



# English Language Arts

Evaluation Brief, 2017-2018 School Year

**AESD** ASSOCIATION OF  
EDUCATIONAL  
SERVICE DISTRICTS

Nine ESDs. One Network.  
Supporting Washington's Schools and Communities.

Dear ESD and OSPI Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that we share this Evaluation Brief to communicate what we have learned thus far in our exploratory pilot study focused on measuring the “Influence on Student Mastery of Content” in the OSPI/AESD Professional Learning Network Theory of Action.

The [OSPI/AESD Professional Learning Network Theory of Action](#) was developed collaboratively by ESD Regional Coordinators. The documents reflect the comprehensive and strategic approach to getting timely information from OSPI education leaders into the hands of our local teachers to improve student learning. It is the way we tell the story between the actions of the Regional Coordinators and teacher and student outcomes.

This brief provides an example of the type of information we are gathering to probe the assumptions in the Theory of Action that specifically focus on Regional Coordinators’ work. By studying one English Language Arts teacher, the through line from Regional Coordinator’s work to student mastery of content is illuminated.

Together, let’s celebrate the collective effects of OSPI/AESD professional learning sessions on teachers and students across Washington State.

Sincerely yours,

Gene Sharratt, AESD and Kathe Taylor, OSPI



## Student Learning Exploration

Throughout Washington State, Regional Content Coordinators serve as the conduit of information from our state education leaders to school districts across 71,362 square miles, spanning the snow-capped mountains of the Cascades to forested islands in Puget Sound to the rich agricultural fields in Eastern Washington. The Regional Coordinators work diligently in their Educational Service District (ESD) Region to take common resources from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) addressing equity, standards, and assessment and help teachers improve instruction and student learning. They offer courses throughout the year and work within schools supporting instruction through professional learning communities, classroom demonstrations, and embedded coaching practices in cooperation with teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators.

Last year, work began with the collaborative development of the OSPI/AESD Professional Learning Network Theory of Action. Over the course of a month, Regional Coordinators from all nine ESDs and four content areas were guided through a series of conversations to construct a Theory of Action. With diligent and assiduous attention to detail, they passionately shared the multi-faceted nature of their work and intended outcomes. After synthesizing volumes of information, Kauffman & Associates, Inc., (KAI) created a resulting Theory of Action that depicts the relationship between Regional Coordinators' actions and tasks to desired outcomes. This framework document allowed for an evaluation to test assumptions by collecting data to confirm, modify, or refute these relationships, thus grounding practice in a clear analysis of what is working well and what may need to be improved.

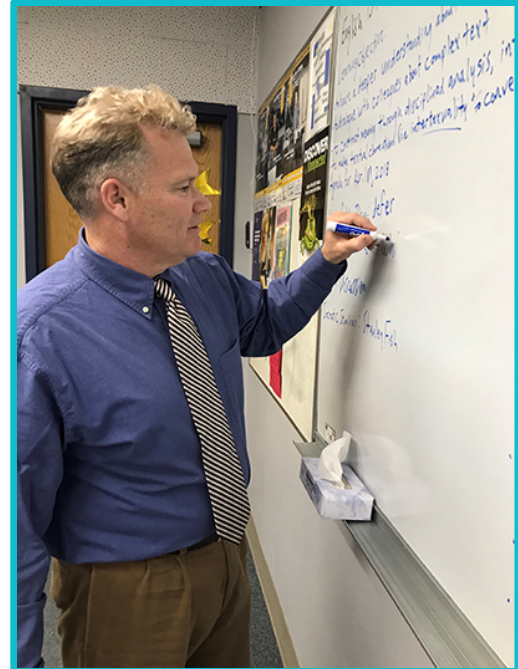
Using a participatory approach, KAI's Dr. Janet Gordon collaborated with teachers to explore how their engagement in OSPI/AESD professional learning has influenced students. Both quantitative (assessment scores, surveys, classroom work) and qualitative data (videos, audio, interviews) were used to tell the story of the teachers' cycle of inquiry, from professional learning to classroom implementation to adjusting practice and the influence on students.

### Spotlight – English Language Arts

Philip Fournier has attended many English language Arts (ELA) professional learning courses at ESD 171 under the tutelage of Regional Literacy Coordinator and Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) Trainer Shanna Brooks. Mr. Fournier teaches all grades in Manson High School, a bilingual school located in one of the fastest growing Latino communities in Washington state. One of the school's goals is to offer more dual credit courses, which prepare students for college and the workforce by providing the skills and knowledge to navigate the rigorous and ever-changing demands of 21st Century work.

Mr. Fournier teaches ninth-grade English courses, including regular and honors sections. These two courses are integrated with the ninth-grade science classes. For these courses, Mr. Fournier said, *“The science teacher and I collaborate on creating real-life, integrated, project-based learning.”*

Mr. Fournier also teaches English 111-Composition, a University of Washington College in the High School course designed to show students how to think in complex and non-binary ways about knowledge and writing. In English 111, students develop skills to write academic papers, which they will undoubtedly need in their academic career and beyond. This course focuses primarily on one discipline, English, as a way of helping students recognize the differences between academic expectations across content areas to provide them with skills for achieving success across disciplines.



*Philip Fournier, 9th-grade ELA teacher at Manson High School in Manson, WA*

## Implementation of Professional Learning

Since his first professional development course at ESD 171 in 2013, Mr. Fournier has been applying what he learned from the Regional Coordinator. One multi-week course that he said *“was pure gold”* introduced him to new strategies to effectively teach students how to use textual evidence to support claims with argumentative writing. It also taught him how to design formative assessments that registered students’ learning. He shared:

*“The course was collaborative in nature, and I found this extremely beneficial because it prepared us to apply what we were learning immediately. Also, it held us all accountable because we needed to bring back our assessments.”*

Another ESD course he completed focused on how to use the English Language Achieve Discussion Cards. These cards are designed to teach speaking skills and improve students’ communicative skills and their ability to express themselves with appropriate social and cultural norms for each situation. Mr. Fournier held a well-worn deck of cards as he enthusiastically explained:

*“Explicitly using the cards has given students access to language so they can have rich conversations about science, math, and English Language Arts. The Discussion Cards have guided and assisted my students, specifically those who are bilingual, by providing them with explicit language support for authentic dialogical experiences in the classroom. In other words, the cards have given my students the opportunity to learn and practice conversational techniques needed to move a discussion forward, as well as the rhetorical devices, a critical*



*foundation at the ninth-grade level, which are frequently found in formal speech and writing activities. Through the use of the sentence stems on the cards, my students have developed confidence, and they have become fully engaged members of the classroom community."*

Ms. Brooks' work strategically focuses on the implementation of ELA units of study that meet the rigor of the Washington State ELA Standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Main topics within that work included strategies for reading complex text, academic writing, vertical curricular alignment, and classroom-based assessments, all of which Mr. Fournier has practiced and refined in his classroom.

## Influence on Student Achievement

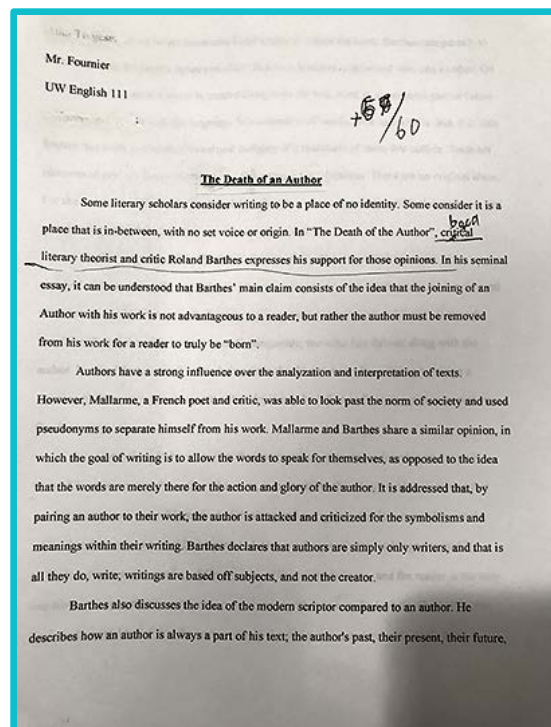
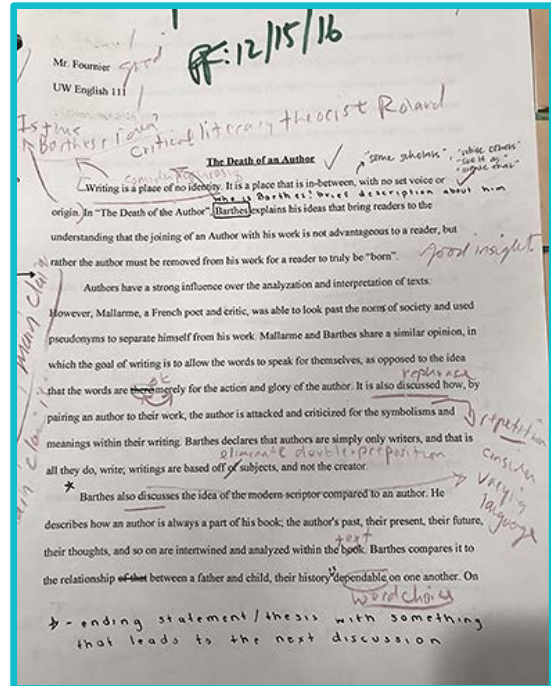
*"I see the impact of the strategies I learned especially in my College in the High School courses,"* Mr. Fournier shared.

Having difficulty choosing just one example of improved writing, Mr. Fournier decided on the pre-and-post feedback writing examples pictured here, explaining:

*"Students are given an opportunity to significantly revise each of their major papers using feedback generated by me, their peers during reading sessions, and writing conferences."*

He asked this student to reflect on what they had learned in his class and the student wrote:

*"When I first signed up for and started English 111, I was skeptical of how much my writing would improve in such a short time period. Fortunately, for me, however, this class taught me skills to help me grow as a writer that will not only benefit me in my English classes, but in all other genres as well. I am now able to create stronger, more complex arguments that are important in an academic context. I can support these*



*Work example shows steep gains in a student's ability to write*

*arguments with evidence and ideas gathered from outside sources, and I am better able to synthesize these ideas into fluid, compelling arguments. And when writing these arguments, [I am] cognizant of my intended audience, and I am consequently able to cater to the needs of the genre I am writing for in order to be more successful.”*

Mr. Fournier is dedicated to his students and committed to attending professional learning at his ESD to best serve them. He attributed the ESD’s ELL-focused professional learning courses with facilitating his ELL endorsement through the Pacific Lutheran University. Next, he plans to work with the ESD to learn how the ELA interim assessment blocks can be used to complement his current formative assessments to benefit his students. Mr. Fournier’s story illustrates best practices of educators reaching out to their ESD and the larger ESD network to learn new knowledge and bring it back to the classroom, school, and district.

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## Next Steps

Dr. Gordon will continue to explore the influence of teacher professional learning on students with the larger group of ELA early learning, mathematics, and science teachers. Also included in the evaluation are school administrators who are Fellows and Instructional Coaches. This analysis will be included in the year-end evaluation report. Factors that professional development participants identified as having shaped their classroom practices and, in turn, their students’ learning will be shared. Learning from this exploratory pilot will prompt action in the upcoming 2018-19 evaluation and inform next steps to maximize the OSPI/AESD Network’s investment of time and resources and set the course for teacher and student success.