**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

# Status of Implementation of the Monitoring Instructional Reading Levels (MIRL) Strategy during 2015–2016 School Year: Findings from 2016 Classroom Teacher Survey

## Office of Shared Accountability

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# Table of Contents

# List of Tables

# List of Figures

# Executive Summary

This report is the first of a series of reports for an evaluation of Monitoring Instructional Reading Levels (MIRL). MIRL is a districtwide strategy being implemented in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to improve reading instruction for K–5 students. The premise of MIRL is that through ongoing observation and data collection, emphasis on high quality guided reading, and analyses of formative reading data, teachers can diagnose a student's immediate need and then use the information to adjust instruction. All elementary schools were expected to implement MIRL in the fall of the 2015–2016 school year.

## Purpose and Scope of Study

This evaluation, conducted by the Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) was requested by the Office of the Chief Academic Officer (OCAO). The study is designed to provide insights on the extent to which MIRL was implemented as intended, the experience of stakeholders with implementation of MIRL, areas needing improvements, and the impact of MIRL on reading performance of K–5 students. This report focuses on the experiences of stakeholders implementing MIRL and to identify areas needing improvement.

## Summary of Methodology

This component of the MIRL study applied a nonexperimental design utilizing document review and a classroom teacher survey to address the evaluation questions. In spring 2016, an anonymous survey of all K–5 classroom teachers of reading was conducted to gather data on teachers' experiences with implementing MIRL during the 2015–2016 school year. A link to the online surveys was distributed through elementary school principals; a total of 2,245 teachers completed the survey with an overall estimated response rate of 62%.

Descriptive summary statistics were computed for the items on background information and structured survey items. Where applicable, chi-square statistics were used to examine differences in responses between groups of K–2 and Grade 3–5 teachers. For open-ended survey items, the content of responses was analyzed and categories of central ideas or similar responses were created.

## Summary of Findings

A summary of findings from the first year of implementation are presented below organized by evaluation question.

*Question 1. To what extent did schools establish processes and structures to support the planning, coordination, and implementation of MIRL?* The vast majority of the teachers indicated that they attended at least two of the four county level professional development sessions about reading instruction. The hours of professional development reported varied, with close to half reporting 10–25 hours. The proportion of teachers who reported that they received fewer than 10 hours of professional development was higher among Grade 3−5 teachers (42%) than K−2 teachers (31%).

The majority of teachers (51−61%) reported that their school placed a high level of emphasis on 6 of the 10 specified activities and processes for clarifying expectations for reading instruction in 2015–2016, specifically: 1) differentiating instruction to meet needs of varied learners; 2) emphasizing reading comprehension strategies; 3) aligning Common Core State Standards (CCSS) indicators to ensure rigor for all students; 4) using CCSS as a basis for instruction planning; 5) implementing expectations for a balanced literacy schedule; and 6) using consistent processes and tools to document evidence of student learning. The activities reported with widest variations or low emphasis were: interpreting formative assessments, selecting guided reading texts, and articulating a formative assessment vision for the school.

Teachers reported increased implementation of specified MIRL activities in 2015–2016 compared to previous years. The majority (56–59%) reported increases in monitoring students' monthly reading levels and comparing instructional levels over time using a data collection tool. Additionally, 40−43% reported increases in: a) incorporating a formative assessment process when planning; b) planning collaboratively for reading instruction with peers; c) planning guided reading using formative assessment; and d) using formative assessment data to identify challenges and student need. Areas of no change reported by slightly over one half of the respondents were: a) assessing students' understanding using tools and processes that are consistent across the grade-level; b) coordinating additional support for students not meeting monthly grade-level targets; c) implementing a variety of formative assessments tools in their classroom; and d) using module pathways to address instructional needs of English language learners, students with disabilities or highly able students.

*Question 2. To what extent did teachers have periodic discussions of reading performance data and student progress at the school level?* A regular schedule for periodic discussion of reading performance and planning for instruction with grade-level teams was reported to be extensively implemented. The vast majority (86%) of respondents reported that their grade-level team met once a week for an average of 60 minutes to plan for reading instruction. As expected, at almost every meeting, the respondents used the time to: a) carefully identify what each indicator was asking students to do; b) discuss and share barriers to learning; c) plan for formative assessments to check for mastery of indicators; d) strategize about effective instructional practices for small groups; e) discuss scaffolds to address individual student needs; and f) discuss explicit instruction for reading comprehension strategies to students. A significantly higher proportion of Grades 3–5 teachers than K–2 teachers reported that they engaged in: a) identifying the characteristics of the text to use during instruction (45 vs. 41%) and b) coordinating with special education staff (29 vs. 21%), at almost every meeting.

*Question 3. To what extent did teachers implement guided reading instruction?* Guided reading instruction was reported to be extensively implemented at all K–5 grade levels. The majority of the respondents (81%) conducted guided reading on a daily basis; respondents had an average of five guided reading groups in each class; and the majority met with each of their guided reading groups either daily or 3–4 times a week for an average of 20 minutes. Higher proportions of teachers of lower grades reported they had guided reading daily (77−92% in K−3 vs. 63−71% in Grades 4−5). More than one third regrouped their guided reading groups either every couple of months (42%) or monthly (35%).

*Question 4.* W*hat were the areas of instructional needs for students identified by classroom teachers?* The most critical areas of instructional needs in reading were identified in order as: writing in response to reading, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, and learning English.

*Question 5a. What were the changes in instructional practices reported by classroom teachers?* From a total of 1,617 responses most frequently mentioned favorable changes in instructional practices were: a) increased data collection and monitoring of student reading levels (*n*=454, 28%); b) increased teachers' awareness of students' reading levels, strengths, and needs (*n*=191, *n*=186, 12%); c) more consistency in instructional leveling (*n*=186, 12%) and greater use of data for planning and adjusting instruction (*n*=71, 4%).

On the other hand, comments regarding negative changes detailed how MIRL had restricted reading instruction in several ways. Common frustrations included assertions that MIRL was not new, that MIRL was disruptive to reading instruction, and that data collection during guided reading was time consuming and burdensome (*n*=559, 35%). Teachers seemed least positive about the use of the monthly data collection tool, stating that MIRL as a strategy was useful but the requirement to collect and document data on students' instructional reading levels on a monthly basis with large classes put more focus on data collection than instruction.

*Question 5b. What were the changes in students' performance reported by classroom teachers?* Close to one half of the 1,224 teachers who provided responses (*n*=581, 48%) to an open-ended item reported that students were making steady progress and advancing more quickly through the reading levels, and that more students were generally more fluent, accurate, and could effectively answer comprehension questions related to a text than in previous years and growth in specific skills such as comprehension and fluency. Other noticeable changes mentioned were: that students were increasingly and consistently using self-monitoring strategies and feedback given based on notes taken during MIRL, and many students were more aware of their own progress, were more confident, or had become more engaged in their own learning (*n*=90, 7%). On the other hand, some mentioned that a few students were lagging in specific skills like writing in response to reading and comprehension (*n*=101, 8%).

*Question 6a. What factors facilitated the implementation of components of MIRL?* One third of the respondents (*N*=886) mentioned that implementation of MIRL was strengthened by the common planning time and support from grade-level teams (*n*=279, 32%). Respondents also lauded the in-school support and training they received from their reading specialists and staff development teachers (*n*=151, 17%). Chromebooks and professional development training were reported to be helpful and eased the use of the online data collection tool (*n*=174, 23%), and ability to use MIRL data to monitor student progress (*n*=223, 27%). Despite its limited acceptance, the requirement to collect data and use the monthly online data collection tool was reported as valuable for monitoring student progress and ensuring consistent implementation of guided reading instruction (*n*=81, 11%). More importantly, many respondents mentioned that the concerted focus on using CCSS indicators, planning lessons collaboratively, discussing instructional and reading comprehension strategies, teachers' increased use of data, and awareness of students' progress or needs strengthened the implementation of guided reading instruction.

*Question 6b. What factors hindered the implementation of components of MIRL?* Repeatedly, the main barrier reported by the majority of respondents was limited time: using the data collection tool (*n*=355 of 610, 58%), implementing guided reading ((*n*=440 of 771, 57%), using formative assessment data, accessing the online reports on the *myMCPS* online portal took a lot of time (*n*=157 of 428, 37%), and data collection during guided reading (*n*=252 of 771, 32%). Teachers reported that they did not use formative assessment data as much as expected; most did not use the online MIRL reports on *myMCPS* at all due to time constraints or that they needed more training on interpreting and using formative assessment data for planning and adjusting instruction. These findings were strong evidence that refocusing K–5 reading instruction to include ongoing monitoring of instructional reading levels and student progress was not an easy transition.  Teachers' comments reiterated that, having to collect data for large classes and use the online tool with monthly frequency shifted the focus from instruction to data collection and interrupted instruction.

*Question 7. What are the professional development needs identified by classroom teachers?* The primary needs reported by close to half of respondents (*N*=889) who provided open-ended responses was ongoing training on instructional strategies and formative assessment skills—particularly assessing comprehension and improving written responses, (*n*=428, 48%)  and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of their students (*n*=402, 45%).  Many teachers would like access to instructional resources such as modeling of guided reading, grade-level examples of comprehension questions, and common formative assessments (19%). Additionally, more than 15% of the respondents identified several professional development needs related to: sharing best practices for managing time; balancing the demands of data collection and implementing guided reading instruction; and enhancing teachers' capacity for analyzing, interpreting, and using formative assessment to match instruction to needs of all students.

*Question 8.  What changes would teachers make to the elementary reading program to make it more effective?* To improve on the effectiveness of the elementary reading program majority of the teachers would place less emphasis on data collection to increase time spent on reading instruction (*n*=550 of 891, 62%). Other changes mentioned by at least a fifth of the 891 respondents were: a) focus instruction on needs of students (*n*=306, 34%), b) provide a wide variety of instructional resources to strengthen guided reading instruction and to increase consistency of implementation of MIRL practices (*n*=268, 30%); c) review Curriculum 2.0 for alignment with CCSS indicators (*n*=232, 26%) and d) provide a variety of professional development opportunities (*n*=203, 23%).

# Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from the teacher survey to provide guidance for the program's improvement as well as its ongoing development:

- *Increase understanding of MIRL and the expectations for the elementary reading program*

    a. Increase consistency in the understanding of the MIRL strategy by teachers and school leaders; clarify its rationale, and its relationship to formative assessment and the Elementary School Literacy Plan.

b.  Dispel the widespread perception that MIRL is an event by explaining the strong connection of MIRL and MCPS' *Priorities for 2016–2017: Focus on Learning, Results, and Accountability*—specifically the expectation to intensify focus on districtwide data-driven monitoring and analysis of student performance in order to increase opportunities for students to learn and to reduce variability in outcomes across schools and classrooms within schools.

c.  Increase the understanding of the CCSS and their implementation through Curriculum 2.0—specifically, that Curriculum 2.0 was updated and comprises the CCSS; that daily implementation of reading skills includes comprehension skills**.** Any misunderstandings surrounding the CCSS, Curriculum 2.0, or the elementary reading program can greatly weaken the implementation of reading instruction as well as the MIRL practices.

d.  Clarify and communicate the guidelines for gathering reading data on accuracy, fluency, and comprehension in upper grades and/or for high performing or highly able readers to all teachers.

e.  Continuously share best practices for implementing MIRL practices within and across schools.

f.  Clarify expectations for teachers' use of the MIRL reports on MyMCPS. The majority of the teachers reported that they were unfamiliar with or had not used these reports.


- *Strengthen and improve implementation of MIRL*
    a.  Based on positive findings, maintain and strengthen the aspects of MIRL that were widely implemented as intended in 2015–2016 including: guided reading instruction, collaborative team planning, articulating consistent expectations for reading instruction, and ongoing in-school professional development from reading specialists and staff development teachers.

    b.  Address the teachers' concerns about the monthly reading data collection tool.  With that regard, consider refining, upgrading, or replacing the tool as needed to make it easier to use and consequently less time consuming.

    c.  Increase emphasis on and broaden implementation of the various MIRL activities and processes where wide variability across schools or low levels of implementation were reported.  Particularly, increase improvement efforts in the areas of:
        1.  assessing students' understanding using tools and processes that are consistent across the grade level,
        2.  implementing a variety of formative assessments tools,
        3.  interpreting formative assessment information,
        4.  coordinating additional support for students not meeting monthly grade-level targets,
        5.  using module pathways for English language learners, special education students, or strong readers, and
        6.  selecting guided reading texts.

    d.  Examine reasons for the limited use and emphasis on the module pathways to address instructional needs in reading of English language learners, highly able students, and students with disabilities. Then, establish structures to support the implementation of these module pathways.

    e.  Use a variety of approaches to decrease the amount of teachers' time spent collecting and inputting MIRL data. As stated in the surveys, the respondents expressed that they did not have enough time to implement guided reading; therefore, teachers need support in

protecting time for guided reading instruction: for example, supply sample common comprehension questions, increase use of technology devices to collect and record data simultaneously or schedule time during the school day for completion of monthly data entry.

- *Increase teachers' capacity to implement rigorous reading instruction through various professional learning opportunities and ongoing support.*
  a. Provide teachers with targeted support for those areas that are specific to their individual needs. Gaps in teacher's competencies can be addressed through a series of short, targeted videos/modules along with suggestions for school leaders on how to facilitate follow up school-based professional development opportunities.
     1. Provide ongoing and additional support to classroom teachers in the areas they identified as the most critical areas of instructional needs for their students in reading: writing in response to reading, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, and learning English.
     2. Provide ongoing professional development to increase teachers' capacity with data analyses, interpretation, and use of data to plan and adjust instruction.
  b. Explain the uses, similarities, and differences among the various reading performance data— MCPS Assessment Program in Primary Reading (AP-PR)/mClass data; MIRL data, and Measures of Academic Progress in Reading (MAP-R) data for teachers.
  c. Upgrade and increase the number and variety of instructional resources for guided reading instruction. This will ensure that all schools have sufficient instructional resources for guided reading instruction, that are aligned with the CCSS indicators for all reading instructional levels and grades.

# Status of Implementation of the Monitoring Instructional Reading Levels (MIRL) Strategy During 2015–2016 School Year: Findings from 2016 Classroom Teacher Survey

Nyambura Maina, Ph.D. and Natalie Wolanin

## Introduction

The goal of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Reading/Language Arts program is to help students become literate, thoughtful communicators, capable of controlling language effectively as they negotiate a complex and information rich-world (MCPS, 2015a). As such, in 2015−2016, MCPS placed emphasis on frequent, ongoing, formative assessment in all areas of literacy instruction across all contents with the goal of deepening students understanding through reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing skills (MCPS, 2016). To achieve this, MCPS continued to refine and emphasize a balanced literacy approach to instruction in Grades Pre-K–5. Reading teachers were expected to support student growth in comprehension, vocabulary, and foundational skills through systematic and explicit whole group, small group, and independent application of skills. Further, a key aspect of the MCPS Curriculum 2.0 in reading is the emphasis on the three critical components of high-quality guided reading: Reader, Task, and Text (MCPS, 2015).

Starting in the fall of 2015, all elementary schools implemented the practice of Monitoring Instructional Reading Levels (MIRL) as a strategy to increase student achievement. The premise of MIRL is that through ongoing observation and data collection, emphasis on high quality guided reading, and analyses of formative reading data, teachers can diagnose a student's immediate need and then use the information to adjust instruction. Therefore, the goal of the MIRL practices is to increase systematic implementation of high quality guided reading, monthly documentation of students' instructional reading levels (accuracy, fluency, and comprehension), analysis and use of monthly reading data and regular discussion of student strengths and needs during collaborative planning meetings, and ongoing adjustment of instruction to meet student needs.

While many of the components of the MIRL strategy have been part of the MCPS elementary reading curriculum for many years, the districtwide implementation of MIRL in 2015–2016 was necessitated by several factors: a) reading performance for K–5 students had declined from 2012 to 2014; b) MCPS had recently instituted a variety of curriculum changes and initiatives; and c) it was unclear to what extent all schools kept up with consistent monitoring to support student learning at all grade levels across the district (MCPS, 2015b). Thus, in 2015–2016, the MIRL practices were implemented and the Monthly Reading Data Collection Tool was introduced, making it possible for teachers to use a common monitoring tool to obtain the data necessary to support instruction and make immediate adjustments to improve reading instruction.

# Background and Context of the MIRL Strategy

From 2012 to 2014, the MCPS Assessment Program in Primary Reading (MCPS AP-PR) results indicated a decline in reading performance for elementary students. During these years, the proportion of students either meeting or exceeding the MCPS AP-PR benchmarks remained steady for kindergarten students and showed a small decrease for students in Grades 1 and 2 in 2013, compared to previous years (MCPS, 2012; MCPS, 2013). These data also showed that the proportion of kindergartners performing at the advanced level (achieved proficiency at Text Level 6) decreased slightly for most racial/ethnic groups. These trends made it imperative to improve performance in reading. A cross-functional Elementary Reading Data Monitoring Team was established in 2014 to explore practices at schools with a goal of altering the downward trend observed in the performance of AP-PR (MCPS, 2015e). This work informed the work of a districtwide elementary literacy Instructional Core Team (ICT), which was established in the 2014–2015 school year. The ICT intensified the focus on data-driven instruction and frequent monitoring of reading data in order to reverse the downward trend in the reading performance of primary students.

By spring 2015 the percentage of primary students who met or exceeded grade-level reading benchmarks on the MCPS AP-PR showed steadiness, with a small one-year decrease for Kindergarten and Grade 1 and a small increase for Grade 2 students (MCPS, 2015e). The rates of achieving reading proficiency at an advanced level for kindergarten students were similar between 2014 and 2015, leveling off from the loss in previous years. It is believed that monitoring reading progress during guided reading will a) maximize improvement of the reading performance of all students and b) work to close the achievement gaps among students.

**Elementary Reading School Pilot**

As a precursor to the districtwide implementation of MIRL, an Elementary School Reading Pilot was conducted in 2014–2015. The purpose of the pilot was to learn more about the impact of consistent monitoring of instructional reading levels. An online data collection tool, the monthly Reading Data Collection Tool, was developed and piloted in spring 2015 at 16 schools. The tool allowed teachers to gather formative assessment data to inform guided reading instruction (MCPS, 2015b; MCPS 2015e). Teachers in pilot schools participated in professional learning around guided reading instruction; captured accuracy, fluency, and comprehension data during guided reading; analyzed and used data to change instruction; and shared reading data with central services staff in order to access support for student achievement (MCPS, 2014a). The outcome of these efforts revealed that by spring 2015, the downward trend in reading performance of primary students observed in prior years had decreased (MCPS, 2015e). As stated in a memo to the Board of Education, results from the reading pilot study demonstrated that student reading performance increased from previous years when schools took the approach of carefully monitoring reading progress during small group reading instruction (MCPS, 2015b).

**Components of MIRL in 2015–2016**

Starting in fall 2015, all Grades K–5 teachers in all elementary schools were expected to implement MIRL practices. The component practices of MIRL addressed in this study are comprised of:
- high quality guided reading using reader, task and text components;
- ongoing monitoring of instructional reading levels and monthly collecting and entering data into a *Monthly Reading Data Collection Tool*;
- analysis and use of monthly data to adjust instruction;
- collaborative planning at the grade-level; and
- activities and structures instituted to support the implementation of the above listed components.

A description of each component is listed below.

**High quality guided reading.** The guided reading instructional segment is designed "to build on a students' ability to process increasingly challenging texts and understanding" (MCPS, 2015a). Using Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as a basis for instructional planning and to ensure rigor for all students, teachers were expected to provide guided reading for every student by using a clear lesson focus based on a standard or an indicator, and using before-during-after structure for a duration of 10–30 minutes. The expectations for guided reading are detailed in Appendix A. The 2015–2016 Elementary Literacy Plan specifies three components for high quality guided reading:

1. <u>Reader</u>: Teachers use student data to understand the reader and what supports the student will need to demonstrate proficiency.
2. <u>Task:</u> Teachers determine which reading comprehension strategies will best help each student to access and learn ideas and concepts from the standard or indicator under study.
3. <u>Text</u>: Teachers match text characteristics to the needs and strengths of their students and assign the appropriate text(s) for instruction.

**Ongoing monitoring of progress, data collection, and monthly entering of reading data.** Because the goal of guided reading is to continue to advance all students on their reading continuum, the expectation was that data on accuracy, fluency, comprehension, and instructional level for each student were to be a) collected regularly during guided reading and b) entered into the *Monthly Reading Data Collection Tool* at least monthly.

- Teachers were expected to take running reading records at regular intervals. Running reading records assess a student's accuracy and fluency during guided reading.
- Teachers were expected to assess comprehension at regular intervals during small group instruction.
- Teachers were expected to document each students' instructional level during guided reading at specified intervals (Appendix A2). This assures consistent and ongoing monitoring of instructional reading levels.

**Analysis and use of data for instructional planning.** The purpose of collecting students' reading data during guided reading is to learn about students as readers, analyze the data, and to use these data to plan for small groups. The analyses of running reading records, responses to reading (tasks,

questions) and other formative assessment data serve to provide the teacher with data to direct students to appropriate texts; teach appropriate reading content or strategies; and address student barriers.

**Collaborative planning at Grade-level team meetings**.  During grade level collaborative team planning, teachers were expected to analyze and discuss formative assessment reading data at the grade level or school level and to use a variety of resources to plan differentiated lessons for guided reading groups (Appendix B).  At these meetings, teachers were expected to: develop a common understanding of indicators; discuss barriers and needs for enrichment; plan instruction to match needs of students; and determine assessment opportunities.

**Activities and structures to support schools with implementation of MIRL.** At the district level, MCPS instituted the following resources, activities, and structures to  prepare teachers and support schools in the implementation of MIRL during the 2015–2016 school year (see also: Figure 1 logic model of MIRL):

- *Professional development for teachers*.  The professional development was intended to empower participants to support the implementation of MIRL.  This professional learning was provided to all K−5 reading teachers (i.e. classroom teachers, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers, special education teachers, reading initiative and focus teachers), and other academic intervention teachers and comprised the following sessions.
    a. *Summer 2014 professional development, "Small Group Instruction in Reading"* for Grades 3−5 teachers, ESOL teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists, and staff development teachers.
    b. *Implementing, Assessing, and Monitoring Guided Reading Grades K–5 2015–2016* was a series of professional learning opportunities facilitated by the Elementary Integrated Curriculum (EIC) team (Appendix C).  It included the following topics:
        i. Monitoring Instructional Reading Level Module 1 Grades K–5: a 1−1.5 hour training taken at the beginning of the 2015−2016 school year.
        ii. Analyzing Data and Instructional Practices, Module 2 Grades 3–5 (Using several rubrics to assess the formative reading data): a 3−3.5 hour training taken between September and November 2015.
        iii. Analyzing Data and Instructional Practices, Module 2 Grades K–2 (Using data to plan instruction during collaborative team planning sessions): a 3−3.5 hour training taken between November and February of the 2015−2016 school year.
        iv. Reflecting on Results and Next Steps Reading, Module 3 Grades K–5: a 1-1.5 hour training taken between April and May 2016.
    c. Online resources related to MIRL training and tools.
- *Professional development for school leaders*.  Professional development was made available throughout the 2015−2016 school year to school leaders such as principals, reading specialists and staff development teachers and occurred in various monthly group meetings such as: the Elementary Principals' Curriculum Update Meetings; the Reading Specialist Meetings; the Early Childhood Teacher meetings; the Staff Development Teacher meetings; and the Special Education meetings. This professional development for school leaders was focused on building content knowledge and leadership capacity to support teachers in planning, teaching and assessing students in literacy.

- *2015–2016 MCPS Elementary Literacy Plan*.  The Elementary Literacy Plan articulates MCPS' goal for providing high quality reading instruction and the expectation for monitoring reading performance through ongoing assessment (MCPS, 2015a).
- *Monthly Reading Data Collection Tool*.  This tool was provided to reading teachers for documenting student-level reading instructional levels during guided reading at specified intervals.  The purpose of collecting students' reading level information during guided reading is to get to know students as readers, analyze the data longitudinally, and to use these data to plan for small groups.
- *Instructional Core Team*.  The elementary literacy ICT is a multistakeholder cross-functional forum charged with data monitoring, data-driven action learning, and implementation and evaluation of systematic research-based strategies throughout the year. The ICT is expected to:
  - analyze targeted reading data on a monthly basis,
  - identify schools needing direct support in reading,
  - implement action plans through classroom, team level, or school leadership support, and,
  - evaluate the effectiveness of support through ongoing data analysis.

# Theoretical Perspective/Theory of Action for MIRL

MCPS emphasizes that an effective instructional program makes proper use of three types of assessments categorized as: a) assessments <u>AS</u> learning, b) assessments <u>FOR</u> learning, and c) assessments <u>OF</u> learning (MCPS, 2015b; MCPS, 2015c).  MIRL is guided by the premise that "If we systematically monitor students' instructional reading levels (accuracy, fluency, and comprehension) and use these data to support and program for students, then classroom instruction will be more strategic and reading achievement will increase for all students" (MCPS, 2015c).

## Expected Outcomes

The overall goal of the districtwide implementation of the MIRL strategy is to increase student performance in reading. Through ongoing observation and documentation of students' reading progress during guided reading, it is expected that teachers will be able to diagnose students' immediate needs and then use the information to adjust instruction.  The implementation of MIRL during the 2015–2016 school year was expected to bring about the following changes at the school and teacher level (Figure 1):
- increased familiarity of teachers and school leaders with the literacy plan, data collection tools, and monitoring of reading performance,
- initiating and formalizing processes and structures for collecting, entering, and using reading data,
- increased monitoring (observation and documentation) of instructional levels during guided reading,
- consistent use of  Monthly Reading Data Collection Tool to track instructional reading levels,
- ongoing coordinated analyses and use of reading data to inform instructional practices and support student learning, and

- increased use of monitoring data to adjust instruction.

Ultimately, the implementation of MIRL is expected to bring about
- established  use of  monitoring of instructional levels during guided reading for all K–5 students,
- improved reading performance for all K–5 students, and
- progress toward reducing achievement gaps.

**MIRL: Activities, Expected Results, and Anticipated Outcomes for 2015–2016**

| Needs and Issues (Rationale for MIRL) | Inputs (Resources and Structures Instituted) | Outputs/Results | | Outcomes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Activities | Participation Metrics | Expected Short Term Changes | Expected Lasting Changes |
| | | | | | |
| • Decreasing performance in reading (K–5) as measured by MCPS AP-PR  <br><br> • Limited observation, documentation, analysis, and use of formative data monitoring) of reading performance/of reading levels at specified intervals throughout the year | • Professional development (PD) sessions <br> • 2015–2016 MCPS Elementary Literacy Plan <br> • Online Monthly reading data collection tool (OCTO) <br> • School level common team planning structures <br> • Monthly principal curriculum updates <br> • Elementary Literacy Instructional Core Team (ICT) | • Clarify and articulate Elementary Literacy Plan and vision for reading instruction at school level <br> • Facilitate ongoing PD to school staff reflecting on results and best practices <br> • Regularly assess and document reading levels during guided reading <br> • Introduction of Monthly Reading Data Collection Tool <br> • Discuss reading data at regular intervals (monthly collaborative teams and principal curriculum updates) <br> • Ongoing strategic use of formative reading data to adjust instruction | • PD sessions and Modules /Topics covered during PD for teachers <br> • Number and frequency of PD sessions for school leaders <br> • % Teachers attending PD <br> • % Administrators attending PD <br> • Types of structures and processes in place at school level and who is involved <br> • Extent of use of Monthly reading data collection tool/ periodic online reports <br> • Frequency and structure of school level team meetings related to use of formative reading data to plan instruction <br> • Frequency and attendance at principal's curriculum update meetings | • Increased familiarity of teachers and school leaders with literacy plan, data collection tools, and monitoring of reading performance <br> • Initiating and formalizing processes and structures for collecting, entering, and using reading data <br> • Increased monitoring (observation and documentation) of instructional levels during guided reading <br> • Consistent use of Monthly Reading Data Collection Tool to document instructional reading levels <br> • Ongoing coordinated analyses and use of reading data to inform instructional practices and support student learning <br> • Increased use of monitoring data to adjust instruction | • Established use of monitoring of instructional levels during guided reading levels for all K–5 students <br> • Improved reading performance for all K–5 students <br> • Progress toward reducing achievement gaps |

*Figure 1*. Logic Model for MIRL 2015–2016

# Literature Highlights

This review focuses on: a) assessment for learning, b) relationship between formative assessment and instructional planning; and c) the role of teachers and schools in implementing assessment of learning.

*Assessment for Learning.* Formative assessments—or assessments administered in order to gauge what students can and cannot do, and know and do not know, so that teachers can modify their instruction accordingly—are generally accepted as a viable tool for improving student achievement. The term formative assessment represents an evolving set of practices commonly described as a planned process in which assessment-elicited evidence is used by; a) teachers to adjust their ongoing teaching and learning procedures to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes, and b) by students to adjust their current learning tactics (Bennett, 2011; McManus, 2008; Popham, 2008). There is no single way to collect formative data and it can be gathered through a variety of means (Heritage M, 2010b; Griffin 2007). The day-to-day assessment strategies of questioning, observing, discussing, checking on students understanding and analyzing their responses as well as engaging children in reviewing progress are not mutually exclusive; neither is the list necessarily exhaustive. These include informal methods during the process of teaching and learning that are mostly planned ahead of instruction but can occur spontaneously (e.g., observations of student behavior, written work, representations, teacher student interactions and interactions among students).

*Relationship between formative assessment and instructional planning.* According to Brookhard and Nitko (2015), diagnostic and formative assessments are similar in that they help inform teacher planning. The purpose of diagnostic assessments is to identify learning targets which students have not mastered along with possible reasons. The emphasis of diagnostic assessment is on what the student does not know and focuses on the teacher's understanding of student learning for instructional planning purposes. Brookhard and Nitko outline six different approaches to diagnostic assessment: a) profiling content strengths and weaknesses, b) identifying prerequisite deficits, c) identifying objectives not mastered, d) identifying students' errors, and e) identifying student knowledge structures.

The purpose of formative assessments is not only to remediate learning deficits, but to improve on student strengths (Brookhard & Nitko, 2015). Additionally, formative assessments involve students, in addition to teachers, in identifying steps for improvement. Formative assessments cycle back into the learning process and focus on teacher feedback and student self-assessment. In brief, with formative assessments, "students and teachers focus on a learning target, evaluate current student work against the target, act to move the work closer to the target, and repeat the process" (Brookhard & Nitko, 2015). Six strategies for formative assessments identified by Brookhard and Nitko are: 1) sharing learning targets and criteria for success, 2) feedback that feeds forward, 3) student goal setting, 4) student self-assessment 5) asking effective questions and 6) helping students ask effective questions. Brookhard and Nitko also suggest that teachers keep systematic records of their formative assessments, and that records should include the type of feedback given to a student on a particular skill over time. These authors also suggest that the

records teachers keep are not used for assigning grades/grading but to ensure that the teacher is observing all students on the important identified skills and that patterns of observations will help in the decisions of what a student or group needs. They further explain that the number of student observations conducted before drawing a conclusion will vary with the skill and grade level.

*The Role of Teachers and Schools in Assessment for Learning.* Formative assessment/assessment for learning exists within a larger educational context. Therefore, professional development for assessment for learning is insufficient in and of itself without considering the larger system in which teachers find themselves (Wylie & Lyon, 2009). These researchers identified four ways in which a sustained focus on formative assessment could affect the experiences of teachers and their schools:

- The implementation of formative assessment may result in changes to both the explicit classroom rules and implicit classroom expectations.
- Formative assessment might interrupt other classroom/school policies. Several researchers pointed out the need to reallocate resources to ensure that teachers have concentrated time and support to build their knowledge of formative assessment within professional learning communities; emphasizing that a supportive culture and network helps to reinforce best practices. Some of the best practices cited include aligning formative assessment needs to school improvement priorities and goals and a review of existing policies and practices to ensure that barriers to implementing research based formative assessment practices are removed or that formative assessment practices are not in conflict with long-standing grading and marking policies (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2004).
- Formative assessment has a critical student component and impacts more than just what the teacher does; in formative assessment, in addition to their own learning, students also have the roles of learning to be self- reflective and providing peer feedback.
- Engaging teachers in formative assessment can be a powerful way to reenergize experienced teachers. Engaging in assessment for learning prompts teachers to continuously refine their classroom practice as they learn about new practices and plan for their use in the classrooms.

# Scope of the Evaluation

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this component of the MIRL evaluation study was to describe the implementation of the MIRL strategy during the 2015–2016 school year from the perspective and experiences of classroom teachers, and to identify areas needing improvement.

**Evaluation Questions**

The study was guided by the following questions:
1. To what extent did schools establish processes and structures to support the planning, coordination, and implementation of MIRL?
2. To what extent did teachers have periodic discussions of reading performance data and student progress at the school level?
3. To what extent did teachers implement guided reading instruction?
4. What were areas of instructional needs for students reported by classroom teachers?
5. What were the changes in a) instructional practices and b) students' instructional reading levels and reading performance reported by classroom teachers?
6. What factors a) facilitated or b) hindered the implementation of components of MIRL?
7. What are the professional development needs identified by classroom teachers?
8. What changes would teachers make to the elementary reading program to make it more effective?

# Methodology

***Study Design.*** Because all elementary schools implemented MIRL during the 2015–2016 school year, this component of the MIRL study applied a nonexperimental design utilizing document review and a classroom teacher survey to address these evaluation questions.

***Study sample***. K–5 teachers of reading from all MCPS elementary schools comprised the study sample; this included classroom teachers, special education teachers, ESOL teachers, or reading support/reading specialists who taught or co-taught reading.

***Survey of teachers***. The classroom teacher survey was developed by the Office of Shared Accountability, in collaboration with staff from the Elementary Integrated Reading Curriculum, in the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs. The purpose of the survey was to examine the teachers' perspectives and experience with the implementation of the MIRL strategy at their school. The survey items included multiple choice, multiple response, and open-ended questions.

The teacher survey was anonymous and was administered between April 30 and May 2016, using the *NoviSurvey* web tool. To distribute the survey, an email was sent to each elementary school principal, asking the principal to distribute the web link to the online survey to all eligible K–5 teachers (teachers of reading) at their school.

After several reminders and extensions of the survey completion window, a total of 2,245 teachers from an estimated 3,585 K–5 teachers completed the survey for an estimated response rate of 62% (Since links were sent to the principals to distribute, it is not known exactly how many teachers received the survey request.).

**Survey Response Rate**

The overall response rate for the MIRL teacher survey was 62% (2,245 out of 3,585[1]) and included teachers who taught reading, from Kindergarten through Grade 5 (Table 1). The percent of K–5 teachers of reading who completed the survey in each of the 133 elementary schools varied from 10% in some schools to 100% in other schools (Figure 2). Only four of the schools had a response rate of 30% or lower. The majority of teachers in 116 of the 133 schools (87%) completed the survey (≥51% response rate). In 23 of the schools, more than 81% of the teachers completed the survey.
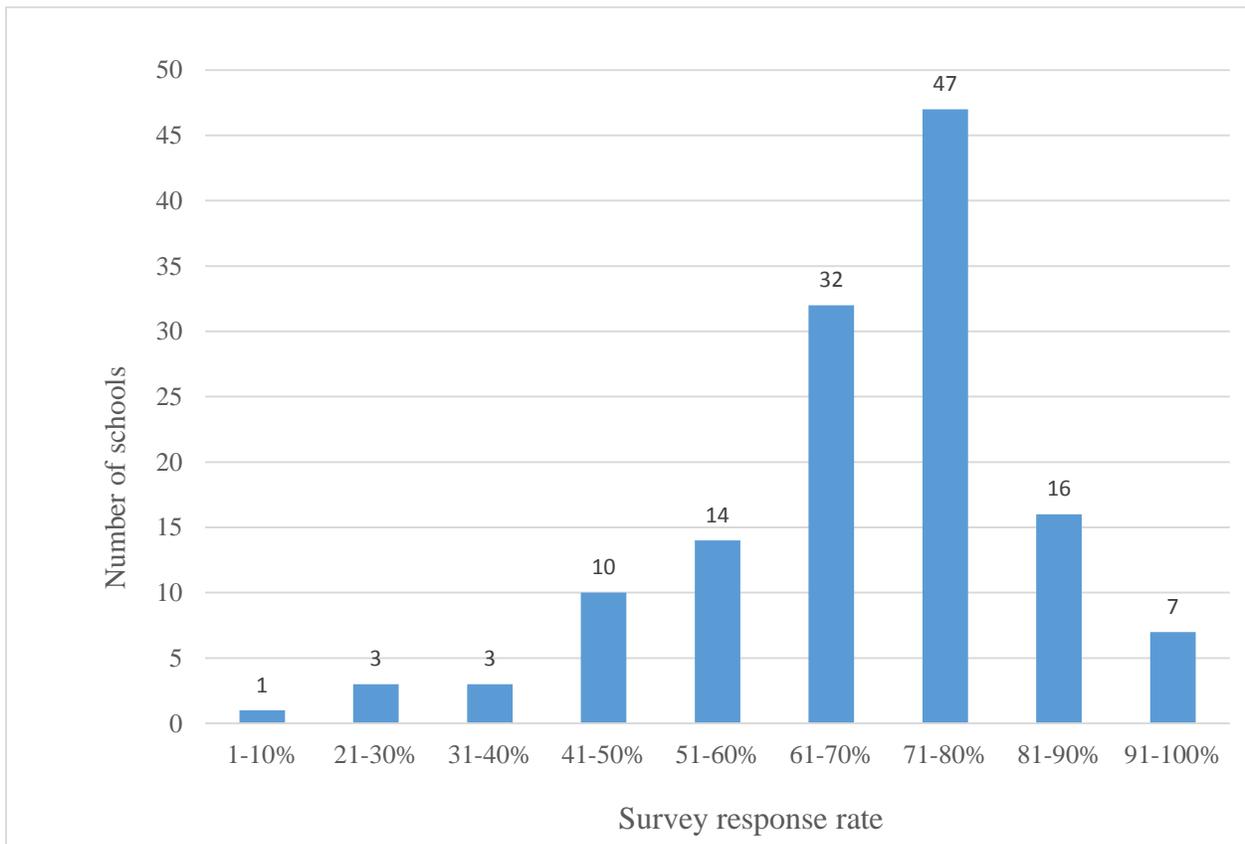


*Figure 2*. Frequency of school level survey response rate

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[1] This information was computed from the official Student Course Grade Teacher (SCGT) file.

*Document review.* A comprehensive set of documents reflecting literacy plans and policies, and staff development training provided at individual schools were reviewed. These documents included but were not limited to the Elementary Literacy Plan, agendas for school leader professional development sessions, memoranda to schools, guidelines for implementation of MIRL, staff development plans, resources shared at principal monthly updates and agendas, resources used during collaborative team planning, agendas for meetings with stakeholders, and topics of professional development training sessions. These reviews informed: a) development of data collection tools, b) analyses procedures, and c) interpretation of findings from surveys.

## Data Analysis Procedures

Descriptive summary statistics were computed for the items on background information and quantitative survey items. Where applicable, additional analyses using 2 x 2 contingency tables (for Chi-square statistics) were applied to determine if there were any significant differences in responses among teachers by grade (K−2 or Grades 3−5). For open-ended survey items, content of responses were analyzed by four Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) researchers and categories of central ideas or similar responses for each survey item were created. In general, a category was assigned and reported in summary tables when a category consisted of at least 50 responses or 10% of the respondents. A miscellaneous category or "Other" was used for responses falling outside the broad categories or appearing with frequency of less than the specified number of responses.

Descriptive summaries for the characteristics of survey respondents and responses to open-ended survey items included all survey respondents who responded the questions. However, descriptive summaries for quantitative survey items which were examined by grade level only, included teachers who reported teaching Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4, or Grade 5 (*N* = 2,057). These findings do not include those who selected more than one grade level because it is unclear which grade level they are referring to when answering survey questions. Additional analyses revealed that respondents who taught multiple grade levels had indicated that they were either special education teachers, ESOL teachers, Pre-kindergarten teachers or Reading support/reading specialists.

## Strengths and Limitations

There were several strengths of this component of the MIRL evaluation study (i.e. Classroom teacher survey). First, all teachers of reading from grade levels K–5 were surveyed. Additionally, the overall estimated response rate was 62%; and more than half of all teachers in most schools completed the survey schools. This makes the respondents fairly representative of MCPS K–5 teachers and schools and the findings can be used with confidence. Third, the survey included open-ended items in order to determine the full extent of teachers' experiences and provide the teachers with the opportunity to elaborate. The open-ended items permitted the respondents to respond in their own words and yielded rich qualitative data. These qualitative data provided details describing a variety of experiences and contexts in the implementation of the MIRL strategy.

There was one main limitation. One of the most intriguing themes that emerged from this survey was the variety of ways the MIRL strategy was defined, experienced, or conceptualized by the stakeholders; for some respondents the definition of MIRL/MIRL terminology was consistent with the view of MIRL as primarily the activity of data collection and using the online reading data collection tool.  Therefore, some respondents may have interpreted questions differently based on their assumptions of what comprised the MIRL strategy. However, the full and accurate definition of MIRL is the systematic implementation of high quality guided reading, monthly collection of reading information, collaborative planning, analysis and use of monthly data, discussion of student strengths and needs, and adjustment of instruction to meet student needs.

# Results

Following the sections on response rate and respondents' background, the findings are organized by each evaluation question. Within each evaluation question, findings are organized by sections/items on the teacher survey.

**Characteristics of Classroom Teacher Survey Respondents**

As shown in Table 1, the percent of teachers responding to the survey were distributed fairly evenly across grade levels from Kindergarten through Grade 5 (12−18%).

Table 1
Number and Percent of Respondents by Grade Taught

| Grade (s) taught | (N = 2,245) | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | *n* | *%* |
| Kindergarten | 367 | 16.3 |
| Grade 1 | 391 | 17.4 |
| Grade 2 | 398 | 17.7 |
| Grade 3 | 329 | 14.7 |
| Grade 4 | 302 | 13.5 |
| Grade 5 | 270 | 12.0 |
| Multiple grade levels/Other | 150 | 6.7 |
| Missing answer | 38 | 1.7 |

As previously mentioned, tables of findings from this point on will only include classroom teachers who reported teaching Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4, or Grade 5 (N = 2,057) and not multiple grade or other teachers.

Tables 2 and 3 show that a variety of MCPS School settings were represented among the survey respondents. Corresponding to the structures and settings of MCPS elementary schools, a vast majority of teachers were from K−5 (43%) or Pre-K–5 (34%) schools (Table 2).  About one fifth (23%) of the respondents taught in K−2 schools, Grades 3−5 schools, or Grades 3−6 schools.

Table 2
Description of School Structure by Survey Respondent

| Description of School | (N = 2,054) | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | n | % |
| K–5 | 891 | 43.4 |
| Pre-K–5 | 697 | 33.9 |
| K–2 | 295 | 14.4 |
| Grades 3 to 5 | 158 | 7.7 |
| Grades 3 to 6 | 13 | 0.6 |

*Note*. Three teachers did not answer the question

Twenty three percent of the responding teachers indicated that their school was one of the 26 MCPS schools that received Federal Title 1 funds in 2015−2016 (i.e. Title I schools); just under 10% reported that their school departmentalizes reading instruction by grade level.

Table 3
Number and Percent of Teachers Describing their School by Specified Category

| Description of School | N | n | % |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Title 1 School | 2,029 | 458 | 22.6 |
| Departmentalized reading instruction at some grade levels | 2,007 | 188 | 9.4 |

Table 4 presents information on the years of teaching experience among the teacher respondents. The average number of years respondents reported teaching was 12 years and teaching at MCPS was 10 years. The respondents reported teaching at their current grade for an average of six years and teaching at their current school for an average of seven years.

Table 4
Classroom Experience by K–5 Teacher Survey Respondent

| Total number years | N | Mean | SD | Median | Min | Max |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Teaching | 2,027 | 12.09 | 8.48 | 10.0 | 1 | 45.0 |
| Teaching in MCPS | 2,019 | 10.13 | 7.48 | 10.1 | 1 | 44.0 |
| Teaching reading at current grade | 2,011 | 6.34 | 5.59 | 6.3 | .5 | 37.5 |
| Teaching reading at current school | 2,000 | 7.00 | 5.78 | 7.0 | .5 | 37.5 |

A majority of the K–5 teacher respondents reported that they were certified in Elementary Education (79%); and under one half (43%) were certified in early childhood education (Table 5). In addition, some teachers also reported certification or endorsement in Special Education (16%), ESOL (8%), Reading Specialist (8%), National Board Certification (4%), or Reading Recovery (less than 1%).

Table 5
Certification Status by K–5 Teacher Survey Respondents

| Description of Certification/Endorsement | (N = 2,057) | |
|---|---|---|
| | *n* | *%* |
| Elementary Education | 1,625 | 79.0 |
| Early Childhood Education | 885 | 43.0 |
| Special Education | 320 | 15.6 |
| Reading Specialist | 159 | 7.7 |
| ESOL/ESL education | 156 | 7.6 |
| National Board Certification | 90 | 4.4 |
| Reading Recovery | 12 | 0.6 |

*Note.* The percentage of responses may exceed 100% because respondents could check all the responses that apply; and some provided more than one response.

### *Question 1. To what extent did schools establish processes and structures to support the planning, coordination, and implementation of MIRL?*

The findings for Question 1 are organized by topics on the classroom teacher survey: professional development, processes and activities emphasized, and implementation of planning or implementing reading activities compare to previous year.

### Professional Development

*Participation in countywide professional development sessions.* Table 6 presents findings on number and percent of teachers who attended the professional development sessions offered for all teachers. A description of the professional development offered can be seen in Appendix C. About 72 to 77% of Grade 3–5 teachers reported attending the *Small Group Reading Instruction Summer Training* for Grades 3–5, and 87−91% of *K–2* teachers reported attending the *Implementing, Assessing, and Monitoring Summer Training for K–2*. Over one half (56−64%) of Kindergarten−Grade 5 teachers reported attendance to the *Monitoring Instructional Reading Levels K−5 Reading Module* training. Only 11–12% of respondents from each grade level, K–5, reported attendance to *Reflecting on Results and Next Steps Reading Module 3*.

Table 6
Number and Percentage of Respondents Who Received Professional Development in Specific Areas
by Grade Level

| | Grade Level | | | | | | | | | | |
| | K | | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | |
| | (*N*=367) | | (*N*=391) | | (*N*=398) | | (*N*=329) | | (*N*=302) | | (*N*=270) | |
| Professional Development Sessions | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* |
| Small Group Reading Instruction Grades 3–5 Tier I Summer Training (2014) | 20 | 5.4 | 23 | 5.9 | 47 | 11.8 | 238 | 72.3 | 233 | 77.2 | 204 | 75.6 |
| Implementing and Assessing, and Monitoring Guided K–2 Tier 1 Summer Training (2015) | 332 | 90.5 | 344 | 88.0 | 347 | 87.2 | 26 | 7.9 | 14 | 4.6 | 9 | 3.3 |
| Monitoring Instructional Reading Levels K–5 Reading Module | 222 | 60.5 | 219 | 56.0 | 234 | 58.8 | 185 | 56.2 | 173 | 57.3 | 172 | 63.7 |
| Reflecting on results and next steps Reading Module 3 | 40 | 10.9 | 43 | 11.0 | 44 | 11.1 | 38 | 11.6 | 29 | 9.6 | 32 | 11.9 |

*Note.* Respondents were asked to check all that apply. The percentage of responses may exceed 100% because respondents provided more than one response.

*Number of hours of professional development related to reading.* About one third of all the respondents (36%) estimated that they received fewer than 10 hours of professional development related to reading in 2015−2016 (including summer) (Figure 3).  Close to one half estimated that they had received 10−25 hours of professional development related to reading (49%). The remaining 15% estimated that they received 51 hours or more.

When data were disaggregated by grade-level, the analyses revealed that the proportion of teachers who estimated that they received 10–25 hours of professional development related to reading was a significantly higher proportion among Grades K−2 teachers (54%) compared with Grade 3−5 teachers (44%) ($\chi2$ (5, $N$ = 2,044) = 29.77, $p < .000$). As a result, the proportion of teachers who reported that they received fewer than 10 hours of professional development was higher among Grade 3−5 teachers (42%) than K−2 teachers (31%).
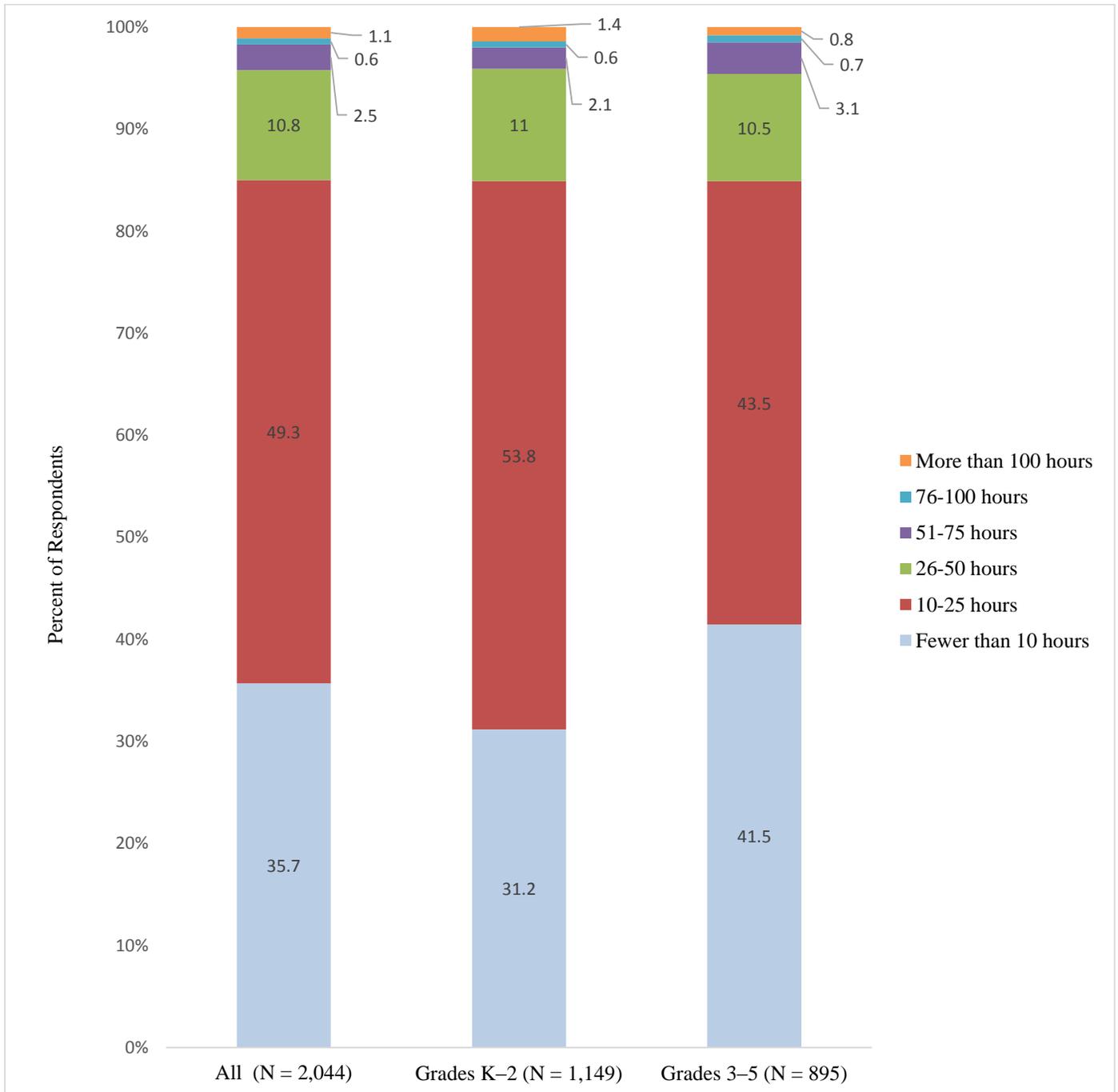
*Figure 3*. Total number of hours for professional development related to reading in 2015−2016.

**Processes and activities emphasized across the schools in 2015−2016**

To support the implementation of MIRL, all schools were expected to establish processes or strengthen existing ones to support the implementation of MIRL and reading instruction in general. The survey asked teachers to report on the extent to which specified activities and processes were emphasized across their school during the 2015–2016 school year.  More than one half of classroom teachers reported that their schools placed high emphasis on six of the ten specified

activities: 1) differentiating instruction to meet needs of varied learners (61%), 2) emphasizing reading comprehension strategies (61%),  3) aligning CCSS indicators to ensure rigor for all students (57%), 4) using CCSS as a basis for instruction planning (55%), 5) implementing expectations for a balanced literacy schedule (51%), and 6)  using consistent processes and tools to document evidence of student learning (51%), (Table 7).  Twenty-seven percent to 37% of the remaining respondents reported moderate emphasis on these six activities.

The greatest variation in levels of emphasis among the respondents were reported for: a) interpreting formative assessment, b) selecting guided reading texts, and c) articulating a formative assessment vision for the school.  For these activities, 26−36% of the respondents reported high emphasis; an additional 32−43% reported moderate emphasis, and 22−37% reported emphasizing these activities to a small extent or not at all (Table 7).

Table 7
Number and Percent of Teachers Reporting the Extent to Which Their Schools Emphasized Specified
Activities and Processes Across Their School During 2015–2016

| Processes and Structures | N | Great Extent | | Moderate Extent | | Small Extent | | Not At All | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Differentiating instruction to meet needs of varied learners. | 1,836 | 1,124 | 61.2 | 519 | 28.3 | 170 | 9.3 | 23 | 1.3 |
| Emphasizing reading comprehension strategies. | 1,844 | 1,120 | 60.7 | 506 | 27.4 | 188 | 10.2 | 30 | 1.6 |
| Aligning reading instruction with CCSS indicators to ensure rigor for all students. | 1,845 | 1,042 | 56.5 | 534 | 28.9 | 214 | 11.6 | 55 | 3.0 |
| Using CCSS as basis for instructional planning for all students. | 1,847 | 1,023 | 55.4 | 554 | 30.0 | 209 | 11.3 | 61 | 3.3 |
| Implementing expectations for balanced literacy schedule. | 1,836 | 933 | 50.8 | 622 | 33.9 | 238 | 13.0 | 43 | 2.3 |
| Using consistent processes and tools to document evidence of student learning. | 1,837 | 932 | 50.7 | 684 | 37.2 | 192 | 10.5 | 29 | 1.6 |
| Use of before, during, and after structure of guided reading structure instruction. | 1,841 | 848 | 46.1 | 668 | 36.3 | 269 | 14.6 | 56 | 3.0 |
| Building capacity for successful collaborative content study and planning. | 1,840 | 784 | 42.6 | 676 | 36.7 | 305 | 16.6 | 75 | 4.1 |
| Interpreting formative assessment information. | 1,837 | 655 | 35.7 | 785 | 42.7 | 339 | 18.5 | 58 | 3.2 |
| Selecting guided reading texts* | 1,837 | 573 | 31.2 | 583 | 31.7 | 493 | 26.8 | 188 | 10.2 |
| Articulating the formative assessment vision for the school. | 1,830 | 468 | 25.6 | 703 | 38.4 | 493 | 26.9 | 166 | 9.1 |

* $p < 0.05$.

When the data were disaggregated by grade level, the findings revealed a significant difference in the percentage of K–2 and Grade 3–5 teachers who reported high emphasis on interpreting

formative assessment information (Appendix D). Compared to Grade 3–5 teachers, a significantly higher proportion of K−2 teachers reported high emphasis on interpreting formative assessment information (39% of K−2 vs. 32% of Grades 3−5) ($\chi 2$ (3, $N = 2{,}044$) = 10.304, $p = 0.016$). Further, a higher percentage of K-2 teachers reported a high emphasis on selecting guided reading texts.

**Implementation of activities related to planning, coordination, and implementation of reading instruction compared to previous year.**

When asked how often they engaged in specified activities related to planning or implementing reading instruction during 2015−2016 compared to 2014−2015, the responses varied depending on the activity.

Compared to previous years, the majority of the respondents reported increases in their levels of: a) monitoring student's monthly reading level targets (59%) and b) comparing students' instructional levels over time using a data collection tool (56%), (Table 8). One third or more reported that they engaged in these activities to about the same extent as the prior year.

Less than one half of the respondents (40−43%) reported increases in: a) incorporating a formative assessment process when planning (43%), b) collaboratively planning for reading instruction with peers (42%), c) planning guided reading using formative assessment (41%), and d) using formative assessment data to identify challenges and student need (40%). For each of these three activities, the percent of respondents who reported about the same level of engagement as the prior year were slightly higher proportions (47−52%) than the percent reporting an increase (Table 8).

Similarly, while more than one third (36−38%) of the respondents reported increases in their levels of: a) assessing students' understanding using tools and processes that were consistent across the grade-level (38%), b) coordinating additional support for students not meeting monthly grade-level targets (38%), or c) implementing a variety of formative assessments tools in their classroom (36%); more than one half (52−55%) of the respondents reported engaging in these activities to about the same extent as the previous year (Table 8).

Only about one fifth reported increases in activities related to:
- Using module pathways to address instructional needs of English language learners in reading (21%).
- Using module pathways to address instructional needs of highly able students (21%).
- Using module pathways to address instructional needs of students with disabilities (18%).

The majority (51−55%) reported engaging in the above activities about the same as the previous year, while another one fifth reported they were not engaged at all in the activities (Table 8).

Table 8
Extent to Which Teachers Reported Being Engaged in Specified Activities in 2015−2016
Compared to Previous School Year

| Specified activity | N | Greater Extent | | About the same | | Less extent | | Not at all | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Monitor students' monthly reading level targets over time | 1,814 | 1,063 | 58.6 | 604 | 33.3 | 37 | 2.0 | 110 | 6.1 |
| Compare your students' instructional reading levels over time using a data collection tool (e.g. the online Monthly data collection tool) | 1,816 | 1,015 | 55.9 | 623 | 34.3 | 51 | 2.8 | 127 | 7.0 |
| Incorporate formative assessment process when planning* | 1,829 | 790 | 43.2 | 884 | 48.3 | 59 | 3.2 | 96 | 5.2 |
| Collaboratively plan for reading instruction with grade-level peers | 1,812 | 765 | 42.2 | 850 | 46.9 | 91 | 5.0 | 106 | 5.8 |
| Plan your guided reading instruction using formative assessment data | 1,827 | 756 | 41.4 | 915 | 50.1 | 54 | 3.0 | 102 | 5.6 |
| Use formative assessment data to identify challenges and student needs | 1,807 | 728 | 40.3 | 939 | 52.0 | 35 | 1.9 | 105 | 5.8 |
| Assess students' understanding using tools and processes that are consistent across the grade-level* | 1,811 | 693 | 38.3 | 944 | 52.1 | 60 | 3.3 | 114 | 6.3 |
| Coordinate additional support for students not meeting monthly grade-level targets | 1,805 | 682 | 37.8 | 933 | 51.7 | 65 | 3.6 | 125 | 6.9 |
| Implement a variety of formative assessments tools in your classroom | 1,807 | 652 | 36.1 | 993 | 55.0 | 60 | 3.3 | 102 | 5.6 |
| Use module pathways to address instructional needs of English language learners in reading. | 1,807 | 386 | 21.4 | 920 | 50.9 | 119 | 6.6 | 382 | 21.1 |
| Use module pathways to address instructional needs of highly able students. | 1,803 | 370 | 20.5 | 985 | 54.6 | 113 | 6.3 | 335 | 18.6 |
| Use module pathways to address instructional needs of students with disabilities. | 1,809 | 328 | 18.1 | 951 | 52.6 | 118 | 6.5 | 412 | 22.8 |

*Chi-square significant at p<0.05

When the data were disaggregated by grade level, the findings revealed that the responses from K–2 compared with Grade 3–5 teachers were similar on most items. A table of these disaggregated findings can be seen in Appendix D. One difference in increased engagement was revealed. A significantly higher proportion of K−2 teachers, compared with Grade 3−5 teachers, reported increases in their levels of assessing students' understanding using tools and processes that are consistent across the grade-level relative to their levels for the prior school year.

***Question 2. To what extent did teachers have periodic discussions of reading performance data and student progress at the school level?***

**Frequency and Content of Collaborative Grade-Level Team Planning.**

MCPS guidelines for collaborative grade-level team planning point out that effective use of collaborative time should have the following characteristics: content, process, and dynamics (MCPS, 2016). Specifically, effective grade-level planning teams for reading are expected to keep a focus on the student (reader) and task with a view to: a) develop a common understanding of the indicator, b) discuss barriers, scaffolds, and needs for enrichment, c) plan instruction to match the needs of students, and d) determine assessment opportunities.

The majority (86%) of teachers reported that their grade-level team meets once a week to collaborate on reading instruction (Table 9a).

Table 9a
Teacher Reported Frequency of Team Meetings for Collaborating
on Reading Instruction

| Specified frequency of collaborative team planning meetings | N = 1,776 | |
|---|---|---|
| | *n* | *%* |
| Once a week | 1,519 | 85.5 |
| Twice a month | 77 | 4.3 |
| Monthly | 55 | 3.1 |
| Never | 32 | 1.8 |
| Other (includes two or three times per week, as needed, quarterly, etc. | 93 | 5.2 |

The responses from teachers showed that the typical grade-level collaborative planning meeting lasted about an hour (Mean = 62.7 minutes among K–2; Mean = 64.0 minutes among Grades 3-5) and ranged from 15 to 240 minutes (Table 9b).

Table 9b
Teacher Reported Duration (Minutes) of Collaborative Team Planning Meetings by Grade Level

| | | *N* | *Mean* | *SD* | *Max* | *Min* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade Level Summary | K−2 | 1,001 | 62.7 | 23.2 | 210 | 15 |
| | Grades 3 to 5 | 785 | 64.0 | 22.2 | 240 | 15 |
| Grade taught | Kindergarten | 320 | 61.8 | 24.6 | 210 | 15 |
| | Grade 1 | 336 | 61.1 | 21.2 | 145 | 20 |
| | Grade 2 | 345 | 65.0 | 23.6 | 150 | 15 |
| | Grade 3 | 280 | 64.0 | 20.6 | 120 | 30 |
| | Grade 4 | 273 | 63.5 | 21.5 | 140 | 20 |
| | Grade 5 | 232 | 64.7 | 24.8 | 240 | 45 |

*Most frequent activities at grade-level collaborative meetings.* When asked to think about how often they engaged in specified activities during collaborative grade-level team meeting, the responses varied by the nature of activity. Over three fourths (76%) said that they engaged in "identifying what an indicator is asking students to do and be able to do" at almost every

collaborative grade-level planning meeting in 2015–2016. In addition, more than one half (51−59%) of the teachers reported that they almost always: a) discussed and shared barriers to learning, b) planned for formative assessment to check for mastery of indicators, c) strategized about effective instructional practices for small groups, d) discussed scaffolds to address individual student needs, and e) discussed explicit instruction for reading comprehension strategies to students. (Table 10).

Approximately one third or more reported that they usually engaged in the following activities at almost every meeting (30–43%) while others engaged in the same activities sometimes (33–50%): a) identifying characteristics of texts to use during instruction, b) discussing outliers, c) using data to differentiate instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs), d) using data to differentiate instruction for highly able students, and e) coordinating instruction with ESOL staff.

Table 10
Number and Percent of Teachers Reporting Frequency of Typical Activities During Collaborative Planning Meetings

| Specified activities | N | Usually (Almost every meeting) | | Sometimes (Occasionally /Some of the time) | | Rarely | | Never | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* |
| Identify what an indicator is asking students to know and be able to do (i.e. what students need to know and be able to do/proficiency with the indicator) | 1,771 | 1,342 | 75.8 | 365 | 20.6 | 56 | 3.2 | 8 | 0.5 |
| Discuss/share barriers to learning | 1,774 | 1,040 | 58.6 | 622 | 35.1 | 98 | 5.5 | 14 | 0.8 |
| Plan for formative assessment to check for mastery of indicator | 1768 | 979 | 55.4 | 611 | 34.6 | 145 | 8.2 | 33 | 1.9 |
| Strategize about effective instructional practices for small group instruction | 1,770 | 973 | 55.0 | 640 | 36.2 | 133 | 7.5 | 24 | 1.4 |
| Discuss scaffolds to address individual student needs | 1,774 | 939 | 52.9 | 678 | 38.2 | 135 | 7.6 | 22 | 1.2 |
| Discuss explicit instruction of reading comprehension strategies to students (how to model or explain a particular strategy) | 1,771 | 900 | 50.8 | 684 | 38.6 | 163 | 9.2 | 24 | 1.4 |
| Identify the characteristics of the text (s) to use during instruction | 1768 | 754 | 42.6 | 712 | 40.3 | 247 | 14.0 | 55 | 3.1 |
| Discuss outliers (student whose performance is outside of the expected range) | 1,769 | 652 | 36.9 | 885 | 50.0 | 199 | 11.2 | 33 | 1.9 |
| Use student specific evidence to differentiate instruction to match needs of English learners | 1,764 | 566 | 32.1 | 794 | 45.0 | 313 | 17.7 | 91 | 5.2 |
| Use student specific evidence to differentiate instruction to match needs of highly able students | 1,771 | 545 | 30.8 | 840 | 47.4 | 302 | 17.1 | 84 | 4.7 |
| Coordinate instruction with ESOL staff | 1,774 | 540 | 30.4 | 578 | 32.6 | 392 | 22.1 | 264 | 14.9 |
| Use student specific evidence to differentiate instruction to match needs of students with disabilities | 1,761 | 494 | 28.1 | 825 | 46.8 | 334 | 19.0 | 108 | 6.1 |
| Coordinate instruction with academic support staff | 1,771 | 467 | 26.4 | 708 | 40.0 | 411 | 23.2 | 185 | 10.4 |
| Review student progress in reading using a variety of data sources | 1,783 | 471 | 26.4 | 1,029 | 57.7 | 240 | 13.5 | 43 | 2.4 |
| Coordinate instruction with special education staff | 1,758 | 437 | 24.9 | 637 | 36.2 | 438 | 24.9 | 246 | 14.0 |
| Examine trends (over time) or patterns (across different group of students or classrooms) observed in the data | 1,776 | 426 | 24.0 | 974 | 54.8 | 308 | 17.3 | 68 | 3.8 |
| Discuss behavior management strategies for students | 1,768 | 396 | 22.4 | 827 | 46.8 | 405 | 22.9 | 140 | 7.9 |
| Perform administrative functions (school business, e.g. field trips) | 1,760 | 295 | 16.8 | 732 | 41.6 | 518 | 29.4 | 215 | 12.2 |
| Participate in school-based professional development sessions | 1,761 | 270 | 15.3 | 937 | 53.2 | 410 | 23.3 | 144 | 8.2 |
| Participate in coaching/PD sessions from school or district staff | 1,768 | 155 | 8.8 | 695 | 39.3 | 565 | 32.0 | 353 | 20.0 |

*Activities engaged rarely or never at grade-level team meetings.* Notably, more than one third reported they rarely or never coordinated instruction with ESOL staff, academic support staff, or special education staff during their collaborative planning meetings. Finally, more than one fourth reported they rarely or never used student specific evidence to differentiate instruction to match needs of students with disabilities, during collaborative planning meetings (Table 10).

As would be expected, about one third or more either only occasionally or rarely/never used the grade-level collaborative planning time to discuss behavior management concerns, perform administrative functions, participate in school-based professional development sessions, or participate in coaching or professional development sessions from school or district staff.

When the data were disaggregated by grade level, the findings revealed that the responses from K–2 and Grade 3–5 teachers varied significantly on several items. A table of these findings can be seen in Appendix D. Compared to Grade 3–5 teachers, a significantly higher proportion of K–2 teachers indicated that they engaged in the following activities usually/at almost every meeting:

- Identifying what indicator is asking students to know and be able to do (78% vs. 73%)
- Discuss/sharing barriers to learning (61% vs. 56%)
- Discussing outliers (41% vs. 32%)
- Using evidence to differentiate the needs of English language learners (35% vs. 28%)
- Coordinating instruction with ESOL staff (37% vs. 22%)
- Reviewing student progress in reading using a variety of data (29% vs. 24%)
- Participating in coaching/professional development sessions (10% vs. 7%)

On the other hand, a significantly higher proportion of Grade 3–5 teachers than K–2 teachers reported that they engaged in: a) identifying the characteristics of the text to use during instruction (45% vs. 41%) and b) coordinating with special education staff (29% vs. 21%), at almost every meeting.

### *Question 3. To what extent did teacher implement guided reading instruction?*

The expectation for guided reading is that every student gets guided reading instruction using a text at their instructional level for 10–30 minutes daily (MCPS, 2016). The following sections presents data on teachers report of: a) how often they had guided reading in their classrooms in 2015–2016; b) how many guided reading groups they had in their class at the time of the survey; c) how often per week they met with each group; d) how often they regrouped the membership of the guided reading groups; and e) what other students were usually doing when teachers were working with a guided reading group. The findings are reported for all teachers and where appropriate analyses are also reported for each grade-level.

*Frequency of guided reading instruction per week.* The majority of the K–5 teachers (81%) reported having guided reading instruction daily (Table 11). Fifteen percent reported they had guided reading in their classroom 3-4 times a week and a small proportion reporting that they had guided reading 1–2 times a week or that the frequency varied. Follow up analyses revealed some variation in frequency of guided reading across grade levels. Higher proportions of teachers of lower grades reported they had guided reading daily (77−92% in K−3 vs. 63−71% in Grades 4−5).

Table 11
Number and Percent of Teachers Indicating How Often they Had Guided Reading Instruction
by Grade

| Grade level | N | Daily | | 3–4 times a week | | 1–2 times a week | | Varies | | Not Yet | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Total K–5 | 1,824 | 1,482 | 81.3 | 275 | 15.1 | 8 | 0.4 | 55 | 3.0 | 4 | 0.2 |
| Kindergarten | 329 | 300 | 91.2 | 24 | 7.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 1.5 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Grade 1 | 342 | 314 | 91.8 | 20 | 5.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 8 | 2.3 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Grade 2 | 358 | 306 | 85.5 | 48 | 13.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 1.1 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Grade 3 | 291 | 224 | 77.0 | 55 | 18.9 | 2 | 0.7 | 7 | 2.4 | 3 | 1.0 |
| Grade 4 | 273 | 193 | 70.7 | 65 | 23.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 14 | 5.1 | 1 | 0.4 |
| Grade 5 | 231 | 145 | 62.8 | 63 | 27.3 | 6 | 2.6 | 17 | 7.4 | 0 | 0.0 |

*Number of guided reading groups per class*. Overall, the reported number of guided reading groups per class ranged from 2 to 15, with a mean of 4.6 and a median of 4 (Table 12). The highest mean number of guided reading groups was reported by Kindergarten teachers (Mean = 5.05, SD = 1.03) and the lowest mean number was reported for Grade 5 teachers (Mean=4.39, SD= 1.29).

Table 12
Number of Guided Reading Groups per Class Reported by Teachers by Grade

| Grade level | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation | Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total K–5 | 1,829 | 2 | 15 | 4.58 | 1.03 | 4 |
| Kindergarten | 331 | 3 | 10 | 5.05 | 1.04 | 5 |
| Grade 1 | 344 | 3 | 10 | 4.64 | 0.83 | 5 |
| Grade 2 | 358 | 3 | 7 | 4.41 | 0.78 | 4 |
| Grade 3 | 289 | 3 | 9 | 4.47 | 0.83 | 4 |
| Grade 4 | 274 | 3 | 15 | 4.41 | 1.28 | 4 |
| Grade 5 | 233 | 2 | 13 | 4.39 | 1.29 | 4 |

*Number of times teachers met with each guided reading group per week*. The data in Table 13 shows that the frequency with which the respondents met with each guided reading group per week varied. Overall, close to one half of the respondents stated that they met with each of their guided reading groups daily (45%); the remaining either met with each group 3–4 times a week (37%), 1–2 times a week (2%), or the frequency varied (15%). Looking across grade levels, close to one half of Kindergarten (49%) and more than half of Grade 1 (59%) and Grade 2 (56%) teachers reported that they met each guided reading group daily.

Table 13
How often Teacher Meets with Each Guided Reading Group Per Week by Grade

| Grade level | N | Daily n | Daily % | 3–4 times a week n | 3–4 times a week % | 1–2 times a week n | 1–2 times a week % | Varies n | Varies % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total K–5 | 1,823 | 828 | 45.4 | 679 | 37.2 | 36 | 2.0 | 280 | 15.4 |
| Kindergarten | 331 | 162 | 48.9 | 112 | 33.8 | 8 | 2.4 | 49 | 14.8 |
| Grade 1 | 341 | 200 | 58.7 | 95 | 27.9 | 1 | 0.3 | 45 | 13.2 |
| Grade 2 | 355 | 197 | 55.5 | 115 | 32.4 | 4 | 1.1 | 39 | 11.0 |
| Grade 3 | 288 | 126 | 43.8 | 116 | 40.3 | 7 | 2.4 | 39 | 13.5 |
| Grade 4 | 275 | 82 | 29.8 | 131 | 47.6 | 5 | 1.8 | 57 | 20.7 |
| Grade 5 | 233 | 61 | 26.2 | 110 | 47.2 | 11 | 4.7 | 51 | 21.9 |

*Duration of guided reading group sessions.* Overall, and across grade-levels, the median duration of guided reading sessions was 20 minutes; indicating that 50% of the respondents spent 20 minutes and 50% of the respondents spent less than 20 minutes with each guided reading group. The average time spent with each guided reading group was 19 minutes but varied by grade level (Table 14). There was a pattern of an increase in the average duration of the guided reading session as the grade level got higher; the longest average guided reading session was reported by Grade 5 teachers (Mean=20.59, SD=5.09). In general, the duration of guided reading sessions among K–2, which ranged from 8 to 30 minutes, were shorter than sessions for Grades 3–5, which ranged from 10 to 45 minutes. Also, the maximum duration of a guided reading group reported by K–3 teachers was 30 minutes, whereas the maximum time spent with a guided reading group reported by Grade 4−5 teachers was 45 minutes.

Table 14
Teacher Reported Typical Duration of Guided Reading Session in Minutes

| Grade level | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation | Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total K–5 | 1,819 | 8 | 45 | 19.28 | 4.04 | 20 |
| Kindergarten | 330 | 8 | 30 | 17.62 | 3.72 | 20 |
| Grade 1 | 344 | 10 | 30 | 18.68 | 3.33 | 20 |
| Grade 2 | 354 | 12 | 30 | 19.56 | 3.57 | 20 |
| Grade 3 | 286 | 13 | 30 | 19.76 | 3.68 | 20 |
| Grade 4 | 275 | 12 | 45 | 20.06 | 4.39 | 20 |
| Grade 5 | 230 | 10 | 45 | 20.59 | 5.09 | 20 |

*Frequency of regrouping guided reading groups.* When teachers were asked about how often they regroup or rearrange their guided reading groups (Table 15), 42% of them indicated that they regrouped or rearranged the guided reading group every couple months and about one third (35%) reported that they rearranged the membership of the guided reading groups monthly.

Table 15
Frequency of Regrouping or Rearranging the Membership of Guided Reading Groups

| Frequency | ($N = 1,809$) | |
|---|---|---|
| | *n* | *%* |
| Every couple months | 864 | 42.0 |
| Monthly | 720 | 35.0 |
| Twice a month | 154 | 7.5 |
| Once a week | 38 | 1.8 |
| Once a year | 33 | 1.6 |

*Student activities when not in guided reading groups.* While teachers were working with their guided reading groups, their other students were engaged in a variety of activities (Table 16). The majority of the respondents reported that the rest of the students were either working on their meaningful follow up tasks (77%), doing independent reading (74%), were working on independent seat work (71%), or working at centers (69%). More than a third (36%) also reported students were working with another adult in a guided reading group.

Table 16
Student Activities When Teachers were working with Guided Reading Groups

| Activities | ($N = 2,057$) | |
|---|---|---|
| | *n* | *%* |
| Working on their meaningful follow up tasks | 1,592 | 77.4 |
| Independent reading | 1,531 | 74.4 |
| Working on independent seat work | 1,466 | 71.3 |
| Working at centers | 1,424 | 69.2 |
| Working with another adult on separate Guided Reading group | 746 | 36.3 |

*Note*. Respondents could provide more than one response.

*Guided Reading Group Formats for Students Receiving Special Education Services*. When asked how students who receive special education services participated in guided reading instruction time, more than two thirds (67%) indicated that they, the classroom teacher, delivered the guided reading instruction (Table 17). In addition, less than one half (47%) indicated that a pull-out arrangement was used for their students receiving special education services; a small proportion of the respondents reported that the guided reading instruction for their special education students was co-taught (16%).

Table 17
Formats for Guided Reading Instructional Group for Students Receiving Special Education Services

| Format | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| ($N$ = 2,057) | | |
| Delivered by Classroom Teacher | 1,384 | 67.3 |
| Pull out | 969 | 47.1 |
| Co-Taught | 336 | 16.3 |

*Note*. Respondents could provide more than one response.


### *Question 4. What were areas of instructional needs for students reported by classroom teachers?*

When asked for the most critical areas of instructional needs for their students, the responding classroom teachers identified areas of need in the following order: writing in response to reading, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, and learning English.  When the data were disaggregated by grade-level, several patterns emerged. Figure 4 presents information on areas of instructional needs for students identified by classroom teachers by grade levels.

Reflecting the fact that Kindergarten is the entry grade and most students were learning to read, accuracy was identified as the greatest need (42%). Several other needs were identified by comparable proportions of the respondents in the following order: fluency (38%), comprehension (38%), writing in response to reading (31%), and learning English language (31%).

The majority of respondents who taught Grades 1 and 2 identified writing in response to reading as the key area of need (62%) and close to one half also identified comprehension as an instructional need (48%). The majority of respondents who taught Grades 3−5 identified comprehension (58%) and writing in response to reading (56%) as the areas of instructional needs for their students.  In addition, a third of Grade 3−5 teachers identified vocabulary as an area of need.

Notably, only a third or fewer of the respondents identified learning English language as an area of instructional need. Also, the proportion of teachers identifying learning English language as an area of instruction need decreased from 31% among Kindergarten teachers to 20% among Grades 1–2 teachers and to 13% among respondent who taught Grades 3–5.
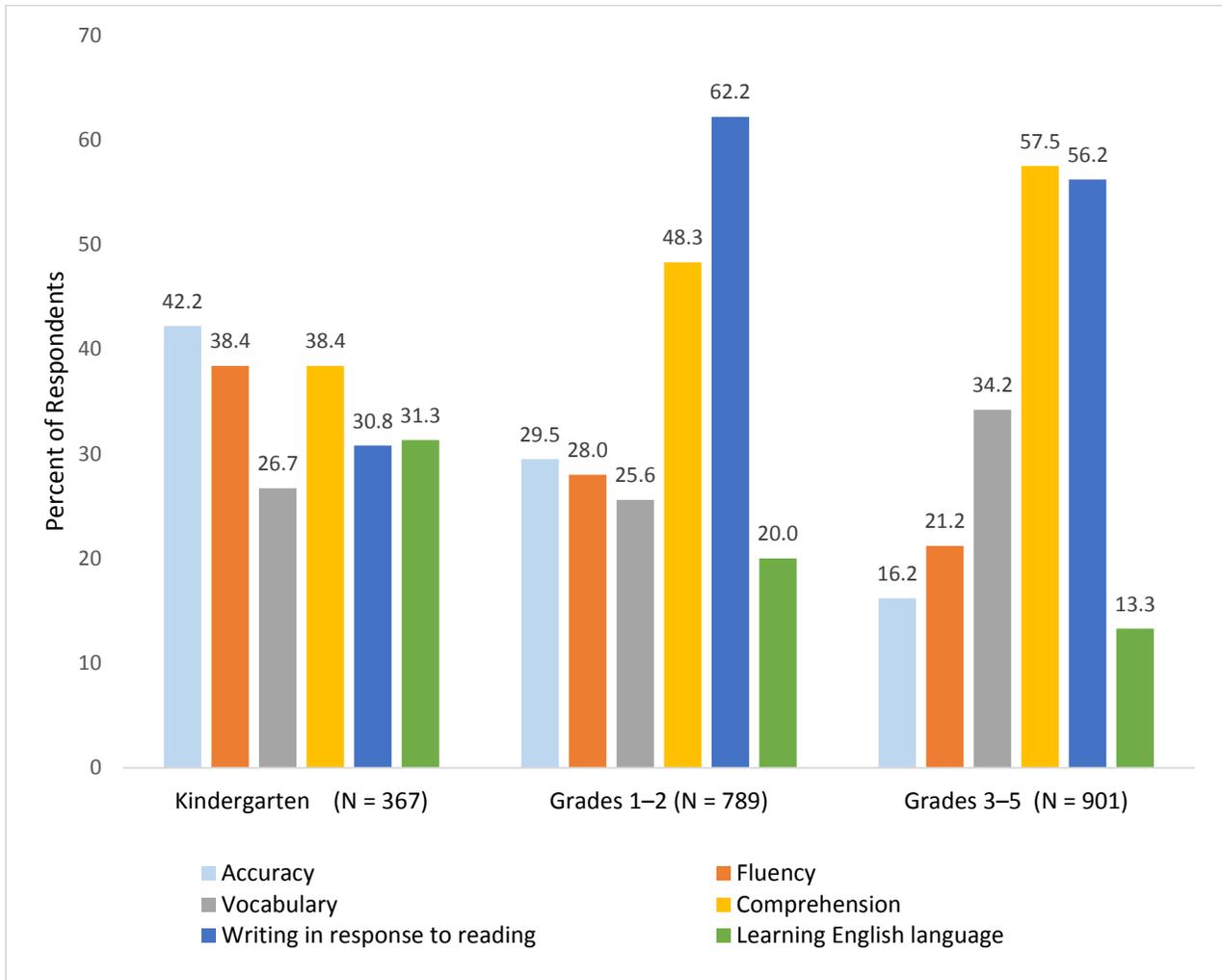
*Figure* 4. Areas of instructional needs for students reported by grade level.

## Responses to Open-ended Items

In the section that follows, the qualitative results from open-ended survey questions are presented and are organized by evaluation question. The number of survey respondents who provided open-ended responses are included.

### *Question 5a. What were the changes in instructional practices reported by classroom teachers?*

When asked how implementing MIRL in 2015–2016 had changed their teaching, 1,617 of the 2,245 survey respondents (72%) provided responses (Table 18). The responses were mixed, representing a variety of positive ways their teaching had changed, how implementing MIRL had restricted reading instruction, as well as those who reported there was no change (or at least not due to MIRL). A closer examination of each open-ended category follows and selected verbatim comments to support the categories are presented in Appendix E, Table E1, and E2.

**Positive/Intended changes in reading instruction associated with implementation of MIRL.**

The elicited responses explained a variety of positive ways that implementing MIRL had changed reading instruction in 2015–2016 (Table 18). With implementation of MIRL, the changes observed or mentioned most frequently by teachers included: increased teachers' awareness of students' instructional levels, needs, and strengths, more systematic data collection and increased the accountability for student learning, more consistency in leveling across students, classes and teachers, and increased use of data for planning and adjusting instruction.

*Increased awareness of students' reading levels, needs or growth.* More than one fourth of the responses mentioned increased teachers' awareness of their students' instructional reading levels and student progress as well as a greater familiarity with students as individual learners with specific needs ($n = 454$, 28%). One teacher explained it this way, "*It has made me more aware of how quickly some students are picking up strategies and are ready to move on to higher levels, and then students who need more specific instruction before moving on.*" As such, the respondents reported changing the composition of reading groups more frequently and providing differentiated instruction for students at each instructional level. Some teachers also mentioned that their students were moving up through the reading instructional levels faster. The evidence of progress and growth in reading levels made the teachers feel more confident moving students up instructional levels, and comparing and analyzing data was easier and more effective because of the consistency of information documented within grades and across the classes.

*Increased evidence and accountability for student learning.* Another 12% of teachers' responses ($n = 191$) mentioned that there was an increase in the documentation of student reading abilities throughout the year, and that the requirement for monthly data collection increased the accountability for monitoring how students were learning or whether they were making progress. In addition, MIRL provided teachers with more data and evidence to enhance and/or confirm teachers' understanding of their students' abilities and to provide feedback to parents and school administrators. Teachers also reported that the data allowed them to stay up-to-date, monitor growth, and plan for instruction.

*More consistency in leveling across students, classes and teachers.* More than one tenth of the respondents ($n = 186$, 12%) specified that data collection during guided reading had resulted in greater consistency in monitoring and assessing across students, and between teachers and classes in their schools. Many of the responses also indicated the data collection and monitoring encouraged greater collaboration and communication among teachers.

*Increased use of data for planning and adjusting instruction.* Not only did implementing MIRL make teachers more aware of their students' needs, the responses also indicated that the information helped them make informed decisions for adjusting instruction with more attention to the needs to students ($n = 71$, 4%). Examples of adjustments made in response to the MIRL data were to: focus on specific strategies or skills such as questioning and writing; create or change guided reading groups; select instructional levelled texts; the instruction of particular indicators; and provide timely feedback to parents and administrators. Additionally, some teachers reported

that MIRL had also helped them to clearly focus on the reasons for a student's errors and successes.

**Unintended/negative impacts on reading instruction associated with implementation of MIRL.** When asked how implementing MIRL had changed their teaching, the respondents also highlighted a number of challenging aspects of implementing MIRL (Table 18); views that will be repeated later in response to a question about factors that hindered the implementation of MIRL. A closer examination of each category follows. A table displaying more verbatim examples to this open ended question can be seen in Appendix E, Table E2.

*MIRL data collection restricted reading instruction*. About one third of the comments mentioned that implementing MIRL made teaching difficult in a number of ways (*n*=559, 35%). Specifically, the requirement to conduct running reading records during guided reading was said to interfere with teaching and planning time, resulting in teachers delivering less instruction. For some, conducting running reading records during every guided reading sessions felt unnatural and compromised the instruction and effectiveness of the reading groups; some groups were rushed, or data collection made it difficult to meet with all the groups.

*Monthly data collection viewed as burdensome on teachers*. Separate from the stated interference of data collection with the planning and instruction, data collection and inputting data onto the monthly reading data collection tool was conveyed as burdensome and that this put pressure on teachers and used up valuable instructional time (*n* = 82, 5%). As stated by one teacher, "*It takes a lot of time to prepare for MIRL and to enter MIRL into the computer. I tried using a Chromebook during group to enter it, but then I am too focused on that and not my group,*" while many teachers agreed that *"it is very important to consistently monitor students 'progress'"*, they reiterated the comments that entering the data into the collection tool every month was time consuming and took away from quality instructional time. Also, some stated that the requirement to assess students and enter data on a monthly basis onto the online monthly data collection tool was too frequent to be meaningful. Some teachers suggested that: a) MIRL data collection should not be required during MAP-R testing, b) to use the MIRL online tool with less frequency (e.g. every other month), or c) that the MIRL testing and data entry be required for some but not all students.

Table 18
Most Frequently Mentioned Changes to Reading Instruction Since Implementing MIRL

| Response Categories | Total Responding (N =1,617) | |
|---|---|---|
| Positive/Intended Changes to Reading Instruction | n | % |
| Increased teacher awareness of students' reading levels, needs, or growth | 454 | 28.1 |
| Increased evidence (more data collection) and accountability (monitoring) for student learning/evidence for leveling | 191 | 11.8 |
| More consistency in leveling across students, classes and teachers | 186 | 11.5 |
| Increased use of data for planning and adjusting instruction/ teaching focus (greater attention to specific skills, etc.) | 71 | 4.4 |
| Unintended/Negative Impacts on Reading Instruction | | |
| MIRL restricted and interfered with reading instruction/planning time, compromises reading groups | 559 | 34.7 |
| Monthly data collection a burden on teachers, stressful, waste of time, pressure | 82 | 5.1 |
| Insufficient instructional resources (e.g. difficulty finding leveled texts, MIRL replaces preferred monitoring methods) | 73 | 4.5 |
| No change, or change is not attributable to MIRL | 364 | 22.6 |
| | | |
| Other MIRL comments | | |
| Perceived inconsistencies in MIRL data and differences between MIRL and mClass; measurement not meaningful or consistent with other measures or does not reflect real growth | 282 | 17.5 |
| Other (e.g. poor implementation or insufficient training, not working for above benchmark readers, | 201 | 12.5 |

*Note.* The percentage of responses may exceed 100 because respondents provided more than one response.

*Insufficient instructional resources.* Some teachers mentioned that they had problems finding appropriate texts or spent a lot of time searching for appropriately leveled texts for their guided reading instruction groups (*n = 73, 5%*). The comments indicated that the respondents did not have enough texts especially at high levels*,* or for poetry. Finally, some of the responses also conveyed that it was difficult for teachers to devise questions for each guided reading text making implementing MIRL very frustrating.

**No change or change in instructional practices not because of MIRL.** In response to how implementing MIRL had changed their instruction, close to a quarter of the respondents (*n = 364;* 23%), stated that implementing MIRL had not changed their teaching (Table 18). Some teachers asserted that implementing MIRL did not change their teaching in any way because they already consistently provided guided reading instruction, conducted running reading records, and monitored their students' progress as expected in previous years: "*It did not change my teaching very much as I typically did a running record on each of my students every 4-6 weeks prior to MIRL*" and "*It has not changed my teaching. I have always monitored students' progress and compare that to where they should be*".

***Perceived inconsistences in MIRL data and differences in MIRL and mClass data***. Close to one fifth of the respondents (n=232, 18%) mentioned that MAP-R and mClass information of their students did not always align with MIRL data, because some mClass instructional levels required a written component.  The issue with the misalignment among these data was also attributed to the observation that, "*there are not STANDARD texts [to use for all students]*".  Therefore, teachers felt that they could not use MIRL data to compare student data between classes.  The teachers also mentioned that it was "*unrealistic to have the exact reading level group for each student, as groups can be clusters of levels to make it manageable (i.e.: levels M/N)*" and  that finding the appropriate leveled books for strong readers and poetry and plays, was extremely difficult.  For such instances, the MIRL data were perceived as somewhat inaccurate or incomplete and not useful to compare performance among students or teachers.  While teachers agreed that the MIRL had helped them identify needs of their students and their reading skills, some teachers cautioned that it would be unfair to use only the MIRL data or the MIRL data in isolation to analyze their students' reading levels.

***Question 5b. What were the changes in students' instructional reading levels and reading performance reported by classroom teachers?***

When asked what changes they had observed in their students' reading proficiency levels following the implementation of MIRL, a total of 1,224 (72%) teachers provided a variety of responses (Table 19).  A table displaying more verbatim examples to this open ended question can be seen in Appendix E, Table E3.

**No change or growth from MIRL.** When asked what changes they had observed in their students' reading or proficiency levels following the implementation of MIRL, more than  one  half (*n*=725, 59%) of the respondents stated that they had not observed any changes at the time of the survey that could be attributed to implementing MIRL.  Others stated that the growth they had observed was similar to what was seen when running reading records were taken in years prior to implementation of MIRL.  In their elaboration, some teachers also stated that merely collecting information would not necessarily result in changes in students' performance.  Because the data collection and the use of online data collection tool was introduced in 2015, many of the reasons given for not attributing any changes to MIRL were consistent with the view of MIRL as primarily the activity of collecting and entering data on instructional reading levels on the tool and not the broad view of the MIRL strategy.

Table 19
Most Frequently Reported Changes to Student Performance Following Implementation of MIRL

| Response Categories | Total Responding (N = 1,224) | |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | n | % |
| No Change | | |
| No change, or no growth attributable to MIRL at the time of the survey | 725 | 59.2 |
| Positive Change | | |
| Positive improvement, faster advancement through levels, or growth in specific skills | 581 | 47.5 |
| Data  increases teachers  awareness of students levels and needs/ Data makes changes easier to students' progress and needs | 174 | 14.2 |
| Students more aware of their own learning | 90 | 7.4 |
| Negative Change | | |
| Decline, slower progress or  specific skills lagging | 101 | 8.3 |
| Other Comment | | |
| Measurement concerns, changes perceived to be due  to measures and not real progress, perceived mismatch with other assessments | 81 | 6.6 |

*Note.* The percentage of responses may exceed 100 because respondents provided more than one response.


## Changes to Student Performance

*Positive improvement, faster advancement, or growth in specific skills.* Close to one half of the respondents (*n*=581, 48%) mentioned a positive change in the student performance or reading levels since implementing MIRL. These respondents wrote that they saw students advancing more quickly through reading instructional levels, and saw growth in specific skills such as comprehension and fluency.  Examples of responses were, "*The students are better able to write more thoughtful responses*", "*I see faster progress, students enjoy being tested and to see what level they are on*", and "*Proficiency for higher readers is more complex since the accuracy rate has to be higher in order for students to be proficient with the comprehension*".

*Easier to track students' progress and address students' needs promptly.* Reiterating the views relating to changes they had made in their instructional practices, the MIRL data made teachers more aware of their students' needs and reading levels (*n*=174, 14%), such as," *I have been able to see their progress more clearly" and "Students are hitting grade level benchmarks since I have a better idea of their weaknesses*".  Some teachers also mentioned that their students were responding to the feedback; for example, "*More than the levels, I see students using the feedback given based on notes taken during MIRL.*" Another stated*, "It's easier to tangibly see what students are struggling with, which gives an immediate opportunity to give feedback*".

*Students more aware of own progress and more engaged*. Another positive change described by the respondents was that students were more aware of their own learning and more motivated to learn (*n*=90, 7%).  The following statements convey these observations: "A*dministering monthly running reading records motivates the students to improve their oral reading. They enjoy the attention and the time that we spend*", "*Students enjoy being tested and to see what level they are on*", "*The students are willing to work and try harder to improve their reading and you can see*

*that they are really trying to use the strategies that have been taught*", "*I see students more excited about moving onto the next reading level*", and "*Students care about their own progress*".

*Decline or slower progress in student performance.* From the monitoring data, some respondents 8% (*n* = 101) had noticed either a decline in performance, that students at higher grades were making slower progress, or noted that students performance was lagging in specific skills like writing and comprehension. For example, two respondents explained, "*Their written responses were not as detailed so I've been having them write anyway, so that they improve*" and "*I think MIRL is geared more towards the lower grades where students move a level sometimes two levels every month*". The observed decline in some student performance was associated with assessing writing and comprehension. A few respondents specifically noted that more differentiation and attention to students receiving ESOL and special education services was needed because MIRL was not sufficiently accommodating students with these special needs.

A small portion of these responses, did not address specific changes in performance per se (n=81, 7%), but stated that the MIRL information does not reflect students' progress accurately or in a comprehensive fashion, that the instructional levels entered in the MIRL tool did not correspond with other assessments.

### Question 6a. What factors facilitated the implementation of components of MIRL (guided reading instruction, use of formative assessment, and use of the online monthly data collection tool)?

Utilizing an open-ended question format, teachers were asked what helped with the implementation of various components of MIRL. Below are teachers' responses (*N*=886) to what factors supported the implementation of these four components: guided reading instruction, the use of the online monthly data collection tool, the use of formative assessments, and the use of the online reports.

*Factors which supported high quality guided reading instruction.* Almost one third (n=279, 32%) of the responding teachers mentioned their common planning time or collaboration meeting was a factor that supported the implementation of planning and implementing high quality guided reading instruction (Table 20). Most simply responded "*collaborative team meeting*" or "*planning time*"; however, others further explained that the time with their teammates was where they planned and discussed guided reading groups. One teacher reported, "*It was good to talk with team members about what strategies worked or didn't work*" and another explained, "*Working collaboratively with my team has helped me improve guided reading instruction.*"

Just under one fifth (*n*=151, 17%) mentioned support or training from the reading specialist or other staff was a factor that supported guided reading instruction (Table 20). Some mentioned specific ways in which staff supported them such as being present in meetings to help with strategies and planning. For example, two teachers reported, "*Our AMAZING reading specialist has been so supportive and given us many tools for running reading records*" and "*A knowledgeable reading specialist and other staff who provide in-house training and make themselves available to answer questions and provide individual support.*" Another 17% reported the planning of questions, focus on indicators, and discussion of strategies and reading comprehension were factors that supported the implementation and planning of high quality

guided reading instruction. One teacher indicated, "*Our team collaboratively planned our MIRL questions and reading comprehension strategies each week based on the indicators, so we were more consistent as a grade level than ever before*" and another reported, "*It has helped in planning sessions to determine our literal and inferential questions ahead of time, aligning them to our indicators*."

Teachers also reported that their use of data, running reading records and awareness of student progress and needs supported the implementation and planning of high quality guided reading instruction (*n*=126, 14%). One teacher stated, "*The monthly running reading records has made me a better informed teacher and helped me to plan my reading instruction based around the needs of my students.*" Further, 6–8% of teachers reported the following as factors that supported the implementation and planning of high quality guided reading instruction: a) resources such as planning sheets and templates, designated reading block time, modules, more leveled books, and Jan Richardson resources; b) choosing books to match indicators, knowing when to move levels, or help with choosing book levels; and c) various professional development and trainings. A table of displaying more verbatim examples to this open ended question can be seen in Appendix E, Table E4. Some teachers (*n*=113, 13%) expressed that they were already planning and implementing high quality reading instruction regardless of MIRL and that MIRL did not have an impact, or it did not facilitate any changes.

Table 20
Most Frequent Factors or Experiences that Supported the Implementation of Planning and Implementing High Quality Guided Reading Instruction

| Supporting Factors or Experiences | Total Responding (*N* = 886) | |
|---|---|---|
| | n | % |
| Common planning time, collaboration meeting, support from team | 279 | 31.5 |
| Support, planning, training from Reading Specialist, SDT, Reading Department Instructional Specialist, or other support staff | 151 | 17.0 |
| Focus on indicators, plan lessons, discuss strategies, discuss reading comprehension | 148 | 16.7 |
| Use data, running reading records, awareness of student progress and needs | 126 | 14.2 |
| Resources: Planning sheets, templates, reading block, curriculum guide, modules, more books etc. | 67 | 7.6 |
| Choosing books to match indicators, knowing when to move levels, helps pick levels, move book levels more often | 54 | 6.1 |
| PD/training/more training/Summer, county training | 51 | 5.8 |
| Hasn't helped/Already were doing this/Nothing has changed/Nothing | 113 | 12.8 |

*Note.* Percents add to more than 100 because respondents may state more than one response.

*Factors which supported using the online monthly reading data collection tool.* Almost one-fourth (*n*=174, 23%) of responding teachers (*N*=752) reported that the online data collection tool was easy to use, quick, accessible, contained an easy drop down menu and Chromebooks made it easy to use (Table 21). Some of the frequent responses addressed the benefits of using online data collection tool data rather than what supported its implementation. Examples of teacher responses were "*I use my Chromebook to enter the data collected immediately, which saves a lot of time and extra steps*", "*Drop down menus helped to enter the data*" and "*It's easy to use*". Approximately

one-fifth of teachers (*n*=161, 21%) reported that the ability to use the tool to view trends in student' progress, past data and track students, supported the implementation of using the online data collection tool. Two teachers explained "*I could see students who were not progressing at the expected or hoped rate, and consequently fill in necessary gaps*" and "*The monthly collection tool helps me plan my guided reading instruction/reading groups*". Ten percent of teachers reported professional development and training modules as factors which supported the use of the online data collection tool. Another ten percent reported that accountability, the monthly deadline, and ensuring that records are kept consistent, supported the implementation of using the monthly reading data collection tool. Just over fifty teachers (*n*=54, 7%) replied that support from specialists were factors that supported their use of the monthly data collection tool. Finally, it should also be noted that 11% of respondent teachers reported that they don't use the monthly tool or that nothing supported the use of the tool.

Table 21
Most Frequent Factors or Experiences that Supported the Implementation of: Using the Online Monthly Reading Data Collection Tool

| Supporting Factors or Experiences | Total Responding (N = 752) | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | n | % |
| Easy to use, Chromebooks made it easy, accessible, students are listed, drop down menus, quick, easy to enter notes | 174 | 23.1 |
| Ability to look back, see trends, see progress, keep track of students, monitor | 161 | 21.4 |
| Training, module training, summer training, professional development | 83 | 11.0 |
| Monthly deadline, accountability, ensuring records are kept, consistent data | 81 | 10.8 |
| Others can see, use at meetings, create graphs, can evaluate and plan as a team, can create groups, can show parents | 80 | 10.6 |
| Support from specialists | 54 | 7.2 |
| Nothing, none, don't use | 85 | 11.3 |

*Note*. Percents add to more than 100 because respondents may state more than one response.

*Factors which supported using formative assessment data.* When asked what factors supported the implementation of using formative assessment data (e.g. running reading records, comprehension checks and fluency checks), more than one fourth (27%) of responding teachers reported: the ability to use the see student progress, student strengths and weaknesses, and the ability to monitor and target students was helpful (Table 22). These frequent responses addressed the benefits of using formative assessment data rather than what supported its implementation; nevertheless, it was how most teachers responded. Thirteen percent of the respondents mentioned that team meetings, collaborative planning, sharing and support from teammates and the reading specialist, supported the implementation of using formative assessment data. One teacher indicated, "*Our school has monthly monitoring meetings which is a great platform to analyze this*" and another stated "*As a team, we created and scaffolded formatives that focused on a specific indicator each week and then that would guide our comprehension questions*." Seventy eight teachers (9%) reported that data sheets, running reading records, standard forms and binders were factors that supported the implementation of using formative assessment data. Examples of teacher responses were: "*Having a running record template made it easier to gather all the data*", "*The team made common formatives to use in our guided reading groups. Helps make our expectations more comparable,*" and "*[I] created a binder for MIRL with student tabs to keep up with individual*

*progress".* Finally, almost one-fifth (18%) reported that they already use formative assessment data, that nothing has changed, or there were no helpful factors that supported using formative assessment data.

Table 22
Most Frequent Factors or Experiences that Supported the Implementation of: Using Formative Assessment Data

| Supporting Factors or Experiences | Total Responding (*N* = 830) | |
|---|---|---|
| | n | % |
| Ability to see progress, strengths and weaknesses, target, monitor, helped | 223 | 26.9 |
| Team meeting, staff, collaborative planning, sharing and support from teammates and reading specialist | 109 | 13.1 |
| Data sheets/running reading records/format/standard form/binder/consistency/standardized | 78 | 9.4 |
| Already do/nothing changed/same as last year/not helpful/none/not applicable | 153 | 18.4 |

*Factors which supported using the online reports.*  Approximately one half (*n*=307, 49%) of responding teachers (*N*=752) reported that they did not use, were not aware, or did not find the online reports helpful (Table 23). Examples of teacher responses were: "*What online report*?", "*I don't really look back at my online reports. I look at my anecdotal records and notes,*" and "*I have no idea how to use, we were never taught.*"  Many of the frequent responses addressed the benefits of using online reports rather than what supported its implementation. Almost one fifth (*n*=107, 17%) reported that seeing student growth and progress, seeing the whole class or school, seeing graphs and help with grouping students, were factors that supported the implementation of using the online reports.  Sixty teachers (*n*=60, 10%) indicated that team meetings, collaboration, staff and support from the Reading Specialist were factors that supported the implementation of using online reports. Finally, 58 teachers (9%) reported that the online reports were easy to use, accessible, organized and kept everything in one place. One teacher stated "*If a student is struggling in reading, I am able to print a report that shows this,*" and another indicated "*We used these at the core team and ILT level primarily.  We will print them for data chats quarterly.*"

Table 23
Most frequent Factors or Experiences that Supported the Implementation of: Using the Online Reports

| Supporting Factors or Experiences | Total Responding (N =752) | |
|---|---|---|
| | n | % |
| Did not use/was not aware of them/not applicable/not helpful/none | 307 | 49.1 |
| See student growth, progress, patterns/see whole class/see across schools/graphs/helps with grouping | 107 | 17.1 |
| Team meetings, staff, collaboration, support from Reading Specialist | 60 | 9.6 |
| Easy to use, accessible, organized, all in one place, can print | 58 | 9.3 |

*Note*. Percents add to more than 100 because respondents may state more than one response.


***Question 6b. What factors hindered the implementation of components of MIRL (guided reading instruction, use of formative assessment, and use of the online monthly data collection tool)?***

Utilizing an open-ended question format, teachers were asked what factors hindered the optimal implementation of various components of MIRL:  high quality reading instruction, the monthly online data collection tool, formative assessment data and the online reports. . A table displaying verbatim examples to this open ended question can be seen in Appendix E, Table E5.

*Factors that hindered implementation of guided reading.* When asked what factors hindered the implementation of guided reading instruction, time was the most frequently mentioned challenge (Table 24).  The majority of the responses explained that it took a lot of time to plan and implement guided reading well (*n*=440, 57%). This finding suggested that the increased attention to using data for grouping students, using the before, during, and after structure of guided reading, or selection of texts took more time than allotted or was different from how teachers did it before. As stated in the surveys, the teacher participants, especially those with large classes, classes with varying needs, and upper elementary teachers, expressed that they did not have enough time to implement guided reading for all their students.

About a third (*n*=252, 33%) of the responses also pointed out that data collection in general, and conducting reading running reading records in particular took too much time from direct instruction.  Reiterating the responses on the ways that implementing MIRL had changed their teaching, close to one third of respondents mentioned that their schools placed a higher priority on data collection over instruction (*n*=222, 29%). More than one fourth of the responses reported not having sufficient instructional resources, specifically levelled books for all the instructional levels in their class and for some genres such as poetry (*n*=206, 27%).  In addition, 24% (*n*=182) of the responses conveyed that the challenge of collecting data and having sufficient time to have guided reading instruction with all their groups as planned.  Also conveyed was that some teachers struggled with checking comprehension,  incorporating and planning for writing in response to reading, or coming up with comprehension questions for each guided reading text they were using (*n*=108, 14%).   This challenge was also reflected in the suggestions for future professional development, whereby, building capacity to develop comprehension checks was one of the topics suggested for future professional development sessions. Finally, themes included in the category of "Other" indicated that:  a) guided reading instruction was not applied consistently throughout the school or county, or b) that some schools were not supportive of MIRL.

Table 24

Most Frequent Factors or Experiences that Hindered the Implementation of Quality Guided Reading Instruction

| Challenges to implementing guided reading instruction | Total Responding (N = 771) | |
|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % |
| Takes time to plan and implement guided reading well | 440 | 57.1 |
| Administering running reading records and data collection in general took too much from instructional time | 252 | 32.7 |
| Schools choosing data collection or too much focus on data collection over instruction/MIRL | 222 | 28.8 |
| Insufficient instructional resources for reading groups /difficulty finding right texts | 206 | 26.7 |
| Insufficient time to meet with all groups/impossible to meet with all groups daily when assessing/balancing instruction and assessment in large class | 182 | 23.6 |
| Struggle with/Limited capability with checking comprehension/coming up with questions or incorporating writing response | 108 | 14.0 |

*Note.* The percentage of responses may exceed 100 because respondents provided more than one response.

*Factors that hindered use of Monthly Reading Data Collection tool*. The majority of the responses (*n*=355, 58%) mentioned that using the monthly reading data collection tool was very time consuming (Table 25). Examples of teachers responses were: "*Less time for planning because of entering data*", "*This was REALLY TIME CONSUMING*!" and, "*It cannot be done within guided reading. I am sorry. I tried. It does not work in REAL CLASSROOMS*". Teachers also reported that the optimal use of the tool was hindered by the design of the tool (*n*=229, 38%) and the perception that the tool was not easy to use (*n*=146, 24%). Detailed comments indicated that it was easy to make errors, the format was not appropriate or applicable for all students' instructional levels, particularly students above grade-level, and that having to match students with their book level was difficult for some teachers. Other responses reflected the perception that the tool was being used to scrutinize them. For example, teachers commented, "*This actually seemed to add more pressure from administration on why students weren't hitting the monthly targets as opposed to measuring student progress based on individual student growth*", "*It was done for others and not me*", and "*Teaching helps children learn to read, not someone who doesn't work with my students overlooking my data*". Related to the challenge of limited time, many felt that the monthly frequency of data entry was too demanding especially having to input instructional notes (*n*=86, 14%). About 10% of the responses specifically reported "*no challenges*" using the monthly data collection tool.

Table 25
Most Frequent Factors or Experiences that Hindered the Use of the Monthly Online Reading Data
Collection Tool

| Challenges using  monthly data reading data collection tool | Total Responding (*N*=610) | |
|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % |
| Time consuming | 355 | 58.2 |
| Format—Not applicable for all students  instructional levels or having to match students to level was difficult/ | 229 | 37.5 |
| Not user friendly—easy  to make errors | 146 | 23.9 |
| Teachers' perception of the tool as  way to scrutinize teachers/distrust | 86 | 14.1 |
| Frequency of data entry especially notes-monthly too demanding | 84 | 13.8 |
| No challenge | 59 | 9.7 |

*Note.* The percentage of responses may exceed 100 because respondents provided more than one response.

*Factors that hindered use of formative assessment data*. Insufficient time was presented as the greatest hindrance to using formative assessment data (*n*=157, 37%).   Other respondents elaborated that conducting running reading records for large classes and often without standardized tools (*n*=156, 36%) or insufficient guidance yielded inconsistent data (*n*=104, 24%).  For example, "*Running reading records are difficult to do with students who are MULTIPLE grade levels above benchmark, and seem quite ineffective to be required. It was not as effective to use running reading records on every student, every month*", "*Comprehension checks are not standardized*" and "*It is difficult to get ALL data needed (comprehension checks linked to curriculum, MIRL decoding data, etc.).*" As such, many also explained that the formative data at hand were either inconsistent, inaccurate, or simply not thorough (Table 26).

Table 26
Challenges to Using Formative Assessment Data

| Challenges using formative assessment data | Total Responding (*N* = 428) | |
|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % |
| Insufficient time to create questions and give formative assessments | 157 | 36.7 |
| Conducting running reading records for large classes with limited time | 156 | 36.4 |
| Perception of formative assessment data as inconsistent or inaccurate, or presenting incomplete picture of student abilities -not reflective of what students could do | 115 | 26.9 |
| Insufficient guidance related to formative assessment | 104 | 24.3 |
| Difficulty with comprehension checks based on indicators/inconsistency with comprehension checks/teachers limited experience or gaps in expertise for completing comprehensions checks | 63 | 14.7 |
| No challenges | 62 | 14.5 |

*Note.* The percentage of responses may exceed 100 because respondents provided more than one response.

The teachers also mentioned having the difficulty coming up with different types of comprehension questions for MIRL; completing the assessments with all their students;  and or using comprehension checks consistently (*n*=63, 15%). In addition, some teachers suggested that the county provide comprehension questions for teachers and additional training on types of

questioning particularly related to higher level questions. And, there were some responses that indicated some teachers were unclear or unsure about how to analyze and interpret running reading records and other formative assessment data. Finally, 15% (*n*=62) specifically stated there were "no challenges".

*Factors that hindered use of MIRL reports on myMCPS online portal*. Close to one half of the respondents mentioned that they were not aware of the MIRL reports on *myMCPS* portal (n=166, 46%) (Table 27). Further, close to one third indicated that they didn't have time to use them (n=117, 32%) and about one fourth indicated they didn't have any training or guidance and did not know how to use them (n=91, 25%).

Table 27
Most Frequent Factors that Hindered Use of MIRL Online Report

| Challenges using online reports | *n* | Total Responding (*N* = 362) |
|---|---|---|
| Not familiar with the reports | 166 | 45.9 |
| Lack of time | 117 | 32.3 |
| No direction-did not know to use the reports | 91 | 25.1 |
| Not helpful did not need to use them | 37 | 10.2 |

*Note.* The percentage of responses may exceed 100 because respondents provided more than one response.

### Question 7. *What are the professional development needs identified by classroom teachers?*

When asked what topics, activities, and strategies they would recommend for future professional development sessions, several themes emerged (Table 28). A table displaying more verbatim examples to this open ended question can be seen in Appendix E, Table E6.

*Continued focus on instructional strategies.* Close to one half of the responses (*n*=428, 48%) identified a need for adequate and ongoing professional development training to update and improve on their skills for delivering reading instruction in all areas *(n*=428, 48%). This category included recommendations to provide more training on strategies for increasing fluency, accuracy, comprehension, assessing comprehension, and particularly improving written comprehension and understanding the CCSS indicators as well as aligning strategies to CCSS indicators. Also a common suggestion was to provide training on how to implement MIRL during poetry or with Grades 4 and 5.

*Differentiating instruction using MIRL data or results from other formative assessment data.* Close to one half the responses suggested more training on addressing needs of all their students— particularly using MIRL data to match instruction to the needs or strengths of struggling students, strong readers, and students receiving ESOL or special education services (*n*=402, 45%).

*Access to more and varied instructional resources*. Many would like access to more instructional materials as well as a variety of resources. (*n*=169, 19%). More specifically, teachers mentioned: the need for instructional materials such as:

    a) video or modules of examples of best practices of peers/teachers who have successfully implemented MIR
    b) exemplars of proven methods and practices that are effective with students who are not making progress/struggling in fluency and comprehension
    c) comprehension questions that relate to certain topics or that match the indicators given in the curriculum
    d) databases of suggested/recommended texts at each instructional level

Table 28
Recommendation for Future Professional Development Sessions

| Recommended topics, activities, or strategies | Total Responding (*N*=889) | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | *n* | % |
| Instructional strategies (e.g., -fluency, accuracy, comprehension, assessing comprehension, improving written comprehension; aligning strategies to CCSS indicators) | 428 | 48.1 |
| Differentiating instruction using MIRL data to address needs of students in reading-to enhance comprehension for variety of learners and students receiving ESOL and SPED services | 402 | 45.2 |
| Access more instructional materials as well as a variety of resources (e.g., expert teacher modelling of guided reading, grade-level examples of comprehension questions, videos, guidelines, common formatives) | 169 | 19.0 |
| Modelling of best practice for implementing MIRL, guidelines, increasing consistency, ways to make data collection less disruptive to instruction and less of an event | 151 | 17.0 |
| Strategies and other support for working specifically with students who are not meeting grade-level expectations or those exceeding grade expectation | 149 | 16.8 |
| Analyzing, interpreting data, and making instructional decisions | 142 | 16.0 |

*Note.* The percentage of responses may exceed 100 because respondents provided more than one response.

*Best practices for managing MIRL.* The teachers also made suggestions for training to address very practical needs that would help to make MIRL less disruptive to instruction and less of an event (n=151, 17%) (Table 28). The elaborated responses called for expert modeling of the entire MIRL process, including: taking running reading records, asking comprehension questions, inputting data, and analyzing and using the MIRL data to determine next steps. This category also included professional development and modeling on how to implement MIRL without losing instructional time, examples of how to teach guided reading and simultaneously collect data, tips for collecting formative assessment data in an effective way, using the MIRL data to help create flexible groupings, and how to manage time while working with several groups of students who are at different instructional reading levels in a class. Also mentioned was training on what to plan for their students (independent work, paired seatwork, independent center work) who were not being assessed or having guided reading.

*Working with specified groups of students.* While related to differentiation, the need to improve their ability to work specifically with students not meeting grade-level expectations as well as very strong readers was mentioned by 17% of those who provided open-ended responses.

*Analyzing and interpreting data.* Related to the areas with low levels of implementation, respondents also mentioned the need to enhance teachers' capacity for analyzing, interpreting, and using formative assessment data (16%). Some respondents mentioned that they were unclear about what is expected of the notes section on the Monthly Online data collection tool, or how to interpret the data to determine next steps. Elsewhere, many reported that they were unfamiliar with or had not used the online MIRL reports.

### Question 8. What changes would teachers make to the elementary reading program to make it more effective?

When asked what changes they would make to the elementary reading program to make it more effective (*N*=891), the responses could be grouped into five categories: a) decrease the frequency of MIRL data collection; b) review of Curriculum 2.0 and alignment to CCSS and needs of students in MCPS; c) focus on needs of students; especially those not meeting expectations; d) provide more resources, guidance, and training related to MIRL and reading instruction; and e) enhance teachers' competence with strategies for guided reading groups (Table 29). Many of the suggestions were related to the challenges identified in previous sections. A table displaying more verbatim examples to this open ended question can be seen in Appendix E, Table E7.

*Decrease focus on data collection to increase time spent on instruction.* The majority of respondents (n=550, 62%) conveyed a need to increase the time they spent on instruction and the need to address how often MIRL data are collected. Overall, there was agreement that the monthly data collection and reporting reduced time spent on instruction and was burdensome. The teachers suggested that the monthly data collection and reporting be reduced to bi-monthly or quarterly basis. A sub-theme was to place less emphasis on MIRL and testing so as to reduce some of the processes or tasks that take time away from for direct reading instruction

Table 29
Recommendations for Improving the Elementary Reading Program

| Themes | (*N*=891) | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | n | % |
| Decrease focus on data collection; decrease frequency of MIRL data collection/Increase time spent on instruction/Focus on student needs | 550 | 61.7 |
| Focus on needs of students-especially those not attaining grade-level bench marks as well as students receiving ESOL services | 306 | 34.3 |
| Provide more instructional resources and guidance---specifically related to comprehension questions/create standard questions for checking comprehension | 268 | 30.1 |
| Review Curriculum 2.0 for alignment to CCSS and adequacy to meet variety of student needs (includes increase focus on writing, increase consistency at county level / alignment of MIRL and mClass) | 232 | 26.0 |
| Increase teachers competence with providing effective guided reading instruction – creating groups, managing reading groups, different ways of grouping students for reading groups | 203 | 22.8 |

*Note.* The percentage of responses may exceed 100 because respondents provided more than one response.

*Review the curriculum and indicators for alignment with CCSS.* Some of the responses indicated a need to revisit and review the curriculum 2.0 for its adequacy to address a variety of student needs or its alignment to the CCSS (*n*=232, 38%). Some of these comments conveyed the need to revisit the curriculum and indicators or completely change the reading curriculum. Also mentioned was the difficulty in finding instructional level texts on particular indicators; and need to "*ensure that MClass is aligned with the CCSS standards/curriculum*". Further elaboration indicated that the texts for class testing are outdated and the tasks do not match the curriculum and that the curriculum should be designed with teaching to reading groups, not whole group lessons. In addition, the responses expressed that the "*curriculum needs to include pre-assessments and ready-made understanding checks*" and have a strong focus on writing. Notably, documentation from OCIP indicate that the MCPS Curriculum 2.0 was updated and comprises the CCSS, therefore these comments may reflect inadequate understanding of both the CCSS and Curriculum 2.0 (MCPS, 2015a). Teachers were expected to use the CCSS as a basis for instructional planning and to ensure rigor for all students, therefore, any misunderstandings surrounding the CCSS, Curriculum 2.0, or the elementary reading program can greatly weaken the implementation of reading instruction as well as the MIRL practices.

*Focus instruction to needs of students.* This category reflected many suggestions for focusing on student needs (*n*=306, 34%), with some comments related to reducing the amount of time spent assessing. This theme included allowing teachers more flexibility with MIRL to fit the needs of the students in their class. In addition, respondents recommended having smaller class sizes with students on more similar levels to allow teachers to have less groups, more time with each group, or giving all students below grade level a second guided reading or extended time.

*Provide more resources, guidance, and training.* Teachers reported that they were struggling with researching books that align well with certain indicators (*n*=217, 24%). As such the need to upgrade and increase guided reading instructional texts was a central theme in many of the open-ended responses. The teachers reported that they needed suggestions for recommended texts for different instructional levels, genres, and topics. In particular, the responses indicated there were not enough resources/books for the students in the upper grades. A sub theme of this category was that comprehension questions or common formatives similar to those created for mathematics are needed.

*Offer ongoing professional development.* About one fifth of the respondents (n=208, 23%), expressed the need for more professional development and information for small group need for PD to increase teachers competence with strategies for effective guided reading group instruction such as managing reading groups, different ways of grouping students reading groups, and best practices for data collection during guided reading .

# Overview of Findings from Open-ended Responses

The basis of MIRL is that through ongoing observation and data collection, emphasis on high quality guided reading, and analyses of formative reading data, teachers can: a) diagnose a student's immediate need and b) then use the information to adjust instruction.

Having a common tool for data collection and ongoing collection and documenting of student reading levels were among the changes intended during the implementation of MIRL. While these were effected by majority of teachers, the same practices were also stated to be time consuming and challenging and consequently as hindrances to achieving high quality reading instruction. Similarly having the monitoring data facilitated planning for guided reading and use of formative assessment; at the same time entering data into the monitoring tool was time consuming, taking away time from direct instruction. Despite the challenges associated to collecting the reading data, having the MIRL data and ability to use it for monitoring student progress was cited as a factor that facilitated other several MIRL practices. Planning and implementation of guided reading, use of the monthly data collection tool, and formative assessment data.

### *Changes Reported by Teachers during Implementation of MIRL in 2015-2016*

Overall, the data from the open-ended responses revealed that schools were making progress toward the intended goals of MIRL.

*Changes in instructional practices and student performance*. A total of 1,617 teachers (72%) out of the 2,245 survey respondents provided responses on how MIRL had changed their teaching in 2015–2016.   With implementation of MIRL, the positive changes observed or mentioned most frequently by teachers  included  increased teachers' awareness of their students' instructional reading levels and student progress (n=454, 28%),  increased data collection during guided reading and monitoring of instructional reading levels ($n$=191, 12%), and increased consistency in levelling across students, classes, and teachers ($n$=186, 12%).

More than one half of the survey respondents, ($N$=1,224, 54%) mentioned several changes they had observed in their students' performance.  Close to one half of the  respondents reported more visible changes in students' instructional reading levels, faster progress, and steady growth in reading proficiency levels and overall student performance in reading ($n$=581,  48%).  Teachers also reported that their students were more aware of their own learning more motivated to learn ($n$=90, 7%).

### *Factors that Facilitated or Hindered Implementation of MIRL*

*Factors that facilitated implementation of specified components of MIRL.*  The proportions of the 2,245 respondents who provided responses identifying factors that facilitated the implementation varied by specified component of MIRL: guided reading instruction ($n$=886, 37%), use of the monthly reading data collection tool (n=752, 33%), or use of formative assessment data (n=830, 39%).

Across these practices, collaborative team planning meetings and support from grade-level teams strengthened:

- implementation of guided reading instruction (n=279, 32%),
- use of formative assessment data (*n*=109, 13%), and
- use of online MIRL reports (*n*=60, 10%).

As intended, having the MIRL data, teachers' increased monitoring (use of monitoring data), and subsequent teachers' awareness of students' progress and needs, facilitated the implementation of several practices:

- the use of formative assessment data (*n*=223, 27%),
- use of online data collection tool (*n*=161, 21%),
- use of online reports on myMCPS portal (*n*=107, 17%), and
- implementation of guided reading instruction (*n*=126, 14%).

Support from reading specialists and staff development teachers was lauded for facilitating the implementation of quality guided reading instruction (*n*=151, 17%) and the use of the monthly reading data collection tool (*n*=83, 11%). Having a common data collection tool and having the MIRL online reports organized in one place on *myMCPS* online portal facilitated and increased consistency in monthly data collection (*n*=80, 11%); Having a common data collection tool also made it possible to have and use the MIRL reports from *myMCPS* online portal (n=58, 9%).

*Factors that hindered implementation of specified components of MIRL.* Compared to responses on factors that facilitated the implementation, fewer respondents provided responses related to challenges. The proportions of all respondents (N=2,245) who identified challenges varied by specified MIRL practices: guided reading instruction (*n*=771, 34%), monthly reading data collection tool (*n*=610, 27%), use of formative assessment (*n*=428, 19%), and use of online report (*n*=362, 16 %.).

The range of challenges mentioned was wide, reflecting the differences in teachers' experiences with implementing the different components of MIRL Consistently across the 4 specified components of MIRL, limited time was reported as major in variety of ways:

- entering data using the monthly data collection tool (*n*=355, 58%),
- planning and implementing guided reading optimally (*n*=440, 57%),
- using formative assessment data (*n*=157, 38%), and
- using MIRL online reports on *myMCPS* portal (*n*=117, 32%).

Further, at least one fifth of the respondents mentioned challenges that applied uniquely to a specified practice: Conducting reading running records and data collection during guided reading (*n*=252, 33%), the struggle to find sufficient or suitable variety of leveled books for guided reading instruction (*n*=206, 27%), the perceived mismatch or misalignment among mClass, MIRL, and MAP-R data which limited their use of formative data for instructional planning (*n*=115, 27%). Finally, limited guidance or training on how to implement was mentioned as barriers to optimal

use of formative assessment data (*n=104, 24%*) and MIRL reports on *myMCPS* portal (*n=91, 25%*). Nearly half of the respondents cited unfamiliarity or not even knowing they existed as a reason for not using MIRL reports on *myMCPS* portal (*n=166, 45%*).

**General Observations on Areas Needing Improvement in Implementation of MIRL**

- A salient theme conveyed through the responses was the perception of MIRL as an event of collecting and entering data into the monthly data collection tool. This perception was probably the greatest barrier to the implementation of MIRL in 2015–2016 because it reflected a limited understanding of the scope of MIRL and the relationships among the MIRL practices to the expectations of the elementary reading program detailed in the Elementary Literacy Plan. Notably, several respondents would assert that MIRL was not new; that they had implemented the MIRL practices in previous years as intended including monitoring the progress of their students; yet they also indicated that MIRL disrupted instruction.
- Despite the key challenges of lack of time and insufficient instructional resources, the areas that were the focus of summer PD sessions were reported to be widely implemented: guided reading instruction, data collection, and monitoring instructional reading levels. The areas reported with uneven implementation were also the practices whereby respondents cited limited guidance and training related to implementation: use of formative assessment data and online MIRL reports were reported to be widely implemented despite the challenges of time and instructional resources cited.
- From the data at hand, it is not clear what teachers perceive as formative assessment or their level of clarity about the connections among mClass, MIRL, and MAP data. Notably, inadequate understanding about the relationships and differences among mClass, MIRL, and MAP data could inadvertently limit the use of these data for instructional planning.

**Ideas for Future PD and Improving the Elementary Reading Program**

At the conclusion of the survey, the teachers identified a variety of topics and activities for future PD; they also made suggestions for making the elementary reading program more effective.

*Suggestions for future PD.* Overall, 889 (40%) of the respondents provided responses expressing a variety of professional development needs. Close to one half of these 889 respondents recommended two broad areas for future PD for teachers: 1) Instructional strategies (e.g., fluency, accuracy, comprehension, assessing comprehension, improving written comprehension and aligning strategies to CCSS indicators) (n=428, 48%) and 2) differentiating instruction using MIRL data to address needs and strengths of a variety of learners (n=402, 45%).

*Suggestions for improving the elementary reading program.* The majority of the respondents recommended increasing time spent on instruction by decreasing the focus on monthly monitoring reading data collection (*n=550, 62%*). Further, at least one fifth of the respondents recommended: a) increasing the attention to specific needs and strengths of students based on the MIRL data (*n=306, 34%,* b) providing more resources and guidance for checking comprehension (n=268, 30%), c) reviewing the Curriculum 2.0 for alignment with CCSS and its adequacy in

meeting needs of a variety of learners (*n*=232, 26%), and providing PD to increase teachers competence with strategies for effective guided reading  instruction (*n*=203, 23%).


# Summary and Discussion

The goal of the MIRL practices is to increase  systematic implementation of high quality guided reading and the supporting practices of monthly documentation of students' instructional reading levels, analysis and use of monthly reading data, regular discussion of student  strengths and needs during collaborative planning meetings, and ongoing adjustment of instruction to meet student needs.

The findings from the teachers' survey provided numerous insights into their experiences with implementing MIRL practices in 2015–2016. Overall, these findings showed encouraging news for the first year of implementation of MIRL. A majority of the survey respondents reported that they:  attended professional development sessions to prepare for the implementation of MIRL; had opportunities for purposive and consistent planning at their schools through the collaborative grade-level planning teams; provided consistent guided reading instruction for all students; increased observation and documentation of instructional reading levels during guided reading; and consistently used the online Monthly Reading Data Collection Tool . Also instituted, but with lower levels of implementation were the processes related to the use of formative assessment data. The respondents also reported several positive changes in instructional practices and student performance that were associated with implementing MIRL in 2015–2016: increased teachers' awareness of their student's strengths, needs, and interests; increased consistency in instruction across grade-levels and schools; more students making better and consistent progress in reading; and more students aware of their own strengths and motivated to read.

The findings also revealed that the transition to the MIRL strategy was not smooth for some. One notable theme that cut across the responses, including nearly all the open-ended items, was the varying understanding of the MIRL terminology, reflecting a variety of ways that the respondents defined, experienced, or conceptualized the MIRL strategy. Reflecting the mixed understanding of MIRL among stakeholders, the optimal implementation of MIRL was hindered in part by the widespread perception of MIRL as the activity of monthly data collection during guided reading and use of the monthly reading data collection tool—both reported to be time consuming and to reduce the time available for direct instruction.  Although the teachers encountered several challenges in their first year of implementing MIRL, guided reading instruction and data collection were extensively implemented.  Also, schools and teachers are more aware of the challenges and what to anticipate in 2016–2017. The goal of guided reading is to continue to advance all students on their reading continuum, which requires sufficient understanding and use of formative assessment data. Across several studies,  researchers report that  teachers can change their instructional  practices in ways consistent with a process view of formative assessment as long as they are provided with information, structures, support, and sufficient time (Lyon, Wylie, & Mavronikolas, 2011; Lyon & Wylie, 2009; Wylie, Lyon, & Mavronikolas, 2008).

To sustain the improvements from the first year of implementation and make progress toward the intended goals of MIRL, two factors will be critical to realizing the intended results from the MIRL strategy. First, recognizing that the full and optimal implementation of MIRL requires the concerted support of teachers and school leaders, the vision of MIRL needs to be clearly understood, embraced, and supported at all levels, not just among school administrators. Full support will necessitate consistent communication, ongoing professional development, access to sufficient instructional resources, and time to learn and use new practices. Second, lack of time was reported to be a key barrier to adequate implementation of each of the components of the MIRL strategy. Because the goal of guided reading is to continue to advance all students on their reading continuum, teachers need support in securing time for guided reading instruction. As schools consider how to optimize the guided reading instruction and intensify data driven instructional decisions; reducing the time constraints brought on by transitioning to collecting monitoring reading data during guided reading and using the monthly reading data collection tool, is crucial to maintaining the improvements from 2015–2016 and progressing toward achieving the intended goals.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from the teacher survey to provide guidance for the program's improvement as well as its ongoing development:

*Increase understanding of MIRL and the expectations for the elementary reading program*

a.   Increase consistency in the understanding of the MIRL strategy by teachers and school leaders; clarify its rationale, and its relationship to formative assessment and the Elementary School Literacy Plan.

b.   Dispel the widespread perception that MIRL is an event by explaining the strong connection of MIRL and MCPS' *Priorities for 2016–2017: Focus on Learning, Results, and Accountabilit*y—specifically the expectation to intensify focus on districtwide data-driven monitoring and analysis of student performance in order to increase opportunities for students to learn and to reduce variability in outcomes across schools and classrooms within schools.

c.   Increase the understanding of the CCSS and their implementation through Curriculum 2.0—specifically, that Curriculum 2.0 was updated and comprises the CCSS; that daily implementation of reading skills includes comprehension skills**.** Any misunderstandings surrounding the CCSS, Curriculum 2.0, or the elementary reading program can greatly weaken the implementation of reading instruction as well as the MIRL practices.

d.   Clarify and communicate the guidelines for gathering reading data on accuracy, fluency, and comprehension in upper grades and/or for high performing or highly able readers to all teachers.

e.   Continuously share best practices for implementing MIRL practices within and across schools.

f.   Clarify expectations for teachers' use of the MIRL reports on MyMCPS. The majority of the teachers reported that they were unfamiliar with or had not used these reports.

- *Strengthen and improve implementation of MIRL*
  a. Based on positive findings, maintain and strengthen the aspects of MIRL that were widely implemented as intended in 2015–2016 including: guided reading instruction, collaborative team planning, articulating consistent expectations for reading instruction, and ongoing in-school professional development from reading specialists and staff development teachers.
  b. Address the teachers' concerns about the monthly reading data collection tool. With that regard, consider refining, upgrading, or replacing the tool as needed to make it easier to use and consequently less time consuming.
  c. Increase emphasis on and broaden implementation of the various MIRL activities and processes where wide variability across schools or low levels of implementation were reported. Particularly, increase improvement efforts in the areas of:
      1. assessing students' understanding using tools and processes that are consistent across the grade level,
      2. implementing a variety of formative assessments tools,
      3. interpreting formative assessment information,
      4. coordinating additional support for students not meeting monthly grade-level targets,
      5. using module pathways for English language learners, special education students, or strong readers, and
      6. selecting guided reading texts.
  *d.* Examine reasons for the limited use and emphasis on the module pathways to address instructional needs in reading of English language learners, highly able students, and students with disabilities. Then, establish structures to support the implementation of these module pathways.
  e. Use a variety of approaches to decrease the amount of teachers' time spent collecting and inputting MIRL data. As stated in the surveys, the respondents expressed that they did not have enough time to implement guided reading; therefore, teachers need support in protecting time for guided reading instruction: for example, supply sample common comprehension questions, increase use of technology devices to collect and record data simultaneously or schedule time during the school day for completion of monthly data entry.

- *Increase teachers' capacity to implement rigorous reading instruction through various professional learning opportunities and ongoing support.*
  a. Provide teachers with targeted support for those areas that are specific to their individual needs. Gaps in teacher's competencies can be addressed through a series of short, targeted videos/modules along with suggestions for school leaders on how to facilitate follow up school-based professional development opportunities.
      a. Provide ongoing and additional support to classroom teachers in the areas they identified as the most critical areas of instructional needs for their students in reading: writing in response to reading, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy, and learning English.
      b. Provide ongoing professional development to increase teachers' capacity with data analyses, interpretation, and use of data to plan and adjust instruction.

    b.    Explain the uses, similarities, and differences among the various reading performance data—MCPS Assessment Program in Primary Reading (AP-PR)/mClass data; MIRL data, and Measures of Academic Progress in Reading (MAP-R) data for teachers.

    c.    Upgrade and increase the number and variety of instructional resources for guided reading instruction. This will ensure that all schools have sufficient instructional resources for guided reading instruction, that are aligned with the CCSS indicators for all reading instructional levels and grades.

# Acknowledgements

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# Appendix A: Expectations For Guided Reading



*Source.* Elementary Integrated Curriculum, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs. Rockville, MD. Montgomery County Public Schools.

## Appendix B: Expectations for Collaborative Team Planning Meetings

During Collaborative Planning : Discuss Reader and Task

| Develop a Common Understanding of the Indicator | Discuss Barriers, Scaffolds, and Needs for Enrichment |
|---|---|
| Plan Instruction to Match the Needs of Students | Determine Assessment Opportunities |
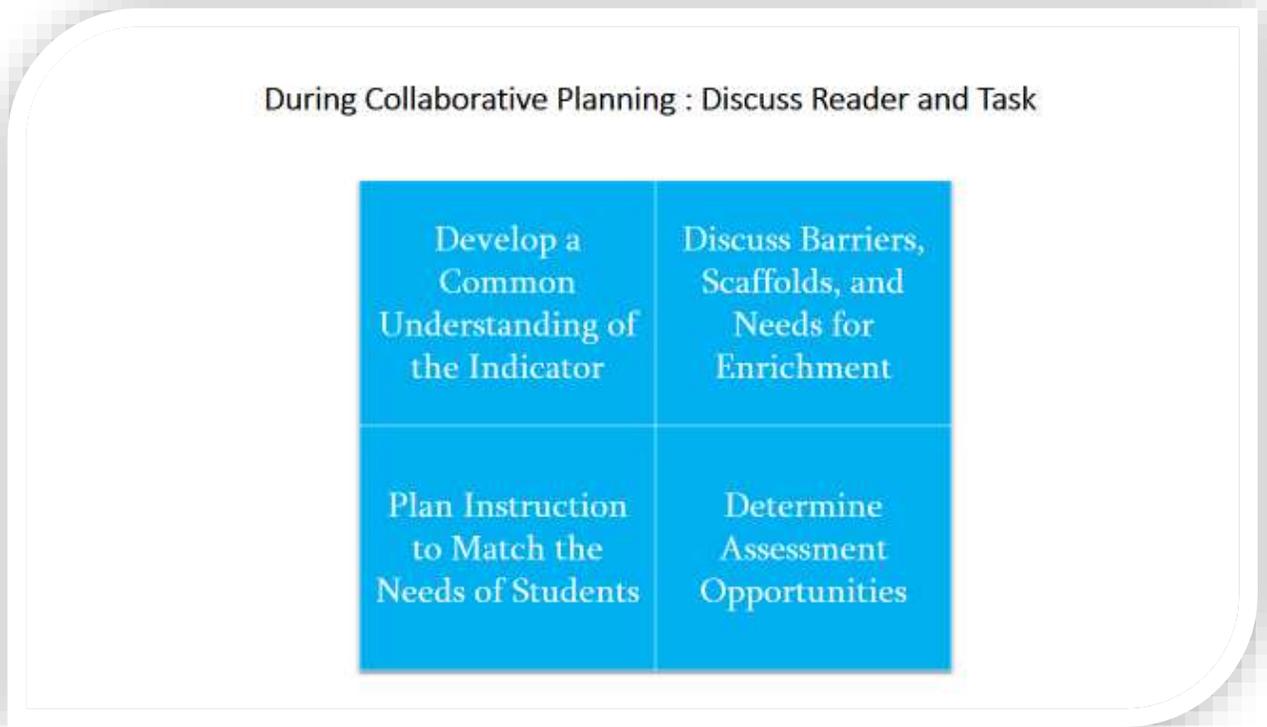
Develop a Common Understanding of the Indicator
- What do students need to know and be able to do in order to be proficient?
- Should the entire indicator be taught or just a portion?

Discuss Barriers, Scaffolds, and Needs for Enrichment
- What do you know about your students' accuracy, fluency, comprehension, and language development?
- What patterns do you notice?
- What insights or strengths do students possess?
- What miscues or confusions did students exhibit while learning the concept or skill identified in the indicator?
- What enrichment will be provided?

Plan Instruction to Match the Needs of Students
- How has this indicator been successfully taught in the past?
- How might whole and small group complement each other?
- How should student confusions be addressed?
- What instructional strategies or resources can be used to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of particular student groups?

Determine Assessment Opportunities
- How will I collect oral or written formative assessment data?
- What questions will be asked to check for student understanding of the indicator?

*Source.* Elementary Integrated Curriculum, Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs. Rockville, MD. Montgomery County Public Schools.

## Appendix C: <u>PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS</u>

**Implementing, Assessing, and Monitoring Guided Reading**
*Monitoring Instructional Reading Level, Grades K–5 2015–2016* is a series of professional learning opportunities to engage participants in professional development to support the implementation, assessment, and monitoring of instructional reading level during guided reading. This professional learning is for all teachers of reading for students in Grades K–5.  In addition, all teacher leader groups including principals, assistant principals, staff development teachers, reading specialists, ESOL teachers, and pre-kindergarten teachers will receive professional learning aligned to the MCPS Elementary Literacy Plan.

| Topic | Time Frame | Audience | Facilitation | Materials | Coverage Compensation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Monitoring Instructional Reading Level* Reading Module 1 **K–5** | August – October 1 – 1.5 hours Dates: TBD scheduled by school | Classroom teachers ESOL, Special Education, Staff Development, Reading Initiative, Reading Focus, Principals, Assistant Principals | Principal Assistant Principal Reading Specialist Staff Development Teacher Team Leaders | District-developed multimedia presentation, training plan, and digital copies of handouts, consultation | None |
| *Analyzing Data and Instructional Practices* Reading Module 2 **3–5** | September – November 3 – 3.5 hours Dates: TBD scheduled by school | Classroom teachers, ESOL, Special Education, Staff Development, Reading Initiative, Reading Focus, Principals, Assistant Principals | Principal Assistant Principal Reading Specialist Staff Development Teacher Team Leaders | District-developed multimedia presentation, training plan, and digital copies of handouts, consultation | Half-day substitute coverage provided through OCIP funds |
| *Analyzing Data and Instructional Practices* Reading Module 2 **K–2** | November – February 3 – 3.5 hours Dates: TBD scheduled by school | Classroom teachers, ESOL, Special Education, Staff Development, Reading Initiative, Reading Focus, Principals, Assistant Principals | Principal Assistant Principal Reading Specialist Staff Development Teacher Team Leaders | District-developed multimedia presentation, training plan, and digital copies of handouts, consultation | Half-day substitute coverage provided through OCIP funds |
| *Reflecting on Results and Next Steps* Reading Module 3 **K–5** | April – May 1–1.5 hours Dates: TBD scheduled by school | Classroom Teachers, ESOL, Special Education, Staff Development, Reading Initiative, Reading Focus, Principals, Assistant Principals | Principal Assistant Principal Reading Specialist Staff Development Teacher Team Leaders | District-developed multimedia presentation, training plan, and digital copies of handouts, consultation | None |

*Source.* MCPS (2015a). *2015–2016 MCPS Early Literacy Plan.* Rockville, MD. Montgomery County Public Schools.

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Professional learning for school leaders (except those around mathematics) will be aligned and focus on building content knowledge and leadership capacity to support teachers in planning, teaching, and assessing students in literacy.

| Group | Aug/Sept Topics | October Topics | November Topics | December Topics | January Topics | February Topics | March/April Topics | May/June Topics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary Principals' Curriculum Update Meeting | No meeting | 2014–15 Data – KRA, MCPSAP-PR, & MAP<br><br>MIRL – Getting started; training Grades 3–5; reports | Math | Using Data to plan/support literacy development in special populations; ELLs and students with disabilities | No meeting | Using data to plan/support literacy development in special populations; highly able students | Math/No meeting | Math |
| Reading Specialists Meeting | Cluster meetings; 2015–16 Priorities Support for Module 1 & 2A; mClass, coaching conversations; developing trust | Support for Module 2B; Supporting implementation of monitoring, coaching conversations, facilitating collaboration | No meeting | Cluster Meetings (continue into January), Supporting analyses of monthly instructional reading level data, supporting special populations | Cluster Meetings (from Dec) | Coaching conversations; Diagnosis and Instructional Practice; supporting special populations, Questioning | Coaching; supporting special populations Questioning | Planning for Year 2 of Implementation of MIRL, literacy plan |
| ESOL Teacher Meetings | No meeting | Collaborative Approach to MIRL/DIRL | No meeting | Collaborative Approach to MIRL/DIRL | No meeting | No meeting | | No meeting |
| Early Childhood Teacher Meetings | Balanced Literacy Schedule Rigorous ways to build Letter Knowledge | Balanced Literacy | Balanced Literacy and cultural proficiency | Balanced Literacy and cultural proficiency | Balanced Literacy and cultural proficiency | | Balanced Literacy and cultural proficiency | |
| Staff Development Teacher Meetings | | Supporting implementation of monitoring, facilitating collaboration | SDT Meeting | Supporting Monitoring Instructional Reading Levels with Reading Specialists | SDT Meeting | Attend PCU | SDT Meeting Attend PCU on Math | Attend PCU on Math |
| Special Education | | Literacy overview-collaboration with EIC Team | | Curriculum and Instruction | | Curriculum and Instruction | Curriculum and Instruction | |

*Source.* MCPS (2015a). *2015–2016 MCPS Early Literacy Plan.* Rockville, MD. Montgomery County Public Schools.

# Appendix D

Table D1
Teachers Reporting Extent of Implementation of Specified Processes and Structures Across Their School During 2015–2016 by Grade Level

| Specified activities | Kindergarten – 2nd Grade | | | | | | 3rd – 5th Grade | | | | | |
| | To a great extent | | To a moderate extent | | To a small extent/Not at all | | To a great extent | | To a moderate extent | | To a small extent/Not at all | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Differentiating instruction to meet needs of varied learners. | 612 | 59.5 | 306 | 29.7 | 111 | 10.8 | 512 | 63.4 | 213 | 26.4 | 82 | 10.2 |
| Emphasizing reading comprehension strategies. | 619 | 60.0 | 290 | 28.1 | 123 | 11.9 | 501 | 61.7 | 216 | 26.6 | 95 | 11.7 |
| Aligning reading instruction with CCSS indicators to ensure rigor for all students. | 572 | 55.4 | 299 | 28.9 | 162 | 15.7 | 470 | 57.9 | 235 | 28.9 | 107 | 13.2 |
| Using Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as basis for instructional planning for all students. | 559 | 54.1 | 310 | 30.0 | 165 | 16.0 | 464 | 57.1 | 244 | 30.0 | 105 | 12.9 |
| Implementing expectations for balanced literacy schedule. | 543 | 52.7 | 343 | 33.3 | 144 | 14.0 | 390 | 48.4 | 279 | 34.6 | 137 | 17.0 |
| Using consistent processes and tools to document evidence of student learning. | 530 | 51.4 | 371 | 35.9 | 131 | 12.7 | 402 | 49.9 | 313 | 38.9 | 90 | 11.2 |
| Use of before, during, and after structure of guided reading structure instruction. | 487 | 47.1 | 371 | 35.9 | 176 | 17.0 | 361 | 44.7 | 297 | 36.8 | 149 | 18.5 |
| Building capacity for successful collaborative content study and planning. | 449 | 43.6 | 368 | 35.7 | 213 | 20.7 | 335 | 41.4 | 308 | 38.0 | 167 | 20.6 |
| Interpreting formative assessment information. | 400 | 38.8* | 417 | 40.4 | 214 | 20.8 | 255 | 31.6 | 368 | 45.7* | 183 | 22.7 |
| Selecting guided reading texts*. | 316 | 30.7 | 315 | 30.6 | 398 | 38.7 | 257 | 31.8 | 268 | 33.2 | 283 | 35.0 |
| Articulating the formative assessment vision for the school. | 268 | 26.2 | 395 | 38.6 | 361 | 35.3 | 200 | 24.8 | 308 | 38.2 | 298 | 37.0 |

*p < .05

Table D2
Teachers Reporting Extent of Implementation of Specified Processes and Structures Across Their School
During 2015–2016 by Grade Level

| Specified activities | Kindergarten – 2nd Grade | | | | | | | | 3rd – 5th Grade | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | To a greater extent | | About the same | | To a less extent | | Not at all/Not applicable | | To a greater extent | | About the same | | To a less extent | | Not at all/Not applicable | |
| | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* |
| Monitor students' monthly reading level targets over time. | 579 | 56.8 | 359 | 35.2 | 21 | 2.1 | 61 | 6.0 | 484 | 61.0 | 245 | 30.9 | 16 | 2.0 | 49 | 6.2 |
| Compare your students' instructional reading levels over time using a data collection tool (e.g. the online Monthly data collection tool). | 572 | 56.0 | 358 | 35.1 | 24 | 2.4 | 67 | 6.6 | 443 | 55.7 | 265 | 33.3 | 27 | 3.4 | 60 | 7.5 |
| Incorporate formative assessment process when planning. | 462 | 44.9 | 476 | 46.3 | 34 | 3.3 | 57 | 5.5 | 328 | 41.0 | 408 | 51.0* | 25 | 3.1 | 39 | 4.9 |
| Collaboratively plan for reading instruction with grade-level peers. | 448 | 44.1 | 455 | 44.7 | 54 | 5.3 | 60 | 5.9 | 317 | 39.9 | 395 | 49.7* | 37 | 4.7 | 46 | 5.8 |
| Plan your guided reading instruction using formative assessment data. | 442 | 43.0 | 499 | 48.5 | 31 | 3.0 | 56 | 5.4 | 314 | 39.3 | 416 | 52.1 | 23 | 2.9 | 46 | 5.8 |
| Use formative assessment data to identify challenges and student needs. | 422 | 41.4 | 515 | 50.5 | 23 | 2.3 | 59 | 5.8 | 306 | 38.8 | 424 | 53.8 | 12 | 1.5 | 46 | 5.8 |
| Assess students' understanding using tools and processes that are consistent across the grade level. | 411 | 40.4* | 510 | 50.1 | 31 | 3.0 | 66 | 6.5 | 282 | 35.6 | 434 | 54.7 | 29 | 3.7 | 48 | 6.1 |
| Coordinate additional support for students not meeting monthly grade-level targets. | 393 | 38.7 | 522 | 51.4 | 33 | 3.3 | 67 | 6.6 | 289 | 36.6 | 411 | 52.0 | 32 | 4.1 | 58 | 7.3 |
| Implement a variety of formative assessments tools in your classroom. | 373 | 36.7 | 548 | 53.9 | 37 | 3.6 | 59 | 5.8 | 279 | 35.3 | 445 | 56.3 | 23 | 2.9 | 43 | 5.4 |
| Use module pathways to address instructional needs of English language learners in reading. | 228 | 22.5 | 519 | 51.2 | 63 | 6.2 | 204 | 20.1 | 158 | 19.9 | 401 | 50.6 | 56 | 7.1* | 178 | 22.4 |
| Use module pathways to address instructional needs of highly able students. | 201 | 19.9 | 567 | 56.0 | 53 | 5.2 | 191 | 18.9 | 169 | 21.4 | 418 | 52.8 | 60 | 7.6 | 144 | 18.2 |
| Use module pathways to address instructional needs of students with disabilities. | 177 | 17.4 | 526 | 51.8 | 69 | 6.8 | 244 | 24.0 | 151 | 19.0 | 425 | 53.6 | 49 | 6.2 | 168 | 21.2 |

*p < .05

Table D3
Number and Percent of Teachers Reporting Frequency of Typical Activities During Collaborative Planning Meetings by Grade Level Categories

| Specified activities | Kindergarten – 2nd Grade | | | | | | 3rd – 5th Grade | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Usually (Almost every meeting) | | Sometimes (Occasionally /Some of the time) | | Rarely/ Never | | Usually (Almost every meeting) | | Sometimes (Occasionally /Some of the time) | | Rarely/ Never | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Identify what an indicator is asking students to know and be able to do (i.e. what students need to know and be able to do/proficiency with the indicator). | 771 | 78.0* | 188 | 19.0 | 30 | 3.0 | 571 | 73.0 | 177 | 22.6 | 34 | 4.3 |
| Discuss/share barriers to learning. | 603 | 60.8* | 338 | 34.1 | 51 | 5.1 | 437 | 55.9 | 284 | 36.3 | 61 | 7.8 |
| Plan for formative assessment to check for mastery of indicator. | 567 | 57.3 | 334 | 33.7 | 89 | 9.0 | 412 | 53.0 | 277 | 35.6 | 89 | 11.4 |
| Strategize about effective instructional practices for small group instruction. | 535 | 54.2 | 370 | 37.5 | 82 | 8.3 | 438 | 55.9 | 270 | 34.5 | 75 | 9.6 |
| Discuss scaffolds to address individual student needs. | 537 | 54.3 | 368 | 37.2 | 85 | 8.6 | 402 | 51.3 | 310 | 39.5 | 72 | 9.2 |
| Discuss explicit instruction of reading comprehension strategies to students (how to model or explain a particular strategy). | 497 | 50.4 | 389 | 39.4 | 101 | 10.2 | 403 | 51.4 | 295 | 37.6 | 86 | 11.0 |
| Identify the characteristics of the text (s) to use during instruction. | 400 | 40.5 | 402 | 40.7 | 186 | 18.8* | 354 | 45.4* | 310 | 39.7 | 116 | 14.9 |
| Discuss outliers (student whose performance is outside of the expected range). | 402 | 40.6* | 478 | 48.3 | 110 | 11.1 | 250 | 32.1 | 407 | 52.2 | 122 | 15.7* |
| Use student specific evidence to differentiate instruction to match needs of English learners. | 349 | 35.4* | 431 | 43.7 | 206 | 20.9 | 217 | 27.9 | 363 | 46.7 | 198 | 25.4* |
| Use student specific evidence to differentiate instruction to match needs of highly able students. | 311 | 31.5 | 462 | 46.8 | 214 | 21.7 | 234 | 29.8 | 378 | 48.2 | 172 | 21.9 |
| Coordinate instruction with ESOL staff. | 368 | 37.1* | 328 | 33.1 | 296 | 29.8 | 172 | 22.0 | 250 | 32.0 | 360 | 46.0* |
| Use student specific evidence to differentiate instruction to match needs of students with disabilities. | 277 | 28.1 | 451 | 45.7 | 258 | 26.2 | 217 | 28.0 | 374 | 48.3 | 184 | 23.7 |
| Coordinate instruction with academic support staff. | 268 | 27.1 | 414 | 41.8 | 308 | 31.1 | 199 | 25.5 | 294 | 37.6 | 288 | 36.9* |
| Review student progress in reading using a variety of data sources. | 286 | 28.7* | 570 | 57.2 | 141 | 14.1 | 185 | 23.5 | 459 | 58.4 | 142 | 18.1* |
| Coordinate instruction with special education staff. | 210 | 21.4 | 361 | 36.8 | 409 | 41.7* | 227 | 29.2* | 276 | 35.5 | 275 | 35.3 |
| Examine trends (over time) or patterns (across different group of students or classrooms) observed in the data. | 254 | 25.6 | 534 | 53.7 | 206 | 20.7 | 172 | 22.0 | 440 | 56.3 | 170 | 21.7 |
| Discuss behavior management strategies for students. | 235 | 23.8 | 454 | 46.0 | 299 | 30.3 | 161 | 20.6 | 373 | 47.8 | 246 | 31.5 |
| Perform administrative functions (school business, e.g. field trips). | 163 | 16.6 | 422 | 43.1 | 395 | 40.3 | 132 | 16.9 | 310 | 39.7 | 338 | 43.3 |
| Participate in school-based professional development sessions. | 157 | 16.0 | 522 | 53.1 | 304 | 30.9 | 113 | 14.5 | 415 | 53.3 | 250 | 32.1 |
| Participate in coaching/PD sessions from school or district staff. | 101 | 10.2* | 393 | 39.8 | 494 | 50.0 | 54 | 6.9 | 302 | 38.7 | 424 | 54.4 |

*$p < .05$

# Appendix E

Table E1
Frequently Mentioned Positive Changes to Reading Instruction Since Implementing MIRL
(*N*=1,617)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| Increased teacher awareness of students' reading levels, needs, or growth (*n*=454, 28.1) | • *I am much more aware of the progress students are making as well as barriers to their learning.*<br>• *More aware of data, more frequent shuffling of groups*<br>• *I'm more aware of their strengths and weaknesses.*<br>• *I feel that it has made me better, more aware of my student's needs.*<br>• *It has made me more aware of my students' monthly progress toward grade level goals.*<br>• *It has made me more aware of student needs, and has helped me better plan for meeting those needs (comprehension, fluency, decoding, written response, etc.).*<br>• *It has helped me to be more aware of students' levels and when they need to be moved to a guided reading group that better meets their needs. It has helped me to focus on their reading fluency more as well.*<br>• *It has made me more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of my readers and how to best support their needs. I am more focused on the individual reader and what they need to be a better reader. I also know where they are at more consistently, and can track their progress easier.*<br>• *I use the tool to have flexible groupings for my guided reading groups.*<br>• *Using this tool has helped me maintain momentum with moving students into the next level of texts when needed.*<br>• *It has helped me know my students better as a reader. It has also given me a tool for providing instant and consistent feedback.*<br>• *I have never used a tool like this consistently for gathering data so gathering data in this way was very new for me.*<br>• *I did notice that using this tool helped to develop fluency for the students. They were being assessed on a text they have practiced multiple times.* |
| More consistency in leveling across students, classes and teachers (*n*=186, 11.5) | • *I am continually monitoring in a more formal way to make sure that my students are reading on the level that they should be.*<br>• *It has helped me to better know what level my students are working at any specific time and it has helped me determine when students are ready to be gently challenged at the next level.*<br>• *I complete running records to enter data, not because I feel the students are ready to move forward to the next level.*<br>• *I was more likely to move students to the appropriate level in a timely manner.*<br>• *I now move students up/down a level more often based on progress.*<br>• *It has forced me to make a strict schedule for incorporating running records into my guided groups.*<br>• *I am not as quick to move students to a higher level if their fluency AND comprehension to not show that they are ready to move.*<br>• *It has helped me keep track of what level each of my students is reading on, and also how much they truly comprehend of the text.* |

# Appendix E

Table E1
Frequently Mentioned Positive Changes to Reading Instruction Since Implementing MIRL
(*N*=1,617)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| | • *I am able to know what level my students should be moved to.* |
| Increased use of data to for planning and adjusting instruction/ teaching focus (greater attention to specific skills, etc.) (*n*=71, 4.4) | • *It helps me better get a true feel how the students are progressing and plan my instruction accordingly.*<br>• *It has helped me keep better track of students' progress.*<br>• *It has helped me meet the needs of my learners better because I'm actually teaching their real reading level. Writing is no longer holding them back from progressing in the reading levels.*<br>• *It has been helpful with my students that are reading below grade level. I have been able to see their progress more clearly. I have also been better about using a variety of sources to assess student understanding.*<br>• *It has supported me in maintaining relevant data to compare, reflect on, and plan using specific information about students' strengths and needs. It has helped to more effectively monitor progress and plan based on outcomes I am changing my groups much more often.*<br>• *It gives me more data to drive instruction and make my groups more flexible. I meet with groups more frequently. Groups are more fluid month to month. It has helped me focus more on comprehension questions.*<br>• *Maintained focus on progress from level to level.*<br>• *It has given me less time to focus on the group as a whole and help the group as a whole especially if we need to focus on a specific learning topic.*<br>• *More conscious or reading fluency is plus, focus on collecting data checks to the detriment of building comprehension with students at times.*<br>• *It has allowed me to focus on specific strategies for specific students to better meet their needs. It allows me to know better where my students are with regards to comprehension and reading fluency.* |

Table E2
Frequently Mentioned Negative Impacts on Reading Instruction Since Implementing MIRL
(*N*=1,617)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| MIRL restricted and interfered with reading instruction/ planning time, compromises reading groups (*n*=559, 34.7%) | • *MIRL takes time and therefore less time is spent in reading group instruction.*<br>• *MIRL took a lot of time out of just teaching. I don't believe a warm read where they have had time to practice the book truly demonstrates what they can read.*<br>• *MIRL takes more time out of guided reading groups, so my groups tend to be longer than normal. I feel rushed during guided reading.*<br>• *It has made it more difficult to meet with all of my groups.* |

Table E2
Frequently Mentioned Negative Impacts on Reading Instruction Since Implementing MIRL
(*N*=1,617)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
|  | • *I have spent more time with MIRL than I do instructing my early readers.*<br>• *It has made it impossible to get in all 5 of my reading groups daily.*<br>• *It has been frustrating trying to keep up with MIRL.*<br>• *I feel rushed to get the MIRL done. I listen to my students read every month.*<br>• *I have to spend so much time on giving MIRL that it takes away from instruction.*<br>• *Less time to work with students in guided reading.*<br>• *MIRL takes time and therefore less time is spent in reading group instruction.*<br>• *Made more work, less time for explicit reading instruction.*<br>• *Less time to teach small groups/more time spent in testing.*<br>• *It has decreased instructional time in the classroom.*<br>• *It has given me less time to actually teach the kids.* |
| Monthly data collection a burden on teachers, stressful, waste of time, pressure (*n*=82, 5.1%) | • *Focused more on data.*<br>• *It has taken away from my planning time to fill out a needless data point for the county.*<br>• *I'm spending more time on my computer inputting data.*<br>• *I have had to find time to input the data.*<br>• *I spend more time collecting data then I would like and feel it impacts student instruction.*<br>• *Being required to submit data electronically monthly.*<br>• *It is more data driven. I feel as though I am testing more than teaching.*<br>• *It has been a complete waste of my time.*<br>• *It has been a waste of time. While it is intended to be fluid throughout the year, it definitely interrupted guided reading groups and I was not able to "MIRL" with integrity given the other expectations to meet standards.*<br>• *With a class size of 31 students, small group time is valuable, and it was sad to have to waste it this year.*<br>• *It hasn't.  It's truly a waste of time. But more of my instructional time is dedicated to completing the assessments.*<br>• *It has made me more frustrated and less patient.  I really see inputting data into the computer on a monthly basis as a waste of precious time.*<br>• *It has given me less time to actually teach and more time spent completing useless paperwork. I feel it has directly and negatively impacted my students' learning.* |

Table E2
Frequently Mentioned Negative Impacts on Reading Instruction Since Implementing MIRL
(*N*=1,617)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| Insufficient instructional resources (e.g. difficulty finding leveled texts, MIRL replaces preferred monitoring methods) (*n*=73, 4.5%) | • *There were not enough leveled materials available to use, especially on a monthly basis.*<br>• *It was difficult to find leveled texts to go with every unit.*<br>• *Implementing MIRL has been frustrating. It has been difficult to find appropriate leveled texts for the many levels in my classes, and I'm always left with doubt as to the accuracy of the results.*<br>• *I need to alter my reading groups to be a leveled text for MIRL, but the curriculum genres do not match up with a leveled text (i.e. fables, poetry, plays).*<br>• *The county does not provide small readers that are levels or a variety of leveled text, so as a teacher I have to spend a GREAT deal of my planning time locating resources to use. Then, they are often disconnected to what we are learning in the classroom.* |

Table E3
Frequently Mentioned Changes to Student Performance/Reading Levels Since Implementing MIRL
(*N*=1,224)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| No change, or no growth attributable to MIRL at the time of the survey (*n*=25, 59.2%) | • *No real change. I always did monthly running records before in order to check student progress.  This has always allowed me to make flexible guided reading groups based on needs of students.*<br>• *They are following a similar pattern to those I have seen in previous years.  There has been no obvious change.*<br>• *I do not see much change in the proficiency levels but I have noticed that my students are stronger at those levels.*<br>• *They continue to make progress in reading, as they did before MIRL.*<br>• *I don't see that MIRL has made a difference.  Monitoring student's progress through data collection and adjusted instruction to meet student's needs has always been part of my program.* |
| Positive improvement, faster advancement through levels, or growth in specific skills (*n*=561, 47.5%) | • *I see faster progress, students enjoy being tested and to see what level they are on.*<br>• *They seem to move faster through levels than before.*<br>• *I am able to know when I can move them up faster.*<br>• *Most of my students really increased their reading levels.*<br>• *Students are progressing in reading.*<br>• *I see positive ones because the students are making progress from week to week.*<br>• *Maybe move up faster than before.*<br>• *Students are going up in reading level much faster because I am able to see where they are immediately and adjust their level.*<br>• *I move students along at a faster pace.*<br>• *Student levels have steadily increased and comprehension has improved.*<br>• *Since I was already meeting with students daily, I see the continual growth in their fluency and comprehension.*<br>• *All of my students made progress.*<br>• *I see gains in the students' reading proficiency levels.*<br>• *I have found my students are reaching a higher reading level with the use of the monthly monitoring.*<br>• *Students are meeting and exceeding monthly benchmarks.*<br>• *For some student the progression is faster.* |
| Data increases teachers awareness of students levels and needs/Data makes changes easier to see students' progress and needs (*n*=174, 14.2%) | • *I'm able to see what skills students are mastering or what skills they need to work on.*<br>• *It confirms that comprehension strategies and skills need to become a larger focus during guided reading instruction. More than the levels, I see students using the feedback given based on notes taken during MIRL. It's easier to tangibly see what students are struggling with, which gives an immediate opportunity to give feedback.*<br>• *Students can read very fluently at higher levels but have a hard time with the comprehension questions.*<br>• *The students who were struggling are making great gains. The students reading above grade level, not so much difference.*<br>• *The students I have can read fluently, but have trouble answering inferential questions orally and in writing.* |

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| | • *It's creating more flexible grouping and allows me to directly take note of deficiencies related to language (ESOL), and other issues that impact learning.*<br>• *I see that my students are more fluent in non-fictional text, than fiction. My students struggle more on inferred responses, than right there questions/responses.* |
| Decline, slower progress or specific skills lagging (*n*=101, 8.3%) | • *Because of many other factors in my classroom this year, the proficiency levels are lower than other years.*<br>• *My students are at lower reading levels this year. I don't think my students have progressed as far as students in past years when MIRL didn't take up so much instructional time.*<br>• *As a whole, my class has made LESS progress. New rules in the 'gateway' testing at level 16 and M has stalled many students who are expected to analyze a fable when fables are not taught at this grade level.*<br>• *I feel they are moving reading levels at a slower pace than before.* |
| Students more aware of their own learning (*n*=90, 7.4%) | • *Students are more confident and powerful at the level they are at.*<br>• *I see students more excited about moving onto the next reading level.*<br>• *Students care about their own progress.*<br>• *Students are more aware of their levels and students were more motivated to reach their personal goal of improving their reading proficiency level.*<br>• *Students are now aware of what we are doing so they are being more conscious of how they are reading and responding to the questions.*<br>• *They are more versed in answering comprehension questions. They are more aware of and comfortable with using Reading strategies.*<br>• *Students are more aware of their levels and are more likely to self-select "just right" books on their reading or lexile levels.*<br>• *Students are aware of their personal progress and enjoy noting their improved reading ability.*<br>• *My students are more aware of their reading levels and are motivated to set goals in order to be on or above grade level.*<br>• *Students are more aware of their reading levels & are motivated to reach the next level using visualization skills to help them gain a better understanding of the text.* |
| Variable progress (*n*=86, 7.0%) | • *Some students jumped several book levels.*<br>• *They move more quickly through the levels in the lower grades.*<br>• *Have not seen significant improvement in written and oral responses of the lower groups.*<br>• *All my students made progress, but ESOL students made the least progress. Some students jumped several book levels.*<br>• *Some students flew; some students' progress moved at a slower pace.*<br>• *Students who were below reading level are progressing at a quicker pace.*<br>• *Lower level students need more support with fundamental skills.*<br>• *The lower students have had more fluency practice.* |
| Measurement issues, changes due to measures not real | • *MIRL has inflated my students' reading grades--if we were ONLY assessing fluency and percentage decoded correctly, MIRL would be* |

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| progress, mismatch with other assessments (*n*=81, 6.6%) | *accurate. Because we've been asked to keep moving kids up if they have met the fluency piece only, this is problematic to me.*<br><br>• *mClass doesn't always align with MIRL, as some mClass levels require a written component.*<br><br>• *In fact, I think the MIRL data shows inaccurate data. For example, if the child is given a MIRL question that is too difficult, yet it's on a grade level book, the data shows they are meeting benchmark.*<br><br>• *Students are making progress as expected, groupings are flexible because students are constantly changing levels, there is a discrepancy between MIRL data and mClass data.*<br><br>• *MIRL data is misleading for student proficiency levels because they don't have to pass a level or be retested if they do not earn proficient scores in accuracy or comprehension. It's difficult to gauge students' proficiency levels in this way.* |

Table E4

Factors or Experiences that Supported the Implementation of: Planning and Implementing High Quality Guided Reading Instruction (*N*=886)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| Common planning time, collaboration meeting, support from team (*n*=279, 31.5%) | • *Meeting with my team has been crucial in helping me with MIRL.*<br>• *Collaborative team meetings*<br>• *Our team works well together and we have reviewed and discussed at length the curriculum, strategies and questions.*<br>• *Collaborative planning in an uninterrupted block*<br>• *It was good to talk with team members about what strategies work or didn't work.*<br>• *Our meetings allowed us to discuss as a team how we implemented our small group instruction and tailored them to the specific difficulties with the material and brainstorm additional scaffolds for students.*<br>• *Working collaboratively with my team has helped me improve guided reading instruction.*<br>• *Our team works really well together and reflects on strategies that work or do not work.*<br>• *Having a high functioning and supportive team was very beneficial for planning.*<br>• *Weekly team meetings* |
| Support, planning, training from Reading Specialist, SDT, Reading Department Instructional Specialist, or other support staff (*n*=151, 17.0%) | • *Opportunities each month to meet with reading specialist*<br>• *Our AMAZING reading specialist has been so supportive and given us many tools for running records…*<br>• *Having reading specialist and county person present at meetings to "dig deeper" and ask us the "how" will we do this in group*<br>• *Reading Specialist attended may of our planning sessions to provide us with strategies and to prompt us to look at our student data.*<br>• *Support from SDT and reading specialist.*<br>• *Our Reading Specialist and Staff Development teacher come to any planning sessions we ask them to attend to help us with meeting all of our student's needs.*<br>• *One-on-one time with reading specialist once a month to analyze data and decide where to go next*<br>• *Through meetings with the reading specialist I was able to plan and deliver instruction based on the data gained from MIRL.*<br>• *A knowledgeable reading specialist and other staff who provide in-house training and make themselves available to answer questions and provide individual support.*<br>• *Our weekly planning meetings with our Reading Specialist have been outstanding this year!* |
| Plan questions, focus on indicators, plan lessons, discuss strategies, and discuss reading comprehension (*n*=148, 16.7%) | • *Planning out our comprehension questions and a score system for their answers.*<br>• *Spent time looking at indicators and discussed how to ask questions of students to see if they can do it with the text they are using in group.*<br>• *Determining higher order thinking questions to ask students after reading.*<br>• *Team worked on having a common question to ask the students each week to use as our comprehension check.* |

Table E4
Factors or Experiences that Supported the Implementation of: Planning and Implementing High Quality
Guided Reading Instruction (*N*=886)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| | • *Our team collaboratively planned our MIRL questions and reading comprehension strategies each week based on the indicators so we were more consistent as a grade level than ever before.*<br>• *Follow the indicators—reading specialist met with us on how to find and follow the indicators and align with specific comprehension strategies.*<br>• *It has helped in planning sessions to determine our literal and inferential questions ahead of time, aligning them to our indicators.*<br>• *Understanding which indicators to focus on during instruction.*<br>• *Every planning we discuss different activities and strategies to use with our emerging group, on grade level and enrichment group.*<br>• *My objectives/indicators are clear and I have a better understanding of how to use the best reading comprehension strategies to teach those objectives.*<br>• *Creating formatives -discussion of strategies for those student below, at, and above proficiency.* |
| Use data, running records, and are aware of student progress and needs (*n*=126, 14%) | • *Having MIRL for each student helped me to plan and implement lessons specifically designed to meet the needs of specific groups.*<br>• *I know the levels and the strengths and weaknesses of each reader.*<br>• *Using the monitoring tool, teachers are able to have a more consistent idea of what instructional level their students are reading on and plan accordingly.*<br>• *More aware of my students strengths and needs*<br>• *Running record data providing error analysis element to support next steps for instruction*<br>• *I am able to look at the data that I collect, analyze it, and plan high quality guided reading instruction from it.*<br>• *The monthly running records has made me a better informed teacher and helped me to plan my reading instruction based around the needs of my students.*<br>• *The MIRL data helps to find what concepts or skills to target.*<br>• *Meet the students at their individual levels*<br>• *Made me think more often of my students' progress and their reading levels -I was able to see how long my students have been in a specific level.*<br>• *Can see what areas of need are.* |
| Resources: Planning sheets, templates, reading block, curriculum guide, modules, more books, Jan Richardson resources, etc. (n=67, 8%) | • *Having many resources on the IC to help guide teachers through planning for and implementing solid reading instruction.*<br>• *The videos showed nice examples of guided reading instruction.*<br>• *The planning templates are helpful.*<br>• *Designated time for teaching reading*<br>• *Using the reading toolkit and resources provided during the module 2B training I have been able to strengthen my planning of guided reading.*<br>• *Some reading and discussion of Jan Richardson's The Next Step in Guided Reading* |

Table E4
Factors or Experiences that Supported the Implementation of: Planning and Implementing High Quality
Guided Reading Instruction (*N*=886)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
|  | • *Use of templates from Jan Richardson that guide me each day in my planning for guided reading. Watching MCPS curriculum videos on same grade teachers in other schools giving reading instruction*<br>• *Various modules that helped me in analyzing running records so that I am planning accordingly.* |
| Choosing books to match indicators, knowing when to move levels, helps pick levels, move book levels more often<br>(*n*=54, 6%) | • *MIRL helped me know how fluent students were, and whether they were ready to go up a reading level.*<br>• *Knowing their levels more often allowed me to change groups as needed.*<br>• *I liked that there was more movement of students between classrooms to accommodate students' reading levels.*<br>• *Great for helping me group students in more specific groups and choose correct resources for reading levels.* |
| PD, training, more training, summer or county training<br>(*n*=50, 6%) | • *Training*<br>• *Professional Development*<br>• *Summer training*<br>• *MIRL training* |
| MIRL hasn't helped, already were doing this, nothing has changed<br>(n=115, 13%) | • *Already in place here. We didn't need MIRL to help us plan our guided reading. It's what we do.*<br>• *I already did this on a regular basis.*<br>• *Most teachers I know did this before MIRL and will continue to do this regardless of MIRL's existence or not.*<br>• *MIRL does not support planning and implementation of high quality reading instruction.*<br>• *MIRL has been nothing but a time suck. It has not, in any way, improved guided reading instruction.*<br>• *Nothing* |

Table E5
Factors or Experiences that Hindered the Implementation of: Planning and Implementing High Quality Guided Reading Instruction (*N*=771)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| Time to plan and implement quality guided reading instruction (*n*=440, 57.3%) | • *Time taken away from planning quality texts at times has been forfeited to finding leveled texts. More meetings, planning time needed. Frustration over the questions we should ask, or standards we should be reporting. Trying to fit standards in so we can have data to enter.*<br>• *Time consuming. Distractions from meaningful, differentiated teaching.*<br>• *Having five days' worth of written plans for each of the four groups has been very time consuming, and often gets done at home.*<br>• *Time is very limited and we don't have time to cover other content.*<br>• *MIRL was very time-consuming within Guided Reading. It made it impossible to meet with all groups every day and made it very difficult to provide wrap-up/closure and meaningful assessments.*<br>• *There was not enough time to actually give meaningful targeted instruction between taking the data, implementing the data, and analyzing the data so that the kids could actually progress and move to the next reading level (in special ed).*<br>• *Planning for guided reading groups, meaningful follow up and engaging and meaningful tasks for students to engage in when away from the teacher requires a great deal of time. It is extremely difficult to fit all of these important elements into the limited planning time teachers have.*<br>• *There was a lack of time to pull and search for necessary resources and it was difficult to come up with various types of questions to ask the students with so little prep time.*<br>• *Difficultly finding time to plan, implement, reflect AND input data, while trying to teach the curriculum!* |
| Data collection and administering running records too much time (*n*=252, 32.7%) | • *Having to do a running record on each student, each month, hindered true and authentic MIRL. It prevented us from using poetry, or other types of text in order to be sure we could get a leveled running record.*<br>• *MIRL created an undue need to take running records on kids at times according to the calendar rather than when their growth indicated.*<br>• *Too much time inputting scores; too much emphasis on completing running records and not enough time on giving quality lessons in guided instruction.*<br>• *Testing/running records for every student on COLD read books is taking up TOO MUCH TIME!*<br>• *Too much time doing running records.*<br>• *Typing out running records took time and finding books that were appropriately leveled in the book room.*<br>• *Time for running records, organizing and entering data*<br>• *Our monthly data chats were effective, but I didn't need to input the data in order to discuss my students.*<br>• *Too much time spent on taking reading data on every single child whether or not the data was needed came in the way of instructing the groups effectively.*<br>• *Entering data took time away planning for instruction.* |

Table E5
Factors or Experiences that Hindered  the Implementation of: Planning and Implementing High Quality Guided Reading Instruction (*N*=771)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
|  | • *Lost time planning because I was entering data constantly on the data base.*<br>• *Too much time collecting and entering data and taking valuable time away from struggling students.*<br>• *Collecting MORE DATA took valuable time away from my guided reading groups (instruction).*<br>• *-class size, -inputting data instead of planning*<br>• *Time wasted on the testing and entering of data.* |
| Emphasis on data collection/ Schools choosing data collection (*n*=222, 28.8%) | • *MIRL focused more on the assessment and not on the teaching aspect.*<br>• *Having to do MIRL.  Lack of countywide training on high quality instruction (as opposed to expensive training on implementing MIRL).*<br>• *MIRL took away from focusing on strategies and became more of an accuracy and comprehension check.*<br>• *MIRL is an add-on, even when you are doing it within the guided reading group.  I found that it added a layer to my daily planning. Often, in order to get MIRL done, some guided reading groups were canceled.*<br>• *More time is spent figuring out how to MIRL effectively and get teaching in. This time in planning could be used towards other reading lessons/needs of our kids.*<br>• *MIRL is not supposed to be an "event" but it is one! At XX MCPS elementary school, the teacher spends one week during each month doing MIRL one-on-one instead of reading groups. I promise you this is happening in other schools as well. It interrupts the flow and effectiveness of a reading group too much to do it all during reading groups.*<br>• *Having to MIRL, activities from school that take away from our reading block.*<br>• *MIRL actually worked against this. Spent so much time taking records and recording data, I had very little time to plan for quality guided instruction. I had to draw from my 27 years of experience with guided reading groups in order to implement quality instruction.* |
| Insufficient resources for reading groups/difficulty finding texts (*n*=206, 26.7%) | • *Our books are not leveled according to the system used by MCPS, so my team struggled greatly with making sure we are reporting accurate instructional reading levels, with much less success than we would have liked.*<br>• *The lesson seeds are often very long and intense, and may not always match our guided reading area of need. I wish we had small group lesson seeds in our curriculum to provide support...*<br>• *The lack of appropriate guided reading books in our book room. We have 10 1st grade classrooms at our school so we are not left with a lot of high quality books (Rigby series, etc.) in the book room when they all get divided up.*<br>• *We need more texts at certain levels.*<br>• *Lack of leveled text that could be used to meet specific grade level indicators, students spread out in terms of levels, finding appropriate text in the book room.* |

Table E5
Factors or Experiences that Hindered the Implementation of: Planning and Implementing High Quality Guided Reading Instruction (*N*=771)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
|  | • *We need more texts and books that are leveled and that can provide high engagement for the students.*<br>• *Difficult to find higher level complex text.*<br>• *Not enough time to address all the needs and investigate texts, need to make choices about where to focus.*<br>• *TIME and materials. We do not always have 7-9 books of the same for students in our groups, or books that go with the indicator.*<br>• *Lack of resources, books at higher levels.*<br>• *Lack of resources (leveled books), especially when all the teachers are trying to use the same books at the same time and there are not enough.*<br>• *Not enough books and not enough of a variety of books. Taking A-Z books away from us and leaving us with the small books in our closet to be shared among 5 fourth grade and 5 fifth grade teachers did not allow for enough books for 7-10 students in a reading group.* |
| Insufficient time to cover all groups/large classes coverage (*n*=182, 23.6%) | • *Lack of books that are available. Too many students in a group that are of various reading levels.*<br>• *MIRL was very time-consuming within Guided Reading. It made it impossible to meet with all groups every day and made it very difficult to provide wrap-up/closure and meaningful assessments.*<br>• *Had to cut groups short or felt rushed and it negatively impacted my group.*<br>• *Many pullouts with Spec. Ed/intervention/ESOL...it is hard to meet with groups as a result.*<br>• *Lots of groups and a wide range of student's reading levels.*<br>• *Too much time spent on taking reading data on every single child whether or not the data was needed came in the way of instructing the groups effectively.*<br>• *Sometimes there were too many levels to have 4 consistent groups and an effective rotation schedule.*<br>• *I felt like many of my groups were forced to do the same thing which really affected my most at-risk readers and my highest readers.*<br>• *Students pulled out for interventions from my reading time. Too many kids leaving at different times made it hard to schedule the different groups so no one missed group.*<br>• *Multiple reading groups. Groups with 5-6 students.*<br>• *Some students took up longer than anticipated and was not able to meet with all of my groups.* |
| Struggle with comprehension checks/incorporating writing response (*n*=108, 14%) | • *Lack of specific training and time to discuss strategies.*<br>• *Frustration over the questions we should ask, or standards we should be reporting. Trying to fit standards in so we can have data to enter.*<br>• *Too many students; not enough copies of books. No standardized questions for comprehension.*<br>• *Spent a lot of time organizing running records (counting words in books, putting words on a recording sheet, coming up with questions, follow-ups, etc.). Less time was spent meeting with guided reading groups.* |

Table E5
Factors or Experiences that Hindered the Implementation of: Planning and Implementing High Quality
Guided Reading Instruction (*N*=771)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
|  | • *The amount of time it takes to find high quality text at each students'/groups' level that would address the indicators, need more professional development designing comprehension questions that could be used to identify needs of students/areas of weakness.*<br>• *Coming up with questions.*<br>• *It would have been nice to have sample questions to ask for comprehension.*<br>• *Time. It's hard to fit in five reading groups each day in addition to running records.*<br>• *Comprehension. It's hard to know what are the "right" questions to ask to gauge comprehension.*<br>• *It was unclear at the beginning that the comprehension check should come from the indicators—some indicators are easier and the students seem to do well on comprehension and then some months their scores went down, Also, since the book was one that was already read and discussed, it is difficult to see/compare data from month to month or student to student.* |

Table E6
Recommendation or Future Professional Development for Teachers  (*N*=889)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|-------|-------------------|
| Instructional strategies (*n*=428, 48.1%) | <ul><li>*Strategies for the very highly able kindergarten students who are decoding at levels r, s, t and even higher. They cannot respond in writing at this level nor understand vocabulary at this level which brings them back to much easier text or short passages.*</li><li>*Fluency and ways to support 4th/5th graders that are reading on a first or second grade level. Recommended strategies and text to use with those students.*</li><li>*Learning ACTUAL STRATEGIES for reading instruction instead of how to keep records.*</li><li>*More strategies for comprehension-written and oral.*</li><li>*Strategy based instruction*</li><li>*How to actually spend time teaching a strategy to an entire group without being focused on just one student and their own comprehension; having someone be in a class of 29+ students and model it.*</li><li>*Teaching ESOL students comprehension strategies. Next steps when a student does not respond to reading interventions.*</li><li>*Ideas/strategies for teaching the highly abled student.*</li><li>*Specific strategies on decoding, building comprehension and teaching ELLs and SPED ELLs.*</li><li>*Searching for different strategies to improve the decoding and fluency.*</li><li>*Focus on explicit teaching of strategies, choosing strategies, choosing appropriate text for student as well as texts that best lend themselves to particular indicators.*</li><li>*I would like to see more available workshops or professional development on strategies, skills, protocols that we can take back to our classroom and implement into our instruction.*</li><li>*Vocabulary instruction, comprehension, how to move kids or get kids to write more detailed written responses with evidence from the text.  Strategies to help foster growth in this.*</li><li>*How to actually spend time teaching a strategy to an entire group without being focused on just one student and their own comprehension; having someone be in a class of 29+ students and model it.*</li><li>*Types of comprehension questions to ask & how many.*</li><li>*Creating comprehension questions based on different indicators.*</li><li>*Specific comprehension questions that we could ask for different books or levels or indicators to make sure all teachers are consistent when asking comprehension questions.*</li><li>*Developing meaningful comprehension questions for lower level texts (for special needs students)-level 2, 3, and 4 texts. It is really difficult to ask "synthesizing" questions on "I see the dog. I see the cat. I see the duck."*</li><li>*Comprehension questions and writing in response to reading (to align with mClass expectations). Written comprehension for students who begin at an instructional level of 4 or below who have to pass reading at a level 16 and written responses at a 16.*</li><li>*If the written response is still there for benchmark more strategies to help with this.*</li></ul> |

Table E6
Recommendation or Future Professional Development for Teachers  (*N*=889)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| | • *How best to teach written response as a measure of overall comprehension* <br> • *Written responses need to be addresses. It is always reading, never about the writing.* <br> • *Consistency in comprehension questions across different grade levels.* <br> • *Samples of good comprehension questions to ask at each level of text.* |
| Differentiating Instruction (*n*=402, 45.2%) | • *Having to do a running record on each student. More time for training with substitutes for upper grades on small group instruction.  How to support struggling readers, not just identifying the problem, but to determine next steps for below grade level readers.* <br> • *M, s, v and strategies to help struggling readers in these areas.* <br> • *Being trained by teachers who have some good strategies to help struggling readers.* <br> • *Strategies for teaching struggling readers as well as ways to enrich students above grade level.* <br> • *Address the need of the struggling readers: analyzing their roadblocks and how to implement a program to meet their needs.  Improve the writing skills of the more able readers to make them well-rounded students who not only are capable readers, but have the writing skills and comprehension skills to match their high reading level.* <br> • *I would like to see more professional training on tasks and resources for advanced readers.* <br> • *More on actual groupings and strategies for struggling readers within the context of the grade level.  Less formal documentation to be able to focus on students.* <br> • *How to address students that are having difficulty with comprehension, how to improve students' writing responses.* <br> • *How to plan for vocabulary and word work within guided reading lessons for students in levels K and above.* <br> • *What to do next after you have determined a student's errors in, decoding, a more structured approach to help support students who are struggling and way below grade level, how to help build student capacity for responding in writing after reading.* <br> • *Incorporate more training on what to do with fluency and what to do with the students who are performing well in reading.* |
| More and variety of resources (*n*=169, 19%) | • *Writing comprehension questions appropriate for grade level standards for lower level texts.* <br> • *Samples of good comprehension questions to ask at each level of text.* <br> • *More guidelines/ sample questions we should be asking our students at grade level and text level* <br> • *More training in how MIRL works with older/higher able students.* <br> • *More grade level examples and models.* <br> • *More literacy center ideas that are targeted at building written comprehension* |

Table E6
Recommendation or Future Professional Development for Teachers  (*N*=889)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| | • *More direct instruction on ways to effectively teach the guided reading strategies (always referring to Jan's plan isn't always effective for all students). Suggested activities, etc. for increasing student "scores" in each area - fluency, comprehension, accuracy, etc.*<br>• *More samples of comprehension questions/more clarification on the scoring of comprehension questions.*<br>• *Exemplars need to be developed by indicators that show how exactly a fifth grader might show growth from MP1 to MP4.  What they are reading and writing in the first MP should look different than what they might be doing in the last MP.  For example - What does a summary look like in MP1 vs. MP4? Is it the same - just with more complex material?* |
| Modelling of Best Practices (*n*=151, 17%) | • *How to properly meet with all your groups and support students in the group when you are assessing another student.*<br>• *Show us different teachers who have successfully done MIRL at our grade level.*<br>• *Testimonials and examples from successful teachers.*<br>• *How to successfully incorporate the testing while authentic instruction is going on. I would like to see models, whether it be videos or examples, of how to really teach the comprehension strategies.  I have found that to be my biggest struggle with first graders and I would like more support with that.*<br>• *Implementation - how to manage time with small groups*<br>• *How to teach an effective small group while MIRLing.*<br>• *Modeled small group lessons and classroom management strategies for rotating the rest of the class through meaningful, engaging reading activities.*<br>• *How to set up activities for the students who are not meeting in small group at any given time.  How to better manage.*<br>• *How to include written prompts in small groups (no time).*<br>• *Watching a video of what all of this looks like in practice. Watching a COMPLETE day 1, day 2, day 3, etc. of the guided reading lesson aligned to the indicator. What does meaningful follow-up look like? What do other teachers have the other students do for literacy centers/rotations?*<br>• *Effectively doing this during a guided reading group with NO other adults in the room and a room full of kids.  All videos we were shown there was a second adult in the room which is not actually given to teachers.*<br>• *More videos on successful implementation of MIRL.*<br>• *More specific examples (perhaps videos) of teachers actually teaching the comprehension strategies.*<br>• *More realistic videos of how teacher collect the data.  Not having two kids at a table in an empty classroom.*<br>• *Very specific directions about what data needs to be uploaded each month on a consistent basis.*<br>• *Your videos depict a classroom with multiple teachers and no interruptions. Do you realize that there are up to 29 students in a K class with ONE classroom teacher. Not only does that mean a lot of disruption but more students takes more time!!! MIRL is an added stress when you are already to trying to teach, take grades, interventions, and all the other things kinder* |

Table E6
Recommendation or Future Professional Development for Teachers  (*N*=889)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
|  | *teachers do. There needs to be more training on how ONE teacher with 29 KINDERS can complete this in an effective way (not a rushed one on one way). as well. It interrupts the flow and effectiveness of a reading group too much to do it all during reading groups.* |
| Working with struggling and highly able readers (*n*=149, 16.8%) | • *Our books are not leveled according to the system used by MCPS, so my team struggled greatly with making sure we are reporting accurate instructional reading levels, with much less success than we would have liked.*<br>• *The lack of appropriate guided reading books in our book room. We have 10 1st grade classrooms at our school so we are not left with a lot of high quality books (Rigby series, etc.) in the book room when they all get divided up*<br>• *We need more texts at certain levels*<br>• *Lack of leveled text that could be used to meet specific grade level indicators, students spread out in terms of levels, finding appropriate text in the book room*<br>• *We need more texts and books that are leveled and that can provide high engagement for the students.*<br>• *- difficult to find higher level complex text*<br>• *not enough time to address all the needs and investigate texts, need to make choices about where to focus*<br>• *TIME and materials.  We do not always have 7-9 books of the same for students in our groups, or books that go with the indicator.*<br>• *Lack of resources, books at higher levels*<br>• *Lack of resources (leveled books), especially when all the teachers are trying to use the same books at the same time and there are not enough*<br>• *Not enough books and not enough of a variety of books. Taking A-Z books away from us and leaving us with the small books in our closet to be shared among 5 fourth grade and 5 fifth grade teachers did not allow for enough books for 7-10 students in a reading group.*<br>• |
| Analyzing, interpreting, and using data to make instructional decisions (*n*=142, 16%) | • *Ways to make the data collection through running records less of an "event", Ideas on how entering data can be more helpful (suggestions for comments, etc.)*<br>• *How to access and interpret the data*<br>• *I'd like to hear about all the different strategies that teachers use to collect this data and actually see how they input and use it to plan.*<br>• *How to analyze students writing and what types of word work or word study that will help them in both reading and transferring those skills over to writing.*<br>• *How to bring data into planning meetings so the discussion is meaningful to EVERYONE there*<br>• *How to do reports with the data*<br>• *More discussion about acting on the data (planning for instruction)*<br>• *How to interpret the data , How to create questions for MIRL*<br>• *Running reports and using the data.*<br>• *How to analyze the data and what are the next steps after collecting data.*<br>• *interpreting data* |

Table E6
Recommendation or Future Professional Development for Teachers  (*N*=889)

| Theme | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
|  | • *Continue working on how to effectively take running records and analyze the data.*<br>• *if then training--- if you see this in the data then you should try these techniques*<br>• *I would like to receive additional training on gathering informal running records and data while keeping groups meaningful for students.  At times, it doesn't flow as easily as I would like it to.  It would be nice to see how other teachers are incorporating MIRL into their guided reading groups.* |

Table E7
Recommendations for Improving Elementary Reading Program  (N=891)

| | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| Decrease frequency of collecting and entering MIRL data (*n*=550, 61.7%) | • *MIRL - to be done quarterly. Quality texts is a must in all schools!*<br>• *Stop MIRL*<br>• *Perhaps not require MIRL at certain levels or with less frequency.*<br>• *Only take data on students who are below grade level or who may not make benchmark.*<br>• *Less MIRL, more time for instruction.  I think a MIRL every other month or every 3rd month is plenty for most students.*<br>• *Although MIRL is wonderful, we shouldn't have to do it every month.  We need to be able to see some growth in the data.*<br>• *Completing MIRL less often, perhaps every other month.  I find it difficult to manage whole group instructional time, small group instructional time, completing weekly CFU's and monthly MIRL.*<br>• *MIRL should go!  It's time consuming and not helpful.*<br>• *I would like if MIRL was not due at the end of each month but had more flexibility for shorter months or months that are interrupted for long periods of time.*<br>• *Remove MIRL and go back to progress monitoring on cold reads once a month.  It takes less time and is LESS of an "event" than MIRL has become. MIRL is an event that takes up more instructional time than progress monitoring did.*<br>• *Get rid of MIRL.*<br>• *MIRL should not be required for every child every month. Perhaps once a marking period, or even every month for a certain number of students/group of students.*<br>• *Allowing teachers to have a little more flexibility to fit the needs of the students in their class.*<br>• *Aligning mClass with MIRL. Written components are required for some levels of mClass.*<br>• *MIRL not being EVERY month*<br>• *I would do away with MIRL!  I need every minute of my 10 -15 minutes of group to teach the above reading areas.*<br>• *Reduce the amount of testing- MIRL, mClass*<br>• *Possible change: Doing MIRL once or twice every marking period instead of doing MIRL every month.*<br>• *Remove MIRL for texts below a 3.*<br>• *Make MIRL mandatory every other month.*<br>• *That MIRL should be a cold read.  The lower level books are easily memorized.*<br>• *Make MIRL bimonthly.*<br>• *I think we should be required to do MIRL once every other month instead of monthly.*<br>• *Collecting and inputting data for MIRL every other month.*<br>• *Having MIRL occur less frequently (once per marking period rather than once per month) since we already know our students' reading instructional* |

Table E7
Recommendations for Improving Elementary Reading Program  (N=891)

| Verbatim Examples | |
|---|---|
| | *levels. The monthly MIRL data confirmed the level of our students, but did not provide any new data that we did not already know.* |
| Review Curriculum 2.0 (*n*=232, 38%) | • *Eliminate Curriculum 2.0. In my opinion the decrease in reading scores can be directly attributed to the fact that appropriate grade level texts related to content do not exist in Curriculum 2.0. Fewer reading groups so that we can have more time.*<br>• *The current reading program is disjointed.  We teach a day of one topic, then a day of another.*<br>• *The grade 3 curriculum for reading in curriculum 2.0 is not great.  The suggested read-aloud books are not challenging enough and the lessons are not well connected to the CCSS. I would rebuild the curriculum for the Social Studies curriculum to be the bulk of the nonfiction reading unit in each quarter. SS (as a non-tested subject) is frequently skipped or ignored in favor of reading, when it could be incorporated in.*<br>• *The curriculum needs to be revisited/revised.  So many of the indicators do not target key reading skills.  Many 1st graders still need foundational reading skills.  More focus on before, during, after strategies that are age appropriate. Very hard to find instructional level texts on particular indicators.*<br>• *Students need to be taught foundational skills well before we can teach the indicators for the curriculum.  There is not enough time to do both well.*<br>• *Have mClass align with the standards/curriculum*<br>• *Look at curriculum and school plans when setting deadlines.*<br>• *MIRL and the curriculum do NOT align with mClass testing questions for K-2. We either need to do MIRL and not mClass, or do mClass and not MIRL. We shouldn't do both.*<br>• *The text for mClass testing are outdated and the tasks do not match the curriculum.*<br>• *Curriculum 2.0 for Grade 2 should focus whole group lessons on learning Foundational Skills needed for reading. Students need more time to practice decoding skills and identifying words. This is the first step in the reading process.*<br>• *The curriculum should be designed with teaching to reading groups, not whole group lessons.*<br>• *The curriculum needs to be revisited/revised.  So many of the indicators do not target key reading skills.  Many 1st graders still need foundational reading skills.  More focus on before, during, after strategies that are age appropriate.  Very hard to find instructional level texts on particular indicators.*<br>• *The curriculum as it is currently written is very difficult to follow.* |

Table E7
Recommendations for Improving Elementary Reading Program  (N=891)

| | Verbatim Examples |
|---|---|
| Focus on student needs (*n*=306, 34%) | • *Less emphasis on grading the indicators and more emphasis on teaching what the students need at their level. Some students are working on decoding strategies and retelling while others are at a higher level and need to examine how the author uses the words to describe the events and visualizing. The way the curriculum is presented inhibits some teachers from spending the time on a strategy that isn't in the indicators. Also the indicators are so broad and repetitive and the seeds are convoluted so it makes it hard to really identify the skills.*<br><br>• *That ESOL students should get the Common Core when it fits into their reading levels since most of the students read below grade levels and that a lot of foundational skills need to be the emphasis. I have taught all 12 years in grades 1-4 so I have now covered reading levels Pre-A thru V. All students were the same.*<br><br>• *It would actually be to the writing program - take grades on fewer measurement topics each quarter so we can focus all our energy on one type of writing rather than bouncing around all the time MIRL helped me know how fluent students were, and whether they were ready to go up a reading level.*<br><br>• *My students maybe saw the ESOL teacher a total of 14 times---- never a regular week ever---- and these students impact the school the same.*<br><br>• *I think the push for consistent guided reading across all schools is something that should definitely be continued because it supports the needs of all readers. The curriculum needs to do a much better job of considering our many ESOL students here in Montgomery County and more resources need to be provided that support*<br><br>• *(1) Change mClass level 3 book (Baby Wakes Up) to a better level 3 book. (2) Don't make written comprehension part of determining reading level. (3) Evaluate the mClass comprehension questions (verbal and written responses) to determine if the questions truly show if a student understands the text.*<br><br>• *Students need to be taught foundational skills well before we can teach the indicators for the curriculum.  There is not enough time to do both well.*<br><br>• *Teachers need explicit lessons and tools to teach the foundational skills in small group and whole group instruction.  Many students are making progress with reading levels but especially our English language learners struggle with phonics and phonemic awareness. These topics are mentioned in the curriculum but there are no lesson seeds, data collection tools or a suggested scope and sequence to help teachers to identify and monitor the essential foundational skills.*<br><br>• *Students need more basic phonics/phonological awareness. They are coming without automaticity of basic letter sounds, vowel sounds, etc.* |

Table E7
Recommendations for Improving Elementary Reading Program  (N=891)

| | **Verbatim Examples** |
|---|---|
| Provide more and varied instructional resources (*n*=268, 30.1%) | • *Give us NEW guided reading materials - ours are so outdated and we don't have enough books.  Allow us to use Reading A to Z - GREAT resources with follow ups and plans that match 2.0.  Give to us rather than take from us!*<br>• *Provide more sample learning tasks that support the instructional value of explicit teaching of reading strategies.*<br>• *Provide a better selection of leveled readers. Increase classic core book novel reading.*<br>• *Provide more text resources to use with students across different reading levels (both fiction and non-fiction).*<br>• *If you want us to use specific genres, then supply leveled texts so we can do this MIRL thing!*<br>• *I would provide teachers with multiple higher level resources to challenge students.*<br>• *More para support in the classroom.  Smaller class sizes.*<br>• *Don't promote students to the next grade if the student is reading more than 1 grade below the current grade.*<br>• *More organization, more support staff*<br>• *More support with written comprehension.*<br>• *There needs to be more time built into the schedule to accommodate multiple reading groups and whole group lessons.*<br>• *I would like if MIRL was not due at the end of each month but had more flexibility for shorter months or months that are interrupted for long periods of time.*<br>• *More time to teach foundational skills.*<br>• *. build in more planning time for teachers- quality instruction requires planning, develop additional programs to support students who are more than a year below grade level to help close the gap*<br>• *Teachers need coverage for M-Class at the beginning of the year.  Starting off with assessing right at the beginning of the year does not provide time to establish routines.*<br>• *Allow other teachers to input MIRL data on students who they see.* |
| Provide training to enhance teachers competence with implementing specified instructional strategies (*n*=203, 22.8%) | • *More focus on basic reading comprehension strategies-connecting, compare, summarize, inference, author's purpose, questions, visualize*<br>• *Give us more access to more interesting and rich materials than the leveled texts, Incorporate chapter rich chapter books into the instruction- rather than those leveled readers- the students would have to read more, The message communicated to us is that "rich" articles and stories such as Storyworks and National Geographic should not be used for instruction because they are not leveled.*<br>• *Create monthly assessments that are a shortened version of MAP-R to check reading levels. , More emphasis on guided writing.*<br>• *More emphasis, training, on written comprehension.*<br>• *More professional learning opportunities and classroom observations.* |

Table E7
Recommendations for Improving Elementary Reading Program  (N=891)

| Verbatim Examples |
| --- |
| • *A better way to group students, so we can spend sufficient time with each group addressing specific needs (maybe grouping students from various classes, for instance)*<br><br>• *Allow other teachers to input MIRL data on students who they see. Change the comprehension checks to include non-indicator based assessments.*<br><br>• *Students that are reading above grade level should not have to be entered each month.  It takes away from instruction time.*<br><br>• *Put the emphasis back on student needs and give the teachers back the flexibility to cover indicators based on student needs*<br><br>• *Professional development for different skill sets- since my students struggle with written comprehension, what are the pathways and strategies best suited for these students (with ESOL and Sp. Ed students)?*<br><br>• *Provide more suggested texts for different levels and topics.  Teachers are struggling with researching books that would be great for teaching certain indicators.*<br><br>• *It may be more beneficial to provide teachers with standards that small groups need to accomplish.* |