

# Improving K-12 Classroom Literacy Instruction with the Model of the Complete, Literate Student: Shared Perspectives by MSED Reading Program Graduates

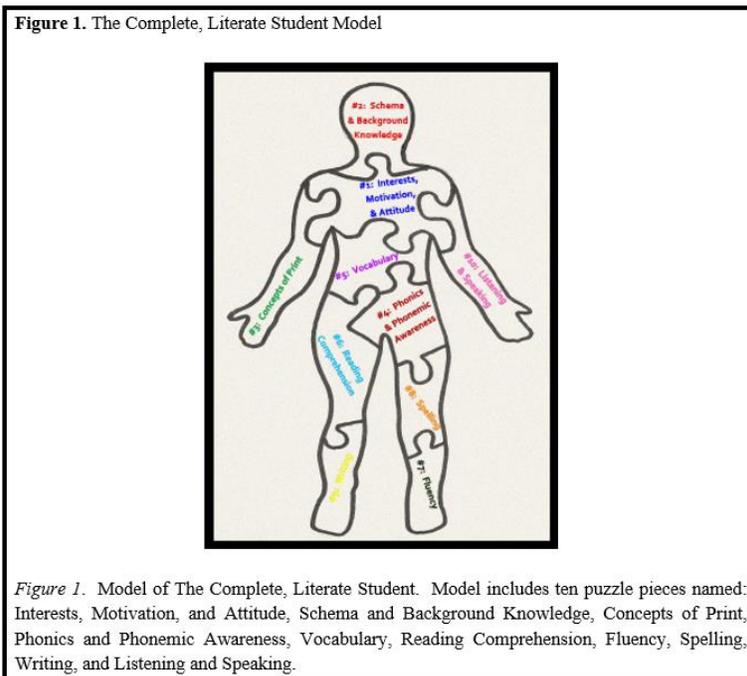
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## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of an instructional model, used in a Master of Science in Education in Reading (MSED) Reading program, on K-12 classroom literacy instruction. Recent, MSED Reading program graduates had an opportunity to share their perspectives on *The Model of the Complete, Literate Student*. Findings from this research study will be utilized to better understand the impact of this instructional model on K-12 classroom literacy instruction, as well as current practitioners' professional growth as literacy leaders.

As an extension of the work begun in a previous article, *Teaching Literacy: A Puzzle-Based Approach* published in December 2020 by Baugher and Akins (see Figure 1), the intent of this subsequent manuscript is to further communicate the found effectiveness and impact of this instructional model among MSED Reading program completers, through a sampling of shared perspectives.



## Research Questions

1. How was *The Model of the Complete, Literate Student* initially perceived by MSED Reading Program Graduates?
2. What degree of impact, if any, has *The Model of the Complete, Literate Student* had on MSED Reading program graduates' classroom literacy instruction?
3. What degree of impact, if any, has *The Model of the Complete, Literate Student* had on MSED Reading program graduates' growth as literacy professionals?

## Literature Review

“Images work better than words” (Kedra & Zakeviciute, 2019, p. 1). Additionally, Gallagher et al. (2017) and Rosar and Weidlich (2022) detail the importance of visuals, particularly in the online environment to support student learning. Given that our MSED in Reading program is offered entirely online, this instructional practice is important for us to consider. “The manner in which information is presented, the medium employed and the ways in which learners interact with information are important factors for learner engagement and motivation (as cited in Domagk, Schwartz, and Plass, 2010 by Gallagher et al., 2017, p. 131). Moreover, as we work to engage and motivate our online learners, we strive to provide them with practical resources that they can immediately apply as part of their daily practice in their classrooms (Kedra & Zakeviciute, 2019).

Hubbell and Goodwin (2019) remind us that “instructional models help teachers understand how to design and deliver effective learning opportunities for their students” (p. 1). Holistically speaking, that was the intent of *The Model of the Complete, Literate Student* when it was first developed and remains the chief goal. Wijngaards-de Meij and Merx (2018) also advocate for visibility in curriculum, adding that “making learning trajectories explicit and visible for students... can help promote reflection and potentially enhance the quality of their learning processes” (p. 221).

In their opinion, visibility also communicates value and that can be equated from two curriculum dimensions: structure and intent (Rosar & Weidlich, 2022; Wijngaards-de Meij & Merx, 2018; Yeh & Lohr, 2010). The effectiveness of *The Model of the Complete, Literate Student* lies heavily in the practitioner and this claim is too supported in research. “The student has to be actively engaged in reflecting on the learning trajectory in relation to their own learning process” (Wijngaards-de Meij & Merx, 2018, p. 226). As part of this study, program completers have been asked to reflect on the model's impact on two separate dimensions of their career: (a) their classroom instruction and (b) their professional growth.

The Model of the Complete, Literate Student as discussed prior showcases a high level of interconnectedness between components and as a result, is an instructional model that promotes scaffolded literacy instruction for learners. Hartsell (2021) encourages that the “implementation and facilitation of visual literacy in education needs to begin with teachers as they provide scaffolding to acquire skills” (p. 848). Moreover, this model too was framed with principles of constructivism in mind, allowing for “...learning [to] explore and construct their own meanings” (Hartsell, 2021, p. 850). This model offers differentiation, consideration of the whole child, and intentional literacy development between ten, identified areas.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

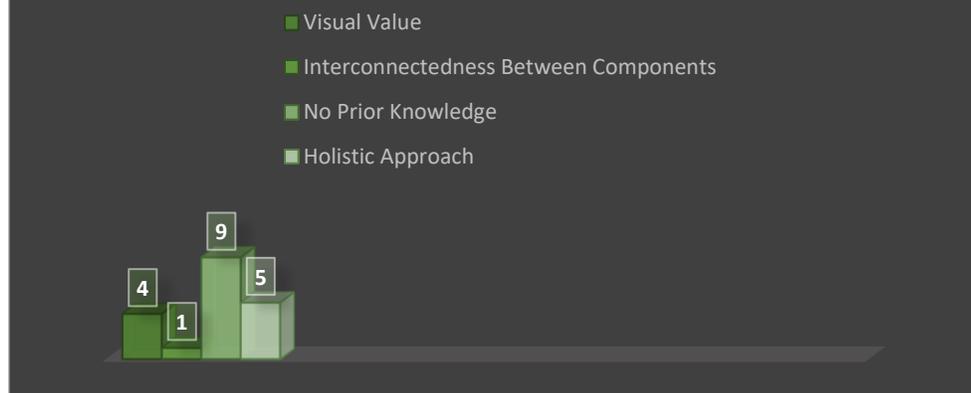
All research participants in this study were graduates of an online, MEd Reading program at a moderately-selective, four-year university in the Midwest. MEd Reading program completers between Spring 2021 and Spring 2022 were surveyed and asked to voluntarily participate in the research study. A total of twenty-three program completers elected to participate in the research study and complete the electronic, five-question survey (see Appendix A). Of the five questions on the survey, three items are qualitative in nature – Questions 1, 4, and 5 and two are quantitative – Questions 2 and 3.

Survey responses were exported to an Excel® spreadsheet for individual item analysis. Mathematical calculations were completed for results on Questions 2 and 3 to compute both raw scores and percentages, as reported later in the Key Findings and Results section. Qualitative items were coded for recurring themes and extracted for reporting purposes in the same section (Creswell, 2014; Fink, 2013).

### **Key Findings and Results**

A total of twenty-three survey responses were collected from MEd Reading program graduates. Question 1 tasked respondents to: Describe [their] initial perception of The Model of the Complete, Literate Student when [they] were first introduced to it in the MEd Reading program coursework. Common themes identified on this survey item included: (a) recognition of the value in the visual; (b) awareness of interconnectedness between components; (c) admission that the graduate student was narrow-minded and/or had no prior knowledge of all the components; and (d) comprehensive in nature because the model offered a holistic, instructional approach.

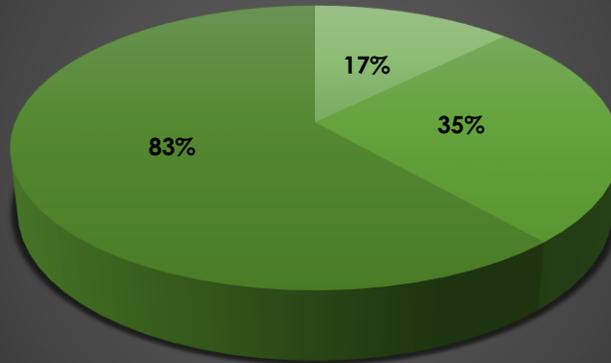
## FREQUENCY OF THEME REGARDING INITIAL PERCEPTION OF MODEL OF THE COMPLETE, LITERATE STUDENT AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS



In sum, four survey respondents recognized the value in the visual model initially, or 17%. Only one respondent reported on the interconnectedness between components, which reflects a 4% calculation. Thirty-nine percent of the survey sample, or nine respondents, conveyed being narrow-minded and/or having no prior knowledge of all the components outlined on The Model of the Complete, Literate Student initially, upon beginning their MEd in Reading degree program. Five respondents, or 22% reflected upon the holistic, instructional approach evident in the model. The remaining four responses were single reports, or outliers, reflecting the other 17% of the surveyed population.

Question 2 read: On a scale of 1-4, identify how impactful The Model of the Complete, Literate Student has been to your classroom literacy instruction. Four respondents, or 17% answered somewhat impactful. Eight respondents, or 35% answered impactful. Eleven respondents, or 48% indicated very impactful. From these totals it can be computed that 83% of survey participants rated The Model of the Complete, Literate Student as impactful or higher when connecting to their classroom literacy instruction. Furthermore, there were zero respondents that indicated the model had been unimpactful.

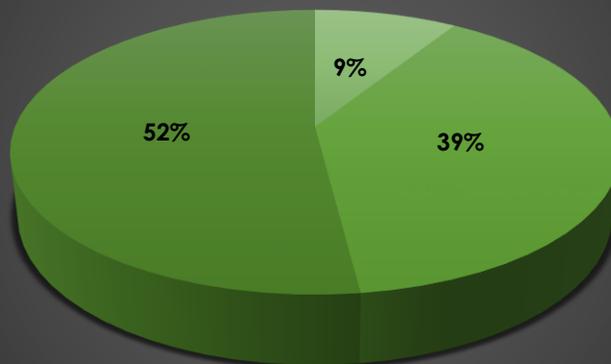
### Degree of Model's Impact on K-12 Classroom Literacy Instruction



■ Not Impactful   ■ Somewhat Impactful   ■ Impactful   ■ Very Impactful

Question 3 read: On a scale of 1-4, identify how impactful The Model of the Complete, Literate Student has been to your growth as a literacy professional. Two respondents, or 9% indicated somewhat impactful. Nine respondents, or 39% answered impactful. Twelve respondents, or 52% indicated very impactful. Final calculations on this item's analysis found that 91% of respondents rated The Model of the Complete, Literate Student as impactful or higher when considering their growth as a literacy professional. Similar to the findings on Question 2, zero respondents indicated the model as unimpactful in this regard.

### Degree of Model's Impact on Individual's Growth as a Literacy Professional



■ Not Impactful   ■ Somewhat Impactful   ■ Impactful   ■ Very Impactful

Survey respondents found The Model of the Complete, Literate Student to be overall more impactful to their growth as a literacy professional than to their classroom literacy instruction. Respondents found the model most impactful to their professional learning as an emerging literacy professional. More specifically, 91% compared to 83%, which computes to an eight percent difference. In terms of respondents' rankings, it was a difference made by two.

Question 4 tasked respondents to consider: How the Model of the Complete, Literate Student has impacted and/or changed [their] classroom literacy instruction. Five respondents, or 22% indicated that the model has aided them in planning appropriate literacy interventions for their students. Three respondents, or 13% highlighted the model's holistic emphasis and encouraged them to likewise consider the whole child. Twelve respondents, or 52% replied that the model has supported their work to provide a balanced literacy curriculum, equitably addressing all ten pieces as outlined in the model. Nine percent, or two responses captured the impact of equitable assessment, and the remaining respondent (4%) was an outlier.

Question 5 invited survey respondents to provide other information regarding the impact that The Model of the Complete, Literate Student has had upon their professional practice and development. Key ideas that were offered from respondents on this survey item included: (a) the model's strong application to supporting both non-English speakers and at-risk student populations; (b) recommendation for this model to be presented in undergraduate, literacy methods coursework; and (c) opportunity for the model to be used as a reflection tool for teachers and current instructional practices.

## **Discussion and Implications**

Respondents' initial perception of the model yielded a lead perception in that the majority had limited to no knowledge of all ten pieces as illustrated in this visual. That finding has significant implications when considering undergraduate literacy curriculum and initial preparation. This perspective conveys we need to do better here! In our previous manuscript, one of our initial next steps was to investigate how the model was perceived with undergraduate students in our redesigned course. That is still in the works, so stay tuned. We are hopeful that our work in this area will help to examine the concern above.

In addition, 91% of respondents compared to 83% attributed the impact of the model to their growth as a literacy professional. In considering this data, I think an inference can be made here between these two data points which goes back to the saying – know better, do better. Inevitably, as we grow and develop professionally, that is organically going to transfer to our classroom practice. So, if we were to survey these folks again, I think we could predict an even higher increase with the classroom literacy instruction percentage. As teachers' confidence and skill grows, it is natural for their practices in the classroom setting to reflect the same.

## **Summary**

The intent of this study was to examine the impact of The Model of the Complete, Literate Student on K-12 classroom literacy instruction and professional growth, as based on perspectives shared by MSED Reading program completers. Research supports the use of visuals in education for a variety of reasons including: value in the presence of a visible curriculum, structure, purpose, and intentional design, as well as the linkages visuals have to constructivism in the formation of knowledge and meaning (Gallagher et al., 2017; Hartsell, 2021; Rosar & Weidlich, 2022; Wijngaards-de Meij & Merx, 2018; Yeh & Lohr, 2010). Through the administration of a voluntary, five-question survey, participants were able to share their perspective on the model through both quantitative and qualitative responses (Creswell, 2014; Fink, 2013). Items were individually analyzed and coded. While the strong majority of MSED Reading program completers attested that they had little to no knowledge of all the components outlined in the model initially, the impact of the model on their classroom instruction and their growth as a literacy professional was exponentially greater. Now that it is known, as supported by data, that this model is impactful to both pedagogy and professional learning, I am hopeful that this model could become a universal literacy tool to support literacy instruction in K-12 classrooms everywhere.

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