



**South East Education Cooperative**

**2017-2018  
Improving  
Academic Literacy  
Executive  
Summary Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide an analysis of the results collected throughout the Improving Academic Literacy project professional development series during the 2017-2018 school year.

Christopher Thompson, M.S.  
South East Education Cooperative  
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## Executive Summary

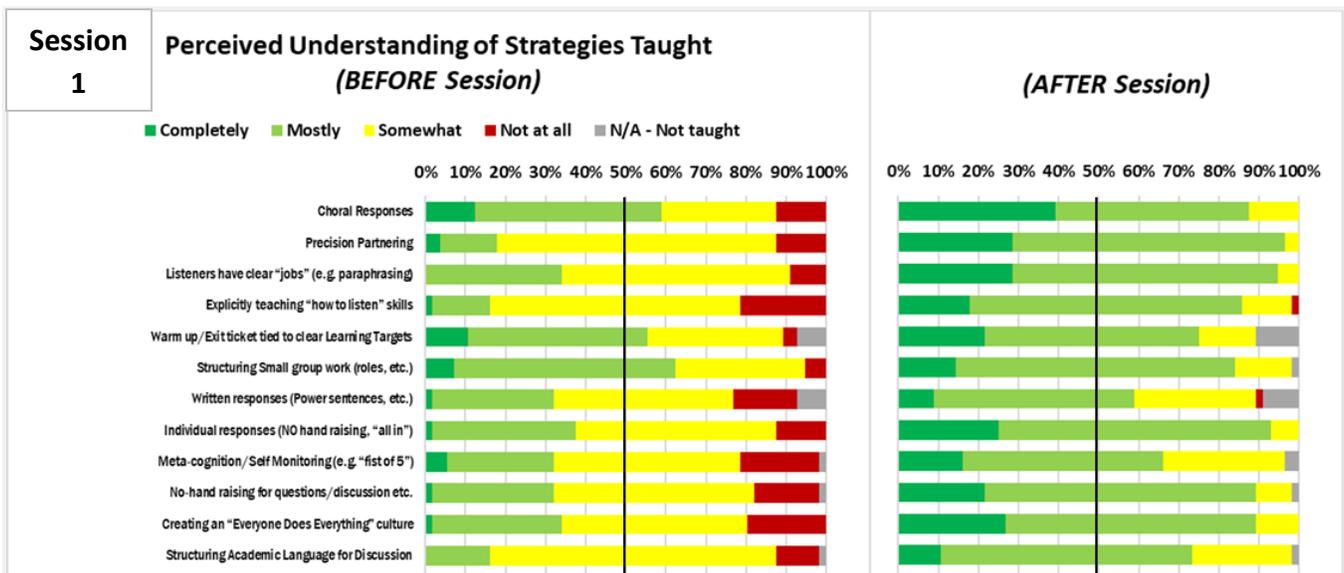
The Improving Academic Literacy (IAL) project is a one-year professional development training series for elementary and secondary level educators seeking information and skills related to teaching and engaging students in literacy. Participants in the IAL project received five full-day sessions of professional development throughout the 2017-2018 academic year. There were two cohorts of participants in the project during 2017-2018 reaching a total of 77 educators (40 in Cohort A; 37 in Cohort B).

The goal behind the Improving Academic Literacy (IAL) project was to familiarize teachers with and increase educators’ capacity to implement effective research-based literacy strategies during instruction. Participants in the training learned about 30 specific instructional strategies proven to increase student engagement and student achievement for learners in grades K-12. It was expected that through participation in the Improving Academic Literacy professional development project, the following outcomes would occur:

1. Increase teachers’ knowledge surrounding effective literacy instructional strategies.
2. Increase teachers’ use of effective literacy instructional strategies.
3. Increase student achievement in reading and literacy on standardized state assessments.

### 1. Increase teachers’ knowledge surrounding effective literacy instructional strategies.

Educators participating in the Improving Academic Literacy project were taught about 30 different evidence-based instructional strategies throughout the course of the professional development series. Strategies generally fell under the categories of student motivation and engagement, academic language and vocabulary, and critical thinking/comprehension. After each training session participants were asked to rate their level of knowledge for each of the strategies taught both before and after the learning. Prior to the trainings, just 9 out of the 30 strategies had at least 50% of educators indicating being either “completely” or “mostly” knowledgeable (Figure 1). After the trainings, this number increased to 29 out of 30 strategies. It appears that the Improving Academic Literacy project was very successful at increasing teachers’ knowledge regarding effective literacy instructional practices.



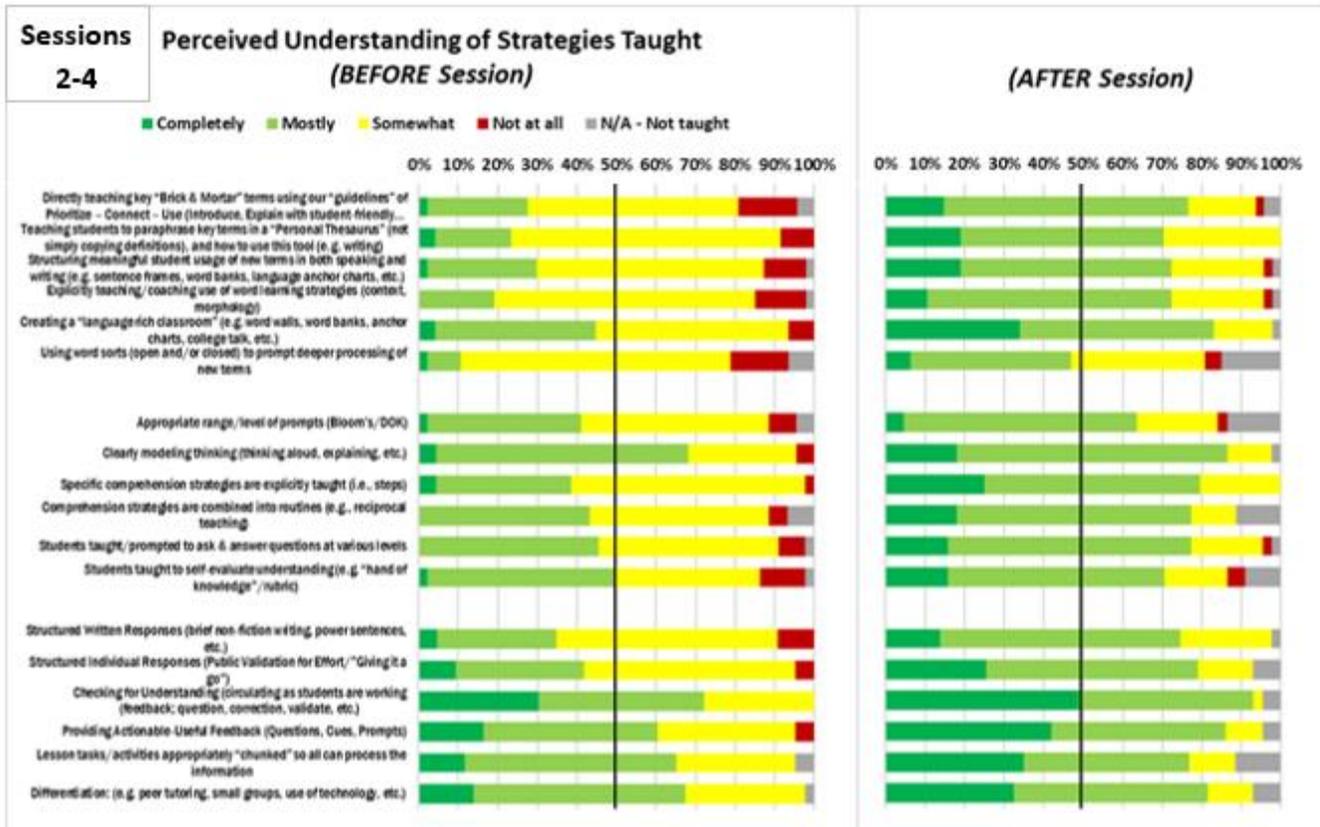


Figure 1. Educators' Perceived Understanding of Instructional Strategies Taught (Before & After Session). Participant ratings on scale of “Completely”, “Mostly”, “Somewhat”, “Not at all”, and “N/A – Not taught”. Data collected for all strategies taught during Sessions 1, 2, 3, and 4.

## 2. Increase teachers' use of effective literacy instructional strategies.

The intention of the Improving Academic Literacy project is more than just teaching educators about new instructional practices, it is about ensuring that teachers are using them within their practice. During Sessions 2-5 participants were asked to identify the frequency in which they have been using each of the strategies that they learned about during previous sessions using the following scale (“Almost always”; “Usually”; “About half the time”; “Rarely”; and “Never”). Although, this project hopes to provide teachers with new strategies that they have never used before, the scope of this evaluation focused on the number of strategies that teachers began to use regularly during instruction (either “almost always” or “usually” on the rating scale). During the baseline period (the following session after learning specific strategies) participants reported utilizing 4.78 out of 12 strategies learned during Session 1, 1.57 out of 6 strategies learned during Session 2, and 3.44 out of 6 strategies learned during Session 3 for a total of 9.79 out of 24 strategies (Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> By Session 5 of the program, each of these averages, with the averages for the Session 1 and Session 2 strategies showing significant increases. Overall, by the end of the program participants were reporting regular use for 7.22 out of 12 Session 1 strategies, 2.64 out of 6 Session 2 strategies, and 3.82 out of 6 Session 3 strategies for an overall total of 13.68 out of 24 strategies – an increase of nearly four additional strategies.

<sup>1</sup> Strategies learned during Sessions 4 and 5 were excluded from analysis as there was no opportunity to collect both baseline and follow-up data.

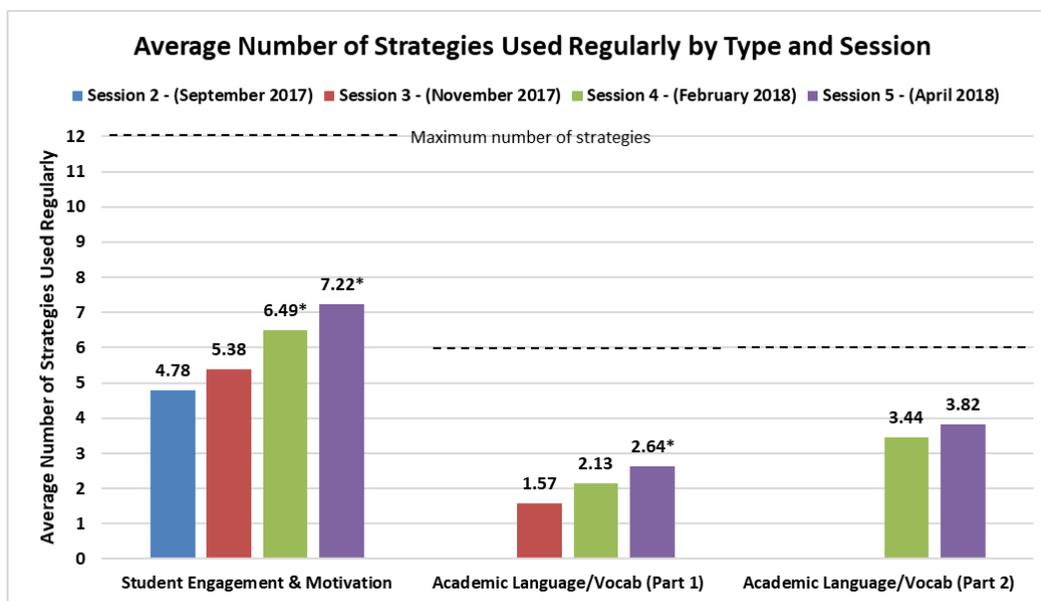


Figure 2. Average Number of Strategies Used Regularly by Type and Session.

\*Indicates a significant increase from baseline amount ( $p > .05$ )

Looking at changes in regular use of strategies taught during the program, a total of 21 out of 24 strategies increased in the percentage of teachers reporting regular use from baseline to Session 5. In fact, of the 21 strategies increasing in this percentage, 12 showed statistically significant increases (Figure 3). Some of the strategies showing the greatest increases in the percentage of teachers reporting regular use were for no-hand raising for questions/discussion (+38.3%), individual responses (+33.9%), structuring meaningful student usage of new terms in both speaking and writing (+33.7%), and creating a ‘language rich classroom’ (+31.3%). Overall, compared to the baseline period the average percentage of teachers reporting regular use across all strategies taught in Sessions 1-3 increased from 40.8% to 57.0%.

### Participant Satisfaction/Perceived Impact of Program

Overall, participants were largely satisfied with the professional development they received from the Improving Academic Literacy project. Across the 10 sessions offered, 84.0% of participants indicated they would be able to apply what they learned to a least a moderate extent, and 87.1% believed what they learned would have either a “substantial” or “moderate” impact on their students. A vast majority of participants (90.3%) indicated making changes to their instruction as a result of what they learned. Notable changes include increasing their use of engagement strategies (84.6%), providing more explicit vocabulary/academic language instruction (38.5%), and reflecting on their practice more regularly/effectively (26.9%). Educators also noticed the impacts of the changes in their practice on their students. One-hundred percent of participants who made changes in their instruction noted changes in student engagement, such as students collaborating with peers more often (61.5%), and explaining their thinking or answers with evidence or logic (30.8%). A majority of teachers (56.0%) noted that students are able to make greater connections with prior learning as well. Additionally, one teacher noted how this program changed their outlook for teaching saying *“I have a different perspective and attitude towards a lot of areas that I previously wanted to keep sheltered.”* It appears that this program was successful at achieving both of its intended outcomes, and participants were pleased with the professional learning they received.

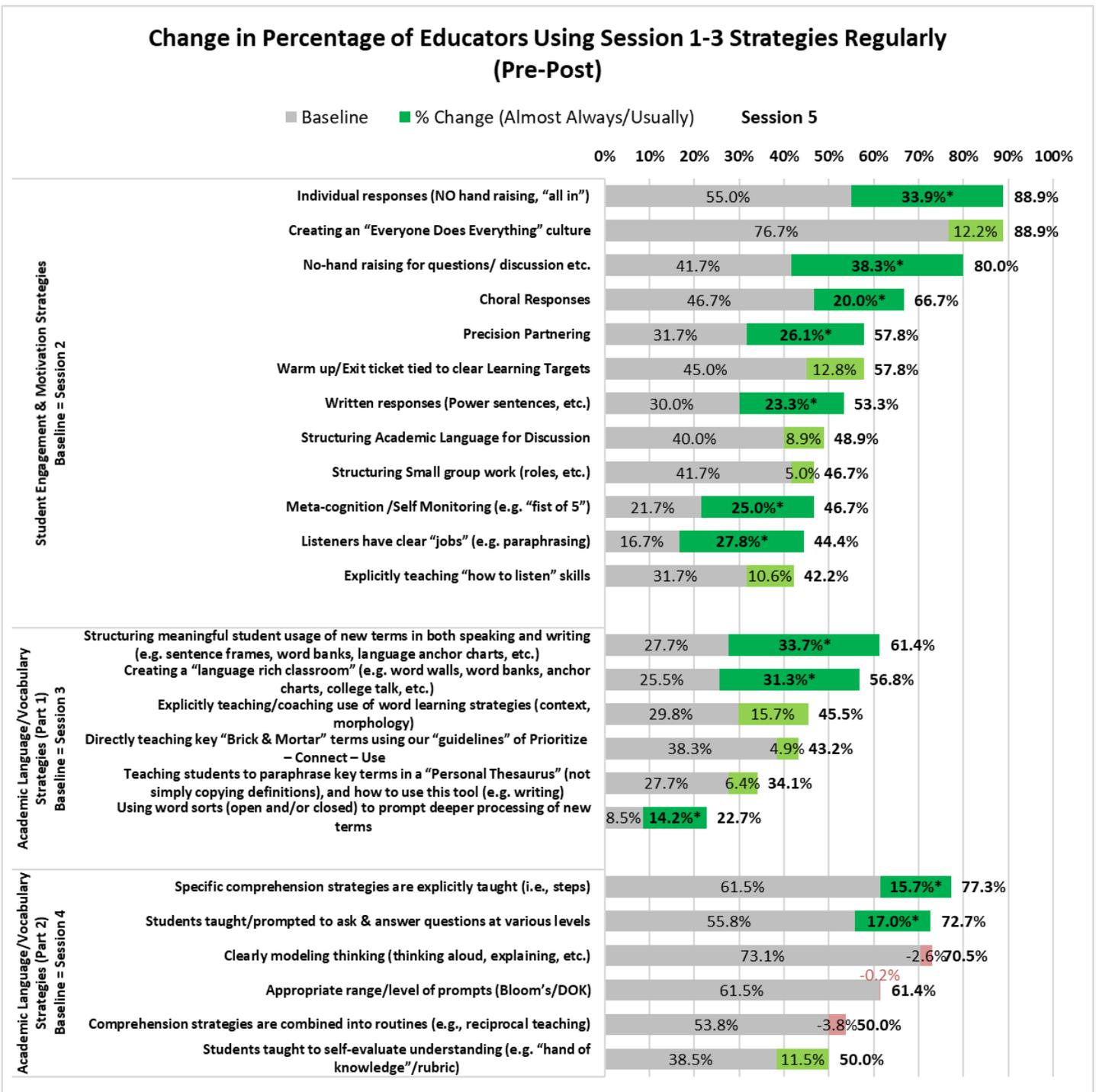


Figure 17. Change in Percentage of Educators Using Session 1-3 Strategies Regularly (Pre-Post). Strategies taught during Sessions 1, 2, and 3 are included. Baseline regular use levels are collected during the following session in which they were taught (e.g. baseline for strategies taught in Session 1 is Session 2). Regular use includes participant responses of either "Almost always" or "Usually."  
\*Indicates a significant increase from baseline to Session 5 ( $p < 0.01$ ).