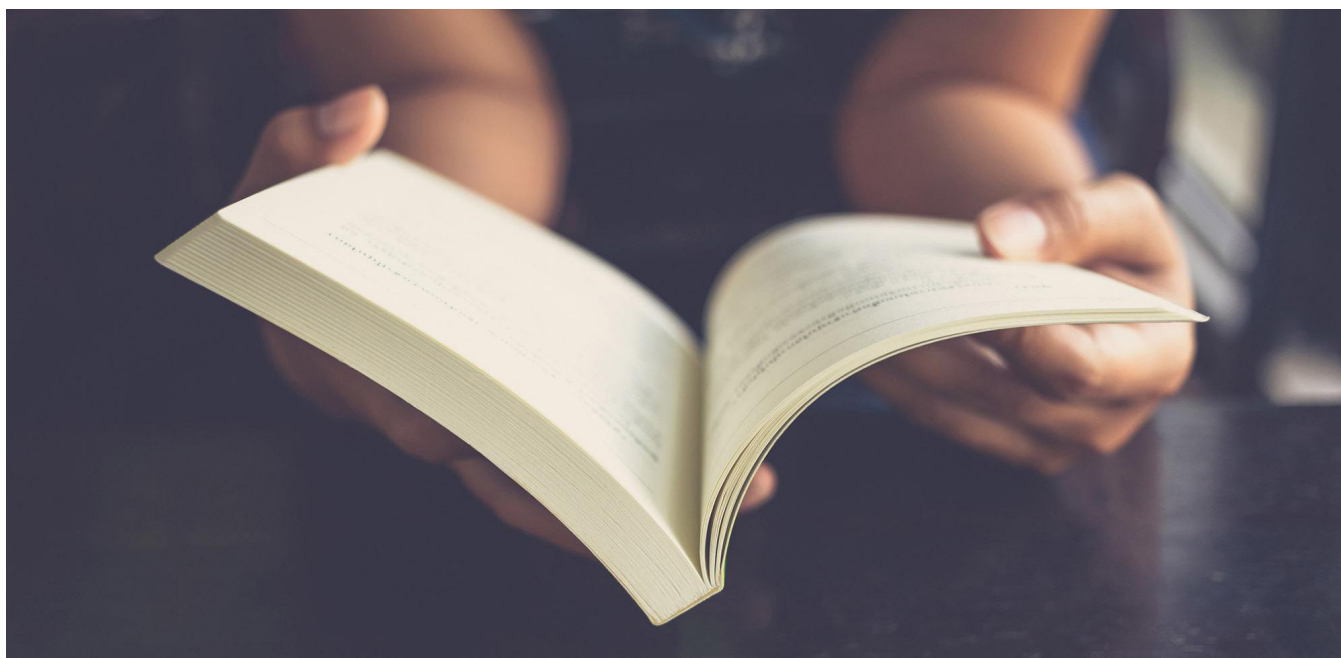


Mississippi Momentum: Bringing the Science of Reading to Teacher Preparation

The Final Evaluation Report

September 2020



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Prepared by

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**CRADLE TO CAREER
POLICY INSTITUTE**

September 2020

Executive Summary

This report provides findings from the third and final year of an evaluation the University of New Mexico Cradle to Career Policy Institute conducted of the Mississippi Momentum Model and Professional Development Partnership. Enabling legislation from 2013, the Literacy-Based Promotion Act, focused on improving children’s reading achievement and ensuring children were reading at grade level by the end of the third grade. A Mississippi governor’s task force recommended the professional growth model designed to focus on early literacy and specifically through the Early Literacy 1 and 2 courses. Fourteen Institutions of Higher Learning across Mississippi participated in the partnership during 2019-20, which provided intensive supports related to the teaching of literacy in the early elementary grades. The supports included modules, texts, and other instructional videos; classroom instruction; one-on-one mentoring; and seminars. Among other courses, participating faculty typically taught EL1 and EL2 classes to pre-service educators and helped prepare them to take and pass the Foundations of Reading test required for licensure.

Senior staff from the Barksdale Reading Institute (BRI), faculty from the Center for Excellence Literacy Instruction (CELI), and a national trainer from the Language Essential Teachers of Reading and Spelling (science of reading), provided many of the on-campus visits, daylong seminars and training sessions that characterized Mississippi Momentum. Other partners included the Assistant Commissioner for Institutions of Higher Learning, the MS Department of Education senior literacy staff, and the Higher Education Literacy Council (HELIC). A generous grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided the main funding for MM, and the Phil Hardin Foundation funded the evaluation.

The Success Case Method that Robert O. Brinkerhoff formulated to assess the efficacy of professional development and training programs informed the evaluation, which used a mixed methods approach. The year’s activities included interviews of six faculty members who participated in MM; a survey of faculty that CCPI conducted in spring 2020; a survey that Dr. Antonio Fierro conducted of faculty in the spring of 2020; a summary of campus visits Dr. Fierro conducted from 2018 to 2020; a summary of MM seminar attendance; a survey of first year teachers BRI conducted in spring 2020; and interviews of six college of education deans. The report closes with a summary of key findings, a list of recommendations, limitations of the evaluation, and an acknowledgements statement.

To conduct this year’s evaluation, the CCPI contacted ten faculty by email, of which two declined and two did not respond after two additional attempts. CCPI conducted the majority of interviews through use of the ZOOM platform with the exemption of one conducted via phone. The conversations were audio recorded then submitted for professional transcription. The CCPI administered survey used the Survey Monkey platform and invitees received an additional email reminder if they had not yet completed the instrument. Fifteen faculty completed that survey. Dr. Fierro distributed a separate training survey to all participants in hard copy form and 12 completed. He provided a summary of results to CCPI for analyses and inclusion in this report. The BRI provided an Excel spreadsheet of the first-year teachers’ survey to CCPI for analyses and inclusion. The six deans interviewed came out of a group of eight who CCPI contacted by email and which two declined. These various sources inform the respective subsections of this report.

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CCPI has taken steps to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participants whose responses appear in this report. These efforts include the blocking of any names of associates and IHLs that could inadvertently identify the source. Presentation of quantitative findings appear in aggregate form.

A Note on Terms

Throughout this report, several references are made to “the science of reading” and “LETRS.” While connected, the two terms are distinct and should not be conflated. Broadly, the term science of reading refers to a broad body of research conducted over the past twenty years. So, what is the Science of Reading? It is evidence: Evidence from many related disciplines, based on literally thousands of studies, supported by hundreds of millions of research dollars, conducted across the world in many languages on reading acquisition and instruction that has been conducted using gold-standard methodologies and has identified effective practices (Reyna, 2004; Seidenberg, 2017; Moats, 2019). Simply put, the Science of Reading is not an opinion, a philosophical belief, a political agenda, a one-size-fits-all approach, a program of instruction, or a specific component of instruction. The accumulated Science of Reading evidence should be trusted to inform the why, what, and how of reading instruction.¹

The Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) is “professional development that provides teachers with the skills they need to master the fundamentals of reading instruction—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language.” The authors of these materials are Drs. Louisa C. Moats and Carol A. Tolman. While grounded in the science of reading, LETRS applies this research base as a formative and foundational component of its approach to professional development.² An advisory working group that included university professors and deans selected LETRS to be consistent with the training provided to K-3 teachers in Mississippi.

¹Reyna, V. (2004). Why scientific research? The importance of evidence in changing educational practice. In P. McCardle & V. Chhabra (Eds.), *The voice of evidence in reading research*. Baltimore: Brookes; Seidenberg, M. (2017). *Reading at the speed of sound: How we read, why so many can't, and what we can do about it*. New York, NY: Basic Books; Moats, L. (2019). Structured Literacy™: Effective Instruction for Students with Dyslexia and Related Reading Difficulties. *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*. Spring (2019): 9-11, <https://www.idaontario.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Moats-2019-Structured-Literacy-Effective-Instruction-for-Students-with-dyslexia-and-related-reading-difficulties.pdf>. See also a description Dr. Louisa Moats of the science of reading offered at: <https://www.voyagersopris.com/blog/edview360/2019/10/16/lets-understand-what-reading-science-is-really-about>.

²Accessed from the Voyager Sopris website, <https://www.voyagersopris.com/professional-development/leters/leters-k-12>. See also a LETRS overview, “Ever get the Feeling Your PD is Missing Something?” https://www.voyagersopris.com/docs/default-source/professional-development/leters/leters_overview_dec2019_update_web.pdf.

Faculty Interviews

During late spring 2020, CCPI reached out by email to a group of eight faculty who had participated in MM. Out of this initial group two declined and two provided no answer after repeated attempts. An additional two faculty received an invitation, which they accepted. After establishing an appropriate time that worked with each of their schedules, CCPI set up the interview using the ZOOM platform, which were audio recorded and later submitted them to a professional transcription service. Each interview lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes and CCPI has used the transcripts to inform this section of the report.

The following three questions provided the focus of the interview and are the same used during year two.

- 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.**

Only one of the six interviewees had not previously completed a consent form, which this person completed electronically. Prior to the start of each interview, CCPI reminded them that any personally identifiable information would be masked to diminish to the extent possible any attribution of their comments. CCPI has accomplished this task by striking the names of affiliated IHLs or colleagues. The CCPI has lightly edited the passages to remove false starts, redundancies, and other quirks to allow the message offered to appear as clearly as possible.

Key Findings from the Faculty Interviews Include:

- Faculty indicated they grew as a function of taking the clicker quizzes (a rapid response public survey platform), which prompted them to keep up with their reading and research and motivated them in a process of self-monitoring regarding their personal growth.
- Others indicated that they had expanded their overall knowledge of the science of reading and had become more adept in its application.
- Another noted they felt challenged by the clicker quizzes but had come out of the experience more knowledgeable and capable.
- Various faculty indicated they had deepened their knowledge regarding the science of reading as evidenced by their increased emphasis on teaching the various models MM exposed them to [Scarborough's rope, Simple View of Reading, Four-Part Processing, Tolman's Hourglass, etc.].

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- Most indicated that participation had resulted in modifications to their syllabi and the materials and text they used in their courses. Several specifically discussed an expanded application of the LETRS materials and modules.
- A couple of the faculty specifically mentioned one of the texts MM assigned them to read, *Focus: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning*, by Mike Schmoker, and its emphasis on content knowledge for improved reading performance and overall comprehension.
- They appreciated the visits from Dr. Fierro and his ongoing availability to serve as a professional development resource for both them and their students.
- Uniformly, they spoke approvingly of Dr. Fierro, including specific reference to his professional demeanor; knowledge and expertise; ability to put both the faculty and students in a mindset of ease and receptiveness; emphasis on developing pragmatic and applicable skills; listening acuity; and capacity for insightful and constructive critique.
- In terms of his explicit modeling techniques, the majority of respondents indicated this process helped build their confidence in the classroom.

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

This first two interviewees note the change in overall knowledge between starting out in MM and the present, indicating that it has deepened and has served to benefits the students.

It has increased a lot. . . . I know that at the beginning of this endeavor, my knowledge of the science of reading was there but pretty limited. Over the course of the last three years or so, it has definitely increased the depth of my knowledge. I know I've gained a much greater understanding, not just of the theoretical models of the science of reading, but then also, the application, which I guess is probably what I appreciate the most given that that's what I teach my undergrad students.

I feel like I have become much more knowledgeable. When we have done those quizzes, . . .I've had more and more answers correct . . . than when we first started. I do feel like I have learned a good bit from this. I do feel much more knowledgeable about the science of reading and the research behind what we do and what we teach. I have learned a good deal from this, I really have.

While not remembering specific scores, this interviewee noted scores on the clicker quizzes have improved dramatically. This person discussed how the science of reading material was new and exposure to the research had been beneficial, especially as one trained in early childhood education.

I don't remember specific scores, but I definitely have improved dramatically. One thing that's kind of interesting about me is I'm kind of a somewhat of an outlier in the group in that I have taught Early Lit. One and Two. I don't currently teach Early Lit. One and Two. I'm more of an Early Childhood person than a literacy person. A lot of the science of reading stuff was very new to me when I started this process. It was something I was interested in,

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but it was not part of what my training as an early childhood professional was. I would say that I probably have increased dramatically because I started so low. I also think that on the last several times [of the clicker quizzes] I was right most of the time.

This interviewee also noted the positive impact participation has exerted on her knowledge base.

I think that it has helped our university tremendously. I taught at my university a few years ago . . . and then I took two years off. I had my second child and stayed at home. I've been back now my second year. Before that, I taught in public school systems and was a reading specialist. I'm a little bit more experienced, but when I came into the Higher Ed Program and was teaching, I saw that we were not doing what we needed to do at our university. Our students . . . were graduating with a degree to be a teacher, but they could not prove that they understood the science of reading and the foundations of how to teach reading. That was evidenced by the data that we received from the Foundations of Reading Test that they were required to pass. That's how they brought me into teaching the Early Lit One and Two courses within our Teacher Ed Program. What had been done for so many years prior was just very basic [and] was not really focused on the science of reading. It was just what I like to call a lot of fluff.

"I think that it has helped our university tremendously."

This same instructor noted how she changed the focus of course in her COE to improve their rigor and established performance expectations for students to either reach or be counseled into a different career path.

I teach a course . . . that is helping college students who necessarily don't have the reading skills to be successful in college level courses. They didn't score so well on the ACT, so it's a type of remediation to help them within their other college courses. I had a little bit more experience about it. When I came in and looked at the actual canvas shelves that were used for prior years, it was milk and no meat. The students were still getting just basic milk from a bottle and they were not getting anything of good quality instruction. We stepped it up. I made some proposals with our dean. The course itself, there was lots more meat that they were getting in the courses. But then I proposed that we have some [limitations]. For example, we have some students who were taking Early Lit One for the seventh time. The way our state scores are, our national reading scores, and the way we were seeing the data from the Foundations of Reading test—no, if you cannot pass the basic Early Lit One and Two within two chances, and pass with a C, then we might need to think about another path for you. . . .The faculty approved it, and so that's being enforced this coming fall semester that they will have two chances to pass the course, and not just with a C. They saw the correlation of those two courses with the Foundations of Reading test, so now it's not just a C, it's a B. That they have to pass the courses with a B. That should definitely help too.

This faculty noted the impact on personal development participation in the clicker quizzes has had. For instance, this person noted participation has exerted pressure to continue reading and studying and be up-to-date on one's knowledge and simply not regurgitating earlier material. The net result was production of a confidence-based mindset.

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Had we participated in those clicker quizzes probably in the very, very beginning, I probably wouldn't have done it. It challenges you as a professional to continue on with the reading and the studying once you leave those meetings we have every month, or whenever we have them. That way when you come back, it's like, what do I wanna say, like you're competing against the person sitting next to you. Because you're talking back and forth like, "Oh, I know I got this one right," or, "I don't know if I got this one right." It does challenge you to be up-to-date on your knowledge. . . .It holds you accountable. It puts you in the mindset where you feel confident in regurgitating information back out.

This last faculty noted that one colleague is a recent graduate with current knowledge in the field of literacy and literacy instruction, and contributed to restructuring the program's syllabi and course instruction. However, this person emphasized that the clicker quizzes and workshops expose whether she truly understand the science of reading and reading instruction.

It has really reinforced my knowledge and it makes my understanding of the science of reading and literacy [instruction] much more clear. We have our professor of record who

"It has really reinforced my knowledge and it makes my understanding of the science of reading and literacy [instruction] much more clear."

is a recently graduate, a doctorate student a few years ago, and her knowledge of literacy and literacy instruction is pretty current. All the components that we included in our syllabus and our instruction [have been critical]. But I think the training and the clickers really test me personally on whether or not I truly understand of the science of reading and the reading instruction. Before it was, I think I know this, but when we use the clicker, that's the time I say, okay, do I really know this? Because a lot of time we say, I think I know, but the clicker and the instruction in . . . the workshops really

makes me feel I know. I don't know everything, but I know a good amount of information covered in the current field. It has really challenged me, but also confirmed what I knew.

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? (Collect documentation of these examples.)

Although during the conversations, the various interviewees indicated that they have modified their syllabi, class assignments, field experiences and assessment as a result of their MM experience, a majority did not provide copies of documentation to indicate how these changes have become manifest. Therefore, that part of the question remains unanswered in this year's report. That said, as noted in one of the quotes below, Dr. Antonio Fierro conducted a syllabus review with at least one IHL and that information has likely been provided to other partners.

As illustrated in the following quote, this professor noted the emphasis that MM placed on grounding the students in the various models (i.e. Scarborough's rope, Simple View of Reading, Four-Part Processing, Tolman's Hourglass, etc.). Indicating significant changes in the way courses are now taught, this professor's earlier approach was to "teach them, then leave them." Whereas now, the models are constantly returned to and referred to in class.

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Well, I'm not sure that our Early Lit syllabi . . . has changed a whole lot. I do know that the emphasis on the different models [Scarborough's rope, Simple View of Reading, Four-Part Processing, Tolman's Hourglass, etc.] as far as the way I teach 'em in class has definitely changed. Again, like I said, I had a basic understanding, but I didn't have that depth that I have now. I taught them, but then I taught 'em and left 'em. Now, I go back to it. I refer back to those models. Those are our anchor for our classes, both in Early Lit and now in Middle Lit as well. I'm constantly goin' back to those models. I think that's been really helpful because it's given our students somethin' to hang their hat on. They can move back to those models, and because I understand them better, I think they understand them better. I can relate everything that we do back to those in some way, shape, form, or fashion. . . .I'm not sure that they've changed. I think they're exactly the same as they were the whole time that I've been here anyway. I've been teaching these classes for...goin' on my fifth year now.

The following professor cites a colleague who teaches the EL1/EL2 courses and who embraces the science of reading "whole-heartedly." The professor cited Dr. Fierro's visit and syllabi review that led to a critique that the colleague's approach to the EL1/EL2 course structure and material was more at a graduate rather than the necessary undergraduate level that would be appropriate. This professor also noted the process has been beneficial to see the common ground in the application of literacy instruction between early childhood education and early elementary where the bulk of that instruction occurs. Further along in the quote, this professor referred a book, *Focus*, by Mike Smoker that MM participants were currently reading and the the importance it places on content knowledge for effective reading and comprehension. Similar positions and stress on the importance of content knowledge appear in the work of other researchers, such as Natalie Wexler (*The Knowledge Gap*), and Daniel T. Willingham (*The Reading Mind*).

This again is where I'm a little bit of an outlier in that I don't specifically teach the Early Lit. One and Two classes. Probably [my colleague] who does teach those courses takes a science of reading approach whole-heartedly. She uses the LETRS modules in the classes, and all that kind of stuff. When [Dr.] Antonio [Fierro] did the syllabus review that's one of the things that we talked about. His feedback was honestly that she was very much treating an undergrad course kinda like a graduate-level course with the rigor of what she's including in the class. . . .This whole process for me has been a really good opportunity to see what common ground there is from the two approaches to Early Education [i.e. play-based/constructivist and more literacy focused]. Then to really hone in with my students an understanding of I'm gonna say a lot of things in this Early Childhood Ed. class about the way that you teach children. They are all true and evidence-based, but when we get specifically into talking about literacy there's gonna be some nuances and some differences in the way that we approach that because literacy is such a distinct skill. It doesn't work the way that physical development works, or general cognitive problem solving, and how that kind of thing develops in children. We have to have some systematic explicate instruction. We've got to get into some very fine details. . . . I've been able to rework those parts of the course where we're dealing with literacy and language, and make sure that what I'm saying is not viewed by the students as contradictory to what [a colleague] is teaching in Early Lit. One and Two. [My goal is to be] much more complementary with one another. I'm not necessarily advocating a balanced literacy approach. 'Cause I'm very much advocating

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systematic explicate literacy instruction. . . . The thing that I emphasize, and this actually is something that [Mike] Schmoker talks about in the book [*Focus: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning*] that they have us reading currently, is the importance of students having that content knowledge that enhances their literacy development. . . .

This professor noted a change in the textbook her program used and a major shift to using the LETRS modules. The course continued to focus on phonics and phonemic awareness and other key early literacy concepts. She further noted that earlier efforts involved the Whole Language and Balanced Literacy approaches that since have been pulled out. This professor noted that the field experiences were and remain well-aligned with the science of reading.

Well, for one, we have changed our textbook. We are using a different textbook in our courses now. We're using the LETRS modules that we used in our training in our courses here. That was a big change for us. The course that I currently teach is our Early Lit 1. We did already have a very large emphasis in that course on phonemic awareness and phonics. Those were the main two things that we already taught in that course. What we have done in that course is we have limited some of the other things that we were doing in that course prior to my receiving this training. For instance, we did do some whole language activities. We did some other things on balance that dealt more with the balanced reading approaches. We have taken some of those things and some of those activities that we did with our students. . . .out of that course. More of what we do now is strictly just the phonemic awareness and phonics. Our field experiences are about the same, because what we were doing prior to this—in our courses here—were pretty much on point with what the science of reading recommends. Our students go out, they administer assessments to determine what the child's problem areas are in phonics and phonemic awareness, and then they go back and they write a lesson plan specifically for that child and that child's needs. Then, they teach it.

“Well, for one, we have changed our textbook. We are using a different textbook in our courses now. We’re using the LETRS modules that we used in our training in our courses here. That was a big change for us.”

Noting the weakness of the previous syllabi used, this professor discussed how participation in MM has produced significant improvements in the current version. She further discussed her desire to restructure the field experience for students and provide a more rigorous approach to observation and critique. She indicated the effect participation had had on improving lesson plan creation and student performance on the FORT, seen through the increased passage rates.

Yes. We have definitely improved on the syllabus that we used prior. It was very weak. Just very weak and the canvas shell and everything that I saw was being done. We [now] have residencies within our Teacher Ed Program, and even within the Early Lit One and Two courses. . . . Then, towards the end, they have their student teaching that is more fulltime

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in the classroom. Right now, they are just spending a few hours of the day in the classroom, but it was basically just observing only and then they were coming back, discussing what they saw. I wanted to completely change it and add more meat to it. It's not just observe because if they are not observing what they need to observe in their field experience, then they're still not getting it. I have to teach what they should be doing based on the science of reading. Okay, they have a child that they work with throughout the entire semester that they pre-assess, that they create their lesson plans for based on the different foundations and the big five components of reading [i.e. phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension]. We had to really work on how to write a lesson plan. Because these students are still new within a program, they are still somewhat new to writing lesson plans. Prior, it was discouraged to start them so soon and they [department administration] wanted them to master that later. I didn't necessarily agree with that because why not start it now? I mean, the sooner the better. . . . It's actually been really great. I have noticed major improvements with the students and the course load. The data's already coming back. The students that are now taking the Foundations of Reading test, their scores are coming back passing and they're higher scores. Whereas, we've been on probably a six year streak of not many students passing. They were graduating with a degree, but they couldn't pass that test. Now, they're passing. Now, they're getting it. I'm seeing the results.

“We have definitely improved on the syllabus that we used prior. It was very weak. Just very weak...”

This professor noted prior experience in an elementary classroom and the preponderance of Whole Language that characterized that school's approach to early literacy. She also discussed how in her undergraduate education EL1 and 2 were not yet available. The exposure to the LETRS materials and training has shifted her department's approach to instructing the pre-service students how to teach reading. In addition, she indicated that participation in MM has informed and improved her ability for field observation of students, providing “a different lens” for this dynamic.

I'm gonna start with the class assignments actually changing how we teach as it relates to the five components of reading. 'Cause prior to going through the training, a lot of it for me was based off of what I learned and how I learned. The school system I came from [had] a lot of whole language going on. We take the reading courses in college, but it really wasn't as detailed as what the LETRS training is, and now we have Early Literacy One and Early Literacy Two. We didn't have those courses when I was an undergrad. A lot of things were pretty much general, but to be able to come back and teach our students those individual skills that we would hope they learned in grade school, but some of 'em didn't. It's actually going back and teaching them the same way we were taught through the LETRS training. With that said, a lot of instruction changed. It was more hands-on. It was a lot of work that the students had to display or do a lot of group work, partner work. . . . It was a lot more hands-on, a lot more opportunities for them to challenge each other with activities that you could do out loud with each other [and] just holding them more accountable to the science of teaching reading, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency versus just going through the textbook. When you go out into the field and you observe your practicum students, you can key in on things that you've learned through the LETRS

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training to see if they're able to . . . do the exact same thing that you [learned]. It's looking at it from a different lens. Now, they're able to pull some of those things out, and actually see results. Just like how we see results as college professors, they're able to see some of those same results in students, pre-K through third grade.

Starting with a discussion of her increased focus on research-based evidence, this professor indicated that her goal is to expose her students to these materials so they appreciate that what they hear during instruction is not her opinion, but is grounded in evidence. She then noted, as a previous interviewee did, that her initial approach to teaching the various reading models was superficial, however, now, she explores them in more depth, with specific reference to Scarborough's Rope and the Simple View of Reading. She further discussed the impact participation has had on her theoretical understanding, and like others, commented on how the COVID19 pandemic has affected her courses and the uncertainty it has caused.

Yeah, in terms of content I personally paid more attention to the research-based evidence. Before I covered the four-part processing model and the simple view of reading. I covered those to broaden my students' understanding. After the training I felt if my student knew the scientific evidence behind the reading instruction and the reading they would . . . have more [of] a urge or desire to learn about the "how part" of reading and reading instruction. Because this is not what my teacher said, it's what the research showed us. I think for me personally, [before] I just brushed through the Scarborough's Rope showing students the graph and talking about it. In area one we just focused on "dee-dee-dee-dee-dee" and then area two that's what we did. I think after training I realized the rope really contains more information. [T]he Simple View of Reading is just five components, but the rope is more specific. I also did the activity with the yarn and it was okay, my activity was okay, but it was not as good as what Antonio did. I was thinking of refining it this spring term. Of course, I did not get a chance because we had the COVID. I'm waiting for more chances, but I don't know [when]. I do believe it has really given me the theoretical foundation of what I do and why I do instruction...My work, all the content, and how I teach, is more theory based and stronger.

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 in previous years, faculty assessment of Dr. Fierro was uniformly positive. In parallel with the deans' comments addressed later, various interviewees discussed his professional demeanor; knowledge and expertise; ability to put both the faculty and students in a mindset of ease and receptiveness; emphasis on developing pragmatic and applicable skills; listening acuity; and capacity for insightful and constructive critique.

This first interviewee commented on Dr. Fierros's impact on her confidence in presentation and overall knowledge related to her courses and adjustments to what she assigns students.

I think it's helped me to be more confident in my explicit modeling. I always did that, but just to the extent that I now do it with those foundational type skills. He's been a really good

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model for what I now do in my classroom as far as that explicit modeling. It's very helpful. I believe it was February in person, then we were gonna meet again in April and we did that virtually. I adopted the lesson plan template that he uses. Where it's basically the explicate modeling, the guided practice, the individual practice, the check for understanding in the middle of that. I missed the anticipatory set, but I've adjusted all of my assignments both in the early childhood, the preservice class, and in my grad-level classes, to where we're structuring the lessons that they create in that format.

This professor is now modeling explicit instruction in the classroom through application of the guided practice approach (I do, we do, you do), and referred to Schmoker's work that aligns with approach and the positive effective it has had both on the professor's and students' mindset.

Of course, I'm doing a little modeling of that in class for them. We're following that same format of them going through the explicit modeling, the guided practice, and then they do it on their own. The doing it on their own is a little different than what we've done in the workshops because it tends to be them going and doing an assignment and turning it in, and either recording themselves or that kind of thing. I found that that was a really great way for me to present it and then for them to do their lesson planning so that they could think through those components of a very effective lesson. I believe it was either [Mike] Schmoker or it may have been [Natalie] Wexler. A lot of what . . . Schmoker talks about in his book aligns with that format. Of that effective lesson where you're presenting content, you are making sure that students are understanding, you're doing the re-teaching if you need to, and that kind of thing. I think that's a really great frame of mind to go ahead and get my students into.

The next professor described the affection the students have for Dr. Fierro. She went on to discuss her practice of techniques he provided with the students and how both have benefitted from the visits. This interviewee commented that MM was more valuable during the first two years than the last one. Nonetheless, if given the opportunity to participate again, she would.

Well, first I just have to say, we love Antonio. My students love when he comes to visit us. I tell 'em about him to start with before he comes, and then once he comes, they absolutely love when he comes and the activities and things he does at the end. They'll ask later, "Is that Antonio guy comin' back to see us anymore?" [T]hey're always sad that they only get him one time, but I have learned lots of different techniques and things to do with my students that I did not know before[such as] lots of different ways to count phonemes and words. Just different activities and things that I was not doin' with my students before . . . but he has taught me lots of different techniques with teachin', phonics, and especially the phonemic awareness and the phonological awareness components. . . .I'll just say that I do think it's been helpful. I have enjoyed it. I do feel like the first couple of years were much more meaningful than the last year or so has been. I don't wanna say that being negative at all, but I felt like more of the focus to start with was on learning the science of reading and the research behind all of that. I just feel like there was less of a focus on that in the last year. . . . Still enjoyed this last year or so getting together with that group of colleagues

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even though that group has changed over the course of this experience. . . . If I had to do it all over again, I would definitely want to participate in it again.

This next professor stated that after she graduated from college and taught at an elementary school, she faced major challenges teaching remedial reading. The MM experience has provided a depth and range of knowledge she wishes she had had at the beginning of her teaching career because of how much more effective she could have been with some students.

I graduated from [IHL], and when I started teaching at [name] Elementary School, I knew how to teach children how to read, but it was challenging. I was a remedial reading teacher actually at the elementary school. Lots of things that I have learned through the Mississippi Momentum, I have thought about several times. I really wish I had known that even though I did know how to teach reading to those children, and I felt very prepared. I have learned quite a few things through this experience that I thought, I really wish I had known that when I taught at [name of ES] 'cause I could've used that. I have thought of specific students and some of these things I could have helped them more with than what I did at the time. I do, I think it's been very meaningful. We do have some new faculty members here at [name of IHL]. One in particular who's brand new. I do hope that she'll get some sort of similar training that I have received.

In this assessment, Dr. Fierro is noted as the “go-to person” and key resource for this professor. Sharing videos of student practice with him is one way he provided support to this IHL, its students, and the host school where the pre-service candidates were assigned prior to the COVID19 pandemic and the adjustments to pre-service preparation made in its wake.

“I have thought of specific students and some of these things I could have helped them more with than what I did at the time.”

I love Dr. Antonio. His energy and his enthusiasm on top of his knowledge and his expertise, he's definitely my go-to person.

I loved all of the seminars that he presented for us [and] him visiting our campus and coming within my classroom and seeing first-hand and observing and giving feedback. I've shared videos with him. Once we had to transition to completely online instruction I was sharing videos with him of what my students [were practicing to get feedback]. Even though my preservice candidates couldn't go into the classrooms, I told them, “Okay, you're going to do just like what all these other teachers are doing. You're gonna teach online too. You're gonna continue with that lesson plan that you have, and you didn't get to teach with that child. You're going to do it on camera and you're gonna share that with your mentor classroom teacher for her to pass along to the students.” . . . He always gives great valuable feedback, and is very encouraging, and is always a great resource to go to.

This professor noted the impact Dr. Fierro's participation has had on expanding the “hands-on” approach the program has now embraced. She also discussed the various activities that have been improved as a consequence of his visits, such as the use of “colored tiles” (a LETRS informed activity) and pipe cleaners (an application of concepts from Scarborough's Rope). The impact of his visits has been major on where the performance of the class was and where it is now.

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The Early Literacy One and Early Literacy Two [courses] from the time I got to [IHL name] to now is so much more hands-on. Even with just bringing in the different manipulatives that we're able to use, bringing in some of the things that Antonio brought into the early literacy courses. When he would come on campus, he would come with his bucket of things, knowing that it's okay to teach the students. Even though they're 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 years old, that it's okay to teach as if they're 5, 6, 7, or 8 years old. The environment has completely changed, I'm not gonna say 100 percent, 'cause we were doing things prior to him coming, just not on the same level [or] as hands-on. An example would be the color tiles. I probably never used color tiles until I went to the LETRS training. Even though we may have a mapping activity, they would just map, like writing it out every time versus bringing in those color tiles to map it without actually putting the individual sound, or the actual letter. Allowing them to map it first with the color tiles, then to go back and write out the different sounds. Another example with the pipe cleaner, when we talk about Scarborough's Rope, that's something that we . . . talked about, but we never actually did where we take the pipe cleaner, and they can see actually how each component comes together. . . . From where the class used to be seven years ago to now has changed drastically. I would say for the good.

Providing guidance on the Foundations of Reading test prep served as the focus of this professor's initial assessment related to Dr. Fierro's visits and his explicit modeling techniques.

Antonio came to our campus three times if I remember correctly, but the first two times he did Foundations of Reading test prep with our students. Those two [visits] were really well received. Antonio personality is just so bubbly. All the students [get] so mesmerized by him [and] by the content that he provided. The third time when he was with us, I was teaching part of the phonics skills. One phonics skills he helped me with was how to articulate the phonemes because I don't always feel comfortable because English is my second language. . . . I said, Antonio I just don't know whether or not I articulate these phonemes correctly.

Continuing, this professor offered specific examples of how his modeling played out during the visits and the positive impact it exerted on students.

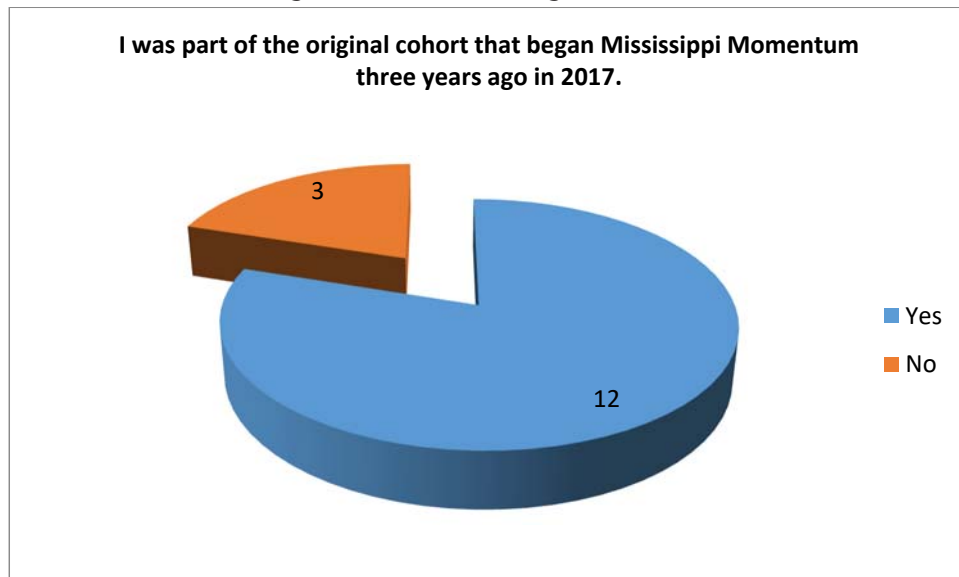
I say [to Antonio] would you mind help[ing] me out? [Then] I say to my students, okay when he comes, I will make sure he has opportunity to see whether I taught you right or not. He really did a great job and my students say, [professor,] you just don't give yourself enough credit, because I'm not confident enough. I think the major thing is for me, . . . it's not how much [his visit] changed my instruction, . . . it's the support he provided us. I feel I'm almost the mother of my students. [A]nother thing for me in terms of what I gained from Antonio's modeling is in the training. Because there were at least two or three times I did not get a chance to attend [the seminars] He purposefully modeled the gradual release of responsibility model [i.e. the "I do, we do, you do" process]. I think he used it one time with the vocabulary [and] another time with phonological awareness. . . . Another thing is when he models, he would not say it, but we have to pick what he tried to show us from his instruction. I personally feel that's one of the most important takeaways. Because for knowledge, we have all the training materials, but those are just on paper. But this one is on action and his visits really impact our students a lot and his modelling impacts me as an instructor tremendously.

Final Faculty Survey

In Spring 2020, CCPI fielded a survey comprised of nine questions to the participants of Mississippi Momentum. Out of the thirty-four participants who received the survey, fifteen chose to respond for a response rate of 44 percent. Each person received an initial invitation and then a follow-up reminder. CCPI developed the survey in conjunction with the Mississippi Momentum partners, Kelly Butler and Angela Rutherford, and the project consultant, Dr. Antonio Fierro. The survey sought to collect information on and challenges to participation; what they would tell colleagues; how well they believed their education had prepared them to teach their students how to teach reading; recommendations to MM partners; key takeaways from the experience; and what, if any, changes could have made the experience more productive. The narrative for each of the questions provides a summary of responses.

The first query posed this statement, “I was part of the original cohort that began Mississippi Momentum three years ago in 2017.” In response, as shown in the following figure, thirteen of the fifteen (80%) who replied answered yes.

Figure 1. Part of the Original Cohort?



For those who answered no to the previous prompt, the semesters they indicated joining Mississippi Momentum included two who began in Fall 2018, and one who joined in Fall 2019.

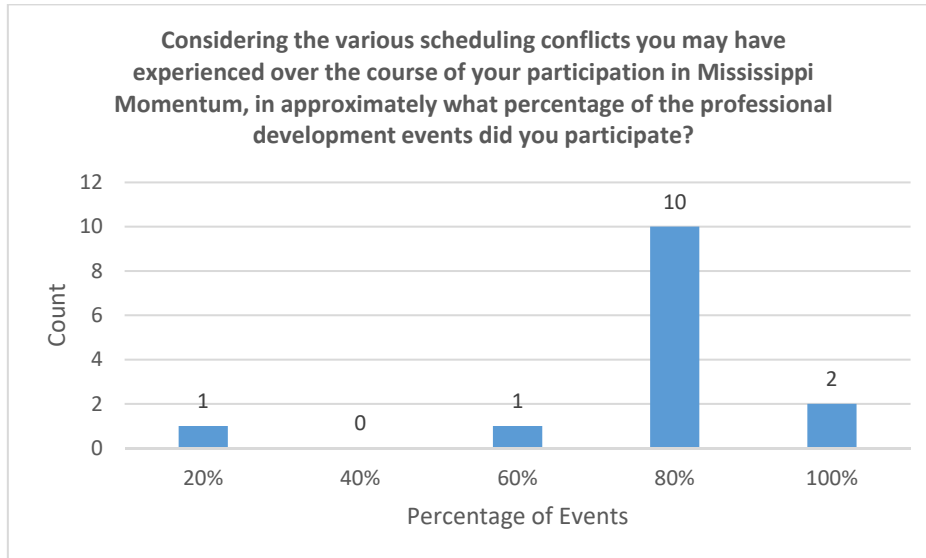
Question three sought to determine what factors impeded participation.

“Considering the various scheduling conflicts you may have experienced over the course of your participation in Mississippi Momentum, in approximately what percentage of the professional development events did you participate?”

The following figure 2 shows results for the fourteen who responded. As shown, twelve (86%) participated in professional development events over the time they had been involved in 80 to 100 percent of the events. These large percentages in the upper ranges indicate that these faculty took their commitment to the project seriously, which is also reflected by their willingness to complete the survey.

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Figure 2. Scheduling Conflicts



The next prompt wanted to uncover the reasons for lower participation.

“Since your participation was 60% or lower in the professional development events, which best describes the reason:” provided five options for a response.

These included:

- Time commitment and conflicts
- Travel
- Overnights away from home
- Didn’t find participation all that helpful, and
- Other

The two of the fifteen who responded both selected “time commitments and conflicts” as the reason they did not attend more events. This response is fully understandable, especially if travel time is factored in from their campus to Jackson, where a large number of the professional development events occurred.

Thirteen provided responses to the following open-ended question,

“Considering your comprehensive experience over the course of your participation in Mississippi Momentum, what would you tell your colleagues about this experience (whether negative and/or positive)?”

As seen in the following list, all respondents were uniformly positive. Among the key points given were the following: improved overall knowledge of the science of reading; impacts on their pedagogy and instructional strategies; and outcomes for their pre-service students. Another key takeaway centered on the opportunity participation in Mississippi Momentum offered to

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collaborate with professional colleagues across the state. Others made mention of the materials used and the guest speakers. For those who framed their response as a direct message for colleagues, quotes included, “it was a great experience” and “they need to attend.”

- This was an excellent opportunity for me to grow as a faculty member after over 15 years teaching at the college level. I don't think I would have added the instructional protocols or evolving evidence-based content to my instruction at this level without the support of Mississippi Momentum. It has also been an excellent opportunity to network with other instructors across the state.
- This is a great experience and opportunity to be exposed theory and best practice in teaching reading.
- Mississippi Momentum has been one of the most positive professional development experiences in my 40+ years in education. The sources and speakers were superior. Having the opportunity to interact with other colleagues was the “icing on the cake.”
- Amazing! I have learned valuable science-based techniques for teaching reading that will strengthen our teacher prep program.
- This experience took my knowledge of teaching reading to another level. It has had a positive impact on my instruction and students.
- I would tell my colleagues that it was a great experience. Being a part of MS Momentum created an opportunity for faculty from various institutions to collaborate and discuss pertinent issues as it pertained to education in the state of Mississippi, I enjoyed the experience.
- I never taught EL I, but through this training I feel I can. When I went through the regular training, I did not feel that confident, but the participation in MM gave me the confidence because it was so much more in depth. I now even discuss many EL I topics in my EL II class to tie concepts together, which never would have happened had I not participated in this training.
- I'd say they need to participate. It's wonderful to learn from colleagues across universities.
- It has been a wonderful experience that has provided many opportunities for professional growth, networking, and collaboration.

“This was an excellent opportunity for me to grow as a faculty member after over 15 years teaching at the college level. I don't think I would have added the instructional protocols or evolving evidence-based content to my instruction at this level without the support of Mississippi Momentum. It has also been an excellent opportunity to network with other instructors across the state.”

“Mississippi Momentum has been one of the most positive professional development experiences in my 40+ years in education. The sources and speakers were superior. Having the opportunity to interact with other colleagues was the ‘icing on the cake.’”

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The next question, focused on how well they felt their previous advanced degrees had prepared them to teach reading to new teachers,

“Given your advanced degrees in education, are there any particular things you are taking away from MS Momentum that you wish your advanced degree(s) had prepared you for preparing teachers to teach reading?”

Twelve of the fifteen participants answered the question. Key points that emerged from responses centered on the temporal aspect of when they had earned their advanced degree. Faculty who had completed their degree several years earlier typically noted their courses had not prepared them to teach reading to their students. Conversely, recent graduates noted they had been prepared to teach reading to their students during their degree program. The takeaway appears to be that IHLs have shifted with the times and have incorporated the necessary preparation for teaching reading, presumably related to advances in the science of reading and cognitive sciences into their overall course offerings.

“I received my Master’s Degree in 1979. I think that speaks for itself. So much has been learned about the science of teaching reading since that time.”

- I had no science of reading in any of my programs with the exception of one speech and hearing sciences course I took in my master’s. I now have been LETRS trained and also gained some in-depth understandings of evidence-based literacy instruction and how to best present that to my students.
- Quite a bit: how to teach linguistic aspects of language, knowledge of theory to guide practice, and making connections among colleagues.
- I received my master’s degree in 1979. I think that speaks for itself. So much has been learned about the science of teaching reading since that time.
- None - The MS Momentum aligned appropriately with the evidence based research and best practices strategies learned within my advanced degrees in education and literacy instruction.
- Yes. A more in-depth look at the science of teaching reading.
- Only my most recent degree prepared me for the teaching of reading. Neither my bachelor’s or master’s prepared me at all. All of my learning and growth was done within the elementary classroom. During my first few years of teaching, I truly feel that my students learned to read in spite of my training.
- One thing that comes to mind is that we as educators have to be sure that our pre-service candidates really have a sound understanding of how to teach reading, to be thorough and precise in their instruction to ensure that they produce great readers.
- Demonstration of [gradual reduction of responsibility] GRR by the instructor and the involvement of all the trainees.

“Only my most recent degree prepared me for the teaching of reading. Neither my bachelor’s or master’s prepared me at all. All of my learning and growth was done within the elementary classroom. During my first few years of teaching, I truly feel that my students learned to read in spite of my training.”

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- Yes, I wish I had classes that were more in-depth. The university I attended was focused on whole language (masters) and my doctorate really did not focus on explicit instruction at all. I learned all of that from the PD I received when I was a literacy coach.
- I wish they focused more on the science of reading.
- We need more reading courses in our advanced degree programs.
- Various methods for teaching reading.

“We need more reading courses in our advanced degree programs.”

The following question queried what they would recommend to MM partners to improve the model’s efficacy,

“Considering your overall experience during the course of your participation in Mississippi Momentum, what specific recommendations/ suggestions would you make about the model to the partners (e.g. BRI, U of M CELI, Assistant Commissioner of IHLs, MDE Senior Literacy Staff, and HELC) to improve the model’s efficacy?”

In response to this query, twelve faculty members provided an array of suggestions. Recommendations included continued funding for this or a similar project as the research always advances and faculty could benefit from ongoing targeted professional development. To maximize the impact on faculty and students, one suggested site visits include prior contact with explicit objectives regarding the visit’s purpose and others suggested that the PD sessions be streamed or video recorded for later viewing to help minimize the impact on courses and to reduce travel. One called for training in differentiated instruction and another wanted less emphasis on protocols and another stated there was not enough emphasis on professional development specifically devoted to reading. Three gave no specific recommendations. Highlighted selections follow.

- Continue supporting it. Research constantly evolves. Our understandings based on evidence are renewed year to year. Also, new faculty are hired. A project like this must be in place to provide continued support and development to faculty. Another recommendation would be more intentional about the site visits. I never felt like there was a clear objective or expectation for the visit and would have appreciated some assistance in making sure my students and I were getting the full benefit of that part of the project.
- If it is possible (I realize how difficult it is), differentiated instruction among the trainees. All the trainees have their own strengths and weaknesses.
- The IHLs needs to get off their high horse and teach what the teacher candidates need to know. All Mississippi schools are doing the explicit instruction- whether a professor believes in it or not, they need to teach the candidates what will help them be successful in the classroom and on the foundations assessment. They are hurting their school’s reputation by sending unprepared teachers into a classroom.

“I never felt like there was a clear objective or expectation for the visit and would have appreciated some assistance in making sure my students and I were getting the full benefit of that part of the project.”

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- Less protocols; more training from Antonio, and guest speakers.
- Scheduling and time away from campus is very difficult. Maybe offer some virtual sessions or maximize the time there. Also, provide some time for more collaboration among participants, such as sharing assignments, textbooks, etc.
- I feel like the meetings this year should have been focused more on P.D. that related specifically to reading.
- Possible video sessions to be viewed at a later date

In order to uncover what faculty felt they had gained from participation, the survey included the following:

“Thinking about your overall experience with Mississippi Momentum, what are the key takeaways you realized through your participation?”

Thirteen of the fifteen faculty members answered this question and offered several elements that Mississippi Momentum provided as takeaways. Among these included: the science of reading; exposure to and application of various reading models; critiquing the validity of research; and the importance of understanding linguistic knowledge. Others highlighted the efficacy of modeling to improve teaching; support for good teaching and independent practice; the importance of providing support for student intellectual growth; the need for lifelong learning; peer collaboration; and embracing a growth mindset as lifelong learners. Selected quotes follow.

- Science of reading, determining the efficacy of research-based articles, simplifying how I do my instruction and how I teach my students to teach to good modeling, guided practice, checks for understanding, and independent practice, additional instructional protocols to take my students deeper into course readings and content.
- Finally, educators start to realize the importance of linguistic knowledge. I am from a different cultural background. I know how important it is.
- My key takeaway is in its name - this experience provided me with the momentum to bring to my university to strengthen our reading courses and teacher prep program.
- Building on a strong foundation is vital. What I don't know or understand affects my students' ability to be effective educators.
- I really enjoyed the book studies, learning strategies, and reading information.
- Collaboration: Helping each other; Strengthening each other; Iron sharpening iron.

“IHL needs to get off their high horse and teach what the teacher candidates need to know. All Mississippi schools are doing the explicit instruction-whether a professor believes in it or not, they need to teach the candidates what will help them be successful in the classroom and on the foundations assessment. They are hurting their school's reputation by sending unprepared teachers into a classroom.”

“Finally, educators start to realize the importance of linguistic knowledge. I am from a different cultural background. I know how important it is.”

“Building on a strong foundation is vital. What I don't know or understand affects my students' ability to be effective educators.”

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- We are lifelong learners. No matter how long we teach literacy, we always can learn new, research based strategies to help our students.
- Higher Ed is a pain in the butt when it comes to making thought process changes.
- We can and have to do better to prepare pre-service teachers to teach reading. Also, ongoing professional development is important at every level of education.
- My main takeaway has been -- good Early Lit I and II content knowledge and good instructional strategies to use while teaching this content.

“We can and have to do better to prepare pre-service teachers to teach reading. Also, ongoing professional development is important at every level of education.”

The final question, asked how the entire experience of participating in Mississippi Momentum could have been more helpful.

“Considering the level of your comprehensive participation in Mississippi Momentum, how might the experience have been more useful?”

Ten respondents provided input. These included: a call for more advanced planning of event dates; the need for more techniques that could be immediately applied in the classroom; increased support for pre-event lodging for attendees; less emphasis on book studies and protocols and more time devoted to peer collaboration on course improvement; and more time devoted specifically to reading. One had no input and another just praise.

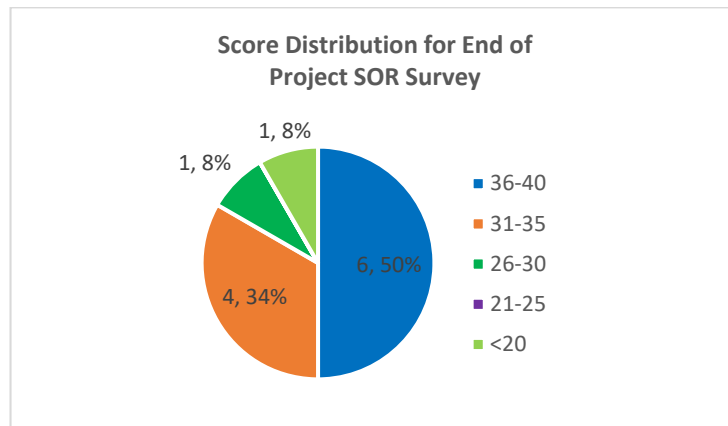
- Plan dates further in advance or use Doodle poll to plan dates to ensure conflicts are avoided.
- If we addressed more on comprehension.
- More ideas to take straight into the classroom with preservice candidates.
- By strengthening my students as well as the division/unit in which I’m employed.
- It is quite difficult for me to cancel classes in order to attend the training.
- It couldn’t be more useful. I have taken everything I have learned and applied it to my classes. I feel we have the most rigorous program in Mississippi with a very positive reputation.
- Hotels the night before for those who live far away; less repetition of protocols.
- Less focus on book studies, protocols and more time to strengthen content in our courses through collaboration.
- Same as my answer to a previous question - I would like for the meetings this past year to have been specifically geared toward reading.

“More ideas to take straight into the classroom with preservice candidates.”

End of Project Science of Reading Survey

In the spring of 2020, MM project consultant, Dr. Antonio Fierro, administered a survey on the science of reading to faculty who participated in Mississippi Momentum. Twelve participants provided input. The term “science of reading” refers to a broad collection of methods and approaches that provide children an advantage in reading and which research has validated.³ Out of a possible 44 points, the average scored was 34.3 (78.1%), with a range of correct selections from 17 to 40. The following figure 3 provides a summary of these scores.

Figure 3. Score Distribution for End of Project SOR Survey



The first section of the survey included 30 questions that were either multiple choice or short answer, the second specifically focused on knowledge related to an Early Literacy 1 course, and the third section focused on Early Literacy 2 knowledge. The discussion below provides the number and percentage of respondents who answered correctly and what the answer is.

A widely accepted model, the Simple View of Reading (SVR), is a formula that posits reading has two components, word recognition (decoding) and comprehension. The next three questions directly addressed the SVR. In response to the first, four of the twelve (33%) answered yes to this question:

I taught the Simple View of Reading (SVR) in my pre-service course (s) prior to the MS Momentum Partnership. (no point value)

Eleven (92%) answered the next question correctly,

The SVR is best described as follows: (B) a formula that comprises the primary domains required for reading comprehension.

³ This description was informed by the following articles: Reyna, V. (2004). Why scientific research? The importance of evidence in changing educational practice. In P. McCardle & V. Chhabra (Eds.), *The voice of evidence in reading research*. Baltimore: Brookes; Seidenberg, M. (2017). *Reading at the speed of sound: How we read, why so many can't, and what we can do about it*. New York, NY: Basic Books; Moats, L. (2019). Structured Literacy™: Effective Instruction for Students with Dyslexia and Related Reading Difficulties. *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*. Spring (2019): 9-11.

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Eight of the twelve (75%) received a full score in response to this question,

In one sentence, explain what you know about the SVR.

An answer to this prompt would have been structured something like this, “The simple view of reading is a formula developed by Gough and Tunmer in 1986 as **Decoding (D) x Language Comprehension (LC) = Reading Comprehension (RC).**” Although referred to by its understated acronym (SVR), various studies show that a student’s reading comprehension (RC) score can be predicted if decoding (D) skills and language comprehension (LC) abilities are known. This knowledge can assist reading teachers in developing strategies to assist students improve all three of the skills the formula addresses.

Scarborough’s Rope is another reading model generally depicted as an infographic. Dr. Hollis Scarborough of the Haskins Laboratories, and a leading authority in the area of dyslexia research, developed the reading rope model. According to the International Dyslexia Association, “The Reading Rope consists of lower and upper strands.” The word-recognition skills, or lower strands, consist of phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition of familiar words and work together as the reader becomes accurate, fluent, and increasingly automatic with repetition and practice. Concurrently, the language-comprehension skills, or upper strands, consist of background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge that reinforce one another and then weave together with word-recognition to produce a skilled reader. This does not happen overnight. The entire process requires instruction and practice over time.”⁴ The next three questions addressed Scarborough’s Rope. The following question received a yes response from four (33%) of the respondents,

I taught Scarborough’s Rope Model in my pre-service course (s) prior to the MS Momentum Partnership. (no point value)

Eight (67%) answered the following correctly,

Which of the following statements is NOT true about Scarborough’s Rope Model: (B) It illustrates how decoding can compensate for poorly developed language skills.

For the next prompt, respondents were asked to:

Sketch a graphic of Scarborough’s Rope Model in the box below.

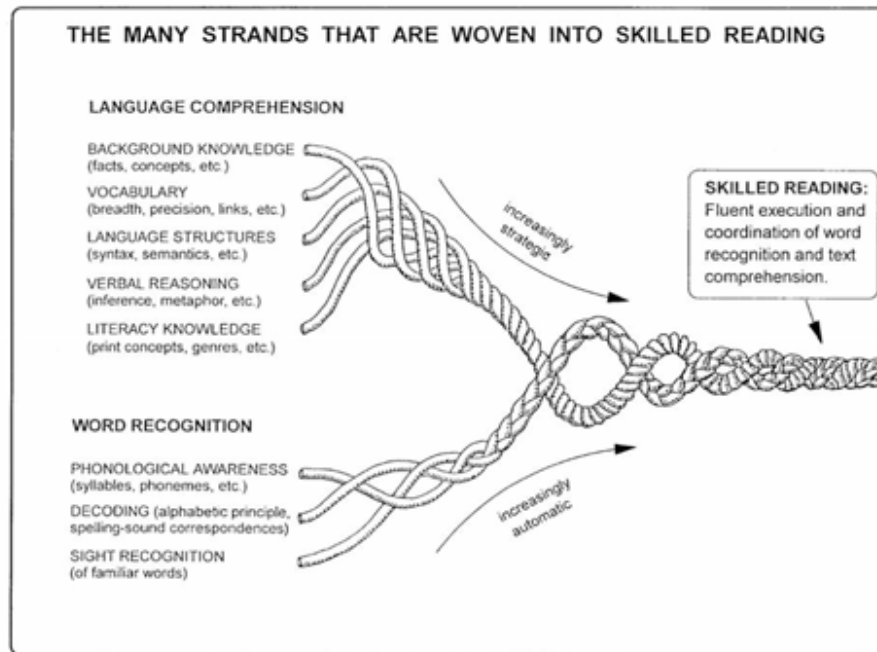
The following graphic provides the International Dyslexia Association’s version that appears on its website.⁵ Respondents would have been expected to create an accurate facsimile of this graphic.

⁴Quote from: Scarborough’s Rope: A Groundbreaking Infographic, International Dyslexia Association website, <https://dyslexiaida.org/scarboroughs-reading-rope-a-groundbreaking-infographic/> 8/21/2020. 9:12 AM.

⁵Image source: <https://dyslexiaida.org/scarboroughs-reading-rope-a-groundbreaking-infographic/>. Downloaded 8/24/2020. The web-based graphic includes the following text: “The image, courtesy of the author, originally appeared in the following publication: Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy* (pp. 97-110). New York, NY: Guilford Press.” The International Dyslexia Association. Accessed: 8/27/2020.

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Figure 4: Scarborough's Rope



The next series of questions addressed a mixture of concepts and approaches that Mississippi Momentum has addressed and the impact participation has had on their pedagogy and instructional strategies.

The following asked respondents to denote how they have altered their teaching:

Because of my participation in LETRS training and the MS Momentum Partnership, I have altered content in the following ways (check all that apply):

List of options

- Phoneme articulation
- Syllable types
- Word families
- Phoneme segmentation
- Advanced vowels
- Sight words
- Simple View of Reading
- Scarborough's Rope Model
- Ehri's Stage of Development
- A precise scope and sequence for phonological and phonics skills.
- Phonics generalizations
- **Cueing system as decoding strategy**
- How to administer a screener

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- How to administer a diagnostic assessment
- **How to administer a running record**
- Encoding
- High frequency words through decodable parts
- Use of leveled text for teaching foundational skills
- Gradual release model
- Read-alouds

Please note that the bolded items above are areas of instruction that SHOULD NOT be taught explicitly as they are not components of structured literacy nor are they based in the science of reading. The intent is for teachers not to teach either the 3 cueing system or the administration of the running record.

In response to the next prompt, ten (83%) answered correctly, one (8%) each got three out of five points or zero out of five points.

List the components of phonological awareness using the hour-glass concept as a guide.

This image, Tolman’s Hourglass, represents a dyslexia screening tool that depicts the importance of structure literacy that Dr. Carol Tolman developed with the primary categories of phonological awareness at the top and orthography at the bottom.⁶ Ideally, the respondents would have placed all elements of the model in the correct location.



⁶Source of figure: <https://www.facebook.com/DallasIDA/posts/another-illustration-demonstrating-the-importance-of-structure-literacy-tm/10156382539836647/> Downloaded on 8/24/2020.

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Five (42%) of the respondents gave a fully correct answer, six (50%) got one of two points, and one (8%) got zero points to the following:

Thinking about Scarborough’s Rope Model, what subskills contribute most to being able to make inferences and why?

In this case, a correct answer would have emphasized the strand verbal reasoning under language comprehension. The reason for this is that reading is not restricted to decoding and comprehending the words on a page but having the ability to move beyond and understand the broader context and meaning of the words being used.⁷

When asked to answer either true or false to the following, five (42%) selected true as the correct answer.

True or False: A fluency rate within the range of the 90th percentile is preferable to one at the 50th percentile.

In giving their critique of the following learning objective, eight (67%) scored correctly,

Critique this pre-service course learning objective: Address the definitions for phoneme, grapheme, morpheme.

Answers to this question would have provided some similar definitions for the words. “A **phoneme** is the smallest part of spoken language that makes a difference in the meaning of words. English has about 41 **phonemes**. A **grapheme** is a written letter or a group of letters representing one speech sound. A **morpheme** is the smallest unit of **meaning** in a language.” They would have also indicated why understanding these definitions is important to the task of teaching reading. Definitions accessed through Reading Rockets website.⁸

Four (33%) of the twelve adequately described the fundamental concepts covered during their time in MM and addressed in the following prompt,

What is the difference between phonemic awareness and phonological awareness?

For a correct answer, respondents would have had to include a response similar to: “While related, **phonemic awareness** refers to the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words; whereas **phonological awareness** refers to a global awareness of the sound structures of speech and the ability to manipulate those structures. Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that encompasses both basic levels of awareness of speech sounds, such as rhyming, alliteration, the number of words in a sentence, and the syllables within words, as well as more advanced levels of awareness such as onset-rime awareness and full phonemic awareness.”

⁷Discussion informed by discussion sheet on Scarborough’s Rope located at <https://www.greatwordhouse.com/scarboroughs-rope-model-of-reading/> Accessed on 8/24/2020.

⁸All definitions used in this report have been informed through access to the Reading Rockets website: <https://www.readingrockets.org>

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However, all twelve (100%) of the respondents gave the correct response to the following,

Which is the most accurate and complete definition of a morpheme? (D) The smallest unit of meaning in a word.

The next question addressed the definition of a “syllable.” In response, nine (75%) answered correctly.

Which definition of syllable would you use in teaching pre-service candidates?: B) A word part that contains a vowel, or in spoken language, a vowel sound.

The following asked respondents to provide a brief description of the distinction between a grapheme and a letter. Briefly, a **grapheme** is a letter or a combination of letters that represent a sound (phoneme) in a word, or alternatively, a **letter** or letters that spell a sound in a word. A letter has specific shapes and sounds and serve as constituent part of words. Ten of the twelve (83%) answered correctly.

How is a grapheme different from a letter?

Referring to an instructional task given to pre-service candidates to write a definition of the **Alphabetic Principle**. The Alphabetic Principle refers to the concept that a systematic and predictable relationship exists between letters and sounds. Ten (83%) respondents provided a correct answer to the following prompt:

Write a definition of the Alphabetic Principle that you would use to introduce this concept to pre-service candidates.

This next question addressed the knowledge of technical terms associated with letters and sounds. The first, **digraph**, refers to a combination of two letters representing one sound. A **diphthong** is a sound of two vowels that begins as one sound and goes to another. Whereas a (phonics) **blend** refers to groups of consonants whose sounds blend together. Only one (8%) of the twelve respondents defined all three terms correctly.

What is the difference between a digraph, a diphthong, and a blend?

The following prompt gets at one of the predictive indicators of early literacy—**letter recognition**. This is a basic skill beginning readers use to understand the relationship between printed text and spoken language. Eleven respondents (92%) answered correctly.

Which of the following is the highest predictor of 3rd grade reading performance?: *B) Letter recognition before entering 1st grade*

The next series of questions further explored respondents’ knowledge about technical terms related to phonics, specifically phonemes, graphemes, and schwas. A **phoneme** is any of the abstract units of a phonetic set of a language that corresponds to a set of similar speech sounds (e.g., the element p in the word “tap”). A **grapheme**, on the other hand, is a letter or a number of letters that spell a sound in a word. Whereas, a **schwa** is described as “the unstressed central vowel, represented by the symbol \ominus in the international phonetic dictionary.”

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The first of these prompts asked respondents to select from a group of four options. Eleven (92%) chose the correct answer to the following:

Which phoneme is voiced?: B) /g/

The next one in the series asked about segmenting a word into phonemes. Nine (75%) answered this question correctly, which has six, showing the segments by forward slashes, or virgules.

Which is the correct way to segment this word into phonemes: bringing: D) /b/ /r/ /i/ /ng/ /i/ /ng/

Similarly, the following asked simply for the number of phonemes in a word. Eleven (92%) answered correctly.

How many phonemes are in the word spill? B) 4

Next in the series asked respondents to identify the number of both phonemes and graphemes in a word. Ten (83%) respondents answered both numbers correctly.

How many phonemes and grapheme are in the word *mountain*?: C) 6 phonemes, 6 graphemes

The following addressed the term schwa, and five (42%) answered correctly.

What is a schwa? E) *none of the above*

As a follow-up, the next prompt asked respondents to identify the word in a set that *did not* have a schwa sound in it. Six (50%) answered correctly.

Which of the following **bolded** words does NOT have a schwa sound in it?: C) *James won the spelling bee contest.*

The following set of queries addressed general aspects of literacy acquisition and areas that Mississippi Momentum activities covered. First in the series dealt with the pronounced /t/ the suffix “-ed” produced. Eleven (92%) selected the correct answer.

Which word has a suffix “-ed” pronounced /t/? : C) *Clasped*

The next one queried the parts of the word that carried meaning. Ten respondents (83%) got the correct answer.

Which word has the most word parts that carry meaning?: C) *unhardened*

Probing into their knowledge of **syllable types**, the next question only had four (33%) who answered correctly. There are six syllable types: a closed syllable, an open syllable, vowel-consonant-e (VCe) syllable, a vowel team syllable, a consonant-le syllable, and a vowel-r controlled syllable. The question read:

How many syllable types are represented in these words: land, laid, lard, loud, lamp, ladle? :C) *five (closed, vowel team, vowel-r, open, c-le)*

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Early literacy assessment provided the focus of the next query. Such tools provide a means of identifying the capacity of early readers and offer insight into whether any intervention is necessary. All twelve (100%) of the respondents got the right answer.

Which of the following best describes the purpose of a screener? C) *An informal or formal assessment used to identify students which may be at risk of reading failure.*

The next prompt had no score assigned. It simply provided Dr. Fierro insight as to the assessments participants were using and whether they fully understood what skills these instruments identified.

List the three early literacy assessment you address in your pre-service course(s). What skills do these assessments identify?

Reaching back to the earlier series on the Simple View of Reading, the next prompt probed whether respondents understood which of the domains needed to become “automatic” and which, “strategic.” To become a fluent reader, word recognition needs to be more automatic and comprehension more strategic. The reason for this is a fluent reader must be able to engage and recognize quickly each letter and its relation to the word whether they are known or unknown. Whereas comprehension needs to be more strategic in that a reader must understand that the meaning of words is in part the function of context within a passage and therefore determining meaning must be more strategic. Ten (83%) of the respondents answered correctly.

Which of the domains in the Simple View of Reading must become “more automatic” and which must become “more strategic?”

The following two prompts included a scaled response. The first asked respondents their impression of the MM Professional Growth Model. Ten (83%) indicated a “4,” and the remaining two (17%) gave a “3.”

On a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high), how would you rate the quality and delivery of the MS Momentum Professional Growth Model?

The second scaled response probed their perspective on the likelihood of providing a recommendation to colleagues who teach literacy, SPED, and/or early childhood education to participate in a professional development program similar to Mississippi Momentum. Here, too, ten (83%) indicated a “4,” and the remaining two (17%) gave a “3.”

On a scale of 1 (definitely no) to 5 (definitely yes), how likely is it you would recommend participation in a similar Professional Growth Model designed for your colleagues who teach literacy, special education, and/or early childhood?

The next set of prompts requested that respondents provide brief, open-ended responses to different aspects of the Mississippi Momentum experience. The question, domains, and responses are as follows.

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What is your biggest takeaway, if any, from each of the following aspects of the MS Momentum Partnership and why?

- LETRS training
- Antonio's site-visits
- Seminars
- Researcher Roundtables (i.e., presentations by Barbara Foorman, Mark Seidenberg, Deb Glaser, Julie Washington, Louisa Moats, etc.)
- Texts and other resource material provided
- Any other comments about the MS Momentum Partnership?

The responses to the first bloc on the LETRS training were generally positive. Respondents noted expanded knowledge of literacy; understanding of language; the need for continued self-practice; collaboration with professional peers; and exposure to models such as Simple View of Reading and Scarborough's Rope.

LETRS training:

- Yes! Huge impact & difference & my knowledge after going through LETRS training.
- It has made me think much more about our language.
- Rated this section a "3."
- How to decode the English language.
- Training is great. I need to work at it more.
- Ironically, my background wasn't literacy. I learned so much!
- Loved going through it with a group of like-minded people.
- Scarborough's Rope Model - Because it has taught me what it really means to become a skilled reader.
- Learning about SVR and Scarborough models and how they relate to reaching early literacy skills.
- Science of Reading approach to literacy.
- The partnerships and collaboration with colleagues.
- More refined skills.

The respondents uniformly gave Dr. Fierro high marks for his visits. Comments centered on his professional knowledge and delivery of content; the practical nature of presented materials; useful guidance and feedback; and impact on their students.

Antonio's site-visits

- Pre-service teachers learning from a dynamic pro
- Always learning new and continuous information
- How to practically teach literacy for mastery
- More individualize instruction and mentoring process

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- Very informative and great feedback was provided
- He gave great feedback and provided more expert teaching to my students
- Great job!
- Helpful for both instructor and students for teaching techniques
- Rated this section as a “5.”
- Very helpful to our students! They love him. [smiley face emoji] Provided good feedback.

Responses to the prompt for the seminars was more mixed. More than half of the respondents gave positive remarks centered on: the quality of the professional development; refreshment of “dormant” knowledge; and the opportunities provided to collaborate with professional colleagues. Others provided a more critical perspective in that they saw the book talks as “boring”; protocols not helpful; and one who gave the number “1,” presumably meaning at the lower end of a scale from 1 to 5. Another three respondents left the response blank.

Seminars

- Book talks = BORING!; protocols = not helpful!; Antonio training = AWESOME!
- Instructional protocols to enhance my instruction
- The means of refreshing and revisiting information
- Great PD!
- Rated this section a “1.”
- Being able to refresh on forgotten skills.
- This allowed/provided great opportunities for discussion and collaboration.
- Very effective and eye-opening.
- Yes! All have been great!
- 3 Left Response Blank

While three left this response blank, the remainder of the other perspectives for this prompt were all positive. Two gave the names of presenters, while others noted their expansion of knowledge, insight to the related research, and the support it provided to their schema on the science of reading.

Researcher Roundtables (i.e., presentations by Barbara Foorman, Mark Seidenberg, Deb Glaser, Julie Washington, Louisa Moats, etc.)

- Richard Sparks
- Louisa Moats - Strategies for reading comprehension (only time shared with us)
- Very beneficial. Keep this coming
- This opened my eyes to a lot of views and additional research.
- Rated this section a “4.”
- Very insightful! Made me aware of the current research.
- A way to view researchers in a different light.

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- Research backing for science of reading
- Love hearing from the experts

Texts and other resource material provided

- Zero comments provided for this section.

Half of the respondents chose to give closing comments, which were all laudatory. The main thrust of these centered on the collaboration they enjoyed with colleagues, the value of the professional development and the extent of knowledge they gained, and hope that it could continue.

Any other comments about the MS Momentum Partnership?

- Love being able to learn and share with colleagues from other universities
- I would rate this as among the most valuable professional development experiences I have had in higher education.
- I have learned a lot and enjoyed it!
- This has really helped me with strong content knowledge and confidence to teach these concepts. I am very lucky because I joined this group my first year teaching higher ed. So, it has really added to my teaching and did not have to change it.
- Hope it continues.
- I have loved this opportunity and hope it continues.

Dr. Fierro asked the group to respond to whether they included various elements in their Early Literacy 1 and 2 courses. While six of the respondents did not respond for various reasons to the elements for EL 1, such as “never have taught the course” or “no longer doing so,” the remaining six did contribute input. Highlighted items are indicated as areas of instruction that SHOULD NOT be taught explicitly as they are not part of structured literacy or supported by the science of reading. An intention of the professional development provided through Mississippi Momentum is to discourage teachers from using the balanced literacy approach. The following table 1 provides a summary of these responses per EL 1 content item.

Five participants did not respond to the request for input on teaching the EL2 content items. The primary reasons cited was “they did not teach early literacy courses,” “did not currently teach them,” or “no longer taught them.” One left the response blank. For this bloc, the one item that Mississippi Momentum stressed should not be explicitly taught is balanced literacy, because it is not a component of structured literacy, nor is it based on the science of reading, and has no research base. Responses appear in table 2.

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Table 1: EL1 Content Items Taught

EL1 Content Item	I Have Begun to Teach This	I Teach This More Explicitly	I Stopped Teaching This	I Am Not Sure Why This Should Be Taught In Pre-Service	Comments
Phoneme segmentation	1	4			
Advanced vowels	2	3			
Sight words	1	3			I teach that it's about 4% of the English language and origins. Anglo Saxon mostly.
Simple View of Reading	6	6			
Scarborough's Rope Model	4	2			
Ehri's Stage of Development	1	4			
A precise scope and sequence for phonological and phonics skills.	2	3			
Phonics generalizations	1	3			
Cueing system as a decoding strategy	2	1			I teach pre-service about this model as an approach, but that the 4-part processing model is more evident-based. 1 entry: never did 1 entry: we still briefly discuss this because it is on the Foundations of reading test.
How to administer a screener	1	3			
How to administer a diagnostic assessment	1	3			
How to administer a running record	2	2		1	Never Did
Encoding	1	2			
High-frequency words through decodable parts	1	2			
Use of leveled text for teaching foundational skills	1	1			
Gradual release model	1	4			
Read-alouds	1	4			

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Table 2. EL2 Content Items Taught

EL2 Content Item	I Have Begun to Teach This	I Teach This More Explicitly	I Stopped Teaching This	I Am Not Sure Why This Should Be Taught In Pre-Service	Comments
Simple View of Reading	4	2			Review
Scarborough’s Rope Model	4	3			
The difference between Reading Comprehension Process and Products	3	4			I teach this but have not made any adjustments
Oral Reading Fluency Norms	3	3			I teach this but have not made any adjustments
Importance of background knowledge	3	4			I teach this but have not made any adjustments
Strategic text selection to build background knowledge	2	4			I teach this but have not made any adjustments
Explicit steps in a vocabulary instruction	3	4			I teach this but have not made any adjustments
A scope and sequence for background knowledge	3	1		1 Entry: ?	I teach this but have not made any adjustments
Choosing words to teach	3	2			I teach this but have not made any adjustments
Read-alouds	3	4			I teach this but have not made any adjustments
Metacognition	2	3			I teach this but have not made any adjustments
Balanced Literacy	3	1	2		I teach this but have not made any adjustments

Summary Overview of Dr. Fierro Visits to MM Participating IHLs from 2018 to 2020

Dr. Antonio Fierro discussed the proposed campus visitation plan, based on the elements of effective coaching, with department chairs, deans, and faculty members during the initial campus visits. Aside from the initial campus visit, three additional visits were planned. These visits included Dr. Fierro modeling instruction for campus faculty, team teaching with a faculty, and, finally, observing faculty delivering instruction with additional feedback provided. The modeling of instruction focused on concepts taught through the LETRS knowledge base. Possible instructional elements ranged from areas focusing on foundational skills of reading to overall comprehension. Dr. Fierro based the effective delivery of instruction on the Learner Snapshot that faculty members used to observe Dr. Fierro and, in turn, Dr. Fierro utilized to provide faculty members feedback if they were observed (see figure 6).

During the second and third campus visits, all faculty members asked Dr. Fierro to model elements dealing primarily with word recognition skills (decoding). These topics included phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding, brain development, and the conceptual models of reading (Simple View of Reading, Scarborough's Rope Model, and the Four-Part Processing Model). All faculty members, including adjunct faculty, stated that they needed a focus on the teaching of foundational reading skills. Faculty felt they had a more robust understanding of those skills dealing with the teaching of vocabulary, background knowledge, and overall reading comprehension. The intent of the fourth and final visit was for Dr. Fierro to observe faculty members deliver a lesson and, using the Learner Snapshot, give appropriate feedback.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of all campus visits and the purpose for each visit. The campuses visited four times (University #1, #2, #3, #6, #7, #10, #12, and #13) and color-coded a light green had Dr. Fierro modeling instruction during either the second or third visits (or both) and the final visit consisting of observing a faculty member delivering a lesson. These campuses had faculty members that attended all the necessary LETRS sessions, observed Dr. Fierro teaching, did at least one team teaching session with Dr. Fierro, and who Dr. Fierro observed. The faculty at these campuses made significant gains in the understanding of the science of reading.

University #9 had four visits. However, the faculty member, when observed, did not demonstrate a level of proficiency of either pedagogy or content knowledge. Dr. Fierro modeled two lessons at University #9 that several faculty members and the department dean observed. University #11 also had four visits. Two visits were of Dr. Fierro modeling lessons. Faculty and adjunct faculty members also observed these lessons. Dr. Fierro could not properly evaluate the LETRS knowledge base faculty members held as he only observed the lesson an adjunct faculty member delivered.

Three campuses (University # 4, University #14, University #17) received three visits and were coded as light yellow. Dr. Fierro modeled a lesson at University #4 for an adjunct faculty member and also observed the adjunct faculty member deliver a lesson. University #4 faculty did not observe Dr. Fierro deliver a lesson, nor was Dr. Fierro able to observe the delivery of a lesson. University #14 opted not to have Dr. Fierro deliver any lessons but allowed Dr. Fierro to observe adjunct faculty deliver a dyslexia lesson to elementary school students as preservice

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teachers observed. He did not observe an faculty member deliver a lesson at University #14. University #17 had Dr. Fierro deliver a lesson and he was able to observe a faculty member deliver a lesson. At University #17, the faculty member had an effective lesson planned but found it difficult to engage students.

University #8 had three campus visits. Two of the three campus visits were planning and learning sessions with faculty members. Faculty members were **not** observed delivering a lesson.

University #5, #16, and #18 received two campus visits. University #5 had two planning sessions that were beneficial as faculty members wanted to learn more about structured literacy and the impact of instruction based on the science of reading. Although Dr. Fierro did not observe any faculty member delivering instruction at University #16 or University #18, Dr. Fierro was able to deliver lessons that faculty members observed. Dr. Fierro did not observe the faculty delivery of a lesson at University #5, #16, and #18.

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Table 3. University Visits (2018-2020)

Campus	# of visits	PURPOSE			
		Model Teach	Team Teach	Observe Faculty Teach	OTHER
1	4	2 nd visit	3 rd visit	4 th visit	1 st visit: met with faculty member for planning
2	4	2 nd visit	3 rd & 4 th visits	no observation of faculty member/s	1 st visit: met with faculty member for planning
3	4	2 nd visit	3 rd visit	4 th visit	1 st visit: met with faculty member for planning
4	3	no	2 nd visit (team taught w/adjunct faculty member)	3 rd visit observed adjunct faculty member	1 st visit: met with faculty member for planning
5	2	no	no	no observation of faculty member/s	1 st visit: met with dept. chair and faculty to explain SOR 2 nd visit: met with two faculty members
6	4	3 rd visit	2 nd visit: phonological awareness workshop	yes	1 st and 4 th visits: met with faculty member for planning
7	4	2 nd and 3 rd visit	no	4 th visit – observed two faculty members teach	1 st visit: met with faculty members for planning
8	3		no	3 rd visit – observed faculty member review for an upcoming exam; no observation of teaching	1 st and 2 nd visits: met with faculty members for planning
9	4*	2 nd and 4 th visits	no	3 rd visit observed faculty member	1 st visit: met with faculty members for planning

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Table 3. University Visits (2018-2020) cont.

Campus	# of visits	PURPOSE			
		Model Teach	Team Teach	Observe Faculty Teach	OTHER
10	4		no	2 nd and 3 rd visits observed faculty member	1 st and 4 th visits: met with faculty members for planning
11	4	2 nd and 4 th visits	no	3 rd visit observed adjunct faculty member	1 st visit: met with faculty members for planning
12	4	2 nd visit	no	3 rd visit observed faculty member 4 th visits observed two faculty members	1 st visit: met with faculty members for planning
13	4	3 rd visit	no	2 nd visit observed student presentations 4 th visit observed faculty member	1 st visit: met with faculty members for planning
14	3			2 nd and 3 rd visits observed dyslexia center adjunct faculty member explain dyslexia lessons	1 st visit: met with faculty members for planning
15	0	no	no	no	no
16	2	2 nd visit	no	no	1 st visit: met with faculty members for planning
17	2	2 nd visit	no	no	1 st visit: met with faculty members for planning
18	2	2 nd visit	no	no	1 st visit: met with faculty members for planning

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Figure 6. Learner Snapshot (based on explicit lesson plan template and adult learning theory)



Professor: _____ Attendance: _____ Date of Observation: _____
 Course title: _____
 Expected content/objective based on course schedule: _____
 Rubric: _____

2 – fully implemented DNA – did not apply to this lesson
 1 – partially implemented 0 – not implemented or implemented inaccurately

	Learning Objective				Comments
	2	1	0	DNA	
Objective appropriate to this course and was reflected in syllabus.					
Objective was clearly articulated and visible.					
Objective included a specific metric to measure level of performance.					
Instructional Delivery					
All content presented was accurate and supported by the convergence of science in early reading.					
Prior information was reviewed, as needed, to frame the current lesson.					
Professor began class with a question, statement, or short activity which set the stage for the objective to be taught.					
Professor demonstrated concepts using a step-by-step modeling process, narrating each step clearly.					
Professor enabled candidates to confirm or practice steps during the modeling process through imitating steps or notetaking opportunities.					
Professor periodically checked for understanding by requiring specific student responses or demonstrations.					
Professor repeated or adjusted teaching based on response to candidates' performance/understandings.					
Professor conveyed information in a well-paced manner.					
Professor provided opportunities for candidates to ask questions and discuss concepts					
Professor engaged students in discussion with questions that prompted critical thinking and cross-class exchanges.					
Professor provided opportunity to demonstrate mastery through well-designed assignment which included a clear metric for measuring mastery against the goal.					
Observed Instructional Format					
If information was presented in lecture format from PowerPoint, it was clear and sequential and did not consume the entire lesson.					
Content was presented in multiple and complementary forms (e.g., graphs, narration, etc.).					
Whole group interactive activity was used to illustrate a concept.					
Small group or partner work (project based/collaborative learning) related to teaching or assessing an early literacy skill appropriate to this course.					
Except for student presentations or modeling, professor did not rely on candidates to teach the content.					
Instructor used effective and varied methods for checking understanding (summary debrief, Accountable Talk®, exit ticket, classroom response system, etc.).					
Professor included multi-media (Teaching Channel, YouTube, etc.), as appropriate, to augment content and demonstrations.					
Additional Observations and Feedback					

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EL1 and EL2 Seminar Participation

Over the 2019-20 academic year, Mississippi Momentum scheduled a series of four professional development seminars for participating faculty who teach Early Literacy 1 and 2. The seminars provide a forum for faculty to receive training, engage in hands-on activities, listen to outside speakers, network with colleagues and other events. Originally scheduled for October, November, February, and April, the first three occurred on time; however, the COVID pandemic required cancellation of the April session, which the partnership rescheduled for June. Table 4 lists the seventeen IHLs that had faculty members attend one or more times over the period. The seminars all occurred at the Barksdale Reading Institute, located in Jackson.

As illustrated in table 5, the October meeting had twenty-eight faculty scheduled to attend and eleven showed. The November had twenty-eight scheduled and twenty attended. The February seminar included thirty-six reserved spots and twenty participated. As indicated, the COVID19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation of the April meeting. Rescheduled for June, that seminar occurred via the ZOOM platform and eleven faculty participated.

Table 4. Mississippi IHLs Participating in EL1 and EL2 Seminars.

IHL	IHL	IHL
Alcorn State University	Mississippi State University-Meridian	Tougaloo College
Blue Mountain College	Mississippi State University-Starkville	The University of Southern Mississippi – GP
Delta State University – Cleveland	Mississippi University for Women	The University of Southern Mississippi - Hattiesburg
Delta State University – Hinds	Mississippi Valley State University	William Carey University-Hattiesburg
Jackson State University	Rust College	William Carey University – Tradition
Mississippi College	The University of Mississippi	

Table 5. Seminar Date and Number of Participants

Seminar Date	Format	Original Participant Count	Actual Attendees	%
October 2-3, 2019	In-person	28	11	39
November 14-15, 2019	In-person	28	20	71
February 3-4, 2020	In-person	36	20	56
April 21-22, 2020 Cancelled - COVID	In-person	N/A	N/A	N/A
June 18, 2020	ZOOM	?	11	?

First Year Teacher Survey Spring 2020

In Spring 2020, the Barksdale Reading Institute administered a survey to all first-year teachers in Mississippi, and 159 responded. The purpose of the survey was to glean information on their perceptions of how well the IHLs they had attended had prepared them for a teaching career and specifically for the task of teaching reading. Among the questions the survey posed included what IHL they attended, if they had transferred from a community college or other IHL, the sequence they had completed the EL1 and EL2 courses, influences on their preparation, what methods they used when teaching reading, and general observations. Several of the questions included an opportunity for the educators to provide an open-ended response. Depending on the question, responses are noted as either counts or percentages. All percentages have been rounded.

Which educator preparation program did you attend?

The first question requested they indicate which IHL they had attended. The University of Mississippi had the largest number (35/22%) followed by a close second with the University of Southern Mississippi (34/21%). Three IHLs each had two respondents (1% each). The Mississippi University for women had one respondent (.06%). Table 6 presents the CCs in alphabetic order.

Table 6. Educator Preparation Program Attended

Educator Preparation Program Attended	Respondents
Alcorn State University	2
Belhaven University	2
Blue Mountain College	3
Delta State University	10
Jackson State University	4
Mississippi College	5
Mississippi State University	23
Mississippi University for Women	1
Mississippi Valley State University	9
Tougaloo College	2
University of Mississippi	35
University of Southern Mississippi	34
William Carey University	29

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.

Two-thirds (106/66%) of the respondents indicated they either attended a community college or another IHL prior to completing their pre-service program. The two CCs with the largest number of transfers included Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (18/11%) and Northeast Mississippi Community College (17/11%). At the other end of the range, Southwest Mississippi Community College provided two (1%). One-third (53/33%) indicated they had not attended a community college. Table 7 shows the CCs in alphabetic order.

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Table 7. Community College of Other IHL Transferred From

Community of Junior College/Prior IHL	Respondents
NA: I did not attend a community college.	53
I transferred from another university prior to or in my junior year.	9
Coahoma Community College	9
Copiah-Lincoln Community College	7
East Central Community College	7
East Mississippi Community College	3
Hinds Community College	3
Holmes Community College	3
Itawamba Community College	5
Jones County Junior College	11
Meridian Community College	4
Mississippi Delta Community College	3
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College	18
Northeast Mississippi Community College	17
Pearl River Community College	5
Southwest Mississippi Community College	2

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

The next question addressed the sequence these educators followed for completing their EL1 and EL2 courses. In general, they could do so in the fall then spring or the summer session of their Junior or Senior years. At some IHLs, they also have the option of completing the sequence as a single bloc. This year, as opposed to last, a few indicated they completed the sequence during the intersession of either their junior or senior year. By far, the most usual sequence followed included EL1 during Fall Session Junior Year (80/50%) and completing EL2 during Spring Session Junior Year (66/42%). Table 8 below shows how the other choices fell in line.

“...the most usual sequence followed included EL1 during Fall Session Junior Year (80/50%) and completing EL2 during Spring Session Junior Year (66/42%).”

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Table 8. Early Literacy 1 & 2 - Semester Completed Separately or by Bloc

Semester Completed	EL1 Completers	EI2 Completers	EL1/EL2 Bloc Completers
No Response	7	8	67
Summer Session, Senior Yr	6	3	5
Spring Session, Senior Yr	3	15	NA
Fall Session, Senior Yr	8	20	13
Intersession, Senior Yr		2	NA
Intersession, Junior Yr	2	1	1
Summer Session, Junior Yr		5	2
Spring Session, Junior Yr	23	66	10
Fall Session, Junior Yr	80	8	12
Did not complete	30	31	46

Respondents could provide commentary if they chose, and seventeen did. Nearly one-half (8/47%) indicated they went through an alternate route of preparation for one reason or another. A handful provided background information regarding their sequence choice, specifically related to preparation in SPED. Another indicated they completed both EL1 and EL2 during spring semester of their sophomore year and a couple indicated they could not fully recall.

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

This and the next table address the perceptions these educators had on how well their EL1 and EL2 professors had prepared them to teach various content areas. In table 9 below, large percentages of respondents indicated their EL1 professors had either well or moderately prepared them. For instance when combined, three-quarters of the educators (75%) chose one of these two ranks for print, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics/decoding. The remaining two: spelling/encoding (73%) and assessment of EL1 skills (69%), were nearly as high. Lower percentages felt they had been either minimally or not at all prepared in these concepts, and others in the low teens, indicated the concepts had not been addressed.

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Table 9. Level of Preparation EL1 Professor Provided

	Not Addressed	Well Prepared	Moderately Prepared	Minimally Prepared	Not at all Prepared
Concept	%	%	%	%	%
Print	13	54	21	7	4
Phonological Awareness (1=NR)	12	59	16	9	3
Phonemic Awareness	12	62	13	11	2
Phonics/Decoding	13	57	18	10	2
Spelling/Encoding	14	47	26	9	4
Assessment of EL1 Skills	16	43	26	11	4

“...between 12 and 16 percent of respondents indicated their EL1 professor did not address key concepts in the course.”

This question included an open-ended response section. Twenty-one chose to provide input. Over a quarter noted they pursued an alternate route and the EL1/EL2 sequence was not required, and another three noted they did not take the courses, with one indicating the major of study was secondary education. Of note is that between 12 and 16 percent of respondents indicated their EL1 professor did not address key concepts in the course. Other comments ranged from highly laudatory for the instruction they received to extremely critical. Various noteworthy comments appear below.

Comments

- Because my college professor covered these materials using LETRS books, I felt very prepared in teaching these topics. All of the activities and skills that we learned came directly from LETRS.
- As an alternate route elementary there is no preparation or courses work for early literacy. I took early literacy and reading for elementary in college for my bachelors so luckily I had already had the foundation.
- I felt as though we were being taught what each category was, but not how to teach it in a classroom.
- I think that these important literacy elements were covered too early in the program. I would have liked to had these my senior year.
- The professor for this course was completely unprepared, which resulted in a lack of preparedness for the Foundations of Reading and teaching in the classroom. (Fall 2018)

“The professor for this course was completely unprepared, which resulted in a lack of preparedness for the Foundations of Reading and teaching in the classroom.” (Fall 2018)

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- My professor went above and beyond to prepare me to teach in the classroom. She was currently a teacher in fourth grade, so she was very familiar with being in the classroom. We did a lot of activities that could be completed in the classroom. We were the students and teachers many different times.

“My professor went above and beyond to prepare me to teach in the classroom. She was currently a teacher in fourth grade, so she was very familiar with being in the classroom. We did a lot of activities that could be completed in the classroom. We were the students and teachers many different times.”

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

Although the combined totals for perceiving themselves as either well or moderately prepared are typically slightly lower than those indicated for their EL1 professors, the respondents nonetheless saw their EL2 professors as having done a good job. For example, combined ranks for oral language development (73%);

vocabulary (76%); morphology (64%); levels of understanding of connected text (67%); strategies of critical thinking (68%); products of comprehended text (72%); text types (68%); and assessment of EL2 skills (68%). Slightly higher percentages of educators indicated they felt minimally or not at all prepared than they noted for their EL1 professors. Of importance, 13 to 16 percent of the respondents indicated their EL2 professors did not address key concepts. The following table provides this summary.

“...13 to 16 percent of the respondents indicated their EL2 professors did not address key concepts.”

Table 10. Level of Preparation EL2 Professor Provided

	Not Addressed	Well Prepared	Moderately Prepared	Minimally Prepared	Not at all Prepared
Concept	%	%	%	%	%
Oral Language Development	13	46	27	11	3
Vocabulary	13	49	27	9	2
Morphology 1=NR	13	41	23	19	3
Levels of Understanding of Connected Text	14	38	29	16	2
Strategies of Critical Thinking	14	43	25	16	2
Products of Comprehended Text	14	46	26	11	3
Text Types	15	47	21	14	3
Assessment of EL2 Skills	16	36	30	14	3

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This question included an open-ended response option and sixteen chose to comment. In response, four noted they prepared via an alternate route, two noted they did not take the course, and one gave an N/A. Others provided critiques in which they stated their professors did a poor job preparing them. However, several noted they felt their professors had performed admirably in preparing them on the concepts, specifically citing use of the LETRS materials, the continuation of a single professor for both EL1 and EL2, or training in dyslexia. Others supplied general comments. Example comments appear below.

Comments

- Professor did not prepare students for teaching content in the classroom. (Spring 2019).
- I didn't take any of these courses as my major was focused in secondary education.
- Because my college professor covered these materials using LETRS books, I felt very prepared in teaching these topics. Morphology and vocabulary was heavily covered and I felt confident with what I had learned using LETRS materials during all of my literacy classes.
- On the job training and professional development over the years have provided excellent accommodations.
- Same professor with this class as EL1. Preparing us for teaching was her intention constantly. The main thing that helped me was the hands on projects and observations completed in classrooms.

“On the job training and professional development over the years have provided excellent accommodations.”

The preceding two tables indicate that large numbers of these first year educators thought their EL1 and EL2 professors had prepared them in the various concepts they would need to be effective teachers of reading. Nonetheless, the percentages (all in the low to mid-teens) of respondents to both questions that indicate their EL1 or EL2 professor did not address the concept is troubling. The reason this is occurring remains a problem the evaluation noted last year and thus continues to warrant investigation.

What Grade Did You Teach This Past Year?

Next in the survey was a question on the grade they taught their first year. The choice, “4th or above,” received the largest number (42/26%). The early elementary grades where early literacy and reading instruction is concentrated collectively absorbed 57 percent of these educators and are noted as follows: kindergarten (29/18%), first (19/12%), second (25/16%), and third (17/11%). One each ended in Pre-K and high school, seven (4%) went to middle school, and the remaining eighteen (11%) took a role other than a classroom teacher. Table 11 below illustrates this distribution.

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Table 11. Grade Level Taught

Grade Taught	Count
Pre-Kindergarten	1
Kindergarten	29
First	19
Second	25
Third	17
4 th or Above	42
Middle School	7
High School	1
Role Other Than CR Teacher	18

Approximately how much time during the school day did you teach reading?

Amount of time on task of teaching reading was the focus of this question. As noted in the following table 12, the highest percentage (22%) spent 90 to 120 minutes. Smaller percentages appear for both “60 to 90 minutes” (17%) and “more than 120 minutes” (14%). At the lower end of the range, 4 and 8 percent, respectively, reported out for “less than an hour,” and “about an hour.” Those who indicated they taught reading all day came in at 15 percent and another 19 percent noted they had not been assigned to teach reading.

Table 12. Approximate Amount of Daily Time Spent Teaching Reading

Approx. Time During Day Spent Teaching Reading	Count	% of Respondents
less than an hour	6	4
about an hour	13	8
60 to 90 minutes	27	17
90 - 120 minutes	35	22
more than 120 minutes	23	14
all day	24	15
I was not assigned to teach reading.	31	19

In what setting/context did you teach reading if it was part of your assignment? Check all that apply.

Settings or contexts for teaching reading can provide a major support for the task. The selection of “for my grade level (departmentalized)” or “self-contained classroom” came in at 38 and 36 percent, respectively, for these top two. The various other choices came in at significantly lower percentages—SPED resource or inclusion (12%); After-school program (5%), and full- or part-time interventionist at 3 percent each. Another 18 percent were not assigned to teach reading. Results appear in table 13.

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Table 13. Setting/Context Used to Teach Reading

Setting/Context	%
Self-contained classroom	36
For my grade level (departmentalized)	38
Special education resource or inclusion	12
Full-time interventionist	3
Part-time interventionist	3
After-school program	5
N/A: I was not assigned to teach reading.	18

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

When asked to respond to this question, 143 (90%) of the educators in this survey noted they did not teach 3rd grade this past year. For the remainder who did, four each reported either 100 or 80-89 percent and one other at 90-99 percent pass rate for the state reading assessment on the first try. Three indicated a pass rate of 70-79 percent, two each noted pass rates of <50 or 50-69 percent for the reading assessment. Table 14 illustrates this distribution.

Table 14. Student Pass Rates of SRA on First Try

Response	Count
Did not teach 3 rd Gr.	143
100%	4
90-99%	1
80-89%	4
70-79%	3
50-69%	2
<50%	2

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%.)

In response to this query on the sources of their ability to implement effective reading instruction in their classrooms produced a range of response. While none of the sources got a ranking of over 50 percent, a significant number of respondents indicated that most or all of this source ability to implement effective reading instruction could be attributed to their own initiative & self-study (48%), their school or district informal mentor (fellow teacher) (47%), EL1/EL2 professor (45%), or supervising teacher during intern experience (45%). Other sources that came in lower included school or district provided PD (42%), other reading professors or courses (40%), MDE-provided LETRS training (34%), and school or district assigned official

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“...most or all of this source ability to implement effective reading instruction could be attributed to their own initiative & self-study (48%)...”

mentor (30%). The remainder of sources dropped off in ranking, such as a school, district, or MDE literacy coach (27%), or a relative or friend who is a teacher or retired teacher (27%). Table 15 illustrates the various ranking percentages.

Table 15. 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	3	21	6	6	19	31	14
Other Reading Professors or Courses	2	20	8	11	19	30	10
MDE-Provided LETRS Training	1	33	8	9	14	19	15
School or Dist. Provided PD	1	13	3	17	24	26	16
Supervising Teacher During Intern Experience	1	21	6	5	22	26	19
School or Dist. Assigned Official Mentor	3	30	6	12	19	16	14
School or Dist. Informal Mentor (Fellow Teacher)	1	18	4	11	19	28	19
School, Dist, or MDE Literacy Coach	2	30	11	16	14	15	12
Relative or Friend Who is a Teacher or Ret. Teacher	1	33	18	7	14	16	11
My Own Initiative & Self-Study	1	8	2	11	30	28	20
None of the Above	7	61	13	5	5	6	3

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Respondents could provide an open-ended response and seven did. Three of the respondents noted the importance a mentor played in development. One noted being an alternate route completer, and others provided various general comments.

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

In identifying the best word to describe their approach to reading instruction, large percentages selected “small group” (82%) and “differentiated” (77%). The lowest ranking came in for “dynamic grouping” (18%) and “balanced literacy” (13%). The remaining descriptors appear in ranked order in table 16. It is not surprising that this final descriptor would come in last as the messaging these educators would have been receiving would have recommended against the use of balanced literacy as it has not research base nor is it grounded in the science of reading. Table 16 shows these approaches by ranking.

Table 16. Word Best Describing Approach to Reading Instruction

Descriptive Word	% Who Use Approach
Small Group	82
Differentiated	77
Whole Group	70
Standards-based Objectives	64
Guided Reading using Leveled Text	55
Anchor Charts	53
Interventions	53
Technology	52
Data-driven instruction	51
Use of Independent Centers	43
Explicit and systematic, using Decodable Text	35
Structured Literacy	24
Dynamic Grouping	18
Balanced Literacy	13
Other (Please specify)	4

Four respondents gave additional comments in which two noted they taught math, one other did not teach reading, and a final N/A.

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

As in several other questions. educators could select more than one choice to indicate their impressions of the Foundations of Reading test they must pass for licensure. The selection with the highest percentage was “my program somewhat prepared me” at 31 percent. The lowest percentage selection at 5 percent was “my program prepared me well.” The various other selections appear in ranked order. The “Other” choice came in at 23 percent and included several responses that ranged from did or have not taken the test, not knowing what the FOR test is, saw no application to what they taught, impact of the COVID19 pandemic, being over or

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under prepared, lack of preparation from their IHL, cost of test prep, as alternate route takers there is no FORT preparation. Various selected responses submitted as an “Other” choice appear below in table 17.

Table 17. Foundations of Reading Test Impressions

Foundations of Reading Test Impressions	Response %
My program somewhat prepared me.	31
I had to take it more than once.	23
My score is an accurate reflection of what I know about teaching reading.	22
It was a good test for determining what I know about reading and teaching reading.	18
It was aligned to my pre-service coursework.	16
I had to hire a tutor or get extra help.	11
My program prepared me well.	5
Other (Please Specify) – Listed Below	23

Other Comments:

- For alternate route students there is no prep for this test. There is little study material making it very difficult to find reliable sources to learn what is needed for this test. The test gives very little feedback on what is lacking making it nearly impossible to know what exactly your weakness and strength is. The workshops that are provided by the state are laughable. They gave resources but no actual instruction and there are not enough workshops provided.
- I had to take an outside study course to prepare. My online college courses did not adequately prepare me.
- I paid almost \$1000.00 hiring tutors and taking this test 4 times. I will be taking the test a 5th time after corona. Foundations of reading has been the hardest test. I'm honestly OVER taking it, and if I don't pass I will quit teaching after my emergency license expires.
- I really struggled with the test. I took it 5 times before passing. I had a hard time applying what I have learned to the test. It was not that I did not know about the content it was asking, I felt like I did not have enough hands on experience prior to taking it to help me meet my score.
- I was overly prepared. Most people were saying it was really hard, but I went in completely prepared and thought it was very simple because I was prepared by my program at (my IHL).
- It was not an accurate representation of what I am capable of in the classroom.
- My program did not prepare me well, so I had to work hard to prepare myself. There also needs to be access to study materials.

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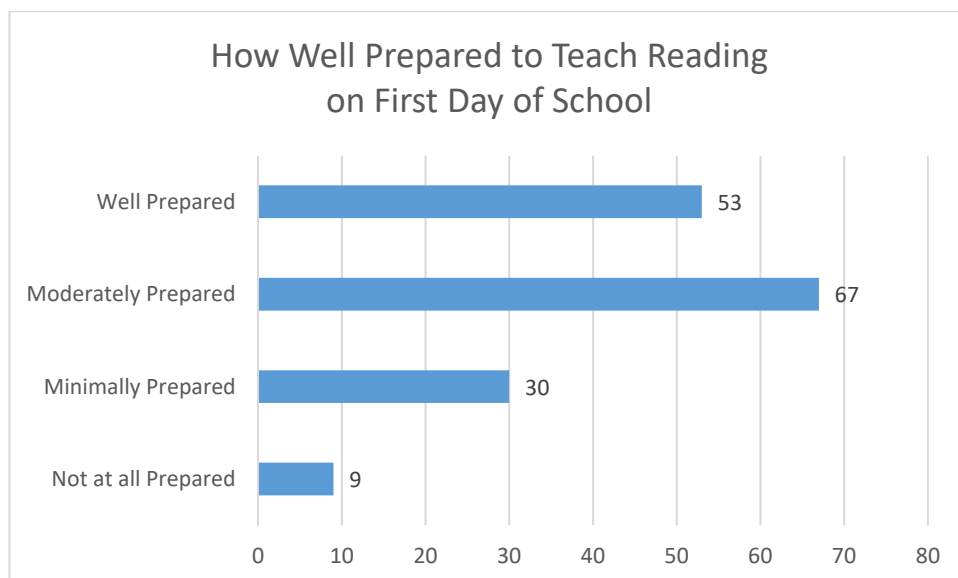
- This test does not prepare you for anything. It would help if you knew what you missed and how to answer. The questions were so long .
- This test was poorly worded and I had to take many workshops to help me with tips on how to effectively take this test. A class specifically for tests that teachers have to take to get their license would benefit them greatly. It would have helped me.
- We were very poorly prepared at (IHL) for this test. They drilled us using the practice tests and those were useless. They sent us to workshops where we had some professor in a too short skirt flit around making us do useless games on and taking the practice test. She informed us she tutored, if we would pay her. I feel FORT is an absolute waste of time and money and I didn't learn much of anything from it other than blowing a bunch of money before a very kind professor at (IHL) tutored me for FREE. After she sat with me I passed it the next attempt. I think it is ignorant the state demands FORT, and is one of the few states that does.

"I feel FORT is an absolute waste of time and money and I didn't learn much of anything from it other than blowing a bunch of money before a very kind professor at (IHL) tutored me for FREE. After she sat with me I passed it the next attempt. I think it is ignorant the state demands FORT, and is one of the few states that does."

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

Responding to this question on their level of preparation to teach reading on the first day, three quarters (120/75%) of respondents indicated they felt well or moderately prepared. Another thirty (19%) felt minimally so, and the remaining nine (6%) noted they felt not at all prepared. Figure 7 below displays the distributions.

Figure 7. Preparation Level to Teach Reading on First Day



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The question had an open-ended response option and twenty-four chose it. Four gave a N/A response, and three indicated they did not teach reading. Various other comments indicate nerves, lack of being prepared on one hand, and being over prepared on the other. Mostly, these comments are honest assessments of how they felt when they entered their classroom at the start of their teaching career. Various illustrative examples appear below.

Comments

- My program lacked classroom management preparation
- Learning about reading in a class is different than teaching it. Student teachers need more time in the actual classroom applying the strategies. Less time in the books, more time in the classroom.
- I do not feel as though I was prepared to actually teach reading. I did not know many techniques or strategies. I knew all the reasons behind how to read, but not how to actually teach it.
- I had not seen a first day since I was in elementary school, so I was unsure what to expect. Other teachers kept saying “feed them and get them home” which is true but it still wasn’t very helpful.
- Nerves played a big role.
- New experience with lower grade and early literacy but it was a success
- This question was difficult for me because I did FEEL prepared, but I also realized that I had a lot to learn once I got into the classroom.
- Teaching anything for the first time is overwhelming. Day 2 I felt better.
- I love to read and was the librarian for 14 years before I was forced to move to teach 4th grade.
- I chose moderately prepared due to phonics. I did not feel comfortable with phonics. Aside from that I felt well prepared going into day 1.
- In all honesty, I feel like (IHL) prepared me very well to teach ELA , but ELA was never on my radar to teach. In fact, in college I only completed the mandatory ELA preparation courses. As a young child, ELA was my weakest subject in school. With a weakness in English, I knew I would never teach it. Throughout my college experience, you could say that I avoided it at all cost. In fact, I graduated with a BS in Elementary Education that included three areas of focus (endorsements): Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. During my senior year at MSU I was placed in a 6th grade ELA/ Social Studies class... I was shocked. This was not my plan. During this time, my mentor teacher taught me all I needed to know to prepare me for WHAT though?!? After graduating in December, I took a 4th grade position as an ELA/ Social Studies teacher. As a new teacher coming into the middle of the year, I was moderately prepared to say the least.
- I had a fabulous team partner who is a veteran reading teacher. Without her and her guidance, I would have not done as well. I felt confident in my own skills; however, I received very little guidance from administration
- I was taught things such as phonemic awareness, but not how to sit in a group and teach reading.

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- I was well prepared for teaching phonics & literacy skills not as prepared for higher level skills (i.e. main idea, purpose, etc.) This maybe due to my lack of exposure in the classroom though.)
- Reading is a favorite subject of mine. I was eager to begin teaching!

Recognizing that professional growth occurs over time, what suggestions do you have for teacher preparation programs in Mississippi that could better equip first year teachers to be ready on “day one” to teach reading in the early grades?

“I had a fabulous team partner who is a veteran reading teacher. Without her and her guidance, I would have not done as well. I felt confident in my own skills; however, I received very little guidance from administration.”

The final question asked these educators to provide suggestions on how teacher preparation programs across Mississippi could do a better job at “equipping” teachers for their first day of class to teach reading. Over 110 respondents decided to weigh in. The suggestions loosely fell into the following categories: classroom management, calls for logistical supports of various types, need for increased pre-service exposure to the profession, mentorships, alternate route issues, professional development and other training, personal self-accountability, and general comments.

Six respondents called for being more instruction in classroom management, especially “nuts & bolts” skills such as time management.

Improving Classroom Management Skills

- Better classroom management preparation - Greater understanding of MTSS and working within the Tier guidelines
- I believe in order to teach reading effectively on day one, classroom management HAS to be stressed. I think it would be extremely beneficial to showcase different formats of teaching reading in teacher preparation programs. Also, teaching how to incorporate independent centers into small group learning so that the teacher is able to focus on the small group. Though I learned about center and small group activities, I do not feel I learned how to best implement those so that I could maximize my time as a teacher. Also, touching base with things, such as mixed level grouping and pulling students for small groups, would be beneficial. Overall, I felt prepared academically, but would have loved to have more guidance in best practices for actually running a successful reading block.
- Prepare yourself with a lesson you have taught beforehand and with a guide. Also, time management is really important. With a planned lesson, you can estimate how much time is spent on each part. Practice, practice, practice.

Calls for Various Types of Logistical Supports

Twenty-four respondents provided input related to the perceived need for various logistical supports, such as actual experience with teaching materials and resources; developing lesson plans; how to use student assessments; data management.

- Because of my internship, I was better equipped at using the resources that my school provided. However, before internship, I had no knowledge or idea of some of the coursework and materials that my school was using. I think teachers would be better equipped on “day one” if they had more experience with using the common materials and resources that schools use (i.e. iReady, Saxon Phonics/Math, Ready Reading).
- Build up confidence in teachers. If they do not understand, teach them to find a new strategy that works. Not all strategies work for all students. If one does not work, try a new one. Try a new one until it works. [My IHL] was phenomenal in helping prepare their teachers for success.
- Have a structured guide for that teacher to go off of. I feel like there is so much wasted time on the first day of school, no matter the subject or grade. To address this, I feel like there should be a guide for teachers to go by until they reach, at least, their fifth year of teaching.
- Help prepare future educators on creating differentiated centers for each standard.
- Helping them understand the process of finding out a student's AR level as well as getting them familiar with all of the tests students will be given reading wise.
- I think small group instruction is really important for reading. Our professors talk about small group instruction and how it can be effective, but I think more time needs spent on specific strategies that can be used for students in small group. I also think that the biggest key to student success is a well managed classroom; therefore, I think there should be more than one classroom management course required for teacher candidates.
- I think that I could have been more prepared when it came to implementing centers. I did during my student teaching; however, I did not know how to take that and adapt it to third grade.
- It was difficult as a new teacher to find the balance between teaching comprehension skills and fluent reading to below grade level students during literacy centers.
- Make sure we are prepared for the tests required for licensing versus giving hours of homework for things that won't be useful in the classroom.

“I think small group instruction is really important for reading. Our professors talk about small group instruction and how it can be effective, but I think more time needs spent on specific strategies that can be used for students in small group.”

“I think that I could have been more prepared when it came to implementing centers. I did during my student teaching; however, I did not know how to take that and adapt it to third grade.”

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- Provide teachers with ways to gather their own data for baselines and explicitly teach how to find the baseline. iReady was used in my district, but without it I would have been lost on how to find the baseline.
- More discussion on how to provide support and enrichment through one lesson.
- Prepare students better for the Foundations of Reading test. Teach more of the “vocabulary” for reading and how to teach reading.
- Programs should have more hands on preparation for teaching reading.
- Provide books and beginner lessons on what reading should look like for the first few weeks of school.
- Strategies to help teachers understand all students do not learn the same way.

“Provide books and beginner lessons on what reading should look like for the first few weeks of school.”

Need for Increased Pre-Exposure to the Profession and Field Experiences

Twenty-five respondents indicated they wanted more pre-exposure to the teaching profession, especially surrounding “day one” issues, guidance on handling different contingencies, and more pre-service exposure time in the classroom to better ground them in teaching effectively.

- Allow student more real world interactions.
- Being in a classroom on the first day of school is what I wished I could have witnessed. I was scared because I had never seen the first day of school, so I was unsure what needed to be done, etc. I figured it out but if I could’ve had hands-on experience that would’ve been even better.
- I believe more real-life scenarios during the teacher preparation programs would be beneficial to all upcoming teachers.
- I think every education student should have to watch a first week of school. I had no clue how to set those procedures. I think education students should also get more practice in setting up reading intervention. Most MS schools do not have interventionists, so teachers are doing their own interventions.
- I think observing a kindergarten or 1st grade classroom would be great due to the phonics instruction. Other grades that future elementary teachers observe are already reading to learn instead of learning to read. I feel as though actual time spent in the classroom is what prepares you. The school courses we have to take are somewhat helpful, but nothing can compare to actual being in the classroom.
- I was taught some of the components that go along with reading but not how to sit down in a group and teach students how to read.
- Lots and lots of time observing and being in the classroom! Very hands-on, realistic learning that can be applied in future circumstances

“I believe more real-life scenarios during the teacher preparation programs would be beneficial to all upcoming teachers.”

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- More emphasis on phonics in my pre-service classes would have helped me feel better prepared. My Early Literacy 1 teacher was amazing but I feel like there is not enough time spent on it. From my Early Literacy 1 class to my first-year teaching was 3 years with not many refreshers in between. I was not as prepared as I wish I would have been to teach phonics. I taught myself a good bit and had a great mentor to help guide me. My school principal made sure that I had great mentors. All other aspects of reading I feel very confident with teaching. I just wish I had more training for phonics.
- More hands on activities for what it would be like in a real classroom would have been beneficial.
- More time in the classrooms applying what they have learned can better equip first year teachers. Teaching is hard. It is mentally hard. I felt unprepared and lost at times.
- Preparation programs could provide more hands on programs for first year teachers. Providing scenarios where teachers are able to learn from experience and mistakes early before entering the classroom.
- Teaching how to teach reading is important but I think there needs to be more emphasis on having pre-service teachers teach reading. I went through distance learning so perhaps my struggle is due to that.
- The best thing that would have helped me would have been a person, one on one with me, to help me understand the direction of standards being taught. There are many resources online in regards to best teaching practices and center ideas but it would have been nice, in my case, if someone would have told me “this”, try “this” in your classroom. Here are your resources, here is how you do it, let me know how it goes and we will reflect afterwards.
- The teacher preparation programs in MS should use more hands on strategies. Pre-interns and interns should have the opportunity to use the skills they have been taught in a grade level of their choice before “day one” of their first year. The programs need to be redesigned to resemble school today. I did not use more than half of the information I learned. I didn’t feel properly prepared will I walked through the doors of my classroom even though I went through a 2-year accredited program.

“More emphasis on phonics in my pre-service classes would have helped me feel better prepared. My Early Literacy 1 teacher was amazing but I feel like there is not enough time spent on it.”

“The teacher preparation programs in MS should use more hands on strategies. Pre-interns and interns should have the opportunity to use the skills they have been taught in a grade level of their choice before “day one” of their first year. The programs need to be redesigned to resemble school today. I did not use more than half of the information I learned.”

Mentorship

Seven provided comments on the need for a mentor while in their first year of teaching. Selected comments include the following. The gist of these comments focused on the support such a experienced professional can provide to a newly minted member.

- Education is like a building block and if you don't have the foundations needed it will be a rocky road. However, with the proper training (mentoring, professional development training and a good drive education) it can be a success, and not to mention the love for children and lots of patient.
- Make sure that first year teachers are partnered with a mentor teacher in their school.
- Teacher collaboration - especially one teacher in my grade - helped me the most. She would share what she was doing with me so I could either copy or get ideas to do my own thing.
- Patience and get all the advice that you can from your coworkers.

Alternate Route Issues

Alternate route issues to becoming a teacher provided the focus of six respondents. More than half of these focused on the need for training in literacy instruction.

- Alternate route teachers should take a reading class before entering the classroom.
- For an alternate route student wanting to compete the elementary route. 1. If we are to be required to take the FOR test our certification should be k-6 period. 2. Alternate route students should be required to take early literacy 1 and 2 before admission into the program just like traditional students. 3. There should be more hands on workshops for students in programs to teach reading in the classroom.
- Offer more courses for alternate route teachers to get the literacy training they do not get in their programs.
- The alternate route programs should cover more than classroom management and tests.

Professional Development and Other Training

Professional development provided the focus of eleven comments with a specific reference for the needs of first year teachers for this resource. A selection of responses follows.

- Give first year reading and math workshops with a lot of resources that would be helpful to the students
- Have trainings so that first year teachers actually understand what to do.
- I actually went through Teach Mississippi Institute, and that was not an option at the beginning of the survey. However, i feel that they could have better prepared me in an elementary setting. The course focuses a lot on secondary and special education.
- I feel that giving true lessons for students to perform mock lessons would prepare them for teaching.

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- Offer a variety of trainings over the summer that offer one on one training and realistic classroom scenarios that teacher would be likely to encounter during the school year.
- Offer day workshops based on grade level they have been hired to teach.
- PD that both mentors and mentees must attend.

Self-Accountability

Four respondents called for more self-accountability in being responsible and taking the initiative through self-study and striving to really understand the materials and being able to implement them effectively.

- Study the standards. Have engaging books that allows you to teach the standards. Do not limit yourself to “Ready” materials or curriculums provided by the district. Find resources that works for you and your students. Make it engaging!
- Understanding of the standards and how to apply.
- Make sure you really understand topics discussed in EL 1. Study those skills even after graduation. It is okay to ask for help when you do not understand something.
- Hold students more accountable for what they learn. I did 100 percent online coursework and the teachers did not seem to put as much effort into teaching us, we had to teach ourselves. Give us access to videos and activities similar to how LETRS teaches its program. More hands on activities, videos, and interactive activities.

General Comments on Program Approaches

The remainder of the comments addressed various topics that did not allow them to be placed in the other categories. Some key points they addressed included the amount of materials addressed in the EL1 & 2 courses, how to identify students who need interventions, the need for reading instruction for special education teachers, a recognition they will need to become experienced to be effective, and a willingness to accept you will fail at times. Various selected responses appear below.

- Focus on the reading goals each year prior to 3rd grade Reading test.
- I think both Early Lit 1 and Early Lit 2 should be year long classes that might take the place of other subject classes. The information in both of those classes is too much to comprehend within a semester in my opinion.
- I would suggest occasional meetings with current employees of the same grade level/subject area. While we learn so much from texts, research, workshops, etc., it helps to gain insight from someone who has had experience at that particular site that you can relate to.
- Just like in my classes, teacher prep programs should have students to learn ALL vowel teams and sounds associated with vowels/vowel teams. We had to know how to accurately pronounce

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them in order to accurately teach our children. Also, have more hands-on activities to help with differentiation and INTERVENTIONS and how to identify students that may need these services.

- Programs should begin preparing future teachers from “day one” about skills and techniques to teach reading.
- Suggestions for teacher preparation programs in Mississippi: 1. Continue to place educators in areas that they are not confident in such as internship placements. 2. Integrate ELA into other subject areas- Math, Science, Social Studies. 3. Prepare teachers on how to teach ELA through other subjects.
- Tailor reading education toward special education teachers
- Teachers in training should be required to implement reading instruction while student teaching.
- Teachers should have an understanding of the essential building blocks of reading and how they must work together to create a strong reader and teach like the foundational skills have never been taught through all elementary grades. This means some level of decoding, phonics, and vocabulary will be incorporated in all reading lessons all of which improve comprehension.
- The EL1 & EL2 courses being combined during a fast paced summer schedule limited my professors ability to provide the EL2 information needed to be better prepared for those skills.
- The program should provide classes before the first day and class and they need to be familiar throughout the preparation programs and school districts.
- The programs could better align to classrooms today. What I learned in class and what my school does is sometimes very different. It would help if colleges and school districts collaborated more on what’s happening inside the classroom.
- There is no way to prepare a teacher for “day one” of kindergarten! Only time and experience.
- To better equip first year teachers, programs should give more realistic work related to what teachers are doing now.
- (My IHL) professors did a great job of modeling and breaking down many reading strategies for students to complete themselves for assignments, as well as implementing in practice teaching. This helped us students understand and work with reading strategies much better than just reading and researching strategies on our own.

“Teachers should have an understanding of the essential building blocks of reading and how they must work together to create a strong reader and teach like the foundational skills have never been taught through all elementary grades. This means some level of decoding, phonics, and vocabulary will be incorporated in all reading lessons all of which improve comprehension.”

“The program should provide classes before the first day and class and they need to be familiar throughout the preparation programs and school districts.”

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- You will not get it right on the first day. Teaching is all about trial and error of what works and what doesn't for your kids. The knowledge gain from college will allow you to thrive in the classroom and aid to your students.
- Get rid of FORT. It isn't an indication of if we can teach students effectively.

Dean Interviews

During the spring of 2020, as part of the end of the Mississippi Momentum evaluation CCPI conducted a series of six interviews with the deans of both private and public colleges of education in Mississippi and whose faculty had participated in Mississippi Momentum. The interviews were brief, comprised of seven questions, three of which asked for a scaled response and followed by a request for elaboration on the selected choice. The interviews sought to reveal the perspectives deans hold about Mississippi Momentum and the impact participation had had on their faculty and students. The interviews lasted anywhere from fifteen to forty-five minutes, depending how in-depth the particular dean wanted to go.

The seven interview questions included:

- On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 means **not at all familiar** and 4 means **highly familiar**, how familiar are you with the content and structure of the Mississippi Momentum that your faculty experienced as part of their professional development experience? (Each was asked to elaborate on their answers.)
- What changes, if any, have you seen in the pedagogy or coursework your faculty have implemented that emerged from their participation in Mississippi Momentum?
- On a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 means **no impact**, 2 means **marginal impact**, and 3 means **significant impact**, how would you rate the impact of these changes on the overall quality of their courses? (Each was asked to elaborate on their response.)
- Using a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 means **not at all interested**, and 4 means **highly interested**, if another professional development initiative that parallels Mississippi Momentum became available for instructors in early childhood or child development/family development programs, how interested would you be in having your faculty participate? (Each was asked to elaborate on their response.)
- If such an offering became available, what specific areas of professional development in early childhood or child development/special education programs would you like to see addressed?

Dr. Antonio Fierro offered a series of visits to participating faculty at each of the educator preparation campuses during the period of Mississippi Momentum. The purpose of these visits was to model instruction, observe instruction, and consult with faculty about challenges/improvements in the early literacy courses. In what ways was having Dr. Fierro on your campus helpful in providing these supports to the early literacy courses for your faculty, and their students?

To close out, are there any other comments or concerns you would like to express about the Mississippi Momentum initiative?

Key takeaways from these Interviews include:

- Not being directly informed about MM-related activities from partners; however, several noted they received regular updates from participating faculty.

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- Most had developed familiarity with MM-related materials, but had not directly attended the trainings as one had.
- One dean stated that faculty felt compelled to participate in MM and follow the LETRS curriculum even though the structure that IHL already had in place adequately addressed phonics-related pedagogy and practice.
- Some respondents expressed concern that certain LETRS materials posed a major challenge to many undergraduate pre-service candidates and was in excess to what was required to know to pass the state's Foundations of Reading exam.
- One expressed concern that while LETRS provides a solid foundation, overemphasis on its materials and approach might have the consequence of narrowing the field of knowledge to which pre-service teachers need exposure.
- Others discussed that since the IHL had begun participation in MM the percentage of pre-service teachers passing the Foundations of Reading exam had increased and the number of retakes had declined.
- One contended that MM had not adequately provided training on how to work with dyslexic students, while another indicated the IHL had brought into its program a dyslexia specialist to teach reading based on advice from MM partners.
- Several commented that the faculty engagement with MM had the consequence of instilling a "can do" mindset in the pre-service candidates about their ability to move into a classroom and teach reading.
- The majority of the deans welcomed a new professional development program directed toward early childhood/family studies.
- Suggestions for focus areas for such a new program would include early literacy and numeracy; social skills; brain science and cognitive development; pragmatic skills, such as legal, financial, and how to approach Head Start programs; concepts of print; working with children and families of poverty; and health and nutrition of small children.
- Various deans commented that the MM focus had diffused over the three years. The first year that focused on professional development in how to teach reading was a major positive aspect, whereas the last two had shifted to a focus on policy and protocols.
- The deans saw the participation of Antonio Fierro as a net plus for MM and commented on his professional demeanor; knowledge and expertise; ability to put both the faculty and students in a mindset of ease and receptiveness; emphasis on developing pragmatic and applicable skills; listening acuity; and capacity for insightful and constructive critique.
- One dean suggested that MM had conflated LETRS with the science of reading.
- Final thoughts on MM allowed the deans the opportunity to comment on their overall assessment of the project. These observations included:
 - » A desire for another iteration of professional development that could emerge from MM.
 - » The mandates set forth by the coordinating bodies are intrusive and problematic.

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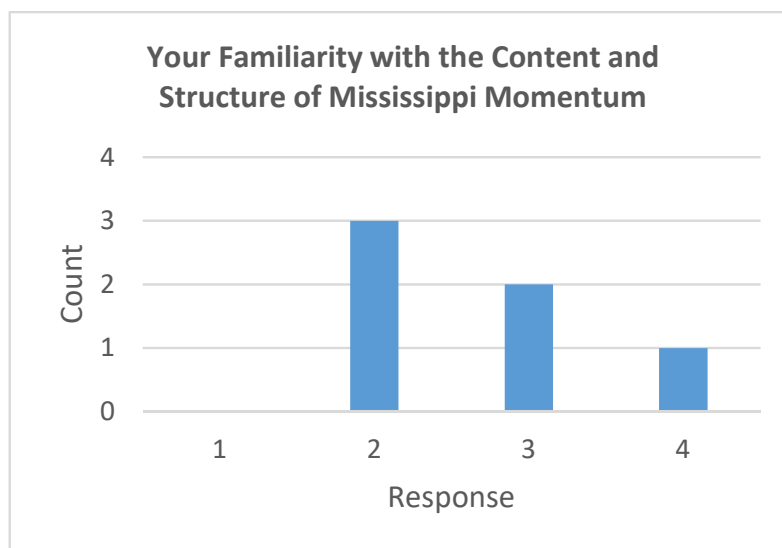
- » One dean suggested development of a three-credit course that would include the various components that MM covered and that would be available to all faculty.
- » Another suggested that credentialing should have been a component of MM as opposed to simply attendance and participation.
- » MM could have provided more information on the purpose of the seminars, which would have helped orient the participants prior to attending.
- » The lines of authority within MM were confusing. Various deans commented that they had no clear sense of which group within the partnership had what type and force of authority.
- » As noted earlier, one dean saw LETRS as a solid foundation; however, the professional development provided to pre-service teachers needed a broader frame of reference on approaches to reading instruction.
- » Overutilization of the Barksdale facility in Jackson imposed a heavy burden on IHLs in distant areas of the state in terms of time, travel, and disruption of courses.
- » Mississippi Momentum has brought positive attention to the state’s effort to improve early literacy instruction and acknowledged its contribution as a platform that facilitated collaboration across the various IHLs.

CCPI asked the first question to establish the level of familiarity each dean had with Mississippi Momentum.

“On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 means **not at all familiar** and 4 means **highly familiar**, how familiar are you with the content and structure of the Mississippi Momentum that your faculty experienced as part of their professional development experience?”

The deans gave a mean response of 2.75 with the complete distribution shown in figure 8.

Figure 8: Familiarity with Content and Structure of Mississippi Momentum



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When asked to elaborate, responses ranged from one dean who expressed a concern of not being adequately apprised of activities to another who declared deep awareness borne from direct experience. The following provide some illustrative responses.

For instance, one explained the deans, as a group, would have preferred to have received more information on the program's content and structure.

. . . I do not think deans have been particularly informed about that work in a way that I could answer. It may even be a little bit ambitious to give it a three because what I hear is from my faculty. . . . [The information] comes in spurts . . . I'm close to the faculty so I have to sit and talk with them after they come back to fully understand the distinction of this group as opposed to other groups that are working with literacy in the state that they're a part of.

In contrast, another dean discussed involvement with Mississippi Momentum since its beginning, had served on its administrative-level task force committee, and thus was highly informed of program activities.

I've been involved [since] the beginning . . . when we initiated the LETRS training. I've been working with Kelly and her group. They visited our campus on a number of occasions and meet with our faculty pretty regularly to talk about the upcoming issues, and I've served on the Mississippi Momentum task force committee.

One of the deans indicated a mid-level familiarity on MM in that they had completed some of the modules and participated in some the professional development sessions; however, the level of experience they had engaged in left them unable to apprise fully its overall content and structure.

I know some of the content very well. I'm being picky because I've been through some of the modules and some of the things with respect to what they were using, part of the LETRS training and some of the literacy information...

One dean who provided a contrasting position indicated they had direct experience with Mississippi Momentum through participation as a faculty member prior to assuming a deanship at their current IHL,

Previously I participated in the training when I was a professor at [IHL]. When I was a chair of education at [my previous IHL], I continued more training. I do have a literacy background.

The second question sought to reveal changes in pedagogy and coursework faculty implemented in conjunction with their engagement.

"What changes, if any, have you seen in the pedagogy or coursework your faculty have implemented that emerged from their participation in Mississippi Momentum?"

The responses provide a spectrum from full engagement to a sense that compliance to the LETRS curriculum was imposed and forced faculty to comply. One dean indicated they could not respond due to the IHL's current course cycle did not include the literacy courses and

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another pointed to the positive effect a suggestion that MM partners made to use an instructor in its dyslexia therapy program to teach courses in reading and early literacy.

Since I've been at [current IHL] I've seen a lot of changes. I've worked with the instructor who's currently teaching the classes. We have . . . reconstructed our classroom to make it more literacy friendly using the resources that were given to us by Momentum to enhance our teaching skills—the flashcards, the postcards. All of those are displayed through the classroom. The instructor . . . is more engaged with teaching the science of reading with the students. The students are more engaged, and they have a better understanding of literacy and how to teach literacy to students.

One dean emphasized the positive effect seen in the delivery of coursework, which a review of syllabi helped develop. While feedback from students was not broad, those in special education apparently got much out of their participation.

I have seen an expanded emphasis on literacy in the delivery of the coursework, which I gathered through analysis of the course syllabi. I have not gotten a lot of feedback from students. The impact on our SPED program was quite positive in that the students have appeared to get much out of their participation and increased their focus.

In the following quote, a dean conveyed the position of faculty that indicates a sense of having been compelled to comply with learning the LETRS curriculum at the expense of a previously successful phonics-centered approach. This dean also perceived that the LETRS curriculum covered materials exceeding what undergraduates needed.

I'm gonna put it this way: they [faculty] feel forced to comply with . . . what they've had to learn from LETRS. Sometimes, they resent that. Now I know Kelly Butler would be happy to know that they're forced to do the LETRS program because that's been part of the intent. At our university, we were already having very good success with our reading program. We were already teaching phonics. To be forced to teach phonics the one way LETRS wants it to be done has been a challenge. Some of my "beginning to read" reading teachers feel that LETRS has tried to force it to a higher level for reading—[as] if you were majoring in reading content for a higher-level master's [degree] than what my undergrad students need.

The next quote indicates satisfaction in having faculty participate in MM, although the last part of the quote also reflects a sense that overemphasis on the LETRS curriculum, as seen in the previous quote, may limit development of their literacy instruction skills.

Oh, I've seen a definite improvement in the . . . delivery of the content and what we call Early Literacy One and Two. The training in LETRS has very much informed their practice. I do think the faculty who have been teaching those courses have a firmer grasp and are better grounded in their phonics and the approaches associated with the content of those

"The training in LETRS has very much informed their practice. I do think the faculty who have been teaching those courses have a firmer grasp and are better grounded in their phonics and the approaches associated with the content of those courses..."

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courses, as a result of the early training they got in modules and LETRS in particular. . . . Yes, it's a great foundation. If it's seen as the only resource that can be used, I think it could be limiting.

Another dean did not see immediate applicability of the question because the current course sequence the IHL was in did not include delivery of the EL1 or EL2.

I think that's not a very good question for me and [my IHL]. I've got multiple people in the program that aren't . . . currently teaching a literacy class, so I can't say that I've seen them changing. They haven't really made any changes—not because the program hasn't done a good job, but because they're not teaching those classes right now.

Finally, one dean indicated a direct benefit from participation in MM that resulted in the use of a faculty member in the IHL's dyslexia therapy program to teach some of the courses in reading and early literacy.

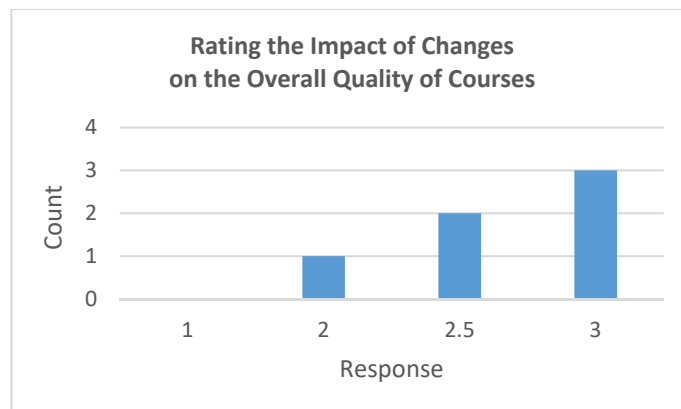
Probably one of the most significant things we've done in our program, they [the MM partners] had a wonderful suggestion that was right in front of our noses and we didn't think about it. They brought up having the coordinator for our dyslexia therapy program . . . teach some of the courses in our reading and early literacy. It made perfect sense. She's doing this anyway to train all of our dyslexia therapists and those who are evaluating and working with students. We thought, "Oh my goodness, that's brilliant. She has hands-on experience every day." So, she serves in our classes. That's probably the most significant one and the one that we've gotten the most positive feedback on.

The third question requested a scaled response,

"On a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 means **no impact**, 2 means **marginal impact**, and 3 means **significant impact**, how would you rate the impact of these changes on the overall quality of their courses?"

The mean score for the six respondents was 2.66, which indicates that the deans perceive that faculty participation in Mississippi Momentum exerted a substantial impact on the quality of their courses. Figure 9 provides the distribution of responses.

Figure 9: Rating the Impact of Changes On Quality of Courses



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To delve deeper into their choice, CCPI asked them to elaborate on their numeric choice. The deans provided an array of perspectives. The following illustrates the positive impact Mississippi Momentum exerted on the improved scores for the state’s Foundations of Reading test.

Our Early Literacy One and Early Literacy Two classes is where all of this . . . takes place. When they are preparing for their final exam, we frame it around the type of questions that are asked on the Foundations of Reading test, which they have to pass in order to receive their Mississippi teacher license. Our students on the . . . practice test . . . tend to score a whole lot higher than when I first came in at [my IHL], and we did not have this in place. I am seeing a difference. They are able to retain information and not just retain it, but [also] understand it.

Another dean, however, expressed concern that Mississippi’s embrace of the LETRS curriculum resulted in the circumvention of the phonics-based program previously operating at that IHL and that the focus on LETRS in professional development activities excluded all other approaches. Further, this dean stated that the LETRS approach was insufficient to engage students with auditory dyslexia and that MM had conflated the LETRS curriculum with the science of reading.

Well, like I said, we had already been doing phonics, and I have some very strong phonics teachers. The two literacy courses required by the state [are] . . . adhered to. We felt we had a very good program. With the syllabi incorporating the phonemic awareness. Now, I know this is anathema or we shouldn’t even say this, but include the blended ways of reading rather than total phonemic [awareness]—which we do. . . . [B]ut my faculty, also, have felt very strongly that the candidates need to know that there are other options should they have some children that have learning challenges. One of the big ones is auditory dyslexia. If a student has auditory dyslexia, how are they gonna do phonemic awareness concepts? We were covering all of that. Now, they feel compelled to force all this into LETRS and LETRS being considered the science of reading. They use that term continuously.

“I think it’s getting these faculty to rethink what they’re doing. I think that’s a positive.”

A dean centered on the impact that the educational consultant, Dr, Antonio Fierro, has had on the IHL’s faculty and expressed the desire that all the faculty would have that professional development experience and take eighteen hours of instruction in reading.

The impact has been in those first two courses, so that’s a limited impact. I do think the professional development, if it stayed focused on professional development is important. . . . The first year when they were getting training and then initially were following up and . . . they’re citing the person who led the training as having great impact, Antonio Fierro. He has visited the classroom and the campus, and for that reason it is a 2.5 [out of 3]. We’re very committed to professional development and if I had my druthers, all of the elementary faculty would have 18 hours in reading.

The next dean saw the effect on faculty participation as changing their mindset and engaging with other faculty about their practice with students.

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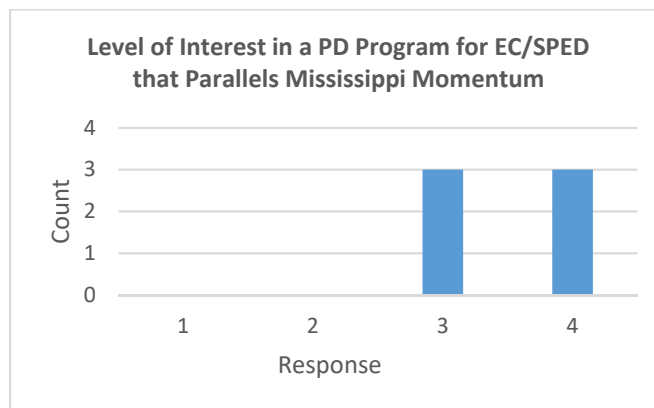
I think it's getting these faculty to rethink what they're doing. I think that's a positive. Let's just say it this way from your standpoint. I can't say there's a significant impact, but there might be an impact statistically. I think there is an impact. I still think one of the greatest things is that they're actually talking about their practice right now with other faculty. That's a strength, it's causing people to have those discussions.

The fourth main question inquired about their interest in another professional development initiative focused on early childhood educators, which also called for a scaled response.

“Using a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 means **not at all interested**, and 4 means **highly interested**, if another professional development initiative that parallels Mississippi Momentum became available for instructors in early childhood education/special education programs, how interested would you be in having your faculty participate?”

Responses produced a mean score of 3.5, as illustrated in figure 10, which suggests a high level of interest for a professional development program for instructors in early childhood education/special education. The following provides elaborations on why respondents selected the score they did.

Figure 10: Level of Interest in a PD Program for EC/SPED



The following dean saw such an opportunity as a way to help address the workforce demand in Mississippi and to provide training to students as a preschool educator without having to meet licensure requirements for the K-3 classroom.

... [Many] of our students who are in the child development route are students who could not pass the Praxis assessment for Mississippi. They take that [early childhood] route because that's a non-licensure route. Because we're in such a great demand for teachers in the state of Mississippi, they're being hired and do not have that additional background that they need that will be an asset in the K12 classroom—well, the K3 classroom. That will be a plus for them, being able to really target towards early childhood because they're receiving emergency license and teaching in the classroom. That would be a plus if we were able to receive that.

The next dean saw the possible program as a means by which faculty would reduce the siloed nature of their professional knowledge and get exposure to perspectives outside their field and pedagogy.

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[My faculty] are limited in their outside information and become too isolated in their fields. I would welcome any opportunity to expose faculty to outside information and instruction.

Another welcomed a new program for professional development, but stipulated that for the IHL to participate the program would not follow the LETRS curriculum. This dean further critiqued a perceived plethora of mandates coming down from the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), Barksdale Reading Institute (BRI), and the Higher Education Literacy Council (HELC), on how to run a pre-service teacher education program to the point of referring to these directives as a form of group think.

As long as it was not LETRS. I would like it to stay a phonemic awareness program. That's fine. I do think we need a little bit of variety and this has been our challenge as deans—we feel that our academic freedom has been removed. Some of our reading teachers feel that way. They have been trained. They have the level [of expertise]. Now, we get, from Barksdale and others, "Well, yeah, but then you haven't produced better reading in our school districts." I know that this initiative has proved some very good results for Mississippi. I think . . . when I read all the information, it's the mandates. The word mandate is over and over and over in the material that we get. I thought, "This is exactly right, it's mandates from MDE, . . . Barksdale, and . . . HELC. Well, HELC is supposed to be a combination of all of us. I have had some of my faculty members even say, "It's group think." Pretty soon, if you start sayin' anything different in HELC or in . . . the governor's taskforce, then you are ostracized or you're not considered because it's a group think concept.

The following dean offered a different critique centered on the relative impact and shift in focus of Mississippi Momentum since its inception. Drawing on the perceptions of faculty, this dean commented that during the first year, Mississippi Momentum with its focus on professional development had been positive; however, in years two and three, its efficacy had declined through a change in emphasis to shaping policy and agendas.

You know, I'm gonna have to think on that. Here's why. It almost makes me go back and wanna change my response. I'm a very appreciative person, so I don't wanna appear unappreciative of the professional development that was afforded to faculty. They felt like [with] Mississippi Momentum . . . the first year was strong and it went downhill from that. . . . Would I enter into that again with them, knowing how they felt, would I commit them to that? I don't know. I would wanna have a conversation about how are you going to keep the focus on professional development and not on policy shaping and agendas that are not professional development. That would be the question I would have [before agreeing to participate].

Another dean indicated a high degree of interest for more professional development for faculty although a lot of activity tempered that choice, presumably tied to the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic crisis.

I'm always interested in any professional development for our faculty to improve their practice. We do have an early childhood program. I think we would be very interested. I think the only reason I'm not saying it's four because of the current situation with so much going on right now that would impact my [decision about] [laughter] not giving it a four, but very interested.

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The fifth question requested that if their IHL could participate in a professional development program that emphasized early childhood education/special education, what were some specific focus areas the deans would like to see.

If such an offering became available, what specific areas of professional development in early childhood education/special education programs would you like to see addressed?

The following dean suggested a pragmatic set of areas for early readers as well as specific skills, techniques, and strategies that faculty could learn in the professional development, including how best to reach out to Head Start centers to get their buy-in on the importance of early literacy.

When it comes to literacy—looking at the beginning. How do you introduce a three-year-old to words? How do you introduce a three-year-old to startin' to sound out words? Or, what are the . . . processes that you need to go through to . . . prepare [them] to read? Somethin' as simple as the concept of print. Truly understanding it and how do you teach that?

Providing professors with the techniques, the strategies, and then classroom teachers who are already in place, they want practical things they can do. At this point in Mississippi, we have several Head Start programs [and we have a need for] developing a relationship with [them] to work with their teachers to show them how do you truly teach children how to read.

Two deans pointed to the need to focus on basic elements of pre-literacy, and included brain, cognitive, motor skills, and social-emotional development that very young children experience.

I would like to see an emphasis on general info on literacy, brain development, and socio-emotional issues that young people are dealing with in their lives.

Yeah. I think that actual child development, cognitive skills, and motor skills development—just child development and the different characteristics at different ages needs to be strengthened.

Another of the deans emphasized the need to include strategies on how to deal effectively with children living in poverty and the need for resources to serve a dispersed and diverse population in the state and highlighted the crucial intersection of language and cognitive development.

Well, again, early literacy would be one for them as well. We have so many needs where I'm looking. I'm trying to think. [Probably] developmentally appropriate learning and special needs. Working with low income families. How to effectively work with children of poverty. Of course, back to literacy and language development. We have a child development center that started out as a lab school years ago where we have students do their child development through their internships and unfortunately it does not serve as diverse of population as I would like for it to. Living in the Mississippi Delta, you just see the needs are just so compounded in language development, cognitive development, it's just critical. The resources in our state, they're just not there. It's improved somewhat, but it's very sketchy.

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“Part of that problem is our candidates themselves do not understand—they were never treated—they grew up without some of those understandings and parents without those understandings.”

Besides the importance of a focus on social emotional development, one dean noted the importance of early numeracy.

You’re saying in addition to Momentum? I would say areas of social emotional well being. I would say mathematics. On the social emotional side . . . right now in education, that’s paramount.

One dean focused on the “nuts and bolts” operational aspects of an early child center that a new professional development program should focus on—licensing, legal aspects, food services, etc.—along with working on formative skill development with symbols, numbers, and letters.

Hm. That’s a great question. So many aspects. Goodness, certainly the licensing and daycare facility operations that they have to go through is always a concern. Just to make sure, being aware of the legal ramification is very helpful. Also, the health and nutrition for students obviously since these facilities are responsible for feeding the children several times a day. I think that doesn’t need to be overlooked and it often is. Obviously, learning with early development with symbols, numbers, letters would obviously be very significant.

Although not in the original interview protocol, and not all deans received the question, those who did agreed with a query on whether they thought coverage of brain development and the cognitive sciences should be included.

Yes, very much, very much. I feel very strongly about that. Part of that problem is our candidates themselves do not understand—they were never treated—they grew up without some of those understandings and [had] parents without those understandings. That has become more important to me than ever, especially now that I have grandkids and . . . I understand those developmental stages much better now than I did when I was a parent and understanding that a four-year-old may have meltdown and breakdowns, but that doesn’t mean you let it go. That’s part of his emotional development.

Oh, absolutely. We have some Special Ed faculty in that area. Absolutely. I think that would be a great asset.

Obviously, yes. Very important to look at the theories of development, the practical aspects that—I know some things that we cover even in educational psychology—basic theories and cognition—would be very helpful and very important.

The next question sought to determine the perceptions the deans had on the on-campus visits by the project consultant, Dr. Antonio Fierro, and the effect these had on the faculty and students in the early literacy courses.

Dr. Antonio Fierro offered a series of visits to participating faculty at each of the educator preparation campuses during the period of Mississippi Momentum. The purpose of these visits was to model instruction, observe instruction, and consult with faculty about challenges/ improvements in the early literacy courses. In what ways was having Dr. Fierro

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on your campus helpful in providing these supports to the early literacy courses for your faculty, and their students?

Uniformly, the deans saw Dr. Fierro's visits as a net plus as many commented on his: pedagogical skills, hands-on approach of applied skills, feedback process, ability to put both faculty and students at ease, and overall knowledge in early literacy, as shown in this response.

He was an eye-opener for our faculty. He provided a different way for them to teach. I'm a hands-on person. He brought that in to the faculty. A lotta people think because you're in college it's supposed to be lecture, lecture, lecture. Well, we're in education. They need to be immersed and shown how to do it. That's what he brought. That was a plus, to know that, "Oh, I don't have to spit out the research. Yes, that's important, but I need to be able to show you how to do it." That was a plus for our instructors. Also for our instructors it was a plus to actually sit in the classroom with their students and another professor is teaching, and they're gaining experience right on the spot from that instructor and not feel . . . embarrassed or not feel like, "Oh, I should know this already." There's always room for improvement. He made them very comfortable and relaxed to where, "Hey, this is a learning experience for us all." They were more accepting of the feedback that he gave and learning from him hands-on, one-on-one in the classroom. I think that was a plus.

This dean also noted that a new faculty member's experience in Mississippi Momentum led to her decision to pursue further training on dyslexia to fill a gap in her own knowledge.

I have one instructor who's never taught Early Literacy One or Two. She is new at [the IHL] and new in higher ed and new to the program. . . . She was like, "Oh, I think I'm gonna go back to school and get my dyslexia training. I'm gonna do this." It opened up another door for her. Even though she's taught school for years in K12, she's never had—as far as in higher ed—[training in dyslexia]. Now she sees a whole different avenue on literacy.

One dean, while terse in the response, noted how feedback from faculty had been positive although, on the other hand, students had not provided any.

Feedback from faculty was positive, with much interaction and high quality communication. I did not hear anything specific from the students.

The next dean gave Dr. Fierro major kudos for his professional demeanor, expertise, and engagement with both faculty and students. Evidently, at times that IHL's faculty viewed some Mississippi Momentum partners as condescending, which they resented and saw as judgement. They did not consider this the case with Dr. Fierro. This administrator suggested that the state superintendent engage all of the deans to find out what they thought about Mississippi Momentum as has been the case during exchanges with Dr. Fierro.

Okay, he has been the gem of this whole program. His personality and his skills are appreciated by the faculty, as well as the candidates. He just is very good, and he does know his reading development to help pass that on to the candidates and . . . has given our faculty some insights into things. They all enjoy visiting with him and picking up some information. He comes in and does not intimidate them—the faculty do not feel like they're being put on trial for their assessment or something. They have felt that way from other

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people involved in the program and, in fact, resented, at times, because they think some of those people . . . [don't] even have higher degrees . . . in reading [and] are coming in to so-call evaluate them. . . . [O]ne of the big problems with one of the initiatives is to have regular scheduled visits and evaluations of our faculty. That causes me a problem, and it has caused our faculty some problems. Antonio coming in hasn't caused a problem, and I don't mind that. It's the way it is presented. Barksdale has done excellent things. I understand that. . . . [but] they have come in as bulldozers and . . . think that they are telling us—I don't know if it's because they've had problems at other universities or what it is—it's just the science of reading. You gotta have the science of reading. It's just like drill, drill. Antonio does not come in that way.

[M]y thought is, how far up does Carey Wright, the state superintendent, understand some of these challenges? She has never interfaced with us, as deans, regarding our thoughts on [Mississippi Momentum]—like this interview. Maybe she gets the results of these and sees this, but it's just surprising to me because I really wonder if she's fully aware of everything. Now, she's probably very happy because the test scores have gone up. The reading skills are up. I understand that.

This same dean suggested to the president of their association that Dr. Fierro come and address the group to answer questions and clear up any misconceptions and smooth out any challenges. While acknowledging the good that Mississippi Momentum has accomplished this dean perceived that it could have been done with more collegiality and less force feeding of the science of reading.

In fact, I asked the president of our association of deans to, please, have Antonio come and talk to all of us because I think he can answer some questions and help us understand. He can hear, from us, the challenges. . . . I've had lunch with him and expressed my concerns and challenges. I said, "I think it would be good if you'd come and share this with all the deans. It could help smooth over some misconceptions and challenges." I think that Kelly and Barksdale think they're doing that, but it just has not come across that way, at least to some of my faculty. [I]t's partly some of the confusion in all these groups together for Mississippi Momentum. Overall, I will tell you I understand that it has done very good here. I just would like it done [with a] little more collegiality. In saying that, I think it's at least listening to us. Every time we talk, all we get back is the science of reading.

Although Dr. Fierro had not provided direct feedback to one dean, the IHL's faculty had developed strong rapport with him, and like and respect him. This dean stays at arm's length during Dr. Fierro's visits to avoid coming across as appearing contrived or intrusive.

You know, that's a hard question to answer and I have asked that question. I've never gotten any feedback from Dr. Fierro. Now, the faculty have great rapport with him, so in terms of the value, it could be that he has integrated and interfaced with them in such a way that it's rather seamless and that would be a good thing. . . . [T]hey don't feel like they're being evaluated and they have an approach that's sort of seamless in how they handle those visits. They like him. They respect him. They talk respectfully about what they've learned from him in the sessions they've been in and been privy to. When I have questioned them about the purpose of his visits, it's been he comes, he watches me teach,

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we talk. . . [W]hen he's there, I don't try to intrude upon that. I want it to be a professional relationship in the service they're engaged in. [B]ut I've never had a report from anyone about what he sees at our university or anything other than I've assumed that is a part of the training and a part of the professional development. . . . I'm not sure that I know what his objective on each visit is and have not gone to visit the classroom to determine that because . . . it would become somewhat contrived and intrusive.

The following dean discussed the transformation that occurred within the faculty from one of deep apprehension to anticipation and receptiveness of his consultation visits. This dean also noted several visits with Dr. Fierro and commented on his professional capacity and delivery.

I would say for Antonio, while the original thought of him coming to our campus [caused] . . . a high level of apprehension, I think Antonio coming was a huge success. I think that's also part of Antonio. He is a quality educator that is willing to model what he teaches. That helped greatly with our faculty. He was non threatening. Therefore, . . . after they finally met him and he came and observed, our faculty were very receptive. They were comfortable with him. I think it was a plus. I wish we could have access to him in greater length. I think that would be a big strength, not just one or two visits. . . . I probably have met with him more than any of the deans. He's just an asset to the state of Mississippi. Again, pedagogically, when you can walk in and practice what you preach and you can model and show it, that's something different, and he did a very good job of that. It's what we need.

This dean commented on Dr. Fierro's relatability to students as well as the way his classroom practices served as models for faculty who often adapt them in their own practice.

Okay. For one and two, he is simply delightful. He makes the learning and the material very, very interesting. He's hands-on, makes it easy to understand, and he's a practitioner that's been out there and I think that's very relatable for the students. It reinforces what our faculty have been trying to explain and show to them. Sometimes they can hear something but just from a different person and it makes it click a little better for them, or at least they go, "Oh, yeah, they've said that. Maybe that is important, and I need to pay attention." It helped the faculty go, "What we're doing is good, is being reinforced," and to the students, again, that concept of reinforcement. Again, he's phenomenal, a wonderful trainer, a great speaker, captures their attention, but also is a very good listener. He wants to know specifically, instead of, "Here, I'm comin' to tell you everything.", "Tell me what you don't understand, and let's break that down." That aspect was incredibly helpful.

The following are comments related to Dr. Fierro's engagement with students. As with the deans' assessment of his engagement with faculty, the observations about student are uniformly positive. Among the assessments the deans provided include his ability to engage with faculty and students; his non-threatening and supportive delivery of feedback; and the skill set he brings to showing effective practice across various applications.

The Students Loved Him: Exactly. Exactly. Our students, they really latched onto him. It was like, "Oh, when are you comin' back? When are you comin' back?" They were very engaged and excited to have him to come and to share his knowledge. Very receptive of

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the feedback that he gave, and because we're in the south —some of our students have deep drawls and may not be pronouncing the words phonetically as possible. He practiced with them and showed them various ways how to do that and where to place the tongue, the whole nine [yards]. It was truly a learning experience for us all.

Well, like I said, it's his personality wins those students right away. Then, they're willing to listen to his expertise. He understands that he can't go above them and run way ahead of them in the LETRS concept.

In terms of his impact on them? I said overall impact has been positive. I do. I think their ability to teach literacy and even in my conversations with them as they exit the program, I've been impressed with our graduates. I believe they do have a better understanding as a result of the overall work that he's done, not necessarily those classroom visits, but just the overall rapport and extended relationship that's under guarding that science. It has been a positive impact. It also seems that when faculty are talking about their work with Mississippi Momentum, they want to qualify that their work with Antonio has been a benefit when they're talking about—when they're contrasting some other things maybe were not as great as a benefit.

With our students, I had great response from our students. They thought he was great. They thought he was easy to talk to. They loved what he was sharing. They thought he was a very good quality educator. I believe our students see through all the minutiae and everything else, and they want to see somebody who can actually practice what they preach, and he did. He was very hands on with them. I have not received any negative feedback about Antonio working with our students whatsoever. Now, look. I'm sure you know. You work with students. They have no problem sharing their honest opinion, and I have not ever had any negative feedback.

At the end of the interview, the deans received one final question,

“To close out, are there any other comments or concerns you would like to express about the Mississippi Momentum initiative?”

The deans provided a varied set of responses, generally positive and others with a critical edge. For instance, this dean noted enjoyment from participation in faculty and students and anticipated the next iteration of another professional development initiative.

It's great. I have truly enjoyed it. The faculty at [the IHL] and the students have truly enjoyed it. It has really helped us beef up our Early Literacy One and Two courses. I'm looking forward to something else branching from this and continuing so that we can continue to strive with literacy in the state of Mississippi. I think it was very smart to start in higher ed because we are training those who want to be teachers, so giving them the material that they need now instead of putting them out there in the schools and they're trying to get the training. It makes it hard.

Another dean noted the positive feedback on MM an assistant dean provided while expressing a concern about a mandate requiring LETRS training be completed by any new faculty hire.

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It was a very good program, got positive feedback from my assistant dean. I am concerned about the required LETRS training for hiring new faculty. I do not support this requirement and other deans do not support it either.

The following dean provided a critique of the groups involved in guiding Mississippi Momentum and the cacophony of directives they issue. As a result, this dean feels confused and suggests other deans feel the same way about the partnership in terms of: their role, who they answer to, who leads, and its purpose.

I think it's a very good program. I think we're doing very well. Of course, the results are there. I know that Barksdale will say, "Well, it's because of LETRS." I would say it's more because of the emphasis on phonemic awareness and helping our teachers with that. There are many things in LETRS that I agree with and would like to have [continue]. . . . I am concerned that we have so many in this partnership and I'm lookin' at the diagram of all the partners—it's not even a flow chart. That's another interesting thing. There's no flow chart on where we are and who do we answer to in this? In the end, we know we answer to MDE, but it's a challenge. MDE says, "Well, they get the governor's taskforce, they get the HELC, and they get Barksdale." None of us know where any of this comes from and how those things all play out and how they come down the line, even though my faculty are on many of these programs. . . . Who is the main lead? If you were to ask most of our people, they would say Barksdale's the main lead and that Barksdale drives MDE, drives HELC, and drives the governor's taskforce. I don't know if that's considered a partnership. I also know that money speaks. Let me tell you, that's exactly the answer you get in our dean's meeting. Money speaks. Barksdale speaks with money. . . . [Y]ou do need people to help contribute with finances. It's good, but not when it's become so mandated, demanding. Okay, so that's probably where I'm at.

One dean indicated full support behind the focus on professional development and offered as a way forward that the different parties come together to talk things out and suggested that a three-credit course be formed so all faculty could take it for their own professional advancement in the area of early literacy.

I think that if its purpose is professional development and provides a continuum of professional development to improve practice, I'm 150, 200 percent behind that. I would like nothing more than to think that I could say to those who are planning the agenda for Mississippi Momentum, now that we have this, could we work on this. Could we expand? Could we offer a three-hour course that all of my faculty would take and they would get credit for their work? It would be professionally rewarding for them.

Another dean brought up the faculty time commitment for attending Mississippi Momentum professional development functions but receive no credentialing. The dean also asked whether the process had been to provide professional development or set policy and asked for more transparency. On a final note, this dean indicated that faculty sometimes complained they attended events without a prior clear sense of the agenda or purpose for being there.

They spent hours getting credit and working on LETRS. They have nothing really that credentials down from that, so that would be a part of [it]. If they're really about policy, I

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would like for them to be transparent and say so, our agenda is to establish and set policy. There is a difference between establishing policy and providing professional development. I just would like to know what I'm engaging in, which is it, and be transparent, have good notes, make good use of people's time when they're away for two days from campus and they're not teaching their classes. That's important time. I would support that wholeheartedly and welcome that. There may be other changes that need to be made, but I don't know that Mississippi Momentum is the vehicle for that unless that is the stated purpose. I think there are times when faculty go expecting training and they're not sure what the meeting's about or they think it's going in another direction and it's more about something that's gonna promote a certain policy or something of that nature. They [the faculty] said you get to a meeting, it's not organized, it's a waste of time and sometimes it's being used to develop a platform or we get to another meeting somewhere else and people quote that this decision was made in Mississippi Momentum, but they don't have any recall that it was. I just think it shouldn't be a political group as much as [it comes across as one]. These folks are hard workers. They wanna go and be trained. They'll voluntarily sign up.

The following dean noted that, while supportive of the idea and the concept of Mississippi Momentum, the scheduling of most activities in Jackson, the location of Barksdale, placed a huge burden on faculty in terms of time and travel.

I think the idea and the concept is very good. I wish this would have started sooner, at the beginning when we started our literacy initiative in teacher ed. We had many faculty that went through previous trainings, so by the time this project started, they didn't feel that they needed this preparation. I think if we put this back at the beginning, . . .we'd probably have more reception for it. On the positive side, professional development for all of us is not a bad thing. It's a good thing. I think it's also hard in the state—I can easily pick—That's part of the problem. Now, we're learning in Zoom. Maybe. . .we can figure this out. I think we'll have more people participating if it's less burdensome on their daily lives because these people are teaching. They have other commitments, and it makes it tough to come to a shared location . . . in the program.... It's not like they can come and go, even if it's a half day. It's a problem. It's a negative. I support it, but it's very difficult.

In closing, this dean noted that Mississippi Momentum had brought positive attention to the state:

I think it's brought some very positive attention to our state. I always appreciate it when we're being recognized for things that we're doing well and not just things that we don't do very well, so I'm very grateful for that. I know it's always an uphill battle with these types of things, but we've come together I think as a state. We've gotten a lot accomplished. When you look at all of the different universities coming together and getting on the same page, honestly, that's quite a monumental task, and so hats off for that.

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Summary

From the input received from faculty and deans for this last year's report, both groups see the value of the Mississippi Momentum Model and Professional Development Partnership. The faculty have embraced the efficacy of the science of reading and have implemented the practices they have learned as core aspects of their classroom instruction. In turn, they see this efficacy manifested in the performance of their students in the college classroom as well as through higher completion rates on the Mississippi Foundations of Reading test.

While many of the faculty and deans saw value in the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) materials, others suggested the experience could have been enhanced through exposure to other approaches that are grounded in the science of reading. Some commented that overemphasis on LETRS produced a limited set of tools for students to deal with contingencies in teaching reading and one dean went so far as to call the overemphasis a form of "groupthink."

All of the deans and faculty commented on the value of onsite visits by the project consultant, Dr. Antonio Fierro, who provided direct instruction and modeling to both faculty and pre-service candidates. To a person, both groups noted that these visits were constructive, well-executed, and offered insightful commentary on practices related to literacy instruction.

A majority of faculty have modified their classroom instruction as a result of their participation in Mississippi Momentum and the modeling Dr. Fierro provided during campus visits.

In general, first year teachers paralleled these assessments on the impact of Mississippi Momentum through their answers to the survey they completed. However, there has been an upward trend over the past three years in the number of respondents who indicated that instructors failed to cover key concepts in their Early Literacy 1 and 2 courses (EL 1 & 2).

Many of the deans and faculty commented on Jackson as the sole location for the seminars and suggested the locale be altered on occasion or be offered virtually to minimize faculty travel and time away from campus and family. A virtual seminar that occurred in July can provide guidance on how this approach worked and what improvements are called for.

Several deans and faculty indicated that the emphasis on instruction and reading in seminars during the first year of Mississippi Momentum had been a major positive of the program. However, this focus had diminished over the following two years, which they perceived as a shift to concentrating more on policy at the expense of hands-on professional development.

Faculty noted that the seminars provided an opportunity for networking, which they enjoyed and thought extremely useful as a means of "comparing notes" and sharing impressions about their participation even though the composition of their peers varied due to differing attendance.

Comments received from faculty indicate that there has been a sea change in the coverage of the science of reading in teacher pre-service programs, in that those who completed their graduate studies several years ago simply had no exposure whatsoever to this development in education.

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Various deans commented that the Mississippi Momentum partners provided insufficient communication to them regarding the project activities on their campus with faculty and students. This tended to leave them uninformed and dependent upon input they received from their faculty.

Various first year teachers who took the alternative path to licensure commented that they had not taken the EL 1 & 2 courses. Such a shortcoming would appear to put them at a disadvantage for teaching reading if assigned to a K-3 classroom.

Only 5 percent of first-year teachers thought their pre-service program had well-prepared them to take the Foundations of Reading test.

Three-quarters of first year teachers felt either well or moderately prepared to teach reading on their first day of classes.

Faculty and first year teachers stressed the importance of “hands on” experiences in the classroom that provided them the opportunity to try different instructional techniques, methods, and models (Scarborough’s Rope, Tolman’s Hourglass, Simple View of Reading, etc.). The faculty noted the importance of constructive feedback that helped inform corrections to any errors or shortcomings they exhibited, whether provided by them to their students or from Dr. Fierro.

Various first year teachers indicated that the time lag between completion of the EL 1 & 2 sequence and sitting for the Foundations of Reading test resulted in either anxiety or reduced performance.

Recommendations

Based on the positive reception that the Mississippi Momentum Model and Professional Development Partnership received over the past three years, the partnership should secure funding to create a self-study guide and modules in the science of reading for new and adjunct faculty. While this resource will not take the place of direct engagement with the partners, it can serve as a proxy for professional development and skill enhancement.

With state support, IHL programs may want to develop site-specific “onboarding” approaches to ensure new faculty receive grounding in the science of reading that they will be expected to deliver in their classrooms.

If Mississippi offers a new professional development program in early childhood and/or special education, the purpose, time commitments, and expectations tied to participation will need to be conveyed clearly to and collaboratively developed with deans and faculty. In addition, the program will need to have a clear structure of administration established beforehand that is recognized by all participants for exercising policy formation and program direction.

If such a program will have a seminar component, the purpose and content will need to be communicated before convening and be more tightly focused on instruction and classroom practice. This approach will indicate to the various IHLs that the time and commitment their faculty make for participation will be worthwhile and productive.

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Partners should record seminars and make these recordings available for review or access by faculty who, for whatever reason, were not able to attend the event in person. Various video conferencing platforms have recording as a feature, so the cost would be nominal.

The success and efficacy of the on-campus visits of Dr. Fierro points to the need for building a skilled cadre of professionals who will be able to fill this need for ongoing hands-on and in-person instruction into the future. The state of Mississippi may consider developing this cadre by drawing on interested faculty from across the state who have completed Mississippi Momentum and who would receive compensation for taking on these additional responsibilities.

Programs need to encourage and facilitate the ability of students taking the Foundations of Reading test as soon as possible after the completion of their EL1 & 2 courses to avoid loss of material recall and reduced test performance.

The upward trend of instructors not covering key concepts in the EL 1 & 2 courses needs attention and ongoing monitoring to ensure that the trend is addressed, pushed downward, and that pre-service candidates receive the necessary background to effectively teach reading to K-3 students. For those faculty who need support filling gaps in the areas not being addressed, Mississippi should provide resources to meet these needs.

Mississippi student performance on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) for reading indicates the state's investment in professional development in literacy and reading instruction is paying off. Mississippi was the only state in the country to improve reading scores on the 2019 NAEP, and was number one in the country for gains in fourth-grade reading and math, number two in gains for students in poverty, and number seven in gains for African-American students. While most states saw no improvement or a decline in scores in 2019, only Mississippi saw improvement in three of the four tested subjects: fourth-grade reading and math, and eighth-grade math—including reaching the national average score in 4th grade reading for the very first time. To ensure that the gains made in student academic achievement do not drop off due to neglect or redirected priorities, the state will need to continue to direct resources for the ongoing support of faculty development in the science of reading.

Limitations

The findings presented in this report offer a final year assessment of a three-year evaluation. In general, as in years past, the findings are positive and show a professional development program that has provided significant growth to many participants by expanding their knowledge of the science of reading and techniques that have enhanced their classroom instructional expertise. As with previous annual reports, the interviews present only a limited number of perspectives for both deans and faculty members, of which only six from each group agreed to be interviewed. The faculty survey that CCPI conducted received results from fifteen respondents and the end of project survey on the science of reading that Dr. Antonio Fierro distributed received twelve responses. The first year teacher survey that the Barksdale Reading Institute conducted received 159 responses, nearly double the count of last year's survey of 89. Taken together, the results from these various sources show a successful professional development program that has improved the teaching of reading skills for IHL faculty across the state of Mississippi. Ultimately though, the final results of this effort will

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need to be determined in the years to come by the number of children who are shown to be effective readers at grade level proficiency across all groups and persist in their educational careers to graduation and movement to fulfilled adult lives.

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