Plan(s). **(Outcome)**

- Write a description of the LASERS Action Step(s) taken to achieve these goals. **(Description)**

- Email submissions for consideration with **"TLI Newsletter" in Subject Line** by below deadlines to TLI@tea.state.tx.us:

Newsletter Date	Submission Date	Newsletter Date	Submission Date
First Quarter 2014	December 6, 2013	**Third Quarter 2014**	June 6, 2014
Second Quarter 2014	March 7, 2014	**Fourth Quarter 2014**	September 5, 2014