



Glean Education's Ed Leaders in Literacy Podcast Episode #8 - Kirsten Wynn and Pati Montgomery (Mississippi Dept. of Education & Schools Cubed)

- Speaker 1: The results they've been immediate and we had one of the biggest shifts in the state.
- Speaker 2: It's almost magical when it all comes together and I think to myself, this is what education is about.
- Speaker 3: There were inequities everywhere. My students in South Texas ultimately taught me more than I taught them.
- Speaker 4: Over 40% of our students were leaving third grade with less than proficient reading skills and that was just something we had to stop.
- Speaker 5: The bottom line is that we can prevent reading failure. We can change the trajectory of these students' lives and I just want to shout from the rooftop, "It can be done."

Jessica Hamman: From Glean Education, this is Ed Leaders In Literacy, a podcast series that features educators and administrators who have made hard decisions about instruction, curriculum, intervention, and school systems to close the achievement gap and build equity by improving literacy.

Jessica Hamman: I'm Jessica Hamman, founder of Glean Education. And on the show today are Kristen Wells and Pati Montgomery. Kristen Wells is the State Literacy Director at the Mississippi Department of Education who has over 15 years of teaching experience as a kindergarten teacher, a K-5 interventionist, and a district literacy coach. Pati Montgomery is the Chief Educational Officer for Schools Cubed, an educational consulting group that works with district leaders to improve literacy outcomes through instructional strategies and efficient school systems. Previously, she was the Executive Director of Literacy for the Colorado Department of Education. I'm very excited to have you, and as I understand, this is a bit of a reunion for both of you because you worked together quite closely on the Mississippi project, am I right on that?

Kristen Wynn: Yeah. Pati came in with us early on as a trainer for our Principal's Primer for Administrators and she's one of the co-authors of the book. And so we ended up having a bond and she early on visited in my role as a literacy coach one of my literacy support schools, so this is a reunion, we haven't seen each other in several years.



Jessica Hamman: Well, I am thrilled to bring you guys together, so thank you for joining me today.

Pati Montgomery: Thank you.

Kristen Wynn: Thank you.

Jessica Hamman: So many people are talking about the fact that Mississippi was the only state in the US to make gains on this year's NAEP, and I'd love to hear more about the project that brought the state on this successful literacy trajectory. So we will talk about that kind of more generally, but first Kristen, I'd love to hear more from you about kind of the background behind, first of all, your career that led you to where you are now and your involvement in this Mississippi reading project.

Kristen Wynn: Sure. So my career started roughly over 15 years ago. I came straight out of college and went straight into teaching. I knew that that's what I wanted to do. So I started off in Canton, Mississippi, so it's a rather rural town outside of Jackson and I started off as a first grade teacher and then I went on to another district that was closer to my hometown in Brandon and I worked there and taught first, second grade. And then I was moved to do interventions between two of our schools. So I did K-5 interventions with the struggling students I had in that district, roughly over 500 students at one school. And



I was in charge of testing and screeners for those kids and identifying and supporting teachers with interventions there.

Kristen Wynn: In 2013, I applied for a literacy coach position with the Mississippi Department of Education. At that time, our governor was seeking 75 coaches across the state. And there were about 500 applicants and out of 500 applicants, around 24 of us were chosen for that initial cohort. So I've been a part of this work in serving the state of Mississippi, the students, and the teachers since 2013. And so I started off as a literacy coach with two literacy support schools, the second year, my principal and I, we took that school from a S rating to a B rating with implementing early literacy best practices and strategies. And then I went on to become a regional coordinator and then an assistant state literacy coordinator, which in that role, I oversaw literacy coaches, regional coordinators, provided support to them, as well as schools and school districts. But then recently this year, as of October, I transitioned into the role of state literacy director.

Jessica Hamman: Wow.

Kristen Wynn: So I am fortunate to have been a part of this work as a teacher, as an interventionist, working with students that struggles, but also as a literacy coach knowing the work and then moving up to a state literacy director.



Jessica Hamman: And clearly you're an asset to the state with all the good work you've done, that's amazing. So tell me more about how you and Pati intersect, and I'd love to hear more about, so now we understand that Mississippi had an emphasis on coaching really for many, many years, since you said 2013. Tell us more about the intersection between coaching and training, which I'm thinking is where Pati comes in.

Kristen Wynn: Correct. So our Literacy-Based Promotion Act, which is our literacy law that we have here in Mississippi, it was passed in 2013, around April of 2013. And the goal for that was that every student is reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade. A part of that law is that the state provides professional development training for teachers in early literacy skills. The professional development training that we selected was LETRS training. And in addition to training the first cohort of teachers as well as the coaches in January of 2014, we also prepared training for our principals. And that was the training that Pati co-authored with LETRS, and it was called the Principal's Primer for Raising Reading Achievement. So it was the administrative portion of the training.

Kristen Wynn: LETRS originally was like a two week, 10 day training and so they really came in and worked with us and created this online face to face training for Mississippi. So it's one thing to train your teachers, but it so equally important to make sure that your leaders have the knowledge and the skills that they need to lead those buildings. We have principals with high school and middle school background that didn't really understand what it took to teach children how to



read and the skills, so we wanted to make sure that we offered training for administrators and Pati was a part of that.

Kristen Wynn: We called them if we needed her, we didn't understand something. And then my principal went through the training and Pati was able to come out to the school and do some observations with me in the classrooms and we just kind of created that bond over her time in Mississippi, and we really enjoyed that time and we appreciate her contribution to this initiative.

Jessica Hamman: Pati, I'd love to turn it over to you and have you tell us about the training work you did and the importance of training principals and administrators alongside with the teacher training?

Pati Montgomery: Yes. Mississippi was wonderful to have the insight and thoughtfulness to think about training principals as well. I've led multiple initiatives regarding literacy and I can tell you that too often we leave principals behind, and that if principals aren't trained, they don't understand what to look for, the principles of how children learn to read and that sort of thing.

Jessica Hamman: Tell me a little bit more about the importance of including principals and administrators in this work.



Pati Montgomery: First of all, many of our principals today didn't get training in the science of reading across the country, and so that's critical. The second thing is that it takes both systems and structures that support teachers in their classrooms. And the third thing that so many people don't understand is that principals are the second most impactful thing to student achievement only to that of teachers and when we leave principals out of understanding reading and what needs to be in place for increased reading achievement for students, we're really missing the boat. So we really need to think about training our principals and providing them with that job embedded professional development as well.

Jessica Hamman: I've also seen the importance of principals understanding their school's data or superintendents understanding their districts data, kind of on a higher level than the teacher may see just their students and classrooms data. And tell me a little bit more about the role of utilizing assessment and understanding the role that database decision making goes into instructional success.

Pati Montgomery: Oh, I can't tell you how important that is. It's my belief that data tells you just as much about what the teachers are doing as it does about what the kids are accomplishing. So we have to look at data in so many different ways, how our building is doing, how each grade level is doing, how each teacher is doing, and how our individual students are doing. And so principals really need to be able to quickly walk in and we have data rooms that we create in each of our schools where principals can quickly say, "Why are these four students struggling? Or what do we need to be doing differently? Or also, if we are not doing well in phony segmentation, what are



the instructional strategies and practices that our teachers need to learn?" So data is critical in every slice of making sure kids are growing and our teachers are growing too and our school.

Jessica Hamman: And making sure teachers are aware of the data that's in their schools so that they can better work toward the goals that they have on a school or district level. The transparency seems critical and it seems like the principals are the linchpin in that.

Pati Montgomery: Absolutely. I can tell you, and Kristen, I don't know if you know this, but I actually trained 849 principals and assistant principals in your state. I kept track.

Kristen Wynn: People ask us how many people or principals and teachers have been trained or gone through the early literacy training, and we can proudly say 15,000, but to have that number of administrators, that's great. Yeah.

Pati Montgomery: Yep, in three years.

Jessica Hamman: In fact, it does lead me to the question concerning how many teachers were trained as well and if you were able to continually train new teachers that are coming on?



Kristen Wynn: Oh, for sure. So like to date, we have trained roughly 15,000 teachers, but the third edition is what we're offering now. And yes, we have opened it up just recently to K-12 teachers. We also train, initially we started the training or had the training set for K-3 teachers and then we have it for K-8 special education teachers, administrators. We trained at prep, our higher ed students, our pre-service teachers, they can go through the training. But this year we really just opened it up just recently to K-12. So we have K-12 teachers, [inaudible 00:12:52], we have our higher ed, our ed prep faculty, we've trained some of them. And then we highly recommend our pre-service teachers go through the training as well as our paraprofessionals can go through the training as well.

Jessica Hamman: And so Pati, what did the Principals Primer Training look like? What was it composed of?

Pati Montgomery: It's composed of, at a basic level how children learn to read, not as in depth as the LETRS training for teachers. It's also though composed of systems and structures that are necessary to be in schools in order for students to succeed. What we know from research is that teacher knowledge is one thing, but it isn't as effective as also ensuring that principals know the systems and structures that need to be put into place. So, how do we do a data team meeting? How to use your resources effectively? How to progress and monitor and setting up the systems for that. So a lot about how to schedule a school-wide schedule that's effective for reading achievement. So more specifically the systems and the structures that need to be in place.



Jessica Hamman: So that the school can work together in terms of instruction and school systems and assessment to kind of make it a well oiled machine.

Pati Montgomery: Right, that support teachers in their teaching of literacy.

Jessica Hamman: And importantly, let's head back to the coaching aspect because all of this is again, great to get professional development, to make people aware of what they need to know, to improve instructional practices, but the job embedded coaching seemed to have a real impact. And since this was part of your career history, can you talk a little to the approach that Mississippi had with regard to coaching and how that made an impact on the state's work?

Kristen Wynn: Like I said prior that in 2013 with the law passing, one portion of that was to have technical assistance provided to schools by the state. So one thing that the state decided to do was to hire the coaches. Now something that's really unique about our coaching model is that we did not leave the hiring up to the local school district. Florida came in with the REL Southeast. We learned from certain things that happened in Florida. So one thing that we did is the hiring of coaches was determined at the state level. So we hired all of our coaches and they are deployed to our lowest performance schools and we called those our literacy support schools. And those schools, we look at two years of data from their third grade assessment, and we average that, and we rank order every



elementary school in the state of Mississippi and place coaches based on the number that we have for that year that we've hired.

Kristen Wynn: The coaches serve in school two to three times a week and they all have two schools. Over the years, we've had to make adjustments to our model because we've seen in several of our schools, which is a great thing, sustainability, because that's the purpose, we want to improve and sustain student achievement in these schools and we've seen that through targeted instructional coaching, through building capacity of literacy across the curriculum, through enhancing reading instruction and interventions, and promoting a school-wide culture of literacy learning that's inclusive of all. That's kind of our model. And so we've had schools to exit our list, 12 to be exact. And so now we have a model where we have full support schools, we have limited support schools, and then we have limited support two and three that don't receive as much intensive support as our full support schools receive.

Kristen Wynn: So our coaches are in the schools two to three times a week. They're co-teaching, they're modeling, they're helping to develop school literacy plan, which was a part of the Principal's Primer. And then they're in there doing observations and doing professional learning with teachers. We really have a very solid and strategic coaching model that we use in our state.

Jessica Hamman: And differentiated. It occurred to me that it's almost RTI for districts in terms of literacy, because you provide the more intensive coaching and information to the districts that need it the most, and



then you get them up to where they need to be. It's just amazing and pretty brilliant.

Kristen Wynn: For us, I guess because we're in the work, it seems just like [crosstalk 00:17:58]-

Jessica Hamman: Obvious.

Kristen Wynn: We know that teachers need support. And as a former classroom teacher, you think, wow, I wish I would have had at a coach that was there to provide me support, not evaluating, that's the administrator's job.

Jessica Hamman: Yeah.

Kristen Wynn: But we [inaudible 00:18:16] on the front end and say, "We are here to support you, so if there are gaps in your knowledge, if there are gaps in your instructional quality, we're able to help you fill those gaps so that we are able to improve and see student achievement? One thing that I can really attribute to the success that we've seen in our state is that, yes, we have LETRS training. We have the early literacy training. However, the coaching piece that accompanies that is so important because I can get the information, but how I implement it in front of a first grader or my group of students, it makes a difference to have someone by my side that I can depend on



and say, "I need help with this or show me how to do this with my kids." And really help with implementation. So that piece it was really critical for us.

Jessica Hamman: That's fantastic. When I first heard about the success that Mississippi was having, I set out to do some research and found a study that REL Southwest did in coordination with IES at the US Department of Education. And then the study is called Educator Outcomes Associated with Mississippi's K-3 Early Literacy Professional Development Initiative. And this study found that the increased knowledge and the coaching was positively correlated with higher quality of instruction, increased student engagement, and improved teacher competencies. And all that kind of bundled together and equated to increased literacy progress in Mississippi in general. Kristen, can you tell me a little bit about the study?

Kristen Wynn: Sure. So just an overview, in January of 2014, we began the statewide, of course, the early literacy professional development for our K-3 educators, again, through the online and face to face training. But this study examined changes in teacher knowledge of early literacy skills instruction, it looked at student engagement during early literacy skills instruction, and teacher competencies in Mississippi between winter of 2014 and fall of 2015. At the same time as the professional development, the department, again, like we mentioned earlier, provided state literacy coaches to our literacy support school who spent an average of two to three days per week in the schools that they served.



Kristen Wynn: So REL Southeast provided two instruments for us. The teacher knowledge survey of early literacy skills as well as the classroom observation tool that was utilized by the coaches to collect the data for this particular study. The coaches randomly selected teachers in each grade level at the time and then they video recorded the teachers and then they used the observation tool and scripted parts of it. Then parts of it had questions that they had to answer afterwards. And so the key findings of that study was the average educator knowledge increased from 48% to 59% on the teacher knowledge of early literacy survey. And our literacy support schools, what was really telling and really we saw some improvements in that period of time was the average rating of quality instruction improved from 31% to 58%. And then the average rating of student engagement increased from 37% to 53%. And then the average rating of teacher competencies increased from 30% to 44%.

Jessica Hamman: It's really impressive.

Kristen Wynn: Yeah, it was really intensive for our coaches. I remember early on, we had lots and lots of training on how to ensure inter-rater reliability using the observation tool that we swapped to make sure we were rating at the same, given a correlated rate. So we were looking at that and making sure that we were on target with inter-rater reliability. And so the impact of just those teachers, whether on the survey they were in the stage where they were in the process of taking it or they had not completed training or they had completed training and to see the growth within our literacy support schools, that was really amazing.



Jessica Hamman: What I found that was interesting about the key findings in this research paper too, was that it said that there was a positive correlation with the teacher knowledge growth and these three competencies or these three elements, but that there was actually, for those who didn't participate, there was actually lower measures of teacher knowledge and competencies. So it's not just that those other teachers were kind of flat, but that they were actually lower than the mean, is that correct? Am I getting that right?

Kristen Wynn: Yes. You're spot on.

Jessica Hamman: So that is a fascinating thing to talk about. I'd like to hear more.

Kristen Wynn: Well, if you look at the survey, the questions that are asked of the survey, some of them are really specific to the training and what teachers should know, what is a requirement of a fillable? If you don't go and you don't really understand what a fillable is, then you can't really answer those questions. So those questions were not just general questions of list the five components or things like that, but why is or why are there two n's in the word running? So you have to know the rule to that to be able to answer that, and there were questions like Miss [Car 00:25:08] wants to help her students become good sellers, which activity should Miss [Car 00:25:14] do? And it gives the activity.



Kristen Wynn: So these were application type questions. And so if you did not have the knowledge to answer those questions effectively, if you didn't have that, then you weren't able to choose the correct answer on the survey. So the survey just wasn't general knowledge, it was [crosstalk 00:25:38] specific to skills teachers need to understand and students need to know to be able to be skilled readers.

Jessica Hamman: And the classroom implications are that if they didn't know it for the test, they aren't teaching it in their classroom either, so that explains it.

Kristen Wynn: Correct.

Jessica Hamman: I'd love to hear a little bit more about the teacher professional development that went into this building this really robust knowledge of phonic space reading instruction that led to all these improved instructional elements.

Kristen Wynn: The training itself is really intense. It was originally like a 10-day training. And they tailored it for us to have online training and additional face to face training workshops. So the teachers had to go in and LETRS is presented in eight different modules. So what we had was like the first phase, the first phase of it was modules one, three, and then module seven. And one and three really kind of take you through recognizing and producing speech sounds, understanding the major brain processing systems that are included



in reading, the progression of sounds and skills to be taught. But that module seven, it pieces it all together. It gives the phonics routine and how phonics should be explicitly taught. It kind of folds it all in. So that first stage, they did modules one through three, and then they did module seven, which pieced it all together.

Kristen Wynn: But what the coaches did was really crucial and critical to this. We also offered with LETRS training a kit. Once the participant finished phase one and phase two, they received this kit of materials. The coaches took this kit of materials and took the training that the teachers received from LETRS and built professional development around some of these kit, the stuff that was in the kit. There were letter towers in there. There was magnetic letters. There were all sorts of things that LETRS referenced. And so now the teachers had the materials to go with what they gained from the training. Also how to use the materials in a classroom setting.

Kristen Wynn: What we also did was in addition to this, the LETRS training, we offered regional professional development across the state. So we took it down to another level. So we had K-2 training, we had training for three, five teachers, and then we had training for middle and high school teachers around these best practices. We just went back in and said, "Okay, these are some essential things, let's break it down again." So if you got it in LETRS, and then you attended the regional training, you got it again in another practical setting. Then we took it a little further and we created the Literacy Focus of the Month in action videos. So we have a literacy YouTube channel. And on that YouTube channel, we actually have a model lesson. One of the coaches did with Mississippi students that shows that modules seven routines from LETRS in action.



Kristen Wynn: So teachers can really see what it looks like in action. So our goal with this was to not just provide the professional development on one shot, PD. We know that as teachers, we know you go to a one shot PD, you're bound to put those things back on the shelf and not utilize them like you should. So we wanted to make sure teachers got all of the things necessary for them to really implement these strategies that we knew worked in their classroom. And so that happened throughout the phases. So they did the phase one, and then they followed up with phase two that went into vocabulary instruction, fluency, comprehension. And so as those things were pushed out, we created more videos for them to have and more professional development that was tailored to those areas. So alongside the LETRS training, we had the regional trainings, and then we added the additional literacy focus of the month videos for teachers as well.

Jessica Hamman: And what I think is so important about this tale between you and Pati, that you're telling, is just how intensive, how ongoing, how deep the learning was. This isn't just a one and done professional development and all of a sudden Mississippi snapped their fingers and the NAEP score rose out of no where, you are talking about intensive, differentiated, consistent instruction, ongoing coaching, ongoing professional development. That's a story of perseverance and a real understanding of what you need to do to layer on professional development and learning and supports, right? Pati, what can you offer on that?



Pati Montgomery: Well, we know from research that teachers need between 30 and 100 hours of professional development in order to get good and to see achievement change in professional development, no matter what the topic is. The optimum number of hours seems to be 49. Unfortunately, in most of our schools, not in Mississippi, but in the rest of the country, we do a standard two-hour stand and deliver as I call it at the beginning of the year, and then wonder why at the end of the year nothing has changed in what we're doing. So, as Kristen has just outlined, teachers need, and principals need a continual staff development so that we can see changes and achievement. What Kristen has outlined is exactly what needs to occur everywhere across America so that our students become better readers.

Jessica Hamman: Yeah. And In terms of recreating this amazing structure elsewhere, one barrier that I see to it is funding resources and time. So how can you pair the two or where can people make room for it so that they can mirror this type of progress and this type of dedication to the work that needs to happen in order for progress to be made?

Pati Montgomery: Yeah, I think number one, we need to look beyond what we have typically done. Job embedded professional development isn't utilized nearly as much in schools as we need to. We also need to do an RTI system for our teachers just as Kristen was outlining. We shouldn't be devoting as much time to teachers who are stellar to begin with, but teachers who very much are committed to the profession and just need more help. So that's certainly some of the things we can do. We also need to make literacy a priority in all states, in all schools, without the ability to read, we're not offering



children what they so much deserve, so those would be some of my suggestions.

Jessica Hamman: Kristen, how about you, in terms of understanding the funding restraints that can happen in a state, what advice do you have for other state leaders that are looking at impending literacy laws and want to duplicate the great work that's happening in Mississippi? What are some suggestions you might have for them to make the room, either budget wise or time wise, to create these amazing results?

Kristen Wynn: One thing is to look at your teacher leaders. You may not have or be able to have coaches that are provided by the state in every one of your schools, but lots of schools have teacher leaders. You have lead teachers, you have your curriculum coordinators, how can you rally around those people to increase their knowledge and allow teachers to go in and coach each other? That's a question too we have to look at as administrators too, are we creating a culture within our building that is receptive of coaching and as a building administrator, I could be a coach to my teachers if I don't necessarily have a coach there. Are we being so evaluative that we're not looking at teachers and saying, "Okay, I understand this may be a gap that you have. As the administrator of this building, instead of evaluating you right now, how can I grow you as a teacher? Are there other leaders within your grade level that I can go and allow that you all to take ownership of your professional development?"



Kristen Wynn: We have schools right now that don't have coaches, but what they've done is they've gone through some of the professional development and they have created teacher leaders within their building. The teachers lead the PLCs, they're given that responsibility to say, "Hey, I want you to lead this particular PLC on phonological awareness, and then I'm going to follow up as a school administrator or have your other peers come in and watch you." We have to build those cultures within our schools that we can have conversations that teachers feel supported. And if we don't support them, I feel like we're doing them a disservice as teachers, but we're also doing a disservice to our students as well.

Jessica Hamman: Absolutely. Yeah, and creating a growth culture where we want to grow you as a teacher, grow you as a employee. Yeah, as happens in many other areas of business. But sometimes we don't think of teaching in that capacity and we should shift our mindset to do so.

Pati Montgomery: Right. And I would also like to say, Jessica, that we need to make sure that we do have principals as instructional leaders instead of building managers. Too many years we've had building managers and the culture that Chris and I are describing, principals become instructional leaders and that's critical.

Jessica Hamman: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And that's when you start seeing change.

Pati Montgomery: Absolutely.



Kristen Wynn: [inaudible 00:37:18] you start seeing growth, and then you tap into the community as well. And that's one thing I'll have to say that we've really taken on too. We also provide regional trainings for our parents, our coaches, and I have to brag on our coaches. They are amazing because they do parent nights all over the state. And so we bring parents in, we talk about the law, we talk about what are things that you can do at home with your child? These are the five components. What does that mean? What does that look like for a parent of a kindergartner? And so we've created parent reading home plans for parents. And so we've branched out to that too. Families and parents, what are we doing to tap into that group [crosstalk 00:38:06] as well?

Jessica Hamman: Because we need all hands on deck in terms of [crosstalk 00:38:10]-

Kristen Wynn: All hands on deck. And as we always say, reading is a civil right. It's a life skill for children. And like Pati said earlier, we are really doing kids a disservice if we don't do all we can to prepare them and teach them and give them what they need so that they're reaching [inaudible 00:38:31] level.

Jessica Hamman: Yeah, absolutely. And my first experience teaching out of college was working at a literacy council with adult students and you can easily see that young students who are struggling readers become illiterate adults if they aren't given the right path to literacy. So tell



me a little bit more about what's happening now. What do you see as the trajectory of this initiative?

Kristen Wynn: Progress is currently happening. We are moving forward. We opened LETRS training up to K-12 teachers because we've had our middle and high school teachers contacting us. We've always provided, through our literacy office, regional training for middle and high school teachers. However, we understand the importance of them understanding the gaps and how to identify those things and how to remediate and what instruction for adolescents look like when we're talking about literacy. So we wanted to make sure that we opened that up to them. We also have had our professional development, our regional professional development training. We still have coaches. We are of course in about 41% of our schools across the state. And we still have that coaching model that's going on right now. And we are striving to move our schools through the progression, through the gradual release that our ultimate goal is to have a sustainability within those schools to build teacher knowledge.

Kristen Wynn: We're also looking at our material. We're really focusing on high quality instructional materials and what that looks like and how that's impacting literacy and reading instruction in our schools. And we have professional development coordinators too, that go out and assist. So for those schools that don't have coaching, they can request professional development through our professional development coordinator and they come out and they do the professional development, but they also have the model where they have follow up coaching as well going on. So we understand, like Pati said, we can't keep doing these one shot PDs and not following



up with support and coaching to make sure the strategies that we're giving to teachers are being effectively implemented in the classrooms.

Pati Montgomery: And I would like to reiterate something that Kristen said, and that is about the work that is, as I see it starting to happen at secondary schools across the country. They're starting to really appreciate what is it that you're doing at elementary schools and what can we be doing at the secondary level? So I'm seeing that too.

Jessica Hamman: And so just professionally or personally, what have you both learned from this experience and working through this and where do you see it taking you next?

Pati Montgomery: Well for me, it's some of my most proud work. I love the work with the principals in Mississippi. I've gone on to do a company, a consulting company that works with principals becoming instructional leaders and changing literacy outcomes for kids based on that. I hope that we see the science of reading picking up all across America because of everything that Mississippi is doing and watching their outcomes. I hope that other states learn that this is what we should be doing as well.

Jessica Hamman: Kristen?



Kristen Wynn: For me, this work is near and dear to my heart. I'm really passionate about it and I want to see us continue. And so we have several different projects that we're working on. We're working on a project with interventions called Closing the Achievement Gap Initiative that we have going on for our middle and high school that we're looking at. We're also looking at, again, like high quality instructional materials, how that's impacting literacy instruction. We're also continuing our training with the third edition with LETRS. We're really pushing teachers to, if you hadn't gone through that, to go through that, because it does have a bridge to practice and we're looking at our walkthrough reforms and making sure that we're [inaudible 00:43:21] with the science of readings and what principals should see in the classroom.

Kristen Wynn: One big push that, again, like Pati mentioned is that we want to make sure that we're building the capacity and knowledge of our administrators and we really don't want to lead that group out. So that's one thing that we're moving towards how are we building literacy leaders in our schools? And we have some great examples of some really great principals that have really done some awesome and amazing work, but we want to be able to replicate that model across our state and across our support schools to ensure that teachers and students are getting what they need and they're being supported.

Jessica Hamman: Great. Well, Kristen and Pati, it was really a pleasure to chat with you and hear about all the impact you have made on the state's literacy initiative. Thank you for all your work and for taking time to chat with us today.



Kristen Wynn: Thank you, Jessica.

Pati Montgomery: Absolutely.

Jessica Hamman: To learn more about Kristen Wells and her work at the Mississippi Department of Education, visit www.mdek12.org/literacy. You can visit their YouTube channel at [MDE_Literacy](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMDE_Literacy). To learn more about Pati Montgomery's work at Schools Cubed, visit schoolscubed.com. Thank you for listening to our Ed Leaders in Literacy Podcast. To find links to the articles and resources mentioned in this podcast, go to gleaneducation.com/edleaderspodcast and access them in the show notes. Bye for now.

