



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS

Striving Readers

Today's Readers, Tomorrow's Leaders

SPRING 2009

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

SPECIAL POINTS OF
INTEREST

- Striving Readers Coaches
- Read 180
- A Teacher Implementing MCLA Strategies



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For submissions to the Memphis Striving Readers Project Newsletter please email newsletter editor Amber McCullough: amccllgh@memphis.edu

Memphis Striving Readers Project

Developing Successful Readers in the Mid-South

Office of Secondary Instructional Support

ELIZABETH HEEREN IS NOW A CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Dr. Elizabeth Heeren, Director and Co-Principal Investigator of Memphis Striving Readers Project



Dr. Elizabeth Heeren, in addition to her position as director, has taken over as co-principal investigator of the Memphis Striving Readers Project since the retirement of Dr. Ric Potts in October of 2008.

The Memphis Striving Readers Project has been an ongoing project between the University of Memphis and Memphis City Schools since March 1, 2006. The project is a five year study and has completed its third year. Dr. Heeren, along with co-investigator Dr. J. Helen Perkins from

the University of Memphis, are in charge of implementing the Memphis Striving Readers Program and Read 180 Program in eight Memphis middle schools. Participating Striving Readers and Read 180 schools for the 2008-2009 school year include; American Way Middle School, Hickory Ridge Middle School, Corry Middle School, Lanier Middle School, Sherwood Middle School, Riverview Middle School, A. Maceo Walker Middle School and Hamilton Middle School.



Dr. J. Helen Perkins, Co-Principal Investigator for the Memphis Striving Readers Project and University of Memphis Associate Professor

A book is like a garden carried in the pocket. ~ Chinese proverb ~



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MCLA SCHEDULE

MCLA Instructors for 2009

Mr. Fred Holmes: Science

Dr. Theresa Magpuri-Lavell and Ms Coronica Hall:
Math

Mrs. LaTisha Bryant: Reading/Language Arts

Dr. Elizabeth Heeren: Social Studies

Spring 2009 classes for MCLA started on January 2,
2009

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSE TO THE MEMPHIS STRIVING READERS PROJECT



Marcia Kingman oversees the Striving Readers grants from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education. After the Striving Readers Annual meeting in February, Ms Kingman sent a follow up memo, a “pat on the back”, to express her admiration for the people working in Memphis on the Striving Readers Project. Ms Kingman stated, “I couldn’t help but link the President’s language in last night’s [February 24, 2009] talk to Congress to the work you are doing. For example, when I heard the President say, ‘The answers to our problems don’t lie beyond our reach. They exist in our laboratories and universities...,’ I was reminded of your thoughtful, intelligent expression of problems and solutions. I linked what you said about your work in solving the daily problems of implementing, evaluating, and sustaining a literacy program to the President’s belief that our citizens have the answers to the really hard problems and opportunity to implement them.”

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America's Premier Reading Intervention Program

READ 180

Mrs. LaTisha Bryant

READ 180 is an intensive reading intervention program that helps educators confront the problem of adolescent illiteracy and special needs reading on multiple fronts, using technology, print, and professional development. *READ 180* is designed to meet the needs of struggling readers whose reading achievement is below proficient level. The program directly addresses individual needs through differentiated instruction, adaptive and instructional software, high-interest literature, and direct instruction in reading, writing, and vocabulary skills.



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This is a Federal Education Program

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Spotlight on Teachers



Hickory Ridge Teacher Implementing Strategies



Mrs. Gwendolyn Powell, a veteran teacher of 26 years, believes that the Striving Reader/MCLA strategies have helped her implement reading strategies during her middle school Social Studies courses at Hickory Ridge Middle School.

Mrs. Powell has been a part of the program since the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year and is very pleased with the project. Her favorite strategies so far have included storytelling, anticipation guides, QAR, exit slips, interest surveys, K-W-L, pop-corn, jigsaw, RAFT, read alouds, t-notes (split notes), read-write-pair-think, think-pair-share, scavenger hunts, and other activities.

"Your heart is slightly bigger than the average human heart, but that's because you're a teacher." Anonymous

CURRICULUM RESOURCE CENTERS

CRC's house an abundance of materials in varying content areas that MCLA teachers are free to browse, check out, and manipulate at will. Also, the coaches are pleased to assist with selecting and evaluating appropriate materials for their subject matter. CRC materials are at differentiated instructional levels to meet the needs of all students.

The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations

They think I can't do hard work,
So they give it to me – a little at a time.
And because I don't ask for more,
They think everything is just fine.

I guess they think they are doing me a favor,
By not expecting too much.
But what about when I leave their classes,
I wonder if I will have to catch up!

Catch up with the other students,
Who were given a little more.
Will I be able to compete with them,
Can I make a high enough score?

Did you do what you hoped to do
And prepare me to be the best
Or did you only teach me enough,
To be proficient on a test?

By: Lester Harper, Mathematics Teacher,
American Way Middle School

LITERACY COACHES

MRS. KENYETTA MCNEIL
AT LANIER MIDDLE

MRS. CANDICE POLLAN
AT AMERICAN WAY MIDDLE

MRS. JOCQUELL RODGERS
AT CORRY MIDDLE

MS CORONICA HALL
AT AMERICAN WAY MIDDLE

MRS. KAMANDRIA VASSER
AT HICKORY RIDGE MIDDLE

MS REGINA WASHINGTON
AT HICKORY RIDGE MIDDLE





Creating Successful Readers in the Mid-South

The Memphis Striving Readers Project is designed to test the efficacy of the Memphis Content Literacy Academy professional development model for improving reading achievement and content literacy in high-need urban middle schools serving grades 6-8. All teachers in Striving Readers treatment schools are eligible to participate in the professional development program. The district employees READ 180 as a targeted intervention for 960 students in grades 6-8. The University of Memphis implemented the school level intervention (MCLA) and Research for Better Schools evaluates the district's Striving Readers project.

RBS and MSRP Website

As part of the external evaluator's role as MSRP evaluator, RBS recently devoted a section of its website to MSRP. In addition to general information on the project, the site includes many of the instruments used in the evaluation, the research reports on the project, and MSRP presentations given at various conferences. The direct address is: <http://www.rbs.org/Research-Evaluation/Memphis-Striving-Readers-Project/31/>. Or you can go to RBS: <http://www.rbs.org/>, click on Research and Evaluation, then Memphis Striving Readers Project. Another link to information concerning the Memphis Striving Readers Project is the federal website at: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders/performance.html>

Striving Readers/MCLA Research Study

By: Research for Better Schools

Since the inception of the Memphis Striving Readers grant in 2006, evaluators at Research for Better Schools (RBS) have been studying teacher involvement in MCLA and student progress in *READ 180* classes and in the classes of MCLA teachers. Thanks to teachers' participation in surveys, focus groups, and classroom observations and access to student achievement data, researchers have been able to measure the implementation and impact of MCLA and *READ 180* on teaching and learning. We wanted to take a moment to share with you some broad highlights from the first two years of the ongoing study.

In Years 1 and 2, the majority of MCLA teachers rated their literacy coaches and instructors very highly, reported implementing various MCLA strategies in their content classes, and appeared to have found the program helpful overall. Early findings indicated that teachers at MCLA schools were more likely than control school teachers to use graphic organizers in their content classes after MCLA participation. Although initial experimental analyses found no school-level links between MCLA and student achievement on the TCAP and Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the first step in promoting literacy integration has been achieved: researchers found that MCLA teachers are using research-based strategies with success. The challenge will be for teachers to continue to use and improve what they've learned from MCLA, especially in the face of competing demands.

Our *READ 180* study has produced similar results. Start-up issues affected initial classroom implementation; however, by Year 2, more classes followed the program model more closely. Although a statistical analysis for the randomized control study did not find differences in the achievement of *READ 180* and control group students, additional analyses currently being conducted may shed more light onto program impact. Moreover, the goals of *READ 180* observations did not include measuring whether teachers increased their knowledge; however, the additional experience gained by returning *READ 180* teachers each year seems likely to help students. RBS is continuing to examine the data from observations, surveys, and interviews to determine if the extent to which teachers are able to use MCLA strategies or *READ 180*-recommended activities are related to gains in student scores.



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