



The Hill Center



Every child. Every day.
Mooreville
GRADED SCHOOL DISTRICT

**The Hill Center and Mooreville Graded School District
Literacy Partnership
2015-2018**

Annual Report Year 1 2015-16

Overview: Together, the Hill Center (Hill) and Mooreville Graded School District (MGSD) have made meaningful progress towards improving the reading achievement of struggling readers within MGSD elementary and intermediate schools, further developing the Hill Learning System (HLS), and establishing a model partnership and demonstration site for HillRAP and HLS implementation.

Notably, in addition to the grant activities and accomplishments described below, Dr. Crystal Hill, Executive Director of Elementary Education and Federal Programs for MGSD, reported the following assessment results for students receiving HillRAP as an intervention during 2014-15: The statewide K-3 “M-Class” Text Reading Comprehension (TRC) results show that 97% of students participating in HillRAP demonstrated an increase in book levels from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

MGSD students receiving HillRAP in 2014-15	91 (K-3)
Improved overall text reading levels	97%
Improved more than 7 book levels	6% (n=5)
Improved 4 to 6 book levels	44% (n=40)
Improved 1 to 3 book levels	47% (n=43)
Showed no improvement	3% (n=3)

As of February 2016, Middle of Year (MOY) TRC (Text Reading Comprehension) results for students receiving HillRAP within MGSD continue to be positive:

K-3 Students receiving HillRAP as of Feb 2016	89 (K-3)
Improved overall text reading levels	84%
Improved more than 3 book levels	29% (n=26)
Improved 1-3 book levels	55% (n=49)
Showed no improvement	16% (n=14)

MGSD is using new assessment measures this year. At this time, we do not have mid-year data to report for 4th – 6th grade students. We will however have EOG Comparison Data to report at the end of the year.

4-6 Students receiving HillRAP as of Feb 2016	56 (4-6)
4 th Grade	39
5 th Grade	12
6 th Grade	5

While not surprising, these results further validate this partnership, MGSD’s laser focus on using data to drive instruction, and the explicit approach of HillRAP. Coupled with the outstanding feedback from teachers who beta tested the HLS during Summer 2015, both Hill and MGSD remain enthusiastic about our work together, encouraged by the potential, grateful for the Mebane Foundation’s investment, and deeply committed to achieving all of the goals and outcomes associated with this project.

Grant Update: From March 2015 through January 2016, The Hill Center and MGSD have made meaningful progress towards the 2015-2018 Literacy Partnership grant outcomes by pursuing foundational activities associated with each of the three goals.

Goal #1: Significantly increase MGSD reading student achievement in grades K-6 by 2018.

1) Increase student access to devices and digital resources for personalized literacy learning.

MGSD has used Mebane Foundation funds to purchase and deploy iPads to all K-1 students as planned. HillRAP students and teachers in grades 2-6 have received iPads during the fall of 2016.

2) Expand HillRAP implementation and Hill professional development for MGSD teachers.

On July 13, 2015, a Mentor workshop was also held at The Hill Center for the 3 MGSD teachers pursuing Mentor Level II Certification this year. On August 28, the MGSD teachers who achieved Level One Certification in 2014-15 received HLS training (9 teachers). These teachers are implementing HillRAP via the HLS during the 2015-16 school year. On September 10-11, 2015, a new cohort of 11 HillRAP teachers (11 new EC teachers, interventionists, and reading specialists), those implementing with paper and pencil, were trained at Mooresville Intermediate School. Those teachers have had 3 observations thus far, and received HillWrite training on February 11-12, 2016.

3) Implement high quality summer M2H Summer Literacy Lift Program.

Year 1 (Summer 2015): Hill teacher training activities were conducted according to plan during Summer 2015. On June 5, 2015, a HillRAP Refresher and HLS Training were conducted in Mooresville for continuing HillRAP teachers who would be implementing during Mooresville's Summer Literacy Lift Program. Nine MGSD teachers taught HillRAP classes in the summer program using the HLS (approximately 144 students were served). Despite initial technical implementation hurdles, the overall transition to the HLS went exceedingly well. The teachers found the HLS to be more efficient than the former paper/pencil model. Teachers also reported satisfaction with support from both the Hill Center and MGSD technology departments. On June 22, a follow-up HLS meeting with Hill Technology and the Hill Project Coordinator was held to address teacher concerns and answer questions regarding the HLS. The Hill Project Coordinator also visited the MGSD summer program on several other occasions during June and July to observe HLS implementation and relay questions regarding the HLS usage to the Hill tech support staff.

M2H Summer Literacy Lift Summary:

145 students who had completed grades K-3 were served in the Summer Reading Program. Demographics for the students were as follows: 40% White, 24% Black, and 28% Hispanic. The summer program staff administered an End-of-Camp Text Reading Comprehension (TRC) assessment, with the following noteworthy result: 61% of the students showed positive growth of at least one book level higher than their End-of-Year benchmark. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the students maintained their End-of-Year benchmark level. All students also completed an integrated multicultural study and completed a digital product.

Goal #2: Develop, test, and refine the Hill Learning System iPad app and associated resources and supports.

1) Beta-test the HLS app.

Update: As planned, The HLS was beta tested with 9 MGSD teachers, over the course of Summer 2015 (It was simultaneously beta tested with one teacher in Carteret and 15 teachers in the Hill Summer School Program). Hill administered a survey to all of these groups and received very positive feedback. Software developers also monitored feedback and observed classes over the summer to revise and improve the software. In addition to providing helpful feedback on HLS design and functionality, Mooresville teachers agreed they and their students benefited from the HLS in the following ways:

- 100% agreed the HLS was easy to use at both the student and teacher level.
- 100% agreed the HLS saved them time and helped them implement RAP more efficiently

- 100% agreed the HLS helped them be more effective teachers
- 100% of responding teachers said students using the app were more engaged and motivated to participate in learning than those who did not use the app

Though in general, the HLS rollout has been smooth, this beta test period has not been without technology challenges and has reinforced how important this project, partnership and testing period is. Additionally, it has highlighted how critical it is that all partners – including both Hill and MGSD technology teams and the HLS software developers – are able to respond effectively and efficiently when challenges do arise. Fortunately, that has been the experience to date. Overall, the beta testing accomplished this past summer and fall have underscored how important it is for Hill to develop a scalable tech support model before expanding too quickly.

This fall, the Hill Learning System Instructional App was used with 9 teachers at MGSD. Furthermore, over 50 teachers at The Hill Center, in Carteret, Beaufort, Davie, Durham, and Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools, used the App. It was also used at KIPP Durham and Global Scholars Academy – both charter schools. Hill Learning System Instructional App version 1.0 (Phases 1 – 4) is complete including the first installment of Hill Readers and accompanying comprehension questions, and was released on November 13. To prepare for the broader HLS rollout, the teacher training curriculum and content is being refined to update the HillRAP training with HLS integration.

A survey collecting feedback from MGSD teachers using HLS during the first nine weeks of the school year was also completed. Feedback was overall very positive with valuable suggestions about how the HLS app could be improved.

- Sample of MGSD Teacher comments:
 - *I've said this before and I truly mean it, HillRAP instruction is the favorite part of my day! :)*
 - *The kids love HillRAP no matter how it is delivered, but the app makes it faster and more efficient so that they get more practice time with the skills they need to become competent successful readers*
 - *I have really enjoyed using the iPads this year. It is much quicker and more efficient. It has cut down on my prep time. I'm a big fan!*
 - *I really like the program using the iPads....the students enjoy using the iPads as well*
 - *I'm thankful for the support we've received from tech staff at Hill Center. The MGSD techs has been amazing and helped make HLS implementation a smooth transition.*

2) Further develop the HLS software.

The Hill Center continued to refine the HLS App and the supporting website. A vocabulary component was added and tested during the summer and changes were made to the network and class management structure based on feedback from MGSD teachers and other partners. The first revision of the reading and comprehension component was also completed and is currently being tested. The HLS app was released in the Apple App Store, which means that the process for eventual online purchase is in place.

With the November release of the HLS app version 1.0, the app development focus has been on integrating teacher feedback and further refinement. We are not adding major new features but prioritizing stability and efficiency improvements and integration with the teacher training platform.

3) Create new vocabulary and comprehension curriculum.

Nine of the Hill Readers books and comprehension content have been completed. Passages, comprehension activities and teacher guide are integrated into the HLS instructional app and are currently in testing. The initial release of the comprehension component has been positively received by teachers and students.

A newly-created vocabulary component has also been integrated into the HLS app. The component uses a research-based approach to learning vocabulary that gives teachers flexibility for students to work

independently during the HillRAP session. The vocabulary component also allows teachers to easily add words from word lists and allows for words to be added from other sources outside of the HillRAP curriculum. This initial release of the vocabulary component has been well received by teachers and students.

4) Develop HLS teacher training and support model.

A plan was developed and work is underway to create a teacher training and support platform which integrates with the HLS platform. The HLS teacher training platform will create a personalized support environment for teachers, with resources, training, coaching and community building capabilities. For the fall beta test, a resource section with documentation, instruction video, demonstration videos, and other activities and strategies has been created and integrated into HLS website for teachers using the program.

Work continues on the ambitious project to overhaul online courses and develop a teacher training web portal to support teachers learning and implementing the HillRAP program with the HLS. The teacher training platform will provide an effective learning experience and a comprehensive and efficient collection of resources, including support for video observation and remote coaching, collaboration platform, robust learning resources library, and personalized teacher training pathways. Some of the new content recently added includes a series of videos to train teachers on all aspects of the HLS app, classroom demonstrations and printed materials. Refinements to the online courses are ongoing. Most recently, the Hill Strategies for Reading online course has been updated and shared with selected partners for pre-release review and feedback.

Goal #3: Establish the MGSD-Hill Literacy Partnership as a model demonstration site for other districts and schools.

1) Showcase Hill at MGSD Summer Connection Institute and Digital Conversion Visits.

During the MGSD 2015 Summer Connection Institute, The Hill Center was recognized with an Honorable Mention as an outstanding partner with the school district during the Opening Session. Additionally, Hill hosted a Partners Table, which enabled attendees to learn more about Hill programs. Hill and MGSD will work closely together to develop a targeted session that will highlight the MGSD-Hill Literacy Partnership for the 2016 Summer Connection.

2) Host prospective HillRAP districts.

MGSD continues to host prospective HillRAP district and visitors. Members of The Hill Center Board of Directors made a Mooresville site visit on February 2, 2016, observing several implementing HillRAP teachers and meeting with MGSD administrators for a Q and A session. Representatives from Stanly County Schools and community will be visiting Mooresville in February or March 2016. They are considering HillRAP implementation within their district in 2016-17.

3) Co-present and co-publish: Hill and MGSD will seek opportunities to present together at state and national conferences and to publish jointly-authored reports or articles sharing project outcomes and lessons learned.

Dr. Denise Morton, Director of Outreach at The Hill Center, and Dr. Crystal Hill, Executive Director of Elementary Education and Title I Programs at MGSD, made a presentation on the details and benefits of this partnership at the North Carolina Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development Conference (NCASCD) in February in Pinehurst, NC. Feedback was positive from the attendees, several of whom expressed interest in talking further about Hill professional development and programs.

4) Collaborate on development of a shared research agenda.

- MGSD testing and accountability director and Dr. Crystal Hill currently are responsible for collecting student impact data. Hill is seeking to build its data and analysis capacity, and engage in research related to HLS development and implementation in public schools, via a pending proposal to the Kenan Charitable Trust to

support a new HLS initiative in East Durham. This project is a direct outgrowth of this grant, and of the Mebane Foundation's grant to PEFNC to support HLS tutoring in two East Durham charter schools, and will both support continued HLS development and generate further lessons learned around how best to scale sustainably in public schools.

To ensure we are living up to our aspirations for a model partnership, and also executing all of the key activities outlined above, we will convene three partners meetings per year where the Mebane Foundation, MGSD, and Hill will come together to review progress, challenges, lessons learned, and plans for the next stage of our work together.

A HillRAP training was conducted for the MGSD principals on November 19th 2015. Dr. Morton traveled to Mooresville to provide an overview session to familiarize them with HillRAP and to enable them to understand and support implementation in their schools. A partner's meeting was held via Skype on November 6, 2015. In attendance were Dr. Mark Edwards and Dr. Crystal Hill from MGSD, and Beth Anderson, Dr. Denise Morton, Sara Gray Horne, Betsy Emerson, and Justin Carlson from The Hill Center.

Conclusion: Hill and MGSD share a desire to see all students reading successfully; an understanding of technology usage and innovation; and a commitment to fidelity, the use of data, and strong programmatic implementation. With a leadership investment by The Mebane Foundation, MGSD and Hill, together, are working toward these shared goals. The first 5 months of the project have gone well and both partners look forward to continued implementation on behalf of struggling readers in the district in order to develop and demonstrate a scalable model.

Comments on use of HLS from MGSD teachers during Summer 2014-15:

I didn't think it was possible, but the Hill Center made their intervention program even better! I fell in love with the program using pencil/paper and using the HLS app instead has only enhanced my teaching. It saves on planning/prep time because the next WAT [word attack] list or PHA [phonemic awareness] list loads automatically. The reports are generated automatically. This time saved on prep work can be put to use planning even better comprehension/vocabulary lessons. The students love using the HLS app. It's immediately more engaging than paper/pencil in this digital age.

I loved the quickness and efficiency of using the HLS! Reading reports that were generated was so much more meaningful than flipping through page after page and calculating percentages. I'm a fan of the system! HLS provided me with a systematic approach to teaching the foundational reading skills. Students were engaged and excited to track their progress with fluency graphs and it was amazing to see how daily drill helped to deepen their understanding of phonics rules. Using the app gave me more time to focus on planning, instructional tasks and other interventions. The program seemed to be effective for all levels of literacy learners.

This program was especially useful in the sense that it helped with time management; this also made it easier to have all the components available and having the word list available was also great. I really feel that the support tool was great for students. They were very interested in using the iPad. Students did much better having a few words presented to them at a time rather than the full page of words in the notebook. It was easier for them to practice and not be overwhelmed by a large number of words on the page. The tracking system for teachers was awesome. It helped to have it tracked by the app. I like to keep things neat and organized. The notebooks can get a little messy at times when students are struggling with a few words from a list. It was a relief not to have to worry about where the check or dot was going to go on the page. The app made groups run so much more smoothly. I loved the timer at the top to help keep track of times. I was able to work with four groups a day and stay on track due to the timer. Overall, I loved teaching this summer and think that the kids were much more engaged due to the use of this technology.