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# USAID/LIBERIA READ LIBERIA IMPACT EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2019

Prepared under Contract No.: GC-10F-0033M/AID-OAA-M-13-00010

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# USAID READING AND ACCESS (R&A) EVALUATIONS

## USAID/LIBERIA READ LIBERIA IMPACT EVALUATION

### IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2019

SEPTEMBER 2019

Prepared under Contract No.: GC-10F-0033M/AID-OAA-M-13-00010 - PN 7617.016.01

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**DISCLAIMER**

This report was prepared independently by Dr. Alicia Menendez and Dr. Anna Solovyeva for NORC at the University of Chicago. The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	IV
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	V
PURPOSE	V
PROJECT BACKGROUND	V
FIELDWORK	V
FINDINGS	VI
1. EVALUATION PURPOSE	I
2. PROJECT BACKGROUND	I
3. MIDLINE DATA COLLECTION	2
3.1 INSTRUMENTS AND FIELDWORK	2
3.2 SCHOOL SAMPLE	2
4. MIDLINE FINDINGS	4
4.1 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOLS	4
4.1.1 PRINCIPALS	4
4.1.2 GRADE 2 TEACHERS	6
4.1.3 SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS	9
4.2 TRAINING	11
4.3 COACHING IN READ LIBERIA SCHOOLS	15
4.4 AVAILABILITY OF READING AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS	18
4.4.1 TEACHER GUIDES	19
4.4.2 STUDENT READING ASSESSMENTS	21
4.4.3 READING BOOKS	22
4.4.4 ACTIVITY BOOKS	24
4.4.5 ALPHABET AND SYLLABLE CARDS	25
4.4.6 ALPHABET POSTERS	27
4.4.7 SCHOOL LIBRARY RESOURCES	30
4.5 TEACHING PRACTICES	30
4.5.1 GENERAL TEACHING AND READING PRACTICES	31
4.5.2 CHANGES IN PRINCIPALS' AND TEACHERS' EFFORTS DEVOTED TO IMPROVING STUDENT READING PERFORMANCE	34
4.5.3 LESSON PLAN REVIEW, CLASSROOM OBSERVATION, AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES	36
4.5.4 RECENT CHANGES IN ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILDREN'S READING	39
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	39

## TABLES

Table 1. Midline sample size by county – All schools .....	3
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## FIGURES

Figure 1. Distribution of principals by sex – All schools .....	5
Figure 2. Principals' educational attainment – All schools .....	5
Figure 3. Years of experience in the principal position – All schools .....	6
Figure 4. Grades taught by principals – All schools .....	6
Figure 5. Distribution of grade 2 teachers by gender – All schools .....	7
Figure 6. Teachers' educational attainment – All schools .....	7
Figure 7. Grade 2 teachers' years of experience – All schools .....	8
Figure 8. Percentage of grade 2 volunteer teachers – All schools .....	8
Figure 9. Number of teachers by grade – All schools .....	9
Figure 10. Feeding program at schools – All schools .....	9
Figure 11. Number of parents attending Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings – All schools .....	10
Figure 12. Implementation of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) or Non Formal Education Program (NFE) – All schools .....	10
Figure 13. In-service training received by principals and teachers, "Have you...?" – All schools .....	11
Figure 14. Read Liberia training attended by principals and teachers – Treatment schools only .....	12
Figure 15. The number of Read Liberia trainings attended by principals and teachers in 2018 – Treatment schools only .....	13
Figure 16. Principals' opinions about the Read Liberia training – Treatment schools only .....	13
Figure 17. Teachers' opinions about the Read Liberia training – Treatment schools only .....	15
Figure 18. Teachers' opinions about the Read Liberia training – Treatment schools only (Continued) .....	15
Figure 19. Principals' work with the Read Liberia coaches aimed at improving teacher reading instruction – Treatment schools only .....	16
Figure 20. Frequency of the Read Liberia coaches observing literacy/English classes – Treatment schools only .....	17
Figure 21. Additional support to teachers offered by Read Liberia coaches even when not visiting the class – Treatment schools only .....	17
Figure 22. Frequency of receiving additional support from the Read Liberia coaches – Treatment schools only .....	18
Figure 23. Availability of sufficient resource materials/textbooks in Grade 1 and Grade 2 according to principals – All schools .....	19
Figure 24. Availability of teacher guides – All schools .....	19
Figure 25. The number of teacher guides received from Read Liberia – Treatment schools only .....	20
Figure 26. Teachers' opinion about the Read Liberia teacher guide(s) – Treatment schools only .....	20
Figure 27. Reading assessments conducted by grade 2 teachers last year – All schools .....	21
Figure 28. Frequency of the Read Liberia oral reading assessments conducted by grade 2 teachers – Treatment schools only .....	21
Figure 29. Availability of reading books in grade 2 classes, as reported by teachers – All schools .....	22
Figure 30. Frequency of using <i>Let's Read</i> books in grade 2 classes – Treatment schools only .....	22
Figure 31. Frequency of students taking <i>Let's Read</i> books to read at home – Treatment schools only .....	23
Figure 32. Availability of <i>Let's Read</i> books in grade 2 classes, measured by enumerators – Treatment schools only .....	23

Figure 33. Availability of activity books in grade 2 classes, as reported by teachers – All schools .....	24
Figure 34. Frequency of students taking Read Liberia activity books to work at home – Treatment schools only.....	24
Figure 35. Availability of Read Liberia activity books in grade 2 classes, as measured by enumerators – Treatment schools only.....	25
Figure 36. Availability of alphabet cards and/or syllable cards to guide grade 2 classes – All schools.....	25
Figure 37. Number of sets of the Read Liberia alphabet and/or syllable cards received per grade 2 class – Treatment schools only .....	26
Figure 38. Frequency of using the Read Liberia alphabet and/or syllable cards in grade 2 class reading instruction – Treatment schools only.....	26
Figure 39. Availability of alphabet posters in grade 2 classrooms. All schools.....	27
Figure 40. Frequency of using the Read Liberia alphabet posters in grade 2 classrooms – Treatment schools only.....	27
Figure 41. Availability of additional reading books in grade 2 classrooms – All schools.....	28
Figure 42. Proportion of grade 2 classrooms received additional reading books from Read Liberia – Treatment schools only .....	28
Figure 43. Number of additional Read Liberia reading books received in grade 2 classrooms – Eleven treatment schools that received books only .....	29
Figure 44. Titles of Read Liberia additional reading books received in grade 2 classrooms – Treatment schools only .....	29
Figure 45. Available libraries/reading rooms and lockable book storages at schools – All schools .....	30
Figure 46. Frequency of developing lesson plans, grade 2 teachers – All schools.....	31
Figure 47. Frequency of using official reading curriculum in grade 2 classroom lessons – All schools.....	31
Figure 48. Methods of measuring student reading progress in grade 2 – All schools.....	32
Figure 49. Principals’ expectation about fluent reading. Grade at which students should read with fluency – All schools.....	32
Figure 50. Grade 2 teachers’ expectation of students’ reading and pre-reading skills at the end of school year – All schools .....	33
Figure 51. Grade 2 classroom reading activities in the last five school days – All schools.....	34
Figure 52. Reasons for making special efforts to improve students reading performance – All schools .....	35
Figure 53. Amount of effort made by teachers to improve their students reading performance over the past year – All schools .....	36
Figure 54. Main person reviewing teachers’ lesson plans and observing classroom practices – All schools.....	36
Figure 55. Frequency of teachers’ lesson plans revision – All schools .....	37
Figure 56. Frequency of observing grade 2 lessons, as reported by principals – All schools.....	37
Figure 57. Frequency of principals observing lessons, as reported by grade 2 teachers – All schools.....	38
Figure 58. Frequency of receiving feedback from principal, as reported by grade 2 teachers – All schools.....	38
Figure 59. Grade 2 teachers’ opinion about attitudes towards reading – All schools.....	39

## ACRONYMS

DEO	District Education Officers
EGR	Early Grade Reading
IE	Impact Evaluation
IRB	Institutional Review Board
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
RL	Read Liberia
TKG	The Khana Group
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WAEC	West African Examinations Council

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PURPOSE

NORC at the University of Chicago, through the USAID Reading and Access Evaluation Contract, has been charged with conducting the external impact evaluation (IE) of the Read Liberia (RL) program. As part of the evaluation, NORC conducted a research study at midline to understand the implementation of Read Liberia in general and in the classrooms, as well as produce programmatic feedback for the implementing partner, USAID/Liberia, and other stakeholders. There are two main components in this 2019 study: the implementation study and the classroom observation study. The implementation study aims to investigate the nature of the Read Liberia program in practice and how it is actually being implemented in schools. The classroom observation study was designed with the purpose of providing an in-depth understanding of the how Read Liberia shaped practices in classrooms, and to capture the fidelity and quality of its implementation at the classroom level.

In this report, we focus on the implementation midline study, presenting findings from interviews with teachers and principals.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Read Liberia aims to improve reading outcomes in primary schools in six counties (Montserrado, Margibi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba and Lofa) in Liberia. The following are the main components of the RL program:

- **Teacher and Principal Training:** Two rounds of cluster-based, five-days training workshops organized by Read Liberia.
- **Provision of student textbooks and supplementary materials:** Every grade 1 and grade 2 student are to receive the reading book “Let’s Read”. Every kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 student are to receive an activity book. Additional copies are provided for the teachers and the school administration.
- **Provision of teaching materials:** Teachers are to receive Teacher Instruction Guides. In addition, each grade 1 and 2 classroom should also receive:
  - two alphabet posters
  - two sets of alphabet and syllable cards
  - ten supplementary reader titles, as follows:
- **Coaching:** Teachers are to receive coaching from recruited Read Liberia Instructional Supervisors (Coaches) to help them gain confidence using the teacher guides. Coaches are supposed to visit each school at least once every month and call or send messages to their teachers daily to discuss students’ progress and instructional challenges. School principals are expected to observe the teachers teach reading through the week. Additionally, the Read Liberia Teacher Training and Coaching Supervisor provides support to coaches and makes periodic visits to schools to provide additional support to teachers and principals.
- **Student evaluation:** Teachers are required to conduct Oral Reading Fluency assessment three times a year at the school level (2<sup>nd</sup> period, 4<sup>th</sup> period and 6<sup>th</sup> period.) They do so with the support of their cluster coach.

## FIELDWORK

In May and June 2019, NORC at The University of Chicago in partnership with The Khana Group (TKG) visited 62 schools in the six counties (Montserrado, Margibi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba and Lofa) where

RL is being implemented. Data were collected from all 44 treatment schools in our sample to monitor how the RL program is being implemented. In addition, we visited 18 control schools to learn the situation in schools that have not received the program yet. The main purpose of these school visits was to find out if teachers and head teachers received training, whether reading materials had reached the schools, and if teachers were using those materials, among others.

## **FINDINGS**

**Training.** Read Liberia provided teacher and principal training. In our sample of treatment schools, training participation was very high among grade 2 teachers (95 percent) and lower among principals (76 percent). The training was generally viewed as very favorable.

We recommend identifying principals that have not received RL training yet and offering a make-up training to those who did not participate as soon as possible.

**Coaching.** In most cases, coaches visited the grade 2 classroom with the adequate frequency intended by the program. The coaching support is well-received by teachers, who universally find it useful or very useful. Fifteen percent of the coaches, however, only visited the school every other month or less frequently.

We recommend exploring the barriers that preclude coaches from supporting teachers as often as expected. In addition, we recommend exploring how an appropriate country-level coaching system could be implemented and sustained once the RL program ends.

**Materials.** Another important component of Read Liberia is the provision of teaching and learning materials.

*Teacher guides.* The program provided all teachers in our sample with teacher's guides, although seven percent of the teachers only have the first semester guide.

*Student materials.* All grade 2 classrooms have RL student activity books and 88 percent of them have the RL reading book, Let's Read. In addition to some classrooms not having any Let's Read book, there is evidence there are not enough activity and reading books for all students in many classrooms. In 35 and 29 percent of the grade 2 treatment classes in our sample, less than half the children have a Let's Read book and RL student activity book respectively.

*Other materials.* Twenty-seven percent of the classes received supplementary reading materials from Read Liberia; alphabet cards and posters are only available in some schools.

We recommend exploring why there are insufficient materials and whether the deficit occurred at delivery or if there was some other problem later on. All RL materials should reach each class and each of the students.

In conclusion, Read Liberia has been very successful in many aspects of the implementation but there is still room to improve the availability of materials and, to a lesser but still crucial extent, the number of principals trained and the frequency of teacher coaching and support.

## I. EVALUATION PURPOSE

NORC at the University of Chicago, through the USAID Reading and Access Evaluation Contract, has been charged with conducting the external impact evaluation (IE) of the Read Liberia (RL) program. The primary interest of the evaluation is to measure the degree to which the RL activity increases the proportion of students who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text.

The NORC evaluation team is using an experimental or randomized control trial (RCT) approach to answer the evaluation question, with schools randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. We opted to use a repeated cross section sample, collecting data from a random sample of Grade 2 students in May 2017 and again from a random sample of Grade 2 students in the same schools, three years later, in 2020.

In addition, NORC collected data in 2019 as part of a midline study. The general purpose of this study is to understand the implementation of Read Liberia in general and in the classrooms, as well as produce programmatic feedback for the implementing partner, USAID/Liberia, and other stakeholders. There are two main components in this 2019 study: the implementation study and the classroom observation study. The implementation study aims to investigate the nature of the Read Liberia program in practice and how it is actually being implemented in schools. The classroom observation study was designed with the purpose of providing an in-depth understanding of the how Read Liberia shaped practices in classrooms and to capture the quality of its implementation at the classroom level.

In this report, we focus on the implementation midline study, presenting findings from interviews with teachers and principals.

## 2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Read Liberia aims to improve reading outcomes in primary schools in six counties (Montserrado, Margibi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba and Lofa) in Liberia. The following are the main components of the RL program:

- **Teacher and Principal Training:** Two rounds of cluster-based, five-days training workshops organized by Read Liberia in February and August of 2018. Teachers and principals unable to participate in February were offered make-up training in May. Similarly, teachers and principals unable to participate in August were offered a make-up training later that month.
- **Provision of student textbooks and supplementary materials:** Every grade 1 and grade 2 student was intended to receive the reading book *Let's Read*. Every kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 student was meant to receive an activity book. Additional copies were provided for the teachers and the school administration.
- **Provision of teaching materials:** Teachers received Teacher Instruction Guides (from previous Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP)). The guide format could be one annual guide or two guides, one for semester 1 and another for semester 2. In addition, each grade 1 and grade 2 classroom were also supposed to receive:
  - two alphabet posters
  - two sets of alphabet and syllable cards
  - ten supplementary reader titles, as follows:
    - *Ayo and His Pencil*
    - *My Little Snail*

- *Eleven Yellow Jerseys*
- *Another Kind of Ship*
- *Nottygoat*
- *Surprise from the Boys Room*
- *Simon's Story*
- *Nelson and Ali*
- *Blapoh's Dream*
- *Old Man and His Hat*
- **Coaching:** Teachers are to receive coaching from recruited Read Liberia Instructional Supervisors (Coaches) to help them gain confidence using the teacher guides for effective instruction to students. Coaches are supposed to visit each school at least once every month and call or send messages to their teachers daily to discuss students' progress and instructional challenges. School principals are expected to observe the teachers teach reading through the week. Additionally, the Read Liberia Teacher Training and Coaching Supervisor provides support to coaches and makes periodic visits to schools to provide additional support to teachers and principals.
- **Student evaluation:** Teachers are required to conduct Oral Reading Fluency assessment three times a year at the school level (2<sup>nd</sup> period, 4<sup>th</sup> period and 6<sup>th</sup> period.) They do so with the support of their cluster coach.

### 3. MIDLINE DATA COLLECTION

#### 3.1 INSTRUMENTS AND FIELDWORK

In May and June 2019, NORC at The University of Chicago in partnership with The Khana Group (TKG) visited 62 schools in the six counties (Montserrado, Margibi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba and Lofa) where RL is being implemented. Data were collected from all 44 treatment schools<sup>1</sup> in our sample to monitor how the RL program is being implemented. The main purpose of these school visits was to find out if teachers and head teachers received training, whether reading materials had reached the schools, and if teachers were implementing the program pedagogical practices in class. In addition, we visited 18 control schools to learn the situation in schools that have not received the program yet.

The tools used in the midline data collection included: (1) a principal questionnaire, (2) a teacher questionnaire administered to the grade 2 teacher of literacy/English, and (3) a classroom observation tool completed during the grade 2 literacy class by two trained enumerators that produced independent descriptions of classroom activity, which are analyzed together. In addition, both fieldworkers completed a closed-ended part of the classroom observation instrument after the lesson. In this report we focus on the quantitative data provided by principals and grade 2 teachers; the corresponding instruments and details about data collection are included in Annex I.

#### 3.2 SCHOOL SAMPLE

The midline sample included all treatment schools (44) and 18 randomly selected control schools<sup>2</sup> out of the baseline sample. Table I displays the number of planned and achieved school visits, principal and

<sup>1</sup> The baseline sample had 45 treatment schools but one school was privatized and therefore dropped from Read Liberia.

<sup>2</sup> The evaluation team, along with USAID/Liberia, decided to visit all treatment schools to have as much detail about program implementation as possible. Eighteen control schools are a large enough sample to understand teaching practices, availability of materials, etc. in the control group while remaining within budget.

teacher interviews and grade 2 classroom observations, and provides reasons for non-completion of the classroom observation for the entire midline sample of schools. It shows that all 62 schools were visited but not all interviews and classroom observations were completed. The completion rates are as follows: principal interviews – 97 percent; teacher interviews – 95 percent; and classroom observations – 93 percent. The reasons for non-completion were schools being closed for the year and tests being administered on the week of school visit. This was in spite of the fact that school visits took place between May 23 and June 7<sup>th</sup>, and schools were supposed to provide normal instruction until June 8<sup>th</sup> and be open until July 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Table 1. Midline sample size by county – All schools**

COUNTY	SCHOOLS		PRINCIPAL INTERVIEWS COMPLETED	TEACHER INTERVIEWS COMPLETED	CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS COMPLETED	REASONS FOR NON-COMPLETION
	PLAN NED	VISITED				
<b>Grand Bassa</b>	7	7	7	7	7	-
<b>Bong</b>	11	11	10	10	9	One school closed One school testing /teacher absent
<b>Lofa</b>	15	15	14	14	14	One school closed
<b>Margibi</b>	5	5	5	5	5	-
<b>Montserrado</b>	10	10	10	9	9	One school closed, principal available
<b>Nimba</b>	14	14	14	14	14	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>58</b>	-

The detailed reasons for school’s closures are as follows. School names are concealed to protect confidentiality.

- **Bong County School A:** The team arrived at the school on May 28th, 2019 and found the school premises empty of students and staff. Upon inquiry within the local community, residents informed the team that the school had been closed for a month and that the children had been taken to “Bush School”. Community residents could not provide more details due to the secret society nature of the Bush School<sup>3</sup>.
- **Bong County School B:** On May 29th, 2019, the Bong team visited this school and was informed by the school’s principal that students were undergoing tests for the remainder of the week. The teacher and principal interviews were conducted, but given that there would be no normal classroom activity for the next two days, Grade 2 reading lessons could not be observed. The team did, however, return to the school the following week. On their second visit to the school, the Grade 2 reading instructor was absent due to death in the family. Reading lessons were not observed at this school.

<sup>3</sup> Bush School is a traditional school that enforces traditional practices that have been carried out for centuries.

- **Lofa County School A:** Upon arrival at this school on May 28th, 2019, the team found the school building empty. The team was informed by community dwellers that the school has been closed for about two months because the children have gone to Bush School.
- **Montserratado County School A:** The Montserratado team successfully conducted the principal interview, however, the school was closed at least for the remainder of the week due to the death of a teacher, as explained by the principal on June 5th, 2019. The principal did not know when classes would restart.

In summary, our actual midline sample includes 18 control schools where we conducted interviews with principals, teachers and classroom observations. Among treatment schools, we were able to conduct 42 principal interviews, 41 grade 2 teacher interviews, and 40 grade 2 classroom observations.

## 4. MIDLINE FINDINGS

In this section, we present implementation findings at midline. We first present basic characteristics of principals, grade 2 teachers, and schools, including the participation of schools in literacy programs. We then explore the extent to which the implementation of the Read Liberia program reached the targeted schools. In addition, we show the proportion of principals and teachers that received RL training, the percentage of schools with RL reading materials and teacher instruction guides, and the percentage of teachers that receive Read Liberia support. Lastly, we present principals’ and teachers’ use of RL resources and their opinions about the program.

### 4.1 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOLS

In this subsection we present the characteristics of principals, grade 2 teachers and the schools for all schools – treatment and control – in our midline sample. We focus on the education and experience of principals and teachers, teaching responsibilities of principals, and special programs implemented in the schools, such as accelerated learning programs and feeding programs.

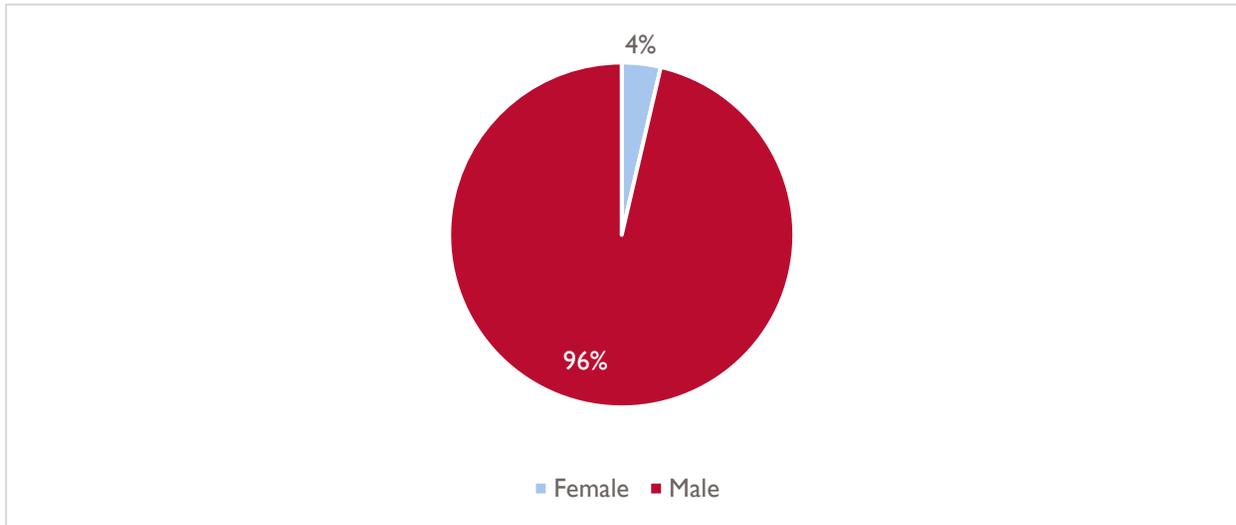
#### 4.1.1 PRINCIPALS

We interviewed principals or the highest level administrators available in every school visited. The sample predominantly consisted of school principals – 88 percent of the sample are school principals, while the remaining 12 percent of respondents are vice-principals.<sup>4</sup> The vast majority (96 percent) of principals are males (Figure 1).

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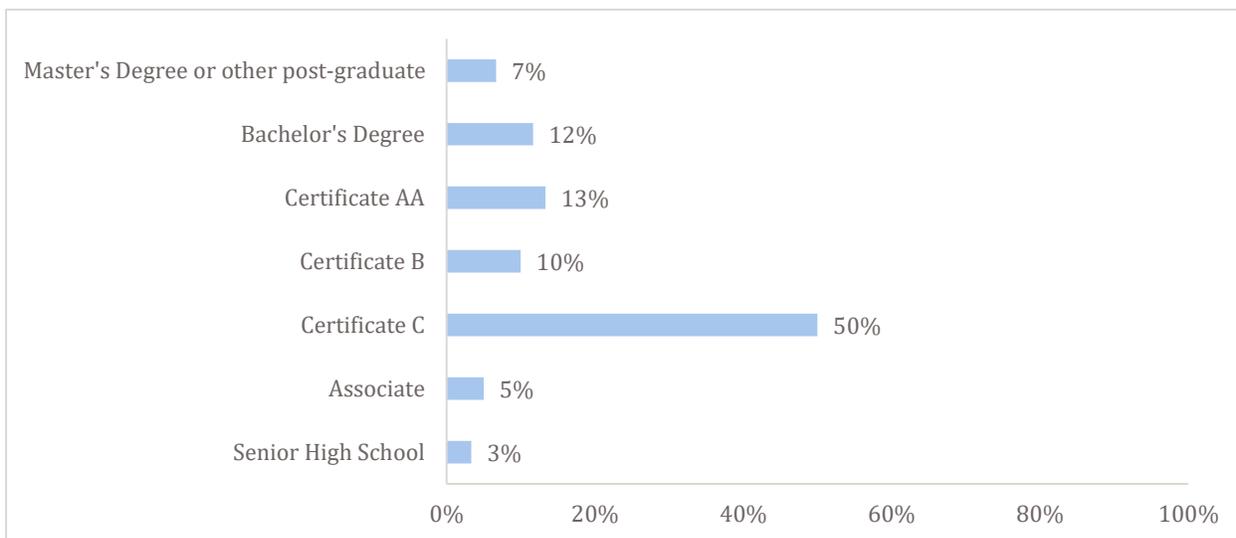
<sup>4</sup> Hereafter we will refer to both principals and vice principal as “principals”.

**Figure 1. Distribution of principals by sex – All schools**



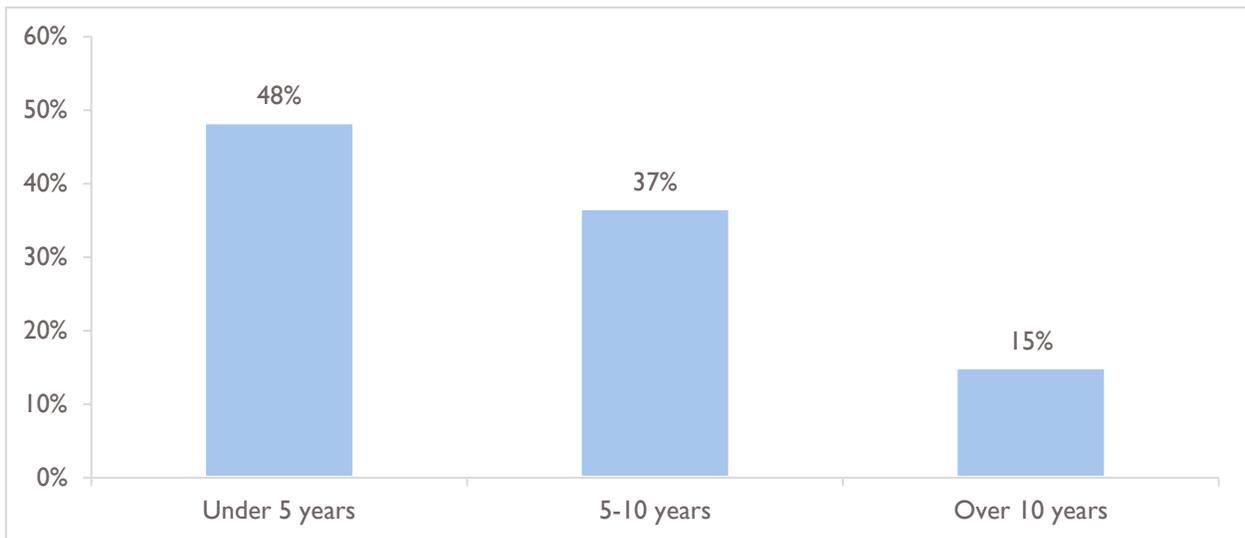
As depicted on Figure 2, half (50 percent) of principals hold a Certificate C – the minimum teaching qualification – allowing them to teach in the elementary division, and ten percent have a Certificate B which allows teaching in the Junior High School Division. Approximately 32 percent of principals have degrees that allow teaching at the level of senior high school, this includes an AA Certificate, Bachelor, Master and other post-graduate degrees. The remaining eight percent of principals have qualifications lower than a Certificate C (Associate and Senior High School).

**Figure 2. Principals' educational attainment – All schools**



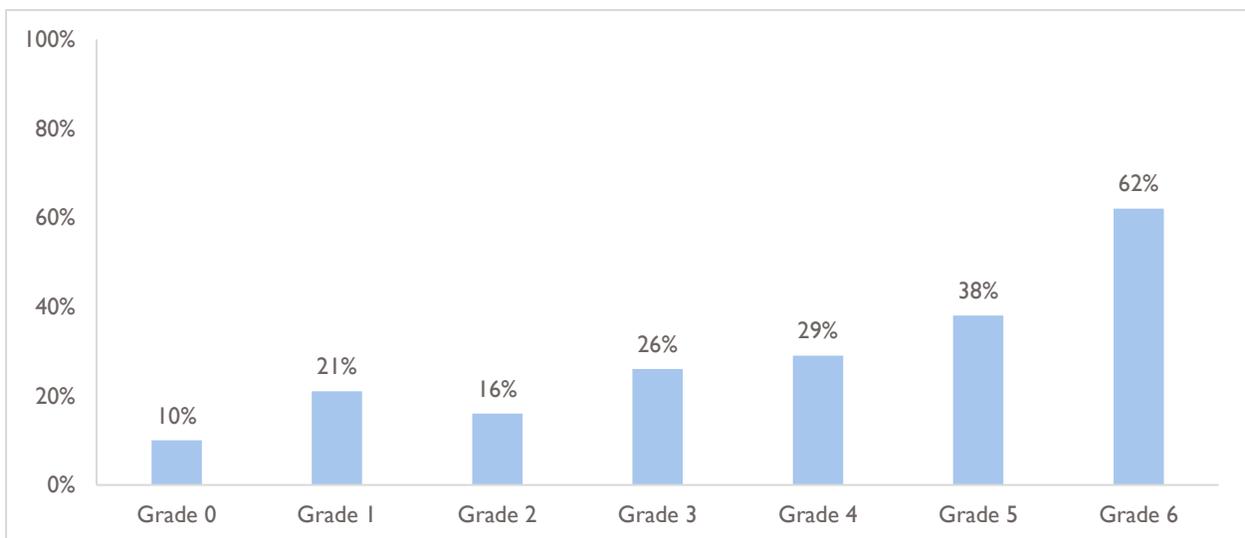
We show in Figure 3. that nearly half (48 percent) of principals have under five years of experience in their current position, over a third (37 percent) have been in this position between five and ten years, and another 15 percent have over ten years of principal experience.

**Figure 3. Years of experience in the principal position – All schools**



Ninety-seven percent of principals currently teach at their schools. As seen in Figure 4, principals tend to teach senior grades with over 60 percent of principals teaching Grade 6, 38 percent teaching Grade 5, and 29 percent teaching Grade 4.

**Figure 4. Grades taught by principals – All schools**

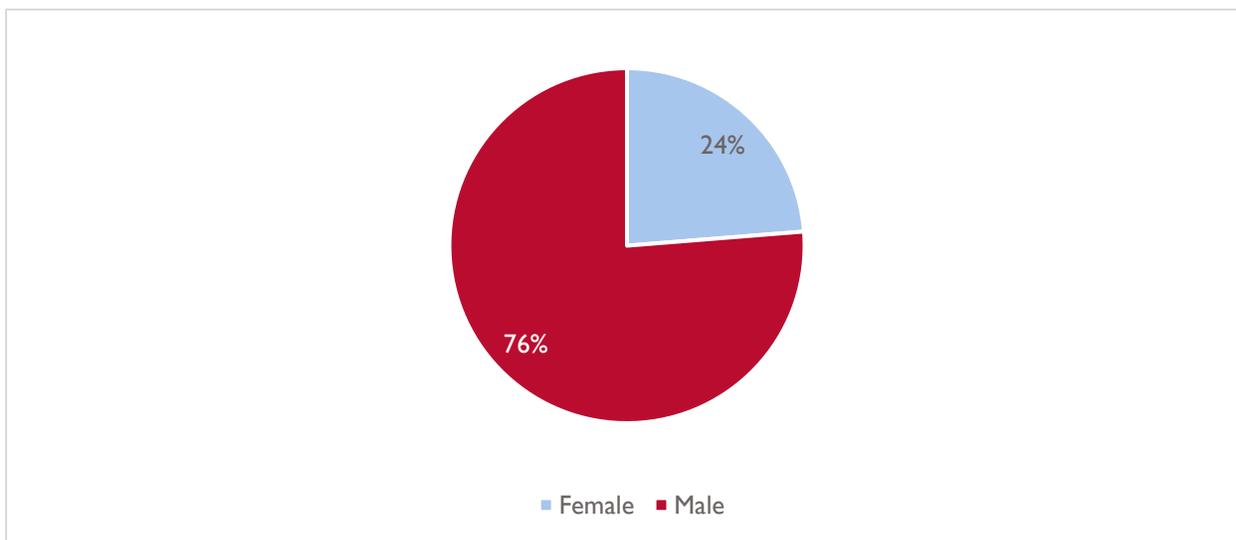


Note: Total adds to more than 100 percent as principals can teach more than one grade.

#### 4.1.2 GRADE 2 TEACHERS

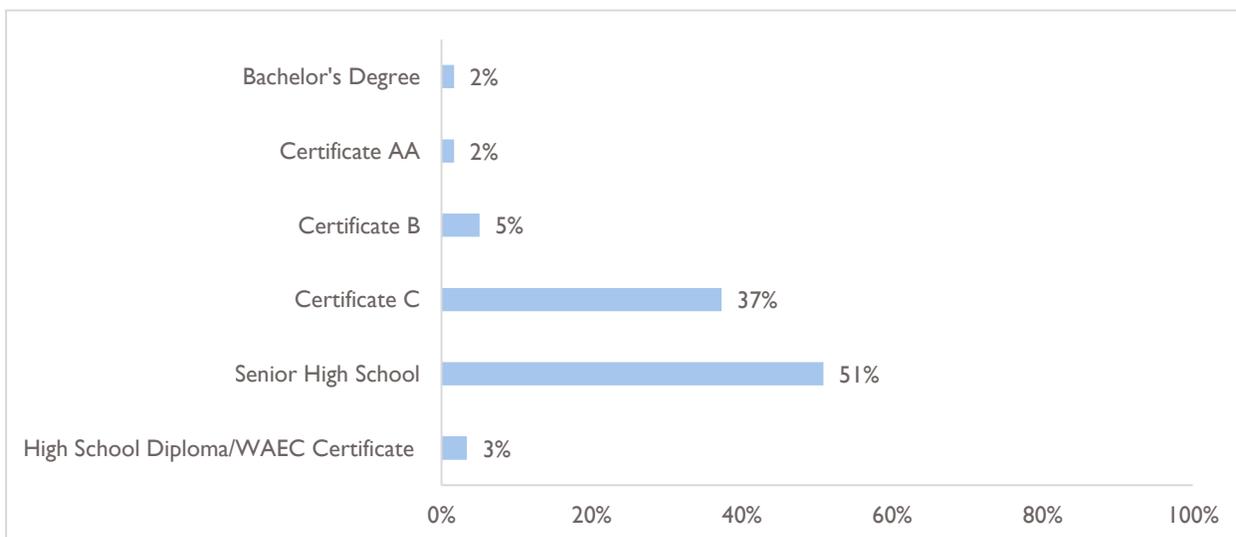
We show in Figure 5 that the majority of grade 2 teachers are males. Compared to school principals, there is increased female representation, though females comprise less than a quarter of the teachers in our sample.

**Figure 5. Distribution of grade 2 teachers by gender – All schools**



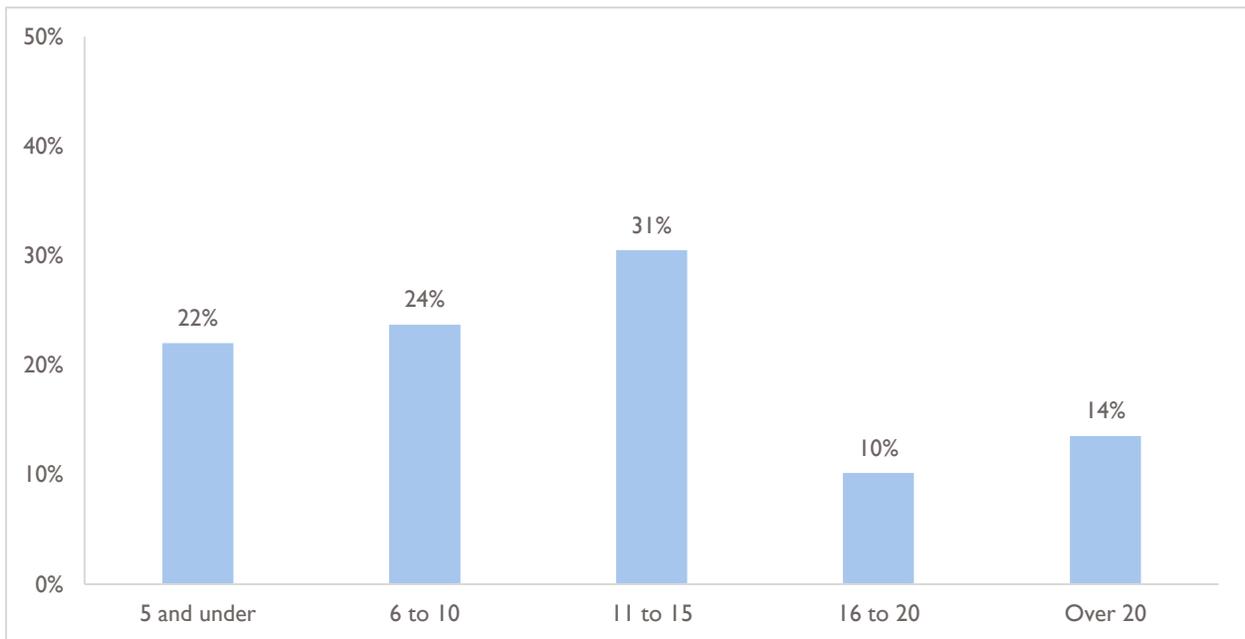
The general educational attainment of grade 2 teachers is generally lower than that of the principal sample. Only two percent of teachers hold a Bachelor's Degree, another two percent have a Certificate AA, five percent have a Certificate B, and 37 percent have a Certificate C, while over half (54 percent) of teachers hold a Senior High School degree or the West African Examinations Council's (WAEC) Certificate (Figure 6 6).

**Figure 6. Teachers' educational attainment – All schools**



Grade 2 teachers in the whole sample appear to be very experienced. 31 percent possess 11 to 15 years of teaching experience, and 24 percent have over 15 years of experience. Another 24 percent possess six to ten years of experience, and the remaining 22 percent having five or fewer years of teaching experience (Figure 7).

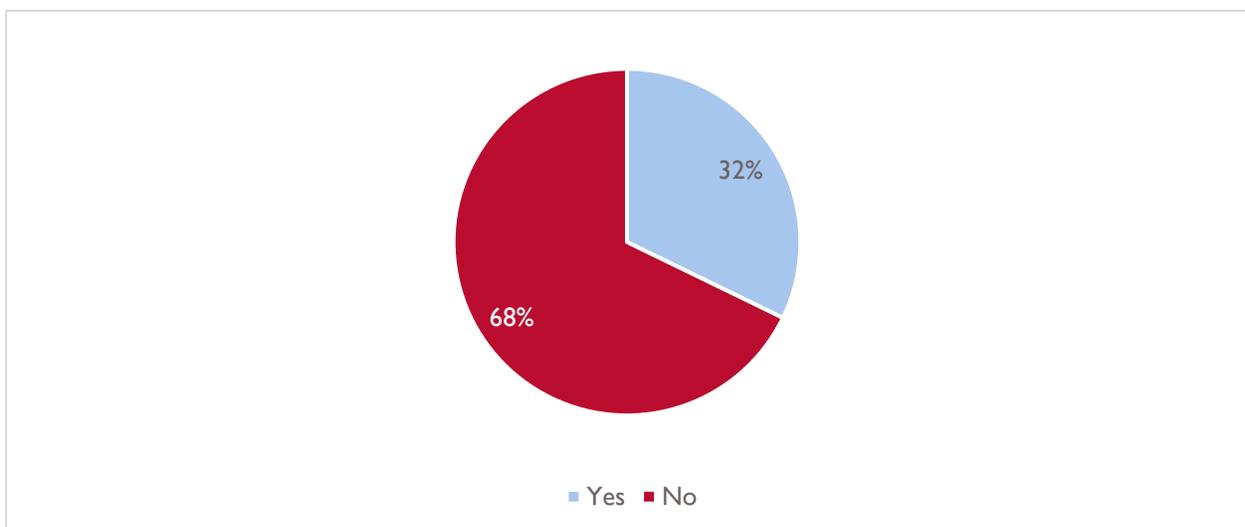
**Figure 7. Grade 2 teachers' years of experience – All schools**



In addition to teaching Grade 2, the respondents most often teach Grade 1 (24 percent), Grade 3 (14 percent), and Grade 4 (ten percent); seven percent also teach Grades 5 and 6 (each), and two percent teach the Kindergarten level. The majority of teachers (97 percent) have been teaching the same class since the beginning of the school year.

Thirty-two percent of grade 2 teachers interviewed are volunteers (Figure 8), all of whom plan to continue teaching during the next academic year that starts in September 2019.

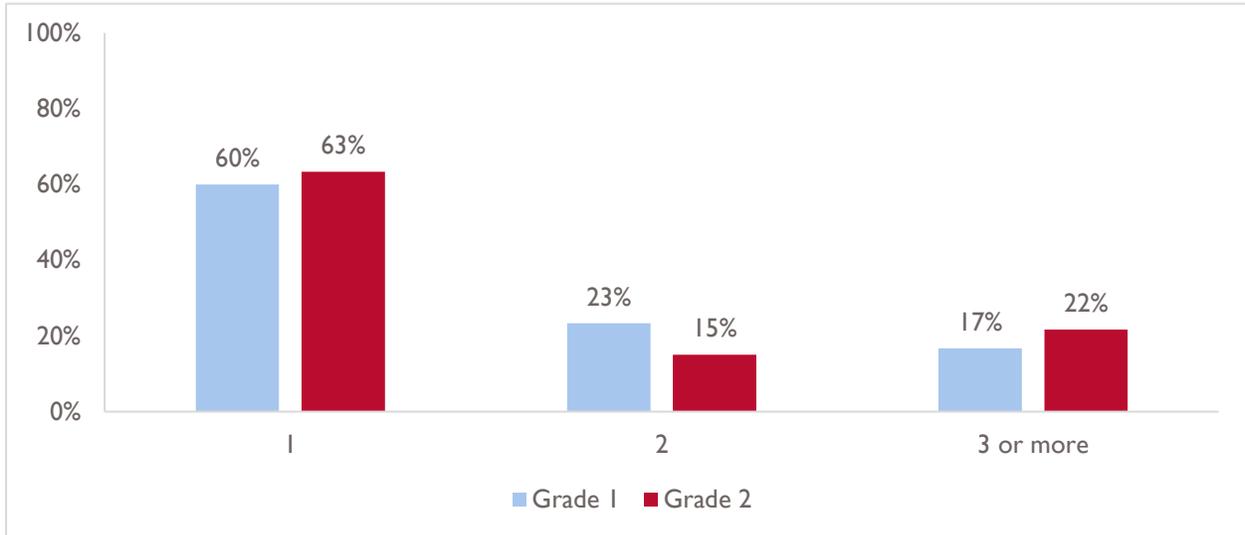
**Figure 8. Percentage of grade 2 volunteer teachers – All schools**



### 4.1.3 SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

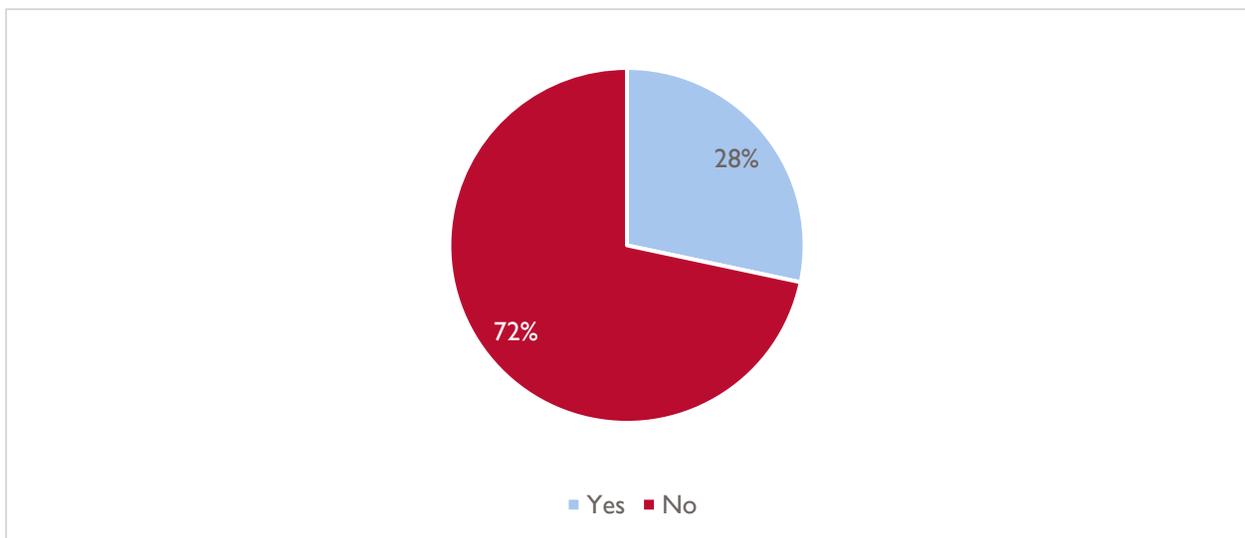
About 60 percent of schools have only one grade 1 and one grade 2 teacher. 23 and 15 percent of schools have two grade 1 and grade 2 teachers, respectively; and 17 and 22 percent of schools have three or more grade 1 and grade 2 teachers (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Number of teachers by grade – All schools**



In Figure 10, we show that 28 percent of schools provide feeding program to the students. All schools observe student dress code.

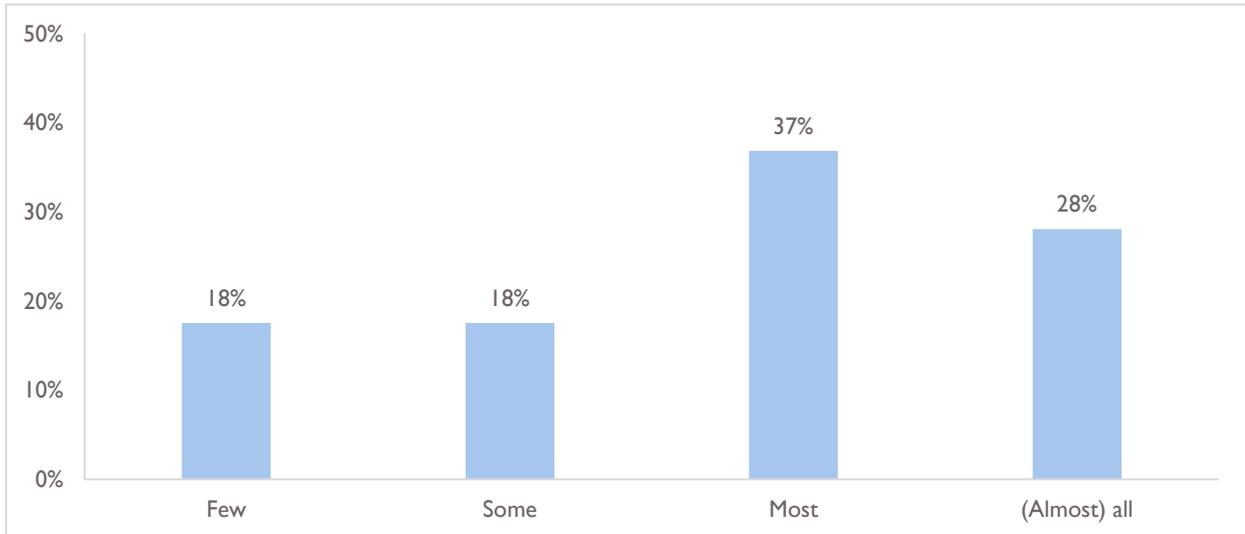
**Figure 10. Feeding program at schools – All schools**



Regarding the presence of Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), 95 percent of schools hold regular PTA meetings. Among the schools that report regular PTA meetings, 65 percent say most or almost all

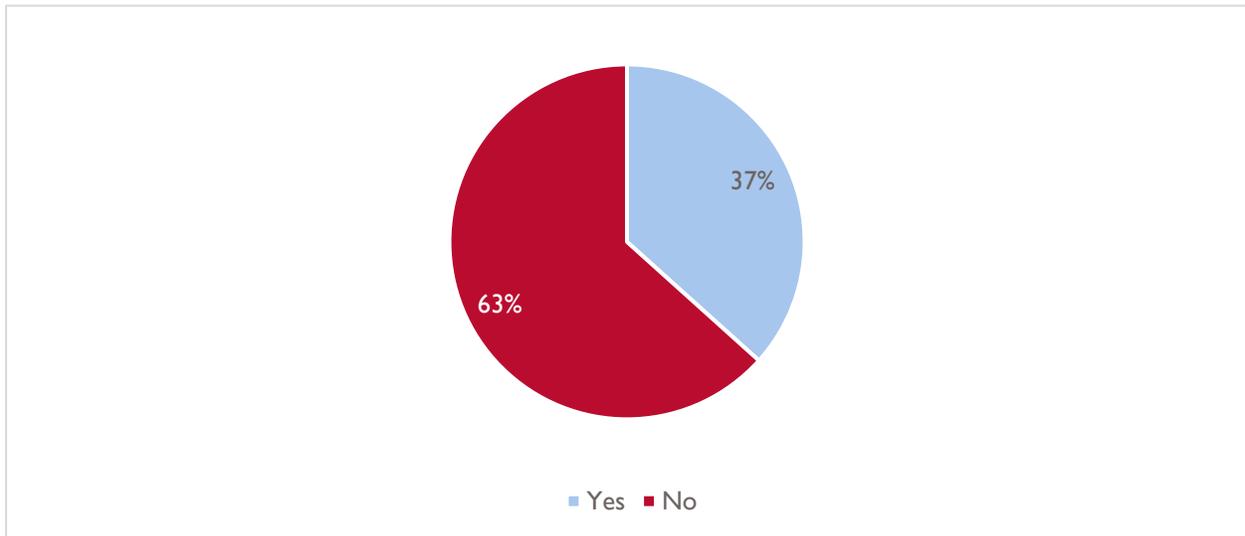
parents attend PTA meetings, 18 percent report some parents come to the meetings, and another 18 percent say only a few parents attend PTA meetings (Figure 11).

**Figure 11. Number of parents attending Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings – All schools**



Thirty-seven percent of the schools in the sample implement Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) or Non Formal Education Program (NFE) (Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Implementation of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) or Non Formal Education Program (NFE) – All schools**



Finally, we asked all principals if their schools are part of the Read Liberia program. All the treatment schools' principals reported that Read Liberia is currently implementing a reading program in their school and none of the control schools' principals reported its implementation.

**Read Liberia is present in all the treatment schools in our sample. No contamination in control schools has been detected.**

### 4.2 TRAINING

In this subsection, we present findings about in-service principals and grade 2 teacher development. We asked principals in all the schools in our sample – treatment and control – about general in-service training and training focused on teaching reading. In addition, we asked questions about Read Liberia training to principals and grade 2 teachers in treatment schools.

Both principals and teachers from all schools were asked a set of questions about their attendance of various professional development trainings and reading trainings. In the total sample, 92 percent of principals and 97 percent of teachers attended in-service training or professional development sessions (workshops). In addition, 82 percent of principals and 93 percent of teachers received some training on how to teach reading (Figure 13).

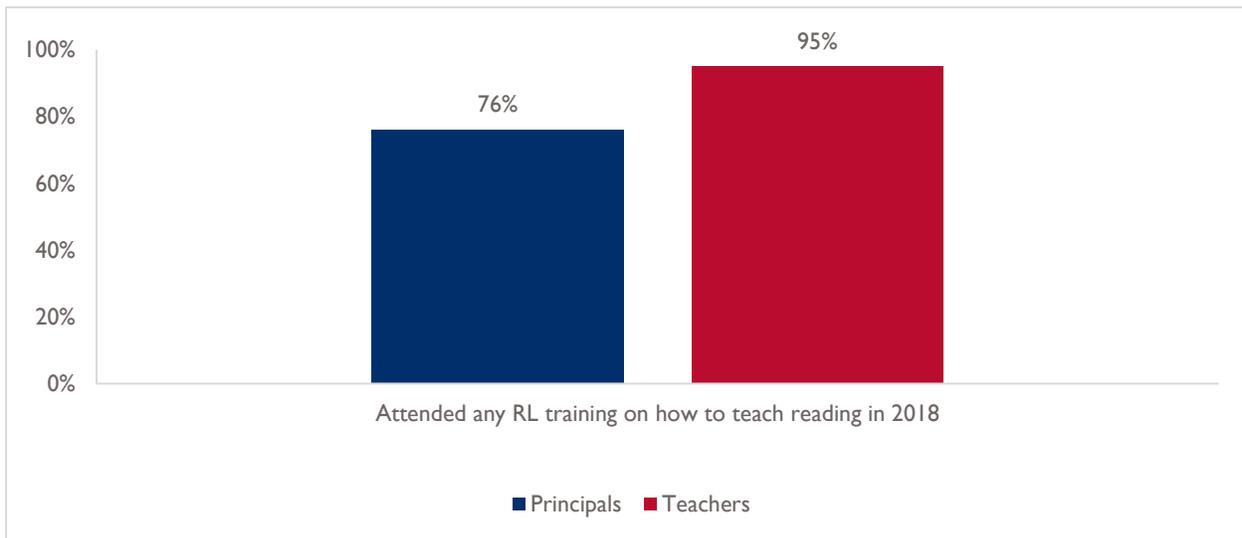
**Figure 13. In-service training received by principals and teachers, “Have you... ?” – All schools**



Next, we focus on RL training attended by principals and teachers. Seventy six percent of principals and 95 percent of teachers in RL treatment schools did attend some RL training in 2018 (Figure 14).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> One principal and two teachers from the control schools report attending the RL training in 2018. Here and in what follows, we do not include them in the subsample when discussing aspects of the RL training attended, rather focusing on principals and teachers from the treatment schools.

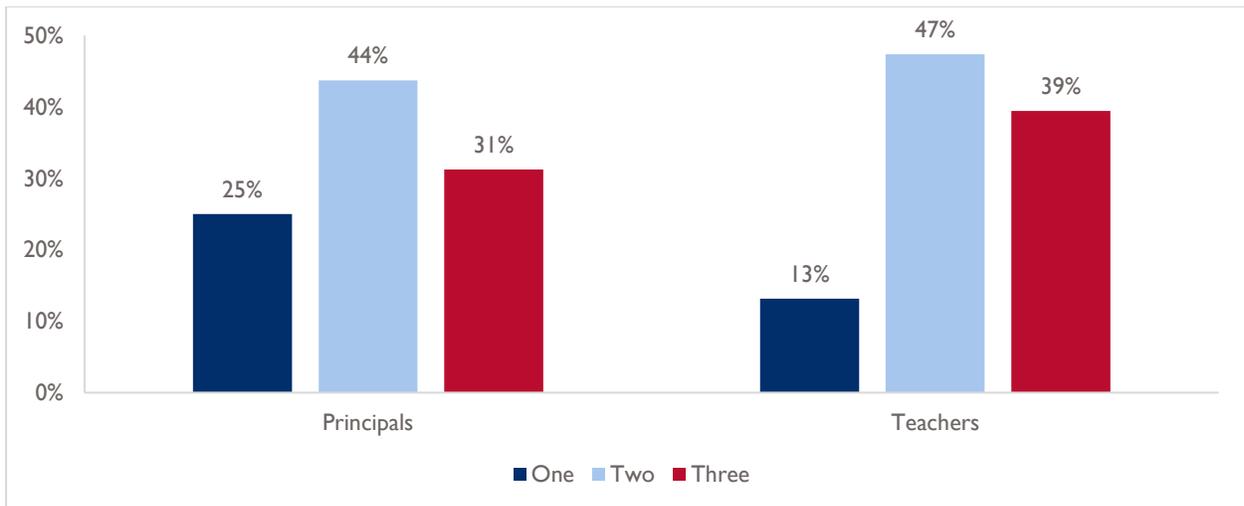
**Figure 14. Read Liberia training attended by principals and teachers – Treatment schools only**



Examining reasons for non-attendance, we find that four principals who did not attend any RL training in 2018 say they were not invited, two were unavailable, and two had other reasons (not specified) for not participating in RL training. The two principals who were unavailable for the training claim that RL did not reach out to them to attend make up training sessions. Out of three teachers who did not attend the RL training in 2018, one was not invited and two were unavailable. One teacher who had been unavailable for the original training attended makeup training, and the other one was provided materials that were discussed during the training.

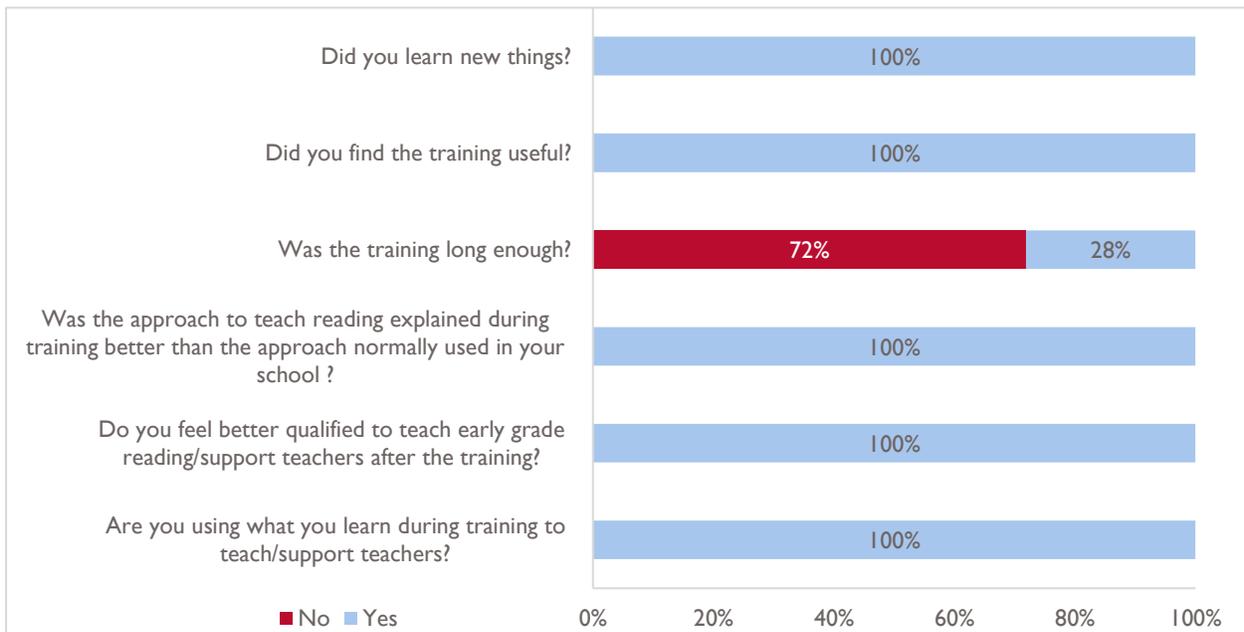
Analyzing the details of the RL training attendance (among attendees), we find that largest percentages of principals (44 percent) and teachers (47 percent) attended two RL trainings sessions in 2018. This is what the RL program was set up to offer. A quarter of principals and 13 percent of teachers attended only one RL training session. About 30 percent of principals and nearly 40 percent of teachers report having attended three RL trainings (February, May (when make-up session was offered) and August) (Figure 15). In theory, each participant was supposed to attend two training sessions; therefore, this could indicate a problem with the respondents' reports or that they participated in the make-up sessions even when it was not needed. On average, principals attended 4.8 out of five days in each training (and 10.0 days in total), whereas teachers attended 4.9 out of five days in each training (and 11.1 days in total).

**Figure 15. The number of Read Liberia trainings attended by principals and teachers in 2018 – Treatment schools only**



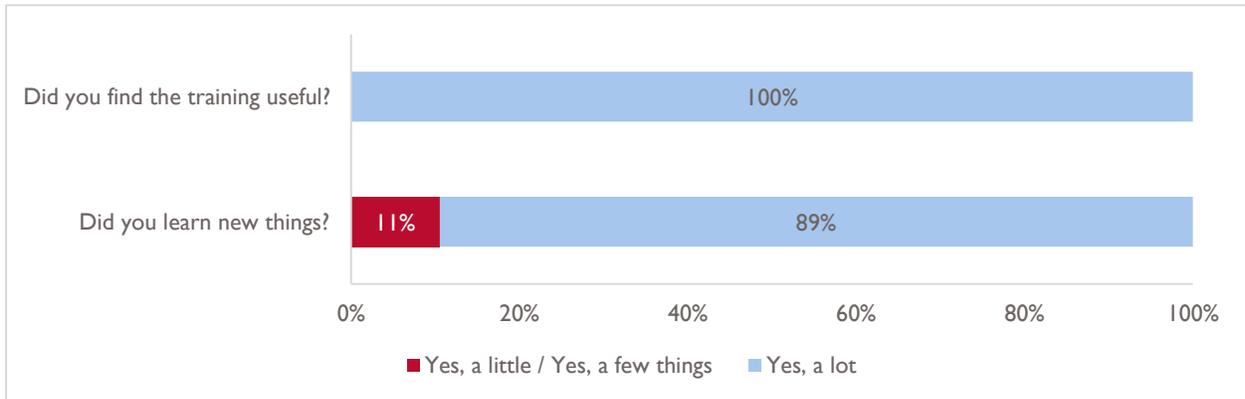
All principals in RL schools agree that the training was useful and that they learned new things (Figure 16). They also find the reading instruction approach that was explained during the training to be better than the one used at their schools. All principals feel better qualified to teach early grade reading or to support teachers after the training, and all say they now use what they learned during training to teach or support teachers. At the same time, over 70 percent of principals think the training was not long enough. This is a very common finding for trainings; in most surveys trainees report that reading instruction trainings should be longer.

**Figure 16. Principals’ opinions about the Read Liberia training – Treatment schools only**

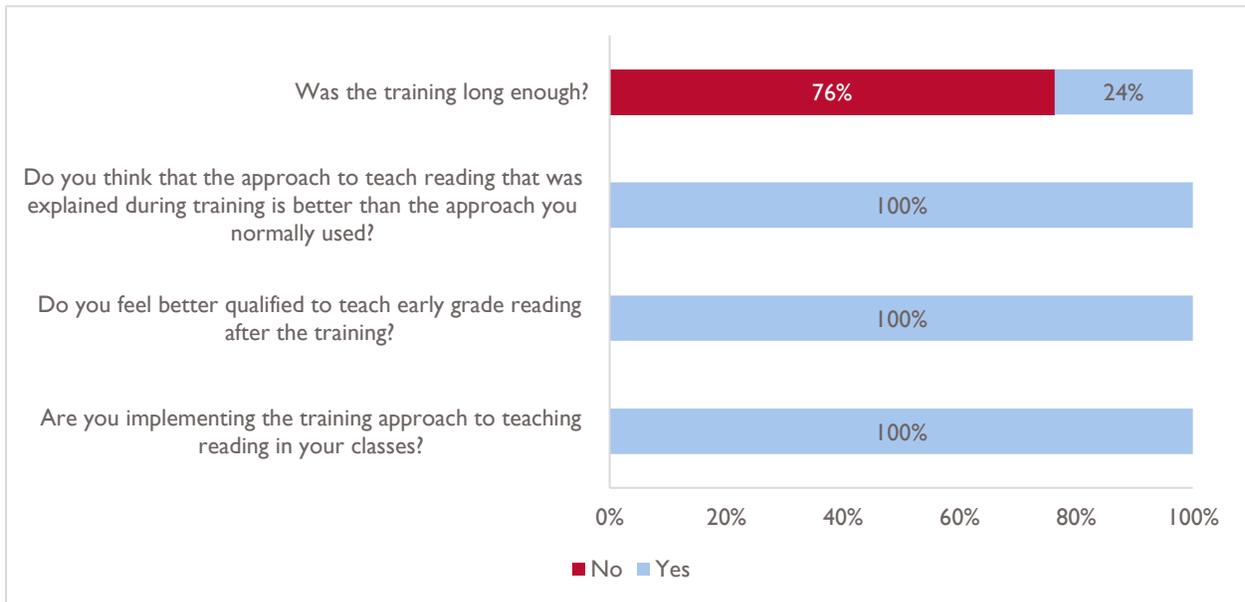


Teachers answered a similar set of questions about their experiences with the RL training. All teachers found the RL training very useful, with 89 percent saying they learned a lot of new things and about 11 percent thinking they only learned a few new things at the training. Figure 18 shows that all teachers consider the RL approach to reading instruction to be better than the one they used in their classes. All teachers feel better qualified to teach early grade reading after the training, and they are implementing the RL approach to teaching reading in their classes. Similar to principals, the majority of teachers – 76 percent – think that the training was not long enough.

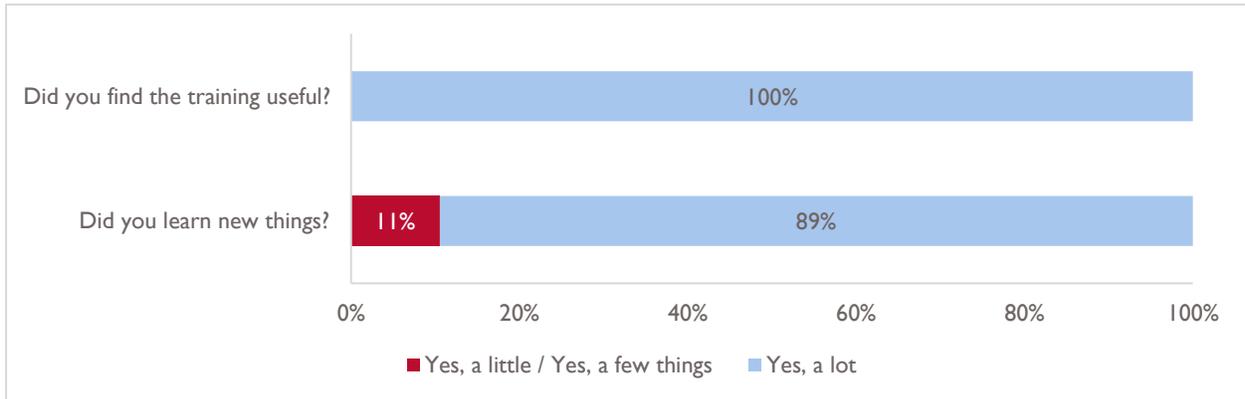
**Figure 17. Teachers’ opinions about the Read Liberia training – Treatment schools only**



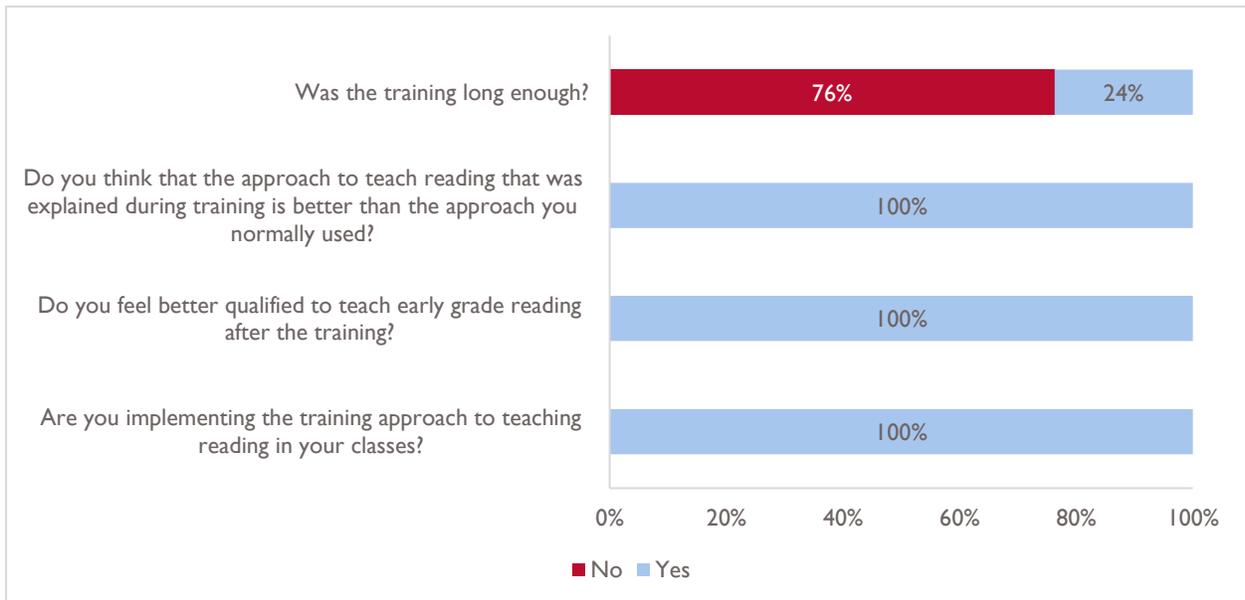
**Figure 18. Teachers’ opinions about the Read Liberia training – Treatment schools only (Continued)**



**Figure 17. Teachers' opinions about the Read Liberia training – Treatment schools only**



**Figure 18. Teachers' opinions about the Read Liberia training – Treatment schools only (Continued)**



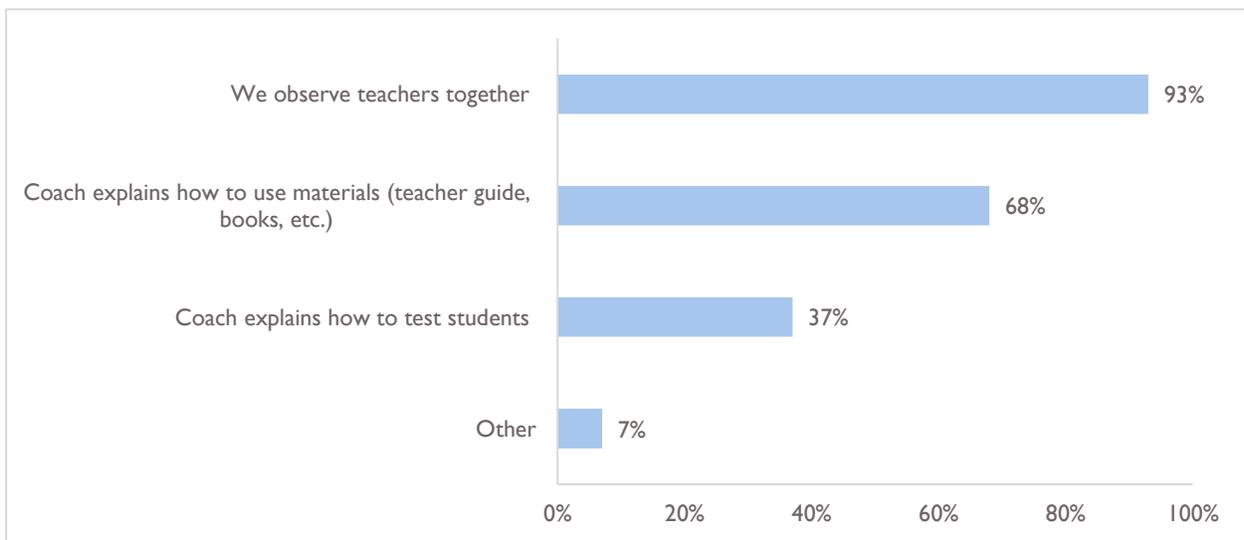
**In our sample of Read Liberia schools, 95% of grade 2 teachers and 76% of principals received Read Liberia training on how to teach reading. The training was very well regarded by all. All participants report applying the lessons learned to their reading classes and teachers' support.**

### 4.3 COACHING IN READ LIBERIA SCHOOLS

In this subsection, we show the in-service support or coaching that principals and grade 2 teachers in Read Liberia schools received under the program. We focus on the frequency of coaching, modalities of the interaction between coaches and principals and teachers, and the overall satisfaction with coaching.

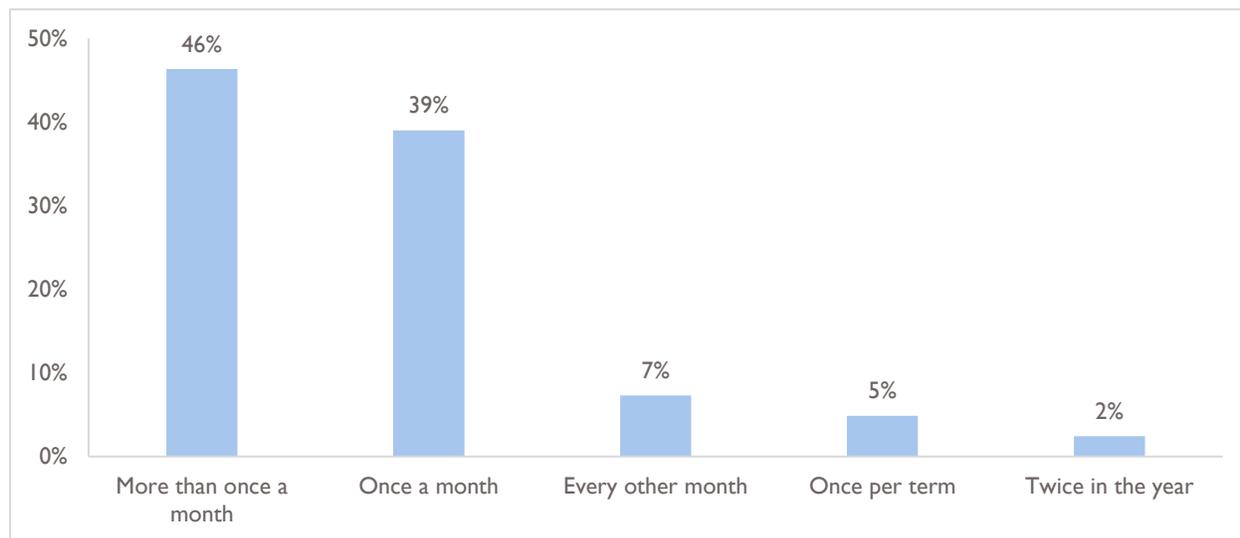
According to the principals, all treatment schools that were visited received visits from the RL coaches within the last year. In 41 percent of the cases, the RL coaches visited schools with their supervisors. Nearly all principals (98 percent) work with coaches to improve teacher reading instruction. The most common ways of working with coaches to improve teacher reading instruction are the following: principals observe teachers together with the RL coaches (93 percent), receiving the RL coach’s explanations on how to use study materials such as teacher guides and books (68 percent), and receiving the RL coach’s explanations on how to test students (37 percent) (Figure 19). Other ways of working with RL coaches mentioned by principals were: feedback received in person from a coach; feedback provided by a coach to teachers after class observations; and coaches occasionally teaching classes. All principals find the feedback provided by the RL coaches to teachers to be generally helpful.

**Figure 19. Principals’ work with the Read Liberia coaches aimed at improving teacher reading instruction – Treatment schools only**



Reports about RL coaches made by teachers are in line with those of principals. All grade 2 teachers in our RL schools sample say that a RL coach came to observe their teaching of the literacy/English class during this school year. According to the RL program, coaches are supposed to visit teachers at least once a month, and this is mostly the case in our sample. In 46 percent of the cases, the RL coach observed teaching more than once a month, in 39 percent of the cases the visit was monthly and in the remaining 14 percent of the cases, the coach observed teaching less frequently than once a month (Figure 20).

**Figure 20. Frequency of the Read Liberia coaches observing literacy/English classes – Treatment schools only**



All but one teacher say the RL coach provided them with feedback after observing their teaching of reading. The feedback is typically communicated verbally (88 percent), via a call (17 percent), or a written note (ten percent). Over 80 percent of those receiving the RL coaches' feedback find it very useful and other 20 percent find it useful.

Finally, teachers in treatment schools report that the majority (66 percent) of the RL coaches offer additional support outside of visits to the classes (Figure 21).

**Figure 21. Additional support to teachers offered by Read Liberia coaches even when not visiting the class – Treatment schools only**

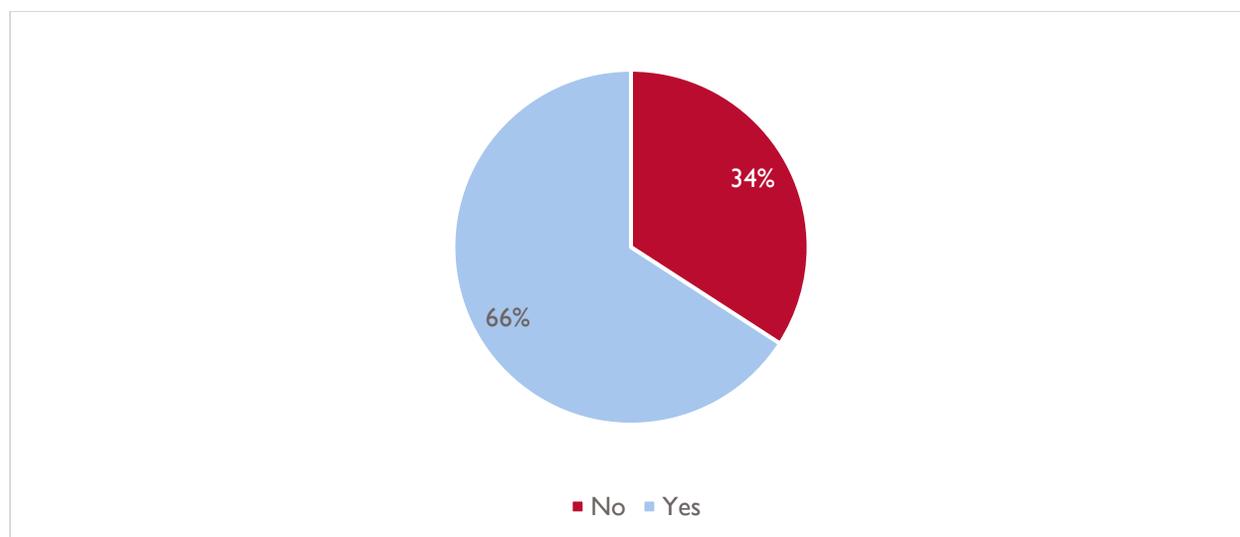
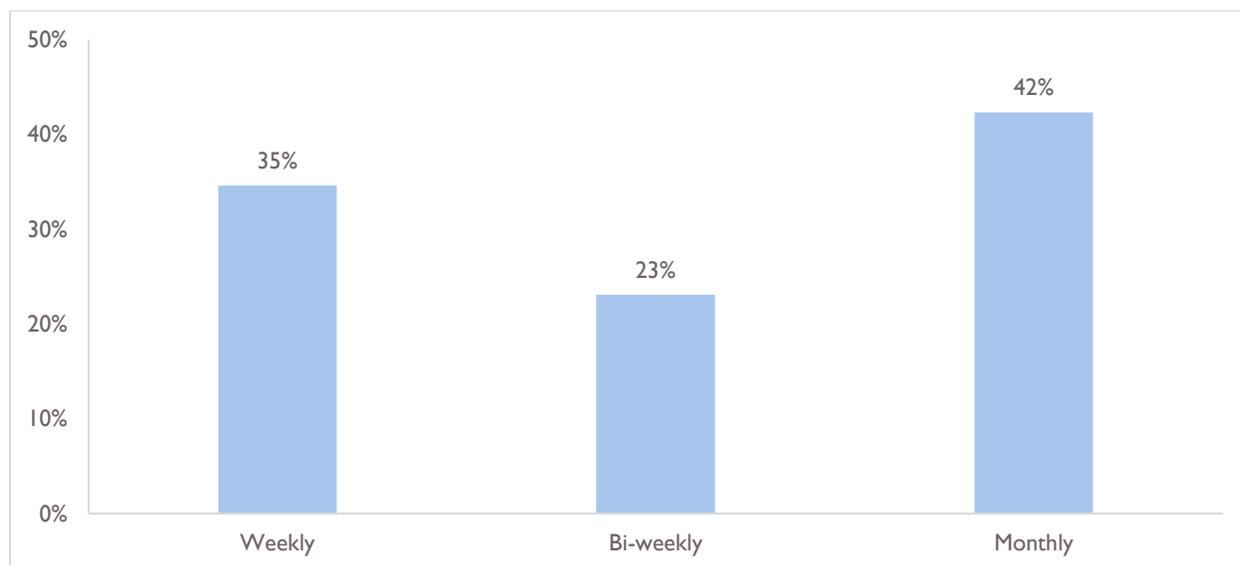


Figure 22 shows that among the teachers who get additional support from the RL coaches, 42 percent receive it monthly, 35 percent weekly, and 23 percent bi-weekly.

**Figure 22. Frequency of receiving additional support from the Read Liberia coaches – Treatment schools only**



This additional support is most often communicated to grade 2 teachers via a phone call (67 percent), verbally (41 percent), or using a written note (seven percent). Teachers appreciate this additional support. About 70 percent of teachers who receive the RL coaches' other support find it very useful and another 30 percent find it useful.

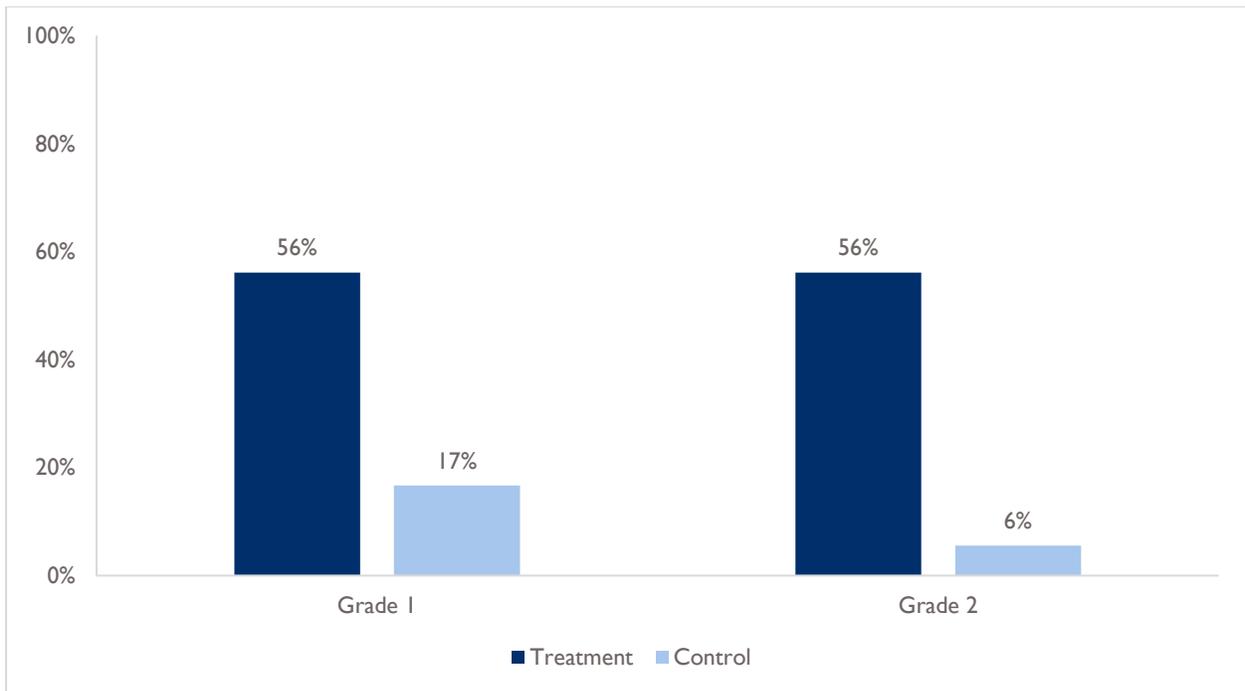
**Read Liberia coaches visited most grade 2 teachers in treatment schools. Eight-five percent of the coaches visit schools once a month or more frequently. The coaching support is well-received by teachers, who universally find it useful or very useful.**

#### **4.4 AVAILABILITY OF READING AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**

We asked questions and measured the availability of reading materials in treatment and control schools. In addition, we asked about frequency and modalities of students reading assessments.

A substantial gap in the availability of sufficient resource materials/textbooks is observed between the treatment and control schools. Figure 23 shows that while the majority (56 percent) of principals at the RL treatment schools claim to have sufficient resource materials available for both grade 1 and 2, only 17 percent of principals at the control schools report having sufficient materials for grade 1 and six percent for grade 2.

**Figure 23. Availability of sufficient resource materials/textbooks in Grade 1 and Grade 2 according to principals – All schools**

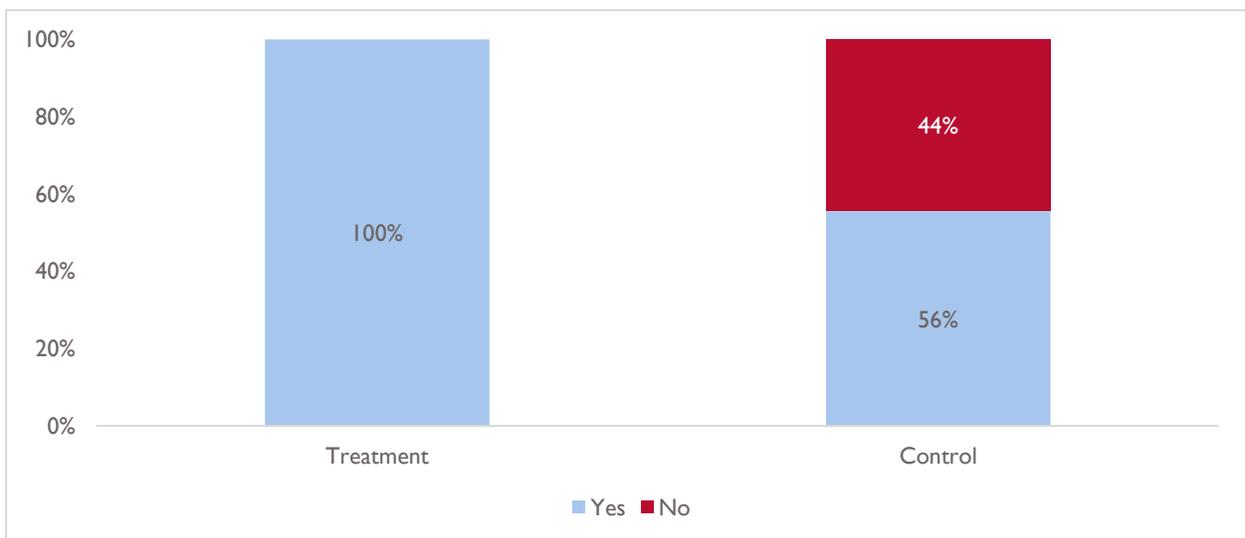


A range of questions were asked to grade 2 teachers to find out what materials, particularly those provided by RL, were available for their instruction of reading.

#### 4.4.1 TEACHER GUIDES

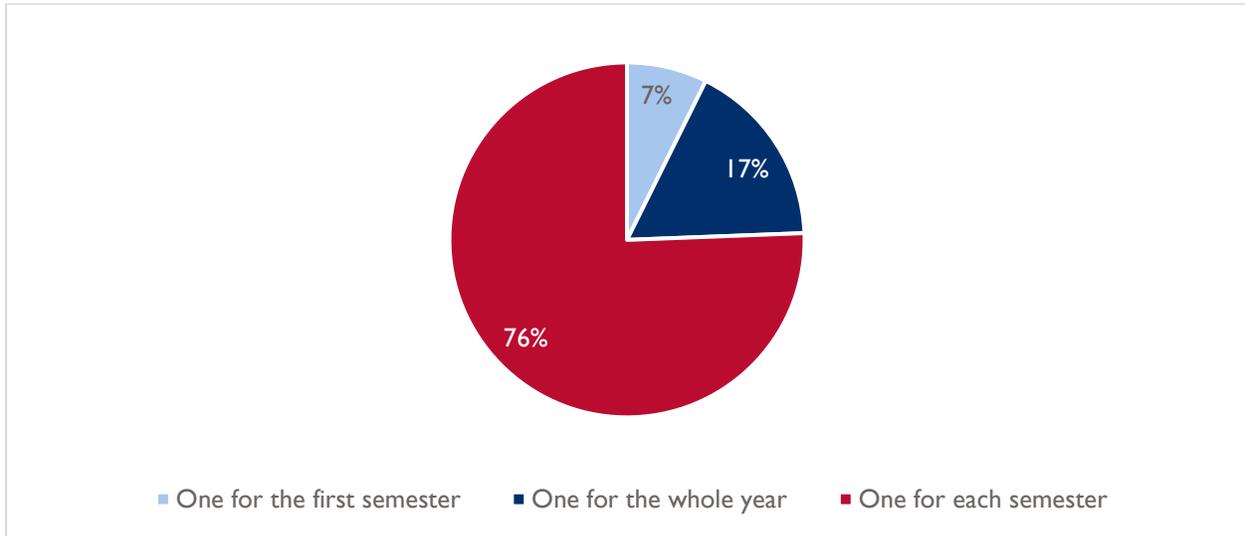
In Figure 24, we show that while all teachers at the treatment schools have printed teacher guide(s) to help develop their classes, only slightly over half (56 percent) of teachers in the control schools have such guides.

**Figure 24. Availability of teacher guides – All schools**



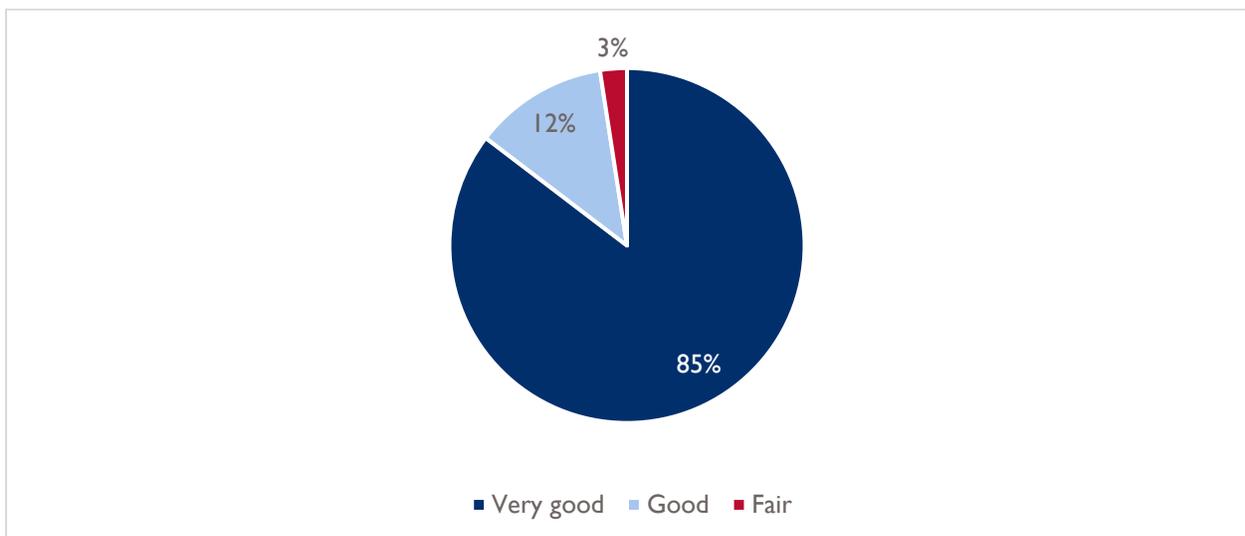
All teachers in the treatment schools received their printed teacher guide(s) from the RL. Among these teachers, 76 percent received one RL guide for each semester, 17 percent received one guide for the whole year, and another seven percent received one for the first semester (Figure 25). Therefore, 93 percent of the teachers in RL schools have teacher guides for the whole academic year.

**Figure 25. The number of teacher guides received from Read Liberia –Treatment schools only**



The majority of teachers in the treatment schools are satisfied with the RL teaching guides, as 85 percent find them very good, 12 percent report that they are good, and three percent think they are fair (Figure 26). While nearly all teachers (98 percent) use the RL teaching guide daily, one teacher uses it a few times a week.

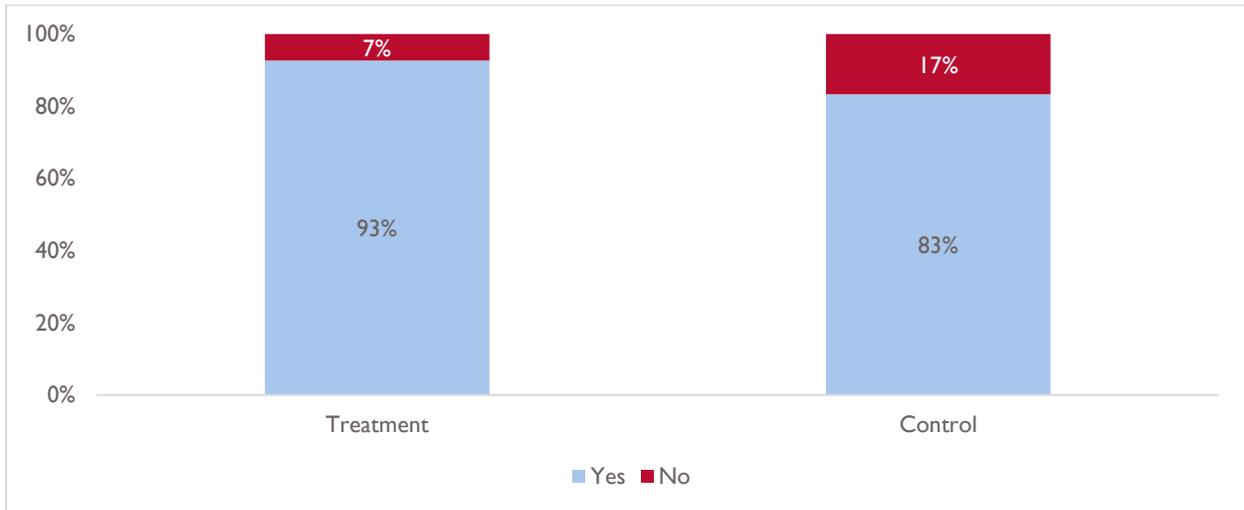
**Figure 26. Teachers' opinion about the Read Liberia teacher guide(s) –Treatment schools only**



#### 4.4.2 STUDENT READING ASSESSMENTS

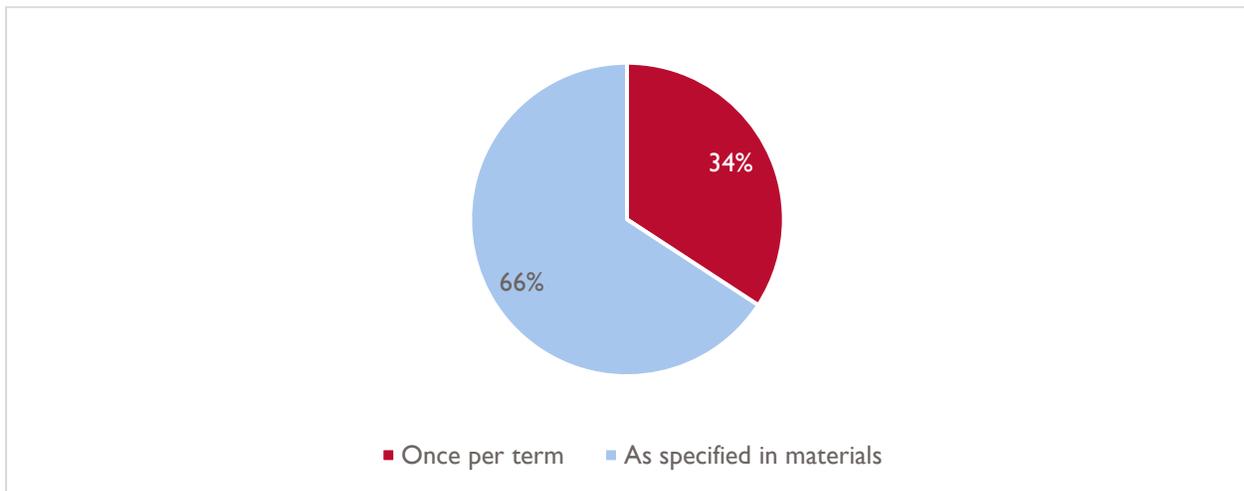
Students reading assessments were conducted by about 90 percent of all grade 2 teachers in our sample last year, with the higher rate of teachers in the RL schools conducting assessments compared to those in the control schools (93 vs. 83 percent) (Figure 27).

**Figure 27. Reading assessments conducted by grade 2 teachers last year – All schools**



The fact that teachers in RL and control schools conduct reading assessments does not mean the assessment approach is the same. All teachers in the treatment schools who conducted the assessments received them from RL. In control schools, each teacher has his or her own approach to assess the students. In treatment school, over 70 percent of those who received the RL assessments find them to be very good and another 30 percent find them to be good. About 66 percent of the teachers who conduct assessments do it with the frequency specified in the materials (every 11-12 weeks), and the remaining 34 percent conduct them once per term (Figure 28).

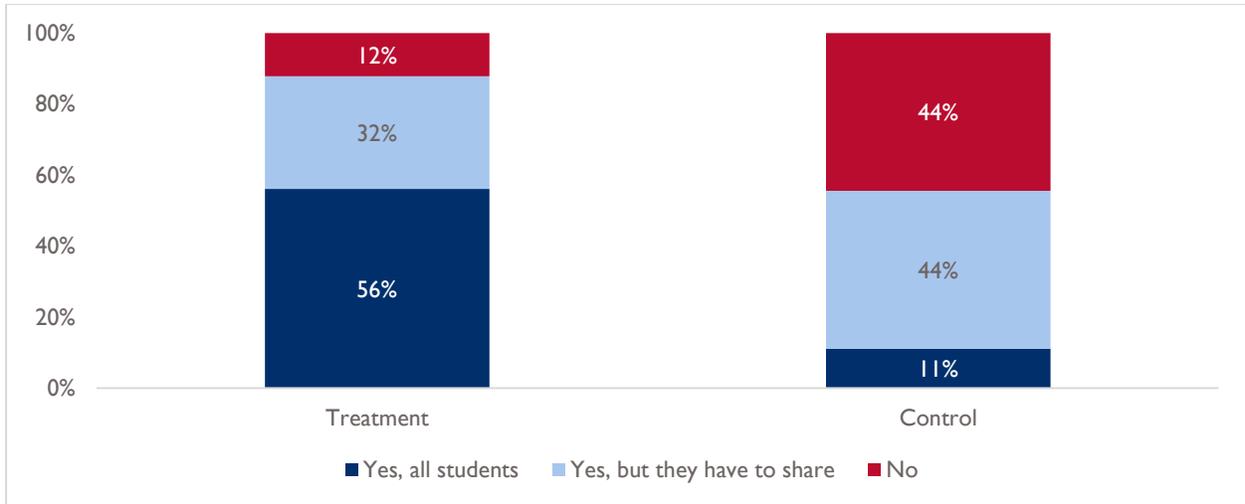
**Figure 28. Frequency of the Read Liberia oral reading assessments conducted by grade 2 teachers – Treatment schools only**



### 4.4.3 READING BOOKS

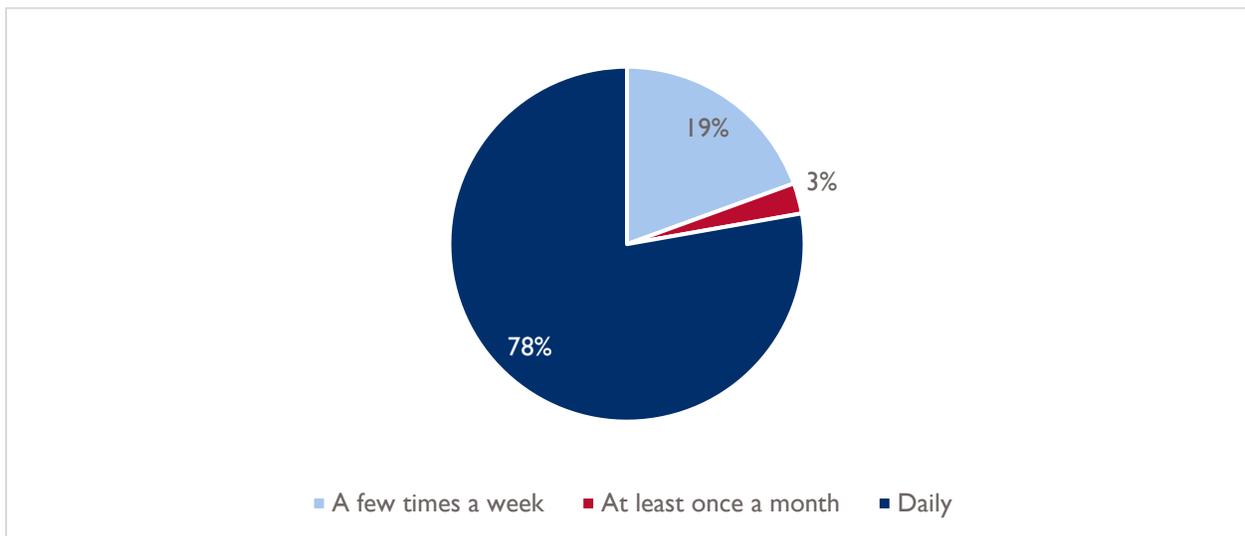
In examining the total sample, it becomes evident that the availability of reading books in grade 2 classrooms is much higher at the RL schools, as expected. Among RL schools, 88 percent of the grade 2 classrooms have reading books available. This compares to 55 percent at the control schools (Figure 29). In RL schools, more than half the grade 2 classes have reading books for every student and in 32 percent of the cases, the students need to share the books.

**Figure 29. Availability of reading books in grade 2 classes, as reported by teachers – All schools**



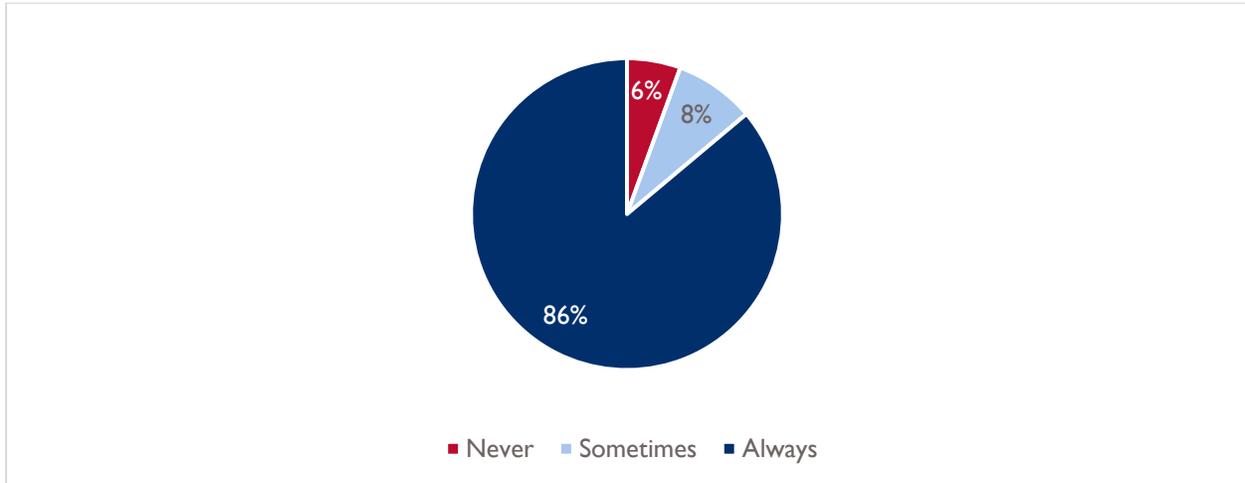
All teachers at the treatment schools whose students have reading books say these books were received from RL. About 80 percent of these teachers find the RL reading books (*Let's Read*) to be very good, and another 20 percent find them to be good. Figure 30 shows that 78 percent of teachers use *Let's Read* books daily, 19 percent report using them a few times a week, and the remaining three percent use them at least once a month

**Figure 30. Frequency of using *Let's Read* books in grade 2 classes – Treatment schools only**



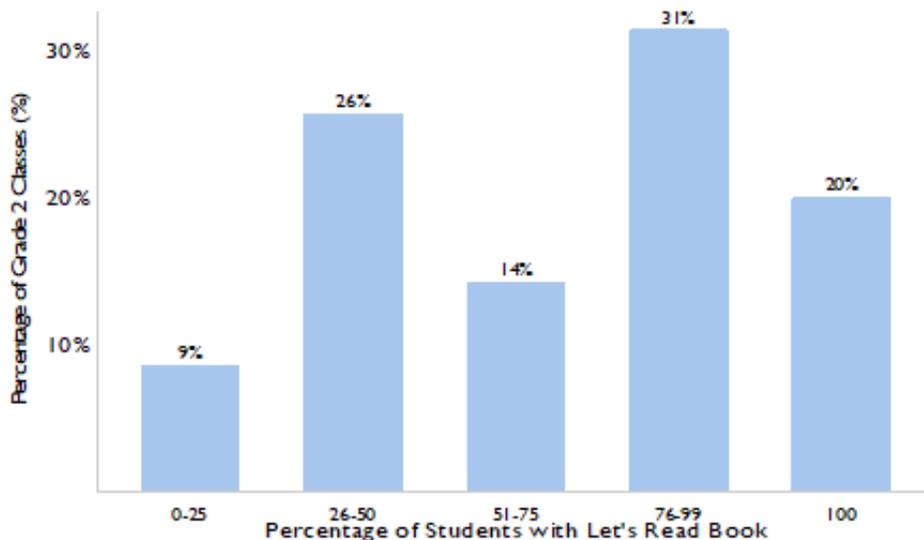
Students of most teachers (86 percent) always take *Let's Read* books to read at home; in eight percent of the cases, students take these books home sometimes, and in the remaining six percent of the cases students never take *Let's Read* books home (Figure 31).

**Figure 31. Frequency of students taking *Let's Read* books to read at home – Treatment schools only**



In addition to asking the grade 2 teachers about *Let's Read* books in treatment schools, we counted the number of students in the class that had the books. As anticipated by the teacher response, in many classes students have to share the reading book. Figure 32 shows that in 20 percent of the classes every student has her/his own *Let's Read* book and in around 30 percent of the classes more than 75 percent of the students have their own book. However, in almost 50 percent of the classes, less than three quarters of the students have their own book. Moreover, in 35 percent of the classes, less than half the children have *Let's Read*.

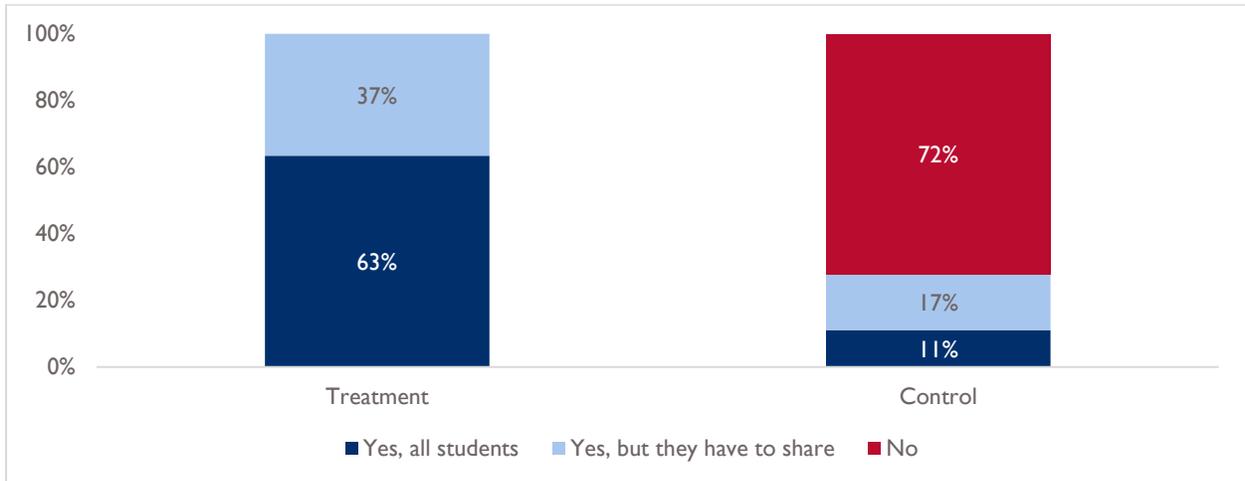
**Figure 32. Availability of *Let's Read* books in grade 2 classes, measured by enumerators – Treatment schools only**



#### 4.4.4 ACTIVITY BOOKS

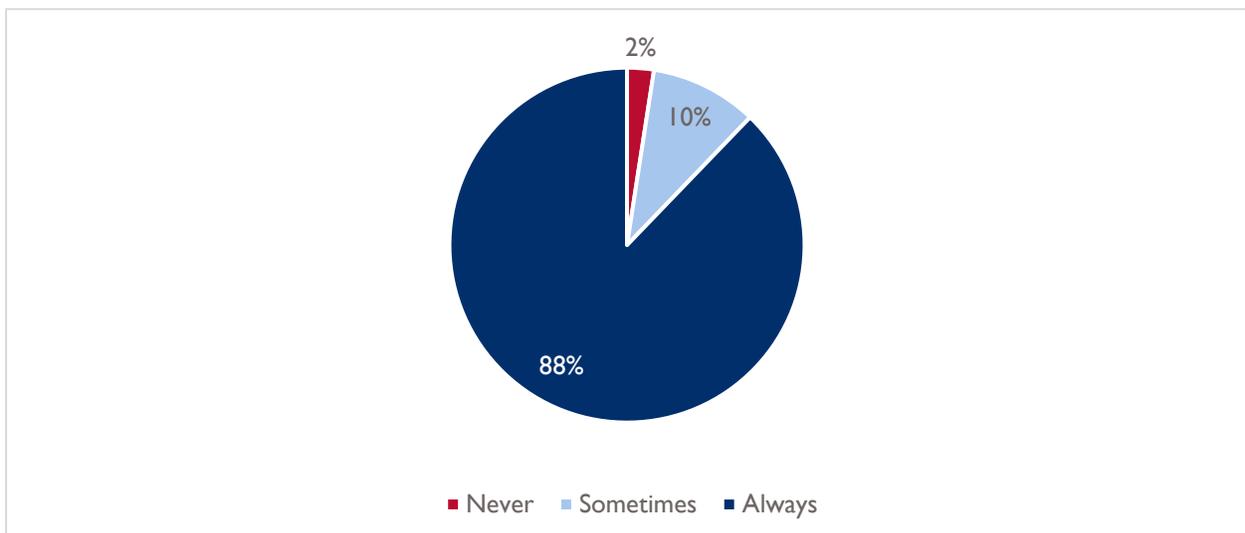
Grade 2 teachers reported that activity books are available to students in all the treatment schools, whereas a large majority (72 percent) of the control schools do not have such books available (Figure 33). Read Liberia provided all the activity books to the treatment schools.

**Figure 33. Availability of activity books in grade 2 classes, as reported by teachers – All schools**



With regards to the quality of the RL activity books, 88 percent of teachers in treatment schools find them very good, and another ten percent find them good. The majority of teachers (85 percent) use the RL activity books in class daily, and about 15 percent use them a few times a week. Similar to *Let's Read* books, most teachers (88 percent) say their students always take the activity books to work at home, while ten percent of teachers say that their students take the activity books home only sometimes, and the remaining two percent of teachers report their students never take the activity books home (Figure 34).

**Figure 34. Frequency of students taking Read Liberia activity books to work at home – Treatment schools only**



**Figure 35. Availability of Read Liberia activity books in grade 2 classes, as measured by enumerators – Treatment schools only**

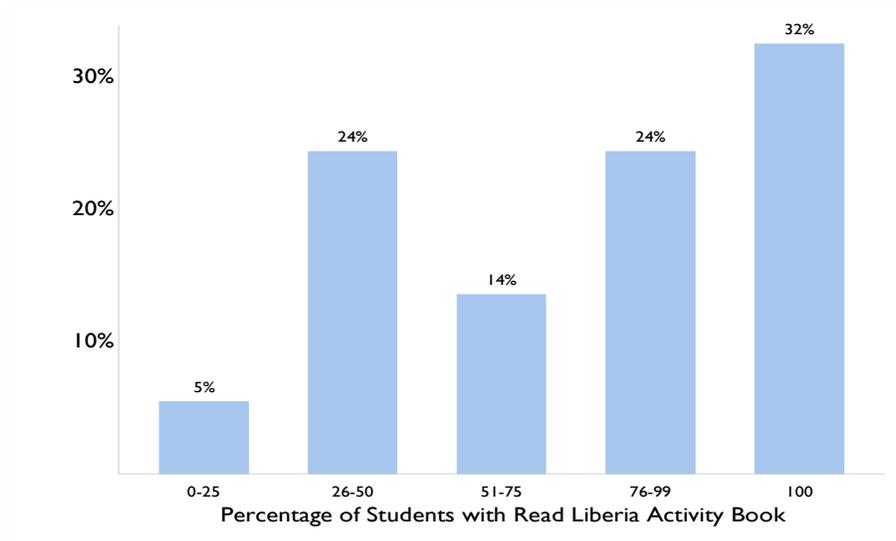
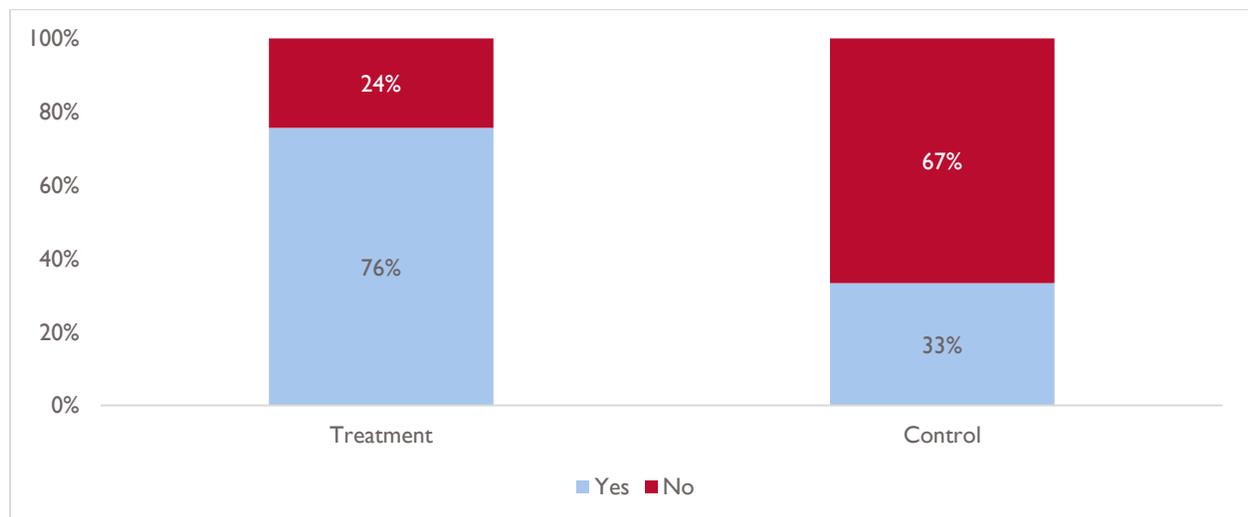


Figure 35 shows the availability of Read Liberia activity books as measured directly by the enumerators in the grade 2 treatment classes. As with reading books, there is a large proportion of classes where not all students have their own activity book. Activity books seem slightly more available than reading books, though there are still over 40 percent of the classes where less than three quarters of the students have an activity book.

#### 4.4.5 ALPHABET AND SYLLABLE CARDS

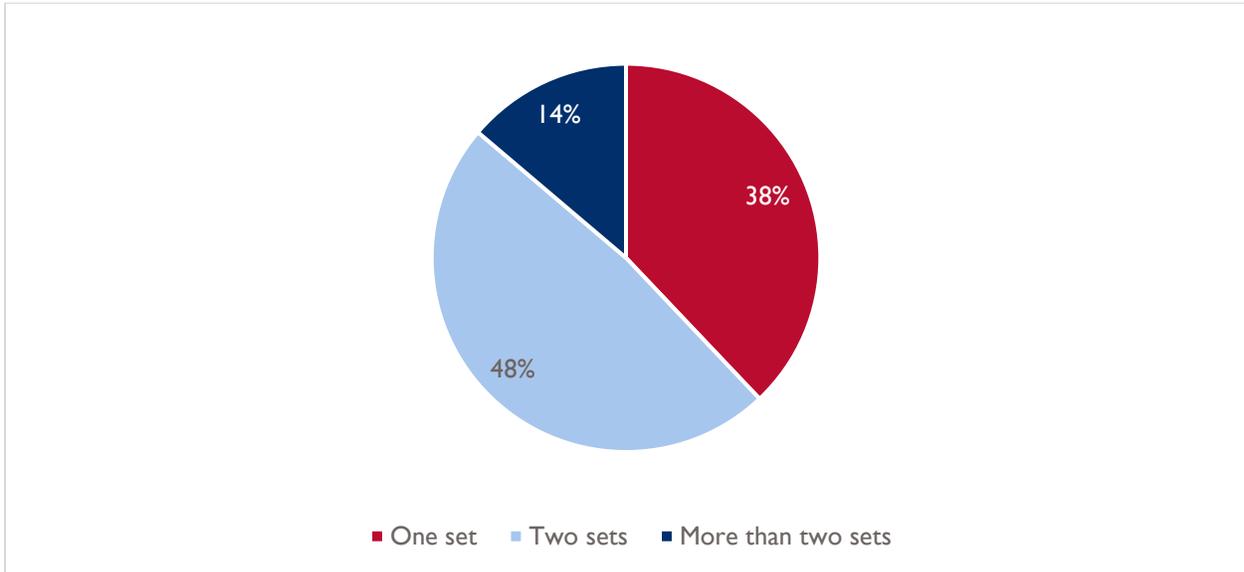
In treatment schools, 76 percent of teachers report having alphabet cards and/or syllable cards to guide classes, while in control schools only 33 percent of teachers report the availability of these materials (Figure 36). Among teachers at the treatment schools who received some alphabet and/or syllable cards, 97 percent reported that these materials were received from Read Liberia.

**Figure 36. Availability of alphabet cards and/or syllable cards to guide grade 2 classes – All schools**



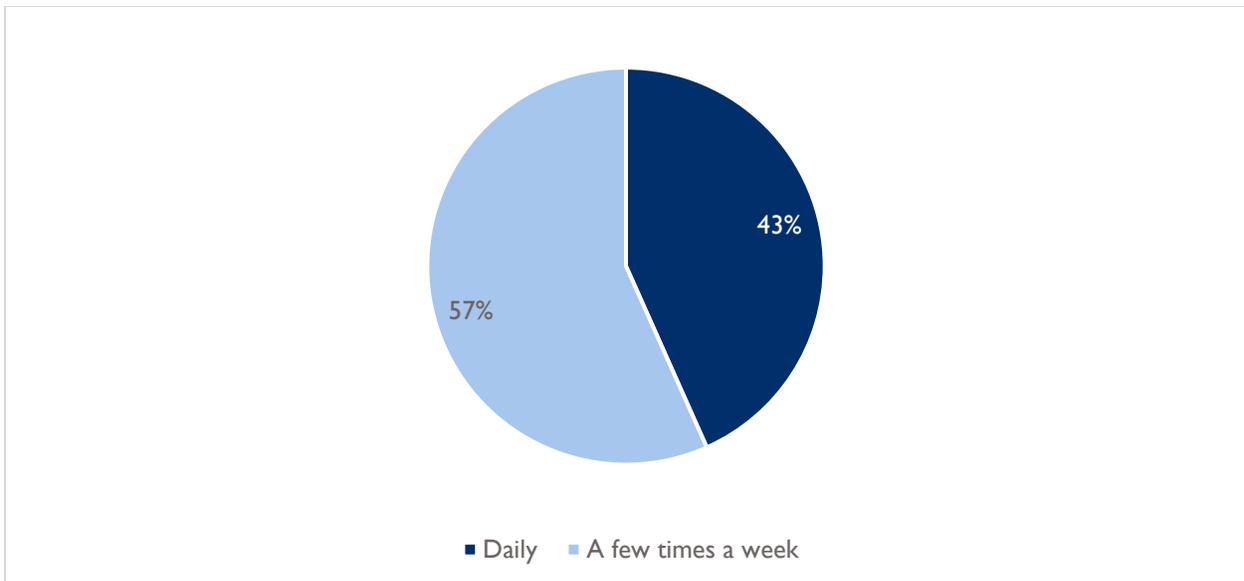
Almost half of the teachers (48 percent) in treatment schools received two sets of RL cards for their class. Another 38 percent received one set, and the remaining 14 percent received more than two sets (Figure 37).

**Figure 37. Number of sets of the Read Liberia alphabet and/or syllable cards received per grade 2 class – Treatment schools only**



All the grade 2 teachers in treatment schools who received the RL cards find that using them helps students to learn more effectively. Fifty-seven percent of teachers use alphabet/syllable cards a few days per week in their instruction, while 43 percent use them daily (Figure 38).

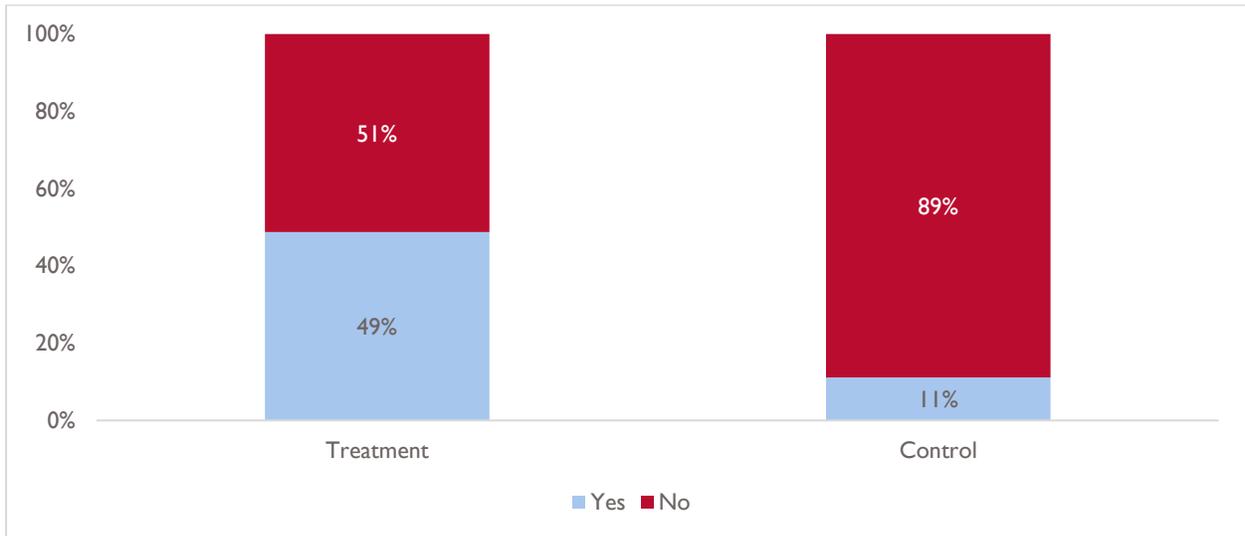
**Figure 38. Frequency of using the Read Liberia alphabet and/or syllable cards in grade 2 class reading instruction – Treatment schools only**



#### 4.4.6 ALPHABET POSTERS

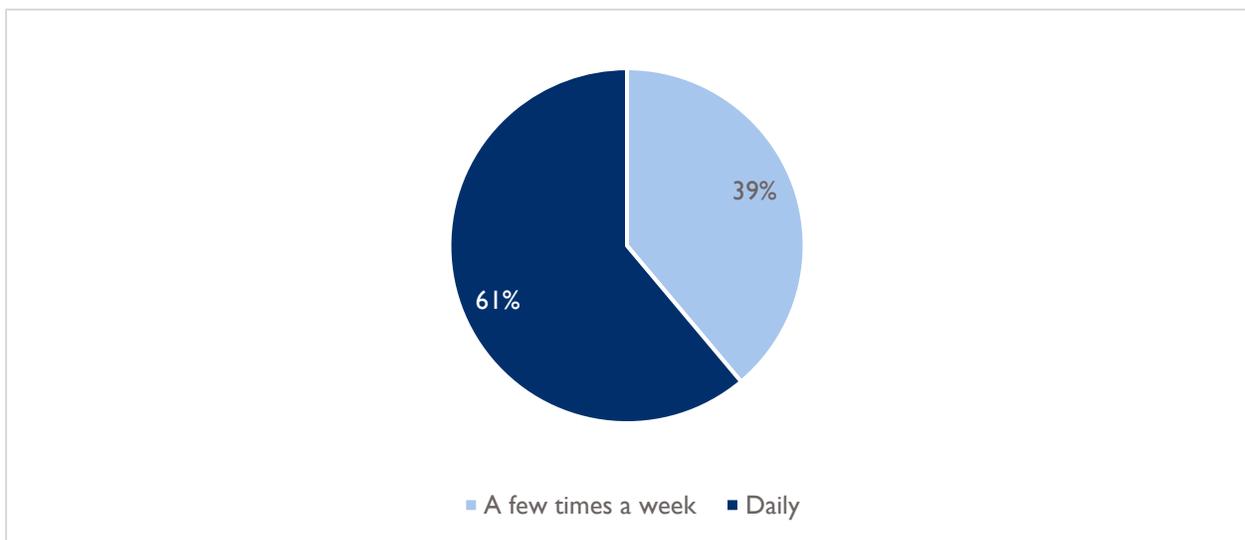
Among the materials we inquired about, alphabet posters are the least common classroom material with 49 percent of teachers at the treatment schools and 11 percent of teachers at the control schools reporting having the posters available (Figure 39).

**Figure 39. Availability of alphabet posters in grade 2 classrooms. All schools**



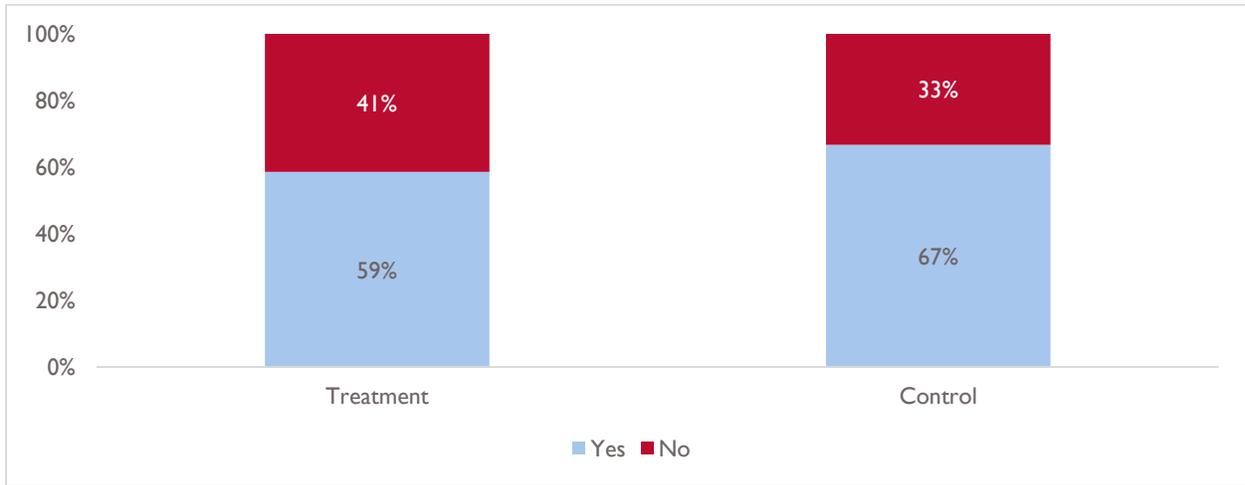
Of the teachers at treatment schools who have alphabet posters in their classrooms, about 90 percent received them from RL. All the teachers who received the RL's alphabet posters find that using them helps students to learn more effectively. Over 60 percent of teachers who have the RL's alphabet posters in their classroom use them daily, and the other 40 percent use them a few times a week (Figure 40).

**Figure 40. Frequency of using the Read Liberia alphabet posters in grade 2 classrooms – Treatment schools only**



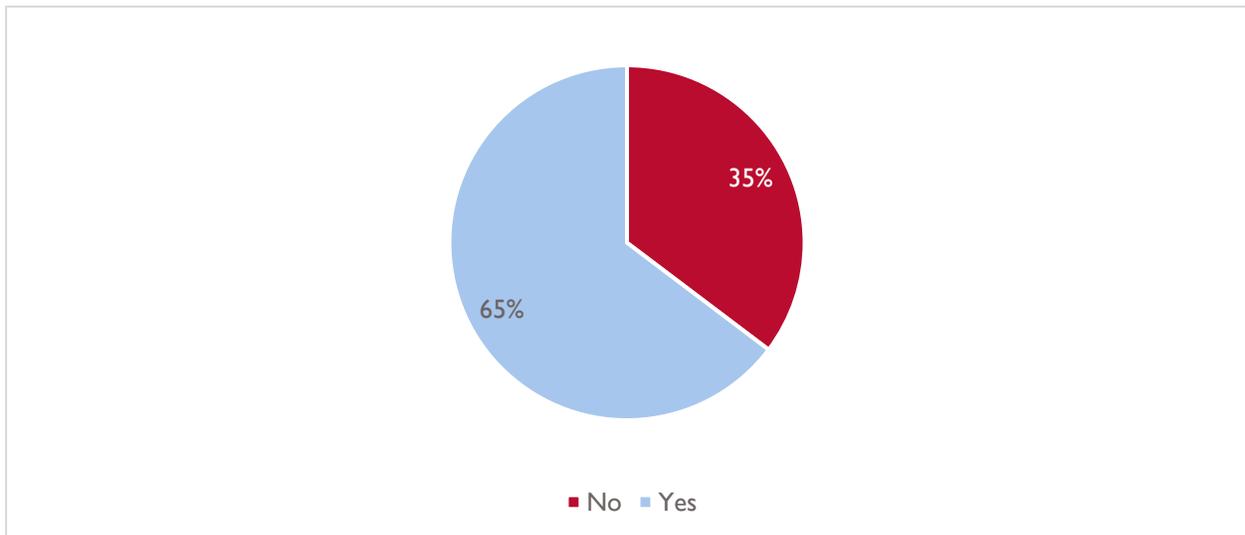
Additional reading books are available in almost 60 percent of grade 2 classrooms in treatment schools and in 67 percent of grade 2 classrooms at the control schools (Figure 41).

**Figure 41. Availability of additional reading books in grade 2 classrooms – All schools**



Among the grade 2 classrooms in treatment schools that have additional reading books, 65 percent received them from RL (Figure 42). This is only 38.5 percent of all the grade 2 treatment classes in our sample. All of the 11 teachers who received additional reading books from RL believe that these books help their students learn more effectively.

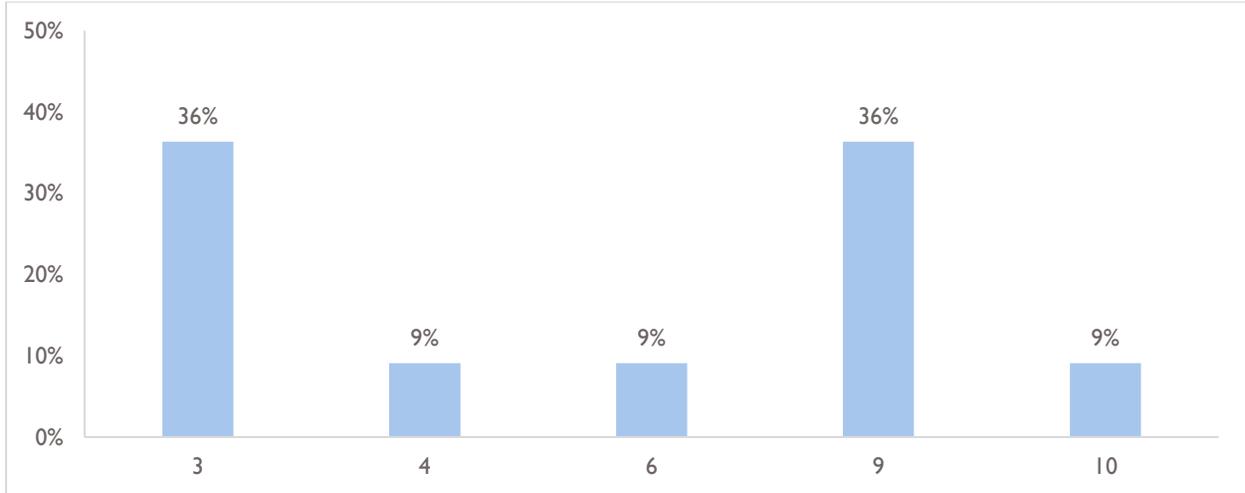
**Figure 42. Proportion of grade 2 classrooms received additional reading books from Read Liberia – Treatment schools only**



Inspecting the number of additional RL reading books received by teachers at the treatment schools, we find that three teachers (36 percent) received three books, another three teachers (36 percent) received nine books; four, six and ten books were (each) received by one teacher (nine percent each) (Figure 43).

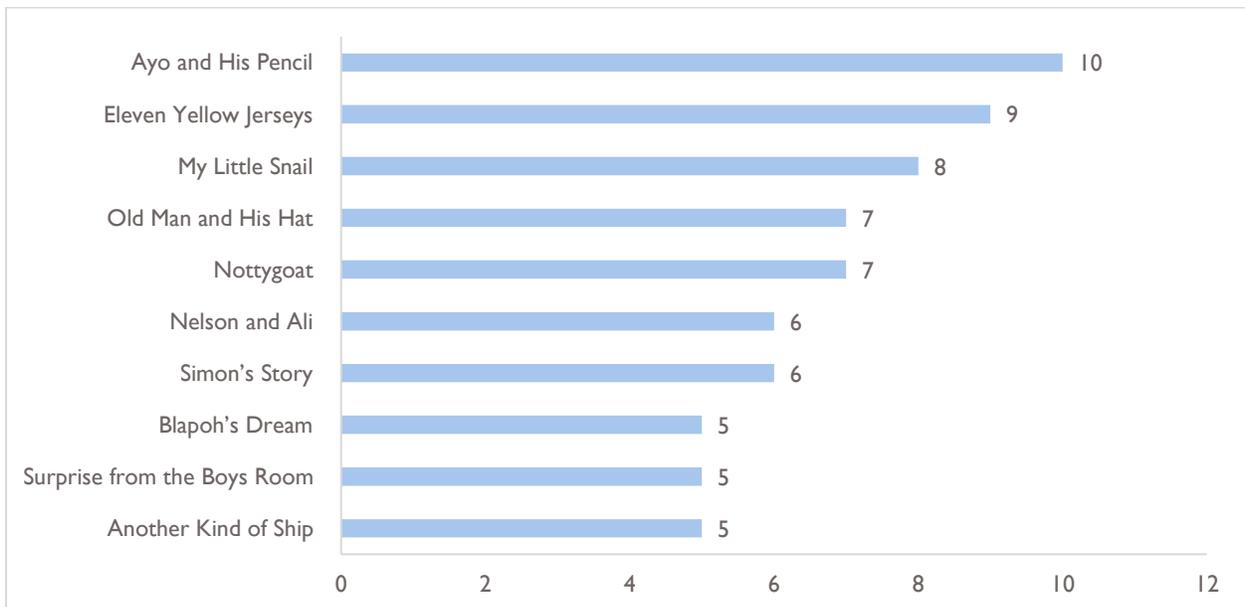
**Only 38.5 percent of grade 2 treatment classes in our sample received supplementary reading materials from Read Liberia.**

**Figure 43. Number of additional Read Liberia reading books received in grade 2 classrooms – Eleven treatment schools that received books only**



The following three RL books for additional reading were mentioned most commonly: “Ayo and His Pencil” (by ten out of 11 teachers), “Eleven Yellow Jerseys” (nine), and “My Little Snail” (eight) (Figure 44). Eight out of 11 teachers who received the RL books for additional reading use these books a few times a week in their instruction, two teachers use them rarely, and only one teacher uses them daily.

**Figure 44. Titles of Read Liberia additional reading books received in grade 2 classrooms – Treatment schools only**

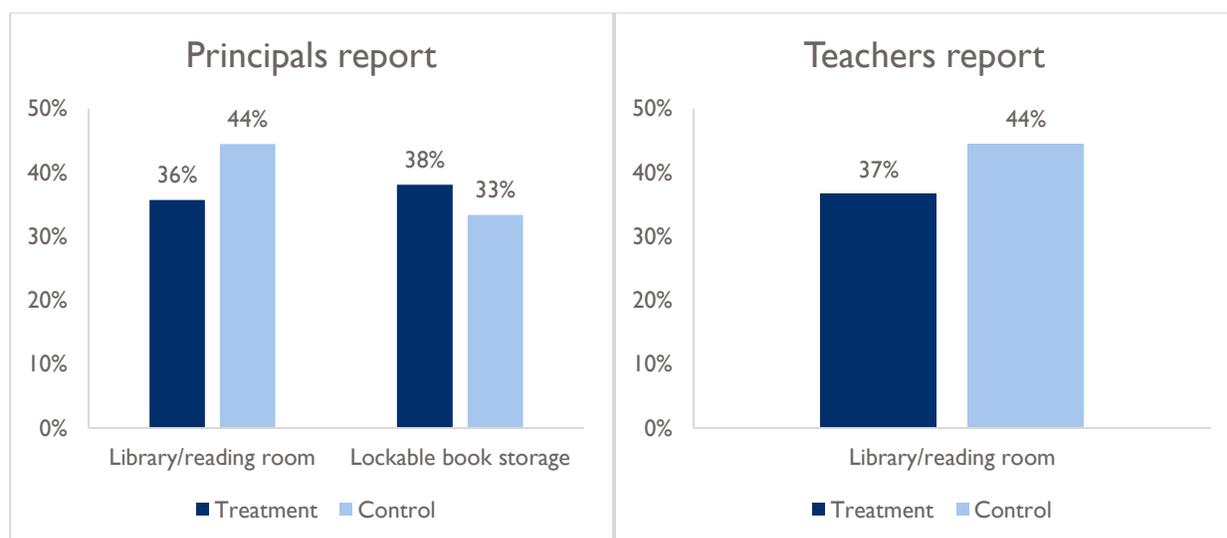


#### 4.4.7 SCHOOL LIBRARY RESOURCES

Although the Read Liberia activity was not designed to create or contribute to schools' libraries or reading corners, we asked about them to provide a complete picture of the reading resources available. Approximately 40 percent of principals and teachers (Figure 45) report that their school has a library or reading room available to students. It appears that the percentage of library/reading rooms is slightly higher at the control schools compared to the treatment schools. In addition, 38 percent of the treatment schools and 33 percent of the control schools have lockable book storages, as reported by principals.

Out of a total of 23 schools that have libraries or reading rooms, nine schools have enough books for students from kindergarten to grade 2, according to principals. Additionally, as reported by grade 2 teachers, out of those 23 schools that have libraries or reading rooms, ten have reading materials appropriate for the kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2 students.

**Figure 45. Available libraries/reading rooms and lockable book storages at schools – All schools**



**In treatment schools, all grade 2 teachers have teacher's guides and find them to be useful. Although 88 percent of grade 2 classes have RL reading books and all classes have RL activity books, in most classes, the materials are not available to every student. Additional materials, such as alphabet cards, posters are only present in some classes.**

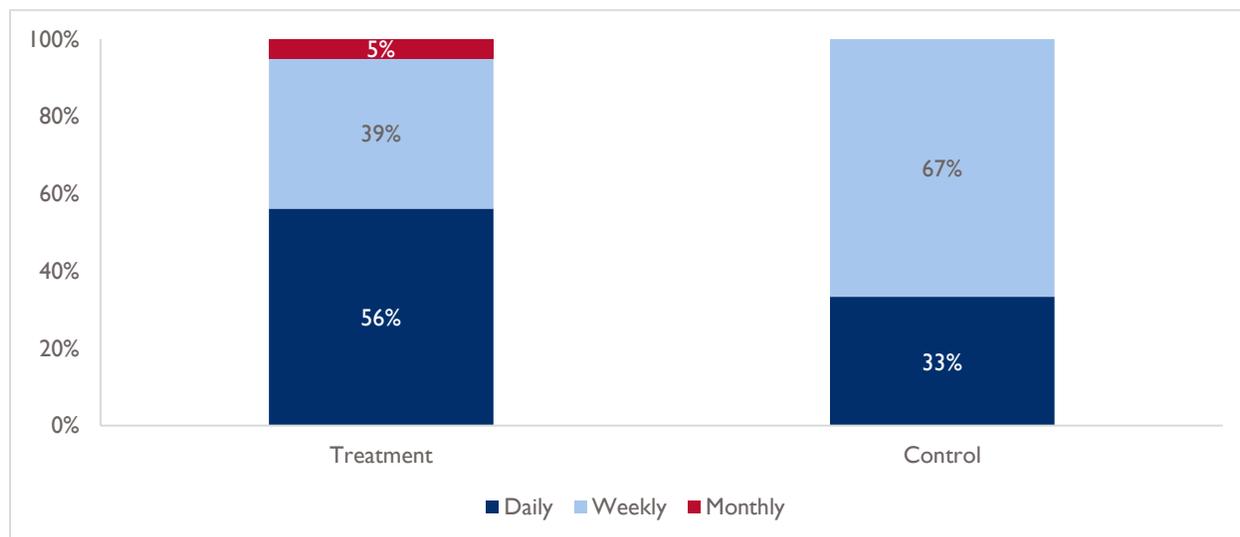
#### 4.5 TEACHING PRACTICES

In this subsection, we show midline findings about teaching in grade 2 classrooms with a particular emphasis on reading instruction, use of the official curriculum, classroom practices as reported by teachers, and expectations about when students should be able to read fluently.. We show these findings for treatment and control schools and evaluate differences and similarities.

#### 4.5.1 GENERAL TEACHING AND READING PRACTICES

Figure 46 shows that more than half of the teachers at treatment schools (56 percent) develop lesson plans on a daily basis, about 40 percent do it weekly and the remaining five percent, monthly. At the control schools, the percentage of teachers developing lesson plans on the daily basis is lower (33 percent), while the majority (67 percent) of these teachers develop lesson plans on the weekly basis.

**Figure 46. Frequency of developing lesson plans, grade 2 teachers – All schools**



Most teachers – about 85 percent in both the treatment and control groups – report developing lesson plans at home, while the remaining 15 percent do it at school. About 40 percent of teachers at the treatment schools and 30 percent at the control schools have scheduled time during the school day for lesson planning.

Over 90 percent of teachers at the treatment schools compared to 67 percent at the control schools use the official reading curriculum in their classroom lessons everyday (Figure 47).

**Figure 47. Frequency of using official reading curriculum in grade 2 classroom lessons – All schools**

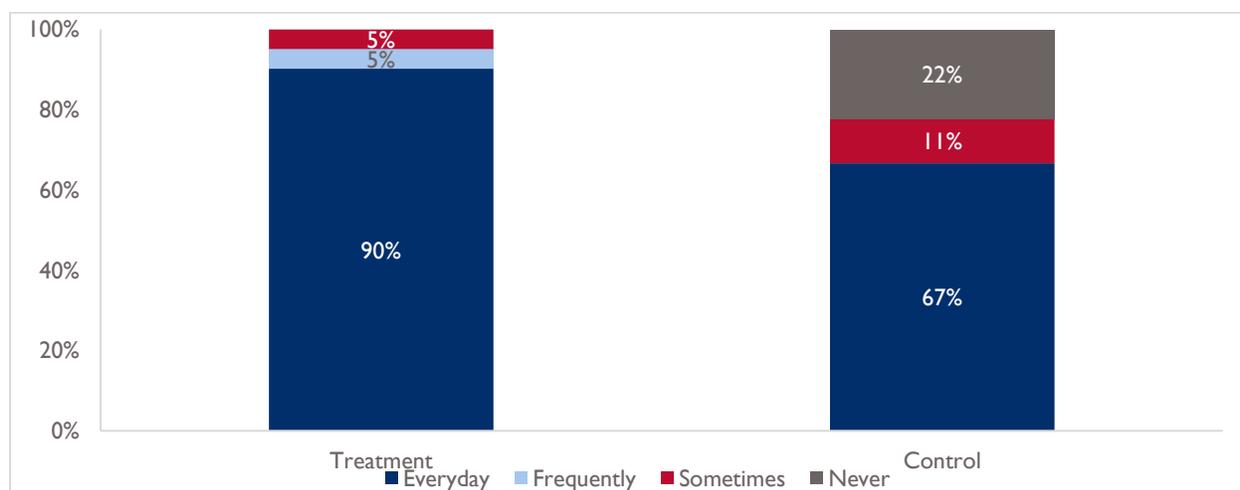
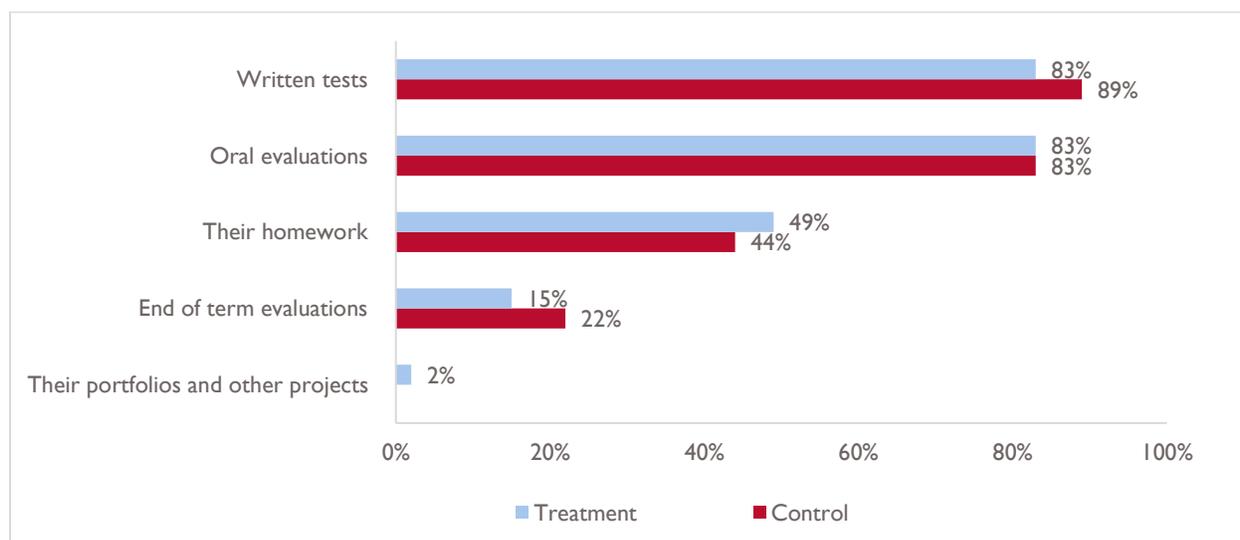


Figure 48 shows that when it comes to measuring students' progress, both treatment and control schools use similar methods, among which written tests (83 percent at the treatment and 89 at the control schools) and oral evaluations (83 percent) are most popular, followed by students' homework (49 percent at the treatment and 44 at the control schools).

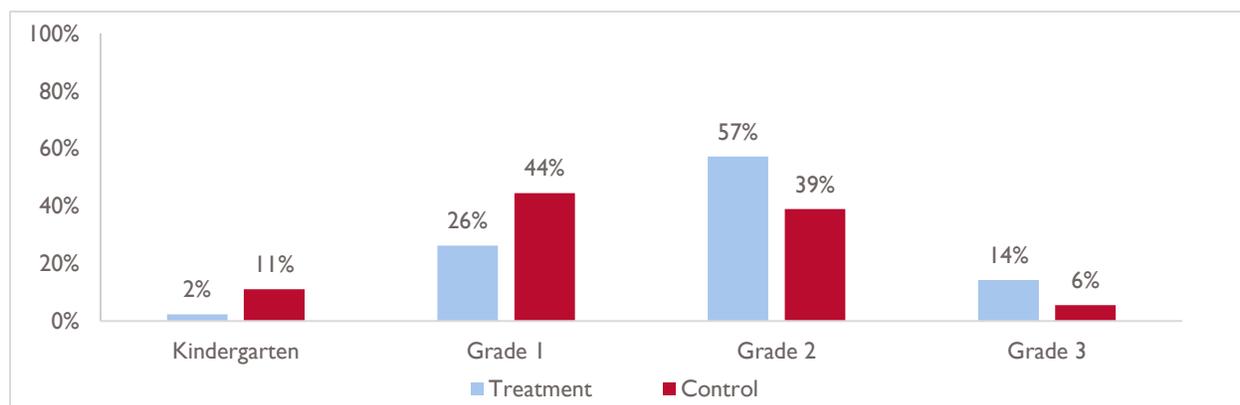
**In treatment schools, almost all grade 2 teachers prepare lessons plans weekly or daily, and use the reading curriculum. These practices are substantially less common among teachers in control schools.**

**Figure 48. Methods of measuring student reading progress in grade 2 – All schools**



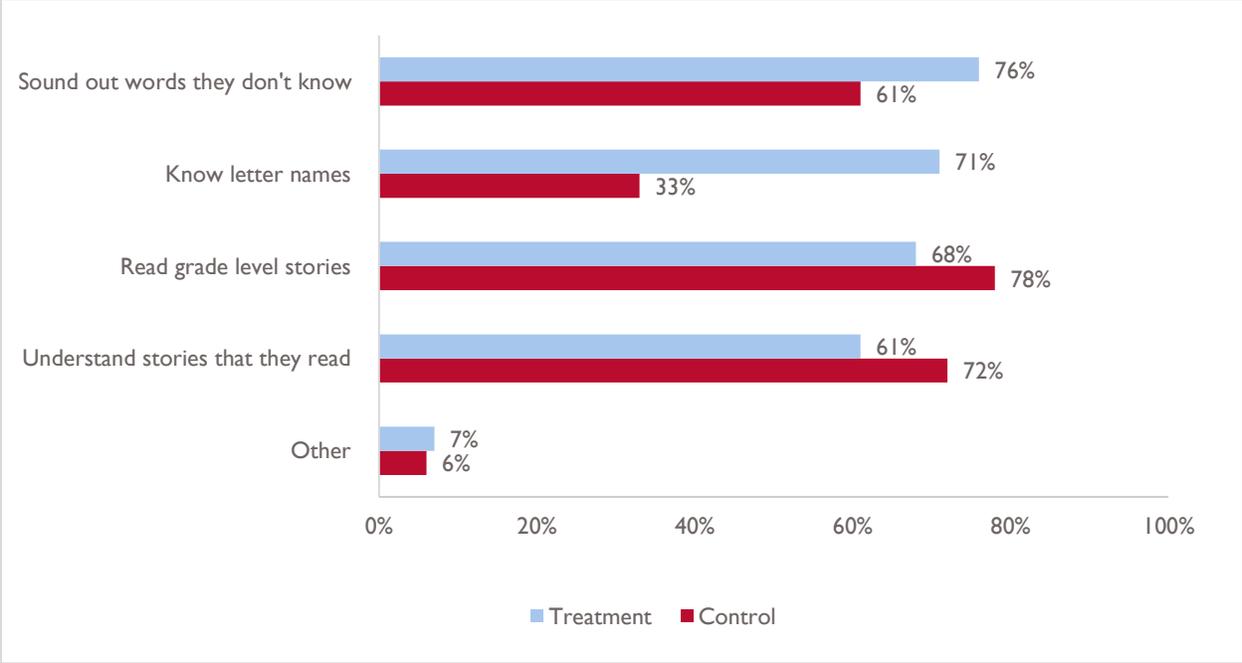
Regarding the expectations set on children's reading skills, the majority (57 percent) of principals at the treatment schools expect all their students to read fluently at Grade 2, 26 percent - at Grade 1, and 14 percent - at Grade 3. The principals' expectations regarding students' fluent reading appear to be more stringent at the control schools with 44 percent of principals expecting students to read fluently at Grade 1, 39 percent – at Grade 2, and 11 percent – at Kindergarten (Figure 49).

**Figure 49. Principals' expectation about fluent reading. Grade at which students should read with fluency – All schools**



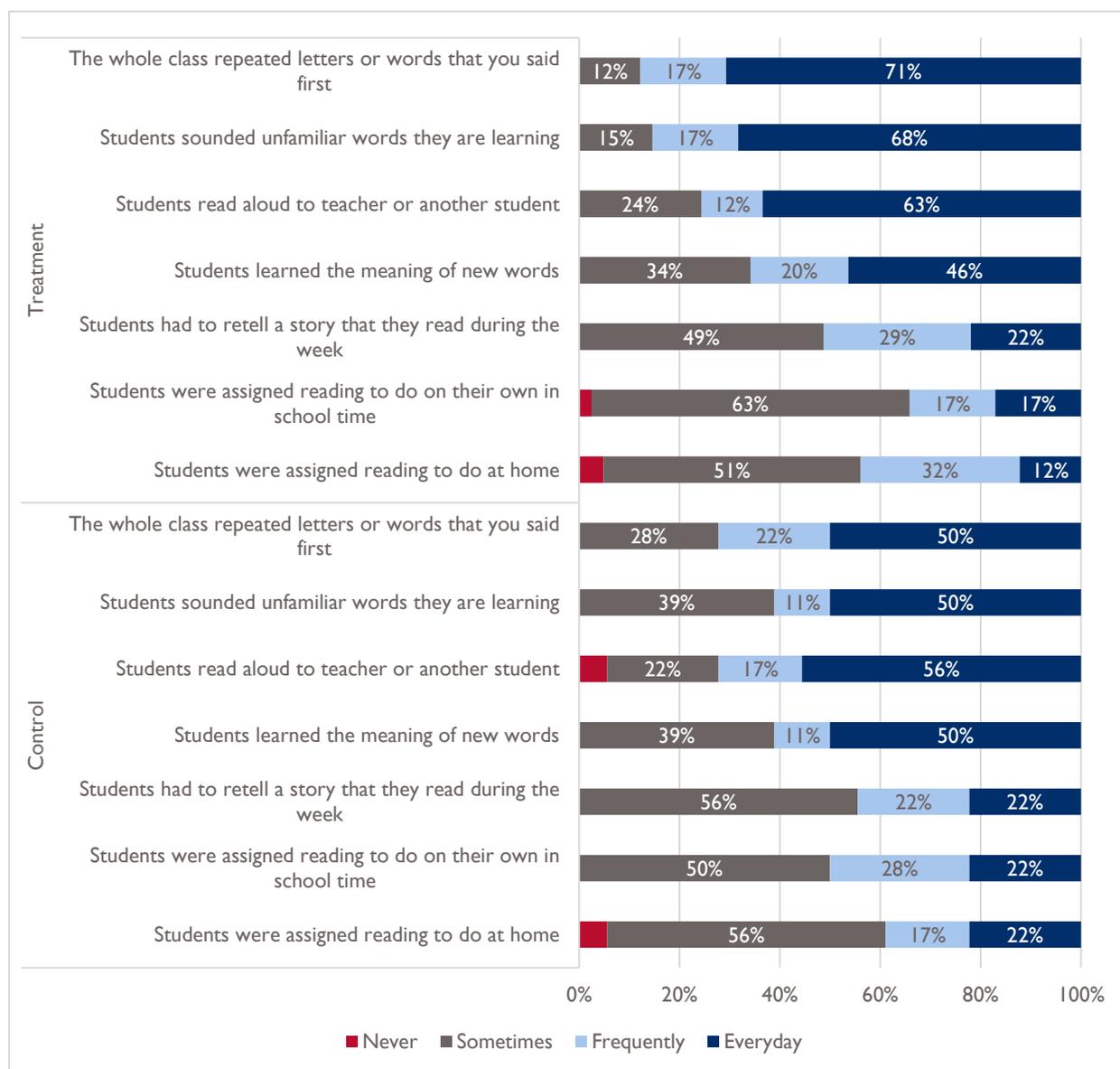
Teachers expect their students to possess the following skills by the end of grade 2: sounding out unfamiliar words (expected by 76 percent of teachers at the treatment schools and 61 percent at the control schools), knowing letter names (71 percent at the treatment schools and 33 percent at the control schools), reading grade-level stories (68 percent at the treatment schools and 78 percent at the control schools), and understanding stories they read (61 percent at the treatment schools and 72 percent at the control schools) (Figure 50). Other reading skills mentioned by the teachers were knowing the word meaning, spelling words, and general “good reading skill”.

**Figure 50. Grade 2 teachers’ expectation of students’ reading and pre-reading skills at the end of school year – All schools**



In Figure 51, we show classroom activities conducted in the last five days at the treatment and control schools, as reported by the teachers. The most common activities we find include the class repeating letters or words after the teacher – 71 and 50 percent in treatment and control schools respectively; sounding unfamiliar words – 68 and 50 percent in treatment and control schools respectively; and reading aloud to teacher or another student – 63 and 56 percent in treatment and control schools respectively.

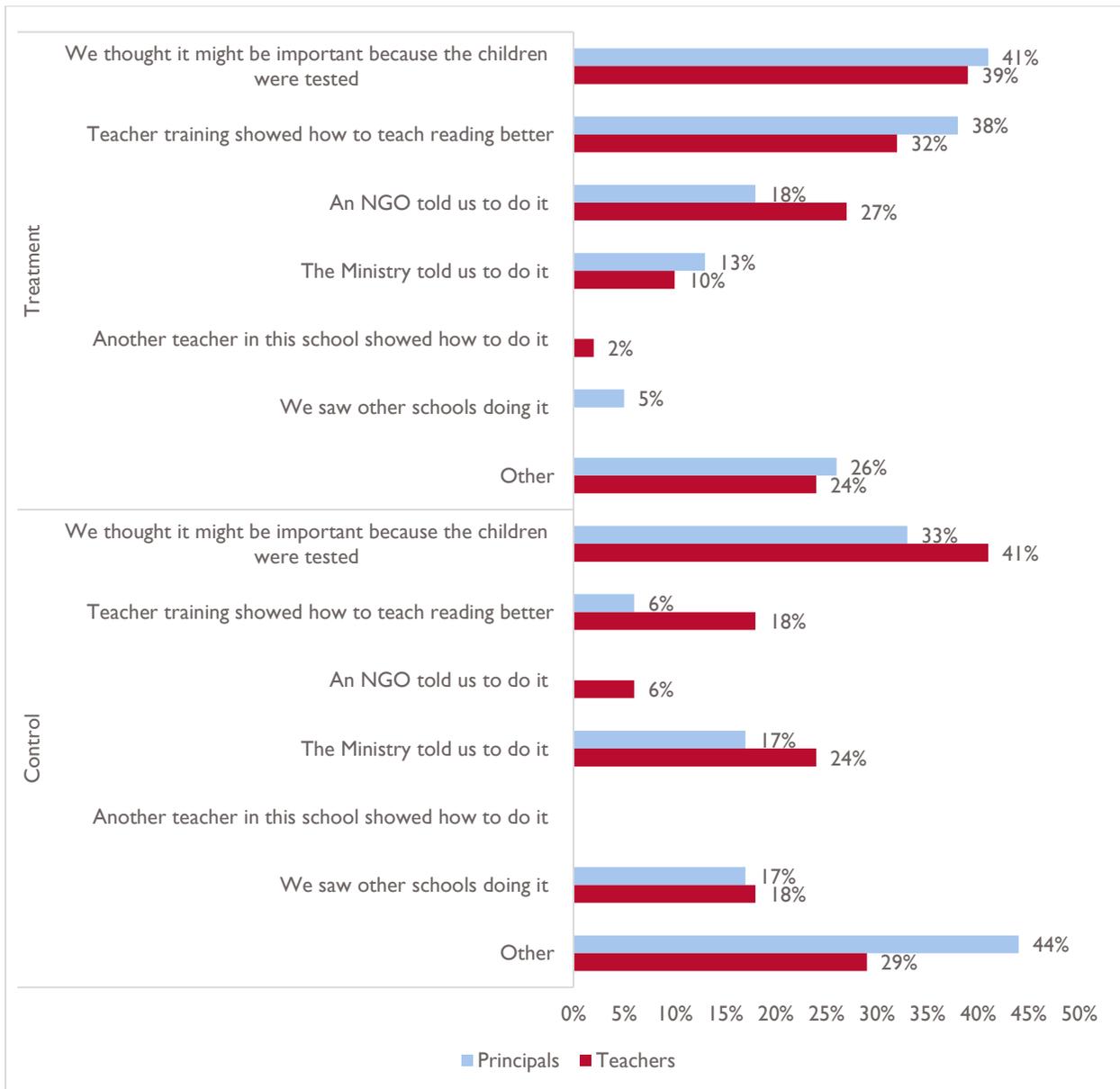
**Figure 51. Grade 2 classroom reading activities in the last five school days – All schools**



#### 4.5.2 CHANGES IN PRINCIPALS' AND TEACHERS' EFFORTS DEVOTED TO IMPROVING STUDENT READING PERFORMANCE

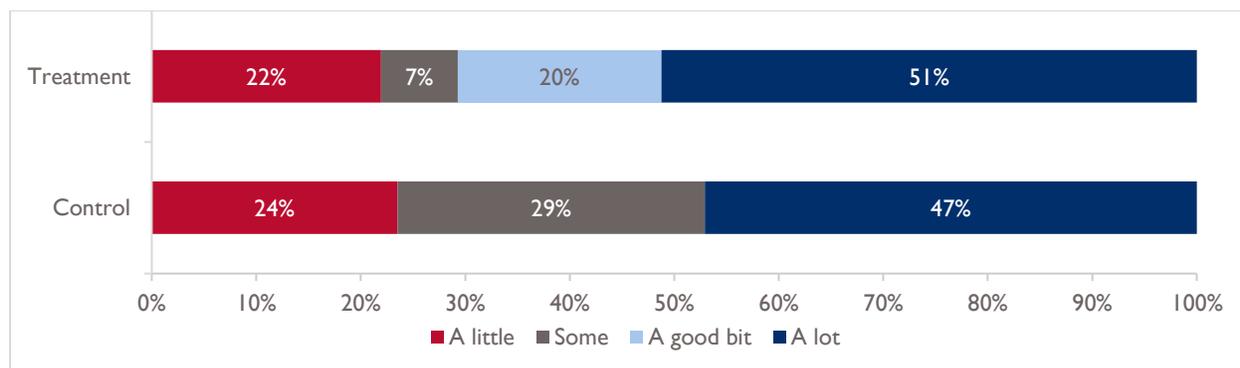
Nearly all principals and grade 2 teachers say they made some special efforts to improve reading at the school in the past year. The most common reason for it was preparing children for a test (mentioned by about 40 percent of principals and teachers at the treatment schools and 33 percent of principals and 41 of teachers at the control schools). Among treatment schools, the next two most common reasons were receiving teacher training that showed teachers how to teach reading better (mentioned by 38 percent principals and 32 percent of teachers) and a recommendation by an NGO (18 percent of principals and 27 percent of teachers) (Figure 52). Among control schools, the second most popular option was “other” and the respondents tend to state that reading is important for students and needs to improve.

**Figure 52. Reasons for making special efforts to improve students reading performance – All schools**



Teachers were also asked about the amount of extra effort they had put into improving their students' reading over the past year. Close to half (51 percent at the treatment and 47 percent at the control schools) of teachers say they made a lot of effort. Generally, it appears teachers at the treatment schools report made more effort, on average, compared to the control schools (Figure 53).

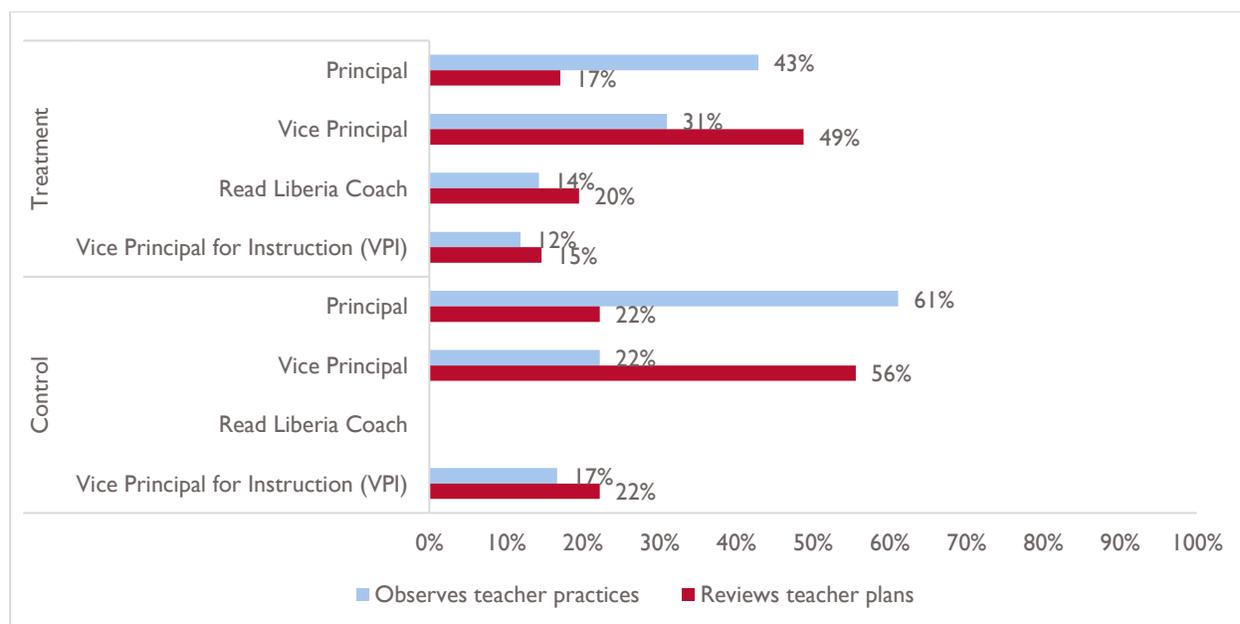
**Figure 53. Amount of effort made by teachers to improve their students reading performance over the past year – All schools**



#### 4.5.3 LESSON PLAN REVIEW, CLASSROOM OBSERVATION, AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES

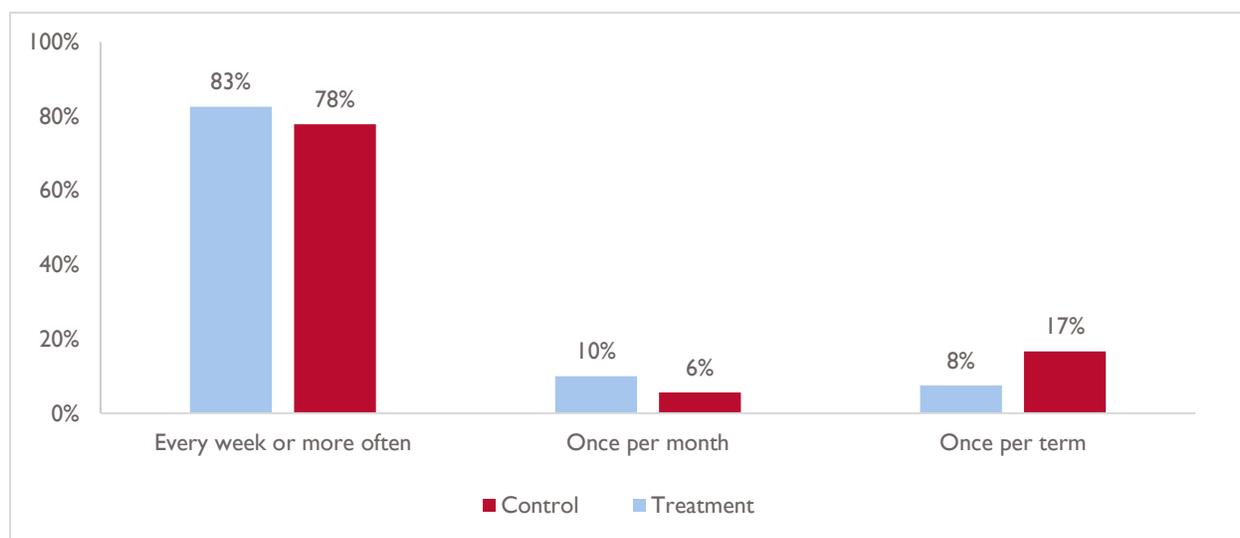
In all but one treatment school and in all control schools, the first and second grade teachers' lesson plans are reviewed. All school principals report that the grade 1 and grade 2 teachers are observed. As we show in Figure 54, the principal is the main person to observe classroom practices in most schools (43 percent of the treatment schools and 61 of the control schools), while vice principals are the main reviewers of lesson plans in nearly half the schools (49 percent of the treatment schools and 56 percent of the control schools). In 14 percent of the treatment schools, the RL coach is the main person to observe classrooms, and in 20 percent of these schools the coach is the main person to review lesson plans.

**Figure 54. Main person reviewing teachers' lesson plans and observing classroom practices – All schools**



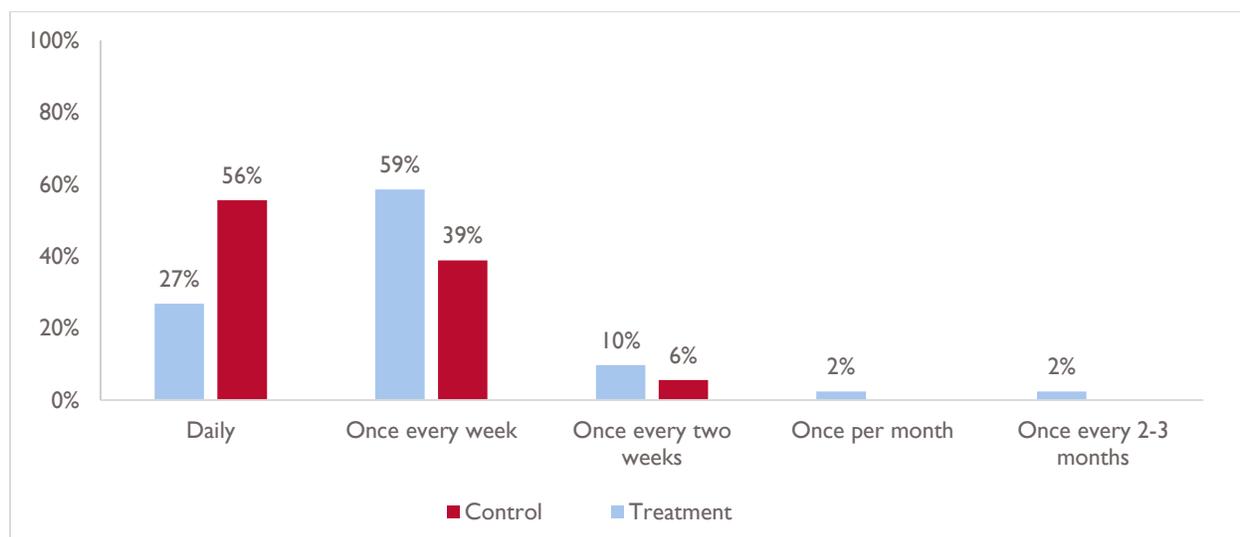
In about 80 percent of both the treatment and control schools, lesson plans are reviewed every week or more often, while in the remaining schools the review is conducted less frequently (Figure).

**Figure 55. Frequency of teachers' lesson plans revision – All schools**



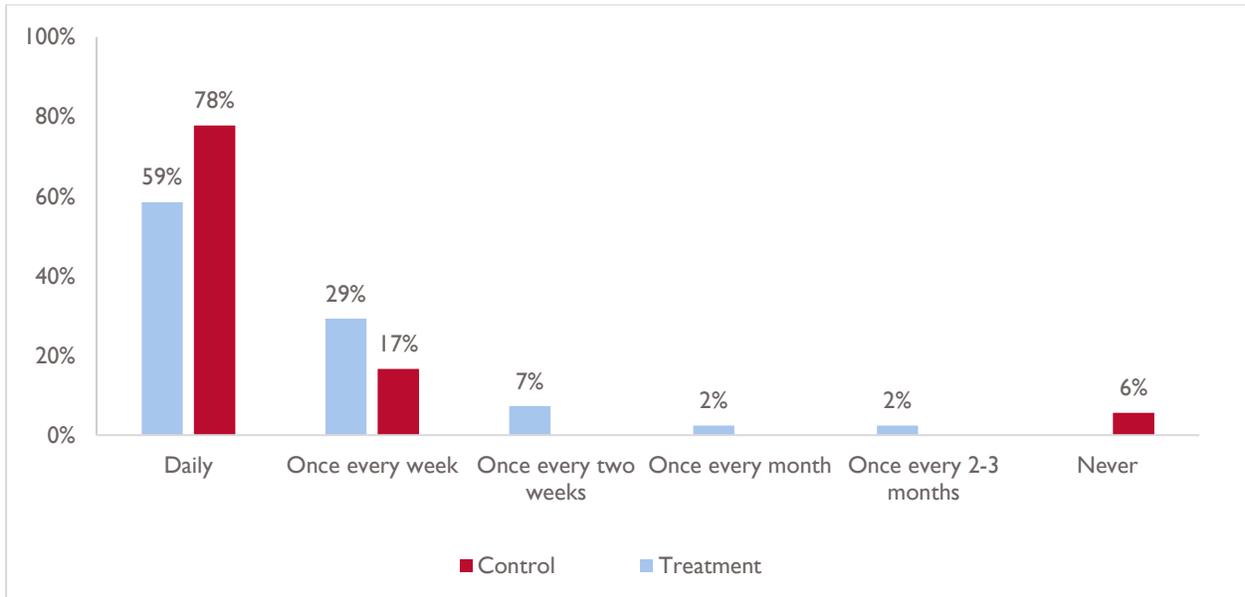
Regarding the frequency of observing classroom instruction, the majority of principals at treatment schools (59 percent) report that the main person observing classes does it once per week, whereas the majority of principals at the control schools (56 percent) report daily class observations (Figure 56).

**Figure 56. Frequency of observing grade 2 lessons, as reported by principals – All schools**



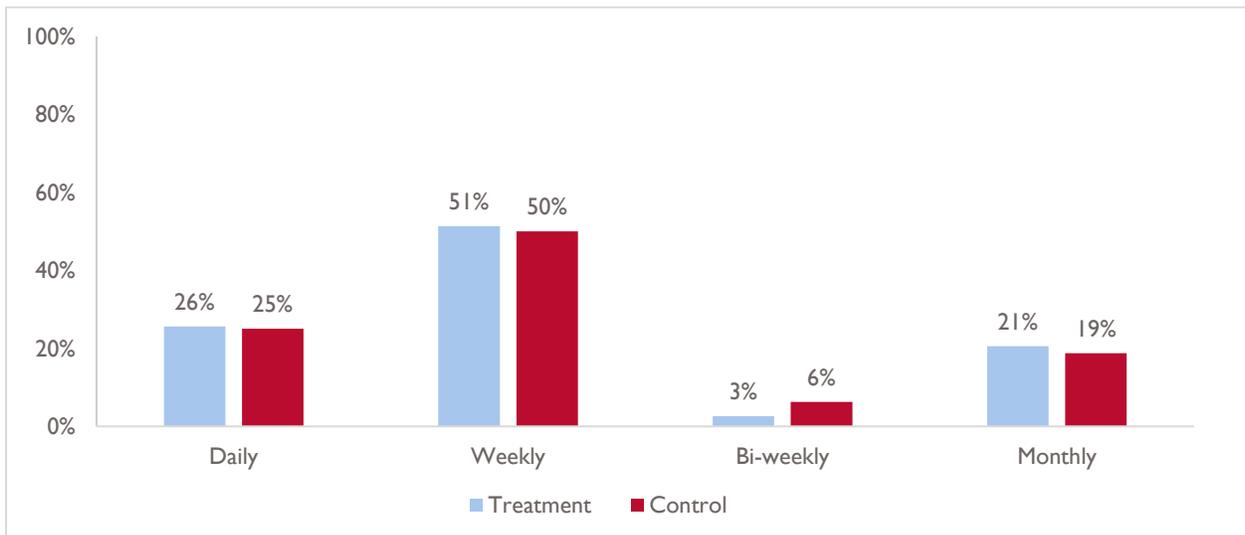
Teachers were also asked about how often their classes are observed by principals. 59 percent of teachers at the treatment schools and 78 percent at the control schools report being observed by their principals daily, while 29 percent at the treatment schools and 17 percent at the control schools report being observed once every week. The remaining teachers have their lessons observed by principals less frequently (Figure 57).

**Figure 57. Frequency of principals observing lessons, as reported by grade 2 teachers – All schools**



Almost all teachers at treatment and control schools (approximately 95 percent) receive feedback from their principals after class observations. This feedback is usually on student progress (64 percent in the treatment group and 31 percent in the control group), teaching (54 and 75 percent in treatment and controls respectively), and teaching plans (21 percent in the treatment group and 31 percent in the control group). The feedback is typically communicated verbally. About 50 percent of the teachers in both treatment and control groups receive principal’s feedback weekly, while approximately a quarter received it daily (Figure 58). The rest received this feedback bi-weekly or monthly. All teachers who receive feedback find it helpful.

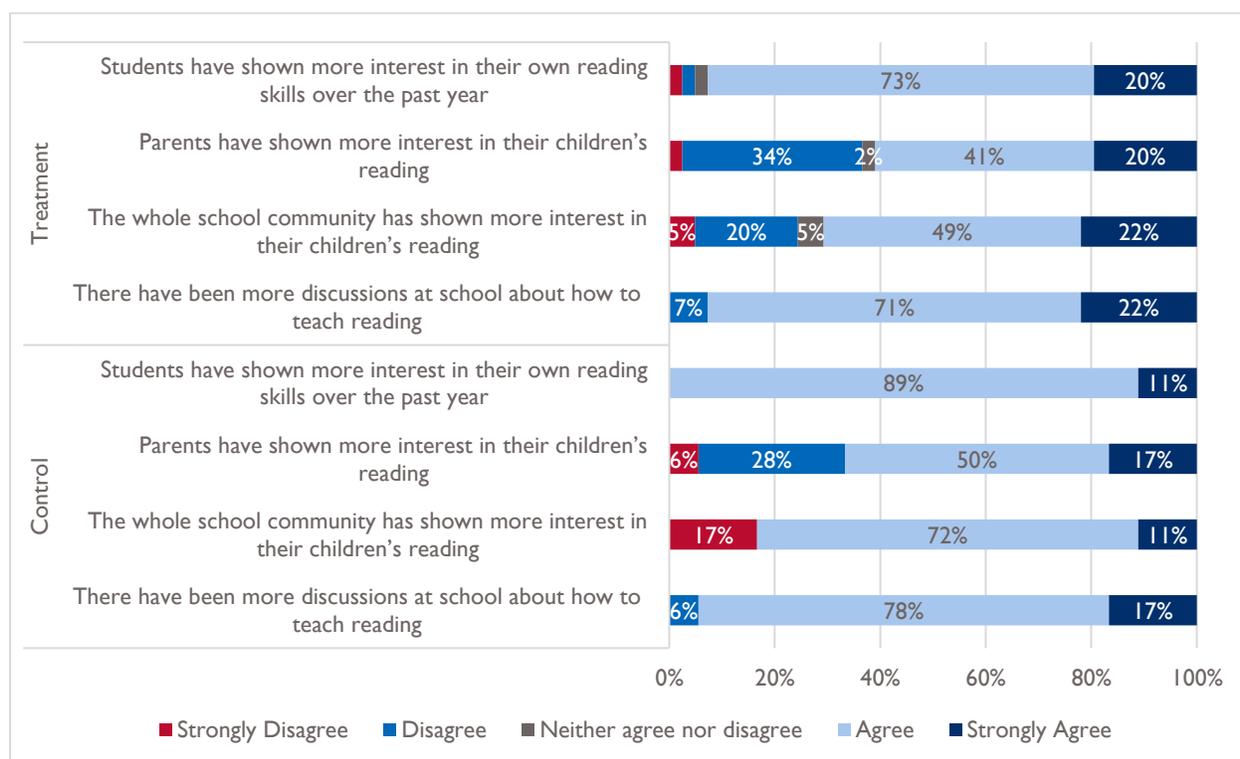
**Figure 58. Frequency of receiving feedback from principal, as reported by grade 2 teachers – All schools**



#### 4.5.4 RECENT CHANGES IN ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILDREN'S READING

Teachers were asked to express their opinions about whether students, parents, and the whole school community had shown more interest in children's reading over the past year (Figure 59). Answers had to be chosen from a Likert-like five-point scale with response options ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Over 90 percent of teachers at the treatment schools and 100 percent of teachers at the control schools either agree or strongly agree that students have shown more interest in their own reading skills over the past year, 61 percent of teachers at the treatment schools and 67 percent of teachers at the control schools either agree or strongly agree that parents have shown more interest in their children's reading over the past year, and 71 percent of teachers at the treatment schools and 83 of teachers at the control schools either agree or strongly agree that the whole community has shown more interest in children's reading. The respondents were also asked to evaluate whether more discussions on how to teach reading were happening at school over the past year. Over 90 percent of teachers at both the treatment and control schools either agree or strongly agree that there have been more discussions at schools on how to teach reading over the past year.

**Figure 59. Grade 2 teachers' opinion about attitudes towards reading – All schools**



## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this report, we analyze evidence of the implementation of the Read Liberia activity as of June 2019. We focus on grade 2 classrooms, their teachers and school principals in all 44 treatment schools and 18 randomly selected control schools out of the baseline sample.

The first important point to note is that four out of the 62 schools (6.5 percent) were not functioning when we visited. One school was closed due to the death of a teacher and the principal did not know when classes would resume. Two schools were completely closed for the year when visited on May 28<sup>th</sup>

and the fourth school was testing students for the whole week of May 27<sup>th</sup>. This should not have been the case given that visits took place between May 23<sup>rd</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup>, and schools were supposed to provide normal instruction until June 8<sup>th</sup> and to be open until July 19<sup>th</sup>. This problem is not related to Read Liberia per se, but given that the activity is delivered to the students at the school, the number of days devoted to instruction is obviously very important. Although being in school does not guarantee learning, it is a necessary condition for it. Schools need to be open, with teachers and students attending and instruction taking place. Recommendations include:

- 1) Increasing efforts to research early schools closing and competing activities such as “Bush School”
- 2) Raising awareness about the importance of attending school every day even in the early grades, including starting on the first day and attending through the last day of each term and giving non-monetary incentives to recognize learners and families that have started the year on time or shown high attendance; and
- 3) Improving teacher attendance monitoring and support and special recognition to those with high attendance.

Read Liberia provided teacher and principal training. Among our sample of treatment schools, training was very high among grade 2 teachers, 95 percent, and lower among principals 76 percent. The generalized opinion about the training is very favorable. We recommend identifying principals that have not received RL training yet and offering a make-up training as soon as possible.

In addition to training, teachers are observed while teaching reading and supported by RL coaches. In most cases coaches visited the grade 2 classroom with the adequate frequency intended by the program. Moreover, teachers find this support useful or very useful. Fifteen percent of the coaches however only visited the school every other month or less frequently. We recommend to explore the barriers that preclude coaches from supporting teachers as often as expected. In addition, we recommend exploring how an appropriate country-level coaching system could be implemented and sustained once the RL program ends.

Another important component of Read Liberia is the provision of teaching and learning materials. The program provided all teachers in our sample with teacher’s guides (although some teachers only have the first semester guide); there are also RL activity books in all grade 2 classrooms, and reading books in 88 percent of them. In addition to some classrooms not having any *Let’s Read* books, there is evidence that there are not enough activity and reading books for all students in many classrooms. For example, in 35 percent of the grade 2 treatment classes in our sample, less than half the children have a *Let’s Read* book; only 27 percent of the classes received supplementary reading materials from Read Liberia; and alphabet cards and posters are only available in some schools. We recommend exploring why there are insufficient materials and whether the deficit occurred at delivery or later on. All RL materials should reach each class and each of the students.

In conclusion, Read Liberia has been very successful in many aspects of the implementation but there is still room to improve the availability of materials and, to a lesser but still crucial extent, the number of principals trained and the frequency of teacher coaching and support.

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