

Appendix B

Reports

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Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

What is CLASS?

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is a classroom observation tool developed at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education. It aims to provide a common lens and language focused on classroom interactions that encourage student learning.

CLASS observations break down the complex classroom environment to help educators focus on boosting the effectiveness of their interactions with learners of all ages. Observations rely on categorizing interactions within the CLASS framework.

The CLASS tool organizes teacher-student interactions into three broad domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. The upper elementary and secondary tools include an additional domain, Student Engagement. Within all domains except Student Engagement, interactions are further organized into multiple dimensions. Table 1 lists the domains and dimensions for each level.

Emotional Support: Students' social and emotional functioning in the classroom is increasingly recognized as an indicator of school readiness, a potential target for intervention, and even as a student outcome that might be governed by a set of standards similar to those for academic achievement. Students who are more motivated and connected to others are much more likely to establish positive trajectories of development in both social and academic domains. Teachers' abilities to support social and emotional functioning in the classroom are therefore central to ratings of effective classroom practices.

Classroom Organization: The classroom organization domain assesses a broad array of classroom processes related to the organization and management of students' behavior, time, and attention in the classroom. Classrooms function best and provide the most opportunities for learning when students are well-behaved, consistently have something to do, and are interested and engaged in learning tasks.

Instructional Support: The theoretical foundation for the instructional support domain is based on research on children's cognitive and language development. Thus the emphasis is on students' construction of usable knowledge, rather than rote memorization, and metacognition—or the awareness and understanding of one's thinking process. As a result, the instructional support domain does not make judgments about curriculum content; rather, it assesses the effectiveness of teachers' interactions with students that support cognitive and language development.

Student Engagement: Unlike other domains, student engagement focuses strictly on student functioning, and measures the overall engagement level of students in the classroom.

Table 1: CLASS Domains and Dimensions

Domain	Dimensions			
	Pre-K	Lower Elementary	Upper Elementary	Secondary
Emotional Support	Positive Climate Negative Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Student Perspectives	Positive Climate Negative Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Student Perspectives	Positive Climate Negative Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Student Perspectives	Positive Climate Negative Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Adolescent Perspectives
Classroom Organization	Behavior Management Productivity Instructional Learning Formats	Behavior Management Productivity Instructional Learning Formats	Behavior Management Productivity Instructional Learning Formats	Behavior Management Productivity Instructional Learning Formats
Instructional Support	Concept Development Quality of Feedback Language Modeling	Concept Development Quality of Feedback Language Modeling	Content Understanding Analysis and Problem Solving Quality of Feedback Instructional Dialogue	Content Understanding Analysis and Problem Solving Quality of Feedback
Student Engagement	n/a	n/a	Student Engagement	Student Engagement

Based on research from the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education and studied in thousands of classrooms nationwide, the CLASS

- focuses on effective teaching
- helps teachers recognize and understand the power of their interactions with students
- aligns with professional development tools
- works across age levels and subjects

CLASS-based professional development tools increase teacher effectiveness, and students in classrooms where teachers are observed to demonstrate and earn higher CLASS scores achieve at higher levels than their peers in classrooms with lower CLASS scores.¹

¹ Teachstone Inc. <http://www.teachstone.org/about-the-class/>

Adoption of CLASS by APS

The 2005-11 strategic plan includes an indicator that targets an increasing percentage of teachers displaying effective, differentiated instruction during annual observations. This indicator was new. However, while differentiation was occurring, no valid or efficient measurement system was in place to capture this information. Therefore, APS targeted development of such a measure.

Table 2: 2005-11 Strategic Plan Indicator on Annual Observations of Differentiated Instruction

	Baseline		2005 to 2011 Strategic Plan					
	('99-05 Strategic Plan)		Results				Targets	
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Indicator 57 – Percentage of teachers displaying effective, differentiated instruction during annual observations								
Target	n/a	n/a	Develop measure	Develop measure	Develop measure	Baseline		
Progress			Not developed	Not developed	Not developed	Not developed		

In 2009, staff began to look at the annual observation processes. Two system-wide processes were identified for initial investigation:

- Teacher evaluation observations
- Observations conducted for program evaluation

Staff next examined whether there were measures within the above processes to provide consistent and reliable data across the evaluations. This criterion eliminated the teacher evaluation system since there is currently no means by which to extract and quantify data from observations. Also, there is variability in use of observations as described in the teacher evaluation system ranging from evaluation of probationary teachers that is exclusively an observation-based system to periodic observations of continuing contract teachers.

However, the observations conducted for program evaluation had the potential to meet our requirements if APS could identify a single observation tool that would be used by all programs, and if we could ensure the validity and reliability of the observation tool.

A Proposed Measure

Department of Instruction staff, joined by representatives from Student Services and Information Services, entered a lengthy process: to review observation tools used in past evaluations and other initiatives and to identify a tool or create a tool that met our requirements for validity and consistency. This endeavor also provided additional opportunity to consider whether such tools might also yield information on the efficacy of teachers' use of culturally competent teaching behaviors, a goal of the Division's cultural competence initiative. This work brought us to the CLASS tool.

APS had experience using CLASS in 2009 as part of the evaluation of APS pre-K programs. To ensure that this selection was appropriate to collect data related to differentiation, in April 2010, a group of APS staff participated in CLASS training for secondary instruction. Once the training was complete, a pilot study was conducted.

APS CLASS Pilot

Pilot Observations

- Since CLASS was used in the 2009 evaluation of Pre-K programs, the pilot focused on secondary classrooms.
- Multiple observations were conducted at seven of nine secondary schools during late May and early June 2010 by certified raters. Observations included a mix of core and elective classrooms and self-contained Special Education and ESOL/HILT classrooms.
- Observations were conducted in 20 minute intervals as recommended by CLASS protocols.

Observers

- Completed a 2-day training session; became certified through the UVA-proctored assessment.
- Did not observe teachers whom they currently evaluate, and agreed to maintain teacher and school anonymity.
- Were paired with a co-observer during each observation to determine if coding was consistent across individuals.

Differentiation

The Gifted Services (GS) Supervisor reviewed the tool and participated in the pilot. She noted that the four domains measured by the secondary CLASS tool are essential in effectively differentiated classrooms: emotional support of the learner; classroom organization to facilitate all students' learning; instructional support that strengthens student understanding; and student engagement. The tool not only itemizes the behaviors of the student and teacher in an effectively differentiated classroom but it also expects a level of student and teacher behavior that is effective for the instruction of gifted learners. The specific indicator measured by CLASS that is essential for gifted learners is Analysis & Problem Solving.

In this limited sample of observations using the secondary CLASS, the decreased scores found in the area of Analysis & Problem Solving parallel what was seen in the GS Program Evaluation. In review of the data collected using the Classroom Observation Scale – Revised (COS-R) observation tool used in grade 3-5 classrooms during the GS Program Evaluation, it had been noted that although there was a moderate adherence to the basic principles of differentiated instruction, differentiation specifically for gifted students in the categories of problem-solving and research were too small to calculate categorical means.²

While all domains address differentiation, four dimensions within those domains were determined to be the most essential for effectively differentiated classrooms:

1. Teacher Sensitivity (pre-k through secondary)
2. Regard for Student Perspectives (pre-K & elementary); Regard for Adolescent Perspectives (secondary)
3. Instructional Learning Formats (pre-k through secondary)
4. Concept Development (pre-K & lower elementary); Analysis and Problem Solving (upper elementary and secondary)

Composites of these indicators from the CLASS will be used by APS as a measure of differentiation for all learners.

² Gifted Services Evaluation Report, November 2008

CLASS and Program Evaluation

APS plans to conduct CLASS observations for all program evaluation reports, starting in the 2010-11 school year. In the fall of 2010, the Office of Planning and Evaluation recruited retired teachers and administrators to become certified CLASS observers. Certification is managed by the University of Virginia. Trainees undergo in-depth training to help them use the tool effectively in the field. An assessment is used to ensure that the observers have demonstrated reliability with the CLASS tool.

Two series of CLASS observations were conducted in the 2010-11 school year, one in the fall and one in the spring. A total of 555 observations of mathematics, English language arts, and world languages instruction were completed. Based on recommendations from the University of Virginia, each observation lasted approximately 30 minutes and observers were instructed to view either the beginning or end of a class. Ten additional minutes were provided for coding of the observation. The sample of classrooms observed included all APS schools and programs. Self-contained classrooms that serve ESOL/HILT or students identified with a disability, as well as mainstream classrooms where ESOL/HILT and students identified with a disability were also included.

CLASS Scores

CLASS dimensions are scored on a 7-point scale consisting of Low (1, 2), Mid (3, 4, 5), and High (6, 7) ranges. A score in the low range indicates an absence or lack of the behaviors associated with a given dimension, while a score in the high range indicates a high presence of such behaviors. Scores in the high range are desirable for all dimensions except for Negative Climate. With this dimension, the goal is a low score, or an absence of negativity.

Research Foundations of CLASS

The CLASS framework is derived from developmental theory and research suggesting that interactions between students and adults are the primary mechanism of child development and learning.

Elementary CLASS

Research provides evidence about the types of teacher-student interactions that promote positive social and academic development. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS) provides a reliable, valid assessment of these interactions³

Selected studies demonstrate:

- Higher levels of instructional support are related to preschoolers' gains in pre-reading and math skills.⁴
- High levels of emotional support contribute to preschoolers' social competence in the kindergarten year.⁵
- High levels of emotional support are associated with growth in reading and math achievement from kindergarten through fifth grade.⁶
- High levels of classroom organization are associated with gains in first graders' literacy.⁷

³ Karen LaParo, Robert Pianta, and Meghan Stuhlman, "Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS): Findings from the Pre-K Year," *Elementary School Journal*, 104:5, pages 409-426.

⁴ Mashburn, Pianta, Hamre, Downer et al., *Child Development*, 79, pages 732-749.

⁵ Timothy Curby, Jennifer Locasale-Crouch, Timothy Konold, Robert Pianta, Carollee Howes, Margaret Burchinal et al., "The Relations of Observed Pre-K Classrooms Quality Profiles to Children's Academic Achievement and Social Competence," *Early Education and Development*, 19, pages 643-666.

⁶ Robert Pianta, Jay Belsky, Nathan Vandergrift, Renee Houts, Fred Morrison, and NICHD-ECCRN, "Classroom Effects on Children's Achievement Trajectories in Elementary School," *American Education Research Journal*, 49, pages 365-397.

- Kindergarten children are more engaged and exhibit greater self-control in classrooms offering more effective teacher-child interactions.⁸
- First-grade children at risk for school failure perform on par with peers, both socially and academically, when exposed to classrooms with effective teacher-student interactions.⁹

Moreover, studies conducted in over 6,000 classrooms provide evidence that students in PK–5 classrooms with higher CLASS ratings realize greater gains in achievement and social skill development.¹⁰

Secondary CLASS

Research using the more recently developed secondary CLASS tool has shown that teachers’ skills in establishing a positive emotional climate, their sensitivity to student needs, and their structuring of their classroom and lessons in ways that recognize adolescents’ needs for a sense of autonomy and control, for an active role in their learning, and for opportunities for peer interaction were all associated with higher relative student gains in achievement.¹¹

Alignment with APS Initiatives

Differentiation

The CLASS tool was adopted by APS to address the need for a valid and efficient measurement system that would allow the school system to capture information for the strategic plan on the percentage of teachers displaying effective, differentiated instruction during annual observations.

Teacher Evaluation (Danielson)

The CLASS tool is heavily aligned with Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching¹², which sets forth standards for teaching behaviors in the areas of planning, instruction, classroom environment, and professional responsibility. Danielson’s Levels of Performance rubrics are the foundation for all T-Scale staff evaluation in APS.

Cultural Competence

There is strong alignment between Gay’s Exemplars of Culturally Responsive Behaviors¹³ and classroom behaviors identified in the CLASS tool. The APS Council for Cultural Competence was established in 2003 to develop the framework for permanent, systemwide cultural competence activities including ongoing cultural competence training for all staff. Cultural competence is a set of attitudes, skills, behaviors, and policies that enable organizations and staff to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

⁷ Claire Cameron Ponitz, Sara Rimm-Kaufman, Laura Brock, and Lori Nathanson, “Contributions of gender, early school adjustment, and classroom organizational climate to first grade outcomes,” *Elementary School Journal*, 110, 142-162.

⁸ Sara Rimm-Kaufman, Timothy Curby, Kevin Grimm, Lori Nathanson and Laura Brock, “The Contribution of Children’s Self-Regulation and Classroom Quality to Children’s Adaptive Behavior in Kindergarten,” *Developmental Psychology*, in-press. See also NICHD ECCRN, “A Day in Third Grade: A Large- Scale Study of Classroom Quality and Teacher and Student Behavior,” *Elementary School Journal*, 105, pages 305-323.

⁹ Bridget Hamre and Robert Pianta, “Can Instructional and Emotional Support in First Grade Classrooms Make a Difference for Children At Risk of School Failure?” *Child Development*, 76, pages 949-967.

¹⁰ Website http://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/CLASS-MTP_PK-12_brief.pdf Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning Charlottesville, Virginia, **Measuring and Improving Teacher-Student Interactions in PK-12 Settings to Enhance Students’ Learning**

¹¹ Joseph P. Allen, Anne Gregory, Amori Mikami, Janetta Lun, Bridget Hamre, and Robert C. Pianta, “Observations of Effective Teaching in Secondary School Classrooms: Predicting Student Achievement with the CLASS-S.” Submitted.

¹² Charlotte Danielson (2007), *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

¹³ Geneva Gay (2000). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, & Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Alignment of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) With APS Best Instructional Practices

Domain/ Dimension	Grades Observed	Description of CLASS Dimensions	Alignment with			
			Differentiation ¹	Responsive Education ²	Danielson ³	SIOp ⁴
Emotional Support						
Positive Climate	Pre-K - 12	Reflects the emotional connection and relationships among teachers and students, and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and non-verbal interactions.		X	X	
Negative Climate	Pre-K - 12	Reflects the overall level of expressed negativity among teachers and students in the classroom; the frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and student negativity are important to observe.		X	X	
Teacher Sensitivity	Pre-K - 12	Encompasses the teacher's awareness and responsiveness to the academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs of individual students and the entire class. At the younger levels, it also includes the teacher's ability to consistently provide comfort, reassurance, and encouragement.	X	X	X	X
Regard for <i>Student/Adolescent</i> Perspective	Pre-K – 3	<i>Student:</i> At the younger levels, it captures the degree to which the teacher's interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy.	X	X	X	X
	4-12	<i>Adolescent:</i> At the older levels, it focuses on the extent to which the teacher is able to meet and capitalize on the social and developmental needs and goals of (pre)adolescents by providing opportunities for student autonomy and leadership. Also considered are the extent to which student ideas and opinions are valued and content is made useful and relevant to (pre)adolescents.	X	X	X	X
Classroom Organization						
Behavior Management	Pre-K - 12	Encompasses the teacher's use of clear behavioral expectations and effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior.		X	X	
Productivity	Pre-K - 12	Considers how well the teacher manages time and routines so that instructional time is maximized.			X	
Instructional Learning Formats	Pre-K - 12	Focuses on the ways in which the teacher maximizes students' interest and engagement in learning. This includes the teacher's use of interesting and engaging lessons and materials, active facilitation, and clarity of learning objectives.	X	X	X	X

¹ Differentiation or differentiated instruction is an approach that recognizes that all students must master a common body of knowledge and skills, but each student learns a different way and needs an approach most appropriate to his or her learning needs. Differentiation relates to content (what students learn), process (how students learn), and product (how students demonstrate what they've learned). Students differ in readiness (prior mastery of knowledge, understandings, and skills), interest (curiosity and passion to know, understand, or do more), and how they prefer to learn (Tomlinson, 1999).

² Responsive education or culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Alignment of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) With APS Best Instructional Practices

Domain/ Dimension	Grades Observed	Description of CLASS Dimensions	Alignment with			
			Differentiation ¹	Responsive Education ²	Danielson ³	SIOP ⁴
Instructional Support						
Concept Development	Pre-K – 3	Measures the teacher’s use of instructional discussions and activities to promote students’ higher-order thinking skills and cognition and the teacher’s focus on understanding rather than on rote instruction.	X		x	X
Content Understanding	4-12	Refers to both the depth of the lesson content and the approaches used to help students comprehend the framework, key ideas, and procedures in an academic discipline. At a high level, this refers to interactions among the teacher and students that lead to an integrated understanding of facts, skills, concepts, and principles.		X	X	X
Analysis and Problem Solving	4-12	Assesses the degree to which the teacher facilitates students’ use of higher-level thinking skills, such as analysis, problem solving, reasoning, and creation through the application of knowledge and skills. Opportunities for demonstrating metacognition, i.e. thinking about thinking, are also included.	X	X		X
Quality of Feedback	Pre-K - 12	Assesses the degree to which feedback expands and extends learning and understanding and encourages student participation. (At the secondary level, significant feedback may be provided by peers)		X	X	X
Language Modeling	Pre-K-3	Captures the quality and amount of the teacher’s use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques.			X	X
Instructional Dialogue	4-5	Captures the purposeful use of dialogue- structured, cumulative questioning and discussion which guide and prompt students- to facilitate students’ understanding of content and language development. The extent to which these dialogues are distributed across all students in the class and across the class period is important to this rating.			X	X
Student Engagement	4-12	Intended to capture the degree to which all students in the class are focused and participating in the learning activity presented or facilitated by the teacher. The difference between passive engagement and active engagement is of note in this rating.		X	X	X

³ Danielson’s Domains of Teaching Responsibility frame the APS teacher evaluation process and are based on Charlotte Danielson’s Enhancing Professional Practice. The domains are the areas in which T-Scale employees are evaluated and are the foundation for Best Instructional Practices. For classroom based teachers they include: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction and Professional Responsibilities. For non-classroom-based teachers the domains are: Planning and Preparation, Environment, Delivery of Service, and Professional Responsibilities.

⁴ Sheltered instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is an approach to teaching that promotes content-area learning and language development for English language learners. Teachers adapt grade-level content lessons to the students’ levels of English proficiency, while focusing on English language development to help students increase their proficiency in academic English.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

Domain and Dimension Scores

CLASS is an observation tool developed at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education to help analyze the interactions between teachers and their students in order to boost the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

The CLASS tool organizes these teacher-student interactions into three broad domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. The upper elementary and secondary tool includes a fourth domain: Student Engagement.

The Emotional Support domain contains 4 categories: Positive Climate, Negative Climate, Teacher Sensitivity, and Regard for Student Perspectives (K–5) or Regard for Adolescent Perspectives (6–12). The Classroom Organization domain contains 3 categories: Behavior Management, Productivity, and Instructional Learning Formats. The Instructional Support domain contains 3 categories for K–3 students: Concept Development, Quality of Feedback, and Language Modeling. It contains 3 categories for students in grades 6–12: Content Understanding, Analysis and Problem Solving, and Quality of Feedback. The same 3 categories, plus one more: Instructional Dialogue, are used to assess grades 4 and 5 classrooms.

Scores are assigned for each category within the domains on a scale of 0 to 7, with 7 being the best possible score. However, the category of “negative climate” found under the domain of Emotional Support uses a reverse scale. Therefore, a score of 0 is considered best for this category.

Over the course of 2 years (2010-11 and 2011-12), certified CLASS observers visited approximately 600 classrooms to obtain the data reflected in this report. More than half the classes observed were elementary reading classes; the remaining classes were a relatively even mix of middle school and high school English language arts classes. In addition, special education classes, classes that serve LEP (limited English proficient) students, classes taught in Spanish, and classes for gifted learners were also observed for this report.

The Gifted Services Office requested that a composite score be devised to assess effective instruction for gifted learners. The specific indicator measured by CLASS that is essential for gifted learners is Analysis & Problem Solving. Therefore, a Differentiation Composite is reported that includes scores from the following categories: Teacher Sensitivity (K–12), Regard for Student Perspectives (K–5), Regard for Adolescent Perspectives (6–12), Instructional Learning Formats (K–12), Concept Development (K–3), and Analysis and Problem Solving (4–12).

Along similar lines, a Culturally Responsive composite score was created to assess culturally responsive behaviors in the classroom between teacher and students. The categories used to measure this outcome were Positive Climate (K–12), Negative Climate (K–12), Teacher Sensitivity (K–12), Regard for Student Perspectives (K–5) or Regard for Adolescent Perspectives (6–12), Behavior Management (K–12), Instructional Learning Formats (K–12), Content Understanding (4–12), Analysis and Problem Solving (4–12), Quality of Feedback (K–12), and Student Engagement (4–12).

Table 1 shows the number of classes observed, the mean score (scale of 0–7), and the standard deviation for each CLASS domain and dimension, by level for the 2010-11 school year. The *Differentiation Composite* and the *Culturally Responsive Instruction Composite* scores are also included by level.

Table 1: Average Domain, Dimension, and Composite Scores for 2010-11

Average Domain, Dimension, or Composite Score	Elementary			Middle School			High School		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Support	115	5.65	0.82	66	5.59	0.83	72	5.86	0.80
Positive Climate	115	5.63	1.19	66	5.65	1.06	72	5.85	1.00
Negative Climate	114	1.19	0.46	66	1.52	0.95	71	1.17	0.48
Teacher Sensitivity	115	5.62	1.16	66	5.23	0.97	72	5.74	1.03
Regard for Student Perspectives (K-5)	113	4.56	1.32	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Regard for Adolescent Perspectives (6-12)	n/a	n/a	n/a	66	5.00	0.98	72	5.03	1.34
Classroom Organization	115	5.70	0.97	66	5.41	0.84	72	5.66	1.01
Behavior Management	115	6.03	1.14	66	5.48	1.06	72	5.92	1.16
Productivity	115	5.89	1.14	65	5.54	0.95	72	5.86	1.15
Instructional Learning Formats	113	5.11	1.42	66	5.21	0.94	72	5.19	1.31
Instructional Support	115	4.13	1.53	67	4.64	1.02	72	4.73	1.24
Content Understanding (4-12)	39	4.56	1.45	66	4.80	1.08	70	5.10	1.24
Analysis and Problem Solving (4-12)	40	3.75	1.68	67	4.31	1.18	72	4.18	1.72
Concept Development (K-3)	75	3.95	1.75	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Quality of Feedback (all grades)	114	4.34	1.55	66	4.73	1.14	72	4.94	1.29
Language Modeling (K-3)	75	4.11	1.73	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Instructional Dialogue (4-5)	39	4.18	1.52	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Student Engagement (4-12)	40	5.98	1.14	66	5.32	0.99	72	5.54	1.28
Differentiation Composite	118	4.70	1.27	67	4.96	0.90	72	5.03	1.06
Culturally Responsive Instruction	118	5.27	1.13	67	5.24	0.84	72	5.43	0.85

Table 2 shows the number of classes observed, the mean score (scale of 0–7), and the standard deviation for each CLASS domain and dimension, by level for the 2011-12 school year. The *Differentiation Composite* and the *Culturally Responsive Instruction Composite* scores are also included by level.

Table 2: Average Domain, Dimension, and Composite Scores for 2011-12

Average Domain, Dimension, or Composite Score	Elementary			Middle School			High School		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Support	214	5.72	0.80	71	5.58	0.81	59	5.82	0.91
Positive Climate	213	5.76	1.13	71	5.59	0.90	59	5.80	1.20
Negative Climate	213	1.17	0.58	71	1.39	0.80	59	1.24	0.86
Teacher Sensitivity	214	5.70	1.07	71	5.34	1.07	59	5.49	1.19
Regard for Student Perspectives (K-5)	212	4.62	1.33	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Regard for Adolescent Perspectives (6-12)	n/a	n/a	n/a	71	4.77	1.27	59	5.22	1.33
Classroom Organization	214	5.82	0.90	71	5.59	0.81	59	5.62	0.94
Behavior Management	214	5.94	1.09	71	5.77	0.88	59	5.85	1.06
Productivity	214	6.09	0.94	71	5.79	0.92	59	5.92	0.90
Instructional Learning Formats	212	5.41	1.14	70	5.21	1.17	59	5.08	1.39
Instructional Support	214	4.27	1.24	71	4.54	1.21	59	4.81	1.30
Content Understanding (4-12)	53	4.87	1.21	71	4.73	1.32	58	4.81	1.30
Analysis and Problem Solving (4-12)	53	3.92	1.34	71	4.11	1.46	59	4.51	1.49
Concept Development (K-3)	160	4.00	1.42	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Quality of Feedback (all grades)	214	4.55	1.36	71	4.79	1.25	59	5.10	1.37
Language Modeling (K-3)	161	4.13	1.45	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Instructional Dialogue (4-5)	53	4.32	1.44	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Student Engagement (4-12)	53	6.21	0.86	71	5.65	0.93	59	5.68	0.92
Differentiation Composite	214	4.92	0.96	71	4.86	1.01	59	5.08	1.18
Culturally Responsive Instruction	214	5.50	0.82	71	5.26	0.80	59	5.43	0.95

Figures 1 and 2 show the average CLASS score for each domain by level for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, respectively. They also include the *Differentiation Composite* and the *Culturally Responsive Instruction Composite* scores.

Figure 1: Average ELA CLASS Scores for 2010-11

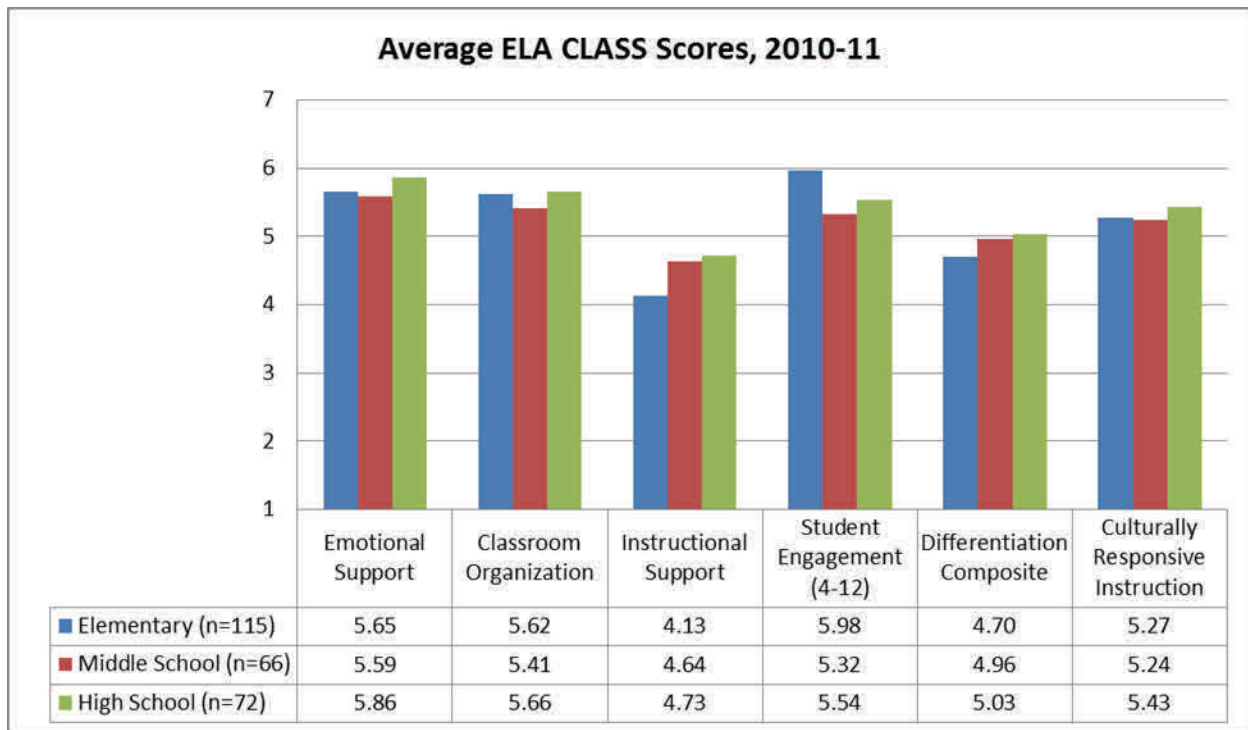
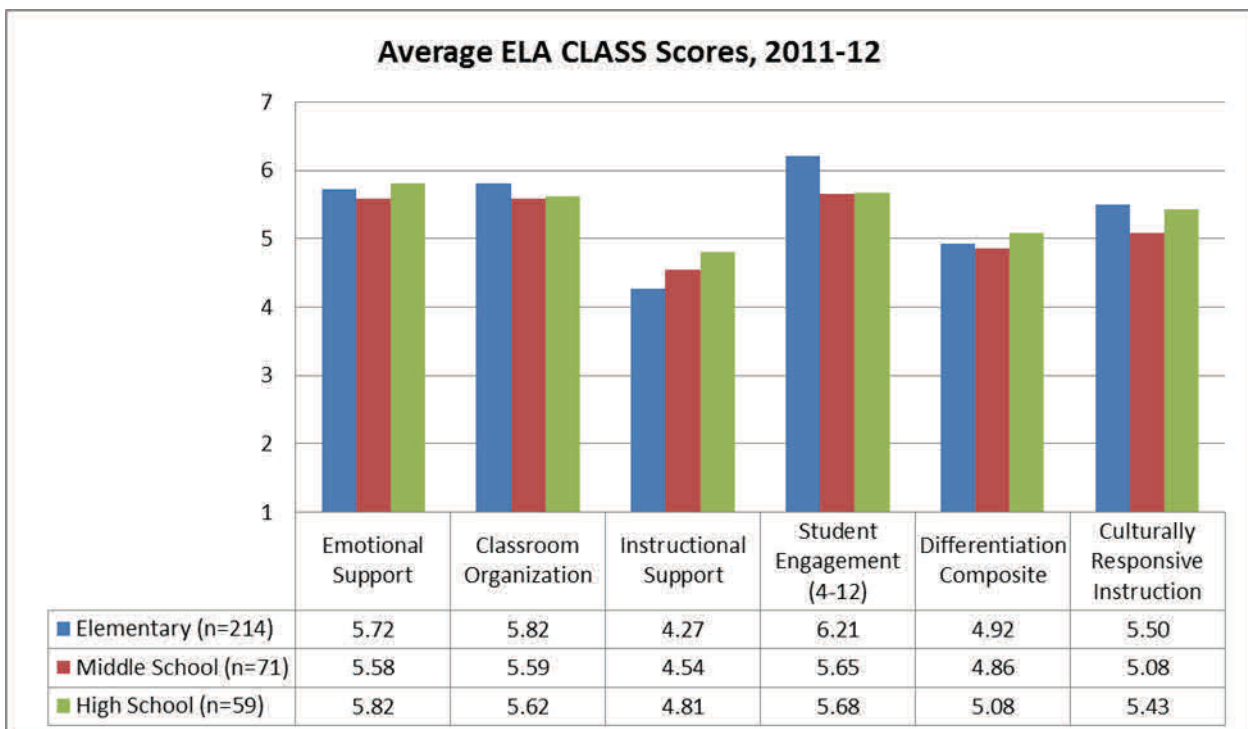


Figure 2: Average ELA CLASS Scores for 2011-12



Figures 3, 4, and 5 display the score distribution within the Emotional Support domain at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2010-11 school year.

Figure 3: Elementary School Score Distribution for Emotional Support, 2010-11

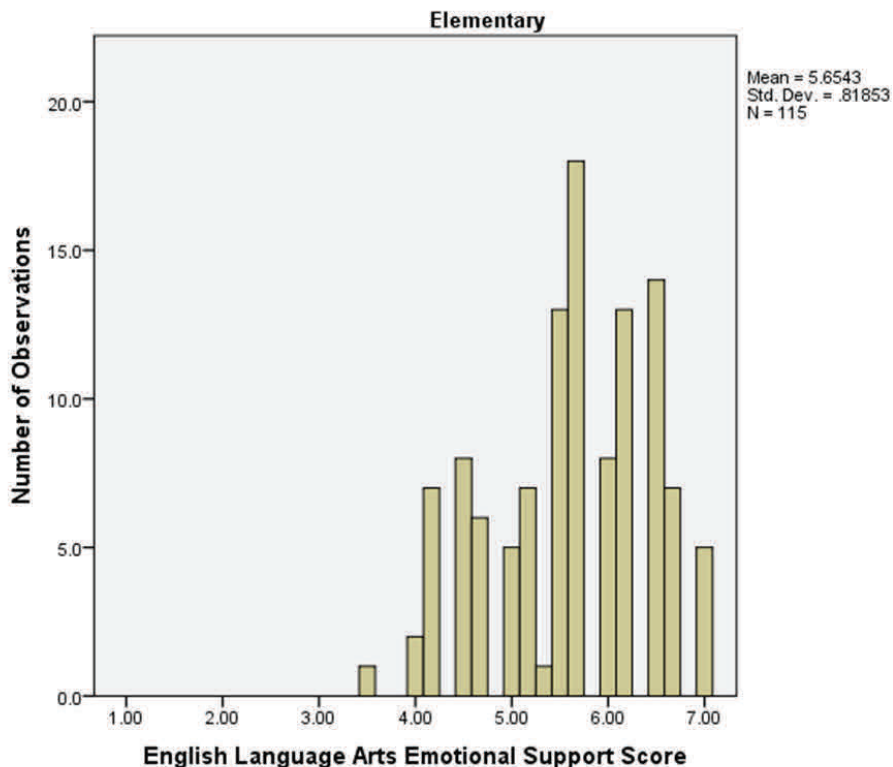


Figure 4: Middle School Score Distribution for Emotional Support, 2010-11

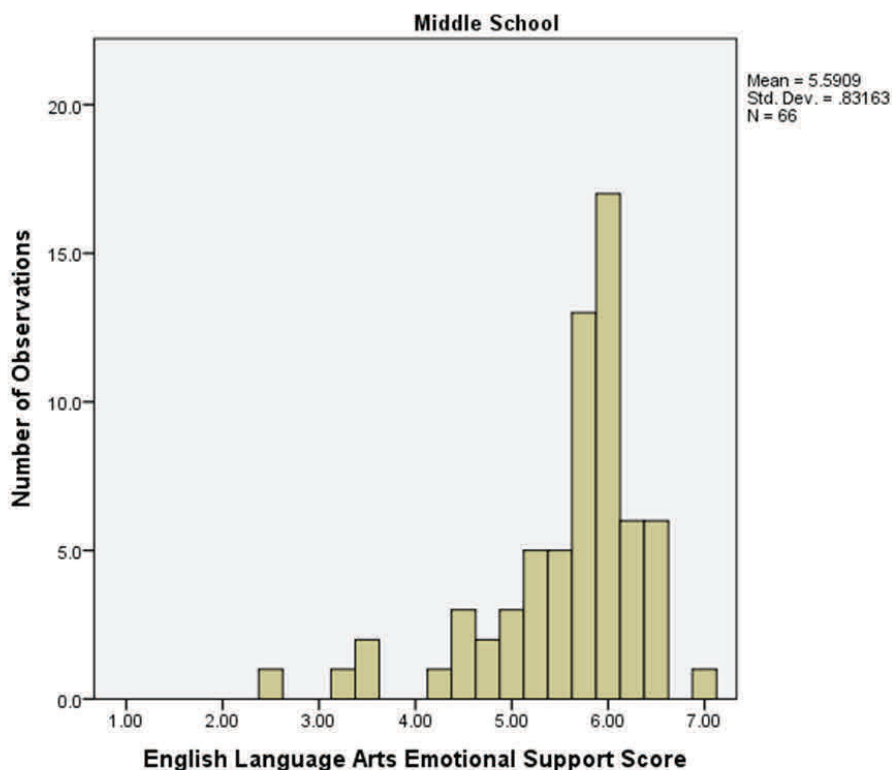
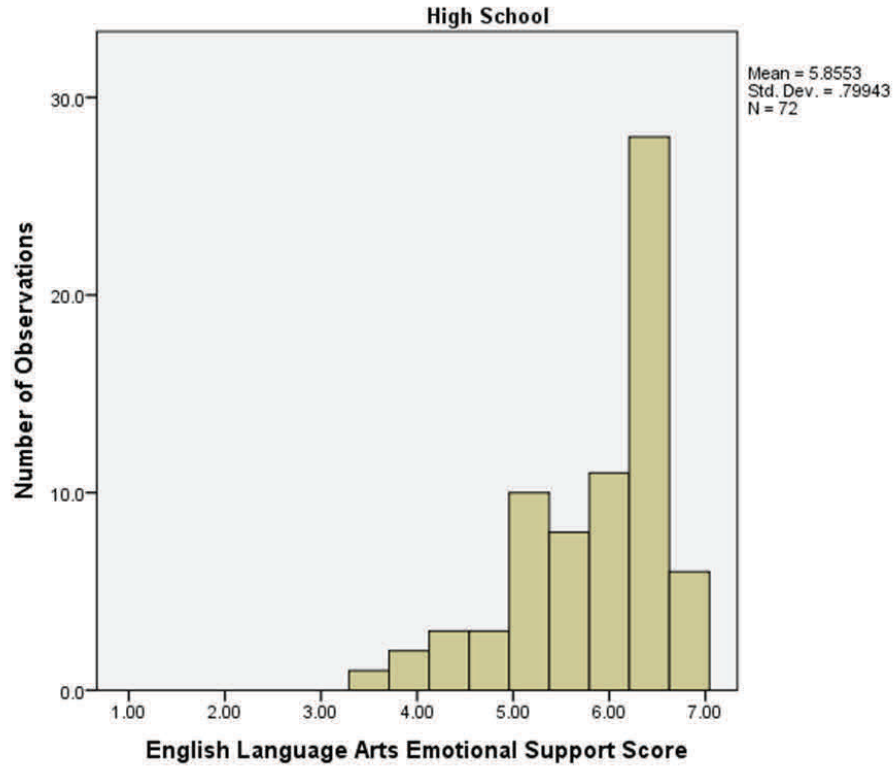


Figure 5: High School Score Distribution for Emotional Support, 2010-11



Figures 6, 7, and 8 display the score distribution within the Classroom Organization domain at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2010-11 school year.

Figure 6: Elementary School Score Distribution for Classroom Organization, 2010-11

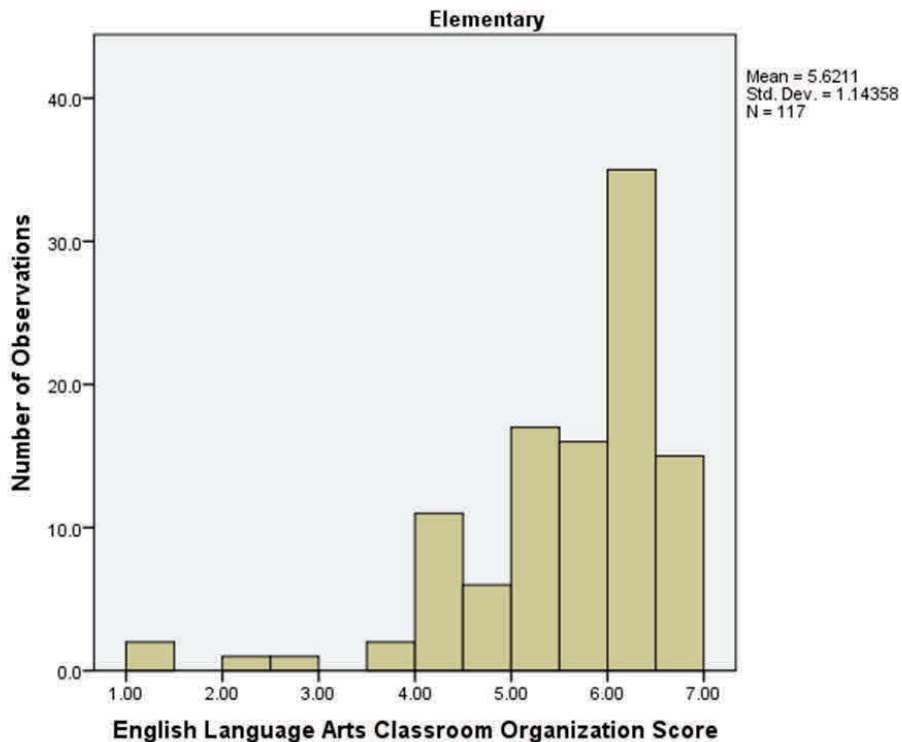


Figure 7: Middle School Score Distribution for Classroom Organization, 2010-11

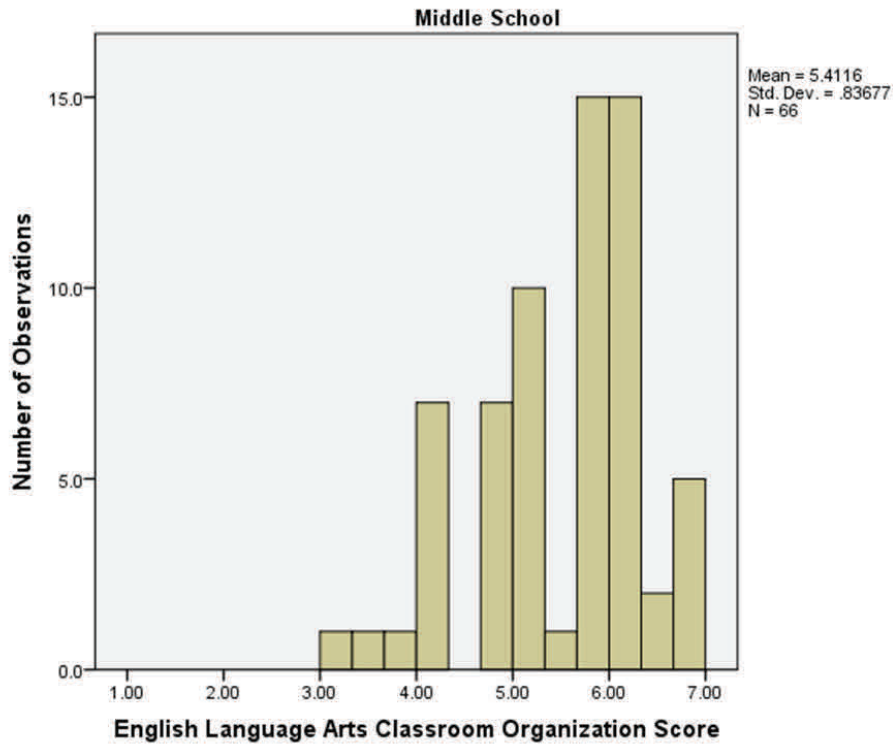
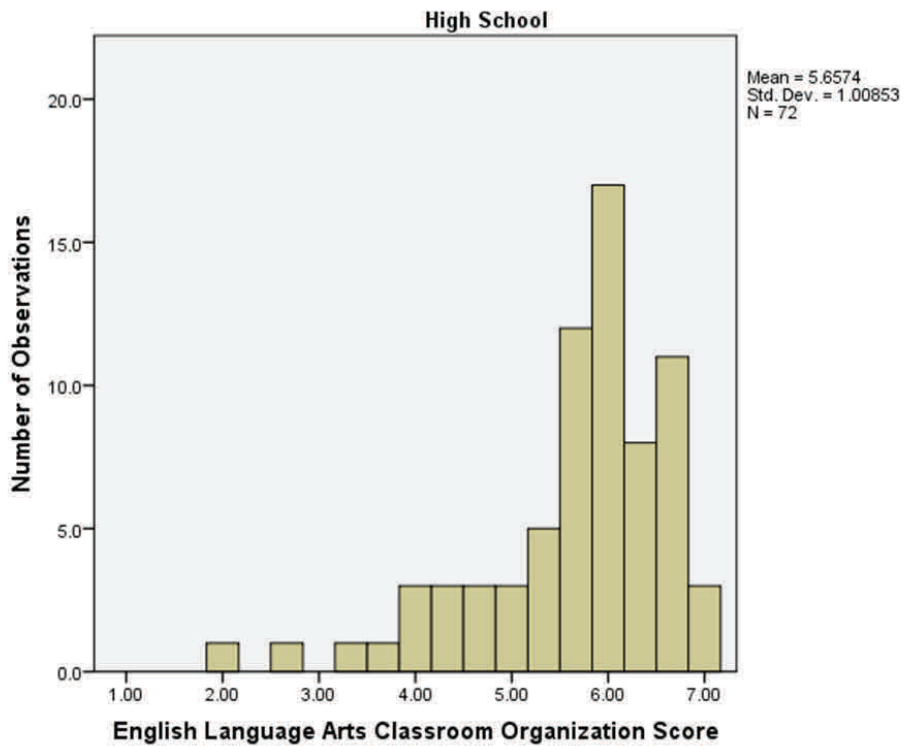


Figure 8: High School Score Distribution for Classroom Organization, 2010-11



Figures 9, 10, and 11 display the score distribution within the Instructional Support domain at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2010-11 school year.

Figure 9: Elementary School Score Distribution for Instructional Support, 2010-11

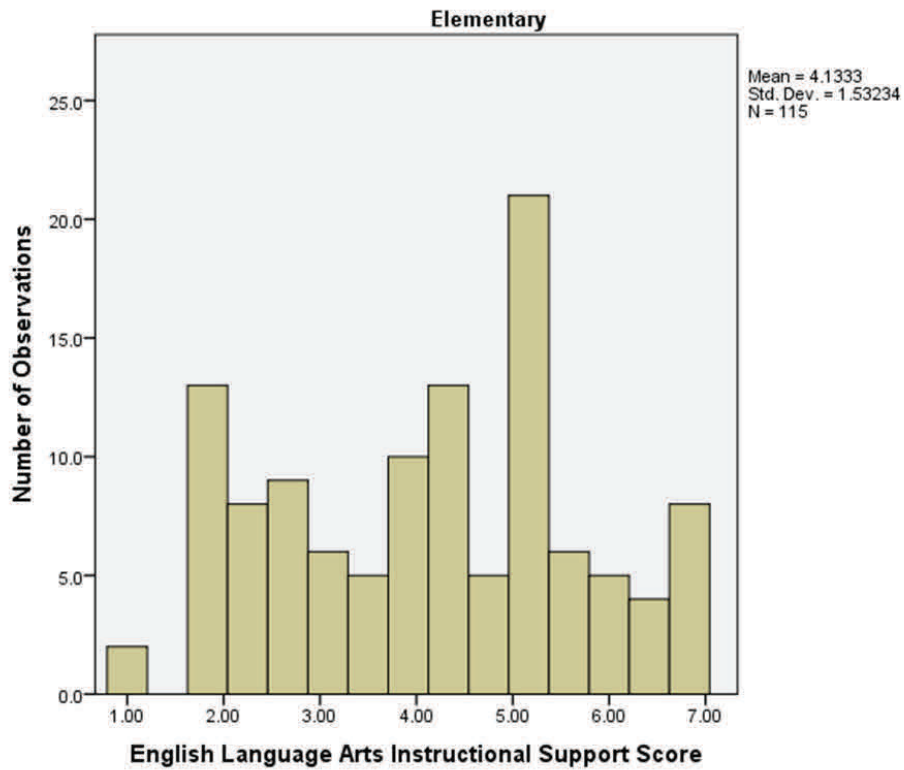


Figure 10: Middle School Score Distribution for Instructional Support, 2010-11

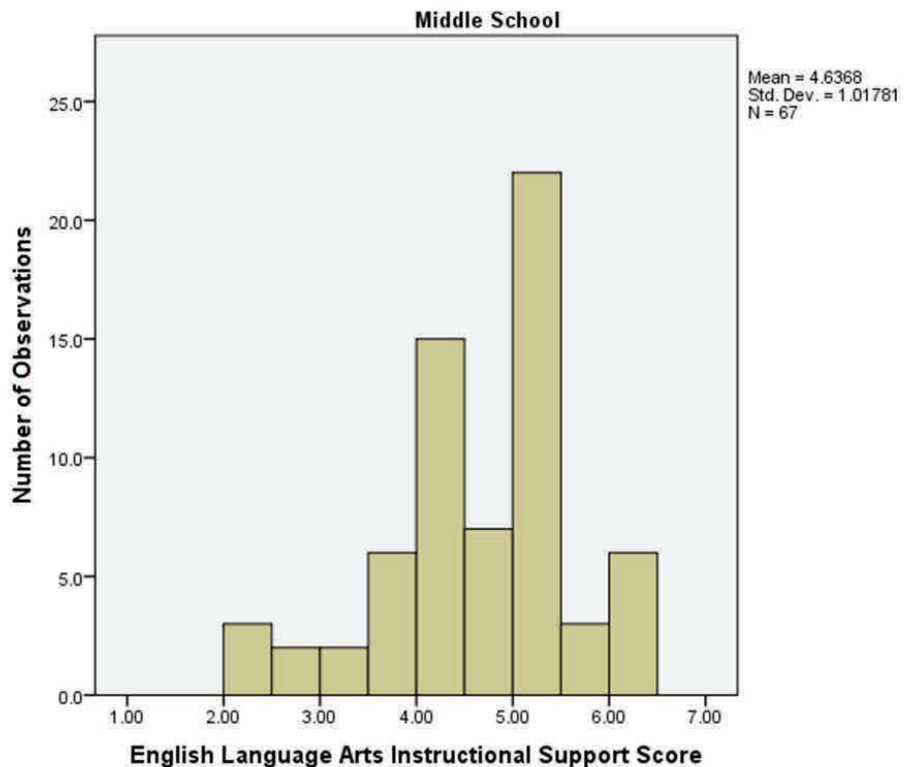
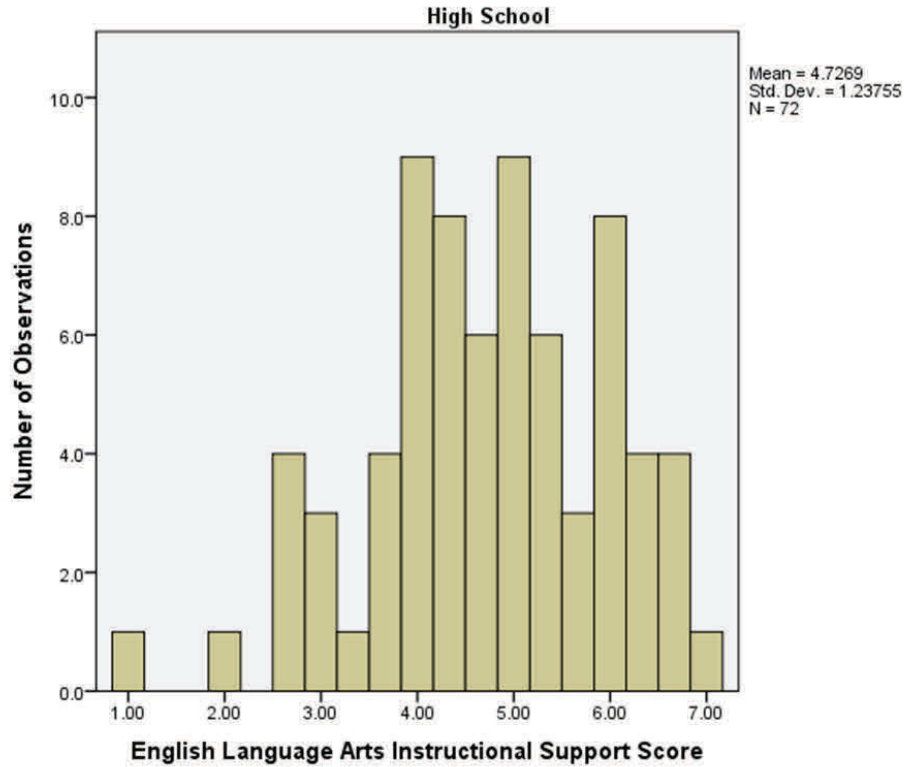


Figure 11: High School Score Distribution for Instructional Support, 2010-11



Figures 12, 13, and 14 display the score distribution within the Student Engagement domain at the elementary (grades 4 and 5), middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2010-11 school year.

Figure 12: Elementary School Score Distribution for Student Engagement, 2010-11

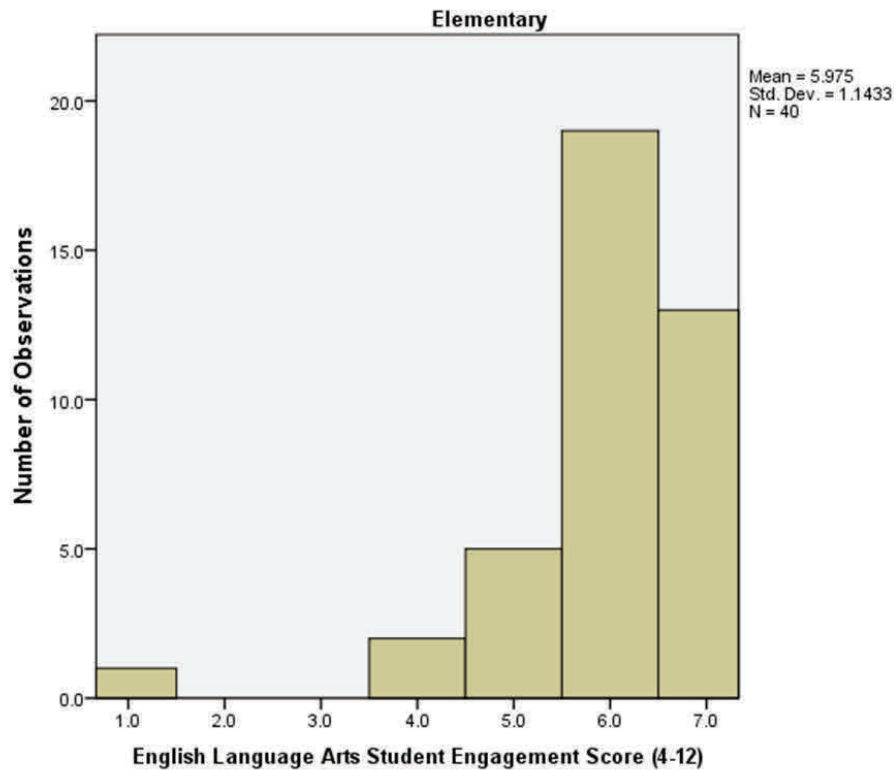


Figure 13: Middle School Score Distribution for Student Engagement, 2010-11

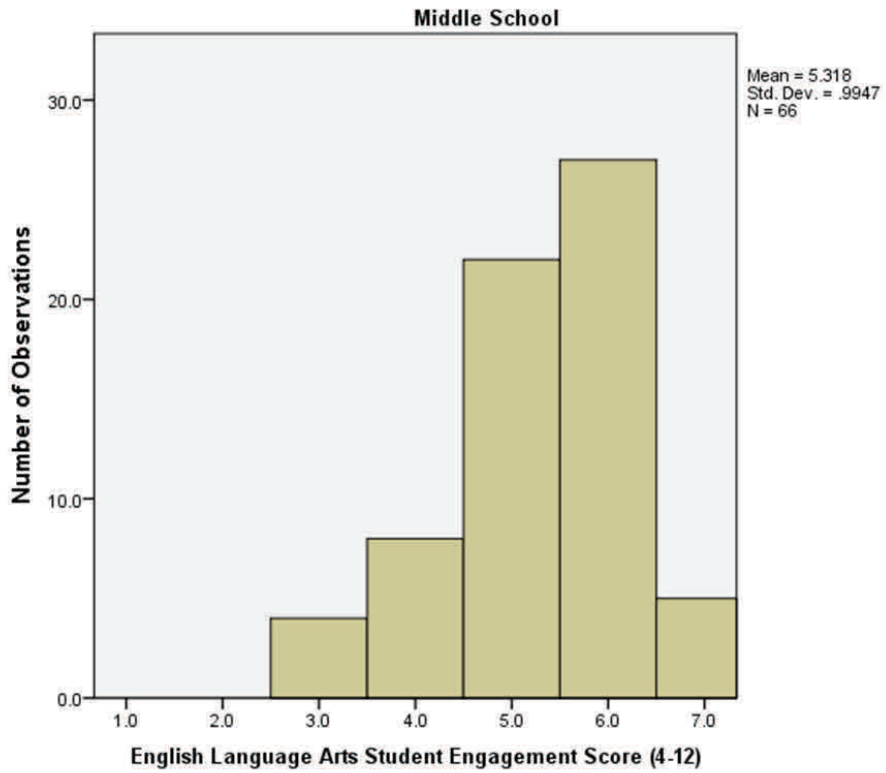
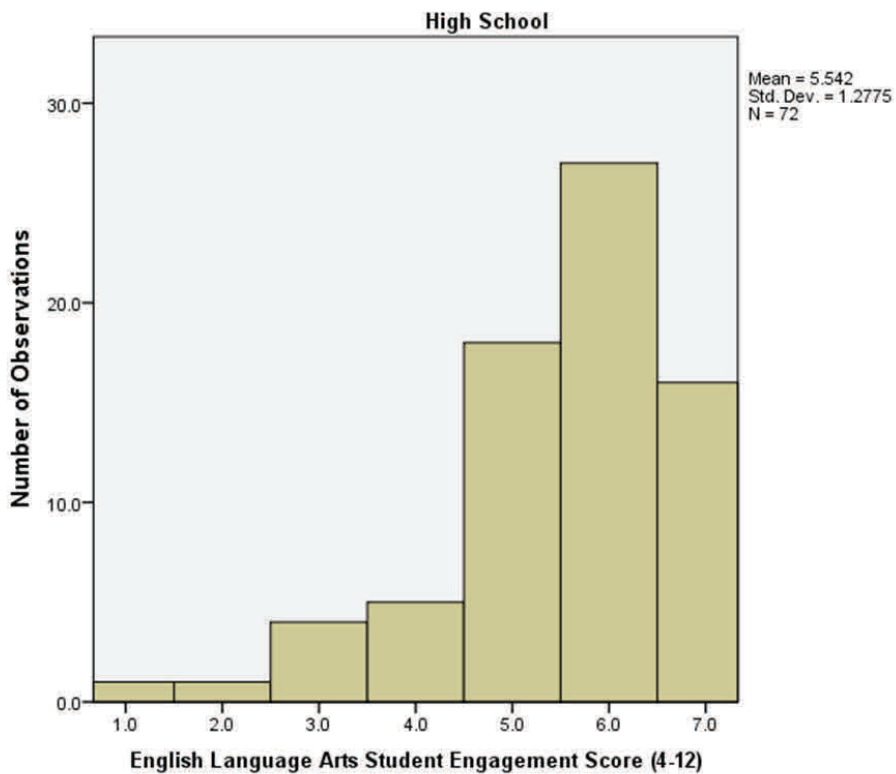


Figure 14: High School Score Distribution for Student Engagement, 2010-11



Figures 15, 16, and 17 display the distribution of scores for the Differentiation Composite at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2010-11 school year.

Figure 15: Elementary School Score Distribution for the Differentiation Composite, 2010-11

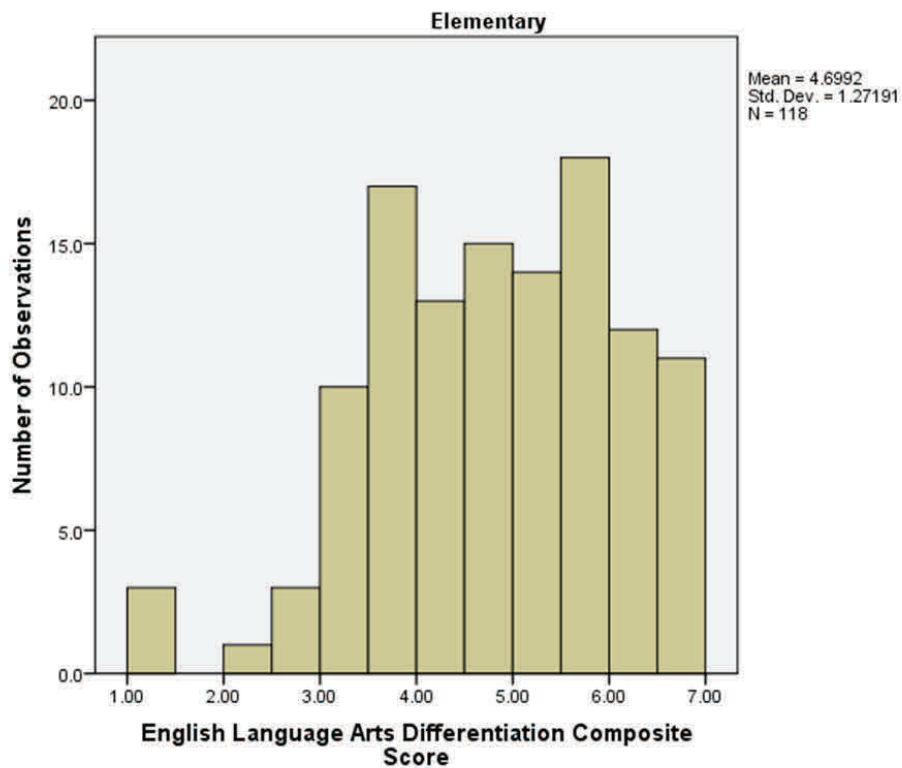


Figure 16: Middle School Score Distribution for the Differentiation Composite, 2010-11

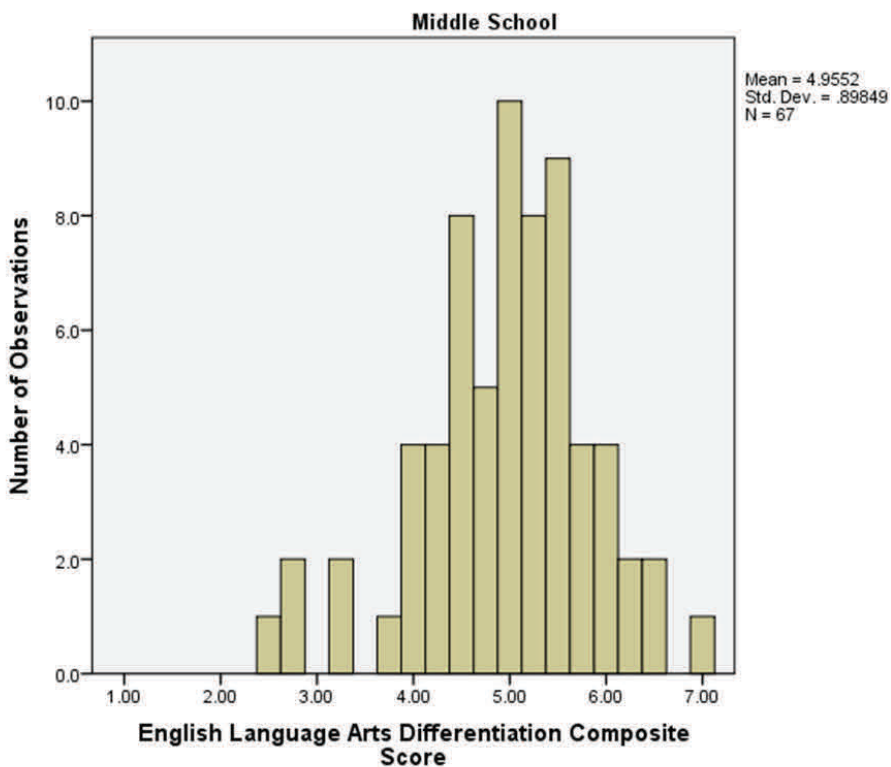
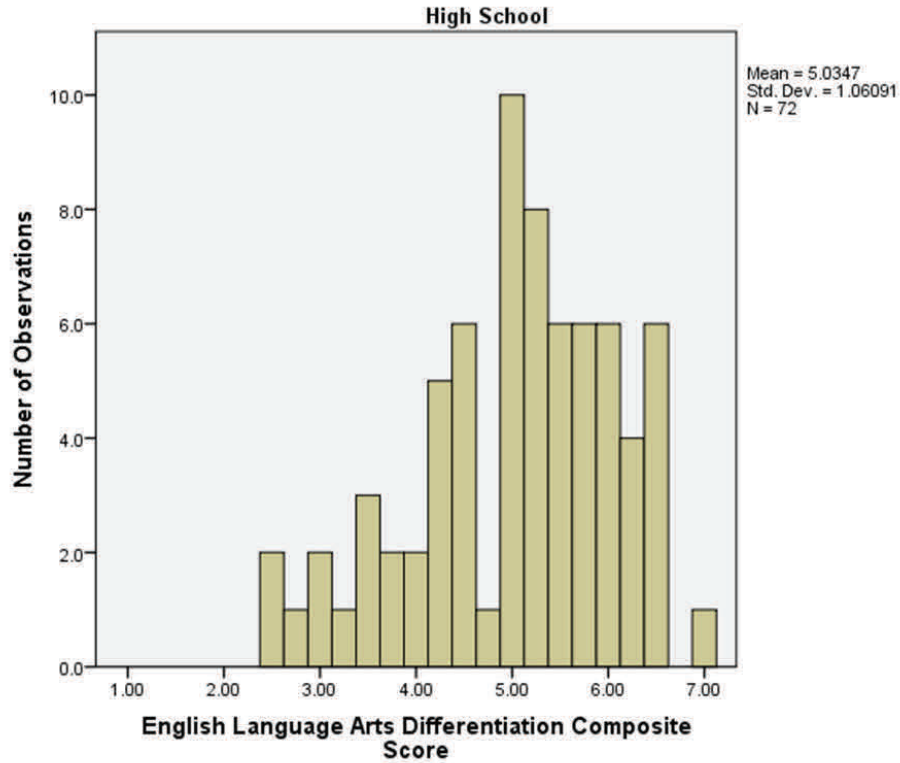


Figure 17: High School Score Distribution for the Differentiation Composite, 2010-11



Figures 18, 19, and 20 display the distribution of scores for the Culturally Responsive Composite at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2010-11 school year.

Figure 18: Elementary School Score Distribution for Culturally Responsive Instruction, 2010-11

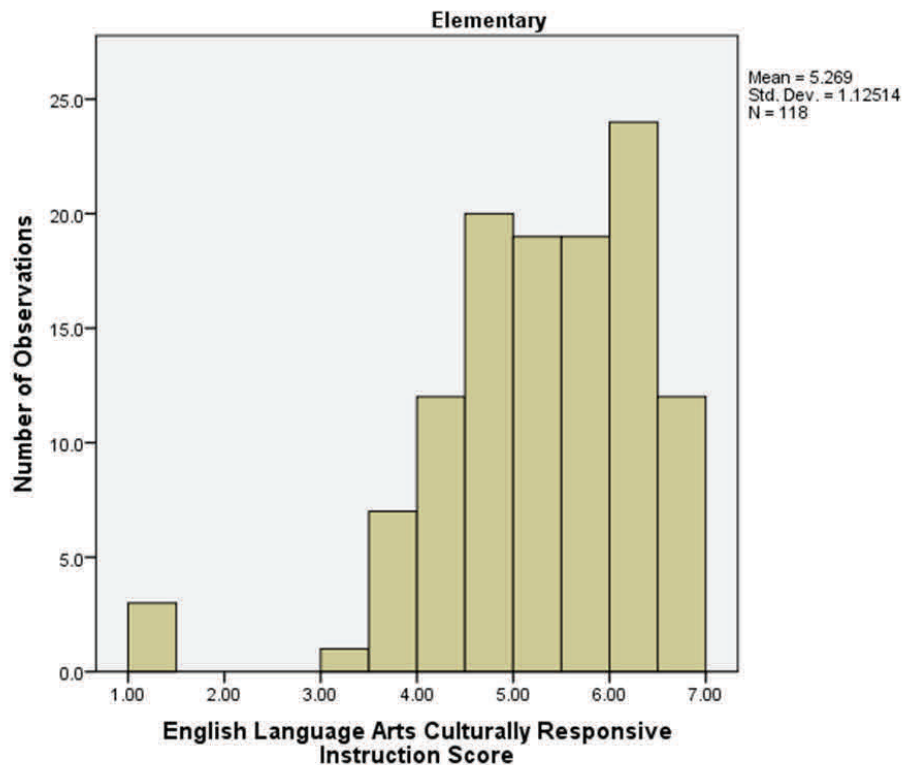


Figure 19: Middle School Score Distribution for Culturally Responsive Instruction, 2010-11

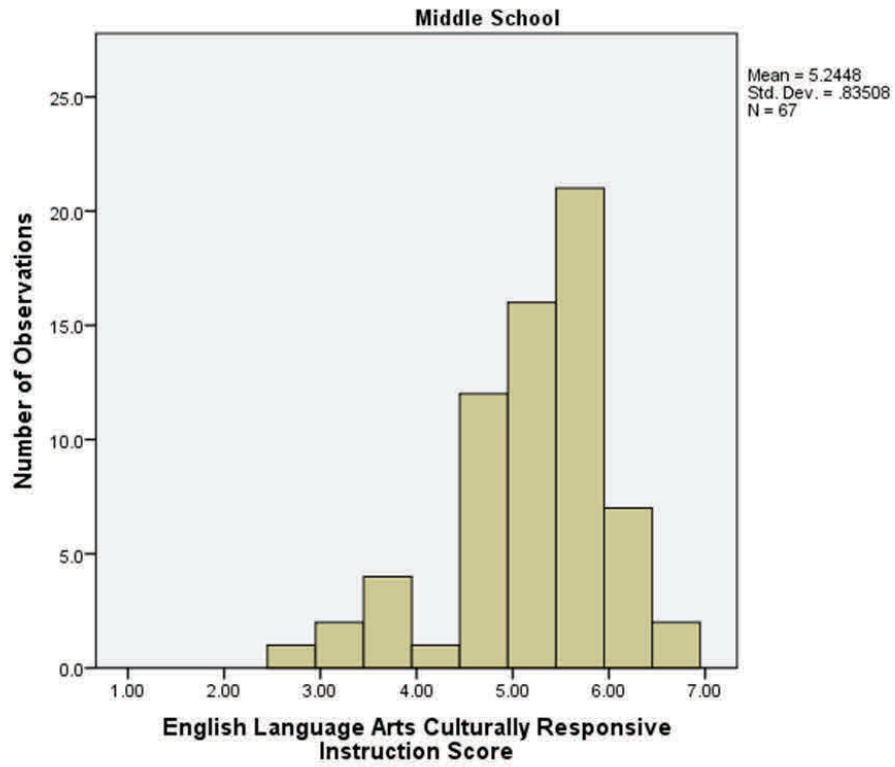
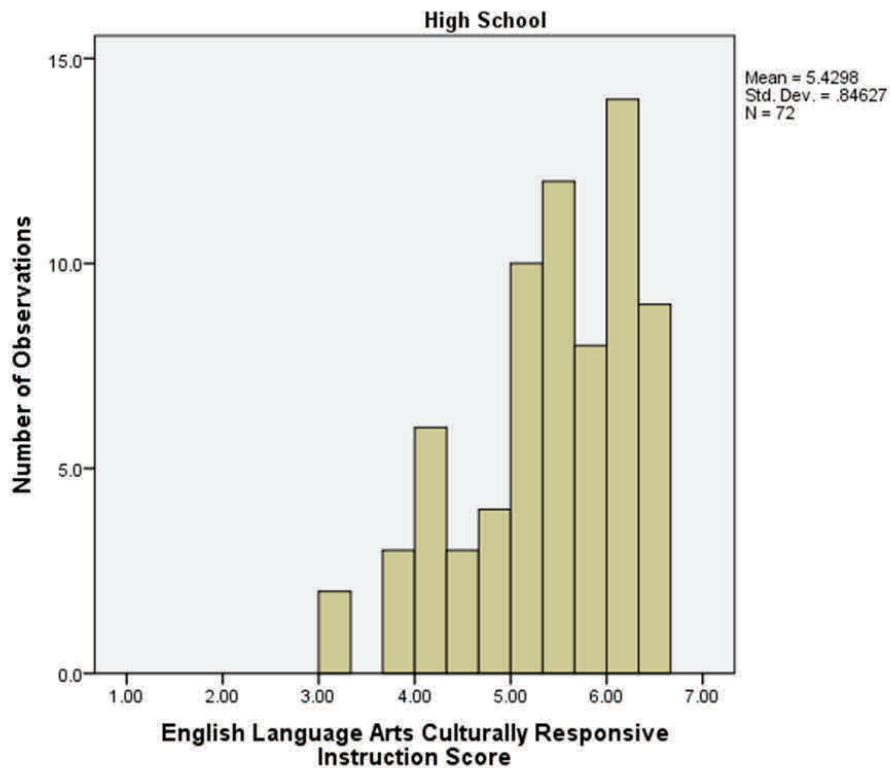


Figure 20: High School Score Distribution for Culturally Responsive Instruction, 2010-11



Figures 21, 22, and 23 display the score distribution within the Emotional Support domain at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2011-12 school year.

Figure 21: Elementary School Score Distribution for Emotional Support, 2011-12

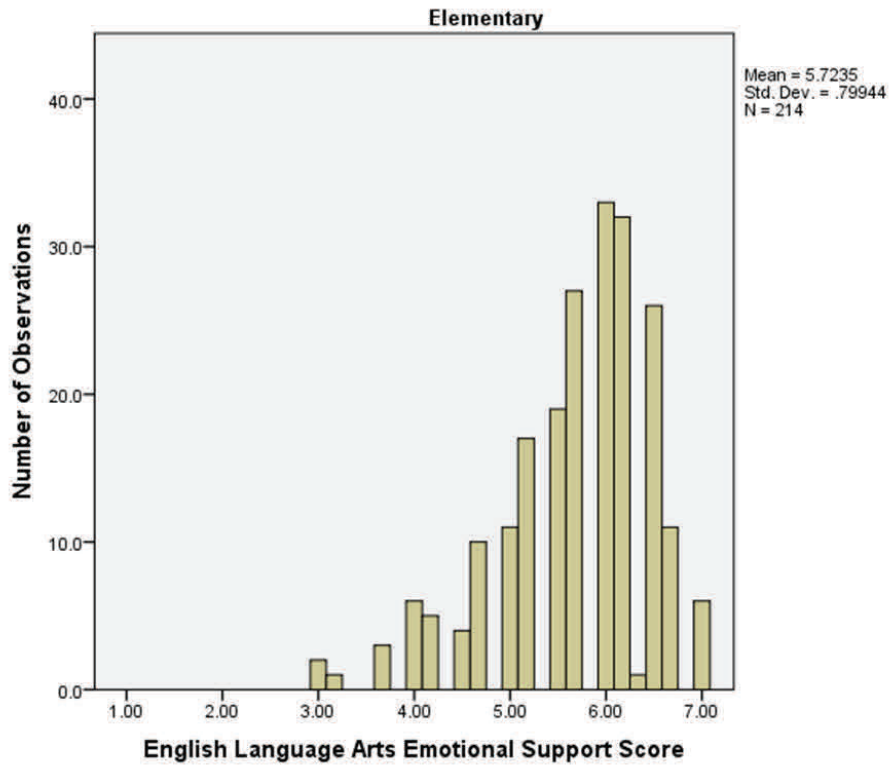


Figure 22: Middle School Score Distribution for Emotional Support, 2011-12

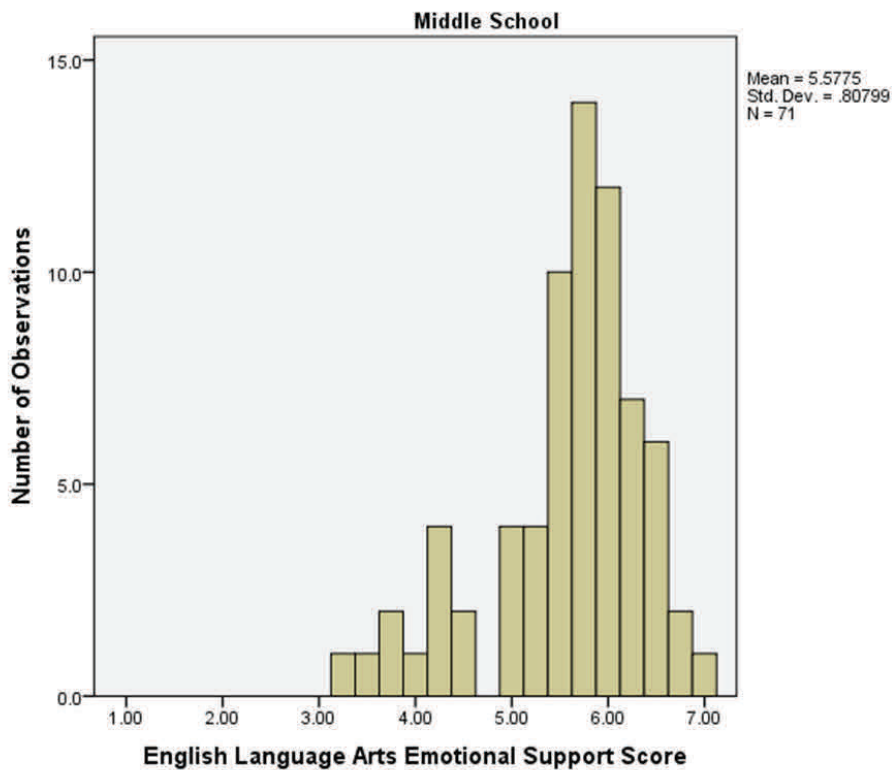
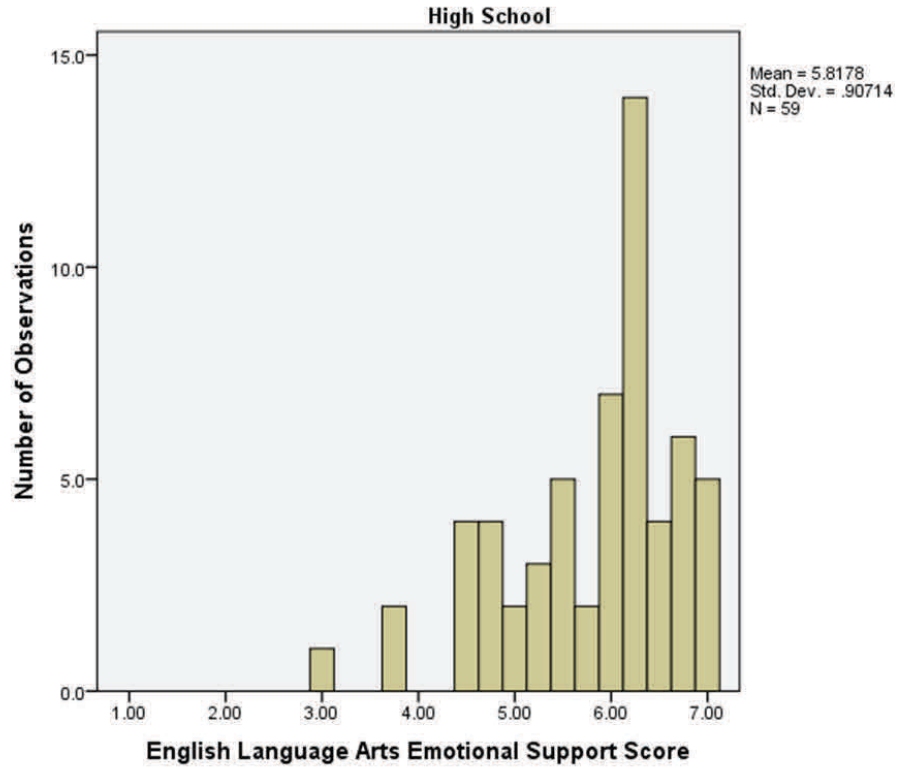


Figure 23: High School Score Distribution for Emotional Support, 2011-12



Figures 24, 25, and 26 display the score distribution within the Classroom Organization domain at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2011-12 school year.

Figure 24: Elementary School Score Distribution for Classroom Organization, 2011-12

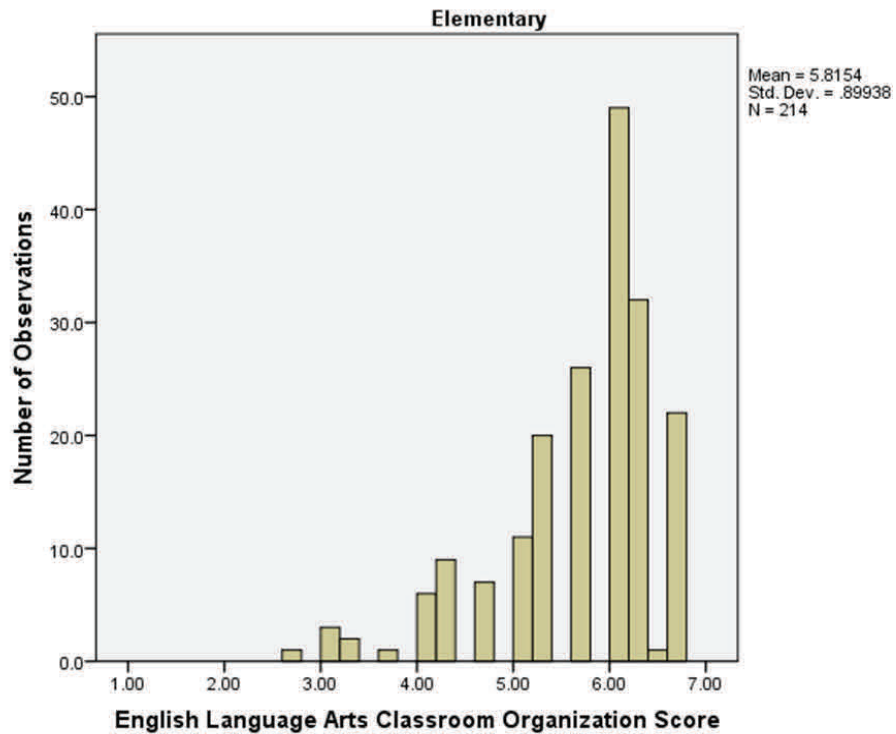


Figure 25: Middle School Score Distribution for Classroom Organization, 2011-12

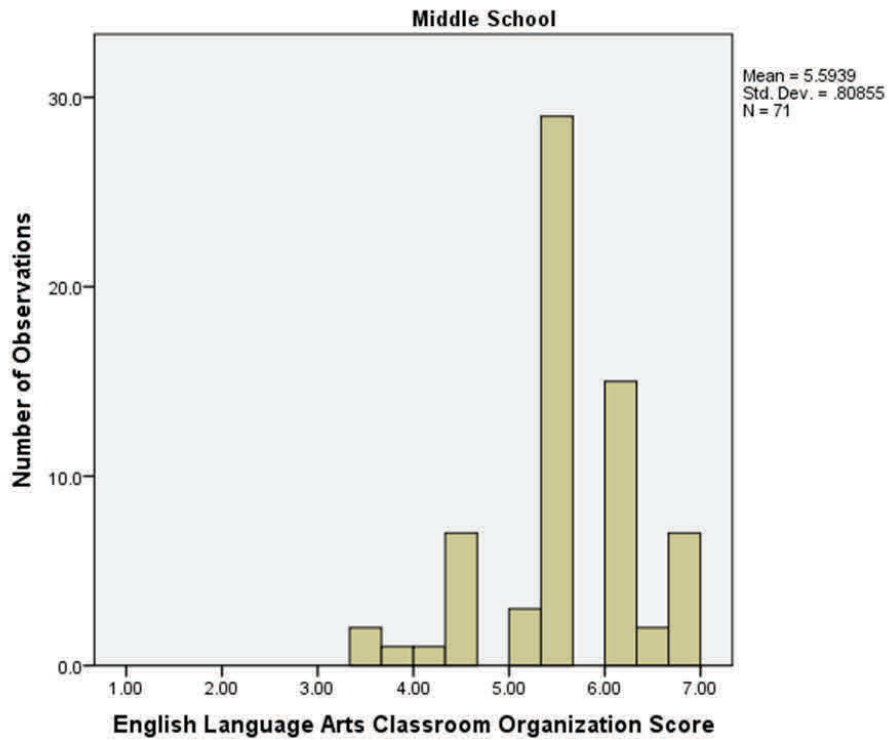
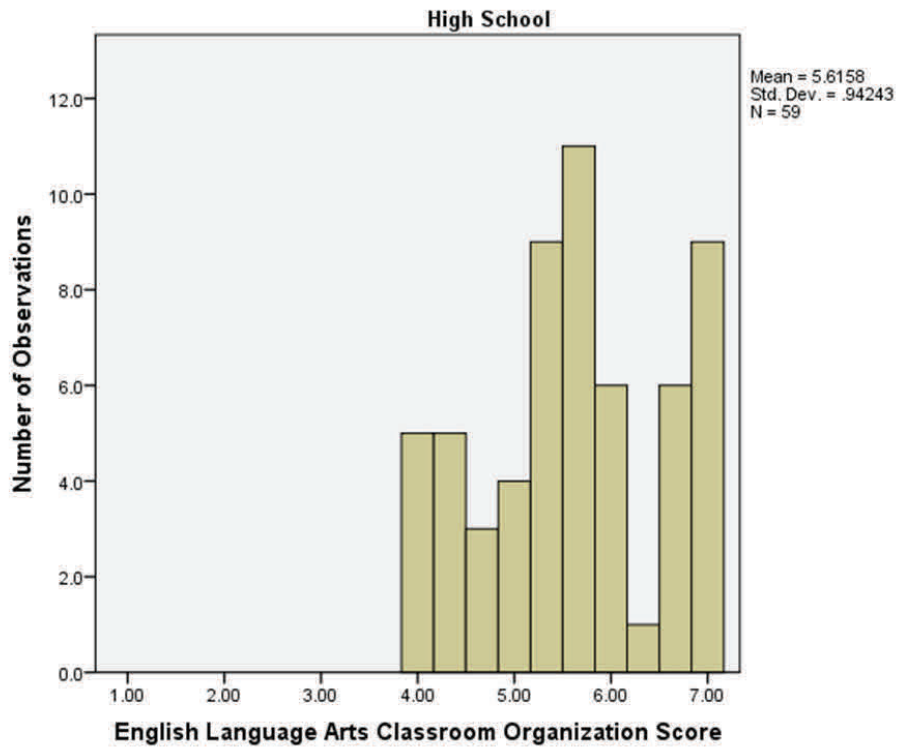


Figure 26: High School Score Distribution for Classroom Organization, 2011-12



Figures 27, 28, and 29 display the score distribution within the Instructional Support domain at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2011-12 school year.

Figure 27: Elementary School Score Distribution for Instructional Support, 2011-12

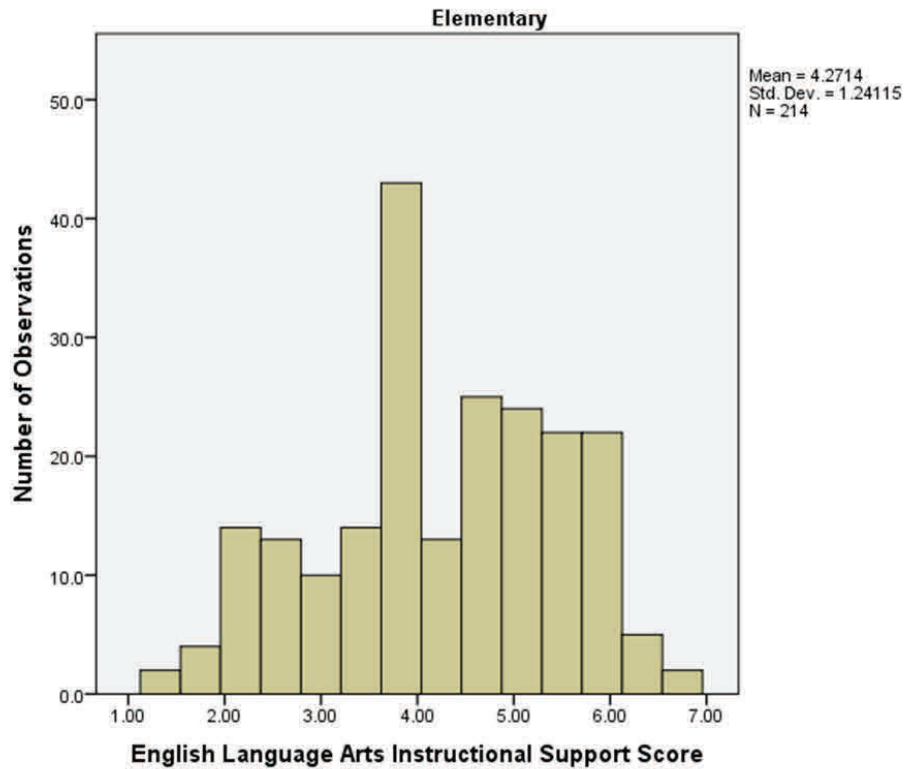


Figure 28: Middle School Score Distribution for Instructional Support, 2011-12

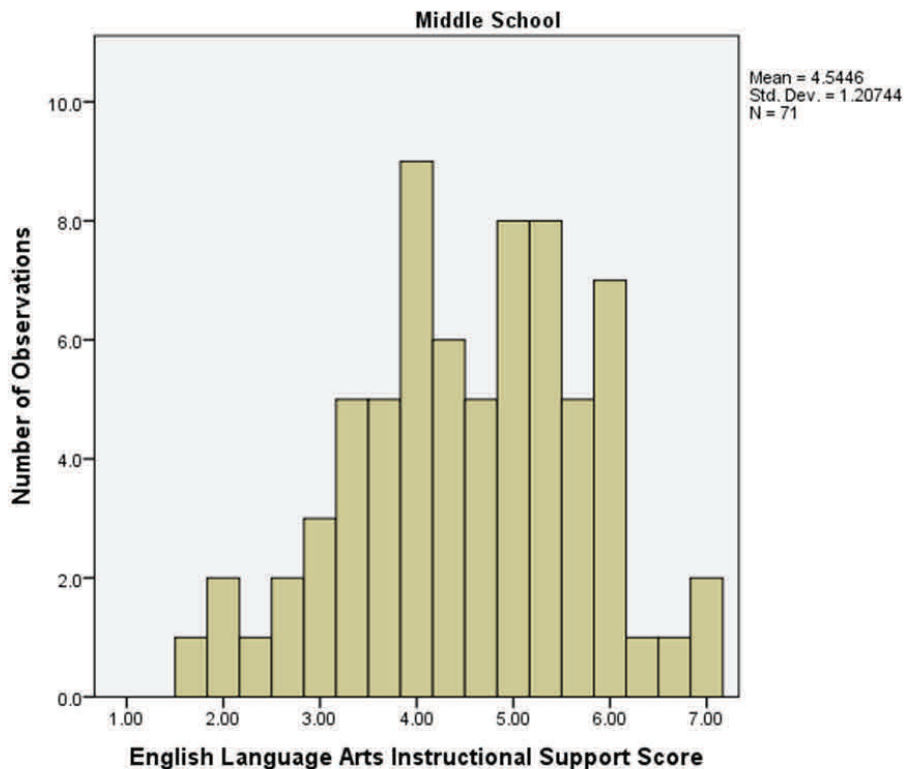
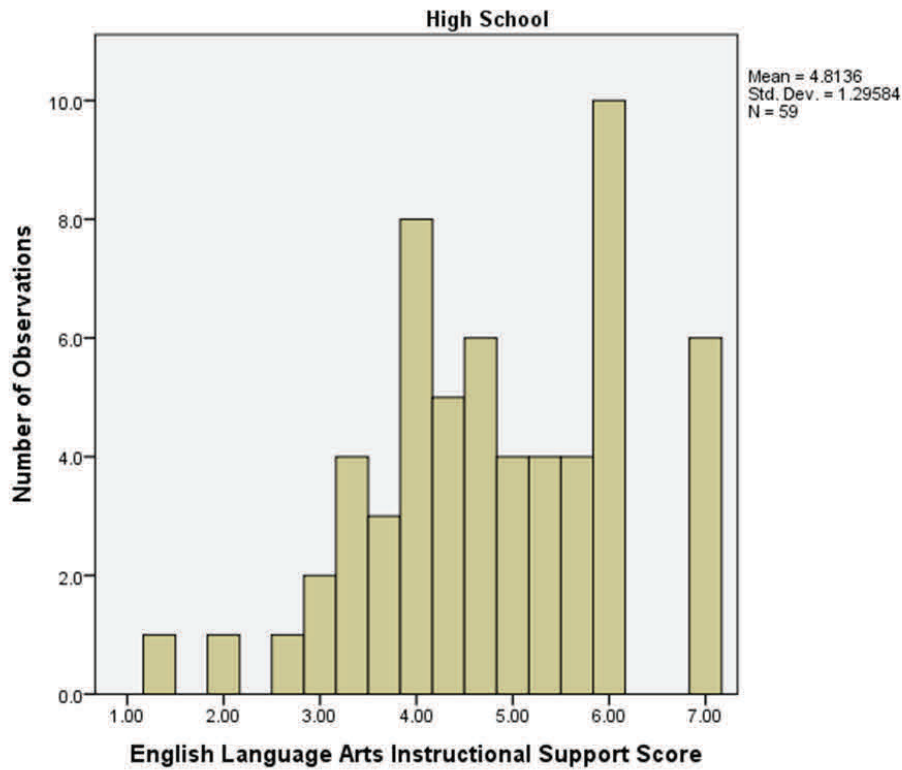


Figure 29: High School Score Distribution for Instructional Support, 2011-12



Figures 30, 31, and 32 display the score distribution within the Student Engagement domain at the elementary (grades 4 and 5), middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2011-12 school year.

Figure 30: Elementary School Score Distribution for Student Engagement, 2011-12

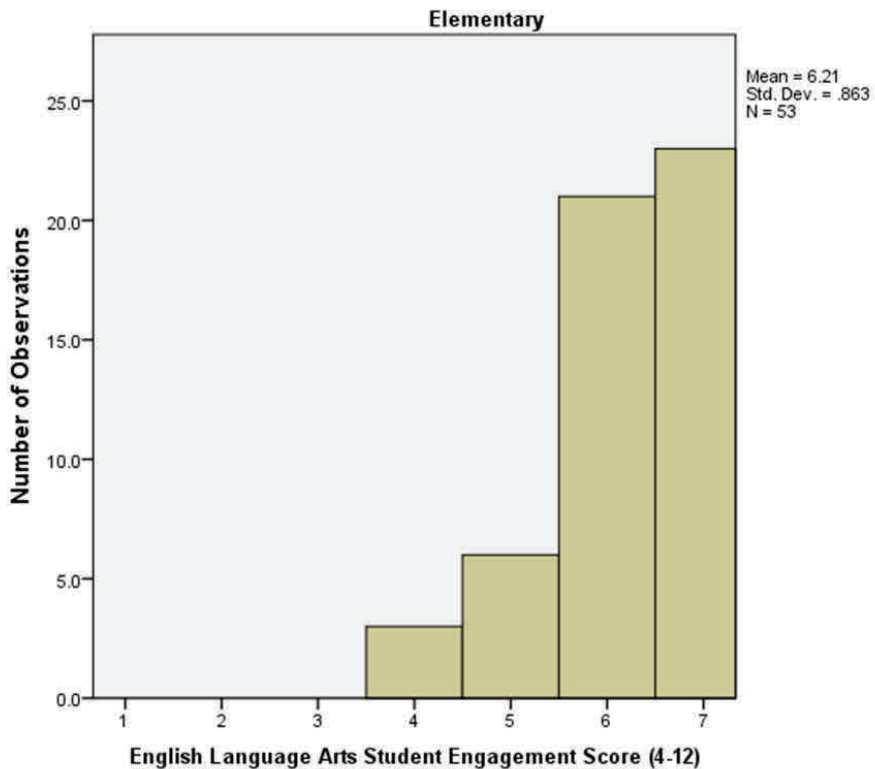


Figure 31: Middle School Score Distribution for Student Engagement, 2011-12

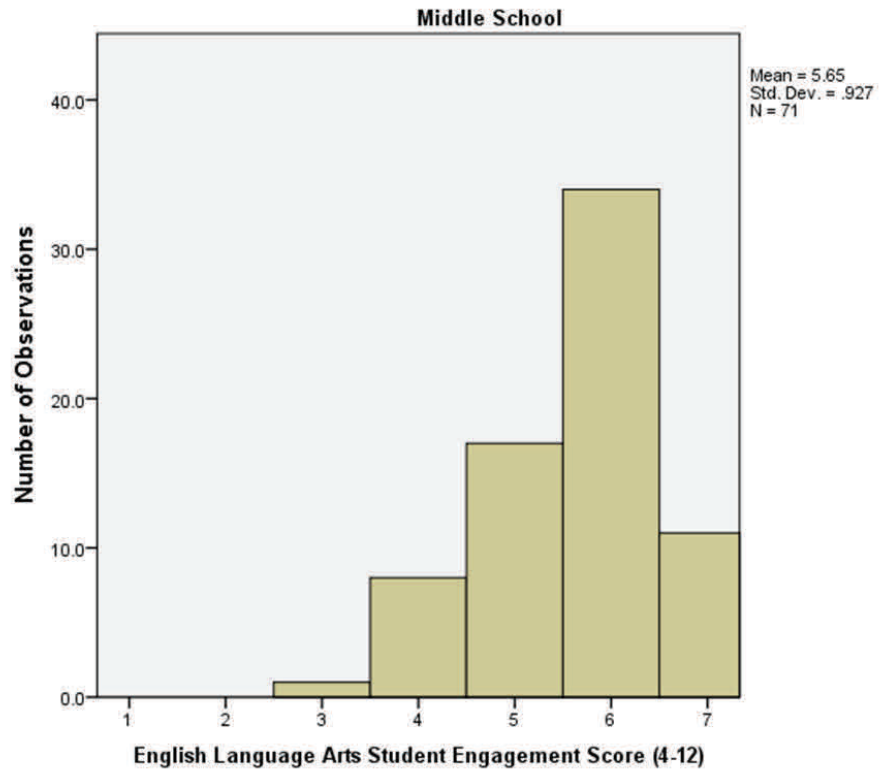
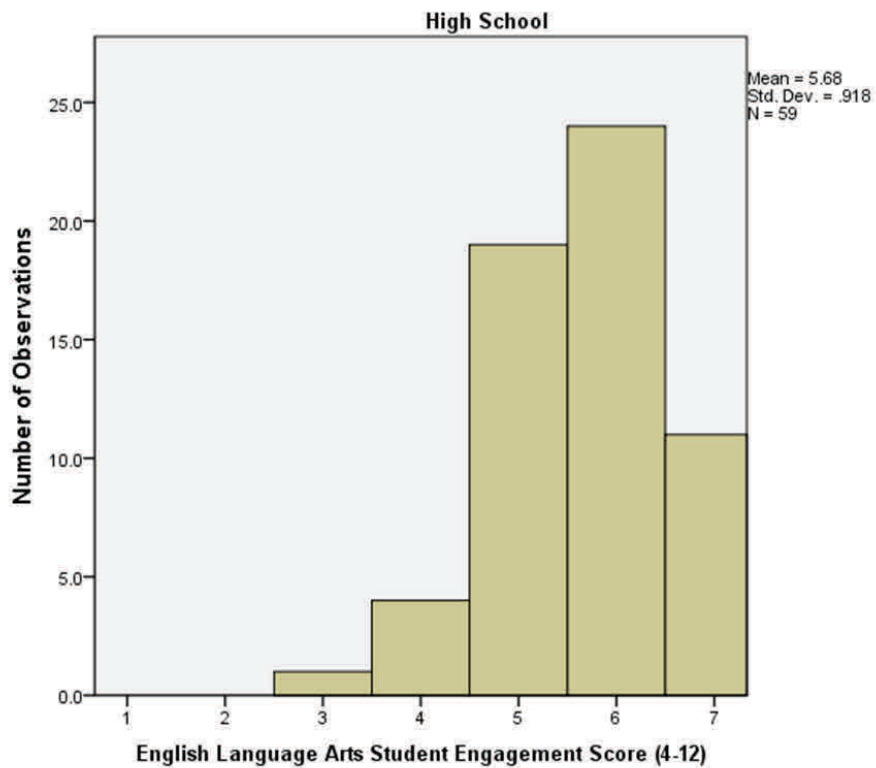


Figure 32: High School Score Distribution for Student Engagement, 2011-12



Figures 33, 34, and 35 display the distribution of scores for the Differentiation Composite at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2011-12 school year.

Figure 33: Elementary School Score Distribution for the Differentiation Composite, 2011-12

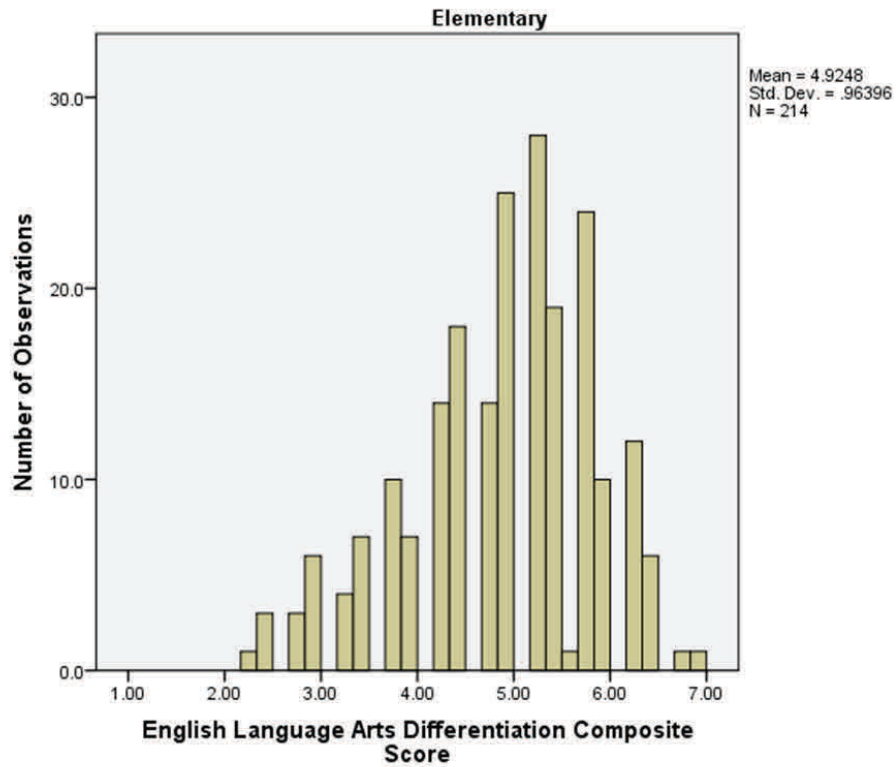


Figure 34: Middle School Score Distribution for the Differentiation Composite, 2011-12

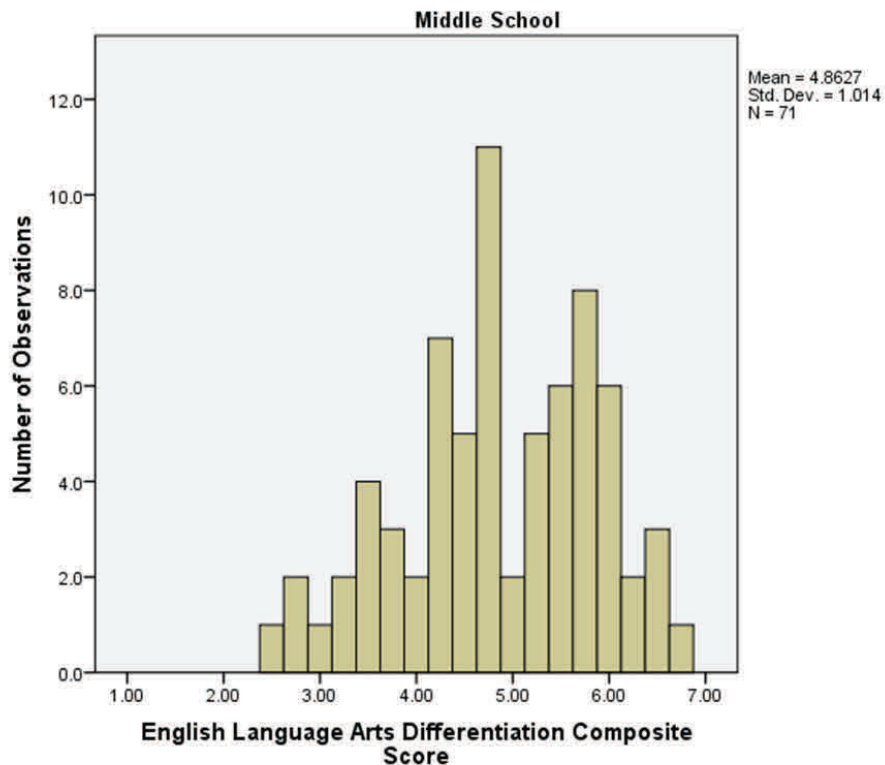
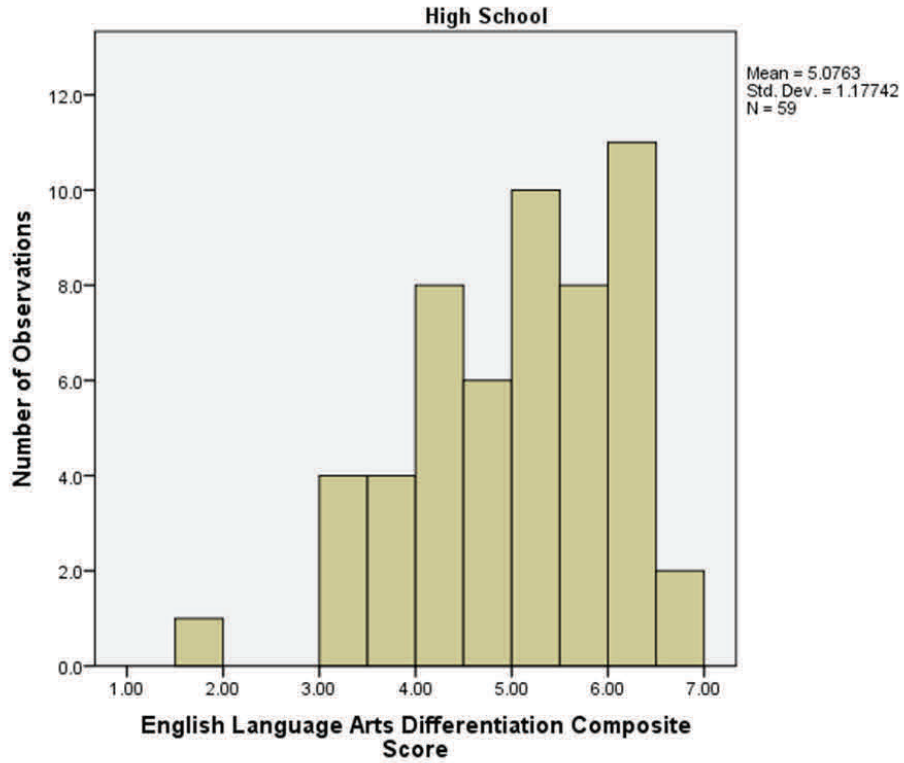


Figure 35: High School Score Distribution for the Differentiation Composite, 2011-12



Figures 36, 37, and 38 display the distribution of scores for the Culturally Responsive Composite at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively, during the 2011-12 school year.

Figure 36: Elementary School Score Distribution for Culturally Responsive Instruction, 2011-12

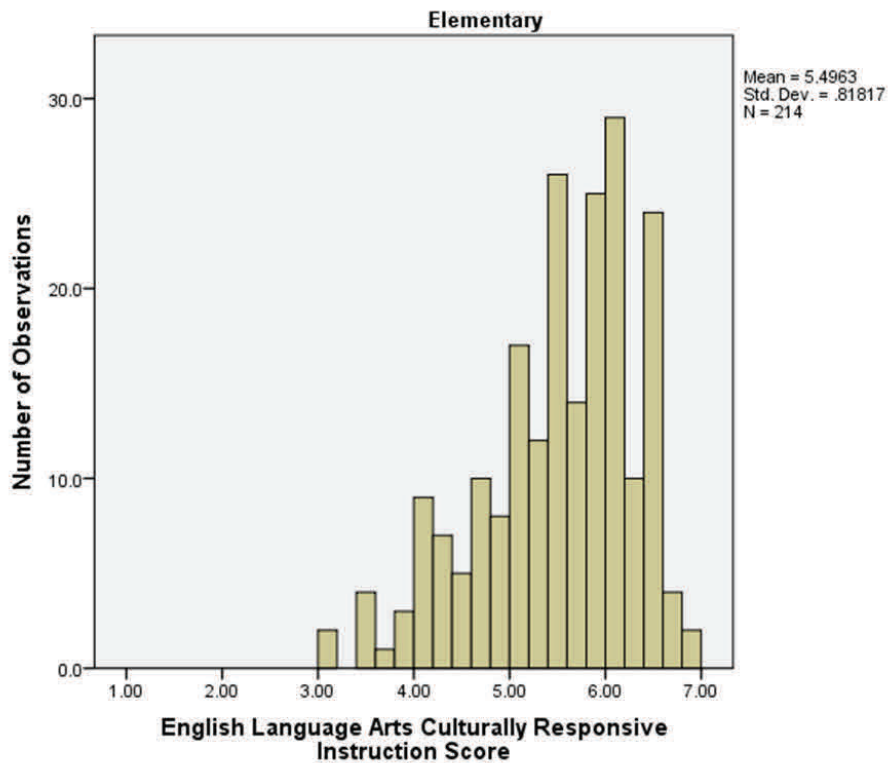


Figure 37: Middle School Score Distribution for Culturally Responsive Instruction, 2011-12

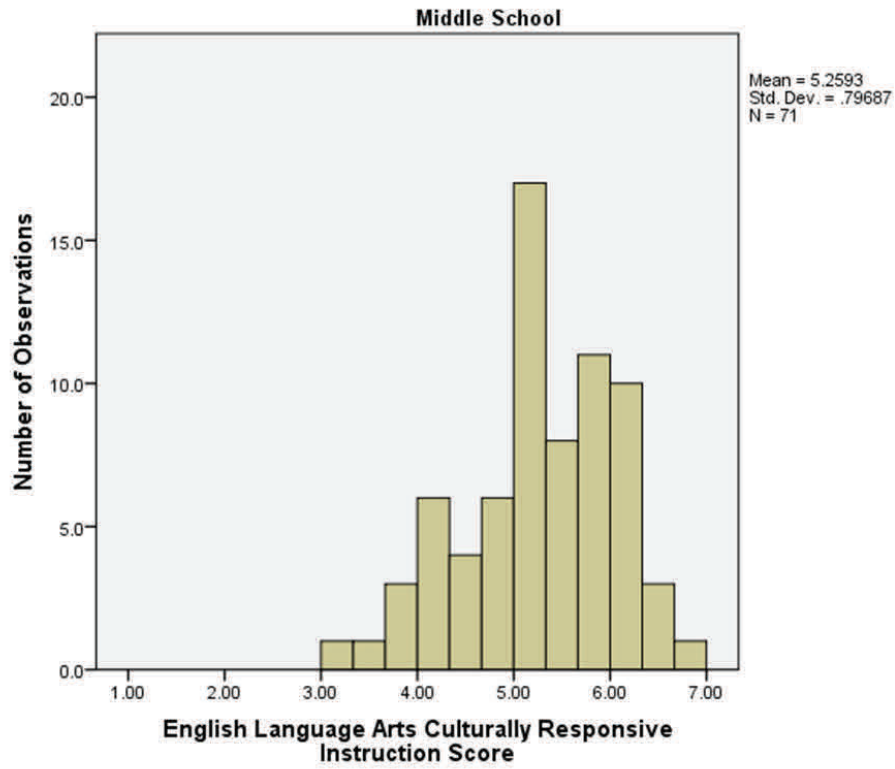
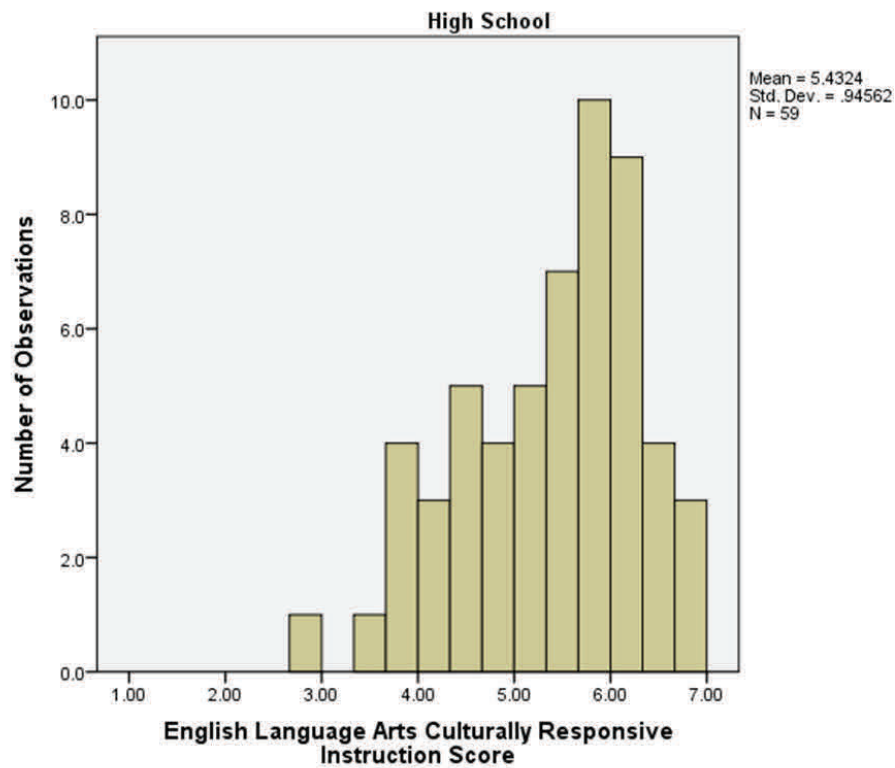


Figure 38: High School Score Distribution for Culturally Responsive Instruction, 2011-12



English and Language Arts Observation Checklists

As part of the English Language Arts (ELA) program evaluation, the ELA Office created two checklists—one for elementary classes; one for secondary classes—designed to capture whether best instructional practices were being used during ELA instruction. This report will discuss the process used to develop and administer the checklists, as well as summarize the results.

Checklist Background and Methodology

The checklists complement the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) observations that are normally conducted as part of most APS program evaluations. While CLASS observations focus on the quality of teacher interaction and classroom process, the ELA observation checklists were developed to evaluate how well ELA content was being taught in APS classrooms.

The checklists examined many features of the ELA classroom, distinguishing as needed between the elementary and secondary instructional components.

In elementary classrooms, evaluators examined whether students were receiving instruction in

- reading
- writing,
- word study,
- research,
- handwriting,
- vocabulary, and
- phonological awareness.

In addition, best practices such as development of robust vocabulary, use of adopted curriculum materials, asking students to read and write independently, and provision of differentiated instruction were also captured.

In the secondary classroom, similar items were examined, including whether classes focused on

- reading,
- literature,
- writing,
- research,
- vocabulary,
- oral language, and
- testing.

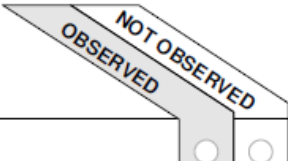
In addition, best practices such as the explicit teaching of reading strategies and the writing process were also captured. Both checklists are included on the following pages.

Figure 1: Elementary ELA Observation Checklist

OBSERVATION ID		Your ID	Arlington Public Schools Language Arts Elementary Observation Checklist of Best Instructional Practices	
0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9
0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9
Date: _____		Time: _____		Grade: _____
Instructional Setting: <input type="radio"/> Reg. Ed. <input type="radio"/> ESOL/HILT pull out <input type="radio"/> SpED self contained		LA BLOCK: <input type="radio"/> uninterrupted <input type="radio"/> 2 hrs (K-2) <input type="radio"/> <2 hrs <input type="radio"/> interrupted <input type="radio"/> 1.5 hrs (3) <input type="radio"/> <1.5 hrs		
Number of Students in the room: _____ Number of Adults in the room: _____ Adults include: <input type="radio"/> SpEd <input type="radio"/> ESOL/HILT <input type="radio"/> Read Teach		POSTED: <i>check all that apply</i> <input type="radio"/> Objective <input type="radio"/> Word Wall(s) <input type="radio"/> Robust Vocabulary The text/reading selection used for instruction is <input type="radio"/> Fiction <input type="radio"/> Non-fiction		
Instruction is delivered: <i>check all that apply</i> <input type="radio"/> Whole group <input type="radio"/> Small group <input type="radio"/> Individual				
1. Students receive instruction in one or more of the following areas: <input type="radio"/> Reading <input type="radio"/> Writing <input type="radio"/> Word Study <input type="radio"/> Research <input type="radio"/> Handwriting <input type="radio"/> Vocabulary <input type="radio"/> Phonological Awareness		2. Content areas integrated into language arts instruction. <input type="radio"/> Math <input type="radio"/> Science <input type="radio"/> Social Studies <input type="radio"/> Arts <input type="radio"/> Health & P.E. <input type="radio"/> World Languages <input type="radio"/> Other		
3. Teacher identifies a clear learning objective for the lesson.		NOT OBSERVED OBSERVED		
4. Teacher uses the adopted curriculum materials.				
5. Students comprehend, summarize, draw conclusions, and/or make inferences.				
6. Students read independently or with a partner.				
7. Students write independently for a variety of meaningful purposes.				
8. Students express their opinions with supporting evidence.				
9. Students learn and read meanings of unfamiliar words through robust vocabulary activities.				
10. Small group instruction is differentiated by content, process, or product (<i>e.g. different word study groups, reading groups OR assignments, different texts, different projects</i>).				
11. Students are given additional support as needed through differentiated instructional techniques and strategies (<i>e.g. ELL, SpED, Below grade level students</i>).				
12. Students are engaged in a research task (<i>e.g. consulting a variety of sources, citing primary and secondary sources, presenting to the class</i>).				
COMPLETE 13 - 18 ONLY IF REFERENCED TO INSTRUCTION ABOVE				
During				
Word Study	13. Students and teachers reflect on why words are sorted into specific categories.			
	14. Students and teachers discuss the underlying generalization of the weekly sort - how and why the spelling feature works within words.			
Process Writing	15. Teacher presents mini lesson with explicit teaching point.			
	16. Teacher confers with student.			
Reading Instruction	17. Teacher explicitly teaches reading strategies to engage students in the reading process.			
If there is team teaching in the classroom				
	18. There is evidence of shared responsibility for instruction.			

Figure 2: Secondary ELA Observation Checklist

OBSERVATION ID		Your ID	Arlington Public Schools Language Arts Secondary Observation Checklist of Best Instructional Practices																																																																																
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; font-size: small;"> <tr><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>4</td><td>4</td><td>4</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>6</td><td>6</td><td>6</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>7</td><td>7</td><td>7</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>8</td><td>8</td><td>8</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>9</td><td>9</td><td>9</td><td>9</td></tr> </table>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	9	9	9	9	9	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; font-size: small;"> <tr><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>4</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>6</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>7</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>8</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>9</td><td>9</td></tr> </table>	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	8	9	9	9	<p>Number of students in the room: _____</p> <p>Number of adults in the room: _____</p> <p>Additional adults:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> SpEd <input type="radio"/> Rdg. Spec.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Res. Teacher <input type="radio"/> English/ for the Gifted History</p>	<p>The material/text used for instruction is: <i>check all that apply</i></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Fiction <input type="radio"/> Other _____</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Non-fiction</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Poetry</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Drama</p>
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9	9	9																																																																																	
<p>Date: _____</p> <p>Time: _____ Grade: _____</p>		<p>Instruction is delivered: <i>check all that apply</i></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Whole group</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Small group</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Individual</p>	<p>Does the school follow block scheduling?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>																																																																																
<p>1. Students receive instruction in or are engaged in one or more of the following areas:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Reading</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Literature</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Writing</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Research</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Vocabulary</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Oral Language</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Testing</p>		<p>2. Content areas are integrated into language arts instruction.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Math</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Science</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Social Studies</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Arts</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Health & P.E.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> World Languages</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other _____</p>																																																																																	
<p>3. Teachers teach reading strategies.</p>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																															
<p>4. Students comprehend, interpret, and analyze text.</p>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																															
<p>5. Students are engaged in some phase of the writing process. Check all that apply:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> pre-writing <input type="radio"/> drafting <input type="radio"/> revising <input type="radio"/> editing <input type="radio"/> publishing</p>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																															
<p>6. Students listen critically and express substantive responses in class/group discussions and/or oral presentations.</p>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																															
<p>7. Vocabulary is taught (introduced, modeled, reinforced) through reading, writing, and/or direct instruction.</p>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																															
<p>8. Students are engaged in a research task or presentation (e.g. consulting a variety of sources, citing primary and secondary sources.)</p>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>																																																																															

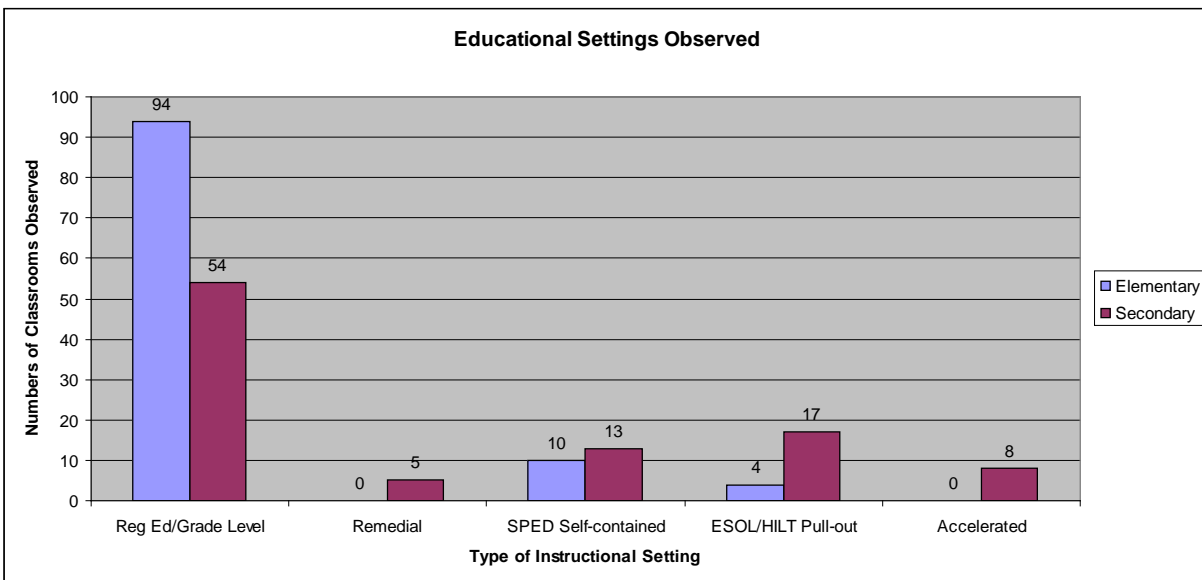


The checklists were developed by the ELA Office in conjunction with the Office of Planning and Evaluation and other stakeholder groups. They were field-tested prior to the observations.

Planning and Evaluation and the ELA Office trained potential evaluators during a 3½ hour session in which they observed a live classroom situation and used the checklist to rate the various items being examined. They engaged in discussion around what they observed, and then observed a second live classroom situation and discussed their individual checklist results together. Finally, the evaluators observed a third classroom and used the checklist independently. Their results were checked for inter-rater reliability, and 10 evaluators who were deemed reliable were selected to rate classrooms using the checklist. The evaluators were typically retired APS ELA teachers who had a wealth of English Language Arts experience.

Altogether, 108 elementary and 97 secondary ELA classrooms were rated using the ELA checklist. Each teacher was only observed once. Each observation lasted generally 45 minutes. The classes selected reflected the range of ELA instruction provided across APS and included special education, remedial, ESOL/HILT, and accelerated classes in addition to grade-level instruction. The chart below shows the breakdown of the types of classes in which checklist observations were conducted.¹

Figure 3: Educational Settings Observed Using Checklists



For elementary classes, 94 of 108 classes observed (87%) were language arts blocks for general education students, 10 (9%) were self-contained special education classes, and 4 (4%) were pull-out ESOL/HILT classes. For secondary classes, 54 of the 97 classes observed (56%) were grade-level ELA classes, 5 (5%) were remedial classes, 13 (13%) were special education classes, 17 (18%) were ESOL/HILT classes, and 8 (8%) were accelerated classes, such as AP and intensified ELA classes.

¹ Please note that remedial and accelerated courses are only offered at the secondary level, so those categories are not applicable to elementary classrooms.

Results

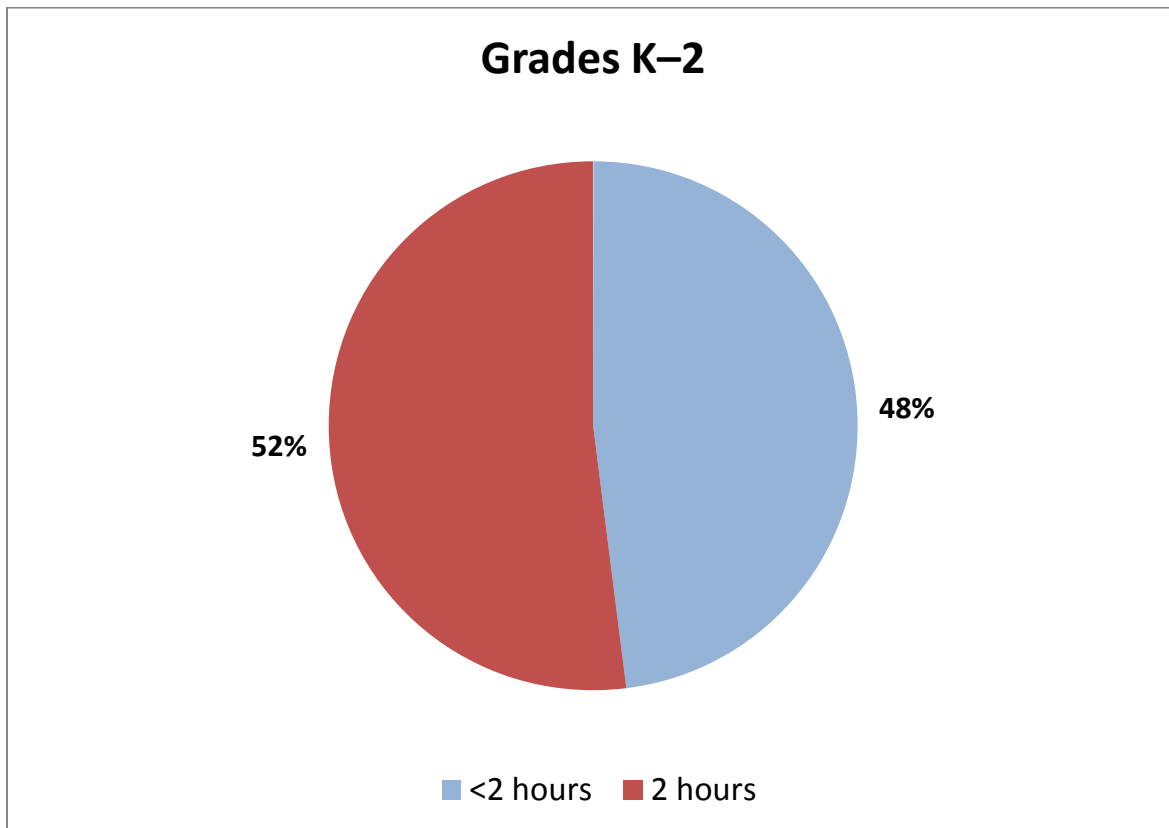
In this section, we will examine the checklist results and highlight the most interesting findings.

Time Spent on ELA Instruction

One of the key questions to be answered by this evaluation at the elementary level was whether ELA instruction was occurring at the recommended amounts of time. At the secondary level, the recommended amount is an average of 45 minutes per day². Because children go to designated English classes, it is logical to assume that all that time is being used for ELA instruction. For grades K-2, APS recommends 2 hours of uninterrupted instruction per day; and for grades 3-5, APS recommends 1.5 hours of uninterrupted instruction per day. In elementary school, children may be with a single teacher who has discretion over how the entire school day is used, so it was important to determine if the ELA time recommendations were being followed.

The evaluators observed that close to half of the K-2 classrooms (48%) did not spend the required two hours of uninterrupted time on ELA instruction per day.

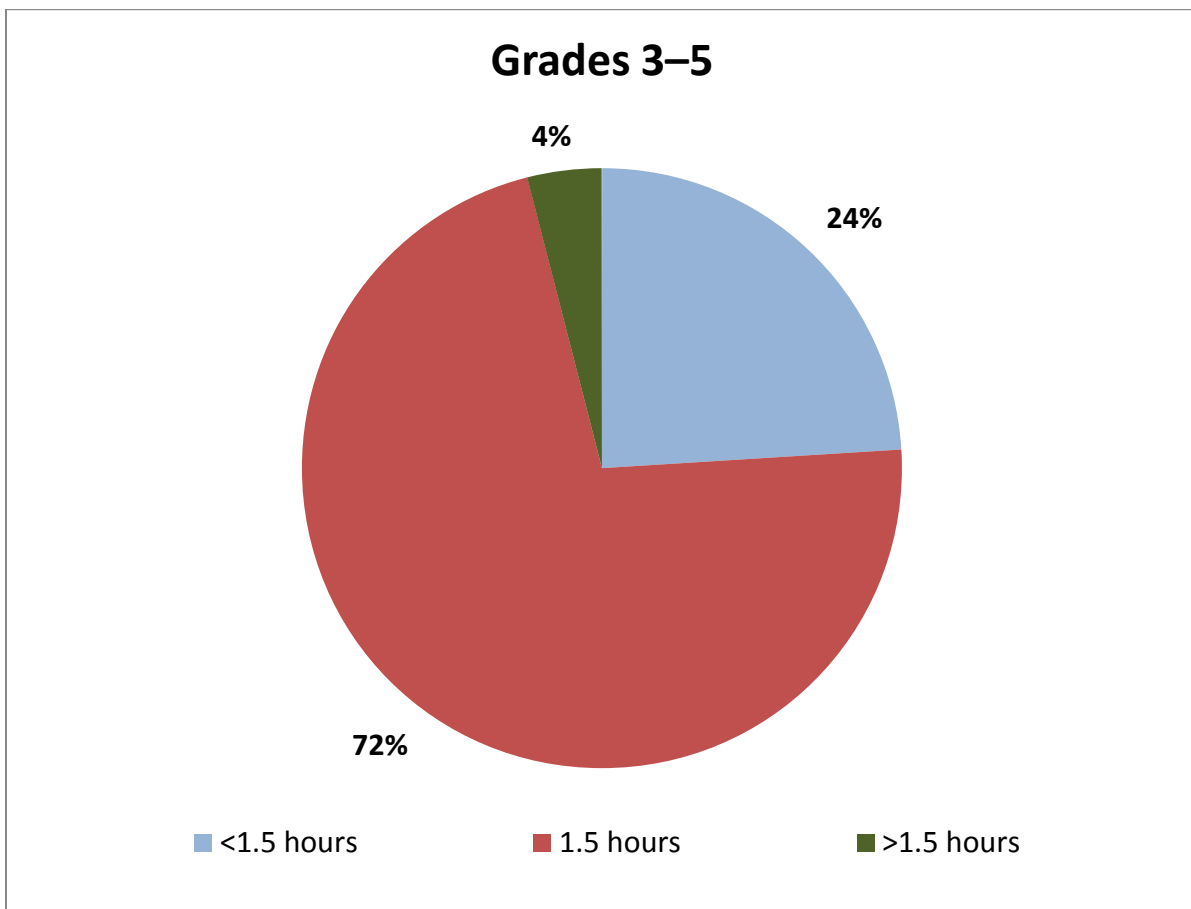
Figure 4: Percent of K-2 Classes Observed Following ELA Instructional Time Requirements



² Times vary due to block scheduling at the secondary level. In a blocked schedule, a student may have no ELA one day and then 1.5 hours on the next.

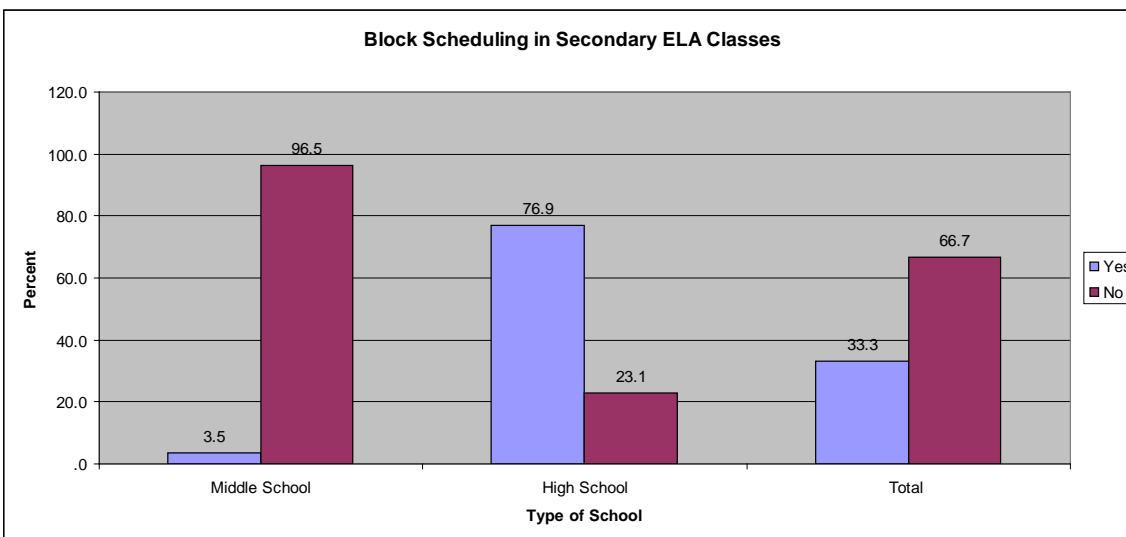
In grades 3-5, over two-thirds of the classes observed provided the required amount of 1.5 hours of uninterrupted ELA instruction per day. However, 24% provided less than 1.5 hours while 4% provided more than 1.5 hours. While encouraging, the results do show that nearly a quarter of grade 3-5 classes were not providing the recommended amount of ELA instruction each day. One explanation for this might be that ELA/Reading instruction was provided over the course of the day rather than in an uninterrupted block viewed by observers. In contrast, observers found that 82% of classes observed provided ELA/Reading instruction in an uninterrupted block as recommended.

Figure 5: Percent of Grade 3-5 Classes Observed Following ELA Instructional Time Requirements



At the secondary level, as we noted earlier, the issue is not so much how much time is spent on ELA instruction, since it is essentially guaranteed by virtue of the specialized nature of coursework at the secondary level, but how that time is spent. The chart below shows the use of block scheduling in secondary ELA classes.

Figure 6: Frequency of Block Scheduling in Secondary ELA Classes



In the classes observed, almost no middle school ELA classes were “blocked”—meaning that classes met every other day for twice the length of a normal period. In contrast, over three-quarters of the observed high school classes were “blocked”.

Delivery of ELA Instruction

In addition to verifying the amount of time spent on ELA instruction, the checklists provided a snapshot of who was providing that instruction and how it was being provided. While the classroom teacher was generally responsible for providing ELA instruction, additional adults were also observed assisting with particular students or the entire class.

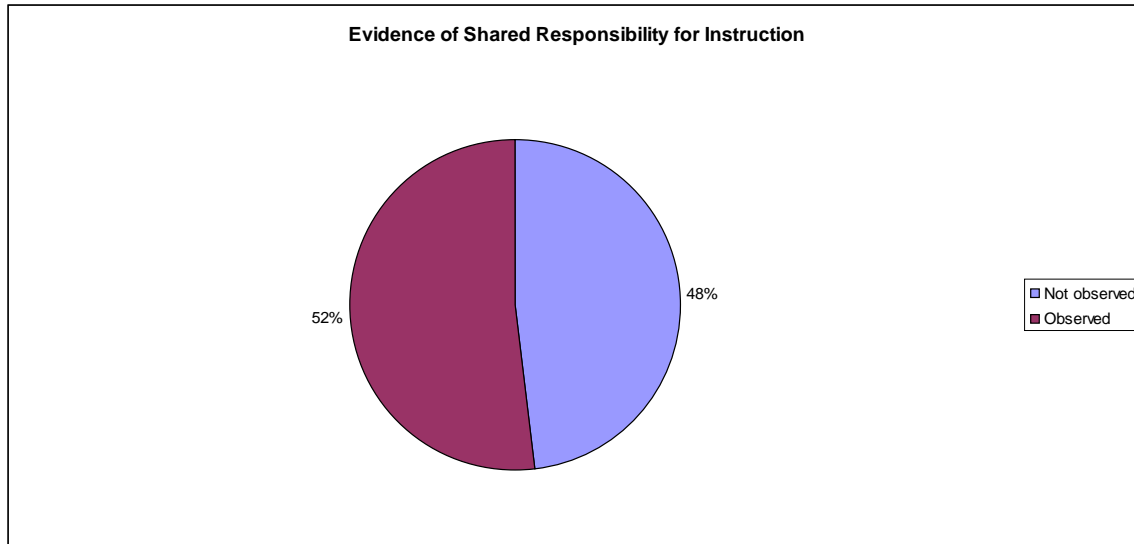
The table below shows the types of adult support found in the classrooms in addition to the teacher providing ELA instruction. Teaching assistants were most often observed in the elementary ELA classroom, followed by special education teachers. It is interesting to note that other adults, such as parent volunteers, were the next most commonly observed adults assisting with ELA instruction at the elementary level. At the secondary level, it was less common for additional adults to be present in the ELA classroom. Those who were present were special education teachers, and they were observed in 21.6% of the classes visited.

Table 1: Types of Additional Adults in the ELA Classroom

Type of ELA Activity	Observed in Elementary	Observed in Secondary
Teaching Assistant	30.7%	0%
Special Education Teacher	13.2%	21.6%
Other Adult	10.5%	Not on checklist
ESOL/HILT Teacher	7.9%	Not on checklist
Reading Teacher/Specialist	7.0%	1.0%
Librarian	1.8%	Not on checklist
Gifted Resource Teacher	Not on checklist	0%
English/History Teacher	Not on checklist	Not on checklist

To see how these resources of personnel were used when more than one adult was present in the elementary classroom, observers were asked to examine whether there was evidence of shared responsibility for instruction. Evaluators found that in just over half the elementary ELA classrooms observed there was evidence of shared responsibility for instruction. In the other half, however, responsibility was not shared. This could mean that personnel resources were not being as fully utilized as possible or that additional training may be necessary for teachers on how to best integrate these resources into the classroom.

Figure 7: Evidence of Shared Responsibility for Instruction



Another feature of instructional delivery is group size: whole-group, small-group, or individual instruction. At the elementary level, whole-group instruction was observed in two-thirds of the classes; small-group instruction was observed in just under half of the classes, and individual instruction was observed in less than a quarter of the classes. The numbers do not add up to 100% because several types of instruction were typically used in a single class observed.

At the secondary level, whole-group instruction was observed in roughly the same amount as at the elementary level, but there was less small-group instruction and more individual instruction than in elementary classes.

Table 2: Types of ELA Instruction Observed

Type of ELA Instruction	Observed in Elementary	Observed in Secondary
Whole-Group	65.8%	62.9%
Small-Group	43.9%	27.8%
Individual	22.8%	45.4%

Focus of ELA Instruction

Evaluators noted on the checklists the types of ELA instructional activities in which students were engaged when they visited. More than one type of activity was checked where applicable.

Table 3 shows that reading, writing, word study, and vocabulary were the most commonly observed ELA activities in elementary classrooms. In secondary classrooms, reading, vocabulary, writing, literature, and oral language were the most frequently observed activities.

It is interesting to note that so little time was spent on research in both elementary and secondary ELA classrooms. The low frequency of research activities observed seems to indicate that more emphasis could be placed on this area in the future.

Table 3: Types of ELA Activities Observed

Type of ELA Activity	Observed in Elementary	Observed in Secondary
Reading	63.2%	73.2%
Writing	36.0%	34.0%
Word Study	31.6%	Not on checklist
Vocabulary	24.6%	48.5%
Research	9.6%	14.4%
Phonological Awareness	11.4%	Not on checklist
Handwriting	7.9%	Not on checklist
Literature	Not on checklist	29.9%
Oral Language	Not on checklist	27.8%
Testing	Not on checklist	13.4%

Observers also collected data on the type of ELA activities taking place by course type. This information was collected on the secondary checklist, but not on the elementary checklist. The results can be found in the table below.

Table 4: Types of ELA Activities Observed in Secondary Classes, by Type of Educational Setting

Course Type	Reading		Literature		Writing		Research		Vocabulary		Oral Language	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Remedial (n=5)	5	100.0	3	60.0	3	60.0	1	20.0	4	80.0	1	20.0
SPED (n=13)	13	100.0	2	15.4	5	38.5	0	.0	9	69.2	3	23.1
HILT (n=17)	13	76.5	2	11.8	6	35.3	0	.0	14	82.4	7	41.2
Grade-Level (n=54)	35	64.8	18	33.3	18	33.3	13	24.1	18	33.3	14	25.9
Accelerated (n=8)	5	62.5	4	50.0	1	12.5	0	.0	2	25.0	2	25.0

Of particular interest is the ELA instructional activity observed in special education and ESOL/HILT classes. Compared to those in grade-level, accelerated, and even remedial classes, children in special education and ESOL/HILT classes were studying literature at a far lower rate. Studying literature allows students the opportunity to apply reading skills and strategies, build vocabulary, experience the nuances of figurative language, and develop an appreciation for books in general. Nonetheless, along with remedial students, children in special education and ESOL/HILT studied vocabulary at much higher rates than did children in grade-level or accelerated classes. Interestingly, children in remedial classes focused on writing activities about twice as often as children in other types of ELA classes. Research activities were not observed at all in special education, ESOL/HILT, or accelerated ELA classes.

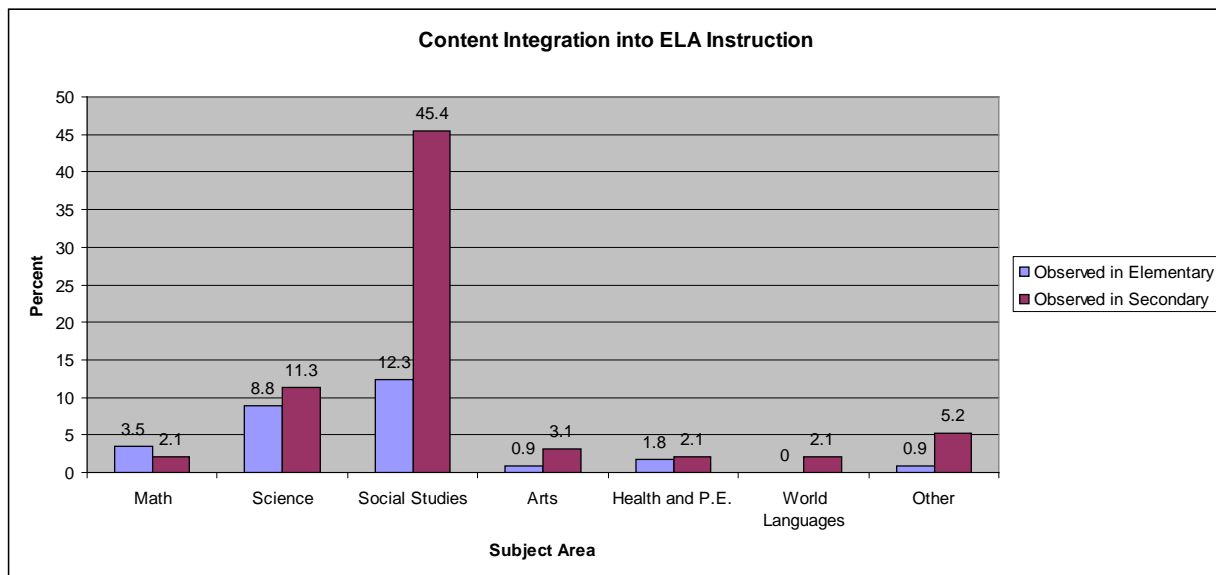
It is important to note that because the checklist observations comprised a snapshot of what one class was doing on one particular day, the differences seen among courses could reflect projects that classes were working on as opposed to long-term patterns.

Content Integration into ELA Instruction

Another focus of the evaluation was to see to what degree content from other subject areas was being integrated into ELA instruction. Both the elementary and the secondary checklists asked observers to note whether content from the following subjects was being integrated into ELA instruction:

- math
- science
- social studies
- arts
- health and physical education
- world languages
- other areas

Figure 8: Content Integration into ELA Instruction



The subjects most frequently integrated into ELA instruction at both the elementary and the secondary levels were social studies and, to a lesser degree, science. The integration was especially strong at the secondary level, with nearly half of the classes observed having some social studies content during the ELA instruction. In some APS high schools, for example, English and social studies were blocked together so that teachers shared space and lesson plans, and children read novels that tied into the period of history being studied in social studies.

Type of Texts Used

ELA classrooms use a rich variety of written material during instruction beyond fiction and non-fiction materials, including reader’s theater at the elementary level, and poetry and drama at the secondary level. Such materials are either in their original form or excerpted or anthologized in a textbook.

Table 5: Type of Texts Used

Content Area	Observed in Elementary	Observed in Secondary
Fiction	36.8%	36.1%
Non-Fiction	24.6%	40.2%
Poetry	n/a	7.2%
Drama	n/a	6.2%
Reader’s Theater	4.4%	n/a

Fictional materials were seen in more than a third of both elementary and secondary classes. Non-fiction was more common in secondary classrooms. Poetry and drama texts were observed being used on a small scale in secondary classrooms.

Observers also looked to determine the degree to which schools were using the textbook materials provided by APS. Figure 9 shows the form that elementary classroom observers used to capture this information. Table 6 reflects the results of their findings. As shown, adopted textbooks³ were not frequently being used in Arlington’s ELA classrooms. The most frequently used text was *Words Their Way in Action* (27%), followed by the *StoryTown Anthology* (17.1%) and the *StoryTown Leveled Readers* (16.2%). Given the infrequent use of many of the materials, it seems more research should be done on why they are not being used. It could be that teachers need more training in how to better incorporate the materials into their classes.

³ At the secondary level, there is a high school reserved book list, but no set of adopted literature anthologies as there are for elementary students, since secondary students generally read original source material.

Figure 9: Checklist of Adopted Textbooks in Elementary ELA Classrooms

OBSERVATION ID		Your ID	Arlington Public Schools Language Arts Elementary Observation Checklist of Adopted Elementary Programs and Materials	
0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9

Core Programs	Titles, Copyright, and Publishers	OBSERVED	NOT OBSERVED
Reading, K-5	<i>Storytown</i> ©2008, HMH Anthology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Storytown</i> ©2008, HMH Big Book	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Storytown</i> ©2008, HMH Leveled Readers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Storytown</i> ©2008, HMH Strategic Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Storytown</i> ©2008 Other <i>Storytown</i> Components	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing, K-1	<i>Units of Study for Primary Writing</i> ©2003, Heinemann	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing, 2-5	<i>Being a Writer</i> ©2007, Developmental Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing SpEd	<i>Step up to Writing</i> ©2007, Sopris-West	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Word Study, K-5	<i>Words Their Way in Action</i> ©2008, Pearson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handwriting, K-3	<i>Handwriting Without Tears (HWT)</i> ©2003	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ESOL/HILT	<i>Moving Into English</i> ©2007, Harcourt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supplementary/ Intervention	<i>Let's Talk About It</i> ©2005, Mondo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Earobics</i> ©2007, Houghton Mifflin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Phono-Graphix</i> , ©2008, Read America, Inc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Making Meaning</i> , ©2005, Developmental Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Comprehension Toolkit</i> , ©2005, Heinemann	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Early or English Explorers</i> , ©2007, Benchmark	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 6: Use of Adopted Textbooks in Elementary ELA Classrooms

Text Type	Text Title	Observed in Elementary
Reading, K-5	StoryTown Anthology	17.1%
	StoryTown Big Book	2.7%
	StoryTown Leveled Readers	16.2%
	StoryTown Strategic Intervention	0%
	Other StoryTown Components	6.3%
Writing, K-1	Units of Study for Primary Writing	8.1%
Writing, 2-5	Being a Writer	1.8%
Writing, Special Education	Step Up to Writing	0%
Word Study, K-5	Words Their Way in Action	27%
Handwriting, K-3	Handwriting Without Tears	6.3%
ESOL/HILT	Moving into English	0%
Supplementary/Intervention	Let's Talk About It	0%
	Earobics	0%
	Phono-Graphix	.9%
	Making Meaning	0%
	Comprehension Toolkit	0%
	Early or English Explorer	0%
Other		85.5%

Use of Best Practices in ELA Classrooms

In this section, we will examine the best practices that were observed in ELA classrooms. Different best practices were identified for elementary and secondary classrooms, so they will be examined separately.

Observers were asked to look for several items posted in an elementary classroom that would set the tone for focused, purposeful ELA instruction. These included the learning objective for the day or week, word walls showing key or sight words, and robust vocabulary walls showing more challenging words.

The evaluators found that word walls were present in almost two-thirds of the elementary classrooms they visited and that robust vocabulary walls were present in about a third of the classrooms. However, learning objectives were posted in only 11.4% of the classrooms.

Table 7: Best Practice Items Posted in Elementary ELA Classrooms

Best Practice	Percent Observed
Learning Objective	11.4
Word Walls	64.0
Robust Vocabulary Displays	31.6

The observers noted that best practices were often being used in the ELA classroom but that they could have been employed more frequently. More often than not, they saw teachers conferring with students during writing instruction (65.6%); they saw adopted curriculum materials being used (59.6%); they saw students reading independently or with a partner (50.9%); and they saw teachers identifying a clear objective for the lesson (50.0%). Some important ELA best practices, such as discussing the underlying generalizations of a week’s word study (3.4%), engaging in research activities (3.5%), and engaging in robust vocabulary work (7.9%) were not often seen in use.

Table 8: Use of Best Practices in Elementary ELA Classrooms

Best Practice	Percent Observed
Teacher confers with student during writing instruction.	65.6
Teacher uses the adopted curriculum materials.	59.6
Students read independently or with a partner.	50.9
Teacher identifies a clear learning objective for the lesson.	50.0
Teacher explicitly teaches reading strategies to engage students in the reading process.	42.9
Small group instruction is differentiated by content, process, or product.	42.1
Teacher presents mini-lesson with explicit teaching point during writing instruction.	35.5
Students and teachers reflect on why words are sorted into different categories during word study.	35.5
Students are given additional support as needed through differentiated instructional techniques and strategies.	33.3
Students write independently for a variety of meaningful purposes.	30.7
Students express their opinions with supporting evidence.	28.1
Students learn and read meanings of unfamiliar words through robust vocabulary activities.	7.9
Students are engaged in a research task.	3.5
Students and teachers discuss the underlying generalization of the weekly sort during word study.	3.4

At the secondary level, observers saw students engaged in comprehending, interpreting, and analyzing text 75% of the time and listening critically and expressing substantive responses 70% of the time. These are activities that we often think of at the heart of English language arts studies at the secondary level. Vocabulary was taught through direct instruction more often at the high school level (73.7%) than the middle school level (50.0%). Although more research activities were seen at the secondary level than the elementary school level, the number of classes engaged in research activities was still fairly low—less than a fifth of all classes observed. Secondary ELA teachers were observed teaching reading strategies and providing writing instruction in roughly the same amounts as elementary ELA teachers overall. However, high school students were more often engaged in writing activities (40.0%) than middle school students (26.8%).

Table 9: Use of Best Practices in Secondary ELA Classrooms

Best Practice	Middle School (n=57)		High School (n=40)		Total (n=97)	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Students comprehend, interpret, and analyze text.	41	73.2	29	78.4	70	75.3
Students listen critically and express substantive responses in class/group discussions and/or oral presentations.	36	64.3	28	80.0	64	70.3
Vocabulary is taught (introduced, modeled, reinforces) through reading, writing, and/or direct instruction.	28	50.0	28	73.7	56	59.6
Teachers teach reading strategies.	24	42.9	14	42.4	38	42.7
Students are engaged in some phase of the writing process.	15	26.8	14	40.0	29	31.9
Students are engaged in a research task or presentation (e.g. consulting a variety of sources, citing primary and secondary sources.)	11	19.6	5	15.6	16	18.2

For those secondary classes that were observed engaging students in the writing process, evaluators were also asked to determine which phase of the process they saw. The table below shows those results.

Table 10: Phase of the Writing Process Observed in Secondary ELA Classrooms

Phase of the Writing Process	Middle School (n=57)		High School (n=40)		Total (n=97)	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Pre-writing	9	15.8	4	10.0	13	13.4
Drafting	6	10.5	10	25.0	16	16.5
Revising	4	7.0	3	7.5	7	7.2
Editing	4	7.0	3	7.5	7	7.2
Publishing	1	1.8	1	2.5	2	2.1

Students were most often seen in the pre-writing or drafting phase of the writing process. They seemingly had very few opportunities to publish their work. This could be an area of future professional development opportunities for teachers.

Conclusions

Overall, the checklists provided valuable information on the types of ELA content being taught in APS classrooms. While good work was observed in APS ELA classrooms, the checklists also revealed several areas for further study, emphasis, and professional development:

- Elementary classrooms in general need to make sure they provide the recommended amounts of ELA instruction each day. Almost half of the grade K-2 classrooms and a quarter of the grade 3-5 classrooms were not providing the recommended amounts of ELA instruction.
- Teaching assistants at the elementary level and special education teachers at the secondary level are the adults most likely to be working with the main ELA teacher to provide instruction. However, responsibility for instruction is only likely to be shared by the other adult about half the time. More work should be done to ensure these human resources are being used to their fullest capacity and that all adults present in the classroom share responsibility for instruction as appropriate.
- More emphasis could be placed research activities, which were seldom seen in either elementary or secondary classes.
- Children in special education and ESOL/HILT classes are studying literature at lower rates than other students and may be missing an important source of contextualized opportunities for the acquisition of ELA skills.
- Social studies, and to a far lesser degree, science, are the other content areas most likely to be integrated into ELA instruction. More could be done to integrate other content areas into ELA instruction. This could be an area for future professional development.
- Poetry and drama are underutilized as texts in the ELA classroom at the secondary level. They offer rich opportunities for language study and interactive classroom activities. This could be an area for future professional development.
- Adopted textbooks for elementary students are being used in limited amounts. The reason for this is worth exploring to ensure the proper use of resources.
- Several ELA “best practices” could be examined as future professional development offerings for teachers, such as explicit teaching of reading strategies, the generalizations underlying word study sets, increased use of robust vocabulary activities, improved differentiation for small groups, increased and purposeful opportunities for writing, and increased opportunities for research.

These areas offer APS’s already strong ELA program a path for further growth and development.