

Did the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant Program Reach Its Goals? An Implementation Report

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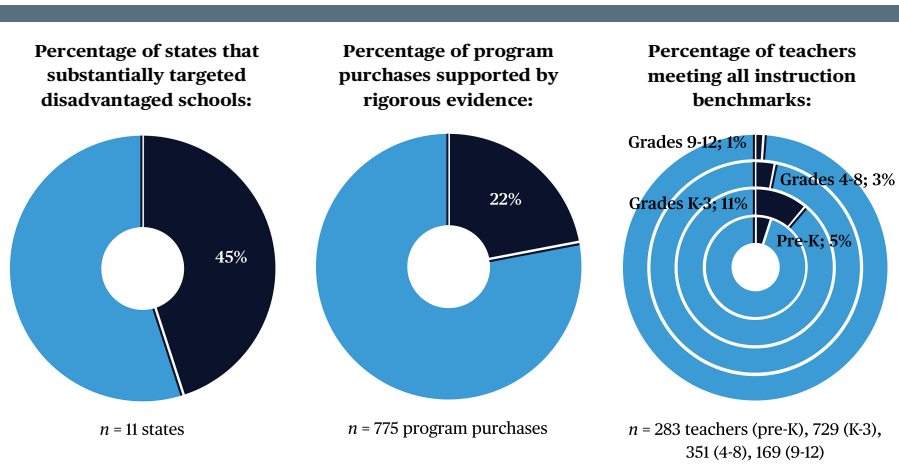
Boosting literacy among school-age children remains a national priority. Nearly one third of students in the United States have not developed the foundational reading skills needed to succeed academically, with students living in poverty, students with disabilities, and English learners especially at risk. Starting in 2010, Congress invested more than \$1 billion for state literacy improvement efforts through the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) program. SRCL was intended to focus funding on disadvantaged schools, encourage schools to use evidence-based practices, and support high-quality literacy instruction. This study assessed how well SRCL implementation was aligned with these goals, using information collected from states, districts, and schools in all 11 states awarded grants in 2017.

Key Findings

- **Uneven targeting of resources to disadvantaged schools suggests that SRCL’s funding objectives were not realized in every state, though limited data availability and variation in states’ definitions of disadvantage make it difficult to draw firm conclusions.** Using a common definition of disadvantage created for the study, not all states funded their most disadvantaged schools consistently in terms of students from low-income families, students with disabilities, English learners, or average student English language arts scores.

- **Literacy programs supported by rigorous research evidence were not a focus,** according to independent reviews of the quality of the research. Few districts used SRCL funds to purchase such programs and few teachers in SRCL schools reported using such programs.

- **The kinds of comprehensive literacy instruction consistent with research and emphasized by SRCL were less widely used by**



- **teachers than expected.** Few teachers reported engaging in all six features of high-quality comprehensive literacy instruction measured by the study, although most engaged in at least half of the features.

This study’s findings underscore both the benefits and challenges of providing funding to states to improve literacy instruction with flexibility to meet local needs. A similar approach is being used by SRCL’s successor, the Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant program (CLSD). It is important to use the lessons learned from this study to inform improvements to the CLSD program as well as other efforts to enhance literacy instruction.