

CASE STUDY

LETRS: Lasting Literacy Professional Learning for Educators and Teachers

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When it comes to professional learning, 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 and 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® as the course of study for literacy instructors and classroom teachers.

Teat explains that LETRS provides comprehensive professional learning and support for educators who teach reading. It’s professional training 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

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% in 2004 and improved to just under 80% by 2008. By 2011, those students were at a solid 80%.



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% 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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