



EdBetter Pilot Data
Findings White Paper

Instructional Improvement Through Curriculum- Aligned Classroom Observation





Table of Contents

Introduction	3
I. Scope of the Pilot and Nature of the Data	4
PILOT OVERVIEW	
GRADE LEVELS, SETTINGS, AND ROLES	
OBSERVATION COLLECTION AND CALIBRATION	
ALIGNMENT TO EDBETTER INSTRUCTIONAL DOMAINS	
Case Study 1: La Joya ISD	5
II. Pilot Data Findings	6
PREPARATION AS THE CENTRAL LEVER FOR INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY	
THE MOST CHALLENGING DOMAIN	7
DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC SIGNALS: LITERACY AS AN EXAMPLE	8
THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES	8
USING A BACKGROUND-KNOWLEDGE ITEM ANALYSIS	10
Case Study 2: The Commit Partnership	11
III. Key Takeaways	12
Citations	13
Acknowledgements	14



Introduction

At EdBetter we have a singular goal: to provide system leaders with data that supports improvement in instruction.

States and districts across the country have invested in the promise of high quality curriculum. District after district has committed to adopting more rigorous, standards aligned instructional materials, operating on the belief that high quality curriculum is a powerful driver of student learning. But curriculum will not implement itself, high quality curriculum demands high quality, curriculum aligned instruction.

This raises critical questions for instructional leaders: How do we know the curriculum is being implemented as intended? How well is instruction aligned? Where do gaps in instructional practice exist? And what are the highest leverage opportunities to support teachers, so the promise of rigorous curriculum is fully realized?

Classroom observation provides the clearest instructional signal for answering these questions. It serves as a powerful tool in an instructional leader's repertoire. Teachers remain the number one in school factor influencing student outcomes, and rigorous curriculum is among the most impactful supports available to them. Observation data sits at the intersection of these two forces, offering insight into how instruction and curriculum come together in classrooms.

However, observation is most impactful when district and school leaders make it routine and anchored in clear expectations for everyone from district and campus leaders to individual teachers. Instructional teams that are trained and equipped to observe instruction through a shared lens are uniquely equipped to discern patterns across classrooms and content areas. Further, they are able to leverage this information to implement strategies supporting systemwide instructional improvement.

Drawing on pilot data from the 2025–26 school year, this white paper synthesizes EdBetter's most important findings. These findings highlight the role of well-designed district routines and systems for collecting and using classroom observation data. Closer analysis of the data revealed a clear conclusion: the usefulness of observation data depends on the specificity and instructional relevance of the questions being asked. To generate actionable insight, observation protocols must include questions that are precise and instructionally meaningful, and observers must be well calibrated on what to look for when answering them. Equally important, protocols must be anchored in research-informed, discipline-specific pedagogy to surface how instruction aligns to what is known to improve learning. When these conditions are in place, observation data enables leaders to target professional learning and coaching to the highest leverage areas, aligning curriculum, instruction, and leadership to improve student outcomes.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

Is curriculum being implemented as intended?

Is classroom instruction aligned to curriculum?

Where are gaps in instructional practice?

Where should we focus support for teachers?





I. Scope of the Pilot and Nature of the Data

PILOT OVERVIEW

This analysis is grounded in pilot data collected during the 2025–26 school year across five partner districts. All participating districts had centrally adopted high quality instructional materials in English and mathematics. Collectively, these districts serve approximately 85,000 students and represent more than 2,000 classrooms. Our implementation included a mix of district-wide and partial district pilots within selected schools or grade bands.

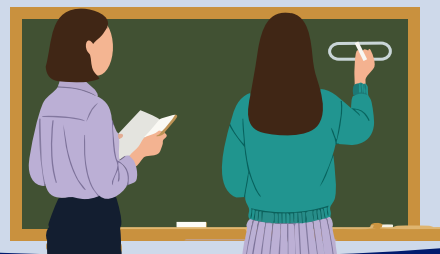
To protect confidentiality and encourage honest participation, all data have been fully de-identified. Findings are therefore presented in aggregate, and no district specific trends or results are attributed to individual systems.

THE PILOT AT-A-GLANCE

5 partner districts | **85,000** students

2,000+ classrooms

2025/26 school year | **K - 12** coverage



GRADE LEVELS, SETTINGS, AND ROLES

The pilot spans all K-12 grade levels, from PreK-3 through high school, and includes observations conducted in self contained classrooms, specialized settings, and departmentalized environments. Observation data was collected by a diverse group of users, including district leaders, school leaders, central office–deployed instructional coordinators, interventionists, and other support roles.

OBSERVATION COLLECTION AND CALIBRATION

All data analyzed in this paper is derived from in-classroom observations. A significant portion of observations, particularly those conducted by district leaders, were collected through coordinated team visits. As a result, these data reflect a higher likelihood of calibration among observers.

Some participating districts used observation tools that were locally developed or selected and internally normed prior to the pilot. While instruments varied across districts, each was designed to capture instructional practice aligned to district priorities and expectations.

ALIGNMENT TO EDBETTER INSTRUCTIONAL DOMAINS

To enable cross district analysis, EdBetter cross-walked each district's observation instrument to a common set of curriculum aligned instructional domains. These domains reflect high leverage teaching practices associated with effective implementation of high quality instructional materials and include:

- Use of adopted instructional materials
- Evidence of preparation for the lesson or unit
- Quality of lesson delivery
- Degree of student engagement
- Evidence of supporting students where they need it
- Discipline specific pedagogical best practices





Case Study 1

La Joya ISD: Instructional Coherence Through Cyclical, Systemwide Observation

La Joya ISD's Year 1 pilot illustrates how a districtwide commitment to instructional coherence, coupled with frequent classroom observation, can strengthen clarity around effective teaching practice. Across the district, leaders share a common instructional framework and a belief that improving instruction begins with consistently seeing it enacted in classrooms.

Classroom observation is routine at La Joya ISD and extends well beyond school-based leadership. District leaders are regularly in classrooms across all campuses, using a shared observation tool to collect instructional data. Observations are organized into clearly defined cycles, ensuring that every campus is visited within the same window of time and with the same level of intensity. Each school receives an equivalent number of classroom visits per cycle, allowing for comparability across sites and reducing variability in how instructional quality is measured.

District leadership cultivated a culture that prioritized classroom-based evidence to improve instruction.

Strong norming across the district leadership observation team produced consistent, calibrated observation data.

A distinguishing feature of La Joya's model is the use of team-based observations. District leaders observe instruction together, often visiting the same classrooms during a cycle. This approach supports calibration among observers and promotes a shared understanding of what proficiency looks like in practice. Over time, this has strengthened alignment in how instructional quality is interpreted and discussed across the district.

Senior leadership involvement reinforces the importance of instructional observation as a core leadership responsibility. The superintendent and senior leaders routinely join classroom walks, modeling expectations for school leaders and signaling that teaching and learning remain the district's primary focus. This visibility establishes observation as an essential, not ancillary, leadership practice.

Following the completion of each observation cycle, the academics team rapidly analyzes the data. The superintendent reviews results within days, and findings are shared transparently with principals. This tight feedback loop allows instructional patterns to be surfaced quickly and creates urgency around improvement. Over the course of the pilot year, district-leader observation data reflects an increase in the proportion of classrooms demonstrating proficiency, suggesting growing clarity and consistency in instructional expectations across campuses.

Observation data drove improvement because district and school leaders quickly analyzed and used it as a unified instructional team.

La Joya ISD's experience highlights the instructional value of routine, aligned, and transparent observation systems led at the district level. When leaders share responsibility for seeing instruction, calibrating expectations, and acting on data, instructional coherence becomes a systemwide characteristic rather than a campus-specific outcome.



II. Pilot Data Findings

PREPARATION AS THE CENTRAL LEVER FOR INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

We examined preparation, with particular attention to observation questions that address lesson and unit internalization. These questions focus on the extent to which instructional planning reflects a clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, how learning will be assessed, and how instruction is intentionally sequenced across lessons within a unit. Evidence of preparation may surface through the actions of teachers, coaches, or instructional leaders and is captured through observable instructional coherence during classroom instruction.

Effect Size of Preparation on All Domains

Key Finding

Preparation is positively associated with all instructional domains. The strongest relationships are with Delivering the Lesson (strength = 0.68 out of 1.0) and Using Lesson Materials (strength = 0.65 out of 1.0). When Preparation is higher, these domains also tend to be higher, with increases of +6.2 and +6.8 percentage points respectively per +10 percentage points in Preparation.

Overall Effect on Using Materials

$r = 0.65$

+6.8pp per +10pp Prep

Strongest Association

Delivering the Lesson

$r = 0.68$

Sample Size

5,785 Total Visits

Across all 5 districts

Preparation's Correlation with Each Domain



This chart shows the Pearson correlation (r) between Preparation and each domain. Darker colors indicate stronger associations.

Across 5,785 paired classroom observations, **preparation is positively associated with performance across all instructional domains.**

This indicates that higher levels of lesson and unit internalization are consistently linked to stronger observed instructional practice.

0.68

Delivering the Lesson

The strongest relationship appears between preparation and **delivering the lesson ($r \approx 0.68$)**. This indicates that when lessons and units are well internalized, instruction more consistently reflects grade-level expectations and intended learning outcomes. In classrooms with higher levels of preparation, teachers are more likely to explicitly teach grade-level standards, maintain focus on the daily objective, reinforce key learning points throughout the lesson, and move students purposefully toward independent mastery. Preparation explains a substantial portion of the variation in lesson delivery, accounting for nearly half of the observed differences in performance.

0.63

Using Lesson Materials

Preparation is also strongly associated with **using lesson materials ($r \approx 0.65$)**. In this analysis, use of lesson materials extends beyond surface-level reference to curriculum resources and reflects implementation with integrity; including use of the provided lesson structure, core texts and supplemental materials, learning activities and assignments, checks for understanding, and aligned assessments such as exit tickets or performance tasks. Higher levels of preparation are associated with clearer alignment between these instructional elements and the intended learning of the lesson.

State agencies such as **Tennessee** and **Kentucky** provide guidance on intellectual preparation, highlighting core elements such as **collaborative planning**, lesson and unit internalization, and analysis of student work. At EdBetter, we affirm this guidance and further emphasize that intellectual preparation should be **grounded in the curriculum** to support meaningful instruction.

THE MOST CHALLENGING DOMAIN: SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS ACCESS TIER I INSTRUCTION

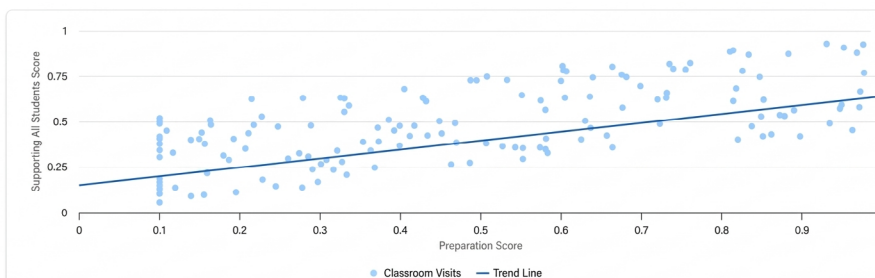
Differentiation based on student needs is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching. Effective differentiation requires teachers to make real-time, context-specific instructional adjustments, placing significant cognitive and logistical demands on the teacher. Data we have collected from thousands of classroom visits consistently reflect this reality: supporting all learners emerged as the most difficult instructional practice to enact, even in classrooms demonstrating otherwise strong instruction.



So how do systems overcome this challenge? Our findings suggest that strong pre-planning rooted in high quality instructional materials is key. Planning must focus on using curriculum-embedded levers for remediation, language support, and access—and deliberately planning instructional responses when those levers are insufficient in the curriculum.

Across our pilot data, **higher levels of preparation are associated with stronger performance** in Supporting All Students.

Stronger Preparation Allows Teachers to Better Respond to Student Needs During Tier I Instruction



This chart shows the relationship between Preparation and Supporting All Students scores. Each point represents a classroom visit, and the blue line shows the overall trend. Note: This is a representative visualization based on the reported correlation of $r = 0.47$.

Correlation
 $r = 0.47$
95% CI: [0.44, 0.49]

Linear Effect
+4.9pp
Per +10pp in Preparation

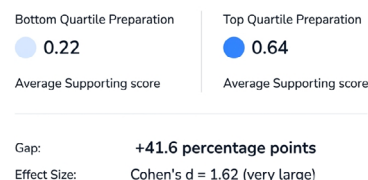
Variance Explained
21.7%
 R^2 value

Top-Bottom Quartile Gap
+41.6pp
Cohen's $d = 1.62$

Across our pilot data, higher levels of preparation are associated with stronger performance in Supporting All Students. As preparation scores increase, Supporting All Students scores rise in a steady, positive pattern, indicating that teachers who enter the classroom with pre-planning are more consistently able to respond to student needs during the lesson. While preparation alone does not guarantee effective differentiation, the trend suggests it creates the conditions under which responsive instruction becomes more feasible.

This relationship becomes more pronounced when comparing classrooms at the extremes. Classroom visits in the top quartile of preparation significantly outperform those in the bottom quartile on Supporting All Students, with an average gap of more than 40 percentage points. In practical terms, well prepared lessons are far more likely to include intentional scaffolds, checks for understanding, and adjustments aligned to student needs, whereas low preparation limits teachers' capacity to differentiate in the moment.

High vs. Low Preparation Contrast (Overall)



The substantial gap between high and low preparation visits highlights the practical significance of the relationship. Visits in the top quartile of Preparation score, on average, 41.6 percentage points higher in Supporting All Students than those in the bottom quartile.

Discipline-Specific Signals: Literacy as an Example

Literacy provides a clear illustration of this dynamic. For example, in **Texas, Research-Based Instructional Strategies (RBIS) for Reading Language Arts** focus on whether instruction reflects:

- A. Foundational Skills**
Explicit, systematic instruction in foundational literacy skills
- B. Text Complexity**
Regular student interaction with grade-level complex texts and academic language
- C. Knowledge Coherence**
Intentional building of knowledge and vocabulary through text across content areas
- D. Text-Based Responses**
Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text

COMPOSITE LITERACY INSTRUCTION INDEX

To examine literacy specific instruction, we crosswalked observation domains and isolated questions that directly reflect the RLA RBIS and constructed a **Composite Literacy Instruction Index**, a 0–1 score for each English/ELA spot check visit, calculated as the average of four discipline specific questions that examine whether instruction activates students' background knowledge and interest, provides opportunities for students to apply and demonstrate understanding through speaking, reading, and writing, explicitly teaches grade level standards, skills, or concepts, and implements instruction with integrity through use of the provided lesson structure, texts, materials, learning activities, and aligned assessments. The index summarizes the overall strength of discipline specific

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

The data point to a critical insight: **the quality of observation depends on the quality of the questions being asked.** Broad, discipline-agnostic questions surface general instructional trends but discipline-specific 'look fors' can provide targeted insights and have exponential benefits to advancing pedagogy. Meaningful instructional improvement requires observation questions that are explicit about what content is being taught and how it is best taught within each discipline.



Calculated as the average of four discipline-specific indicators of literacy instruction:

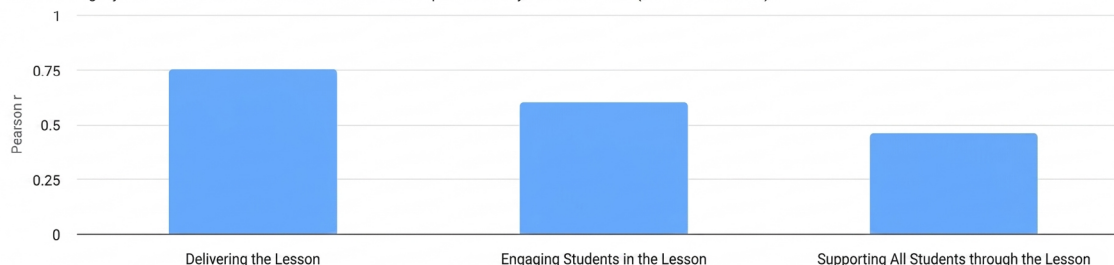
- 1.** Instruction **activates students' background knowledge and interest.**
- 2.** Instruction **provides opportunities for students to apply and demonstrate understanding through speaking, reading, and writing.**
- 3.** Instruction **explicitly teaches grade-level standards, skills, or concepts.**
- 4.** Instruction **implements with integrity, using the provided lesson structure, texts, materials, learning activities, and aligned assessments.**

Stronger Literacy Instruction Is Associated with Higher Performance Across Instructional Domains

This chart shows how strongly the Composite Literacy Instruction Index is associated with each EdBetter domain. Scores and the composite are on a 0–1 scale; slopes indicate how much a domain score changes, on average, for a 0.10 increase in the composite.

Correlation (Pearson r)

Shows how tightly each EdBetter domain score moves with the Composite Literacy Instruction Index (Pearson correlation).



POSITIVELY ASSOCIATED WITH PERFORMANCE ACROSS ALL THREE EDBETTER INSTRUCTIONAL DOMAINS

#1 - Delivering the Lesson

0.75

($r = 0.75$), with a 0.10*

Delivering the Lesson

#2 - Engaging Students in the Lesson

0.60

($r = 0.60$, +0.07)

Engaging Students
in the Lesson

#3 - Supporting All Students through the Lesson

0.46

($r = 0.46$, +0.05)

Supporting All Students
through the Lesson

Across English/ELA spot check visits, the **Composite Literacy Instruction Index** has positively associated with performance across all three EdBetter instructional domains.

The strongest association is with **Delivering the Lesson** ($r = 0.75$), with a 0.10 increase in the literacy index associated with an average **+0.08 increase** in lesson delivery scores; similar but smaller associations are observed for **Engaging Students in the Lesson** ($r = 0.60$, +0.07) and **Supporting All Students through the Lesson** ($r = 0.46$, +0.05).

Importantly, these relationships persist when examining **within teacher variation only**. The within teacher slopes show that when the same teacher demonstrates stronger literacy specific practices on a given visit, performance in lesson delivery, student engagement, and differentiated supports also increases on that visit.

This indicates that the observed relationships are not driven solely by differences between teachers but reflect meaningful variation in instructional practice within individual

** increase in the literacy index associated with an average +0.08 increase in lesson delivery scores*

USING A BACKGROUND-KNOWLEDGE ITEM ANALYSIS TO ILLUSTRATE THE VALUE OF DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC LOOK-FORS

Building knowledge is now widely recognized as a non-negotiable element of strong literacy instruction and a central criterion for evaluating high-quality curriculum. Building on the work of scholars such as **Natalie Wexler**, who has emphasized the essential role of background knowledge in reading comprehension, and research on knowledge coherence highlighted by **The Knowledge Matters Campaign** and **Dr. Olivia Mullins**, there is growing consensus that literacy instruction must support students in developing connected, cumulative understanding over time. Yet, as **Robert Pondiscio** recently cautioned us, the presence of a knowledge-building curriculum does not ensure that students actually experience knowledge-building instruction: “You don’t know if instruction, as students experience it, systematically builds knowledge over time.” As he further notes, “As students experience it’ is the rub. It is more revealing to watch what people do than what they say. And what educators do with curriculum suggests that, for all our talk about its importance, it does not yet command real authority.”

Background Knowledge shows moderate correlations with all literacy specific questions: items ($r = 0.31-0.40$), suggesting it captures something partially distinct. Strong explicit instruction doesn't automatically guarantee strong background knowledge activation.

The 4 Literacy-Specific Questions & How They Move Together

Here is how the other literacy items correlate with the Background Knowledge target item:

Target Item	“Activate the Learning: Teacher Connects to background knowledge and student interest with linguistically sustaining practices.”
$r = 0.31$	“Develop Language: Students apply and demonstrate understanding through speaking, reading, and writing.”
$r = 0.40$	“Implement with Integrity: Teacher uses the provided lesson structure, main text, supporting materials, problem sets, learning activities, in-class assignments, exit ticket, and/or performance task aligned to the portion of the lesson observed.”
$r = 0.40$	“Teach Explicitly on Grade Level: Teacher explicitly teaches grade-level standard, skill or concept.”

Note: The strongest correlation overall is between Implement with Integrity ↔ Teach on Grade Level ($r = 0.56$).

When we examined background knowledge over time, we saw **meaningful improvement across the school year**, with average performance nearly doubling from the Fall to Spring semester. This confirms that leveraging background knowledge is a practice that can improve when it is made visible and prioritized through observation and feedback.

However, the pattern of improvement matters. **Roughly two-thirds of the gains reflect a shift toward more classrooms demonstrating higher proficiency** indicating likelihood that teachers who were already stronger instructionally were more likely to make progress on this practice, while growth within lower-proficiency classrooms was more limited. Activating background knowledge is both high-leverage and difficult—it requires teachers to make intentional, knowledge-centric instructional moves that do not happen automatically.

This distinction aligns with Robert Pondiscio’s emphasis on the **student experience**. As he notes, “You don’t know if instruction, as students experience it, systematically builds knowledge over time,” and “It is more revealing to watch what people do than what they say.” Our findings suggest that when teachers are supported on the more challenging instructional moves, their instructional practice increasingly reflects those knowledge-building moves.

EXAMPLES OF DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC CLASSROOM ‘LOOK-FORS’: ALIGNED TO TEXT COMPLEXITY AS DESCRIBED IN TEXAS RBIS FOR READING LANGUAGE ARTS

Students spend the majority of the lesson reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening about grade level complex text, with all students—including diverse learners—engaging with the same text and content objective.

Texts meet grade level expectations for complexity based on quantitative measures, qualitative features (meaning, structure, language, knowledge demands), and reader/task considerations.

Questions and tasks are aligned to grade-level standards and require students to attend closely to the text, including its structure, vocabulary, ideas, and details, with strategic scaffolds provided only as needed for access.

Note: The above are not meant to be used as questions, rather these are thematic elements that need to be present in observation questions for literacy classrooms.



Case Study 2

The Commit Partnership: Advancing Instruction Through Cross-System Coherence and Discipline-Specific Observation

During the pilot year, The Commit Partnership supported three participating districts using a single observation instrument and shared methodology. This consistency in tools and methodology created a unique opportunity to analyze instructional practice across districts while simultaneously strengthening capacity-building and technical assistance efforts.

As part of Commit's support, the three participating districts used a common six-domain observation framework and aligned walkthrough and observation protocols. In each district, a single designated leader focused on instructional system improvement conducted observations and consistently connected them to debrief conversations, ensuring that classroom evidence informed instructional feedback. Because tools and methods were standardized, instructional data could be meaningfully within and across systems, allowing patterns in practice to be identified at the system level rather than in isolation.

This shared design enabled Commit to streamline supports to the three districts participating in the pilot. Rather than customizing support for each district's tools, Commit could focus on strengthening leaders' ability to interpret observation data and respond to common instructional trends. The consistency of the observation framework also positioned Commit to emphasize the highest leverage instructional moves across systems.

Standardized tools enabled cross-system instructional insights and streamlined supports.

Notably, Commit districts were the only pilot participants to consistently incorporate targeted, discipline-specific questions into their observation protocols. In literacy, observation tools included questions related to foundational skill instruction, knowledge-building in Reading Language Arts, and text-based comprehension. In mathematics, observers examined direct instruction, explicit modeling, and opportunities for guided and independent practice. These discipline-specific prompts allowed observers to assess instructional quality with far greater precision than discipline-agnostic indicators alone.

Improving discipline-specific instruction requires observation of discipline-specific teaching practices.

The pilot year findings suggest that discipline-specific observation sharpens instructional diagnosis. While general domains such as engagement or lesson structure provide useful baseline information, they are insufficient for advancing content-specific pedagogy. Commit's approach demonstrates that if systems seek to improve discipline-specific instruction, they must intentionally observe for discipline-specific practice.

The Commit Partnership's experience underscores the instructional value of coherence—both within and across systems. By aligning observation tools, methodologies, and disciplinary focus, districts can more effectively identify leverage points for improvement and accelerate learning about what strong instruction looks like in practice.



III. Key Takeaways



Classroom observation is the most actionable source of instructional data.

When observation is routinized, calibrated, and anchored in clear instructional expectations, it provides leaders with a direct line of sight into how curriculum is actually enacted in classrooms—and where support is most needed.



System design matters as much as individual practice.

The case studies illustrate that observation systems—how often leaders observe, how calibrated they are, how quickly data is reviewed, and how transparently it is shared—shape the instructional improvement that follows.



Preparation, defined as lesson and unit internalization, is the strongest lever for improving instruction.

Across thousands of observations, preparation is positively associated with performance in every instructional domain, with the strongest relationships observed for delivering the lesson and using materials with integrity.



Supporting all students within Tier I instruction remains the most persistent challenge.

Even in classrooms demonstrating otherwise strong instruction, differentiation and responsive support were the least consistently observed practices. The data suggest that this challenge is not primarily a matter of effort or intent, but of cognitive load and planning. Classrooms with the highest levels of preparation significantly outperform those with the lowest preparation on Supporting All Students, underscoring the importance of curriculum embedded planning for access, scaffolds, and instructional response.



The instructional signal depends on the specificity of observation questions.

Broad, discipline agnostic observation questions are effective for identifying general instructional patterns, but discipline specific questions provide sharper insight into pedagogy. Literacy specific observation revealed meaningful variation in practices such as background knowledge activation, language development, and text based instruction—variation that would have remained obscured without targeted questions.



Discipline specific observation clarifies what needs to change and how.

Moderate correlations between these practices suggest that strong explicit instruction does not automatically translate into coherent knowledge building. Discipline specific observation makes these distinctions visible, enabling more precise professional learning and coaching.





Citations

- Crist, K. (n.d.). Curriculum as a dinner party: Selection sets the table; implementation is everything else. Education 4500.
<https://www.education4500.com/post/curriculum-as-a-dinner-party-selection-sets-the-table-implementation-is-everything-else>
- Hattie, J. (2009). Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Routledge.
- Instruction Partners. (2024, September 12). Unlocking the power of unit internalization.
<https://instructionpartners.org/2024/09/12/unlocking-the-power-of-unit-internalization/>
- Kentucky Department of Education. (n.d.). Intellectual preparation guidance.
https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Intellectual_Preparation_Guidance.pdf
- Knowledge Matters Campaign. (2016). Five essential features of effective literacy instruction.
<https://knowledgematterscampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/FiveEssentialFeatures.pdf>
- Maryland State Department of Education. (n.d.). High-quality instructional materials frameworks and rubrics.
<https://hqim.marylandpublicschools.org/frameworks-and-rubrics/>
- Mullins, O. (n.d.). What it looks like when content isn't coherent.
<https://omullins.substack.com/p/what-it-looks-like-when-content-isnt-8f3>
- Pondiscio, R. (n.d.). The limits of the “high-quality curriculum” movement.
<https://thenext30years.substack.com/p/the-limits-of-the-high-quality-curriculum>
- Relay Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). How to implement high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) so teachers master them—and students benefit.
<https://www.relay.edu/leaders/how-to-implement-high-quality-instructional-materials-hqim-so-teachers-master-them---and-students-benefit>
- Steiner, D. (n.d.). Why teachers don't use the high-quality instructional materials they're given. The 74.
<https://www.the74million.org/article/why-teachers-dont-use-the-high-quality-instructional-materials-theyre-given/>
- Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). Intellectual preparation: Lessons and learning.
<https://bestforall.tnedu.gov/lessons-and-learning-item?content-id=8686>
- Texas Education Agency. (2025). Introduction to research-based instructional strategies (RBIS): Reading Language Arts [PDF].
<https://tea.texas.gov/texas-educators/preparation-and-continuing-education/program-provider-resources/epp-sy-24-25-intro-to-rbis-session-feb-final-2025.pdf>
- Wexler, N. (2019). The knowledge gap: The hidden cause of America's broken education system—and how to fix it. Avery.
- Wexler, N. (n.d.). How can you tell if a curriculum is knowledge-building?
<https://nataliewexler.substack.com/p/how-can-you-tell-if-a-curriculum>



Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the collaboration, expertise, and contributions of many individuals and partner organizations. We would like to thank **Katie Houghtlin** and **Grace Wu** for their foundational contributions to EdBetter's vision for improving classroom instruction. We are also grateful to **Teresa Khirallah**, **Tim Regal**, **Kate Crist**, and **Dr. Miah Daughtery** for their expert advice on intellectual preparation, instructional leadership, and literacy instruction, which shaped both the analysis and interpretation of findings. We are grateful to **Zarah Lakhani** for operations support and **Align Consulting** for legal advice.

We extend our sincere appreciation to **La Joya Independent School District**, **Lake Worth Independent School District**, and **The Commit Partnership** for their partnership and collaboration throughout the pilot. Their willingness to engage in classroom observation, data use, and instructional learning made this work possible and significantly strengthened the insights presented in this report.

We also thank **Manta AI** for their analytics support and partnership, as well as **Joe Mwaura** and **dac creative** for their design support, which helped bring this work to life.