Teachers at Tyler Elementary School in Washington, DC, are using LDC to teach their students how to write and have seen improvement since using it, both in the writing abilities of their students and in their own instruction. Tyler is a unique learning environment; almost half of its students are in a Spanish immersion program in which students are taught in a dual-language format. There is also a special education program that caters to students with autism. The school began to loosely use LDC two years ago with support from LDC Design Team members and has now implemented the framework across grade levels, including the special education classrooms.

The teachers employing LDC at Tyler have found that the tools strengthen their lesson plans and improve their instruction in the classroom. They have taken advantage of the common framework of LDC to collaborate, sharing their assignments with their peers for feedback and comparing their resulting student work to evaluate whether certain tasks were more effective.

“Our teachers are very excited and feel that using LDC is helping them to learn from one another,” says Tyler principal Jennifer Frentress. “They look at what students have done in other classes, and if they find that some students are writing more effectively, they can help one another using the templates.” Tyler teachers say the level of student engagement and quality of work has risen since they began teaching units developed through LDC. “Students respond to good assignments,” says Frentress. “The most compelling argument for LDC is looking at pre- and post-LDC student work. You’ll see improvement across the board.”

Tyler’s reading coach, Dr. Octavius Gaba, says that the framework of LDC “has a strong reciprocal relationship between reading and writing,” which is helpful to elementary students because it makes them think critically about a text they are reading before starting to write. “Our students are learning what good writing looks like,” says Dr. Gaba. “Their writing has gotten more detailed and they are proud of their work.”

The work of Tyler Elementary School teachers and students shows promise for the growth of LDC to all grade levels. “LDC is a good point of entry for teachers into the Common Core State Standards—it can really facilitate the implementation,” says Frentress. “LDC is like having a belt or suspenders to keep things together.”