

Lasting PD for literacy educators and classroom teachers

LETRS® from Voyager Sopris Learning focuses on raising literacy achievement for all students

When it comes to professional development, Regina Teat believes building the instructional capacity of every instructor and classroom teacher is the most effective use of time and money of any program, especially using grant funding.

“When the money goes away, the capacity and knowledge through good professional development for the teacher remains,” says Teat, Director of Elementary Education and Title I & II for Dorchester County Public Schools, a rural district located on Maryland’s eastern shore.

When Teat was principal at Hurlock Elementary, a school in Dorchester County, back in 2004, she used funds from a federal Reading First grant to bring LETRS® from Voyager Sopris Learning as the course of study for literacy instructors and classroom teachers.

Teat explains that LETRS provides comprehensive professional development and support for educators who teach reading. It’s professional development for both new and veteran teachers—anyone who teaches literacy but may not have learned the science



behind how students learn to read.

“LETRS also builds and deepens educator knowledge, including the ‘what,’ ‘why,’ and ‘how’ of literacy instruction,” Teat says. “It also

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helps develop a road map for meeting state standards. It's not program-specific, it's the foundation of good reading instruction."

Positive results

Teat shared how *LETRS* co-author Carol Tolman (along with Louisa Moats) conducted summer training modules for the teachers at Hurlock. During the school year Tolman would observe classrooms, give teachers one-on-one feedback, and discuss data on student progress. This exposure and training helped sharpen the educators' ability to diagnose students who were struggling with reading and to understand how to provide intervention that leads to literacy success.

"This helped each of my teachers," Teat says. "My goal was for each teacher to become a reading specialist in knowledge and capacity, and that's what *LETRS* training allowed us to do at Hurlock."

Students were direct beneficiaries of their teachers' increased literacy instruction. For example, the fifth-grade students' reading

proficiency, according to state assessments, was 36 percent in 2004 and improved to just under 80 percent by 2008. By 2011, those students were at a solid 80 percent.

Fast-forward

When Teat left Hurlock five years ago to become Supervisor of Elementary Education and Title I for the district, she decided to replicate the Hurlock success formula she experienced with *LETRS* at Choptank Elementary, another Title I school in the district. Teat worked with Tolman to lead the summer modules and school-year training at Choptank, and Teat says there was 100 percent buy-in from teachers. Once again, there was a rise in state assessment scores during the first two years with *LETRS* at Choptank.

"The bottom line is that if instructors work through the modules and apply that instructional capacity and knowledge, they will have a better understanding of how reading instruction works," Teat says. "Students benefit from that."

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