



THE SURVEY SAYS... FEEDBACK FROM WNY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

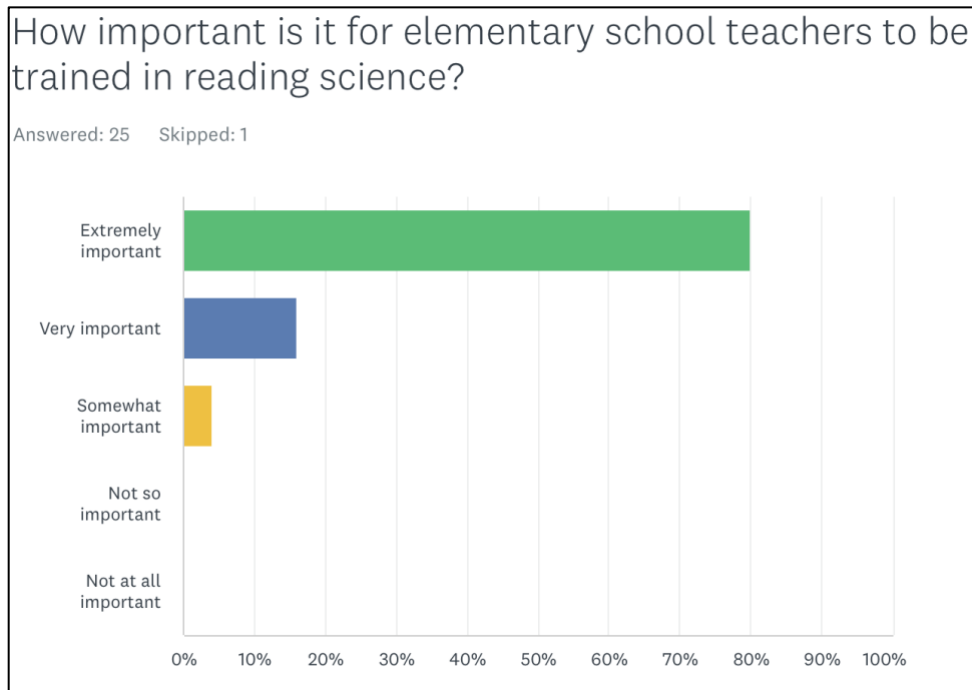
(June 5, 2023) Last month, the partners in the WNY Literacy Initiative sponsored the Lexia LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) for Administrators development course for 40 administrators from schools in Western New York (WNY). This professional development is “designed to provide early childhood and elementary educators and administrators with deep knowledge to be literacy and language experts in the science of reading.”

We would like to thank the 24 partners in the WNY Literacy Initiative for sponsoring this important professional development opportunity, Lexia for providing the training, Erie 1 BOCES for hosting the training sessions, and the 40 administrators who took their time over weekends to learn more about reading science.

The training was another great example of education stakeholders working collaboratively to help improve reading instruction and educational outcomes in WNY. We have seen tremendous engagement on the literacy front so far from teachers and school administrators and look forward to working more closely with school boards and superintendents as well to help improve reading instruction in our region.

Following the training, we surveyed the attendees to share some of their takeaways. Below are the key points from that survey:

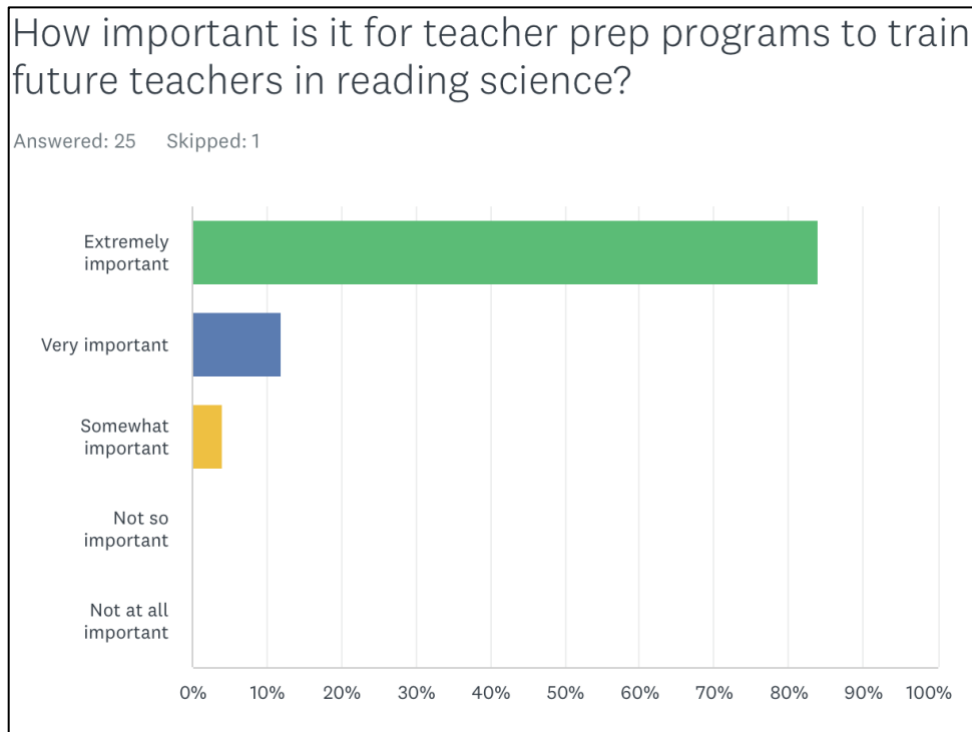
1. **School administrators found the LETRS training to be useful.** Unlike less popular professional development, 87.5% of the administrators who attended the training found the LETRS Training for Administrators to be “very useful” or “extremely useful” with 96% of administrators finding the training to be at least “somewhat useful.”
2. **Administrators agree that it is important for both teachers AND school leaders to be trained in reading science.** 96% of administrators believe that is “extremely important” or “very important” for both administrators and teachers to be trained in reading science. This is an important takeaway since most teachers and administrators are not yet trained in reading science.



Source: WNY Education Alliance, Survey Monkey

While there is proposed legislation in Albany to fund training in the science of reading, we believe that it makes sense for school districts to move ahead with providing teacher/admin training on their own, perhaps by utilizing any remaining ESSR funds.

3. **School administrators believe that teacher prep programs should be training prospective teachers in reading science.** 96% of the administrators surveyed said that it was either “very important” or “extremely important” for teaching colleges to train future teachers in reading science; 100% found it at least “somewhat important.”



Source: WNY Education Alliance, Survey Monkey

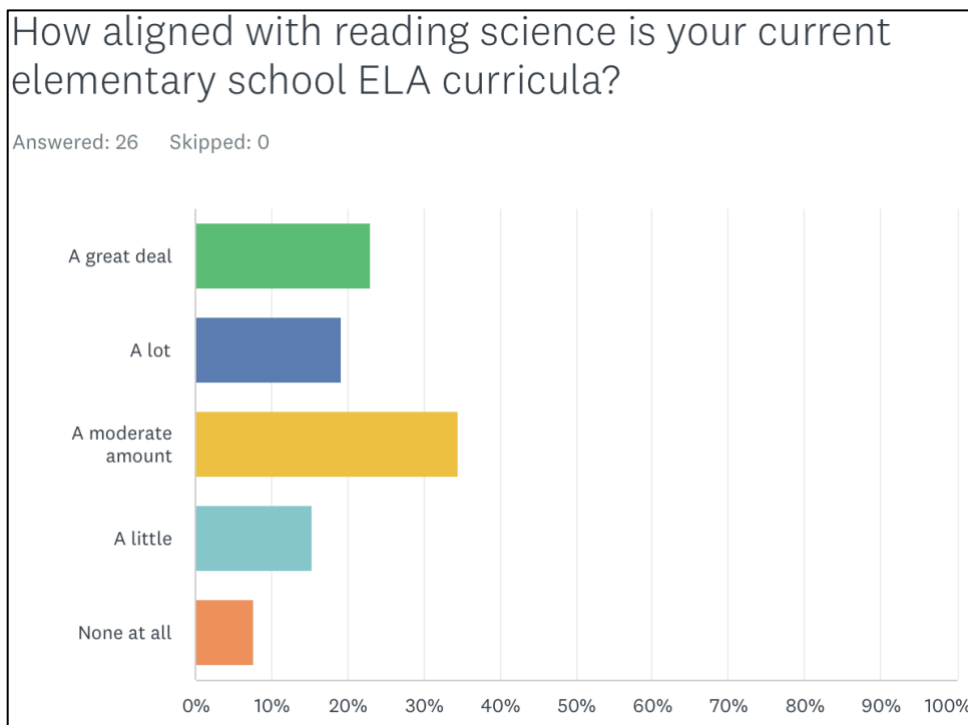
This is another important takeaway. We have received some feedback from teacher colleges that they would offer more courses in reading science if there were more demand for it. This survey would seem to suggest that school administrators would like to see their teachers trained in reading science and that there should be more demand for this type of training at teacher prep programs.

*We would like to see NYSED require prospective teachers to be taught about reading science and we would like to see local teacher colleges do more to align their own teaching with the well-established research regarding how children learn to read because ***it is the right thing to do.****

4. **Less than 50% of administrators felt that the ELA curricula used in their elementary schools was significantly aligned with reading science.** Only 42% of administrators felt that the ELA curricula used in their elementary schools was either “a great deal” or “a lot” aligned with reading science. Meanwhile, 35% of administrators felt that their curricula “moderately” aligned with reading science and 23% felt that their curricula was either “not at all” aligned or “a little” aligned.



Given the number of schools in WNY that continue to use Lucy Calikins' Units of Study and Fountas and Pinnell, we suspect that percentage of schools in the area that have aligned their ELA curricula with research is even lower than suggested by the survey.



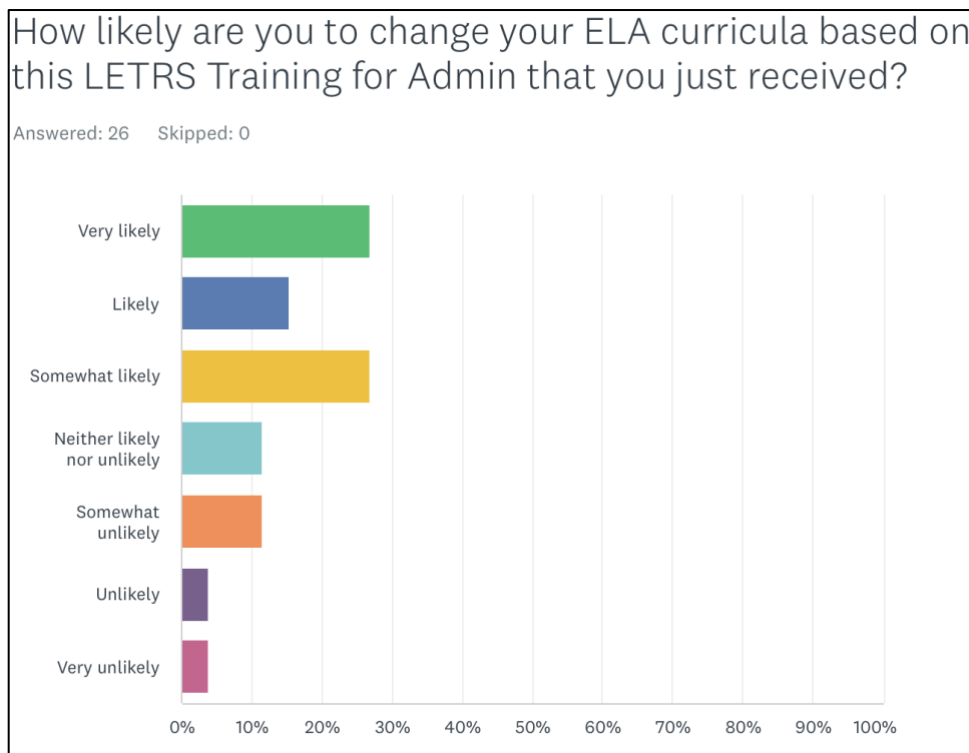
Source: WNY Education Alliance, Survey Monkey

Nonetheless, the fact that the ELA curricula being used is not yet aligned with reading science is not terribly surprising and it certainly isn't an indictment of our schools, particularly since few teacher prep programs have taught reading science and since NYSED, unlike many other state education departments, has not provided schools with much support in terms of curricula evaluation/guidance and teacher training.

Given the declining reading proficiency scores in New York State and in our region, we would like to see NYSED follow the lead of other state education departments in supporting teachers, schools, and students by providing teacher training/coaching as well as guidance for reading assessments, curricula, and interventions.



5. **Changes to ELA curricula are coming to many school districts in WNY.** Nearly 70% of administrators who participated in the training were “somewhat likely”, “likely”, or “very likely” to change their ELA curricula based on the training. This is directionally consistent with the percentage of administrators who felt that their curricula is aligned with reading science. We are encouraged by these responses, and it proves the old adage from Maya Angelou that “when you know better you do better.”



Source: WNY Education Alliance, Survey Monkey

The survey results indicate a general agreement among those administrators in WNY who completed the LETRS training that: 1) it is important for all administrators and teachers to be trained in reading science, 2) teacher prep programs should do a better job of teaching all aspects of the science of reading, 3) the ELA curricula used in many WNY schools is not particularly well-aligned with research, and 4) changes are likely to be made to ELA curricula when administrators understand the science which describes how children learn to read.

We hope that this feedback is helpful for those superintendents, school boards, and leaders within NYSED who are interested in improving literacy rates and eliminating the inequities in education that have existed for far too long.