



Project ALIGN: An Opportunity to Improve Fifth-Grade Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary

We invite you to collaborate with The University of Kansas and The University of Texas at Austin on a **U.S. Department of Education-funded project**. The goal of this project is to find out if students with reading comprehension difficulties do better in reading and learn more content when provided the same reading comprehension practices in core English language arts/reading (ELA/R) and small-group reading intervention. We hope to build a **partnership** with you so we can work together to **improve the reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and content knowledge of students with reading difficulties** in your school.

What is Project ALIGN?

- ALIGN is a research project conducted by The University of Kansas and The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk at The University of Texas at Austin in partnership with KC Metro and Central Texas school districts.
- A total of 72 elementary schools, up to 432 teachers, and up to 864 fifth graders will participate in ALIGN between 2024 and 2028.
- Project ALIGN will compare students' performance across 3 groups:
 - **Aligned Group:** Teachers implement reading comprehension practices in core ELA/R and small-group reading intervention
 - **Nonaligned Group:** Teachers implement reading comprehension practices in core ELA/R and business-as-usual instruction in reading intervention
 - **Business-as-usual Group:** Teachers provide typical instruction in core ELA/R and intervention.

Why is aligned instruction important?

- National data suggest students with reading difficulties struggle to read and understand grade-level texts.
- Students often receive small-group reading intervention in addition to core instruction. However, **intervention** typically addresses **different content** and **skills**. This **limits practice opportunities** and **generalization of skills**.
 - On the other hand, **aligned instruction provides:**
 - **Consistent** use of **evidence-based practices** in core and intervention settings
 - **Pre-teaching practices** in intervention before they are introduced in core instruction
 - **Intentional, structured practice opportunities** with high-quality feedback
 - **Distributed practice** opportunities to facilitate generalization

STRIVE Collaborative Learning Expectations

- Be respectful
- Take turns
- Ask questions

Question Types

Who? A: **CLP Student Script for Vocabulary**

What? A: **5. Word Associations:** Partners take turns discussing each other's words.

When? R: **Get the Gist**

Where? A: *I think the word is...*

Why? A: *[vocabulary word]*

How? A: **CLP Student Script for Get the Gist**

6. Example: What is the meaning of "what" in the text?
I wrote _____

7. Word Building: Tell the partner the meaning of the word "who".
I wrote _____

Context CLUE Strategy

C: Check for unknown words.

L: Look for clues in the text to look for the word's meaning.

U: Use the word's meaning to understand your resource.

E: Expand your understanding by asking a friend.

Examples of Context Clue Types

Definition

1. A **tribe** is a group of people living together.
2. A group of people living in the same area.
3. **Plateaus**, high stretches of land.

Synonym

1. More than 1,200 years ago, the Piney Woods region was a **marshy** area.
2. The government held a **meeting**, they wrote Texas history.

Word Building

Prefixes (Common Word Beginnings)

Prefixes	Examples
un- (not, opposite)	unhappy, unkind
re- (again)	redo, replay
in-, im-, ir-, il- (not, opposite)	incomplete, impossible, irregular, illegal

Word Building

Suffixes (Common Word Endings)

Suffixes	Examples
-s or -es (plurals)	frogs, boxes
-ed (past tense)	played
-ing (present tense)	jumping
-er, -or (person)	teacher, mayor
-tion (act, process)	election
-ible, -able (can be done)	accessible, readable
-ly (characteristic of)	friendly
-ment (action or process)	development
-ful (full of)	thankful
-less (without)	thoughtless

Sample Student Cue Cards

Sample Gist-to-Summary Organizer

Date: _____

Week 14
Lessons 15 and 16: Sons of Liberty and the Boston Massacre

Gist 1

Gist 2

Gist 3

Gist 4

Topic Sentence

Supporting Details

Concluding Sentence

Sample Vocabulary Map

Lesson 14: The Road to Independence

2. Definition

Underline key words.

Occurs when a group of people try to overthrow the government

3. Illustration



Source: Library of Congress

4. Context

Circle the correct sentence.

A. The colonists started a **revolution** because they didn't want to pay more taxes.

B. After one **revolution** on the merry-go-round, I felt sick.

1. Word: revolution

5. Word Associations

Choose two related words.

A. song
 B. war
 C. rebellion
 D. animal

6. Example

Write a sentence or definition that uses the word.

7. Word Building

Use the vocabulary word to write another real word.

Turn and Talk

If you were a colonist living in long ago, would you have supported the revolution? Why or why not?

"I would/would not have supported the revolution because _____."



What occurs in each group?

	Aligned Group	Nonaligned Group	Business-as-usual Group
What occurs in core ELA/R?	36 <u>ALIGN</u> lessons delivered by each school's ELA/R teacher(s) 2x/week	36 <u>ALIGN</u> lessons delivered by each school's ELA/R teacher(s) 2x/week	Typical instruction provided by school
What occurs in small group reading intervention?	54 <u>ALIGN</u> reading intervention lessons delivered by each school's intervention teacher(s) 3x/week	Typical reading intervention provided by school	Typical reading intervention provided by school

What are the project activities?

Aligned Group:

- The **fifth-grade core ELA/R and intervention teachers** will receive an initial professional development and two follow-up sessions provided by the research team.
- Teachers and students will receive ALIGN materials at no cost.
- The fifth-grade core ELA/R and intervention teachers will teach ALIGN lessons during the 18-week implementation period (2x/week in core; 3x/week in intervention).
- The research team will provide individualized coaching for each teacher to support implementation.
- Students with reading difficulties will be pretested and posttested.

Nonaligned Group:

- The **fifth-grade core ELA/R teachers** will receive an initial professional development and two follow-up sessions provided by the research team. **Intervention teachers** provide typical instruction.
- Teachers and students will receive ALIGN materials at no cost.
- The fifth-grade core ELA/R teachers will teach ALIGN lessons during the 18-week implementation period (2x/week in core).
- The research team will provide individualized coaching for each teacher to support implementation.
- Students with reading difficulties will be pretested and posttested.

Business-as-usual Group:

- The **fifth-grade core ELA/R and intervention teachers** provide typical instruction.
- Students with reading difficulties will be pretested and posttested.





What does this mean for my school?

Project Tasks

Research Team (KU & UT Austin)

- Provide all PD sessions to **core** and **intervention** teachers in the aligned group and **core** teachers in the nonaligned group.
- Provide all teacher and student materials at no cost.
- Provide ongoing implementation support (via observations with feedback).
- Administer individualized assessment at pretest.
- Distribute teacher stipends.
- Upon request, provide summative report to the school at end of project.
- Observe all school rules and policies and respect teachers' time and instruction.

Teachers

- Assist with collecting parent consent forms.
- Assist with scheduling PD sessions, pretesting, and posttesting.
- Administer group assessments once for pretesting and once for posttesting.
- Audio-record lessons for implementation fidelity and coaching feedback.
- Complete brief teacher surveys and provide students' demographic data and prior year's state reading test scores (with parent permission).

School & District Leaders

- Provide access to schools, teachers, and students (with parental consent).
- Adhere to the school's assigned condition (Aligned, nonaligned, business-as-usual instruction).
- Allow audio-recording for implementation fidelity and coaching feedback.
- Assist with scheduling PD sessions.



What are the next steps?

We will answer questions and provide additional information if needed. Please do not hesitate to contact one of our team members from The University of Kansas or The University of Texas at Austin.

With your approval, our project team would like to meet with your fifth grade whole-class ELA/R and intervention teachers to notify them of their invitation to join us.

We look forward to collaborating with you.

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