



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

NCLE 2015 National Survey on College- and Career-Ready Literacy Standards & Collaborative Professional Learning

This report was produced by the National Center for Literacy Education. Evaluation consultant Dr. Catherine Awsumb Nelson played a lead role on the writing team and provided technical assistance on the project. Copyright ©2015 National Center for Literacy Education/National Council of Teachers of English. All rights reserved.

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INTRODUCTION

This document presents an overview of findings from a May 2015 national survey conducted by the National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE). Building on previous national surveys in 2012 and 2013, as well as an extensive qualitative study in 2014, this survey explores how educators are working together to implement new literacy standards. We focus particularly on effective educator collaboration as a driver of literacy change: what it looks like and how it can be supported.¹

ABOUT NCLE

NCLE is a coalition of 25 professional education associations, policy organizations, and foundations united to support schools in elevating literacy learning. Through support for practice, research, and policy change, we are building a movement around the power of educator teams to advance literacy learning. By identifying the structures and practices that support educators as they systematically plan and evaluate their own professional work and student literacy learning, we are helping schools build the capacity to improve steadily. Our website, the Literacy in Learning Exchange (www.literacyinlearningexchange.org) offers a portfolio of free resources and tools to connect educator teams that are collaborating across subject areas and school walls to meet student literacy needs, while building accessible knowledge about effective team practices.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted online in May 2015. Because many of the questions dealt specifically with the implementation of new literacy standards and we sought the perspective of those with direct implementation experience, only building-level educators in public PK–12 schools in states with recently adopted/revised literacy standards were eligible to respond. Although building-level educators across roles (principals, librarians, instructional coaches) were included in the survey, this document reports findings specific to classroom teachers. The total number of classroom teachers responding to the survey was 1,456, although the number for each question may be somewhat lower. Educators were invited to participate in the survey through a variety of means. In addition to NCLE promotion on the Literacy in Learning Exchange website and through subscription-based biweekly *SmartBrief* news summaries, the membership organizations within NCLE's stakeholders communicated directly with their members and invited them to participate. Because the resulting respondent group was a sample of convenience rather than a deliberately selected representative sample, we examined the demographics of our respondents relative to the population of PK–12 teachers nationally. Because our respondent group was found to be disproportionately composed of secondary teachers relative to the national population, sample weighting procedures were used to increase the relative weight of responses from

¹ Findings from our previous national surveys are summarized in the reports *Remodeling Literacy Learning: Making Room for What Works* (2012) and *Remodeling Literacy Learning Together: Paths to Standards Implementation* (2013), both available at www.literacyinlearningexchange.org.

elementary teachers in all summary statistics. Respondent demographics for the unweighted teacher sample are reported as Appendix B of this document.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document presents a summary of teacher responses across the entire survey, organized according to the following broad questions:

- How has standards implementation progressed since our last study?
- What role is teacher collaboration playing in standards implementation?
- How can schools best support literacy capacity building?
- What does standards implementation look like in classrooms?
- What challenges are teachers experiencing as they work to implement standards?
- How do teachers view new state assessments linked to standards?

Under these headings, important findings are highlighted in the text and in graphic displays. Each section makes reference to tables in Appendix A which present the full text of the relevant questions and the full range of responses.

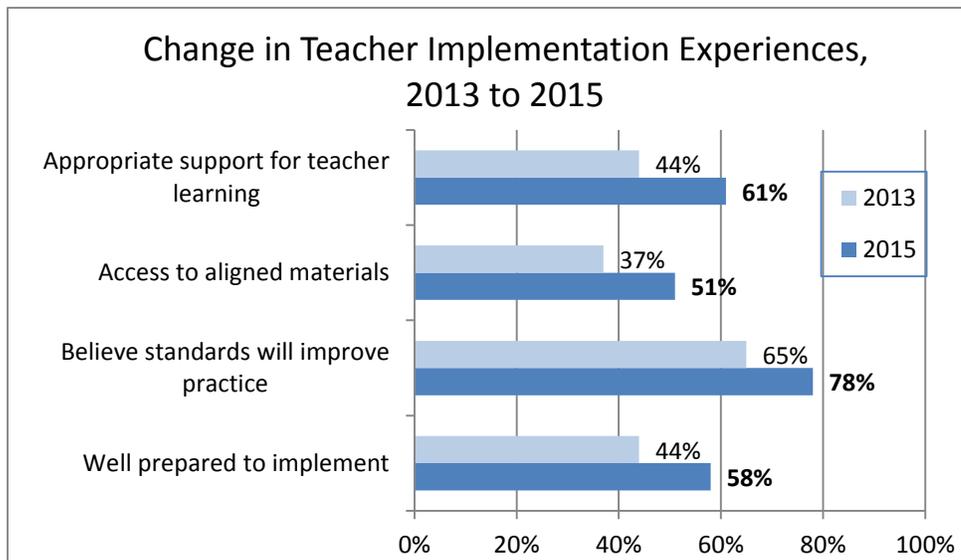
Research and Evaluation Consultant Catherine Awsumb Nelson, PhD, is the principal author of this report and also provided survey design and analysis services to NCLE in the development of this project.

How has standards implementation progressed since our last study?

A year and a half has passed since our last national survey in Fall 2013. Almost all teachers surveyed now report two or more years of experience implementing the standards, and 60% have three or more years (Table 1). Not surprisingly, with this increased experience, all measures of implementation progress show positive trends. In 2015, compared with 2013, more teachers

- Agree that their school/district is providing appropriate support for teacher professional learning around the standards;
- Agree that the curriculum materials they have access to are well aligned with the standards;
- Support the standards (believe they will improve instruction and classroom practice); and
- Rate themselves well prepared to implement the standards.

(Tables 2–5)



Although these numbers reporting positive implementation experiences are majorities, there remains considerable variation in teacher experiences with standards. For that reason the bulk of our analysis will focus on the correlates of successful implementation, in other words, the experiences and strategies that differentiate the schools making the most progress in the implementation of new literacy standards.

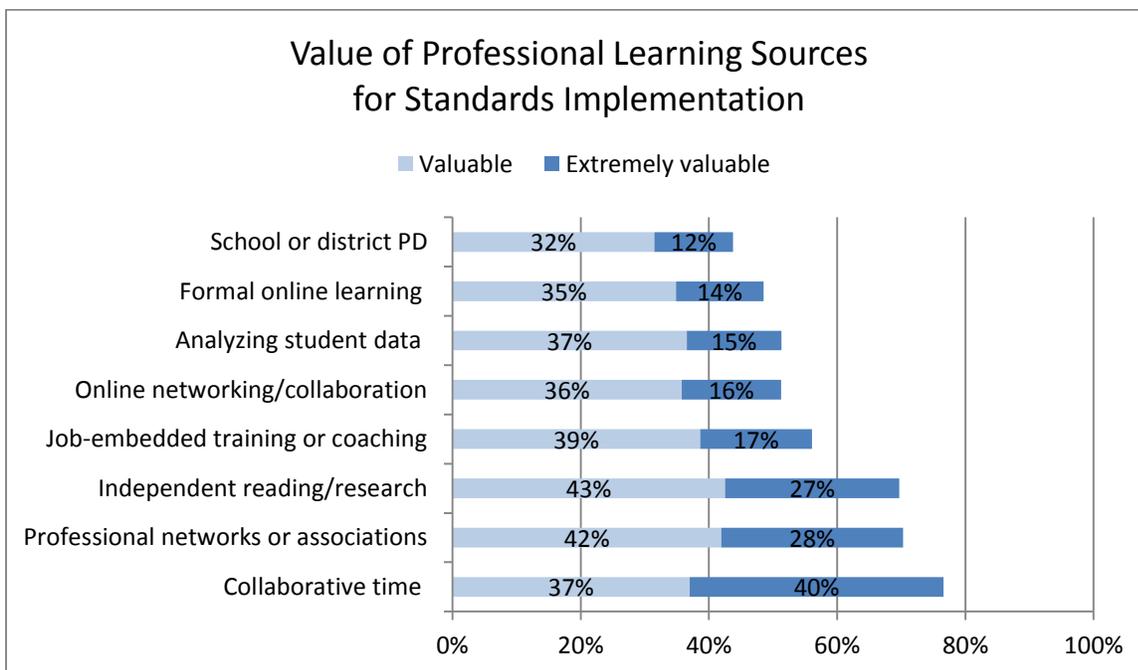
Overall, 69% of teachers agree that standards implementation is going well in their schools, 1% higher than the level reported in a 2014 Gates/Scholastic survey.² The percentage of teachers who *strongly* agreed that implementation was going well increased from 12% in the earlier survey to 21% in ours (Table 6).

² Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. (2014). *Primary Sources: Update. Teachers' Views on Common Core State Standards*. <http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/download-the-full-report.htm>

What role is teacher collaboration playing in standards implementation?

Almost all teachers now report at least some experience working on standards implementation during collaborative time with colleagues (80% in 2013 → 91% in 2015). Collaboration remains the most highly valued learning support among those who participated, with 77% rating it valuable or extremely valuable in supporting their transition to new literacy standards (slightly higher than our 2013 finding). This compares, for example, with 44% of teachers who found school- or district-provided professional development to be a valuable support for standards implementation (Table 7).

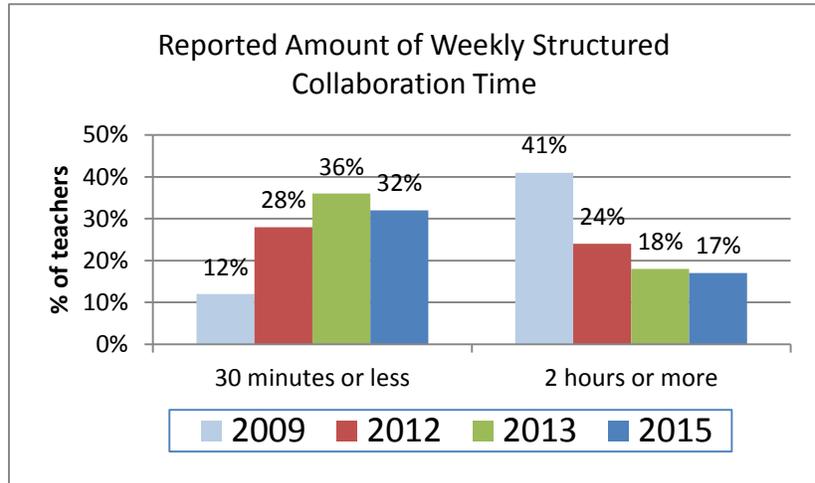
Learning opportunities (including conferences) offered by professional networks or associations (such as NCLE stakeholders) were the second-most-valued learning support, with 70% of teachers rating those experiences valuable or extremely valuable (Table 7).



While all teachers have at least some time for collaboration, the amount of time is small. In our first national survey in 2012, we found a drop in the amount of collaboration time from the level reported in the 2009 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher.³ In 2013, these numbers edged slightly lower. The drop in collaboration time for US teachers (already low by international standards) appears to have leveled off: 2015 levels are almost exactly the same as in 2013, but still lower than before the Great Recession (Table 8).

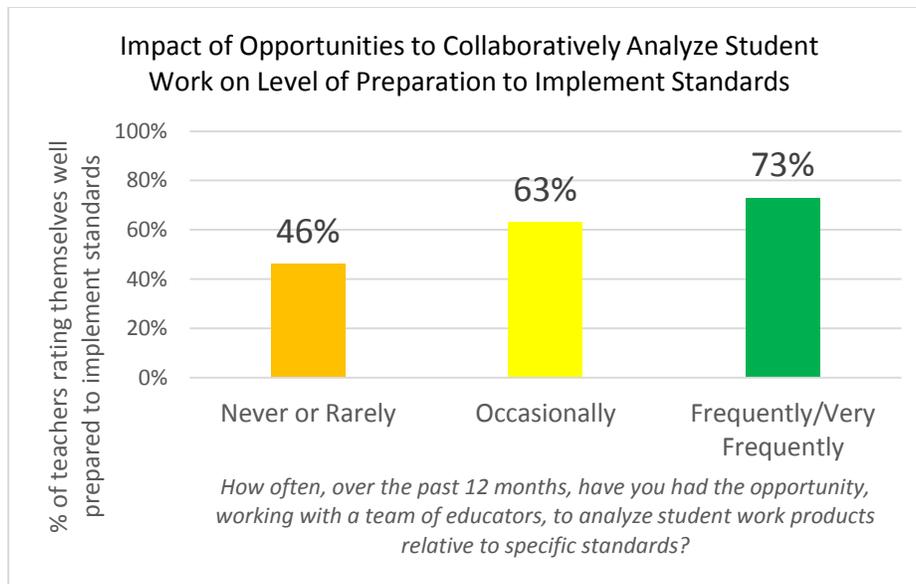
³ MetLife/Harris Interactive. (2009). *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success*. p. 15. <https://www.metlife.com/metlife-foundation/about/survey-american-teacher.html>

Although the overall amount of time formally designated for collaboration did not increase between 2013 and 2015, more teachers are having at least some experience with powerful collaborative practices. The share of teachers who said they had never done each of 9 specific collaborative activities identified in the literature and our own past research as effective in changing



teaching and learning dropped from 40–50% to around 20%. Unfortunately, the share of teachers who said they engaged in these powerful tasks frequently or very frequently increased only slightly (Tables 9a/b).

This study confirms our 2013 finding that when teachers do have an opportunity to engage frequently in effective collaboration, they report being better prepared to implement standards. For example, just 46% of teachers who never or rarely worked with a team to analyze student work relative to specific standards rate themselves as well prepared to implement, compared with 73% among teachers who collaboratively analyze student work frequently or very frequently.



This relationship between opportunities to engage in specific collaborative tasks and level of preparation to implement standards holds across a range of other powerful collaborative tasks identified in our 2013 research, including co-creating lessons and assessments and discussing literacy expectations across grade levels and subject areas.

How can schools best support literacy capacity building?

The 2015 survey included two sets of items to measure factors identified in our prior research as important conditions for literacy capacity building: ownership and leadership (*Table 10*). The results of this survey validate that both matter: teachers who reported that these conditions existed in their school were also more likely to say that standards implementation was going well in their school.

From among specific factors on the leadership and ownership scales, the strongest correlates of teachers reporting that implementation was going well in their schools were:

From the leadership scale

- Clear vision and priorities for literacy improvement
- School leaders engage in professional learning alongside teachers

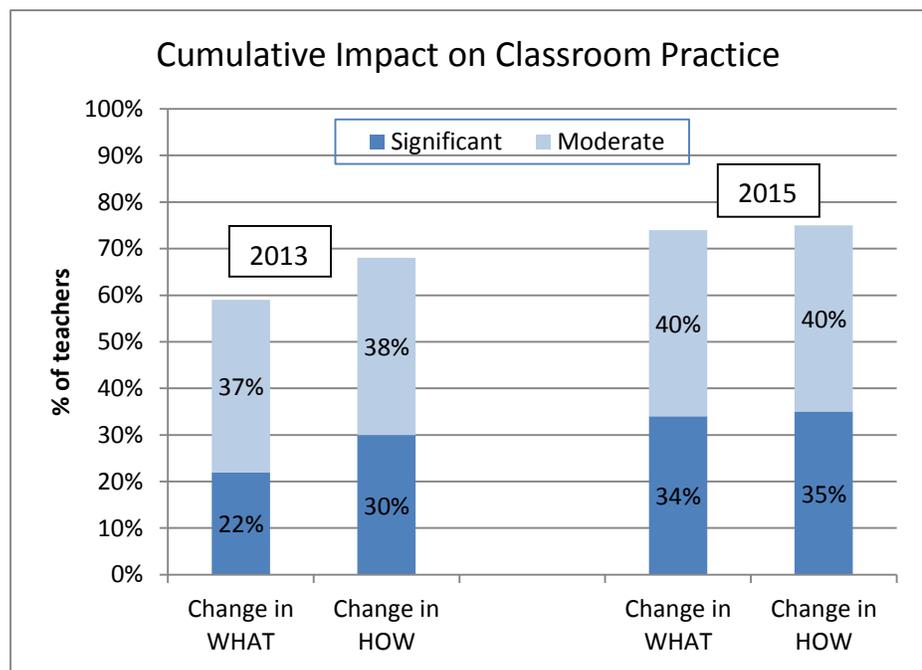
From the ownership scale

- Literacy priorities developed collaboratively with teachers
- Decisions about literacy curriculum and instruction draw on teacher expertise

These conditions for capacity building are more likely to be present in elementary schools, with lower levels reported in middle schools and high schools. The drop from elementary to middle to high schools is more pronounced in the leadership factors than in the ownership factors.

What does standards implementation look like in classrooms?

In 2013 more teachers reported that standards were impacting *how* they teach (pedagogy, methods, activities) than *what* they teach (content, topics, materials). Between 2013 and 2015 there has been less movement in how much pedagogy has changed, while the share of teachers reporting significant changes in content has caught up. In this year's results about 35% of teachers

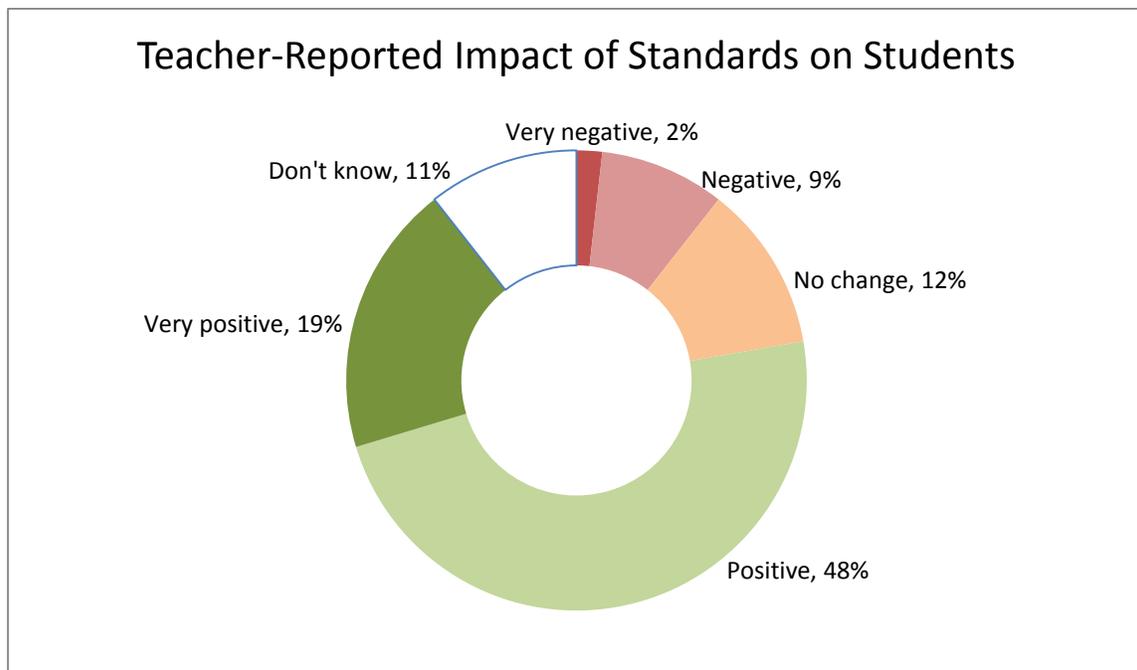


report significant changes in both content and pedagogy, and another 40% report moderate change (Tables 11 a/b).

The strongest correlate with reported changes in classroom practice is how frequently teachers engage in powerful collaborative tasks such as co-creating lessons and assessments and analyzing student work and student data together.

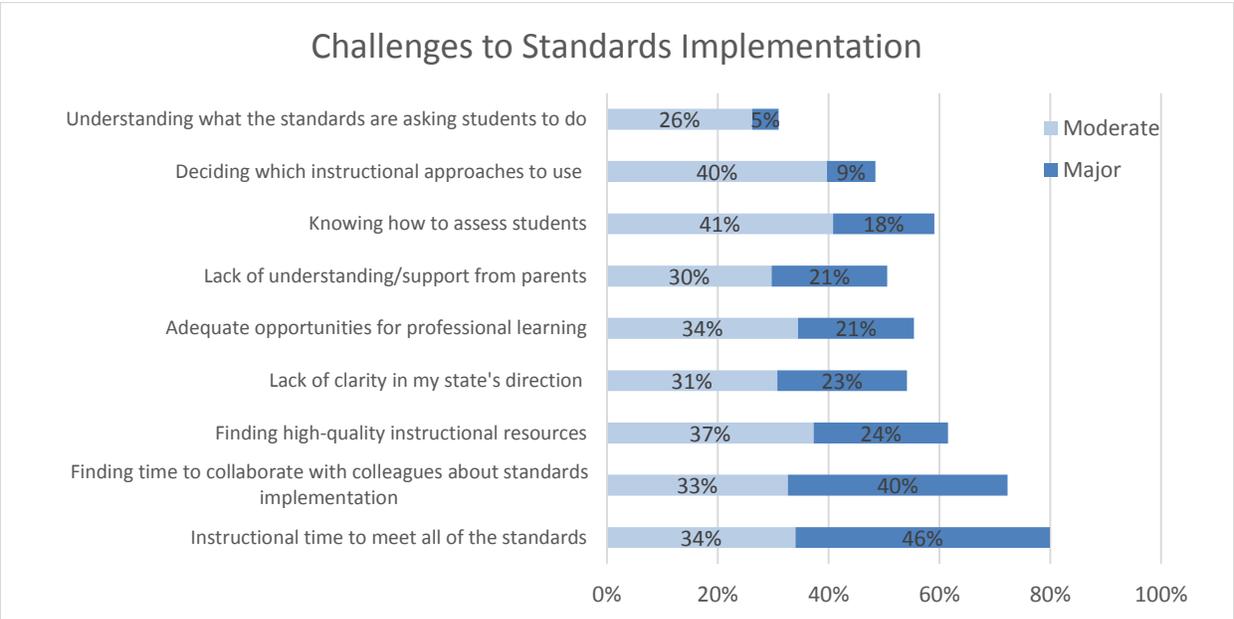
As was the case in our 2013 data, the percentage of teachers reporting significant change in what and/or how they teach since they began implementing standards decreases from elementary (40%) to middle (35%) to high school (22%).

Two-thirds of all teachers report that the changes they are making to implement the standards are having a positive impact on their students.



What challenges are teachers experiencing as they work to implement standards?

As was the case in our 2013 study, lack of instructional time and of time for collaboration were ranked as the most significant challenges to standards implementation. Instructional time was rated as a major or moderate challenge by 80% of teachers in 2015, followed by time to collaborate with colleagues (72%) and finding quality instructional materials (62%) (Table 12).



With a year and a half of experience between the 2013 and 2015 surveys, the level of concern about 8 of the 9 potential challenges to implementation declined somewhat. The exception was quality instructional resources, which stayed at the same level, moving it from fifth to third on the list of concerns. The biggest drop in concern was around knowing how to assess students on the standards.

How do teachers view new state assessments linked to standards?

Teacher opinion on the new assessments was divided, with most teachers responding either positively to all five statements or negatively to all five. The teachers

Between 40% and 60% of teachers agree with positive statements about the new assessments.

- 62%, well aligned with what they have been teaching
- 57%, cover full range of standards
- 52%, good measure of analytical skills/critical thinking
- 45%, improvement on past state tests
- 41%, fair measure of what my students know and can do

(Table 13)

who had the most positive views about the new assessments were those who also reported capacity-building conditions and approaches in their schools. Specifically, teachers with more positive views of the new assessments were more likely to say their schools

- Had supported their professional learning.
- Provided access to aligned materials.
- Had clear priorities for literacy improvement.
- Had leaders who learned alongside teachers.
- Incorporated teacher expertise into decisions about curriculum and instruction.

APPENDIX A

TABLE 1

Q: When did your school begin working on the shift to new state literacy standards?

	Percent
Has not started	2.7
This school year	8.5
Last school year	28.6
2012-13	35.8
2011-12 or earlier	24.3

TABLE 2

Q: My school/district is providing appropriate support for teacher professional learning around the standards.

	2015	2013
Strongly disagree	15%	20%
Disagree somewhat	22%	36%
Agree somewhat	39%	37%
Strongly agree	22%	7%

TABLE 3

Q: The textbooks and other curricular materials available to me (including digital resources) are well aligned with new literacy standards.

	2015	2013
Strongly disagree	18%	15%
Disagree somewhat	25%	41%
Agree somewhat	35%	31%
Strongly agree	16%	6%
Don't know enough to say	6%	8%

TABLE 4

Q: In general, the new literacy standards will help improve instruction and classroom practice.

	2015	2013
Strongly disagree	5%	8%
Disagree somewhat	11%	15%
Agree somewhat	41%	49%
Strongly agree	37%	16%
Don't know enough to say	6%	13%

TABLE 5a

Q: On a 5-point scale (where 1 is “Not at all prepared” and 5 is “Very prepared”), how prepared do you personally feel to implement new literacy standards for the following groups of students?

Your students as a whole

	2015	2013
-1- Not at all prepared	4%	7%
-2-	10%	17%
-3-	24%	30%
-4-	34%	28%
-5- Very prepared	25%	16%
Don't know	2%	2%

TABLE 5b—2015 data only

	Your students as a whole	English language learners	Students with disabilities	Students reading below grade level	Gifted and talented students
-1- Not at all prepared	4%	16%	13%	12%	5%
-2-	10%	23%	25%	24%	7%
-3-	24%	26%	31%	25%	18%
-4-	34%	18%	18%	22%	34%
-5- Very prepared	25%	8%	8%	13%	30%
Don't know	2%	8%	5%	3%	6%

TABLE 6

Q: The implementation of new literacy standards is going well in my school.

	NCLE 2015	Gates 2014
Strongly disagree	7%	5%
Disagree somewhat	19%	19%
Agree somewhat	48%	56%
Strongly agree	21%	12%
Don't know enough to say	5%	5%

TABLE 7

Q: Please indicate how valuable each of the following forms of professional learning has been in your ability to implement new literacy standards.

	<i>Haven't done</i>	Value rating, of those who have participated			
		Not at all valuable	Somewhat valuable	Valuable	Extremely valuable
Collaborative time with colleagues	9%	3%	20%	37%	40%
Learning opportunities (including conferences) offered by professional networks or associations	18%	4%	25%	42%	28%
Independent reading/research (online or offline)	6%	3%	28%	43%	27%
Job-embedded training or coaching	30%	12%	32%	39%	17%
Online networking/collaboration	34%	9%	39%	36%	16%
Analyzing student data relative to the standards	10%	14%	35%	37%	15%
Formal online learning (courses, Web seminars, etc.)	41%	11%	40%	35%	14%
School- or district-provided professional development	8%	15%	41%	32%	12%

TABLE 8

Q: Excluding administrative duties (e.g., planning field trips, ordering materials, scheduling duties, etc.), how much time per week do you spend in structured collaboration with other educators (e.g., grade-level, subject-area or data teams, PLCs, etc.)?

	2009 MetLife	2012 NCLE	2013 NCLE	2015 NCLE
0 minutes			9%	8%
1–30 minutes	12%	28%	27%	24%
31 minutes–1 hour	20%	24%	25%	25%
Between 1 and 2 hours	26%	24%	23%	26%
Between 2 and 3 hours	17%	12%	10%	11%
More than 3 hours	24%	12%	7%	6%

TABLE 9a

Q: How often have you done each of the following things in a team working on the new literacy standards over the past 12 months?

	Never	Rarely	Occasion-ally	Frequently	Very frequently
Analyzed student assessment data relative to specific standards	14%	16%	31%	28%	10%
Analyzed student work products relative to specific standards	15%	17%	31%	27%	10%
Evaluated specific materials for their alignment with the standards	18%	18%	30%	25%	9%
Co-created assessments to measure progress toward standards	20%	17%	29%	26%	8%
Co-created a lesson to help students reach specific standards	21%	17%	29%	23%	10%
Mapped the standards against existing curriculum	20%	17%	33%	24%	6%
Discussed the literacy expectations of the standards across grades	14%	20%	37%	24%	5%
Discussed the literacy expectations of the standards across subject areas	17%	21%	38%	20%	5%
Discussed shared professional reading or research about the standards	16%	25%	36%	17%	5%

TABLE 9b

	Never		Frequently/ Very frequently	
	2015	2013	2015	2013
Mapped the standards against existing curriculum	20%	40%	30%	34%
Co-created a lesson to help students reach specific standards	21%	47%	33%	28%
Co-created assessments to measure progress toward standards	20%	50%	34%	27%
Analyzed student work products relative to specific standards	15%	43%	37%	33%

TABLE 10

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school's literacy efforts?

LEADERSHIP SCALE	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
We have a clear vision and priorities for literacy improvement in this school.	13%	29%	48%	10%
The time of teacher teams to work together on literacy is protected from scheduling intrusions and other tasks.	29%	32%	33%	6%
School leaders engage in professional learning about literacy alongside teachers.	21%	30%	43%	6%
School leaders monitor the impact of professional learning on teacher practice and student learning.	19%	34%	42%	6%
OWNERSHIP SCALE				
The literacy priorities were developed collaboratively with teachers.	18%	35%	39%	8%
Decisions about literacy curriculum and instruction draw on the expertise of teachers.	17%	32%	42%	9%
Teachers have influence over decisions about their own professional learning.	16%	29%	46%	9%

TABLES 11 a/b

Q: Since you first began the transition to new literacy standards, how much impact have they had on your classroom practice?

Impact on WHAT is taught (content and topics emphasized, materials used)

	2015	2013
No impact	6%	11%
Minor	21%	29%
Moderate	40%	37%
Significant	34%	22%

Impact on HOW literacy is taught (instructional methods, assignments, types of learning activities)

	2015	2013
No impact	4%	7%
Minor	21%	24%
Moderate	40%	38%
Significant	35%	30%

TABLE 12

Q: To what extent are you experiencing each of the following challenges in the implementation of new literacy standards?

	Not a challenge	Minor	Moderate	Major
Instructional time to meet all of the standards	5%	15%	34%	46%
Finding time to collaborate with colleagues about standards implementation	7%	21%	33%	40%
Finding high-quality instructional resources aligned with the standards	12%	26%	37%	24%
Lack of clarity in my state's direction for implementing the standards	15%	31%	31%	23%
Adequate opportunities for professional learning about the standards	12%	33%	34%	21%
Lack of understanding/support from parents	18%	32%	30%	21%
Knowing how to assess students on the new standards	11%	29%	41%	18%
Deciding which instructional approaches to use in addressing the standards	15%	37%	40%	9%
Understanding what the standards are asking students to do	28%	41%	26%	5%

TABLE 13

Q: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this year's state literacy assessments? *Asked only of teachers whose states had administered new literacy assessments this year (n=829)*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Well aligned with what I have been teaching all year	12%	26%	48%	14%
A fair measure of what my students know and can do	26%	33%	34%	7%
Cover the full range of literacy standards	14%	28%	46%	11%
Good measures of the analytical skills and critical thinking emphasized by the standards	18%	30%	41%	11%
Improvement on past state tests	25%	29%	33%	13%

APPENDIX B: Respondent Demographics (Unweighted, Teachers Only)

GRADE LEVELS

PK–2	13.0%
3–5	16.3%
6–8	29.8%
9–12	50.2%

Percentages total more than 100% because some respondents reported teaching at multiple grade bands.

All summary statistics in this document use statistical weighting to reflect the national distribution of teachers across grade levels as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012:

Elementary: 49%/Middle, 20%/High, 31%

Source, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Education, Training and Library

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/high-school-teachers.htm>

PRIMARY TEACHING ASSIGNMENT

ELA	41.2%
Self-contained/Multi-subject	19.0%
World language	14.3%
Social sciences	12.0%
All other	13.5%

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Less than 3 years	3.9%
3–5 years	7.6%
6–10 years	21.8%
11–20 years	39.8%
21–30 years	19.8%
More than 31 years	7.0%

ESTIMATED STUDENT POVERTY LEVEL

Less than 25%	22.6%
25–49%	27.4%
50–74%	21.5%
75% or more	27.5%
Not sure	1.0%

LOCATION OF SCHOOL

Urban	21.1%
Mid-size	14.3%
Suburban	35.1%
Small town/rural	29.6%