

Understanding ESSA EVIDENCE



In 2015, as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Congress passed and the President enacted the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind. ESSA encourages local and state educational agencies and schools to place a strong emphasis on evidence-based interventions, strategies, or approaches when purchasing and adopting solutions and services.

Within the law, evidence-based solutions are described as programs showing evidence of producing positive results on student outcomes. Specifically, the type of evidence backed by formal research and studies.

ESSA defines four tiers of evidence:

Tier 1—Strong:

Supported by one or more experimental studies.

Tier 2—Moderate:

Supported by one or more quasi-experimental studies.

Tier 3—Promising:

Supported by one or more correlational studies.

Tier 4—Demonstrates a Rationale:

Practices that have a logic model, are supported by research, and have some effort of study underway.



LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) provides educators with an in-depth understanding of the science behind teaching literacy, and gives them the background and depth of knowledge to teach language and literacy skills to every student.

Designed to be the cornerstone of a multiyear, systemic literacy improvement initiative, **LETRS** is the most respected comprehensive professional development course for instructors of reading, spelling, and related language skills.

TIER 3

PROMISING Criteria as Defined by ESSA

- Demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes
- Based on promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias

How LETRS Meets the Promising Criteria

- ✓ Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast report identified educator outcomes associated with the implementation of **LETRS** professional development as part of Mississippi's early literacy initiative.
- ✓ Educators who participated in the professional development course of study (**LETRS**) had higher measures of teacher knowledge than those who had not completed it by the end of the study.
- ✓ Educators who participated in the professional development course of study (**LETRS**) had higher measures of instruction quality, student engagement, and teacher competencies than those who had not completed it by the end of the study.*

*Study used for ESSA classification: Folsom, J. S., Smith, K. G., Burk, K., & Oakley, N. (2017). Educator outcomes associated with implementation of Mississippi's K-3 early literacy professional development initiative (REL 2017-270). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

Research: [LETRS Research Base](#)

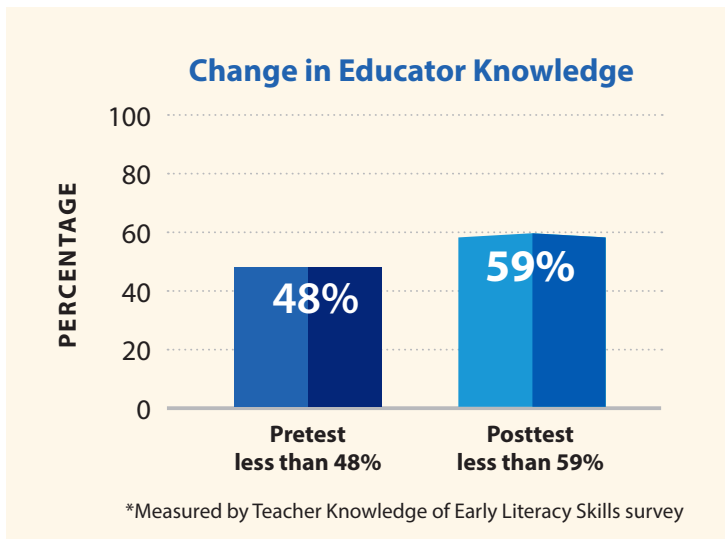
Results: [Executive Summary of the Study by Regional Educational Laboratory \(REL\) Southeast and Mississippi Department of Education](#)

Case Studies: [Rapides Parish, LA](#)
[Niles, OH](#)

Evidence Summary

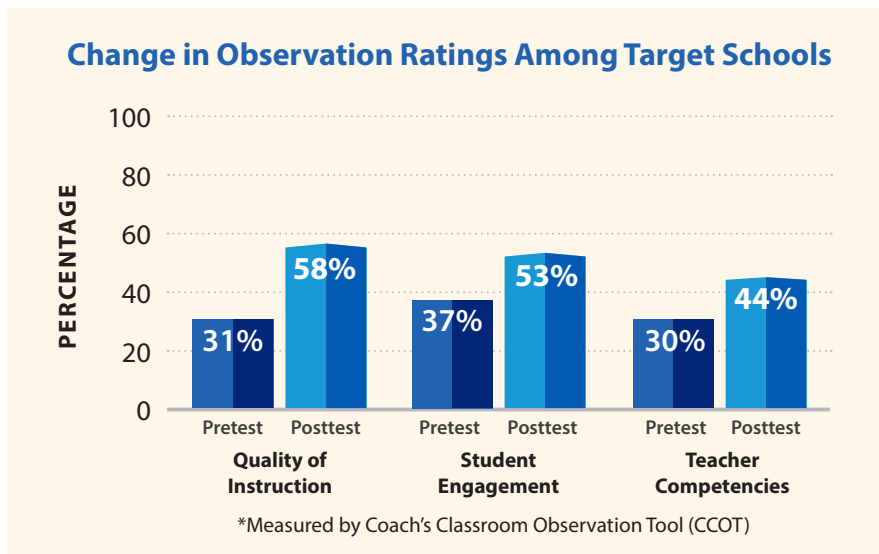
The Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast report on Mississippi’s K–3 early literacy professional development initiative highlights key findings related to educator outcomes. Noted in the report and seen in the graphs below, teacher knowledge increased for those who participated in **LETRS** professional development compared to those who had not participated. Additionally, quality of instruction, student engagement, and teacher competencies also increased for those participating in the professional development.

Summary of Key Findings from REL-Southeast Report (April 2017) on Educator Outcomes Associated with Implementation of Mississippi’s K–3 Early Literacy Professional Development Initiative



Average educator knowledge increased from the 48th percentile to the 59th percentile on the Teacher Knowledge of Early Literacy Skills survey.

Educators who had not yet participated in the professional development course of study by the end of the study had lower measures of teacher knowledge than those who had completed it.



In target schools, the average rating of the quality of instruction, student engagement, and teaching competencies all increased.

Teachers who had no yet participated in the professional development course of study by the end of the study had lower measures of instruction quality, student engagement, and teacher competencies than teachers who had completed it.