

Adopting & Adapting

How organizational factors shape curriculum implementation

Adopting high-quality instructional materials at scale requires investments in organizational capacity and teacher learning. Research examining the launch of Chicago Public School's novel Skyline Curriculum offers insights for schools and district leaders into how strategic resource investments influence capacity for instructional change.

To ensure **universal access** to high-quality instructional materials, Chicago Public Schools launched the Skyline Curriculum in 2021.

In the first 2 years, 167 elementary **schools voluntarily adopted** K–2 Skyline English Language Arts (Skyline ELA). Researchers examined how resources influenced instructional change.



Findings

Leaders in many schools allocated resources to strengthen their staff's capacity to adopt and implement the curriculum.

Leaders who targeted these five organizational levers enhanced instructional capacity and fostered staff engagement with the Skyline ELA curriculum.

Teachers whose leaders prioritized investments in **at least one** of the five organizational capacity levers reported greater confidence and satisfaction with Skyline curricular materials than their counterparts.



How did school leaders engage the organizational capacity levers?

School leaders encouraged enhanced instructional capacity and staff engagement by:

Professional Learning	- consistently endorsing staff participation in centralized professional learning establishing clear expectations for professional learning attendance and knowledge sharing coordinating staffing coverage to enable professional learning attendance during school hours distributing responsibilities for implementation of co-labs to teacher leaders
Allocation of Teacher Time	protecting meeting time for Skyline-focused discussion and troubleshooting programming shared instructional planning time for grade-level teams and grade bands allocating discretionary funds to pay teachers for summer or weekend time
Staff Support	increasing the number of instructional support staff (e.g., teaching assistants, volunteers, paraprofessionals) in classrooms with the greatest needs pairing new or struggling teachers with mentors and coaches aligning instructional coaching plans with Skyline support needs
External Support	advocating for supplemental resources and support (e.g., coaching from network instructional support leaders and content area teams) engaging Continuous Learning Partner organizations for technical assistance
Collaboration Structures	promoting teacher exploration and voluntary integration of Skyline resources prior to school-wide adoption; centering early adopters' feedback in planning reinforcing existing collaboration structures and routines to facilitate knowledge sharing

Our research team surveyed teachers in the 167 schools that adopted Skyline in the first 2 years to find out:

Did strong school leaders generate organizational capacity in their schools?



Yes! Teachers in schools with strong school leaders* **participate in just over twice as many district professional learning sessions** as teachers in schools with less strong instructional leaders: An average of 3.1 sessions compared to 1.4 sessions. Teachers also reported higher rates of:

- Participation** in the district-organized and school-directed professional learning and Skyline-focused coaching
- Collaboration** and trust among teachers

* Strong School Leaders = Principal Instructional Leadership is a composite measure based on K–8 teachers' survey responses describing their leadership teams' ability to set high expectations for teaching and learning and provide feedback and support to teachers related to their instructional practice.

Did schools with strong organizational capacity engage more with Skyline?



Yes! In schools with strong organizational capacity, teachers reported **higher levels of engagement with Skyline ELA materials** 1 year after adoption, including:

- Full Skyline Adoption**—Teachers in schools with high rates of district professional learning during the first year of Skyline adoption were 2.8 times more likely to describe themselves as full Skyline adopters in school year 2024, compared to teachers in schools where district professional learning was low: 67% percent of teachers compared to 24% of teachers.
- Exclusive Skyline Usage**—Teachers were more likely to report relying on Skyline ELA materials than drawing on other curricular resources.
- Positive Attitude about Skyline Materials**—Teachers reported more favorable opinions about their Skyline materials and their ability to support strong instructional practice.

