



## Literacy Strategies: Professional Development for Schools and Districts

Today's students participate in a highly competitive global economy. It is more important than ever that teachers have access to literacy strategies that prepare students for careers, advanced training and further study after high school. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is committed to providing teachers and school leadership the tools necessary to improve students' literacy skills across disciplines and significantly increase the percentage of students who meet state college- and career-readiness standards.

### Why Choose the Literacy Design Collaborative Instructional Framework for Your School or District?

We have never asked more of our educators, and they deserve the tools that will prepare middle grades and high school students to meet the challenges ahead. The Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) is a tested instructional framework that guides teachers in planning literacy-based assignments that engage students in deeper learning to advance content and literacy achievement.

SREB's professional developers have worked with hundreds of teachers since 2010 to spread LDC practices across districts and schools in 38 states. These teachers tell remarkable stories about how literacy-based assignments impact student achievement by engaging and motivating them to learn. SREB's publication, *Students Step Up When Teachers and Leaders Transform Classrooms* and *Strategies That Work* testimonials document the successes and provide data that show the difference literacy-based assignments make in increasing student engagement and achievement. Read about them here: [bit.ly/studentsstepup](http://bit.ly/studentsstepup) and [bit.ly/literacyandmathstrategies](http://bit.ly/literacyandmathstrategies).

## How is the Literacy Design Collaborative Framework Different From Traditional Instruction?

College- and career-readiness standards, established by individual states, are literacy benchmarks that prepare students for success in college and the workplace. Created specifically to advance students' literacy readiness, LDC provides a flexible framework for teachers to plan assignments that require students to comprehend and analyze discipline-specific, grade-level texts and write products that demonstrate deep understanding of content throughout the reading process.

The LDC framework embeds literacy standards through an **instructional planning process**. Teachers create a series of reading and writing tasks that aid students in learning new content and identify the specific literacy skills students need to succeed on a specific task, such as:

- **Task Engagement** — the ability to connect the task and new content to existing knowledge, skills, experiences, interests and concerns
- **Active Reading and Note-taking** — the ability to select important facts and passages for use in one's own writing
- **Organizing and Developing Ideas in Writing** — the ability to construct an initial draft with an emerging line of thought and structure

*At the end of school, some of my boys told me how much they liked the books they read in my class. At the beginning of the semester I could barely get a paragraph out of them, and by the end they were writing with confidence. I credit that to my literacy professional development from High Schools That Work. The percentage of my students passing the AP test grew from 30 percent in 2013 to 72 percent in 2015. Those scoring a 4 or 5 went from 10 percent in 2013 to 28 percent in 2015.*

**Ann B., history and English teacher,  
Tennessee**

*The literacy strategies work [in my science class] because they help students break texts down into easy-to-digest chunks ... and then they apply what they pull from the reading to develop writing products throughout the unit. I love problem-solving driven instruction because it gives students a purpose, and when they know why they're doing something, they are much more likely to be engaged.*

**Katrina Z., science and technology teacher,  
North Carolina**

## Traditional Classroom

### Teacher-Centered

Students learn reading and writing skills separate from content standards; literacy is taught as an end, not a means, to learning new content in different classes.

Teacher assigns texts for students to read based on their reading levels.

Teachers deliver most content through presentations, lectures and explicit instruction. Students take and review classroom notes in preparation for a multiple-choice exam.

Teachers focus only on content standards, and literacy instruction is owned by the English language arts teachers.

Honors and AP students receive challenging assignments that take 15-20 days to complete. These assignments require them to learn content by exploring a variety of texts and developing in-depth writing products. In general or basic academic courses, teachers cover content without having students read texts closely or write extensively.

## LDC Classroom

### Student-Centered

All students learn through engaging assignments that connect **reading grade-level texts and writing in response to reading** with content standards. Teachers include literacy skills with content, and support students to complete large-scale assignments and shorter ones.

Students read the discipline-specific, grade-level texts required to complete both large and small assignments. Teachers provide scaffolding strategies that help students read, comprehend and analyze text, and learn how to respond to texts.

Students learn content through skills-based instruction that helps them comprehend grade-level texts, build arguments and present an analysis. Students develop active reading, writing and thinking strategies, which they can apply to all classes.

All teachers become literacy instructors, showing students how to use the reading and writing process to build knowledge independently, regardless of the subject.

All students receive challenging assignments. With students who struggle, teachers invest more time modeling and scaffolding the literacy skills to complete large multiweek assignments as well as shorter assignments. As students use reading, writing, listening and speaking skills to learn the content, the teacher formatively assesses skill development and content understanding. Over time, students learn and think about new content with less support from the teacher.



## **SREB's Five-Element Professional Development Approach**

SREB's professional development uses a five-element approach involving principals, local trainers and classroom teachers to significantly increase the percentage of students meeting state college- and career-readiness standards. SREB builds capacity and sustainability within schools and districts by developing local expertise to spread LDC practices to existing and new teachers.

### **Element 1 – Build Capacity of Teacher-Leaders**

SREB provides LDC professional development sessions to selected teachers in a school. These become LDC teacher-leaders, proficient in LDC tools and strategies, who work with other teachers to develop literacy-based assignments.

### **Element 2 – Develop Local Trainers**

During Year 1, local trainers prepare to become SREB-certified LDC trainers. They learn to work with teachers in participating schools and districts to develop quality literacy-based assignments.

### **Element 3 – Conduct Classroom Observations and Provide Teacher Feedback**

SREB and local trainers participate in a series of school visits to complete classroom observations, provide nonevaluative feedback to teachers and principals, and attend LDC teams' professional learning community meetings.

### **Element 4 – Expand Schoolwide and Districtwide Implementation**

In Year 1, SREB and local trainers lead after-school workshops that focus on the LDC approach to framing literacy-based assignments for all English, science, social studies, and career and technical education courses. Other teachers, while not directly enrolled in the professional development, begin working with teacher-leaders in their discipline so they can incorporate literacy strategies into their assignments.

## **In Years 2 and 3, SREB offers two approaches to support the spread of LDC schoolwide and districtwide:**

- 1. Year 2 Collaborative Plan:** SREB and local trainers provide step-by-step guides to spread the use of LDC tools and strategies to all teachers through 60 hours of collaborative professional planning.
- 2. Web-Based Courses:** LDC online courses, combined with the assistance of skilled local trainers and teachers, help teachers implement the tools and strategies. SREB trainers work with districts to create a customized learning plan, utilizing the online courses to effectively meet each school's specific goals for improved literacy instruction.

### **Element 5 – Work With Principals**

SREB and local trainers meet with principals and conduct classroom observations that focus on supporting LDC implementation. SREB has identified the instructional shifts that trainers and principals should look for as they determine if LDC tools and strategies are being used effectively.

This observation protocol provides effective feedback that helps teachers make the necessary instructional shifts. Principals, as instructional leaders, must be actively involved in major initiatives that impact teaching and learning. **The principal has two critical roles in spreading LDC.** Principals must:

- 1.** Understand what LDC looks like in a classroom and give teachers timely feedback.
- 2.** Create, monitor and sustain effective professional learning communities around disciplines so that LDC-trained teachers can support their peers in using LDC instructional tools and strategies.

### **To encourage teacher engagement and sustain the integration of LDC, principals must:**

- Attend LDC professional development sessions with their teachers to gain a clearer picture of LDC and the types of instructional changes expected. There are breakout sessions for principals during these sessions.
- Join SREB and local trainers during LDC school visits and classroom observations, and collaborate with trainers to give teachers feedback.
- Attend a two-day workshop in Year 1 to learn how to use the LDC classroom protocol to improve teaching and learning, redesign the school schedule to support teacher collaboration, and create and sustain effective professional learning communities.
- Attend follow-up workshops and webinars in Years 2 and 3 to learn strategies for spreading LDC schoolwide.



## SREB'S Three-Year Professional Development Plan

During the first three years, schools and districts train enough teachers and local trainers to allow principals to sustain the LDC framework moving forward.

**Year 1:** During eight days of professional development, SREB prepares select teachers from each school to design and teach three or four high-quality LDC modules that meet both content and literacy standards. These teachers build excitement among their peers.

As teachers implement the LDC modules, which cover 15 to 20 days of instruction, the LDC teachers formatively assess the extent to which students have mastered the literacy skills taught.

**Using these results, they plan a series of smaller literacy-based assignments before beginning the next large module, which continues the use of literacy as a means of learning content.**

*SREB's training model makes sense, because it is designed for sustainability. Collaborative tools and teacher-leadership development are built into Year 2 workshops. Year 1 teachers become experts before moving into a teacher-leader role in Year 2.*

**Sheri B., instructional coach,  
Mississippi**

By midyear, teachers begin to collaborate with other teachers to design and develop a major literacy-based assignment. **They also assist peers in developing two or three smaller literacy-based assignments.**

**Year 2:** SREB and local trainers, teacher-leaders and principals use professional learning communities to disseminate LDC practices to 40 percent of the teachers in a school.

SREB's goal is to have 40 percent of the English language arts, science, social studies, and career and technical education teachers developing literacy-based assignments and modules throughout the school year.

Teachers who collaborate with experienced LDC teachers:

- a. Develop at least two literacy-based modules covering 15 to 20 days of instruction.
- b. Assess students' deficiencies in using literacy skills to complete their assignments.
- c. Design smaller literacy-based assignments before the next large module that requires students to read complex texts and demonstrate critical thinking through an extended writing product.

**Year 3:** SREB and local trainers work together to sustain the LDC effort in participating schools and to spread it districtwide. SREB and local trainers work toward the same expectations as outlined in Years 1 and 2.

## Virtual Support

In addition to direct face-to-face workshops and coaching, SREB's professional development plan includes virtual support through online courses and learning communities, webinars, screencasts and video conferencing. Participating teachers are invited to social network with LDC teachers around the country.

## Developing Local Trainers

A key component of SREB's professional development plan is the local trainer, who supports and sustains LDC practices. Participating districts appoint a literacy educator to become a SREB-certified LDC local trainer. These trainers meet the following certification requirements:

- Attend all trainings, webinars, electronic coaching sessions and site visits.
- Develop a module using LDC tools to prepare and launch a major literacy-based assignment, then partner with a teacher in a different subject area to design and complete an additional module.
- Jury multiple modules and provide feedback to teachers.
- Submit at least one module for national peer review and publication.
- Support teacher-leaders, facilitators and school leaders in the assigned district/region/cohort and assist with initial feedback.
- Master LDC classroom observation tools and provide teacher feedback and support to improve practices.
- Conduct school-embedded professional development visits to other schools after shadowing SREB trainers.



**Contact us if you are ready to improve outcomes in your school. If not now, when?**

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*Before LDC, teachers never expected students to develop a final product other than take a test. It was about teaching to the test and not pushing to prepare them for the next step in their lives. As a result, all students cared about was getting points toward a grade. When teachers use LDC, it's not about regurgitating facts. It's applying what they know. LDC has forced teachers to raise their expectations of what students can do. The result is that students are doing all the work instead of the other way around.*

**Juliana C., curriculum supervisor,  
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