An Innovative Learning Academy Approach to Increasing Early Literacy Performance

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Introduction

In 2015, a mere 44% of California's third through eleventh grade students met or exceeded grade level standards (Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, ¶. 4) which indicates that *less than half* of California students are proficient readers. At the *Innovative Learning Academy* where this project was conducted, 64% of first graders were not proficient readers at the end of the 2014/2015 school year.

The rationale behind this project was to train K-2 teachers in effective methods to address early literacy development using innovative methods. The implementation of the Reader's Workshop (Calkins, 2010) model of instruction and in Scholastic's foundational digital reading program *iRead* (Scholastic Inc., 2014) were selected as alternative, more relevant curricula to monitor and increase student reading proficiency.
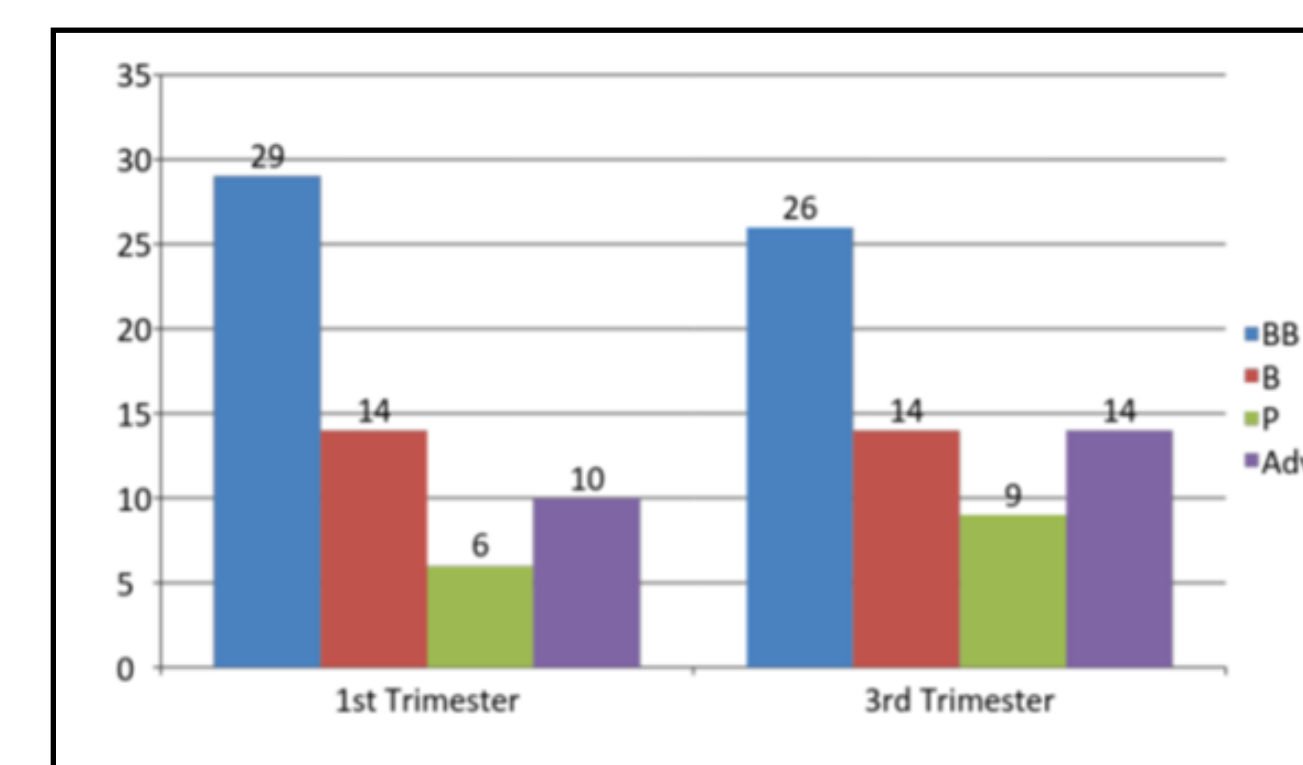
Figure 1: 1st grade reading proficiency data for 2014-2015 indicates that the majority of students performed below grade level for the entirety of the school year.

Project goals and objectives

Student Objective 1: Engage learners in and develop a love for reading.

Student Objective 2: Differentiate instruction and provide each student with reading materials that correspond to their individual abilities.

Student Objective 3: Increase reading proficiency as measured by the running record level in correlation to the district administered Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA).

Teacher Objective 1: Learn to administer and practice the new running records assessments.

Teacher Objective 2: Get an overview of and structure for the Reading Workshop (Calkins, 2010) model of instruction.

Teacher Objective 3: Obtain a reference packet of support materials to aid teachers in determining student reading levels and the progression of skills needed to progress academically.

Teacher Objective 4: Receive a brief introduction to the complimentary digital reading tool *iRead* (Scholastic Inc., 2014) that will be used to differentiate and monitor reading performance.

Results

Student Objective Results:

• Teachers report that Reading Workshop has "completely transformed" classroom instruction…where in the past reading has brought "groans, boredom, and frustration" this "differentiated reading time" has made students "excited and motived to become better readers" ("Favor," personal communication, March 18, 2016). (Objectives 1,2)

• Following implementation, one first grade classroom reported only 4 out of 27 students far below grade level in reading — as compared to 10 out of 26 the year prior. An increase of reading proficiency by 23% in that class alone. (Objective 3)

• Figures 4, 5 & 6 illustrate the positive effect of the innovative modifications. Comparatively over three years, the data falling implementation shows a reversal of the reading proficiency trends. (Objective 3)

Teacher Objective Results:

• In the one day session, teachers learned how to administer running record assessments and the how to organize, plan and structure Reading Workshop lessons 78% of teachers are currently using the new assessment system. (Objectives 1,2)

• 75% of faculty is implementing Reader's Workshop and 100% using *iRead* in their classrooms (Objectives 3, 4)
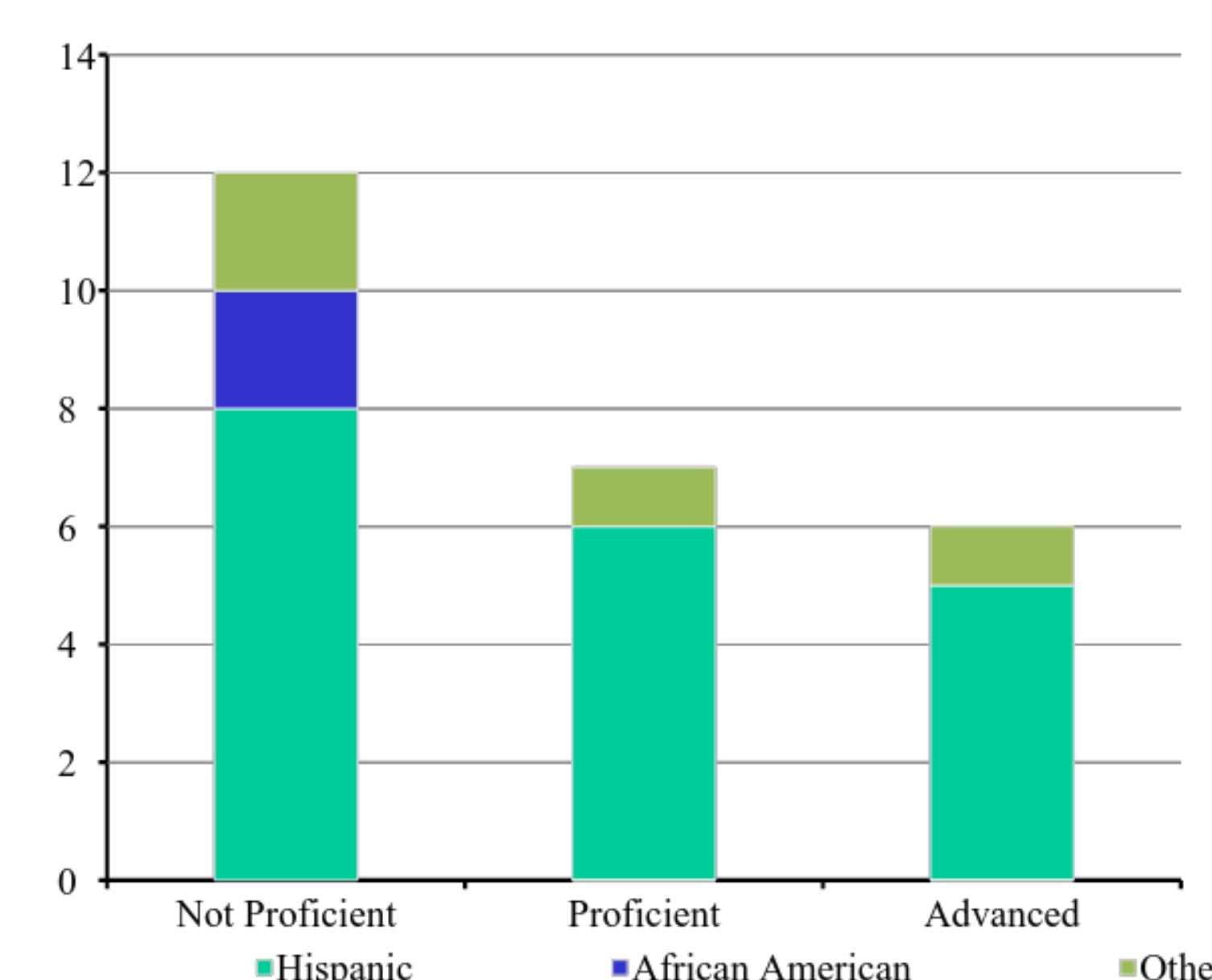
87.5%
AVERAGE IMPLEMENTATION OF MODIFICATIONS
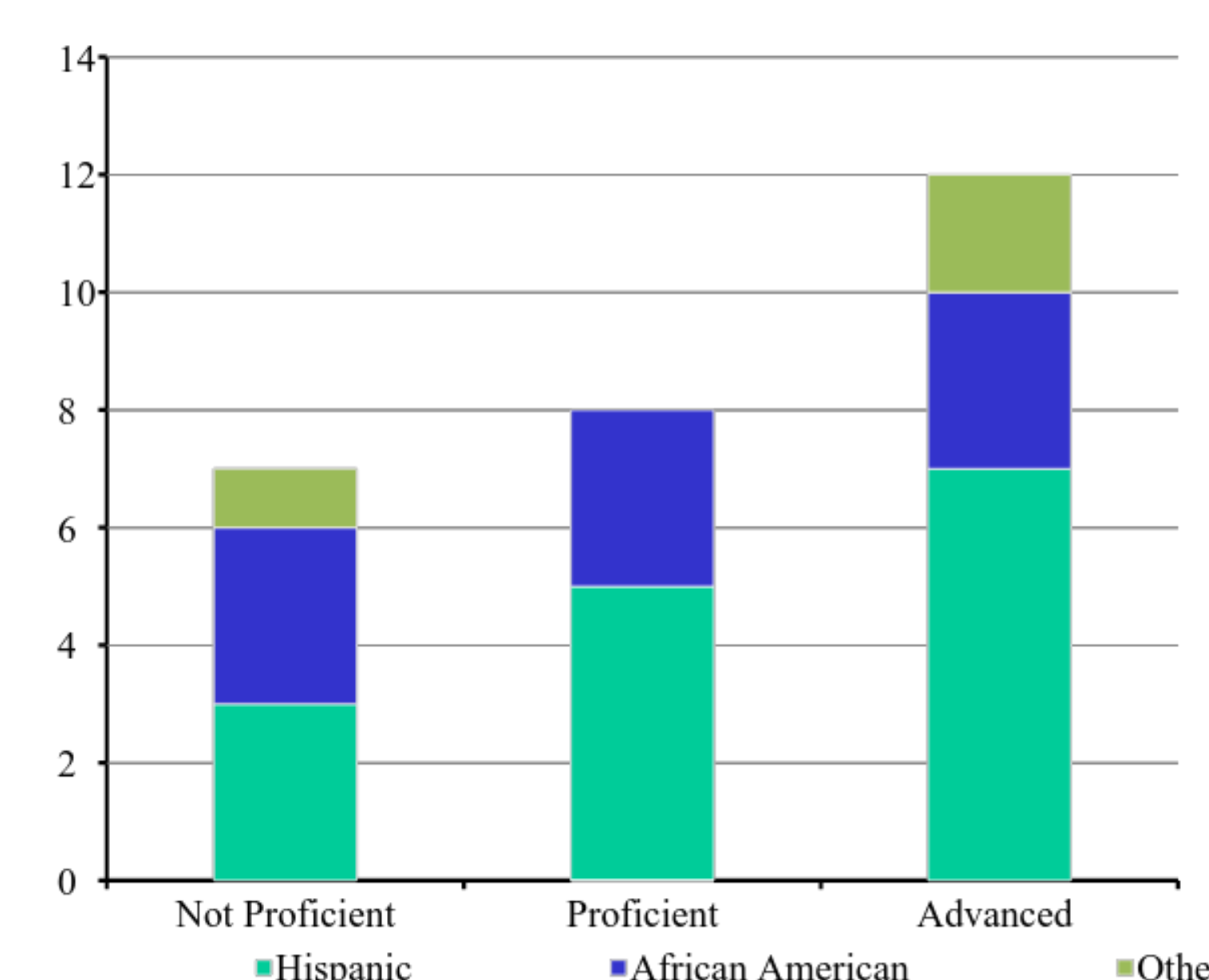

Reading Proficiency by Ethnicity 13-14
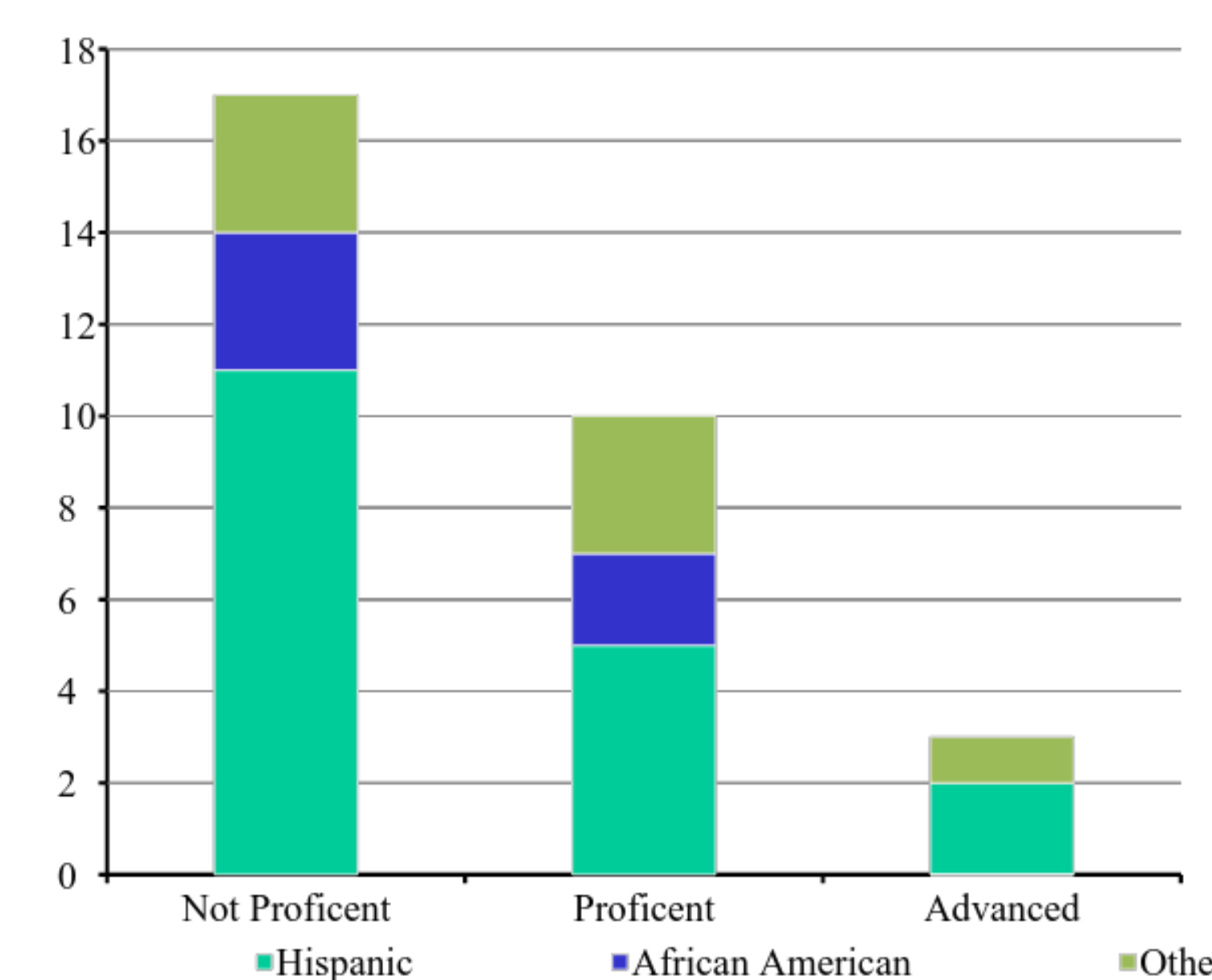
Figure 4: Trimester 2 reading proficiency data from the 1st grade sample population for the 2013-2014 school year.

Reading Proficiency by Ethnicity 14-15

Figure 5: Trimester 2 reading proficiency data from the 1st grade sample population for the 2014-2015 school year.


Reading Proficiency by Ethnicity 15-16

Figure 6: Trimester 2 reading proficiency data from the 1st grade sample population for the 2015-2016 school year. This figure shows the increase in reading proficiency following implementation of the curricular modifications from the research project.

Materials and methods

In a one day training, a *Google Slides* presentation was presented to K-2 teachers using materials created by Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (n.d) and adapted by the researcher. The professional development focused on two main components: running record reading assessments and the implementation of the Reader's Workshop (Calkins, 2010) model of instruction.

Figure 2: Appendix B, *Google Slides* presentation.
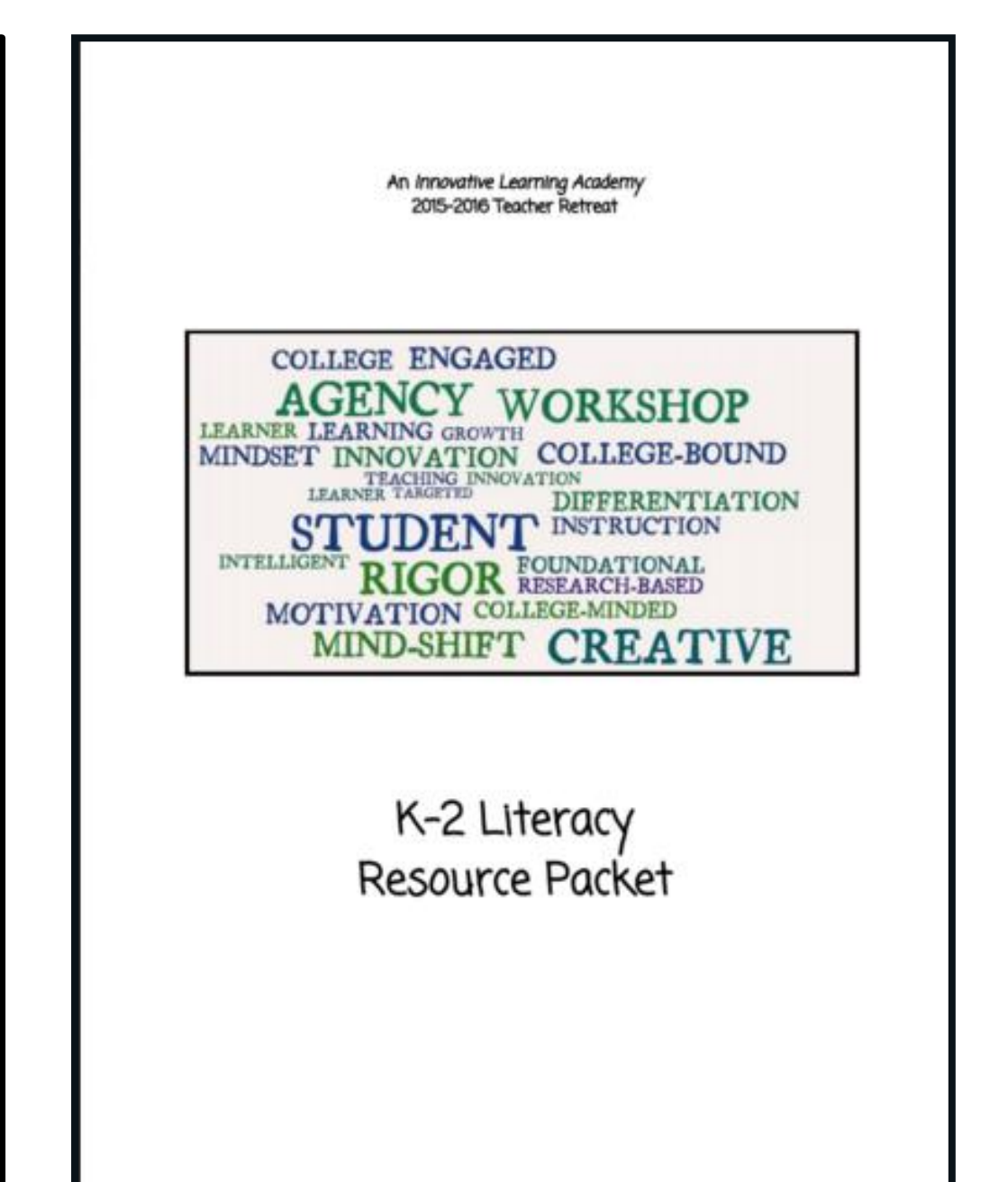
Figure 3: Appendix A, K-2 Literacy Handbook.

Literature cited

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Acknowledgements