

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

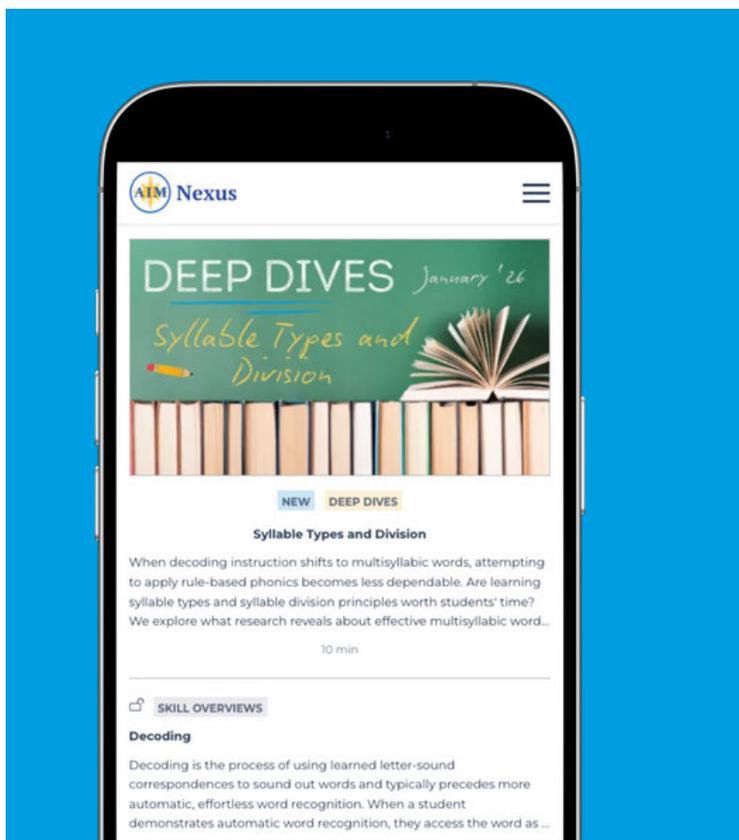
13th Annual
**MTSU LITERACY
RESEARCH CONFERENCE**

Saturday, February 21, 2026
8:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. (CST)

I AM *true***BLUE**

Advancing literacy through the science of reading, research, and real-world practice.

AIM Institute is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving literacy outcomes by connecting research, practice, and professional learning. Grounded in the science of reading, AIM partners with educators, researchers, and education leaders, including through research collaborations with institutions such as **Middle Tennessee State University**. Through this work, AIM translates evidence into impact and makes research accessible, usable, and relevant to the field.



To support this work, AIM created Nexus, our digital hub for connecting literacy research to real-world practice.

Inside AIM Nexus:

- Research-based explanations grounded in the science of reading
- Scholarly deep dives into complex and debated literacy topics
- Videos and models connecting research to practice
- Webinars, symposium recordings, and expert publications
- A curated, searchable library of literacy resources

Why AIM Nexus?

Research doesn't improve outcomes unless it is accessible, interpretable, and applied. AIM Nexus was built to support that work, connecting literacy research to instruction, preparation, and leadership.

Explore. Engage. Translate
Research into Impact.



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13th Annual
2026 LITERACY
RESEARCH CONFERENCE

SCHEDULE

8:30–9:00 (CST)	Registration Light Refreshments
9:00–10:15 (CST)	Keynote COE 160
10:30–11:30 (CST)	Session I
11:30–12:30 (CST)	Lunch Poster Session
12:30–1:30 (CST)	Session II
1:45–2:45 (CST)	Session III
3:00–4:00 (CST)	Session IV Closing Keynote and Info Session

Sponsored by the
MTSU Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program

LITERACY RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2026

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

College of Education Room 160



LOUISA MOATS

Speech to Print: Reading's Most Important (and Least Understood or Practiced) Idea

Louisa Moats, Ed.D., has been a teacher, psychologist, researcher, graduate school faculty member, and author of many influential scientific journal articles, books, and policy papers on the topics of reading, spelling, language, and teacher preparation. Moats is the lead author of LETRS Professional Development and the textbook *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers*. Moats is also author of LANGUAGE! Live, a blended instructional program for middle and high school students, and co-author of Spellography, a structured language word study program for intermediate students. Moats' awards include the prestigious Samuel T. and June L. Orton award from the International Dyslexia Association for outstanding contributions to the field; the Eminent Researcher Award from Learning Disabilities Australia; and the Benita Blachman award from the Reading League.

The keynote session is supported by the MTSU Distinguished Lecture Fund, provided by the Center for Student Involvement and Leadership (CSIL).

DANIELLE THOMPSON

Closing Keynote (Session IV): Language Is the Work: Stewarding a Course Correction in Literacy Leadership



Danielle “Nell” Thompson, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, is a literacy leader with a language bias, leadership coach, and founder of The Transformative Reading Teacher Group and its high-impact Big Sky Literacy Summit. She develops educators and leaders who recognize language as the foundation of literacy and champions the paradigm shift needed to align assessment and instructional systems accordingly. A former SLP and educator whose journey spans Alaska to Mississippi, Thompson brings clarity, humanity, and scientific rigor to helping schools rethink and elevate practice. Certified in Maxwell Leadership and Brendon Burchard High Performance Coaching, she is committed to building schools where people thrive and every child becomes a reader.

SESSION I: SPOKEN PRESENTATIONS 10:30–11:30 A.M. (CST)

Room	Session Title	Presented by	University/Affiliation
160	Boosting Science Success: A Meta-Analysis of Effective Vocabulary Strategies for Adolescents (A P R)	Debs Pingitore, Yucheng Cao, and Amy M. Elleman	Middle Tennessee State University
160	The Role of Mathematics Vocabulary in College Algebra Performance: Examining Reading Comprehension, Task Type, and Vocabulary Alignment (U R)	William Puckett, Amy M. Elleman, Sungyoon Lee, and Eric L. Oslund	Middle Tennessee State University
141	WordFlight as a Computer-Based Supplement to Structured Literacy: Effects on Decoding and Reading Fluency in Upper Elementary and Middle School Students with Characteristics of Dyslexia (E R)	Heather Joslin, Aviva Coyne-Green, and Timothy N. Odegard	Middle Tennessee State University
141	Teaching Literacy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (K P)	Leora Coleman, Eric L. Oslund, and Katie Schrodt	Middle Tennessee State University
142	Validity and Reliability Analysis of a Sentence-Level High School Reading Comprehension Screener (H R)	Brandi MacDonald and Amy M. Elleman	Middle Tennessee State University
142	Responsive Assessment Strategies for Adolescent Multilingual Learners (A P)	DeAnna DeBow Osborne and Janna Brown McClain	Middle Tennessee State University
145	Motivating Middle School Students in DSI (M P)	Paula Burnette	Williamson County Schools
145	Using Orton Gillingham Methodology to Intervene with Struggling Readers in Grades K–5 (E P)	Susan Green	Collierville Schools
146	A Meta-Analysis of Morphological Decoding Interventions on K–12 Students' Multisyllabic Word Reading (K R)	Sarah Champeau	Middle Tennessee State University
146	Cross-Linguistic Transfer Between Spanish L1 Language Comprehension and English L2 Reading Comprehension: A Meta-Analysis (A R)	Tiffany Anderson, Janna Brown McClain, and Yucheng Cao	Middle Tennessee State University
SYMPOSIUM: Supporting Readers: Evidence-Based Practices for Struggling Readers and Multilingual Learners (K P)			
149	Supporting Struggling Readers: Understanding Dyslexia and Evidence-Based Strategies (K P)	Brian Kissel, Lillie Wurdack, Julia Sullivan, and Meghan Saba	Vanderbilt University
	Many Languages, One Classroom: Supporting Multilingual Learners in K–2 Classrooms (K P)	Brian Kissel, Becca Petras, Rebecca Hemans, and Amy Hylan	Vanderbilt University

Target Age Group: **E** = Elementary; **M** = Middle; **H** = High School; **C** = Early Childhood;

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Target Audience: **P** = Practitioners; **R** = Researchers

SESSION I: SPOKEN PRESENTATIONS 10:30–11:30 A.M. (CST)

SYMPOSIUM			
153	Stitching at the Edge of Practice and Theory: How Early Clinical Experiences Strengthen Teacher Candidates' Capacity in Evidence Based Reading Instruction E R	Jeanne Peter, Vanessa Campbell, Erica Sinclair, Mallory Rodriguez, Melany Morgan, Alyssa Valentine, Angie Aikens, and Audrey Weedman	Vanderbilt University Metro Nashville Public Schools



LUNCH PROVIDED, 11:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M. (CST), College of Education Building, Second Floor

POSTER PRESENTATIONS AND LUNCH 11:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M. (CST)

Room	Session Title	Presented by	University/Affiliation
P1	SLP Inter-Rater Agreement on Scoring the Oral Vocabulary and Relational Vocabulary Subtests of the TOLD-P:4 E P	Ashleigh Hayward, Lauren Acord, and C. Melanie Schuele	Vanderbilt University
P2	Creating Readers: An Exploration of Leadership, Instructional Autonomy, and Student Engagement in High School Literacy H P	Armanda Shiver-Boyd	University of the Cumberland
P3	Vocabulary Instruction and Reading Comprehension: A Meta-Analysis of Impacts, Moderators, Methodological Influences E R	April Senkow and Yucheng Cao	Middle Tennessee State University
P4	Developing a Culturally Responsive Classroom Library: A Practical Guide for Elementary Educators E P	Charlene Coleman and Jenna Brown McClain	Middle Tennessee State University
P5	Measuring What Children Know: A Hands-On Demonstration of Feature Inventories and Levenshtein Distance for Spelling Assessment E R	Caitlin Deckard, Lindsey Hester, Robin Miranda, Cameryn Vongphachanh, Stuart Bernstein, and Katie Schrodt	Middle Tennessee State University
P6	Learning to Segment Words with Blends: What Types of Errors Do Children Make? E P	Jane Eppstein, Hannah Krimm, and Melanie Schuele	Vanderbilt University
P7	Interactive Session on OG Methods that Work to Increase Reading and Writing Scores K P	Jill MacNiven	University of Kentucky
P8	A Comparison of Elementary Educators' Literacy Knowledge E R	Katy Kloberdanz, Timothy N. Odegard, and Jennifer Stewart	Middle Tennessee State University

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POSTER PRESENTATIONS AND LUNCH 11:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M. (CST) CONTINUED

P9	A Systematic Review of the Associations Between Peer Coaching, Professional Development, and Student Reading Achievement Scores (A P)	Kendra Miller, Amy M. Elleman, and Eric L. Oslund	Middle Tennessee State University
P10	Alignment Between Teachers' Perceptions and Demonstrated Literacy Knowledge (K R)	Lindsey Lowery, Karen Kehoe, and Timothy N. Odegard	Middle Tennessee State University
P11	Effectiveness of Explicit Vocabulary Learning Interventions on Foreign Language Vocabulary Acquisition in Higher Education: A Meta-Analysis (U R)	Maria Del Mar Cuadron Roldan and Sungyoon Lee	Middle Tennessee State University
P12	The Effects of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports on Student Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis (E P R)	Philip Eller, Yucheng Cao, and Amy M. Elleman	Middle Tennessee State University
P13	Revitalizing Vocabulary Instruction: Revamping Best Practices and Adding AI-Enhanced Innovations (K P)	Rachel Peay Cornett and Kristan Shields	Lipscomb University
P14	The Relationship Between Academic Self-Efficacy and English Language Proficiency: A Meta-Analysis (A R)	Xue Xia	Soochow University

SESSION II: SPOKEN PRESENTATIONS 12:30–1:30 P.M. (CST)

Room	Session Title	Presented by	University/Affiliation
160	Evidence-Based Writing Strategies for Multilingual Learners (K P)	Caitlyn Osborne Parris, Janna Brown McClain, and Stacy Fields	Middle Tennessee State University
160	Amplifying and Improving Student Writing Outcomes: A Guide to Providing Systematic and Explicit Writing Instruction within a Novel-Based Curriculum (K P)	Margaret Guggenberger	St. Michael Academy
141	The Orthographic Toolkit: Practical Strategies for Teaching Reading to Non-Roman Alphabet Literate Learners in Grades 3–16 (A P)	Laura Clark Briggs	Metro Nashville Public Schools
141	Mapping Words to Memory: Practical Phoneme Grapheme Mapping Routines for K–5 Keywords (E P)	Shauna Sweeney and Robin Miranda	Middle Tennessee State University
142	From Perception to Production and Comprehension: How Minimal Pairs Can Support English Language Acquisition (K P)	Clarissa Hooper and Janna Brown McClain	Middle Tennessee State University
142	Learning for a Change: How Preparatory Coursework Impacts Preservice Teachers' Self-Reported Perceptions Surrounding Multilingual Learners and Multilingualism (K P)	Sydney Banda, Katie Schrodt, Janna Brown McClain, and Lauren MacDonell	Middle Tennessee State University

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SESSION II: SPOKEN PRESENTATIONS 12:30–1:30 P.M. (CST) CONTINUED

145	Beyond Speech Errors: What Really Drives Reading Disability Risk in Children with Speech Sound Disorders (S P)	Johanna Hearn and C. Melanie Schuele	Vanderbilt University
145	More Than Words: Effective Engagement Strategies for Students with IEPs During Phonics Instruction (S P)	Jeni Samuelsen	Bentonville School District
146	The Importance of Syntax Instruction for Students with Reading Difficulties (K P)	Jessica Kane-Cabello	University of Texas at Austin
146	Building Sentence Comprehension: Syntactic Instruction for Elementary Readers (E P)	Jieun Park	Middle Tennessee State University
SYMPOSIUM: Becoming Readers, Becoming Thinkers: Empathy, Identity, and Critical Thinking (K P)			
149	From Skills to Self: Helping Students Grow as Confident, Empathetic Readers (K P)	Emily Pendergrass, Laura Grace Brothers, Anna Burnidge, and Taylor Gerth	Vanderbilt University
	Words Are Never Neutral: The Power of Critical Literacy (K P)	Emily Pendergrass, Jessie Webster, Lucie Antonius, and Eireen McGuire	Vanderbilt University
SYMPOSIUM: Strengthening Literacy Competencies in Educator Preparation Programs: Research, Policy, and Programmatic Innovations (U P)			
153	Building Capacity Within EPPs: Collaborative Models for Improving Literacy Instruction in Higher Education (U P)	Kelly Ballard	Bryn Athyn College
	Navigating Literacy Legislation: Implications for Educator Preparation Programs and the Teacher Pipeline (U P)	Lisa Klein	Keys to Literacy

SESSION III: SPOKEN PRESENTATIONS 1:45–2:45 P.M. (CST)

Room	Session Title	Presented by	University/Affiliation
160	Leveraging Guided Play to Enhance Literacy Learning in the Primary Grades (E P)	Robyn Ridgley, Martin Ridgley, and Katherine Mangione	Middle Tennessee State University
160	Mentor Illustrations: Using Illustrations as a Mentor Text in Preschool and Early Elementary Classrooms (C P)	Thankful Davis and Katie Schrodtt	Middle Tennessee State University
141	Bridging Research to Practice: The Role of Research-Practitioner Partnerships (K P)	Aviva Coyne-Green	Middle Tennessee State University
141	Building a Research-to-Practice Bridge: The Literacy Center as a Hub for Coaching, Professional Learning, and Bilingual Literacy Reform (K P)	Sara Gonzalez Flechas	Literacy Center Latam

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SESSION III: SPOKEN PRESENTATIONS 1:45–2:45 P.M. (CST) CONTINUED

142	Language Science: An Instructional Paradigm for Teaching About Language K P	Lauren MacDonell	Middle Tennessee State University
142	Inference Strategies for K–2 Grade E P	Melania Khan	Middle Tennessee State University
145	Related Arts Teachers in a Professional Learning Community: Examining Collaborative Conversation Standards During Implementation E P	Noah Friedman	Middle Tennessee State University
145	How Tennessee Teachers Responded to Authoritative Discourse in English Education H P	Sarah Esberger	Longwood University
146	Unpacking and Repacking Vocabulary: Using Semantic Waves to Support Disciplinary Literacy in Secondary Classrooms H P	Amanda Denney and Janna Brown McClain	Middle Tennessee State University
146	From Exclusion to Engagement: Scaling Literacy Access with Differentiation and Co-Teaching in an Inclusive Secondary Classroom K P	Caroline Kleiner and Amy Dalton	Williamson County Schools
149	Understanding Student Language Development and Orthographic Learning (Spelling as a Window: Using Student Errors to Unlock Literacy Growth, Part 1) K P	Lisa Brill, Jennifer Burch, Amy M. Elleman, Cyrille L. Magne, and Eric L. Oslund	Middle Tennessee State University
149	Using Student Spelling Errors as Instructional Roadmaps (Spelling as a Window: Using Student Errors to Unlock Literacy Growth, Part 2) K P	Colleen Danilson, Rebecca Loera, Amy M. Elleman, Cyrille L. Magne, and Eric L. Oslund	Middle Tennessee State University
SYMPOSIUM:			
Bridging Evidence and Practice: Meta-Analytic Insights and Instructional Strategies for Adolescent Literacy K A R P			
153	A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Syllabication Intervention on Polysyllabic Decoding for Pre-Kindergarten to Twelfth Grade K R	Courtney Pippenger and Yucheng Cao	Middle Tennessee State University
	The Effects of Classroom Discourse Interventions on Grades 4 to 12 Students' Literacy Achievement: A Meta-Analysis A R	Amanda Freeman and Yucheng Cao	Middle Tennessee State University
	Fluency Matters: Empowering Striving Adolescent Readers A P	Lauren Spenceley	Middle Tennessee State University

SESSION IV: CLOSING KEYNOTE AND INFO SESSION 3–4 P.M. (CST)

Room	Session Title	Presented by	University/Affiliation
160	CLOSING KEYNOTE: Language is the Work: Stewarding a Course Correction in Literacy Leadership	Danielle “Nell” Thompson	The Transformative Reading Teacher Group
141	Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program Information Session	Amy M. Elleman	Middle Tennessee State University

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Brehm Preparatory School is a nonprofit, co-educational boarding and day school dedicated to students with learning disabilities, ADHD, executive function challenges, and related learning differences.

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an interdisciplinary program

Addressing the national literacy crisis—an interdisciplinary approach

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College of Liberal Arts

The **Literacy Studies Ph.D. program** is designed to address one of education's most pressing needs—the shortage of scholars, practitioners, administrators, and policymakers who are equipped to translate literacy-related research to effectively inform educational policy, practice, and professional preparation. Graduates of the program pursue careers as college professors, leaders at the state and district level, literacy consultants, and reading specialists/coaches.

This **75-hour, post-bachelor's** doctoral program allows applicants holding a master's degree to transfer up to 15 credit hours with approval.

The interdisciplinary program provides coursework in neurobiology, psychology, linguistics, and education. Three concentrations are offered to deepen literacy knowledge:

- **Literacy Instruction and Staff Development**
- **Reading Disabilities and Dyslexia**
- **Literacy Measurement and Analysis**

The program offers a **rigorous curriculum for working professionals**. Many students in the program work full time as educators. Classes typically meet twice a week in the evenings and can be taken remotely or in person.



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- The 10-hour assistantship pays **half tuition** plus a stipend. This assistantship is ideal for working professionals.

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- December 1 is the application deadline for priority consideration for fall admission and assistantships.
- April 1 is the final deadline for fall admission and assistantships.

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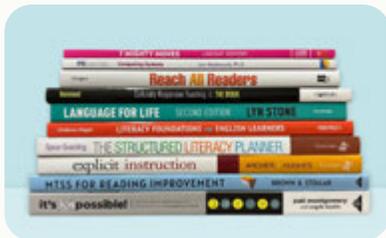


“Teaching a child changes a life. Teaching a teacher changes hundreds—and transforms generations.”

—Dr. Maria Murray, President and CEO, The Reading League

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10th Annual Conference of The Reading League

Chicago, Illinois

September 30 - October 2, 2026

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We believe that *all children* deserve to learn to read, and *all teachers* can learn to teach them.

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