



EdData II

Task Order 30: Education Data for Decision Making (EdData II): Primary School Reading Study for Honduras

Final Report

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Abbreviations

AIR	American Institute for Research
CARSI	Central America Regional Security Initiative
CIASES	Centro de Investigación y Acción Educativa Social/Center for Educational Research and Social Action
CIDEH	Consultores para la Investigación y el Desarrollo en Honduras
DCNB	el Diseño Curricular Nacional Básico
EdData II	Education Data for Decision Making II
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
INICE	Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Capacitación Educativa
IRT	Item Response Theory
MIDEH	Mejorando el Impacto de Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras/ Honduras Improving Student Achievement
MOE	Ministry of Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies
PROHECO	Programa Hondureño de Educación Comunitaria/Community School Program in Rural Honduras
RQ	research question
TPST	teacher pre- and in-service training
UPNFM	National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazan
UNAH	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Executive Summary

This final report for the USAID/Honduras Primary School Reading study describes the activities, results and recommendations of a two part study that took place from July to December 2014. The purpose of the this study was to gain a better understanding of the current context of literacy instruction in primary schools by reviewing relevant documents such as curriculum materials and by investigating the instructional practices and materials use of teachers in primary schools. The second half of the study took place in the western districts and Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) municipalities.

Desk Study

RTI reviewed a variety of documents to better understand the recent policy issues around the improvement of reading outcomes, including reports from international assessments, curriculum documents used to support teachers in planning instruction, and the 2013 versions of the national assessment, the Rendimiento Académico. This review of documents gave insight into recent and current plans for improvement to the education sector in general and literacy instruction specifically, teacher preparation and knowledge, and student knowledge of literacy skills. It also provided a view of the alignment between the curriculum documents, assessment, and results of assessments. Using this information RTI was able to design instruments and plan data analysis for the field study that would further investigate what specific instructional practices were supporting students' literacy development.

Field Study Design

The field study collected data from 43 schools in Grades 2, 3, 5, and 6 in October 2014. These grades were chosen based on data from the Rendimiento Académico, which show that student performance is lowest in Grades 3 and 6. USAID was interested in discovering why scores were lower in these grades than in the preceding grades—thus RTI collected data in Grades 3 and 6 and in Grades 2 and 5. RTI drew a convenient sample of schools from western districts and the CARSI municipalities using the results from the Rendimiento Académico to classify schools as either high, average, or low performing in reading achievement. The study consisted of a teacher interview, a teacher beliefs and knowledge survey, classroom observation, classroom inventory, lesson plan inventory, and student interview. Data collected from these instruments were mostly quantitative with the idea of gaining a general understanding of the classroom environment and teachers' instructional practices. Qualitative data were collected from 9 of the 143 classrooms to gain an in-depth understanding of the instructional practices that most specifically related to the skills tested on the Rendimiento Académico.

Key Research Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to provide data on effective teacher practices and school environment and infrastructure related to early grade reading instruction in Honduras. We organized the report around five key factors:

- Effective teaching practices
- Use of instructional materials
- Teacher evaluation and feedback
- Teacher preparation and support
- School and classroom environment

Below is a list of the most significant findings and recommendations that came out of this research which point to areas that warrant more investment and attention.

Effective Teacher Practices

On average, we found a mix of skills in classrooms representing a variety of evidence-based content areas. Much class time was spent reading texts and on comprehension. Less time was spent on writing, vocabulary, and spelling, which are equally important.

- Recommendation 1: More research could be done to better understand how teachers are choosing to spend their instructional time and to help them balance the time across all content areas.

A significant amount of time was spent teaching grammar skills, which research shows is not essential for learning to read successfully. Teachers in higher performing schools in our sample spent the least amount of time on grammar instruction. CARSI school teachers appeared to spend more time on grammar than those in western district schools.

- Recommendation 2: Consider what grammar skills are essential and how much time is truly needed for this type of instruction. Time spent on grammar could be better spent on skills directly impacting reading development, especially in the earlier grades.

At present, decoding only occurred 1.5 percent of classroom reading instruction time.

- Recommendation 3: There should be more focused time on decoding or word study in Grades 2 and 3.

Although most teachers used the enfoque comunicativo (or said they used it and understood it), there was less evidence of teachers' fully implementing this approach to teaching reading.

- Recommendation 4: More training in how to implement the enfoque comunicativo approach is likely needed. This approach requires teachers to be highly knowledgeable about their practice and their students. It also requires significant resources beyond a reading textbook for students to be able to construct knowledge rather than be given information solely from the teacher.

Use of Instructional Materials

Teachers were more likely to have textbooks and teachers' guides in their classrooms than the el Diseño Curricular Nacional Básico (DCNB) materials, Programaciones and the Estándares Nacionales. Most teachers reported that they used textbooks to plan their lessons.

- Recommendation 5: Efforts should be made to ensure that teachers have all the materials necessary for teaching reading, not just textbooks and teachers' guides.
- Recommendation 6: Materials should be updated regularly and all materials should be aligned, including the textbooks. It is not clear from this study if the textbooks are fully aligned with the DCNB, and further research is needed.
- Recommendation 7: Adequate support in learning how to use these materials and incorporate them in daily lesson planning should be given to all teachers.

The National Standards and Pacing Guides include useful information, however they are very vague and repeat the same standards for several grades without explaining how these standards should become more complex across grades. The DCNB provides significantly more nuanced explanations of the specific skills and standards that are expected of students for each grade.

- Recommendation 8: The National Standards and Pacing Guides should be more explicit and precise with regard to expected increases of skills and standards across grades.
- Recommendation 9: More decoding and/or word study instruction should be added throughout the National Standards and Pacing Guides
- Recommendation 10: Due to the fact that the DCNB is now over 10 years old, it would be useful to review this document and ensure it is aligned with the most recent research.
- Recommendation 11: The standards in the DCNB for Grades 3 and 6 are significantly more difficult than in Grades 2 and 5. Due to the relatively poor performance of students in these grades, it is essential that teachers receive more support in planning for instruction to meet the standards.

Teacher Preparation and Support

Approximately 60 percent of teachers have university degrees and say they are prepared to teach reading. Despite these high levels of education and preparedness, the results suggest that teachers lack specific skills and knowledge for teaching children how to successfully read.

- Recommendation 12: Increasing the level of education for all teachers, along with professional development on how to teach reading would greatly support the improvement of the quality instruction.

Teachers in high performing schools were more likely to report that their school director reviewed their lesson plans and spent time conducting support visits than teachers in low performing schools.

- Recommendation 13: School directors should be encouraged to spend more time with teachers in classrooms (including time spent reviewing lesson plans).

There is a lack of regular support received by teachers in the classroom. Teachers are supposed to receive regular pedagogical support visits; however, most teachers interviewed said that these visits either never happened or happened once a year or once every two months.

- Recommendation 14: It would be beneficial to increase the quantity and quality of school support visits. Further research or consideration of how such a system could better support and impact teacher performance is highly recommended.

Resumen ejecutivo

El presente informe final del estudio de la Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional / Lectura en las Escuelas Primarias de Honduras (USAID / Honduras Primary School Reading) describe las actividades, los resultados y las recomendaciones de un estudio de dos partes, que se llevó a cabo de julio a diciembre de 2014. El objetivo del presente estudio fue obtener un mejor entendimiento del contexto actual de la enseñanza de lectoescritura en las escuelas primarias, mediante la revisión de documentos relevantes, tales como materiales de los planes de estudio, y mediante la investigación de las prácticas de instrucción y los materiales utilizados por los maestros en las escuelas primarias. La segunda mitad del estudio se llevó a cabo en los distritos occidentales y en las municipalidades de la Iniciativa Regional de Seguridad para América Central (CARSI, por sus siglas en inglés).

Estudio teórico

RTI analizó una gran variedad de documentos para comprender mejor los asuntos normativos recientes en torno a la mejora de los resultados en el aprendizaje de la lectura, incluyendo informes de evaluaciones internacionales, documentos curriculares utilizados para apoyar a los maestros en la planificación de la instrucción, y las versiones de 2013 de la evaluación nacional, conocida como Rendimiento Académico. Esta revisión de documentos proporcionó una visión de los planes recientes y actuales para las mejoras del sector educativo en general, y la instrucción de la lectoescritura en particular, la preparación y el conocimiento del maestro, y el conocimiento del estudiante de las habilidades de lectoescritura. También proporcionó una visión de la alineación entre los documentos curriculares, la evaluación y los resultados de las evaluaciones. Por medio de esta información, RTI pudo diseñar instrumentos y planear un análisis de datos para el estudio de campo, para investigar más a fondo cuáles son las prácticas de instrucción específicas que apoyan el desarrollo de la lectoescritura de los estudiantes.

Diseño del estudio de campo

El estudio de campo recopiló información procedente de 43 escuelas en los grados segundo, tercero, quinto y sexto en octubre de 2014. Estos grados fueron elegidos con base en información de la evaluación de Rendimiento Académico, la cual indica que el rendimiento estudiantil es más bajo en los grados tercero y sexto. USAID estaba interesado en descubrir por qué las puntuaciones en estos grados fueron inferiores a las de los grados precedentes, por lo que RTI recopiló información de los grados tercero y sexto, y los grados segundo y quinto. RTI obtuvo muestras convenientes procedentes de escuelas de los distritos occidentales y las municipalidades de CARSI, utilizando los resultados de la evaluación de Rendimiento Académico, para clasificar a las escuelas como de nivel alto, medio o bajo en el rendimiento en lectura. El estudio consistió en una entrevista con el maestro, un estudio sobre las creencias y los conocimientos del maestro, observación en el aula,

inventario del aula, inventario del plan de lección, y entrevistas con los estudiantes. La información obtenida de estos instrumentos fue en su mayoría cuantitativa, con la idea de obtener un entendimiento general del ambiente en las aulas y las prácticas de enseñanza de los maestros. Los datos cualitativos fueron obtenidos de 9 de las 143 aulas, para obtener una comprensión a fondo de las prácticas de enseñanza que están relacionadas más específicamente con las competencias que se evalúan en la evaluación de Rendimiento Académico.

Resultados clave de la investigación y recomendaciones

El propósito de este informe es proporcionar información sobre las prácticas docentes eficaces, el ambiente escolar y la infraestructura, en relación con la enseñanza de la lectura en los primeros grados en Honduras. Hemos organizado el informe en torno a cinco factores clave:

- Prácticas de enseñanza eficaces
- Uso de materiales de instrucción
- Evaluación y retroalimentación del maestro
- Preparación y apoyo del maestro
- Ambiente escolar y del aula

A continuación se muestra una lista de las conclusiones y recomendaciones más importantes que surgieron de esta investigación, las cuales indican las áreas que requieren más inversión y atención.

Prácticas eficaces de los maestros

En promedio, encontramos una mezcla de habilidades en las aulas, representativas de una variedad de áreas de contenido basadas en la evidencia. Gran parte del tiempo de instrucción se dedicó a la lectura y comprensión de textos. Se dedicó menos tiempo a la escritura, el vocabulario y la ortografía, los cuales son igualmente importantes.

- Recomendación 1: Se podría realizar más investigación para comprender mejor cómo los maestros eligen utilizar su tiempo de instrucción, y para ayudarlos a equilibrar el tiempo en todas las áreas de contenido.

Una parte considerable de tiempo se dedicó a la enseñanza de habilidades gramáticas que, de acuerdo a la investigación, no son esenciales para aprender a leer correctamente. Los maestros en las escuelas de mayor rendimiento de la muestra dedicaron la menor cantidad de tiempo a la enseñanza de la gramática. Los maestros de las escuelas de CARSI parecieron pasar más tiempo que los maestros de las escuelas del distrito occidental en la enseñanza de la gramática

- Recomendación 2: Considerar qué habilidades gramaticales son esenciales, y cuánto tiempo es realmente necesario para este tipo de instrucción. El tiempo dedicado a la enseñanza de la gramática podría ser mejor utilizado en la enseñanza de habilidades que impactan directamente el desarrollo de la lectura, especialmente en los primeros grados. En la actualidad, la decodificación sólo se lleva a cabo durante un 1.5 por ciento del tiempo de instrucción de lectura en el aula.

- Recomendación 3: Se debe dedicar más tiempo a la enseñanza de decodificación o el estudio de palabras en el segundo y tercer grado. Aunque la mayoría de los maestros utilizan el enfoque comunicativo (o dijeron que lo usaban y lo entendían), existen menos evidencias de que los maestros aplican plenamente este enfoque a la enseñanza de la lectura.
- Recomendación 4: Es probable que sea necesaria más formación sobre la implementación del enfoque comunicativo. Este enfoque requiere que los maestros estén muy bien informados sobre su práctica y sus estudiantes. También es necesario utilizar recursos significativos, más allá de un libro de texto de lectura, para que los estudiantes sean capaces de construir su propio conocimiento, en lugar de solamente recibir información del maestro.

Uso de materiales de instrucción

Los maestros eran más propensos a tener en sus aulas libros de texto y guías para maestros, que los materiales del Diseño Curricular Nacional Básico (DCNB), Programaciones y los Estándares Nacionales. La mayoría de los maestros indicaron que utilizan los libros de texto para planificar sus lecciones.

- Recomendación 5: Se deben hacer esfuerzos para asegurar que los maestros cuentan con todos los materiales necesarios para la enseñanza de la lectura, no sólo libros de texto y guías para maestros.
- Recomendación 6: Los materiales deben ser actualizados regularmente, y todos los materiales deben estar alineados, incluyendo los libros de texto. No queda claro a partir de este estudio si los libros de texto están totalmente alineados con el DCNB, y es necesario llevar a cabo más estudios de investigación al respecto.
- Recomendación 7: Los maestros deben recibir el apoyo adecuado para aprender a utilizar estos materiales e incorporarlos en la planificación de las lecciones diarias. Los Estándares Nacionales y las Guías de Ritmo incluyen información muy útil, sin embargo, son muy vagos y repiten los mismos estándares para varios grados, sin explicar cómo estos estándares deberían ser más complejos entre los distintos grados. El DCNB ofrece explicaciones mucho más minuciosas de las competencias y los estándares específicos que se esperan de los estudiantes para cada grado.
- Recomendación 8: Los Estándares Nacionales y las Guías de Ritmo debe ser más explícitos y precisos, en lo que respecta a la mejora prevista de competencias y estándares en todos los grados.
- Recomendación 9: Se debe añadir más tiempo de enseñanza de la decodificación y/o el estudio de palabras a los Estándares Nacionales y las Guías de Ritmo.
- Recomendación 10: Debido a que el DCNB tiene ahora más de 10 años de antigüedad, sería útil revisar este documento y asegurarse de que está alineado con la investigación más reciente.
- Recomendación 11: Los estándares en el DCNB para el tercer y sexto grado son significativamente más difíciles que los del segundo y quinto grado. Debido al relativamente bajo desempeño de los estudiantes en estos grados, es esencial que los maestros reciban más apoyo en la planificación de la instrucción para cumplir con los estándares.

Preparación y apoyo para maestros

Aproximadamente el 60 por ciento de los maestros tienen títulos universitarios y dicen que están preparados para enseñar a leer. A pesar de estos altos niveles educativos y de preparación, los resultados sugieren que los maestros carecen de las habilidades y los conocimientos específicos para enseñar a los niños a leer correctamente.

- **Recomendación 12:** El aumento del nivel educativo para todos los maestros, junto con el desarrollo profesional sobre cómo enseñar a leer, apoyaría en gran medida la mejora de la calidad de la enseñanza. Los maestros en escuelas de alto rendimiento fueron más propensos que los maestros en escuelas de bajo rendimiento, a informar que su director de la escuela revisó sus planes de estudio y dedicó tiempo a la realización de visitas.
- **Recomendación 13:** Los directores de las escuelas deben ser alentados a dedicar más tiempo a los maestros en las aulas (incluyendo el tiempo dedicado a la revisión de planes de estudio). Hay una falta de apoyo regular para los maestros en el aula. Los maestros deben recibir visitas de apoyo pedagógico regulares; no obstante, la mayoría de los maestros entrevistados dijeron que estas visitas o bien nunca ocurrieron, o sucedieron una vez al año o una vez cada dos meses.
- **Recomendación 14:** Sería beneficioso aumentar la cantidad y calidad de las visitas de apoyo escolar. Es muy recomendable llevar a cabo más estudios de investigación a fondo para determinar cómo este sistema podría apoyar mejor el desempeño docente.

Project Description

As one of the countries with the fewest resources in Latin America, Honduras faces many challenges to implementing and maintaining a strong education system. Despite this the government of Honduras has put education, especially primary education, at the forefront of its priorities. Over the years the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has supported Honduras in its educational efforts, most recently through projects such as the *Mejorando el Impacto de Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras/Honduras Improving Student Achievement (MIDEH)* project, which has worked with the MOE to create national assessments by grade level and write standards and pacing guides for teachers to use in planning their instruction. In 2014 USAID asked RTI to take stock of the efforts that have been put forth by Honduras to better understand the current context of literacy education in primary school. A two-part study was designed to gain an understanding of past efforts and current instructional practices in primary literacy. The first part was a desk study that reviewed policy and curriculum documents as well as assessment reports from several different literacy assessments conducted in recent years. The second part of the study was a field study that looked specifically at instructional practices in literacy of teachers in Grades 2, 3, 5, and 6. The study results will support the Government of Honduras (GOH) and USAID in considering next steps for further research and reforms. The following is the report of the study and its major findings.

Structure of this Report

The purpose of this report is to provide data on effective teacher practices and school environment and infrastructure related to early grade reading instruction in Honduras. To do this, we report information from classroom observations (both quantitative and qualitative), teacher and student interviews, a classroom observation, and a teacher knowledge measure. The report focuses on these key research questions (RQs):

1. What is the current status of literacy development based on existing assessments in the last three years?
2. How do the national standards and curriculum support literacy development in Grades 1–6?
3. How do instructional practices support literacy development in Grades 1–6?
4. How does the school environment support literacy development in Grades 1–6?

This analysis is guided through the prism of the core research questions that were developed by USAID. This report presents data that address each of the RQs and draws conclusions and recommendations based on those data. The report also identifies additional areas for further research or exploration that could be useful for decision makers.

To get started, high-level results from the desk study conducted in July 2014 are presented that detail the context of early grade reading in Honduras. Following that,

descriptive characteristics of the study are provided. In-depth results are then presented for five key areas related to the research questions:

- Effective teaching practices
- Teacher evaluation and feedback
- Use of materials
- Teacher preparation
- School and classroom environment

Desk Study

The desk study conducted by RTI took place in July 2014. The purpose of the study was to better understand the educational context in Honduras; it included a review of current national standards and assessments. This review served as the guiding document for the field study design and data analysis. The main questions answered by the desk study were:

1. What is the current status of literacy development based on existing assessments in the last three years?
2. How do the national standards and curriculum support literacy development in Grades 1–6?

RTI reviewed key documents in order to answer the RQs. The documents fell into the following four categories:

1. **USAID strategy documents** focused on the global Goal 1 and the Honduras strategy
2. **Honduras policy documents** that helped to gain understanding of the political context in which decisions and priorities around literacy development exist
3. **Assessment reports and databases** from various assessments conducted by the Ministry of Education ([MOE] with the support of USAID through MIDEH) in the last three years to elucidate the current context and issues for primary school children developing literacy skills in Honduras
4. **Curriculum materials** including the standards, curriculum, and formative assessment documents to explain the expectations and approach to reading instruction in Grades 1–6

Using all of these documents RTI was able to analyze the current context, what students are learning in reading, what the teachers know about teaching literacy, and what the curriculum and standards do to guide literacy instruction. Knowledge gained from reviewing each document was synthesized to explain how all these pieces impact the literacy skills that are seen in the assessment reports. The following is a summary of major findings from the desk study. More detailed findings can be found in sections to which they correspond.

Policy

The bulk of the policy review focused on three national education plans and their goals and objectives.

1. MOE's Plan de Educación 2010–2014 (Education Plan).
2. Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Education for All Honduras (EFA) 2003–2015 (FTI-EFA plan).
3. Plan Estratégico del Sector Educación Período 2005–2015 (Strategic Sector Plan).

The three plans each set forth at least one goal specific to improving academic performance, and several goals across the three plans were set to support this improvement. **Table 1** shows a summary of the goals set forth across the three plans that could most directly impact literacy development and that are also associated with the RQs for this final report. The goals in **Table 1** show all three plans having at least one goal to improve academic performance, which is the overall goal of all the reforms planned. These will be monitored in most cases using the data from the national assessments. All three plans set some goal to reduce illiteracy rates and increase achievement at Grades 3 and 6 selected because they are the end of each of the cycles of basic education. Coincidentally these grades are also the grades in which student outcomes on the national assessment conducted by the MOE with support of MIDEH seem to be lowest according to the MIDEH report of the national assessment data; they are also grades that can be associated with transitioning to more complicated text and academic work. Only one plan, the Strategic Sector Plan, set a specific goal around materials in classrooms, teacher training, and supervision.

Table 1. Summary of Goals with Potential to Directly Impact Literacy Outcomes

Focus:	Student Assessment			Materials	Infra-structure	Instruct-ion Time	Teachers	
Goal:	Reduce Illiteracy	Percent of Sixth Grade Graduates at Age 12	Increased Academic Achievement: Grades 3 and 6	Improved Materials Distributed	Improved Infrastruc-ture	200 Days of School	Building Human Capital	Super- vision and Evaluation of Teachers
Education Plan 2010–2014	X		X			X	X	
FTI-EFA 2003–2015	X	X	X			X		
Strategic Sector Plan 2005–2015	X		X	X	X	X	X	X

These goals and objectives of the national plans became part of the *Act for the Establishment of a National Vision and Adoption of a National Plan for Honduras*. This is a law and plan published in 2009 to support the development of Honduras. There is one main educational goal in the Act that calls for raising the average years of schooling to nine throughout the nation. The plan also calls for the establishment of a system for evaluating the quality of primary schools; promoting the organization of competitions at the regional level in the areas of science, math, and Spanish; and making arrangements with schools and international research experts for the training of teachers and students.

Assessment

The assessments reviewed in the desk study cover a range of skills and populations to reveal some insights into the state of literacy among primary students in Honduras. Overall it is difficult to draw any comparisons, as the assessments each test different skills for different purposes; however, they do give some useful information on specific literacy skills. We first discuss analyses from the Rendimiento Académico, then quickly review results from the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) assessment.

Rendimiento Académico

In 2012 and 2013 a sample of students were given the annual literacy assessment administered as a standardized research study by trained data collectors as part of the USAID-supported MIDEH project. The assessment was the same one given to all other students in the country; however, it was not administered by teachers, thus it was more formal and standardized and could be used to get a more accurate national picture of literacy development in Grades 1 to 9. Although this is a national assessment given to all students at the end of each school year, it is not meant to be a high stakes assessment.

One of the more interesting results reported from the national tests is a drop in academic achievement on the Rendimiento Académico from second to third grade and then again from fifth to sixth grade. This phenomenon has been widely discussed and the trend can be seen clearly in the national, grade-level data from 2013. The MOE's Rendimiento Académico document from last year shows that the proportion of students designated as satisfactory and advanced in reading was significantly lower for Grades 3 and 6 than it was for Grades 1, 2, 4 and 5.

In order to explain this trend, it is necessary to understand the method used to determine cut scores for the assessment. According to documentation provided by MIDEH/American Institute for Research (AIR) staff, the Angoff method was used to divide student performance scores into four categories: unsatisfactory, needs improvement, satisfactory and advanced. Most simply, this means that experts were asked to evaluate how many test items they believed a student should be required to answer correctly in order to be in a given performance category. These individual cut points were then averaged across all experts. Finally, in order to strengthen the reliability of this approach, expert evaluations were conducted across several rounds.

These final averages were then used to determine the final cut scores. This is a reliable and well-established method but it does rely heavily on the standards for each category. The most interesting aspect of this is that while the cut scores for satisfactory and advanced performance were relatively consistent across Grades 1, 2, 4 and 5, they were noticeably higher for Grades 3 and 6. In other words, students needed to answer more questions correctly on the assessment in grades 3 and 6 than in the rest of the grades, in order to obtain a satisfactory designation. Therefore, it appears that there are three potential explanations for the Grade 3 and Grade 6 drops in performance when examined via performance levels. First, it could be that the tests for Grades 3 and Grade 6 were significantly easier (thus requiring higher scores in order to perform adequately against the standards). It is clear from the psychometric analyses conducted by AIR that the third and sixth grade assessments were easier relative to the second and fifth grade assessments. However, test equating accounts for the test difficulty across years and therefore precludes this as the explanation for differences in student performance. The second option is that students simply perform worse in Grades 3 and 6 than they do in the other grades. The third option is that the standards are significantly harder for those two grades. This latter option seems plausible given the fact that experts felt as though students needed to answer more questions correctly in order to be in the higher categories. In other words, the standards were set in such a way that students had to do extremely well on the test in order to be deemed satisfactory (relative to how they would have to do in other grades).

In correspondence with AIR/MIDEH staff, we were informed that the question of high standards was routinely discussed during the standard setting process in 2008 and that the panel experts felt strongly that the established cut scores accurately reflected the DCNB standards. The trend of lower performance has continued to be apparent in Grades 3 and 6 in each year since the assessment standards were set. Most recently, the 2013 data show very clearly that while the raw cut scores are higher for Grades 3 and 6, there are greater demands in performance relative to student ability as seen by examining the latent ability cut scores (ascertained through Item Response Theory (IRT) analyses). **Table 2** shows that while the raw cut scores for satisfactory performance are higher for third and sixth grade than for second and fifth grade, respectively, there is also a significant difference in the associated student ability (theta) for these cut scores. For example, while a student ability of just below average (-0.09) is associated with satisfactory performance in Grade 5, an ability of .71 would be needed for satisfactory performance in Grade 6.

Table 2. 2013 Rendimiento Académico Cut Scores

		RAW			THETA
		Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	
Grade 2	Below Basic	7	7	7	-0.97
	Satisfactory	17	16	17	0.16

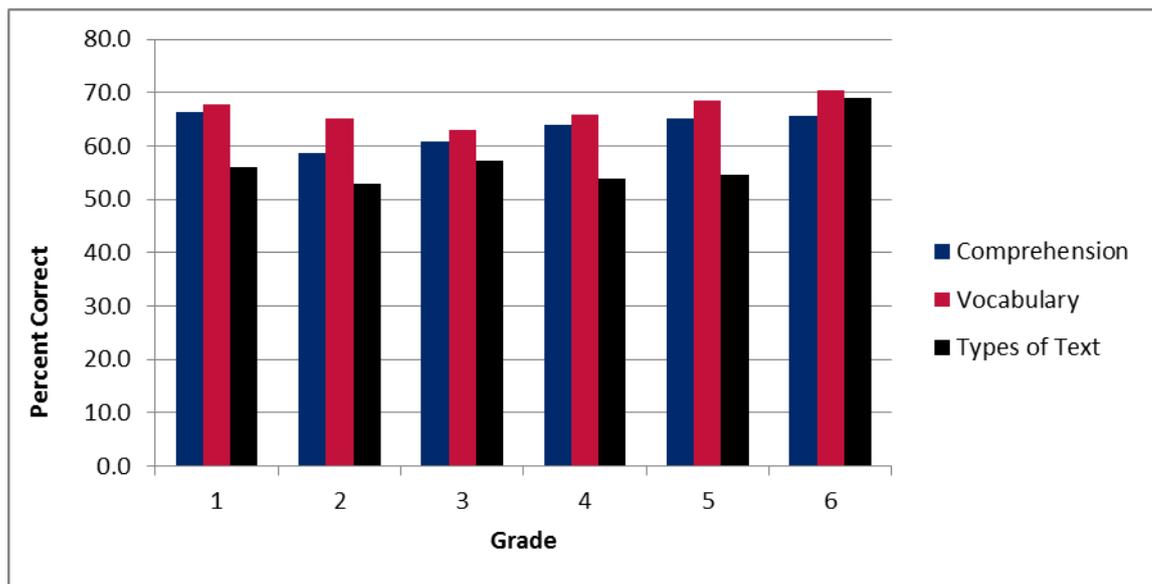
		RAW			
		Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	THETA
Grade 3	Advanced	28	28	28	2.25
	Below Basic	10	9	10	-0.80
	Satisfactory	22	21	22	0.75
	Advanced	28	28	28	2.40
Grade 5	Below Basic	9	9	9	-1.14
	Satisfactory	17	17	17	-0.09
	Advanced	25	26	26	1.52
Grade 6	Below Basic	15	16	15	-0.71
	Satisfactory	25	25	24	0.71
	Advanced	29	29	29	2.48

Ultimately, these higher demands in performance are likely due, in part, to the fact that Grades 3 and 6 are end-of-cycle grades—which bring about more stringent standards. While it is clear that these assessment standards are aligned with the DCNB standards at each grade level, AIR is currently in the process of reviewing and evaluating the vertical alignment of these standards. This could provide further insight into whether or not the increase in standard difficulty in Grades 3 and 6 is justifiably high. Regardless of what they find in these analyses, it seems clear that students in Grades 3 and 6 are not being adequately prepared to meet their grade-level standards. This may be due to shortcomings in particular content areas or possibly just a result of the fact that teachers are not aligning their practice with the DCNB standards.

In an effort to determine the likelihood of the first hypothesis, we conducted additional analyses in order to examine what types of teacher practices and/or school environment factors might be negatively associated with student and classroom level performance in Grades 3 and 6 (but not in other grades), as well as item level analyses for content area difficulty. These results of these analyses are found below.

Initial analyses were conducted for assessment sub-topics, across all primary grades. *Figure 1* shows that there was no significant drop in scores for third and sixth grade students on the three major reading skills of comprehension, vocabulary, and types of text.

Figure 1. Rendimiento Académico Performance, by Grade and Subtask



Similar results were found when the analyses were limited to the students in schools sampled for the field study. However, it was still possible that while the overall scores were similar, the relationships between the scores and measures of teacher practice and classroom environment varied by grade. Therefore, correlations were run for student scores and all available measures from the field study instruments, with a focus on teacher practice (from the classroom observation), school infrastructure (from the school inventory and teacher questionnaire), and teacher profiles.

Analyses were run separately for all students as well as by grade. In both the overall and grade-level analyses, the majority of correlations were exceedingly small. As a matter of fact, while very few correlations across any of the measures were above 0.30, the highest was 0.45 (which falls below the conventional standard for strong correlation). This is due in part to the relatively small sample size (particularly in the grade-level analyses) but ultimately points to the fact that we do not have any specific evidence from differences in teacher practice or classroom environments that can provide an explanation for why scores appear to be dropping off for Grades 3 and 6.

Lastly, it was possible to analyze item-level data for each grade by examining the item difficulty parameters obtained from IRT analyses. The purpose of this analysis was to determine if there were certain content areas that tended to be more difficult in Grades 3 and 6, which could subsequently be used as areas of focus for future curriculum/materials development or teacher professional development.

Unfortunately, at the time that this report was written, IRT item analyses were only available for 2012, for Grades 1 to 3. Due to the interest in the drop in scores from Grade 2 to Grade 3, analyses were focused on those two grades. In both grades, the assessment questions were designed to cover three main components: comprehension, vocabulary, and types of text. Comprehension covered four specific standards: 1) understanding global ideas; 2) understanding main ideas; 3) understanding secondary ideas; and 4) understanding inferential ideas. Vocabulary was made up of two

standards: 1) recognizing and understanding familiar words; and 2) interpreting unfamiliar words. Types of text aligned with just a single standard on reading and using text for various purposes. Both the second and third grade tests had a range of questions on each of these standards. Careful analysis of item difficulties showed that there was little difference in content areas that were found to be easier or more difficult across the two grades. For example, the 10 easiest questions in third grade covered the standards of global comprehension, inferential comprehension, main idea comprehension, secondary idea comprehension, familiar word recognition, and interpretation of unfamiliar words—whereas the easiest questions for second graders were split across the exact same categories. As for the most difficult items, the categories remained nearly identical in both grades, with the only real difference being types of text in lieu of familiar word recognition. In other words, the easiest and most difficult items in both Grades 2 and 3 covered a range of content areas and standards, with no discernible difference by grade¹.

This finding leads to the conclusion that there is no single content area that must be focused on in order for third grade students to perform as well as their second grade counterparts. Instead, it is necessary for teachers to teach to a higher standard across all content areas or components in Grade 3, in order to more appropriately align their teaching with the DCNB standards and to adequately prepare their students for the national assessment.

EGRA and PIRLS

In 2009 EGRA scores showed students in Grades 2 to 4 in rural Programa Hondureno de Educacion Comunitaria/Community School Program in Rural Honduras (PROHECO) schools with very low foundational reading skills, such as letter sound knowledge (average numbers of letter sounds per minute were 8.5 in Grade 2, 11.0 in Grade 3, and 12.3 in Grade 4) and word reading fluency (average numbers of words per minute were 24.8 in Grade 2, 42.1 in Grade 3, and 60.4 in Grade 4), leading to low comprehension scores (percentage of reading comprehension questions answered correctly were 42.8 in Grade 2, 63.8 in Grade 3, and 79.4 in Grade 4). While there are no research-based benchmarks for Honduras, a general rule would be that students should read 65 correct words per minute (cwpm) by the end of Grade 2 depending on the quality of instruction and access to text outside and inside school in a particular country.² The Catholic Relief Services EGRA data from 2013 show similar results and patterns. This study was also a baseline for a project called Food for Education funded by the United States Department of Agriculture. The study covered 2,218 students in eight municipalities (La Esperanza, Intibuca, San Francisco de Opalaca, Yamaranguila, San Juan, San Miguelito, Dolores, and San Isidro). One interesting note about the EGRA data is the improvement in word reading fluency both across grades and in both data sets, versus the lack of improvement in letter sound knowledge across grades. It would be expected that students improving in word

¹ 2013 data for grades 1 to 6 were made available to RTI just prior to report submission. Brief analyses of these data show similar trends to what is discussed for 2012. Difficult questions were spread across content areas for all grades, with no apparent difference between grades 2 and 3 or grades 5 and 6.

² <https://dibels.uoregon.edu/market/assessment/idelgoals/>

reading skills are also improving in letter recognition skills. However these data do not show that to be the case. With the adaptation of the enfoque comunicativo as the main approach to teaching reading, many teachers have been told not to teach letter sounds or even syllable decoding in isolation. The enfoque comunicativo is a global approach to reading, where all instruction is linked to each other and anchored by a text. For example, instead of teaching the sounds of letters in isolation, teachers are told to teach the sounds in the context of a text begin read. The difficulty comes in planning, as it is difficult to plan for and teach in an integrated manner without high levels of teacher knowledge. These data may be a reflection of this. Students may read even more fluently at an earlier age if their letter sound recognition skills were to improve.

The 2011 PIRLS also reported low comprehension scores by sixth graders on a fourth grade level test. The test was given to sixth graders because fourth graders were not thought to be skilled enough to pass the assessment. This assessment showed that students were most successful on literal questions, answering 81 percent of them correctly, and least successful on the more complicated inferential questions such as interpreting and integrating ideas, answering only 27 percent correct.

Overall, the results of the assessments examined here suggest that although Honduras has made a significant effort to improve the education system, there is still work to be done to improve the literacy development of students in primary school.

Materials Review

To address the RQs noted above, the Estandares Educativos Nacionales (National Education Standards); the pacing guides, (Programaciones Educativas Nacionales); and the different assessment tools created by the Honduran government and the MIDEH project were carefully analyzed for this desk study. The review of instructional materials and various assessments found that Honduras has done an excellent job of covering many important skills needed for literacy development broadly. However, there seems to be a lack of explicitness and specificity in the documents that would help teachers plan their instruction better. Without being able to review the teachers' book and student textbook, it is difficult to get a full picture of how the reviewed documents support teachers' instruction. However, breaking down the broad set of skills found in the standards and pacing guides into more detail, especially about how a skill or standard changes over the grades, would likely help to clarify expectations for instruction and learning.

We believe that for students to succeed in these examinations, there should be robust vocabulary and comprehension instruction that can help students meet the standards. It can be said that the skills assessed in the Rendimiento Académico align with the National Education Standards and pacing guides, especially the comprehension and vocabulary skills. However, imprecise comprehension and vocabulary instruction are noted in the pacing guides and vague standards in the National Education Standards. Due to the lack of specificity of skills to be taught at each grade and how skills grow more complicated throughout the grades in the standards they allow for a variety of comprehension and vocabulary skills tested on the assessment to be aligned with the

standards. This lack of precision might be one of the factors that contribute to some students' poor performance in these tests. Because the national standards are so vague, they give little guidance as to the exact skill level students should have achieved for each grade. The standards simply repeat throughout the grades with no differentiation. This lack of specificity allows for both the skills tested in the assessment and the instruction to align with the standards, without any guarantee that the level of difficulty in the instruction and the assessments will be aligned.

These and other findings were used to guide the analysis of data from the Field Study. More detailed findings of the Desk Study will be described throughout this report to help explain findings from the Field Study where appropriate. The full Desk Study is also attached to this report in *Annex F*

Field Study

The second component of the research study was the field research. This research attempted to answer the RQs:

- How does the school environment support literacy development in Grades 1–6?
- How do instructional practices support literacy development in Grades 1–6?

In order to fully answer these questions, the field research was divided into two studies. The first study was a mixed methods study of 43 carefully selected schools at differing levels of reading achievement based on the Rendimiento Academico results of 2013. The study shed light on the school environment and instructional practices related to early grade reading in Grades 2, 3, 5, and 6. The second study was a qualitative, in-depth case study of 5 of the 43 schools. These case studies provided a deeper understanding of instruction and the impact on student engagement and learning for the 5 schools.

Methodology

Sample

The field study took place in 43 schools throughout the following areas: Distrito Central, La Ceiba, Tela, Choloma, San Pedro Sula, Intibuca, and La Paz. The sample for these schools was a convenience sample that allowed RTI to look at specific areas of interest and differences in school performance. In each department and municipality, the schools were ordered from highest to lowest performing according to overall reading percentage from the Rendimiento Académico. Each department/municipality was then split into thirds, with the top third being the high performers, the middle third the average performers, and the bottom third the low performers. From these three groups, roughly equal numbers of schools were chosen, also keeping in mind routes, access, and safety. This ensured that in each of the departments and municipalities, there was representation of high, average, and low performers relative to the area. Using this method, a larger number of schools were sampled from the CARSI municipalities as compared to the Western districts, given

that there were five municipalities included in the sample (Districto Central, La Ceiba, Tela, Choloma, and San Pedro Sula), and efforts were made to have representation from all performance categories within each municipality. Due to the inclusion of only two Western districts, a lower number of schools were sampled there as compared to the CARSI municipalities. We were also able to group all the schools together and rank them on a similar scale of high, average, and low performers in our analysis. This sample was drawn precisely in order to illuminate findings from the Rendimiento Académico analysis.

This sample allowed RTI to flexibly explore patterns and profiles at both the teacher level and school level, and shed light on any differences that may exist between the selected schools with varying levels of achievement. However, it should be noted that these results are not to be generalized beyond the sampled schools, and conclusions should not be drawn about the country in general.

Videos were collected in five schools in La Paz and the **Distrito** Central. In four schools, two videos were filmed: one classroom containing Grade 2 students, and another classroom containing Grade 5 students. In one school, one video was filmed in a classroom that contained both Grade 2 and Grade 5 students. Three of the schools were rural, and two were urban.

Instruments

Six total instruments were developed for the larger 43-school field study. The instruments collected a mix of quantitative and qualitative data and allowed RTI to develop a picture of primary literacy instruction in Grades 2, 3, 5, and 6 in the selected schools. The instruments also gave a general understanding of what teachers in these schools know about literacy instruction, their beliefs and attitudes toward teaching literacy, and their expectations of students' ability to learn to read with understanding and use this skill to learn other subject matter. Students' views on literacy learning and instruction were also collected. Development of the instruments took place at the adaptation workshop in August 2014 in conjunction with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and local experts, below is a description of what the instruments consist of.

- **Teacher interview**—The interview focused on teacher attitudes and beliefs about how to teach reading. It also asked about teachers' expectations regarding students' ability to become successful readers and when students should acquire certain skills. Questions also focused on the kinds of supports struggling readers receive and the support the teacher receives from the director. In addition, basic enrollment and attendance data were collected.
- **Teacher knowledge survey**—This survey assessed what teachers know about how reading skills are developed and served as a brief informal assessment of teachers' own reading skills. Questions assessing teacher understanding of the enfoque comunicativo approach were also included.
- **Classroom inventory survey**—This survey helped identify factors such as staffing strength, materials availability, or other elements of the classroom environment that may be influencing reading outcomes.

- Student interview—This interview asked students about their attitudes and beliefs about reading generally, the types of instruction they receive, and their own reading skills and interest. In addition, we collected information about children’s prior schooling, as well as home environment.
- Classroom observation—The observation looked at what and how teachers are teaching during their reading lessons. It recorded the skills being taught, as well as the frequency of these skills, how curriculum and materials are used during instruction, and student engagement.
- Review of lesson plans—Observers also reviewed lesson plans for that week to understand how teachers typically use their instructional time over a week.

Data Collection

Data collection included the two components of the field research study:

- 43-school mixed methods study
- 5-school case studies sampled from the 43-school study

The larger study took place over two weeks in October 2014; 43 schools across the 4 departments/municipalities were visited. In each school, one teacher from each of Grades 2, 3, 5, and 6 was randomly selected to be observed and interviewed. Five students were randomly selected to be interviewed from each classroom.

One person from the CIDEH team traveled at all times with each data collection team to check quality and immediately address any issues. This provided a high level of supervision and quality control during the data collection.

The data collection team was made up of 16 trained data collectors. The team was made up of a mix of retired teachers, newly graduated teachers, and professional data collectors. A group of 30 prospective data collectors were trained over five days. Each day participants worked in small and whole groups to practice the instruments. The most difficult instrument to learn was the classroom observation instrument, which was practiced with the whole group for at least four hours daily. During the week data collectors also visited schools to practice administering the instruments in classrooms with teachers and students. Two interrater reliability assessments were given and the results of these assessments were used to select the final team of data collectors. RTI chose only data collectors who reached 81 percent interrater reliability or higher to ensure the best quality data.

Additionally, a local video production firm traveled with some of the data collection teams and filmed at the 5 schools selected for the qualitative study. Videos were focused on Grades 2 and 5. The filming took place at the same time that the classroom observation tool was implemented, so the data from the observation and interview could guide the video analysis. The two different grades provided us with an understanding of a range of teaching practices. The case studies allowed RTI to understand how teachers are preparing and supporting students to develop literacy skills. An additional component of the data collection was visits to 1 to 2 escuelas normales, which are specialized teacher preparation schools. Attendance at these schools can begin directly after completion of basic education. Completion is the

minimum requirement for a teaching license. More details will be described in the section on teacher preparation. Local education experts with guidance from RTI experts visited the escuelas normales to learn how teachers are prepared to teach reading and what their instruction looks like. These data supported RTI to further understand the knowledge that teachers bring to the classroom.

Data Analysis

Analysis for the field study was done in two parts to reflect the two main sets of data. One set was quantitative data collected from the larger 43-school sample, which included data from the interviews, observations, and school context survey. The second set of data was qualitative case study data from the smaller 5-school observation sample. The analysis focused on responding to the RQs finalized during the research design and adaptation workshops.

Quantitative data from the interviews, observations, and school surveys were used to calculate basic descriptive statistics and to examine relationships between teacher practice and school performance.

For the qualitative study, videos were coded by two research experts. As a first pass, coders looked for patterns in reading instruction and documented the types of activities that occurred during the lesson. The focus was on documenting three areas of instruction in detail: comprehension, types of text that were used, and vocabulary. These three categories emerged from the previous analysis reported on the results from the Rendimiento Académico. The first video was coded together, and subsequent videos were split evenly between the two coders. As a second pass, categories were created to represent the extent that the activities were linked and illustrated best practices. All videos were double coded and agreement was reached for all codes.

Findings

Demographics

The final sample for this report consists of 832 students across 143 classrooms in 43 schools. For nearly all analyses, the data have been collapsed to the teacher-classroom level and therefore represent classroom-level averages for any student-specific variables. This was done because the majority of information was collected at the teacher level, and these analyses also allowed us to disaggregate by grade. An overview of the basic sample characteristics for the 143 sampled teachers can be found in **Table 4** (while a brief overview of school characteristics is provided in **Table 3**). The table is divided into three columns of data. The first column displays basic statistics for the overall sample. The second and third columns disaggregate the data into CARS municipalidades and western districts, respectively.

Approximately half of the teachers in the overall sample came from urban schools (53 percent) and half from rural schools (47 percent). Additionally, while schools were evenly split into three performance categories based on their average reading

achievement scores, there were ultimately fewer teachers sampled from the low performing schools, compared to average performing and high performing schools (due to the fact that there was a higher proportion of multi-grade teachers in low performing schools). Overall, approximately 4 out of every 5 teachers were female and just over a quarter of all teachers (27 percent) taught more than one grade. The mean student wealth variable, which was calculated using principal component factors on a variety of household items averaged out to 1.3 (which is difficult to interpret independently but provides useful information when disaggregated by school type).³

Table 4 shows that there were large differences in all of these characteristics between teachers in CARSI municipalities and those in western districts. While more than 70 percent of CARSI municipality teachers were in urban schools, more than 90 percent of those in western districts came from rural schools. With regard to performance, nearly 50 percent of teachers in CARSI municipalities were teaching in high performing schools, whereas only 15 percent of teachers in western districts were in high performing schools in this sample. Western district schools had more than twice the proportion of male teachers and more than 10 times the proportion of multi-grade teachers as CARSI schools. Lastly, the classroom mean wealth index in CARSI schools was six times that of students in western districts.

Table 3. School Level Descriptive Statistics: Number of Schools

	Overall	CARSI Municipalities	Western Districts
Urban	19	18	1
Rural	24	8	16
Low Performing	15	4	11
Average Performing	14	10	4
High Performing	14	12	2
Total	43	26	17

³ Student household items used to calculate wealth index:
.33(television) + .328(electricity) + .297(water bottle) +.297(access to health service) +.259(sound equipment) + .258(computer) + .216(latrine) + .21(cooking w electricity) +.205(cooking w gas) + .178(truck) + .153(bike) + .116(motor) + .084(read place) +.021(water tank) + .009(cooking w kerosene) + -.369(cooking w wood) + -.253(latrine) + -.167(water jug) + -.131(water pipe) +-.09(water river) +-.082(water from a common location) + -.057(radio) + -.023(cooking with coal)

Table 4. Teacher Level Descriptive Statistics, Overall and by CARSI Designation

	Overall	CARSI Municipalities	Western Districts
Urban	53%	72%	9%
Rural	47%	28%	91%
Low Performing	29%	12%	65%
Average Performing	33%	39%	20%
High Performing	38%	49%	15%
Male Teacher	19%	14%	30%
Female Teacher	81%	86%	70%
Multi-grade Teacher	27%	6%	70%
Single Grade Teacher	73%	94%	30%
Mean Student Wealth	1.3	1.8	0.3
Number of Teachers	143	97	46

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the same descriptive characteristics as *Table 4*, disaggregated by level of school performance. Intuitively, the majority of teachers in average performing and high performing schools are in urban areas, while the majority of low performing schools are rural schools. Since there is a strong relationship between CARSI designation and urban status in this sample, is it not surprising that only 29 percent of CARSI teachers are in low performing schools (as compared with 87 percent in high performing schools). This difference in school performance represents an expected difference in urban versus rural schools. CARSI districts are more urban and typically urban schools are higher performing than rural schools. There does not appear to be a straightforward trend with regard to male/female teachers and school performance. However, there is a very strong association with multigrade versus single grade teachers, with the latter comprising nearly all of the teachers in high performing schools (94 percent). Lastly, mean student wealth is substantially lower in low performing schools than in high or average performing schools.

Table 5. Teacher Level Descriptive Statistics, by School Performance Level

	Low Performing	Average Performing	High Performing
Urban	18%	68%	65%
Rural	83%	32%	35%
CARSI	29%	81%	87%
Western Districts	71%	19%	13%
Male Teacher	28%	11%	20%
Female Teacher	73%	89%	80%
Multi-grade Teacher	60%	21%	6%
Single Grade Teacher	40%	79%	94%
Mean Student Wealth	0.6	1.6	1.7
Number of Teachers	42	46	54

For the qualitative sample, videos were taken in nine classrooms that were included in the larger sample of schools for the field study. **Table 6** below contains the locations and number of videos collected in each school.

Table 6. Locations and Achievement Status of the Schools Included in the Video Sample

Department/ Municipality	Location	Number of Videos	Reading Achievement	Academic Rankings
Districto Central	Urban	2	74.36	High
Districto Central	Urban	2	61.83	Average
La Paz	Rural	1	48.33	Low
La Paz	Rural	2	64.33	Average
La Paz	Rural	2	59.33	Low

Use of Effective Instructional Strategies

In this section, results are reported for the RQ: How do instructional practices support literacy development in Grades 1–6? We draw on both the data from the quantitative

study, the qualitative video study, and relevant findings from the Desk Study to answer this question. By instructional strategies, we mean both the core components that are known to be effective in the teaching of early grade reading, as well as the methods that are used to deliver these components. Our analysis below first covers the content of what is being taught (i.e., the core components), and then examines how it is being taught (i.e. the teaching practices).

The five core components that are often identified in reading instruction are phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to hear and manipulate sounds orally in words. Alphabetic principle is the linking of written letters and words to their sounds. Vocabulary is the learning the meaning of new words. Fluency refers to the speed at which children read in order to be able to understand what they are reading. Comprehension is an understanding the meaning of a particular text. In the early grades of primary school, phonemic awareness is very important, along with the other core components. In the later years of primary school, vocabulary and comprehension become increasingly important.

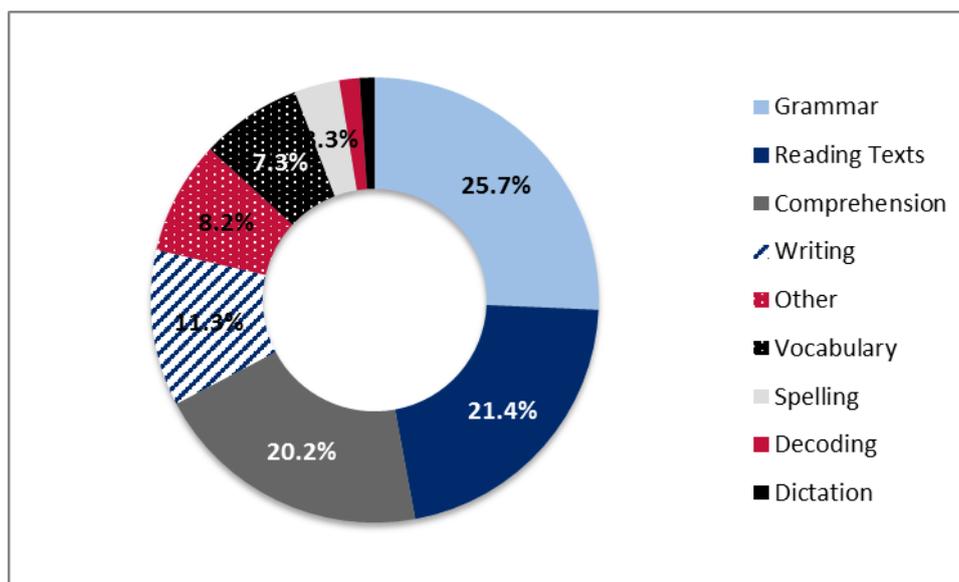
In this study, we selected eight areas that we would observe in the classroom observations. These areas are the areas we would expect to see covered in literacy instruction in Grades 1 to 6 in Honduras. They are based on the five components explained above, our review of the standards and pacing guides, and input from the adaptation workshop conducted with the MOE and Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Capacitación Educativa (INICE). **Table 7** below provides the mapping between the observed areas and the core components. The only area that we observed that was not included in the core components was grammar. We included grammar because it is often taught during reading lessons, even though it is not identified as a core practice.

Table 7. Effective Classroom Practices

Areas in Classroom Observations	Core components Based on Best Practices
Grammar	
Reading texts	Comprehension and Fluency
Comprehension	Comprehension
Writing	Alphabetic principle
Vocabulary	Vocabulary
Spelling	Alphabetic principle
Decoding	Phonemic awareness
Dictation	Alphabetic principle

It is first important to understand what content areas teachers are teaching during the reading lesson, and the extent that each content area is taught, during the reading lessons in primary schools. *Figure 2* below contains the mean percentage of time that each of the 7 content areas was observed over the course of the lesson.

Figure 2. Mean Percent of Time Spent on Each Content Area



Only 66 percent of the time was spent on the five core components of reading instruction. This means that 34 percent of the time spent on reading lessons was dedicated to instructional practices that research shows are not relevant to the teaching of reading (grammar and other activities). It is crucial that the instructional time during reading lessons be dedicated to the components that are core to learning how to read.

Within the 64 percent of time that core components were being taught, we did not see an ideal distribution of time. Ideally, more time in the early grades would be spent on decoding (phonemic awareness). However, only 1.5 percent of the total time on task was dedicated to decoding. We would not expect to see an emphasis on decoding skills in the upper grades (5 and 6). However, we would have expected to see more emphasis on decoding in Grades 2 and 3 as it is a core component that should be taught in the early grades. In fact, there were only 11 instances of decoding skills observed in all of the sampled classrooms. Our analyses revealed no differences between the grades in terms of teaching decoding skills, which points to a very small percentage of time students in Grades 2 and 3 were receiving instruction in decoding.

Findings from the Desk Study's review of the National Standards also showed there is less emphasis on decoding skills. The only standards focused on decoding skills were for kindergarten and grade 1. The Pacing Guides used to support teachers' lesson planning also had little focus on decoding past grade one. Instruction in the pacing guides was focused on grapheme sound correspondence with no focus on word level

decoding instruction. There was some fluency instruction seen in the Pacing Guides; however it was limited to grade one. As noted in the review of these documents, there are no word reading or word study standards listed for Grades 2 to 6, which would provide guidance on how teachers should approach phonemic awareness and alphabetic principle components. Even in a language with a transparent orthography such as Spanish, there is a critical need to develop advanced decoding skills for students even in upper elementary grade levels to be able to read longer/multisyllabic words (Caravolas, 2005; Genard et al., 2005).⁴

The most frequently observed content areas were grammar (25 percent), comprehension (20 percent) and reading, which primarily consisted of reading of texts (23 percent). Decoding and reading of texts were collapsed because of the very small amount of time that we observed dedicated to decoding.

Overall, grammar, comprehension, and reading accounted for 68.5 percent of the total content taught in primary reading classrooms. The other areas, vocabulary, dictation, writing, and spelling, were not observed to the extent that grammar, comprehension, and reading were seen.

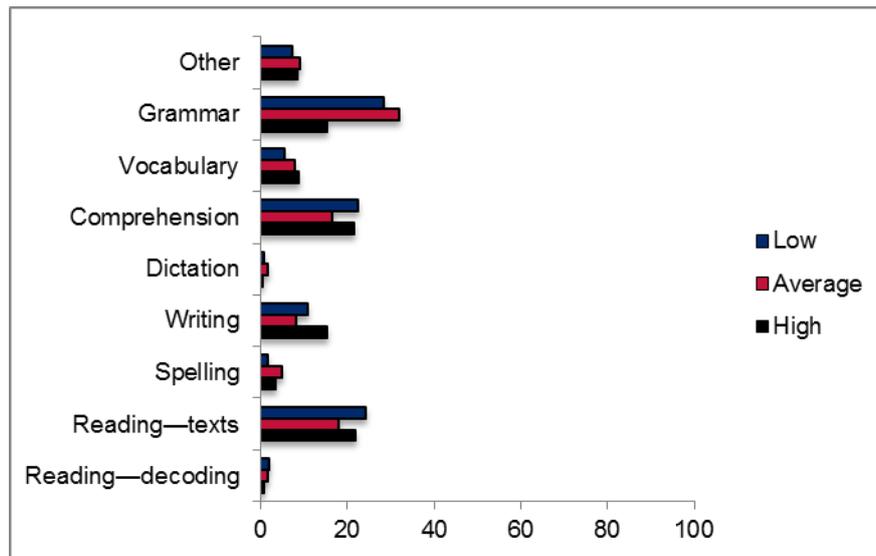
Findings revealed that, in general, content that lines up with evidence-based practices in classrooms we sampled. Reading and comprehension together was 43 percent of the overall content within a lesson.

However, 25.3 percent of the time in reading lessons was dedicated to grammar topics. This heavy focus on grammar may be taking valuable time away from practices that are more geared towards the topic of reading. Interestingly, the Desk Study found little mention of grammar skills in standards and pacing guides. It was noted that the vocabulary instruction in the pacing guides was focused more on teaching parts of speech which could be considered grammar skills.

Figure 3 below shows the breakdown of the percent of time spent on each content area according to the levels of academic achievement from the 2013 Rendimiento Académico, described above.

⁴ Caravolas, M. (2005). Learning to spell in different languages: How orthographic variables might affect early literacy. In R.M. Joshi & P.G.Aaron (Eds.): Handbook of orthography and literacy. Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, pp. 497-511. Genard, N., Alegría, J., Leybaert, J., Mousty, P., & Defior, S. (2005). La adquisición de la lectura y la escritura. Comparación translingüística. *IberPsicología*, 10, 1-9.

Figure 3. Mean Percent of Time Spent on Each Content Area, by Level of School Performance

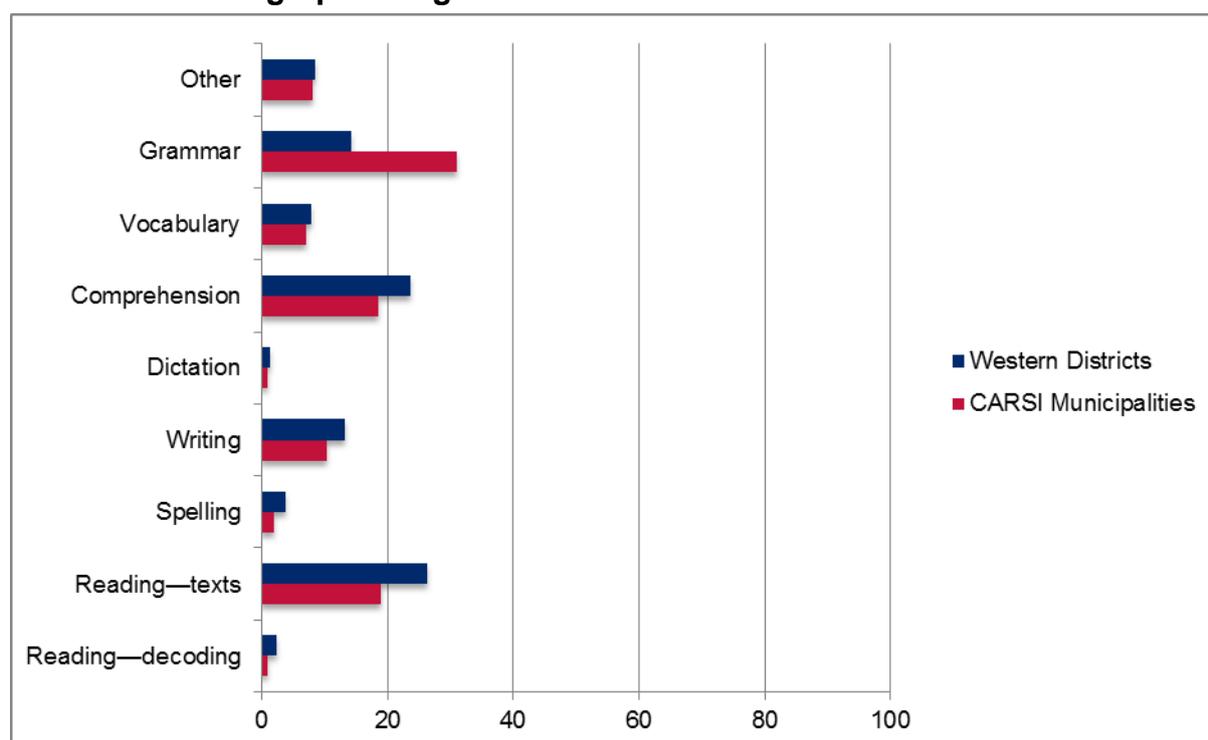


In general, each group follows similar patterns, with reading, comprehension, and grammar occupying most of the time during the lesson, and with spelling, writing, and vocabulary using less time than the other activities. Interestingly, the low and high achievement groups follow the most similar pattern, with the average group spending different amounts of time on the content areas than the other groups. For example, consider comprehension—the average group spent 16.5 percent of the time teaching comprehension, compared to the high (22 percent) and low (22 percent).

Grammar was the skill area where the most meaningful differences between the groups were seen. The high performing group only spent, on average, 15 percent of the time on grammar. This is compared to the average group, which spent 32 percent of the time on grammar, and the low group, which spent 28 percent of the time on average on grammar. This difference is particularly meaningful given that grammar is the one content area that, according to the research base, is not considered one of the core skills in the teaching of reading.

Figure 4 below displays the breakdown of the mean percent of time spent on each area according to the two focal geographic areas included in the sample: the five CARSÍ municipalities, and the two western districts.

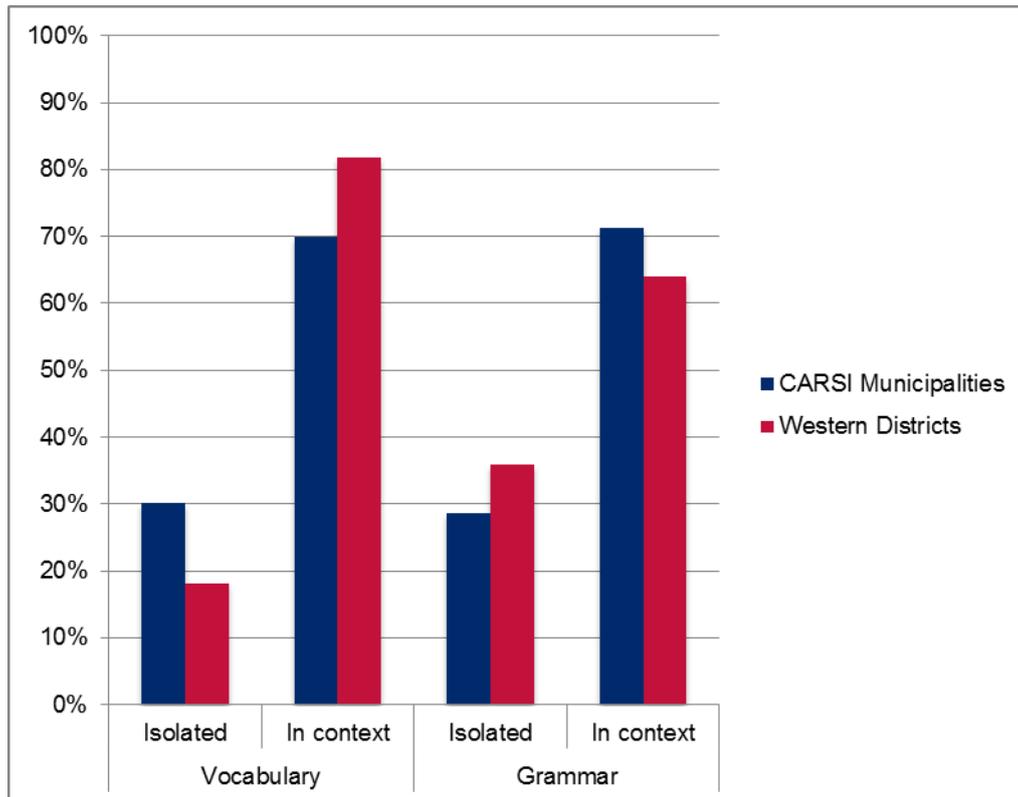
Figure 4. Mean Percent of Time Spent on Each Content Area, by Geographic Region



There are meaningful distinctions between the western districts and the CARSÍ municipalities. The western districts spend most of the time in reading class on comprehension and reading, for a combined average time of 52 percent. The CARSÍ municipalities spent only 38.5 percent of class time on reading and comprehension. They spent more than double the amount of time on grammar (31 percent) compared to the sampled schools in the western districts (14 percent). Again, all schools spent very little time on decoding skills.

In addition to measuring the extent that each of these content areas was taught, subtopics within the contents were observed. In particular, the focus was on whether the specific content was taught “in context” or “isolated” from an anchor text. This was done because of the “enfoque comunicativo,” which is widely used in Honduras. The enfoque dictates that, among other things, reading instruction focus on global ideas and messages, and that all activities (e.g., comprehension, word reading, grammar, and vocabulary) be closely connected with a written text of some kind to provide a context relevant to students. This text anchors the lesson. *Figure 5* contains the average percent of time spent teaching “in context” versus “isolated” according to content areas of vocabulary and grammar, and geographic areas. There were no meaningful differences that we found between teachers from the different academic achievement levels.

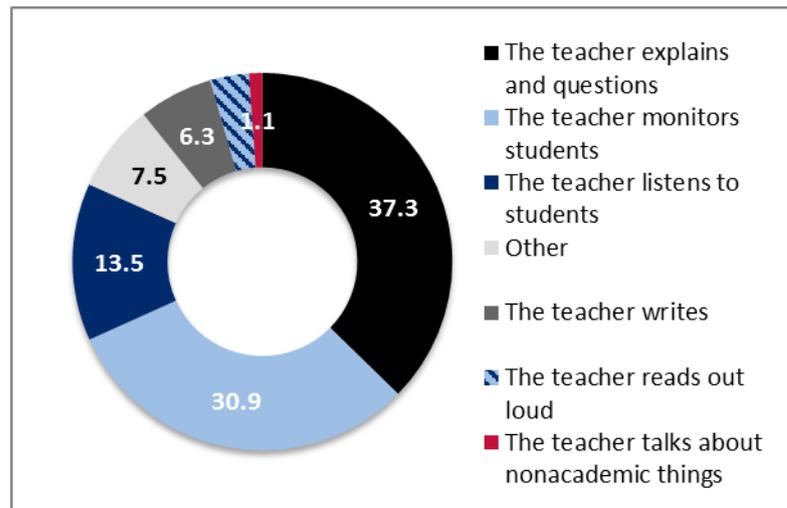
Figure 5. Average Percent of Time Spent Teaching Vocabulary in Context versus Isolated, by Geographic Area



For teachers in western districts and the CARSİ municipalities, both vocabulary and grammar were taught in context through the use of an anchor text, a majority of the time. This approach reflects the enfoque comunicativo. However, there remain many teachers who continue to teach vocabulary and grammar in an isolated manner.

Teachers must also engage in productive actions to teach the core content areas above, such as explaining, questioning, and monitoring students. *Figure 6* displays the mean percent of time that the teacher engaged in the selected actions detailed below as seen during the classroom observations. These actions were chosen as they represent actions that are productive in teaching reading, as well as not productive based on best practices. For example, the teacher explaining and questioning is important in reading instruction. However, it would not be productive if the teacher explains and questions without giving children an opportunity to talk and contribute to discussions, which is captured under “the teacher listens to students.”

Figure 6. Mean Percent of Time of Teacher Actions

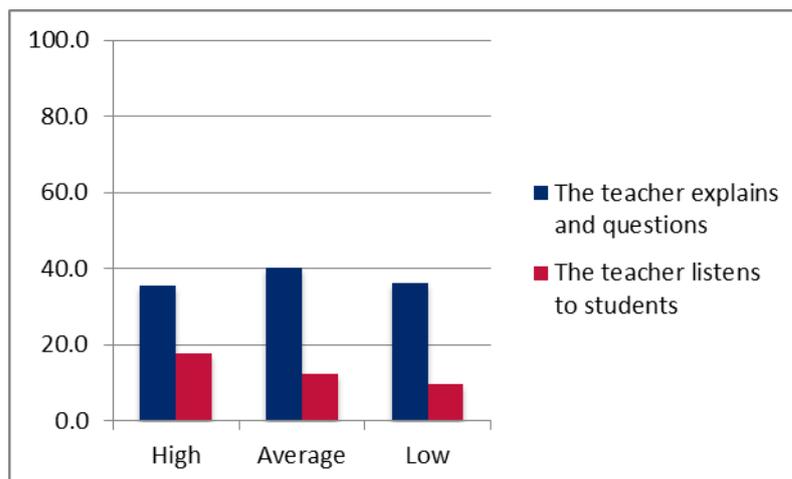


Teachers explained and asked questions 37.3 percent of the time, but only 13.5 percent of the time was dedicated to teachers’ listening to the students. This means that a majority of time that group discussions were occurring, the teacher was talking. There was not adequate time for students to contribute actively and in meaningful ways to the discussions, suggesting that most of the questions that teachers asked required short and possibly choral responses from students. Instead, teachers tended to dominate the discussion time.

Figure 7 below shows the difference between teachers explaining and questioning versus listening to students, according to school performance levels. Teacher tended to talk more frequently in the low performing schools compared to the high and average performing schools. In the high performing schools, teachers talked two times more than they listened to students. In the average performing schools, teachers talked three times more than they listened to students. However, in the low performing schools, teachers talked almost four times more often than they listened.

It is important that teachers allow students to actively participate in a discussion; this is key to producing strong readers who can comprehend what they are reading. Teachers in high performing schools do this much more effectively, which can contribute to why these schools perform better on the Rendimiento Académico.

Figure 7. Mean Percent of Time of Teacher Spends Explaining versus Listening According to Performance Levels



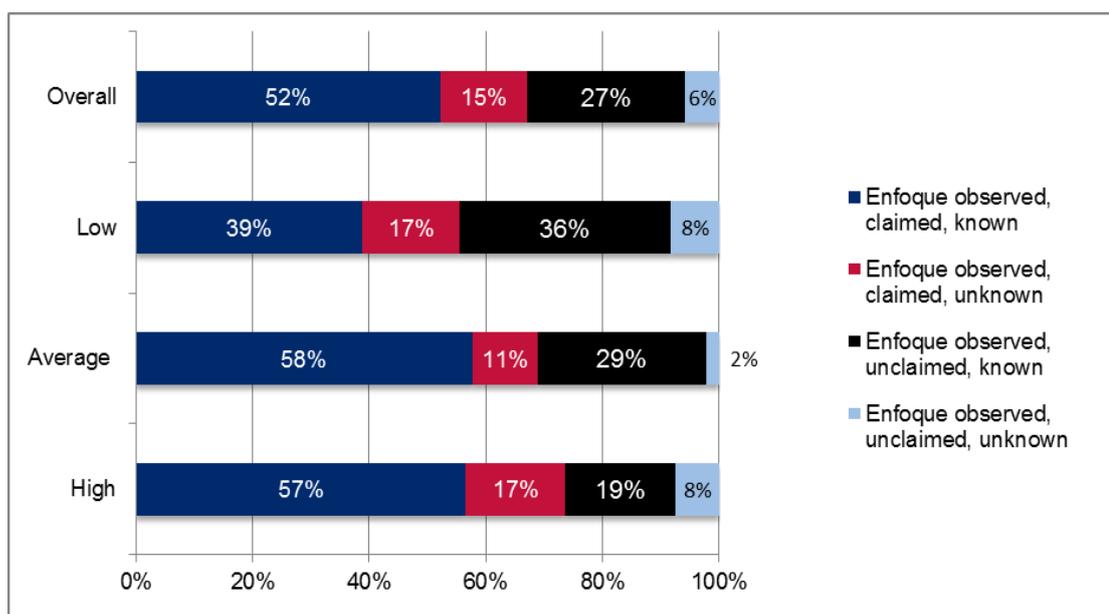
The majority of time in sampled classrooms (68 percent) was spent on the teacher explaining and questioning students, and monitoring students as they engaged in individual or group work. .

Profile of Enfoque Comunicativo

As stated above, the use of the enfoque comunicativo is an important part of reading instruction in Honduras. In order to understand more about the use of the enfoque comunicativo in sampled schools, profiles were created using three criteria: teachers' self-report of whether they use the enfoque in their teaching; teachers' use of the enfoque comunicativo based on classroom observations; and teachers' knowledge of the enfoque. This was done in order to understand not just if teachers are using the enfoque, but instead teacher perceptions and knowledge of the enfoque. It is not simply enough to know if teachers are using the method or not; instead, it is important to understand how and why they may or may not be using it. To do this, we looked at teachers' knowledge of the enfoque in two ways: their answers to a question on the teacher interview about whether they feel they are using the enfoque or not, and their answers to multiple choice questions on the teacher knowledge part of the interview. These two measures gave us a means to understand how and why the enfoque is being used.

Based on these three criteria, 8 possible categories were defined for this profile. While all possible categories are examined with regard to teacher use of the enfoque comunicativo, a simplified profile was created to estimate the relationship between enfoque use and school performance. This simplified profile represents the ideal usage of the enfoque (observed use, claimed use, and known or unknown knowledge) as compared to all other combinations across these three criteria. See *Annex A* for further explanation of this profile. *Figure 8* displays the results of this profile.

Figure 8. Profile of Teachers' Use of the Enfoque Comunicativo, by Level of School Performance



All teachers displayed use of the enfoque in their classroom lessons and or lesson planning. These profiles provide more detailed understandings of the ways teachers reported their use of the enfoque, and whether or not they appeared to understand the use of the enfoque.

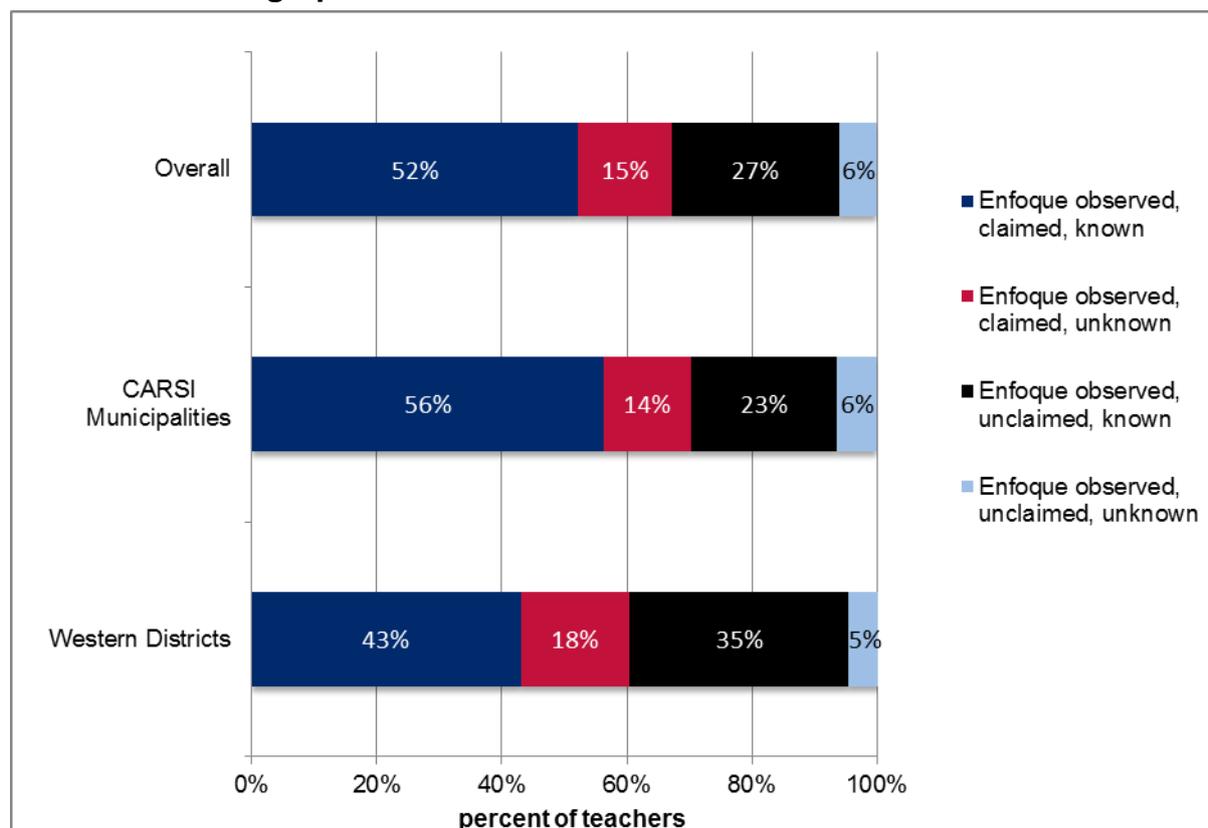
The majority of teachers overall fell into the profile where the use of the enfoque was observed during the reading lesson and/or the lesson plans; teachers self-reported that they taught the enfoque, and teachers understood the fundamental principles of the enfoque. Twenty-seven percent of teachers were observed using the enfoque and displayed knowledge of it, yet did not self-report that they taught it. It may be that although they did not name their practice as the enfoque, the principles of this approach were manifested in their practice and knowledge.

On average, teachers in the high and average performing schools followed this pattern, with a majority of teachers falling in the first profile where the use, self-reports, and knowledge were aligned. Fewer teachers in the low performing schools tended to fall into this profile (39 percent). In fact, there were similar numbers of teachers in the first profile and the third, where although they used it and displayed knowledge of it, they did not self-report that they teach the enfoque.

Although smaller in number, there was a group of teachers who used the enfoque and self-reported they used this approach, but who did not display knowledge of what the enfoque actually was.

Figure 9 displays the results of this profile according to geographic area.

Figure 9. Profile of Teachers' Use of the Enfoque Comunicativo, by Geographic Area



In general, we see a similar trend for teachers in the CARSI municipalities regarding their use of the enfoque. A majority of teachers in the CARSI municipalities fell into the first profile. Less than the majority of teachers in the western districts fell into this profile. Again, we see that many teachers in the western districts used and understood the enfoque, but did not claim they used it.

In order to better understand instructional practices in classrooms, we turn to the evidence from the videos. This provides an in-depth understanding of instruction from the videotaped lessons, and may provide clues as to some of the nuances we see in the profiles and above results.

Video Results

In this section, we describe the results from nine videos. We present the results in three parts, all of which add context and depth to the above analysis on instructional practices. We used the results of our analysis of the data from the Rendimiento Académico to guide this analysis. The Rendimiento Académico analysis identified three focal areas of content: comprehension, vocabulary, and types of text. We decided to examine these areas in more detail.

First, the analysis examines comprehension instruction and types of text. Then, we examine vocabulary instruction. Finally, we present two case studies that illustrate different qualities of instruction.

To begin, we reviewed the way in which comprehension was assessed in the Rendimiento Académico . The Rendimiento Académico tested major skills related specifically to comprehension, including types of text, main ideas, secondary ideas, and global ideas. In a strong comprehension lesson we would expect to see a text that is read in some way, significant discussion around the theme of the text both before, during, and after, and a teacher modeling for students how to make connections between the text, other texts they have read, and their lives. We would also expect that a range of types of comprehension would be taught, as they are assessed in the Rendimiento Académico.

For comprehension instruction, we viewed the nine videos and noticed patterns of practices emerging within the videos that defined the lessons. We named these practices and then looked for them throughout the videos to better understand in what ways lessons were aligned to best practices in comprehension instruction, or the ways in which they were not aligned. The three practices we focused on were connectedness of the lesson, modeling comprehension strategies, and a variety of comprehension types (e.g., inferential and literal). These three practices have been identified as productive instructional practices in the comprehension instruction.

Of the 9 lessons recorded in the 5 schools, 8 were anchored by a text. One lesson used a poem, 1 lesson an informational text, and the other 7 used fictional stories. Fictional stories were the most common type of text used in these lessons.

The first practice, “connectedness,” was a measure of the links between the activities based on the text. We coded lessons as either connecting activities to the text most of the time or some of the time. One video received a code of not applicable, as there was no text present, and therefore comprehension instruction did not occur. A code of most of the time was given when the activities around the focal text were logically linked together. For example, in classroom 1, fifth grade students in an urban school first read a poem. As they were reading, the teacher engaged in the first activity, which was asking children to notice and describe the structure of the poems. After reading, the teacher then led several activities all related to helping the child understand the poem better: they identified words they didn’t know, they answered questions about the poem, and they wrote a summary of the poem using their own words. Each of these activities was related to the poem and furthered students’ comprehension of the text.

In contrast, for a code of some of the time, consider classroom 7. In this video of fifth graders in an urban school, students read a story, answered factual questions about the text after reading it, and then proceeded to a grammar lesson about adjectives. Although the teacher used the story as a starting point, the grammar lesson was not tied to the story in any substantial way.

Of the 9 lessons, 3 received a code of most of the time, 5 received a code of some of the time, and 1 received a code of not applicable.

The second practice, modeling, was coded as yes or no; a code of yes meant that modeling occurred at least once in the lesson. A code of no meant that modeling did not occur in the lesson. Modeling is an important and crucial instructional practice in

early grade reading. In addition to teaching students the basic skills, instruction must also contain strong models of what good reading behavior looks like. This is especially important with comprehension, and it must be modeled and taught, not simply directed.

Classroom 3, of a rural second and fifth grade classroom with low achievement status, illustrates the code of yes. Fifth grade students were reading a nonfiction text about Copan and the Mayans in Honduras. After reading, the teacher asked students questions about the text. When he asked a particular question that students did not have the answer to, the teacher directed them to the photos in the text. He modeled how to look at the photos and get information out of them that is useful. In this case, he was explaining a vocabulary word that was illustrated in the photo.

Classroom 4 of a rural Grade 5/6 classroom with low achievement status shows the code of no. After referring to the story that was previously read, the teacher asked students to write a tongue twister based on the story. There was no modeling or explanation of how to do this, simply a directive for students to write.

Only 2 lessons received a code of yes for modeling. The other 7 received a code of no. Interestingly, the 2 lessons that received a code of yes were on opposite sides of the achievement rankings: the highest-ranked urban school, and the lowest-ranked rural school.

The third practice we investigated was the type of comprehension that was done in the lesson. Literal comprehension was coded when the activity was a recall of events and details in the text. Inferential comprehension was coded for all other higher-order types of comprehension that required students to interact with the text in a way beyond simple recall. Both types of comprehension are important for instruction.

An example of literal comprehension is shown in classroom 6 of a second grade urban classroom with high achievement. There, after reading a story, the teacher asked children to identify the main characters, as well as provide a summary of the story. In classroom 8, a Grade 1/3/5 rural classroom with middle achievement, the teacher asked questions such as “Who are the characters in the story?”, and “Where is the cow?”, all literal questions.

Classroom 3 of a rural second and fifth grade classroom with low achievement status shows inferential comprehension. Second graders read a story about taking a vacation in the countryside. After asking some literal questions, the teacher asked students to think about what they might see while walking in the country. In this way, the teacher made a personal connection to students’ lives.

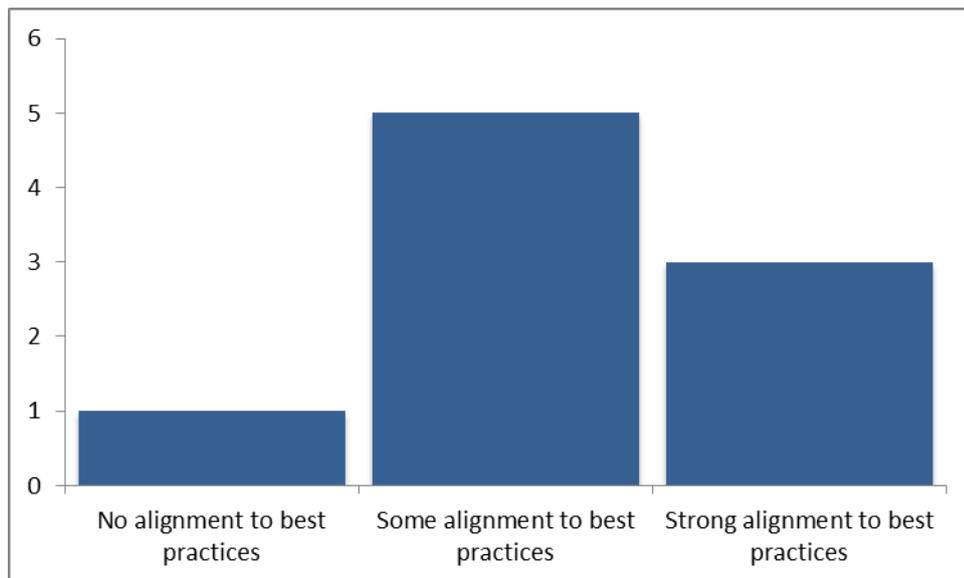
Of the 9 lessons, 2 classrooms used both literal and inferential comprehension. Again, they were the two schools on opposite sides of the spectrum, the higher achieving urban school and the low achieving rural school. Six lessons used only literal comprehension; 1 lesson did not involve comprehension.

In order to then give each lesson a score of the overall quality of the comprehension instruction, we compiled scores for the 9 lessons using the following system:

- Each lesson that was anchored by a text was given 1 point, as it is crucial that in a comprehension lesson, there is a text present.
- For connectedness, each lesson that was coded as “most of the time” was given 2 points, 1 point for “some of the time,” and 0 points for “never.”
- For modeling, each lesson that was coded as “yes” was given 1 point, and 0 points for “no.”
- For types of comprehension, each lesson that was coded as inferential was given 1 point, and each lesson that was coded as literal or none was given 0 points.

These compiled scores for all the comprehension lessons analyzed provide a measure of the quality of the comprehension instruction, with a score of 0–1 meaning instruction was not aligned to best practices, a score of 2–3 meaning instruction was somewhat aligned to best practices, and a score of 4–5 meaning instruction was aligned to best practices. *Figure 10* below contains the results.

Figure 10. Alignment to Best Practices in Comprehension Instruction



The majority of the lessons (5 altogether) fell into the “some use” category, where some elements of best practices were present and others were not. Only 1 classroom showed no alignment to best practices, and 3 classrooms showed strong alignment. These results point to the fact that some elements of best practices are in use in a majority of classrooms that were included in the videos (8 out of 9). However, although it is in use, it may not contain all the elements that are expected to be completed, which is important with comprehension instruction.

We now turn to another aspect of these lessons, vocabulary. A vocabulary lesson using the enfoque comunicativo would be expected to be linked to some text and discussion from which students could construct their own definitions and understanding of new words. It would be expected that vocabulary lessons would involve teachers guiding students to use their background knowledge and the text

from which the words were read in order to construct meanings. Thus the definitions of new words are based on students' experiences instead of on just the memorization of a dictionary definition. Seven out of nine observations included some type of vocabulary instruction.

To begin, we determined what skills were tested in the Rendimiento Académico and what would be expected in a vocabulary lesson. The Rendimiento has two kinds of vocabulary questions: recognizing familiar words and understanding unfamiliar words. A strong vocabulary lesson would be anchored in some type of text and use that text to model a discussion on how to derive an accurate and personally relevant definition of a word. The lesson should be explicit enough that students are aware that the point of the activity is to define the word.

We then viewed the nine videos and noticed patterns of practices emerging within the videos that defined the lessons. We named these practices and then looked for them throughout the videos to better understand in what ways lessons were aligned to best practices in vocabulary instruction, or the ways in which they were not aligned. The three practices we focused on were links to the text, explicitness of the lessons, and quality of discussion.

For links to text, we measured whether the vocabulary lesson was tied to a text, or isolated. This means that a text was read and vocabulary words were chosen from the text. It is important that vocabulary is embedded in a context. Of the seven lessons that contained vocabulary instruction, five were linked to texts.

The second practice was explicitness. Videos were coded as either *explicit* or *not explicit*. This measure indicates whether vocabulary appeared to be planned so that the purpose of the activity was unambiguous and/or consisted of obvious vocabulary instruction. Of the seven lessons we saw, six appeared to be a planned part of the lesson. Because they were planned, it was clear to students what they were supposed to learn. For example, in classroom 8, the teacher first prepared students at the beginning of the lesson, saying that there would be a vocabulary component later in the lesson: "After reading the story, we are going to find the characters and words we don't know and write sentences with them." This level of explicitness gave students a purpose while they read and prepared them to begin to look out for parts of the text that will help them find word meanings.

The third practice is quality of discussion. This practice had three levels: whether the vocabulary instruction involved *primarily discussion*, *limited discussion*, or *no discussion*. Two of the seven classrooms that contained vocabulary instruction were coded as *primarily discussion*. Interestingly, this happened in the same school, which was ranked as high achieving. Consider classroom 1, in which the vocabulary instruction in a fifth grade classroom consisted of asking students to self-monitor and make a list of words they did not know as a poem was read. The teacher then chose a word (*chubasco*), and asked if any students had heard anyone use the word. Students shared that they had heard the verb form *chubasquear* and discussed what they knew about the word's meaning. The teacher then defined the word and provided a synonym. Students were assigned to find other new words in the dictionary and write

them in their exercise books individually. The teacher then led a discussion to compare definitions of students.

Only one classroom was put into the *limited discussion* category. This category was used for lessons that attempted discussion, but it was not of high quality. For example, in classroom 3, the teacher asked students to keep track of words they did not know as they read a text. He then either explained the meaning of words for them by asking what the word meant and then answering his own question, or sent students to the dictionary to find the definitions. In this lesson there seemed to be an attempt at limited discussion.

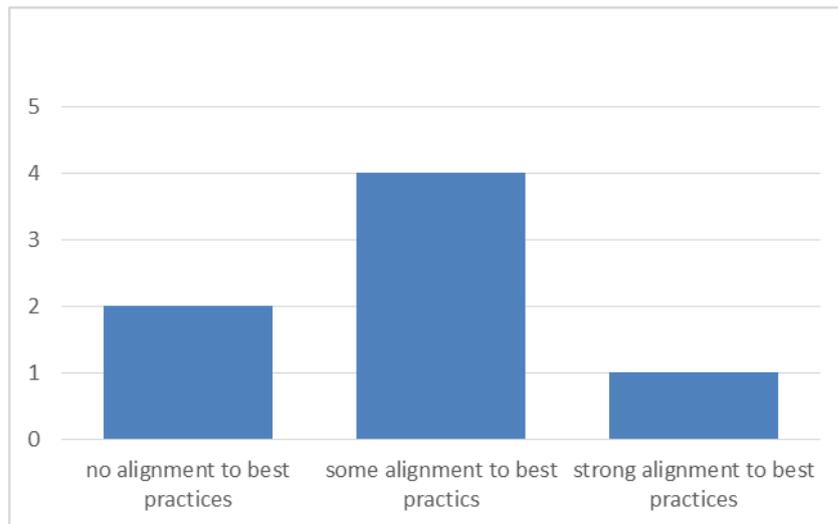
Four observations were coded as *no discussion*. In classroom 7 the teacher asked students what an adjective is. She then read several sentences of an explanation of adjectives verbatim from a textbook while students wrote what she was reading in their exercise books. Other lessons, such as in classrooms 5 and 8, involved students being asked to find the definition in a dictionary or the teacher just giving a definition for a word.

The final piece of analysis was to compile scores and rank the vocabulary instruction (similar to the comprehension instruction) as to the extent that they resembled best practices in vocabulary instruction, using the practices described above. The vocabulary lessons were given a score based on the following:

- Each lesson coded as linked to text was given 1 point.
- Each lesson that was coded as explicit received 1 point.
- For quality of discussion: 2 points were given for primarily discussion, 1 point for limited discussion, and 0 points for no discussion.

These compiled scores for all the vocabulary lessons analyzed provide a measure of the quality of the vocabulary instruction, with a score of 0–1 meaning instruction was not aligned to best practices, a score of 2–3 meaning instruction was somewhat aligned to best practices, and a score of 4–5 meaning instruction was aligned to best practices. . **Figure 11** below shows the total scores. As with the comprehension, most teachers fell into the *somewhat aligned* category. This indicates there is a basic level of understanding of best practices, but there may not be the profound understanding needed to fully implement this type of instruction.

Figure 11. Vocabulary Instruction



In order to further illustrate the quality of instruction in the videotaped classrooms, we present two representative case studies of classrooms: one classroom that represents teaching that is aligned with these identified best practices, and one classroom that does not. These illustrative examples shed light on the different levels of instruction in classrooms, as well as a model of high-quality instructional practices in reading lessons.

Aligned to Best Practices

In a fifth grade classroom in an urban location, the teacher begins the lesson by reviewing topics from the day before. He asks students about the difference between cursive and printed letters, which was a topic of instruction the day before. He asks the students what the differences are between the two types of letters, waits until a student explains the difference, and then listens closely to the student. This demonstrates an important element of productive classroom discussion, that of the teacher not dominating the entire discussion, but instead facilitating a conversation. This discussion lasts less than two minutes, as it is a review only.

Next, the teacher writes several words on the board and goes over the syllables in each word. He instructs students on how to divide these words in syllables. He uses a variety of methods to engage students in the discussion, such as choral responses and calling on individual students.

The next activity is a comprehension activity. The students read a poem. The teacher asks a student to read aloud while other students follow in their book. He then asks several questions that aid in comprehension, such as asking students about the structure of the poem. These types of questions alert students to the structure, and help them comprehend what is occurring.

After reading the entire poem through, he asks children to identify words they do not know. In order to then explain these words, the teacher models how to use what they know about the word, and the context in the poem, to understand the meaning. This is

important, as the teacher does not simply provide the definition of the word, but uses the previous knowledge of the children to define the words. Again, the teacher involves the students in the discussion, and waits patiently for answers from the students.

The lesson then moves on to the comprehension of the story, including the main idea of the poem, literal questions, and inferential questions. The teacher asks several students the same question, in order to have a variety of answers. He then provides an explanation of the main idea of the story, drawing on the answers the children already provided. It is noteworthy here that the teacher is listening to what the students are saying, and drawing on and building on their answers during the discussion.

After the teacher models how to describe the main idea of the poem, he asks students to do the same and write a summary of the poem in their own words. He monitors students and provides help as needed.

In sum, this teacher demonstrated teaching practices that were aligned to best practices. Students were involved in discussions and provided more than one-word or one-sentence answers. The teacher listened to students and built off what they said, and in fact incorporated their thoughts and ideas into the discussion. The teacher also used a variety of means by which to teach vocabulary and comprehension, such as asking multiple questions, drawing on previous knowledge, and modeling how to complete a task before asking students to do the same.

Not Aligned to Best Practices

We now turn to a case study of instruction that is not aligned with the best practices that have been discussed, which takes place in an urban fifth grade classroom in a different school.

The teacher begins the lesson by reading an abbreviated version of a section of *The Odyssey*. The teacher reads the first paragraph out loud and then calls on students individually to read the subsequent paragraphs. The teacher proceeds this way until the end of the story without stopping at any point to check for comprehension from the class.

Following the reading, the teacher poses several literal comprehension questions. She asks questions such as, who are the main characters and what happened 10 years before the story began? The teacher poses each question and waits several seconds for an answer. When students are unable to answer her question, she gives the answer and asks students to repeat the answer chorally. When students do know the answer, they call it out and the teacher responds by saying yes or correct. For the last question that the teacher poses, a student calls out an incorrect answer. The teacher says “no” and asks the exact same question to other students until someone is able to respond correctly. The teacher then asks all students to repeat the answer.

This comprehension lesson did not exemplify best practices for three main reasons. First the teacher asked only literal questions. These questions required only a surface level of understanding of the text. There were no deep questions or connections made to other texts or other relevant events in the students’ lives. Second, the pattern of

asking questions and having students give short and simple answers did not allow for any discussion around the text or students' understanding. Her focus on having students repeat the correct answer tells students that the importance of this lesson is focused on direct recall of the story, not having any interaction with the text or making their own meaning or connections. Finally, the teacher's lack of feedback and modeling to find the answers to questions did not support students in learning what to do if they did not understand a text. Some strategies that the teacher could have used were to reframe the questions, ask more questions to help guide students' thinking, and show them how to go back to the text to find the answer. The teacher's action also sent the message that answering questions after reading a story serves only as a form of evaluation rather than using questioning as a strategy to self-monitor understanding while reading a text.

Following the comprehension activity the teacher begins an activity on different types and functions of adjectives. This activity starts by the teacher asking the class to explain what an adjective is. When there is no response, the teacher writes a definition taken directly from her teacher's guide on the board, and asks students to copy it down. Then, she proceeds to write on the board the different types of adjectives (qualifying or determining), while students copy what she wrote. She writes simple sentences with examples of both types of adjectives and reads them for the students.

After the teacher has finished with her explanation of adjectives, she reviews by asking the class to define the meaning and function of an adjective. Students are only able to read from what is written on the board to respond.

The remainder of the lesson is spent practicing how to use adjectives. Throughout this practice, the teacher's main reaction to students' lack of answers is to provide them with the answer without any feedback or explanation.

The lesson on adjectives is not the closely aligned with best practices. Besides the fact that a majority of class time was spent on a grammar topic instead of a reading instructional topic, there were several other factors that led to this lesson's being not aligned. The teacher read out the definition and explanation concerning adjectives, never allowing students to use what they know or have read before to make their own connections. Students instead are asked to copy from the board and are not given a chance to engage in a discussion. Students' lack of responses for much of this activity could be a symptom of rote memorization, as well as the only directed instruction without student involvement that the teacher demonstrated. It is not until the end of the lesson when students are asked to volunteer their own ideas and sentences that the students are fully engaged and responding correctly; however, this part of the lesson is short.

Teacher Feedback and Assessment

In this section, results are reported for the RQs: To what extent are assessment and feedback integrated into literacy instruction? To what extent are teachers differentiating instruction for different ability groups and responding to learner needs? To answer these questions, we focus on teachers' use and knowledge of informal assessment and differentiation.

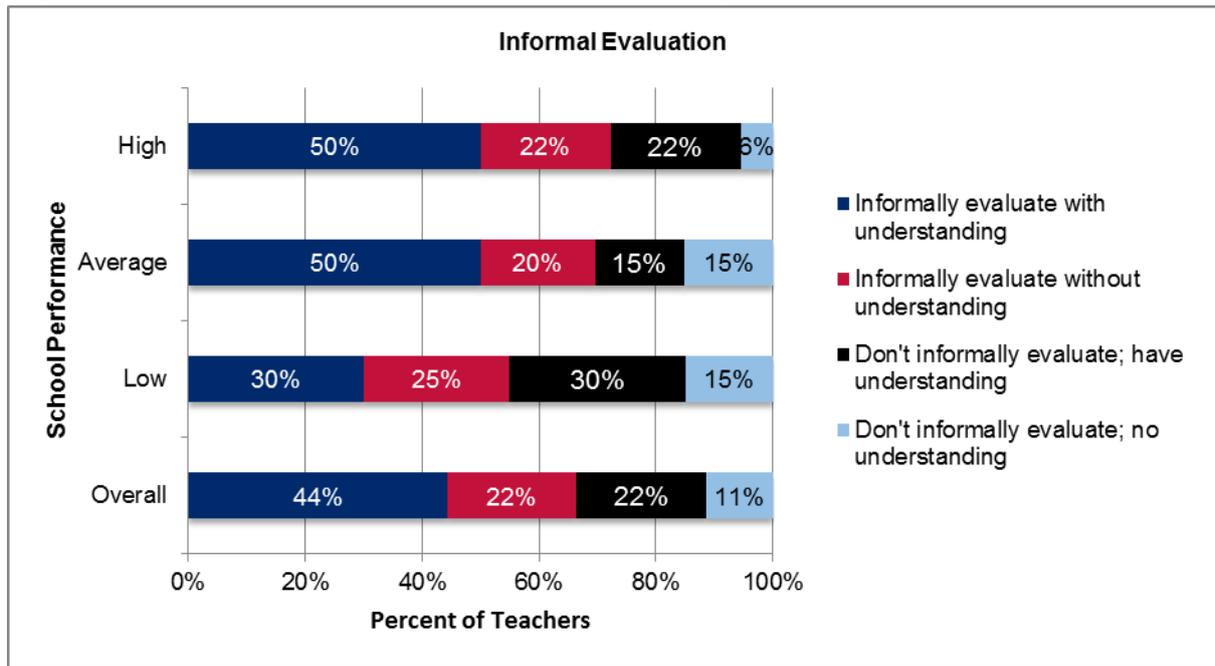
Teachers' Knowledge and Use of Informal Assessment

Informal assessment is key to effective teaching practices. There are several means to informally evaluate students during the course of a lesson, such as asking students to demonstrate what they have learned by applying it to a new context, or asking questions to check for understanding. These strategies are important for teachers to know what content students may continue to struggle with, and plan accordingly.

In order to understand the use of informal assessment in sampled schools, profiles were created using two criteria: the teacher's use of informal evaluation based on classroom observations and/or lesson plans, and the teacher's knowledge of how to informally assess students. Based on these criteria, four possible categories emerged. For use, teachers either showed evidence of using informal assessment, or they did not. For knowledge, teachers either displayed knowledge of how to use informal assessment, or they did not.

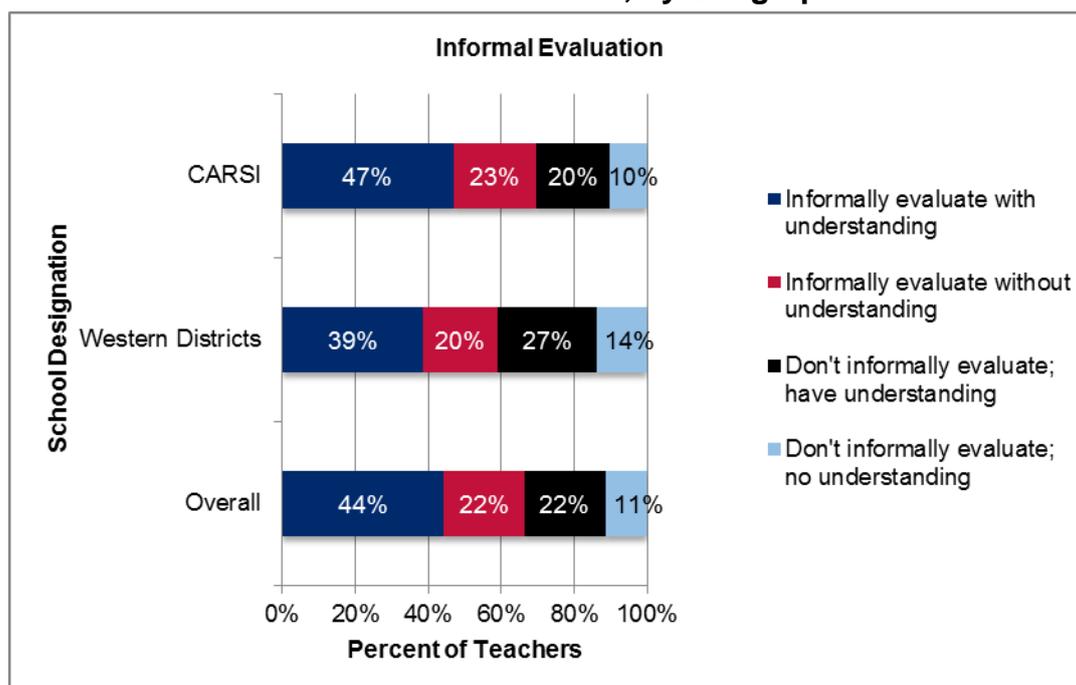
As shown in the final row of **Figure 12**, the majority of teachers in the overall sample (66 percent) showed evidence of using informal assessments in the classroom. However, only two-thirds of those teachers that used informal assessments (44 percent) had a strong understanding of how to use informal assessments. When separated into school performance levels it is clear that teachers in high and average performing schools tend to use and understand informal evaluation to a similar degree. However, a much smaller proportion of teachers in low performing schools appear to informally evaluate with strong understanding (30 percent, as compared with 50 percent in high and average performing schools). While this difference is large between average performing and low performing schools, it is interesting to note that the percent of teachers with a strong understanding of informal evaluation across the two school types is far more similar (65 percent for average performing and 60 percent for low performing). This means that sampled teachers in low performing schools understand how to use informal evaluations to a similar degree but that they are less likely to actually use such assessments.

Figure 12. Informal Evaluation of Students, by Level of Performance



Similar trends are seen for CARSI municipalities versus western districts in *Figure 13*. While teachers in CARSI schools are approximately 20 percent more likely to informally evaluate with understanding than their western district counterparts, the overall proportion of teachers with a strong understanding of evaluation is strikingly similar between the two school types (67 percent for schools in CARSI municipalities and 66 percent for schools in western districts). The percentage of teachers without understanding of informal evaluation is also similar (33 percent versus 34 percent, in CARSI municipalities and western districts respectively).

Figure 13. Informal Evaluation of Students, by Geographic Area



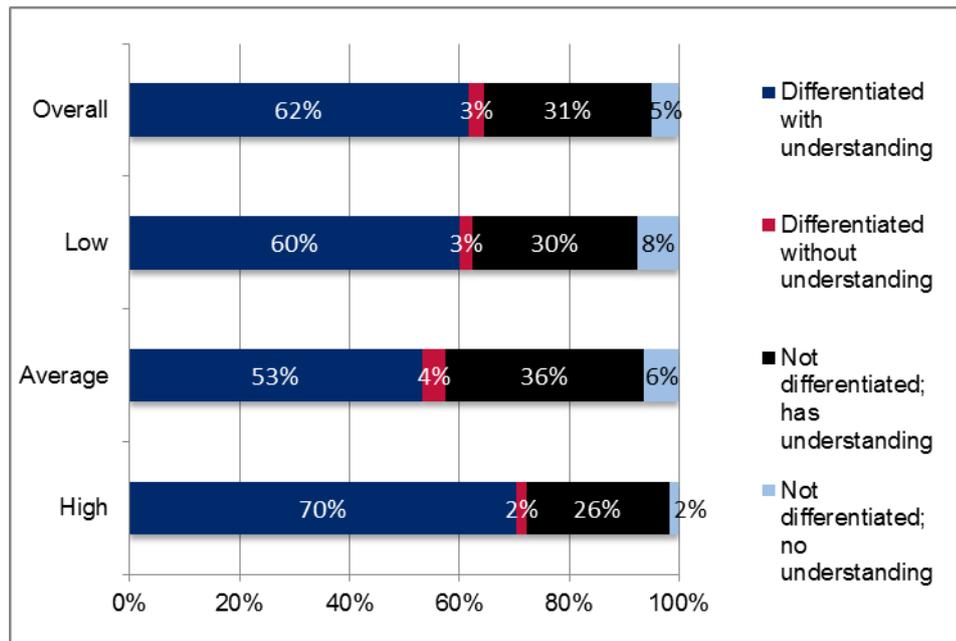
In sum, the majority of teachers in the overall sample showed evidence of using informal assessments in the classroom, and teachers in high and average performing schools tended to use and understand informal evaluation to a similar degree. A much smaller proportion of teachers in low performing schools appeared to informally evaluate with strong understanding. This points to evidence that some teachers may understand how to use informal evaluations, but they are not aware of the potential benefits.

Teachers' Knowledge and Use of Differentiation

Differentiation is an essential element of teaching that involves targeting instruction to meet the identified needs of students through instruction. Often, these identified needs are assessed through informal evaluation. Differentiated instruction may include planning lessons that are different for groups of children or frequently adapting instruction based on informal evaluation.

In order to understand use of the differentiated instruction in sampled schools, profiles were created using two criteria: teachers' use of differentiated instruction based on classroom observations, and teachers' knowledge of differentiated instruction. Based on these two criteria, 4 possible categories emerged. For use, teachers were classified as having either strong evidence or no to weak evidence of differentiating instruction based on the observations. For knowledge, teachers were classified as either displaying strong knowledge of how to differentiate instruction, or not displaying strong evidence of how to differentiate instruction. See **Annex B** for further explanation of this profile. **Figure 14** below displays the results according to level of performance of the school.

Figure 14. Differentiated Instruction, by Level of Performance

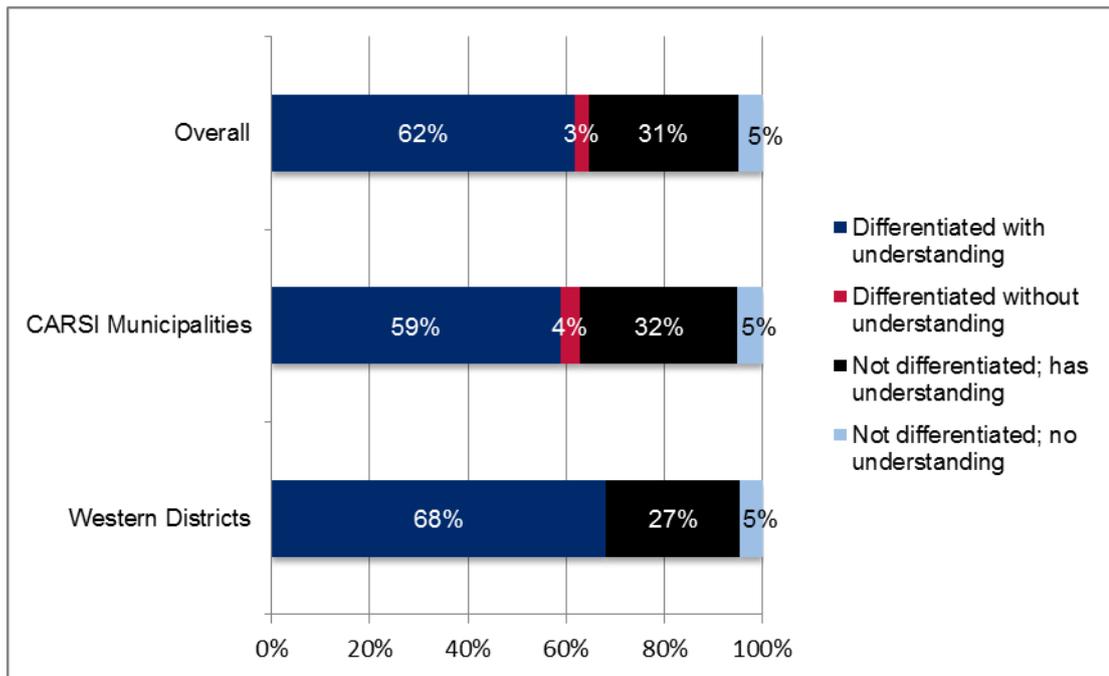


Overall, majority of teachers fell into the first profile, *differentiated with understanding*, meaning that there was positive evidence that teachers differentiated understanding during the course of the lesson observed and/or in the lesson plans, and they displayed understanding of how to differentiate. There was a meaningful difference between teachers falling into this profile between the high, average, and low performing groups. Interestingly, teachers in the average group tended to fall into this profile less than teachers in the low performing group.

Many teachers also fell into the third profile, *not differentiated, has understanding*. In this profile, evidence was not found of teachers differentiating instruction during the lesson or plans, but teachers did understand what it means to differentiate. In fact, overall, 93 percent of teachers understand the principles behind differentiating instruction. It may be that some teachers that fell into the third profile did not have the resources to be able to differentiate instruction, such as teacher guides that aid them in planning for multiple ability levels of children, space in the classroom to work in small groups, and classroom management techniques that allow teachers to be able to manage groups of children doing multiple activities at the same time.

Figure 15 displays the results according to geographic area.

Figure 15. Differentiated Instruction, by Geographic Area



Teachers in the western districts tended to fall into the first profile more than teachers in the CARSI municipalities. Again, this may be due to the high concentration of rural and multigrade schools within the western districts as opposed to in the CARSI municipalities.

In sum, many teachers (93 percent) understood how to differentiate instruction, but only 62 percent of them actually did it in their classrooms. Because of this, teachers need more training and classroom support in how to take their knowledge of differentiated instruction and translate it to teaching practices in the classroom.

Instructional Materials

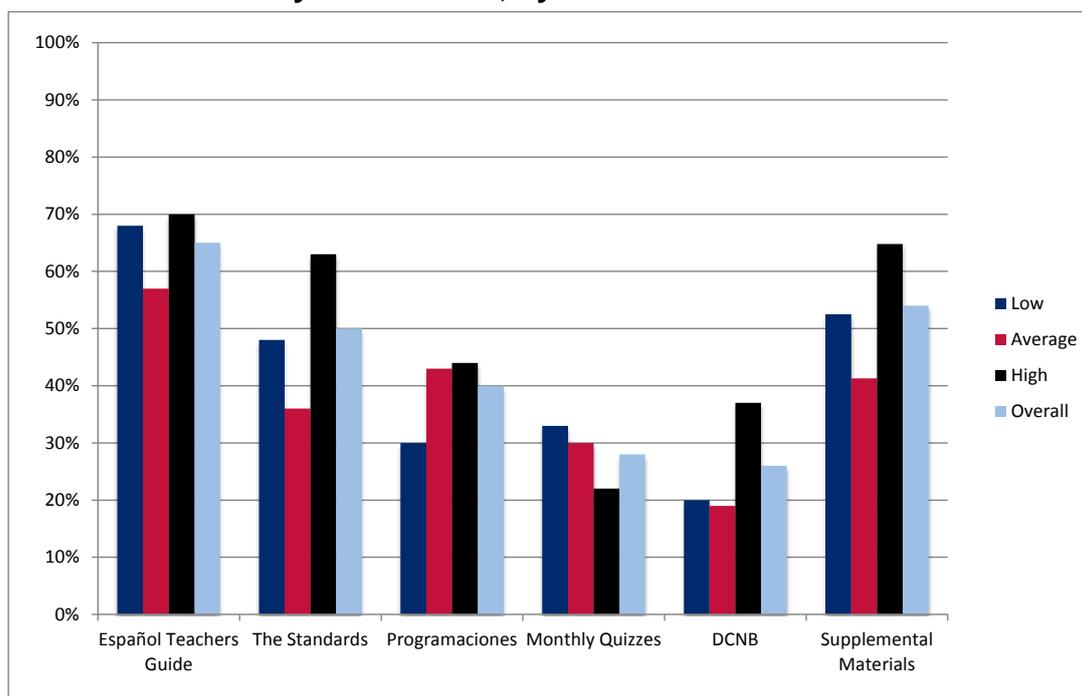
In this section, we provide results from several RQs, including *Does the school have adequate supply of curricular materials (standards, pacing guides, textbooks, etc.)?*, *Are curricular materials available and used by students and teachers?*, and *To what extent are teachers utilizing available curricular and supplemental materials?* To answer these questions, we first describe the availability and use of curricular materials, then provide profiles of textbook and supplementary materials use and availability by teachers and students.

Availability and Use of Curricular Materials

In 85 percent of the sampled classrooms, most to all of the children had textbooks. There were no meaningful differences according to geographic region or level of academic performance. This also points to a lack of availability of textbooks, which are core to primary school teaching and learning; in 15 percent of sampled classrooms, students did not have textbooks.

Figure 16 below displays the availability of other types of instructional materials in the classrooms, by school achievement levels.

Figure 16. Availability of Materials, by Level of School Performance



The results point to low numbers of available materials in classrooms across the sampled schools. The teacher guide for Spanish was found in only 65 percent of classrooms overall. Teachers in high and low performing schools tended to have the most availability of the teacher guides, with the average performing schools tending to have the least availability as compared to the others. Low performing schools also had less availability of the programaciones (i.e. pacing guides). On average, the availability of materials that teachers should have in classrooms was low.

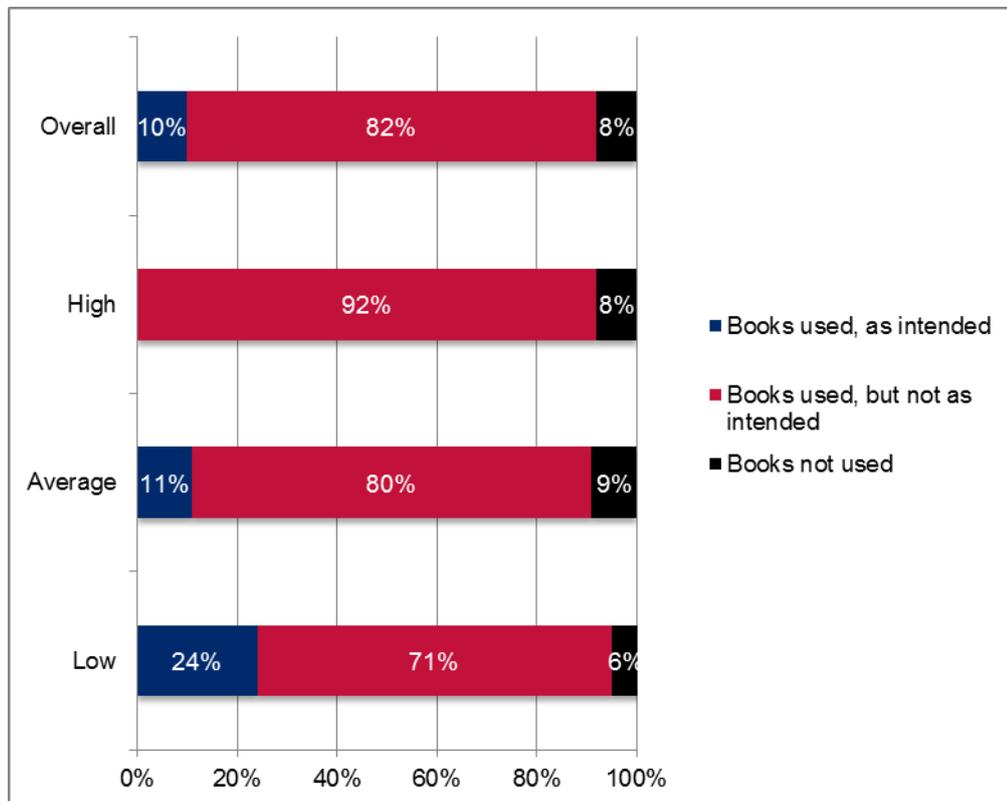
These materials are important for teachers to have in their classroom. The National Standards and Programaciones or Pacing Guides are meant to support teachers in writing lesson plans. However, the CIASES sector analysis reviewed in the Desk Study found that in Copan, 85 percent of teachers from the five municipalities included in the audit said that they use the textbooks to write their lesson plans, not the Programaciones or Pacing Guides. Teachers in the CIASES audit also noted that they felt the textbooks contain what is needed for children to learn grade level skills according to the education standards.

There were no meaningful differences between geographic regions with regard to availability of materials. Teachers in CARSI municipalities tended to have less availability of teacher guides than Western Districts, but otherwise were relatively similar.

Profile of Textbook Use

In order to understand not just the availability but also the use of textbooks in sampled schools, profiles were created using two criteria: use of textbooks and activity books during the observed lesson, and use of these materials as intended. To measure use of textbooks and activity books, observers noted if the materials were used during the course of the lesson, and/or if there was evidence of use in the lesson plans. For intended use, observers looked at student activity books to check if they were written in. Intended use, therefore, was measured by the extent that there was evidence that students were actually writing in their activity books, versus their exercise books or other journals. Intended use was not measured if books were not observed in use, and therefore these classrooms fell into the “books not used” category. See *Annex C* for further explanation of this profile. *Figure 17* displays the results according to level of performance.

Figure 17. Use and Intention to Use Textbooks and Activity Books, by Level of Performance



In a majority of all classrooms, books were used but not as intended, meaning that although students used the activity books, they did not write in their activity books. In fact, in the high performing schools, in all classrooms in which books were used, books were used not as intended. In low performing schools, 24 percent of classrooms used books and had children write in their activity books. This was the highest percentage of all profiles, suggesting that the teachers in these schools may have had more access to student activity books.. No evidence of book use was found in only 8 percent of classrooms overall.

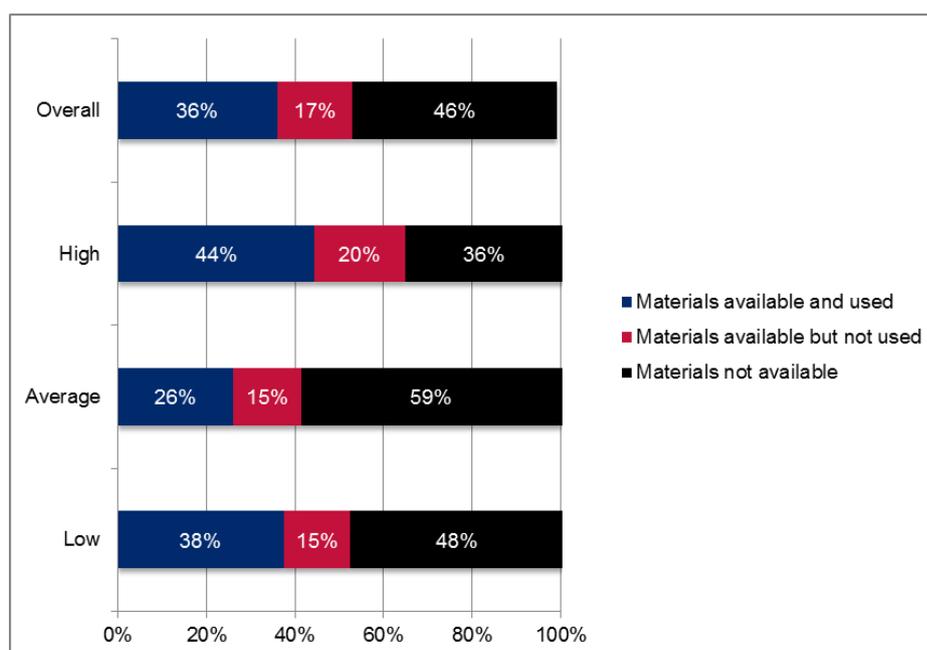
In sum, teachers need all materials in classrooms if they are expected to use them—in particular the teacher guides and the Programaciones. Teachers in high performing schools tended to have better access to these materials, but were still lacking in overall access.

Profile of Supplementary Materials Use

Supplemental materials can be an important element to an early grade reading lesson, as teachers may use various sources such as newspapers, magazines, and storybooks to enhance a lesson. In particular, supplemental materials give children an opportunity to learn to read a variety of formats and text types. Of the classrooms that did have supplemental materials, we found books, (50 percent of the classrooms), magazines (21 percent of classrooms), and newspapers (12 percent of classrooms). Books were the most common type of materials, suggesting that in those classrooms, children have opportunities to read a variety of different stories in addition to those in their textbook.

In order to understand availability and use of supplementary materials in sampled schools, profiles were created using two criteria: availability of supplementary materials, and use of supplementary materials during the observed lesson. To measure availability of supplementary materials, observers conducted a classroom inventory in which they looked for evidence of supplementary materials that were accessible to students. To measure use of supplementary materials, observers noted if the materials were used during the course of the lesson, and/or if there was evidence of use in the lesson plans. See *Annex D* for further explanation of this profile. *Figure 18* displays the results of this profile according to levels of performance.

Figure 18. Use and Availability of Supplementary Materials, by Level of Performance

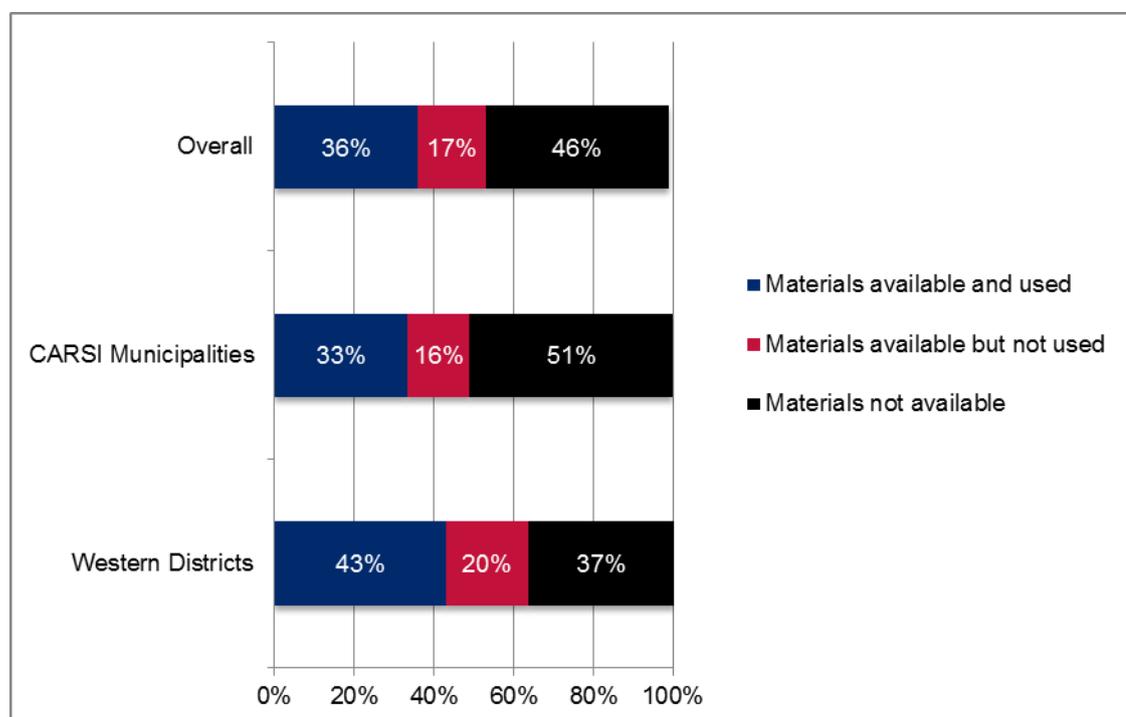


Overall, 53 percent of classrooms contained some type of supplemental material. However, the materials were only seen being integrated into lessons in 36 percent of classrooms. High performing schools tended to have higher use of supplemental materials, and average schools had the least amount of usage. In general, the classrooms that had supplemental materials available tended to use them in reading lessons.

In 46 percent of classrooms, no evidence of supplemental materials was found. This percentage increased in a meaningful way in average performing schools, where 59 percent of classrooms did not have supplemental materials available.

Figure 19 displays the results of this profile according to geographic area.

Figure 19. Use and Availability of Supplemental Materials, by Geographic Area



A similar pattern was found with schools in western districts, which tended to have more teachers who had used materials than did schools in CARSI municipalities. There was less availability of supplemental materials in classrooms in CARSI municipalities than the overall average.

Teacher Preparation

Understanding the role of teacher preparation was an essential focus of this study. In Honduras, students who want to be teachers first attend one of the escuelas normales, which are specialized secondary schools whose graduates receive a title to teach. The escuelas normales students follow of a four-year program that most enter at 14 years old. The focus is on both content and pedagogy. Documents in the Desk Study explained that the system of 13 schools (numbers vary in documents) has existed

since the 1950s. This system is considered much less rigorous than preparation to become a teacher at the middle school or higher level, where teachers must obtain a degree from the National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazan (UPNFM) or *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras* (UNAH). This means that the primary teachers, responsible for students' foundational literacy and math skills, have the lowest education requirements.

In order to better understand teacher preparation, there were two parts to this study. First, a team of education research experts visited two of the *escuelas normales* to better understand how teachers are prepared. Second, during the field study, teachers were asked about their educational background and the amount of in-service and pre-service training they received that focused on literacy instruction.

Among many reforms, in 1996 there was an attempt to reform teacher education by closing the *escuelas normales*. However, this reform was halted, and to this day the *escuelas normales* continue preparing teachers. According to the Education Plan, reactivating the *escuelas normales* set the teacher preparation system back to the 1950s.

There was also an attempt to create a System of National Teacher Training that included the UPNFM, but the effort was unsuccessful (likely due to cost, among other reasons). With the inception of the Zelaya government, this reform ended and the *escuelas normales* continue to be one of the main sources of basic primary teachers. The Education Law seeks to increase the level of primary school teacher training to a higher level of education by 2018.

We visited two *escuelas normales*: one in Francisco Morazán and one in La Paz. These visits included interviews with the professors who are charged with preparing students to teach early literacy. The interviewees collected data on both the professors' background and the content of the program.

The interviewed professors ranged in experience from 5 to 28 years teaching, and all had bachelor's degrees in Spanish or in pedagogy. One was male, seven were female. Professors were also at one point teachers, thus there is considerable experience in this teaching force. However, this may also mean that the professors are less familiar with how to implement the *enfoque comunicativo* approach since it was introduced after most professors began teaching at the *escuelas normales*. More detailed information about the professors that were interviewed can be found in *Annex E*.

Students at the *escuelas normales* take two main types of classes focused on literacy development and teaching. The first are classes on the Spanish language itself including linguistic rules, writing, and literature. The second are classes on instruction, which include theory on teaching literacy skills and different methods including phonics, alphabetic, and/or syllabic approaches. *Table 8* below shows the different courses that are included under each of these types of classes.

Table 8. Escuelas Normales Course Work in Teaching Early Literacy

Spanish Language	Spanish Instruction
The word	Introduction to the study of the teaching of Spanish
Lexical-semantic function	Theory and methodology
Grammar	Methods
Grammatical sentence	Literacy Definition
Orthography	Resources
Writing	Enfoque Comunicativo
Honduran Literature	Handwriting
Classic Literature	

Of the seven topics covered in the classes on instruction, only one is focused on the enfoque comunicativo. While some of the subtopics taught may be used as part of the enfoque comunicativo approach, this could leave little time for students to learn and understand this approach to teaching reading. We would expect that more coursework would focus on the enfoque. Further research on how or if this constructivist approach may be used to teach the other topics could help further explain the instructional approaches and methods used in classrooms.

The Desk Study review found significant importance placed on teachers and teacher preparation by the different sector plans reviewed in the study. All three plans suggested activities that would improve teachers' knowledge and set up a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to help ensure teachers have the knowledge they need to provide sound instruction that produces successful readers and writers. **Table 9** below shows the activities set forth in each plan in order to support teacher improvements and supervision.

Table 9. Teacher Focused Improvement Activities, by Sector Plan

Activity	FTI-EFA Plan	Strategic Plan 2005–2015	Education Plan 2010–2014
Review and improvements to teacher pre- and in-service training (TPST) program	X		X
Incentive programs introduced for pupils who do well in the TPST program	X		
Identification of needs by level of teacher training and curriculum areas			X

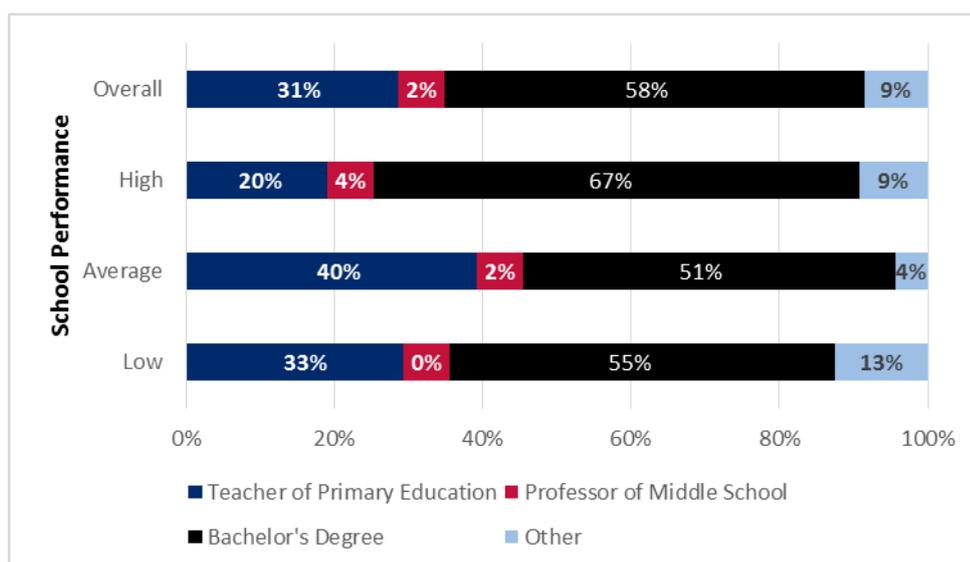
Activity	FTI-EFA Plan	Strategic Plan 2005–2015	Education Plan 2010–2014
In-service teacher training: training structure developed to provide pedagogical support	X	X	X
Teacher performance and incentives: review and preparation of instruments to regulate teacher performance	X		
An M&E system institutionalized	X	X	X

This list of activities covers the full range of teacher training and contact points, which show a well thought out improvement plan.

We now turn to the quantitative data we collected from 143 teachers during the field study. Of teachers, 97 percent said they had a teaching title, and 58 percent said their highest degree was a licenciatura or bachelor’s degree from a university. Of teachers, 31 percent hold a Teacher of Primary Education degree or Maestro de Educación Primaria, which is the basic degree received from the escuelas normales, and only 2 percent had a Professor of Middle School degree or Profesor de Educación Media.

Figure 20 shows that 67 percent of the teachers in high performing schools have university degrees, while 55 percent of teachers in low performing schools have this degree. This shows a moderate difference in the level of education that exists in high and low performing schools. No difference was found between CARSÍ municipality and western district schools, as both groups had a majority of teachers (58-59 percent) with a bachelor’s degree.

Figure 20. Teachers’ Highest Level of Education, by School Performance Level



Teachers were asked about the training they had received focused on literacy instruction for both pre-service and in-service training. Seventy-nine percent of teachers said they had been trained in how to teach reading and writing during preservice. These findings were consistent across school performance levels, as well as by school location (i.e., CARSI municipalities versus western districts).

Table 10 below shows the percentage of teachers who reported having received in-service training during the last year on how to teach reading. Overall, only 36 percent of teachers reported receiving training in how to teach reading. Given that methods are constantly evolving, it is important that all teachers receive training on reading instruction with more frequency. .

Table 10. In-Service Training Received in the Last Year

	Overall	Low	Average	High	Western Districts	CARSI
Training in how to teach reading	36%	43%	34%	33%	43%	33%

It is interesting to note that teachers in low performing schools and in western districts reported receiving in-service training in reading more often even though the schools are generally more rural, making them further away from training centers. This may be the result of a concerted effort to provide additional training to those most in need, although more research is needed to confirm this hypothesis.

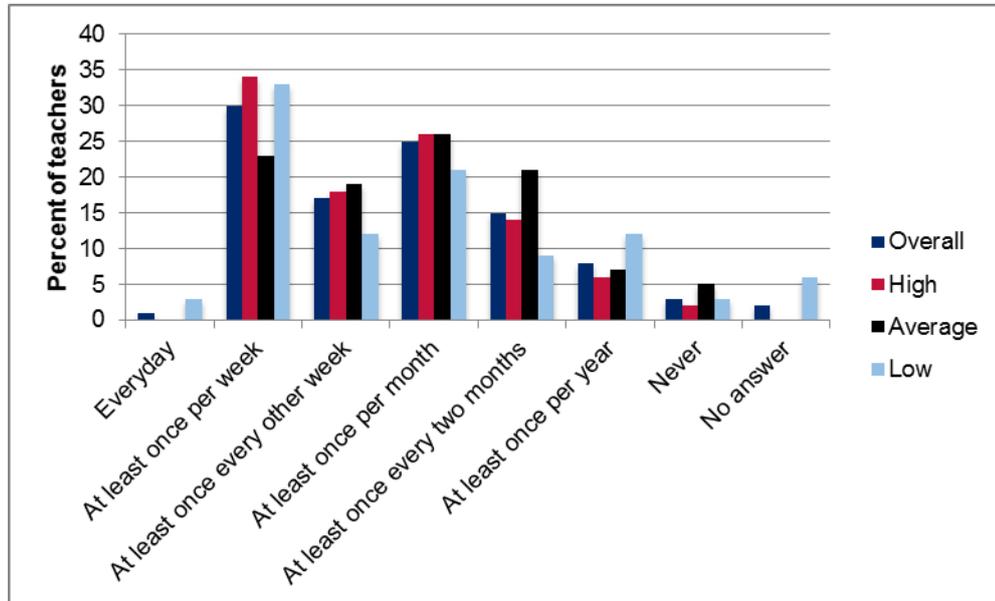
One of the important questions the study tried to answer was how well prepared teachers felt to teach reading skills. Overall, 82 percent of teachers said they felt very confident and prepared to teach early literacy based on their training. There was a meaningful difference between teachers' feelings of preparedness in high performing schools and those in low/average schools. In high performing schools, 74 percent of teachers said they felt prepared. Surprisingly, the percentage of teachers was higher in low (85 percent) and average (87 percent) schools. It could be that teachers with higher skill levels are concentrated in the high performing schools, and are likely to be more self-aware about what they do and/or do not know.

We now turn to the findings in the area of teacher support. Teachers in Honduras are supposed to receive regular support and supervision in the classroom from both the school director and district officials. This support is set up for accountability and with the aim of improving instruction. This type of system can be very helpful to teachers. However, if not monitored well, it may become more of an evaluation system than a support system.

One of the most common forms of accountability and support in schools is reviewing lesson plans with the school director. This is a common practice all over the world that is implemented to various degrees. **Figure 21** below shows how often teachers reported having their lesson plans reviewed. Just under a third of teachers (27 percent)

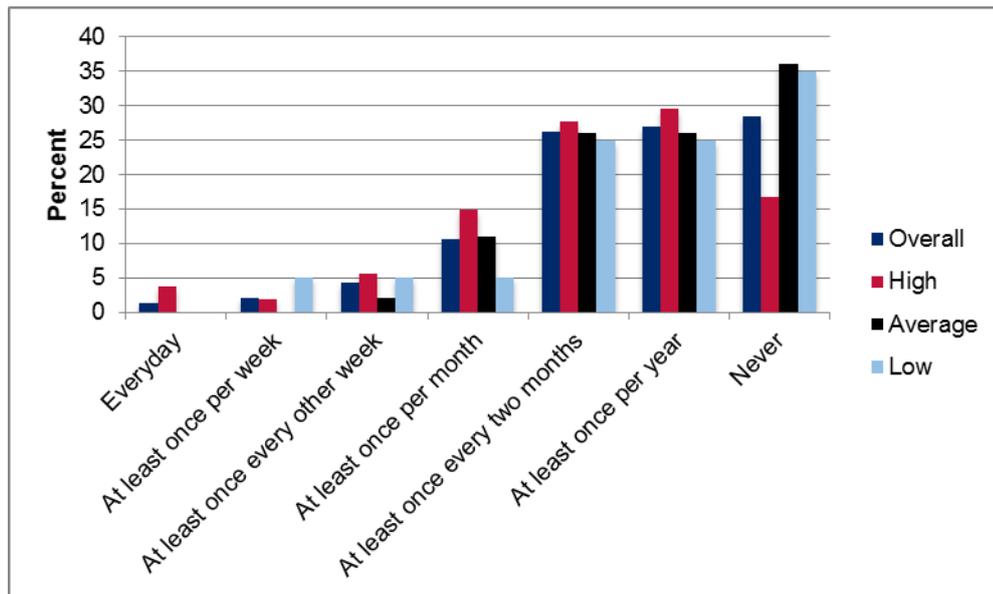
reported having their lesson plans reviewed once a week. Teachers in high performing schools had their lesson plans reviewed most often at 31 percent; 28 percent of teachers in low performing schools also had their lesson plans reviewed once a week. There were no differences seen between schools in Western and CARSI municipalities.

Figure 21. Frequency with Which Teacher Lesson Plans Are Reviewed



Support visits were far less frequent than lesson plan reviews. *Figure 22* below shows only 11 percent of teachers reported being visited once a month, while 28 percent reported never receiving visits from an authority figure, such as the school director or a district official. While low performing and average performing school teachers reported never having been visited at similar rates (approximately 35 percent), those in high performing schools responded with ‘never’ half as frequently (17 percent). There are minimal differences across school performance for each of the other categories. It is important to note that 50 percent of teachers in low performing schools reported receiving visits either once every two months or once a year.

Figure 22. Frequency of Support Visits



Across the different geographic locations in the two most frequently reported categories (once a year or never), CARSi school teachers reported 23 percent and 26 percent, while western schools reported 36 percent and 34 percent. This indicates that western district teachers were less likely to receive support visits. These schools are often further out and more difficult to reach.

We also asked teachers who conducted the support visits; 48 percent of teachers said that the support visits were conducted by their school director. Sixty-one percent of teachers in the high performing schools said school directors conducted visits, versus 38 percent of teachers in low performing schools and 43 percent of teachers in average performing schools. This indicates that the school directors are more likely to conduct visits in high performing schools. Thirty-five percent of teachers overall reported that visits were conducted by a district official, with 40 percent of teachers in low performing schools responding in this way.

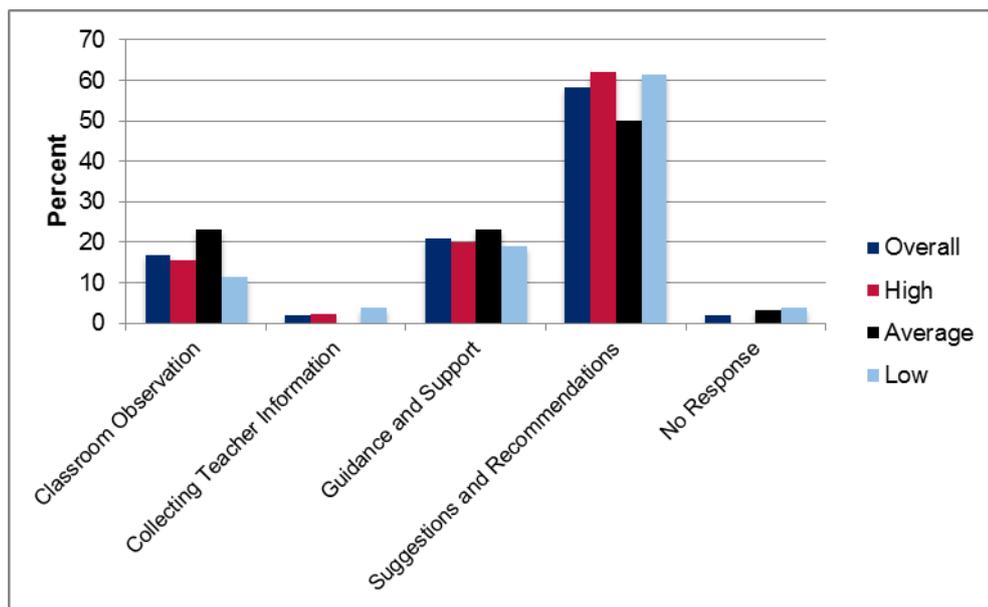
It should be noted that many schools received visits from both directors and district officials. *Table 11* shows the breakdown of personnel who visited teachers by school performance and by location. For example, of the teachers who said that district officials conducted a school visit, 50 percent also reported that a support visit was conducted by a director. When comparing schools in western districts and CARSi municipalities, more teachers in CARSi schools reported that their school director conducted the visits (57 percent) versus teachers in western districts (30 percent). Western district schools tended to be more rural and lower performing schools, and according to these teachers, have less active participation from school directors.

Table 11. Personnel Conducting Support Visits

Who Conducts Support Visits?	Overall	Low	Average	High	Western Districts	CARSI
Director	48%	38%	43%	61%	30%	57%
District Officials	35%	40%	32%	35%	34%	36%

Knowing that the content of the visit is just as if not more important than the frequency, we asked teachers what major activities occurred during the support visits. **Figure 23** below shows the activities teachers reported with highest frequency. The two most common activities were classroom observations (59 percent of teachers) and suggestions and recommendations (47 percent of teachers). These two activities would be mostly likely to directly impact the quality of instruction. It is interesting to note that teachers in average performing schools reported the lowest percentage of classroom observations and suggestions and recommendations, much lower than the teachers in low performing schools. Teachers in high performing schools had the highest percent in each of the four most reported categories.

Figure 23. Major Activities during Support Visits



We then asked teachers which of the activities they found to be most beneficial to their teaching practice. Fifty-eight percent of the teachers responded that suggestions and recommendations were most beneficial. Teachers in high performing schools reported this 12 percent more than teachers in average performing schools (but to the same extent as those in low performing schools). Sixty-four percent of teachers in CARSI schools also reported this, versus 45 percent of teachers in western schools. All other activities had no meaningful differences. Overall, teachers seem to recognize the importance of actual coaching and mentoring to improve their practice.

This need for more coaching visits can also be seen when we asked teachers what aspects could be changed to make the visits more beneficial than they are currently. The top three responses were suggestions and recommendations, the pedagogical knowledge of the person visiting, and the attitude of the visitor. These three aspects are much more about having a support visit that can improve teacher instruction as well as foster mentorship, rather than an evaluative relationship between the teacher and the person providing support. This could allow for more open conversation and true instructional support that are more likely to improve teacher practice.

Finally teachers were asked what would most improve their teaching of literacy and their overall teaching performance. Approximately half of teachers (54 percent) thought more training would improve their overall teaching performance, with teachers in average (66 percent) and high (52 percent) performing schools choosing this option most often. Teachers in CARSÍ schools felt even more strongly about the need for more training, responding 60 percent compared to 40 percent of teachers in western schools. This could be a consequence of the fact that we saw more teachers in western schools say they have received training this year than did CARSÍ school teachers. The next highest responses were for more instructional materials (13 percent) and more guidance and support (16 percent). It is interesting to note that only 5 percent of teachers said that a higher salary, promotion, or compensation would make them perform better. This shows teachers seem to have intrinsic motivations for teaching and would prefer instructional support over compensation.

We also asked teachers what would help them improve their literacy instruction specifically. Teachers responded similarly with 43 percent of teachers saying training and 46 percent responding materials. The materials response is dramatically higher in response to this question. This could be a response to the lack of materials seen in the classrooms. No meaningful differences were seen across performance levels or geographic locations.

School and Classroom Environment

This section has been designed to answer the question: *Does the school infrastructure (i.e., classroom environment) provide an environment conducive to teaching and learning?* This question is addressed via the Desk Study and a range of items from the classroom inventory.

Desk Study documents revealed issues of infrastructure in Honduras are greatly driven by the devastation of and recovery from Hurricane Mitch in 1998. After Hurricane Mitch, 2,465 of the country's 10,000 classrooms were damaged. Potable water, electricity, and roads throughout the country no longer existed. In response to this, the government put in place a short- and long-term plan that aimed to rebuild and improve Honduras beyond its original state by 2005. Most recently the *Centro de Investigación y Acción Educativa Social* ([CIASES] Center for Educational Research and Social Action)⁵ Sector Analysis reported that the Ministry of Education

⁵ The CIASES *Análisis del Sector Educación Honduras* (Sector Analysis) was analyzed in our desk study. Our desk study report is attached here as *Annex F*.

developed the Education Infrastructure Master Plan supported by National Agricultural University, World Bank, Bank of Credit for Reconstruction (KfW, the German development bank) and Switzerland’s international cooperation agency. The first phase of this plan was completed in 2013. This involved on-site data collection at each school in the country—a total of 20,500 schools. The sector analysis reported on two key infrastructure factors: potable water and electricity. CIASES found that in 2011, 80 percent of schools had a water connection and 9 out of 10 urban schools had water; however, only 23 percent of rural schools have potable water connections. Access to electricity followed a similar pattern: CIASES reports that in 2011 62 percent of schools had electricity, 97 percent of urban schools and only 50 percent of rural schools.

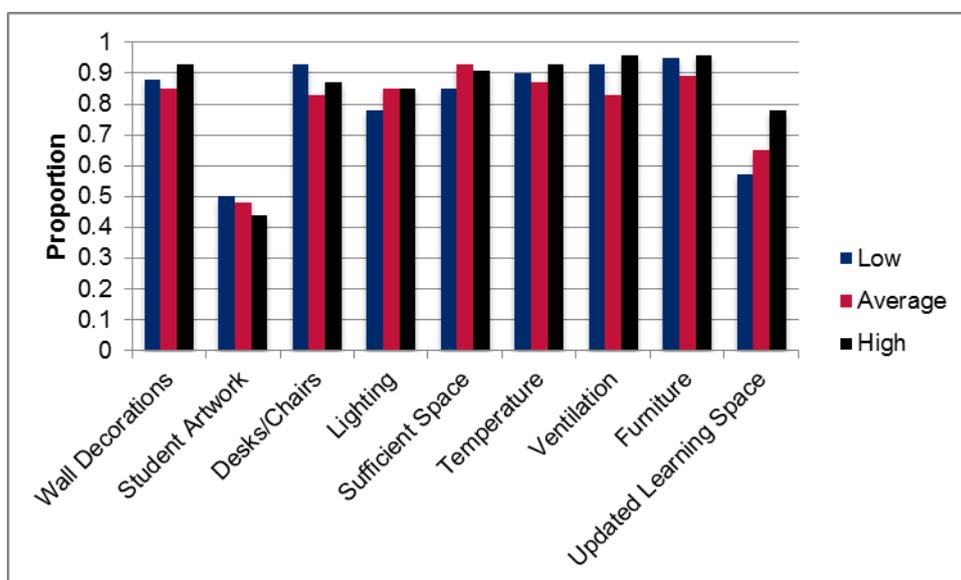
In the field study, we looked at other aspects of classroom infrastructure, such as space, temperature, and classroom environment. Overall, sampled schools appear to have classroom environments that are conducive to teaching and learning, as seen in *Table 12*. As a matter of fact, at least 90 percent of classrooms in the sample were reported to have sufficient space, adequate classroom temperature, sufficient ventilation, and suitable, grade-level furniture. Additionally, more than 80 percent of classroom had signs/graphics/drawings on the wall, sufficient desks/chairs for all students, and adequate lighting. The only two inventory items available in fewer than 70 percent of classrooms were an updated learning space (68 percent) and student artwork displayed on the walls (47 percent). An updated learning space refers to a corner of the room where the teacher has materials relevant to the current theme or topic that is being covered in the class. For example, an updated learning space may have different books, or newspaper articles, that are relevant to the theme being taught. The updated learning space may be a proxy measure for teachers who use supplemental materials relevant to what they are teaching, and who frequently change the supplemental materials according to the needs of the students.

Table 12. Classroom Environment: Inventory Items

	Overall
Wall Decorations	89%
Student Artwork	47%
Desks/Chairs	87%
Lighting	83%
Sufficient Space	90%
Temperature	90%
Ventilation	91%
Furniture	94%
Updated Learning Space	68%

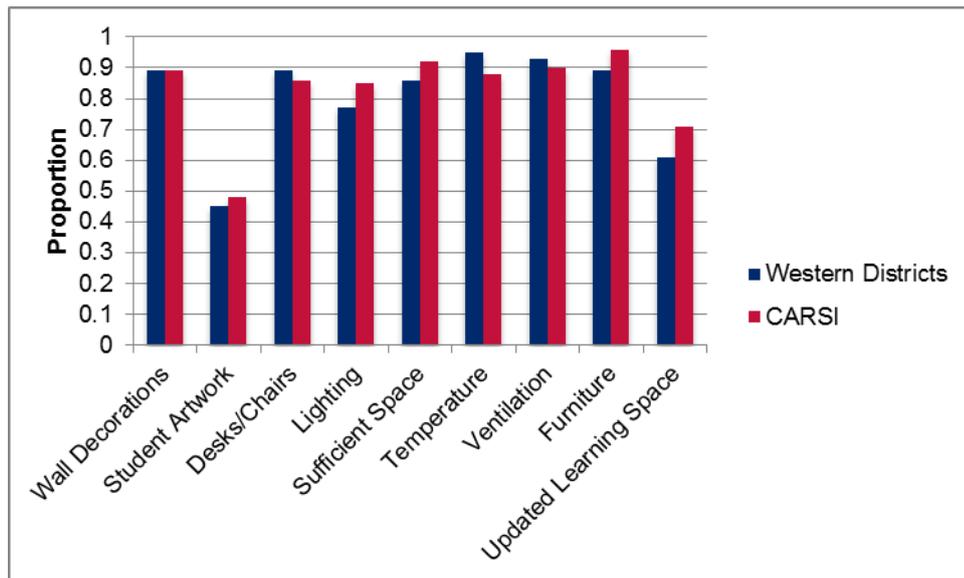
In addition to overall trends, it is also useful to examine these classroom inventory measures by school performance level. This information is displayed in **Figure 24**. As seen in this figure, the availability of inventory items was relatively consistent across the majority of classrooms, regardless of school performance. Although it is interesting that classrooms in low performing schools were reported to have higher availability of six of the nine inventory items, as compared with average performing schools, it is important to note that none of these differences are greater than 10 percentage points. Ultimately, the only factor that appears to be substantially different across performance levels is the availability of updated learning space in the classroom. While 78 percent of classrooms in high performing schools had updated learning spaces, only 57 percent of those in low performing schools made the same claim.

Figure 24. Classroom Environment, by Level of School Performance



Similar to the consistency across school performance levels, **Figure 25** shows that the classroom inventory measures are similar for CARSI and western district schools. Once again, the only measure that appears to be substantially different across school type is the availability of updated learning spaces (71 percent for classrooms in CARSI municipality schools, as compared to 61 percent in their western district counterparts).

Figure 25. Classroom Environment, by CARSI Designation



In sum, more than 90 percent of classrooms in the sample were reported to have sufficient space, adequate classroom temperature, sufficient ventilation, and suitable, grade-level furniture. More than 80 percent of classroom had signs, graphics, or drawings on the wall; sufficient desks and chairs for all students; and adequate lighting. The only two inventory items available in fewer than 70 percent of classrooms were an updated learning space (68 percent) and student artwork displayed on the walls (47 percent). The availability of inventory items was relatively consistent across the majority of classrooms, regardless of school performance or CARSI designation.

Additional Analyses

This section is intended to describe additional analyses that were not directly related to any of the specific research questions already discussed above. These analyses provide a deeper understanding of the aforementioned profiles, by examining them across grades as well as across teachers.

Analysis of Profiles by Grade

Although differences in teacher profiles have been analyzed by school performance level and CARSI versus western districts, it is also important to know if these profiles are consistent across grades. For these analyses, each of the five profiles was recoded as a binary variable to compare the most desirable profile category with all other categories in that profile. For example, the supplementary materials profile (i.e., Profile 1) was redefined as having and using supplemental classroom materials (preferred) versus any other combination. Other top profile categories were defined as follows: Profile 2 (books used as intended); Profile 3 (enfoque used, claimed and known); Profile 6 (informal evaluation with understanding); Profile 7 (differentiated instruction with understanding).

The results of the cross-grade comparisons for each of the top profiles are displayed in **Table 13**. While just more than one-third of teachers (36 percent) were in the recommended category for use of supplementary materials, it is clear from the table that nearly half of Grade 2, Grade 3, and multigrade teachers were in the top category of Profile 1, as compared with much smaller percentages in Grades 5 and 6 (20 percent and 26 percent, respectively). Relatively few teachers (10 percent overall) were found to use textbooks and activity books appropriately, but the percentages were particularly low for those teachers in the early grades. With regard to the enfoque comunicativo, there was no discernible pattern but there were substantial differences across grades. The most distinct differences were found in terms of Grade 3 and multigrade teachers (38 percent and 35 percent), compared to Grade 2 teachers, who were more than twice as likely to use the enfoque comunicativo properly (77 percent).

Table 13. Profile Summaries, by Teacher Grade

	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 5	Grade 6	Multi-Grade	Total
Profile 1: Supplementary Materials	44%	44%	20%	26%	45%	36%
Profile 2: Use of Textbooks	4%	0%	8%	15%	19%	10%
Profile 3: Enfoque Comunicativo	77%	38%	61%	56%	35%	52%
Profile 4: Informal Evaluation	46%	44%	46%	52%	37%	44%
Profile 5: Differentiated Instruction	58%	60%	64%	48%	74%	62%

Profile 4 showed the smallest amount of overall variation across grades. Multigrade teachers did tend to use and understand informal evaluation methods to a lesser degree than their single grade counterparts—but the proportion of single grade teachers in the top category for Profile 6 was relatively consistent. Lastly, while similar rates of Grade 2, Grade 3, and Grade 5 teachers used and understood differentiated instruction techniques in the classroom, fewer than half of Grade 6 teachers met this profile category (48 percent), and nearly three-quarters multigrade teachers did so (74 percent). Overall, there is some indication that use and knowledge of these important pedagogical skills varies by grade level, but there are no clear trends regarding these differences.

Analysis of Profiles and Performance

In addition to the cross-grade comparisons, logistic regression was used to estimate the impact of the five aforementioned top profiles on school performance. While these analyses should be interpreted as associative and not causal (with no claims of

statistical significance), they do provide further insight into the relationship between teacher action and school performance.

All models regressed the lowest school performance category on the respective top profile variables (introduced above), controlling for urban/rural status, CARSI/Western district, teacher gender, multi- v. single grade teacher, and student wealth index. Odds ratios were estimated for ease of interpretation. Most simply, an odds ratio below 1 signifies that the outcome variable (i.e., low performance) is less likely to occur when the independent variable of interest is present. Odds ratios from all five logistic regressions are shown in *Table 14*.

Table 14. Logistic Regression Estimates—Teacher Profiles and Low School Performance

	Odds Ratio
Profile 1: Supplementary Materials	0.83
Profile 2: Use of Textbooks	4.27
Profile 3: Enfoque Comunicativo	0.62
Profile 4: Informal Evaluation	0.48
Profile 5: Differentiated Instruction	0.58

Controls: urban/rural, CARSI/western, student wealth index, teacher gender, multigrade teacher

As can be seen in this table, four of the five profiles have odds ratios smaller than one. This means that a teachers' being in the most desirable category within a profile is associated with a smaller likelihood of being in a low performing school than if that teacher were in any other category with that profile. The only odds ratio that is greater than one comes from Profile 2. In that case, the odds of being in a low performing school are 4 times greater for teachers who use their textbooks and exercise books as intended, as compared with those teachers who do not. This counterintuitive finding is based on the fact that while 93 percent of teachers in high performing schools were found to be using their textbooks, none were using the activity books as intended. Ultimately, very few teachers were using textbooks as intended, but the small number in our dataset who were doing so happened to be in lower performing schools. Still, that number is too small to make any claims about the relative impact of this activity.

In addition to examining the profiles individually, it is also helpful to look at the proportion of teachers who fall into the top categories of multiple profiles. In other words, are teachers simply in the preferred category of only one or two things profiled, or do teachers who tend to follow one of them appropriately, tend to follow all of them? *Table 15* shows the percentage of teachers in the top categories of each possible number of profiles by level of school performance. It should be noted that profile 2 was removed from this analysis due to the fact that so few teachers were in the top category.

Table 15. Percent of Top Profile Categories, by School Performance Level

	Low Performing	Average Performing	High Performing	Overall
0 Profiles	24%	15%	9%	15%
1 Profile	29%	25%	18%	24%
2 Profiles	21%	32%	30%	28%
3 Profiles	21%	17%	28%	22%
4 Profiles	5%	11%	15%	11%

This table shows that, on average, teachers in high performing schools tend to use more of the profile-related activities across the board, than do those in low and average performing schools. For example, nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of all teachers in low performing schools were in the top category for half the profiles or fewer, whereas this number was only 57 percent for teachers in high performing schools. However, it appears that there is still much work to be done to be able to locate all teachers in the top categories for all profiles.

Recommendations and Implications

The purpose of this report is to provide key results from a study investigating effective teaching practices and school environment as related to reading instruction and student learning outcomes in primary school classrooms in Honduras. On first look, the data seem to suggest that the teaching of reading in the primary grades is strong. However, closer analysis of the results points to several key factors that this study has uncovered that warrant more investment and attention. As the fluctuation and general low performance on the Rendimiento Académico shows, these factors must be addressed in order to support higher performance on the national exam and increase student learning outcomes in the foundational skill of reading. Below, we discuss these key factors, first providing overarching recommendations, then specific recommendations for each key factor, and finally discussing the recommendations from stakeholders in Honduras that were provided during the dissemination workshop.

There should be more focused time on decoding, an important skill in the early grades which provides students with the foundations of reading and writing. Decoding can be taught in context of texts, as part of the enfoque comunicativo. At present, decoding only occurred 1.5 percent of the time of classroom reading instruction. In addition, there should be an understanding of the role of grammar in early reading instruction. Clearly grammar is important to teach, but further discussions are required in order to agree upon how and when this should be implemented in the classroom.

Although teachers have high levels of education, and say they are prepared to teach reading, they may lack specific skills and knowledge for teaching children how to read. Teachers would benefit from targeted and explicit support for lesson planning and implementation of reading instruction. For example, teachers employed the enfoque comunicativo method in their teaching, but require more training, modeling, and support, as to how to use it more completely.

Efforts should be made to ensure that teachers have all the materials necessary for teaching reading, including the DCNB materials, Programaciones and the National Standards. These materials should be updated in conjunction with the curriculum. It may be that textbooks are not well aligned with the performance standards in the DCNB; further research is needed to investigate, as most teachers reported that textbooks are what they use to plan their lessons. Because of this, it is important that textbooks are aligned with the DCNB, and that teachers have access to these materials as well as adequate support in learning how to use these materials and incorporate them in their daily lesson plans.

Because the standards in the DCNB for Grades 3 and 6 are significantly more difficult, these teachers need more support in planning for instruction to meet the standards. Textbooks are not aligned, which means that these teachers may not have what they need in order to prepare third and sixth graders for the Rendimiento Académico .

Although teachers in high performing schools are using the profile-related activities more appropriately, still only 43 percent of teachers in those schools were in the top category for at least three of the profiles—and only 15 percent were in the top category for all profiles. Therefore, it is important for teachers not only to improve their practice with regard to these profiles individually but also in conjunction with one another. This also implies that, at minimum, any reform to the educational system in Honduras must address all factors that were explored in the profiles.

Below, we provide specific conclusions and recommendations in four focal areas effective teacher practices teacher feedback and assessment, differentiated instruction, use of instructional materials, school and classroom environment, and teacher preparation.

Effective Teacher Practices

- Much of the time in class is spent on reading and comprehension skills, which is fundamental for the development of reading skills. Less time is spent on writing, vocabulary, and spelling, which are also important. On average, there is a mix of skills seen in classrooms that represents a variety of evidence-based content areas CARS schools appear to spend more time on grammar than all other schools. More investigation is needed as to why this may be the case, and what the grammar lessons contain.
- Although most teachers used the enfoque comunicativo or said they used it and understood it, in reality it is hard to implement fully. Teachers need more

training in the nuances of how to use the enfoque and how to tie a lesson together so that it is a coherent series of activities.

- Modeling was not found often, though it is crucial for success of any style of teaching. It is especially important in following the enfoque, as it is a complex and difficult style of teaching to enact.
- Many teachers appeared to use the enfoque but did not claim that they do. More research is needed to understand why these teachers don't think they're using the enfoque, or which elements about the enfoque they are or are not claiming to use.

These findings indicate more training is likely needed on how to implement the enfoque comunicativo approach in the classroom. This approach requires teachers to be highly knowledgeable about their practice and their students, background knowledge and skills. It also requires significant resources beyond a reading textbook for students to be able to construct knowledge rather than be given information solely from the teacher.

- The video case studies point to productive practices in teaching reading, such as modeling, connectedness, and explicit vocabulary instruction. Future teacher's guides and teacher trainings should incorporate these practices.
- The vocabulary analysis on videos indicates there may be a basic level of understanding of the approach, but not a deep enough understanding to fully implement the this type of instruction.
- Analysis of the skills or components taught showed that a significant amount of time was spent teaching grammar skills, which research shows are not essential for learning to read successfully. Also the higher performing schools spent the least amount of time on grammar instruction. It would be useful to consider what grammar skills are essential and how much time is truly needed for this type of instruction. Time spent on grammar could be better spent on skills directly impacting reading development especially in the earlier grades.

Teacher Feedback and Assessment

- More training is likely needed for teachers to better understand how to assess students. This includes methods for evaluating students using the enfoque comunicativo approach within the classrooms.
- Due to a lack of availability of materials, teachers may not use the pre-prepared monthly quizzes, which are a valuable resource.
- Although teachers may understand how to use informal assessment, it is difficult to integrate into the classroom. More training may be need in how to integrate assessment while planning lessons.

Differentiated Instruction

- There is a need for further investigation of use of differentiation for schools in the average level of performance. It is not clear why they tend to have lowered use of differentiation.

- Teachers may need support translating the ideas of differentiation into concrete steps to implement in the classroom. More teachers from the rural and multigrade classrooms tended to differentiate instruction due to the nature of the multigrade classroom. More research is needed to understand how multigrade teachers manage to differentiation instruction.

Use of Instructional Materials

- Teachers need all materials in classrooms if they are expected to use them—in particular the teacher guides and DCNB materials.
- Although most classrooms used textbooks and activity books, very few classrooms (10 percent) used the activity books as intended, with students writing in them. More investigations are needed as to why this may be, including understanding the scarcity of materials and teacher motivation behind not having students write in the books.
- Further investigation into how teachers are trained and supported with regard to supplemental materials may be warranted. What are the expectations? For teachers who do have materials, how do they get them? What do they see as the role of these materials? For teachers who don't use them, why? Do they lack the resources, or do they not see the importance with regard to the materials?
- Overall the National Standards and Pacing Guides should be more explicit and precise about which and how skills and standards should change as students move through the grades. The standards in the DCNB are much more specific, and can be more helpful to a teacher when planning for instruction. In addition, the teacher's guide and textbook should be aligned to the DCNB and Standards, to support teachers in lessons planning.
 - Decoding instruction at upper elementary grades (Grades 3 to 6) in Spanish should focus on combining all knowledge of letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (prefixes and suffixes) to read unfamiliar words in and out of context, and this should be reflected in the Standards. These higher-level word study skills would support student fluency and comprehension skills.
 - Reading comprehension instruction can be strengthened by detailing specific comprehension skills and strategies that need to be learned in the Standards.
- As noted in the Desk Study the National Curriculum is now over 10 years old. It would be useful to review this document and ensure it is aligned with the most recent research on Spanish literacy instruction and the current Honduran context.

School and Classroom Environment

- Ultimately, the only factor that appeared to be substantially different across performance levels and CARSI designation was the availability of updated

learning space in the classroom. The updated learning space may be a proxy for teachers who have access to more supplemental materials and are better prepared. However, further investigation is needed into this and the implications for student learning.

Teacher Preparation

- This study focused on current instructional practices and materials. However a deeper understanding of how teachers are prepared and what knowledge they have when they take on a classroom for the first time would greatly enhance the understanding of educational quality in Honduras. It would be beneficial to conduct further research on teacher preparation including observations and interviews with professors and student teachers to understand the quality of education at both the normales as well as at the university level.
- One of the most notable insights gained from the field study was the lack of regular support received by teachers in the classroom. Teachers are supposed to receive regular pedagogical support visits, however most teachers we interviewed said that these visits either never happened, happened once a year or once every two months. These visits mostly included suggestions and recommendations, however the quality of the recommendations was not always relevant. It would be beneficial to increase the quantity and quality of the visits. Further research or consideration of how such a system could better support and impact teacher performance is highly recommended.
- The data from the teacher interviews demonstrated that teachers in schools that were high performing were more likely to report that their school director reviewed their lesson plans and spent time conducting support visits more frequently than teachers in low performing schools. This could imply that the more active the director participates, the higher the quality of instruction. It could be helpful to incentivize school directors in some way to spend more time classrooms, and provide training on what types of activities to undertake while in the classroom.
- It is worth considering a move away from the escuelas normales and towards a university or an equivalent two- or four-year degree, as well as a teacher preparation curriculum closely aligned to the best practices of literacy instruction. This is also something that is mandated in the Fundamental Education Law (*Ley Fundamental de Educacion*).
- When teachers were asked what would most improve their teaching, the majority responded more training, support guidance, and materials. It seems clear that the teachers in this study feel they would benefit from more support and sufficient materials over salary increases and promotions. These findings once again support the need for higher quality education, classroom support and materials.

Recommendations from the Workshop

On December 3, 2014, the results of the desk study and field study were presented at a workshop attended by representatives of the Honduras Secretaría de Educación, USAID, and CIDEH. As a part of this workshop, participants offered their own conclusions and recommendations from the study. In general, participants were supportive of the findings and were interested in thinking through means of moving forward and improving the early education system in Honduras. Specific recommendations were offered and summarized below.

For use and availability of materials, participants noted that while classroom and school libraries were not found in many schools, they are essential to the learning environment and should be available in all schools. Other materials, which participants suggested should be found in schools, were supplementary materials that are low-cost and which teachers could make or provide, and technology to support reading instruction. Suggestions for providing these materials ranged from partnerships with other organizations and I/NGOs, drawing on parental and community support to finance and provide the library, and support to teachers to create these materials.

Most participants agreed with the findings of the report that teachers require more training and support for the successful application of the enfoque comunicativo. Participants suggested that effective means of delivering more training and support could be accomplished through the instructional support visits, and that those conducting the visits should be armed with knowledge and skills to support teachers who are struggling with this approach. Other suggestions included more training for teachers at all levels, and more monitoring of teachers to better understand how the approach is being used.

Annex A. Teachers' Knowledge of the Enfoque Comunicativo

In order to understand use of the enfoque comunicativo in sampled schools, profiles were created using three criteria:

1. Teachers' reporting of whether they use the enfoque in their teaching: All teachers were asked three questions regarding their use of the enfoque. They were asked directly if they used the enfoque, which way they thought was the best to teach reading, and how they taught vocabulary. Based on their answers, teachers were given 0–3 points: 1 point for saying they used the enfoque, 1 point for saying they used texts for teaching reading, and 1 point for saying they taught vocabulary through the use of a text. Teachers with a total of 2–3 points were put in the category of reporting they used the enfoque comunicativo. Teachers with a total of 0–1 point were put in the category of reporting that they did not use the enfoque comunicativo.
2. Teachers' observed use of the enfoque comunicativo: All teachers were observed during a reading lesson, and observers took note of the content that was being taught. All teachers who were either observed teaching reading skills or had lessons plans with evidence of teaching reading skills that matched the enfoque comunicativo (i.e., reading of letters, syllables, words, sentences through the use of a text, comprehension of a text, vocabulary through a text, grammar through a text) were put in the category of a “yes” on use of the enfoque. All teachers who did not show any evidence of teaching reading skills that matched the enfoque were put in the category of “no” on use of the enfoque.
3. Teachers' knowledge of the enfoque: Teachers were asked three questions to measure their knowledge of the enfoque. The first question involved two statements from which they had to choose the statement they agreed with the most. The second and third questions were multiple choice questions. The questions and answers are contained in *Table A-1* below. For each question, they received 1 point for an answer aligned to the enfoque, and 0 points for an answer not aligned to the enfoque, for a possible total of 3 points.

Table A-1. Teachers' Knowledge of the Enfoque Comunicativo

Question:	Answers Aligned with Enfoque	Answers Not Aligned with Enfoque
1. Marque con una equis (x) en el recuadro a la derecha del enunciado con el que usted esté	Para enseñar los sustantivos el/la docente debe primero explicar	Para enseñar los sustantivos el/la docente debe primero explicar

Question:	Answers Aligned with Enfoque	Answers Not Aligned with Enfoque
más de acuerdo.	su significado.	su significado.
2. Para enseñar a los/las estudiantes como leer palabras multisilábicas, Ud:	Busca un texto que tiene muchas palabras multisilábicas y leyendo el texto juntos	Escribe una lista de palabras multisilábicas en el pizarón para repasar Dictar palabras multisilábicas
3. Para enseñar el significado de una palabra nueva, Ud:	Lee un cuento con está palabra y usa en contexto para explicar el significado	Pide a los/las estudiantes que buscan la palabra en el diccionario. Pide a los/las estudiantes que buscan la palabra en el diccionario.

Annex B. Profile of Differentiated Instruction

In order to understand use of the differentiated instruction in sampled schools, profiles were created using the two following criteria:

1. Teachers' use of differentiated instruction: All teachers were observed during a typical reading lesson, and observers took note of whether the teacher ever gave (1) differentiated instructions to students working in small groups that were created according to learning levels, and (2) differentiated instructions to individual students according to learning levels. In addition, lesson plans were examined for any reference to differentiated learning levels. For each of these three questions, teachers were given 1 point for positive evidence of differentiation, and 0 for lack of evidence. Teachers with 2–3 total points were classified as showing “strong evidence of differentiating instruction.” Teachers with 0–1 total points were classified as showing “none to weak evidence of differentiating instruction.”
2. Teachers' knowledge of differentiated instruction: Teachers were asked 5 questions to measure their knowledge of differentiated instruction, receiving 1 point for each answer that was aligned to principles within differentiated instruction and 0 points for answers that were not aligned (*Table B-1*). The questions and answers are contained in the table below. Points were totaled: teachers with 3–5 points were classified as displaying strong knowledge of how to differentiate instruction; teachers with 0–2 points were classified as not displaying strong evidence of how to differentiate instruction.

Table B-1. Questions for Teachers' Knowledge of Differentiated Instruction

Question:	Answers Aligned with Differentiation	Answers Not Aligned with Differentiation
1. Marque con una equis (x) en el recuadro a la derecha del enunciado con el que usted esté más de acuerdo.	Los/las estudiantes que tienen problema en la lectura deben recibir la mayor atención del docente para que puedan alcanzar al resto de la clase	Los/las estudiantes que van bien en la lectura deben recibir la mayor atención del docente porque tienen mucho potencial para tener éxito
2. Marque con una equis (x) en el recuadro a la derecha del enunciado con el que usted esté más de acuerdo.	Es más importante evaluar el nivel de lectura de los/las estudiantes para determinar qué apoyo necesitan	Es más importante evaluar el nivel de lectura de los/las estudiantes para determinar su nivel de rendimiento (por ejemplo sus calificaciones)

Question:	Answers Aligned with Differentiation	Answers Not Aligned with Differentiation
<p>3. Usted está enseñando 5to grado, y sabes que tiene 3 estudiantes que no pueden leer al nivel. Cuando está planificando actividades de lectura, que planea hacer con esos 3 estudiantes?</p>	<p>Planea que ellos reciban apoyo extra por parte de docentes o tutores</p>	<p>Planea que los (as) estudiantes (as) repitan la lectura varias veces hasta que la lean de forma correcta</p> <hr/> <p>Planea que ellos pasen al aula de 3ro o 4to grado durante la lección de lectura para que pueden aprender a leer.</p>
<p>4. Usted está enseñando un nuevo vocabulario (de 8 palabras). Al quinto día solo el 50 percent de los/las estudiantes pueden identificar las palabras en el su contexto. ¿Qué debe hacer?</p>	<p>Anotar los estudiantes que no aprendieron las palabras. La próxima semana Ud. tratará de volver a enseñarlas en grupos pequeños</p>	<p>Volver a enseñar a toda la clase ese día.</p> <hr/> <p>Saltarse esas palabras. Usted tiene que continuar para terminar el programa a tiempo.</p>
<p>5. Un/una estudiante está leyendo un cuento en voz alta, y nota que el/lla no sabe leer bien una palabra. ¿Qué hace Ud?</p>	<p>Ayuda al estudiante para que use el contexto (resto de cuento) y lo que sabe de la palabra para leerla</p>	<p>Espera hasta que la lea correctamente</p> <hr/> <p>Le dice la palabra.</p>

Annex C. Profile of Textbook Use

In order to understand use of the textbooks in sampled schools, profiles were created using the two following criteria:

1. Teachers' use of textbooks: All teachers were observed during a typical reading lesson, and lesson plans were examined. Observers took note if textbooks and/or activity books were used during the course of the lesson, and/or there was mention of the textbooks and/or activity books in the lesson plans.
2. Intended use of activity books: During the course of the student interview, students were asked to show the interviewer their activity book and/or exercise book, choosing the exercise book if they did not have or did not write in their activity book. Students who provided the activity book were taken as a measure of intended use. Students who did not provide their activity book were taken as not intended use.

Annex D. Profile of Supplementary Materials Availability and Use

In order to understand use of the supplementary materials in sampled schools, profiles were created using the following two criteria:

1. Availability of supplementary materials: During the classroom inventory, observers examined the classroom environment and made note if supplementary materials were present in the classroom. In particular, materials had to be easily accessible for students, not in a cabinet under lock and key.
2. Use of supplementary materials: All teachers were observed during a typical reading lesson, and lesson plans were examined. Observers took note of whether supplementary materials were used during the course of the lesson, and/or there was mention of materials in the lesson plans.

Annex E. Demographic Information of the Professors Interviewed at the Escuelas Normales

Gender	Years of Experience	Academic Background	Courses Taught	Location
Female	5	BA in Spanish	Spanish 1, 2, 3, & 4	Tegucigalpa
Male	3	BA in Spanish	Spanish 1, 2, 3, & 4	Tegucigalpa
Female	29	BA in Spanish	Spanish 1, 2, 3, & 4	La Paz
Female	17	BA in Spanish	Spanish 1, 2, 3, & 4	La Paz
Female	28	BA in pedagogy	Instruction in Spanish and natural sciences 1, 2, 3, & 4	Tegucigalpa
Female	3	BA in Spanish	Instruction 1 seminars and Spanish	Tegucigalpa
Female	15	BA in Spanish	Instruction in Spanish 1 & 2	La Paz
Female	17	BA in Spanish	Seminar and Practicum in Instruction third year.	La Paz

Annex F. Location and Types of Sampled Schools

Department	District	Place	Type	Area
08 - Francisco Morazán	01 - Distrito Central	01 - Distrito Central	Multiple Teacher	Urban
05 - Cortés	02 - Choloma	36 - San José de Los Laureles	Multiple Teacher	Rural
05 - Cortés	01 - San Pedro Sula	01 - San Pedro Sula	Multiple Teacher	Urban
08 - Francisco Morazán	01 - Distrito Central	01 - Distrito Central	Multiple Teacher	Urban
05 - Cortés	01 - San Pedro Sula	01 - San Pedro Sula	Multiple Teacher	Rural
08 - Francisco Morazán	01 - Distrito Central	01 - Distrito Central	Multiple Teacher	Urban
01 - Atlántida	01 - La Ceiba	01 - La Ceiba	Multiple Teacher	Urban
10 - Intibucá	07 - Jesus de Otoro	01 - Jesús de Otoro	Multiple Teacher	Rural
10 - Intibucá	16 - Yamaranguila	01 - Yamaranguila	Multiple Teacher	Urban
05 - Cortés	01 - San Pedro Sula	01 - San Pedro Sula	Multiple Teacher	Urban
05 - Cortés	01 - San Pedro Sula	01 - San Pedro Sula	Multiple Teacher	Urban
01 - Atlántida	07 - Tela	01 - Tela	Multiple Teacher	Urban
01 - Atlántida	01 - La Ceiba	21 - Yaruca	Multiple Teacher	Rural
01 - Atlántida	07 - Tela	50 - Mezapa o Santa Rosa del Norte	Multiple Teacher	Rural
12 - La Paz	16 - Santa Elena	03 - El Carrizal	Multiple Teacher	Rural
05 - Cortés	02 - Choloma	01 - Choloma	Multiple Teacher	Urban
01 - Atlántida	07 - Tela	31 - Kilómetro Trece	Multiple Teacher	Rural
05 - Cortés	02 - Choloma	01 - Choloma	Multiple Teacher	Rural
08 - Francisco Morazán	01 - Distrito Central	01 - Distrito Central	Multiple Teacher	Urban
08 - Francisco Morazán	01 - Distrito Central	01 - Distrito Central	Multiple Teacher	Urban
12 - La Paz	06 - Guajiquiro	01 - Guajiquiro	Multiple Teacher	Rural
01 - Atlántida	01 - La Ceiba	01 - La Ceiba	Multiple Teacher	Urban
12 - La Paz	01 - La Paz	01 - La Paz	Dual Teacher	Rural
01 - Atlántida	01 - La Ceiba	01 - La Ceiba	Multiple Teacher	Urban
05 - Cortés	01 - San Pedro Sula	01 - San Pedro Sula	Multiple Teacher	Urban
08 - Francisco Morazán	01 - Distrito Central	01 - Distrito Central	Multiple Teacher	Urban

08 - Francisco Morazán	01 - Distrito Central	01 - Distrito Central	Multiple Teacher	Urban
01 - Atlántida	07 - Tela	70 - Santiago	Dual Teacher	Rural
12 - La Paz	08 - Marcala	03 - Santa Cruz	Multiple Teacher	Rural
05 - Cortés	01 - San Pedro Sula	01 - San Pedro Sula	Single Teacher	Rural
12 - La Paz	01 - La Paz	06 - San Rafael	Multiple Teacher	Rural
12 - La Paz	19 - Yarula	01 - Yarula	Dual Teacher	Rural
10 - Intibucá	13 - San Marcos de la Sierra	04 - San Luis	Dual Teacher	Rural
05 - Cortés	02 - Choloma	38 - Santa Marta	Single Teacher	Rural
10 - Intibucá	13 - San Marcos de la Sierra	02 - Las Delicias	Multiple Teacher	Rural
12 - La Paz	08 - Marcala	01 - Marcala	Dual Teacher	Rural
10 - Intibucá	13 - San Marcos de la Sierra	03 - San José	Multiple Teacher	Rural
10 - Intibucá	16 - Yamaranguila	10 - El Picacho	Multiple Teacher	Rural
12 - La Paz	14 - San Pedro de Tulule	04 - Las Huertas	Multiple Teacher	Rural
10 - Intibucá	13 - San Marcos de la Sierra	01 - San Marcos de La Sierra	Dual Teacher	Rural
12 - La Paz	18 - Santiago Puringla	02 - Cedritos	Dual Teacher	Rural
10 - Intibucá	06 - Intibucá	18 - San Pedro	Multiple Teacher	Rural
05 - Cortés	02 - Choloma	01 - Choloma	Multiple Teacher	Urban
08 - Francisco Morazán	01 - Distrito Central	01 - Distrito Central	Multiple Teacher	Urban
10 - Intibucá	09 - Masaguara	01 - Masaguara	Dual Teacher	Rural

Annex G. Desk Study



EdData II

Task Order 30: Education Data for Decision Making (EdData II): Primary School Reading Study for Honduras Desk Study

Revised October 2014

**EdData II Technical and Managerial Assistance
Contract Number BPA-EHC-E-00-04-00004-00
Task Order: AID-522-BC-14-00011
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Task Order 30: Education Data for Decision Making (EdData II): Primary School Reading Study for Honduras Desk Study

Revised October 2014

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Abbreviations

CIASES	Centro de Investigación y Acción Educativa Social /Center of Investigation and Social Education Action
cispm	correct initial sounds per minute
clpm	correct letters per minute
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
cwpm	correct words per minute
DCNB	Diseño Currículo Nacional Básico/National Basic Curriculum Design
DIGECE	Dirección General de Evaluación de Calidad Educativa/ General Directorate of Evaluation and Education Quality
EFA	Education for All
EGRA	early grade reading assessment
FTI-EFA	Fast Track Initiative-Education for All
IHE	Institute of Higher Education
INICE	Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Capacitación Educativa /National Center for Educational Research and Training
KfW	German development bank
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MIDEH	Mejorando el Impacto de Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras/ Honduras Improving Student Achievement
PD	professional development
PERCE	First Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies
PREAL	Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina y el Caribe/Program for the Promotion of Education Reform in Latin America and the Caribbean
PROHECO	Programa Hondureño de Educación Comunitaria/Community School Program in Rural Honduras
TPST	teacher pre- and in-service training
UMCE	Unidad de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación/Unit for Monitoring the Quality of Education
UNAH	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras
UPNFM	National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

wpm

words per minute

Introduction

As one of the poorest countries in Latin America Honduras faces many challenges in making the progress it desires. However, Honduras has also put extensive effort into reforming its education system throughout the beginning of the current century. The Government of Honduras recognizes that education will build a strong future for the country and its people. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) country strategy focuses on decentralization as the main activity to improve the education sector. Decentralization will allow more decision making at local levels and help schools and communities meet their own needs. Decentralization, however, does not necessarily guarantee funding for activities that would directly affect the quality of education and improve the literacy of primary school students. Three of the five anticipated results laid out in the strategy focus on quality improvements:

1. Reduction in repetition and dropout rates
2. Improved academic performance for basic education
3. Increased enrollments and higher completion rates in primary and secondary schools.

The anticipated results are more closely matched to the USAID Assistance Object Goal 3 for student achievement. Two of the indicators set forth by this goal will help USAID support activities that directly impact primary students' literacy development:

- Proportion of students who, by the end of the primary cycle, are able to read and demonstrate understanding as defined by a country curriculum, standards, or national experts.
- Number of teachers/educators trained with US Government support (disaggregated by pre-service and in-service).

In light of these goals and the issues faced by the Government of Honduras to improve the lives of the people, USAID/Honduras has requested that RTI conduct a two-part study of literacy education in Grades 1–6. This desk study report represents the first part of this study, and is itself divided into three parts.

1. Literacy Development Education Policy in Honduras
2. Assessment Review
3. Review of Instructional Materials

Literacy Development Education Policy in Honduras

El centro escolar, entonces, debe convertirse en el espacio en el que los diferentes actores aportan su mejor contribución de manera armónica, convirtiéndose los docentes en los facilitadores de un proceso de cambio que se refleja en la práctica pedagógica, generando saberes que motiven a los estudiantes a asistir a sus 200 días de clase y a los padres y madres de familia a contribuir no sólo enviando a sus hijos a la escuela, sino apoyando los

procesos de gestión de la escuela y la gestión pedagógica de los docentes. (Plan de Educación 2010–2014 p.32)

The school, then, must become the space in which different actors make their best contributions harmoniously, with teachers becoming facilitators of a process of change that reflects pedagogical practice, generating the know-how that motivates students to attend 200 days of classes and that gets parents to contribute, not just by sending their children to school, but also by supporting the school's management and pedagogical direction. (Education Plan 2010-2014)

As part of the desk study RTI was asked to review several policy documents laying out the country's plans for improving education overall. The review that follows has focused on the areas of these plans that most directly impact literacy development in Grades 1–6 and answer the research questions given by USAID.

1. What is the current status of literacy development based on existing assessments in the last 3 years?
2. How do the national standards and curriculum support literacy development in Grades 1-6?
3. How does the school environment support literacy development in Grades 1-6?
4. How do instructional practices support literacy development in Grades 1-6?

The USAID provided documents reviewed in this section were:

1. **Plan de Educación 2010–2014 (Education Plan).** This plan is the most detailed and thorough of the plans laid out by the Education sector. This document, published in 2010, explains the issues and plans for meeting both short- and long-term objectives as far out as 2038. It focuses on five main areas: access, efficiency, quality, modernization, and investment. The plan is an initiative of the Government of Honduras and will ensure coordination of various government entities and actors in the national effort to improve the quality of education.
2. **Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Education for All Honduras (EFA) 2003–2015 (FTI-EFA plan).** This plan, written in conjunction with FTI, is Honduras' plan to meet the EFA goals that were set in 2000. This plan was one of the earlier initiatives in Honduras' attempt to reform education. Several of the suggestions and goals have therefore been achieved or changed since it was written.
3. **Ley Fundamental de Educación (Education Law).** This is the newest set of laws put in place to guide the implementation of the Education sector in Honduras. This new set of laws makes significant changes to the number of days in school, the evaluation system, and many other systems and subsystems with the hope of improving education for all.
4. **Análisis del Sector Educación Honduras (Sector Analysis).** Written by Centro de Investigación y Acción Educativa Social ([CIASSES] Center of Educational Research and Social Action), this report is the most recent analysis of the education sector. It reviews several policies and research

studies to give a thorough picture of factors affecting literacy and math education.

5. **Plan Estratégico del Sector Educación Período 2005–2015 (Strategic Sector Plan)**. In June of 2005 Honduras released this long-term plan for reforming the Education sector. This plan was developed by an interdisciplinary and multi-institutional technical team. The components of the plan include access, quality, science and technology, infrastructure, decentralization, and development of human talent. This document was also accompanied by a presentation of the plan summarizing goals, actions, and financial needs.

The review was based on the specific actions, goals, and plans that would directly affect students' literacy outcomes in Grades 1–6. There are of course many ways in which any education sector could be improved; however, not all improvements (such as decentralization of the system or improved management) will have a direct impact on literacy outcomes. Specifically, this review looked at the Ministry of Education's goals and planned activities for the national standards and curriculum; school environment, including infrastructure and curricular materials; and instructional practices, including teacher preparedness. The following are the results of this review.

Goals and Objectives

Any plan for change begins with the goals or objectives that must be reached. Overall the goals for most of the education plans for Honduras are focused on increasing access and decreasing repetition and dropouts through the improvement of student achievement—important and necessary goals for reforming the education system. However in order to most directly impact literacy improvement of primary school students, it is also essential to consider goals that focus on what happens once students are inside the classroom. This is where the greatest impact on student outcomes can be made and where the Ministry of Education and teachers specifically have the most control over time, knowledge, and resources. The three plans each set forth at least one goal specific to improving academic performance, and several goals across the three plans were set to support this improvement. *Table 1* shows a summary of the goals set forth across the three plans that could most directly impact literacy development and are also associated with the research questions for this study. There is no goal set that speaks specifically to the curriculum or standards. Work on the national standards and curriculum has been a main focus of the *Mejorando el Impacto de Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras* ([MIDEH] Honduras Improving Student Achievement) project in recent years, so it may be assumed that the standards and curriculum were already planned, and there may not have been a need for a specific goal.

The goals in *Table 1* show all three plans having at least one goal to improve academic performance, which is the overall goal of all the reforms planned. These will be monitored in most cases using the data from the national assessments. All three plans set some goal to reduce illiteracy rates and increase achievement at Grades 3 and 6. Interestingly these grades are the grades in which student outcomes on the national assessment seem to be lowest; they are also grades that can be associated

with transitioning to higher levels of text and academic work. Only one plan, the Strategic Plan, set a specific goal around materials in classrooms, teacher training, and supervision.

Table 1. Summary of Goals with Potential to Directly Impact Literacy Outcomes

Research Focus:	Student Assessment				Materials	Infrastructure	Instruction Time	Teachers	
Goal or Objective:	Reduce Illiteracy	% of Sixth Grade Graduates at Age 12	% of All Ages as Sixth Grade Graduates	Increased Academic Achievement: Grades 3 and 6	Improved Materials Distributed	Improved Infrastructure	200 Days of School	Building Human Capital	Supervision and Evaluation of Teachers
Education Plan 2010–2014	x			x			x	x	
FTI-EFA 2003–2015	x	x	x	x			x		
Strategic Plan 2005–2015	x			x	x	x	x	x	x

These goals and objectives of the national plans are based on the Act for the Establishment of a National Vision and Adoption of a National Plan for Honduras. This is a law and plan published in 2009 to support the development of Honduras. There is one main educational goal in the Act that calls for raising the average years of schooling to nine throughout the nation. The plan also calls for the establishment of a system for evaluating the quality of primary schools; promoting the organization of competitions at the regional level in the areas of science, math, and Spanish; and making arrangements with schools and international research experts for the training of teachers and students.

The goal and objectives set out in this document continue to serve as the guiding force for development in the education sector.¹

¹ *Decreto Legislativo No. 286-2009, Ley para el Establecimiento de una Visión de País y la Adopción de un Plan de Nación para Honduras. Secretaria Técnica de Planificación y Cooperación Externa SEPLAN*

Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment

Key to improving the quality of education in any subject is having a sound and well developed set of standards that drive the curriculum, and a set of student assessments that help teachers determine whether students are achieving those standards. In general the review of documents shows a significant interest in supporting and using the national assessment developed in conjunction with the MIDEH project as a means of supporting the improvement of literacy outcomes. However, based on the goals and objectives of the plans reviewed, there seem to be few focused on the curriculum and standards as a means of improving educational quality.

Curriculum

During the early 1990s education was driven by a set of learning objectives (Rendimientos Basicos) for each of the four basic subjects in each grade of primary school. They included performance criteria and support for teacher planning. The purpose of this document was to use standardized assessments to improve student achievement. In 2002 Honduras took the learning objectives further and focused on the development and formalization of a national curriculum, the Diseño Currículo Nacional Básico ([DCNB] National Basic Curriculum Design). Along with the curriculum Honduras focused on the development of instructional tools: educational standards, monthly schedules, textbooks, and an evaluation system that included diagnostic tests for the start of the school year, formative monthly testing, and end of grade tests with manuals and instructional standards. The MIDEH project played a significant role in supporting the government to create the current standards. During the review of documents it was noted that the FTI-EFA plan and the Strategic Plan made mention of the curriculum as a tool for improving education outcomes. The curriculum would be a key component in improving literacy outcomes, and any new educational reform plan should consider curriculum review now that the curriculum is over 10 years old. It will also be important to gain a better understanding of how well the curriculum has been implemented up to this point and what changes would support implementation.

Assessment

Honduras has a history of working to improve the quality of primary education through evaluation going back almost 30 years to the Proyecto de Eficiencia de la Educación Primaria (Project for Efficiency in Primary Education), which started in 1986. One component of this project created and used standardized tests to evaluate student performance nationally. This project supported the World Bank, UPNFM, and MINED's creation of the Unidad de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación ([UMCE] Unit for Monitoring the Quality of Education). In 1996 a legislative decree created the Dirección General de Evaluación de Calidad Educativa ([DIGECE] General Directorate for Evaluation of Educational Quality) to standardize the assessment processes in the education system and ensure educational quality. Following this, Honduras participated in the First Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (PERCE) in 1997, which was the first study to produce

comparable data on learning achievement in Latin America. Since 1997 Honduras has been conducting national standardized assessments in Spanish and mathematics that emphasized Grades 3 and 6. Then in 2004–2007 as part of the EFA plan, the USAID-supported MIDEH project worked with the Honduran Secretary of Education to design national standards in mathematics and Spanish as well as to conduct annual assessments on student performance. The MIDEH project continues to support the government to improve quality of education in 2014. In 2011 Honduras participated in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessment for the first time. Most recently in 2012 and 2013 Honduras, with the support of the MIDEH project, conducted both a national census and a formal research-sample-based annual evaluation of Spanish reading and writing performance, as well as mathematics performance, in Grades 1–9. These evaluations will support Honduras in tracking student learning and making data-based decisions affecting education quality. Based on this review, a system of assessment of students does seem to have been the focus of most of the sector plans, but it was a key to the Education Plan. This plan listed three actions to be taken to improve assessment:

1. Establish flexible and efficient assessment in Cycle I.
2. Develop a strategy for the use of evaluation reports in the classroom so teachers can establish levels for students of different abilities.
3. Establish an external system (national and international) of evaluation to provide information to improve learning.

It seems clear that Honduras has come to value a strong assessment system that can be used by teachers and the Ministry of Education as a whole to make decisions about instruction and education more generally. As this system is being established, it may be useful to review the literacy curriculum to ensure that it matches the assessment system and includes the latest research-based best practices, because assessment will only give information about students know. It cannot change what skills students are learning

Quality of Instruction

Strong instructional practices help ensure that students are able to learn new skills. Without high-quality instruction, even the best curriculum or books will not guarantee that students will learn. In the documents reviewed there were two main elements of instructional practices: instructional time, and teacher training and evaluation.

Instructional Time

It is well known that students require significant instructional time to become successful readers (Allington, 2001; Krashen, 2001; Stanovich, 2000).² One of the goals noted across almost all the strategic plans to increase quality is an increase in the number of days students attend school. The Education Plan notes that the average

² Allington, R.A. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers*. New York: Wesley Educational Publications; Krashen, S. (2001). More smoke and mirrors: A critique of the National Reading Panel report on fluency. *Phi Delta Kappan*, (October) 119-123.; Stanovich, K.E. (2000). *Progress in understanding reading*. New York: The Guildford Press.

number of days in public schools was 160 while the average number of days in private schools was 200. The understanding that students in private schools tend to have better learning outcomes and they spend more time in school has helped to support the changing of the law. The Education Law now specifies students must receive 200 days of instruction per school year. Unfortunately various studies that have been conducted show that the actual number of school days varies. Citizens Alliance for Education found that students attended school for an average of 90 days from 2008 to 2012, and an Inter-American Development Bank 10-year study reported in 2010 that students attended school for an average of 125 days. The FTI-EFA plan noted at the time there was evidence that the actual number of days of instruction was significantly lower than 200 due to absenteeism of both teachers and students. One of the activities suggested in this plan was the development of a system for monitoring the number of instructional days to ensure students are actually receiving 200 days of instruction.

Taking up this cause, the Citizens Alliance for Education conducted a further study that was published in 2014. This study took place in 2013; data collectors were sent to visit schools between February and November of the 2013 school year. The study covered 422 schools in 18 departments in public schools. They found that the average number of days of instruction was 183, which came to 91.5 percent of the number of days established by the law. However, at this time Honduras has added school hours on Saturdays that may now make up the shortfall found in the study.

This has been considered a major achievement in the improvement of the quality of education in Honduras and should be celebrated as an accomplishment of the Ministry of Education. All documents reviewed for this policy review mentioned the increase in school days to 200. However it is important to remember that it is not just the amount of time that is spent in class, but also how classroom time is used. It is important to help teachers use this time they have with students to the best of their ability. In the following section we will discuss the role of teachers in improving the literacy outcomes of students in Honduras.

Teacher Practice

En cuanto a la formación inicial y capacitación docente, se reconoce como uno de los factores asociados fundamentales para lograr la calidad de la educación, convirtiéndose en uno de los ejes clave de las reformas educativas. (Plan de Educación 2010–2014, p. 24)

Initial teacher education and training is recognized as one of the fundamental factors in achieving quality education, and is becoming one of the keys to educational reforms. (Education Plan 2010–2014, p. 24)

Teachers play the most essential part in improving student outcomes in any subject. Improving and maintaining teachers' knowledge and instructional practice will have the most direct and immediate effect on students learning.

Teacher preparation

There are 55,007 teachers in the basic school cycle of Honduras, and 73 percent of these teachers are female (CIASES, 2014). Teachers are prepared in a system of 13 (numbers vary in documents) schools called the Escuelas Normales. This primary level teacher preparation system has existed since the 1950s; students who decide they want to become primary teachers finish their teacher education at one of these schools. This system is considered much less rigorous than the preparation to become a teacher at the middle school or higher level. These higher level teachers must obtain a degree from the National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazan (UPNFM) or Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH). This means that the primary teachers, responsible for students' foundational literacy and math skills, are the least educated of the teaching force.

In 1996 there was an attempt to reform teacher education by closing the Escuelas Normales; however, this reform was halted, and to this day the Escuelas Normales continue preparing teachers. According to the Education Plan reactivating the Escuelas Normales sent the teacher preparation system back to the 1950s. There was also an attempt to create a System of National Teacher Training that included the UPNFM, but effort was unsuccessful, likely because of cost among other reasons. With the inception of the Zelaya government this reform was ended, and the Escuelas Normales continue to be one of the main sources of basic primary teachers. The Education Law seeks to increase the level of primary school teacher training to match that of the higher level school teacher training; however, as the system continues to focus on the Escuelas Normales as the main path to teacher education, the process for doing this is unclear and has not yet begun.

In-service training is covered by the Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Capacitación Educativa ([INICE] National Center for Educational Research and Training). The Education Plan notes that INICE has the power to establish, design, and implement policies and training strategies as well as monitor and evaluate the process of training and performance of teachers.

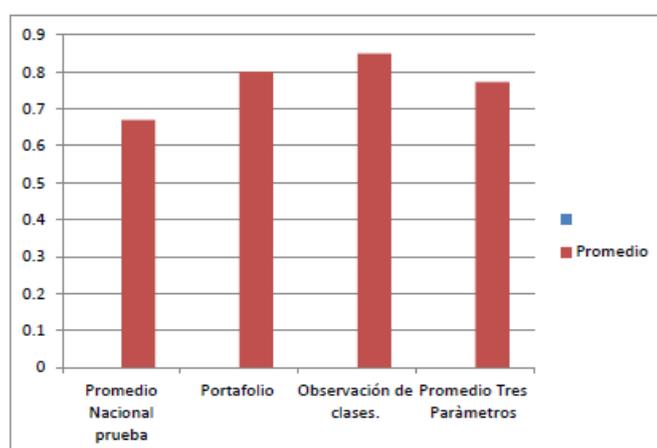
Teacher performance

It is evident that Honduras is in the middle of a big effort towards improving the quality of teaching provided to its students. One proof of this is the first evaluation of teacher performance that took place in 2013. In 2013 the DIGECE released a report based on analysis of several studies conducted in Honduras on teaching performance that showed a need to measure teacher knowledge and performance in a standardized way. The results presented in the available report show teachers are struggling to perform well in this evaluation. Although the report compares students' performance and socioeconomic status, it does not segregate data by grade level. It is still possible, however, to see how teachers in Grades 1–6 performed in this evaluation. The evaluation tool is a good instrument, but does not seem to capture the content of the lessons. When evaluating teacher performance, it is critical to observe both what is taught and how it is taught. The content of literacy lessons must be critical reading and writing skills. Also, more information is needed on how this evaluation process will be used for teacher improvement.

To add to this report classroom observations being conducted since 2011 found that only 64 percent of time in the classroom was used for instruction. Thus in 2013 the Ministry of Education decided to administer a teacher knowledge assessment to over 55,000 teachers in Spanish and mathematics at the Grade 3, 6, and 9 levels and covered the DCNB. Teachers were also asked to submit their lesson plans and records of student work. The assessment was set up so that teachers would immediately know their results and be given ways to address any areas for improvement. Teachers were not penalized for their scores. The results were based on three parameters: a score on the assessment, a score on their portfolio of documents submitted, and a classroom observation. The data showed teachers performed best on the classroom observation and lowest on the test of Spanish and mathematics as seen in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1. Performance in the Three Parameters of Evaluation of teacher Performance

Gráfico sobre tres parámetros de la evaluación del Desempeño Docente



Fuente propia: Dennis Cáceres

Source: Prueba de Evaluación del Desempeño Docente 2013. INFO-DIGECE

The study also found that the teachers with the lowest performance scores also had students with low performance and that these teachers often came from the areas in Honduras with lowest scores of the Human Development Index. CIASES noted that the report stated that many teachers were trained prior to taking the assessment. The government stated that this was a positive unexpected outcome as the teachers were now better prepared to teach students (DIGECE, 2013, p. 8). However, it could also be seen as confounding the research if teachers were given knowledge before the test that was needed for the test.

Another piece of information available for this desk study was a memorandum of April 2014, where it was decreed that the 13 Escuelas Normales will be integrated to the INICE in an effort to transform them into an Institute of Higher Education (IHE). This Institute will be in charge of training potential teachers, and efforts will be taken to ensure that the education provided to these pre-service teachers improves in quality. For example, the teaching schools' professors will be offered a free master's degree program or a higher education "diplomado." However, at this point, there was

not enough information on what the Escuelas Normales are teaching the individuals who will become teachers.

The other important point that lacked enough information is the area of professional development (PD) for teachers. Although it was mentioned in the 2013 evaluation report that PD efforts would follow this evaluation, it was not possible to completely understand Honduras' PD process. The website Educatrachos has some information, but just four courses on basic reading skills are listed. It was not possible to discern how the PD system of Honduras works, and the following questions still remain:

- How are data used to guide this PD effort?
- What kind of data?
- By region? By school?
- Who is in charge of developing and delivering this PD?
- How are teachers held accountable for their learning?
- How are leaders ensuring that knowledge acquired by teachers makes it all the way to the classroom?

The DIGECE study supports the importance placed on teachers and teacher preparation by the different sector plans reviewed in this desk study. All three plans suggested activities that would improve teachers' knowledge and set up a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to help ensure teachers have the knowledge they need to provide sound instruction that produces successful readers and writers. **Table 2** below shows the activities set forth in each plan in order to support teacher improvements and supervision.

Table 2. Teacher Focused Improvement Activities by Sector Plan

Activity	FTI-EFA Plan	Strategic Plan 2005–2015	Education Plan 2010–2014
Review and improvements to pre- and in-service training (TPST) program.	x		x
Incentive programs introduced for pupils who do well in the TPST program	x		
Identification of needs by level of teacher training and curriculum areas			x
In-service teacher training: training structure developed to provide pedagogical support	x	x	x
Teacher performance and incentives: review and preparation of instruments to regulate teacher performance	x		
An M&E system institutionalized	x	x	x

This list of activities covers the full range of teacher training and contact points, which show a well thought out improvement plan. However, one activity worth considering is moving away from the Escuelas Normales and requiring a university or equivalent two or four year degree as well as a teacher preparation curriculum closely aligned to the best practices of literacy instruction.

School Environment

A functioning school environment will support the literacy development that Honduras would like to achieve by ensuring that students have a safe, clean, and well-resourced school. Two of the biggest concerns when it comes to improving school quality are school infrastructure and available instructional materials.

Infrastructure

School infrastructure is a basic need that is not always fully met. In some parts of Honduras schools lack fully operational water and electricity. The Strategic Plan suggests the country should invest in high-quality physical infrastructure. The Education Plan also supported significant infrastructure review and improvements to ensure students and teachers have a safe place to learn.

Issues of infrastructure in Honduras are greatly driven by the devastation of and recovery from Hurricane Mitch in 1998. After Hurricane Mitch, 2,465 of the country's 10,000 classrooms were damaged. Potable water, electricity, and roads throughout the country no longer existed. In response to this, the government put in place a short- and long-term plan that aimed to rebuild and improve Honduras beyond its original state by 2005. This plan was called the Plan Maestro de Reconstrucción y Transformación Nacional (Master Plan for Reconstruction and National Transformation). This plan was the guiding force for many reform and rebuilding initiatives. This plan set out one major goal for the Vision of 2005: solid quantitative and qualitative improvements in indicators of education, health, nutrition, and housing. The plan calls for a national effort to reform and improve education for all public school students by improving infrastructure, access and quality.

Most recently CIASES' Sector Analysis reported that the Ministry of Education developed the Education Infrastructure Master Plan supported by National Agricultural University, World Bank, Bank of Credit for Reconstruction (KfW, the German development bank) and Switzerland's international cooperation agency. The first phase of this plan was completed in 2013. This involved on-site data collection at each school in the country—a total of 20,500 schools. The study collected data on hydro-sanitary installations, furniture, natural hazards, societal challenges, basic services, and geographic location, among other infrastructure-related data.

The sector analysis reported on two key infrastructure factors: potable water and electricity. CIASES found that in 2011 80 percent of schools had a water connection and 9 out of 10 urban schools had water; however, only 23 percent of rural schools have potable water connections. Access to electricity followed a similar pattern: CIASES reports that in 2011 62 percent of schools had electricity, 97 percent of urban schools and only 50 percent of rural schools.

Supply of Curricular Materials

Textbook distribution

In 2012 an audit conducted by la Asociación para una sociedad más justa y Transformemos (Partnership for a Fairer Society Honduras) took place in the central and western departments of Honduras (Copán, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Intibucá, La Paz, and Comayagua) covering 61 percent of the municipalities in the region. These municipalities had been identified by the MIDEH project to participate in the annual sample of the Rendimiento Académico (Academic Performance). The audit found that only 71 percent of students reported being able to count on having a textbook and posited that the issue of insufficient textbooks stemmed from problems with enrollment data. Having access to a textbook is one of the key factors in student success on assessments such as the early grade reading assessment (EGRA).

Textbook investment

The CIASES sector analysis explained that in 2012 the Government of Honduras invested \$1.7 million in the acquisition of 1.158 million textbooks in mathematics and Spanish. This purchase also included the teachers' guide that accompanied the textbooks. Distribution of these books was set to take place in February and March of 2013. There is no report on how the distribution was accomplished in this sector analysis.

Lesson planning

The CIASES sector analysis found that in Copan, 77 percent of teachers stated that textbooks contain what is needed for children to learn grade level skills according to the education standards. In addition, 85 percent of teachers from the five municipalities included in the audit said that they use the textbooks to write their lesson plans.

Textbook satisfaction

Of students interviewed in CIASES' analysis, 94 percent said the textbook helped them learn and 95 percent said they liked the textbooks.

Assessment Review

Honduras has placed significant emphasis on evaluation of students' literacy skills in recent years. As part of the national assessment conducted as part of the MIDEH project, students in Grades 1–9 are tested at the end of each school year to determine their progress in literacy development. Honduras students also participated in multiple EGRAs administered by RTI International and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) between 2009 and 2013 to provide baseline data for various projects. The Rendimiento Académico national assessment is administered yearly at the end of the year, and this report looks at the results from 2012 and 2013. In 2011 Honduras participated in the PIRLS assessment that compared Honduran literacy development to international standards. In 2010 the Programa de Promoción de la Reforma

Educativa en América Latina y el Caribe ([PREAL] The Program to Promote Educational Reform in Latin America and the Caribbean) report was released reviewing literacy data from 1997 to 2008 as well as data on factors known to affect student learning. In this section we will review each of these assessments and the data gathered to better understand the current context of literacy development in Honduras. **Table 3** summarizes the literacy assessments to be discussed, their samples, and their purposes.

Table 3. Description of Literacy Assessments

Year	Assessment	Grades	Location	Students	Purpose
2009	EGRA – RTI	2-4	15 departments (72 PROHECO Schools)	1,738	baseline
2013	EGRA-CRS	2-4	8 Municipalities	2,218	baseline
2012	Rendimiento Académico	1-9	18 departments	8-9%	national assessment
2013	Rendimiento Académico	1-9	18 departments	110,827	national assessment
2011	PIRLS	6	147 schools	3,893	international comparison
2010	PREAL	1-8			national assessment

Table 4 describes the assessments to be discussed and what literacy skills each assessment measured. The most frequent skills assessed were text reading, comprehension, and writing. Only the EGRA instruments assessed any skills that would support decoding, oral comprehension, and fluency.

Table 4. Literacy Skills Measured by Assessment

Assessment	Phonological Awareness	Alphabetic Principle	Fluency	Vocabulary	Oral Comprehension	Reading Comprehension	Grammar	Writing
EGRA - RTI	x	x	x		x	x		x
EGRA-CRS	x	x	x		x	x		
Rendimiento Académico				x		x	x	x
Rendimiento Académico				x		x	x	x
PIRLS				x		x		x
PREAL				x		x	x	x

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)

The EGRA instruments are focused on early literacy skills that cover all four of the five components of reading. The focus is on the skill students need to decode words fluently enough to support high levels of comprehension. Skills tested by the EGRA instrument are:

- Phonological awareness—Initial sound recognition
- Alphabetic principle—Letter names, letter sounds, familiar word reading, nonword reading, dictation
- Fluency—Oral reading fluency (story reading)
- Comprehension—Oral and reading comprehension

The EGRA instrument was originally adapted in 2009 by RTI for the World Bank with support from CIASES. The study provided a baseline of 72 Programa Hondureño de Educación Comunitaria ([PROHECO] Community School Program in Rural Honduras) schools in 15 departments. In this study 1,738 students were assessed using the EGRA instrument. Students were also given a brief interview focused on their experiences with literacy in and out of the school as well as on some family descriptive information such as the perceived education level of parents. This was the first EGRA study conducted in Honduras, and its purpose was to understand what students knew about early literacy and what early literacy skills students were developing.

In 2013 Catholic Relief Services also conducted an EGRA study. The EGRA instrument covered the same five components of reading that RTI's 2009 EGRA covered, but does not seem to have included a writing component. This study was also a baseline for a project called Food for Education funded by the USDA. The study covered 2,218 students in eight municipalities. The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify teacher professional development needs
- Raise parental awareness
- Provide technical support to schools
- Disseminate the results of the EGRA study to the various municipalities.

Unfortunately the report from this EGRA study is quite brief and only gives data on the percent of students who reached the standard for each measure by municipality without explaining what standards are being used. This indicates that the only information that can be taken from this report is a ranking of municipalities for each measure. Thus we will only be able to report on this data superficially and will not have a complete understanding of student performance on this assessment.

Rendimiento Académico

In 2002 Honduras, with the support of the UMCE and MIDEH projects, began to give a formal end of the year literacy assessment to all students in Grades 1–9. This assessment is given at the end of each school year to check student progress in literacy skills at the national level. In 2012 and 2013 a sample of students were given the annual literacy assessment administered as a standardized research study by trained data collectors as part of the USAID-supported MIDEH project. The assessment is the same as was given to

all other students in the country; however, it was not administered by teachers, thus it was more formal and standardized and could be used to get a more accurate national picture of literacy development in Grades 1–9.

The assessment for each grade consists of 32 items, the majority of which are texts students are to read and then answer multiple choice questions focused on vocabulary and comprehension. There are also cloze grammar-based questions and writing prompts. The studies in 2012 and 2013 are a nationally representative sample of approximately 10 percent of the student population, or approximately 100,000 students.

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

The PIRLS assessment is a test of Grade 4 literacy skills in 49 countries. Developed by the International Association of the Evaluation of Educational Achievement the purpose of the study is to inform individual countries and the international community of trends in literacy development. The findings are meant to support countries in understanding how literacy is being developed and what areas and factors related to literacy development could be improved. The most recent PIRLS assessment began a new initiative to allow countries whose Grade 4 students are not prepared for the difficulty of the assessment to participate by having their Grade 6 students take the Grade 4 level test. Honduras was one of four countries that participated in this manner.

The PIRLS instrument measures two purposes of reading: reading for the literary experience and reading to acquire and use information. PIRLS items on the test consist of reading passages of 800 to 1,000 words and questions associated with those passages. The comprehension questions focus on four main skills:

1. Focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information
2. Make straightforward inferences
3. Interpret and integrate ideas and information
4. Examine and evaluate content, language, and textual elements.

Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina y el Caribe (PREAL)

PREAL's 2010 Informe de Progreso Educativa (Report on Education Progress) provides countries data on educational progress to promote accountability and reform to improve educational quality and student outcomes. This report rates aspects of the country's entire educational system, from access to equity to quality. In this report Honduras' quality of education received a "deficient" rating, unchanged from the previous PREAL report, demonstrating that students continue to score low on the national assessments. The report provides data from MIDEH end of grade assessments in 2007 and 2008 in Grades 1–6. The report also provides data from the Unidad de Medición de la Calidad Educativa ([UMCE] Unit for the Monitoring of Education Quality) assessments from 2002 to 2007. The average scores in Spanish in 2007 ranged from 59 percent in Grade 1 to approximately 61 percent in Grade 6. The percent correct responses increased from approximately 41 percent in 1997 to 45 percent in 2007. There was also no significant change shown in Grade 6 students scoring in the medium to high category between 2002 and 2007.

Assessment Results

The following section summarizes results of the different assessment studies. Results are separated by the five components of reading.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the understanding that words are made up of sounds and that words can be separated into these individual sounds. The skills in this component help students learn how to write words as well as begin to understand how a word can be broken into parts to be decoded.

The only assessments reviewed that measure phonological awareness are the EGRA studies. Both studies measured students' ability to identify the initial sound in a word. This skill is tested completely orally. The 2009 RTI and CIASES EGRA study of the PROHECO schools found that out of 10 words, the average number of correctly identified initial sounds (cis) was 1.5. *Table 5* below shows scores by gender and grade.

Table 5. Initial Sound Recognition Means by Grade and Gender

Grade	Mean cisp			Standard deviation		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2	0.9	1.1	1.0	2.1	2.2	2.2
3	1.6	1.3	1.5	2.6	2.4	2.5
4	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.7	2.9	2.8
Total	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5

In the 2013 Catholic Relief Services EGRA results show that La Esperanza had the highest percent of students meeting the unknown standard on this measure, at 45 percent, while San Isidro had 0 percent of students reaching the standard. The analysis of raw data also showed low scores, but they were higher than the RTI EGRA findings. *Table 6* shows the Grade 2 mean was 2.55 items correct while Grade 4 is up to 3.95 cis. This still means students were able to respond correctly to fewer than half of the items.

Table 6. CRS Initial Sound Recognition Means by Grade

Grade	Mean cis out of 10	Difference in Scores from Grade 3
2	2.55	-0.78
3	3.33	0
4	3.95	0.62
Total	3.27	

Results from both assessments show a disconcertingly low understanding of phonological awareness. The particular skill tested here is one of the easiest skills of this component, thus it is assumed that scores for the more difficult skill of segmenting words into sounds, which is used to predict later reading success, would be worse.

Alphabetic Principle

Again, the only studies that measured alphabetic principle skills were the two EGRA studies. Four skills were measured under this component: letter name recognition, letter sound recognition, familiar word reading, and nonword reading.

Letter Name Recognition

The 2009 RTI-CIASES EGRA found that students could recognize the names of the letters with reasonable fluency based on benchmarks of 35 letters or more per minute from second language learners in the US. In Honduras, averages were 39.7 correct letters per minute (clpm) for Grade 2; 51.3 clpm in Grade 3; and 66.3 clpm in Grade 4. Catholic Relief Services did not report any results for this skill with its EGRA and may not have tested it.

Letter Sound Recognition

Results of this measure were very different from those in letter name recognition. The RTI-CIASES EGRA found that average numbers of letter sounds per minute were 8.5 in Grade 2, 11.0 in Grade 3, and 12.3 in Grade 4. These results are disconcerting as it is the ability to identify the sounds of the letters that actually allows students to be able to read new words.

The Catholic Relief Services EGRA showed that the highest percent of students who met their unknown standard was 18 percent in La Esperanza; in San Isidro and Dolores, 0 percent of students met their standard. RTI's analysis of the Catholic Relief Services data showed very similar findings. Means for Grades 2 through 4 were 8.85, 11.52, and 13.41 clpm. These results show students are improving very little as they go through the grades, which is not what would be expected if students were improving their reading fluency across grades.

These scores suggest either a lack of instruction in this skill or minimal instruction if Grade 4 students are unable to identify more than 12.3 letter sounds in a minute.

Familiar Word Reading

This task consists of asking students to read as many of 50 simple and familiar words as they can in one minute. This is also a test of fluency in word reading that will support students' ability to read words well enough to be able to put together and hold meanings in their head as they read. **Table 7** below shows the scores from the 2009 EGRA. The Indicadores Dinámicos del Éxito en la Lectura (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) benchmark for end of year Grade 1 second language learners who speak Spanish is 90 words per minute (wpm).³ The 2009 EGRA scores even at Grade 4 were still significantly below that first grade benchmark. This could be a direct result of the

³ <https://dibels.uoregon.edu/market/assessment/idelgoals/>

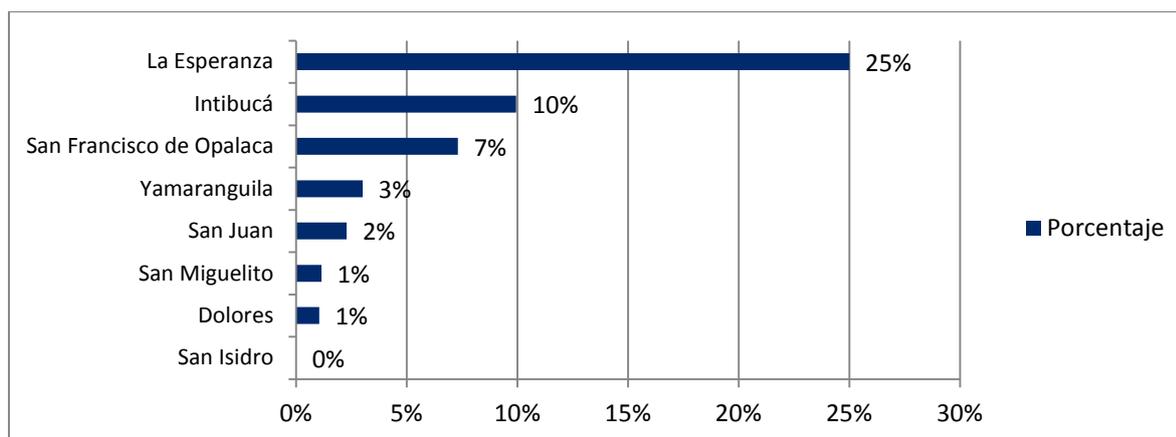
students not knowing their letter sounds and therefore not being able to decode any words they have not memorized.

Table 7. Familiar Words by Grade and Gender

Grade	Mean wpm			Standard Deviation		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2	21.7	27.5	24.8	20.2	22.5	21.7
3	39.7	44.5	42.1	24.3	28.2	26.4
4	53.1	66.7	60.4	27.2	32.1	30.6
Total	37.5	45.1	41.5	27.0	31.9	29.9

The Catholic Relief Services EGRA showed similarly low scores compared to their unknown benchmark, with the highest percentage of students meeting the standard being 25 percent in La Esperanza.

Figure 2. Percent of Students Who Meet the Standard for Familiar Words per Minute



RTI’s analysis of the Catholic Relief Services data showed that the means for familiar word reading were lower than the means from the RTI study. **Table 8** shows the means by grade and also shows the difference among grades. Unlike the letter sounds task, the word reading scores almost double each year, showing that while students are not reading as fluently as would be expected they are improving.

Table 8. CRS Familiar Words by Grade

Grade	Mean cwpm	Difference in Scores from Grade 3
2	16.43	-19.51
3	35.93	0

Grade	Mean cwpm	Difference in Scores from Grade 3
4	52.88	16.94
Total	34.87	

Nonword Reading

This measure is similar to the measure of the familiar words; however, the items students are reading are not real words but nonwords that follow the rules of the language. This measure is not a skill to be taught in the classroom, but a pure measure of decoding skills because there is no chance that students have seen these words before. Thus this measure shows what students are truly capable of decoding.

Unsurprisingly results from the 2009 EGRA show scores that were lower than those for the familiar words measure. **Table 9** below shows averages by grade and gender. With such limited knowledge of letter sounds, it would be expected that students perform poorly on this measure as well.

Table 9. Nonword Means by Grade and Gender

Grade	Mean wpm			Standard Deviation		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2	15.7	19.0	17.5	14.6	15.6	15.2
3	27.6	29.5	28.6	15.3	16.7	16.0
4	35.3	40.2	37.9	16.0	15.4	15.8
Total	25.8	29.0	27.5	17.2	18.1	17.7

The results from the more recent EGRA are even worse, showing only 8 percent of students in Intibuca reaching the unknown standard of the Catholic Relief Services EGRA. RTI's analysis of these data also shows slightly lower performance according to **Table 10** below.

Table 10. CRS Nonword Means by Grade

Grade	Mean cwpm	Difference in Scores from Grade 3
2	12.06	-14.67
3	26.74	0
4	36.89	10.15
Total	25.11	

Fluency

This skill measures student ability to read connected text with speed, accuracy, and expression. Being able to do this is important for comprehension. Students who read very slowly use up all their working memory sounding out words and have little capacity to focus on the meaning of each word, much less to put the meanings together to understand a sentence or a whole text. While this is not the only skill necessary for high levels of comprehension, it is an important one. Again only the EGRA studies have measured this skill. US Spanish benchmarks, for students in US schools who are second language learners of English are: Grade 1: 40 cwpm and above, Grade 2: 65cwpm and above, and Grade 3: 85 and above.

RTI-CIASES EGRA results show that students in PROHECO schools in Honduras in 2009 are still significantly behind these benchmarks but are improving their reading fluency as they go through the grades. **Table 11** below shows that with time and practice students are developing efficient rates of fluency. It could be their limited knowledge of letter sounds leading to slower rates of word reading automaticity that are causing these lower scores. However students do continue to learn to read fluently eventually. The issue to be concerned with is how much further behind this lower fluency keeps students in this and other subjects, as they are likely to struggle to read and understand science and math texts as well as Spanish texts.

Table 11. Oral Reading Fluency Means by Grade and Gender

Grade	Mean cwpm			Standard Deviation		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2	31.8	39.8	36.2	32.4	34.6	33.8
3	60.0	66.2	63.1	43.7	42.2	43.0
4	85.2	106.8	96.7	45.1	43.9	45.7
Total	57.8	69.1	63.8	45.9	48.6	47.7

The EGRA administered by Catholic Relief Services is difficult to judge without understanding the standard used to measure success on the assessment and the fact that results are reported in totals and not by grade. However, the Catholic Relief Services EGRA shows that La Esperanza had the highest percent of students reading fluently, at 45 percent, while San Miguelito had the lowest, at 6 percent. The assumption could be that these areas could have the highest and lowest rates of fluency. Again RTI's analysis of this data is below in **Table 12**. The results demonstrate a similar pattern with lower scores. The analysis also shows the mean doubles between Grades 2 and 3 and is 1.5 times greater in Grade 4 than in Grade 3, which suggests students are becoming more fluent even if they are not reading as fluently as expected for their grade.

Table 12. CRS Oral Reading Fluency Means by Grade

Grade	Mean cwpm	Difference in Scores from Grade 3
2	22.97	-31.66
3	54.63	0
4	83.34	28.7
Total	53.3	

One thing to note across both data sets is the improvement in scores compared to the familiar word reading. The support of having context likely played a significant role in the higher scores.

Comprehension

Oral Comprehension

The EGRA instrument tests students’ ability to comprehend stories that are read to them. This measure allows for an understanding of students’ comprehension knowledge without being limited by their ability to decode words in reading. Data collectors read a short 30 word text to students and then ask five questions that are a mix of literal and inferential questions. The scores are in percent correct out of five. **Table 13** show an average comprehension score of 50.5 percent, which is lower than would be expected for students to understand a story told to them. There is an increase in scores throughout the grades, showing that students are in fact learning, but even in Grade 4 the average score is only 60.4 percent. Scores for Catholic Relief Services cannot be interpreted without an explanation of how this measure was scored.

Table 13. Oral Comprehension Mean Percentage Correct out of 5 by Grade and Gender

Grade	Mean			Standard Deviation		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2	46.4	33.7	39.5	31.9	28.7	30.9
3	61.2	45.2	53.1	27.9	29.9	30.0
4	66.5	55.1	60.4	26.9	28.5	28.3
Total	57.7	44.1	50.5	30.2	30.3	31.0

Analysis of CRS data demonstrate a similar pattern with somewhat higher mean percentages in **Table 14** below. However there is very little growth across grades, less than one question per grade

Table 14. CRS Oral Comprehension Mean Percentage Correct out of 5 by Grade

Grade	Mean %	Difference in Number of Questions Correct from Grade 3
2	46.4	-0.59
3	58.4	0
4	64.4	0.3
Total	56.4	

Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension is the main skill tested by all the assessments reviewed. Comprehension is the main goal of literacy, thus its importance in the assessments. Results of the EGRA studies, PIRLS, and the Rendimiento Académico will be discussed here. It is important to note that while each of these studies measures comprehension skills, they each measure different comprehension skills. These results are also from completely different populations. Therefore the results of these different tests of comprehension should not be compared or synthesized. What follows is a descriptive summary of results.

EGRA. The reading comprehension measure is assessed similarly to the oral measure, though the student is asked to read a longer passage out loud before answering the questions. Results of the 2009 EGRA are higher on this measure than on the oral one, which is unexpected but positive. The average score according to **Table 15** below is 62.8 percent—significantly higher than the oral average. Again without explanation of how this measure was scored, the result of the Catholic Relief Services EGRA cannot be interpreted.

Table 15. Reading Comprehension Mean Percentage Correct out of 5 by Grade and Gender

Grade	Mean			Standard Deviation		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2	38.7	46.2	42.8	38.0	38.9	38.7
3	63.5	64.0	63.8	35.8	36.1	35.9
4	77.5	81.1	79.4	28.1	24.8	26.5
Total	59.1	62.8	61.1	37.9	37.0	37.5

RTI’s analysis of Catholic Relief Services oral reading fluency data shows scores that were similar to significantly lower in Grade 2 but almost the same in Grade 4 for reading

comprehension. **Table 16** shows the means per grade and also a slightly higher improvement by grade from the RTI EGRA, but still not much difference.

Table 16. Reading Comprehension Mean Percentage Correct out of 5 by Grade

Grade	Mean %	Difference in Number of Questions Correct from Grade 3
2	30.6	-1.52
3	61	0
4	78.6	0.88
Total	56.6	

PIRLS. The 2011 PIRLS study measured three main comprehension skills through a reading passage and question format. Students were asked literal questions, inferential questions, and interpretation of ideas and information questions. Some inference questions were written response questions. Overall Honduras Grade 6 students scored 450; by comparison, US fourth graders scored 556, and the highest scoring country was Hong Kong, whose fourth graders scored 571. Of the four countries who administered the test to sixth graders rather than fourth graders, Honduras had the highest score. Below in **Table 17** we summarize the scores by different categories to better understand factors that may have affected student outcomes.

Table 17. % Correct by Type of Question

Type of Question	% correct
Literal question	81%
Write inference response	52%
Inference multiple choice	55%
Interpret and integrate ideas and information	27%

1. Students answered the literal questions correct most often probably due to a combination of familiarity with this type of question and the fact that these questions are considered easier or lower level comprehension questions.
2. **Table 18** shows the percent of students in each category. The majority of the students, 74 percent, scored in the lowest category while 1 percent of students reached the highest score of 625 or higher.

Table 18. % Honduras Students Attaining Benchmarks

Benchmark	Score	% Honduras Students
Advanced international benchmark	625	1 (0.4)
High international benchmark	550	10 (1.4)
Intermediate international benchmark	475	38 (2.2)
Low international benchmark	400	74 (2.3)

3. Research has shown students tend to have more academic success if they attend preprimary school. *Table 19* below shows students with 1 to 2 years of preprimary had the highest scores, and students with more than 3 years of preprimary scored lower than students who had not attended preprimary. It is possible that students who had more than 3 years of preprimary were held there for a reason that delayed their learning; however, it is difficult to make any claims from these data alone. There is however a definite advantage for attending preprimary according to these data.

Table 19. Score for Students who Attended Preprimary

Attended preprimary	% students	Score
3 or more years	21 (1.6)	429 (9.0)
less than 3 years	36 (1.6)	464 (6.4)
1 year or less	28 (1.6)	455 (5.1)
Did not attend	15 (1.0)	443 (5.6)

4. Finally, there are many factors that can affect student learning. RTI has found some of the most significant factors that affect scores on the EGRA assessments are access to reading materials and parents' reading habits and expectations. *Table 20* below summarizes how Honduras students scored according to these factors. Students scored highest if they had access to at least some reading resources, their parents liked to read, and their parents expected them to get a post-graduate degree.

Table 20. Factors Impacting Scores

Factor	% of Students	Score
Some resources for reading	44%	485
Few resources	56%	440
Parents like to read	21%	485
Parents don't read	11%	455

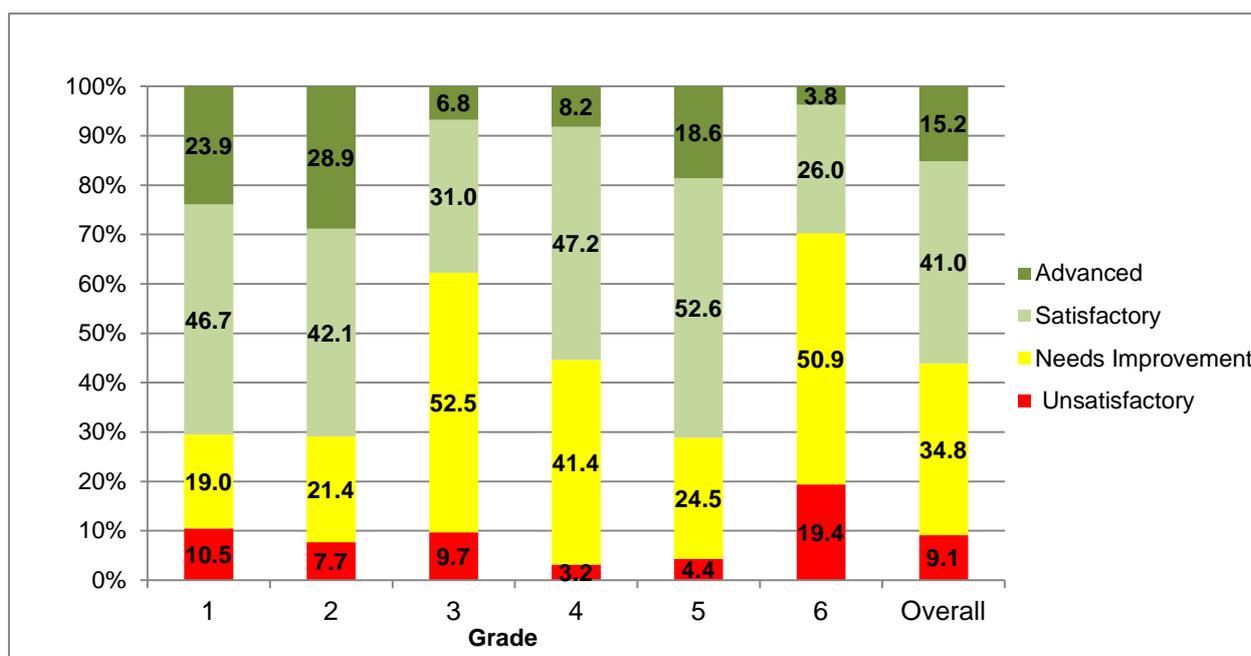
Factor	% of Students	Score
Expectations: postgrad	35%	481
Expectations: college	22%	468
Expectations: upper secondary	28%	413

Rendimiento Académico 2013

The Rendimiento Académico tests three categories of skills: vocabulary, grammar, types of text, and comprehension. These skills are some of the skills needed for students to understand the meaning of a text. Results of the Rendimiento Académico are shown as percent of students in each of four categories. Students are given a score based on the number of correct responses, and then based on their scores, students are put into the categories of advanced, satisfactory, needs improvement, or unsatisfactory. The report does not clearly state the scores needed for each category, thus it is difficult to tell the actual level of understanding students are reaching in each category (*Table 21*). Patterns of achievement, however, can be discerned and are discussed below.

Patterns in the overall results show that students in Grades 1 and 2 perform the highest of the first 6 grades. Grade 3 students have the most students in the two lower categories. Grade 4 and 5 students show an increase in achievement, and then a second dip in scores is seen in Grade 6. This pattern cannot be explained by this report alone, but one possible difference in Grade 3 and 6 scores is that the academic work in these grades typically becomes more difficult, with harder vocabulary words and more difficult words to decode.

Figure 3. Rendimiento Académico % Performance by Grade and Category



Source: Estándares Educativos Nacionales

Rural vs. urban. The Rendimiento Académico assessment report also compares scores of students in urban settings to those of students in rural settings (*Table 21*). Overall, students in the rural settings seem to score lower than those in urban settings. Differences, however, are not all significant. Scores for Grades 1 and 2 are basically the same in these two settings; however, in Grades 3 and 4 there are significant differences in almost all categories. Differences continue, although they less distinct, in Grades 5 and 6. The differences seen here could be attributed to differences in resources and teacher knowledge in the two settings. Students are less likely to have lots of reading materials and highly educated parents, among other factors, in rural areas, and as texts and vocabulary become more difficult these factors tend to have more of an effect on student performance.

Table 21. Rendimiento Académico Performance in Rural and Urban Settings

Grade	Geographic Setting	Needs			
		Advanced	Satisfactory	Improvement	Unsatisfactory
3	Rural	5	26	58	13
	Urban	9	36	49	7
4	Rural	6	43	47	4
	Urban	10	51	37	2
5	Rural	13	51	28	6
	Urban	22	54	21	3
6	Rural	3	21	51	25
	Urban	4	30	51	15

Gender. Results of the Rendimiento Académico disaggregated by gender reveal a similar pattern (*Table 22*). Grade 1 and 2 students show little to no difference in scores; however, from Grades 3–5, female students outperform male students. In Grade 6 there is little difference again in scores. This pattern of girls outperforming boys in school is common in literacy. Often female students are more likely to be expected to stay inside and participate in more academic activities, while male students are expected to be outside playing and participating in manual labor or other activities. Without research on this we cannot say for sure the cause of the differences in Honduras, however.

Table 22. Rendimiento Académico Performance by Gender

Grade	Gender	Needs			
		Advanced	Satisfactory	Improvement	Unsatisfactory
3	Female	8	34	31	8

Grade	Gender	Needs			
		Advanced	Satisfactory	Improvement	Unsatisfactory
4	Male	6	29	34	11
	Female	9	30	38	3
5	Male	7	44	45	4
	Female	19	34	23	4
6	Male	19	31	26	3
	Female	4	27	51	18
	Male	3	25	51	21

Writing

Only one assessment includes a measure of writing skills. The Rendimiento Académico asked students in Grades 3, 6, and 9 to write different types of passages based on a prompt (**Table 23**). These types of passages were different for each grade level and were based on the standards set forth in the national curriculum. Overall students did not score well on the writing portion of the assessment. More telling is that students also did not show improvement as they progressed through the grades. This could be in part because the writing assessment got more difficult, but growth in writing scores should still be expected from Grade 3 to Grade 9.

Table 23. Rendimiento Académico Writing Assessment Performance

Grade	Type of Writing	Needs			
		Advanced	Satisfactory	Improvement	Unsatisfactory
3	Complement a story	3	10	20	67
	Create an advertisement	2	9	25	63
6	Post message about values	2	9	35	55
	Create a story	2	14	31	53
9	Synthesize a scientific test	2	9	17	71
	Critically evaluate a text	4	13	25	58

Vocabulary and Grammar

The Rendimiento Académico tested vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension, but scores for each skill were not reported separately in each assessment. The scores in the comprehension section above take into account items that measure each of these skills

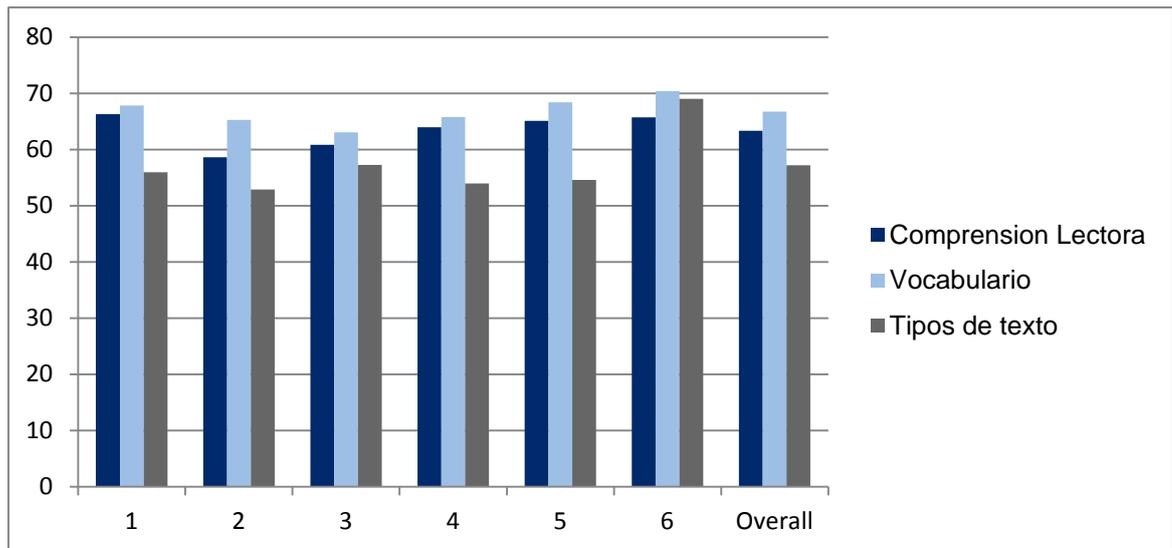
thus these skills are represented but we are not able to speak to students’ abilities on these skills apart from what is shown above.

Further Analysis

RTI has analyzed the grade- and school-level data from the 2013 Rendimiento Academico to get a deeper understanding of these data. The data analyzed covered Grades 1-6 and categorized the questions into three high-level categories of Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Types of Text, with subcategories for Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary.

Figure 4 below shows the mean scores for the three high-level categories by grade. The data show students perform best on Vocabulary questions and worst on the questions dealing with Types of Text. Similar to the above analysis, the data show a dip in scores in Grade 3; however it is not as drastic. The analysis conducted by RTI does not, however, show a dip in scores in Grade 6. The real dip in comprehension happens in second grade. RTI did not have the actual raw item-level data to analyze, so the differences could be in the data that are being analyzed, or further research could be needed to better understand student achievement in Grade 6.

Figure 4. Rendimiento Académico Means by Grade and Type of Question



Reading Comprehension

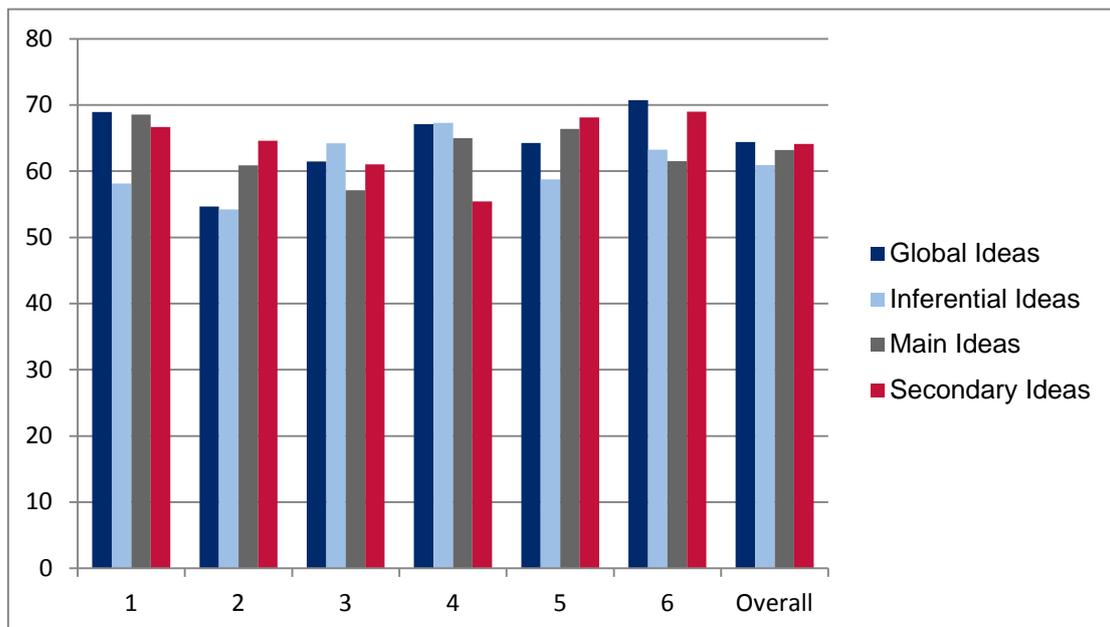
Reading comprehension questions were divided into four subcategories

1. Global ideas: high level general or overall themes about the text
2. Inferential ideas: ideas not found directly in the text that require the use of the text and previously learned knowledge to respond
3. Main ideas: the main idea, theme, or action of the text
4. Secondary ideas: supporting details of the main idea

Looking at the data reveals that the type of comprehension that seemed to be most difficult for the students was the inferential ideas (**Figure 5**). The means for these questions are lowest in all but Grades 3 and 4. Grades 3 and 4 are typically when teachers

spend more time on this type of higher level questioning, so it may be that teachers are not focusing their time on these kinds of questions in other grades or these types of questions were more difficult in all grades but third and fourth. The scores seem to be lowest in second and third grade overall. This change in scores is difficult to explain with this data set, but further research into the instructional practices may contribute to a better understanding.

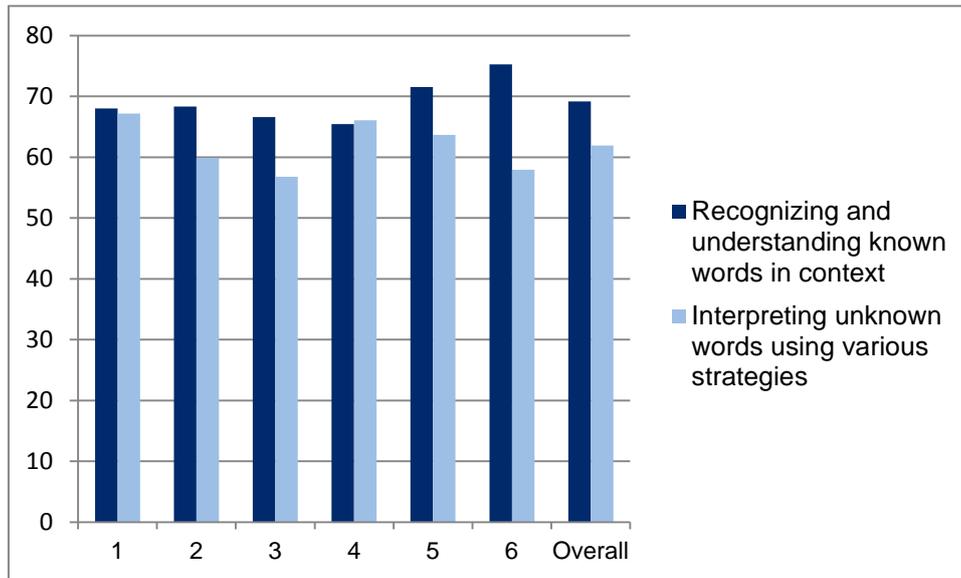
Figure 5. Rendimiento Académico Means by Grade and Type of Comprehension Question



Vocabulary

The Vocabulary questions were divided into two types: recognizing and understanding known words in context and interpreting unknown words using various strategies. Overall **Figure 6** shows that students in all grades but fourth scored the same or better on questions involving known words than unknown words. This is to be expected because students are more likely to correctly answer a question about a word they know better. In Grade 1, students scored the same on both types of questions, likely because their vocabulary is still limited and they may not have known all the words in the known words category. As students progress, their vocabulary grows and the mean for the known words questions gets higher. The unknown words are likely related to more complicated topics and less frequently used, thus the questions are more difficult.

Figure 6. Rendimiento Académico Means by Grade and Type of Vocabulary Question



These data help illuminate some of the findings from the Rendimiento Académico report; however, they also bring about more questions regarding how to improve student achievement. In order to better understand these data, research on instructional practices for teaching each of these skills and the use of curriculum materials is needed.

Findings on Assessments

The assessments reviewed in this desk study cover a range of skills and populations to reveal the state of the literacy among students in Honduras. Overall it is difficult to draw any comparisons, as the assessments each test different skills for different purposes. In 2009 EGRA scores showed students in rural PROHECO schools students with very low foundational reading scores such as letter sounds knowledge and word reading, leading to low comprehension scores. The Catholic Relief Services data show similar results. One interesting note about the EGRA data is the improvement in word reading fluency both across grades and in both data sets, versus the lack of improvement in letter sound knowledge across grades. It would be expected that students improving in word reading skills are also improving in letter recognition skills. However these data do not show that to be the case. There may be some factor in the instruction that could explain this finding, but perhaps students would read even more fluently if their letter sounds recognition skills were to improve. The 2011 PIRLS also reported low comprehension scores by sixth graders on a fourth grade level test. The Rendimiento Académico for 2013 showed older students struggling more on their tests than younger students, which could be explained by the change in types and difficulty of text or by changes in instruction. It is also important to note that while the results on this comprehension assessment show more than 70 percent of Grade 1 and 2 students in the two highest categories, it is unclear what the benchmarks or cut off scores are to reach these categories. Thus it is difficult to draw conclusions about the level of skill development, but instead we can see the improvement

or decrease in percent of students in each category. With more information about benchmarks and cut off scores, more could be said about the level of skill development that exists. These results suggest that although Honduras has made a significant effort to improve the education system, there is still work to be done to improve the literacy development of students in primary school. In the next section we will look at the curriculum and standards to determine how they are supporting literacy development and where there may be areas for improvement that could affect student outcomes.

Review of Standards and Instructional Materials

The purpose of this section is to present the results of the investigation that reviewed Honduras' national educational standards and curriculum materials in order to answer the following questions:

- How do the national standards and curriculum support literacy development in Grades 1–6?
 - To what extent does the curriculum address reading component skills and align with what is currently known about literacy development?
 - Do the curricular support materials (pacing guides, formative assessments, etc.) provide a practical and logical approach for meeting the curricular standards?

The documents reviewed in this process were the following:

- National Educational Standards for Spanish: This document presents the educational standards Honduran students are expected meet regardless of their geographical, cultural, or social context.
- Curricular Pacing Guides for Spanish: This document presents the conceptual and ,motivational content and curriculum that teachers are required to teach in order to achieve the objectives stated in the educational standards.
- Guidelines Booklet for Formative Assessments for Grades 1–6: This document explains the standards that are being evaluated through these assessments and how the formative assessments should be administered, graded, and recorded.
- Diagnostic Assessments for Grades 1–6: This document contains sample diagnostic assessments that are used to screen students' Spanish literacy development at the beginning of the year for Grades 1–6.
- Formative Assessments for Grades 1–6: This document contains sample formative assessments of Spanish literacy development that take place once a month in Grades 1–6.
- End-of-Year Assessments for Grades 1–6: Sample end of the year tests that assess Spanish literacy development for Grades 1–6.

The first section below discusses the educational standards in terms of how clearly, fully, and specifically they state the literacy behaviors that should be acquired by all students. The second section examines the literacy curriculum presented in the pacing guides in terms of its alignment to research-based reading instruction, and explores materials used in Honduras' student evaluation system.

Honduras National Education Standards

In 2002, the Honduras Ministry of Education published the new DCNB curriculum for Grades K–11, which includes standards for textbooks, national standards, curricula, teachers’ guides, and an incipient evaluation system with diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. The DCNB was designed for the subjects of Spanish, math, science, and social studies.

Student assessment has been gradually implemented in Honduras since 2002. In 2007, end of year tests were administered to Grades 1, 3, and 6. In 2008, end of year tests were administered to Grades 1–6, and in 2010, evaluations took place in Grades 1–9. The MIDEH project has been responsible for designing and executing these evaluations.

To address the research questions noted above, the *Estandares Educativos Nacionales* (National Education Standards); the pacing guides, or *Programaciones Educativas Nacionales* (National Education Curriculum Pacing Guides); and the different assessment tools created by the Honduran government and the MIDEH project were carefully analyzed for this desk study. However, we had no access to the teachers’ guides or the student textbooks, which must be reviewed at a later date to fully understand how all instructional materials work together to support teacher instructional practices. RTI’s careful review of the national standards and curriculum demonstrated that a purposeful effort to establish, organize, and sequence appropriate literacy content and skills took place when the DCNB was designed. The Spanish block of the curriculum is appropriately divided into three important literacy areas, and each area clearly establishes important individual standards students must achieve. However, it appears that there is still some vagueness and lack of depth in these standards and curriculum for Spanish, which could affect teachers’ implementation of the curriculum and negatively impact the literacy development of Honduran students. As there has been no access to the teachers’ books and student textbooks, there is no insight into the level of instructional support that is available for teachers. The main concern we had, then, seems to be the need for more specific and explicit literacy content and skills and instructional support to help teachers provide more explicit literacy instruction in the classroom.

Estandares Educativos Nacionales (National Education Standards)

The standards that guide the DCNB reflect a certain level of expertise in literacy curriculum and instruction design. These standards listed for Spanish language instruction are conceived as “educational objectives that signal what students need to know and do regardless of their geographical, cultural, or social context” (National Education Standards, 2002, p. 1), which illustrates a clear understanding of how educational standards should be designed and utilized.

The Spanish standards are organized in three blocks: Oral Language, Reading, and Writing. Each block is divided into “components” that are the “specific themes for each block,” and each component includes a specific number of individual standards. For example, under the Reading block there are five components, and Component 4 is about Reading Comprehension: **Reading Comprehension: development of the interaction process between the reader, previous knowledge, and the text to interpret meaning.**

There are eight individual standards for this component that are applied throughout grade levels K–9. One individual standard for this component that is present in almost every grade level is “*demonstrate comprehension of the global, main, secondary, and inferential ideas of a read text, including the interpretation of visual images.*”

The **Table 24** illustrates the Spanish curriculum blocks, components for each block, and number of individual standards.

Table 24. National Standards by Block and Component

Block	Components and Explanation	Number of Individual Standards
Oral language = 9 individual standards	Oral exchange: communication with others in person or through media, applying language norms and grammar rules according to context and purpose	6 standards for K–11 that have minimum differences across grade levels
	Vocabulary: use of diverse vocabulary according to context needs and purpose	3 standards across for K–11 grade
Reading = 27 standards	Alphabetic principle: recognizing and using sounds that form the words and the relationship of these sounds to their written form	6 different standards across K–1
	Print awareness: visual appreciation of form and structure of a book and printed text	3 standards for K–4
	Types of text: reading and use of different types of text for the meeting of all other reading standards	1 standard for K–9 6 standards for 10–11
	Reading comprehension: development of the interaction process between the reader, his or her previous knowledge, and the text to interpret meaning.	4 standards for K–9
	Vocabulary: recognizing and comprehending words, both their explicit and implicit meaning, to understand messages and to enrich personal vocabulary	4 standards for K–11
	Development of reading: correct and fluent reading of texts; intentional and independent daily reading	3 standards with minimum differences across for K–11
Writing = 17 standards	Planning and organizing: first steps that should be followed in the production of texts	5 standards K–11
	Research skills: knowledge and use of different sources of information that help research different topics to facilitate the production of written texts	0 standards for K–4 2 standards for 5–11
	Writing process: production of written texts (narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive) applying writing strategies, grammar rules, and mechanical writing aspects.	6 standards from K–11
	Vocabulary: use of diverse vocabulary according to context and purpose of written texts	3 standards for K–11

The standards for Spanish literacy content included in the DCNB cover important areas in the field of literacy development: oral language, reading, and writing, and each area (or block) targets critical literacy content such as the writing process, developing vocabulary, and reading with comprehension. These expected skills they measure are also included in sets of standards in other Spanish-speaking countries and in Spanish literacy standards in the USA. The National Education Standards document is presented in clear and easy to understand language, which can make teachers feel more comfortable with this information. However, we believe that adding a numbering system to the standards document would greatly help teachers and others interested in discussing and using these standards. For this desk study report, we list blocks, components, and standards with letters and numbers for easy mentioning.

One of the first problems found in the National Education Standards is the limited number of standards for each component. For example, in the case of the component for Vocabulary, there are only four standards repeated across Grades K–11. It might be that the developers kept the number of standards limited in order to simplify their use, but there is no explicit indication of this. However, we feel important literacy skills were left out. In the case of Vocabulary, for instance, it is very difficult to establish everything that is related to vocabulary skills in Grades K–11 with only four standards.

Using the U.S. Department of Education’s (DOE’s) 2005 report as a model of standards analysis we will discuss the efficacy of the standards.⁴ The report details four critical elements relevant to the analysis of literacy standards:

1. Clarity and explicitness—How clearly and explicitly do the standards represent the area?
2. Grade appropriateness—How appropriate are the standards representing each area for the grades they are assigned?
3. Complete content coverage—Do the standards provide complete coverage of student knowledge and skills for that area?
4. Appropriate level of detail—Do the standards provide enough level of detail and flexibility?

These four criteria for standards are applied below to the DCNB National Education Standards.

1. **Clarity and explicitness.** The DCNB Honduras Spanish standards clearly and explicitly represent each of the five literacy components to a certain extent. Most of the individual standards are clearly identified with the appropriate component within the appropriate area, and it is evident that an expert in literacy and language development was utilized when developing these materials. However, the important skills of phonological awareness and alphabetic principle are not clearly differentiated in the standards. In the National Education Standards, the component of conciencia fonética or alphabetic principle (recognizing and using sounds that form the words and the relationship of these sounds to their written form) within the Reading block does not clearly represent the specific literacy area

⁴ U.S. Department of Education (DOE), Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Services, (2005) *Analysis of State K-3 Reading Standards and Assessments*. Washington, D.C.: DOE.

but combines two important early literacy development areas: phonological awareness (PA) and the aforementioned alphabetic principle (AP). However, there is not a clear distinction between these two important areas. Out of the six different individual standards for Grades K–1 that are listed for this component, some standards refer to PA and other standards refer to AP without clear identification. As a result, there seems to be little or no attention to important and predictive PA skills such as phoneme or syllable segmentation and an emphasis on a transition to connecting sounds to print too quickly. Although research has proven that it is critical to connect sounds to print as soon as possible, developing strong phonological awareness skills, specifically phoneme segmentation, at the beginning of reading instruction, which will impact reading performance in years to come, including reading multisyllabic words in upper elementary grades (National Reading Panel, 2000).⁵

2. **Grade appropriateness.** Although somewhat vague and abstract, the skills listed in the National Education Standards are appropriately assigned to each grade level. However, there is not enough differentiation between individual standards according to grade level, and identical standards are listed for several grade levels. For example, under the Component 3 Text Types, there is one single individual standard for Grades 1–9: *Read and utilize narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive texts with varied purposes, both literary as well as functional and informative, from various sources such as books, media, internet, including graphic and linguistic content.* There is no indication in this document how this standard is different across grade levels. There are many other instances where identical standards are used across grade levels with little or no differentiation between these grade levels. Therefore, although the National Education Standards document lists appropriate literacy standards for K–11, there is a need for more standards or a set of sub-standards that can be used to differentiate these skills across grade levels.
3. **Complete content coverage.** There are literacy and language skills that should be included for each grade level and are not, and therefore, important and more specific skills might be overlooked by teachers. For example, there is no clear indication in the component of alphabetic principle that students are expected to develop strong word decoding skills through explicit reading instruction at any grade level. The skill of blending letters or syllables to read words, which is a crucial skill when learning to read in alphabetic languages, is not evident or expected according to these standards. Further, there are no word reading or word study standards listed for Grades 2–6. Even in a language with a transparent orthography such as Spanish, there is a critical need to develop advanced decoding skills for students even in upper elementary grade levels to be able to read longer/multisyllabic words (Caravolas, 2005; Genard et al., 2005).⁶ There is a focus on spelling as part of the Writing standards, but a focus on making students aware of the relationship between spelling and word decoding is missing.

5 National Reading Panel (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction [on-line]. Available at: <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/report.cfm>

6 Caravolas, M. (2005). Learning to spell in different languages: How orthographic variables might affect early literacy. In R.M. Joshi & P.G. Aaron (Eds.): Handbook of orthography and literacy. Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, pp. 497-511. Genard, N., Alegría, J., Leybaert, J., Mousty, P., & Defior, S. (2005). La adquisición de la lectura y la escritura. Comparación translingüística. *IberPsicología*, 10, 1-9.

Although there is a weak indication in the standards that the correspondence between letter and sounds is expected knowledge, there is no indication of explicit decoding instruction for the following fundamental skills: blending sounds and/or syllables to read words, reading whole words, and reading multisyllabic words.

We can say that every single component within each of the three blocks (Oral Language, Reading, and Writing) does not seem to have enough individual standards to cover all the content and skills that research specifies are needed at each grade level. In the Reading block, the components for Text Types, Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Reading Development (Fluency) have only between 1 and 4 standards that cannot possibly account for all the expected knowledge and skills that students need to acquire and develop as part of elementary education. As will be more evident when discussing the curriculum pacing guides, a lot of literacy content is missing in the materials available for teachers.

4. **Appropriate level of detail.** Although relevant and important skills are listed as part of the standards, the standards seem to be too general and/or too abstract. Teachers seem to have a general guideline of the literacy behavior but there is a need for more precise and detailed literacy standards or sub-skills that can specify the breadth and the depth of the literacy skills expected to be developed at each grade level. For example, the individual standard *Demonstrate comprehension of the global, main, secondary, and inferential ideas of a read text, including the interpretation of visual images* is one of only four individual standards within the component of Reading Comprehension in the Reading block for grades K–9, and it is repeated using the same language for Grades 1–9. Although the skill of comprehending global, main, secondary, and inferential ideas in a text is a critical reading skill, the standard does not mention the more specific literacy skills needed to understand text, such as sequencing and summarizing the plot's main events and explaining their influence on future events; or describing the interaction of characters, including their relationships and the changes they undergo; or identifying whether the narrator or speaker of a story is first or third person, among many other specific skills. This lack of explicitness can impede teachers' understanding of how sophisticated their instruction must be to develop these specific comprehension skills. The vagueness in the language will likely not promote a true understanding of the breadth and depth of the literacy behaviors. This is the case for every individual standard in the three areas.

Programaciones Educativas Nacionales (Pacing Guides)

These curricular pacing guides have been intended to help Honduran teachers plan their instruction by helping them determine if they are meeting the standards and giving them a clear idea of what students are expected to learn at each level. The pacing guides are organized in a set of tables for each grade level. Each grade level has nine tables for each of the months in the school year (except for the first two months which are combined): February/March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, and November. Each table has three columns: the first column lists the individual standards; the second column lists the conceptual and attitudinal (methods for encouraging positive attitudes toward literacy) content, which includes content/themes to be covered (e.g., curricula); and the third column indicates lessons from the teachers' book to be completed in that

month to meet those standards and to cover that content. The main purpose of these pacing guides is apparently to clearly state the standards and the content to be covered each month of the school year for each grade level.

Generally speaking, these pacing guides cover important and critical literacy content and skills by grade level. It is evident that literacy expertise was utilized to develop the curricular pacing guides, and these pacing guides cover content related to the five components of reading instruction according to the National Reading Panel⁷ (phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). It is also important to note that the pacing guides carefully include both conceptual and attitudinal content. Conceptual content refers to the actual language and literacy content and skills, while the attitudinal content refers to content designed to develop positive attitudes regarding language and literacy among students. There was also a conscious effort to establish a clear relationship between individual standards and specific content for each standard using the table format, in which rows have individual standards and the content for those standards. Unfortunately, this goal was not always successfully achieved, since the tables at times cluster the content for five or more standards in one single cell, which does not allow for a clear and easy-to-see correlation between standard and content. Further, the content within these pacing guides is organized in a spiral curriculum fashion, where concepts and skills are presented several times during the school year within the same grade level and across grade levels. In a spiral curriculum each time a skill or concept is repeated it should be more sophisticated than the previous instance, building from the easiest skill to the most difficult. However, there is not enough evidence in the pacing guides to determine if the concepts/skills get more sophisticated each time they are discussed within a grade level or across grade levels.

The main problems that affect the pacing guides are similar to those present in the standards. There is a lack of specificity and the exclusion of some important literacy skills and content, more evident for some blocks and in some grade levels than others. The content presented is not specific and detailed enough, which can make it difficult for teachers to know what and how to teach, if teachers solely use these pacing guides to guide their instruction. The content listed in the pacing guides provides minimum information to teachers since most of the times it just mentions general concepts or categories (e.g., Dramatization, Synonyms and antonyms of adjectives and verbs, Functional texts: game directions, etc.) instead of detailing specific literacy skills that need to be taught and specific steps in how to teach these skills. There is also little differentiation between grade levels since sometimes the same content is repeated across grade levels for every month. For example, the individual standard, Read texts fluently in a correct way, with an average of words correct per minute appropriate for the grade level, has the same conceptual and attitudinal content, Pronunciation, prosody, and speed, for Grades 2–5. There is no indication of how this content is different across these four grade levels.

It seems that Honduran teachers are asked to use these pacing guides to plan their instruction. However, we question the level of support that these guides provide teachers unless there is a more explicit teachers' guide to accompany the pacing guides. A typical

⁷ <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/research/supported/Pages/nrp.aspx/>

teachers' guide in an U.S. literacy program includes a very detailed scope and sequence of weekly lessons, with very specific objectives for every day, and a clear set of instructional steps that teachers can use to guide their instruction including what specific letters, words, and grammar skills to teach each day or week. Using these pacing guides alone to plan instruction will not in any way guarantee that teachers provide sound, systematic, explicit literacy instruction, as the pacing guides do not provide enough information on what that content looks like or what specific content elements should be taught. There is a mention in the pacing guides of the teachers' book; however we were unable to attain copies for this desk study. It is likely that this resource provides more specific information on how to teach literacy skills, how much to teach according to grade level and specific instructional needs, how to differentiate instruction for special populations, how to scaffold instruction, etc. The information provided in the pacing guides alone does not ensure that teachers can teach explicitly using appropriate scaffolding. We believe that this lack of specificity asks a lot of teachers and leaves them with a list of literacy concepts to teach but not a clear idea of how to teach effectively. A review of the teachers' book and textbook will need to be completed to fully understand how the pacing guides support teachers' instructional planning.

A more detailed analysis was conducted for Grades 1, 3, and 6 (see *Annex A*) as these are generally grades where skills and concepts move from learning to read to reading to learn. These tables (one table for the Reading and one for Writing per grade level) present the different components for the Reading and Writing blocks, the standards for each of these components, the list of literacy content and skills for each of the standards according to the pacing guides, and our analysis and comments on that content and skills. It is important to note that this information followed the same format as the pacing guides, therefore some of the content is presented in one single cell for several standards. A summary of the analysis is presented in *Table 25*. This final summary is organized according to the five components of literacy instruction, and discusses the quality of the content presented in the pacing guides as well as recommendations based on content that is missing.

Table 25. Content Present in the Pacing Guides Grades 1, 3, 6

Reading Area	Comments/Recommendations
Phonological Awareness	<p>There seems to be little attention to important PA skills such as phoneme or syllable segmentation in first grade. There is a need to develop strong phonological awareness skills at the beginning of reading instruction, which will impact reading performance in years to come, including reading multisyllabic words in upper elementary grades.</p> <p>Recommendation: Include PA skills that are predictive of future reading success such as phoneme segmentation in the first semester of first grade.</p>
Alphabetic Principle/Phonics	<p>There is not enough phonics/decoding instruction at any grade level. In first grade, there is an indication of learning about phoneme-grapheme correspondences, but there is no indication of teaching students explicit decoding skills such as blending sounds to decode/read syllables and words and blending syllables to read words.</p> <p>Spanish has a transparent orthography where some students can master the decoding process at this early stage quickly; however, there is still a lot of explicit decoding instruction that should take place in all elementary grades (at least until Grade 5) to help students learn to read longer, multisyllabic words. Lack of decoding success will impact their fluency development, which will in turn impact their comprehension. The curricula presented in the pacing guides for Grades 3 and 6 do not include any kind of decoding instruction for the</p>

Reading Area	Comments/Recommendations
	<p>students.</p> <p>Decoding instruction at upper elementary grades (Grades 3–6) in Spanish should focus on combining all knowledge of letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (prefixes and suffixes) to read unfamiliar words in and out of context.</p> <p>Recommendation: Strengthen phonics and decoding instruction for all grade levels by including specific decoding skills for each grade level.</p>
Fluency	<p>Fluency instruction is weak in Grades 1–6 as far as we can conclude based on the materials available. The only content indicated in the pacing guides is “articulation, prosody, and speed.” There is no indication of any other content related to fluency such as rapid letter and sound naming, rapid word reading, phrase reading, sentence reading, and connected text reading, or important instructional practices such as repeated reading, partner reading, choral reading taking place.</p> <p>Although there is a mention of the need for “articulation, prosody, and speed” and for a number of correct words per minute (cwpm) in the standards, there is no indication that teachers help students develop knowledge of the phonological, orthographic, and morphological patterns of the language, and how to effectively and efficiently process this knowledge at the letter, word, and connected-text level.</p> <p>Further, there is no clear differentiation (other than the number of cwpm) between grade levels in the content listed for fluency standards in the pacing guides. Fluency content seems to be the same for all Grades 1–6.</p> <p>Recommendation: Specify and focus on Fluency subskills (at the letter, word, phrase, sentence, and connected-text level) that will help students meet the fluency standards.</p>
Vocabulary	<p>Although there are important vocabulary skills mentioned in the pacing guides such as use of context, polysemous words, synonyms and antonyms, use of dictionary, classes of words, vocabulary instruction as described in the pacing guides is not explicit, substantial, and robust.</p> <p>There is an emphasis on parts of speech (adjectives, nouns, verbs) but there is no indication of explicit vocabulary instruction that teaches new words to students, or explicit instruction to help students learn how to try to understand unfamiliar words when encountered in texts.</p> <p>There is an overlap of vocabulary content among the three blocks: Oral Language, Reading, and Writing and not a clear way of how to take advantage of this or deal with this issue.</p> <p>Recommendation: Specify and focus on actual vocabulary instruction that is explicit and systematic that will help students meet the vocabulary standards</p>
Comprehension	<p>Although there are a few important comprehension skills mentioned such as anticipating ideas based on titles, sequencing a story, and using graphic organizers, these are mostly mentioned in the first grades (1–3) and overseen in the later grades (4–6). As the main goal of reading instruction, reading comprehension instruction should meticulously include a complete spectrum of comprehension strategies that get more sophisticated as students move up in their schooling, aiming at ensuring students can obtain meaning from different types of text. Unfortunately, the pacing guides do not include complete grade-appropriate reading comprehension content and skills to be taught. Examples of missing skills and strategies (among others) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finding main idea and details • explicit and implicit questions/answers • summarizing • generalizing • describe different points of view • infer the implicit theme of a fiction text: difference between theme and topic; • analyze the function of stylistic elements in traditional and classical literature from various cultures

Reading Area	Comments/Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare and contrast the historical and cultural settings of two literary works • understand, make inferences, and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. <p>Further, month after month, grade level after grade level there is a list of functional, literary, and informative texts that we assume are meant to illustrate the different types of texts that students should be reading and working with. However, there is no clear indication of what students need to learn about these texts.</p> <p>Recommendation: Strengthen reading comprehension instruction by detailing specific comprehension skills and strategies that need to be learned and by implementing explicit and systematic comprehension instruction that helps students learn how to apply these strategies effectively.</p>
Writing	<p>The content listed in the pacing guides regarding writing instruction reflects careful incorporation of important writing skills such as the writing process, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and developing a sense of enjoyment and valuing their writing efforts and written texts</p> <p>The pacing guides do not include complete grade-appropriate content and skills for these standards. For the writing process standard, for example, there is no clear indication of how students are taught how to plan, draft, and revise a written text. There is only a mention of three steps: plan, write a draft, and produce a final version with no indication of specific steps, guidelines, or techniques to help students learn the writing process. Some of the writing process skills missing include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating ideas by brainstorming, sharing ideas, drawing • Selecting an appropriate topic • Considering audience <p>Regarding actual writing of texts (Standard 3C), there is some indication of content that would teach students how to organize a larger text and a paragraph but more explicit information is needed.</p> <p>As with reading comprehension, there is an extensive list of texts to be studied as part of this writing curriculum. This list reflects a careful effort to focus on the functional aspect of language. These are important texts that students will likely see/use in their future daily lives but no specific information of how to write these texts, what kind of text structure is depicted, or what is important about these texts is provided in these pacing guides.</p> <p>There is a lack of clarity in the language of these pacing guides, and teachers would really struggle to know what and how to teach only based on these.</p> <p>Recommendation: Include more specific skills that can help teachers provide more explicit instruction in the writing process.</p>

The pacing guides represent an impressive step into scaffolding teacher practice in Honduras. The content present includes important literacy and language development skills. Even if the teachers’ book has more detailed guidance for teachers on how to teach these skills, we believe that these pacing guides could also have a more detailed scope and sequence of the skills that need to be taught, especially since, as was mentioned in the National Report of the end of the year test for 2013, 82 percent of teachers in Grades 1–6 indicated that they used the pacing guides for planning their instruction.

Pruebas Formativas Mensuales (Monthly Formative Assessment)

Based on the documents provided, the Monthly Formative Assessments are aligned with the National Education Standards and the pacing guides (**Table 26**). According to these materials, they are intended to be used by teachers to “make adjustments” to their

instructional strategies, and by the students to make adjustments to their learning strategies.

In Grades 1 – 6, the following individual standards are tested for the Reading and the Writing blocks in the Monthly Formative Assessments.

Table 26. Monthly Formative Assessments

Component	Individual Standard
Reading Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate comprehension of the global, main, secondary, and inferential ideas of a read text, including the interpretation of visual images
Vocabulary (within the Reading block)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize and understand in read texts a variety of known words Interpret unknown words using diverse strategies
Writing Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive texts, revising and improving until obtaining a final version Apply grammar norms (morphosynthatics, orthography, semantics, and pragmatics) and calligraphy in the production of coherent texts
Vocabulary (within the Writing block)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize a variety of words in the production of written texts

Each grade level test has a Directions booklet which provides the general directions for administering and grading these monthly assessments, and the correct answers for each monthly test, as well as directions to convert the first quantitative grade to a qualitative rating to help teachers determine the students’ performance levels. The booklet also provides a table to record grades and performance levels for each student, and recommendations for student feedback. A rubric for grading students’ written texts is provided in the administration booklet. The rubric, which is explained to teachers, has five parameters (ideas, use of language, audience, grammar and mechanics, and text structure). There are four levels of performance: Advanced, Satisfactory, Should Improve, Unsatisfactory, and the rubric explains what each parameter should look like to obtain the necessary points for each performance level. The problem with the rubric is that the descriptors for each parameter within each performance level are very subjective. For example, within the parameter of grammar and mechanics, the rubric talks about *very few errors*, *few errors*, *several errors*, *so many errors*. This can impede consistency of results across different teachers or even within the same teacher, which could also affect the type of feedback that different students can receive.

In Grade 1, the teacher reads the passages, questions, and answers and guides the students for the first five administrations (Feb/Mar – July); the remaining three administrations are read independently by the students.

We believe that the effort to create and implement a system of formative assessment is an important step in the right direction. We are not sure if the content and skills tested in the assessments is adequate at the early elementary grades. There are important phonics skills (e.g., blending sounds to read words) that are not tested, for example. Further, we don’t think that the directions that teachers received from the booklets provide necessary

feedback, and re-teaching to struggling students is robust enough. The process of using instructional data to inform instruction is a complicated and sophisticated one that needs lots of coaching and scaffolding from an expert.

End of the Year Assessment/Rendimiento Académico

Honduras’ current evaluation process based on the current curriculum and standards began in 2007 when a sample of students in Grades 1, 3, and 6 took the end of the year test. In 2013 the Honduran Ministry of Education administered the end of the year test, which evolved into the Rendimiento Académico, for the second consecutive year to all students in Grades 1–9 with the help of hundreds of external administrators and thousands of observers. The MIDEH project also administered the Rendimiento Académico to a representative sample of students using a standardized administration process.

This end of the year Rendimiento Académico assessment is very similar across Grades 1–6. For each grade level, there are three different forms (A, B, and C) that are, according to the National Report, equal in terms of difficulty and content. Each test has 32 items that assess student performance in reading and writing. It is noted in the National Report that every item in these tests underwent a complete psychometric analysis in terms of classic test theory and item response theory.

This end of the year test follows the same format as the Monthly Formative Assessments (multiple choice questions and two open-ended items for the writing) and, even though it is not explicitly indicated, it seems to test the same individual standards listed for the monthly formatives:

- Comprehension—Reading comprehension at the paragraph level and/or larger chunks of text; main idea and details, generalizing, answering both explicit and implicit questions
- Vocabulary—Identify meaning of words by using context clues; other items expect students to know the meaning of the word
- Cloze test—Alignment between gender, number; grammar and writing rules
- Writing—Students write a persuasive, literate, descriptive (among other qualities) text based on a prompt and/or illustration

The questions for each end of the year assessment are categorized as shown in **Table 27**.

Table 27. End of the Year Rendimiento Académico Assessment Question Categories

Areas	Range/Number of questions Grades 1–6
Comprehension	18–21
Vocabulary	7–10
Cloze (grammar alignment)	1–2
Writing	2 (every grade has two writing assessments)

As was pointed out about the Monthly Formative Assessments, there are some important skills that are not assessed at the earlier grades by the end of the year assessment, such as decoding skills. Further, there is an emphasis on assessing comprehension skills through sophisticated questions that require both explicit and implicit answers, word and vocabulary knowledge, and an effective use of diverse comprehension strategies, as well as excellent decoding and fluency skills that allow students to efficiently read the texts in the time allotted. The vocabulary questions require knowledge about the actual words tested (i.e., knowing a priori the meaning of the words), and not specific knowledge of strategies to figure out the meaning of the words through the use of context clues. This is to say that unless a student knows the meaning of the word, he or she won't be able to answer the question correctly. We believe that for students to succeed in these examinations, there should be robust vocabulary and comprehension instruction that can help students meet the standards. It can be said that the skills assessed in the Rendimiento Académico align with the National Standards and Pacing Guides, especially the comprehension and vocabulary skills. However the imprecise comprehension and vocabulary instruction that is noted in the pacing guides and vague standards in the National Standards allow for a variety of comprehension and vocabulary skills to align. This lack of precision might be one of the factors that contribute to some students' poor performance in these tests.

Conclusion

This desk study requested by USAID/Honduras has reviewed three significant aspects of the education sector in order to begin to better understand the context that directly affects students' literacy development in primary school.

The policy document review consisted mainly of three strategic plans for reform of the education sector, the newest set of education laws and a sector analysis. The three plans addressed a range of issues that could improve student literacy outcomes such as assessment, curriculum, time for instruction, and teacher evaluation. These plans also covered large range of years from 2003 up to 2038 however the plans were developed approximately 10 years ago. At this point it may be time to revisit the plans and review documents such as the DCNB. One of the greatest concerns and ways to improve instruction is the teacher preparation system. Teachers are the main conduit of instruction and have the most direct impact on student learning. Having a well prepared teaching force that is highly respected as knowledgeable professionals is essential to student achievement. Without improvements to teacher knowledge other improvements will never achieve the level of student achievement required for an educated citizenry.

The assessment review looked at several studies of student literacy knowledge and found varying degrees of knowledge exist depending on the assessment and study. The two EGRA studies covered the widest range of skills and show that while students are not learning to recognize letter sounds automatically they are learning read words especially in the context of a story however the word reading fluency even in with the context of a story is lower than international standards. Comprehension was the most tested component among all the studies which makes sense as the end goal of learning to read. The PIRLS assessment found Honduran students were a way behind other countries even

when their Grade 6 students took a Grade 4 level text. The Rendimiento Académico on the other hand shows 70 percent or more of Grade one and two students in the highest achievement categories while Grade three and six students have significantly fewer students in these categories. This could be in part caused by a possible change in focus of instruction that is typical at this time moving from learning to read to reading to learn. If students were not fully prepared for this transition it could affect their outcomes. Overall the assessments show there is still work to be done across grades and components of literacy.

Finally the review of instructional materials that consisted of the National Standards, National Pacing Guides, and various assessments found that Honduras has done an excellent job of covering many important skills needed for literacy development broadly. However there seems to be a lack of explicitness and specificity in the documents that would help teachers plan their instruction better. Without being able to review the teachers' book and student textbook it is difficult to get a full picture of how the reviewed documents support teachers' instruction. However breaking down the broad set of skills found in the standards and pacing guides into more detail especially about how a skill or standard changes over the grades would likely help to clarify expectations for instruction and learning.

Overall this desk study finds that Honduras has put in significant effort into improving the education sector in order to improve the quality of instruction for students in primary school. With concerted efforts to improve teacher knowledge and guiding instructional materials as well as continued work on infrastructure and resource availability the potential for all students to gain a high level of literacy is attainable.

Annex A. Analysis of National Standards for Grades 1, 3, and 6

First Grade

Reading component and individual standard	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides	Missing content/skills/Analysis
Alphabetic principle 1A & 1B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound-letter correspondence • Words with the same initial letter • Word extension (?) • Words that begin and end similarly • ABC order • Personal dictionary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is content listed in a way that is not clear which individual standard it is aligned with. • The content listed is not specific and/or explicit enough • The programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught. • 1st grade appropriate phonological awareness skills that are missing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Syllable blending and segmentation ○ Phoneme blending and segmentation • 1st grade appropriate phonics skills that are missing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ blend sounds to decode/read syllables and words ○ blending syllables to read words • Except for ABC order and personal dictionary, which is covered in the eight month, this content is listed under the first five months of the school year.
Alphabetic principle 1C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children songs • Words that rhyme • Onomatopeias • Poetry • *Curiosity and enjoyment of rhythm and melody in language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pacing guides seem to include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught in 1st grade • This exact same content is repeated in the pacing guides for months 1 – 5 with just a few additions every month for specific book parts, for example.
Print awareness 2C	Identifying book parts (cover, illustrations, text, table of contents, number of pages, spine, author) *Valuing a book as an access to imaginary and fictional worlds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pacing guides seem to include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught in 1st grade • This exact same content is repeated in the pacing guides for months 1 – 5 with just a few additions every month for specific book parts, for example.
Print awareness 2D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directionality, laterality, linearity (from left to right and from top to bottom) • Identifying sentences (initial capital letter, final period) 	

Reading component and individual standard	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides	Missing content/skills/Analysis
Text types 3A	Although the standards document presents one standard at the first grade level, the pacing guides do not include it explicitly. It seems that it is covered in other content related to other standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a lack of clarity and detail about this standard in the pacing guides.
Reading Comprehension 4D	Although listed as a standard for 1 st grade under this component in the Standards documents, there is no content listed for this specific standard in the pacing guides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two standards for this component in the grade level are very similar which might explain why there is no content listed for the first standard.
Reading Comprehension 4E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipating ideas based on the title, illustrations, and cover (2 months) Anticipating ideas based on title, text shape, and beginning and ending formulas (2 months) Anticipating ideas based on cover, title, table of contents, number of pages (4 months) Sequencing a story (2 months) Main ideas in a story (1 month) Changing beginning/ending of a story <p>A list of types of text that are used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literary text: the story, children songs, the recount, a play, comic, tongue twister Functional texts: instructions, bulletin/flyer, the message, the list, the poster, the recipe, the advertisement Information texts: the scientific text *Curiosity to make predictions about the content of a text and corroborate *Valuing sequenced images to retell or invent make up stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programaciones do not seem to include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught since there seem to be a heavy emphasis on predicting skills. These skills are covered in ¾ of the school year. Although predicting skills can be important to the development of robust comprehension, it's also imperative to pay attention to other skills that are related to the actual interaction between the reader and the text for the purpose of comprehending such as sequencing and discussing main ideas of a text. More of these missing skills include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking/answering questions as reading takes place Identifying key details and facts in texts Making adjustments when comprehension breaks down Comparing characters Plot analysis Differentiating between fantasy and reality The pacing guides only list the types of literary and functional texts assumed to be discussed in first grade. These pacing guides, however, do not specify the particular skills that are needed to read and understand each of these types of texts or what it is important about these texts. There seems to be a need for more sophisticated reading comprehension instruction.

Reading component and individual standard	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides	Missing content/skills/Analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Enjoying discovering what type of texts based on table of content 	
Vocabulary 5C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaning of new words Name of people, animals, and things Adjectives & verbs Derived words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although two different standards, the content for each of these standards is not differentiated enough. The programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught for vocabulary. It is not clear what is expected to be taught of each category, or how to each.
Vocabulary 5D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class of words: actions, qualities, names Words that begin the same way, Words that are similarities at the graphic and sound level Common and proper nouns, gender, number, adjective, verbs, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The content focuses on parts of speech or other spelling elements like homophones and homographs There is no clear indication of actual teaching vocabulary-learning strategies using context or other tools. Missing skills: emphasis on conceptual knowledge, explicit instruction to learn complex and essential vocabulary words
Reading Development 6C	Pronunciation, prosody, and speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught for fluency and wide reading. The content for both standards does not change during the whole school year.
Reading Development 6D	Texts and books of their preference *Forming intelligent, voluntary, critical, and autonomous readers who experience the joy of reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need for much more clearly stated fluency instruction that includes skills such as rapid letter naming, rapid word reading, phrase fluency, text reading Not an indication of how many WCPM at first grade.

Writing	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Missing content/skills
Planning and organization 1C:	Months 1 -5 Text production: planning, draft, final version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pacing guides do not include complete grade-appropriate content & skills for this specific standard. There is no clear indication of how students are taught how to plan, draft, and revise a written text. • Some of the skills missing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Generating ideas by brainstorming, sharing ideas, or drawing ○ Selecting an appropriate topic ○ Considering audience
Research skills (none for 1 st grade)		
Writing as a process 3C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanics of writing: Letters in their name; upper case and lower case; cursive handwriting • Sequencing stories (2 months) • Collective production of a text • Changing end of a story • ABC order • Structuring sentences • Interrogative and imperative sentences A list of types of text that are used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literary text: the story, children songs, the recount, a play, comic, tongue twister, the dialogue, the adventure story • Functional texts: instructions, bulletin/flyer, the message, the list, the poster, the recipe, the advertisement, the description, the calendar • Information texts: the scientific text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programaciones include critical grade-appropriate content & skills for these individual standards in the writing area. There is indication that students are taught important skills for grammar, punctuation, and the mechanics of writing. • There is a sense of appropriate sequencing of these skills throughout the school year evidenced by how some skills are presented in a systematic order. • There seems to be a need for more explicit instruction on the actual writing process (specifically writing connected text of three to five sentences), which is critical part of literacy development and a skill that is assessed in both the formative and the summative exams. They do mention the skill of sequencing a story as an important content, but it seems like it is covered only during two months. • The content as listed in the pacing guides can be more clearly explained. • Similarly to what was noted in reading, the pacing guides just list the types of texts with no indication of what are students expected to do and learn from these types of texts. The

Writing	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Missing content/skills
Writing as a process 3D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punctuation: Writing sentences with capital letters and final period; use of question and exclamation signs, comma, uppercase letters for proper names • Grammar: Correct agreement between article, noun, adjective, and verb; common and proper names, adjectives; order of words in sentences, separation of sentences in words • Spelling: Irregularities in the phoneme-grapheme relationship que, qui, g, r, rr <p>*Valuing the importance of punctuation signs to make sense in texts</p>	<p>questions remain: are they learning how to write these texts? are analyzing the different parts of these texts?</p>
Writing as a process 3E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Avoidance of stereotypes • *Enjoying to discover about writing 	
Vocabulary 4B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of words: qualities and actions • Types of words: common nouns, adjectives, verbs • Same and opposite meanings • Writing words to complete sentences • Derived words • Lexic relationship: synonyms, adjectives • Making words changing letters • Compound words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pacing guides include very similar vocabulary content for writing and reading with no real variation and/or differentiation • Similarly to the vocabulary content for reading, there seems to be a lack of explicit vocabulary instruction to learn new words or to learn strategies to figure out meaning of words based on context.

Third Grade

Reading	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Analysis/Missing content/skills
Alphabetic principle	None in third grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programaciones do not include any kind of phonics, decoding, or word study instruction that can help students learn longer, multisyllabic words. • Missing skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ accurately decoding words with diphthongs, suffixed, prefixes, and unique Spanish elements.
Print Awareness 2C, 2D	Although the standards document presents two standards at the third grade level, the pacing guides do not include them.	
Text types 3A	Although the standards document presents one standard at the third grade level, the pacing guides do not include it explicitly. It seems that it is covered in other content related to other standards.	
Reading Comprehension 4F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphic organizers: tables y graphics • Symbols & icons: traffic signals y prevention • Identification of the structure of the comics: introduction, development, ending • Graphic Supports • Sequence of stories: how do they begin, what happened next, and how do they end <p>A list of types of text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literary texts: the story, fable, song, the recount, plays, comics, cartoons, the poem, the legend, description, • Functional texts: personal letter, telegram, icons and illustrations, instructions, bulletin/flyer, the message, the list, the poster, the recipe, the advertisement, norms & rules, birth certificate, interview, recipe books, game directions, • Information texts: the scientific and technical texts, encyclopedia, dictionary, biography, news, informative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is only one reading comprehension standard for this grade level. Although the standard covers a lot of skills, there might be a need for more specific standards that cover a bigger number of expected skills. • Therefore, we can say that the programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content and skills to be taught. The content covered represents many important skills that are related to the standard and to the grade level, and that are aligned to what we know about literacy development, but there is still many skills that are not taken into account such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ finding main idea and details ○ explicit and implicit questions/answers ○ summarizing ○ generalizing • The pacing guides only list the types of literary and functional texts assumed to be discussed in third grade. These pacing guides, however, do not specify the specific skills that are needed to read and understand each of these types of texts or

Reading	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Analysis/Missing content/skills
	article, news reporting, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Critical capacity to value and express an opinion about a text • *Recognizing in literature the expression of the linguistic richness • *Valuing the importance of interpreting symbols and icons • *Valuing sequenced images to retell or invent fictional texts based on them • *Valuing text like a transmitter of culture 	what it is important about these texts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for more sophisticated reading comprehension instruction that encompasses explicit and systematic instruction with step-by-step modeling, guided practice, and scaffolded individual practice.
Vocabulary 5C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polysemous words • Augmentatives, diminutives • Meaning of new words: context of the word, use of dictionary • Lexical relationship: Synonyms & antonyms of adjectives and verbs • Homographs, homophones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught for vocabulary. • The statements used for content are too general: what do they really mean with by “polysemous words”? • There is no clear indication of actual teaching strategies to help obtain the word meaning according to context. There is a mention of use of context but there is no explicit and clear explanation of how this is implemented
Vocabulary 5D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New words • Use of dictionary • Use of context • Lexical relationship: polysemous words, new words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ emphasis on conceptual knowledge, ○ explicit instruction to learn complex and essential vocabulary words • No clear indication of techniques/strategies to teach vocabulary
Reading Development 6E	Pronunciation, articulation, prosody, and speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught for fluency and wide reading. • There is a need for more clearly stated fluency instruction that includes skills such as phrase fluency and connected text reading
Reading Development 6F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texts and books of their preference • *Forming intelligent, voluntary, critical, and autonomous readers who experience the joy of reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not an indication of how many cwpm at third grade.

Writing	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Missing content/skills
Planning and organization 1C:	Months 1 -5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text production: planning, draft, final version • Functional Texts: personal letter, personal diary, the list, the poster, an interview guide, instructions, rules, a program, etc. • Literary texts: story, group description, transformation of stories, etc. • Informative texts: research report, a table, etc. • *Valuing the communicative function of writing • *Valuing the importance of publishing their writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content & skills for this specific standard. There is no indication of how students are taught to plan, draft, and revise a written text. There is only a mention of three steps: plan, write a draft, and produce a final version with no indication of specific steps. • There is only a list of texts that it is assumed students will be taught how to write. • The lessons from the Teacher guide seem to be very few. For example, in the first two months, there are only three lessons to be covered in almost 8 weeks. • Some of the skills missing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Generating ideas by brainstorming, sharing ideas, drawing ○ Selecting an appropriate topic ○ Considering audience
Research skills (none for 3rd grade)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are important skills that should be part of a 3rd grade literacy curriculum.
Writing as a process 3C: Writing text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming the ending of a story, transforming a recount • Collective writing of a story • Graphic organizers • Introductory paragraphs • Text coherence, use of connectors • A list of types of text that are used: • Functional Texts: personal letter, personal diary, the invitation, the recipe, the calendar, commercial tag, the survey, the message, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programaciones include critical grade-appropriate content & skills for these individual standards. There is indication that students are taught important skills for grammar, punctuation, and the mechanics of writing. Nevertheless, there are other important skills that are not included such as: • Editing • There seems to be a strong emphasis on grammar, spelling, and punctuation and a lesser focus on the actual teaching of writing. • There seems to be a need for more explicit instruction on the actual writing process, which is critical part of literacy

Writing	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Missing content/skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literary texts: story, group description, transformation of stories <p>Informative texts: research report, the sports summary, the tourism pamphlet, etc.</p>	<p>development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similarly to what was noted in reading, the pacing guides just list the types of texts with no indication of what are students expected to do and learn from these types of texts. There is a lack of clarity in the language of these pacing guides and teachers would really struggle to know what and how to teach only based on these.
<p>3D: grammar, spelling, handwriting, punctuation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punctuation signs: interrogation, exclamation, long dash, period, comma, separating words at end of line Infinitive verbs (?) Spelling permanence in writing Words with difficult spelling (v, b, güe, güi, r, rr, azo, aza) – (first two months here) Use of “guión”, capital letters Grammar sentence: number, gender, subject, predicate Grammar: tacit subject, subject and predicate (agreement) Infinitive and conjugated verbs. ar, er, ir The verb and its parts Past tense of verbs, notion of gender and number Accents: sílaba átona, tónica Spelling of derived words: change of ‘z’ for ‘c’ or ‘s’ Abbreviations Spelling of words Use of ‘y’ and ‘ll’ Use of ‘m’ before ‘b’ and ‘p’ Use of capital letters, period, indenting 	

Writing	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Missing content/skills
3E: use language with no discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Avoidance of stereotypes *Valuing spelling for effective communication *Valuing the systematic nature of their mother tongue 	
Vocabulary 4B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adverbs (quantity), adjectives Breaking words into syllables (?) Augmentative, diminutives nouns; collective nouns Lexical relationships: synonyms, antonyms Synonyms, antonyms of adjectives and verbs Punctuation signs Use of la b, bl, br (now in vocab) Spelling permanence in writing (now in vocab) 	

Sixth Grade

Reading	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Analysis/Missing content/skills
Alphabetic principle	None in sixth grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programaciones do not include any kind of phonics, decoding, or word study instruction that can support students' continuous growth in learning to read longer, multisyllabic words. Missing skills:
Print Awareness	None in sixth grade	
Text types	Although the standards document presents one standard at the third grade level, the pacing guides do not include it explicitly. It seems that it is covered in other content related to other standards.	

Reading	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Analysis/Missing content/skills
3A		
Reading Comprehension 4F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title, introduction, prologue, subtitles, illustrations Questionnaires Graphic organizer, synoptic organizer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is content listed for four standards (2RC and 2Vocab) that is not clearly organized by standards. It is difficult to identify which content is for which reading or vocabulary standard.
Reading Comprehension 4G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summaries Outlines Lists Interview questionnaire Symbols, maps, plans Photographs and printed images “Actos” (Acts?) News Headlines <p>A list of types of text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literary texts: the story, legend, description, the novel, the “bomba”, the guessing poem, tongue twister, the cartoon, the poem, the play and its parts, the comic, Functional texts: personal letter, dictionary, telephone book, agenda, minutes, calendar, commercial letter, receipts, promissory note, invitational posters, publicity/advertisements, selling letter, invoices, deposit slip, bank withdrawal, applications Information texts: the bibliographic card, technical or scientific magazine, conceptual maps, the newspaper, the radio, television, the scientific text, the historic text Descriptive text: the biography Narrative texts: descriptions, short narrations Persuasive texts: legal documents *Valuing social and personal meaning of read texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programs do not include complete grade-appropriate content and skills to be taught. There are almost no reading comprehension skills to be covered with this content at this grade level. Examples of missing skills include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> finding main idea and details explicit and implicit questions/answers summarizing generalizing describe different points of view infer the implicit theme of a work of fiction, distinguishing theme from the topic; analyze the function of stylistic elements (e.g., magic helper, rule of three) in traditional and classical literature from various cultures; compare and contrast the historical and cultural settings of two literary works. understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding The pacing guides list the types of important types of texts assumed to be discussed in sixth grade. All these texts represent critical types of texts that students will likely encounter in later years as part of their everyday lives. These pacing guides, however, do not detail the specific skills that are needed to read and understand each of these types of texts or what it is important about these texts. Only listing these types of text won't be enough. There is a need for more sophisticated reading comprehension

Reading	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Analysis/Missing content/skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Valuing the ways language plays with words in the tradition of their communities *Valuing reading as a basic tool to learn and develop thinking 	<p>instruction that encompasses explicit and systematic instruction with step-by-step modeling, guided practice, and scaffolded individual practice and cover important reading comprehension skills in 6th grade.</p>
Vocabulary 5C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library; use of the card catalogue Use of grammatical information, context, dictionary, galicisms and anglicisms in the Spanish language Lexical relationship: Synonyms & antonyms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught for vocabulary. The statements used for content are not clear enough and do not clearly represent the standard that they are aligned to. There is no clear indication of actual teaching strategies to help obtain the word meaning according to context. There is a mention of use of context but there is no explicit and clear explanation of how this is implemented
Vocabulary 5D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homographs, homophones New words Use of dictionary Use of context Lexical relationship: polysemous words, new words, sayings, prefixes Composition and derivation processes Use of known words, the context Past tense of verbs Glossary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> emphasis on conceptual knowledge, explicit instruction to learn complex and essential vocabulary words No clear indication of techniques/strategies to teach vocabulary
Reading Development 6E	<p>Pronunciation, articulation, prosody, and speed</p> <p>*Valuing the importance of articulation and prosody in the reading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content to be taught for fluency and wide reading. There is a need for more clearly stated fluency instruction Not an indication of how many cwpm at sixth grade.
Reading Development 6F	<p>Texts and books of their preference</p> <p>*Forming intelligent, voluntary, critical, and autonomous readers who experience the joy of reading</p>	

Writing	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Missing content/skills
Planning and organization 1C:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text production: planning, draft, final version Purpose and type of text Narrative structure: beginning, development, and closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The content listed for these five standards (1C, 3C, 3D, 3E, 4B) related to three different components within the writing block is not clearly organized by standards. The pacing guides tables list the content in one same cell. This table lists the content as it is presented regardless of standard and from BOY to EOY. If content is repeated, then it is not repeated in this table.
Writing as a process 3C: Writing text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synthesis technique: outline (topics and subtopics), tables, graphics, summary, anthologies, summary in “fichas de trabajo”, comparative tables, Graphic marking of paragraph Cohesion between paragraphs Paragraph function: introduction, transition, and conclusion Summaries Library materials Maps: maps of their community Tables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programaciones do not include complete grade-appropriate content & skills for standard 1C. There is no indication of how students are taught to plan, draft, and revise a written text. There is only a mention of three steps: plan, write a draft, and produce a final version with no indication of specific steps. Some of the skills missing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generating ideas by brainstorming, sharing ideas, drawing Selecting an appropriate topic Considering audience
3D: grammar, spelling, handwriting, punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Valuing connectors to extend and write cohesive texts Literary texts: the story, legend, description, the “bomba”, the guessing poem, tongue twister, cartoon, poem, the play script, the comic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regarding actual writing of texts (standard 3C), there is some indication of content that would teach students how to organize a larger text and a paragraph but more explicit information is needed.
3E: use language with no discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional texts: personal letter, newspaper news, journals, radio script, formal and informal letters, job applications, interview script, summary, report, conceptual maps, selling letter, invitational poster, news, the promissory note, the receipt, the invoice, deposit slip, bank withdrawal, Information texts: paraphrased summary, Descriptive text: the biography Narrative texts: descriptions, short narrations Persuasive texts: legal documents, universal declaration of human rights Grammatical sentence: structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The list of texts to be studied as part of this curriculum is impressive and reflects a careful effort to focus on the functional aspect of language. These are important texts that they will likely see/use in the future daily lives but no specific information of how to write these texts, or what is important about these texts is provided in these pacing guides. Regarding standard 3D: the programaciones include some critical grade-appropriate content & skills related to grammar, spelling, and punctuation. There seems to be a strong emphasis on grammar, spelling, and punctuation and a lesser focus on the actual teaching of writing. There seems to be a need for more explicit instruction on the actual writing process, which is critical part of literacy

Writing	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Missing content/skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject, nucleus, modifiers • Subject and predicate • Regular and irregular verbs • Verbal periphrasis (verbal clauses) • Cursive and print • Spanish formation 	<p>development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary instruction based on the content present in the pacing guides is weak. There is no indication of any instruction in teaching students strategies to figure out the meaning of unknown words or any other explicit vocabulary instruction. • There is a lack of clarity in the language of these pacing guides and teachers would really struggle to know what and how to teach only based on these.
Vocabulary 4B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct, indirect, and circumstantial object • *Valuing libraries as a promoting factor of autonomous and critical writing and creative production. • *Valuing writing as a way to satisfy needs and solve problems • *Valuing the writing process of others' and their own texts • Accents • Verb tenses: past, present, future • Use of capital letters, final period (new paragraph), use of parenthesis, quotations marks, dash, exclamation signs • Use of letters c, z, x • Words with difficult orthography • Words with difficult orthography: use of h, v, b • Words with –ivo, -evedad, -ividad, -ivoro, -ivora • Use of initial and middle “h” • Use of c and q • Accents in diphthongs, hiatus, diacritic accent • Use of g, j • *Respect for the function of spelling rules when writing texts • *Valuing the richness and flexibility of language 	

Writing	Corresponding conceptual & attitudinal content listed in the pacing guides (from BOY to EOY)	Missing content/skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *interest in revising and correcting their own texts Synonyms, antonyms, homographs, polysemous words Adjectives, prepositions, personal and interrogative pronouns 	
Research skills 2A	Although mentioned in the standards documents, this standard is not covered in the pacing guides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are important skills that should be part of a 6th grade literacy curriculum.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Services, *Analysis of State K-3 Reading Standards and Assessments*, Washington, D.C., 2005