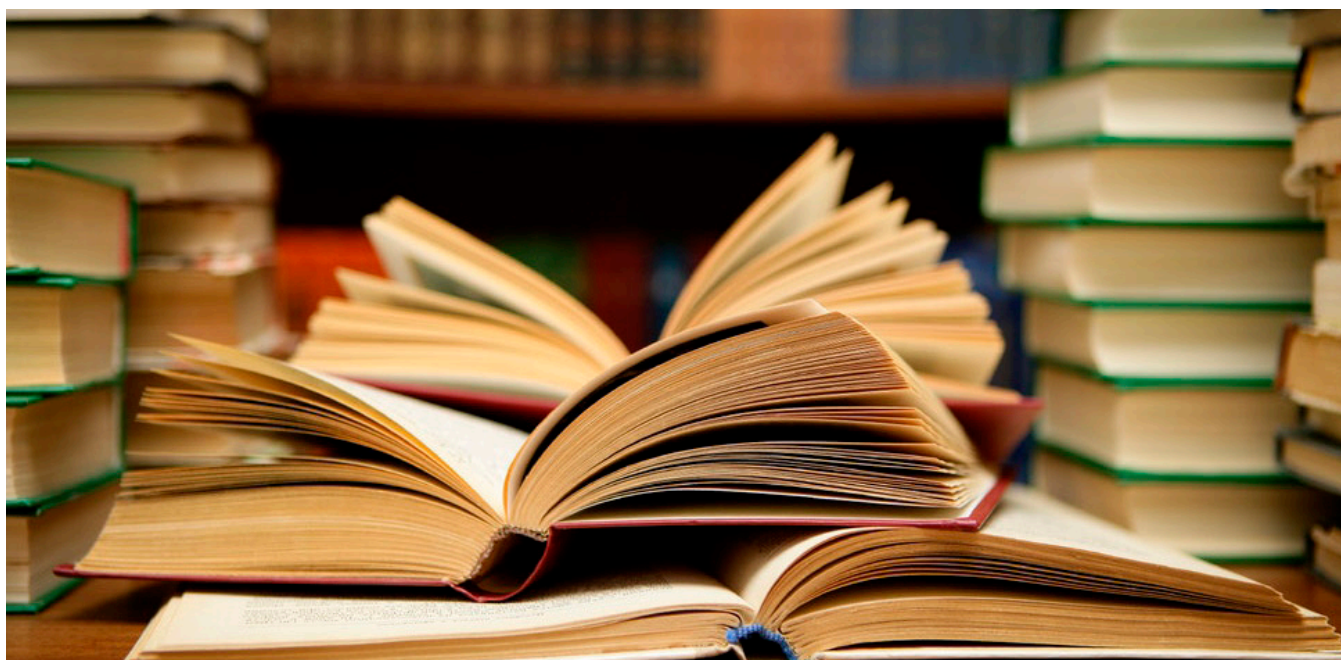


# **Mississippi Momentum: Bringing the Science of Reading to Teacher Preparation**

**The Second Annual Evaluation Report**

**October 2019**



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**The Second Annual Evaluation Report**

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**CRADLE TO CAREER  
POLICY INSTITUTE**

**October 2019**

## **Executive Summary**

This report provides findings from the second year of a three-year mixed methods evaluation the University of New Mexico Cradle to Career Policy Institute (CCPI) is conducting of the Mississippi Momentum Model and Professional Development Partnership. The Partnership is designed to increase the accountability of Mississippi's Institutions of Higher Learning for third grade literacy. The enabling legislation is found in the Literacy-based Promotion Act (LBPA) the Mississippi legislature passed in 2013 to improve children's reading achievement and ensure children were reading at grade level by the end of third grade. The Partnership provides intensive supports related to the teaching of early literacy to faculty from the fourteen Institutions of Higher Learning across Mississippi in the forms of modules, texts and other instructional materials; classroom instruction; one-on-one mentoring; and seminars. Among other courses, these faculty members teach the core Early Literacy 1 and Early Literacy 2 courses to pre-service educators and prepare them to take and pass the Foundations of Reading exam required for licensure.

The MS Momentum Partnership, including senior staff from the Barksdale Reading Institute (BRI), faculty from the Center for Excellence Literacy Instruction (CELI), the national trainer of the Language Essentials Teachers of Reading and Spelling (science of reading) curriculum that undergirds much of the professional development activities, provided much of the direct support to participating faculty through on-campus visits and day-long seminar and training sessions. Other partners include the Assistant Commissioner for Institutions of Higher Learning, the MS Department of Education's senior literacy staff, and the Higher Education Literacy Council (HELIC). The W.K. Kellogg Foundation provides the main funding for the MS Momentum Partnership and the Phil Hardin Foundation supports the evaluation.

Based on the Success Case Method Robert O. Brinkerhoff developed to assess professional development and training programs, the evaluation uses a mixed methods approach. This year's activities included interviews conducted with eight faculty participating in Mississippi Momentum, a survey on LETRS the partners conducted during the April 2019 seminar and which eighteen faculty completed, and another survey administered to first year educators across Mississippi that eighty-six completed. The screening element used for selection of faculty interviewees required that the educational consultant conducted two on campus visits. The CCPI evaluator visited Mississippi once in fall 2018 and another in spring 2019. The purpose of the first visit was to observe the educational consultant engage with faculty during an on-campus visit and the second was to conduct the interviews. CCPI audio recorded the interviews and later had them professionally transcribed for use in this report. CCPI analyzed the results from the two surveys and their interpretation along with a synthesis of findings from the interviews. These materials serve as the core sources of this second year report.

## **The Results**

### **From the Interviews**

The eight interviews conducted in April 2019 provided insight to the impact Mississippi Momentum is having on the professional capacity of IHL educators.

Comprised of three questions, the responses illustrate the positive effect participation has had on their instructional practices and the materials they use in their classrooms.

The 3 questions included:

- 1. How has your knowledge of the science of reading changed as evidenced by your performance on the clicker quizzes in the seminars?**
- 2. How has your knowledge of the science of reading transformed actual content being addressed in your pre-service courses as evidenced by changes in syllabi, class assignments, field experiences, and assessment? (Collect documentation of these examples.)**
- 3. As a result of the explicit modeling Antonio Fierro displays during his on-campus visits, how has your practice changed in your pre-service classes as evidenced by modifications in your pedagogy, curriculum, and delivery of content.**

The faculty appreciate the immediate feedback they experience during the seminars hosted by the Barksdale Reading Institute through the clicker technology that assesses their knowledge of the LETRS curriculum. Not only can they immediately see if they have answered a question correctly, the engagement with the partners allows them to explore why other answers were not correct.

Five of the faculty mentioned that understanding why you were wrong in selecting an answer and given the opportunity to correct that thinking may be more important in making a positive impact on future intellectual progress than simply making the correct choice in the first place.

Six of the faculty transferred this “clicker” use into their classrooms with platforms such as Kahoot™ or Poll Everywhere™ where they quiz their pre-service candidates in various concepts related to the science of reading. All eight of the faculty indicated they are now emphasizing areas such as phonics, phonemic awareness, and phonological awareness at a much deeper level than what they had prior to being in MM.

Interviewees discussed how they had modified their syllabi, assessments, field assignments and their classroom practices due to their participation.

For instance, all eight indicated they had restructured their syllabus in ways that emphasized the science of reading and established a deeper emphasis on phonics related concepts.

All eight indicated they no longer relied solely on text knowledge for assessing student progress, rather they require students to demonstrate the skills taught. They also provide much more detail in their student critiques.

Seven indicated they modified how field assignments were structured with examples being the lengthening of hours, providing pre-assignment direction and preparation, post-assignment debriefing, and requiring their students to show evidence of what they did and the students outcomes they saw.

All the faculty indicated how they shifted their classroom practice from an emphasis on text and theory in their earlier courses to more focus on hands-on related instruction and effective practice and grounding their instruction in the science of reading they are being exposed to through their participation in MM. When students are having difficulty with understanding a concept, several mentioned they “step back” and review it to ensure the students grasp what is being taught. Six of them specifically mentioned that they practice modeling techniques much more, specifically in the application of the key models such as Scarborough’s Rope, the four-part processing model, and the simple view of reading.

Faculty enhanced their ability to identify and use evidence-based materials, specifically peer-reviewed articles and texts they know to be grounded in the science of reading, to support their efforts to teach literacy and reading skills.

When asked about when students should take the Foundations of Reading test, all eight indicated that shortly after completion of the EL2 course is the ideal time. At least two have established monitoring systems to track when their students take the test, concluding that the longer the period between completion of EL2 and sitting for the FOR, the more likely the student will be to fail and to take it again.

Each interviewee noted how Fierro’s engagement with them, and their students, positively influenced their understanding of the science of reading and instructional behaviors.

His depth of professional knowledge and skill in delivery of content appear to have made lasting impressions on both the faculty participating in Mississippi Momentum and the students who were present in the college classrooms he visited. This impact is evidenced by faculty’s comments in areas such as changing their course syllabus, modifying classroom instruction practices that include modeling more frequently utilizing the “I do, we do, you do,” technique he often practices during his visits, and engaging in more explicit instruction and feedback with their students.

## **From the Review of Syllabi and Course Materials**

Participation in Mississippi Momentum has had an effect of the structure and content of syllabi and course materials. These impacts appear in the assignment rubrics; provision of direct links to research-based articles on literacy and reading instruction; time devoted to phonics and other related concepts; the frequent use of ongoing formative assessment; the expectations for field assignment, including the pre-assignment preparation and reading assessment materials students are expected to use.

In latter versions of the syllabi, faculty had typically shifted from reliance on a single source to integrating the use of several sources, all of which are grounded in the science of reading, such as peer-reviewed articles and instructional videos produced by recognized experts.

Much more reliance of Web-based platforms such as Canvas, TK-20 or Watermark (they are one of the same company now) appeared throughout the more recent syllabi that have links to research-based articles or instructional videos they have assigned to ensure their students are accessing materials tied to sound research instead of materials not based in sound research.

Several references to the Simple View of Reading Model, Four-Part Processor for Word Recognition, and Scarborough's Rope Model, which are conceptual models supported by the science, appeared in later versions of syllabi that were not present in earlier versions.

Throughout the syllabi, a universal goal that faculty spelled out centered on the need for students to prepare to take and pass the Foundations of Reading test (preferably on the first try), which is a necessary milestone for them to move into elementary teaching and literacy instruction. While discussing the FOR test, all the faculty agreed that the sooner the test is taken after completion of the EL2 course the more likely students will be able to pass on the first attempt.

Faculty expressed high expectations for their students as a reflection of their desire to help them succeed.

### **From the LETRS Quiz**

Eighteen faculty participated in the LETRS quiz conducted during the April 11-12, 2019 Mississippi Momentum seminar.

Their performance reflected that while some concepts are widely recognized many are still not established in memory for various participants.

For instance, in only six questions 100% of respondents answered correctly. Another eleven questions showed correct answers from between 76% and 94% of respondents. Between 59% and 71% of the respondents gave correct answers to the remaining ten questions.

In only one question did the correct response rate fall below 50% this being 41% of the respondents making the correct choice.

As the quiz results show, continued professional development and self-study is called for to deepen the knowledge and recall ability of faculty concerning terms and concepts related to LETRS and the science of reading.

### **From MDE Summary of Student Completers of the LETRS Phase 1 Modules**

The Mississippi Department of Education hosts Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional development classes for several groups of teachers in the state. Pre-service teachers comprise one of these groups. The professional development is directed to improving the knowledge of early literacy skills, improving the quality of classroom instruction, and improving the level and degree of teacher engagement with students.

For the 2018-19 academic year, the University of Mississippi had 44 students complete the LETRS Phase 1 Modules the Mississippi Department of Education provides.

Three IHLs, Alcorn, Mississippi University for Women, and William Carey each had 1 completer. The remainder of the IHLs had from zero to thirteen completers.

Students had to finish with an overall passage rate of 60%, however, no average score per IHL or composite average was able to be calculated from the data provided.

## **From the First Year Teacher Survey Spring 2019**

The first year teacher survey is administered to help determine how well teachers in elementary schools are faring as they begin their career. The survey covers various topics, such as their educator preparation program, how well prepared they were in their training, impactful sources of their ability to teach reading, impressions of the Foundation of Reading test, and how well prepared they felt on their first day of teaching. The following provides a summary of the results.

The University of Southern Mississippi and University of Mississippi had the largest numbers of respondents with twenty-one (24%) and twenty (23%), respectively.

Thirty respondents (35%) indicated they did not attend a community college prior to transferring to their IHL where they completed their educator preparation.

Itawamba Community College with eleven (13%) and Northeast Mississippi Community College at ten (12%) had the highest number of respondents who later transferred to their degree granting IHL. Respondents at the other CCs ranged from one (1%) to six (7%). Of the thirty-nine respondents who indicated transfer from a community college, five did not complete the EL1/EL2 sequence either as separate semesters or as a blocked course.

Sizeable minorities of students completed their EL1/EL2 block during the fall and spring semesters of their junior year with respective counts of forty (47%) and thirty-six (42%). Thirteen (15%), indicated they did not complete the EL1/EL2 sequence. As noted above five of those respondents had transferred from a community college.

A relatively small number, twelve (14%), completed the EL1/EL2 sequence as a single block during the fall semester of their senior year, the highest of any of the available semester options.

The survey then shifted to the influence their EL1 and EL 2 professors had on their preparation. In relation to their EL1 professors, in general, combined totals of 80% or more, thought this individual either well or moderately prepared them in the concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics/decoding, spelling/encoding, and assessment of their EL1 skills.

A few respondents, 0 to 2% in all cases, indicated their EL1 professor did not prepare them at all in those same skills. Somewhat more troubling were the 9 to 10% of respondents who indicated their EL1 professor had not addressed those various skills. The skills that came in at the 9% level included phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, spelling/encoding, and assessment of skills. For the 10% level, the skills included print and phonics/decoding.

Assessment of their EL2 professors dropped off with combined totals from 63 to 84% for concepts covered, including: oral language development, vocabulary, morphology, levels of connected text, strategies of critical thinking, products of comprehended text, text types, and assessment of EL2 skills.

The percentages for students who indicated they were not at all prepared by their EL2 professors in the concept areas listed above ranged from 0 to 2%.

The respondents who indicated their EL2 professor had not covered various concepts rose somewhat from what they gave for their EL1 professors to a range of between 9 and 12%.

Seventy-four (86%) respondents indicated they either taught reading in a self-contained classroom (forty/47%) or for their grade level (thirty-four/39%).

Seventy-four (86%) of respondents did not teach 3rd grade this past year, twelve (14%) did. With this assignment came the responsibility of guiding their students through the 3rd Grade. The student passage rate on the first try for the Reading Foundations Assessment of the twelve third grade teachers ranged from 50 to 100%.

One teacher reported a 100% pass rate. Of the remaining eleven, five fell into the 80 to 89% passage rate, the largest individual grouping, with the other six distributed equally across the remaining three percentage bands.

The survey prompted respondents to indicate what percentage of influence on their ability to teach reading came from five different sources: EL1 or EL2 professor, other reading professors or course, MDE-provided LETRS training, School or District provided PD, or supervising teacher during intern experience. The percentage magnitude of these influences included: Not at all (0%), Very Little (30%), Some (50%), Most (70%) and All (100%).

For those who indicated “all” or “most” for their EL 1 or EL 2 professor, the aggregate count was thirty-seven (43%). In considering some other reading professor or course, twenty-nine (33%) indicated these as their top choices.

Regarding MDE-provided LTRS training, twenty-nine (34%) indicted this as their top source. For the school or district-provided PD, thirty-six (41%) chose these as their most important. Finally, forty-one (47%) noted their supervising teacher during their intern experience as their key choice.

Drawing from a list of fourteen words to best describe their approach to reading, a total of seventy-four (86%) indicated either “small group” or “differentiated.” Another twenty-eight (33%) selected “structured literacy” and sixty-eight (79%) chose “whole group.” The remaining ten words fell somewhere between these min/max figures.

To give their impressions on the Foundations of Reading Test respondents could select from a group of seven choices and could select all that applied. Thirty-nine (45%) indicated they believed their program had prepared them well. At the other end of the spectrum, seven (8%) noted they had to hire a tutor or get extra help.

Asked to indicate how well prepared they felt on their first day of class to teach reading, twenty (23%) of the eighty-six felt well prepared, forty-six (53%) moderately prepared, twelve (14%) indicated they were minimally prepared, and eight (9%) noted they were not at all prepared.

As a closing option, respondents could provide an open-ended comment at the end of the survey and fifty-six chose to do so. The responses fell broadly across eight categories, including: 1) request for more phonics training, 2) need for mentoring, 3) pre-service exposure, 4) need for



emphasis on practical skills development, 5) need for training in differentiated instruction, 6) need for ongoing professional development for beginning teachers, 7) personal testimonies to their pre-service education, and a catch-all 8) miscellaneous.

## **Limitations**

The findings provided in this report offer a second-year assessment of a three-year evaluation. In general, the findings are positive and present a professional development approach that appears to be promoting individual growth in terms of changed mindsets and instructional practices of participating faculty. However, since only eighteen faculty members participated in the April 2019 seminar from which the LETRS quiz results are drawn and CCPI interviewed eight of those individuals, the findings in this report should not be universally applied. Further, only eighty-nine respondents completed the first-year teacher survey, which informs another section of this report, the results reflect only a limited perspective of new teachers across Mississippi. In light of these limitations, while the presented results suggest various positive indicators and trends, major conclusions as to the efficacy of the Mississippi Momentum initiative remain to be fully established.

## **The Interviews**

During spring 2019, CCPI interviewed a total of eight participants in Mississippi Momentum over the two-day period of April 11-12, 2019. The interviews coincided with the period Mississippi Momentum was hosting a professional development seminar at the Mississippi Children's Museum in Jackson. Museum staff provided the space for the interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and comprised of three main questions each lasted from 20 to 40 minutes. Audio-recorded and professionally transcribed, CCPI reviewed the manuscripts for major themes that serve as the core of the following discussion.

Mississippi Momentum partners reached out by email to invite faculty participants who had completed two on-campus visits with Antonio Fierro. Faculty who agreed to participate contacted the CCPI evaluator and they agreed upon a day and time for the interview, which would occur during the two-day period denoted above.

The three questions that served as the structure of the interviews include:

- 1. How has your knowledge of the science of reading changed as evidenced by your performance on the clicker quizzes in the seminars?**
- 2. How has your knowledge of the science of reading transformed actual content being addressed in your pre-service courses as evidenced by changes in syllabi, class assignments, field experiences, and assessment? (Collect documentation of these examples.)**
- 3. As a result of the explicit modeling Antonio Fierro displays during his on-campus visits, how has your practice changed in your pre-service classes as evidenced by modifications in your pedagogy, curriculum, and delivery of content.**

Where appropriate to expand a line of inquiry, the interviewer asked additional questions. The themes and corresponding responses to these supplemental questions appear as subsections in the discussion of the main questions. As alluded to at the end of question two, CCPI requested interviewees provide copies of various course materials or activities (syllabi, class assignments, field experiences, and assessments) they had developed prior to or early on during their participation in Mississippi Momentum and what they had developed up to the point in time of the interview. The analysis of these changes appears as a separate section that begins on page thirteen. Where appropriate, CCPI made some minor editing of quotes to remove duplicate or excessive verbiage that appears in oral language without altering the essence of the thought.

### **Question 1: How has your knowledge of the science of reading changed as evidenced by your performance on the clicker quizzes in the seminars?**

Providing immediate feedback for participants from quizzes the group takes during Mississippi Momentum professional development activities appears as a hallmark of the seminars. Using a clicker (effectively an electronic selection device) or a smart phone, participants select from a set of responses to questions on the material they are covering during a seminar. The questions and selections appear on a central projection screen with a time limit for the response and

composite results appear as follow-up. The partners then discuss with the participants why a particular answer was correct but also why the other selections were incorrect. This process provided participants the opportunity to understand why and how their thinking aligns with the answer and to provide correction and clarity when it does not. Universally across the responses, participants expressed high favor with the approach and the immediate impact it had on improving their knowledge of the LETRs curriculum and the science of reading. One interviewee summed it up as follows:

I think it works well. Absolutely, absolutely. Immediate feedback. If the question is asked and, say, 60 percent of all of us get it wrong and 40 percent get it right, then there's an immediate explanation why. "Okay, this one was correct, but let's see why so many of you thought this was it." Immediate feedback has definitely been there.

A participant specifically linked the success of the clicker approach in improving her professional growth to the process Dr. Antonio Fierro followed, specifically his comprehensive explanations of why a particular answer was correct and the others incorrect.

Dr. Fierro is so good at explaining things, and not just, "This is the right answer," but, "This is why this is the right answer. This is why this one is the wrong answer," and if there's something that is very close, two that are very close, and just terminology, like, "Well, now, don't you remember segmenting with spelling and blending with decoding?" .... He has made it more explicit as to what the answers are, and why that is the correct answer.

Other interviewees discussed how the process helped them deepen their understanding of the science of reading. For instance, one participant explained how feedback enhanced her grasp of material, especially what is occurring in a student learning to read and the models used to explain the dynamics of teaching reading.

I feel like before this whole Mississippi Momentum, and the LTRS training, and all that, I'm not sure I had a deep understanding of the science of reading. I understood what components went into best practices for teaching reading, but I don't think I understood the science behind it, what research says and really in-depth components of it, like the phonemic awareness. I don't know that I really understood all that goes into that and how oral language plays into that. I think that it's really just broadened and given me a deeper understanding for the science of reading. I know that the brain research that was presented, that was fascinating to me to see what the brain does when students are learning to read. Then the models that we've talked about throughout the seminars: the Simple View of Reading, or the four-part process, or Scarborough's rope model. All of that has really given me just a deeper understanding.

*"I think that it's really just broadened and given me a deeper understanding for the science of reading"*

Another interviewee discussed how the results from the quizzes served to prompt a deeper investigation into phonics and other curricular materials she had not been exposed to because her earlier education in reading coincided with the emergence of and focus on Whole Language. She realized she did not know the material and made the concerted effort to correct these deficiencies in her knowledge base.

When we first started the modules of the LETRS training, I remember doing—not the clickers—just the regular quizzes. The first test we had, I remember it clearly. We didn't have to put our names or anything on there. This was my first time attending. I thought I knew the questions. Ended up, I did not understand, because I hadn't read about the science of reading at that time. I was not trained in phonics. I was trained through whole language. It really made a big difference, so then after I got that test back, I saw that, "Hey, I really need to delve more deeply into this."

One of the MM participants noted how she came into higher education via a twenty-three year teaching career in 3rd and 4th grade English Language Arts (ELS). Her positive experience with the clicker application and the resulting expansion of her knowledge of the science of reading led her to apply the approach in teaching her undergraduates. The following describes her direct application of the approach Dr. Fierro models in his engagement with faculty.

When I came in, I came from the experience of a third- and fourth-grade ELA teacher for 23 years, versus I didn't use the knowledge that we were talking about in the LTRS program, Mississippi Momentum. Now that I've learned more, as time went on, my score has improved greatly. .... I will say just using the quizzes in the seminars, I use that as a model in my classrooms. We use some of the Foundations of Reading practice-test questions as what I call bell-ringers, and we use Kahoot!™, which is kind of a clicking system. I've pulled the questions that are based on whatever we're studying at that time from the practice tests, and give them some application to what they're going to have to do when they take the Foundation of Reading test. I've modeled that after the clicker quizzes that we took. The students love it, because they know they're gonna be assessed at the end of Early Lit II, that's a required state test in our state for certification. It's a little bit of a variety in the way—then, we talk about, "If B's right, why is B right? Why is it the correct answer? If, A, C, and D are not correct, why are they not the correct answer?"

One interviewee elaborated on how important participating in MM had been for her skill maintenance, since she was not currently teaching.

[L]ike I said, in the modules, I guess, four, five and six, since I don't teach that right now. It's helped me keep myself, at least on some degree, knowledgeable of that content.

Another pointed out how participation and experience with the quizzes generally enhanced her skills and knowledge related to the material surrounding vocabulary, comprehension and fluency and her professional expertise as a college instructor of reading, specifically in her EL2 classrooms where those concepts are emphasized.

I really like the quizzes that we're taking because it shows me the growth that I'm going through....I don't teach EL1, and so I'm not as familiar with the content. My area of expertise is [with] much older students. I teach EL2, which primarily focuses on the vocabulary, comprehension and fluency part. With that being said, I have learned so much going through the LETRS process, and I started many years ago as a literacy coach, under [faculty name]. I did the LETRS training there, and I continuously have done the LETRS training, and I found it really interesting that every time I go, you learn new things. .... I was actually pretty pleased with my growth, that I've actually learned a lot, and it was able to show me that I had my own results in front of me, and I really appreciated that.

As indicated in the various responses above, the engagement with and review of LETRS materials through the clicker assessments as part of Mississippi Momentum seminar activities contributes to the professional growth and development of participating faculty. Uniformly, participants expressed the positive nature of the use of the platform and the enhanced knowledge they gained in the science of reading. A central aspect of their experience included Dr. Fierro's use of a social learning methodology to facilitate participant practice, understanding, retention, and motivation to apply what they learned in their own classrooms. Participant responses illustrate how the immediate feedback process enhanced their deeper understanding of the materials being covered and results in improved classroom instruction for their pupils who will be going on to teach reading across Mississippi. Later on in the interviews various individuals commented on, among other changes, how their participation in the seminars changed the way they taught their course, modeled techniques, provided informed and reflective critiques of their students, and strived to ground their instruction and curriculum in the science of reading.

**Question 2: How has your knowledge of the science of reading transformed actual content being addressed in your pre-service courses as evidenced by changes in syllabi, class assignments, field experiences, and assessment?**

When answering this question faculty members explained how participation in Mississippi Momentum prompted them to initiate significant changes in their courses for pre-service teacher candidates. Many described how their deeper knowledge of the science of reading facilitated changes in their syllabi, class assignments, field experiences, and how they now assess their students. For instance,

- all eight indicated they had restructured their syllabus in ways that emphasized the science of reading and established a deeper emphasis on phonics related concepts.
- all eight indicated they no longer relied solely on text knowledge for assessing student progress, rather they require students to demonstrate the skills taught. They also provide much more detail in their student critiques.
- seven indicated they modified how field assignments were structured with examples being the lengthening of hours, providing pre-assignment direction and preparation, post-assignment debriefing, and requiring their students to show evidence of what they did and the students outcomes they saw. The eighth interviewee did not have a field component in her class because she was not teaching either EL1 or EL2.
- every faculty indicated that they had shifted their classroom practice from an emphasis on text and theory in their earlier courses to more focus on hands-on related instruction and effective practice and grounding their instruction in the science of reading they are being exposed to through MM.
- when they recognize students are having difficulty with understanding a concept, several mentioned they “step back” and review it to ensure the students grasp what is being taught.
- six of them mentioned that they practice modeling techniques much more, specifically in the application of the key models such as Scarborough's Rope, the four-part processing model, and the simple view of reading.

Several referred to how their expanded knowledge gained through participation in Mississippi Momentum led them to replace earlier “research” materials that they had previously allowed their students to self-select with other articles grounded in the science of reading research, such as Louisa Moats seminal piece, *Teaching Reading is Rocket Science*. Using their enhanced knowledge base gained through participation in MM they altered their behavior in classrooms and engagement with students by modeling the techniques and practices they learned.

A clear indication of how faculty have changed their thinking and approach is tied to their comments on how much they have modified their syllabi or assessments as a consequence of their engagement in Mississippi Momentum and now have a greater reliance on and recognition of evidence-based research and practice as illustrated in the following quotes:

When I was looking for samples to bring in today, it made me proud that I have made so many changes. Just starting with the syllabi, every time I leave one of these professional development sessions, I come back to campus, and I’m, like, “Okay, I need to change this, I need to change that.” Specifically with my syllabi now, I have research articles embedded [within]. When I look at my syllabus, and I look at what I’m gonna do each week or the course schedule, every week I have a piece of research that is evidence-based practices... that I’m exposing students to. So, that was the biggest thing. Prior to that, my articles—I don’t even know if they were research articles, but they were recommended by a friend or a colleague, or maybe a student brought ‘em in, maybe they’re just opinion pieces, they’re not peer reviewed. [Now] they’re actually research articles. I did notice that in my syllabus.

It’s changed a great deal. I brought you a syllabus that I used for Early Lit I, from winter 2015, which is the first quarter that I taught that class at [IHE name]. Compared to spring, over the time since I’ve been in the LTRS training, I have adjusted my syllabi to talk about the phonics, and I try to group it according to the LTRS instruction. You’ll see that the challenge of learning to read is something that we picked up in LTRS Module 1 – learning to read is not natural, and what the brain does. I pull all that in. That’s the very beginning of the courses. They get information about that. As we go through each strand...for Early Lit I, we do oral language development concepts about print, phonemic awareness, and phonics. As I go through and introduce the strand...I start bringing in Reading Universe to them; it’s listed on my syllabus. I actually model lessons. Here’s Phonological Awareness; Hourglass Concept Model; the Consonant Articulation chart; the Vowel Articulation chart, we cover. I have pulled all that in, which totally looks different now than it did four years ago. It’s almost a living, breathing machine that’s just changed as my knowledge has grown. I’ve tried to integrate everything that I’ve learned through LTRS. In particular, I use the article reviews; I use articles that we’ve actually covered in our material.

I had the LETRS training, too, just with the elementary teachers, but I like this, and I’m glad I had it because it prepared me to do the one here with Dr. Fierro and the others. I think I’m getting a lot more out of this one because I had that background. At [my IHE], we’ve done several things, like we used to use a survey book, a text, [by D. Ray] Reutzel [and Robert Cooter]. It’s the teachers that make the difference. It was a good book, but it was just a survey, a little bit of this, a little bit of that, a little bits of other. We moved to actually using the LETRS modules this year, and Dr. Fierro... made the point that some things in the LETRS modules are probably too deep for a novice to understand. That made me feel

good because I had already felt that way, but I like using the LETRS modules, they're clear. One of the main things that I like about using are those models, like the Simple View of Reading and the Scarborough's Rope, and talk with them about that, and then the fact that Mississippi Momentum actually gave us visuals to put up so that we could talk about them, and then the Four-Part Processing. To me, that's our conceptual framework.

I don't teach Early Literacy I and II. I teach Diagnostic Reading. Kelly [Butler] came to our campus two years ago. She helped develop an assessment—we even changed the title because of her visit. Before, we called it Diagnostic and the Remedial Reading. Remedial carried a negative status...so yeah, we changed it to Reading Assessments and Intervention. Also, based on latest training, we added the loss of phonological awareness survey and a decoding survey. This is the first semester I have used this syllabus. .... We modified all our assessments and assignments. We focus more on phonics. However, in this class, I think we still do not want to forget comprehension and syntax, semantics. We're all about the phonics, testing, fundamental learning, the concept of print. After the midterm we are doing comprehension, semantics, meaning. I think it is good package now, but we are learning to use this new syllabus.

Faculty also discussed how their involvement with Mississippi Momentum has changed the way they structure their assignments for pre-service students by requiring more pragmatic, hands-on application of the concepts they learn in the college setting. This is a marked change from what they had relied on for assessment in the past, which was primarily student recall of text-based knowledge. As noted below, one faculty explained that for her final exam, she requires students to label and summary explain each part of various conceptual models she teaches in her course (e.g. Scarborough's Rope, the Simple View of Reading, the Four-Part Processing Model, and Ehri's Phases of Word-Reading Development).

***"It's all application at this point, just about, not a typical multiple choice test. They have to reproduce the models; they have to explain them. They must explain what types of characteristics you'll see in children according to what they're struggling in."***

What I've learned about the science of reading—there's several things. It's changed my emphasis on the models and being able to look deeper and understand why things happen the way they happen—What's going on in the brain? How are children processing this—so they can better analyze or diagnose students or their abilities/disabilities when the students are struggling with something. For me, that has gone into my instruction with the students. Having them practice deeper application of these processes and with the assessments. It's all application at this point, just about, not a typical multiple choice test. They have to reproduce the models; they have to explain them. They must explain what types of characteristics you'll see in children according to what they're struggling in. Things like that. It's really changed over into my assignments and my assessments.

Another discussed how her experience within Mississippi Momentum had made her much more attuned to "disconnects" between what she might think are clear expectations and directions for assignments and what her students perceived. Hence, she now revisits concepts previously covered to ensure her students have developed the foundational knowledge necessary before proceeding.

If I assign something, and I think the directions are clear, and I think it's gonna be an easy assignment or somethin' that could easily be executed within the classroom, and more than half of 'em are sayin', "I don't get this. I don't know if I can teach this," then that's a clue to me. Okay, wait. We've gotta back up. The background knowledge is not there, or the concept is just not well developed, and I have to back up. It's always a reflected piece for me. Assessment is always reflective for me.

Various faculty discussed how their experience with Mississippi Momentum led them to restructure their syllabi. Consequently, they became much more reflective on their approach that entailed embracing explicit approaches with instructional strategies and requirements for student field experiences:

Before coming to the LETRS modules, we had different books. Our syllabi had to be restructured. One good thing about that, when we meet for the Higher Ed Literacy Council [was that] our assignments should focus on the restructuring that we made through our syllabus. Because the science of reading teaches us if you don't really know the background, you don't really know the content. If you don't know how children actually learn how to read, then your teaching is not going to be effective in order for them to be successful. Now, when we meet [in the MM seminars], I take notes, get examples, different things like that, so that when I go back to my class, then I can also structure my assignments. I don't copy the assignments. I put a spin on anything that I get through the teachings of whoever is doing the modeling that day. I go back and think about ways that my students can be successful, because in the location where I teach, I have to be very explicit in my teaching.

Specifically, with the science of reading, prior to doing this, most of our faculty taught more of what we felt was backed, which was a balanced literacy approach. We learned quickly from coming through here that such a thing does not exist. While we were teaching the five components of reading and focusing on phonics, it wasn't as explicit and it didn't have the research backed with it with the models—the simple view of reading and such. In our courses, we have now integrated that content into the lecture courses. Then in our field experiences, there were already assignments where they taught a phonics lesson, and I brought [examples]. There are assignments that were already there that were good assignments—a phonics lesson, a comprehension, a vocabulary—but how it has changed and how we have prepared them to teach those lessons—the content they are using—it's more explicit phonics instruction. Through these seminars, we've learned more of the science of reading. For a specific example, a lot of our students, for a phonics lesson, they focused on Magic e—vowel, consonant e. We've now learned that that's not a set rule as most people think and that's not a principle that they should be focusing on. Now, in my feedback, I watch them in the field, and they teach these lessons, and I give feedback on their lesson plans after they've taught, so the feedback that I give them on the content when they teach those phonics lesson—and comprehension and vocabulary, but mainly phonics—is much more based in the science of reading.

One faculty member, who is just entering the field of college instruction, expressed how fortunate she felt to have come in when she did as this entailed receiving a foundation in the LETRS approach to reading with the added benefit that she did not have to “unlearn” ideas or practices from her previous educational experiences:



I have been very fortunate in this entire journey because, as I stated, when I was a literacy coach I was trained in LETRS, and then when I went into working at the higher-ed level when I was at another college for my first year, the lady that I worked under was really big into LETRS and explicit instruction. So, I...didn't have to battle anything. Then I came to where I am now, and it was the same thing. [My colleague] was just really wanting to do this type of instruction. I've been very fortunate and haven't had any battles. Therefore, since I'm so young in the game, I haven't had to make any changes. Everything that I teach actually comes from everything that I've learned from LETRS, so everything that I do is based on my professional development here.

In response to a query on how their participation in Mississippi Momentum had modified their pre-service student field experiences, the answers at times showed less emphasis on the effect of this participation, with the caveat they provided more explicit training in tools the preservice students could use:

We've increased the time in the field, but I don't know if that's a direct reflection of this. We actually have a pretty strong field experience component to our EL1 and EL2, but prior to this, we were one of the few programs that that's part of it. They have to do EL1 and EL2 field experience. I don't know that the actual program—that hasn't changed, but as I said, what they're doing in the field is changing. Instead of, "Oh, you need to tutor a student—work with fluency," we are giving them tools [e.g. Oral Language Assessment, Phonemic Awareness Assessment, and Phonics Screener] and instruction [i.e. explicit instruction on how to administer the assessments and providing guided critiques on their use] on how to work with those students more than just sending 'em out there and letting the mentor teachers in the schools guide what they're doing.

As an additional question, some interviewees were asked whether they were monitoring their students' preparedness for the Foundations of Reading test in terms of determining the ideal point in time in relation to their course taking to take the FOR test and pass, preferably on the first attempt. Uniformly, the interviewees indicated that as soon as possible after completion of their EL1/EL2 sequence provided the highest likelihood of them passing. The following quote shows the approach faculty at one IHL had implemented to help ensure this success and modify their instruction as appropriate.

Yes. We look at our scores each semester, and [my colleague] and I are actually doing the study about Mississippi Momentum where we're looking at are the foundation of reading scores improving throughout this time, so we've specifically been looking at each semester since we started this. What we've been doing is looking at students when they're taking it in our program. Is it right after EL1 or EL2? Is it during our diagnostic and assessment course right before student teaching? When is the best time for them to take it? This has definitely helped us understand that test more so that we can advise them as to when and tailor our instruction to fit when they should take it.

**Question 3: As a result of the explicit modeling Antonio Fierro displays during his on-campus visits, how has your practice changed in your pre-service classes as evidenced by modifications in your pedagogy, curriculum, and delivery of content.**

As noted above, one of the screening items used to select faculty who would be interviewed for this report had to have received two on-campus visits from Dr. Antonio Fierro, the consultant working with the Mississippi Momentum project. A number of interviewees indicated that the modeling Dr. Fierro displayed served as an impetus for them to reflect upon their own practice in the classroom and the delivery of content then allowing students to practice the skill as seen in the following:

The delivery of content would be one that I would address first. When you see Antonio come to campus and then do all these fantastic activities and hands-on, it has really made me sit back and think, “Am I providing enough modeling? Am I really showing them? I know I’m talking about it. I’m maybe even showing a video of it in practice, but am I really modeling this, of how this is gonna look in the classroom?” I would think that that’s the biggest thing with me is trying to lecture less and model more, so really tryin’ to show them, and then giving them opportunities to then model it back to me. Do you have it? Do you understand it? Can you actually take this into the classroom?

My ability to explicitly explain the content, apply it, model it, and have the students apply it has gotten stronger because I get to watch him. He actually visited with me yesterday. I actually asked him to do some interactive application with them....[and] it was so nice to see an expert or somebody who is quick at it, who is very knowledgeable, who can bring in everything. [I]n that process of watching him do it in front of them, it reminds me of what I need to be doing and gives me a model to try and achieve, something similar or as good as what he’s providing.

Probably the most impact, speaking just from his campus visits, are how we have now interwoven the science into our content and the existing text that we’re required to use ‘cause we can only change text every so many years in the adoption cycle. He has modeled how to present those models and the concepts of phonological awareness, phonemic awareness into our already content that, unfortunately, some of it we have to use—we’re tied to it. He has come and presented seminars to the students. He’s modeled teaching hands-on with the models with the phonological processor and the orthographic processor [and] how to make those concepts fit into our already existing lectures and textbooks. Probably that’s the biggest change.

I’m doing more modeling, and they [pre-service students] are doing more actual practicing. When he came to us this semester, he did a—tap it, map it, zap it. We did that. Then when we went out as a phonemic awareness activity...in schools, we did that, and then we got some phoneme tiles that we started using out in the schools. Really, I guess I have more confidence that I model. I sometimes have to make them do it. I think they would rather do it for children than they would their peers, but they teach it. They teach an activity; not necessarily a whole lesson. They teach an activity. Then that prepares us to go out and work with the children, the struggling readers that we work with in first grade in my particular class. Each one of ‘em has one student to work with.

For me, it's more of the read between classes. I might do a little podcast [of material, such as Scarborough's Rope or a concept, such as phoneme awareness, covered in the class] or something at the beginning of class; might be five, eight minute, something reminding them of the content, the key points. Then we spend most of the class actually doing something.

I practice a flipped-classroom approach, so that my students have their assigned reading to do out of the module, and then they come in and they take a quiz. It's an open-note quiz, so I encourage them to take notes from the module as they go along. They have an open-note quiz, which is one question, just to make sure that they go ahead and have read the chapter, because it gives them that background knowledge for when I'm going to explain it. Then, after we do that, at the beginning of the semesters, you'll see my syllabus that I model for them how to do an explicit vocabulary lesson, all the way from introducing the vocabulary at the beginning, the background knowledge, how to read the story, how to teach the vocabulary.

This same faculty member then explained how she required her students to put her modeling into their practice by demonstrating one of the strategies they covered:

Then I give them a list of [laughter] research-based activity strategies to use, and they sign up for which ones they want to demonstrate. I call it a teacher demonstration. After they take the quiz, they do a full demonstration with the "I do, we do, you do" [a technique they learned from Dr. Fierro during his visits]. They turn in lesson plans that they write, and then they collect it to a portfolio so that they have this to go with them when they leave.

Another faculty member discussed how Dr. Fierro's visits has instilled in her a need for intentionality in her practice that her students can model, while recognizing the challenge of the students' lack of preparation prior to attending class.

I try to lead by example more. I try to take what he has modeled and put it in my teaching and try to teach it explicitly, not as well as he can, but just model it the way he has taught us to model it. When I do that, I can see their interest peak. I do have to teach the research. I tell my students all the time, "I do have to teach the research, because I have a problem with them [not] reading the material before they get there. I do have to teach the research. I have to go through it and try to make sure that they understand it. In modeling, I do a lot of anchor charts [often a graphic tool used to support learning (i.e. "anchor" the lesson) in a classroom, co-created by a teacher and students], we do a lot of hands-on activities. This is not a sit down, read your book class. This is a class filled with activities structured by the author. Some structured by the author. ... I think his modeling has really helped me be able to help my students.

One faculty member discussed how Scarborough's Rope model applied to the Mississippi anchor standards as a focus of one aspect of her instruction and the modification of her approach to teaching those as a consequence of Dr. Fierro's visits.

One of the things that I took from Antonio's visit...[includes] talking about Scarborough's Rope. I have added that activity to my syllabus—we call 'em pipe cleaners...We do that activity where we label each [component] and twist 'em together and talk about how each

of these are important. Then we take it another step further where we go and we look at the Mississippi anchor standards, and we tie our anchor standards to Scarborough's Rope. They can see how all these anchor standards that we have for Mississippi college and career readiness skills ties into Scarborough's Rope. They're able to see the importance of how all the components need to be taught, and how we teach them in our state.

Dr. Fierro's visit also served as a catalyst for one campus to establish a model classroom that is used not only for training of pre-service teachers but also serves as a resource for teachers at local districts to visit to encourage high school students to consider entering the field. At the time of the interviews, only one faculty member indicated their IHL had established a model classroom.

One thing that's changed is we have set up a model classroom, a model literacy classroom, on our campus. He came and spoke with us probably a year ago, last spring. .... He mentioned the idea. ....We got permission to use one of the classrooms that I typically taught in. We designed it as a model literacy classroom we have the Consonant Phoneme wall,... the Vowel Phoneme wall. We have the models up in the classroom. I set up centers in the classroom, so that I can model. The students actually can move center to center, as they complete activities in the classroom. That changed a lot. Now, we hold as many of our Elementary-Ed classes in the model classroom as we can. We've had Teacher Academy groups come from the high schools to tour. They say, "Oh, we wanna see what y'all got going on there, so we can encourage our students to go to your university, because you have this, and others don't in the area." It really helps to be able to show the pre-service teachers: how do you use an anchor chart in a classroom? You don't just throw a number line up, or a word wall. You don't just throw an ABC line up. It's not just there for pretty purposes. It's actually a tool that you can use. A lot of the things that Barksdale has on their walls—we go in there; we have things like that, things that students can actually participate in.

*"One thing that's changed is we have set up...a model literacy classroom, on our campus....We have the Consonant Phoneme wall... the Vowel Phoneme wall. We have the models up in the classroom."*

This same professor discussed how during a visit to her classroom, Dr. Fierro was able to walk her students through a discussion of Scarborough's Rope model. During his session, he pulled together the various threads she had addressed with her class during previous meetings, with the result being the students were enthralled with the lesson. Impressed with the efficacy of his delivery and what she saw him accomplish, she took notes to inform her own teaching strategies and future reference.

[W]hen Antonio came, our last visit, he taught my Early Lit I. He went over the Scarborough's Rope Model with them, and discussed it. It was like all of the things that I'd been teaching 'em up to that point, all of it came together. It was just—for them, "Here I am. I've learned this, and I'm gonna pass it on to you," but it all came together for them, because we'd had so many classes before he came. I intentionally built it up to his visit, and then he actually did the Rope Model with the Early Lit I students, and he built it with 'em. He talked 'em through it, just the way he did us. Yeah, he did. I wrote some notes of how I could do it differently, because he won't be there every quarter, when I teach it. .... He being there,

and showing me how he did it, and modeling the lesson, and working with the students, and seeing everything come together that I had been teaching them, and confirming that what I'd been teaching them is good stuff, and not just another program, it's good teacher knowledge. Yes, yes.

As a close out to the interviews, the interviewer encouraged faculty to provide any closing comments they wished to make. The comments ranged from the importance of Mississippi having embraced the science of reading as foundational for expanding the instructional skills of educators in institutions of higher learning, to the importance of relevancy in one professor's instruction, to a hope for continuance of Mississippi Momentum.

The following quote shows the recognition by at least one of the faculty of the importance of Mississippi's role in embracing the science of reading as a central component for improving the skills of IHL educators. Further, that this embrace is important for not only the educators in the state, but across the nation, and the impact it has on their pre-service students and ultimately the young children who are developing literacy skills through their instruction.

Not to put in a plug, but a positive—the science of reading is not everywhere. The training for teachers and higher-ed literacy professors is not quite there in this area, to some extent. There are holes across the nation in this. I'm hopeful that some of this research and some of the things that you share of what comes out of this can be duplicated, and shared, and done in other areas, or maybe at least encourage other groups to do something similar to this and have a model that's similar to this. For that, I'm hopeful.

Another closed out with a comment on the importance of relevancy in her instruction for her students and a recognition of the challenge she faced with her students who would eventually be teaching reading but had not yet developed the love for reading she believed necessary for their success. As a consequence of this observation, she saw her mission as getting them motivated to read.

I think relevancy is the main thing. If they don't see it as being relevant—because the first question I ask in every semester, "Do you like reading? Raise your hand if you like reading." I might get one. I might get two sometimes. I can't even remember when I started reading. I was reading at such a young age, and reading can take you so many places that you will never be able to travel. I don't see myself being able to go to Japan, but I can read about it. I can visualize about it. They will say, "Well, how do you read a book without pictures?" I say, "The pictures are in my mind." I can see whatever the author is trying to tell me. "We don't read books without pictures," so my job is to motivate them to read.

One faculty provided a closing comment that centered on her desire that the opportunity that Mississippi Momentum provided be allowed to continue in this succinct quote:

I'd just like to see it continue. Learning from each other in this state, as we continue to move ahead, and advance in our instruction.

While drawn from a point earlier in the interview and not as a closing comment, one of the interviewees summed up what appears as a major underpinning of Mississippi Momentum, that the focus is not primarily on IHL professors, or even their students, rather it is the students those pre-service teachers eventually have in their own classroom.

I truly agree with Angela [Rutherford] this morning. Even though our target is teachers, ultimately, it's their students that we care about, K to 12 students' learning outcomes. ...We teach them how to teach them. We use them as a bridge to that group's learning outcomes. That is the ultimate goal. I think that's what we are doing.

IHL professors' knowledge, skills and practices serve as the sources of a professional education for their pre-service students. In turn, as these elementary pre-service educators enter their classrooms equipped with the skills in literacy and reading their IHL professors have instilled in them, they set the youngest citizens of the state on a path to academic success. Ultimately, the results will be seen in reduced numbers of special education designations, persistence through high school graduation, and movement into higher education and careers as fully participating citizens.

### **Course Material and Syllabi Review**

The following discussion provides a summary review of the syllabi and course materials interviewees provided to the University of New Mexico Cradle to Career Policy Institute interviewer in April 2019. The rationale for this exchange was to assess the influence participation in Mississippi Momentum had on faculty teaching Early Literacy 1 (EL1) and Early Literacy 2 (EL2) and course development between some earlier point and a more recent version of the same course. One of the faculty taught reading assessment and intervention (formerly known as diagnostics and remediation) and her material is handled separately from the broader discussion of EL1 and 2. In keeping with terms of the consent agreement, there are no specific references to any particular institute of higher learning made. Also, in some cases, the individual who provided materials for this review had not taught the earlier version of the course and provided the syllabus and materials from another faculty member. Therefore, the comparison of materials in those cases was conducted using a less critical filter and considered more in terms of general transformations of the course.

In general, the review established faculty have modified their course materials as a result of this participation. Specifically, the review revealed significant shifts from reliance on a singular textbook to the use of other materials, such as research-based articles, videos from experts in the field of reading education, and materials specifically reflecting the science of reading. Perhaps most importantly, the syllabi and course materials exhibit the setting of higher expectations for students that require them to display a deep level of understanding of the curriculum as well as the ability to apply this knowledge to their practice in classrooms. Some key findings between the earlier and later versions of the reviewed syllabi include:

- Course objectives or goals and student learning objectives were well constructed and linked to the different standards from numerous entities. These entities included: Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), Elementary Teacher Preparation Standards (ETPS), Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), the International Literacy Association (ILA), the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI), and the College and Career Readiness Standards of Mississippi (CCR). No faculty referenced all of these for a course; however, in any one course faculty would invoke several of them. These linkages illustrate the determination of faculty to ground their instructional and their students' learning

objectives in the standards they will be expected to follow once they are formally in classrooms and providing literacy instruction to young students.

- Faculty use Internet resources, such as Canvas, TK20/Watermark, much more effectively than what was apparent in earlier syllabi and this use applies to courses taught in a classroom or via the Internet. These electronic resources provide a central location for both students and teachers to organize, store, and access course materials through modules that can help minimize the use of paper.
- Faculty required student attendance and did not tolerate excessive tardiness, which often affected grades. They required assignments be completed and turned in on time and were often unforgiving, with some imposing either a reduction in grade or a score of zero depending on how late the assignment was submitted.
- Courses involved field assignments and included placement in participating schools, which, in turn, required students undergo a background check, a condition that did not appear in many of the earlier versions of syllabi.
- In each of the syllabi, faculty directed much more emphasis and time toward instruction on phonics, phonological awareness, and phoneme awareness. For example, one faculty indicated that she lengthened the time devoted to phonological and phonemic awareness from one week in an earlier course, to four weeks in her more recent EL1 course.
- Several references to the Simple View of Reading Model, Four-Part Processor for Word Recognition, and Scarborough's Rope Model, which are fundamental components of the LETRS curriculum, appeared in later versions of syllabi that were not present in earlier versions. One faculty required students to identify the parts of each model and provide an explanation of its application. This same faculty required students to identify different parts of the brain that is engaged while learning to read and differences that appear between a student without dyslexia and another with the learning disorder.
- In four courses, LETRS modules were part of the required materials used during instruction. The use typically split between EL1 with modules 1-3 and EL2 with 4-6.
- In the interventions course, instruction was devoted to introducing tools and techniques used for diagnosing reading performance issues as they related to oral language, decoding ability, vocabulary, comprehension, and effective intervention practices where necessary to remedy them.
- In later versions of their syllabi for the early literacy courses, faculty emphasized the areas listed above along with fluency, comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, and phonological awareness.
- Faculty included references to particular assessment instruments, with names such as an Oral Language Assessment, a Phonemic Awareness Assessment, and a Phonics Screener, in several recent syllabi that did not appear in earlier versions.
- In their more current syllabi, two faculty abandoned use of "balanced literacy" to embrace the LETRS curriculum developed by Louisa Moats. Another shifted from reliance on Basal Units to Core Reading Program Units.

- Rubrics appeared in six of the syllabi faculty provided and they varied in the level of detail given, with a few being quite extensive and others less so. Depending on the syllabus, they addressed various course components, among which included assessment, artifacts, portfolios, vocabulary and comprehension activities, writing analysis, phonemic awareness, writing analysis, and other areas.
- In later syllabi, three faculty required students to develop and maintain a portfolio that included various elements of work from throughout the course, such as lesson plans, assessments, activity logs, and sometimes videos of them delivering lessons in formal classroom settings. As part of her more recent assessment strategies, one faculty would participate in debriefing sessions with their students to discern how well field assignments had gone and provide in-depth critiques of these activities.

Throughout the different syllabi, a universal goal that faculty spelled out centered on the need for students to prepare to take and pass the Foundations of Reading test (preferably on the first try), which is a necessary milestone for them to move into elementary teaching and literacy instruction.

## **Mississippi Momentum April Seminar LETRS Quiz Results**

During the seminar of April 11-12, 2019, eighteen participants took a quiz on concepts related to the LETRS materials and science of reading they had covered throughout their time with Mississippi Momentum. Of the twenty-seven questions reviewed for this section, only six had all respondents select the correct answer. Further, not all eighteen responded to each question. Table 1 below presents the question, the correct response, and the number who answered correctly. The six questions and responses illustrate where participating faculty through their MM experience have learned and internalized key concepts related to early reading literacy.

It is useful to highlight two of the results from the following table to emphasize the importance of developing these skills. The first example is the response to the fourth question listed above. The correct answer was “fluency development” developed through repeated reading, which in 2000 the National Reading Panel identified as a strategy for developing fluency. The second relates to the ability to segment a word into phonemes, the smallest units of language that change the meaning of spoken words. This question appears as the last in the table and asks how many phonemes appear in the word “box” with the correct answer of four.

Three questions had high percentages of respondents making correct choices. For example, a question produced seventeen (94%) of eighteen correct responses. This question, “If “tife” were a word, the letter “l” would probably sound like the “l” in which word?” had the correct response “find.” One incorrectly selected “if.” Using this approach helps students recognize common letter sounds among words, even though they may be “nonsense” words.

Two questions had sixteen (94%) of seventeen respondents answer correctly. The first was, “Which of the following is a nonsense word that does NOT follow English spelling patterns?” Those who answered correctly chose “Toyn” correctly, while one incorrectly selected, “Squive.” The other two incorrect words included “Clow” and “Shease.” One of the reasons for utilizing “nonsense words” to help teach reading is that it assists students develop an understanding of spelling patterns that serve as part of the inner structure of a language. The second question



*Table 1: LETRS Concepts All April 2019 Seminar Participants Chose Correctly*

Question	Correct Response	Number who answered correctly
<b>What does morphemic analysis help students do?</b>	Examine words for meaningful parts	18
<b>As a teacher reads aloud to his students from a social studies text, he comments aloud, 'This word, pioneer, is in bold print... so that means it is an important word,' and 'The chapter headings in the book can help me understand the main ideas in the book, so I will be sure to read them.' How is the teacher helping students improve their comprehension of informational text?</b>	Modeling attention to useful features of informational text	18
<b>Mr. Lewis' class has been learning spelling rules for adding 'ing' to base words. He is looking for groups of words that illustrate the greatest number 'ing' rules to give students a complex challenge. Which of the following groups of words would be best for this purpose?</b>	Seeing, letting, liking, carrying	16
<b>A teacher assigns pairs of students to reread a text aloud to each other three times. What skill will this activity most effectively address?</b>	Fluency Development	17
<b>How many morphemes are in the word 'unhappiness'?</b>	3	17
<b>How many phonemes are in the word 'box'?</b>	4	17

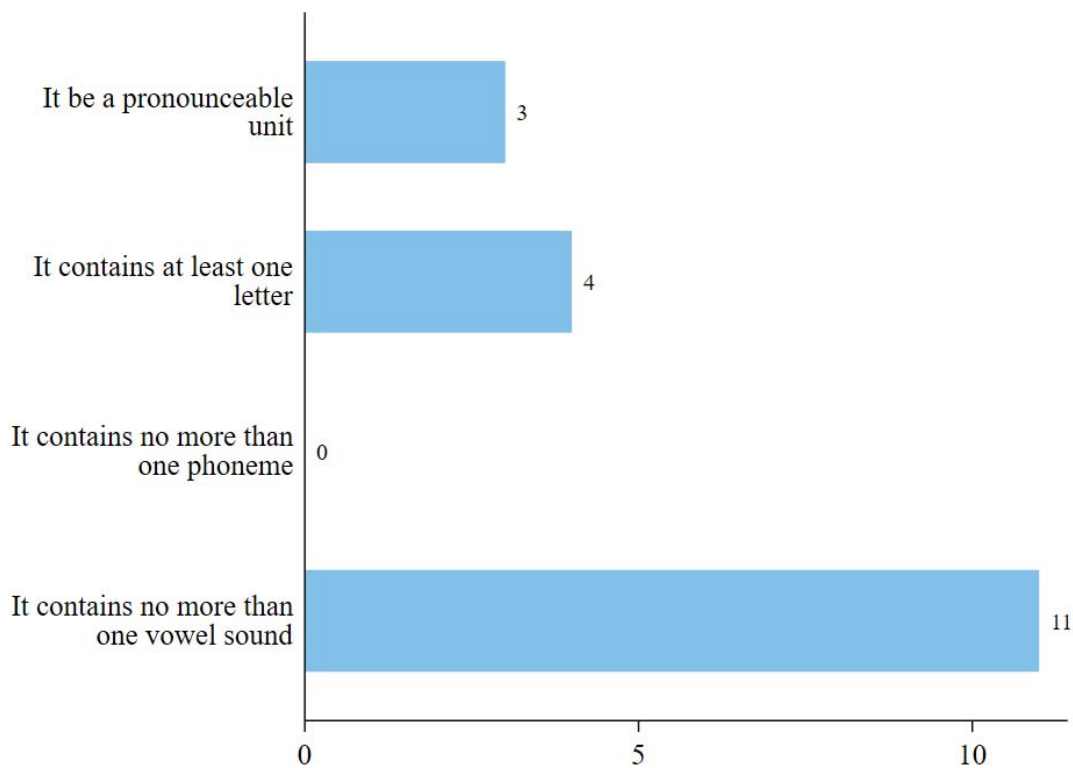
asked, “Which of the following is an example of an instructional strategy that helps to promote active construction of meaning?” and had the correct answer, “doing a think aloud.” One respondent incorrectly selected, “independent silent reading” as their answer. Doing a think aloud provides the teacher an opportunity to understand the strategies her students are using for constructing meaning from the text.

Another question, “How should explicit writing lessons be taught?” had sixteen (89%) of eighteen correct responses. Those who answered correctly chose, “By explaining and modeling a task, skill, or strategy and providing feedback while students write.” As reflected in the answer, explicit writing lessons require a teacher to model the intended instruction, offer guidance through specific steps, and provide feedback, with the end of having the student work independently toward a specific writing goal.

***What is a requirement of a syllable?***

All of the remaining seventeen questions had various numbers of respondents who selected incorrect answers, thus illustrating a level of disconnection between the LETRS materials they are engaging with and what they are retaining. For instance, the following seven questions include graphs that illustrate where learning key concepts has faltered. The first in this series probed what respondents thought was the requirement of a syllable. A syllable is a part of a word that contains a vowel, or in spoken language, a vowel sound. As shown in figure 1, while approximately eleven of the eighteen (61%) chose the correct answer, “It contains no more than one vowel sound.” Four (22%) incorrectly chose “It contains at least one letter,” and another three (17%) incorrectly chose “It be a pronounceable unit.” Being unclear about such foundational knowledge as what is a requirement of a syllable may impair acquisition of other knowledge related to vowels and other speech sounds.

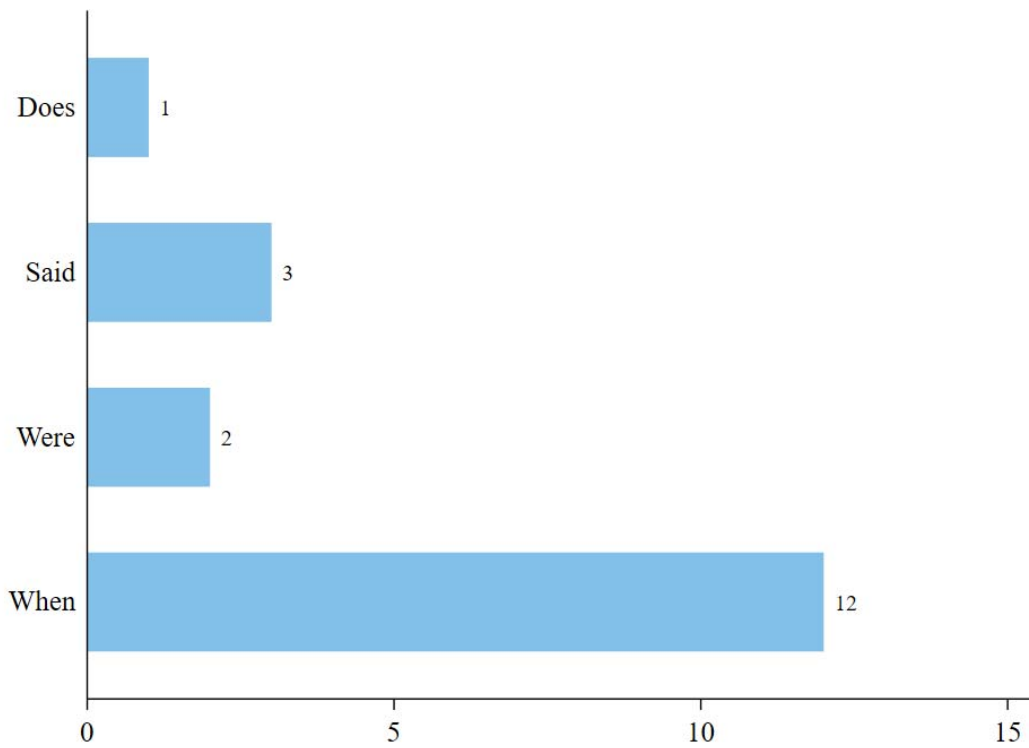
**Figure 1: A requirements of a syllable (N=18)**



***Which of the following is NOT an irregular high frequency word?***

Another question in the assessment, “Which of the following is NOT an irregular high frequency word?” Irregular words are those that contain letters that stray from the most common pronunciation or do not follow common phonic patterns. Figure 2 shows that from the four choices, twelve (67%) correctly chose “when.” Another three (17%) chose “said”; two (11%) “were”; and one (6%) selected “does,” all of which were incorrect. Since one-third of the participants made incorrect choices in identifying irregular high frequency words, the results indicate a need to revisit this area for review.

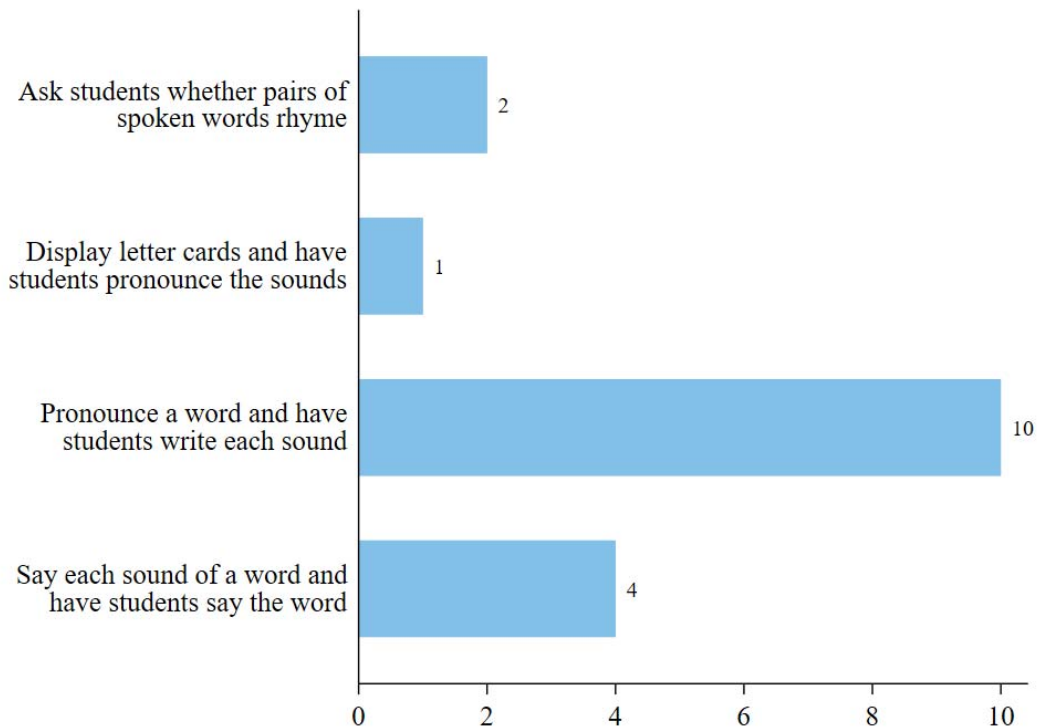
**Figure 2: Not an irregular high-frequency word (N=18)**



***Mrs. Card wants to help students become good spellers. Which activity most directly supports spelling development?***

The following prompt focused on an activity to promote good spelling. Research indicates that being able to spell properly contributes to improved proficiency in reading. Of the seventeen who responded, ten (59%) made the correct choice in selecting, “pronounce a word and have students write each sound.” Those who did not select correctly included four (24%) who chose “Say each sound of a word and have students say the word”; two (12%) who chose, “ask students whether pairs of spoken word rhyme”; and one (6%) who picked, “display letter cards and have students pronounce the sounds.” Since over 40% of faculty answer incorrectly, helping them recognize effective practice for promoting good spelling is an area that needs review and more emphasis. Figure 3 illustrates these findings.

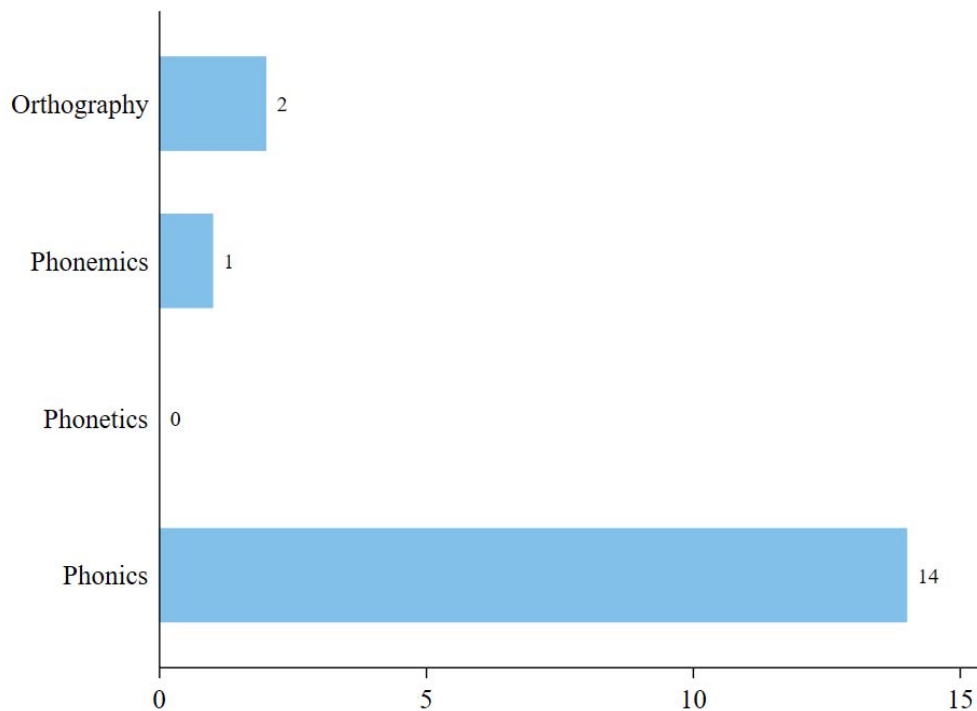
**Figure 3: Activity to Help Students Become Good Spellers (N=17)**



***What do we call instruction that focuses on teaching the connection of phonemes to letters?***

Next in the series was a question that probed faculty recognition of the lexicon they had learned during their Mississippi Momentum experience. Specifically this query related to the term applied to the teaching of the connection of phonemes to letters. Figure 4 illustrates that of the seventeen who engaged with the prompt, fourteen (88%) correctly selected “phonics” as their answer. Two (12%) selected “orthography,” and one (6%) chose “phonemics,” both of which were in error. Although a large majority of faculty correctly selected “phonics,” the presence of three others who did not suggests the need for a review of base concepts and their definitions.

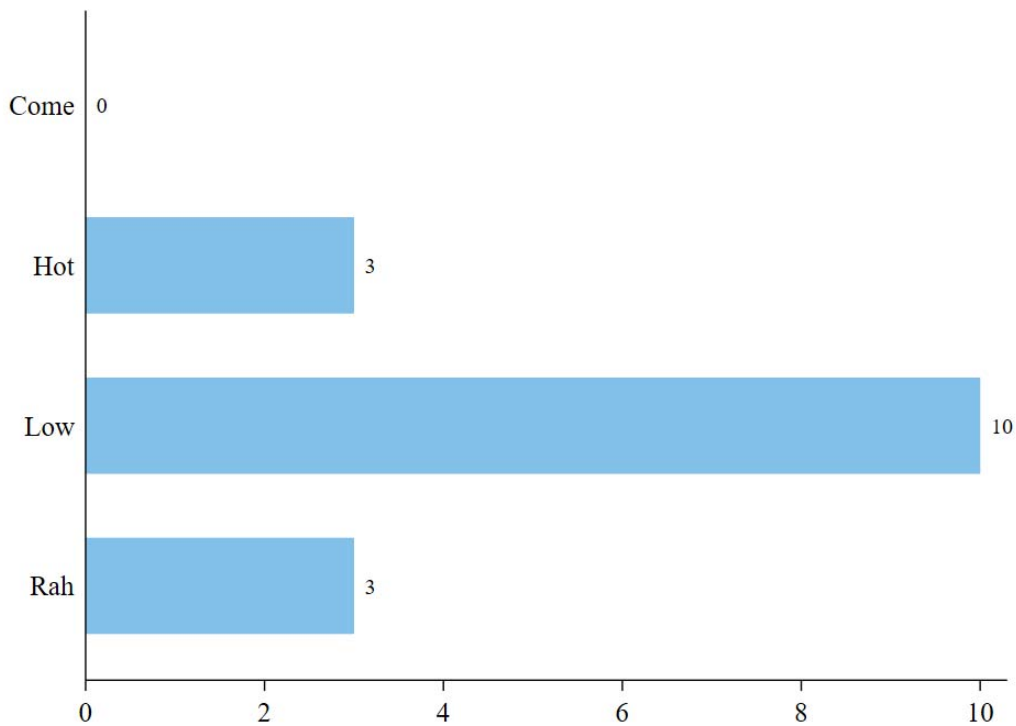
**Figure 4: Instruction Using the Connection of Phonemes to Letters (N=17)**



***In the nonsense word, ‘botem’, what would the open syllable most likely rhyme with?***

The next question related to the faculty’s understanding of phonological awareness, a key skill in recognizing syllables and similar sounds in words. In this case, respondents were asked to identify the word that the open syllable in the nonsense word “botem” would likely rhyme. Figure 5 displays these results. Here, sixteen chose to engage, and of those ten (63%) correctly indicated “low” as their choice. Three (19%) each incorrectly selected either “hot” or “rah.” Here again, since over one-third of the faculty chose incorrectly, the results indicate the need for review of phonological awareness as well as other foundational concepts.

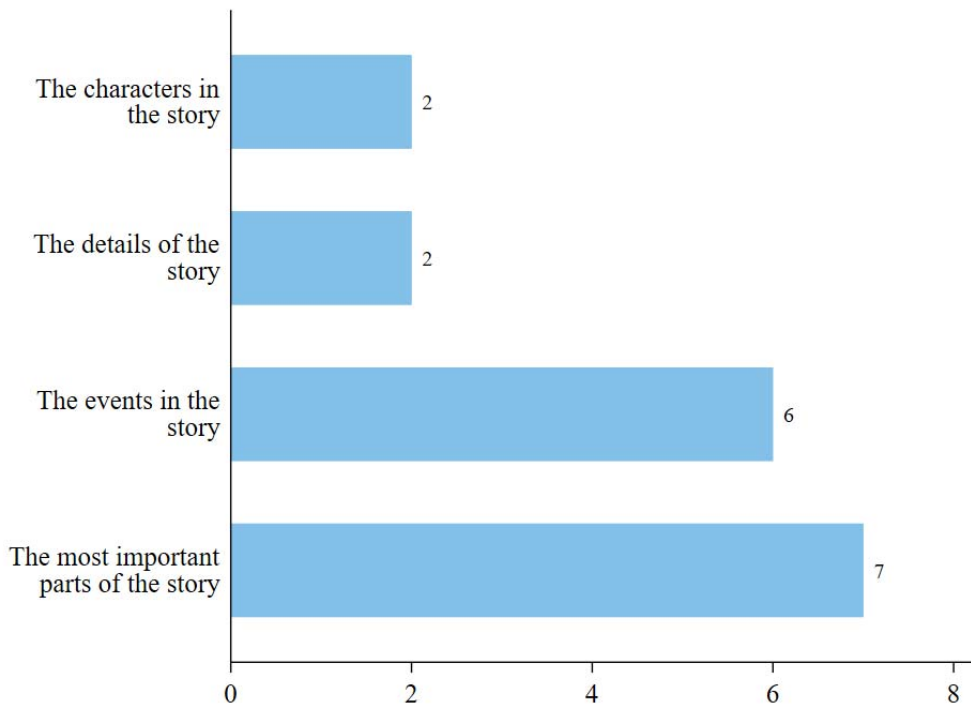
**Figure 5: Open Syllable Rhyming (N=16)**



***After reading a story, what should the discussion focus on in order to maximize comprehension?***

Comprehension, a key skill for reading proficiency and the correct strategy to use in student discussion to improve it, served as the focus for the next prompt. Figure 6 shows that of the seventeen responses to this query, seven (41%) chose “the most important parts of the story,” as the correct answer. Nearly as many, six (35%), indicated “the events in the story” in error. Two (12%) each incorrectly selected either “the characters in the story,” or “the details of the story.” Since nearly 60% of all respondents chose an incorrect answer related to maximizing comprehension, these results indicate a need to revisit the curriculum and modify the instructional approach with faculty to improve their understanding of this critical literacy skill.

**Figure 6: Focus of Discussion to Maximize Comprehension (N=17)**



The remaining nine questions provide additional illustrations of where some faculty have not yet fully understood and engaged various literacy concepts into their thinking and, by extension, their instructional practice. The following summarizes these findings.

- Two questions resulted in fifteen (83%) of eighteen respondents selecting correct answers. One question asked, “What can sentence combining help students do?” and had the correct response of “form complete sentence structures.” For the incorrect responses, two (11%) chose, “analyze word structure,” and 1 (6%) selected “Correct grammatical errors.” Sentence combining supports students to avoid using choppy sentences and encourages the learning proper grammar.

- The second queried, “Which of the following sets of words would be best for a teacher to use when providing students with examples of words conforming to the ‘silent e’ phonics generalization?” The correct response included this set of words: brake, use, hope, shine. Incorrect selections included the set of: lake, breathe, raise, rate; and those of: time, make, cube, done.
- A question asked, “Which word is phonetically irregular?” Fourteen (82%) of seventeen respondents correctly selected “both done and give,” from the choices of done, give, and peach. Two (12%) selected “done” and one (6%) selected “give,” both of which were half correct. Instructing students to recognize phonetically irregular words can improve their ability to avoid spelling errors and overall literacy.
- Another referred to teaching phonics through spelling. The lead in and question reads, “Two or three times each week, Mrs. Ruby teaches ‘phonics through spelling’ with her students. She pronounces words sound-by-sound as her students listen, write the appropriate letters, and then blend the phonemes to identify the words. Why is this activity likely to be effective?” For this query, the twelve (71%) of the seventeen who responded correctly chose, “it requires students to use letter-sound relationships to blend unfamiliar words.” Three (18%) selected, “it reinforces student’s recognition of common spelling patterns,” and another 2 (12%) selected, “it reviews and strengthens students’ ability to recognize and blend word chunks,” as incorrect options.
- Seventeen faculty members responded to the question, “Teachers often read texts aloud as students follow along before the students try to read the text themselves. Which of the following is the best reason why teachers might do this?” Of those, fifteen (88%) correctly chose the response, “To demonstrate appropriate phrasing and expression for the text.” The remaining two (12%) incorrectly selected, “to model their expert decoding skills to students.” As the correct selection suggests, when a teacher reads aloud, she models fluency and expression in reading technical or literary materials that demonstrates meaning embedded in the text.
- The technical term, diphthong, provided the focus of the next question. A diphthong is a sound formed by the combination of two vowels in a single syllable, in which the sound begins in one vowel and moves towards another. It is also known as a “gliding vowel.” The question, “Following her lesson on recognizing diphthongs in words, Mrs. Byrnes wants to provide her students with additional practice. Which type of text should she select to provide the best practice?” resulted in eleven (65%) of the seventeen who responded choosing the correct answer, “text with a high percentage of patterned decodable words.” Another third incorrectly answered with one (6%) choosing “authentic text from children’s literature,” and another five (29%) choosing “none of the above.”
- The following question, “Decoding skills will benefit a student’s understanding of text only if the words s/he decodes are what?” produced the following distribution across four options. Thirteen (72%) of the eighteen correctly chose, “included in student’s oral vocabulary” as their response. Another two (11%) each erred by selecting “encountered several times,” or “recognized at sight” as answers. One (6%) incorrectly chose, “single morpheme words.” Decoding refers to the ability of a student to translate a word from print to speech, usually by employing knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences.



- Decoding skills were the focus of the following question. “Mr. Kubota teaches his 3rd grade students to decode unfamiliar words by breaking words into parts such as word root, prefix, and/or suffix (e.g. un-imagine-able). Which skill is he teaching?” Of the seventeen faculty who engaged the question, thirteen (76%) correctly named this approach as “structural analysis.” Four (24%) incorrectly selected “analyzing the meaning of word parts.” The ability to decode new words is a useful skill for expanding one’s vocabulary, which is an essential attribute for being a proficient reader.
- Shifting the focus to cognitive process, the next prompt considered the importance of metacognition (e.g. awareness and understanding of one’s own thought processes) in reading comprehension. Here, too, seventeen of the eighteen participated, and of those twelve (71%) correctly selected “it helps students monitor their own comprehension.” The remaining five chose incorrectly with three (18%) selecting, “it causes automatic processing of text so that students can make meaning of the text,” and one each (6%) selecting either, “it makes the teacher aware of when students are experiencing difficulty during reading,” or “it prompts students to mental images.”

Since several respondents missed each of the above nine questions, which represent a third of those asked, these areas of literacy instruction and the science of reading warrant further review in the seminars and self-study by faculty participants to reinforce their learning and recall.

### **Mississippi Department of Education LETRS Module Training for Pre-Service Candidates 2018-2019**

The Mississippi Department of Education hosts Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional development classes for several groups of teachers in the state. One of these groups are pre-service teachers. The MDE intends the professional development of various educators in the LETRS curriculum to improve their knowledge of early literacy skills, the quality of classroom instruction, and the level and degree of teacher engagement with students.

The following table 2 provides a summary of ninety-six pre-service teacher candidates by university affiliation at twelve IHLs who successfully completed Mississippi Department of Education workshops on the LETRS modules one through three over the academic year of 2018-2019. To successfully complete the online coursework participants had to achieve a score of 60% or above.

*Table 2: Summary of LETRS Phase 1 Pre-Service Participation Spring 2019*

<b>University Affiliation</b>	<b>Actual Phase 1 Workshop Attendees in 2018-19</b> <i>*Indicates Successful Completion of Online Coursework of 60% or above on Modules 1-3 exam</i>
Alcorn	1
Belhaven	6
Blue Mountain	0
Delta State	13
Jackson State	0
Mississippi College	2
Mississippi State	11
MS University for Women	1
Tougaloo	11
University of Mississippi	44
University of Southern MS	6
William Carey	1
Total Pre-Service Participation	96 Completed Phase 1 in 2018-2019

Source: Figures provided by Mississippi Department of Education

## **First Year Teacher Survey Spring 2019**

This section provides a summary review of questions asked in a survey administered to first year teachers during spring 2019. The Barksdale Reading Institute distributed the survey to all school districts in Mississippi and 86 teachers responded. The purpose of the survey was to glean information about the experiences first year teachers had during their preparation and their initial year in the classroom. Further, the survey allowed for a limited number of open-ended responses, with the last one responded to by a majority of participants. All percentage figures are shown as full numbers.

### ***Which educator preparation program did you attend?***

The first question in the survey addressed the educator preparation program attended. Of this group, the largest number of respondents at twenty-one (24%) attended the University of Southern Mississippi and the smallest number at one (1%) each came from Millsaps College and Alcorn State University. Three IHL's had no respondents for this question. Table 3 below provides a summary of IHLs with educator preparation programs participating in MM.

*Table 3: Educator Preparation Program Attended*

<b>Educator Preparation Program Attended</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
William Carey University	9
University of Southern Mississippi	21
University of Mississippi	20
Mississippi University for Women	2
Mississippi State University	9
Mississippi College	8
Millsaps College	1
Jackson State University	2
Delta State University	6
Blue Mountain College	5
Bellhaven University	2
Alcorn State University	1
Rust College	0
Tougaloo College	0
Mississippi Valley State College	0

***If you transferred from a community college program or from another university, please indicate which one. If you were not a community college transfer, please select one of the last two options in the dropdown box.***

Several of the 86 respondents indicated they transferred from a community college (CC) or junior college prior to entering a four-year IHL. This number compares to ninety-seven from the 2018 First Year Teacher Survey who indicated they had transferred from a community college. The two institutions with the largest number of transfers included Itawamba CC (11/13%) and Northeast Mississippi CC (10/12%). One (1%) attended Mississippi Gulf Coast CC. Thirty (35%) respondents did not attend a community college prior to entering the IHL of their teacher preparation program. The spread of attendees appears in table 4.

**Table 4: Community College or Other University Transferred From**

<b>Community College or Other IHL Transferred From</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
NA: I did not attend a community college	30
I transferred from another university	2
Pearl River Community College	5
Northwest Mississippi Community College	2
Northeast Mississippi Community College	10
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College	1
Meridian Community College	5
Jones County Junior College	4
Itawamba Community College	11
Holmes Community College	2
Hinds Community College	6
East Central Community College	5
Copiah-Lincoln Community College	3

***Which best describes the sequence in which you completed Early Literacy 1 and Early Literacy 2 coursework?***

Next in the series was a question related to the sequence respondents indicated they took their Early Literacy 1 and 2 coursework. In general, they had the choice of completing the EL1-EL2 sequence during the summer, fall or spring semester of their junior or senior year. Another group indicated they completed the EL1/EL2 sequence as a block in one semester. By far, the largest number of respondents at forty (47%) indicated they completed the EL1 course in the fall semester junior year. Apparently many of these at thirty-six (42%) completed EL2 in the spring of their junior year. Whereas the fall semester of senior year saw the largest number of twelve respondents (14%) who completed the EL1/EL2 sequence in one semester. Of the thirty-nine respondents who indicated transfer from a community college, five did not complete the EL1/EL2 sequence either as separate semesters or as a blocked course. Table 5 provides the summary for the eighty-six respondents and the semester they completed the required Early Literacy 1 and 2 courses separately or blocked.

***Table 5: Early Literacy 1/2 – Semester Completed Separately or Blocked***

<b>Semester Completed</b>	<b>EL1 Completers</b>	<b>EL2 Completers</b>	<b>EL1/EL2 Blocked Completers</b>
No Response	4	5	34
Summer Session, Senior Year	1	1	NA
Spring Semester, Senior Year	2	3	5
Fall Semester, Senior Year	4	21	12
Summer Session, Junior Year	3	2	NA
Spring Semester, Junior Year	19	36	5
Fall Semester, Junior Year	40	5	6
Did not complete	13	13	24

A significant point that appears in the table above is the thirteen respondents who indicated they did not complete either EL1 or EL2. This data suggests that some IHLs apparently have policies or procedures that allow some pre-service candidates not to complete these critical professional preparation courses.

*“...thirteen respondents...did not complete either EL1 or EL2.”*

**Which best describes how well your Early Literacy 1 professor prepared you to teach the following content?**

The next question allowed respondents to indicate how well a job their EL 1 professor had done in preparing them to teach various concepts. For the most part, respondents indicated they felt either well or moderately prepared in relation to the concepts asked about. Roughly about one-tenth of respondents indicated the professor had not addressed the concept in their course and smaller numbers indicated they had either been minimally or not prepared at all. The following table 6 summarizes the concept responses.

*Roughly about one-tenth of respondents indicated the professor had not addressed the concept in their course.*

**Table 6: Level of Preparation Your Early Literacy 1 professor Provided**

	Not Addressed	Well Prepared	Moderately Prepared	Minimally Prepared	Not at all Prepared
Concept	%	%	%	%	%
Print	10	53	29	7	0
Phonological Awareness	9	50	34	7	0
Phonemic Awareness	9	53	27	6	1
Phonics/Decoding	10	51	31	5	2
Spelling/Encoding (2=NR)	9	38	43	6	1
Assessment of EL1 Skills	9	41	40	9	1

Seven students provided responses to the following question:

**Please add any other comments about your preparation to teach EL1 content in your classroom. Were other components of literacy addressed in this course? If so, please specify.**

*As an alternate route teacher, I did not take this course.*

*I don't feel I gained the greatest knowledge on the content in college due to the specific professor. However during my first year I felt appreciative of the amount of resources I had to help me succeed.*

*I did complete a teaching degree.*

*Did not take. Alternate Route student.*

*I was certified through an alternate route program.*

*We addressed different curriculums/programs and the approach to technology used to enforce literacy.*

*NA- I was not enrolled in either class. I was required to answer # 14, so I chose the first answer in each area.*

**Which best describes how well your Early Literacy 2 professor prepared you to teach the following content?**

The follow-up question asked respondents to indicate how well their EL 2 professor had prepared them for teaching reading concepts commensurate with that coursework. Here again, the majority indicated they believed they had been either well or moderately prepared. A relatively small number ranging from eight (9%) to ten (12%) respondents indicated the concept had not been addressed in their EL 2 course. Other respondents ranging from four (5%) to twelve (14%) felt their professor had minimally prepared them in the concepts. A very small number believed they had not been prepared at all. Table 7 summarizes the percentages across the levels of preparation for each concept.

*From eight (9%) to ten (12%) respondents indicated the concept had not been addressed in their EL 2 course.*

**Table 7: Level of Preparation EL2 Professor Provided**

	Not Addressed	Well Prepared	Moderately Prepared	Minimally Prepared	Not at all Prepared
<b>Concept</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Oral Language Development	10	36	44	9	0
Vocabulary	10	48	24	9	0
Morphology	10	35	28	14	1
Levels of Connected Text	9	40	42	7	2
Strategies of Critical Thinking	10	48	36	5	1
Products of Comprehended Text	12	50	27	12	0
Text Types	12	45	29	14	0
Assessment of EL2 Skills	10	38	37	14	0

The two preceding tables illustrate that a majority of first year educators believe their EL1 and EL2 professors successfully prepared them for teaching reading, the percentages who indicate that various concepts were not addressed is troubling. For both courses, roughly one in ten respondents indicated that their professor did not address key concepts for teaching reading warrants further investigation of why these shortcomings are occurring.

***If you taught 3rd grade this past year, what percentage of your class passed the State Assessment for Reading on the first try?***

To get a sense of how effective their teaching had been, the survey prompted teachers who taught in a third grade classroom to indicate what percentage of their students had passed the Mississippi State Reading Assessment (SRA) on the first try. Of the eighty-six respondents

seventy-four (86%) indicated they had not taught third grade. From the remaining twelve respondents, one (1%) had a 100% passage rate. Five (6%) indicated they had achieved an 80-89% success level. Finally, of the other percentage ranges (50-69%, 70-79%, and 90-99%), two (2%) respondents each selected one of those bands to indicate the percentage of their students who passed the SRA on their first attempt. Table 8 illustrates these results.

***Now that you’ve taught in an elementary classroom, how much of your ability to implement effective reading instruction came from each of these sources? (Check all that apply; your responses need not total 100%.)***

**Table 8: 3rd Grade Teachers Rates of**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>
Did not teach 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	74
100%	1
90-99%	2
80-89%	5
70-79%	2
50-69%	2

The survey queried respondents to indicate what they saw as sources of their ability to implement effective reading instruction and what percentage they thought applied. Results are varied across the selections and percentages are summarized in table 9 three points are worth highlighting. First, thirty-one (36%) respondents selected their EL1 or EL 2 professor as the source for most (70%) of their ability to teach reading. Second, thirty-three (38%) selected some other reading professor or course as some of their ability (50%) to teach reading. Third, 45% of respondents indicated some or most of the source for their ability to teach reading came from a supervising teacher during their intern experience, which suggests that school-based expertise provides significant support for Mississippi’s efforts to improve reading instruction. Seven respondents also provided short open-ended responses.

*45% of respondents indicated some or most of the source for their ability to teach reading came from a supervising teacher during their intern experience*

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**Table 9: Sources of Ability to Implement Effective Reading Instruction**

	No Answer	Not Applicable	Not at All (0%)	Very Little (30%)	Some (50%)	Most (70%)	All (100%)
Source	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
EL1 or EL2 Professor	0	12	3	10	31	36	7
Other Reading Professors or Courses	2	13	2	10	38	24	9
MDE-Provided LETRS Training	1	35	3	3	23	26	8
School or District Provided PD	1	14	2	9	30	24	17
Supervising Teacher During Intern Experience	1	12	3	14	22	23	24



**Other (please specify)**

*I used Orton [Gillingham] in small group, whole group, and 1:1 with individual students as much as possible. My students responded very well to Orton.*

*Lots of phonics and sight words. Read aloud.*

*I taught a specials subject.*

*I taught math using all of the above.*

*I teach math. (2 respondents)*

*N/A*

**What words best describe your approach to reading instruction? Check all that apply.**

The next question requested respondents to select terms they felt best applied to their approach to reading instruction. They could select as many as they thought appropriate. As table 10 below shows, respondents appear to have several different approaches in their professional repertoire. Of the fourteen terms available to them to choose, the two highest were “differentiated” and “small group” at seventy-four (86%) each. On the other end of the spectrum the two selections with the lowest counts were “dynamic grouping” and “balanced literacy” at twenty-two (26%) and twenty-three (27%), respectively.

**Table 10: Words Best Describing Approach to Reading Instruction**

<b>Descriptive Word</b>	<b>Count</b>
Differentiated	74
Structured Literacy	28
Whole group	68
Explicit and systematic, using decodable text	31
Guided reading using leveled text	65
Small group	74
Dynamic grouping	22
Balanced literacy	23
Data-driven instruction	41
Standards-based objectives	48
Use of independent centers	44
Interventions	53
Technology	54
Anchor charts	54

## Impressions of the Foundations of Reading Test

***What impressions do you have about the Foundations of Reading Test? Check all that apply.***

This question sought to determine respondents' impressions of the Foundations of Reading Test. Here, too, they could check all that applied of the seven options offered. Thirty-four (39%) respondents indicated they thought their program had prepared them well for taking the test. Twenty-nine (34%) selected, "My program somewhat prepared me," and twenty-four (28%) chose "I had to take the test more than once. As noted in the interview section, faculty identified those individuals who waited too long after completion of their E1/EL2 sequence as more likely to have taken the FOR test more than once. Since 28% of respondent had to take the FOR more than once, the finding suggests that tighter monitoring by their IHL of when pre-service candidates take the test warrants consideration and implementation. Twenty one (24%) chose "It was a good test for determining what I know about reading and teaching reading." Seventeen (20%) selected "My score is an accurate reflection of what I know about teaching reading." At the lower end of the counts, nine (10%) chose "It was aligned to my pre-service coursework," and seven (8%) selected "I had to hire a tutor or get extra help." Table 11 shows these results as percentages.

*Twenty-four  
(28%)...had to  
take the test  
more than  
once.*

**Table 11: Impressions of the Foundations of Reading Test**

<b>Impression</b>	<b>%</b>
My program prepared me well	39
My program somewhat prepared me	34
It was aligned to my pre-service coursework	10
It was a good test for determining what I knew about reading and teaching reading	24
I had to take it more than once	28
I had to hire a tutor or get extra help	8
My score is an accurate reflection of what I know about teaching reading	20

### ***Overall, how prepared did you feel to teach reading on Day 1 of your first year?***

To close out, the survey asked respondents how prepared they felt to teach reading on day one of their first year. In response, twenty (23%) felt "well-prepared," and eight (9%) chose "not at all prepared." As the results show, a large majority sixty-six (77%) indicated moderately or well prepared to teach reading on their first day. However, nearly a quarter, twenty (23%) of the respondents selected either minimally or not at all prepared, thus indicating that work remains to provide supports for pre-service teachers who have not yet developed the professional capacity or skills to move into the early elementary classrooms and contribute to student success in reading. Table 12 provides the summary.

*Table 12: Preparedness to Teach Reading*

<b>Level of Preparedness for Day 1</b>	<b>Count</b>
Not at all prepared	8
Minimally prepared	12
Moderately prepared	46
Well prepared	20

Survey takers also had the opportunity to provide an open-ended response and sixty respondents provided one. The following broad categories group these comments:

- Request for More Phonics Training
- Need for Mentoring
- Pre-Service Exposure
- Need for Emphasis on Practical Skills Development
- Need for Training in Differentiated Instruction
- Need for Ongoing Professional Development for Beginning Teachers
- Personal Testimonies to their Pre-Service Education
- Miscellaneous

The following is a brief synthesis of each of the main categories. Placement in various categories was somewhat arbitrary as some comments covered various topics; however, the main point emphasized in the comment underpinned the designation.

### **Request for More Phonics Training**

Six commented on the need for more training in phonics. Two of these called for specific training in the Orton Gillingham approach (which strongly emphasizes phonics) and the remaining four indicated they thought they lacked sufficient explicit instruction in phonics and effective strategies and methods for use in the classroom.

### **Need for Mentoring**

The need for mentor teachers provided the focus for five comments. Mentors are established teachers who agree to guide novice instructors during their formative initial periods in a classroom. Comments in this group ranged from a call for pre-service assistance for understanding what to expect in the classroom during the first few weeks to ongoing one-on-one guidance over the first year of instruction.

### **Pre-Service Exposure**

A call for novice teachers to receive pre-service exposure produced fourteen comments. Three suggested pre-service candidates should be required to be present on the first day of a class and eight indicated there should be less emphasis on book learning and theory and more emphasis on actually being in classrooms for hands-on experience and observation. One indicated a need for more required classroom observation hours and the importance of being

present in several different grade-level classrooms to gain an appreciation for the differences manifest in each, while one other indicated a preference for more concentrated exposure at one grade level, especially the early grades to help prepare them for teaching reading. Finally, one suggested the need to know all the standards prior to beginning teaching.

### **Need for Emphasis on Practical Skills Development**

Five commentators indicated a need for practical skills development. While all the comments in this group emphasized the need for instruction in “toolkit skills,” two indicated a need for understanding how to set standards within a developmental framework for a classroom at a specific grade level and implement them from day one. Two called for the need for more instruction in foundational skills, including basic teaching skills and understanding the extent of required record keeping when teaching reading. Finally, one called for more intensive clinical experience rather than being in a college

### **Need for Training in Differentiated Instruction**

The need for differentiated instruction provided the focus of nine comments. Three called for training in strategies on how to conduct small group instruction and one wanted more training in whole group instruction. Three wanted more instruction on the strategies for dealing with students at different levels of reading proficiency. Whereas, two commentators in this group wanted more training in how to conduct effective intervention with struggling readers including special needs students. Finally, one of this group wanted to know how to teach reading effectively in a school that does not have a phonics-based program.

### **Need for Ongoing Professional Development for Beginning Teachers**

Five respondents called for professional development while they were pre-service candidates or early in their careers. Two commentators indicated the desire for training in Project Read, which is a commercial language arts curriculum, and one of these wanted instruction in LETRS. Both stressed the need for having this training at the beginning of the year. One each of the comments called for intensive instruction in classroom management, how to work with data, and a general call for professional development that would help prepare a novice teacher to teach reading on day one.

### **Testimonies to their Pre-Service Education**

Laudatory comments about the quality of their pre-service education appeared in four comments. Three IHLs received these statements, with one being the object of two. Across this group, the comments focused on the positive qualities of the professors, the coursework, and the pre-service opportunities these IHLs provided that prepared the commentators to succeed on their first day and first year of teaching. The comments emphasized the importance of their pre-service experiences in classroom settings that laid the groundwork for their entrance into the profession.

## Miscellaneous

Twelve individuals offered miscellaneous comments that did not fit under the previous categories. One indicated feeling unprepared for day one, whereas another indicated the need to know what to expect to be able to complete the task-at-hand. Another suggested that the Mississippi Department of Education review alternative route programs for teaching and consider adding coursework that will support teaching in the lower grades. One each gave one-word responses, including “practice” and “study.” A comment indicated that special degree programs, such as Art Education, should include a course on simple elementary-level concept areas (reading, ELA, math, etc.) to assist graduates to work with “inclusion” students. Another complained there are qualified teachers who want to teach but can’t during a teacher shortage. Yet another called for more training and complained about college student peers in a LETRS training session who were busy doing other things and not paying attention to the instructor. One commented on the disconnection between teaching your own class and what she had been told about what to expect and another called for “videos of excellent guided teaching lessons.” Finally, two gave “N/A” responses to this prompt.

## Conclusion

This second annual report of the MS Momentum Partnership continues the review of a unique approach to Educator Preparation Providers (EPP) faculty change and growth. The CCPI used various sources for this report, including a set of interviews conducted with faculty participating in MS Momentum, a survey of LETRS concepts, and a survey of first year educators to assess the impact of their faculty participating in the professional development in the science of reading provided through MS Momentum.

Central components of MS Momentum include research in the science of reading; seminars typically conducted in Jackson, MS, at the Barksdale Reading Institute; campus visits by a national educational consultant; and a broad set of experiences that facilitate hands-on application of skills learned through these different means. The evidence that emerged through the interviews illustrate the degree to which faculty have applied science of reading concepts in their classrooms and course materials. These adaptations are supported and reinforced by the high expectation faculty hold for their pre-service candidates and the steps the faculty members are taking to ensure these students pass the required Foundations of Reading assessment on their first attempt as they move forward in their teaching careers. That 28% of respondents indicated they had to take the FOR more than once is suggestive that the IHLs consider tighter monitoring of when their pre-service candidates take the test.

Uniformly, faculty express how they benefit from the on-campus visits the national reading consultant, Dr. Antonio Fierro, provides. His development of safe spaces for professional learning to occur, expert knowledge, and use of constructive critique, combine to provide a rich experience that faculty appear to internalize and then apply within their own classrooms. Consequently, faculty members indicate that their students benefit from Dr. Fierro’s visits as well through his engagement with them during his visits.

The LETRS quiz that 18 faculty completed in April illustrated how well faculty understood various science of reading concepts. As all participating faculty answered only six questions

correctly, results indicate there remain several concepts that warrant review. The majority of questions showed correct scores typically in the 70, 80 and 90% ranges, and only one of the 28 questions had a correct response rate below 50%. Attention to why faculty have not fully committed the material to memory and practice could be in the form of more intensive review during the seminars, participant self-study, or a combination of both.

The survey administered to first year educators in spring 2019 indicates that, for the most part, the professional learning faculty have experienced through MS Momentum is paying off in the preparation of these educators. Large percentages of respondents indicated their programs had well- or moderately-prepared them for teaching. Somewhat troubling were the selections from roughly 9 to 10% of respondents who indicated various skills had not been addressed. At the 9% level, the skills indicated as not addressed included: phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, spelling/encoding, and assessment of skills. For the 10% level, the skills included print and phonics/decoding. A combined 73 percent of respondents indicated either their pre-service program well- or somewhat prepared to take the Foundations of Reading assessment.

The second to last question this survey posed was on how well prepared they felt on day one. Although the highest percentage of respondents chose moderately prepared, when combined with those who selected well-prepared, a solid majority of 66 (77%) selected one of these two choices. The final question in the survey was open-ended and sixty participants chose to provide a response, which fell into one of six categories.

To conclude, this second annual report indicates that the MS Momentum partnership continues to exert a positive influence on the professional learning of IHL faculty. Still, as illustrated by the performance in both the quiz eighteen faculty took in April and some of the responses provided by sizeable minorities of eighty-nine respondents to the first year teacher survey, there remain various areas in the faculty professional development and pre-service candidate preparation landscape that warrant attention. In doing so, IHL faculty and students alike can realize fully the positive influence Mississippi Momentum has the potential to manifest.

