

Grade-Level Reading Communities Network

LOU Reads Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP)

Submitted for:
Lafayette County-Oxford-University, Mississippi

Coalition Member Organizations

- United Way of Oxford & Lafayette County (convener)
- Lafayette County Literacy Council (convener)
- Lafayette County School District
- Oxford School District
- Boys & Girls Clubs of North Mississippi
- Lafayette County & Oxford Public Library
- Leap Frog Program
- LOU Excel By 5 Coalition
- LOU-Home, Inc.
- Oxford University School
- University of Mississippi
 - College of Liberal Arts
 - College Corps
 - North Mississippi VISTA Project
 - McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement
 - Horizons at the University of Mississippi
 - School of Education
 - Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction
 - Jumpstart
- Driven Educational Services, LLC (consulting partner)
- Writer on Staff, LLC (consulting partner)



The LOU Reads Coalition is supported in part by

PART ONE: COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

History and Demographics

Founded in 1836, Lafayette County, Mississippi is located in the northern “hill country” of the state, about 75 miles south of neighboring Memphis, Tennessee and an hour east of the Mississippi River, which defines the state’s western boundary. The county encompasses 679 square miles and its incorporated municipalities include Oxford, Abbeville, and Taylor, in addition to seven unincorporated communities. The City of Oxford (pop. 20,088), founded in 1837, serves as the county seat and was deliberately named after the British city of Oxford to enhance its potential to be chosen as a center of learning for the entire South. Ten years later, the Mississippi legislature selected Oxford as the site of its flagship university, the University of Mississippi, which is commonly referred to as “Ole Miss.” The University opened its doors in 1848 and has a current enrollment of 17,142 students.

The 2010 U.S. Census recorded the county’s population as 47,351, reflecting a 22% increase over the previous ten years. An updated 2012 population estimate of 49,495 suggests a continuing trend of growth. The population is 71.8% White, 23.7% Black, and 4.6% other minority racial/ethnic groups. Such growth has been culturally enriching while revealing educational and economic challenges. These problems could be exacerbated in the future if there is a lack of effective strategizing and meaningful action today.

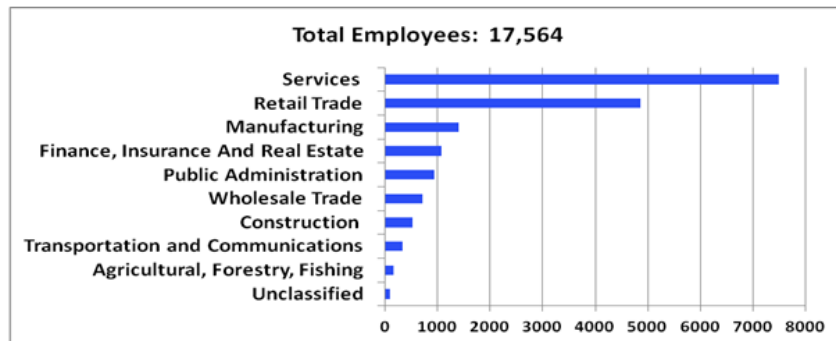
Economy and Employment

A first-time traveler through rural stretches of Lafayette County might surmise that the local economy is agriculturally based; however, the presence of the University of Mississippi and the ancillary businesses that support its large population combine to make service and retail industries the largest employment sectors, by far. The majority of these types of positions require, at minimum, a high school diploma. Lafayette County citizens, despite having an unemployment rate lower than the rest of the state, have to be vigilant in pursuing economic development and educational investments to ensure access to viable opportunities for the county’s current and future students.

County-Wide Employment

Labor Force Size: 20,957
Total Employees: 17,564
Total Establishments: 1,655
Job Growth Rate: 10.09%
Commute Travel Time: 18

Note: The Services category in the chart at right includes executives, managers, education leaders, teachers, administrators, specialized professionals and support staff.



Education

With a troubled history pre-dating the Civil War and coursing through the events of the Civil Rights era, the state, the county, the city, the school districts, and the University work diligently to meet the needs of evolving 21st century learners in a diversified world. The University of Mississippi is currently positioned as a change agent for the poorest state in the nation as it seeks to enhance the quality of life for Mississippians by fighting poverty through education and fostering partnership development. Even with such efforts, and despite the overall positive statistics on the two school districts’ performance (see chart below), socio-economic and racial/ethnic achievement gaps exist. General statistics and information for the 2012-2013 academic year for the county’s two districts, Oxford School District and Lafayette County School District, are included in the charts below, with details and data related to specific issues defined in the various Assurance responses of the CSAP.

Lafayette County School District	Oxford School District
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 2,575 students • 58.93% free and reduced priced lunch • 29.8% racial/ethnic minority students • 4 schools on one campus • 49% of staff hold advanced degrees • 14% of staff hold National Board Certification • 80.3% graduation rate and 86% completion rate • Level “B” accountability status by state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 3,945 students • 49.64% free and reduced priced lunch • 48.17% racial/ethnic minority students • 8 schools on multiple campuses • 44% of staff hold advanced degrees • 9% of staff hold National Board Certification • 91% graduation rate and 90.3% completion rate • Level “A” accountability ranking by state

PART TWO: THE COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS ACTION PLAN

ASSURANCE #1

The Problem: In 2012, there were 5,304 children from birth to third grade in the Lafayette County-Oxford-University (LOU) community. Approximately 2,099 of those children were K-3rd graders, representing nearly 34% of students in the two public school districts. Among those elementary students, not all children were entering kindergarten school-ready or achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade, a major predictor of school success and high school graduation. Grade-level reading and consequently high school graduation could be improved significantly by addressing school readiness, attendance, summer learning, and instructional quality during the school day— each of which will be targeted in this action plan.

High School Graduation

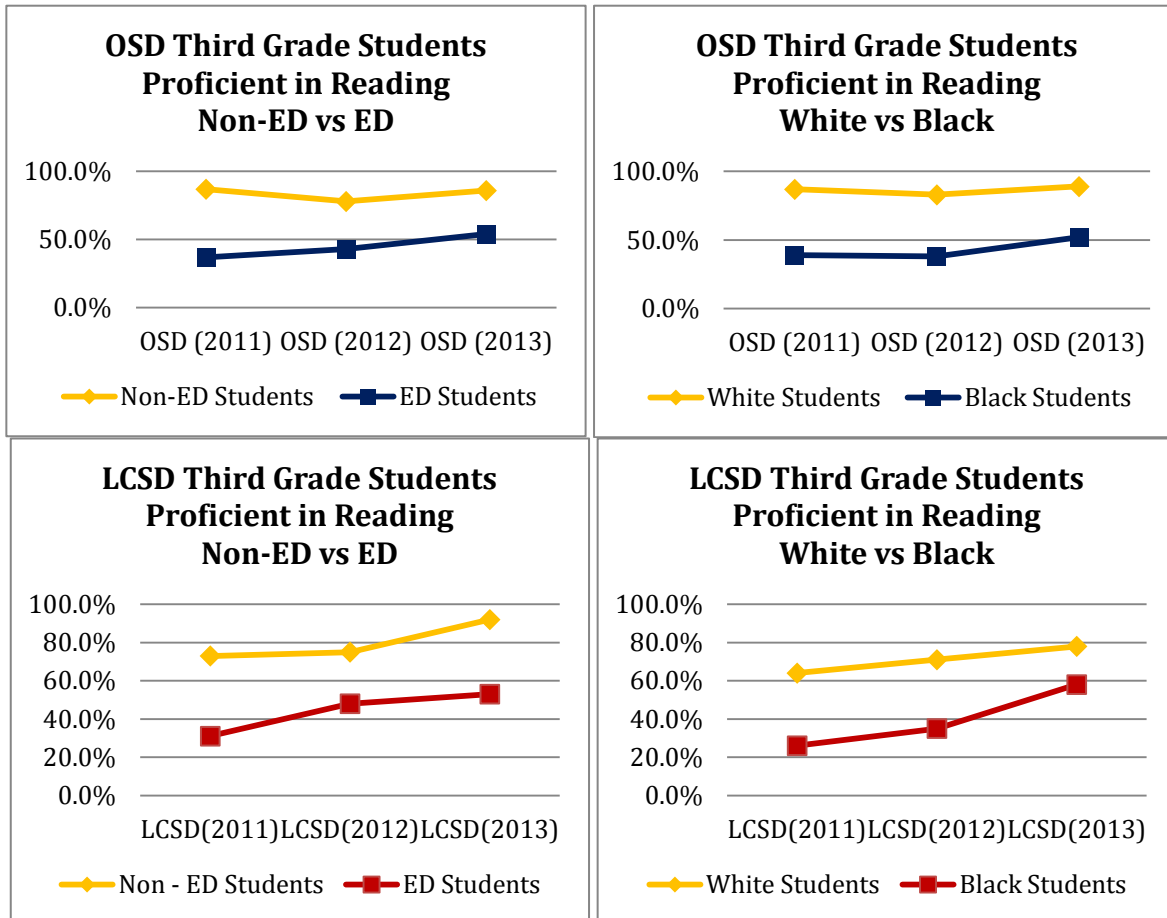
Research has well documented the negative impact of high school dropout on individuals and society as a whole.^{1,3-6} High school dropouts are less likely to be employed, more likely to engage in criminal activity, and more likely to require social services. On the other hand, high school graduates have greater civic engagement in activities such as volunteerism and voting, have higher taxable income and job-generating potential for a community, and have better health. In the drafting of this Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP), the LOU Reads Coalition and stakeholders are keeping the critical goal of high school graduation in mind for the youth of LOU as it relates to the issue of grade-level reading. The high school graduation rate in Lafayette County, on average, has been historically higher than the current state graduation rate of 75.5 percent; nonetheless, there is much work to be done. The chart below presents trend line data for the combined graduation rate of both school districts.⁸

Grade-Level Reading

Reading proficiency results for Oxford School District (OSD) and Lafayette County School District (LCSD) were obtained from the results of the Language Arts assessment of the Mississippi Curriculum Test, 2nd edition (MCT2) by the Mississippi Department of Education. The MCT2 was a statewide criterion-referenced assessment that was administered annually before the adoption of Common Core State Standards, and it consisted of reading and writing sections. Students tested with the MCT2 exam received a scaled score that was classified as minimal, basic, proficient, or advanced. In 2013, 72% of all third graders at OSD and 70% of all third graders at LCSD scored proficient or advanced on the MCT2 exam. Despite the reading success of nearly three-quarters of the third graders within the two public school districts, an academic achievement gap existed along both racial/ethnic and economic lines.

During that year, 54% of economically disadvantaged (ED) students in OSD, as indicated by eligibility for free or reduced priced lunches, were at least proficient in comparison to 86% of non-economically disadvantaged (NED) students. Eighty-nine percent of White students demonstrated proficiency or advanced performance in comparison to 52% percent of Black students. At LCSD, NED students excelled also with 92% of them scoring at least proficient while only 53% of their low-income peers were able to attain

proficiency. Additionally, 78% percent of White students at LCSD were proficient in reading in comparison to the 58% percent of Black students who scored proficient or advanced on the MCT2 exam. Black students were not the only student population lagging behind their White peers, but the small subgroup of other racial and ethnic minority students prevented data analysis. Despite the persistent and disproportionate achievement gaps, the schools have demonstrated commendable improvements in third grade reading as verified by trend line data that presents, in most cases, shrinking achievement gaps from 2011 to 2013. See the graphs and table below.⁷



Third Grade Reading Proficiency by Subgroup							
Oxford School District				Lafayette County School District			
Subgroup	2011	2012	2013	Subgroup	2011	2012	2013
All	65%	62%	72%	All	52%	61%	70%
Black	39%	38%	52%	Black	26%	35%	58%
White	87%	83%	89%	White	64%	71%	78%
ED	37%	43%	54%	ED	31%	48%	53%
Non-ED	87%	78%	86%	Non-ED	73%	75%	92%

Source: Mississippi Department of Education, Children's First Annual Report Card

Addressing the academic achievement gaps shown above is critical to school success, the future of individual students, and the collective prosperity of the Lafayette County citizenry. Early monitoring, Response to Intervention (RtI) strategies, and quality instruction based upon a common curriculum framework are some of the school districts' most noted services used to obtain increases in academic achievement.

Beyond statewide standardized assessments, each school district currently has had autonomy over instruments used at the local level to assess and measure student achievement throughout each academic year. A combination of STAR, STAR Early Literacy, aimsweb, Classworks, and Study Island have been used to provide benchmarking, progress monitoring, and supplemental instruction for pre-K through 5th grade students at Lafayette County School District. At Oxford School District, STAR, STAR Early Literacy, Pearson Reading Street, and DIBELS have been employed to test elementary students for reading proficiency and to provide universal and benchmark assessment. Additionally, afterschool tutoring has been provided for students and in partnership with community-based organizations such as Boys and Girls Club, Leap Frog, and the Lafayette County Literacy Council's Reading Rockets.

School Readiness

In the spring of 2013, the LOU community received certification from the statewide Excel By 5 program as a *child-friendly* community. The innovative program is being used by more than 30 communities in Mississippi, and it emphasizes the importance of the roles parents and early childhood educators play in a child's life from birth through age five. The certification process can take up to two years and communities must meet an extensive list of standards and requirements that fall into four areas: family and parent support, health and safety, early care and education, and community involvement.

As part of the certification process, identification of the target population and its associated needs was undertaken. In 2012, the LOU Excel By 5 Coalition identified the early childhood population as consisting of 3,205 children under the age of five. When the LOU Excel By 5 Coalition used the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to measure school readiness of entering kindergartners that same year, it assessed five domains, including the Language and Cognitive Development domain. Results indicated no more than 10% of children in Lafayette County were considered vulnerable in each of the five domains (see *Appendix B*). Nevertheless, some neighborhoods had more entering kindergartners not ready when specific sub-domains were considered. For example, further evaluation of the sub-domains of the Language and Cognitive Development domain helped to reveal the condition of school readiness in literacy. Other sub-domains also highlighted gaps in important prerequisites for success in reading. Specifically, the EDI indicated that, while 88.7% of entering kindergartners were ready for school in the sub-domain of advanced literacy skills, in two of the nineteen Lafayette County neighborhoods, 30% or more of the children were not ready for school in the same sub-domain. Additionally, the EDI results indicated 15 out of 19 neighborhoods in LOU had a high percentage of children not ready in the gross and fine motor skills sub-domain of the Physical Health and Well-Being domain. Within the Emotional Maturity domain, very few children were considered vulnerable overall, but at least 10 neighborhoods had 20% or more kindergartners not ready in the hyperactive and inattentive sub-domain as well as the pro-social and helping behavior sub-domain. Finally, the EDI also indicated that children of racial and ethnic minority groups were less ready for school than White children. The table below presents the percentage of children, by race and ethnicity, who demonstrated school readiness in the Language and Cognitive Development sub-domains (see *Appendix B* for other EDI results).

Percentage of Children Age 0-5 Ready for School				
Sub-domain by Race/Ethnicity, 2012				
Sub-domain	Total	White	Black	Others
Advanced Literacy Skills	88.7%	95.6%	79.8%	78.7%
Basic Literacy Skills	87.3%	93.0%	80.3%	76.6%
Interest in Literacy/ Numeracy and Memory	75.3%	83.4%	60.5%	79.5%

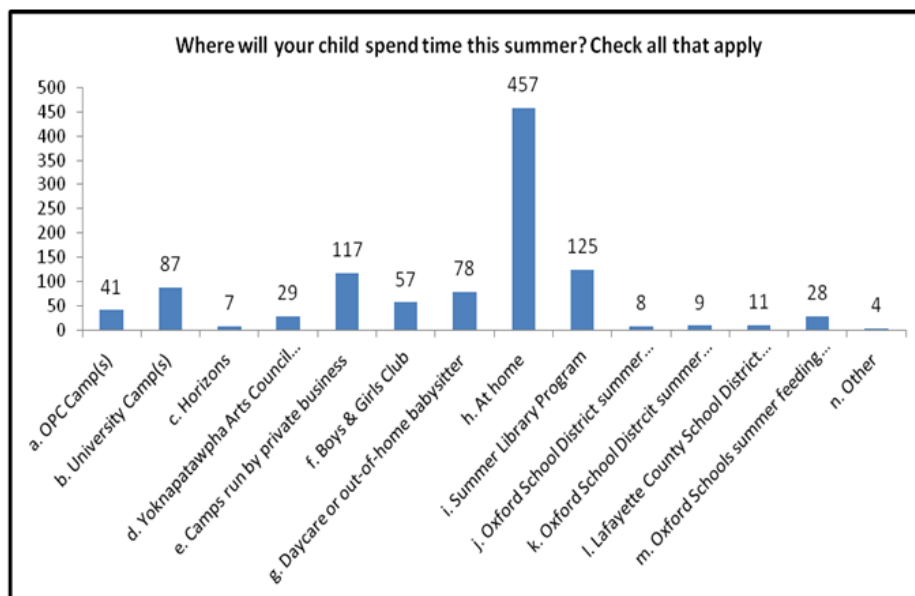
The success and opportunities for improvement highlighted in the EDI data are being addressed by community-based child care centers, the local Head Start Program, homeschool parents, and two public pre-kindergarten programs operated by the school districts. The type, accessibility, and quality of early childhood settings differ, which has created hurdles to improvement in early learning. The LOU Excel By 5 Coalition has been working to remove those barriers by fostering community-based collaborations, promoting research-based practices, and improving existing resources.

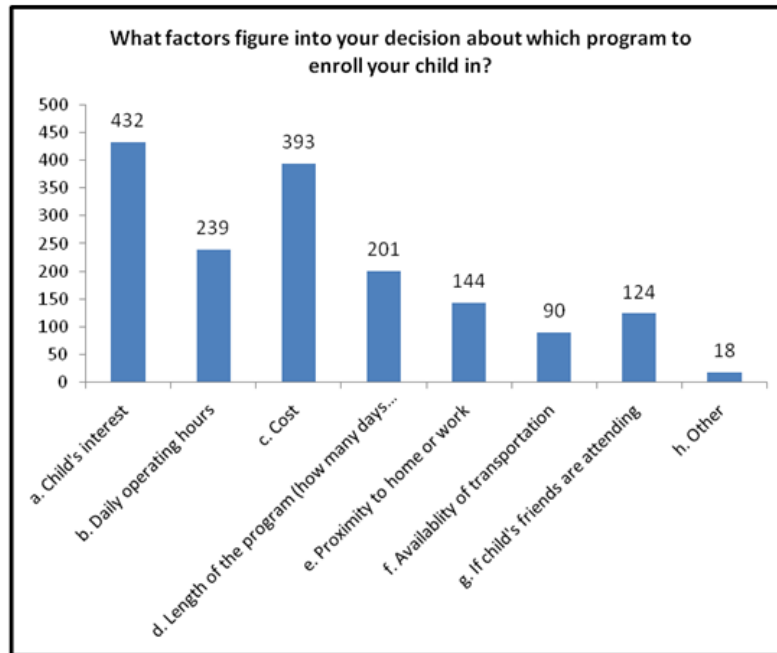
Attendance

Current criteria used to define chronic absenteeism can vary among cities, counties, and even various grade levels in a district. Mississippi has been working to rectify this issue that has prevented its communities and schools from effectively focusing on and measuring chronic absenteeism. A state law was created in 2013 that mandated all students attend at least 63% of a school day to be considered present; this law has the potential to positively influence school attendance. Additionally, with schools' improved training on the use of new software packages such as PowerSchool and OnHands School, the Coalition can expect to learn more information surrounding attendance as the districts' data analysis capacity is increased. For future purposes of defining and identifying chronic absenteeism, the LOU Reads Coalition will use a definition of chronic absenteeism from a Johns Hopkins study by Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) that described chronic absenteeism as missing 10% of a school year.²

Summer Learning

Lafayette County has a variety of summer learning opportunities for children within both formal and informal summer programs. These summer programs differ by the service provider, the cost, the length of the program, the program's focus on reading, the availability of extracurricular activities (e.g., art, gardening, swimming), and more. At the end of summer 2013, the LOU Reads Coalition was able to confirm that 149 students in K-4th grade participated in summer learning at OSD, the local Boys and Girls Club, and the newly formed Horizons program at the University of Mississippi. During that year, a survey also was administered to 596 parents of whom 570 were parents of prekindergarten through fifth grade students. According to the data tables below, an overwhelming number of children in the Coalition's target population may be spending their summer at home due to cost and children's lack of interest in summer programs (see tables below).





The above data highlight the threat of summer learning loss, as it relates to the grade-level reading of LOU students, while underlining the diversity of options for summer programs—both academic and recreational. In addition, despite the community’s out-of-school time (OST) programs having working relationships with the schools, many of the programs compete for the same students because of low rates of participation in OST activities overall. At this point, unfortunately, the community does not have enough information to determine a) if all current programs are reducing summer learning loss or b) if the students most at risk for summer learning loss are participating in OST programs. Such observations have revealed a need to better coordinate OST programs, most of which provide both afterschool and summer learning activities. Programs’ affordability and scheduling, as well as practices for attracting and retaining participants, also must be examined and improved if there is going to be an increase in access to quality summer programs that impact grade-level reading (see *Appendix B* for more Summer Learning data).

Conclusions

The LOU Reads Coalition has, in the course of preparing this CSAP, defined a number of cross-cutting issues perceived to be of concern and underlying the overall challenges to grade-level reading.

ACCESS

In large, rural areas such as Lafayette County, issues of access can range from transportation to the availability of programming. Depending on the distance of neighborhoods or parents' job site from educational program campuses, some parents decline their child's participation in a program because they cannot adhere to the pickup and drop off schedules. In other cases, schools cannot afford to hire staff to host out-of-school programs with extended hours. School-based prekindergarten programs also are limited by a lack of state or federal funding for early childhood education. As a result, the current prekindergarten programs managed by the school districts have limited hours, space, and transportation options for the students.

RESOURCES

Many school-led and community-based summer learning programs exist. A number of the programs are short-term (some as little as two weeks) and others only serve limited number of children. Similarly, with early learning programs, there are many successful programs in place, but there are not always enough spaces to accommodate all potential attendees.

PARENTAL AWARENESS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The member organizations in the Coalition have to take a step back and take a fresh look at how each agency presents the vital importance of grade-level reading and other educational initiatives to parents, area businesses, and the community in general. Organizations need to explore different methods of sharing "real world" success stories from current programs in order to get the following message across: *Access to quality education and wraparound services are beneficial not only to the children, but the overall quality of life for all residents of Lafayette County. Everyone's participation and support is essential to this mission.*

COORDINATION

There are many great things happening, but more can be done to align efforts, reduce duplication of services, and make sure community programs and resources are explicitly linking to impact the school districts and families to which the children belong.

DATA

While LOU gathers a surplus of data on its students and their achievement, there is more that could be done to collect data on all important indicators, align the data collected across agencies and organizations, and analyze/share data to help improve services and achievement.

ASSURANCE #2

Destination (Desired Outcomes and Impact): The LOU Reads Coalition has set forth goals, subgoals, and associated strategies to address challenges in grade-level reading (see Assurance #3 for subgoals and strategies). Because of recent statewide changes in assessment and curricula that will directly impact instruction and achievement data, as well as the limited availability of other baseline data and a desire not to delay the submission of the CSAP, several of the goals listed below will need to be refined and finalized in the coming years. In addition, the attendance issue has been interwoven within the goals and strategies listed for the other core challenges—school readiness, summer learning, and grade-level reading.

A major curriculum shift occurred in 2010 when Mississippi adopted the Common Core State Standards in an effort to lead students to greater proficiency in literacy among other desired outcomes such as college- and career-readiness. The first Common Core-related assessment was piloted statewide in April 2014 and full assessment implementation is scheduled for the 2014-2015 academic year. Going beyond improving the curriculum framework through Common Core, legislative action for third grade reading has been introduced. In 2013, the Literacy-Based Promotion Act was passed to prevent social promotion for any student performing at the lowest level of achievement on a state-designated reading assessment by the end of third grade. The act also requires any student, in kindergarten through third grade, not meeting the achievement threshold be provided interventions to improve student deficiencies in reading. The Mississippi K-3 Assessment Support System (MKAS²) has been the primary response to the act for ensuring adequate pre-kindergarten readiness, universal screening, diagnostics, and a third grade summative assessment. Renaissance Learning's STAR Enterprise has been selected as the state assessment tool for MKAS² to achieve the aforementioned. The online assessment system will include the STAR Early Literacy and STAR Reading assessments, which will be used to provide future baseline data for the goals of this CSAP.

Other relevant legislative changes include the Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013, which authorized and directed the Mississippi Department of Education to initiate the implementation of a state-funded prekindergarten program. An Early Learning Collaborative is designated as a school district or countywide council that applies to participate in the voluntary prekindergarten program and receive funding to support the program. In December 2013, the Mississippi Department of Education awarded 11 Early Learning Collaboratives a total of approximately \$8,438,000 to use for the next three years.

Such initiatives indicate an evolving and promising educational climate to address school-readiness and other grade-level reading challenges in Lafayette County. Listed below are the three goals LOU Reads would like to use to begin its journey to success for all students. Projected milestones/growth goals will be developed upon initial assessment in Fall 2014 and as additional data becomes available through local and statewide systems.

Grade-Level Reading
Goal #1: Increase the percentage of third grade students proficient in reading as measured by Renaissance Learning Summative 3 rd Grade Reading Assessment within MKAS ² .
School Readiness
Goal #2: Increase the percentage of entering kindergarten students who have achieved proficiency with the literacy components of the Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children, as measured by STAR Early Literacy Assessment.
Summer Learning
Goal #3: Increase the participation of kindergarten through third grade students in quality out-of-school time programs, annually, by 10% of the previous year's enrollment, with a focus on disadvantaged youth.

ASSURANCE #3

Strategy (Integrated and Intertwined): The LOU Reads Coalition was divided into three subgroups to develop goals and strategies to address the challenges to grade-level reading in Lafayette County. The Coalition identified specific mechanisms for accomplishing its goals with a focus on a) connecting and coordinating existing programs to reduce duplication of service; b) improving interventions; c) importing best practices into existing programs; d) scaling programs and services to include formal and informal programs and services; e) ensuring at risk students and families have better access to healthy learning environments throughout the whole day; and f) expanding action toward grade-level reading to include nonacademic programs and various community stakeholders. Attendance, public awareness, and volunteerism are common needs for each challenge and goal, so each has been integrated throughout the strategies listed below:

Grade-Level Reading	
1. Build, staff, and open a wrap-around center to address all areas of literacy development and barriers to development (to include a literacy clinic/lab, family resource center, family counseling services, speech and hearing services, vision services, etc.).	
2. Create a culture of professional learning and growth among pre-K to grade 3 educators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage school district participation in professional learning opportunities via the MS Dept. of Education, as well as other opportunities. Plan a special event for school districts to recognize professional growth and student achievement growth. (LOU Reads Spotlight on Teaching Success)
3. Improve attendance for pre-k to grade 3 students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an incentive program for chronically absent students. Reward all students for reaching attendance goals. Implement Attendance Works “Teaching Attendance: Everyday Strategies to Help Teachers Improve Attendance and Raise Achievement.” (http://www.attendanceworks.org/ AND http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/AWTeacherToolkitFINAL3.19.pdf) Contact parents/guardians (home visits if necessary) of chronically absent students. Develop parent communication resources and workshop/presentations related to attendance.
4. Improve in-school support to struggling readers by establishing a well-coordinated and professionally run volunteer tutor program with a paid coordinator and alignment with the school curriculum, such as the Book Buddies model.	
5. Improve out-of-school support to struggling readers by establishing a training program for volunteer reading tutors available to all Oxford and Lafayette County schools and non-profit agencies.	
School Readiness	
1. Build awareness of the importance of the first five years of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support traditional media channels (e.g., Invitation Oxford, Oxford Eagle) in running stories. Leverage social media (e.g., Facebook) to share information about child development. Host and participate in community-wide events that focus on the importance of the first five years (e.g., Excelebration, Party in the Park, Spooktacular, Baptist Memorial Children’s Health Fair, etc.). Recruit community members, organizations, and businesses to the LOU Excel by 5 Coalition.
2. Support parents and families in developing safe, stable, and nurturing relationships with their young children, beginning at birth, and provide positive early childhood experiences to promote their children’s healthy development in all domains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In partnership with the local Health Department and WIC office, and possibly also obstetric and

<p>pediatric doctors' offices, share important infant care information with pregnant women and their families, by showing an infant care DVD in their lobbies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In partnership with Baptist Memorial Hospital, provide newborn packets with an infant care DVD to all new parents. ▪ Coordinate parent/family support workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ACT Raising Safe Kids Course (developed by the American Psychological Association). – Series of workshops facilitated by LOU Excel by 5 Coalition (tentative title – The Knowing Parent), in partnership with a wide variety of community organizations, including the lower elementary schools in OSD/LCSD. ▪ Incorporate information about early development, modeling of appropriate activities for young children, and nutrition education into community events (Excelebration, Party in the Park, Spooktacular, Children's Health Fair). ▪ Provide information about early development, modeling of appropriate activities, and toys-for-lending through the Excel by 5 Family Resource Center and North Mississippi Resource and Referral Office in Oxford (which are co-located in one facility).(described in more detail below).
<p>3. Enhance a local Family Resource Center (FRC) focused on children from birth through five.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the FRC, offer free toys-for-lending, books for parents, caregivers, and teachers, and guidance on appropriate activities that promote healthy development for children aged birth through age five. ▪ Increase the FRC's hours and the regularity of those hours through volunteer staffing (e.g., College Corps). ▪ Increase use of the FRC through strategic advertising (e.g., at the library, at child care centers, etc.). ▪ Increase use of the FRC through a mobile check-out system (e.g., at kids' events, at child care centers, etc.).
<p>4. Improve the quality of early care and education available to LOU children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support licensed childcare providers in maintaining Excel by 5 certification requirements related to professional development and use of external assessments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Facilitate networking, relationship building, and best practice sharing among early care and education providers. – Increase access to professional development opportunities for local early care and education providers. ▪ Provide targeted professional development to early care and education providers based upon the kindergarten readiness data of children who attended that center prior to kindergarten enrollment. ▪ Partner with Jumpstart for Young Children to enhance literacy intervention in early care and education settings. ▪ Identify and implement strategies to maximize attendance in early care and education settings, including public pre-kindergarten.
<p>5. Increase access to public pre-kindergarten, particularly for low-income and other vulnerable children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the school districts in applying for grants, such as the Early Learning Collaborative Act and Early Learning Race to the Top, as appropriate, given school district priorities, constraints, and resources.

Summer Learning
<p>1. Strengthen and expand existing academic out-of-school time (OST) programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey the existing academic OST programs regarding needs, possibilities for building quality, and opportunities for increasing capacity. ▪ Create an OST professional network and facilitate conversations among program providers. ▪ Assisting existing programs in overcoming barriers to quality and capacity enhancement as well as effective recruitment and retention.

<p>2. Coordinate OST programs throughout the entire Lafayette-Oxford-University community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a database of OST supporters, providers, and participants to maintain records and relationships with supporters, and track students participating in summer programs. ▪ Support joint professional development for OST staff and volunteers. ▪ Assess each program's impact or influence on student achievement in grade-level reading.
<p>3. Engage traditionally non-academic programs to promote literacy instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aid in the incorporation of literacy elements within Oxford Parks Commission's recreational programs, YAC art camps, University Museum art programs, and Vacation Bible School at churches. ▪ Promote awareness of and participation in literacy programs at the Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library. ▪ Assist with public transit tickets to the library. ▪ Approach 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts to invite the organizations to partner in LOU Reads.
<p>4. Promote summer learning and advocate for parental engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a parent toolkit including: tips for teaching literacy, list of OST programs, list of educational television programs with corresponding channels and time, and list of literacy game apps for smart devices. ▪ Host a summer learning kickoff event annually. ▪ Encourage participation in the national <i>Lights on Afterschool</i> event annually. ▪ Call parents of academically at risk students around mid-summer to poll and encourage participation of students in summer learning programs and literacy activities. ▪ Engage school-based stakeholders to enhance OST services and to make referrals.

ASSURANCE #4

Connecting for Synergy: The LOU Reads Coalition understands the value of connecting to current and ongoing initiatives while simultaneously creating and linking to new innovative programs and services. Therefore, LOU Reads will adopt and/or support comprehensive reforms to education and community development. Listed below are some initiatives that enhance the work of the LOU Reads Coalition or that the Coalition can advance through its participation or advocacy:

▪ **K-3 Reading Panel**

The University of Mississippi's (UM) School of Education is one of the state's largest producers of educational leaders and teachers. In August of 2013, Dr. Angela Rutherford, a UM literacy education scholar and LOU Reads Coalition member, was appointed to a six-member expert panel working with the Mississippi Department of Education to recommend new standardized assessment tools for public K-3 reading programs. The panel was commissioned to respond to 2012 data showing that almost 47% of the state's third-graders read below grade level. Rutherford was selected to serve on the panel by Senator Gray Tollison, chair of the State Senate Education Committee and LOU Reads Coalition member. Senator Tollison stated, "Dr. Rutherford is an expert in early literacy and having her expertise, I believe, will be critical in helping achieve successful third-grade reading in Mississippi." Another Oxford resident, Claiborne Barksdale, a former CEO of the Barksdale Reading Institute, has served on the K-3 Reading panel as well.

▪ **MKAS² Kindergarten Readiness Assessment**

Mississippi Department of Education has created a school readiness assessment and early learning standards to give parents, teachers, and early childhood educators' common knowledge of children's kindergarten readiness. Using the *Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children* and the MKAS² readiness assessment, pre-kindergarten programs will have clear statewide standards and an instrument for measuring effectiveness in providing preparation for kindergarten. The early learning standards closely align to the College and Career Readiness Anchor

Standards in literacy for the Common Core State Standards. The primary goal of the standards and the readiness assessment is to inform the quality of instruction and services for children from pre-kindergarten to third grade. Because the standards and assessment were announced only recently, the Coalition could be very helpful in introducing the Lafayette County community to the new tools (see <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/student-assessment/k-readiness-assessment> for further information).

- **Community Wraparound and Mobilization**

Before arriving to school, a student needs a healthy start, safe housing, an emotionally stable and intellectually stimulating environment, and a socially nurturing atmosphere to develop as a person. Strengthening families, schools, communities, and early learning programs for reading success is no easy task, but LOU Reads is an ideal mechanism for directing volunteers to the critical need of grade-level reading and creating seamless wraparound support to schools, parents, and childcare centers. Beyond the current support and services listed in Assurance #1 and described in the strategies of Assurance #3, synergy will also be fostered by promoting and engaging the following:

- **Northwest Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network**

A network established by the Mississippi State University Extension Service co-sponsors the LOU Excel By 5 Coalition Family Resource Center in Oxford. The network provides training and technical assistance to early childhood educators including distance-learning technology, online Child Development Associate (CDA) credentialing, and continuing education credits. The local resource center serves as one of many state hubs for early care and education training workshops as well as local family workshops. Through the resource center, parents and teachers have access to children's literature, puppets, toys, curricula, media, and other resources that can be checked out for days at a time. LOU Reads can play a vital role in enhancing community awareness of this network and resource center, which is a little less than two years old in this community (see <http://www.excelby5.com/lafayette-county/lafayette-county-resources> for more information).

- **College Corps**

A service program at the University of Mississippi, known as College Corps, encourages community engagement and offers a resource for human capital. Approximately 70 college students serve 10 hours per week at 13 sites within local schools and nonprofits for one full academic year. At the end of the year, students have volunteered nearly 300 hours and are eligible for the \$1,200 Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. College Corps members already have been involved within many of the LOU Reads partner organizations through tutoring, grant writing, and more. Several College Corps members actually participate in Jumpstart, an early education organization that trains Corps members how to develop literacy skills in pre-school children (visit <http://collegecorps.olemiss.edu/our-sites/> for more information).

- **Summer Learning Program Network**

Professional learning communities and networks are becoming the norm within schools in Mississippi as it is now required by the state department of education. Unfortunately, out-of-school time (OST) programs, which play critical roles in the educational achievement of low-income children, do not have the same requirement or infrastructure. Therefore, a platform for improving collaboration among and support for OST programs that serve the same youth, schools, and communities must be available. In November 2013, a celebratory breakfast event, sponsored by LOU Reads Coalitions, was held for local OST providers as a first step to building a professional network. At the breakfast, providers exchanged information about the community's summer learning opportunities and talked about ideas for increasing collaboration and community impact. Participants included: Leap Frog (currently only school year, but starting summer program in 2014), Lafayette County Literacy Council (including Reading Rockets), Boys & Girls Club (including Power Hour), Horizons (summer program run by the McLean Institute for Public Service & Community Engagement at the University of Mississippi), and other school district summer programs. LOU Reads' efforts in summer learning will build upon the foundation laid by this event.

ASSURANCE #5

Data (Holders to Data Contributors): Data is a crucial element to progress monitoring and addressing challenges to success in grade-level reading. Early childhood centers and OST programs need data to evaluate their programs' impact on school readiness and summer learning. Public access to achievement and enrollment data has been readily available through a portal on the Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE) website. The MDE data is disaggregated by school district, school, race, and assessment for sufficient analysis by those subcategories. Performance of students by socioeconomic status is broken down into only two subcategories—economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged; English language learners and disabled students' achievement are presented similarly. The MDE data source does not indicate what percentage of each racial subcategory is comprised of low-income, English language learners, or disabled students. Therefore, LOU Reads will have to depend on data from the school districts to generate more specialized reports to understand which student populations are at risk, to measure school readiness through MKAS² data, to receive chronic absenteeism data, and to determine if OST programs effectively align with the school day to impact student achievement in reading.

After the schools assist early learning and out-of-school time educators, there is still a data need for schools to measure the outcome of their success in preparing students for college, career, and citizenship. Through the use of a new state longitudinal data system, Mississippi Lifetracks, schools can track their students after high school graduation into college and the workforce (as long as they stay in Mississippi). Mississippi Lifetracks also provides community-based organizations a greater glimpse into the overall achievement of children and schools in their community with an export of data to various file formats as well as production of charts and graphs for use in reports and other documents such as grant applications. (See <https://lifetracks.ms.gov/SitePages/Home.aspx> for more information on Mississippi Lifetracks.)

ASSURANCE #6

Success and Sustainability: The LOU Reads Coalition serves as an advocate and consortium that gives a voice and venue for the community to rally around local schools seeking to help all students read at grade-level by the end of third grade. Prior to the formation of LOU Reads, some community stakeholders were in silos, duplicating service, lacking data and resources, and lacking introductions to other stakeholders. LOU Reads, to date, has provided a roundtable for discussions about grade-level reading. In the future, LOU Reads hopes to utilize appreciative inquiry and other strategies to cultivate relationships among partners and transparent conversations about community perceptions of agencies as well as evidence of impact.

Each partner organization's decision to participate in LOU Reads communicates the village philosophy and response to raising and educating children. Because LOU Reads is comprised of providers at each point in Lafayette County's children's lives—early childcare stakeholders, K-12 schools, afterschool and summer program providers, and a local university—it can ensure quality teaching of the whole child in every setting every day. The LOU Excel by 5 Coalition is working closely with hospitals, early childhood educators, and parents to make sure families and communities understand healthy development from birth while the Literacy Council offers children free books monthly (through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library) until they reach age five. Both school districts have implemented Common Core State Standards and will be administering MKAS² under Mississippi's new requirement for literacy. As interventions are more strongly emphasized and required, at the state level, for each student not achieving at grade-level in reading, the local schools are committed to enhancing their partnerships with other agencies that support their goals for literacy. Beyond these locally owned programs and solutions, the success of the LOU Reads' work also will be perpetuated through the use of national models and resources like Book Buddies, Putting Reading First, Horizons National, and Attendance Works. Ultimately, such work by LOU Reads in collaboration with other educational initiatives and entities will position Lafayette County's community stakeholders to be better applicants and competitors for large sustainability grants and networks that require systemic inputs and outcomes.

PART THREE: OVERVIEW OF THE CSAP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In October 2012, United Way of Oxford and Lafayette County, the primary convener of LOU Reads, asked an educational leadership graduate student at the University of Mississippi to research the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the condition of grade-level reading in Lafayette County after Senator Gray Tollison recommended the Campaign. The information and data collected were combined with data previously compiled by the LOU Excel By 5 Coalition. The needs assessment revealed a racial and socioeconomic gap in achievement in grade-level reading. During this same period, the two conveners (United Way and the Lafayette County Literacy Council) dialogued with community stakeholders, including legislators, as there was news of a statewide bill being drafted to address grade-level reading. In December 2012, the graduate student volunteer and the United Way director attended a workshop to learn more about the statewide longitudinal data system that was in development.

On March 5, 2013, an interest meeting for the grade-level reading coalition was held with a formal presentation by United Way and the Literacy Council. Later in Spring 2013, the Literacy-Based Promotion Act and the Early Learning Collaboration Act were passed, further signifying an opportune time for the Lafayette County community to ambitiously tackle the issue of grade-level reading. The LOU Reads Coalition quickly began to build momentum, attracting meeting attendees such as a superintendent, principals, school board members, a state senator, business owners, nonprofit leaders, OST directors, librarians, and others. Coalition meetings were spent building relationships, diagnosing the problem, learning the data and resource holders, explaining the CSAP process, and developing subgroups to address the core grade-level reading challenges. The Grade-Level Reading, Out-of-School Time, and School Readiness subgroups met outside of the general LOU Reads Coalition meetings to research and develop approaches to improve grade-level reading from birth to third grade.

In November 2013, LOU Reads had the privilege of having a breakfast meeting with Ralph Smith, the managing director for the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, and Sammy Moon with United Way Worldwide. Smith and Moon brought encouragement and a sense of urgency and national significance to the issue of grade-level reading during the meeting. LOU Reads Coalition members left the meeting energized with a stronger vision for changing grade-level reading in Lafayette County, connecting with a national network, and becoming a leading model of community mobilization around the issue of literacy for the state of Mississippi.

In December 2013, writing of Assurance #1 of the Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP) was initiated by the graduate student volunteer. Within the next month, a grant writer from Writer on Staff, LLC offered to write the community overview on a pro bono basis. For the next few months that followed, the Coalition focused on continued partnership development but struggled to move forward on the drafting of the CSAP as there was no full-time staff person for any organization able to commit time to the writing. In March 2013, United Way contracted the educational leadership graduate student under Driven Educational Services, LLC to collect and fine tune goals and strategies from the three subgroups and to lead the writing of the CSAP during the spring of 2014. The CSAP was completed by June 2014 in preparation for submission to the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Network.

APPENDIX A

Coalition Members		
Name	Organization	Position/Title
Teresa Adams	Leap Frog Program	Director
Marian Barksdale	Oxford School District	Board Member
LaTanya Dixon	Driven Educational Services, LLC and School of Education at the University of Mississippi	Owner and Consultant (DES) Doctoral Student (UM)
Brian Harvey	Oxford School District	Superintendent
Connie Hwang	United Way of Oxford & Lafayette County	Board Member
Fred Lorenzo, Ph.D.	LOU-Home, Inc	Board Consultant and Past President
Melissa Leach	United Way of Oxford & Lafayette County	AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer
Zell Long	Boys and Girls Club of North Mississippi	Chief Professional Officer
Barbara Lowe, Ph.D.	Oxford School District	High School English Teacher
Stephen Monroe, Ph.D.	College of Liberal Arts, College Corps, North MS VISTA Project, and Jumpstart Programs at the University of Mississippi	Assistant Dean (CLA) Director (CC, VISTA, Jumpstart)
Albert Nylander, Ph.D.	McLean Institute for Public Service & Community Engagement at the University of Mississippi	Director
Nancy Opalko	Lafayette County & Oxford Public Library	Children's Librarian
Bonnie Owen	Lafayette Lower Elementary School (Lafayette County School District)	Principal
Rhonda Reed, Ph.D.	Della Davidson Elementary (Oxford School District)	Intervention Coordinator
Alice Ricks	United Way of Oxford & Lafayette County and LOU Excel by 5 Coalition	Executive Director (UW) Steering Committee Chair (Eb5)
Angela Rutherford, Ph.D.	Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction and School of Education at the University of Mississippi	Director (CELI) Professor (School of Education)
Suzanne Ryals	Bramlett Elementary School (Oxford School District)	Principal
Jeremy Stinson, Ph.D.	Lafayette County School District and School of Education at University of Mississippi	Curriculum and Testing Coordinator (LCSD) Professor (School of Education)
Kathy Sukanek	United Way of Oxford & Lafayette County LOU Excel by 5 Coalition	Past Executive Director (UW) Steering Committee (Eb5)
Emma Tkachuck	Horizons Program and McLean Institute for Public Service & Community Engagement at the University of Mississippi	Director (Horizons) Project Manager (McLean)
Sen. Gray Tollison	Mississippi State Senate	State Senator
Kim Washetas	Writer on Staff, LLC	Owner and Consultant
Meridith Wulff	Lafayette County Literacy Council	Director

APPENDIX B

Early Development Instrument Domain and Sub-domain Results Summarized at the Neighborhood Level; Oxford-Lafayette County Kindergarten Students, Spring 2012

Domain	Overall results: Percent of students "Vulnerable"**	Sub-domain	Sub-domain Results**: # of Neighborhoods with --		Did community- wide percent 'Not ready' exceed 20%?
			20% or more students not ready	30% or more students not ready	
Physical Health and Well-Being	6%	Physical readiness for school day	0	0	no
		Physical independence	0	0	no
		Gross and fine motor skills	15	5	yes
Social Competence	8%	Overall social competence with peers	1	0	no
		Respect and responsibility	1	0	no
		Approaches to learning	2	1	no
		Readiness to explore new things	0	0	no
Emotional maturity	10%	Prosocial and helping behavior	10	4	yes
		Anxious and fearful behavior	0	0	no
		Aggressive behavior	3	0	no
		Hyperactive and inattentive behavior	11	4	yes
Language and Cognitive Development	7%	Basic literacy	0	0	no
		Interest in literacy/numeracy and memory	5	1	no
		Complex literacy skills	2	2	no
		Basic numeracy skills	1	0	no
Communication and General Knowledge	6%	Communication and General Knowledge	17	11	yes

* Percent of Oxford-Lafayette County students with scores below the 10th percentile for U.S. communities

**Number of Oxford-Lafayette County "neighborhoods" with high percentages of kindergarten students scoring below the level needed to be considered "ready" on each sub-domain, using readiness criteria established by EDI developers

Summer Learning Survey Results*

1. What grade is your child completing this year?	paper	online	Total
a. Pre-K	60	2	62
b. Elementary (K-5)	476	32	508
c. Middle School (6-8)	12	10	22
d. High School (9-12)	0	4	4
2. Where will your child spend time this summer? Check all that apply.	paper	online	Total
a. OPC Camp(s)	37	4	41
b. University Camp(s)	78	9	87
c. Horizons	7	0	7
d. Yoknapatawpha Arts Council Camps	25	4	29
e. Camps run by private business	102	15	117
f. Boys & Girls Club	54	3	57
g. Daycare or out-of-home babysitter	72	6	78
h. At home	422	35	457
i. Summer Library Program	115	10	125
j. Oxford School District summer school	7	1	8
k. Oxford School District summer enrichment program	8	1	9
l. Lafayette County School District summer school	11	0	11
m. Oxford Schools summer feeding program	27	1	28
n. Other	4	0	4
3. What factors figure into your decision about which program to enroll your child in? (Rated 4 or 5 in online survey)	paper	online	Total
a. Child's interest	389	43	432
b. Daily operating hours	213	26	239
c. Cost	356	37	393
d. Length of the program (how many days or weeks it lasts)	176	25	201
e. Proximity to home or work	126	18	144
f. Availability of transportation	79	11	90
g. If child's friends are attending	110	14	124
h. Other	17	1	18
4. How do you look for information about available summer programs? Check all that apply	paper	online	Total
a. Newspaper	198	27	225
b. Word of mouth	378	34	412
c. School handouts	357	35	392
d. Internet	116	26	142
e. Church	99	19	118
f. Other	22	0	22

*Item 5 on transportation was not presented here due to lack of space in the CSAP

Summer 2013 Learning Programs (Academic)		
Program	Organization	Details
Fun in the Sun at Lafayette Elementary School	Lafayette School District	A three-day remedial skills camp for students in grades 1 st and 2 nd by invitation. Teachers will work with the students on math, reading and science. The program will be centered on giving students a positive end to the year and opportunity to be encouraged to continue learning during the summer days. This program is from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. each day. Bus transportation is provided as well as a snack.
Summer Enrichment Program	Oxford School District	<p>Prevent the Summer Slide will be held at Della Davis Elementary School for two weeks in July. The program will center on helping students get a jumpstart on learning before the next school year begins. Teachers will work with students on their math and reading skills. Students will be required to attend from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. Bus transportation, breakfast, and lunch will be provided to all students in attendance. The program is by invitation only.</p> <p>At Della, math and reading intervention (Maritime Reading) held during the day.</p> <p>At Oxford E, Anna Purvis ran a similar program.</p>
Horizons	McLean Institute for Public Service & Community Engagement, University of Mississippi, in partnership with Oxford School District	The Horizons Summer Learning Program was launched this year. Thirty low-income kindergartners and first graders spent six weeks on campus. Several college classrooms were converted to elementary classrooms, and the students learned reading and mathematics from local teachers hired for the summer. This was an intensive learning experience to combat the summer learning loss experienced by low-income children. Horizons students all learned how to swim, enjoying the UM pool four days per week. They went on field trips across campus, and they took art lessons at the UM Museum three days per week. Attendance was near 100%, and pre- and post-DIBELS test scores provide evidence that our students made significant gains over the six week period. All students will return for Horizons next summer and for at least ten summers into the future. Our goal is to replace summer learning losses with summer learning gains for these children—and to stay with them until they enter college. Each year, we will add one class of kindergartners, thus growing the program to more than 165 by year ten. To support the Horizons program, the McLean Institute has partnered with the School of Education, the Luckyday Success Program, Aramark Catering, the Oxford Public Schools, the Lafayette County Literacy Council, the United Way, an important private donor, and the Horizons National organization.
Summer Reading Program	The Lafayette County & Oxford Public Library	This program is for all ages--babies to adults--and registration is held all summer. At registration, participants receive a free book of their choice, a reading record to keep track of all their books over the summer, and a calendar of events. Activities are offered almost every day -- story hours, craft programs, art and literature-based workshops, educational programs, and book discussion groups -- at different times in order to reach all segments of the community. After reading five or more books, participants receive a prize and are encouraged to keep reading.
BGC Summer Program	The Boys & Girls Club LOU Barksdale Clubhouse	The Boys & Girls Club provides a safe place for youth ages 6-18 to spend time during the summer as an alternative to the streets or being home alone, as well as a chance to learn, laugh, play and have fun. Reading is promoted as a summertime activity with help from the Club's library and the Lafayette County Literacy Council's Book Exchange library, which is available for kids as well as their family members. During the Summer Program, the internet-based interactive Learning A-Z reading program, formerly called MimioSprout, is incorporated into the daily programming. Math assignments are also incorporated into the weekly activities. High-Yield Learning Activities are incorporated into the daily programming that results in Club members retaining abilities in math, reading and spelling. Members who attend the Summer Program tend to go back to school ready to learn and adapt to the "early-rise" requirements. Summer Program hours are from 8am-5pm. In addition, field trips are incorporated into the Summer Program which allows Club members to have experiences (bowling, shopping, meals at restaurants, Buffalo Park) that they might not experience otherwise.
	Second Baptist Church	During the summer, only students who failed to pass to the next grade are intentionally assisted. There are also some requests from students who want to be advanced in their studies, and they participate in the summer program.

APPENDIX C

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