



CLEARLiteracy™

The Research Driving *Lenses on Literature*

How a 15-year quest to redefine literacy instruction culminated in our newest 6-12 ELA curriculum.

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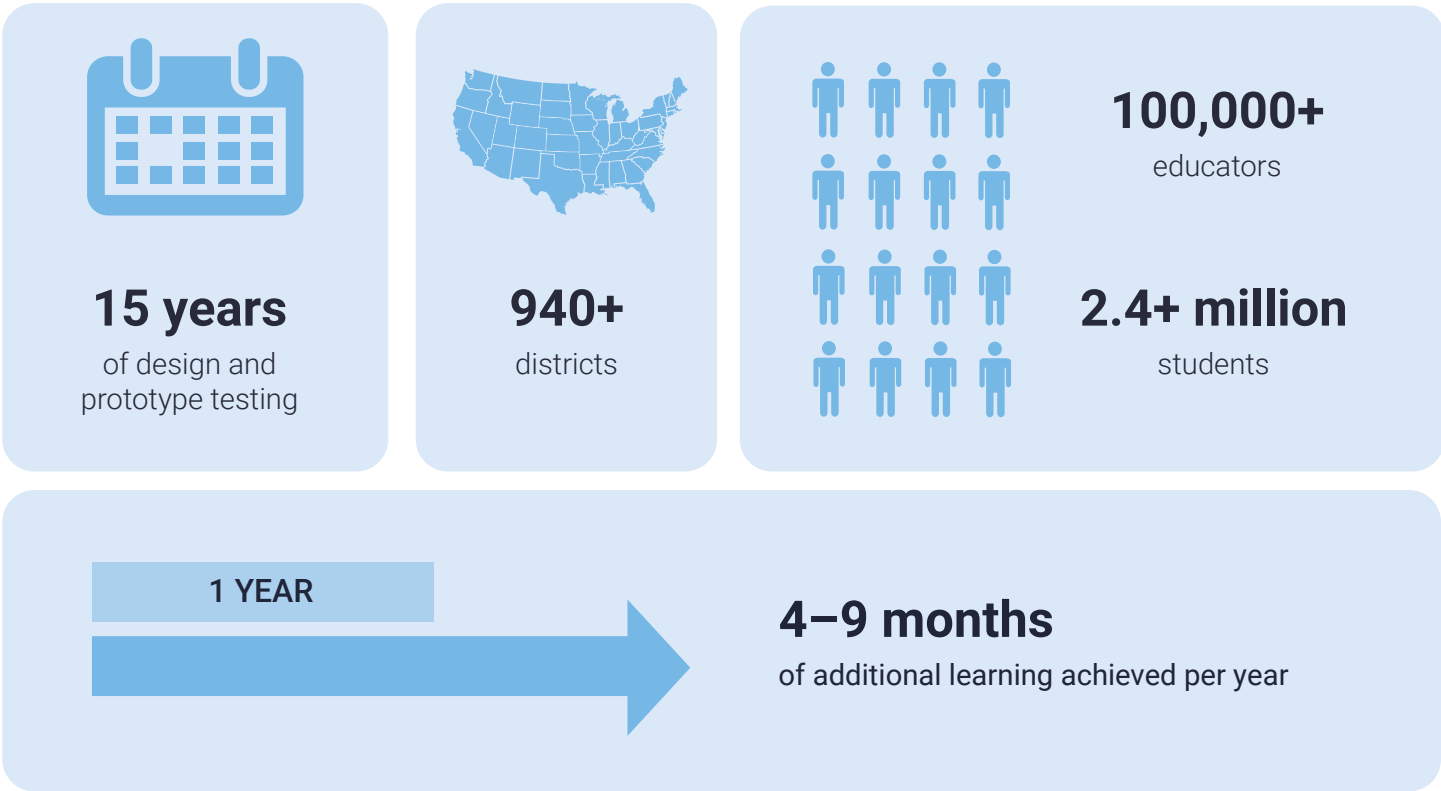
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An ELA Curriculum 15 Years in the Making

Lenses on Literature was developed from an instructional model field-tested by the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) with 100,000 educators and 6.4 million students over 15 years. Founded as a collaborative of teachers, literacy experts, and curriculum specialists, LDC developed literacy frameworks, tools, and professional learning for teachers across the country. These resources were tested, refined, and validated through additional collaborations with state departments of education, performance task experts, and disciplinary partners.



The Literacy Design Collaborative

The Literacy Design Collaborative empowers teachers with data-driven tools and rubrics to close achievement gaps through rigorous, standards-focused instruction.

LDC began as a community of educators who believed all students are capable of engaging with complex texts and rigorous, grade-level tasks. Working alongside some of the nation's largest school districts, the Literacy Design Collaborative implemented data inquiry cycles centered on teaching and assessing focus skills and standards in order to eliminate achievement gaps.

LDC stakeholders collaborated to iterate an effective instructional model using strategically placed, scaffolded assignment modules guided by the principles of rigor, high expectations, learning by doing, and authenticity.

In the LDC model, teachers start with a cluster of three focus standards as the driver of their work with students. Their instructional plans and practices are then designed to answer the question, "How can I best teach these focus standards?"

A unique aspect of LDC's model is its progressional rubrics for ELA reading and writing, NGSS, and C3 standards developed in conjunction with the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). LDC/SCALE also provides a double-blind peer consensus review process that evaluates rigor, disciplinary authenticity, and whether assignment prompts and instructional plans are standards-driven.

The LDC/SCALE rubrics also support student understanding of expectations for their learning at the outset of a unit. They help teachers maintain a clear view of the learning goal and ensure that feedback given to students is meaningful and targeted to the focus standards.

To better address focus standards, the Literacy Design Collaborative adopted a standards-driven instructional model.

Focus Cluster



Content
Standard



Reading
Standard



Writing
Standard



"It's so easy to [backward plan] in LDC because the rubrics, exemplars, and scaffolds are all there—teachers have the tools in front of them."

– School Principal

What Is Standards-Driven ELA Instruction?

Standards-driven ELA instruction transforms classrooms by placing grade-level literacy standards at the core of every student experience, challenging the superficial “standards-aligned” approach common in many curricula.

Standards-driven ELA instruction uses grade-level focus standards to guide all student experiences in the classroom starting from day one. The LDC instructional model uses literacy standards as the starting place for all lesson plans, classroom activities, and evaluations of student work.

This differs from the structure of other curricula, many of which superficially connect standards to instructional practices and identify as “standards-aligned.” This approach views merely naming standards and describing their goals as sufficient means to achieving them. When the iterative process stops there, students often end up below grade level.

While understanding the concept of standards-driven instruction is crucial, it’s equally important to examine how this approach translates into a unique experience for educators implementing the LDC model.

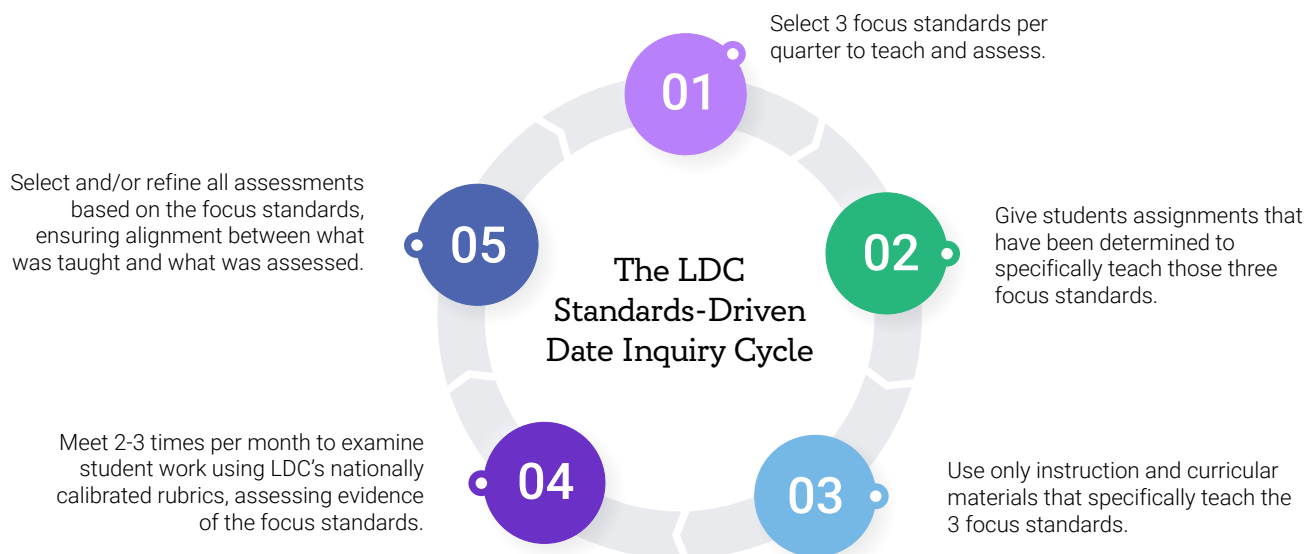
A Unique Educator Experience

LDC’s innovative approach focuses teachers on deep instruction of three priority standards per quarter, using data-driven cycles to maximize student learning outcomes.

LDC’s implementation utilizes a job-embedded, blended coaching model to support teachers through two to three data inquiry cycles throughout each school year.

LDC’s data inquiry cycles require teachers to select just three priority standards to focus on in each quarter—one content, one reading, and one writing standard. These standards focus clusters help teachers learn the ways in which the thinking work of those standards manifest in reading, writing, and speaking in various content areas. Teachers are able to consider the type of reading, writing, and thinking work students need to do in order to most deeply engage with the content.

LDC’s approach has shown what the research recommends—that teaching important things deeply has more impact on student learning outcomes than teaching many things superficially. The LDC data inquiry cycles support teachers in recognizing, refining, and delivering standards-driven instruction. The innovative approach LDC offers to educators naturally leads us to the question: What impact does this have on student performance? The results are nothing short of transformative.



Radical Student Growth

LDC's transformative approach led to remarkable gains of 4-9 months of additional learning for students in major urban districts, narrowing achievement gaps and accelerating learning for students who'd fallen behind.

Students learning from Literacy Design Collaborative materials demonstrated improved writing quality, quantity, rigor, and stamina, as well as higher levels of thinking and overall confidence in their abilities. These students were reported to be more engaged in their classrooms and better understood the expectations set for them.

Results Beyond Student Testing

Students

Growing agency over learning and ability to engage with complex concepts and texts.

Higher engagement in classrooms and stronger understanding of assignment expectations.

Improved writing quality, quantity, and stamina.

Increased depth of thinking.

Expanded discourse with peers, leading to deeper connections and applications of knowledge.

Teachers

Higher expectations for all students.

Deeper understanding of the standards and knowledge of what mastery of specific standards looks like.

Ability to plan standards-driven assignments and make more intentional choices about instruction and texts.

Ability to effectively differentiate to meet varying student needs.

Ability to anticipate student thinking and respond with appropriate in-the-moment instructional moves.

Ability to assess student learning for evidence of the standards, and to provide more meaningful feedback to students based on that assessment.

Schools

Writing is infused into all core content areas, allowing students to experience comfort and success with writing.

Connections across classes and content areas emerge naturally, resulting in a more coherent learning experience for students.

Teachers have the knowledge and planning tools to support authentic, content-based collaboration and connections across grades and subjects.

Teachers apply the knowledge and instructional planning learned from LDC to their lessons broadly, so using standards to drive planning, teaching, and assessment becomes the norm.

Schoolwide coherence of curriculum and instruction to standards increases dramatically.

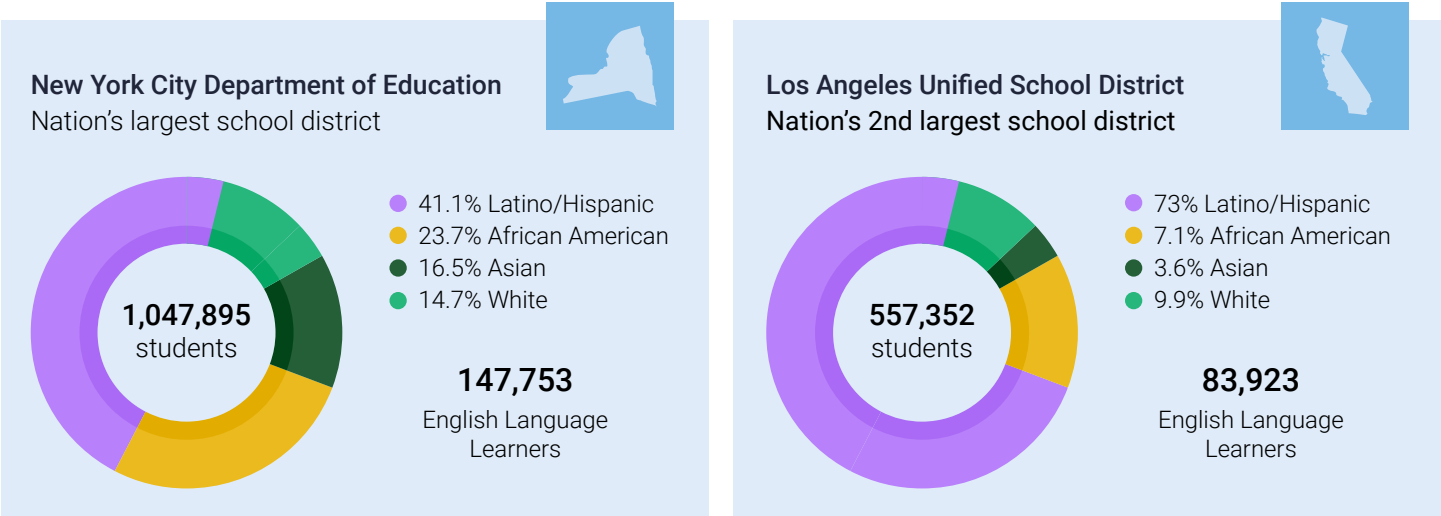
“LDC was instrumental in taking the students into a higher level and caliber of writing and thinking, and into more collaborative work. It just picked kids brains in a different way to create richer conversation and more rigor.”

– LDC Teacher Participant



The LDC instructional model changed how teachers and students think about and respond to reading and writing across and within content areas. It shifted conversations at the classroom, grade, school, and even district level. And, most importantly, it closed the achievement gap for students—for some by a whole school year.

Through a five-year federal Investing in Innovation (i3) validation grant, schools in the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) transformed their classrooms into standards-driven learning environments with the Literacy Design Collaborative.



The UCLA Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing's (CRESST) independent evaluation of LDC's impact on student outcomes found that students in New York City and Los Angeles gained from four to nine additional months of learning compared to matched-pair peers when exposed to multiple LDC teachers. In some cases, gains of three to seven months of additional learning were seen after just one year of teacher participation in LDC.^{1,2}

Gains of this magnitude are unusual in education, especially in such a short time period. By some measures, they are greater than the gap in learning among students with teachers in the top and bottom quartiles in terms of their teaching effectiveness.³ The cumulative effect of such large improvements in student learning has the potential to greatly narrow the achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers. This holds the promise of setting youth from marginalized populations on a new trajectory for significantly better life prospects.

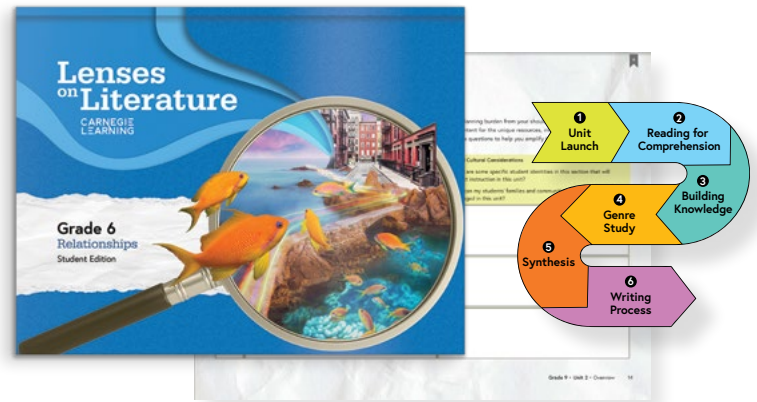
The results of the CRESST evaluation are supported by established research that states, unequivocally, that “task predicts performance.”⁴ Students need grade-appropriate assignments, effective instruction, high expectations, and to be engaged in what they are learning in order to consistently meet grade-level standards. Yet, only 17% of the assignments that students currently receive meet grade-level standards⁵, solidifying the reality that students will underperform those standards. When students are offered assignments with grade-appropriate expectations, they can meet their grade-level standards and close the achievement gap with their peers by more than seven months.



With such **impressive outcomes** demonstrated by the **LDC model**, the next logical step was to develop a **comprehensive curriculum** that could bring these benefits to even more students and teachers. **This led to the creation of *Lenses on Literature*.**

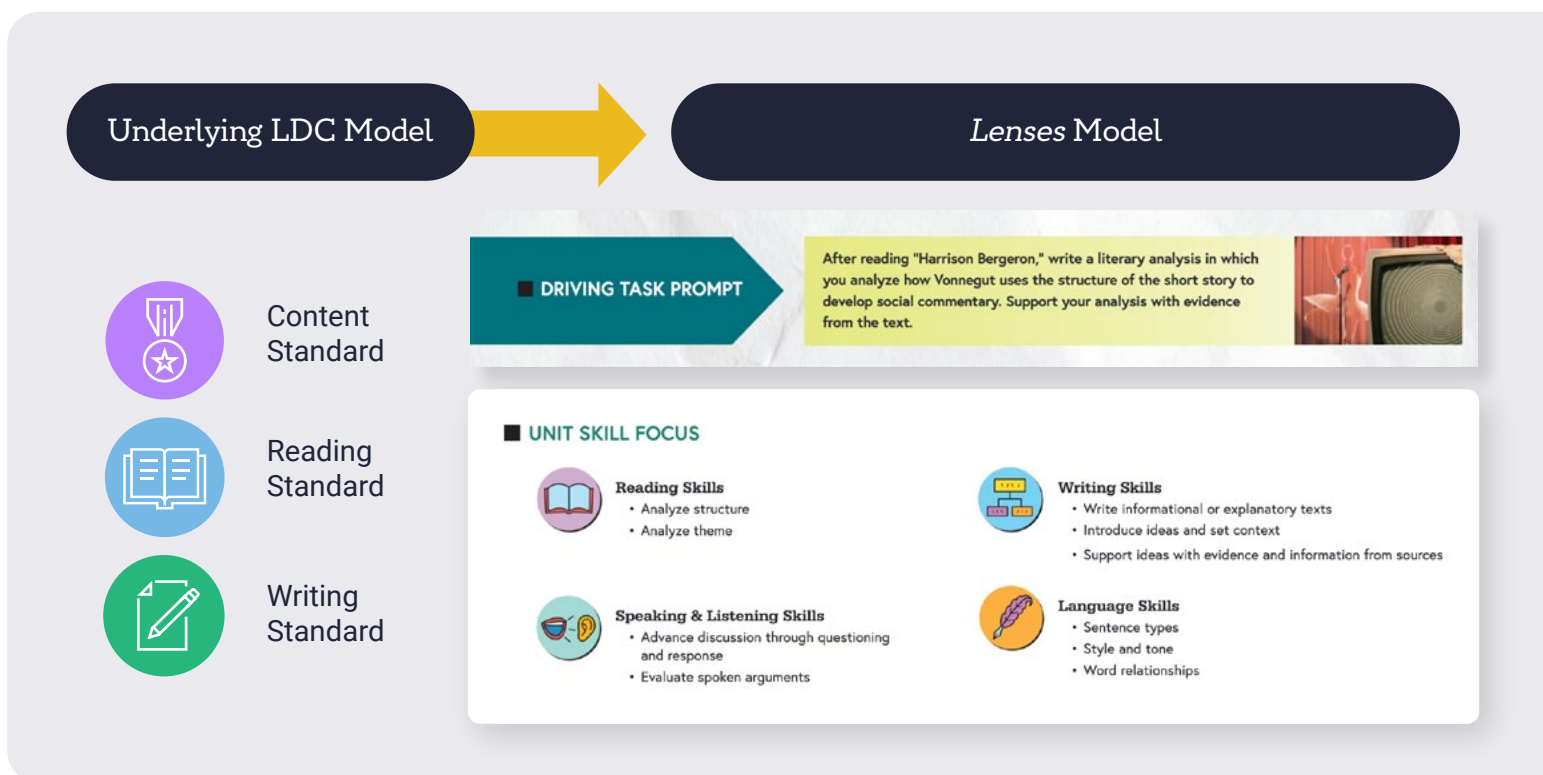
Creating *Lenses* on Literature

The *Lenses on Literature* curriculum integrates LDC's proven model into a comprehensive 6-12 ELA solution, focused on rigorous, standards-driven literacy tasks to enhance student engagement and skill development.



In 2020, Carnegie Learning and LDC, realizing their missions aligned, forged a new path towards bringing the LDC model to more districts. Under the leadership of Carnegie Learning Chief Literacy Officer Suzanne Simons, formerly LDC's Chief Academic Officer, the Carnegie Learning ELA team took the LDC model and materials to their next level: a comprehensive ELA curriculum. We now proudly present *Lenses on Literature*, a 6-12 solution that engages students in rigorous, grade-level literacy tasks using complex texts.

Lenses on Literature is intentionally designed to teach the critical skills, knowledge, and thinking structures students need to meet grade-level literacy standards. Drawing from the LDC's Focus Clusters, *Lenses* introduces each unit and section with Focus Skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language to drive the student experience.



Each *Lenses* unit centers on a journey, initiated by a Driving Task Prompt and anchored in the unit's focus standards. SCALE rubrics are used throughout each unit to orient students and teachers to the expectations of their final writing product as they progress through the content. A color-coded Journey Tracker aids students and educators in tracking their progress from reading to analysis to synthesis to writing.

Ongoing formative assessment activities provide authentic opportunities for students to demonstrate progress with focus skills in open-ended tasks. Periodic skills checks offer insights about student skill development using item types from high-stakes assessments. Final writing products assess each unit's focus skills for writing, reading, and language, according to a product-specific, multidimensional rubric.

Educators Love the LDC Model

What do educators say about the model behind *Lenses on Literature*?



“If [students] know the intentionality of the work, what they’re shooting towards, it builds excitement and rigor because they’re making the connections from the very beginning of a task through everything they’re asked to do along the way.”

– LDC Teacher Participant

“Students move through a process towards sifting the information and then toward using the information to support their own assertion.”

– Gary McCormick, LDC Partner

“It puts these pedagogical tools in [educators’] hands and enables them to share information, share best practices in a way that really promotes leadership.”

– Patricia Mitchell, Principal



Explore *Lenses on Literature*:

www.carnegielearning.com/lenses

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¹Wang, J., Herman, J. L., Epstein, S., Leon, S., La Torre, D., & Bozeman, V. (2020). Literacy Design Collaborative 2018–2019 evaluation report. Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).

²Wang, J., Herman, J. L., Epstein, S., Leon, S., La Torre, D., Chang, S., Bozeman, V., Xie, W., & Haubner, J. (2019). Literacy Design Collaborative 2017–2018 evaluation report for New York City Department of Education. Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST).

³Gathering Feedback for Teaching Combining High-Quality Observations with Student Surveys and Achievement Gains. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, January 2012.

⁴E.A. City, R.F. Elmore, S.E. Fiorman, L. Title (2009). Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁵TNTP. (2018). The Opportunity Myth. Retrieved from: <https://opportunitymyth.tntp.org/>