

CoGrader in the Classroom: What teachers and district leaders reported after a year of use in a Texas ISD

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10-15 hrs → minutes	4 educator groups	5 themes
Reported grading time for a full class set of essays	High school English and ESL, middle school social studies, electives, and district leadership	Synthesized from transcripts plus two independent field-note sets

About this study

Over a multi-day site visit in spring 2026, the CoGrader research team observed classrooms and conducted semi-structured group interviews across two campuses of a Texas ISD. This was a Chromebook district in West Texas with daily professional learning community meetings at both schools. We spoke with high school English and ESL teachers, middle school social studies teachers, an elective department team, and district leadership.

Full meeting transcripts, structured field notes, and raw observation notes were combined and analyzed through inductive thematic coding, refining clustered quotes into five themes. The findings below describe practitioner experience as educators reported it, rather than measured effects.

What we found

Grading time collapses, and teachers reinvest it in instruction

The most consistent message across all three sets of source materials was that grading, which once dominated evenings and weekends, is now compressed into minutes. Importantly, that time is not simply returned to the teacher’s personal life. Teachers reported reinvesting it in conferencing with students about the feedback the tool produced.

“For me, it has freed up so much time. It used to take me 10 to 15 hours to grade one essay from all my students. ... Well, now it’s, what, five minutes, and I’m done with all of them? And so now I’m not afraid of putting out another assignment.”

High school English teacher

Teachers assign writing more often

Because the cost of grading a class set has fallen, teachers across both campuses described assigning writing more frequently, framing it as a change in what they were willing to ask of students rather than only a change in how long grading takes.

“After using, I’m more likely to give a writing assignment, because I don’t have to sit down and grade.”

Middle school English language arts teacher

Perceived fairness is the strongest trust signal in the field

Teachers repeatedly returned to the idea that CoGrader removes both the appearance and the reality of bias. Students stop questioning grades against one another, and teachers stop second-guessing themselves on holistic scoring. Field notes describe this as removing a barrier between teacher and student. Teachers extended it to their own biases, describing the tool as a check against themselves and not only a labor-saver.

“There’s no favoritism. It’s all, you know, this is all consistent and based on the rubric and based on facts and evidence that we have right here in front of us.”

High school English teacher

Students begin asking for feedback, and using it to revise

The outcome teachers described most enthusiastically was a shift in student behavior. Rather than receiving feedback passively, students began seeking it out and revising before submitting, asking to run drafts again to see whether a revision had moved the score. Teachers also used the translation feature to deliver feedback to multilingual learners in a language they could act on.

“I have this group of wonderful writers this year, and they constantly want it to be checked. Is it a five? Is it a five?”

Elective team teacher

“I’m also able to translate the feedback into Spanish so they can actually understand the feedback.”

ESL teacher

District leadership is anchoring instruction around what the tool makes visible

Beyond individual classrooms, district leadership has begun anchoring instructional practice around CoGrader. The district’s writing strategy, its differentiation approach for multilingual learners, and its state-aligned rubrics are increasingly organized around the feedback the tool surfaces, and teams meet in professional learning communities to align on scoring across grade levels.

What educators asked for next

A research visit is only useful if it also surfaces what is not yet built. Educators were specific about where the product should go, and their requests now sit on the roadmap:

- A student-facing experience for immediate feedback, the most requested capability, raised unprompted by every group, with support for handwritten work and teacher-controlled release.
- Reading-level controls, so comments meet seventh graders and multilingual learners where they are, alongside a setting that weights content reasoning over grammar.
- Anchor papers and exemplar responses teams can upload to calibrate scoring across a department or grade level.
- Multi-question assignments, so one passage with several questions and rubrics scores in a single pass.
- A district-level view for administrators, with usage reporting and a standards-coverage summary.
- Shorter, interactive certification training with hands-on practice, plus mid-year refreshers.

A note on outcomes data

District leadership shared retest performance data during the visit. In the baseline year, 32 percent of district students wrote anything at all on the state assessment's new reading passage with an embedded constructed response. The rest scored zero. After a year of instruction aligned to the district's writing strategy and supported by CoGrader, the district reported substantial improvement on December retests.

These figures were shared by the district and were not collected under controlled conditions. While they do not show a causal effect of CoGrader, we report them because they are the reason we are pursuing a rigorous follow-up study.

Where the research goes next

Texas districts are being asked to do something new. The redesigned state assessment puts a constructed response in front of every student, which calls for writing practice at a volume no teacher could grade by hand. That is the problem this district brought us, and the one we are building for. The work coming out of this visit points straight at it: scoring districts can rely on across their own rubrics, feedback students can read, exemplar papers so a department can calibrate together, and multi-question assignments that match how Texas districts build their common assessments. We are also deepening our work with the assessment platforms these districts already run, so writing checks land in the tools teachers open every day.

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