

Mississippi Momentum: Bringing the Science of Reading to Teacher Preparation

The First Annual Evaluation Report

September 2018



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Science of Reading to Teacher Preparation**
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Prepared by

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**CRADLE TO CAREER
POLICY INSTITUTE**

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Executive Summary

This report provides baseline findings from the first year of a three-year mixed methods evaluation the University of New Mexico Cradle to Career Policy Institute (CCPI) is conducting of the Mississippi Momentum: Bringing the Science of Reading to Teacher Preparation. The MS Momentum Partnership emerged as a result of the 2015 Governor’s Task Force to Improve Teacher Preparation for Early Literacy Instruction which followed a Statewide Study of the same name. The MS Momentum Partnership provides intensive supports related to the teaching of early literacy to faculty from the fifteen public and private Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) across Mississippi in the forms of modules, texts and other instructional materials; classroom instruction; one-on-one mentoring; and seminars. Among other courses, these faculty members teach the core Early Literacy 1 (EL1) and Early Literacy 2 (EL2) courses to pre-service educators and prepare them to take and pass the Foundations of Reading exam required for licensure. The EL1 and EL2 courses are part of the 15-hour required courses in reading.

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

Based on the Success Case Method (SCM) Robert O. Brinkerhoff developed to assess professional development and training programs, the evaluation included a survey of thirty-nine participants of which twenty-seven responded (69% response rate). The survey served as a means for screening respondents for a follow-up interview to determine the efficacy of the professional development through both an analysis of results and their agreeing to an interview. Fifteen of the twenty-seven respondents agreed to an interview and of these, CCPI selected ten for follow-up. CCPI reached out via email to the ten and due to either out-of-country travel or non-response, CCPI eliminated two from this cycle and interviewed eight. On two occasions, April and May 2018, the CCPI principal investigator visited Mississippi to attend science of reading training sessions and seminars held in Jackson. The purpose of these visits was two-fold. First, it provided the means by which the PI could introduce himself to the EPP faculty, explain the evaluation and gather consents and releases for audio recording of the interviews. Second, the visits allowed for the direct observation of seminar activities, such as short lectures, large and small group discussions, hands-on activities, and assessment of participant knowledge. In addition, the report provides a summary of results from a survey the MS Momentum Partnership conducted in June and July 2018 of first year teachers.

The Results

From the Cradle to Career Policy Institute EPP Project Participants’ Self-Reports:

Twenty-seven of thirty-nine respondents (69% response rate)

Nineteen (70%) respondents have taught college between one and ten years.

Twenty (74%) had taught at their current EPP between 1 and 10 years.

In terms of skills acquired during science of reading PD and applied in the classroom, the two highest included:

- “Engaging your undergraduate students in conversations related to science of reading concepts and skills,” (23/85%)
- “Structuring your college classroom instruction to include science of reading-related concepts and skills,” (22/81%)

When asked about the “Classroom results achieved in relation to faculty science of reading professional development,” the top two responses included:

- Increased student comprehension in understanding why students have difficulty learning to read (22/81%)
- Increased student mastery for applying science of reading-based concepts in teaching reading in grades K-3, including phonemes (17/63%)

When asked about their perceptions about the impact of the science of reading-related professional development nineteen (70%) of respondents selected either high or moderate.

The two highest responses selected in relation to what elements of the science of reading professional development they found most helpful, the participants selected:

- Participation in the seminars (21/78%)
- Knowledge sharing with other participants in the science of reading professional development events (21/74%)

Queried about hindrances to effectively implementing their science of reading professional development effectively, respondents selected the following responses as the two highest:

- Lack of planned time to implement science of reading concepts and skills in my instructional approach (7/26%)
- Undergraduate students who are either unfavorable or disinterested in learning about and implementing science of reading based skills and concepts (4/15%)

Responding to a query regarding what they had modified in their classroom practice as a result of their participation in the science of reading-based professional development, participants selected the following two items as the highest:

- Assignments (19/71%)
- Syllabi (16/59%)

The final core question asked about further impacts they saw in relation to their participation. The highest two responses included:

- The science of reading training and professional growth model has provided more consistency to the structure and content of the EL1 and EL2 courses I teach. (18/67%)

- I have increased the explicit modeling of early literacy instruction in the EL1 and EL2 courses I teach. (16/59%)

From the Mississippi Momentum Baseline Survey of First Year Educators in the Field:

Of the ninety-seven respondents, the two largest EPPs had a participation rate of twenty (23.71)% respondents each and were the EPPs with the highest number of respondents.

Many teacher candidates in Mississippi begin as community college students and then transfer to a four-year institution. Of the first year teachers surveyed, twelve (12.37)% indicated they had attended Itawamba Community College, the CC with the highest number of respondents prior to entering their current EPP. Another thirty-three (34.03)%, the highest response selection, indicated they had not attended a community college prior to enrollment in their current EPP.

In terms of the sequence followed for completing the core EL1 and EL2 courses, the results indicate large percentages of students pursued a logical pattern of completing their EL1 during the fall semester (63.04%) followed by EL2 in the spring (46.51%) of their junior year.

A majority of respondents indicated they felt **well prepared in the domains** of: Concepts of Print (58.76%), Phonological Awareness (59.38%), Phonemic Awareness (58.33%) and Phonics/Decoding (54.17%).

A majority of respondents indicated they felt **well prepared through their EL1 professor** in the domains of: Concepts of Print (58.76%), Phonological Awareness (59.38%), Phonemic Awareness (58.33%) and Phonics/Decoding (54.17%).

The percentage of respondents who indicated they felt **well prepared through their EL2 professor** hit 50% or above in four of the domains. These included oral language development; vocabulary; products of comprehended text (main idea, theme, cause and effect, etc.); and text types.

In response to a question regarding the grade they taught this past year, while fairly evenly distributed across choices, those who selected third grade were in the largest group at twenty (20.62)%.

The respondents who indicated they were spending 90 to 120 minutes each day (36/37.11%) were more than double the next level who taught 60 to 90 minutes (18/18.56%).

When queried about the physical environment they used to teach reading, the two highest response choices included “self-contained classroom” and “for my grade level (departmentalized)” at 45/46.39% and 34/35.058%, respectively.

Out of the twenty who responded to a question regarding passage rates for the third grade students who took the reading proficiency assessment, six indicated passage rates of 100% and another ten indicated a rate of 90-99%.

In response to a query concerning influences on their ability to teach reading, respondents could choose from a list of ten choices and assign relative weights to each in terms of this influence. Responses indicated widely distributed results. In terms of a couple of examples to illustrate what respondents thought as being 100% influential, the number include eighteen who thought “a supervisory teacher during my internship experience” fit this designation as well as another fifteen each who indicated “Professional development offered by school or district” or “My own initiative and self-study”

Queried about what best described their approaches to reading, eighty-one (83.51%) respondents chose “small group” and another eighty (82.47%) respondents indicated “differentiated.”

When asked about their Foundations of Reading test, forty-two (43.3%) respondents selected “my program prepared me well,” and another thirty-three (34.02%) respondents chose, “my program somewhat prepared me.”

Responding to their level of preparedness for teaching reading on the first day of class, more than two-thirds of the respondents felt either well-prepared (22/22.68%) or moderately prepared (46/47.42%).

The last question of this survey asked respondents for suggestions to improve teacher preparation in the state of Mississippi, seventy-seven provided answers that ranged across several domains. A few examples included: the need for more practice in the classroom, guidance on how to use data to drive instruction, and seeing what expert teaching looks like.

From the Interviews of EPP Project Participants:

The interviews included fifty-one questions across five domains, including the science of reading modules, classroom instruction, knowledge to practice phase (referred to as mentoring during the interviews), the Jackson-based seminars, and the “global aspects” of the MS Momentum Partnership.

Interviewees found the science of reading modules accessible, useful and applicable to their everyday classroom practice and generally superior to better than other professional development materials they had used.

Specifically, they found the explanations of practices related to teaching reading thoroughly grounded in evidence-based research and understandable.

Not one of the respondents felt the time commitment necessary for preparation or participation in the professional development activities was excessive.

In relation to the classroom instruction that the national literacy consultant provided, respondents thought their experience useful and applicable. They also commented that they always felt the consultant respected and supported them at all times. In addition, they regarded him as easy to engage with and accessible outside of the formal instructional settings.

Regarding the mentoring visits, while not all had yet received those, those who did thought the experience proved useful, informative, and helpful in improving their engagement with preservice educators.

Interviewees generally agreed that the length, pace, and content were all at satisfactory levels and reflected a good balance in relation to the materials covered.

In particular, interviewees saw the consultant's role during these visits as a critical and constructive observer as extremely productive and beneficial to their growth as college professors.

As noted earlier, the various interviewees thought the Jackson-based seminars useful in terms of their time in preparation as well as actual attendance.

All appreciated the mixture of instructional strategies the Mississippi Momentum partners used to engage the participants. These included large and small group instruction, various hands-on activities, short presentations, and feedback provided through the interactive assessments used to gauge their level of comprehension and recall of various concepts, techniques, and approaches they experience through their participation. They appreciated the opportunities to network with faculty from other EPPs the seminars provided.

While participants thought the two-day structure and the geographic location of the seminars worked successfully, some of them indicated the meeting space at the Barksdale Reading Institute was somewhat cramped and offered suggestions for other locations.

They appreciate the pace and the content of the seminars and especially the interspersed breaks and being provided on-site lunches.

In discussing the "global aspects" of the MS Momentum Partnership, all of them commented on the ongoing commitment to having the professional development grounded in evidence-based research tied to the science of reading.

For the most part, they believed their previous education had prepared them for successfully engaging in the MS Momentum Partnership, whether through their coursework, previous mentors, teaching experiences, or self-study and professional interests.

They found that the ongoing linkages to neuroscience covered in the classroom instruction, mentoring, and seminars useful and applicable and that these linkages helped expand their awareness of how to approach different children, especially those diagnosed with dyslexia, for reading instruction.

Interviewees agreed that their participation had made positive impacts on the course materials they generated and especially in terms of their explicit modeling during instruction.

While some EPPs have a formal structure in place whereby faculty are able to monitor the preparation level of their students as they move into careers as professional educators, not all have done so.

Introduction and Overview

In late summer of 2017, the MS Momentum Partnership approached and ultimately selected the University of New Mexico Cradle to Career Policy Institute to conduct an evaluation of their initiative. The full range of Mississippi Momentum partners includes five entities, including The Barksdale Reading Institute (BRI), the Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction (CELI), the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), The Assistant Commissioner for the Institutions of Higher Learning (EPP), and the Higher Education Literacy Council (HELC). These partners applied for and received grant funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to conduct the project. The University of Mississippi serves as the fiscal agent for the project.

One of the key elements of this project is the use of a nationally recognized curriculum that Dr. Louisa Moats developed known as the Language Essentials for the Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS). In addition, the professional development model used various other practice-centered activities including on campus classroom instruction and mentoring, and seminars focused on improving the knowledge, capabilities and techniques of early literacy faculty in all fifteen of the public and private EPPs across Mississippi who prepare preservice educators who will teach reading to children in grades K-3. The CCPI has worked primarily with two partners, the BRI and CELI, in conducting this evaluation.

The evaluation is a required component of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan grant provided to the MS Momentum Partnership. The Phil Hardin Foundation of Meridian, Mississippi provided the funding for the evaluation. Both the MS Momentum Partnership and the evaluation will continue through August 2020.

This report provides baseline findings of data collected and analyzed from a survey and interviews the CCPI conducted with faculty participants and a survey of early career educators the partners of the Mississippi Momentum created and conducted. Six main sections make up the structure of this report, including (1) this introduction and overview; (2) a brief review of the observations made during the science of reading training sessions and seminars held during April and May in Jackson, MS, and (3) discussions of: the CCPI survey, (4) the first year educator survey, (5) the interviews the CCPI conducted, and (6) a conclusion.

A Brief Summary of the Evaluation

The CCPI evaluator used an approach Robert O. Brinkerhoff developed known as the Success Case Method (SCM). While multi-method in structure, the methodology is also cost-efficient. Brinkerhoff developed it to assist in the determination of the efficacy of professional growth models. The evaluation will contribute to the knowledge base as a result of professional development and mentoring for evidence-based practices for early literacy instruction for EPP faculty in Mississippi who are engaged in quality improvement activities with the potential to improve their knowledge, skills, and interactions with pre-service educators. A brief discussion of the methodology follows below.

It needs to be stressed CCPI did not design the evaluation to be one of the quality of science of reading modules or curriculum (rather to focus more generally on impact of the science of

reading as professional development content) nor establish the efficacy of the professional development on early literacy outcomes for children in grades K-3. Such a focus would, of necessity, on one hand, be beyond the scope of the evaluation and, on the other, have to be undertaken after the pre-service teachers who are in settings taught by university faculty engaged in the MS Momentum Partnership have moved into the early elementary classrooms, which may be several years in the future depending upon the pre-service teacher candidate's current position in their teacher professional growth model. Instead, the professional development evaluation has five aims:

1. Assess key features of implementation of the MS Momentum Partnership (professional development of university faculty, mentoring, and field observation methods) and identify factors that facilitate or impede successful implementation
2. Identify the successes and challenges of strategies used by participating faculty to implement and enact the professional development elements they received over the course of their participation in the MS Momentum Partnership
3. Examine variations in the use of available strategies and delivery of curriculum content to understand how EPP faculty are individualizing the approach based on the needs of their pre-service students [teacher candidates] and to identify challenges or deviations from the intended approach
4. Assess how the MS Momentum Partnership supports the development of university faculty members' knowledge, practices with pre-service teachers, and participation in quality improvement activities and professional opportunities
5. Assess stakeholders' perceptions of the successes, challenges and lessons learned from the Mississippi Momentum faculty professional development partnership

Through a multi-method study including both qualitative and quantitative data, the professional development evaluation describes the MS Momentum Partnership's implementation activities, successes and challenges, and assesses the feasibility of continuing the initiative with university faculty involved in the pre-service professional development of early elementary educators within the State of Mississippi. Evaluation findings provided in this report offer lessons learned and a deeper understanding about the features of the professional development approach that can be implemented as intended and to support early elementary educators in their application of new practices with the children they serve.

Seminar Observation

In April and May 2018, Mississippi Momentum conducted two seminars for faculty participants at the Barksdale Reading Institute. A one day science of reading training session held at the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning preceded the April seminar. Both locations are in Jackson. During the visits, Dr. Hughes was able to observe the activities of the Mississippi Momentum partners, including Dr. Angela Rutherford, Kelly Butler, Dr. Michael Cormack, and Dr. Antonio Fierro, the national literacy consultant, as they engaged in various professional development activities with the attendees. The April activities included Dr. Fierro starting off with a review of concepts and materials addressed in the science of reading modules, including

reading comprehension, Scarborough's Rope Model, Four-part Processing Model, and various key terms, such as phonics, phonemes, and phonology. Dr. Cormack conducted a review of *How Learning Works: Seven research-based principles from smart teaching*, chapter 1, and had the attendees develop a student self-assessment or interest inventory. The modeling/delivery methods that Dr. Cormack used over the two days included several examples from the repertoire developed by the National School Reform Faculty. These included the Four As Text Protocol: What Assumptions does the author of the text hold? • What do you Agree with in the text? • What do you want to Argue with in the text? • What parts of the text do you want to Aspire to, Forming Ground Rules, Artifact Sharing, a Professional Learning Community Survey, and Picture Metaphors that served as the closing activity. The protocols provide additional examples for presenting material to pre-service candidates that EPP faculty can use.

During the May meeting, Dr. Cormack covered chapters 2 & 3 of *How Learning Works*, engaged the attendees about the concept map or graphic organizer they completed, and a grading rubric. The modeling/delivery methods he used included handouts on ones of Comfort, Risk, & Danger; Literacy Task Analysis/Matching Activity; a "Setting Goals" article along with the Block Party Text Protocol; then closed with an activity writing on Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely (SMART) goals.

During the May seminar, Dr. Fierro periodically engaged attendees with a series of assessments related to the science of reading materials, whereby he posted a question on a smart board and attendees could select an answer via a "clicker." After each question, Dr. Fierro would review the results with the group and address any questions or misconceptions attendees may have had. This procedure proved useful to clarify information that participants still did not understand. Attendees engaged in small and large group discussion, various hands on activities and ongoing question and answer engagement with the presenters. The seminars lasted from 9:00 AM till approximately 3:00 PM with period breaks and a lunch that was brought in. The Mississippi Momentum partners and Dr. Fierro held a debriefing session at the close of each session's second day to discuss the previous two days of activities and to plan for future events. The use of the text *How Learning Works* in the MS Momentum Partnership reflects the initiative's emphasis throughout all its activities on the science of reading. The text, *How Learning Works*, presents seven principles of adult learning that bridge learning research and actual teaching practice. The emphasis on the effective teaching strategies found in this text undergirds objectives of Mississippi Momentum and offers a common text for participating faculty to discuss concepts and suggested practices addressed in the science of reading.

A Note on Methodology

The SCM methodology relies on preliminary surveys to help identify professional development participants who were later invited to participate in more in-depth interviews. The intention was to use the surveys to ascertain which individuals who participated in and received professional development have made the shift to implement the skills they were exposed to during their instructional (group or mentoring) or seminar sessions. In conjunction with a focus on those who successfully implemented the skills and practices received through professional development with a high degree of fidelity, the SCM approach also identifies individuals who, for whatever reason, have not done so. Ideally, while the survey results should provide a window on these

two tails of the distribution of professional development implementation by participants and allow for their identification, this did not occur because the survey results skewed to the positive. Nonetheless, the survey allowed for identification of potential interviewees through a question that asked whether they would agree to be interviewed. Fifteen of the twenty-seven survey respondents indicated this willingness. CCPI identified ten and ultimately selected eight who agreed to an interview. CCPI contacted the interviewees by email and asked for a date and time that would fit their schedules and a phone number. Once set, CCPI conducted the interviews by phone and audio recorded the conversations. CCPI sent the audio recordings to a professional transcription service and later used the transcripts for coding and thematic analysis.

The purpose of the interviews was two-fold. First, the interviews allowed the evaluator to ascertain what skills the faculty members learned during professional development and whether they applied them in their interactions with pre-service teacher candidates. And, second, the interviews allowed for the discovery of what obstacles (time, comprehension, commitment, mindset, etc.), if any, impeded the implementation of the skills addressed during the professional development sessions related to the science of reading.

The principal investigator from CCPI, Scott D. Hughes, PhD, attended two seminar sessions and one science of reading training that Mississippi Momentum conducted in Jackson, Mississippi in April and May 2018. One purpose of the visits was to have Dr. Hughes introduce himself to the participants, explain the evaluation, and to secure informed consents and audio recording releases from the participants. While each of the faculty members who attended the seminars signed a consent form, not all of them agreed to be audio recorded. These consents and releases will remain effective for the duration of the evaluation. The second purpose of the visits was to observe the operation of the seminars and thus have Dr. Hughes be better informed about this dimension of the professional development model. A brief discussion of the seminar activities is provided in the next section following this introduction and overview.

Because this evaluation is technically a program evaluation, CCPI, working in conjunction with Dr. Rutherford of CELL, applied for an authorization agreement to the University of Mississippi (UM) Institutional Review Board. The Board issued this agreement on April 3, 2018. The University of New Mexico Office of Institutional Review Board (OIRB), in turn, concurred with the authorization agreement made by the UM IRB. Although the UM IRB granted this waiver, Dr. Hughes chose to use informed consents and audio recording releases to build trust with participants and ensure them that their privacy would be protected, and no personally identifiable information would be shared.

Limitations

The findings provided in this report offer a baseline first-year assessment of a three-year evaluation. In general, the findings are positive and present a professional development approach that appears to be promoting individual growth in terms of changed mindsets and instructional practices of participating faculty. Nonetheless, although the presented materials indicate several positive indicators and suggestive trends, it would be premature to draw major conclusions at this time as to the overall efficacy of the Mississippi Momentum initiative.

The Faculty Survey

As part of the first year’s evaluation activities, CCPI administered a survey to thirty-nine faculty participants in the MS Momentum Partnership. Twenty-seven of the thirty-nine answered the survey for a response rate of 69%. Comprised of eleven questions, CCPI designed the survey in compliance with Brinkerhoff’s Success Case Methodology so respondents could complete it with a minimal time commitment. On average, it took seven minutes to complete based on analytics that Survey Monkey, the platform used, supplied. The survey included three primary sections: background information related to years teaching at the college level; 2) application of science of reading professional development; and 3) factors that drive success or non-success. The following discussion provides a summary of survey that operated from mid-April to the end of May 2018. CCPI sent out three reminders to non-respondents over the period the survey was open. For each of the tables, the percentages reported are rounded to the nearest full number. The survey served as a means for screening and selecting Mississippi Momentum participants for a more in-depth follow-up interview. The results of these interviews appear later in the report. It needs to be noted that use of the term “student” produced some ambiguity in that it was used to mean undergraduates in some contexts and elementary students in others. To eliminate any possible confusion, the term “preservice teacher candidate” appears in brackets where appropriate to convey the correct meaning.

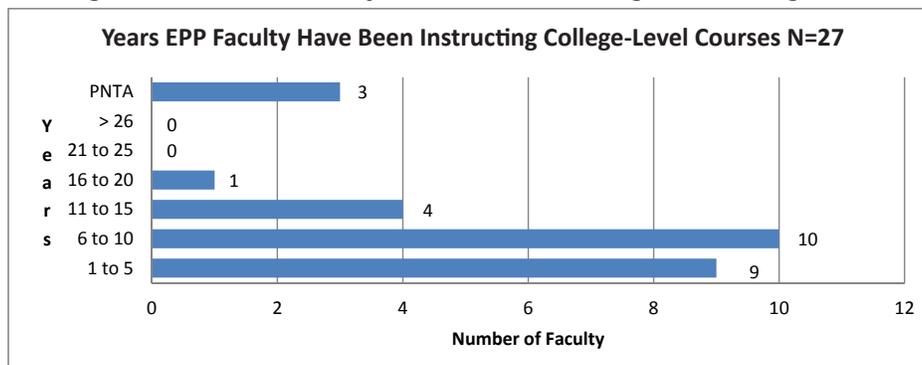
The first question simply served as a screen that was required for compliance with the waiver the University of Mississippi Institutional Review Board (IRB) provided and asked whether the respondent was eighteen years of age. As was expected, all twenty-seven respondents answered yes to this question.

The second question asked how many years each faculty member had been instructing at the college level:

2) Please select from the options below, how many years you have been teaching college level courses in the area of early literacy (designated as K-3) to undergraduate students [preservice teacher candidates] in a teacher preparation program?

Figure 1 below provides the distribution of responses. As illustrated, the most common selection was 6 to 10 years at ten (37%) and at a close second was service from 1 to 5 years at nine (33%). Four (15%) selected 11 to 15 years, one (4%) selected 16 to 20 years, and another three (11%) selected “I prefer not to answer” which is indicated as PNTA in figure 1.

Figure 1. Years EPP faculty have been instructing at the college level

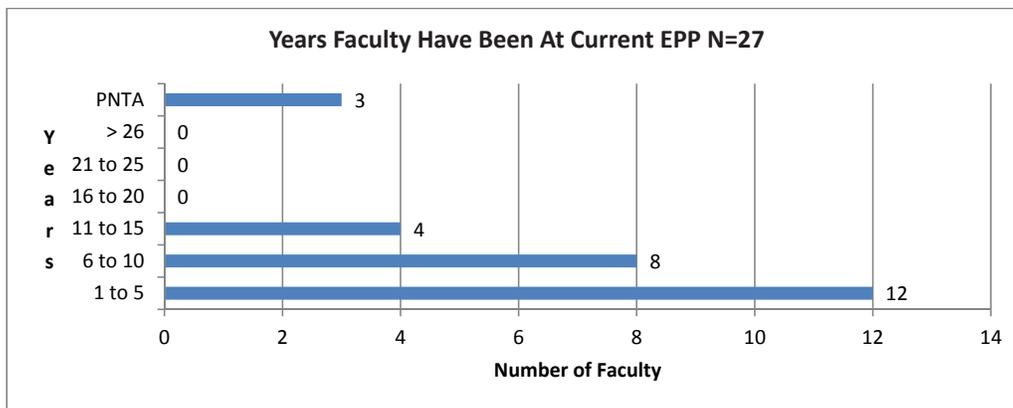


The next question asked how long each participant had been at his or her current EPP.

3) *From the selections below, please indicate how many years you have held an instructional position at your current institution of higher learning in which you have taught undergraduate students [preservice teacher candidates] in a teacher preparation program?*

The results from this question appear in figure 2 below. The largest number of faculty at twelve (44%) indicated they had been at their current EPP between 1 to 5 years. Whereas eight (30%) chose 6 to 10 years, another four (15%) indicated they had held their position for 11 to 15 years. Zero respondents indicated 16 to 20, 21 to 25, or equal to or more than 26 years. As with the previous question, three respondents selected “I prefer not to answer (PNTA)”

Figure 2. Years at current EPP



The next three questions shifted the focus of the survey to the section related to the application of science of reading professional development. The responses for each of the three questions in this group appear in table format with both a count and a percentage illustrated for each.

Please note that references to responses are by the factor number that appears on the left side of each table. This approach to referencing responses appears throughout the rest of the discussion for this survey.

Question four reads:

4) *Based on the skills you acquired in your science of reading professional development, which of the following skills have you successfully applied in your college classroom? (Check all that apply)*

Most participants (23/83%) chose factor three followed by factors two and six (22/81% each). The third most common factors chosen included one and nine (21/78% each) with two others, seven and eight, at 18/67% each. The remaining three factors: ten (13/48%), five (17/46%) and four (10/37%), captured the remainder of the responses. Results from question four appear in Table 1.

Table 1. Skills acquired during science of reading PD and applied in the classroom

Factor	Q4	Count	%
1	Introducing science of reading related concepts and skills	21	78
2	Structuring your college classroom instruction to include science of reading related concepts and skills	22	81
3	Engaging your undergraduate students [preservice teacher candidates] in conversations related to science of reading concepts and skills	23	85
4	Explaining how using science of reading related concepts and skills differs from other approaches to teaching early literacy in grades K-3	10	37
5	Exploring the reasons students have difficulty learning to read using science of reading based concepts	17	46
6	Exploring how children learn to read using science of reading based concepts	22	81
7	Exploring the reasons students have difficulty learning to read using science of reading based concepts	18	67
8	Developing skills in phonetics instruction using science of reading based concepts	18	67
9	Developing skills in phoneme instruction using science of reading based concepts	21	78
10	Developing skills in how English language spelling “works” using science of reading based concepts	13	48

Question five addressed what type of classroom results participants have seen in conjunction with their science of reading professional development. The responses specifically referred to the types of skills and knowledge preservice teacher candidates are expected to develop as they work with the evidence-based materials.

5) Using the concepts and skills you’ve applied in your science of reading professional development, what classroom results have you achieved? (Check all that apply)

By far, factor one shows the most common response selected (22/81%), which indicates a significant finding in this survey in that a large majority of faculty believe their preservice candidates are able to comprehend reasons why the students they are teaching to read have difficulty acquiring that ability. The next highest choice, factor four came in at 17/63%. Factors five and eight at 14/52% and 13/48%, came next in the order, respectively, followed by factors two (8/30%) and three (9/33%). The last two, factors six (4/15%) and seven (3/11%), came in at relatively low response rates in relation to the others. Results appear in Table 2.

Question six sought to determine faculty perceptions of the impact their science of reading professional development was helping produce in the form of measurable academic progress in their undergraduate preservice students.

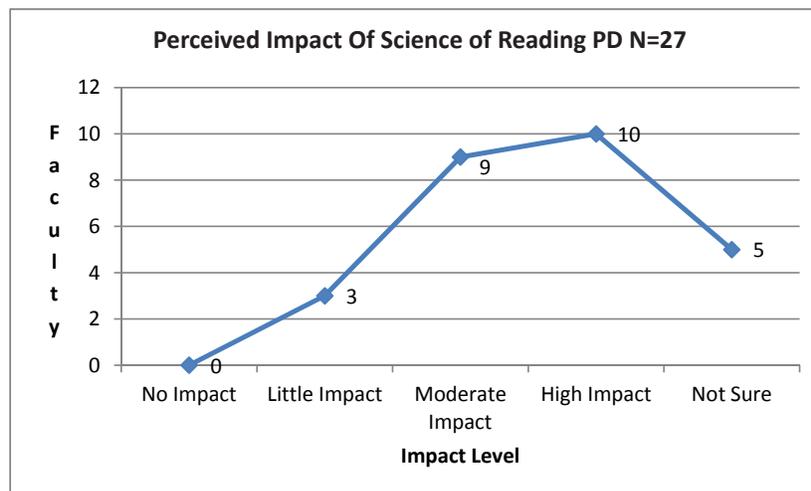
Table 2. Classroom results achieved in relation to faculty science of reading professional development

Factor	Q5	Count	%
1	Increased student [preservice teacher candidate] comprehension in understanding why students have difficulty learning to read	22	81
2	Students [preservice teacher candidates] display mastery for applying science of reading based concepts in teaching reading in grades K-3, including phonics	8	30
3	Students [preservice teacher candidates] show mastery for applying science of reading based concepts in teaching reading in grades K-3, including phonology	9	33
4	Increased student [preservice teacher candidates] mastery for applying science of reading based concepts in teaching reading in grades K-3, including phonemes	17	63
5	Increased student [preservice teacher candidate] comprehension of how English language spelling works	14	52
6	Students [preservice teacher candidates] are fully capable for applying science of reading based concepts in teaching spelling in grades K-3	4	15
7	Students [preservice teacher candidates] illustrate mastery for teaching reading to English language learners	3	11
8	Students [preservice teacher candidates] display mastery for engaging in differentiated instruction using science of reading based concepts and skills	13	48

6) Overall, how much impact has your science of reading-based professional development had in helping you produce measurable academic progress in your undergraduate students [preservice teacher candidates] enrolled in a teacher preparation program?

As illustrated in figure 3 below, a large majority of participants indicated a moderate (9/33%) or high (10/37%) perceived level of impact their science of reading-related professional development was having on measurable academic progress in their preservice teacher candidates. Another three (11%) indicated little impact and five (19%) were not sure.

Figure 3. Perceived Impact of Science of Reading PD



The last section of the survey included four questions developed to help determine factors that drive success or non-success in their own professional growth.

Question seven prompted respondents to consider what factors helped them effectively use the learning experiences from the science of reading professional development.

7) What factors helped you to use the learning experiences from the science of reading professional development effectively? (Check all that apply)

Results from this question presented in Table 3 below show the distribution of responses. Respondents selected factor 9 the most (21/78%), and factor 3 the least (7/26%) out of the selections. Perhaps the most significant finding from this question is that solid majorities of respondents chose seven of the eleven choices. The responses for each factor are as follows: 7 (20/74%), 6 (19/70%), 2 (18/66%), 4 (15/55%), and 1 (14/52%). Two factors, five and eight, each had solid responses, even if not in majority ranges of 11/41% each. One respondent selected “Other” and that comment appears at the bottom of Table 3.

Table 3. Factors that helped faculty use science of reading PD effectively

Factor	Q7	Count	%
1	My solid understanding of the science of reading based concepts and skills learned in this professional development	14	52
2	My belief that the science of reading based professional development will improve my teaching of my undergraduate students [preservice teacher candidates]	18	66
3	Discussion with my chair about how science of reading professional development will help me and our department be more successful	7	26
4	Availability of support from personnel involved with the Mississippi Momentum initiative	15	55
5	Planned time and resources to implement science of reading based concepts and skills	11	41
6	Professional environment in which learning and knowledge sharing are valued	19	70
7	Knowledge sharing with other participants in the science of reading professional development events	20	74
8	Follow-up discussion and mentoring with the science of reading professional development personnel	11	41
9	Participation in the seminars	21	78
10	Favorable mindset of undergraduate students [preservice teacher candidates] to adopt science of reading based concepts and skills in the their instructional framework	15	55
11	Other (please specify)	1	4
Comment:			
Science of reading training and seminars have reassured the concepts and skills I have been teaching in the undergraduate classes. They help me to understand the students better and [how they] learn differently.			

Question eight sought to determine what factors, if any, hindered faculty members’ ability to implement the learning experiences from the science of reading PD effectively.

8) What factors (if any) hindered your ability to implement the learning experiences from the science of reading professional development effectively? (Check all that apply)

This question offered nine responses as choice options. Of these, nobody selected three factors—two, three and four. For the remaining five factors, not one had a majority of respondents that selected it. The factor with the highest relative number was five that had a 7/26% (count/

percentage). Factor four at 4/15% was the next highest. Factors one, six and seven each had a 2/7% split. Factor nine at 6/22% was the “Other” response choice and the various comments are included at the bottom of Table 4. Of note, one respondent indicated that the science of reading materials was not sufficient for pre-service teachers and suggested that sole reliance on the curriculum inadequately prepares them.

Table 4. Factor that hinder faculty ability to implement science of reading PD effectively

Factor	Q8	Count	%
1	My incomplete understanding of concepts and skills learned during the professional development activities	2	7
2	My belief that the professional development will not improve my results (e.g. they are irrelevant for my current academic position or will not help me advance professionally)	0	0
3	Lack of clear support from my department’s administration for science of reading related professional development	0	0
4	Lack of follow up support from science of reading related personnel	0	0
5	Lack of planned time to implement science of reading concepts and skills in my instructional approach	7	26
6	Lack of resources to implement science of reading concepts and skills in my instructional approach	2	7
7	Professional environment that has little support for knowledge sharing related to the science of reading approach to early literacy instruction	2	7
8	Undergraduate students [preservice teacher candidates] who are either unfavorable or disinterested in learning about and implementing science of reading based skills and concepts	4	15
9	Other (please specify)	6	22
N/A			
Time to Plan and Implement			
Time issues. EL 1 class has so much content it is extremely difficult for me to cover all the concepts and skills in depth.			
There have been no obstacles in implementation.			
Not sufficient for pre-service teachers. If all I can use is evidence-based materials, then my students are not being adequately prepared for teaching.			
My choice on this question is not to be seen as a negative. This type of instruction is new to teacher preparation students in our program.			

The last two questions in the third section focused on changes to course materials and monitoring preservice teacher candidates. Question nine addressed the first part through the following query:

9) To reflect more of the science of reading, for the EL1 and EL2 courses I teach I have altered my:

- Syllabi
- Course outlines

Assignments

Assessments

As the results in Table 5 shows, a majority of respondents indicated they had modified one or more of the various items listed. For instance, 19/71% designated a change in item 3, assignments, which suggests strongly that the professional development Mississippi Momentum is providing is exerting a positive effect on modifying classroom instruction. Another 16/59% selected item one, syllabi, as one they altered. Items two and four both show that 14/52% have altered their course outlines and assessments. Finally, 2/7% selected the “Other” option. One commented she altered instructional strategies and class readings and the last indicated she had not yet taught an EL1 or EL2 course yet. In year two, participants will be bringing sample artifacts to seminars for presentation and critique, which will offer further evidence of how much their engagement in Mississippi Momentum has exerted influence on their classroom practice.

Table 5 - Course items altered

Item	Q9	Count	%
1	Syllabi	16	59
2	Course outlines	14	52
3	Assignments	19	71
4	Assessments	14	52
5	Other (Please specify)	2	7
Other Comments			
I altered the instructional strategies and class readings			
I did not teach EL1 or EL2 courses			

Question ten sought to determine whether respondents realized any specific impacts from a group of four choices and was framed in the following manner:

10) Has the science of reading professional development and growth model resulted in any of the following impacts?

Table 6 provides the summary results and illustrates that two of the impact selections (one and two) received majority counts at 18/67% and 16/59% respectively. Whereas respondents chose the other two impact items—three and four—on a more modest level at 8/30% and 7/26% each.

CCPI used the final question eleven as an invitation for a more in-depth interview concerning the evaluation of the science of reading professional development model. A total of 15 respondents responded “yes” and ten received a follow-up query. Of those eight participated in an interview. The results of these appear later on in this report.

Table 6. Science of reading PD impacts

Impact	Q10	Count	%
1	The science of reading training and professional growth model has provided more consistency to the structure and content of the EL1 and EL2 courses I teach.	18	67
2	I have increased the explicit modeling of early literacy instruction in the EL1 and EL2 courses I teach.	16	59
3	I monitor the elementary education majors who are participating in the EPPs 15-hour required early literacy sequence for using a more structured and explicit approach to teaching	8	30
4	I have seen improved mean cut scores and passage rates for the Foundations of Reading assessment for my students [preservice teacher candidates] since I have begun participation in the science of reading professional development	7	26

Concluding Comments

The ten questions that made up the survey of faculty participants show a majority of the respondents (19 of 27) have been faculty only between one and ten years. They also show that a majority (20 of 27) have been at their current EPP between one and ten years. A majority believe they are learning new and effective skills through their participation in Mississippi Momentum and that these skills are having at least a moderate if not a high impact. Many of them have altered different components of the EL1 and EL2 courses, such as the syllabi, outlines, and materials. They wish they had more time to spend on the implementation of science of reading concepts and skills. And, more than half think that the professional development they have received has produced more consistency in the EL1 and EL2 courses they teach and that they practice more explicit modeling of the techniques they have learned for teaching reading.

The Survey of First Year Educators

In order to establish a baseline sense of the impact the Mississippi Momentum model and professional development activities was having on preservice educators as they started out their careers, the partners constructed and distributed the survey that the outside evaluator later analyzed. The partners intended the results of this survey to serve as a baseline for data from first year educators whose EPP faculty had not yet participated in the Mississippi Momentum professional development activities. The partners distributed the survey to all school districts in the State of Mississippi that, in turn, distributed to their new teachers. Mississippi Momentum received ninety-seven responses. Due to a lack of knowing the number of individuals the districts distributed the survey to, a response rate is unable to be calculated. Entitled, “Mississippi Momentum: A MS Momentum Partnership to Improve Early Literacy Instruction,” and comprised of fourteen questions the survey addressed the following topics:

- the EPP the respondent attended for their preservice training;
- if they attended a community college prior to transferring to a four-year undergraduate program;
- what areas of early literacy development their EL1 and 2 professors covered and prepared them to teach;
- what grade they taught this past school year (2017-18);
- hours during the school day they taught reading; the setting reading instruction occurred;
- if a 3rd grade teacher, the percentage of students that passed the state reading assessment;
- sources that supported their early literacy instruction;
- how they describe their style for teaching reading;
- their impressions of the Foundations of Reading assessment (the assessment that requires passage for licensure); and
- their perceived level of preparedness to teach early literacy; and suggestions they had for improving early literacy instruction at Mississippi’s EPPs.

The results of this survey make up the findings presented in this section.

The first question for the survey queried what EPP the respondent attended for their preservice educator preparation.

“Which educator preparation program did you attend?”

Variation in program enrollment across the institutions likely accounts for some of the differences in respondent rate. As reflected in the responses, the two EPPs that have the largest teacher preparation programs in Mississippi, both had equal number of respondents at 23/23.71% each. The next highest number of respondents came from Delta State University at 11/11.34%. The University of Southern Mississippi came in next at 8/8.2%; followed by Mississippi College at 7/7.22% and William Carey at 6/6.19%. With 5/5.15% respondents, Blue Mountain College came in next, with Bellehaven University indicated as having 4/4.12%. Two EPPs, Alcorn State University and Mississippi Valley State University, each had 3/3.09% respondents. One EPP had a single respondent and another three of the fifteen had zero respondents.

The second question of the survey read,

“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.”

By far, “I did not attend a community college” at 33/34.02% was the largest number of responses; however, this indicates that 65% of respondents *did* attend a community college prior to transferring to a bachelor’s degree granting college or university. Four community colleges—Hinds, Jones County JC, Northeast Mississippi, and Northwest Mississippi—had 7/7.22% report earlier attendance. Another 6/6.19% indicated they had “transferred from another university,” and two CCs—Coahoma and Holmes—had 4/4.12% respondents. Three CCs each had 3/3.09% respondents—Copiah-Lincoln, East Central and Southwest Mississippi. Mississippi Gulf Coast CC had 1/1.03% respondents and four CCs—East Mississippi, Meridian, Mississippi Delta, and Pearl River—each produced zero respondents. Table 7 provides the summary of these results.

Table 7. Community college transfers

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Percentage	Count
Coahoma Community College	4.12%	4
Copiah-Lincoln Community College	3.09%	3
East Central Community College	3.09%	3
East Mississippi Community College	0.00%	0
Hinds Community College	7.22%	7
Holmes Community College	4.12%	4
Itawamba Community College	12.37%	12
Jones County Junior College	7.22%	7
Meridian Community College	0.00%	0
Mississippi Delta Community College	0.00%	0
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College	1.03%	1
Northeast Mississippi Community College	7.22%	7
Northwest Mississippi Community College	7.22%	7
Pearl River Community College	0.00%	0
Southwest Mississippi Community College	3.09%	3
I transferred from another university prior to or in my junior year.	6.19%	6
NA: I did not attend a community college.	34.02%	33
Answered		97

The first year educator survey’s third question probed how and when the respondents completed their EL1/EL2 course sequence. In other words, the question sought to determine whether they had completed the sequence as separate courses or as a block and in what semester according to their status as juniors or seniors. The survey framed the question in this manner:

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

The results indicate large percentages of preservice teacher candidates completed their EL1 during the fall semester (63.04%) followed by EL2 in the spring (46.15%) of their junior year. For those who completed the EL1/EL2 sequence as a block 18.37% completed it during the fall semester of their junior year and 26.53% completed it as seniors during their fall semester. The remainder of the EL1, EL2 or EL1/EL2 Block options, typically completed during their senior year or an intersession all had completion percentage rates of 15.22% or less. Figure 4 below provides a graphical illustration of the distributions and Table 8 provides the counts and percentages of respondents for each choice. Any option that indicated zero responses is not displayed in figure 4.

Figure 4. Sequence for EL1/EL2 coursework

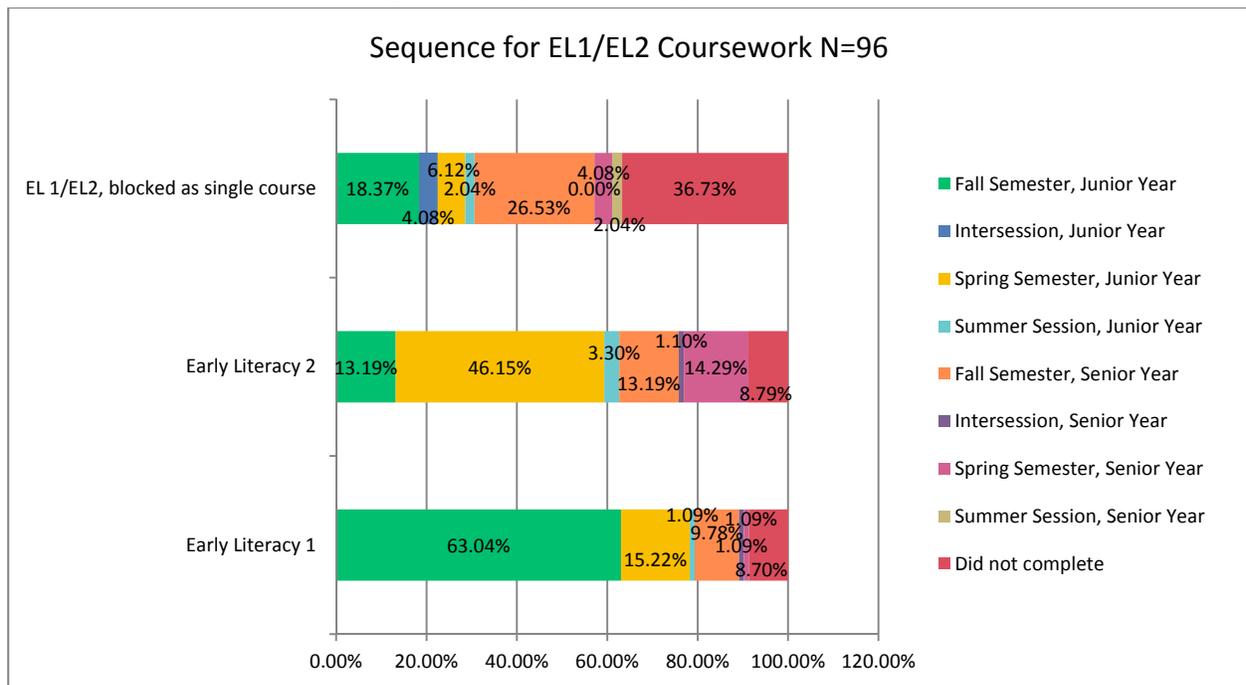


Table 8. Sequence for EL1/EL2 coursework

	Fall Semester, Junior Year		Intersession, Junior Year		Spring Semester, Junior Year		Summer Session, Junior Year	
Early Literacy 1	63.04%	58	0.00%	0	15.22%	14	1.09%	1
Early Literacy 2	13.19%	12	0.00%	0	46.15%	42	3.30%	3
EL 1/EL2, blocked as single course	18.37%	9	4.08%	2	6.12%	3	2.04%	1
	Fall Semester, Senior Year		Intersession, Senior Year		Spring Semester, Senior Year		Summer Session, Senior Year	
Early Literacy 1	9.78%	9	1.09%	1	1.09%	1	0.00%	0
Early Literacy 2	13.19%	12	1.10%	1	14.29%	13	0.00%	0
EL 1/EL2, blocked as single course	26.53%	13	0.00%	0	4.08%	2	2.04%	1
	Did not complete		Other Responses					
Early Literacy 1	8.7	8						
Early Literacy 2	0%	8						
EL 1/EL2, blocked as single course	8.79%	8						
If other sequence, please specify:	36.73%	18						
				2				

Two Written Responses:

- I have an Early Childhood Major, and I didn't have these classes but wish I would have.
- Don't remember

Question four asked how well they thought their Early Literacy 1 professors had them prepared in various content domains,

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

A majority of respondents indicated they felt **well prepared** in the domains of: Concepts of Print (58.76%), Phonological Awareness (59.38%), Phonemic Awareness (58.33%) and Phonics/Decoding (54.17%). The remaining two domains of Spelling/Encoding and Assessment of EL1 Skills both hit in the upper 40s with 45.83% and 47.37%, respectively. For respondents who chose **moderately prepared** across the same domains, the percentages ran from a low of 20.62% for Concepts of Print to a high of 36.84% for Assessment of EL1 skills. The percentages who indicated either **minimally prepared** or **not prepared at all** for any of the topics ranged from 12.5% to 2.08%, which are concerning. Finally, relatively small percentages of respondents selected “This topic was not addressed in the course” for each of the topic domains, which

appears to show a disconnection between the curriculum of the EPP the respondent attended, and licensure standards established at the Mississippi Department of Education. These ranged from 5.21% for Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics/Decoding and Spelling/Encoding, to 5.26% for Assessment of EL1 skills, and 7.22% for Concepts of Print. Results are illustrated in figure 5 and summarized in Table 9 with comments following.

Figure 5. EL1 professor preparation of preservice educators

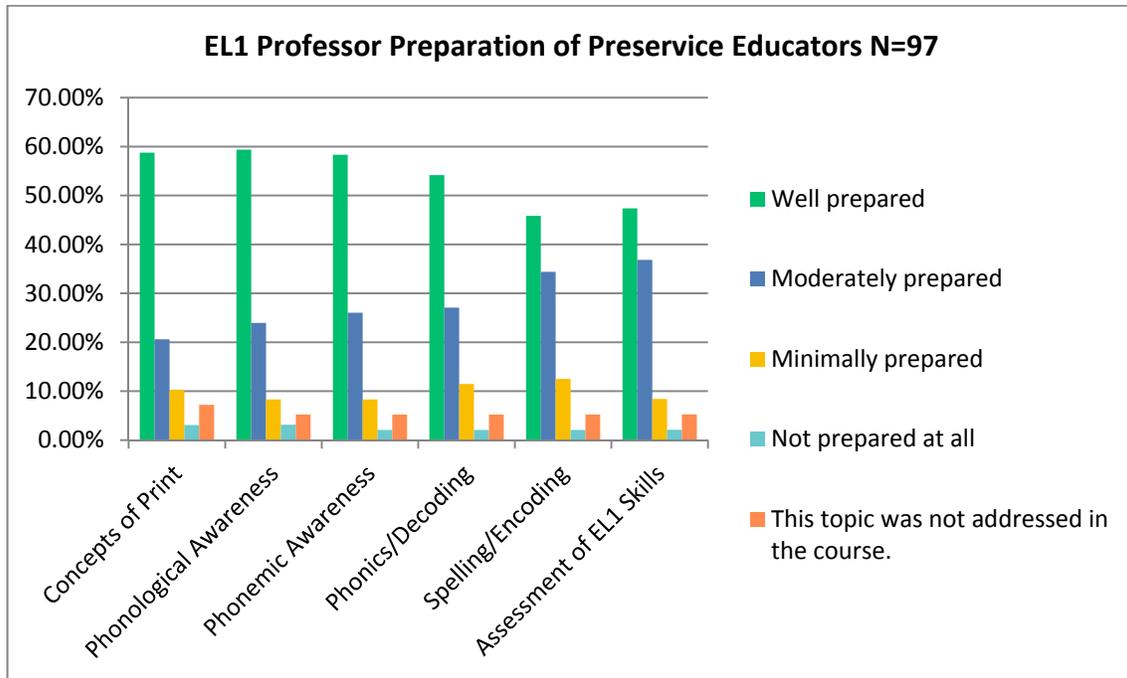


Table 9 EL1 Professors preparation of preservice educators

	Well prepared	Moderately prepared	Minimally prepared	Not prepared at all	This topic was not addressed in the course.	Total
Concepts of Print	58.76%	20.62%	10.31%	3.09%	7.22%	97
Phonological Awareness	59.38%	23.96%	8.33%	3.13%	5.21%	96
Phonemic Awareness	58.33%	26.04%	8.33%	2.08%	5.21%	96
Phonics/Decoding	54.17%	27.08%	11.46%	2.08%	5.21%	96
Spelling/Encoding	45.83%	34.38%	12.50%	2.08%	5.21%	96
Assessment of EL1 Skills	47.37%	36.84%	8.42%	2.11%	5.26%	95
Please add any other comments about your preparation to teach EL1 content in your classroom. Were other components of literacy addressed in this course? If so, please specify.						9
						Answered 97
						Skipped 0

Comments:

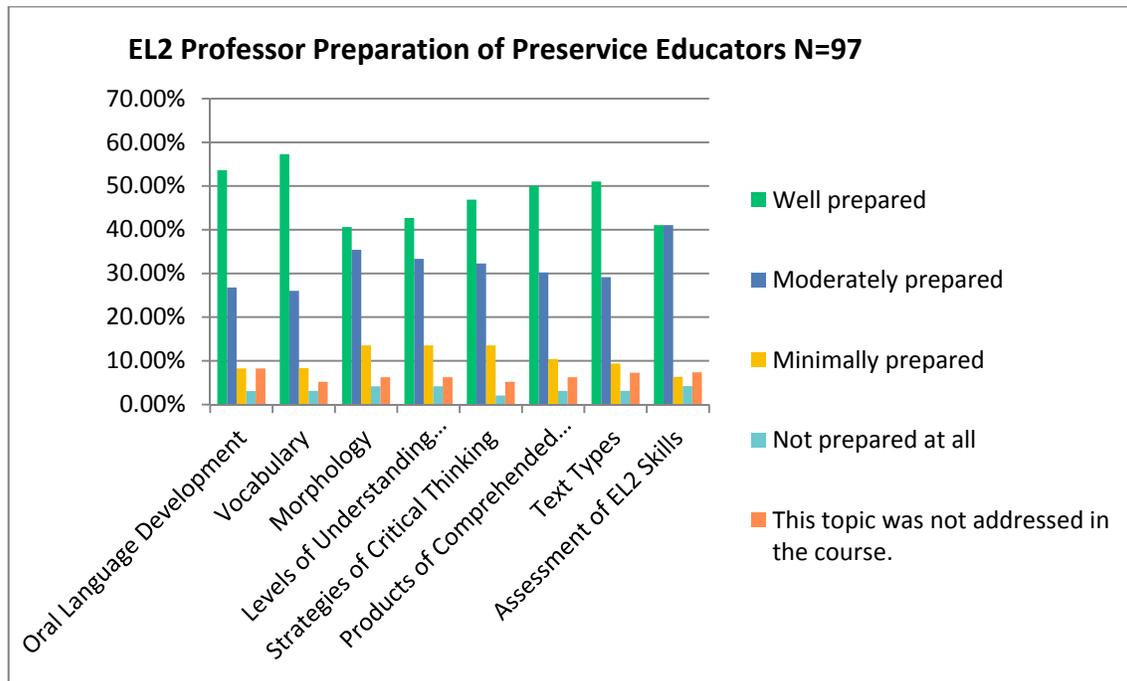
- I feel like my professor really drilled all of these aspects and prepared me fully for teaching my kindergarten kids.
- I believe that being in the classroom was more helpful to me.
- Like I stated earlier, I was an Early Childhood Student so none of this was addressed. It was mainly focused on development of children. I wish I would of had these courses.
- Alternate route. Did not take EL1
- I was extremely prepared for all of these topics. [My EPP] pinpointed each of the topics above and explicitly taught them!
- We were basically told to read the chapters about all the domains, but never were we ever taught how to teach them.
- We received the resources but it's difficult to cover all the practice one needs deeply in such short time.
- We studied in depth the 5 components of literacy: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency.

The next question, five,

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

paralleled that asked in the previous one except for focusing on the second course of the early literacy sequence (EL2). Somewhat expanded with eight domains covered versus the six in EL1, the percentage of respondents who indicated they felt **well-prepared** hit 50% or above in four of the domains. These included: oral language development; vocabulary; products of comprehended text (main idea, theme, cause and effect, etc.); and text types. The other four domains all hit within the 40 to 50% range. These included: morphology (40.63%); levels of understanding connected text (literal, inferential, propositional) (42.71%); strategies of critical thinking (46.88%); and assessment of EL2 skills (41.05%). The percentages for respondents who selected **moderately prepared** range across the domains as follows: oral language development (26.80%); vocabulary (26.04%); morphology (35.42%); levels of understanding connected text (literal, inferential, propositional) (33.33%); strategies of critical thinking (32.29%); products of comprehended text (main idea, theme, cause and effect, etc.) (30.21%); text types (29.17%); and assessment of EL2 skills (41.05%). The percentages that selected **minimally prepared** or **not prepared at all** were at 13.54% or below. The percentages of those who indicated that **the topic was not addressed in the course** ranged from a low of 5.21% for vocabulary and strategies of critical thinking to a high of 8.25% for oral language development. Figure 6 and Table 10 display these distributions.

Figure 6. EL2 Professor preparation of preservice educators



Full descriptions of topics noted in figure 6 from student survey.

- Oral Language Development
- Vocabulary
- Morphology
- Levels of Understanding Connected Text (literal, inferential, propositional)
- Strategies of Critical Thinking
- Products of Comprehended Text (main idea, theme, cause and effect, etc.)
- Text Types
- Assessment of EL2 Skills

Table 10. EL2 Professor preparation of preservice educators

	Well prepared		Moderately prepared		Minimally prepared		Not prepared at all		This topic was not addressed in the course.		Total	
Oral Language Development	53.61%	52	26.80%	26	8.25%	8	3.09%	3	8.25%	8	97	
Vocabulary	57.29%	55	26.04%	25	8.33%	8	3.13%	3	5.21%	5	96	
Morphology	40.63%	39	35.42%	34	13.54%	13	4.17%	4	6.25%	6	96	
Levels of Understanding Connected Text (literal, inferential, propositional)	42.71%	41	33.33%	32	13.54%	13	4.17%	4	6.25%	6	96	
Strategies of Critical Thinking	46.88%	45	32.29%	31	13.54%	13	2.08%	2	5.21%	5	96	
Products of Comprehended Text (main idea, theme, cause and effect, etc.)	50.00%	48	30.21%	29	10.42%	10	3.13%	3	6.25%	6	96	
Text Types	51.04%	49	29.17%	28	9.38%	9	3.13%	3	7.29%	7	96	
Assessment of EL2 Skills	41.05%	39	41.05%	39	6.32%	6	4.21%	4	7.37%	7	95	
Please add any other comments about your preparation to teach EL2 content in your classroom. Were other components of literacy addressed in this course? If so, please specify.											5	
											Answered	97
											Skipped	0

Comments:

- The professor I had for this subject was lacking in motivation. She was very bland and read off of PowerPoint or straight out of books. There were no hands-on activities, mostly us students had to band together and teach the info to each other.
- I felt the most confident in teaching these areas than any other area of content after completing my courses at my EPP.
- Same as early literature 1, taught the domains, but not how to teach.
- Again, we had the resources and even PowerPoint presentations to cover each, but not enough time to actually practice.

The next question in the survey, six, asked what grade they had taught,

“What grade did you teach this past year?”

As illustrated in Table 9, the largest number/percentage of respondents (20/20.62%) indicated they taught third grade. The selection of second grade came in next at 18/18.56%. Respondents indicated they taught grades K, 1 and 4 in equal amounts at 17/17.53. A total of 17/17.53% indicated 4th or above and 1/1.03% chose PreK. The amount who chose middle school was 5/5.15%. Nobody selected high school and another 2/2.06% indicated “other role besides grade level teacher.

Table 11. Grade taught

Answer Choices	Responses	
Pre-Kindergarten	1.03%	1
Kindergarten	17.53%	17
1st Grade	17.53%	17
2nd Grade	18.56%	18
3rd Grade	20.62%	20
4th Grade or above	17.53%	17
Middle School	5.15%	5
High School	0.00%	0
Other role besides grade level teacher	2.06%	2
Answered		97
Skipped		0

Question seven addressed the number of minutes per day respondents devoted to teaching reading.

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

Table 12 provides a summary of the responses. The respondents who indicated they were spending 90 to 120 minutes each day (36/37.11%) were double the next level of 60 to 90 minutes at 18/18.56%. The next highest group included those who chose “I was not assigned to teach reading” at 15/15.46% followed by those who indicated more than 120 minutes (14/14.43%). A relatively modest number (7/7.22%) indicated they taught reading all day. Only 1/1.03% selected less than 60 minutes.

Table 12. Minutes per day devoted to teaching reading

Answer Choices	Responses	
less than an hour	1.03%	1
about an hour	6.19%	6
60 to 90 minutes	18.56%	18
90 - 120 minutes	37.11%	36
more than 120 minutes	14.43%	14
all day	7.22%	7
I was not assigned to teach reading.	15.46%	15
Answered		97
Skipped		0

Determining the physical environment provided the focus of question eight,

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

The two highest response choices included “self-contained classroom” and “for my grade level (departmentalized)” at 45/46.39% and 35.05%, respectively. While the selection, “I was not assigned to teach reading,” had the next highest count at 16/16.49% the other choices resulted in modest counts. These included “special education resource or inclusion” (8/8.25%), “after-school program” (2/2.06%), and “full-time interventionist” (1/1.03%). Not one respondent indicated they were a “part-time interventionist.” Table 13 provides the full summary of these responses.

Table 13. Physical environment where teaching to read happens

Answer Choices	Responses	
Self-contained classroom	46.39%	45
For my grade level (departmentalized)	35.05%	34
Special education resource or inclusion	8.25%	8
Full-time interventionist	1.03%	1
Part-time interventionist	0.00%	0
After-school program	2.06%	2
N/A: I was not assigned to teach reading.	16.49%	16
Answered		97
Skipped		0

A key outcome of the Mississippi Momentum professional development provided the focus of the next question, nine,

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

Table 14 provides the summary. Because of their grade assignment, 77/77.38% of the respondents chose “I did not teach 3rd grade.” The remainder of the respondents indicated passage rates as follows: 100% - 6/6.19%; 90 to 99% - 10/10.31%; 80 to 89% - 3/3.09%; and 1/1.03% chose 70 to 79%. Not one respondent indicated either 50 to 69% or less than 50%.

Table 14. Third grade students who passed the

Answer Choices	Responses	
100%	6.19%	6
90 - 99%	10.31%	10
80 - 89%	3.09%	3
70 - 79%	1.03%	1
50 - 69%	0.00%	0
less than 50%	0.00%	0
I did not teach 3rd Grade.	79.38%	77
Answered		97
Skipped		0

Question ten,

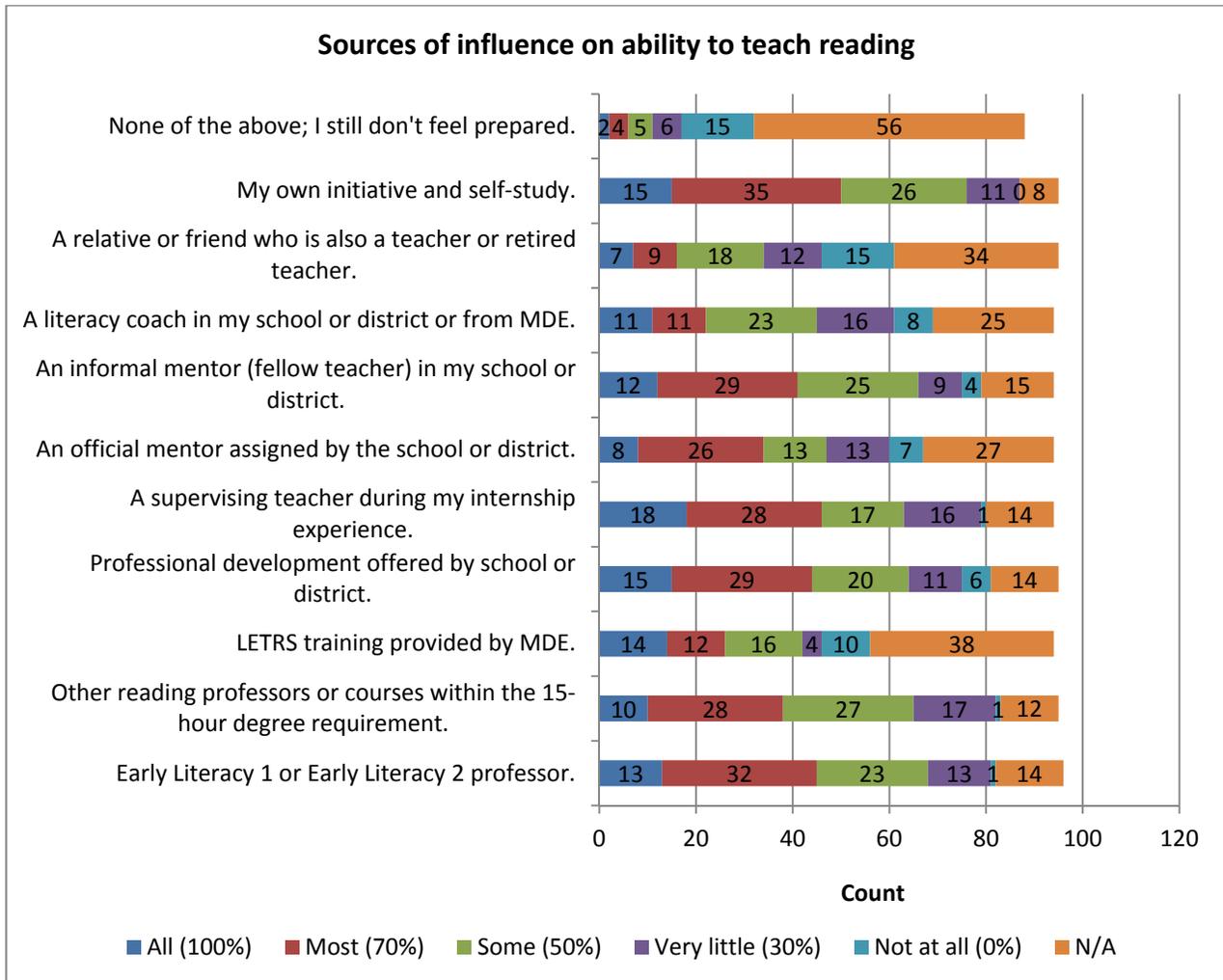
“Now that you’ve taught in an elementary classroom, how much of your ability to implement effective reading instruction came from each of these sources? (Check all that apply; your responses need not total 100%.)”

addresses the impacts of the various influences early career educators might consider as helping form their professional capacity to teacher reading. The question requested respondents to provide a percentage weight to each of the choices. To interpret these responses the reader should keep in mind the column headers in Table 15, which summarizes the data, and the legend color coding in figure 7 that parallels the column headers. Also, please note that none of the sources listed had a total of 97 respondents. Rather the total respondents who chose any particular source are indicated in the far right column of Table 15. For example, 50 of 95 indicated that their own initiative or self-study as “all” or “most” of the influence. Another 46 of 94 located this source in a supervising teacher during an internship and 45 of 96 respondents selected an EL1 or EL2 professor as an influence. A group of 44 of 95 indicated professional development offered through their school or district as a major influence. For those who found their influence in an informal mentor (fellow teacher), 41 of 94 made this selection and 36 of 94 indicated an official mentor assigned by a school or district. Science of reading training provided by MDE generated a response of “all” or “most” from 26 of 94 first-year educators. Whereas 22 of 94 selected “all” or “most” of the influence in a literacy coach from a school, district or MDE, only 16 of 95 selected these choices in considering the influence of a relative or friend. In contrast, 71 of 88 new educators selected “not at all” or “N/A” when considering the “None of the Above, I still don’t feel prepared” option.

Table 15. Sources of influence on ability to teach reading

	All (100%)	Most (70%)	Some (50%)	Very little (30%)	Not at all (0%)	N/A	Total
Early Literacy 1 or Early Literacy 2 professor.	13	32	23	13	1	14	96
Other reading professors or courses within the 15-hour degree requirement.	10	28	27	17	1	12	95
LETRS training provided by MDE.	14	12	16	4	10	38	94
Professional development offered by school or district.	15	29	20	11	6	14	95
A supervising teacher during my internship experience.	18	28	17	16	1	14	94
An official mentor assigned by the school or district.	8	26	13	13	7	27	94
An informal mentor (fellow teacher) in my school or district.	12	29	25	9	4	15	94
A literacy coach in my school or district or from MDE.	11	11	23	16	8	25	94
A relative or friend who is also a teacher or retired teacher.	7	9	18	12	15	34	95
My own initiative and self-study.	15	35	26	11	0	8	95
None of the above; I still don't feel prepared.	2	4	5	6	15	56	88

Figure 7. Sources of influence on ability to teach reading



Getting at terms to describe their approach to reading instruction, question eleven offered a selection of fifteen choices that provide a lexicon of terms found in the world of literacy instruction some of which the science of reading supports and some of which the science does not yet remain in use. The question reads,

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

As indicated, one of the choices was “other,” which allowed for a written comment. These follow at the bottom of Table 16 that summarizes the selections made.

Table 16. Words used to describe approaches to reading instruction

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Percentage	Count
Differentiated	82.47%	80
Structured Literacy	24.74%	24
Whole Group	71.13%	69
Explicit and systematic, using Decodable Text	32.99%	32
Guided Reading using Leveled Text	74.23%	72
Small Group	83.51%	81
Dynamic Grouping	19.59%	19
Balanced Literacy	28.87%	28
Data-driven instruction	70.10%	68
Standards-based Objectives	62.89%	61
Use of Independent Centers	59.79%	58
Interventions	56.70%	55
Technology	64.95%	63
Anchor Charts	71.13%	69
Other (please specify)	5.15%	5
Answered		97
Skipped		0

Comments:

- If I would have been assigned to teach reading, I would have used the vast majority of these strategies.
- Did not teach literacy. I'm not sure what my approach would be.
- I incorporated reading in my science class just as additional reading practice
- I'm a math teacher.

The Foundations of Reading assessment served as the focus of question twelve,

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

The top two selections provide two perspectives of how well respondents felt prepared to teach reading. The selection “my program prepared me well,” received the largest number of responses at 42/43.3%. Whereas, the choice, “my program somewhat prepared me,” received the second highest with 33/34.02% making that selection. A relatively small number of 3/3.09% chose to hire a tutor to support their effort to pass the test. Of special note is the percentage of participants (22/22.68%) who had to take the assessment more than once. The nearly one-quarter of respondents who indicated they had to take the Foundations of Reading test more than once provides an opportunity for EPPs to review their preservice candidate passage rates to work with these individuals in order to discover what could have been done differently in their preparation to avoid this outcome. A full summary of results appears in Table 17 followed by a selection of comments that excludes those related to not taking the test.

Table 17. Foundations of Reading Test Impressions

Answer Choices	Responses	
My program prepared me well.	43.30%	42
My program somewhat prepared me.	34.02%	33
It was aligned to my pre-service coursework.	13.40%	13
It was a good test for determining what I know about reading and teaching reading.	24.74%	24
I had to take it more than once.	22.68%	22
I had to hire a tutor or get extra help.	3.09%	3
My score is an accurate reflection of what I know about teaching reading.	16.49%	16
Other (please specify)		13
Answered		97
Skipped		0

Comments:

- I did not have to take this test. I graduated in 2016.
- I was not prepared for it because at the time it was not a thing and then it all of a sudden was and we had not prep time or anything to help us. I felt it also did nothing to prepare me for the classroom or analyze if I was ready to teach reading or other subject.
- I have a Bachelor’s Degree in Speech Pathology that helped me prepare.
- Meeting the score requirements on this test was difficult to me. I was 2 points away from passing it. I then took it again after studying the online material that helped me. I felt like the minimum score was high for some of my classmates and myself to reach, but I did reach it after re-testing.
- My professor prepared us well, we passed with flying colors.
- I was not required to take this being sped.

The second to last question, thirteen, posed this query,

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

Although it is a fairly simple question on its surface, it most likely obscures the complexity of feelings a new teacher experiences on day one of a new career. As the results in Table 18 illustrate, more than two-thirds of the respondents felt either well-prepared (22/22.68%) or moderately prepared (46/47.42%). Another 21/21.65% considered themselves minimally prepared and a relatively modest number of 8/8.25% thought themselves not at all prepared. When considered together, these last two groups indicate that nearly one-third of respondents in this survey saw themselves as ill-prepared for their first day in the classroom. The results tie in to the suggestions provided in response to question fourteen that explicitly asked how educator preparation programs could better equip them for day one. Another eight respondents provided additional comments that appear below the table.

Table 18. Level of preparation on the first day of class

Answer Choices	Responses	
Well prepared	22.68%	22
Moderately prepared	47.42%	46
Minimally prepared	21.65%	21
Not at all prepared	8.25%	8
Additional comments?		9
Answered		97
Skipped		0

Comments:

- I feel like my professors prepared me pretty well for my first year but I have to give a LOT of credit to my internship teacher that I worked with. It is one thing to hear how you should teach but Ms. E really put this in motion. She not only showed me what it should look like she also had me implement in my own reading group and intervention group.
- This was more a feeling of lack of experience
- Was not assigned to teach reading
- None
- I felt moderately prepared to teach reading; however, I was hired for a third grade self-contained Math and felt minimally prepared.
- I barely knew the curriculum and all I had was knowledge from textbooks and professors.
- My curriculum was very scripted, which was why I felt more confident about what I was teaching.
- Did not teach reading

Question fourteen, the final one of the survey, sought to provide insights for improving the MS Momentum Partnership and teacher preparation programs across the state as it moves into the future. The question reads,

“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?”

While not all ninety-seven respondents gave their suggestions, a total of seventy-seven did. The results fell into eleven categories with a call for more classroom time and hands on experience the largest with a count of twenty-eight. What follows is the list of categories with the count for each and suggestion examples.

More classroom time and hands on experiences (28)

- I believe that more classroom work is important. One semester of student teaching doesn't prepare you enough for the classroom setting and the college courses sure don't.
- Nothing prepares you better than field experience! I had a lot of that, but there's never anything wrong with having more.
- More training in the use of diagnosis and intervention techniques (13)
- How to reach lower students-more emphasis on various levels and interventions

More professional development (12)

- Professional growth is always good but for the better of those who are interested in becoming teachers, more should be offered upon entering college. Freshman year and Sophomore year should be exposure to all requirements needed for professional growth, when choosing the career to become a teacher.

More opportunities for professional networking (5)

- I think there needs to be a conversation with new teachers about what their expectations are and that there may be a gap between what others are doing on your hallway, what the district is asking of you and what the state wants you to accomplish. It was hard entering an environment that was not consistent with what teacher who had been teaching for 10+ years were doing, what the district was asking and what I learned in college.

More grounding in state standards (5)

- Standards. It's hard to know specifically which ones to look at because we don't know what grade we would be teaching, but we focused a lot on testing rather than actual content. I could tell you how to differentiate and test students all day, but I had to go back and reteach myself content and study the standards.

More exposure to research (3)

- Prepare your own material. Read the teacher book for the lesson, story, phonics lesson, or passage you are going to teach. Do not wing it. Read academic journals and teaching tips to stay on top of your game. Take others' advice, but make it your own. Do not try to do exactly what they do because you are not them. Do it your own way.

First day/first week orientation (3)

- Discuss first day and first week procedures. As a first year teacher I was lost at how to do this.

Miscellaneous (4)

- I felt very well prepared for skills covered in Early Literacy 1, and that's what I mainly focused on in Kindergarten this year. I do wish Early Literacy 2 would have been as in depth so that if I were in a different grade level I would feel just as prepared.

- Become better prepared for the Foundations of Reading test. I was not a reading teacher this year- sorry, I can't help anymore!
- Using data to drive instruction
- More small group planning/experience with real life scenarios

Those who indicated “none” or “N/A” (4)

Concluding Comments

The results from the survey that the MS Momentum Partnership conducted with first year educators show that many, but not all, of them felt they were well or moderately prepared by their programs and to teach reading once they entered the classroom. Over two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they are teaching reading in their classrooms for at least 60 minutes a day and some more than two hours a day. The extensive list of suggestions that respondents provided offer a wide array of ways they believed the EPPs across Mississippi could improve teacher preparation programs, such as the need for more mentors, more classroom practice, more instruction on how to diagnose and intervene when facing reading difficulties, and the need for more preservice professional development.

The Interviews

As part of the evaluation plan for the Mississippi Momentum initiative, UNM CCPI staff conducted interviews with a group of selected participants. The count of ten interviews was based on the Success Case Model guidelines used to inform this evaluation. CCPI selected the group of ten out of the fifteen participants who indicated in a survey completed separately they would be willing to be interviewed. All ten were contacted and from this initial group, a total of eight were interviewed. CCPI excluded two for the following reasons. One was out of the country for an extended period and the logistics and expenses required to complete an interview proved prohibitive. The other individual never responded to three attempts to establish contact so CCPI did not include that person in this first interview cycle.

Earlier in 2018, CCPI staff developed the interview protocol in collaboration with the partners of the Mississippi Momentum initiative. Comprised of fifty-one questions distributed across five main topic areas the interviews typically took between thirty and forty-five minutes to complete. The five topic areas included: the science of reading modules themselves; classroom sessions Dr. Antonio Fierro conducted; “knowledge to practice” mentoring sessions Dr. Fierro provided; the seminars typically based in Jackson and that the Mississippi Momentum partners co-facilitated with Dr. Fierro; and a fifth and final section that dealt with more “global” aspects of Mississippi Momentum. For a variety of reasons, not all interviewees responded to all fifty-one questions. CCPI did not ask questions in the sections related to onsite visits Dr. Antonio Fierro conducted to two individuals, as they had not yet received those visits. Another did not attend the Jackson-based seminars, so she could not answer the questions in section four. Still another indicated that they had not completed the modules due to other professional demands. Despite this lack of interviewee responses to all questions, the material collected offers rich insights that can help inform activities surrounding Mississippi Momentum as it moves through the next phases.

For the most part, the responses provided in this section are verbatim with the caveat that in responses that contained false starts or redundant information that reflected the formation of thought, CCPI staff conducted minor edits typically as word removals or tense changes to allow for better flow of the text. A professional service provided transcriptions of the interviews, and as a consequence due to unfamiliarity with some content and context specific terms or language, CCPI staff conducted verification of text where the transcriber indicated the text as “unintelligible” or requesting verification if the word offered was questionable. Again, CCPI staff strove to verify the word through review of the audio recording and to ensure the fidelity of responses used. Because of the need to respect the privacy and identities of interviewees, text that may have either revealed the person themselves, their home EPP, or other potentially identifying information, CCPI staff used neutral replacement language enclosed in brackets (i.e. []) to achieve this end. Finally, to keep this report a manageable length only key selected passages from responses are used to illustrate the thinking or position of interviewees to any particular question and not all interviewees are reflected in the responses to any particular questions.

The Science of Reading Modules

As noted above, the interview question series began with a group that address the science of reading supported modules, including access to, comparison to other professional development materials, preferred aspects and conversely any drawbacks to the materials, time commitment to complete coverage, etc.

The first question asked,

“Did you experience any problems getting access to the modules? If so, what were they?”

In response, not one of the eight respondents indicated any problem with access whatsoever.

The next question was somewhat broader in focus than the first,

“Compared to other professional development you have participated in, have you found the science of reading modules related professional development useful? If not, why not?”

Respondents were uniform in their perceptions that the professional development they received in relation to the science of reading supported modules was useful. For instance:

Yes, I have. I think the books are excellent, but then when you see the videos it gives you more. It elaborates on them.

I have, yes. The science of reading modules have some great practice material and they're very detailed in the content that they provide. ... To me, it's a very solid program, and ... you gain a deeper understanding by going through the process. Reading the content, doing the practice, watching the videos. To me it hit more areas as far as helping us to retain the information.

The following question addressed the structure of the modules.

“Does the format, structure and organization of the science of reading modules work for you? If not, why not?”

Consistently, the responses from interviewees was positive:

Yes because it's at the point where we're forced to have to do something. For example, if you're taking a college course, you must go to class once a week or twice a week. It allows us the opportunity to come back, review, and then meet back up every so many months. Also they give us a lot of stuff that we can do in advance prior to coming to the next session, so it gives us opportunity to balance both our work and learning this new information that we've been getting in science of reading. It's a good balance.

Yes. I've made it work, because, really, it's designed for teachers who are in a classroom setting that—to me, when you're going through them, that you can go back and work with colleagues. Then they can go back to a regular classroom and work with your—with whatever aged students you're working with. I'm glad I had all those years of experience in the classroom...

Questions four and five in the first series addressed what interviewees found as useful or less useful elements in the modules. Number four read as follows:

“What particular features of the science of reading modules have you found useful? What about less useful?”

To the first, the respondents were somewhat varied yet positive in terms of perceiving the usefulness:

Yes, I found, the one thing I like about the science of reading content is how it gives you the reason why you need to teach certain components in reading. I think that's missing a lot with our preservice teachers in the programs not only in Mississippi but everywhere. They don't understand why it's important to teach phonics and I find that information really helpful to help tie it together for them.

I'm a very hands-on, visual person, so, of course, the videos that they have, the way that they have the applications that they use, and the frequent questioning that they're always going through. I like that, because it's like a cumulative review; you're really supposed to teach with that, so that's been very helpful.

And to the second, all respondents indicated they found nothing that was not useful in the modules.

Less useful? Mm, I don't think so. I mean, up to now I don't think anything...in the module is less useful to me. They are all useful to me.

Not yet.

The following two questions addressed time commitments related to engagement with the modules. The first-time query was structured as such,

“What would you estimate as the amount of time you have spent online going over this first set of module materials?”

In response, interviewees gave a fairly wide range of responses that stretched between 4 and 40 hours. Here are examples of the extreme points on that distribution.

I get the quizzes online. I don't remember exactly how long it took me but we have the modules to go over online and then you have to take the quiz at the end of each module. I don't have a particular time frame. I believe I completed modules one through four in one day. Well modules one through three, I'm sorry. Modules one through three and seven or something like that but it's syllables for the first session. I completed those four in one day. Probably on accident, maybe three or four [hours].

Oh, gosh. Forty hours, plus. I don't know what other people are estimating, but I spend a lot of time online going through this information.

The second question related to independent study of the materials.

“What would you estimate as the amount of time you have spent in independent reading and review of these materials?”

Here the responses were more varied because of the way respondents considered their answers in context of the time of year. Some answered using a general context and amount and other related to their engagement with the modules in relation to use during teaching a course. Consequently, a clear picture of the distribution cannot be offered.

For example:

Probably 8 to 10 hours.

Yeah, that was just goin' through the modules, reading in the text myself and answering their quizzes, watching the videos. I'd say it was probably 15 to 20 hours maybe.

I like to compare all the different programs and see the consistency, so I would say I spent at least—probably 30 minutes a day, if you wanted to do it like that, because I'm always, constantly going back, ...it's like I live it and breathe it sometimes.

The eighth question in this first series related to whether the time commitment posed any burden for participants.

“Has that time commitment posed any type of burden for you in terms of conflicts with your other professional responsibilities?”

Although they are all extremely busy professionals, the respondents generally indicated they saw their participation as a burden they accepted without complaint. For instance:

No, because they sent us the materials in plenty of time. I just paced myself. They gave us plenty of time to finish everything. Like I said, we already had the materials in way plenty of time to be reading or whatever before we looked at the video, so no, it didn't pose any burden for me.

Well, not to complain on that one at all, but, yes. As far as the time that it takes to do that on top of a full-time job, it's not an easy process. I would say my schedule is a little bit busier than some. I wouldn't say that it's a burden for everybody. For me, it's heavy, but I enjoy it, so it's okay.

The next question addressed what other materials related to early literacy development the faculty used for personal professional development.

“What other materials related to early literacy development have you used in your own personal professional development? These materials can reach back to your academic preparation or self-study.”

Here, as can be expected, because of the varied length of their careers from decades-long to just starting out, the responses provide various work they have used in their personal journey.

I have other books and resources that I use. It's in my classes so I have Literacy for the 21st Century, that's the book I use. I have Teaching Reading in Today's Elementary School so it's a few books that I use that I incorporate within my classroom...[and] some passages that I use. Phonics A to Z is another book I use that's in my class. Most of it is just reading exercises. I also incorporate phoneme cards as a resource. Those are just some things that I use that I've looked at and added to my regular classroom instruction.

I just finished my doctorate degree, so I've done a lot of self-study recently, but I used a lotta things related to literacy development through the International Literacy Association, their publications, and the reading association. The ASCD—I also read their updates and articles that come out that have been beneficial towards literacy also. I found 'em very helpful.

The tenth question posed to the interviewees concerned the relative standing of the science of reading materials to other professional development materials they had used.

“From your perspective, do you think the science of reading modules are less useful, about equal, better than most, or superior to other materials you have used for your personal development in early literacy?”

Of the seven individuals who answered this question, three indicated they were better than most, and three chose superior. The remaining one indicated that with some dimensions covered, it was superior but with others it was about equal.

I think they're better than most, and I think that they go in depth, but also they give us what we need right now in our schools...in Mississippi, third grade children have to meet, be close to reading at the end of second grade, and all that focus...in Mississippi is on... phonemic awareness and phonics. Science of reading really goes along with the Mississippi curriculum, so that has been extremely helpful.

Oh, I think that it's definitely superior. ... I just know some of the past professional development workshops I've been to and also some of the resources that I've used in the past to teach Early Literacy 1 and Early Literacy 2 wasn't as detailed as the science of reading modules as it relates to helping my students [preservice teacher candidates] pass the Reading Foundations Test.

Towards the end of the first series, interviewees were asked whether they saw a singular component of the science of reading curriculum they found the most useful.

“Is there a singular component of the science of reading modules that you have found the most useful? Why or why not?”

While the interviewees were not wholly uniform in their responses the importance of the reading models was a highlight as was the module on spelling:

The five components of reading and I haven't really found many sets of materials that don't just focus on one or two of the components. That's one thing that I would say in that perspective, superior, and not just better than most. It also provides...the research and the science behind why teachers should know this in order to teach reading. Why it's important to teach the skills this way and how the brain actually works as it's trying to learn to read and reading. That is lacking in a lot of other materials that I've seen. It does give our students, the novice teacher, the preservice, it gives them some actual activities and lessons and strategies that they can do with the student.

To me it's been the spelling module. That just fascinates me anyway, being able to go in and look at why the child's spelling this way, what does this mean, and it's not necessarily dyslexia, it's just the fact that they haven't had the proper training. That's been the most helpful, and the most fun module for me.

The last question in the series queried whether interviewees found anything in the modules not at all useful.

"Is there anything in the science of reading modules that you have found not at all useful? Why or why not?"

A couple of respondents provided examples of material they took issue with, such as one who commented on the timeliness of videos, which they perceived as dated in terms of the look, not the content per se:

Well, there's one thing I found that is not at all useful. Their videos are somewhat dated. I don't know. I think that their content is still up to date, but just the look of it. It looks like it's 10 years old, or 8 years old. Something like that. I just noticed that.

Another commented on an apparent absence of significant coverage in relation to English Language Learners, as illustrated here:

Not really but what I think maybe is that it would be better if the modules...mention something about the English learner. Because right now, according to the statistic, it says that [for] every 10 kids going to public school, there will be at least 1 English learner. But, if saying that, it says a little bit about English learner but not a whole lot and I think there should be some part in the module dedicated to this group of students.

Classroom Instruction

In the second series of questions, interviewees were asked to discuss various aspects of the classroom instruction they participated in as part of their professional development in the Mississippi Momentum initiative. Dr. Antonio Fierro provided this instruction. The following comments indicate that the willingness of faculty to open their classrooms to an outside consultant illustrates a level of buy-in that appears as foundational for the overall success of

the professional development model used in Mississippi Momentum.

The initial question in the series addressed the structure of the instruction:

“Let’s talk about the structure of the classroom activities. Can you provide a brief explanation of how the classroom instruction involving the science of reading curriculum is structured?”

As indicated in the responses, during his visits, Dr. Fierro engaged the faculty with fidelity to the science of reading materials and provided substantial hands on activities along with continual review. Consequently, his approach provided a model for at least one faculty member just beginning a career in college teaching to emulate.

Antonio had various ways to get us to learn and to remind us of many things that we read from the material. Like, I still remember that he displayed the vowel – not only vowel but also other sounds of the word, together with the example of the word and the picture, I think it’s really nice. Coz I took a picture of those things [chuckling] to keep for future reference.

It follows a very set plan. It follows the module closely, but there’s a lot of hands on, there’s a lot of interaction, there’s a lot of review, consistent review. It’s just good modeling of ... how you should be teaching your college level students. That was what I got excited about, because I was just recently asked to teach just one class. ... I’ve never taught a college-level class, so I was going into this brand new. ... I told Antonio over and over that it’s great to see him teaching like a teacher. I mean that’s what I’ve been excited about, that I could teach like I know I need to teach for this.

The next addressed how interviewees perceived the structure working for them.

“How does that structure work for you? If the response is negative, query what the interviewee would suggest as an alternative structure”

Uniformly, respondents indicated in the positive. Various individuals noted the sense of openness and safety they felt through the non-threatening environment Dr. Fierro provided.

He kept everyone involved throughout the day, I felt like. He listened to colleagues’ opinion and respected them, made it an open environment where people felt comfortable sharing their opinions and ideas about different things.

It was great. He sat next to me during whole group. We were working on interactive white boards reviewing one of those higher-level skills at the end of Module 3. As things came up and we had questions or he wanted to interject, he did. Then we moved to small group where I allow my students [preservice teacher candidates] to write on tables so I did a kind of informal assessment to see if they knew the material. Then we progressed into their homework skill.

The next two questions addressed the length and pace of the sessions. Here is the one on length:

“In terms of the length of the classroom sessions, do you think they are about right, too long, or too short?”

There was widespread agreement among respondents that the sessions were about the right length to cover the necessary material in addition to having sufficient time built in for breaks and mental relaxation.

I think they're fine. I think they're right. If they're too short you won't get enough information.

I think they're perfect. I think the breaks are perfect. I don't think anybody's belittled—everybody is a student and everybody makes mistakes; you don't feel like you've made a mistake, if that makes sense.

Here is the question regarding pace:

“How about the pace of the classroom sessions, is the amount of material addressed adequate, too much or too little, for the length of time available?”

Interviewees offered mixed responses with some indicating they could handle more material while others preferring more time during what all acknowledge is typically a challenging day.

It's adequate. I would say, for those of us who are more familiar with it, we could have covered more, but for those who are not, the length is good.

Well, I think it's very fast paced. We could use some more time.

I think it's okay. This is not my first training with Antonio, so I know how heavy some of his trainings can be but I think the way he's doing science of reading is okay.

The discussion then shifted to how easy the instructor was to engage.

“Is/are the instructor(s) easy to engage with during the classroom sessions?”

As alluded to in some of the earlier comments, respondents universally indicated they found Dr. Fierro open, non-threatening and supportive whenever they participated in sessions with him.

Oh, yes. Very easy to engage with. Very open personality.

Absolutely. He answers questions easily, spends time elaborating. He really wants everyone to understand it, so yes, absolutely.

Because the need for clarification of material or concepts sometimes arises in learning dynamics, the interviewer posed the question whether the instructor was available to participants outside regularly scheduled sessions.

“Does the instructor make himself available to you outside of the regular scheduled classroom meetings?”

In each case, the answer given was affirmative even if each respondent did not avail herself of that option.

Yes, over the past two years since meeting him I've emailed him a couple times with specific questions that I've had about certain aspects of teaching, reading and every single time he's responded within 48 hours. If he couldn't answer it, he would connect me with someone else that could answer the question, so yes, he's very accessible.

I'm not really sure about this because I have never contacted him outside a scheduled classroom meeting, so I don't know but I guess he's available, I guess because that's what he said [chuckling]. Yeah, I haven't done it.

The interview then pivoted to whether respondents were applying any of the approaches or strategies they were learning in these sessions to their own practice.

“Are there any approaches to material presentation or strategies demonstrated that you could or have applied in your own pre-service courses? Be specific. If not, why? Could you explain how they are not applicable?”

Respondents indicated that they were adapting and applying various approaches they learned in the sessions with Dr. Fierro in their own instructional practices.

Since I've taken the science of reading training particularly starting last fall, I have done a lot of the activities that Dr. Fierro did with us with my students, and it has helped a lot. Now, it's gonna help even more with them actually having it before; having the activities that we can take class time, or they can do it for homework, follow up in other things, some of the exercises that are at the ends of the chapters and things like that. I'm real pleased that we have moved to using the science of reading modules as our textbook.

Yes. I've taken a lot of his visuals that he's done, and rearranged some of them, I'm using those in my class, and that's—instead of reading through all that literature, these students, you've got to remember, they're at college, they've got a college life, and they've got more subjects than just this. Those visuals have really helped to just cut to the chase and let's actually get down to teaching—getting to experience what they're going to be teaching in the classrooms, so that's been very helpful for me.

The interview then focused on the time commitments participants had to make and whether they felt it was reasonable.

“Do you feel the time necessary to prepare for the classroom sessions is reasonable or unreasonable?”

In general, most felt the preparation time was reasonable.

Oh, okay. I think it's kind of reasonable but then...they said it takes about 15 to 20 hours to go through all the video training and... it took me more than that. It took me like a couple

of hours more than estimated amount of time but I guess again, it's because of my lack of background.

It is reasonable. Now, I do think that reminders closer to time on what we need to be reading and doing is helpful. Just because we get busy, but again, we're adults. We can be responsible for that. The time is definitely good. We have enough time to prepare.

A follow up question asked how much time they actually spent in preparation.

“How much time would you estimate you spend preparing for classroom sessions?”

The estimates varied broadly, most likely as a reflection of individual approaches to learning.

I may say at least like five hours plus to the estimated amount of time that they, is that in the email that I received before the seminar.

Probably about 8 to 10 hours before each two-day session.

If I was going to put in an exact time, ...that's hard to say, but ...I'd spend at least eight hours, spread out through the time that I have to look over it. In a way, I feel I'm constantly preparing, because of the center I work with, and I start going back. Once you get onto the internet and you go deeper and deeper and deeper, because one thing triggers something else, so it's almost like I'm going back and forth all the time.

The next question focused on the efficacy of the assessments Dr. Fierro gives to each of the attendees in his classroom sessions.

“Do you find the assessments you complete useful in helping you to more fully engage with the materials covered?”

The assessments provided immediate feedback to participants and offered both Dr. Fierro and the faculty member insight where the instruction has promoted gains and where more attention would be beneficial.

Oh, yeah. I'm very apprehensive about testing, and that's my one thing. The test may look like I don't understand it sometimes, but I really do. What I do like about the testing is that we get the feedback, so that I can go back and say, “Okay, I really do need to remember this term if I'm going to be teaching,” or something like that. Yes, I think a lot of the assessments...

Yes. Yeah, the assessments, they can be somewhat intimidating to some. Now, I think the way we've been doing a little bit with the assessments more as a game is helpful. The assessment that we were handed, to where we have to answer questions, it definitely made me realize that there are things that I go over. ... It made me more aware of what I didn't

know...well enough. I found that very helpful. Yes,...so we're aware of what we don't know. Then, we can ask. That makes it more helpful.

While the next question was asked of a few interviewees, it became apparent that what was being addressed was not an option so it was eliminated from the series. The question reads:

“If necessary because of conflicts with scheduling or travel, are you able to participate in the classroom activities via Zoom or some other platform?”

Not one of the interviewees answered yes to this question.

When asked whether they could select an alternative date for the sessions be held, the respondents indicated that the issue was basically moot since the upfront logistics of the scheduling were worked out prior to the visit to ensure each person who had to be present would be.

“Is there any opportunity for you to participate in an alternative day/time for a classroom session if you are unable to make the one original one scheduled?”

The answers given reflect this perspective.

Yeah. I think ...if the person who hosts the sessions really work with me, I think we can figure out a time.

My institution was very flexible in working with me to allow me to attend, so it really did not create a problem. I didn't have to do any alternative days or times.

The final question in the second series addressed whether interviewees could think of any way to improve the classroom sessions.

“Is there anything about the way classroom sessions operate that you would offer for an improvement?”

As a general consensus, the respondents indicated they thought the instructional approach worked well.

No, not really. I like how they've made it more engaging and it's not just lecture, question and answer. They're involving all of us in the process, for lack of a better term, practicing what they preach. They're modeling good teaching.

No, I wouldn't. You come back, and it's like they're constantly reevaluating what they need to present, which I think is great.

Knowledge to Practice Phase

The third question series addressed the “knowledge to practice” phase of the professional development in which Dr. Fierro would make site visits to individual campuses. The purposes of these visits centered on Dr. Fierro providing feedback and critiques on modeling instruction, co-teaching, course syllabi, student assessment, etc. For shorthand purposes within the dynamic

of the questions being asked, the term “mentoring” was used to describe this relationship. Many of these visits coincided with real time classroom sessions with preservice educators.

The initial question set the frame for this discussion as follows:

“As part of the project, there is a phase where the science of reading trainer visits campuses for the purposes of modeling instruction, co-teaching, and giving feedback about course schedule, assignments, assessments, etc. as you may request. How is this mentoring process working for you?”

It was determined through this initial screening question that a couple of the interviewees had yet to participate in these activities, so they were not asked the remainder of this question series. However, for those who had received these visits, they appreciated the direct one-on-one exchanges the visits offered.

I thought it worked very well. He has made one visit to us so far and he modeled teaching and then we met with him and other faculty that teach literacy courses. We had him review textbooks and core schedules and syllabi, that sorta thing. He offered some valuable feedback on ways to improve. I think that he comes again in September and is hoping to go into the field with us and the students and learn more about how they're teaching literacy lessons in the classroom. I think that'll be helpful to see how we could restructure or revamp some of those assignments to better help the students.

Working really well. ... He co-taught with me. He gave me feedback. He looked at our assessments. He looked at assignments, gave me great feedback. He actually took my assessments with him to look at, gave me some quick feedback on our assessments, and was very impressed. We got some instant feedback from him.

The follow-up question addressed the interviewee's preconception of the visit.

“Do you believe the mentoring process is working as you expected? How so?”

In response, interviewees indicated they had held a positive perspective regarding the visits and in some cases even exceeded their expectations. Here again, Dr. Fierro's ability to provide a supportive and constructive approach as integral to this engagement resonated well with the participants.

Yes, I think so. I think he is providing us with support and suggestions without being critical and making anyone feel nervous or inferior about having him come onto the campus. I thought it was a great experience having him there.

Oh, yes. Well, just the fact that he came in and made suggestions of some things that we needed to change, maybe, or oh, yeah, you've got some ideas, so that's a good thing. I was able to talk about his approach and back and forth, and then he was able to tell us, “Let's switch this just a little bit.” I can't wait 'til he comes in the fall to really get some more hands on with what we're going to be doing.

It actually exceeded it. I thought it worked better than I visualized it working.

The conversation shifted to the interviewee's perceptions of how this relationship was affecting their growth as educational professionals.

"Do you believe that the relationship you have with your mentor is benefiting you and your professional growth?"

There was uniform agreement among the respondents that it had been beneficial to them and welcomed his future visits.

Absolutely, yes. ...I can go to Antonio with any questions I have. He's very good about explaining things, modeling things. He has great ideas, so it's definitely beneficial to me.

He provides confirmation on how you're pulling the concepts in through your instruction and helping encourage and give other ideas of ways to strengthen instruction.

Yes. I do. I look forward to him coming back.

The next couple of questions addressed the logistics of the mentoring visits, including length, scheduling, and ability to reach out to Dr. Fierro outside the regularly scheduled visits. This section started with this query,

"When you meet with your mentor, what do you think about the length of the sessions, are they about right in their length, or too short or too long?"

All the respondents agreed that the length of the visits was about right and efficient in the coverage of material.

It was about right. He spent the better part of a day with us and we were able to get a lot accomplished in that time frame.

I think they're fine. He was here with us for a full day. I felt like we had ample time to talk, and discuss, and get feedback.

In relation to scheduling, CCPI asked the following,

"Do you have any latitude about when you can meet for your mentoring sessions?"

The respondents had a consensus that they or their institutions were the one who set when the mentoring visits would occur as stated in these examples.

Yes, overall I do. As long as I'm not in a classroom. Now, granted, I teach five days a week, so it does make arranging times a little bit harder. He's been very flexible, so we've been able to work around my class schedule.

We pretty much controlled that.

Here as with the previous section on classroom instruction, the interviewer prompted faculty members to respond to the following:

“In case the need arises, do you have the opportunity to contact your mentor outside of your regularly scheduled sessions?”

As noted previously, all respondents indicated that Dr. Fierro made himself available via email and cell phone.

Yes, yes. I know myself and other colleagues at my university have contacted him about different questions or issues, things like that and he’s been available to us.

Yes, sir. He’s given us his cellphone number and also his email address.

To determine what really resonated with interviewees during the mentoring visits, CCPI asked them to answer this question,

“Can you think of one particular aspect of the mentoring relationship that you appreciate above any of the others? Please describe this.”

The following two responses reflect the perceptions faculty had towards his abilities as an engaged presenter, a deep listener, and a constructive critic.

Well, I mean definitely I appreciated his willingness to come and present a lesson to our students and show them, for them to get the opportunity to listen. It’s one thing to have us present that material for them, but then to get the opportunity to listen to that material be presented by somebody who actually worked with Louisa Moats to develop some of this is just incredible. I think our students really felt honored by that and we did as well, having him come. I really appreciated that. He’s so engaging as a presenter, for them to get that opportunity to see him was something that I definitely appreciated.

One of the things I appreciate the most is just his authenticity of being frank, honest, and supportive at the same time. Yeah, and I appreciate that. I’m a what-you-see-is-what-you-get kinda person also, so I appreciate that he doesn’t spend a lotta time mincing words when materials are not in support of what the practice is supposed to be. He’ll let you know pretty quick.

The final question in the series centered on inquiring if Mississippi Momentum could improve anything about the mentoring visits.

“Do you think the mentoring arrangement you participate in can be improved? If so, what would you change?”

While some of the responses were done “tongue in cheek,” the basic conception is that the mentoring visits are working well.

Not really, not unless you wanted to keep him around here all the time.

The only way it could be improved is if we could get him down there when our students are there.

No. I like it the way it is.

To close out, it is significant to note that institutions of higher learning and faculty themselves allowing an outside consultant into their classrooms may be perceived as a reflection of trust and goodwill on their part. Dr. Fierro's practice of engaging faculty on their home ground in a respectful and supportive manner indicates a level of professionalism that appears to permeate the entire structure of the Mississippi Momentum initiative.

Jackson-based Seminars

The fourth question series centered on the seminars held in Jackson to which all the participating faculty received an invitation to attend. The Mississippi Momentum partners have structured the seminars as two-day events that have a mixture of instructional strategies including short lecture, full and small group activities, hands-on presentations, assessments, and opportunities for networking. Although the days are full, they offer both morning and afternoon breaks and provide on-site lunch so that attendees do not have to leave and come back.

The first two questions addressed the seminars in terms of structure and operation. Here is the first:

“Can you briefly explain the structure of the seminars?”

Those who attended provided comprehensive overviews.

Okay so the first thing about seminars. Seminars are a little different because we have [Michael Cormack]...the person over the Barksdale Institute. He's been doing a lot of work with us within the seminars. ... [H]e's been heading a lot of the seminars, it's good to hear from someone else. [H]e also takes what we learn in Early Literacy and he applies it to things that we're doing daily or weekly within our classrooms but on the professor side. ... We would bring home [How Learning Works] and read. ...Yeah, [questions] directed towards faculty members and just having us go back, thinking about, remember it, and discuss with other colleagues, really how learning works. It was good as a refresher for a lot of us. The structure is a little different but it's working out pretty good.

Here again, we have the lecture, but we have discussions. There's the applications, you're accepting for knowledge, you've got the hands-on participation, you got modeling, you've got good instruction, good teaching going on.

The follow-up question focused on its operation.

“Does this structure work for you? If so, how? If not, why not?”

The interviewees approved of the structure and saw their participation as beneficial.

I like the way that they're structured. I like it because they take breaks. Like I said, I appreciate the fact they have lunch just right there, ready for you. I like the fact that you're doing some small group work as well. I like that, too. I've met a lot of new people that I had never met before, including [my colleague], who happened to sit beside me in the fall. He was looking for a job in Mississippi, so that worked out well for both of us.

Yes. This structure, to me, has been very beneficial. Because we already have the foundation, this is taking it to the next level.

The next two questions addressed the length of the seminars and location. The first of these read:

“What about their length?”

Across the board, the interviewees indicated that the length was right. One day would be too short and three days, too long. Here are a couple of quotes.

The length is good for me. I think they've got that timing down, when you need breaks. It amazes me sometimes when you go places, most of the people know that your brain needs break time, and they never give you that break time, so I appreciate everything they're doing.

The length is fine. The second day seemed longer at the end of the day than the first, but it's been adequate. ...[T]hree days would be too long, and one day would be not long enough. The sessions end before everybody's attention span is over.

The other logistics question dealt with location:

“How about the location?”

While there was general concurrence that holding the seminars in Jackson worked for everyone due to its central location in the state, some commented that having them hosted in the Barksdale Reading Institute was somewhat more problematic because the size of the meeting room.

It is. Jackson obviously is centrally located in the state so that works and as far as the actual Barksdale facility, sometimes it gets a little tight and a little small, but its fine.

Well, I appreciate the Barksdale Reading Institute opening up their building to us. It just seemed a little cramped there, and parking was terrible. The first place that we met, I think it was the Jackson State University building, it was much more comfortable, and there was more space, and it seemed more conducive to the kind of work that we needed to be doing.

The next question queried about networking,

“Do you engage with any of the other seminar members outside of your regularly scheduled sessions? If so, in what ways?”

Many of the respondents indicated they used the seminars as opportunities for networking and were in contact with other cohort members outside of the formal settings.

I really have been in contact with some of the others, because I've taught with some of them at other institutions. We were already friends, and I've asked them, “How are you doing this at your institution?” and different things. I really have. I have interacted with some of them outside of class, in addition to [my colleague].

Those relationships I've made through the professional development have definitely continued through email, thorough social media. I've had several contact me with questions. We've contacted other universities with ideas and questions. I think that it has really opened the door to collaborate with others and get ideas about textbooks or specific learning experiences for the student and just the general content of our literacy courses. Not only literacy, but their entire teacher prep program, how their progression works, and it's really been helpful.

The following question sought to highlight elements that resonated with participants:

“Are there particular aspects of the seminars that you appreciate above all others? Please describe.”

Here, as can be expected, interviewees gave varied responses that reflected personal preferences.

Being able to process through information with colleagues, people who are doing the same thing we are. I really appreciate that piece. It's wonderful to get others' ideas or to expand our own. If you want to get into Vygotsky or social learning, I think this is one of those pieces that we definitely can learn from each other and be stronger. Our learning is scaffolded, in a way, by each other, so I appreciate that piece.

Of course you're going to hear me say this again. I love the hands on. Yeah. I mean I like the fact that we had that interaction with the applications, that we're actually seeing the materials, we're actually using those materials, and practicing with them.

Another query sought to determine if the seminars posed any obstacles for participants.

“Do any of the aspects of participating in the seminars pose any obstacles for you? If so, please describe.”

In general, the seminars themselves posed no obstacles per se, but one described her sensitivity to perfumes and another commented on the “chattiness” of her group, for which she bore responsibility.

No, not really.

The only obstacle that any participating in the seminars has posed for me is like one of the times we were at Barksdale. I have really bad allergies, and somebody had some very heavy perfume on, and, since we were in a very tightly enclosed room—I have triggered migraines. I have allergies to scents and things like that, so that's the only thing that created an obstacle for me. A dab'll do it, not bathe in it.

No. No, other than when we get too chatty in our group. That's my own fault.

The last question asked whether they would suggest any changes to the seminars.

“If you could suggest a change to any aspect of the seminars, what would it be?”

While more than half of the respondents thought that nothing needed to be changed, a couple mentioned the need for more coverage on working with English Language Learners, and another suggested changing the location back to Jackson State campus.

No, not really.

Mm, maybe it's just about a content; the topic. Maybe the English learner should be on top of it. To have a way in arrange of the content in the list of the topics to be covered in the seminar, that's the only thing I want to add.

Just to go back to the original location, maybe. It was easier to access via the interstate for out-of-towners, and it was just easier parking, and it seemed to be a more comfortable environment.

The Global Aspects of Mississippi Momentum

The fifth series of questions addressed the more global aspects of Mississippi Momentum. By this is meant how participants perceive: their background education prior to participation, the science of reading, advances in neuroscience, effects of Mississippi Momentum on how they constructed their EL1 and EL2 courses and supporting materials, their engagement with preservice teacher candidates, and their candidates' readiness to move into the early grade classrooms.

The first question of the series asked interviewees to reflect on their education prior to becoming EPP faculty and recent advances in neuroscience:

"Thinking back about your own education and completion of your terminal degree, how did your own preparation prepare you to teach the next generation of teachers in context of the nearly 30 years of research in early literacy development as well as the more recent research in neuroscience?"

Their different backgrounds led to disparate comments in responses. Some discussed how much the science of reading had evolved over time and the importance of understanding brain functions as revealed through neuroscience. Still others discussed the various approaches to teaching reading that have emerged over the years and have come in and out of favor.

I really don't know much about the early literacy development research [from] 30 years ago...because...I don't have that background. ...[The] information that I got from the seminar [is] up-to-date and research-based, and yeah, I think that it was good. There's a pathway I remember where Antonio showed us—the different pathways of the left-brain hemisphere... where the vowel [and letter] processing [occur]... They are different pathways in the brain, and we have to help to create a connection between the two. I mean, that's one path that I learned [and] I was surprised, I just didn't know that information.

I was sitting with some [associates] the other day that were doing assessments for dyslexia... and these were foster children.... I thought that they were doing great things, but one of the [associates] turned to her other one and said, "Well, you know reading is natural." I looked at her and I said, "Really, it's not." She was willing to listen to that, because, of

course, both of her boys that came out turned to be dyslexic. [Also,] I hear parents talking about, “Our teachers aren’t prepared...” [and] I say, “Oh, wait a minute, this new generation that’s coming out will be so much more prepared, because they got that down to the foundation. That’s just amazing to me what they’re going to know when they come out of [their preparation].

Well, I was very lucky with my undergraduate degree in elementary education in that [when] I graduated from USM I had a teacher that had been around for a while, and she was very familiar with the way the pendulum swings back and forth, back and forth. My initial training with my bachelor’s degree is her doin’ the whole-language-movement type thing. But she was very cautious to make sure that she spent an ample amount of time preparing us for phonics teaching also and made sure we had a really good background in phonics, phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge, which I appreciated. Because, for the most part, most people that graduated when I did with bachelor’s degrees, were comin’ out with just the whole-language approach. She had a vision that she knew that it... was not the only way that you could teach kids to read.

The conversation shifted to having interviewees respond to a query about the science of reading:

“What does the term “the science of reading” mean to you?”

Most situated the term in the need for approaches to teaching reading be grounded in solid research-based evidence as well as how it can be applied in a practical manner in actual classrooms.

Well, that term to me—I don’t know that I’m gonna say the correct answer or not, but that term to me means we need to know what the evidence says. We need to know what the research says, and build around, build on evidence-based practices. That’s what we’re trying to do here at [my EPP]. I think that’s what science of reading does. Just because it’s cute or something—some of our elementary education people, they get on Pinterest and they find all these cute things, but then, is it evidence-based? We have to. Science of reading has helped us to focus on that evidence-based practice. We’ve got to do what research indicates for us. To me, there’s a science of reading just as much as there is in other areas. What does the research say, and how do we make that practical in a classroom?

The science of reading to me means that a lot of times, especially in the 30 years ago [since] the whole language movement, people thought that...if you just immersed students into literature they’d learn to read. Now we know that that’s not true. There is a science to it. You have to understand how the brain works, how you process language, the progression of skills from a baby to a 7-year-old, and how their language develops and what role that plays in reading. There is actually some science behind it. There’s research that backs why these things should be done and it’s not just immersing them in literature.

When I think of that, I think of evidence-based skills that students need to be able to have to read proficiently. It’s based on that proper research. You’ve got to have peer review, you’ve got to have the evidence that merges with everything, and you’ve got to have a practical application of it. The most important thing that I’ve been over and over and over,

and it makes so much sense, because it's got to be explicit, it's got to be exclusive, it's got to be systematic, and it's got to be cumulative. That's what [the science of reading] means to me.

The next query addressed explicitly the contributions neuroscience has made to the science of reading in their own experience.

“From your personal experience, how does neuroscience contribute to educational practice?”

Many of the respondents framed their response in terms of the effect of this work on their own intellectual growth as well as for the preservice teacher candidates they instruct.

Neuroscience has helped me understand—I've always been pretty much interested in brain studies and how they affect learning. But now particularly with the reading and that four-processes model, I think that really helps my students to understand things. [It helps them in] making a link between the oral and the visual, between the sound and seeing a letter, and linking those two through phonics. [It also] helps them see the different parts of the brain where these different skills are located and activated, and understanding that schema theory, the importance of activating prior knowledge, which goes beyond literacy, but that as well.

I think it really helps, especially with some – you know, the dyslexia kid, their brain just doesn't work the right way but that's not their fault. It's just a biological disorder of the brain and I remember the diagram that shows that we can do some intervention with those kids, and then they can do some kind of picture thing with the top of the brain and we can see the change after the intervention. I think neuroscience really helps with how to help a child learn how to read.

Well, basically, I teach Early Lit 1 and neuroscience is a big, big piece of that because we talk about what's going on in the brains of the normal reader and a dyslexic brain. We do spend quite a bit of time on neuroscience and what's going on with the four-part processes, and how that relates to the science of reading.

The interview then shifted to an exploration of how the science of reading-related professional development had influenced their construction of course outlines, syllabi, etc.

“Has the science of reading training and professional growth model influenced how you have constructed the syllabi, course outlines, assignments, and assessments for the EL1 and EL2 course you teach to reflect more of the science of reading?”

To a person, each indicated that their participation had influenced positively how they constructed these essential course elements.

Yes. It's continuing to change it. A lot of times for us we have to go through curriculum to change things about assignments and in our syllabi but those are starting those conversations with faculty that aren't involved in the Mississippi Momentum, but definitely with even maybe not changing an assignment but improving an assignment. I believe improving it, to use the research and evidence that we've learned in the science of reading

modules to enhance the assignment more so. We also have changed the progression of some of our literacy courses based on what we've learned. Like I said, that is a process at our university that can't just be easily saying, oh, we're moving this course where they take it during their junior year. That has definitely started that process.

Yes. It absolutely has. The foundational pieces, the theoretical pieces, I now make sure I put it in there. I really learned that from the science of reading training. I make sure that the students [preservice teacher candidates] have a solid understanding of that. How the simple view of reading, how these different views of reading connect, so that the students [preservice teacher candidates] have a much deeper understanding of what's going on when the child is learning to read.

The follow-up question centered on whether the science of reading experiences had brought more consistency to the structure and content of the EL1 & EL2 courses within the individual participant's EPP.

"Has the science of reading training and professional growth model brought more consistency to the structure and content of EL1 & EL2 courses across the Educator Preparation Program (EPP) at the EPP where you teach?"

The interviewees had concurrence that this was happening in their respective EPPs.

Yes. We have been required to have certain content in those two models for a long time. I think it was before—I know it was—before we ever knew anything about science of reading, but science of reading has just enriched that. We've had those basics. The phonemic awareness, phonics, word analysis, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension back in Early Literacy I. Letter recognition, concept of print and other things, but I think science of reading has helped us put the flesh, if you will, onto the skeleton of the syllabi that we've had for a long time. Plus, we have upgraded those syllabi. We have as a group—I shouldn't say upgraded. We have updated those syllabi as well, because there were times when we didn't put that much focus on things such as concepts of print and things like that, but new research is showing the importance of that for young children.

Right. I believe so because they are able to take what's learned in one course and apply it to another. ...Well EL1 and EL2 are such that if other courses follow EL1 and EL2 and then you also have reading foundations courses that they must take, so they're able to take this information and utilize in other courses. For example, we have a phonics course within our English department. So our students [preservice teacher candidates] who take the Phonics course are able to utilize a lot of the material they learn in EL1 and EL2 and implement it within the phonics course.

Yes, and I worked very closely with the EL2 teacher last year. While I taught science of reading 1, 2, 3, she taught 4, 5, and 6. We worked very closely together to make sure that we were teaching everything that we felt like they needed for the foundations of reading.

We worked very closely together. Yes. We were very consistent. Now we do have a satellite campus on the coast and we do try to work with them also. We have someone on the coast teaching and someone in [another campus] teaching EL1 and 2. We do try to stay as consistent as we can in the program at our university.

The next question addressed whether faculty members they believed their participation in Mississippi Momentum caused them to use more explicit modeling in their teaching practices during their EL1 and EL2 courses.

“Have you engaged in more explicit modeling of early literacy instruction in the EL1 & EL2 courses you teach as a result of your participation in the Mississippi Momentum professional development?”

The respondents agreed that they used more explicit modeling in their classroom practice as an outcome of their participation in Mississippi Momentum.

Yes, most definitely. Here, again, it's the affirmation that I was on the right track, but a lot of that depends on the teaching material. I was able to add some more—the things from science of reading into that for me.

Yes. Yes, I have definitely modeled more. And, being able to participate in this is a good and frequent reminder because we meet every semester, sometimes more than once. Knowing that I'm hearing it, seeing it, it's pretty easy to turn around and model those things with my students [preservice teacher candidates].

The seventh question in this series centered on exploring what activities the participants engage in with their preservice candidates for success in the classroom once they begin teaching.

“Can you explain some of the key activities you engage in to prepare your pre-service candidates to be successful in their classrooms once they begin formal teaching?”

Not surprisingly, each indicated different activities they implemented to prepare their preservice candidates with some explicitly mentioning strategies found in the science of reading modules and others not.

A lot of field experiences, key assignments for the field experiences, the instructor being there with you in the field experience, watching you as you're in a small group teaching or whatever. We have tried to build ours, I guess you could say, with the theory of learning in mind as you would start. What we do, we do it in a small group first. Then, you would do it through your own, but you've had experiences in doing it with a small group.

Yes. What I do is I follow the gradual release responsibility model [so] that we have time to practice under the “We Do” model. In order to do that I meet with a small group and they have center time. During center time I've put centers out such as phonemic—we've got weeks of phonemic awareness activities where they are actually working with phoneme articulation cards, with counting phonemes, segmenting, blending, all those types of activities because they need that practice time. It's heavy, heavy—it's built into every class that they have practice time with the skills that we are working on.

I use the pipe cleaners, Scarborough's Rope model to assist them and show them, when we start talkin' about the learning models right away. I use the hands-on activities... with the simple view of reading model. I've also pulled in the cards, the vowel cards and the consonant cards to help my students [preservice teacher candidates] prepare and be successful. They're required... to do field-experience hours towards the classes that we teach for EL-1 and EL-2, and they're required to incorporate some of these activities into their instruction with their students.

Question eight centered on changes their EPP had made to their educator preparation program's (EPP) fifteen-hour early literacy sequence.

“What changes, if any, have you implemented in your EPP's 15-hour required early literacy sequence for elementary education majors to reflect a structured and explicit approach to teach reading?”

In the responses it is clear that some EPPs are further along in the process than others; however, some respondents simply did not have enough awareness of where their EPP was to answer the question.

Right now we haven't made any big changes. We would like to move a couple, like I had mentioned earlier, we're hoping to rearrange the sequence of some of the literacy courses in that 15 hour, but like I said that's a slow process for us. It's not just something that's easily flipped. Most of the changes have been smaller and we're presenting more of the research that the science of reading modules and Antonio have provided us with. Making sure they understand that research and then applying those concepts in their lessons and papers and that sorta thing.

Well, we've integrated it more into Early Literacy 1 and 2, but we have not changed hours, per se. We happen to have 21 hours at my university, so we have a heavy amount of reading, anyway. At some point, there will be some more changes coming. They just haven't been put into place yet....

I don't think I could really answer that question, only because when you say the 15 hours, I only teach one course and I will go a full year without teaching an Early Literacy course. I teach in the Spring and I'm not teaching one this Fall. I don't think I'll be able to give you an extensive answer.

The last two questions in this series focused on passage rates of the Foundation of Reading Assessment and whether recent graduates of their respective EPP's educator preparation program felt ready to teach early literacy to students. The first of these questions was this:

“Have you seen the mean cut score and passage rate of the Foundations of Reading assessment improve for elementary education majors since you began your participation in Mississippi Momentum?”

As shown in the first quote, while a professor can provide supportive instruction, the student must take the exam seriously and prepare to pass the exam.

Last fall, we were strong. I think I had a class of 13 people. One of them was not going to do their internship until later, and she chose not to take it, although I begged her to take it. If I remember correctly, 10 of the 12 who took it passed on the first attempt, and their scores were high. ... I had three who did not pass on the first attempt, one of whom passed on the second attempt, I think basically because she didn't choose to study before she went and took the test. Another one, two more who passed on the second attempt, I think. Yeah. No. One passed on the second attempt. One passed on the third attempt. The one with the third attempt, she was honest with me and said, "I didn't study. I didn't review until I'd taken it the third time, and then I passed it." I said, "Well."

Whereas, this interviewee discussed the ongoing monitoring she practiced as well as the support mechanisms her EPP had in place to assist student navigation of the exam process.

I've been following that ever since the first test came out a couple of years ago. We have a very high passage rate, so yes, I follow those. I, like I said, because of my training with [center name] I don't know how much Mississippi Momentum is helping with that, but it definitely keeps me on my toes. Our university data person just sent me an updated list today. I get that once or twice a month, I get the scores of our students [preservice teacher candidates] and I monitor it. I also provide test prep workshops from an overall view, a big picture view of how to take the standardized test. Yes, I monitor that heavily. Like I said, with all of these questions I don't know how much Mississippi Momentum is keeping me on my toes because I've been doing this for a while, but it is, I would say that it is helping to maintain and to keep an emphasis on the science of reading. Without the Mississippi Momentum some things may have fallen off, I guess I could say it that way.

The final question of the series sought to determine the level of readiness graduates of the various EPPs expressed once they got into their classrooms.

"Do recent graduates of your EPP's elementary education major program report increased confidence in their ability to teach reading on Day 1 as reported by written surveys being used to collect this information?"

Respondents provided mixed results. While some EPPs have a student survey and reporting structure in place, others did not or administrators apparently were not providing faculty with the findings. Consequently, some respondents could not provide an answer.

Yes, they do, but I don't think that we're seeing quite yet. I think in another year or two we will see more of them, because we have organized our syllabi and our literacy courses better. Science of reading has been a big part of that, and many of them are telling us in internship, "I understand why the teacher is doing this on my first week. I'm observing or assisting her. I understand why she did this for this reading group. I know why. This is why." They can articulate why. "She activated prior knowledge. I understand. She taught three vocabulary, the key vocabulary before they read the story." They're getting a lot of that from the science of reading framing, and I think in the future, we'll see even more of the people.

I think they are trying to gather that information, also through our field experiences. Right now, I do not have access to the written surveys. We informally talk with students [preservice

teacher candidates], and I get informal information about their teacher preparedness, but I don't get anything formal.

Yes, yes. From what we've collected from the state and seen out of our students [preservice teacher candidates], they really are feeling like they're walking into the classroom, knowing how to teach reading.

I don't have any written surveys in place at this time to collect this information.

The interviews conducted with faculty members provided a deeper look at how they perceive the Mississippi Momentum Model and Professional Development Partnership. Their responses illustrate that they are engaged with and supportive of the MS Momentum Partnership and find it both useful for their growth as educators and as a support for the preservice educators they are responsible for preparing to move into early grade classrooms and being capable of teaching young children how to read.

While uniformity of opinions concerning the PD was not always present, overall a consensus emerged that the process worked well and they intended to continue participation. Faculty members regard the materials provided over the course of the professional development as approachable, understandable, and practical. The PD has given them a deeper grounding in the science of reading and the expanding field of neuroscience. In addition, the PD offered them various concepts, approaches, and techniques many, if not all, have adopted for their classrooms. Further, all of them stated that the settings where they engage in PD activities, whether classroom instruction or mentoring visits that occur on their campuses, or the seminars that happen in Jackson, are psychologically safe and supportive where they never feel intimidated or are made to feel inferior.

Conclusion

This baseline evaluation report of the MS Momentum Partnership presents findings of a unique approach to EPP faculty change and growth. The CCPI used various sources to create this report. These included a survey and interviews of participating faculty, a review of documents and texts used in seminars conducted in Jackson, and the science of reading modules that served as foundational texts of the MM professional development activities. CCPI also analyzed results from a survey MM partners at BRI created and conducted of early career educators who had recently completed their preservice training and taken positions in schools across Mississippi. These analyses illustrate early signs that the MM approach is working by gaining the support and buy-in of faculty who participate in the initiative's professional development.

For instance, the science of reading modules used in MM offer not only evidence-based research tied to the science of reading but also practical actionable practices that faculty members can and do use in their EPP classrooms. Across the various question series that made up the structure of the interview protocol, the discussions revealed this use as participants indicated they had engaged the texts and used them to inform their instruction of preservice educators. During the seminars in Jackson, the MM partners used handouts, the text *How Learning Works*, instructional practices and modeling of effective teaching techniques, and large and small group activities to contribute to a professional development structure that is effective and

has informed the practice of participating faculty in their classrooms. Further, Dr. Fierro used formative assessments during his on-campus visits and during seminars to provide feedback and determine overall comprehension in faculty of early literacy concepts and practices the faculty had encountered during their participation, which, in turn, has changed their instructional practices. The Jackson-based seminars that the MM partners facilitated and faculty self-study offered other means they had available to reflect on and improve their overall scientifically grounded knowledge base in the area of early literacy instruction. A critical aspect of the model has been the willingness of faculty to open their classrooms and be vested from the beginning as active participants in the overall implementation of the initiative. Without such faculty buy-in and commitment, it is unlikely that the MS Momentum Partnership would have made the progress it has in these early phases.

In summary, this initial and baseline evaluation report indicates that the MS Momentum Partnership has achieved a successful beginning. Of course, the faculty members themselves are the key element in making the MS Momentum Partnership work as well as it has. The twenty-seven who completed the survey and the eight who participated in interviews make up a sample of the overall group of thirty-nine faculty who are actively participating in Mississippi Momentum. The results from this first year's evaluation supports the conclusion that they represent their peers as professional educators who are committed through their participation in the MS Momentum Partnership. These results further show a willingness for embracing the initiative's goal of changing faculty mindsets and instructional practices, and, in turn, to improving the instruction of preservice educators and the reading abilities of young children across Mississippi. As various studies have long established, higher proficiency in reading leads to better academic outcomes, which produces more high school graduations, increased enrollment in higher education, and better chances at a fulfilling life. The net, long-term result of Mississippi Momentum, while in the future, will be citizens who have the opportunity to improve their lives and the lives of their families and broader communities.

