

# Professional Development Description

Name of Entity:

**Voyager Sopris Learning (Cambium Learning Group)**

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Summary of Services provided:

## Overview

*Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)* is expertly- and intentionally-designed professional development for educators who are responsible for teaching and improving PreK–12 instruction in reading, writing, and spelling. Sixty percent of students learn to read with instruction, while a small percentage will learn no matter what. Of that 60 percent of students who learn to read with instruction, 30% need explicit, specific, sometimes even intensive instruction. For this reason, beyond the routines and lesson plans of adopted reading programs, it is important that educators understand the language structures they are teaching, how students learn to read and write, and the reasons some children struggle. *LETRS* gives teachers this knowledge while addressing each component of reading instruction—phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, oral language, vocabulary, reading fluency and automaticity, comprehension, assessment, and writing. Through *LETRS*, teachers and reading coaches gain a deeper understanding of language structure and how to help struggling readers. *LETRS* and the national cadre of expert trainers, all of whom were once educators, help teachers apply best practice in teaching reading in the classroom every day.

## Services

*LETRS* is not an ELA instructional curriculum for students; it is research-based, relevant professional development for educators that is not aligned to, nor specifically supports, any individual or particular literacy curriculum or program. *LETRS* provides teachers with an understanding of the *what, why, and how* of teaching reading, spelling, and writing, and increases their effectiveness with any research-based reading program. This curriculum-agnostic professional development provides the deep foundational knowledge that is critical for teachers to meet the expectations placed on them no matter what tools and programs they are provided with to be used in their classrooms daily. *LETRS* is relevant to teachers and administrators, as well as to both general education and special education and uses accessible language and interactive exercise to help educators understand the science behind the best ways to teach reading.

The *LETRS* course of study:

- Builds a bridge between research and practice
- Cultivates knowledge about teaching literacy and language
- Develops teachers' ability to diagnose and overcome students' reading challenges
- Provides practical strategies that work for every type of learner
- Increases effectiveness of core reading and supplementary instruction
- Engages teachers with real-world applications and thought-provoking questions

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As a whole, the program is designed to be a course of study and/or series of workshops that connect topics to one another. Each *LETRS* course is designed to give educators the tools they need to be confident teacher leaders who seek deep learning and reflection as they prepare for the challenging work of making literacy a reality for every student. *LETRS* content was developed by a corpus of literacy experts who all specialize in and study the strands of literacy, while focusing on diverse populations of students. Trainings are multi-day sessions delivered by *LETRS* trainers who live and reside all across the United States, all of whom are former educators, having worked in roles as wide and varied as those of educators who participate in *LETRS* trainings. Every trainer has completed a rigorous certification process in order to be considered qualified to travel to schools or districts to effectively connect research to practice and make content accessible, engaging, interactive, and applicable in the classroom. *LETRS* professional development is also available through online courses featuring National *LETRS* Trainers

Each *LETRS* module addresses key topics in depth. Within each workshop and series of workshops, integrated, interactive exercises and accessible language connect topics to one another, to the research, and to practice in the classroom. Topics include:

## 1 Foundational Module

Foundations: An Introduction to Language and Literacy

## 10 Core Modules

Module 1: The Challenge of Learning to Read

Module 6: Digging for Meaning: Teaching Text Comprehension

Module 2: The Speech Sounds of English: Phonetics, Phonology, and Phoneme Awareness

Module 7: Teaching Phonics, Word Study, and the Alphabetic Principle

Module 3: Spellography for Teachers: How English Spelling Works

Module 8: Assessment for Prevention and Early Intervention

Module 4: The Mighty Word: Building Vocabulary and Oral Language

Module 9: Teaching Beginning Spelling and Writing

Module 5: Getting Up to Speed: Developing Fluency

Module 10: Reading Big Words: Syllabication and Advanced Decoding

## 4 Supplemental Modules

*Teaching English Learners: For Instructional Leaders*

*ParaReading: A Training Guide for Tutors*

*LETRS for Early Childhood Educators*

*A Principal's Primer for Raising Reading Achievement*

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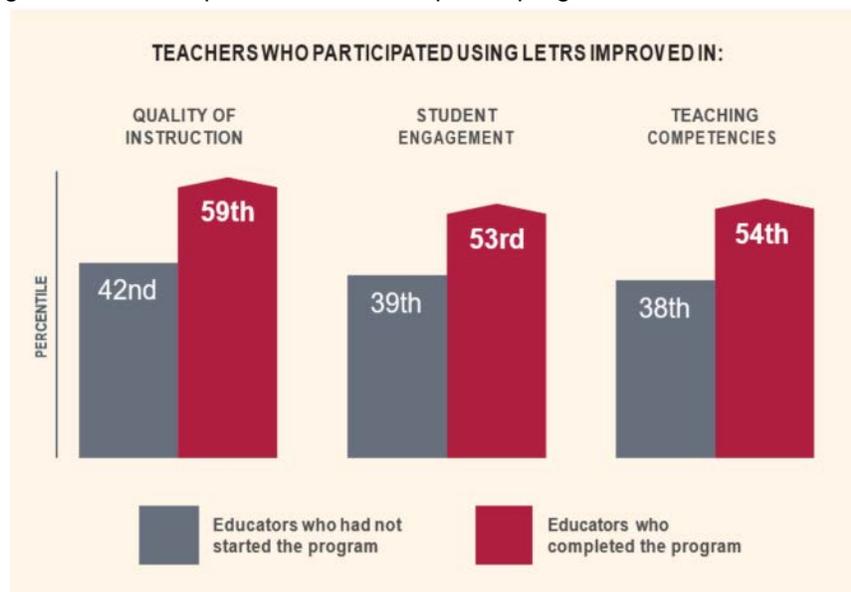
## Results

To address the goal of having every student reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade, the Mississippi Department of Education incorporated the use of professional development, using the *Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling* (LETRS®) program, and literacy coaching for K-3 educators across the state. *Educator Outcomes Associated with Implementation of Mississippi's K-3 Early Literacy Professional Development Initiative* (Folsom, Smith, Burk, & Oakley, 2017) reports results of the systematic investigation of change in educators' knowledge and classroom practices.

While the Folsom et al. study investigated the change in educators' knowledge and classroom practices, it was not intended to directly evaluate the impact of the professional development program. However, the study's findings suggest **“teacher knowledge of early literacy skills, the quality of early literacy skills instruction, student engagement during early literacy skills instruction, and teaching competencies improved among educators who participated in the program over and above any increases found among educators generally.”**

## FINDINGS

The main findings related to the professional development program include:



Increases in average ratings of quality of instruction, student engagement, and teaching competencies were found to be associated with progress in the professional development program. At the end of the study, teachers who had not started the program were rated in the 42nd percentile for quality of instruction, the 39th percentile for student engagement, and the 38th percentile for teaching competencies. Teachers who completed the program were rated in the 59th percentile for quality of instruction, the 53rd percentile for student engagement, and the 54th percentile for teaching competencies.